

Vayikra – *And He Called* Leviticus 1:1 – 5:26

The book of Leviticus, as the 3rd book of Moses, is the **heart** of the Torah. It is an ancient tradition that little boys who are beginning to read will begin their study of the Torah with the book of Leviticus. Jewish teacher Avraham Yehoshua Greenbaum writes, "...the Torah code of sacrifices and purification may appear ancient, primitive, complicated and irrelevant. But if we are willing to explore the Torah with the fresh eyes of **children**, ready to take the word of G-d on trust, with faith and belief, we can discover that the sacrificial system contains the keys to repentance and the healing of the soul and the entire world."

Mark 10:15 "Assuredly, I say to you, whoever does not receive the kingdom of Elohim as a little **child** will by no means enter it."

Leviticus contains **247** of the **613** instructions in the Torah. Known as the book of the Levitical Law, it is considered to be the most "**Jewish**" of the Bible, and the **least understood** and studied by the **Christian** community.

Let's make a **commitment** over these next several weeks to **fall in love** with the book of **Leviticus**. In fact, let's refer to it as the book of "**Vayikra**" which means "**and He called**". For **believers in Yeshua** are indeed those whom "**He has called**" and we will find that the book of Vayikra is an **invitation** to a **relationship** with the **King of all Creation**. This thought is embodied in the very letters of the Hebrew word **Vayikra**, for this is how it appears in the Hebrew Scriptures:

וַיִּקְרָא

You don't have to know Hebrew to notice something **unusual** about this word. The letter **aleph** (א) is **smaller** than the other letters. The **pictograph** for this letter is an **ox head**, representing **strength** and **power**. The golden **calf** that the Israelites worshipped showed their association between **Elohim** and the **ox**. Many titles for יהוה (Yahweh) begin (Hebrew reads right to left) with aleph...El (אל), Elohim (אלהים), El Shaddai (אל שדי), Elohay Tzvaot (צבאות), etc. This small letter could be a picture of what our **strong** and **powerful Messiah** did for us in order that we are now even able to **RESPOND** to His **call**:

Philippians 2:5 Let this mind be in you which was also in Messiah Yeshua,⁶ who, being in the form of Elohim, did not consider it robbery to be equal with Elohim,⁷ but **made Himself of no reputation**, taking the form of a **bondservant**, *and coming in the likeness of men*.

For several weeks now, we have been studying the tabernacle, and have made a special note of "**why**" the Almighty desired for the tabernacle to be built:

Exodus 25:8 "And let them make Me a sanctuary, **that I may dwell among them**."

Last week, in an extraordinary climax to the building of the tabernacle, we saw the **Glory of יהוה** come down to **fill** the **tabernacle**:

Exodus 40:34 Then the cloud covered the tabernacle of meeting, and the glory of יהוה filled the tabernacle.

Baruch HaShem! So we've **accomplished** the **goal**, right? Hmm...something is still **amiss**:

Exodus 40:35 And **Moses was not able to enter the tabernacle** of meeting, because the cloud rested above it, and the glory of יהוה filled the tabernacle.

The glory of יהוה has come down to fill the tabernacle, but even the faithful Moses is **not able to enter** the place where He is **dwelling**. Now let's continue on into the book of Vayikra....

Leviticus 1:1 Now יהוה called to Moses, and spoke to him from the tabernacle of meeting, saying,² "Speak to the children of Israel, and say to them: 'When any one of you brings an offering to יהוה, you shall bring your offering of the livestock -- of the herd and of the flock.

Thus begins the instructions of יהוה on **how to approach** a holy Elohim that we may indeed **dwell** with Him. In fact, you may remember that the whole rest of the Scriptures will focus on this until we get to the last chapters of Revelation where this process is completed and we will **dwell** with Him.

Sadly, many who have become believers in the Messiah have labeled this book as “**obsolete**” or “**done away with**”. In doing so, they have lost the **instructions** on how to “**draw near**” to יהוה that we may **dwell** with Him.

