

PARASHAT HASHAVUA

PARASHAT VAYIKRA

**This year's Parashat HaShavua series is dedicated
in loving memory of Dov Ber ben Yitzchak Sank z"l**

Dedicated in memory of Matt Eisenfeld z"l and Sara Duker z"l
on their 20th yearzeit.

Though their lives were tragically cut short in the bombing of Bus
18 in Jerusalem, their memory continues to inspire.

Am Yisrael would have benefitted so much from their
contributions. *Yehi zikhram barukh*. –

Yael and Reuven Ziegler

**Introduction to Sefer Vayikra
By Rav Mordechai Sabato**

At the very beginning of *Sefer Vayikra*, both the Rashbam and the Ramban explain the expression "*Va-yikra*" ("He called"), which appears nowhere else in the context of God's conversations with Moshe, in light of a fundamental problem presented by the *Mishkan*. Since God's Presence rests in the *Mishkan*, Moshe must enter there in order to receive God's pronouncements. On the other hand, he cannot enter the *Mishkan* precisely because God's Presence fills it! This problem is resolved by God's "calling" Moshe, giving him explicit permission and indeed an invitation to enter the Tent of Meeting.

If, however, we examine the last five verses of *Sefer Shemot*, which describe the resting of God's Presence within the *Mishkan*, we will find that it actually discusses two consequences:

A. *Shemot* 40:34-35

The cloud covered the Tent of Meeting, and the Presence of God filled the Tabernacle. Moshe could not enter the Tent of Meeting, because the cloud had settled upon it and the Presence of God filled Tabernacle.

B. *Shemot* 40:36-38

When the cloud lifted from the Tabernacle, the Israelites would set out, on their various journeys; but if the cloud did not lift, they would not set out until such time as it did lift. For over the Tabernacle a cloud of God rested by day, and fire would appear in it by night, in the view of all the house of Israel throughout their journeys.

The first result of the resting of God's Glory on the *Mishkan* is that Moshe is prevented from entering (section A), while the second result deals with the determination of when Benei Yisrael would travel (section B). As the Rashbam and Ramban explain, *Sefer Vayikra* is a continuation of section A. However, we do not pick up the thread of section B until chapter 9 of *Sefer Bemidbar* (which features a lengthy discussion of how the nation's journey depended upon the divine cloud). It seems that all the previous information in *Bemidbar* - the division of labor among the Levites, the arrangement of the tribes' encampment according to banners and their location vis-a-vis the Tabernacle - serves as preparation and background information for the journey. Since the people encamped in the same arrangement in which they traveled, the discussion of their

encampment in the beginning of *Bemidbar* also relates to their journey.

Generally speaking, then, the Book of *Vayikra* is the book of commandments which Moshe received in the *Mishkan*, and the Book of *Bemidbar* is the book of travels. As such, these two *sefarim* form the continuation of the final verses of *Sefer Shemot* specifically, and, more generally, the continuation of the Book of *Shemot* as a whole. God's communication with Moshe and the traveling patterns of Benei Yisrael constitute the two results of the God's Presence in the *Mishkan*. The first expresses the relationship between the Almighty and His people through His communion with Moshe, when He presents His commandments to the nation. The second expresses this relationship through God's direct involvement in the nation's navigation through the wilderness, where He leads like a King striding before His camp.

Parashat Vayikra: The Voluntary Sacrifices

The first seven chapters of *Sefer Vayikra* deal with the various types of *korbanot* (sacrifices) and their detailed laws. This group of chapters naturally divides into two subsections, each one dealing with the same *korbanot*: "*ola*" (burnt-offering), "*mincha*" (meal-offering), "*shelamim*" (peace-offering), "*chatat*" (sin-offering) and "*asham*" (guilt-offering). Although both subdivisions discuss each of these sacrifices, they present the *korbanot* in different sequences. The problematic repetition, as well as the change of sequence, will be dealt with *IY"H* in next week's *shiur*. Here we will focus on the three voluntary sacrifices and the relationship between them.

