

Vayikra

The WHOLE book of Vayikra is the instruction manual for the newly blessed Jewish nation. They are to be the light among the nations. Light among the nations does not mean better, faster, stronger, it means “I am going to give you the instructions how to lead, build and commune in a just way. But firstly, the leaders had to be taught what was instructed to Moshe on Mount Sinai. The Book of Vayikra is also referred to as the Book of the Kohanim, or the Book of Holiness. Firstly, the leaders were to be educated and then the people. The goal was “I am Holy therefore You are Holy”. The Architect of the World wanted at least these two important elements to be the concept of humanity: Free will and understanding of the sensations: love, integrity, just, fairness, education and recognition. Man was the vessel for these and many other emotions, given in one location: the soul. How to simply recognize and perform holiness is the purpose of the Book of Vayikra.

It is stressed in the Book of Vayikra and in this Parsha in particular, that certain rituals such as the sacrificial ritual should be performed according to the laws of Gd. This Parsha might read as outdated and outrageous, as to slaughter an innocent animal would atone or glorify an act of a human being. This topic is one that truly cannot be understood or discussed in this brief outline, so I will do my best to touch upon the concept in which the Parsha is trying to focus on.

Holiness, what does that mean in relation to Gd and animal sacrifices? First we have to again refer to the Mishkan and the exact details of building and consecration of this structure, which brings Gd in the center of the people. Each detail in the building of the Mishkan was exact, but each exactness had symbolism that connects us with Gd and his heavenly court. The Mishkan was the location of the sacrifices. The Pagan cultures all around the Israelites had these practices so animal sacrifices were familiar to the people. Vayikra is the “path” on which the Jewish population were to use as a guide in order to make their lives and their worship to Gd holy. The other cultures offered up sacrifices to many deities and used many accoutrements for their sacrifices including children. Since it was so common in the culture of ancient Israel and surrounding nations, it is said by the Sages that Gd wanted to “redirect” the Israelite Nation in the Book of Vayikra, the Book of Kohanim, the Book of Holiness, to offer their sacrifices in a meaningful, holy way. Many times, it is said, “Gd does not need our sacrifices, nor does he

want them. Thus, the goal is to maintain and understand “I am Holy therefore you are Holy.”

Again, this topic is so personal and so beyond the scope of this introduction. Studying the sacrifices is a lifetime of work. Please when you read the Parsha, try to understand that the ritual is the ritual of ancient history. By having the physical Mishkan, the place of Gd to perform these rituals, the focus would be on a loving, caring, understanding Gd, who values humility and obedience to holiness. This location is the place where the people were able to come closer to Gd, in his presence on earth, with all the symbolism in that structure, offering up the sacrifice in the Jewish, Monotheistic way.