2 Corinthians 6:15 Or what part has a believer with an unbeliever?¹⁶ And what agreement has the temple of Elohim with idols? For you are the temple of the living Elohim. As Elohim has said: "**I will dwell in them and walk among them. I will be their Elohim, and they shall be My people.**"¹⁷ Therefore "**Come out from among them and be separate, says Adonai. Do not touch what is unclean, and I will receive you.**"

They also miss the **understanding of what Yeshua's sacrifice did for us**....or better yet **what His sacrifice continues to do for us**. “**Offering**” is the translation of the Hebrew word **korban** (קָרְבָן). This word is found **25 times** in this week's Torah reading. The root of the word is **karov** (קָרַב) and means “**to come near**” or “**approach**”. So we see that the ultimate purpose of the **offering** is **to bring the individual “closer” to יהוה**. It is an expression of **worship** by the one bringing the offering of his **commitment** and his **loyalty** to his **Creator**.

This week we are introduced to **five** major types of **offerings** or **korbanote** (plural of korban):

- **Olah** (Elevation offering)
- **Minchah** (Grain offering)
- **Shelamim** (Peace offering)
- **Chatat** (Sin offering)
- **Asham** (Guilt offering)

All of these different types of offerings are **for drawing near** to יהוה. However, only the **last two** are offered for **sins**. The first three are also **voluntary offerings**, and the last two are **commanded**. JPS Torah Commentary notes that the Chatat and the Asham were “offered for the **purpose of securing God’s forgiveness**, their presentation was obligatory, pursuant to **transgressions of religious law, committed either by omission or through inadvertent violations**. In most cases, the sacrifice served to remove the charge against the offenders and **to restore them to a proper relationship with Elohim** and to fit membership in the religious community.”

To understand more fully the sacrifices and some very important and **misunderstood concepts of the New Covenant Scriptures**, we must also understand that there are **two basic types of sins**:

- **Intentional**
- **Unintentional**

The **definitions** of these words can **vary** slightly from our **Western mindset**. It appears that only those **sins committed in out-right rebellion are termed as “intentional”**. Sins committed because of **carelessness**, or **omission**, or because of perhaps **fear** are usually defined as **unintentional**. However, the important point to remember is that under the Levitical system, **there is NO sacrifice for intentional sin**. Oh dear! If I do just a short review of my recent past, I find that I am indeed **guilty under the Law!** And there is **no sacrifice for my sin under the Levitical system!** I could be put out of the camp!

Numbers 15:30 ' But the person who does *anything* **defiantly.... he shall be cut off from among his people.** ³¹ Because he has despised the word of יהוה, and has broken His commandment, that person shall be completely cut off; **his guilt shall be upon him.**'

Of everything I read this week, two commentaries stood out for explaining the concepts of **intentional/unintentional sin**. They come from **opposite directions** as Thomas Bradford (www.torahclass.com) is a believer and Baruch Levine is a Jewish commentator (non-believer in Yeshua).

The sacrificial system atoned for unintentional sins. If you committed a sin of **rebellion (intentional)** you would be turned over to **“The Law”**. In these cases **the Law** would deal **directly** with the offender, **imposing real punishments**. This is the same way our **justice system** works today. The **punishment for intentional sin** was either **death** or **being put out of the camp**. To an Israelite, this was as good as **death** because now you are **separated** from יהוה.

Obviously, many Israelites probably lived in fear of being brought to trial for **“intentional sins”**. Romans 3:23 speaks to where we all stand:

Romans 3:23 for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of Elohim,

But look at what **Yeshua has accomplished** for us:

Romans 3:24 being justified freely by His grace through the redemption that is in Messiah Yeshua,²⁵ whom Elohim set forth *as* a propitiation by His blood, **through faith**, to demonstrate His righteousness, because in His forbearance **Elohim had passed over the sins that were previously committed**,

John 3:16 "For יהוה" so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that **whoever believes in Him** should not **perish** but have everlasting life.

Romans 5:11 And not only *that*, but we also rejoice in Elohim through our Adonai Messiah Yeshua through whom **we have now received the reconciliation**.

