



## **Parasha Vayikra**

March 23, 2024

*Torah:* Leviticus 1:1-5:26

*Haftarah:* Isaiah 43:21-44:23

*Ketuvim Shlichim:* Hebrews 10:1-14

*Shabbat shalom mishpacha. Purim begins at sunset today. In view of the current world situation, it seems that we are reliving what Esther and Mordecai lived through so long ago. It is very unsettling and also painful to think about all of the persecution, suffering and death which is being inflicted on Jews and Christians around the world. What all this means is that we are living in the birthpangs of Messiah's second coming, the last of the last days: 4 Yeshua answered them, "Be careful that no one leads you astray! 5 For many will come in My name, saying, 'I am the Messiah,' and will lead many astray." (Matthew 24:4-5 TLV). The context is that Yeshua was speaking to Jews. According to Jerry Rabow, the author of 50 Jewish Messiahs: The Untold Life Stories of 50 Jewish Messiahs Since Jesus and How They Changed the Jewish, Christian, and Muslim Worlds, (October 1, 2002), there have been many false Jewish Messiahs. None of them has gained much of a following, but they have led some Jews astray.*

Then Yeshua said: 6 *"You will hear of wars and rumors of wars. See that you are not alarmed, for this must happen but it is not yet the end."* (Matthew 24:6 TLV). Presently, we have two ongoing wars, Russia against Ukraine and Israel against Hamas. Recently, in conjunction with and following the coming total eclipse of the sun, some pastors are predicting an attack on Israel by Russia and Turkey as a fulfillment of the Gog and Magog scripture (Revelation 20:7-10). Is it in our immediate future?

Yeshua continued: 7 *"For nation will rise up against nation, and kingdom against kingdom. And there will be famines and earthquakes in various places."* (Matthew 24:7 TLV). We are seeing Russia against Ukraine and Israel against Hamas, that is, Israel essentially against Iran who backs Hamas and Hezbollah and the Houthi's who are also shooting missiles at ships in the Red Sea and at Israel. North Korea is threatening the U.S. with long range missiles and China is threatening to invade Taiwan. And, there is unrest almost everywhere on the globe. We have had many famines. Today, famine is happening in northern Nigeria and Yemen and Somalia are on the brink of famine with many other nations facing severe food shortages. We would like to be able to show that there are now more earthquakes, but according to [www.statista.com](http://www.statista.com), the number of earthquakes worldwide are not currently increasing. There are a number of them each year, a range of 1,341 to 2,481 per year since the year 2000. This, according to Yeshua's words, is "earthquakes in various places," but don't be surprised if they begin to increase in number and intensity.

Then Yeshua said: 8 *"But all these things are only the beginning of birth pains."* (Matthew 24:8 TLV). How long will the birth pains last until the baby is delivered? No one knows, but based upon what we see in the world now, it is certain that death and destruction

will continue to happen regularly until Yeshua returns. With regard to antisemitism and attacks on the Jews, is this like ancient Persia? I say yes. The world is increasingly becoming a modern-day Persia, a world inhabited by many Haman's. This is not only persecution against Jews, but also against the Gentiles of the world who are Yeshua's followers and a part of the Commonwealth of Israel. Thousands of Christians in the world are being murdered every year by militant Muslims. By being chosen by ADONAI to live in these last days, we will see persecution as we continue to pray for Yeshua to come quickly.

Today, we begin a new book of *Torah*, the book of *Vayikra*, Leviticus, and it also begins with *Parasha Vayikra* which means "and called," referring to ADONAI calling. Leviticus is an instruction book for the *kohanim*, the priests. The name Leviticus, a word meaning "the instruction of *Levi*," was first used in the *Septuagint*, the Hebrew Bible translated into Greek about 200 years before Yeshua's time. The first subject of *Vayikra* is the regulations regarding sacrifices. It begins: *1 Now Adonai called to Moses and spoke to him out of the Tent of Meeting, saying: 2 "Speak to Bnei-Yisrael, and tell them: When anyone of you brings an offering to Adonai, you may present your offering of livestock, from the herd or from the flock. 3 "If his sacrifice is a burnt offering from the herd, he is to present a male without blemish. He is to offer it at the entrance of the Tent of Meeting, so that he may be accepted before Adonai. 4 He is to lay his hand on the head of the burnt offering, so that it will be accepted for him to make atonement on his behalf. 5 He is to slaughter the bull before Adonai. Then Aaron's sons, the kohanim, are to present the blood and splash it around on the altar that is at the entrance of the Tent of Meeting."* (Leviticus 1:1-5 TLV).

