

Parashah #24

(Updated for 3.12.11)

Vayikra ~ וַיִּקְרָא ~ And he called

Torah: Vayikra/Leviticus 1:1~5:26 (6:7)

Haftarah: Yesha'yahu/Isaiah 43:21~44.23

B'rit Hadashah: Romans 8:1-13; Ivrim/Hebrews 10:1-14 & 13:10-16

According to the Chumash, the Book of Leviticus is called (Toe-raht Koe-hah-neem) **Torat Kohanim/Torah of the Priests** because most of the book deals with the laws of the Temple service and other laws relating to the priests and their responsibilities. With the destruction of the Temple, prayer, (ah-vo-dah lehv) **avodah lev/service of the heart** replaced the (ah-vo-dah kor-bah-note) **avodah korbanot/service of the sacrifices**.

One more little tidbit . . . **Vayikra/Leviticus** is considered the **heart** of Torah. The main reason has to do with it being the third book in the five books of Torah. Another interesting aspect, is such a G~d thing!!! The English name of this book is Leviticus and the abbreviation of it is Lev. In Hebrew the word **lev** (לב) means **heart**.

In our Parashah reading for today, we learn **Vayikra** means **He called** or literally **and He called**.

CHAPTER 1

VAYIKRa Do you notice anything strange about the way the preceding word is written? Do you think it might be a typographical error? Actually, in the Torah scroll it is written with an unusually small “aleph” (the letter “a” in Hebrew) at the end. This peculiar form has been a matter of discussion among Torah scholars for ages. We are told it has always been seen as a symbol of the great humility of **Moshe/Moses**. But there is another explanation of the small aleph.

HaShem is to be seen and heard in the small things in life, not just in great events. Remember, HaShem told **Eliyahu/Elijah**, the prophet, He is not to be found in the wind, the noise of an earthquake, or the brightness of a burning fire but rather in the still, small voice, in the sound of a whisper and not of a shout. The first tables of stone Moshe brought down from Sinai were given with great noise . . . thunder, lightning, volcanic explosions and ended up smashed to bits. The second set was given quietly and privately to Moshe and from him to all of Israel and it has endured. May we hear the “small aleph” in our lives, the still small voice of HaShem, loud and clear.

In **Sh'mot/Exodus 3:4** HaShem “called” to Moshe from the burning bush on Mt. Sinai.

In **Sh'mot/Exodus 19:3 & 19:20** HaShem “called” to Moshe from Mt. Sinai.

In **Sh'mot/Exodus 24:16**, HaShem “called” to Moshe from the thick cloud on the top of Mt. Sinai. And now, in **Vayikra/Leviticus 1:1** we find HaShem “calling” Moshe from the *Mishkan/Tabernacle*.

Usually, we find HaShem speaking to, saying, or commanding Moshe but seldom “calling” him. “Calling” him or “called” to him (Moshe) is rarely used and perhaps is indicative of the specific times HaShem did call Moshe. HaShem’s holiness would prohibit Moshe from entering the L~rd’s presence until he was called. Remember? Last week we learned Moshe couldn’t enter into the Tabernacle because the Presence of HaShem was so heavy. Consequently, HaShem wanted to reassure Moshe the Tabernacle had been built to benefit him and his people, not to exclude them. Because Moshe was His servant, HaShem desired intimate fellowship with him, so He initiated the relationship: He called.

When HaShem called to Moshe from the burning bush, He repeated his name, saying “Moshe, Moshe”. The Sages tell us when HaShem repeats a person’s name, it is an expression of special affection. For example, “Moshe, Moshe”, “Avraham, Avraham”, “Ya’akov, Ya’akov”, and “Sh’mu’el, Sh’mu’el” are said to signify love and encouragement according to *Numbers Rabbah 14:21*, quoting **B’resheet/Genesis 22:1; B’resheet/Genesis 46:2, Sh’mot/Exodus 3:4; and Sh’mu’el Alef/1st Samuel 3:10**.

