

Vayikra (And He Called)

March 27, 2004

Torah: Leviticus 1:1 - 5:26

Shabbat Morning

Haftarah: Isaiah 43:21 - 44:23

We begin the book of Vayikra, Leviticus, with Parasha Vayikra. This book is a book of instructions for the priests, the cohanim. The name Leviticus, referring to the instruction of Levi, was first used in the Septuagint, the Hebrew Bible which was translated into Greek about 200 years before the common era. The first subject dealt with is the regulations regarding sacrifices. These regulations cover all of Parasha Vayikra, and about one-half of the next parasha, Tsav (Give An Order). By identifying and becoming more familiar with the different types of offerings, we can more clearly see our own relationship with HaShem and Messiah Yeshua. There are parallels between Israel's bringing of sacrifices to the Tabernacle and our acceptance of Yeshua as our own personal sacrifice. Just as Yeshua is much more than just a sacrifice for us, so were the sacrifices of the Tabernacle and Temple. They depicted a living relationship between Israel and HaShem.

Leviticus 1:1-4: *Adonai called to Moshe and spoke to him from the tent of meeting. He said, "Speak to the people of Isra'el; say to them, 'When any of you brings an offering to Adonai, you may bring your animal offering either from the herd or from the flock. If his offering is a burnt offering from the herd, he must offer a male without defect. He is to bring it to the entrance of the tent of meeting, so that it can be accepted by Adonai. He is to lay his hand upon the head of the burnt offering, and it will be accepted on his behalf to make atonement for him.'"* The first verse says that Adonai called to Moshe. This was the third time that Adonai had called to Moshe. In Exodus 3:2-4 we read: *The angel of Adonai appeared to him in a fire blazing from the middle of a bush. He looked and saw that although the bush was flaming with fire, yet the bush was not being burned up. Moshe said, "I'm going to go over and see this amazing sight and find out why the bush isn't burned up." When Adonai saw that he had gone over to see, God called to him from the middle of the bush, "Moshe! Moshe!" He answered, "Here I am."* And in Exodus 19:1-3 we read: *In the third month after the people of Isra'el had left the land of Egypt, the same day they came to the Sinai Desert. After setting out from Refidim and arriving at the Sinai Desert, they set up camp in the desert; there in front of the mountain, Isra'el set up camp. Moshe went up to God, and Adonai called to him from the mountain: "Here is what you are to say to the household of Ya'akov, to tell the people of Isra'el."* Each of the callings of Moshe by HaShem was for a critical purpose. When he called from the burning bush he initiated the salvation of Israel by naming Moshe as their deliverer. In Chapter 19 before the mountain Sinai, HaShem gave Moshe his terms for the relationship which was to be established. And in Leviticus 1 he told Moshe how Israel was to be able to maintain the relationship with him; how they were to deal with sin. And this is what HaShem did in the book of Leviticus. He spoke to Moshe the Korbanot; that is the animal and grain offerings which were to be brought to the sanctuary. The word Korbanot is the plural of the word korban which refers to an offering of any kind which has been devoted to HaShem. Another way to look at the relationship depicted here is as a marriage. You know this; we've talked about it many times. At Mount Sinai there was a marriage between HaShem and Israel. The Torah which he gave to Moshe is the ketubah, the marriage contract. In the latter part of the book of Exodus, the house for the marriage was built; the Tabernacle. And

in Leviticus, where we are now, the wife, Israel, is being taught how to live in the house. And while the Cohanim are those especially called for this purpose, the learning of the laws of sacrifice was for all of Isra'el. It was to make them into "a kingdom of priests" as Exodus 19:6 states: "...and you will be a kingdom of cohanim for me, a nation set apart."

