

Sacrifices for the Glory of God

This weeks reading is from Parashat Vayikra (*Vayikra / Leviticus 1:1-5:26*). This is the first portion in the book of Leviticus (Vayikra, וַיִּקְרָא) whose name is derived from the first word in this book meaning “*And He called.*” In addition, the English name Leviticus is from the Latin Leviticus, which is a transliteration from the Septuagint (Greek) as a reference to the Levites, the tribe of Aaron, from whom the priests descended. This week we learn about the Whole Burnt Offering (*Olah Korban, 1:1-17*), the Grain Offering (*Minchat Korban, 2:1-14*), the Peace Offering (*Shelamim Korban, 3:1-17*), the Sin Offering (*Khatat Korban, 4:1-35*), and the Guilt Offering (*Asham Korban, 5:1-26*). The opening verses however are addressed all the people of Israel (1:2, בְּדִבְרֵי אֵל-בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל וְאֶמְרַתְּ אֲלֵהֶם אָדָם כִּי-יִקְרִיב מִכֶּם קֹרְבָן לַיהוָה מִן-הַבְּהֵמָה מִן-הַבֶּקָר וּמִן-הַצֹּאן תִּקְרִיבוּ) even though some passages address the priests specifically (6:8). Most of Leviticus (*chapters 1–7, 11–27*) consist of the Lord speaking to Moshe who is then commanded to repeat to Israel. The book of Shemot / Exodus narrates how Moshe led the Israelites in building the Tabernacle (*Shemot / Exodus 35–40*) based on the Lord’s instructions (*Shemot / Exodus 25–31*). Here in Vayikra / Leviticus, the Lord instructs Israel and the priesthood on how to make offerings in the Tabernacle and how to conduct themselves while encamped around the Tabernacle.

The first question that comes to mind regarding the Simchat Torah Series is what is joyful about all of these Sacrifices? In the book of Leviticus, as mentioned above, we find that God’s instructions deal with the ritual service of the priesthood, the moral, and the legal rulings that are required of the Lord’s people. The major point that comes out of the Leviticus is the idea that the Lord desires to dwell among His people (see *Parashat Bechukotai*). Vayikra / Leviticus details the importance of sin and impurity if one desires to go up to the Tabernacle to worship the Lord. The real question though is, “*what is it the Lord wants us to understand regarding the Sacrifices (Korbanot)?*”

The rabbis help us to understand the importance and significance of the sacrifices according to Midrash Rabbah Shemot, Parashat 51, Part 4. In the Midrash, the rabbis discuss the meaning of “*the Tabernacle of the Testimony.*” They say the Tabernacle of the Testimony is a reference that the Torah is the testimony of God to all the world. The testimony of God reveals to us that there is salvation in Israel. The Lord’s response to the question on the meaning of the Testimony is, “*As you live, I will cause My Shechinah to dwell in their midst, for it says, And let them make Me a sanctuary, that I may dwell among them (Shemot / Exodus 25:8).*” The “*Tabernacle of the Testimony*” describes the “*dwelling place of the Testimony of God.*” If we consider these words for a moment, from the perspective of the Apostolic Writings (NT), keeping His word hidden in our hearts, abiding in the Word and in Yeshua the Messiah, we have a Torah based understanding that the Lord, His glory, will dwell in our midst, just like what we find occurring in the book of Leviticus. This is a very biblical, Torah based, and rabbinic concept described in the Apostolic Writings. The Testimony of the Tabernacle, according to the rabbis in Midrash Rabbah, is paralleled to all the world (all of creation) knowing of the

forgiveness that God has given to Israel. The idea of forgiveness and salvation being found in Israel is a very significant concept. This is the heart of Simchat Torah, the joy of the Torah, in Parashat Vayikra. The Lord our God loved us so much, that He provided a way for the Salvation of Israel!

One of the ways God reveals His love for us in the Hebrew Scriptures, is how He works in our lives to confirm the covenant (the Salvation) that He has made. In Parashat Ekev, *Devarim / Deuteronomy 8:18* the Scriptures say the Lord enables us to live and work so that He can establish and confirm His covenant in us.