The laying of the individual sinner's hands on the sacrifice's head signifies that he is responsible for the animal's death as a replacement for his own life thus cancelling the death sentence initiated by his sin. The penalty for sin is death: *23 For sin's payment is death, but God's gracious gift is eternal life in Messiah Yeshua our Lord.* (Romans 6:23 TLV). *Sha'ul* is speaking of spiritual death, the spending of eternity in darkness separated from ADONAI's presence. Our spirits are eternal and we will spend eternity somewhere, either in ADONAI's glorious presence or completely separated from Him, still conscious and aware, but in nothingness. An innocent sacrifice is a replacement for the person who sins.

Why today, without a Temple, do we even study ancient sacrifices? It is because, by identifying and becoming more familiar with the different types of offerings, we can more clearly see our own relationship with ADONAI 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 ADONAI in the same way that our relationship with Yeshua today is a living one. Our relationship with ADONAI through Yeshua is not just an escape from punishment, but is a living relationship of love with our Creator and our Messiah.

*Vayikra*, "And ADONAI called" to Moses. He actually called to Moses several times. First, while he was in exile from Egypt in the Sinai wilderness, *malakh ADONAI*, the angel of Adonai, appeared to him in a fire blazing from the middle of a bush. He saw that although the bush was flaming with fire, it was not being burned up. *4 When Adonai saw that he turned to look, He called to him out of the midst of the bush and said, "Moses, Moses!" So he answered, "Hineni."* (Exodus 3:4 TLV). "Here I am." Then, after Israel was delivered from Egyptian captivity, we read this: *1 In the third month after Bnei-Yisrael had gone out of the land of Egypt, that same day they arrived at the wilderness of Sinai. 2 They travelled from Rephidim, came into to the wilderness of Sinai, and set up camp in the wilderness. Israel camped there, right in front of the mountain. 3 Moses went up to God, and Adonai called to him*

from the mountain saying, “Say this to the house of Jacob, and tell Bnei-Yisrael...” (Exodus 19:1-3 TLV). Both of these callings of *Moshe* by ADONAI were for a specific purpose. When He called from the burning bush, He essentially initiated the salvation of Israel by sending Moses to deliver them. In Chapter 19, before the mountain of Sinai, ADONAI gave Moshe his terms for the relationship which was to be established with Israel. And then, in Leviticus chapter 1, where we are today, He called to Moses a third time: *1 Now Adonai called to Moses and spoke to him out of the Tent of Meeting, saying:*” (Leviticus 1:1 TLV). ADONAI then told Moses how Israel was to be able to maintain the relationship with him, that is, how they were to deal with sin which separates them from Him. And this is what ADONAI did in the book of Leviticus. He spoke to Moses about the *korbanot*, the animal and grain offerings, which were to be brought to the sanctuary. *Korbanot* is the plural of *korban* which refers to an offering of any kind which has been devoted to ADONAI. Another way to look at Israel’s relationship with ADONAI is as a marriage. At Mount Sinai there was a marriage between ADONAI 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 *chalah*, the wife, Israel, is being taught by ADONAI, the *chatan*, the groom, how to live in the house. And while the *kohanim*, the priests, are those especially called for this purpose, the learning of the laws of sacrifice was for all of Israel. Its purpose was to make them into “a kingdom of priests” as ADONAI stated: *6 “So as for you, you will be to Me a kingdom of kohanim and a holy nation.”* (Exodus 19:6a TLV).

The first sacrifice described is the *olah*. The root of this word carries the idea of “going up.” It was an offering that was completely burned up. From this, we get another name for this sacrifice, “burnt offering.” The *olah* was a purely voluntary offering, but we are not told its purpose. It could be a sacrifice for a person who has sinned in his thoughts or had not performed a specific required action. Or it could be that the person was expressing his desire to be devoted to the service of ADONAI such as through the Nazirite vow. Whichever the case, the *olah* was a sin offering and this was well understood by Israel. The person presenting the *olah* 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 ADONAI and this person could continue. The *olah* 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.