Don't miss the point here! **Under the Levitical system (The Law)**, there was **NO reconciliation** for those who sinned **intentionally**. But through the **order of Melchizedek**, of which **Yeshua is priest and king**, we can now obtain **forgiveness for intentional sins!** Before Yeshua, **sin** could be handled in **one of two ways**:

- By the **Sacrificial system** (upon committing an **unintentional sin**)
- By the **Law** (**intentional sin**)

The **sacrificial system was a system of grace** because you escaped **death** by the **innocent animal** paying for your sin. We are **still** under this **system of grace** because **now through faith in Yeshua, He is our payment for sin!** And He is a **better way** because His **blood is good for both intentional and unintentional sin!** This is **the Gospel of Messiah! Baruch HaShem!** Now we can understand verses like these:

Galatians 1:6 I marvel that you are turning away so soon from Him who called you in the **grace of Messiah, to a different gospel,**⁷ which is not another; but there are some who trouble you and want to pervert the gospel of Messiah.

Galatians 3:10 For as many as are of **the works of the law are under the curse**; for it is written, "Cursed *is* everyone who does not continue in all things which are written in the book of the law, to do them."

Galatians 3:13 **Messiah** has redeemed us **from the curse of the law**, having become a curse for us

- The **curse** of the **law** was **death for intentional sin**.

Isn't it awesome what a bit of **perspective** will accomplish for us in understanding the Scriptures? Now read these verses in **Romans**:

Romans 6:15 What then? **Shall we sin because we are not under law but under grace? Certainly not!**¹⁶ Do you not know that to whom you present yourselves slaves to obey, you are that one's slaves whom you obey, whether of sin *leading* to death, or of obedience *leading* to righteousness?¹⁷ But Adonai be thanked that *though* you were slaves of sin, yet you obeyed from the heart that form of doctrine to which you were delivered.¹⁸ And having been set free from sin, you became slaves of righteousness.

Do you see now how **the law has not been abolished**?! We still must try to keep His **commandments**. **Obedience still leads to righteousness**. And we have "been set free from sin" because **now there is forgiveness for "intentional sin" through the sacrifice of Yeshua**. But **without Yeshua**, an offender is **still under the curse of the Law**.

The **earthly Levitical system** was only meant to be a **picture** of the **heavenly**. All **earthly** systems are **inferior** to what they shadow. Yeshua is a High Priest of the **heavenly** order of **Melchizedek**:

Psalms 110:4 ... "You *are* a **priest forever** according to the order of **Melchizedek**."

The **Law never failed** because it was **never designed** to **forgive intentional sin**. The **requirements** of the **Torah** are still in force. It's just that today we have the **Spiritual** option:

Romans 8:2 **For the law of the Spirit of life in Messiah Yeshua has made me free from the law of sin and death.**³ For what the law could not do in that it was weak through the **flesh** (*it was an earthly system*), Adonai *did* by sending His own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, on account of sin: He condemned sin in the flesh,⁴ that the righteous requirement of the law might be fulfilled in us who do not walk according to the **flesh** but according to the **Spirit** (*this is the heavenly system*).

This **addition** to the **system of Law** was **prophesied in Jeremiah 31:33-34** and is repeated in Hebrews:

Hebrews 10:16 "This *is* the covenant that I will make with them after those days, says יהוה: I will put My laws into their hearts, and in their minds I will write them,"¹⁷ *then He adds*, "Their **sins** and their lawless deeds **I will remember no more.**"¹⁸ Now where there is remission of these, **there is no longer an offering for sin**.

Now you can understand one of the reasons that the **Pharisees** were so **angry** with **Yeshua**. It must have been very **confusing** when Yeshua began **forgiving intentional sins**:

Matthew 9:1 So He got into a boat, crossed over, and came to His own city. ² Then behold, they brought to Him a paralytic lying on a bed. When Yeshua saw their faith, He said to the paralytic, "Son, be of good cheer; **your sins are forgiven you.**" ³ And at once some of the scribes said within themselves, "**This Man blasphemes!**"