The first sacrifice described is the "olah" (hlvf). The root of this word carries the idea of "going up." It was an offering that was completely burned up and from this we get another name for this sacrifice- "burnt offering." The rabbis did not all agree on the purpose of the olah. One felt that it was the offerer who was going up; that is being raised from sinner to an elevated spiritual state. Another felt that it was called olah because the ascending smoke gave gratification to HaShem. Whatever the reason, it was purely voluntary and Leviticus 1 doesn't tell us the purpose of the olah. It could be a sacrifice for a person who has sinned in his thoughts or has not performed a specific required action. Or it could be that the person was expressing his desire to be devoted to the service of HaShem. The ArtScroll Chumash gives a third possibility; that it is brought by someone who has intentionally sinned and the Torah does not prescribe a punishment. Another possibility is that someone failed to perform a positive commandment. Whatever the case, the olah was a sin offering and this was well understood by Israel. The offerer had to place his hands on the head of the offering. This implied that he was confessing sin, sin which had to be dealt with before the relationship between HaShem and this man could continue. This offering was available to any person regardless of his financial circumstances. The wealthy could offer cattle, the average man could offer sheep or goats, and the poorest could offer a dove. Adonai looked upon the gifts equally. Each man or woman has the same importance in His eyes. The olah offering was totally burned on the altar. This teaches us that our whole person must be submitted to HaShem in order to accept atonement. When we do this we submit not only our spirits, but also our physical bodies. We accept in our hearts his atonement and at the same time seek to do that which pleases the Lord. As Ya'acov, Yeshua's brother says in Ya'acov, James, 2:17: *Thus, faith by itself, unaccompanied by actions, is dead.*"

In chapter 2 we read about the "minchah" (hHnm) offering. Leviticus 2:1: *Anyone who brings a grain offering to Adonai is to make his offering of fine flour; he is to pour olive oil on it and put frankincense on it.* We are not given the specific purpose of the minchah, but by observing how the word is used in the Torah we can arrive at a reasonable assumption of its purpose. In Genesis 44 we are told that Ya'acov, Jacob, brought a minchah, a tribute to his son Yosef, Joseph. We also know that it is not an atoning sacrifice because only blood can atone for sin. We read in Leviticus 17:11: *For the life of a creature is in the blood, and I have given it to you on the altar to make atonement for yourselves; for it is the blood that makes atonement because of the life.* The most likely purpose for the minchah was that it was a tribute or gift by the worshipper to HaShem. Some rabbis, however, consider it a poor man's offering. The minchah was comprised of grain, usually wheat, olive oil, and frankincense. Yeast and honey were not permitted in the minchah because they could not be burned on the altar. Leaven represented sin and honey was considered by the heathens to be a favorite food of the gods (little g). There was however, one more ingredient. Do you know what it was? Correct. Salt. Every offering was to be salted. The Torah doesn't tell us why, but tradition gives two reasons:

1. Salt is a preservative and depicts that which is lasting; as in "an everlasting covenant of salt." It was a sign of friendship among ancient people to eat salt together.

2. Salt also represents purity. This indicates that the covenant with HaShem is a covenant of purity, but also permanence.

Most of you are aware of the Jewish custom of salting the challah. This is done because the Talmud tells us that " a man's table is like the altar that brings atonement." There are five ways that the minchah offering could be presented: uncooked, baked in an oven, fried in a pan, deep fried in a pan, and as a first-fruit grain offering. This last one was not offered on the altar.

The third offering is the "shlamim" offering, or peace offering. No, not shlameil (hapless bungler). Not even shlemazel (a person with very bad luck). This offering did not atone for sin, even though it was an animal sacrifice. It differed from the olah in that only a small part of it was burned. The rest of the animal was cut up in such a way that it could be cooked and eaten. The offerer was to slaughter the animal at the entrance of the tent of meeting. The word used here for slaughter comes from the same root word which forms the word for "ritual slaughterer," (FHw) shochet which indicates that this offering was intended to be used for a fellowship meal. The owner would invite his whole family, his friends, his acquaintances, and the officiating priest to join him. He would then praise HaShem and tell the gathered company about His kindness. This shlamim offering, a peace offering, would only have followed the offerer's presentation of an olah offering for sin. At the time of eating the peace offering he was rejoicing that he had been forgiven of his sins and wished to share this wonderful time with his family and friends.

The fourth offering was the "chatat" offering. Leviticus 4:1 tells us this: *Adonai said to Moshe, "Tell the people of Isra'el: 'If anyone sins inadvertantly against any of the mitzvot of Adonai concerning things which whould not be done, if he does any one of them, then, ..."* The passage goes on to describe the type of offering required for a cohen who sins, the whole community when they sin, a leader who sins, or an individual who sins. The word chatat (txFH) is usually translated as sin, but acturally means something more like, "missing the mark." It is an unintentional sin, committed inadvertantly, or perhaps because of carelessness. There were also other times when the chatat offer was required. For example, a woman after childbirth (Lev. 12:6), people with skin diseases (Lev. 14:9), and for the dedication of priests, Levits, and the altar (Num. 8:8).

