

# THE COMMUNITY PARSHA SHEET



PARSHAT VAYIKRA

London's Leading Young Professionals Platform and Jewish Communal Centre



**RABBI JONATHAN TAWIL**  
TAL Founder & Director

## PREPARE!

It is the custom of Am Yisrael, that when someone is called to the Torah, their name is first called out prior to their Aliya.

There is a famous story of how one Shabbat an Israeli who was not a normal attendant to shul was invited for his first ever Aliya.

The Gabai came over to him and asked him what his name was, and he replied "Moshe". Then the Gabai proceeded to ask him in Hebrew – "Ben...?"

The Gabai was intending to find out his father's name, but Moshe not understanding this looked at him with a weird face. Moshe thought to himself, this is unusual, why does he want to know my age? "Ben Chamishim VeArba", he answered – 54 years old. The Gabai, startled, shook his head and said "No no, Aba (your father)?" Again, poor Moshe had no idea what he wanted and by then was getting angry. Why does this Gabai wish to know my father's age? "Ben Shmonim VeShesh" – he is 86! We are called to the Torah by our name. Part of our name is who our father is, and we are known as X Ben (the son of) Y.

Yet why is it that we need to be called by name to the Torah at all? Why not get the Gabai to just point out the person he chooses to go up to read the Torah?

The answer is hinted at in this week's Parsha.

After five weeks of reading about the Mishkan, we now turn to the third book of the Torah – Vayikra. This book deals mainly

with the instructions concerning the sacrificial rituals and commands that need to be performed in the Mishkan. These sacrifices were continued when they reached the Promised Land and in both Bet Hamikdash – so during a total period of about 1,300 years.

Amazingly close to 250 of the Torah's 613 permanent commandments are enumerated and described in the book of Vayikra. This means that in some sense ALMOST half of all classical Judaism's core commandments are to be found in this book.

The English name for this book is Leviticus which seems more appropriate than the Hebrew word. Leviticus indicates that the book deals with the work of the Levites (priests). How is the Hebrew name of Vayikra apt for this section?

The book begins, "He called (Vayikra) to Moshe, and G-d spoke to him from the tent of meeting saying..." Rashi's opening comment on this portion is: Each time G-d spoke to Moshe, told him something or commanded him, He first called to him. This is a word denoting love and closeness, as we find with the ministering angels, "They call one to another..." (Yishaya 6:3). However, when G-d speaks to non-Jewish prophets, He appears to them 'incidentally', as the Torah states, "The L-rd happened (Vayikar) upon Bilam".

This is a very interesting Rashi, since we know that Hashem always calls to Moshe first before every prophecy. So why did Rashi not make this comment until now? And what difference does it make if G-d calls first before speaking to a prophet, or if He just appears to them?

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Prepare!  
By Rabbi Jonathan Tawil

**DVAR TORAH**  
A Soul that Brings an Offering  
By Rabbi David Baadani

**DVAR TORAH**  
What is Holiness?  
By Rabbi Yonatan Salem

**HALACHOT**  
By Rabbi Eli Mansour

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Ohr Gedaliyahu explains that when G-d called to Moshe it was as if He was saying 'Prepare yourself to come near to Me'. This is what Rashi means by calling Vayikra a term of closeness; that it gave Moshe an opportunity to prepare himself and draw nearer to G-d. The Midrash (Rabba, Ki Tavo 7-9) finds a hint to this from the way that G-d gave the Torah to Moshe. The verse states "G-d called Moshe to the top of the mountain - and Moshe elevated himself" (Shemot 19; 20). In a similar vein, when a man comes up to read from the Torah, he must first be 'called up'.

Through Hashem calling a person, an opportunity is given to prepare themselves to come close to G-d. In this way the Torah that they will receive will not be merely tangential to them, but they will be able to absorb it and make it part of themselves.

This is the opposite of what happened with Bilam. G-d came to him 'inciden-

tally' without calling to him first. Though Bilam received a message through prophecy, we see that this fact had no effect on Bilam's personal conduct. He remained greedy, cunning and steadfast in his hatred of the Jews.

Vayikra deals with sacrifices. The Hebrew word for sacrifice is Korban, which comes from the root Karov, meaning closeness. Rashi is highlighting the fact that it is particularly at this point that the Torah wishes to stress that there needs to be a calling before every Avoda. There needs to be preparation in our service of Hashem. Nowadays, prayer has replaced sacrifices and it is through our prayers that we draw near to Hashem.

The Gemara (Berachot 6b) relates that Rebbe Chelbo stated in the name of Rav Huna, 'Whoever fixes a place for his Tefillah (prayer); the G-d of Avraham will help him.' (Rashi: 'Just as

He helped Avraham.'). The Gemara continues to relate that a person who prays in his Makom Kavuah will be called an Anav (a humble one), a Chasid (one who goes beyond the letter of the law,) and a student of Avraham Avinu." The Rashba explains that your Makom Kavuah helps you settle your mind with the proper Kavanah (intentions) before you pray. You realize before Whom you are standing, and you stand in awe and fear of Him. When you prepare yourself in this way, your tefillah is naturally better.

