Shabbat Shalom. Today is 3 Nissan 5780. Ashkenazim are permitted to say Kiddush Levanah tonight. The Vina Gaon stated that 4 days have to pass from the time of the Molad, re-appearance of the moon, to allow us to say Kiddush Levanah. Sefardim follow the Shulchan Aruch who wrote that seven days have to pass.

TORAH DIALOGUE
(p. 410 Hz) (p. 605 S) (p. 371 Hi) (p. 544 AS)
VAYIKRA
Leviticus 1:1
[Compiled by Rabbi Edward Davis (RED),
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1. The Hebrew word for a sacrifice, Korban, has at its root Karov, which means close or near. The idea is that the donor becomes closer to Hashem when he brings a sacrifice. In the post destruction period of the Holy Temple, when we have no sacrificial rituals, prayer takes the place of the sacrifices. But action is better than words and intentions. When we brought a sacrifice, we were required to lean on the animal and recite Vidui, a confession of our sin to Hashem. In the case of bringing a Shelamim or Thanksgiving offering, there is no Vidui. So the donor would say some words of praise to Hashem when he leans on the animal. Today we are left with words of praise in good times and words of confession at other times, but no action accompanies these words. A major ingredient is missing in our ritual service, and we have become accustomed to the new reality. Reading today’s Parshah brings a glimpse of what is lacking in our service today. (RED)

2. One of the first things the Reform Movement did was to remove the mention of sacrifices from their liturgy. They claimed that the prophets had earlier railed against sacrifices. While the prophets did raise their voices against sacrifices, that was because the Jewish people were bringing sacrifices and not doing Mitzvot. What good are animal offerings if we otherwise reject the word of Hashem. The prophet Samuel chastised Saul for bringing sacrifices and not listening to the command of Hashem in eradicating Amalek from the world. Hashem wants sacrifices if done properly and with appropriate obedience to Hashem. We must observe the Mitzvot. It is absurd to think that modern man can reject a Mitzvah of Hashem. We are unable to bring sacrifices today because Hashem denies that privilege. So we pray for the restoration of the sacrificial ritual and the rebuilding of the Holy Temple. (RED)

3. The Rambam in his Mishnah Torah has a volume devoted to the world of sacrifices. Most of the Codes of Jewish Law, like the Shulchan Aruch, do not include any discussion of the sacrifices because they were applicable to their daily lives at that time. According to the Rambam, the sole reason for the sacrifices was to keep Bnei Yisrael from idolatry. Hashem used the prevailing method of service to a deity, but formulated major changes in the system. (Archaeologists digging in the Middle East concluded that a round altar indicated that it was an idol worship. Only the Jews had a square altar.) Many of the animals brought in the Jewish ritual and were slaughtered at the altar were gods of the ancient idolaters. Sheep were worshipped in Egypt; goats in Chaldea; cattle in India. The Ramban thoroughly rejects the Rambam’s idea as “nonsense.” Cain, Abel, and Noach all brought sacrifices at a time when there were no idols. According to the Ramban, we sinned, we should die. We kill an animal as a substitute for our own lives. The Abravanel and others come to the Rambam’s defense.

4. The opening verse of the Sidrah opens with the word VAYIKRA with a small letter Aleph at the end of the word. Moshe wanted to write the word Vayikar which would mean that Hashem had a chance meeting with Moshe. Or the word Vayikar could be related to the word Keri which would mean contamination. When Hashem appeared to Bilaam, the Torah used the word Vayikar. Moshe, being excessively humble, wished to use the word Vayikar, but Hashem insisted upon using the word Vayikra. Moshe had to yield to the voice of Hashem, but humbly wrote the word with a small Aleph (Baal HaTurim). (There are nine “small” letters in the Torah, and twenty “large” letters in the Torah. There are many more small and large letters in NaCh. Each deviation from the normal script is evaluated and commented upon in the Midrash and by Biblical commentators. -RED)

5. At the end of the first verse is the word Laimor. Rashi explains the word to mean that Hashem was instructing Moshe to convey these words to Bnei Yisrael. But here these words of Rashi would not make sense because in verse two, Hashem says “speak to Bnei Yisrael...” The Ramban states that the word Laimor means: Be clear. Or that you, Moshe, can embellish on Hashem’s words. Moshe may teach them the underlying philosophy or reasons for these Mitzvot, the Oral Tradition. I favor a simpler approach, namely that the word Laimor is the verbal rendition of a quotation mark. It would be as if the opening sentences of our text would read: And the Lord called unto Moshe, and he spoke to him out of the tent of meeting “Speak unto Bnei Yisrael and say to them...”