Luke 7:37 And behold, **a woman** in the city **who was a sinner**, when she knew that *Yeshua* sat at the table in the Pharisee's house, brought an alabaster flask of fragrant oil, ³⁸ and stood at His feet behind *Him* weeping; and she began to wash His feet with her tears, and wiped *them* with the hair of her head; and she kissed His feet and anointed *them* with the fragrant oil....Then He turned to the woman and said to Simon, "Do you see this woman? I entered your house; you gave Me no water for My feet, but she has washed My feet with her tears and wiped *them* with the hair of her head. ⁴⁵ "You gave Me no kiss, but this woman has not ceased to kiss My feet since the time I came in. ⁴⁶ "You did not anoint My head with oil, but this woman has anointed My feet with fragrant oil. ⁴⁷ "Therefore I say to you, **her sins, which are many, are forgiven, for she loved much.** But to whom little is forgiven, *the same* loves little." ⁴⁸ Then He said to her, "**Your sins are forgiven.**" ⁴⁹ And those who sat at the table with Him began to say to themselves, "**Who is this who even forgives sins?**" ⁵⁰ Then He said to the woman, "**Your faith has saved you.** Go in peace."

The Levitical Law did not allow for forgiveness for intentional sins. Truly it must have seemed like **blasphemy** to those who were **zealous for the Law**.

Okay, let's go in another direction now. As we look at the **first three offerings**, there is a **phrase repeated ten times...**

a burnt offering, an offering made by fire עלה אשה

Now interestingly enough, when you **take away the Hebrew vowels** (these were added much later to the text), you come up with the phrase:

an ascending woman or an ascending wife

Here is the first verse where you find this phrase:

Leviticus 1:9 'but he shall wash its **inner parts** and its **legs** with **water**. And the priest shall burn all on the altar as **a burnt offering, an offering made by fire**, a sweet aroma to יהוה.

In this verse “**inner parts**” translates from (קִרְבָּי) which is from the same root as “**drawing near**”. **Legs** comes from (פְּרָעֵי) and is the same word (minus the vowels) as to “**bend or to kneel**”. Wow! Do you see the picture of the **bride** in this verse? How about a little help from Romans?

Romans 12:1 I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of Adonai, that you **present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to Adonai**, which is your reasonable service.² And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, that you may prove what *is* that good and acceptable and perfect will of Adonai.

We are the **bride**, and we are to **offer ourselves** as this **Olah offering**. Our “**inner parts**” are to be washed with the “**water**” of the **Word**. Our “**legs**” also as we “**bow down**” in worship. As a result, we are that “**ascending woman**”...**a sweet aroma to יהוה**.....

2 Corinthians 2:14 Now thanks *be* to Elohim who always leads us in triumph in Messiah, and **through us diffuses the fragrance of His knowledge** in every place.¹⁵ For we are to Elohim **the fragrance of Messiah** among those who are being saved and among those who are perishing.

Ephesians 5:2 And walk in love, as **Messiah** also has loved us and given Himself for us, **an offering and a sacrifice to Elohim for a sweet-smelling aroma**.

We have much to learn of those first three sacrifices to be found in Vayikra 1-3. For now, let’s remember them as **a way of enhancing their relationship with יהוה**, by demonstrating **obedience** and **loyalty**.

Okay, the **last two offerings** in our Torah reading are offered because of **sin**. Again we find a phrase **repeated 7 times**:

“the priest shall make an atonement for him”

Let’s pull out just one particular verse where this phrase is found:

Leviticus 4:35 He shall remove all its fat, as the fat of the lamb is removed from the sacrifice of the peace offering. Then the priest shall burn it on the altar, according to the offerings made by fire to יהוה. So **the priest shall make atonement for his sin** that he has committed, and it shall be forgiven him.

Atonement can be looked at as a **covering**. There are **two types of atonement** referred to in the first five chapters of Leviticus. The first is related to the **voluntary offerings** and is **atonement for the person**. The **offering** is given for the **purpose of drawing near** to יהוה, but he is **in need of some sort of covering** in order to **approach** a **Holy Elohim**. This is **provided** as a

result of the Olah offering. Yeshua is our Olah offering. He is our covering that allows us to boldly approach the throne of יהוה.

The **second** type of atonement, given as a result of the sin and the guilt offerings, was **an atonement for his sin**. Note in Vayikra 4:35 that the sin was **forgiven** him. However we know from **Hebrews 10** that though the sin was **forgiven**, it was **not taken away** by the animal sacrifice. These sacrifices had to be offered **again and again** for the same sin. Still, the offering of the sacrifice provided them with a **covering that repaired their relationship** with יהוה. The **sacrifice of Yeshua** paid the price for **ALL** sin, **intentional** and **unintentional**. **Forgiveness** was granted through **faith** and by **confession** and **repentance**.

