

Candle Lighting

6:07

S"Z Kriat Shema

9:34

Sunset

6:26

Motzei
Shabbat

7:01



Parshat HaShavuah

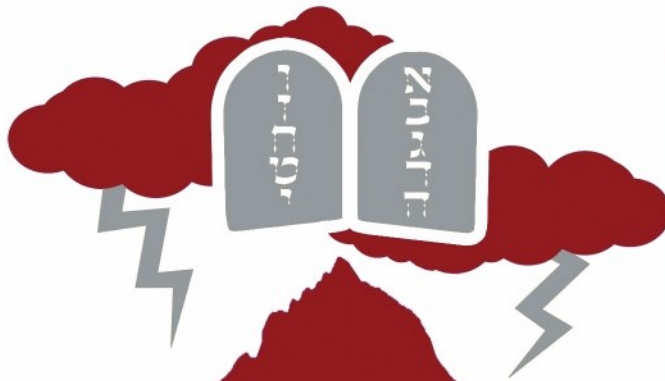
ויקרא

VAYIKRA

ו' אדר-ב תשע"ד

MARCH 8, 2014

A PUBLICATION OF



Ashreinu

חלקינו מה טוב

Enriching and Enhancing Your Study of the Weekly Torah Portion

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Sponsored in memory of Lana (Leah) D. Goldberg

PLEASE PASS THE SALT

RABBI JONATHAN KROLL

The intricate processes involved in the sacrificial rites often strike us as opaque rituals. Our parsha lists in great detail the different types of sacrifices with their myriad of associated laws.

As the Torah describes the korban mincha, the meal offering, we are told that we are required to add salt to the offering and that salt must indeed be added to every type of sacrifice that is brought: "על כל קרבנך תקריב מלח" (2:13) Why is salt so critical an ingredient that it must be added to every korban?

The diverse approaches of the commentaries to this mitzvah of adding salt to sacrifices offer us insight into the entire enterprise of sacrifices. In a controversial passage in the Moreh Nevuchim, the Rambam explains that the Torah's system of sacrifices was meant to wean the Jews off of idolatrous practices of worship that were common at the time the Torah was given. In that vein, he explains that since salt was an ingredient that idolaters never used in their sacrificial service, the Torah instructed us to use it in all of our sacrifices as a way of differentiating our service from theirs. In the eyes of the **Rambam**, the mitzvah of salt has no inherent message; its message is a **protest against idolatry**.

The Ibn Ezra suggests simply that salt makes everything taste better. By adding salt to our sacrifices we are presenting God with the best that we have to offer. According to the **Ibn Ezra**, the purpose of salt is not symbolic, it's **culinary**: we show our devotion to God by offering him our best.

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ANIMAL CRUELTY?

LAURA BETESH ('15)

In this week's parsha, Parshat Vayikra, there is a lengthy description of the daily korbanot that are brought to the Mishkan. This raises some questions about Judaism's view of the treatment of animals: Do the korbanot count as acts of animal cruelty? Isn't there a list of mitzvot in the Torah designed specifically for the care and protection of animals?

Usually, we kill animals for our physical benefit—to eat them or to use their skins. However, the case of korbanot is different. When we bring sacrifices, we use animals for more spiritual needs.

People often mistake the word korban to mean “sacrifice.” The true definition of korban stems from the word *karov* which means “to come close.” Korbanot, when brought according to proper Torah law, enable the Jewish people get closer to Hashem. The intent of these offerings is to elevate man to a higher level and to form a bond with G-d. The korbanot are not necessarily for Hashem as He does not physically need them. Rather, they are for our own spiritual growth. These sacrifices represent our own duality of physicality and spirituality. Sometimes, we allow our material desires to overpower our religious ones. Sometimes, we forget that we must seek meaning, love, and a connection to Hashem. One way we can get back on track and rebalance ourselves is bringing a korban.

Our laws of korbanot are far from animal cruelty. We do not arbitrarily slaughter animals. Just as we can use animals for our physical needs, we can use them for our spiritual development as well.

NO “I” IN TEAM

SOPHIE ROSE ('14)

The very first word of Sefer Vayikra is “*vayikra*”—“and He called out.” But why? Chazal interpret this word to mean that Hashem called out with *chibah*, with love and affection. When Hashem calls out to someone, He is telling that person to prepare to listen and to give Hashem his unwavering attention. The Torah is stressing the importance of listening, hearing, and understanding because each of those processes on its own plays an important role.

The importance of listening to Hashem is repeated elsewhere in Tanach. When Shaul fails to listen to Hashem's commandment to destroy Amalek in its entirety, Shmuel responds with a rhetorical question: “Does Hashem delight in offerings as He does in [a person] listening to His voice? Behold, to obey is better than a choice offering” (Shmuel 15:22). Subsequently, this plays a role in Shaul's loss of kingship for he is incapable of listening to Hashem.

On the other hand, here we have another leader, Moshe, who is able to listen with complete attention. Moshe's humility leads to his ability to listen for he understands the value of other people's opinions and approaches.