6. The Torah Temimah wrote that there is no use of honey in the sacrificial ritual because honey is exuded by a non-kosher insect, the bee. Man can eat the honey because the bee did not really make the honey. Honey is from the fruit juices that the bee collected. There is no honey in sacrifices since its origins are repulsive to Hashem. The Torah Temimah adds that the Kohanic clothes could not contain any silk for the same reason, that it is derived from a non-kosher insect. I do not fully understand the Torah Temimah. The Torah word Dvash is not bee honey. It is honey from date syrup. The Abravanel states that the honey is too sweet, and the Kohanim might lick their fingers before the sacrifice takes place. Nevertheless, there is some merit to the idea that no sweetener is used.
7. The Minchah, meal offering, consists of nothing more than finely ground wheat flour, oil, frankincense (and water, in most cases). It is inexpensive and is most likely brought by people too poor to afford anything better. The whole lineup of sacrifices take into consideration the financial condition of the donor. If the donor can afford it, he would bring a large animal. If not, a smaller animal like a sheep. If financial difficulties exist, he would bring a bird. But a poor person is not excluded. He can bring a meal offering. I consider the same thinking in our observance of Mitzvot today. A person came to me and asked how much should he spend on Tephillin. I responded with a question: what kind of car do you drive? If you drive a Hyundai, you can go with a cheaper pair. If you drive a Ford or Chevy, maybe the next level. If you drive a Lexus or Mercedes, you need to spend more on your Tephillin. The price should match your income. If you drive a Rolls Royce, well then... (RED)

HAFTORAH
(p. 424 Hz) (p. 625 S) (p. 868 Hi) (p. 1165 AS)
ISAIAH 43:21

The Torah portion contained the characteristic acts which, if performed and understood correctly, can reinforce the Jewish people in their work of making life holy and help them bring, here on earth, the Divine Presence. Therefore, these acts are called Korban, "bringing closer." The Haftorah shows how Israel had misunderstood the Korban in the heathen sense, as an "offering" brought as a means of compromising with God. What was meant to support morality became a factor for demoralization. The verse, "I alone, am He that blots out your transgressions for My own sake" (43:25), which is included in our Yom Kippur service, reminded the Jewish people that no Korban can be used to bargain with Hashem after a deliberate transgression, only His mercy alone allows us to continue. Therefore, the Temple had to fall for a time until the Jewish people would realize the true nature of a Korban in comparison to a heathen sacrifice, which they would see in their exile. Then when the Jewish people heeded Hashem's word, "Return to Me" they saw the promise "that I may redeem you" (Isaiah 44:22).

QUESTIONS FOR PARSHAT VAYIKRA 5780
by Rabbi Edward Davis

I. From the Text
1. Must an Olah (whole burnt offering) be a male or female? (1:3) Must a Shelamim (thanksgiving offering) be a male or female? (3:1)
2. How is a bird sacrifice slaughtered? (1:15)
3. Who received the leftovers from a meal offering? (2:3)
4. What is added to every sacrifice? (2:3)
5. A person saw another person sin and refuses to come and be a witness. Is this considered a sin? (5:1)

II. From Rashi
6. What is learned from the Torah using the expression Adam for a man in the verse "when a man brings a sacrifice "? (1:2)

7. What gives Hashem the sweet favorable smell of the sacrifice? (1:9)
8. Why does the Torah use the word "Nefesh" (a soul) in describing a person who brings a meal offering? (2:1)
9. What is the only sacrifice whose blood is sprinkled with the Kohan’s fingers and not a vessel? (3:8)
10. What is the punishment for someone who entered the Sanctuary while in a state of defilement? (5:2)

III. From the Rabbis
11. “And he shall lay his hand upon the head of the Olah...” (1:4). How many hands does he use, one or two? (Ramban)
12. Why is the Peace (Thanksgiving) offering called a Shelamim, indicating peace? (Rashbam)
13. Who is more prone to sin because of his wealth and power? (Seferno)

IV. Haftorah. Isaiah
14. A man cuts down a tree and uses some of the wood to make an idol. What does he do with the rest of the wood?

V. Relationships
a) Yehudah - Chetzron
b) Kehat - Amram
c) Amram - Gershom
d) Aharon - Nachshon
e) Itamar – Pinchas

ANSWERS FOR PARSHAT VAYIKRA
1. An Olah must be male. A Shelamim may be male or female.
2. The Kohan pinches off its head.
3. Aharon and his sons.
4. Salt
5. Yes
6. The first man Adam could bring from what he had and did not steal from anyone; so too, we may not use a stolen animal.
7. Hashem is pleased when He sees His commandments being performed.
8. A poor man brings a meal offering. His offering is accepted as if he offered himself as a sacrifice.
9. The sin offering
10. Kareit
11. Both hands. The Torah uses the singular to teach us that it may not be done by proxy.
12. Since it is eaten by both the donor(s) and the Kohanim.
13. The ruler (prince or king)
14. He makes a fire and cooks his meal.

Relationships
a) Grandfather Yehudah
b) Father Kehat
c) Grandfather Amram
d) Brothers-in-Law
e) Uncle Itamar