In chapter 2 we read about the *mincha* offering. *1 “When anyone brings a sacrifice offering of grain to Adonai, his offering shall be of fine flour, and he is to pour oil on it and put frankincense on it.”* (Leviticus 2:1 TLV). We are not given the specific purpose of the *mincha*, but by observing how the word is used in the *Torah* we can arrive at a reasonable assumption of its purpose. We know that it is not an atoning sacrifice because only blood can atone for sin. (Leviticus 17:11). The most likely purpose for the *mincha* was that it was a tribute, a gift by the worshipper, to ADONAI with just a memorial portion of it burned on the altar. Along with the oil and frankincense, there was one more ingredient, 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 ADONAI is a covenant of purity, but also a covenant of permanence. It is remembered today by salting the *challah*, a reflection on the ancient practice which views the Jewish family table as an altar and the *challah* as a meal

offering. There were five ways that the *mincha* could be presented, uncooked, baked in an oven, fried in a pan, deep fried in a pan, and as a first-fruit grain offering.

The third offering is the *shlamim* or peace offering. Even though it was an animal sacrifice, it did not atone for sin. 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 person offering it was to slaughter the animal at the entrance of the tent of meeting. This offering was intended to be used for a fellowship meal and the owner would invite his whole family, his friends and the officiating *kohen* to join him. He would then praise ADONAI and tell those gathered with him about ADONAI's kindness. The *shlamim* would normally have followed the person's presentation of an *olah* offering for sin. When he ate the peace offering, he was rejoicing that he had been forgiven of his sin and wished to share this wonderful time with his family and friends.

The fourth offering was the *chatat* or sin offering. *1 Adonai spoke to Moses, saying: 2 "Speak to Bnei-Yisrael, saying: If anyone sins unintentionally in any of Adonai's mitzvot that are not to be done, and commits any one of them 3 —or if the anointed kohen sins so as to bring guilt on the people—then let him offer for his sin which he has committed, a young bull without blemish to Adonai for a sin offering."* (Leviticus 4:1-3 TLV). These verses describe the type of offering required for both an individual and a *kohen* who sins. The verses following apply to the whole community when they sin, a leader who sins, or a poor individual who sins. The word *chatat* is usually translated as sin, but actually means something more like, "missing the mark." It is an unintentional sin, one committed inadvertently, or possibly because of carelessness. There were also other times when the *chatat* was required: a woman after childbirth (Leviticus 12:6), people with skin diseases (Leviticus 14:9) and for the dedication of priests, Levites, and the altar (Numbers 8:8).

The fifth offering was the *asham*, usually translated as "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 repaying full value plus one-fifth. It 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 sins, and in these cases, there was forgiveness for intentional sins.

Here is a review. There were 5 types of offerings presented in the Tabernacle and in the Temple.

1. The *olah*, or burnt offering was a sacrifice for sin and was completely burned up.
2. The *mincha* was a tribute offering of grain, oil, and frankincense.
3. The *shlamim*, the peace offering, was only partially burned. The majority was eaten in fellowship.
4. The *chatat*, the sin offering was for missing the mark, that is, unintentional sin.
5. The *asham*, the guilt offering was for serious sin and could also carry restitution as a penalty.

It is important that we understand that even at the time the offerings were made, they did not take away sin, but merely covered it until *Yom Kippur*, the Day of Atonement. On *Yom Kippur*, the *Kohen Gadol*, the High Priest, would offer sacrifices for his sins and the sins of the people which occurred during the year. This also, was in effect, only a temporary covering of sins. We know this to be true because of what we read in the Book of Hebrews: *4 .. for it is impossible for the blood of bulls and goats to take away sins.* (Hebrews 10:4 TLV). But, by an act of ADONAI's own will (Gr. *theléma* [thel'-ay-mah]), the blood of Yeshua, our Messiah, takes away sin permanently. We have been made holy, once and for all, through the offering of the body of Yeshua, our *Mashiach*. (Hebrews 10:10). When Yeshua died, He offered a single sacrifice for all time with His own body. And, after He had offered it, He sat

down on the right hand of ADONAI to wait for all His enemies to be defeated. By His one offering, He paid the price for everyone who chooses Him and they are set apart for G-d and made holy. (Hebrews 10:12-14). Yeshua entered the Tabernacle in heaven, not by means of the blood of goats and calves, but by means of His own blood, and brought the sacrifice which sets people free forever. We were saved by Yeshua's bloody death.