In fact, this is alluded to in the word “*vayikra*.” “*Vayikra*,” in our parsha, is spelled with a small letter alef because Moshe intends to write the word “*vayikar*”—“and He happened upon.” As a humble man, Moshe does not want it to elevate himself to a lofty esteem, praising himself for his ability to listen; rather, he hopes to suggest that Hashem merely “happened upon” him in conversation.

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Rose continued

When the Torah speaks of a leader sinning (Vayikra 4:22), it says, “*asheir nasi yecheta*”—“when a ruler sins.” The *roshei teivot* (first letters) of these three words spell the word “*ani*,” which means “I.” From here we can see that the cause of a ruler’s sin is his pride and ego.

What we can learn from this is the importance of listening. We must all channel Moshe’s greatness, his humility, and especially his ability to listen. It is vital that it is never just “I”; we must listen to everyone around us, whether it is Hashem, our family, our friends, our teachers, or our peers, and open our minds to listen, hear, and understand.

DO YOU FIT YOUR NAME?

TAMARA KAHN (‘17)

Vayikra begins with the phrase “*vayikra el Moshe*,” which means, “And He [Hashem] called to Moshe.” The midrash explains that Moshe really had ten names. We know that Hebrew names are significant in that they reflect the individual’s inner essence; therefore, what is so special about the name “Moshe” that Hashem chooses to call him that specifically?

The name Moshe is given to him by Pharaoh’s daughter when she sacrifices her safety and obedience to her father in order to save the abandoned baby. Rabbi Chaim Shmulevitz explains that her act shows self-sacrifice. She is willing to defy her father in order to save a life. Since Moshe is saved through chesed, Hashem instills within him a drive for self-sacrifice—arguably Moshe’s most essential quality as a leader of Bnei Yisrael.

Summoning this same trait of self-sacrifice from Pharaoh’s daughter, Moshe first proves his selflessness when he chases after one sheep that runs away from his flock. Moshe finds the animal drinking water and realizes that the sheep is just trying to alleviate his thirst. Moshe immediately hoists up the sheep and carries it back to the rest of the flock so as not to exhaust it any further.

Hashem recognizes this simple yet kind deed and decides that Moshe should lead His “flock” out of Egypt. Moshe retaining his original Egyptian name proves the importance of the specific quality that the name embodies—selflessness. This is the ultimate trait that is essential for true Jewish leadership.

TO ERR IS HUMAN, TO REPENT IS DIVINE

LANA ROSENTHAL (‘17)

This week’s parsha, Parshat Vayikra, describes the *korban chatat*, which is specific for each group of Jewish people—the Kohen Gadol, members of the Sanhedrin, leaders, and regular individuals. When talking about the Kohen Gadol, Sanhedrin, and individuals, the Torah says, “If you sin....” With regard to a leader, however, the Torah uses the term *asher*, as in, “when you sin....” Why does the Torah assume that a leader will definitely sin?

The Sforno suggests that those with power may sometimes resort to unethical ways of life. Unlike Kohanim and the Sanhedrin, leaders such as kings and elders are not constantly involved in Torah study; rather, they engage more in the secular world, in which they have a greater opportunity to sin.

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Rosenthal continued

Furthermore, a leader relies on the people for support as opposed to Hashem. The ruler can therefore be swayed by the people's beliefs and demands.

The Torah recognizes that a leader will sin. By means of the *korban*, he has a chance to admit his mistakes. Fittingly, the ability and willingness to acknowledge one's sins is a defining characteristic of Yehuda, from whom all Jewish kings descend. David, the topic of our studies this year in Navi, exemplifies this quality, and it is this trait that makes him such a great leader.

Rabbi Yochanan Ben Zakkai connects the word *asher*, when, to the word *ashrei*, happy, as in, "Happy are those whose leader brings a *korban chatat*." The Torah does not expect leaders to be infallible; they will inexorably sin. However, they must be willing to confess and do teshuva in order to be ideal Jewish leaders.

In today's age, while we no longer have the privilege to bring *korbanot*, we should still apply the message of the *korban chatat* to our everyday lives. After we realize we have done something wrong, we should confess and repent. Doing so will enable us to be true Jewish leaders of our community.

Rabbi Kroll continued

The Ramban rejects the approaches of the Ibn Ezra as well as the Rambam and offers a more symbolic interpretation. Salt is complex, explains the Ramban. On the one hand it can enhance the taste of food, but it can also corrode and destroy. Salt can be both positive and negative and thereby symbolizes the nature of our covenantal connection to God.

When we live up to our responsibilities the results are positive, but when we do not, the results are negative. According to the **Ramban**, salt represents the **nature of our relationship with God** and is therefore included in every type of sacrifice. The **Netziv** adopts the Ramban's interpretation of salt's dialectical nature and develops the idea from a different angle. The **Netziv** agrees that salt is both good and bad: it can enhance and preserve but it can also damage and destroy.

This is, therefore, an apt metaphor for the nature of the world and our commitment to God. There is very little in the world that is objectively or exclusively good or bad. God set the world up so that we will have to make hard choices in life as we figure out the right thing to do.

The **Netziv** sees the dual nature of salt not as reflecting the positive or negative results of our commitment to the covenant with God, but as reflecting the **nature of a life committed to that covenant**. By adding salt to every sacrifice we affirm our understanding of the nature of our religious lives and the path on which we become closer to God.

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