Today, as His servants, HaShem is also calling us to draw near to Him. Whether it’s in a crowded auditorium or in our prayer closet, it makes no difference to Him. Regardless of when or where He calls, it will not escape the confines of the Tabernacle/Temple (**1 Corinthians 3:16**). Just as the people outside the Tabernacle did not hear the voice of Adonai, His voice to you will not be heard by those around you. HaShem always broadcasts on the same frequency; it’s up to us to adjust our receivers to tune in and hear what He is telling each one of us.

What A Bloody Mess!!!!

Another week and more revelation! I remember when I finally came to the realization the priests were not the ones doing the sacrificing. In all of **Vayikra/Leviticus Chapter 1** you read phrases like . . .

- “he must offer . . .”
- “he is to bring . . .”
- “he is to lay his hand . . .”
- “he is to slaughter . . .”
- “he is to skin . . .”
- “he is to wash . . .”
- “he is to cut into pieces . . .”

The “he” mentioned was the family leader, people like you and me. There is commentary which states many prostrated themselves unable to kill the lamb which they had brought as their sacrificial offering.

The *cohanim/priests* were responsible for . . .

- presenting the blood
- splashing the blood against the altar
- putting fire on the altar
- arranging the wood
- arranging the pieces of the sacrifice
- causing it to go up in smoke

Vayikra/Leviticus 1:2 speaks of bringing “an offering to HaShem”. When the word HaShem is used, it represents the tetragramaton, the Four Letter Name of G~d, which always represents **His Attribute of Mercy** and is always used in connection with offerings. **Elohim** is never used in connection with offerings as it **always** represents **His Attribute of Judgment**.

The **Burnt Offering** comes from the Hebrew word (oh-lah) **olah** (עֹלָה), meaning **to rise up** or **ascending** just as smoke rises up from the burnt offering. Additionally, it was completely burned up, i.e. completely consumed on the altar, ascending as a soothing aroma to HaShem.

Rashi interprets the “soothing aroma” as a metaphor for man’s obedience. He explains the aroma of the sacrifice is pleasing to HaShem because it is a token of His children’s obedience. When HaShem smells the sacrifice, He delights in the human being who has gone to such effort to draw near/close to Him.

Oh, one last thing, one of the Sages quoted in the Stone Edition of the Artscroll Chumash “states that it is called **olah** because it is superior to all other offerings because it is voluntarily brought and is offered on the Altar in its entirety.” (**Vayikra/Leviticus 1:1-17; 6:8-13**) The **olah** was offered during the three Pilgrim Feast Days of (Pay-sahk) Pesach, (Shah-voo-oat) Shavuot and (Sue-coat) Sukkot. It was also offered by the (Kohen Hah-Gah-dole) **Cohen HaGadol/High Priest** on (Yome Kip-poor) **Yom Kippur/Day of Atonement**. This same olah was also offered by a woman who had given birth.

CHAPTER 2

I found it interesting, in **verse 1**, the English word(s) **anyone** or **a person** was translated from the Hebrew word (neh-fehsh) **nefesh** (נֶפֶשׁ) which literally means **soul**.

In **verse 11** we learn no leaven OR honey is to be brought to the altar for a fragrant aroma; it is not to go up in smoke as an offering. It can be brought as an offering of first fruits but not to be burned on the altar.

According to Rabbi Chinuch, “The prohibition against offerings of leaven and fruit-honey conveys a moral lesson regarding the full range of man’s service of G~d. Man should not be sluggish, as symbolized by the slow process of leavening; nor should he be obsessed with the pursuit of pleasures, as symbolized by the sweetness of honey.”

In **verse 13** we are instructed to season, not only every grain offering with salt, but we are to “offer salt with all your offerings”. Salt symbolizes G~d’s immutable covenant, because it preserves what was and inhibits change. **B’midbar/Numbers 18:19** will go further in referring to salt as a covenant between HaShem and His family. Then to top it all off, our G~d is a Southern G~d because He likes “grits and olive oil”!! ☺ Check it out; **verse 16** in the Complete Jewish Bible.

Throughout this entire chapter, the *cohen/priest* causes only a “reminder portion” to go up in smoke because the remainder of these offerings belongs to Aharon and his sons.

