

*SHABBAT SHALOM. Today is 13 Adar II, 5784, corresponding to March 23, 2024, Parshat Zachor. We read from two Sifrei Torah, the second one is for Zachor. It is a Torah Mitzvah to hear Zachor. We omit Av HaRachamim. Tonight and tomorrow is Purim.*

TORAH DIALOGUE  
(p. 410 Hz) (p. 605 S) (p. 371 Hi) (p. 544 AS)

VAYIKRA ויקרא  
Leviticus 1:1  
[Compiled by Rabbi Edward Davis]

1. In Rabbinic literature, the Chumash of Vayikra is known as Torat Kohanim, the Book of the Priests, because so much of the Chumash deals with the laws of the Kohanim. There is very little narrative in this Chumash. I prefer referring to this Chumash as the Book of Holiness because much of it is a compilation of Halachot dealing with creating a World of Holiness for the nation. When the Torah states right before the Ten Commandments “you shall be for Me a kingdom of priests and a holy nation,” here the Torah expands on that theme. The directive to be holy goes far beyond the sacrifices, and thus the directive is mentioned four times in this Chumash, 11:44-45, 19:2, 20:26, and 22:32. There are many laws dealing with the relationship between man and man, under the clause Love your Neighbor as Yourself (19:18). All and all we see a list of guidelines to create a holy life in and out of the house, Temple, and workplace. (RED)

2. Offering a sacrifice is truly a foreign idea to us in the modern world, but back then it was a meaningful expression of relating to Hashem. The donor of a sacrifice recognized that Hashem did not need the offering. Rather it was a gift to Hashem. The donor gave something to Hashem that he possessed, and he gave it with a whole heart. He feared Hashem and he loved Hashem. He leaned on the animal, literally projecting himself into the animal. He realized that maybe he deserved to die on the Altar for his misdeed. Hashem allowed him to offer an animal in his stead. Bringing this sacrifice was an emotional expression of relating to Hashem in a physical fashion, truly binding with Hashem. Both Parshah Vayikra and Tzav deal with the same sacrifices, first from the perspective of the donor and from the perspective of the Kohen. The rituals are detailed and remain completely beyond our ability to understand them fully. (RED)

3. The small letter Aleph at the end of VAYIKRa indicates the humility that Moshe possessed. It must have required a terrific effort for Moshe to remain humble, considering the fact that Moshe was Hashem’s favorite human being in the entire world, ever. Rabbi Bunin of Peshiska wrote a good story to demonstrate this point. There was a man who stood on the top of a great mountain, and from there he could see far and wide. This man should never think of himself as being great. It’s the mountain that gave him the

perspective of greatness. He possessed no greatness at all. So too did Moshe realize that his greatness emanated from Hashem and not from him. Therefore he remained humble.

4. The text states that when a man brings an offering, he must bring it voluntarily, by his own will. Rashi (on 1:3) states that if someone is required to bring a sacrifice and doesn’t want to, the rabbinic court can coerce him. The question here is how can we coerce him to bring it voluntarily. The Rambam refers to the similar law to force a husband to give his wife a Get. In truth, said the Rambam, every man really wants to do the right thing, but external forces have influenced him to do otherwise. By using force, we remove these external forces until he says “I want to do the right thing.” And this same principle is used here.

We force him to enter the Tent of Meeting, and once inside, he is influenced by the holiness of the place to want to do the right thing. [RED’s note: In the late 19th century some scholarly rabbis in Europe really thought that when irreligious Jews would come to Eretz Yisrael, the holy atmosphere of the Holy Land would transform these Jews to keep the Torah. Sadly it didn’t happen.]

5. No honey is permitted on the Altar (2:11). Rashi comments that the Torah identification of Dvash (honey) is a product of fruit which can produce a sweet nectar, just like bee honey, namely date honey. The Talmud does discuss bee honey, describing the bee collecting the nectar from the plant and bringing it to the hive. Storing it in its body turns it into honey. Modern science states that the bee secretes an enzyme quickening the honey making process. This should raise an Halachic question. One opinion in the Talmud is that it is a Gezairat HaKatuv, a decree from the Torah text, just like allowing the meat cow to produce a dairy milk. The Kli Yakar wrote that honey represents haughtiness and the pursuit of honor, elements that are contrary to the spirit of a sacrifice.