Similarly, the Gemara (Shabbat 10a) Rava bar Rav Huna would put on fine shoes when praying, as it says "Prepare yourself to meet your God, O Israel" (Amos 4:12).

Let us all heed the calling from Above, let us enter our prayers with time and preparation, and may Hashem answer our Tefilot. Amen.

Shabbat Shalom.



**RABBI DAVID BAADANI**  
*Director - TAL Chazanut Program*

**A SOUL THAT BRINGS AN OFFERING**

In this week's Parsha, the Torah introduces us to the korban Mincha, the offering brought from simple flour. Unlike an animal sacrifice, it contains no grandeur, no display of wealth. It is brought by someone who cannot afford more. And yet, the Torah uses a striking phrase: "nefesh ki takriv", "when a soul brings an offering."

Usually, the Torah speaks of a person bringing a sacrifice. Here it says a soul. Why? Our sages explain that when a poor person brings flour, Hashem considers it as if he has offered his very soul. This small, inexpensive gift carries something deeper. It carries the person himself.

When the Torah describes offerings of birds or cattle, it repeats the phrase

"rei'ach nicho'ach laHashem", a pleasing aroma to Hashem. Whether it is an expensive animal or a modest bird, the result is the same. The aroma is equally pleasing. Hashem is not impressed by the size of the gift. He responds to the heart behind it.

We live in a world that measures everything. Bigger is better. More is more impressive. But Torah teaches us a different metric. What matters is not how much you give, it's how much of yourself you give.

There is a story told about the Rabbi Yaakov Yisrael Kanievsky. An Israeli taxi driver once had the merit of driving him. During their conversation, the rabbi gently asked, "After a long day of work, do you have time to learn Torah?" The driver sighed. "I try to attend a Gemara class every evening. But I'm exhausted. Most nights I fall asleep after a few minutes. I feel terrible about it."

The rabbi responded with surprising

encouragement. "Keep going. Even if you fall asleep. In Heaven, you are regarded like a general in the army. You are fighting a battle. You come tired, you struggle, and you show up anyway. That is your offering."

This is the message of the Mincha. The flour offering may look small, but it contains a soul. Showing up to a class when you're exhausted contains a soul. Saying a short prayer when you barely have time contains a soul.

Hashem does not ask us to be someone else. He does not compare us to others. He asks only one thing: give Me your best. If your best today is flour, bring flour. If your best is a bird, bring a bird. And if your best is simply showing up despite your fatigue, that too rises as a sweet aroma.

Never underestimate your effort. When you give what you truly can, you are offering your soul. And that is infinitely precious.



## RABBI YEHONATAN SALEM

### WHAT IS HOLINESS?

In the book of Bereshit we learned about how our forefathers – the pioneers of our nation, acted to perfect their characters. The book of Shemot relates about our enforced slavery in Egypt, which in retrospect, taught us the trait of subservience. All of these character improvements were, in fact, a prerequisite for our acceptance of the Torah, which requires good character traits. The book of Shemot finishes off by describing, in great detail, the building of the Mishkan – the Tabernacle, and some of the avodah – service that was to be carried out there by the Kohanim, Levites and Israelites.

The book of Vayikra, which contains the most mitzvot of any of the five books of the Torah, deals with the practical issue of doing G-d's commandments. The purpose of all the mitzvot is to elevate the level of holiness of our nation and of each person individually. This is true, whether the mitzvot are related to the actual service of the Mishkan, i.e., the offering of diverse types of animals or birds, wine, or flour, or whether they are the other mitzvot of Hashem, which comprise of those "between man and G-d," those "between man and his

fellow man," or those "between man and himself."

Apart from the general concept that all mitzvot generate holiness, there is a specific commandment of "kedoshim tiheyu" – you shall be holy (Vayikra 19:2). What is kedushah – holiness, and how do we attain it? Rabbi Shimon Shkop (in the introduction to his classic work Sha'arei Yosher) explains that this mitzvah of being holy is the foundation and root of all that we should be aiming for in our lives. Holiness, he says, is the dedication of all the input and effort that we put into our thoughts, words, and actions, to be for the good of others, whether an individual or a community. When a person makes this his goal and aspiration, then even what he does for himself, e.g., eating, taking caring of his needs etc. are all really to enable others to gain from him. By making this our goal, we are following G-d's ways. He created the world as a medium for giving, so too, our goal should be to imitate this and live a life of giving.

Within our various relationships, whether with Hashem or with other human beings, like between husband and wife, parent, and child etc., opportunities constantly arise for us to give. When we give in these situations, often we will reap immediate gains, like a sense of good feeling because of what

we did or being shown appreciation. However, often, our input does not produce any immediate, tangible results and it may seem to us that we did it for nothing. We may come to feel that "we can't be bothered" doing our daily quota of Torah learning, praying, or even giving to our spouse. We may think: "even if I help out by washing the dishes, I may not be thanked for it!" "If I get up early to make scrumptious sandwiches for my son, he may just tell me afterwards that he wanted egg and not tuna!" In situations like these a person's ability to give selflessly, without expecting returns, is being tested. Any positive input that a person does will gain returns, even if it only becomes apparent "way down the line." An example of this is one's child's education, which requires years of constant input. There may be very gradual progress, with results only becoming apparent years later. One may find the same, regarding other relationships as well.