The *Grain Offering*, in Hebrew (men-kah) *minchah* (מִנְחָה), which means *to cause to rest*, is an offering of flour, oil and frankincense. Rabbi Hirsch comments “the name *minchah* implies “a tribute to a superior” and our friend in Jerusalem, Rabbi Ya’akov Youlus says it means “a gift offering”. As the staple of the human diet, grain represents our very existence; this meal offering proclaims the bearer’s acknowledgment his life is (B’yah-deem HaShem) *B’yadim HaShem/in G~d’s hands*. The oil symbolizes comfort, and the frankincense represents joy and satisfaction. By means of his offering, the owner acknowledges these, too, are from G~d alone.” (**Vayikra/Leviticus 2:1-16; 6:14-23**)

This particular offering is SO symbolic of our Messiah Yeshua. He was born in a city called Bethlehem, in Hebrew (Bayt Leh-kehm) *Beit Lechem* (בֵּית לֶחֶם), which means *house of bread*. While He was still there, men from the east brought frankincense, just like the grain offerings were offered with frankincense. The grain offerings were anointed with oil. *Messiah* means *anointed one*. The grain offerings were prepared unleavened and Messiah’s life was one free of sin and corruption. In **Yochanan/John 6:41**, Yeshua said He was the bread which came down from heaven, and just as the matzah was shared with the priest, at Yeshua’s Last Seder, He broke the matzah and gave it to His (tahl-me-deem) *talmidim/disciples*, instructing them to “take, eat . . . this is My body, which is given for you” (**Mattityahu/Matthew 26:26; Luke 22:19**).

CHAPTER 3

This chapter is about the Peace Offerings. According to **verse 17**, we are not to consume any fat or any blood. Now, I wouldn’t think of eating or drinking blood and I wouldn’t eat just plain old fat but a steak with marbled fat has been another matter. I don’t go out to eat very often but when I do, I usually order a salad. However sometimes I used to order steak because it’s something I normally didn’t cook at home. The tastiest steak is one well marbled with . . . fat, of course! After I spent some time in my prayer closet I was able to obey my Heavenly Father about this dietary guideline as well as the others. And like, “D-U-U-U-U-H-H-H!!!”

what have the doctors been advising for the last several years? Limit fat intake!!! Gee, it's too bad we haven't been given this directive sooner! "Oh, but Batyah . . . that's under the LAW!!!! We're not under the law anymore." I'm sorry, the Law/Torah has never been abolished!!! On top of that, HaShem sure did give us some good advice concerning our dietary intake and that was . . . how many thousands of years ago????? Additionally, the rest of **verse 17** says it is a **permanent regulation** through **all generations** WHEREVER you live!!! Oh well

Yochanan/John 14:15 tells us Yeshua said, "If you love me, keep my commandments". Yeshua's younger brother **Ya'akov/James 4:12** says "There is one lawgiver, who is able to save and to destroy." This indicates to me Yeshua and Adonai are (eh-khad) *echad/one*. Consequently, we should keep all His commandments from the front to the back!!!!

The *Peace Offering*, or (Sh-lah-meem) *Sh'lamim* is from the Hebrew word *shalom* (שלום) meaning **peace**. This offering, is also called the Fellowship offering and symbolizes being at peace with HaShem. (**Vayikra/Leviticus 3:1-17; 7:11-36**) From one commentary, I learned the following: In the year 70 CE, the second Temple in Jerusalem was destroyed by the Romans and the people panicked because they could no longer offer sacrifices. Rabbi Yochanan ben Zakkai and other scholars, from the 1st Century, introduced a new approach to serving G~d which no longer required bringing physical sacrifices. They were able to institute this change because they believed the people would always observe Torah under any kind of circumstances. Therefore, they instituted prayer as a substitute for physical sacrifices until the Temple would be rebuilt. Since a sacrifice is an act of getting closer to G~d, they believed this could be done through prayer. (And I do too!!!)

CHAPTER 4

Vayikra/Leviticus 4:12 speaks of taking the entire bull "outside of the camp." When *B'nei Isra'el/Children of Israel* were in the Wilderness, this meant outside all three camps: the camps of the (Sheh-key-nah) *Shechinah*, of the Levites, and of the Israelites. This perhaps will make more sense when we begin schlepping across the desert.

