

1. SEFER VAYIKRA – INTRODUCTION – Rabbi Menachem Leibtag

Up until Sefer Vayikra, Chumash has essentially been narrative...Sefer Vayikra is radically different, as it not only begins with a set of commandments [mitzvot], the entire book (with the exception of two short narratives) is a collection of various mitzvot! In other words, the ongoing narrative of Chumash that began in Sefer Breishit and continued with Sefer Shmot does not continue in Sefer Vayikra. Instead, that narrative resumes in Sefer Bamidbar - with the story of how Bnei Yisrael prepare to leave Har Sinai (after the Mishkan has been built). Sefer Vayikra appears to stand alone, as it constitutes a book of laws, spanning a wide range of laws (mostly relating to the Mishkan and "kedusha" [holiness])...

Sefer Breishit we saw how God entered into a covenant with Avraham Avinu in order that his offspring ['zera'] would become a nation dedicated to the representation of His Name. To facilitate that goal, God entered into a covenant with the Avot, promising both a special Land ['aretz'], and a long historical process to become that nation (i.e. 'brit bein ha-btarim' / see Br. 15:6-18).

Sefer Shmot began as God began His fulfillment of that covenant by redeeming Bnei Yisrael from Egypt, and giving them the Torah at Sinai - i.e. the laws that would help establish this special nation. The unfortunate events at chet ha-egel constituted a 'breach', raising the question if this special relationship could continue.

Fortunately, God declared His attributes of mercy, thus enabling Bnei Yisrael an avenue for repentance, as reflected in their collective effort to construct of the mishkan. The return of God's Shechina to the mishkan at the conclusion of Sefer Shmot served as a climax, for it showed that this covenantal relationship had returned to its original level.

It is precisely at this point - when God's Shechina returns - where Sefer Vayikra begins. Before Bnei Yisrael continue their journey towards Eretz Canaan (as will be discussed in Sefer Bamidbar), God commands them with an additional set of mitzvot that will not only provide a guide for how they can use the mishkan, but will also facilitate their becoming God's special nation - a "mamlechet kohanim ve-goy kadosh" (see Shmot 19:5-6). In this sense, Sefer Vayikra constitutes more than simply a technical list of the various rituals performed in the mishkan. As we will show, the laws of Sefer Vayikra will focus on the very nature of Am Yisrael's relationship with God, at both the individual and national level.

Parshat Vayikra – The Korban Yachid	
I. Korban N'dava	<p>I. Korban N'dava – Voluntary Offerings (Chapters 1-3)</p> <p>A. Olah – the entire korban is burnt on the mizbayach</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Bakar – from cattle (1:1-9) 2. Tzon – from sheep (1:10-13) 3. Of – from fowl (1:14-17) <p>B. Mincha – a flour offering</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Solet – plain flour mixed with oil and l'vonah (2:1-3) 2. Ma'afeh Tanur – baked in the oven (2:4) 3. Al Machavat – on a griddle (2:5-6) 4. Marcheshet – on a pan (plus miscellaneous general laws) (2:7-13) 5. Bikurim – from the first harvest (2:14-16) <p>C. Shlamim – a peace offering, of which part is eaten by the owner</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Bakar – from cattle (3:1-5) 2. Tzon – from sheep (3:6-11) 3. Ayz – from goats (3:12-17)
II. Korban Chovah	<p>II. Korban Chovah – Mandatory Offerings (Chapters 4-5)</p> <p>A. Chatat</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. For a General Transgression – laws organized according to violator <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a. Par Kohen Mashiach (High Priest) – a bull (4:1-12) b. Par He'elem Davar (Bet Din) – a bull (4:13-21) c. Se'ir Nasi (Prince) – a male goat (4:22-26) d. Nefesh (Layman) – a female goat or female lamb (4:27-35) 2. For Specific Transgressions – "Oleh V'yored" <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a. A Rich Person – a female goat or lamb (5:1-6) b. A Poor Person – two birds (5:7-10) c. A Very Poor Person – a plain flour offering (5:11-13) <p>B. Asham – always an ayil (ram)</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Asham Me'ilot – taking from Temple property (5:14-16) 2. Asham Talui – unsure if one sinned (5:17-19) 3. Asham G'zeilot – stealing from another (5:20-26)
1) Kodshei Kodshim	<p>1) Kodshei Kodshim - the highest level of kedusha</p> <p>Olah: cattle, sheep and fowl The entire korban olah is burnt on the mizbayach</p> <p>Mincha: the five ways to present the fine flour The "kmitzah" (a handful) is burnt on the mizbayach The "noteret" (what is left over) is eaten by the Kohen</p>
2) Kodshim Kalim	<p>2) Kodshim Kalim - a lower level kedusha</p> <p>Shlamim: cattle, sheep, and goats The fat surrounding the inner organs go on the mizbayach The "chazeh v'shok" (breast and thigh) go to the Kohen The remainder of the meat can be eaten by the owner</p>