Devarim / Deuteronomy 8:11-18

8:11 'Beware that you do not forget the Lord your God by not keeping His commandments and His ordinances and His statutes which I am commanding you today; 8:12 otherwise, when you have eaten and are satisfied, and have built good houses and lived in them, 8:13 and when your herds and your flocks multiply, and your silver and gold multiply, and all that you have multiplies, 8:14 then your heart will become proud and you will forget the Lord your God who brought you out from the land of Egypt, out of the house of slavery. 8:15 'He led you through the great and terrible wilderness, with its fiery serpents and scorpions and thirsty ground where there was no water; He brought water for you out of the rock of flint. 8:16 'In the wilderness He fed you manna which your fathers did not know, that He might humble you and that He might test you, to do good for you in the end. 8:17 'Otherwise, you may say in your heart, 'My power and the strength of my hand made me this wealth.' 8:18 'But you shall remember the Lord your God, for it is He who is giving you power to make wealth, that He may confirm His covenant which He swore to your fathers, as it is this day. (NASB)

Devarim / Deuteronomy 8:18 translates literally to say, “*You remember the covenant of the Lord Your God, He is giving you the ability/power to make wealth, for the purpose of rising up His covenant which he swore to your fathers, this day.*” The Lord God preserves us by giving us the power to live and to earn a living. Is this not one of the greatest messages in the Scriptures that should encourage us to live in a worthy manner that brings glory to His name? This message goes even deeper while studying the book of Revelation which says, 12:11 says καὶ αὐτοὶ ἐνίκησαν αὐτὸν διὰ τὸ αἷμα τοῦ ἀρνίου καὶ διὰ τὸν λόγον τῆς μαρτυρίας αὐτῶν, καὶ οὐκ ἠγάπησαν τὴν ψυχὴν αὐτῶν ἄχρι θανάτου. (:והם ניצחהו למען דם השה ולמען דבר עדותם ולא אהבו את נפשם עד למות) *12:11 And they overcame him because of the blood of the Lamb and because of the word of their testimony, and they did not love their life even when faced with death. (NASB)* John says that they, the people of God, overcame the deceiver (the dragon, HaSatan) by the “*blood of the lamb*” (αἷμα τοῦ ἀρνίου, השה דם למען) by the way of the covenant that God has made. In addition to this, they also overcome by the “*word of their testimony*” (διὰ τὸν λόγον τῆς μαρτυρίας, ולמען דבר עדותם). The phrase “*Word of their Testimony,*” is filled with rabbinic and Torah based principles. When we give our testimony before men, we

speak of how God has worked in our lives, He has changed and transformed our hearts, the way we think, what we do, and how we interact with others. We speak of how the Lord has helped us to walk in righteousness, holiness, truth, and justice. The Lord God Almighty is working in our lives! The “*Word of their Testimony*” reveals the power of God that gives each of us the ability to live for Him. He gives us the ability to work for the very purpose of “*Establishing His covenant*” (לְמַעַן הִקְיִם אֶת-בְּרִיתוֹ). So when the Scriptures say “*they overcome by the blood of the lamb and the word of their testimony,*” based upon the Torah text from *Devarim / Deuteronomy 8:18*, we literally overcome with God’s help.

In Parashat Vayikra, we learn about the Whole Burnt Offering (*Olah Korban, 1:1-17*), the Grain Offering (*Minchat Korban, 2:1-14*), the Peace Offering (*Shelamim Korban, 3:1-17*), the Sin Offering (*Khatat Korban, 4:1-35*), and the Guilt Offering (*Asham Korban, 5:1-26*). According to the Apostolic Writings, Yeshua encouraged the Torah observance of bringing a sacrifice before the Lord according to the command of God. We find examples of this in the gospels of Matthew, Mark, and Luke.