In my readings, the most simple, impressive, explanatory meanings for *offering* and *sacrifice* are these:

- *Offering* implies a gift which satisfies the receiver.
- *Sacrifice* implies giving up something one values for the benefit of another.

Here is some (Eve-reet) *Ivrit/Hebrew* concerning the sacrifices from the (Say-fer Vah-yee-krah) *Sefer Vayikra/Book of Leviticus*. The general term for *sacrifice* is *korban*. This has been translated "sacrifice" but it comes from the Hebrew word (kah-rahv) *karav* meaning *to draw near*. In other words, it's not the killing of the animal or even the shedding of the

animal's blood but rather **drawing near to HaShem** which makes a difference. Let's read **Vayikra/Leviticus 10:3**, "Moshe said to Aharon, "This is what Adonai said: 'Through those who are near me I will be consecrated, and before all the people I will be glorified.'" The shedding of the sacrificial blood is important but the main purpose is to draw a man or woman near/close to G~d.

According to Rabbi Ya'akov Youlus, Torah puts emphasis on the intentions of the person bringing the sacrifice. The intention or attitude of this person is primary while the sacrifice, itself, is secondary.

The **Sin Offering**, from the Hebrew root word (khet) **chet**, meaning **sin**, can also mean **to purify**. If you recall, several weeks ago, we learned the symbol for this root word (כ) was painted over the doorposts when **B'nei Yisrael/Children of Israel** left (Mitz-rah-yeem) **Mitzrayim/Egypt**. This offering is also referred to as (khah-taht) **Chatat** (חטאת). (**Vayikra/Leviticus 4:1-5:13; 6:24-7:7**)

CHAPTER 5

The variable-offering is addressed in **verses 1-13** and Torah lists three specific sins this covers:

- the sin of denying testimony (**verse 1**)
- the sin of contaminating the holy things (**verses 2-3**)
- the sin of false or unkept oaths. (**verse 4**).

Verses 14-26 tell us about the guilt-offerings with specific mention in **verses 17-19** "in case of doubt".

The **Trespass Offering** comes from the Hebrew word (ah-shahm) **asham** (אָשָׁם) which simply means **guilt**. Someone, who sinned unintentionally, made this offering once they became aware of their sin. Looking at the Hebrew word **asham** I thought it was interesting those are the very letters which begin the English word "ashamed" which usually transpires when we are guilty of something. (**Vayikra/Leviticus 5:14-6:7; 7:1-7**)

I can remember when **verses 17-19** really hit home with me. "If someone sins by doing something against any of the **mitzvot/commandments** of Adonai concerning things which should not be done, he is guilty, even if he is unaware of it; and he bears the consequences of his wrongdoing . . . concerning the error which he committed, even though he was unaware of it; and he will be forgiven. It is a guilt offering – he is certainly guilty before Adonai."

Let's make this relevant to our daily lives. Many are beginning to see the things we have been taught are opposed to Torah and are wrong. We have observed holidays which are not only opposed to the stated ways of Torah but are pagan in origin. Consequently, we have suffered through our ignorance . . . from sickness in our bodies, to our children not walking with HaShem, to a host of other things.

- It is time for us to admit our wrongdoing.
- It is time to turn away from man's ways.
- It is time to ask forgiveness and turn to the ways of Torah.

Remember, Torah is the way to live your life AFTER you receive salvation.

It is important to note . . . forgiveness mentioned above is a form of GRACE. HaShem has always made grace available to those who repent.

Pesach/Passover is a perfect time to put action to our words. Will you observe ***Pesach / Passover***? Or will you decide on easter. It takes very little research to find out easter is NOT biblical. It was not observed in the Book of Acts or any other 1st Century assembly. It was instituted by Constantine in the fourth century and is a celebration to the fertility goddess, Ishtar. Come on, bunnies laying eggs???? And where did the colored eggs come from anyway? They were eggs dipped in the blood of sacrificed babies, at dawn on Sunday morning! Are colored eggs really child's play? Does anyone really think that one was from the Bible?