6. Rai’ach Nicho’ach: a pleasant aroma to Hashem is an expression that appears six times in this Parshah. Targum Onkelos interprets this as a sacrifice that is willingly accepted by Hashem. Rashi interprets this as an expression of Hashem’s satisfaction in seeing His words being fulfilled. In his Sefer HaKtav V’Hakabbalah, Rabbi Yaakov Tzvi Meklenburg (1785-1865, Europe) wrote that the sacrifice by itself will not bring atonement. The aroma must last for a while, indicating that atonement will come depending what the donor will do in the future. If he doesn’t correct his actions, then the sacrifice is useless. If the aroma persists and he corrects his actions, then Hashem is more than agreeable to forgive him. I see the idea that the sacrifice is a means to an end and not an end in itself.

7. The Shelamim (Thanksgiving) offering is unique in that all are at peace (Shalom) with it. Part of the sacrifice is

burnt on the Altar; part of the animal is given to the Kohanim; and the larger portion is given to the donor (who will need to share the meat with his friends and family). This is unlike the Olah, sin and guilt offerings where the donor receives nothing from the sacrifice. Every morning the section of prayers of sacrifices ends with a large Mishnah from Zevachim, Aizehu Mekoman shel Zevachim. Rabbi Yosef Karo (1488-1575, author of the Shulchan Aruch): At the age of 4, he and his family experienced the expulsion from Spain in 1492. They settled in Turkey. As an adult, he moved to Tzefat, Israel, where he died. He wrote that the reason we end that section of prayers with that Mishnah is because it is the only chapter in Mishnah that has no disagreement among the rabbis. It is our wish that there should not be arguments. Peace should exist among all the people.

8. MIDRASH. Vayikra Rabbah 7:3. Rabbi Assi said: Why do young children commence (their learning in school) with the Book of the Law of the Kohanim and not with the Book of Bereishit? Surely it is because young children are pure, and the sacrifices are pure. So let the pure come and engage in the study of the pure.

#### QUESTIONS FOR PARSHAT VAYIKRA 5784

##### I. From the Text

1. Where did Hashem communicate with Moshe? (1:1)
2. What is done with the innards and feet of an Olah (whole-burnt) offering? (1:13)
3. What is the recipe for a Meal (Minchah) offering? (2:1)
4. How did the king's sin offering differ from a plain person's sin offering? (4:23)
5. If a person is too poor to bring doves for his guilt offering, what can he bring instead? (5:11)

##### II. From Rashi

6. Why did Hashem use the word Adam for a man instead of Ish? (1:2)
7. Who is permitted to slaughter the animal offered as a sacrifice? (1:5)
8. What does it mean when Hashem says that the sacrifice offers "a satisfying aroma"? (1:9)
9. What is the origin of the honey (that is not allowed)? (2:11)
10. In the sin offering ritual, the Kohen sprinkles the blood toward the Parochet. Does it hit the Parochet (Curtain)? (4:6)

##### III. From the Rabbis

11. Why is there a small "Aleph" in the first word VAYIKRa? (Baal HaTurim)
12. Who gets to keep the skins of animals offered as a whole-burnt sacrifice?
13. How much flour and oil is used in a Meal (Minchah) offering? (Talmud)

##### IV. Midrash

14. What are the ten names for Moshe?

V. Haftorah. Parshat Zachor

15. What is the name for the king of Amalek?

##### VI. Relationships

16.

- a) Moshe - Nadav
- b) Tzipporah - Pinchas
- c) Miriam - Korach
- d) Serach - Yocheved
- e) Mordechai - Esther (from the text)

#### ANSWERS FOR PARSHAT VAYIKRA 5784

1. At the Tent of Meeting.
2. They are washed in water and then burnt on the Alter.
3. Finely ground wheat flour, oil, and frankincense.
4. The king's sin offering is a male goat. The commoner's sin offering is a female goat.
5. A flour offering.
6. Just as Adam, the first man, did not offer a stolen animal as a sacrifice, you will not offer a stolen animal as a sacrifice.
7. Any man, even a non-Kohen.
8. Hashem says "I have spoken and My will has been done," and that pleases Hashem.
9. Fruit.
10. No, it does not hit the Parochet, but if it does, so be it.
11. In Moshe's humility, Moshe wanted to write the word Vayikar without the final letter Aleph to indicate that Hashem didn't really want to speak to him.
12. The skins are divided among all the Kohanim who served that day at the Mishkan/Temple.
13. Flour, an issaron, which was the equivalent of 43.2 eggs, which today is about 86-172 fluid ounces. Oil, a log, about 6 eggs, which is about 12-24 fluid ounces.
14. Moshe, Yered, Chever, Yekutiel, Avigdor, Avi Soco, Avi Zanoach, Tuvia, Shemayah, Levi.
15. Agag
- 16.
- a) Uncle Moshe
- b) Great Aunt Tzipporah
- c) First Cousins
- d) First Cousins
- e) First Cousins

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