Each of the first three chapters of *Sefer Vayikra* deals with one of the voluntary sacrifices, in the following order: *ola*, *mincha* and *shelamim*. The discussion of all three sacrifices seems to flow from the opening verse, "When any of you presents an offering to God..." While the individual decides whether to offer a sacrifice, the Torah sets forth the details of how each offering is to be prepared. Apparently, just as the individual makes the very decision to offer the sacrifice in order to express his relationship to God, so does he choose the specific *korban* that most accurately captures his precise feelings. The Torah neither demands that one bring these sacrifices nor does it express a preference for one over the other; it merely details the procedure for bringing each. Our job, then, is to identify the unique character of each sacrifice and thereby to determine the relationship obtaining between the various types of offerings.

The following are the Torah's introductions to each type of sacrifice:

- "If his offering is a burnt-offering" (1:3);
- "When a person presents an offering of meal to God" (2:1);
- "If his offering is a peace-offering" (3:1).

The clear literary parallel between the *ola* and the *shelamim* (already noted by the Rashbam [1:3]) indicates a relationship between the two. Additionally, the *mincha* seems to stand out as a separate, independent category; it is not related to the general introduction at the beginning of the *Sefer* - "When any of you presents an offering to God, you shall bring an offering from the cattle, the herd and the flock" - for it does not consist of animal sacrifice. Thus, the Chumash presents two categories: A) animal sacrifices, the *ola* and the *shelamim*; B)

grain sacrifices, the *mincha*. How do these two categories relate to one another, and why does the second interrupt the first?

It would seem that an animal sacrifice symbolizes one's recognition of God's dominion over all living creatures, while the meal-offering represents God's power of sustenance, His control over the ground's produce, which sustains life. These two symbols of recognition express the individual's belief in God as both Creator of life and the One Who sustains life. These two distinct articles of faith were clearly addressed by King David: "How many are the things You have made, O God! You have made them all with wisdom... All of them look to You to give them their food when it is due" (*Tehillim* 104:24-7). Whereas the first sentence expresses David's awe of creation itself, the second opens his description of the world's constant dependence upon the Creator.

This distinction may explain why specifically in the context of the *mincha* the Chumash employs the term "*nefesh*" (literally, "soul"). Ibn Ezra (*Devarim* 6:5) notes that this expression - "*nefesh*" - refers to the desirous tendencies of man, as in the verses: "For your soul (*'nafshekha*) has the urge to eat meat" (*Devarim* 12:20) and "You may eat as many grapes as your soul wants (*'ke-nafshekha*)" (*Devarim* 23:25). It follows, then, that the "*nefesh*" of the individual, the aspect of his character that yearns for sustenance, should offer a meal-offering to God, expressing his recognition of God as the great sustainer of all living creatures.

This approach also clarifies the minimum volume required for a *mincha* - one-tenth of an "*epha*." As we know from the Torah's presentation of the manna, "The *omer* is one-tenth of an *epha*" (*Shemot* 16:37), and the Jews collected each morning one *omer* of manna, indicating that this constitutes one's daily ration. This amount, then, serves as a most suitable means of expressing one's recognition of God's power of sustaining life.

Significantly, the meal-offering differs from the animal sacrifices with regard to its name, as well. Whereas the title given here to the meal-offering - "*korban mincha*" - describes its content, the Torah gives no specific title to the category of animal sacrifices: "When any of you presents an offering to God..." Apparently, the basic *korban* is that of a live animal. Thus, the plain term "*korban*" refers to an animal sacrifice. In our terms, the basic recognition that one must develop relates to God as Creator of life. Only upon this basis can one maintain a "*korban mincha*," the recognition of God as the power that provides life with its necessary sustenance.

In order to properly understand why the Torah inserts its discussion of the *mincha* in between those of the two animal sacrifices, we must first examine the relationship between the *ola* (burnt-offering) and the *shelamim* (peace-offering).

The first indication of a fundamental difference between these two lies in their names: "*ola*" and "*zevach shelamim*." The name "*ola*" (literally, "ascends") most probably relates to the fact that we consider the sacrifice to "rise" to the Almighty, since it is completely burnt on the altar. By contrast, the appearance of the word "*zevach*" in the context of the *shelamim* suggests that this sacrifice should be seen as a sacred feast of sorts, since the individual consumes part of sacrifice himself. Although the primary connotation of the term "*zevach*" is "slaughtering" (as is the case in Arabic), nevertheless, in the Bible it usually denotes a sacred feast.¹

¹ Compare to *Shemuel* I 9:12-3:

"'Yes,' they replied. 'He is up there ahead of you. Hurry, for he has just come to the town because the people have a sacrifice (*zevach*) at the shrine today. As soon as you enter the town, you will find him before he goes up to the shrine to eat; the people will not eat until he comes; for he must first bless the *zevach* and

Thus, whereas the central quality of the *ola* relates to the individual's offering to God, the key element of the *shelamim* involves the individual's consumption of the sacrificial meat. Chapter 3, where the Torah discusses the *shelamim* for the first time, makes no mention whatsoever of the individual's mitzva to partake of the sacrificial meat, probably because the term "*ZEVACH shelamim*" itself connotes the individual's participation in the sacrifice's consumption. All the Torah needs to do is to outline the sacrificial procedure. Once these guidelines are followed, it is understood that the individual is invited to partake of the sacrificial meat. (The right of the *kohanim* to consume part of the meat is discussed in *parashat Tzav*.)

Another allusion to a difference between these two types of *korbanot* emerges from an expression employed regarding the *ola* but omitted entirely from the discussion of the *shelamim*: "...that it may be acceptable in his behalf, in atonement for him." The Torah says nothing related to atonement in its treatment of the *shelamim*. It seems that, although both sacrifices are purely voluntary by nature, the *ola* serves as atonement for small mishaps. *Chazal* and later commentaries raise various opinions regarding the identity of the particular sin for which the *ola* atones. However, within the simple understanding of the text, there is no reason to specify one sin or another. The *ola* atones not for a SIN but for the INDIVIDUAL. The person feels a distance between himself and the Almighty, be it as a result of a sin, a general feeling of inadequacy or religious mediocrity, or perhaps even due to the very fact of his physicality. He therefore decides to offer a sacrifice to God, an *ola*, to achieve atonement and thereby to avoid divine retribution. The *ola* sacrifice thus expresses the individual's feeling of awe and fear and his sense of distance from God. The *shelamim* sacrifice, by contrast, is generally associated with joy and celebration: "You shall offer *shelamim* and eat them, rejoicing before the Lord your God" (*Devarim* 27:7). The individual's desire to offer a sacrifice to the Almighty and then to partake of the meat emanates from his feelings of closeness to God, his overflowing affection for his Creator. In short: the *ola* signifies fear of God, and the *shelamim* relates to love of God.

The *mitzvot* of fearing and loving God comprise the essence of the Torah's demands of the Jew. *Chazal* write (*Midrash Tannaim, Devarim* 6:5),

"It is written, 'You shall love the Lord your God,' and it is written, 'You shall fear the Lord your God' - implying that you serve out of love and fear. For if you come to hate, remember that you love, and a lover does not become a foe. And if you come to rebel, remember that you fear, and one who fears does not rebel."

Perhaps this is the reason that the *ola* precedes the "*shelamim*:" one must fear God before he can come to love Him. By the same token, the aforementioned commandment to fear God appears earlier in the Torah (*Vayikra* 19:14) than its counterpart regarding love of God (*Devarim* 6:5).²

only then will the guests eat. Go up at once, for you will find him right away."

See also *Shemuel* I 1-2, 20:6.

² This may also be the reason behind the opinion that Gentiles, at least before the giving of the Torah, did not offer *shelamim* (*Bereishit Rabba parasha* 22, *Yerushalmi Megilla* 1:1 72b, *Bavli Zevachim* 116a, etc.). They could attain the level of awe and fear of God - "For from where the sun rises to where it sets, My Name is honored among the nations, and everywhere incense and pure oblation are offered to My Name; for My Name is honored among the nations" (*Malakhi* 1:11) - but they could never reach the exalted standards of love for God. See also the commentary of Yefei Toar (*Bereishit Rabba*, ad loc.):

We can now return to our question: why does the Torah interrupt its discussion of the animal sacrifices with the meal-offering? The answer is now clear: the *mincha* and the *ola* are associated with the attribute of fear, rather than love. Similar to one who brings an *ola*, the individual offering the *mincha* receives no portion of the sacrifice. A handful of the *mincha* is consumed by the altar and the rest is consumed by the *kohanim*, but the individual offering the *korban* does not participate in the consumption. Furthermore, we find many indications that the *kohanim's* partaking of the meal-offering is considered equivalent to the altar's consumption (as opposed to the *kohanim's* partaking of the meat of other sacrifices, where no such equivalence exists).³

If we view the *kohanim's* consumption of the *mincha* as equivalent to the altar's consumption, then why do the *kohanim* partake of the *mincha* at all? If our association between the *ola* and the *mincha* is correct, then the entire *mincha* should be burnt on the altar, like the *ola*!