The following is from Richard Rives with Just the Facts. "Visitors to Jerusalem are many times taken to the church of the Holy Sepulcher and told that the crucifixion and resurrection of Christ took place on that spot. What they are not told is that the church of the Holy Sepulcher is built on the site of a Roman temple dedicated to Aphrodite, the goddess of love.

The basis for the timing of the worship of the pagan fertility goddess, was the vernal or spring equinox. At this time of year, the fertility rituals of pagan sun worship have been observed since antiquity. It is important to note that the supposed Christian festival of Easter is based on the same astrological event observed by pagan sun worshippers, the vernal or spring equinox.

It is also important to note that the worship of Aphrodite was closely associated with that of the sun god Tammuz, whose birthday was known to be December 25th. Both events, Christmas and Easter are based on celestial events.

Every year at Easter, thousands of Christians crowd into the courtyard at the church of the Holy Sepulcher, hoping to gain entrance into the church. Before the church was built, thousands of pagan sun worshippers crowded into the very same courtyard, at the very same time of year.

There is no Biblical basis for the observance of Easter, the pagan festival in honor of the spring fertility goddess. The crucifixion and resurrection took place at the time of Passover, not Easter. Contending for the faith once delivered to the Saints.”

On the other hand, Passover is biblical. It is a celebration HaShem refers to as everlasting. We know Yeshua observed Passover, as well as His disciples, which **IS** found in the Book of Acts. Rabbi *Sha’ul/Saul/Paul* admonished the Corinthians as well as the Colossians to observe the Feasts. For those of us who remember WWJD, I ask you, What Would Jesus/Yeshua Do? Would He observe a pagan ritual or a Biblical Feast? I think we can figure out the answer!! As Rico Cortes says, **“If you said ‘It doesn’t mean that to me!’ I remind you, you are not G~d and it does mean that to Him!!!”**

There are three additional offerings . . .

- The **Sacrifice of Thanksgiving** or **thank offering** comes from the Hebrew word (toe-dah) **todah** (תודה) meaning **thanksgiving**.
- The **Voluntary Offering** or **freewill offering** comes from the Hebrew word (neh-deh-vah) **nedevah** (נדבה) meaning **to give willingly** for no other reason than because one wants to give something to the L~rd.
- The **Consecration** or **Ordination Offering** is from the Hebrew word (mill-oo-eem) **miluim** (מלואים) which comes from a root meaning **completeness** or **to be full**.

Theses terms speak to one critical issue; through sin, man has separated himself from G~d and Adonai, **Himself**, provided a way of return. The way is outlined in the sacrificial system and is fulfilled in the offering of **Yeshua HaMashiach/Jesus the Messiah** on the altar of Calvary. According to **Vayikra/Leviticus 17:11**, the blood of the sacrifice makes atonement (at ~ one ~ ment) for our souls and establishes peace between us and HaShem.

Verses 20-26 in the Complete Jewish Bible and **Chapter 6:1-7** in other translations cover the guilt-offering for thefts. “If someone sins and acts perversely against יהוה by dealing falsely with his neighbor in regard to a deposit or security entrusted to him, by . . .

- stealing from him
- extorting him
- swearing to a lie
- dealing falsely in regard to a lost object he has found

. . . he is to restore it in full PLUS an additional one-fifth; he must return it to the person who owns it on the day when he presents his guilt offering. Let’s see . . . the original amount plus

20%. If more of Torah were observed today, there would probably be less stealing, extortion, lying, etc!!!!

Vayikra ~ ויקרא ~ And he called
Haftarah: Yesha'yahu/Isaiah 43:21~44.23

I read an interesting commentary by Torah Teacher, Ariel ben-Lyman HaNaviy. Here are some of his comments concerning what he calls the “prophetic servant theme”. This is introduced in **Yesha'yahu/Isaiah 41:8**. The theme, specifically the Hebrew word (ahv-dee) *ahvdi* translated as *my servant* continues through the following chapters and verses:

- Yesha'yahu/Isaiah 41:9
- Yesha'yahu/Isaiah 42:1
- Yesha'yahu/Isaiah 42:19
- Yesha'yahu/Isaiah 43:10
- Yesha'yahu/Isaiah 44:1 & 2
- Yesha'yahu/Isaiah 44: 21 & 26
- Yesha'yahu/Isaiah 48:20
- Yesha'yahu/Isaiah 49:5-7
- Yesha'yahu/Isaiah 50:10
- Yesha'yahu/Isaiah 52:13 ending with
- Yesha'yahu/Isaiah 53:11

Ben-Lyman encourages us “to go back and read the entire section beginning with **Chapter 41:8** and don't stop 'til you get through **Chapter 53**. I can assure you most Christians don't read this much. To be sure, most just start in Chapter 53!” No wonder our Jewish brethren interpret the servant as Isra'el while the Church interprets him as Yeshua. My suggestion is both are right to a degree.

The (p'shaht) *p'shat/plain* or *literal* meaning of most of these instances is Isra'el, the servant of HaShem. But in a (reh-mehz) *remez/hint* and even a (drawsh) *drash/searching* the prophet **Yesha'yahu/Isaiah**, under the inspiration of the **Ruach HaKodesh/Holy Spirit** meant the coming servant Messiah! The nation of Israel as a whole cannot see in these verses the *remez* or the *drash*, but only the *p'shat*. This is proof of their spiritual blindness through their ever-increasing “defensive theology”. On the other hand, the Christians, as a whole, cannot see in the same verses the *p'shat*. They only see the *remez* and *drash*, which is proof of stubborn pride and ever increasing “replacement theology”.

Here is the key: Yeshua personifies the Hebrew people. He is the prophetic servant chosen by HaShem to suffer on account of all peoples in the world. He is the model servant of the Hebrew people, representing the perfect picture of what the Servant of servants should look like. He is the quintessential Jew! And, is the One chosen to atone for the sins of the world by the Holy One, Himself. Every facet of the Temple sacrifices shows Him and His sacrifice. He alone is worthy to be worshipped as Meshiach!”

In closing (the first one) let's re-read **Yesha'yahu/Isaiah 44:1-23** I believe I can and will be reading Yesha'yahu with even deeper meaning and clarity than ever before, from both sides of the fence.

As an aside from this same scripture reading, check out **44:12**. "If he doesn't drink water, he grows tired". That just blessed me, being an observant water drinker for several years; I now have the scriptural basis for doing so!!!

Jewish Tradition

When the Temple was destroyed, tradition teaches the Divine Presence departed. It is believed a taste of holiness still remains at the Western Wall. In addition, all synagogues and places of Torah study are considered to be miniature Temples where one can feel the Divine Presence as well. May it be so!

Vayikra ~ ויקרא ~ And he called

B'rit Hadashah: Romans 8:1-13; Ivrim/Hebrews 10:1-14 & 13:10-16

Romans 8:1-13 I have a question here . . . is Torah weak or are we weak? Actually, I think the Torah works in us to bring us to HaShem. It makes us aware of what He declares is and is not sin. Torah should be a guide in our lives each and every day. If the Torah fails us, it is because we have failed it. The Torah can only work in us if we have the faith to live it out in our daily lives.

Many believe **verse 1** makes Torah null and void because of Yeshua's sacrifice. I believe this verse is greatly misunderstood. Yeshua's death **doesn't free us from the obligation of Torah** but **it does free us from the penalty of Torah** which brought death, often by stoning. Through Messiah Yeshua, we have eternal life but only if we ask for forgiveness and place our faith in HaShem. Our eternal life through Yeshua does not remove the Torah from guiding our lives. Why should it? Torah guided Yeshua's life and He became the perfect "Lamb of G~d" without fault. The only way He could achieve such is by obeying Torah. Should we do any less? To know what is right and wrong, we need to look to the Torah. Remember, the "New" Testament is not really "NEW" it is The Renewed Covenant. It is just that – renewed!!!

Ivrim/Hebrews 10:1-14 First of all, **verse 1**, says "For the Torah has in it a shadow of the good things to come . . ." I think we can all agree, each year, as we study Torah, we see more and more fore-shadows of Yeshua.