The sacrifice of Yeshua is in fact **timeless**. Revelation gives us an insight on it:

Revelation 13:8 All who dwell on the earth will worship him, whose names have not been written in the Book of Life of **the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world**.

In the Father's eyes, the **Son's sacrifice** has always been seen in the **present tense**. It supersedes **time**. John the Immerser recognized **Yeshua** as the **Lamb of Elohim**:

John 1:29 The next day John saw Yeshua coming toward him, and said, "Behold! The **Lamb of Elohim who takes away the sin of the world!**

Now here's a question for you. Which of these **sacrifices** that we have studied in Vayikra is the one that "**takes away the sin of the world**"? None of them do this! Remember that the **Law** never was meant **to take away all sin**. The **sacrifice** being referred to here is the **Passover Lamb**. Now any unbelieving (in Messiah) Jew will tell you that the **Passover Lamb was not sacrificed for sins**. But what do we know of these Passover lambs?

- **These lambs protected them from death** – in the same way **Yeshua saved us** from being **condemned by the Law** and **sentenced to death** because of our **intentional sin**
- The Passover Lamb **freed them from slavery to Egypt** – we are **freed from our slavery to sin** through the death of the Passover Lamb

The **offerings for sin** are no longer **necessary because of Yeshua's perfect fulfillment**. That does not mean that we do not suffer **consequences** for our sin, but the **price** has already been **paid** and we do not need to make a **sacrifice** for sin. Instead we **repent** and ask for **forgiveness** through **faith** in **Yeshua**. This is what provides our **atonement**, and allows us to come **near** to the **Father**.

1 John 1:9 If we **confess** our sins, He is faithful and just to **forgive us our sins** and to **cleanse us** from all unrighteousness.

John 14:6 Yeshua said to him, "I am the way, the truth, and the life. **No one comes to the Father except through Me.**

Now of course we know that there is no **temple** where we can actually make an **offering**. However, we know that even **after Yeshua's resurrection offerings were made** by the **believers**. They were not made for **sin**, but for the purposes **they were designed for...**for **complete devotion, for making vows, for total surrender, for obedience, and for thankfulness** of יהוה's **provision**. If the temple were functioning today, I'd want to make one of these offerings!

A person bringing an animal for one of these **voluntary offerings** must **lean** with both hands upon the head of the animal. Many say in this way the animal became a **substitute** for the person's **sin**. While this is true for the **guilt** and the **sin** offerings, there are other reasons for **leaning**. They may have been **dedicating** all of their **strength** and **purpose** to יהוה. They may be stating a **specific spiritual goal** or **offering praise** to יהוה. The **smoke** from the offered animal then **rises as a sweet aroma** to יהוה, representing the man being **elevated** to **heavenly stature**. The offering is about **dedication** and **transformation**.

Okay, just one more question. Did **Yeshua** ever make an **offering**? Hmmmm.....He was a **respected Rabbi** and He **kept Torah**. He **loved the Father** and He **totally surrendered His will** to Him. Of course He would **not** have needed to make an offering **for sin**, but wasn't He **completed dedicated to the Father**? Wouldn't He have wanted to **publically express His love** for His **Father**? Wouldn't the people around Him have **expected Him** to make these **sacrifices**? Plus we read **no criticisms** by the **Pharisees** that He was not making **offerings**. These verses demonstrate His **commitment**:

Matthew 26:39 He went a little farther and fell on His face, and prayed, saying, "O My Father, if it is possible, let this cup pass from Me; nevertheless, **not as I will, but as You will.**"

John 17:4 "I have glorified You on the earth. **I have finished the work which You have given Me to do.**

So what can we gain from study of the sacrifices? First of all, be aware that these Levitical sacrifices had nothing to do with our idea of "**being saved**" or with "**eternal salvation**". They were and they are about **worshipping יהוה**. What we learn from them can benefit us as we too desire to **improve our relationship** with the **Almighty** and as we learn how to "**draw near**" that we may **dwell** with Him.

Shabbat Shalom!

Ardelle