Moreover, by doing for others, we are nurturing and polishing our spiritual essence, even if the returns will never become visible. We become more refined, less egotistical, and more selfless when our life's ambition is to live for others. This is the epitome of holiness.

Shabbat shalom



## HALACHOT BY RABBI ELI MANSOUR

### The Proper Pronunciation of the Words of "Az Yashir" (PART 1)

One of the verses in the "Az Yashir" song which our ancestors sang after the miracle of the splitting of the Yam Suf – and which we recite each morning toward the end of Pesukeh De'zimra – is "Mi Chamocha Ba'elim Hashem, Mi Kamocha Ne'edar Be'kedesh." Although both halves of this verse begin with the same two words ("Mi Chamocha"), the pronunciation is not identically the

same in both halves. At the beginning of the verse, the correct pronunciation is "Mi Chamocha," whereas in the second half, these words should be pronounced "Mi Kamocha." The phrase "Mi Kamocha" in the second half of the verse marks an exception to a rule of Hebrew grammar. The basic rule is that a Bet, Gimmel, Dalet, Kaf, Peh or Tav at the beginning of a word receives a Dagesh (dot), in which case, in principle, the

letter Kaf at the beginning of "Kamocha" should receive a Dagesh, and should thus be pronounced "Kamocha." However, when the previous word ends with a Heh, Vav or Yod – such as the word "Mi," which ends with the letter Yod – the Dagesh is not added. Hence, according to the rules of grammar, the phrase should be pronounced "Mi Chamocha." Nevertheless, the second half of this verse is exceptional, and the Dagesh is,

in fact, added to the Kaf, resulting in the pronunciation of "Mi Kamocha."

When one recites this verse, he must ensure not to say the words "Hashem Mi Kamocha" rapidly, such that it sounds like he says, "Hashem Micha" – as though declaring that Micha is G-d, Heaven forbid. Micha was the person responsible for creating the golden calf at Mount Sinai, and one must be careful

not to imply that he is a deity. Sephardim make a distinction in their pronunciation between a letter Gimal that has a Dagesh, and a letter Gimal that does not. In the phrase "Am Zu Ga'alta," the Gimal at the beginning of "Ga'alta" receives a Dagesh. According to the rule mentioned earlier, this letter should not receive a Dagesh, because the previous word ("Zu") ends with the letter Vav. The reason why this Gimal

nevertheless receives a Dagesh is that without a Dagesh, the word would sound like "Ga'alta" spelled with an Ayin (as opposed to an Alef), which would mean that Hashem is repulsed by Beneh Yisrael, Heaven forbid. Pronouncing the Gimal with a Dagesh makes it clear that the word is "Ga'alta" with an Alef, which means that Hashem has redeemed Beneh Yisrael.

To be continued next week



## WEEKLY PARSHA OVERVIEW

### Parshat Vayikra

The Book of Vayikra (Leviticus), also known as Torat Kohanim – the Laws of the Priests – deals largely with the korbanot (offerings) brought in the Mishkan (Tent of Meeting). The first group of offerings is called korban olah, a burnt offering. The animal is brought to the Mishkan's entrance. For cattle, the one bringing the offering sets his hands on the animal. Afterwards it is slaughtered and the kohen sprinkles its blood on the altar. The animal is skinned and cut into pieces. The pieces are arranged,

washed and burned on the altar. A similar process is described involving burnt offerings of other animals and birds. The various meal offerings are described. Part of the meal offering is burned on the altar, and the remaining part eaten by the kohanim. Mixing leaven or honey into the offerings is prohibited. The peace offering, part of which is burnt on the altar and part is eaten, can be either from cattle, sheep or goats. The Torah prohibits eating blood or chelev (certain fats in animals). The offerings that atone for inadvertent sins committed by the Kohen Gadol, by

the entire community, by the prince and by the average citizen are detailed. Laws of the guilt-offering, which atones for certain verbal transgressions and for transgressing laws of ritual purity, are listed. The meal offering for those who cannot afford the normal guilt offering, the offering to atone for misusing sanctified property, laws of the "questionable guilt" offering, and offerings for dishonesty are detailed.

**Rabbi Sinclair,**  
Seasonsofthemoon.com

Q

1. Who does the word "eilav" in verse 1:1 exclude?
2. Name all the types of animals and birds mentioned in this week's Parsha.
3. What two types of sin does an olah atone for?
4. Where was the olah slaughtered?
5. What procedure of an animal-offering can a non-kohen perform?

A

1. 1:1 - Aharon.
2. 1:2, 14, 3:12 - Cattle, sheep, goats, turtledoves (torim), and doves (bnei yona).
3. 1:4 - Neglecting a positive command, and violating a negative command which is rectified by a positive command.
4. 1:5 - In the Mishkan Courtyard (azarah).
5. 1:5 - Ritual slaughter.

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