It seems that herein the Torah expresses the distinction between one's recognition of God as the creator of life and as the sustainer of life. The capability of creating life belongs exclusively to God Himself; no one, including the *kohanim*, participates with the Almighty in this endeavor. *Chazal* speak of three "keys" that the Almighty reserves for Himself: childbirth, resurrection of the dead, and rain. All three involve bringing about life, and they all remain beyond the limited powers of mankind. However, God did afford the *kohanim* a portion in the second area, that of sustaining life. The *kohanim* bless the people and "place" the Name of God, as it were, on Benei Yisrael. Through them, the Almighty blesses Benei Yisrael and provides their needs.

Thus, the meal-offering appears as separate from the *ola* and *shelamim*, since it expresses man's recognition of God's control over the sustenance of life on earth, as opposed to animal sacrifices, which reflect God's dominion over life itself. Nevertheless, the Torah deals with the *mincha* immediately following its treatment of the *ola*, thus interrupting its discussion of the animal sacrifices, since the *mincha* and *ola* both express fear of God. The *shelamim*, which expresses man's love for God, appears only after both the *ola* and *mincha* have been discussed.

What we have seen, then, is how the three different voluntary sacrifices express all the basic emotions felt by an individual standing before his Creator. The person's trepidation before God is manifest through the *ola* and *mincha*, whereas one's love for the Almighty is expressed through the *shelamim*. The recognition of God as the Maker of life finds expression in the *ola* and *shelamim* - the two animal sacrifices - and one's recognition of God as the sustainer of life emerges through the means of the *mincha* offering.

(Translated by Rav David Silverberg)

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"The reason for this opinion is that the *ola* is burnt entirely on the altar, so even Noach's sons offered *ola* sacrifices. But regarding the *shelamim*, the individual himself partakes of the meat and becomes a partner with the Almighty. This could be done only once the Almighty established His '*Shekhina*' on earth, in the Tent of Meeting, and not before then, for until then the heavens belonged to God and the earth belonged to man."

³ This contention, accompanied by many proofs, is raised by Rav David Zvi Hoffmann in his commentary to *Vayikra*. For example, both the "inner sin-offerings" ("*chatat penimit*," as opposed to those offered on the altar situated outside the *Mishkan*) and the *mincha* offered daily by the *kohen gadol* may not be eaten. But while the meat of the former is burnt outside the Jewish camp together with other forbidden sacrificial meat ("*notar*"), the latter is completely offered on the altar. This implies that, fundamentally, the nature of the *korban mincha* is to be offered entirely on the altar; however, the Torah allowed the *kohanim* to partake of the *mincha* offering in most cases. Thus, in cases where this permission is denied (such as the *kohen gadol's mincha* offering - *Vayikra* 6:16), then the natural destiny of the meal-offering is actualized: it is completely burnt on the altar.

This may explain why in *Parashat Vayikra* the Torah mention the *kohanim's* right to partake in offerings only with regard to the *mincha*. This privilege with regard to all other sacrifices does not appear until *Parashat Tzav*. The reason may be that the *kohanim's* consumption of the meal-offering is tantamount to that of the altar, which is discussed here in *Parashat Vayikra*. This point may also be manifest in the prohibition of turning the meal-offering into leaven (*chametz*). This prohibition applies not only to the handful of flour placed on the altar, but also to the rest of the offering, which is eaten by the *kohanim* (*Vayikra* 6:10). The prohibition of leaven in sacrifices generally applies only to that which actually reaches the altar: "You may bring them to God as an offering of choice products; but they shall not be offered up on the altar for a pleasing aroma" (*Vayikra* 2:12). If, then, even the *kohanim's* portion may not become leaven, then apparently their consumption is equivalent to that of the altar. This relationship that we have now established between the *ola* and *mincha* is also reflected in the Torah's constant association between these two offerings (see *Shemot* 30:9; *Vayikra* 23:37; *Shoftim* 13:23; *Melakhim I* 8:64; *Yirmiyahu* 33:18; and especially *Vayikra* 9:16-7 and *Yehoshua* 22:23).