

PARASHAH: Vayikra (He called)
ADDRESS: Vayikra (Leviticus) 1:1-5:26 (6:7)
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(Note: all quotations are taken from the Complete Jewish Bible, translation by David H. Stern, Jewish New Testament Publications, Inc., unless otherwise noted)

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Let's begin with the opening blessing for the Torah:

***“Baruch atah YHVH, Eloheynu, Melech ha-‘Olam,
asher bachar banu m’kol ha-amim,
v’natan lanu eht Torah-to.
Baruch atah YHVH, noteyn ha-Torah.
Ameyn.”***

(Blessed are you, O' LORD, our God, King of the Universe,
you have selected us from among all the peoples,
and have given us your Torah.
Blessed are you, LORD, giver of the Torah.
Ameyn.)

This is the beginning of the book of **Vayikra** (say "vah-yeek-rah"), also known as Leviticus. The English title comes from the fact that the book is primarily written about the many functions within the Levitical priesthood. Our Hebrew title comes from the ancient practice of naming a book or portion after one of the opening few words. The Stone edition **TaNakh** has this to say about the book of Vayikra:

In the lexicon of the Talmudic Sages, the Book of Leviticus is called *Toras Kohanim*, the Torah of the Kohanim, or priests, because most of the Book deals with the laws of the Temple service and other laws relating to the priests and their responsibilities. The opening chapters of the Book deal exclusively with animal "korbanos", a word that is commonly translated as either sacrifices or offerings, but the truth is that the English language does not have a word that accurately expresses the concept of a korban. The word "sacrifice" implies that the person bringing it is expected to deprive himself of something valuable—but God finds no joy in His children's anguish or deprivation. "Offering" is more positive and closer to the mark—indeed, we use it in our translation—but it too falls short of the Hebrew korban. Does God require our gifts to appease Him or assuage Him? "If you have acted righteously, what have you given Him?" (Job 35:7); God does not become enriched by man's largess.¹

¹ *Tanach*, (Stone Edition, ArtScroll Series, Mesorah Publications), p. 243.

Indeed, much of the concept of sacrifices is foreign to our 21st century ears. As believers in Messiah Yeshua, we understand that the Levitical priesthood has been superseded by his own effectual, bloody sacrifice made on the Heavenly Altar. A thorough study of the book of Hebrews (called Messianic Jews in another well-known translation) would do well to help the average reader understand the concepts that the book of Vayikra is ultimately pointing to. For those of you who are new readers, it is imperative that you understand what I have previously stated in a former parashah concerning sacrifices and our relationship to Yeshua as believers. Here is a brief recap for those folks:

As was stated in a previous parashah, God's system of animal sacrifices, with their ability to cleanse or "wash" the flesh, was never intended to be a permanent one. Conversely, the animal sacrifices were not intended to be a "temporary fix" either. In fact the etymological background of the word Torah (the root word being an archery term meaning to "direct towards the goal") also suggests that the fullest measure of HaShem's atonement (Hebrew=kafar כָּפַר is usually translated "to atone," "to cover over," "make reconciliation," "pacify," "propitiate," "purge."²) was not found in the earthly copies, but rather, in the heavenly originals. Yet, during the time period of the TaNaKH, the animal sacrifices were authentically God's system. In other words, if you were a citizen of this community of former slaves, and you wanted to operate within a covenant relationship with its Savior, then you had no choice but to participate in the sacrificial system when approaching the Holy Tabernacle/Temple where God concentrated his Glory. There was no room for circumvention. Why would HaShem require exclusivity? Because, in his established order of things, only the blood could make atonement for their lives (read Leviticus 17:11). Tim Hegg makes a case for the meaning of the word kafar כָּפַר as "wipe off, smear on" in this quote from a short paper available from his site at torahresource.com as of 3-20-07:

The root *kpr* is attested in the Akkadian base stem *kaparu*, meaning "wipe off, smear on." This is classified with *kaparu* II, "pour bitumen over" and *koper* II, "pitch, tar, bitumen" and with the so-called D stem *kuppuru*, "to wipe off, clean, rub, ritually purify."

The idea that כָּפַר has its base meaning "to cover" was strengthened by the fact that the same root is used one time in the Tanach to mean "to cover with pitch," Gen 6:14. In this case, the verb appears in the *Qal* stem. However, every other place the verb is found in the Tanach, it is in either the *Piel*, *Pual*, *Hitpiel*, or the rare *Nitpiel*. Averbek notes that "from a methodological point of view, linguistically the same root in a different stem is a different word."³ As such, the *qal* should not necessarily be taken to indicate the meaning for the *piel* and other stems. Thus, the

² Brown, Driver, Briggs (BDB), כָּפַר.