The fifth offering was the "asham" offering (Mwx), usually translated "guilt offering." This offering was for a very serious sin and in some cases also required that the offending person make restitution to the one damaged for the value of the animal or whatever item was affected by full value plus one-fifth. This offering was also required for trespass against holy things or speaking false oaths in court. Some of these sins were unintentional, but lying and defrauding are intentional. There was forgiveness for intentional sins in these cases.

So, let's review very quickly. There were 5 types of offerings presented in the Tabernacle and later in the Temple.

1. The olah, or burnt offering was a sacrifice for sin and completely burned up.
2. The minchah was a tribute offering of grain, oil, and frankincense.

3. The shlamim, or peace offering was only partially burned. The majority was eaten in fellowship.
4. The chatat, or sin offering was for missing the mark; unintentional sin.
5. The asham, or guilt offering was for serious sin and could also carry restitution as a penalty.

It is important for us to understand that even at the time the offerings were made, they did not take away sin, but merely covered it until Yom Kippur. On this day the Cohen haGadol, the High Priest, would offer sacrifices for all of the sins of himself and the people which occurred during the year. This was in effect also only a covering of sins. We know this to be true because of what we read in Hebrews 10:4: *For it is impossible that the blood of bulls and goats should take away sin.* But the blood of Yeshua, our Messiah, could take away sin permanently. Hebrews 10:10 says this: *It is in connection with this will (that is; HaShem's) that we have been separated for God and made holy, once and for all, through the offering of Yeshua the Messiah's body.* Verses 12-14 go on: *But this one, after he had offered for all time a single sacrifice for sins, sat down at the right hand of God, from then on to wait until his enemies be made a footstool for his feet. For by a single offering he has brought to the goal for all time those who are being set apart for God and made holy.*

Dr. Louis Goldberg in the Messianic periodical, "Tishrei" has shown us very clearly how Yeshua functioned as a sacrificed substitute. We are given five different actions which occur in the atonement for a sin.

1. Man is always the guilty one, whether intentionally or unintentionally. Sin is sin and missing the mark is not acceptable to a holy God. But HaShem out of grace and mercy provides a substitute, an acceptable sacrifice to take the place of guilty man. In the Tabernacle, the offering is the substitute which represents the one who sinned; it is killed in his place. In the same way we are told that Yeshua was given to be a sinner's substitute. He was the God-given acceptable One who died in the place of the sinner. According to I Peter 1:19-20*it was the costly bloody sacrificial death of the Messiah, as of a lamb without defect or spot. God knew him before the founding of the universe, but revealed him in the acharit-hayamim (the latter days) for your sakes. Yeshua is our substitute. A substitute.*

2. The guilty sinner brought the animal for sacrifice and placed his hands on the animal's head. As he did this he was confessing his own personal sin and unworthiness to receive HaShem's grace. This was also true of the sacrifices made on Yom Kippur. The Cohen HaGadol laid his hands on the sacrifice and confessed the sins of Israel over it. We must do the same thing. I John 1:9 tells us that: If we acknowledge our sins, then, since he is trustworthy and just, he will forgive them and purify us from all wrongdoing. We must confess our sins before HaShem. Yeshua will forgive sins sincerely confessed. Confession.

3. The laying on of hands also depicts the concept of identification. By laying hands on its head the sinner designated the animal as his substitute and the substitute was now identified with the sin of the offerer. It was now the substitute's sin. In Romans 6 Sha'ul tells us that the sinner was identified with the death of Yeshua. Verses 3-6 tell us that: Don't you know that those of us who

have been immersed into the Messiah Yeshua have been immersed into his death? Through immersion into his death we were buried with him; so that just as, through the glory of the Father, the Messiah was raised from the dead, likewise we too might live a new life. For if we have been united with him in a death like his, we will also be united with him in a resurrection like his. We know that our old self was put to death on the execution-stake with him, so that the entire body of our sinful propensities might be destroyed, and we might no longer be enslaved to sin. This can be explained in this way: when Yeshua died, it was as if HaShem took our guilty hands and placed them on Yeshua who was the sacrifice. In this way Yeshua represents all sinners who place their faith in him. Our sin is identified with Yeshua. **Identification.**