For the believers in Yeshua, the sacrificial system **for sin** was abolished after the final sacrifice of Yeshua. However, the daily, continual sacrifices, the tamid and other (core-bah-note)

korbanot/sacrifices to HaShem were not meant to atone for sin. This is why Rabbi *Sha'ul / Saul / Paul* (Acts 21:25 and 24:17) and Yeshua's other (tahl-me-deem) *talmidim/disciples* continued to worship in the Temple and offer sacrifices until the Temple was destroyed in 70 AD approximately 40 years after Yeshua's death.

Ivrim/Hebrews 13:10-16 As believers, our altar is in heaven. Yeshua made the once-for-all sacrifice of Himself on the altar "outside the camp". Just as the sin offering was burned outside the camp, so Yeshua's death took place "outside the camp". Our (tah-meed) *tamid*/"*continual offering*" should be those of praise to HaShem as we await the second coming of our Messiah.

ON A PARTING NOTE: As the Torah describes the sacrificial service, it says when the smoke of the offering rises to heaven, it will be a "soothing aroma to the L~RD" (Leviticus 1:9). Regardless of how we understand it, Torah is clear HaShem takes delight in the sacrifices. He graciously accepts the gifts of His people, and the smoke which rises from the altar fires is as a soothing aroma to Him.

This seems difficult to reconcile with many statements in the prophets where HaShem speaks out against the sacrifices. For example, in the book of *Yesha'yahu/Isaiah* He says, "I have had enough of burnt offerings of rams and the fat of fed cattle; and I take no pleasure in the blood of bulls, lambs or goats ... bring your worthless offerings no longer" (*Yesha'yahu/Isaiah 1:11-13*). Likewise, in the book of *Yirme'yahu/Jeremiah* He says, "Your burnt offerings are not acceptable and your sacrifices are not pleasing to Me" (*Yirme'yahu/Jeremiah 6:20*). In the book of *Mal'akhi/Malachi* He says, "[If only] you might not uselessly kindle fire on My altar ... nor will I accept an offering from you" (*Mal'akhi/Malachi 1:10*).

In the early days of Christianity, the church fathers often cited texts like these to try to prove HaShem had never wanted the sacrificial system. Some used these and similar passages to suggest HaShem had given the sacrifices to the Jews as a punishment. They argued against the Jewish people, claiming Yeshua/Jesus had done away with the sacrifices because HaShem had always hated them.

That does not make sense. If HaShem always hated the sacrifices, why did He command the children of Israel to bring them in the first place? Why did He state over and over He was pleased with them?

A better explanation comes from a more careful reading of the prophets. When the prophets seem to speak against the sacrificial system, they are not condemning the mode of worship, they are condemning the worshippers. In every instance the prophetic rebuke is directed toward the immoral, disobedient people among the Israelites who were violating the covenant of Torah

while continuing to go through the motions of the sacrificial system. Though their hearts were far from HaShem, they continued to perform their religious rituals.

This can be compared to a wicked womanizer who beats his wife and cheats on her but continues to faithfully attend church every Sunday and take communion with the rest of the congregation. The religious ritual is meaningless and an insult to HaShem. Or suppose the same fellow, after beating his wife and cheating on her, dutifully sends her a bouquet of roses. Would she be pleased to receive the flowers? Hardly!!! She would say, "Your flowers are an abomination to me!" In the same way, HaShem hates religious rituals when they are performed hypocritically.

These lessons should be a warning to all of us. We must be careful not to develop any sense of right standing with HaShem because of ritual observances. HaShem is interested in the state of our hearts. Our outward rituals should reflect our inward conditions.

The corresponding Psalm for this Torah portion is: Psalm 50

Next Week: Parashah #25

Tzav ~ צַו ~ Give An Order

Torah: Vayikra/Leviticus 6:1~8:36

Haftarah: Yirmeyahu/Jeremiah 7:21~8:3 & 9:22-23

B'rit Hadashah: Mark 12:28-34; Romans 12:1-2; 1 Corinthians 10:14-23

Shavuah tov (Have a good week)!!!

Who fills his mind with Torah clears it of fear and folly.

Rabbi Chanina Sgan HaKohanim