Matthew 8:2-4

8:2 And a leper came to Him and bowed down before Him, and said, ‘Lord, if You are willing, You can make me clean.’ 8:3 Jesus stretched out His hand and touched him, saying, ‘I am willing; be cleansed.’ And immediately his leprosy was cleansed. 8:4 And Jesus said to him, ‘See that you tell no one; but go, show yourself to the priest and present the offering that Moses commanded, as a testimony to them.’ (NASB)

Mark 1:40-44

1:40 And a leper came to Jesus, beseeching Him and falling on his knees before Him, and saying, ‘If You are willing, You can make me clean.’ 1:41 Moved with compassion, Jesus stretched out His hand and touched him, and said to him, ‘I am willing; be cleansed.’ 1:42 Immediately the leprosy left him and he was cleansed. 1:43 And He sternly warned him and immediately sent him away, 1:44 and He said to him, ‘See that you say nothing to anyone; but go, show yourself to the priest and offer for your cleansing what Moses commanded, as a testimony to them.’ (NASB)

Luke 5:12-14

5:12 While He was in one of the cities, behold, there was a man covered with leprosy; and when he saw Jesus, he fell on his face and implored Him, saying, ‘Lord, if You are willing, You can make me clean.’ 5:13 And He stretched out His hand and touched him, saying, ‘I am willing; be cleansed.’ And immediately the leprosy left him. 5:14 And He ordered him to tell no one, ‘But go and show yourself to the priest and make an offering for your cleansing, just as Moses commanded, as a testimony to them.’ (NASB)

Yeshua healed the leper and told the man to go and show himself to the priests and offer the prescribed sacrifices. Note that the command to obey God's word was for the purpose of being a Testimony to the priests. This is a very important concept because in our own lives, we also are to obey God's word as a testimony to others, especially to the unsaved world.

In previous Torah studies (*See from Bits of Torah Truths, Parshiot Nitzavim and Vayelech - 2014 and Parashat Vayera - 2014 at www.matsati.com*) we discuss the idea that our lives consist of both physical and spiritual counterparts. The Torah and all of Scripture, teaches us about the physical and spiritual aspects of our lives. The example taken from Parashat Vayikra, we read **א וַיְדַבֵּר יְהוָה אֶל-מֹשֶׁה לֵאמֹר: ב דַּבֵּר אֶל-בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל לֵאמֹר נֹפֵשׁ כִּי-תִחַטָּא בְּשִׁגְגָה מִכָּל מִצְוֹת יְהוָה אֲשֶׁר לֹא תַעֲשִׂינָהּ וְעָשָׂה מֵאַחַת מֵהֵנָּה: 4:1** *Then the Lord spoke to Moses, saying, 4:2 'Speak to the sons of Israel, saying, 'If a person sins unintentionally in any of the things which the Lord has commanded not to be done, and commits any of them, (NASB)* If one sins, according to the covenant, he is to bring a sacrifice. The efficacy of this action is something that requires both faith and obedience. On a spiritual level, one receives the forgiveness of sins. But it isn't simply a matter of bringing a sacrifice, one must have a repentant heart, and seek the Lord for the forgiveness of sin. The Torah principle at work here is the manner in which one is seeking the Lord for forgiveness, the sacrifices, and turning from sin (Teshuvah, repentance). These concepts are emphasized in the rabbinic concept put forward in *Midrash Tehillim 50, Part 2* (מדרש תהלים פרק נ סימן ב) *Midrash Tehillim 50, Part 2* opens saying, *"I do not reprove you for your sacrifices (Tehillim / Psalms 50:8)."* The homiletic introduction to the Midrash states, *"Rabbi Nakhman taught in the name of Rabbi Berechiah, If a man intends to do a righteous act, the Holy One blessed be He, writes it down before Him, as if already done, for the verse goes on to say your rising thoughts are continuously before Me."* Rabbi Nakhman says that he learned from Rabbi Berechiah that if a man has the *"intention"* to perform a righteous act, the Lord writes it down as if he had already performed the act. According to this interpretation, the rabbis suggest that the spiritual supersedes the physical. This sort of interpretation is not restricted to *Tehillim / Psalms 50*, we also know that rabbi Yochanan Ben Zachai, taught the idea that *"G'millut Khasadim"* (*deeds of loving kindness*) may substitute for the blood atonement. The rabbinic teaching is that when one reads the commandments in the Torah regarding atonement, if a man reads with the correct intention, it is as if he has performed them. This interpretation is derived from select verses out of the Tanach such as the following:

Hosea 6:6 *For I desired mercy, and not sacrifice; and the knowledge of God more than burnt offerings.(KJV)* **ו כִּי חָסֵד חִפְצָתִי וְלֹא-זָבַח וַדַּעַת אֱלֹהִים מַעֲלֹת:**

Hosea 14:2 *Take with you words, and turn to the LORD: say unto him, Take away all iniquity, and receive us graciously: so will we render the calves of our lips. (KJV)* **ג קחוּ עִמָּכֶם דְּבָרִים וְשׁוּבוּ אֶל-יְהוָה אָמְרוּ**

אֱלֹהֵינוּ כָּל־תְּשׂוּאָה עֵוֹן וְקַח־טוֹב וְנִשְׁלַמָּה פְּרִים שְׁפִתֵינוּ:

These interpretations most likely were the result of the destruction of the second Temple coming out of The Council of Jamnia, which was held in Yavneh and the restructuring of Judaism into today's form of Rabbinical Judaism.

We also know these concepts are found in the Apostolic Writings regarding our faith in Yeshua the Messiah, we receive the forgiveness of sins being credited righteous due to the sacrifice of the innocent (the Messiah's sacrifice). In our world, it is generally understood that "*sacrifice*" involves some kind of loss, usually for the sake of a greater good. For example, a person may sacrifice time, pleasure, or happiness. Another example would be the death of a soldier in war which is often referred to as a sacrifice. Sacrifice, therefore involves giving up something. In the case of the ancient Israel, the practice that was referred to as "*sacrifices*," is better understood as giving over rather than giving up. The English word for "*sacrifice*" comes from the Latin, *sacrificare*, meaning "*to make sacred*," or to permanently transfer something from the human (common) realm to the divine or supernatural (sacred) realm. This meaning is appropriate for the sacrifices in the Masoretic Text, since they involve the transfer of offerings from the common to the sacred, from human beings to God. In the Hebrew Bible, the primary Hebrew term for a sacrifice is *Korban* (root word "*to draw near*"), indicating the basic ancient understanding of this activity. In the Hebrew Bible, the Lord God is the recipient of the legitimate sacrifices. One of the most helpful ways to think about sacrifices is as "*gifts*" given over to the Lord. We can understand this type of gift-giving by thinking about gift-giving in our own lives, especially that of young children to parents. Parents really don't need the gifts their children give them and for young enough children, the money used to purchase a gift comes from the parents themselves. This can be directly paralleled to the relationship between Man and God. The gift giving is important, because it expresses a relationship of commitment, care, and love. When they performed sacrifices, ancient Israel gave to God some of what they believed God had given them. This expresses a close relationship with the Lord, and shows the desire of God's people to draw near and deepen their relationship with Him. In some passages from the Torah, the sacrificial offerings are called "*food*" (see, *Vayikra / Leviticus 3:11, 21:6, and 22:25*). Referring to a sacrificial offering as food makes sense in a culture in which the sharing of meals is an important means and marker of trust, intimacy, and connectedness. Sharing food with God, even though God doesn't need food, marks and sustains the relationship, which was the whole purpose of the Tabernacle and for the Lord God dwelling amongst His people and the people trusting in Him. In the Hebrew Bible, sacrifice always involves transformation and the most common way to transform something as a "*sacrifice*" is to destroy it., Destruction removes the animal from the earthly realm into the Spiritual realm, both of which we live in as mentioned earlier, the physical and spiritual counterparts. The Scriptures tell us that what the Lord received from a sacrifice was the smoke of the burning, as a "*pleasing aroma*" (*Vayikra / Leviticus 1:13*). By the smoke of the transformed sacrifice, the Lord God enjoyed a fellowship meal with human beings.

Simchat Torah, the Joy of Torah, is found in the knowledge that the Lord God, our Father in heaven, loves us to the extent that He has provided a means for the forgive-

ness of sins. But not only that, we find within the Sacrificial system an intimacy that surpasses our understanding, His love requires our love and trust in Him, which fosters a deep connectedness that no one had seen before (i.e. the nations). In and through Yeshua the Messiah, we have God Himself dwelling within the Tabernacle of our bodies, the indwelling of God's Holy Spirit. Halleluia!