Can these five, now inactive offerings and sacrifices of Leviticus, have meaning for our lives today? Yes, they can, because they are types and shadows of the total redemption which Yeshua brought to us, and are symbolic pictures of the varied sins of humanity. The *olah* was the first mentioned, and it spoke of the need of a sacrifice for sin. Today, when a person in their un-regenerated state recognizes their sinfulness, they can ask Yeshua for forgiveness. What He does for each of us who cries out to Him is pictured in the complete burning of the *olah*, symbolically permanently removing our sins and giving us life.

The *mincha* symbolizes our gratitude and tribute to ADONAI for accepting our *olah* of repentance. Through our praises of thanks, we express our gratitude for forgiveness to ADONAI. We also do that today by performing *mitzvahs*, righteous deeds, and walking righteously before our Messiah.

The *shlamim*, or peace offering, was a fellowship meal which was eaten with family and friends to celebrate the joy of forgiveness. Our *erev Shabbat* meals on Friday night seem very much like the *shlamim* offering. It is a time which we set aside for our families to worship ADONAI through the meal as preparation for the upcoming *Shabbat* rest the next day.

The *chatat* symbolizes the forgiveness which is available to us after trusting in Yeshua. We all sin daily, sins not leading to death, what we might call minor sins. We all commit sins of this type and He will forgive us. It is important that we regularly ask His forgiveness in order to keep our relationship pure and holy.

The *asham* was offered for more serious sins and represents forgiveness available today for sins such as murder and other sins deserving of physical death. We hope not to ever need this type of offering, but Yeshua is the *asham* for anyone who sincerely confesses something very serious. *10 Yet it pleased Adonai to bruise Him. He caused Him to suffer. If He makes His soul a guilt offering (an asham), He will see His offspring, He will prolong His days, and the will of Adonai will succeed by His hand.* (Isaiah 53:10 TLV). No matter how serious the sin, if we sincerely repent, as our *asham*, Yeshua will forgive.

*Parasha Vayikra* this week and *Parasha Tsav* next week describe the various offerings that were available to Israel in order to maintain proper relationship and fellowship with ADONAI prior to Yeshua's sacrifice. For whatever reasons, ADONAI chose to implement His kingdom on earth in a series of steps. We don't really understand why He did not just go ahead and send His Son Yeshua in the beginning, but His ways are not our ways and in the end we will understand these things. What we do understand is that ADONAI's New Covenant is now the active covenant, having partially replaced the Mosaic Covenant. What is new about it? Its newness is the replacement of the Levitical priesthood with the priesthood of Yeshua and the sacrifices of Leviticus with Yeshua's body, the perfect permanent sacrifice for our sins. The coming of the *B'rit Chadasha*, the New Covenant, is announced in Jeremiah 31:30 by ADONAI and was cut with His Son Yeshua's own blood some 600 years later on 14 *Nisan*, 30 CE when He became the physical and spiritual fulfillment of the Egyptian Passover (Exodus 12:12-13) and the *Yom Kippur* sacrifices. (Leviticus 16:7-10; 15). The *mitzvot*, the laws, given through the Covenant at Sinai, the Mosaic Covenant, remain, now written on our hearts. (Jeremiah 31:32), that is, those which can be observed today. But, those which require a Temple and Levitical priesthood are currently inactive and cannot be carried out today.