4. We read Leviticus 17:11 a short while ago. It teaches us that unless blood is shed in a sacrifice, no atonement is made. Therefore, the sacrifice must have died, but it had to be a bloody death. It could not just be electrocution or hanging, or something which does not produce blood. The images of Yeshua on the stake in The Passion of the Christ certainly would meet all requirements regarding the shedding of blood. And we know from Ephesians 1:7 that: In union with him, through the shedding of his blood, we are set free -- our sins are forgiven; this accords with the wealth of the grace he has lavished on us. Yeshua could not have been a sacrificial substitute for us unless his blood was shed and he died. And he did die and then took his own blood into the Mishkan, the Tabernacle in heaven and placed it on the altar there. Hebrews 9:11-12: But when the Messiah appeared as cohen gadol of the good things that are happening already, then, through the greater and more perfect Tent which not man-made (that is, it is not of this created world), he entered Holiest Place once and for all. And he entered not by means of the blood of goats and calves, but by means of his own blood, thus setting people free forever. We were saved by Yeshua's bloody death. **Shedding of blood.**

5. In the Tabernacle, when the sacrifice was killed by the sinner, something happened in the spiritual world. When the sacrifice died the sins were removed from the sinner and placed upon the sacrifice. The sacrifice died, but the guilty sinner lived. He was now considered righteous, at least for the area of his life for which he was seeking forgiveness. This is so much more true when the sacrifice is the Holy Messiah of Israel who offered himself once and for all. II Corinthians 5:21 tells us that: God made this sinless man to be a sin offering on our behalf, so that in union with him we might fully share in God's righteousness. Romans 6 which we read a few moments ago also told us that we died. The sinner who trusts in Yeshua dies; that is, the old man dies. Our old man was nailed to the tree with Yeshua. But because Yeshua our Messiah rose from the dead, so did we. Our

spirits are now eternally alive because Yeshua died. **Sacrifice dies, sinner lives.**

Let's look back for just a moment at the offerings described in our parashah. We can even today apply those long-inactive sacrifices to our own lives. The olah offering was the first mentioned, and it spoke of the need of a sacrifice for sin. Today when we recognize our sin we ask Yeshua for forgiveness. He became our olah, accepting our sins and giving us life. The minchah offering was next. In gratitude and tribute to HaShem for accepting our olah offering we offered the minchah, so grateful for forgiveness that we just want to do something for HaShem. The minchah was the way that we showed our gratitude. We do that today by obeying, by performing mitzvahs. The next offering was the shlamim or peace offering, a fellowship meal which was

eaten with family and friends to celebrate the joy of forgiveness. Our erev Shabbat dinner seems very much like the shlamim offering. The chatat offering was always available to us in our forgiven state if we inadvertantly "missed the mark." Today, if we only slightly miss the mark, Yeshua will forgive. The asham offering for more serious sins is also always available to us. We hope not to ever need this type of offering, but Yeshua is our sacrifice if we must confess something very serious. No matter how serious the sin, if we can sincerely repent, he will forgive and become our asham.

If there is anyone here who has not accepted Yeshua as Messiah, think about these things:

First: **Yeshua is our substitute.** Recognize him as the lamb of HaShem. Second: **Yeshua will forgive sins that are sincerely confessed.** Confess your sins. Third: **Our sin is identified with Yeshua.** Yeshua took our sin upon himself. Fourth: **We were saved by Yeshua's bloody death.** Because of his death we have salvation. Fifth: **Our spirits are now eternally alive because Yeshua died.** Eternal life is ours.

This costs us nothing monetarily, but costs us everything in terms of our lives. Salvation is not cheap. We give up our old lives and live for Messiah. We must make t'shuvah. That is, we must turn 180 degrees from the life we were living and live unto HaShem. When we do this we fulfill HaShem's plan for us; that is, to make us a nation of priests. As priests we are to minister to the nations. And in it we experience shalom. Romans 14:17 tells us that: for the Kingdom of God is not eating and drinking, but righteousness, shalom and joy in the Ruach HaKodesh.

If you already know Yeshua, reflect upon the offerings. How are they applicable to us as believers? Can the lessons we have learned help us to understand our relationship with Yeshua and the Father even better? Do the offerings of the Tabernacle still have meaning for us, even though they are no longer in active use?

Father, open our eyes to our inadvertant sins; to our sins of omission; to anything which separates us from you. Confess before Him if there is anything there which needs to go. Father, forgive us, for we have sinned. Yeshua, grant us forgiveness. Send the Ruach HaKodesh to indwell us in greater measure; to speak to us, to encourage us, to empower us to carry out your will in our lives. We stand before you Father, transparent and naked. Forgive us Father.