2. Kohanim and Israel by Rav Yonatan Grossman

It would appear that the reason is connected with the purpose of each of the two listings or, to be more precise, to the different people to whom they are addressed. The listing in parashat Vayikra opens as follows: "Speak to the children of Israel and say to them, if any man among you bring an offering to God" This list is addressed to Benei Yisrael, and is presented with their perspective in mind. In contrast, the listing in parashat Tzav begins, "Command Aharon and his sons" This latter list is meant for the kohanim, and is presented in accordance with their perspective. Throughout the laws of the sacrifices, the Torah clearly indicates to whom Moshe is speaking: In Vayikra, the command is formulated in a general way, without any special identification; it is the "man among you" - anyone - who brings the sacrifice. In contrast, in parashat Tzav it is the kohanim who hear the command, and when the Torah turns its attention to what should be done by the person (Israelite, not kohen) who brings the sacrifice, it indicates this explicitly, since the subject of the sentence has changed.

In this light the reason for the differing structure of the two parshiot is clear. In our parasha, where the Israelite is the focus, the categories are clearly voluntary and obligatory sacrifices. From the point of view of the person bringing the sacrifice, these are two completely different experiences, and his whole visit to God's house changes in light of the reason for his bringing the sacrifice. This difference, though, is almost completely irrelevant to the kohen who serves in the Beit HaMikdash. The sacrificial ritual is not directly influenced by the reason for the sacrifice being brought. Whether the sacrifice is a voluntary *ola* or an obligatory one, the kohen's work still involves stripping the animal's skin, cutting it into parts, burning parts of it, etc. From the point of view of the kohen on duty a more important question is who eats the sacrifice. In other words, it is important to him (both practically and experientially) whether the sacrifice in question is an *ola*, of which he cannot partake at all, or one in which he has a portion, or a peace offering which - as its name indicates - brings and symbolizes peace, and all those involved eat of its meat.

Since the listing in parashat Tzav focuses on the kohanim, we can also understand why the Torah suddenly "remembers" and adds to the list of *mincha* offerings that special *mincha* offered by the newly sanctified kohen. It is logical that this sacrifice not appear at the beginning of the Sefer, in parashat Vayikra, where the focus is the Israelite, but rather in the listing in parashat Tzav which is addressed to the kohanim and focuses on them.

Let us now return to our opening observations. Sefer Vayikra is indeed the "torat kohanim." It deals with the laws pertaining to the sacrifices and to the Beit HaMikdash, and this subject is connected both practically and in its very essence specifically with the kohanim.

And yet, it is for this very reason that the Sefer opens with a focus on the Israelite who comes to the Beit HaMikdash! In many cultures of the ancient world the priests were an elite amongst the nation, and their actions in the temples were hidden from the masses, such that their service of the gods became quite esoteric in the minds of the people. The philosophy underlying this was that not every mortal is capable of serving God. The servants of God were the special class of priests, and the simple individual from amongst the nation could only regard their spiritual world with admiration.

Sefer Vayikra deals with issues pertaining to the kohanim, and the danger exists that in the minds of both the Israelite masses and the kohanim performing the Divine service the institution of the *kehuna* will become esoteric, removed from the masses seeking communication with God and a spiritual experience which will bring them closer to Him....

The Sefer concludes in the same vein. The second half of Sefer Vayikra emphasizes the fact that holiness resides in Israel beyond the confines of the Mikdash. Holiness of time (the festivals) and holiness of place (especially Behar-Bechukotai, dealing with the laws of Shemitta and Yovel) go beyond the confines of the Mikdash and address each and every Jew.

3. Rabbi Leibtag

One could suggest that Parshat Vayikra begins specifically with the "korban n'dava" since these *korbanot* in particular reflect the individual's aspiration to improve his relationship with God. Only afterward does the Torah detail the "korban chova," which amends that relationship should it be tainted by sin. Additionally, perhaps, the *korban n'dava* reflects a more ideal situation, while the obligatory sin-offering seeks to rectify a problematic situation.

We may, however, suggest an even more fundamental reason based on the "double theme" that we discussed in our study of the second half of Sefer Shmot. Recall from our previous shiurim that the Mishkan served a dual purpose:

- A) To perpetuate the experience of Har Sinai (emphasized by [Ramban](#)); and
- B) To atone for Chet Ha'Egel (emphasized by [Rashi](#))....