The forty years following Yeshua's death on the cross were a picture of impending doom for the nation of Israel: (The bolds are my insertion) *The Sages taught: During the tenure of Shimon HaTzaddik (about 300 years before Yeshua), the lot for God (the goat to be sacrificed to G-d for the people on Yom Kippur) always arose in the High Priest's right hand; after his death (High Priest Shimon's death), it occurred only occasionally; but during the forty years prior to the destruction of the Second Temple, the lot for God did not arise in the High Priest's right hand at all (the years 30-70 CE). So too, the strip of crimson wool that was tied to the head of the goat that was sent to Azazel (the Scapegoat) did not turn white, and the westernmost lamp of the candelabrum (menorah) did not burn continually. And the doors of the Sanctuary (Temple) opened by themselves as a sign that they would soon be opened by enemies, until Rabban Yohanan ben Zakkai scolded them. He said to the Sanctuary: Sanctuary, Sanctuary, why do you frighten yourself with these signs? I know about you that you will ultimately be destroyed, and Zechariah, son of Ido, has already prophesied concerning you: "Open your doors, O Lebanon, that the fire may devour your cedars" (Zechariah 11:1), Lebanon being an appellation for the Temple. (Babylonian Talmud, Yoma 39b). In the year 70 CE, the Temple was destroyed and along with it the way to offer sacrifices to ADONAI, especially the Yom Kippur sacrifices which provided Israel's yearly atonement. Additionally, the Levitical priesthood was dispersed. There was no way to offer sacrifices, but Rabbi Yochanan Ben Zakkai was stiff necked and sought a way to replace Temple services. He and his associates did this by developing the new system of Rabbinic Judaism. It is a Judaism without the blood sacrifices required by ADONAI who said: 11 "For the life of the creature is in the blood, and I have given it to you on the altar to make atonement for your lives—for it is the blood that makes atonement because of the life." (Leviticus 17:11 TLV). Yeshua's blood is the only blood sacrifice effective for sin today.*

I, a Gentile, have been a part of Messianic Judaism for over thirty years, a very specific calling by ADONAI. I have a supernatural love for our Jewish people and my calling as rabbi is a part of that. But today, many traditional Jews hate Messianic Jews and the Gentiles who worship with them, rejecting what they call the teachings of a false god, Jesus. Many traditional Jews truly love ADONAI and show their devotion by their service and prayer. But, when *Rosh Hashanah*, the Ten Days of Awe and *Yom Kippur* approach, they are no longer certain of their forgiveness. They cry out in fear to be saved for another year, not certain that their *mitzvot* have been enough to save them.

But, Yeshua is not a false god. He is G-d, divine just like His Father, something which we cannot yet understand. How are ADONAI, Yeshua and *Ruach HaKodesh echad*, one? We don't know and won't know until Yeshua returns. But, the Scriptures clearly reveal this truth and ADONAI's love for and the plan of salvation for the people of the world, all of them, Jew and Gentile. The *Ruach* is speaking to the hearts of many Jews today, not more loudly than before, but recognized more by the individuals because of the adversity facing them. Now is the day of salvation!

Messianic Judaism's rebirthing in the 20<sup>th</sup> century was ADONAI's love response for the Jewish people, the apple of His eye. He rebirthed Messianic Judaism after two thousand years to lead the Jewish people individually into knowing Yeshua and also collectively preparing for what ADONAI says is to come. Reflecting on the prophets, especially Ezekiel 36, *Sha'ul* wrote: 25 *For I do not want you, brothers and sisters, to be ignorant of this mystery—lest you be wise in your own eyes—that a partial hardening has come upon Israel until the fullness of the Gentiles has come in; 26 and in this way all Israel will be saved, as it is written, "The Deliverer shall come out of Zion. He shall turn away ungodliness from Jacob. 27 And this is My covenant with them, when I take away their sins."* (Romans 11:25-27 TLV). The Messianic Jews and Gentiles of today recognize their calling by ADONAI and willingly take

the rebuke as we all await that which ADONAI Himself has proclaimed: “All Israel shall be saved!”

The *Purim* that begins at sunset today is very much like the *Purim* of Esther and *Mordecai*. The *Haman*'s of today's world, the spiritual Amalekites, are calling for the destruction of the “People of the Book,” Jews and Christians. It is happening among all the people of the world, the governments of the world, and most especially within radical Islam. How long before they cast *pur*, lots, for our destruction? The signs of the times show us that Yeshua's return is near. Cry out to ADONAI and turn to Yeshua. He is our only hope. *Shabbat shalom!*