³ NIDOTTE, 2:692-93.

suggestion that כָּפַר has as its base meaning “to cover” has been discarded by many current scholars, including evangelical scholars.⁴

Presenting the notion that the blood of the animals did not so much cleanse the worshipper as it cleansed the Holy Sanctum, Tikvat David (Hope of David) writes in an article titled “*Understanding the Sacrifices of Isra'el, Past and Future,*”

Most importantly, burnt, purification, and reparation offerings were made to cleanse the sanctuary of the people’s sin and impurity. The sins and ritual impurities of the people were like pollution that stuck to the tabernacle/ temple. God’s holy presence would withdraw from the land, which was also holy, if the people did not constantly cleanse to allow his presence near. This is the theology of Leviticus 15:31, “Thus you shall keep the people of Israel separate from their uncleanness, lest they die in their uncleanness by defiling my tabernacle that is in their midst.” This is also behind Numbers 5:3, “You shall put out both male and female, putting them outside the camp, that they may not defile their camp, in the midst of which I dwell.” See also Num. 19:13, 20 and Ezekiel 5:11 and 23:38. Thus, the Levitical sacrifices were not for obtaining personal forgiveness or for making the worshipper clean. In this sense, they were not like the cross of Yeshua, which does bring forgiveness to the worshipper and makes him or her clean. They were to clean the sanctuary of the people’s sins and impurities so God’s presence could dwell in a clean place.⁵

Hegg seems to make reference to such cleansing of the Tabernacle/Temple as well:

If we accept Averbeck’s viewpoint, that a primary meaning of כָּפַר (the *piel* stem) is to be found in those places where the verb has a clear direct object, then it’s base meaning is to be found in connection with Yom Kippur, for the verb with direct object occurs only in Lev 16 and the comparable passages in Ezek 43 and 45. If this is the case, then the base meaning is “to wipe away,” for in these contexts כָּפַר has a direct effect on *sancta*—it “wipes” *sancta* “clean,” meaning it restores the status of *sanctum* to that which had been defiled. In this way, the *qal* meaning of the verb, “to cover with pitch” is connected to the meaning of the *piel*, “to wipe (with blood).”⁶

⁴ Tim Hegg, The Meaning of כָּפַר, torahresource.com (<http://www.torahresource.com/Parashpdfs/kafarstudy.pdf>), p.1.

⁵ <http://www.hopeofdavid.com/article1.htm>

⁶ Tim Hegg, The Meaning of כָּפַר, torahresource.com (<http://www.torahresource.com/Parashpdfs/kafarstudy.pdf>), p 2.

I can agree as a writer with both aspects of this word kafar כָּפַר “cover,” and “wipe clean” with regards to the worshipper and the Sanctuary. For indeed, as the blood of the animals pointed towards the ultimate sacrifice of Yeshua, we (the cleansed worshipper) can now approach the Holy of Holies in Heaven without fear of contaminating God’s Throne. Whether or not we could theoretically approach the earthly Mercy Seat as believers is altogether another issue. Suffice it to say, with the above-supplied information, we can now better understand that our God was teaching each and every participant an important aspect of his established spiritual laws.

Washing and Wiping the Sins Away

The animal sacrifices conveyed both a temporal and an eternal message to the participants. The blood of bulls and goats is the shadow; Yeshua is the type. However, before we become so quick to look down on God’s “temporal shadows,” let’s look at what the sacrificial system of those days could accomplish. In Psalms chapters 32 and 51 we see the heart of man who genuinely experienced the forgiveness of HaShem. In Psalm 32:1 he stated that the man whose sin is covered is blessed! (Hebrew for “covered”=kasah כָּסָה) In verse 5 he clearly states that his acknowledgement of his sin brought about true forgiveness from HaShem. Because of unmerited favor, this man could rejoice in the mercies of HaShem (verses 10, 11)!

Psalm 51 was written after Dah-vid had committed the gross sin with Bat-Sheva, the mother of Melekh Shlomo (King Solomon). In this passage we again see a man who, knowing the true goal of the Torah—salvation of his eternal soul through the Promised One to come—sought the genuine forgiveness of his Maker.

Verses 16-19 of this Psalm explain to us readers that a heart given to genuine trusting faithfulness—the very same heart required of us today!—is what rendered the sacrifices of the TaNaKH effective. Simply performing the rituals perfunctorily did not please our Heavenly Abba (verse 16, 17). Rather, it was a heart broken in genuine submission to the Ruach Elohim (Spirit of God) that moved HaShem to forgiveness! This same heart gave the sacrifices validity (verse 19).

Did Dah-vid, as of yet, know the name of his future descendant Yeshua? We have no evidence to support that he explicitly knew the name “Yeshua.” What he **did** know is that through Moshe, the Torah promised that one day a “Prophet” would arise and that the people were to obey him (read Deuteronomy 18:15-19)! What he **did** have was a glimpse of the intended function and nature of the Torah (the “**goal**”), in that, these antitypes **pointed** towards that day when the corporate sins of all Isra'el would be forgiven, never again to be brought to HaShem’s mind. This is the day spoken about in Yirmeyahu (Jeremiah) 31:34,

“...for I will forgive their iniquity, and I will remember their sin no more” (KJV)

And just in case you've forgotten, this is a “New Testament” feature (read Hebrews 8:12)! According to the book of Hebrews, the sacrifices of Dah-vid's day could cleanse the flesh, but not the conscience, that is to say, I understand Hebrews to be teaching that only the eternal blood of a Sinless Sacrifice can regenerate the mind of an individual. By comparison, the blood of bulls and goats focused on the external:

For if the blood of bulls and of goats, and the ashes of an heifer sprinkling the unclean, sanctifieth to the purifying of the flesh: How much more shall the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered himself without spot to God, purge your conscience from dead works to serve the living God? (Hebrews 9:13, 14, KJV)

Moreover, the writer of Hebrews makes his point explicit in this additional passage:

The law is only a shadow of the good things that are coming—not the realities themselves. For this reason it can never, by the same sacrifices repeated endlessly year after year, make perfect those who draw near to worship. If it could, would they not have stopped being offered? For the worshipers would have been cleansed once for all, and would no longer have felt guilty for their sins. But those sacrifices are an annual reminder of sins, because it is impossible for the blood of bulls and goats to take away sins. (Hebrews 10:1-4, NIV)

The "Old Testament" saints were not "saved" by a different system than the one in which we rely on. If they were, then this would suggest that there were really two separate ways unto righteousness—a theory, which we know, cannot be true. Hegg's conclusion is fitting for our study:

The older idea that “atonement” was only a “temporary fix” for sins for those who lived in the time before the coming of our Messiah must be abandoned. The idea of atonement as portrayed in the Scriptures encompasses both a temporal aspect as well as an eternal one.⁷

To be sure, Yeshua himself stated emphatically that he was THE way, and that NO man can come unto the Father except through HIM.

⁷ Ibid, p. 5.

The sacrifices, performed with a genuine heart of repentance, afforded real-life forgiveness, but only to the purification of the flesh! However, the mortal blood of the animals in and of themselves—and by themselves—could not even take away sin; only the eternal blood of the Perfect Sacrifice—to which the animals pointed—could purify both flesh and soul.

Thus you could say that the blood of the animals “moved” as it were, the sin from the body of the person to the Mercy Seat (the earthly altar) where God would in fact grant genuine atonement (washing of sins of the flesh) because of the reality of the Heavenly Altar. Alternately, the blood of the animals “washed, wiped clean” the Holy Place where God “manifestly dwelt.” The objective faith of the individual still remained dependant upon God’s Promised Word to Come, namely Yeshua himself, yet his obedience was demonstrated by adherence to explicit Torah commands where sacrifices were concerned. What is more, the salvation of the eternal soul of an individual was always dependant upon a circumcised heart, exactly as it is today.

Types of Offerings

In all fairness, the topic of animal sacrifices was introduced to us way back in Exodus 29: 38-46

38 "Now this is what you are to offer on the altar: two lambs a year old, regularly, every day. 39 The one lamb you are to offer in the morning and the other lamb at dusk. 40 With the one lamb offer two quarts of finely ground flour mixed with one quart of oil from pressed olives; along with one quart of wine as a drink offering. 41 The other lamb you are to offer at dusk; do with it as with the morning grain and drink offerings - it will be a pleasing aroma, an offering made to ADONAI by fire. 42 Through all your generations this is to be the regular burnt offering at the entrance to the tent of meeting before ADONAI. There is where I will meet with you to speak with you. 43 There I will meet with the people of Isra'el; and the place will be consecrated by my glory. 44 I will consecrate the tent of meeting and the altar, likewise I will consecrate Aharon and his sons to serve me in the office of cohen. 45 Then I will live with the people of Isra'el and be their God: 46 they will know that I am ADONAI their God, who brought them out of the land of Egypt in order to live with them. I am ADONAI their God.

The tamid (continual) offering is in view here. FFOZ has provided a precise and theologically sound explanation for understanding the tamid offering mentioned in this passage:

Exodus 29:38–42. God ordained a daily worship service in the Tabernacle. The daily worship service was called the “continual burnt offering.” Every day, two male lambs were offered up as burnt offerings for this daily service.

The continual burnt offering (tamid, תמיד) began each morning with a male lamb offered as a burnt offering (olah, עולה). The lamb was slaughtered and placed on the fire on the altar as the first sacrifice of the day. Each subsequent sacrifice that day was placed on top of the continual burnt offering lamb. The lamb burned on the fire all day.

When the day’s service was over, and all the offerings had been brought, a second lamb was slaughtered as an olah and placed on top of the remains of that day’s offerings. The effect was that of sandwiching the whole day’s services between the two lambs of the continual burnt offering. The second lamb was left on the altar to burn through the night. The next morning, the ashes were removed and a new lamb was slaughtered and placed on the altar, beginning the process all over. Thus, a lamb was continually burning on the altar before the LORD. The Temple’s entire sacrificial service began with an olah, was offered on top of the olah, and was concluded with an olah. These olah offerings were called the continual burnt offering because one of them was continually on the altar fire.

The continual burnt offering was the most basic and regular function of the Tabernacle and the Temple. The prayer services, the singing of psalms, the lighting of the menorah, the burning of incense all occurred in conjunction with the continual offering. The continual burnt offering is the very center of the entire worship system.

The continual burnt offering was to be a remembrance of the offering made during the Exodus 24 covenant ceremony at Mount Sinai. For this reason, the burnt offering was to be continually upon the altar as a permanent token of the covenant. Its blood, splashed daily against the altar, was a reminder of the blood Moses splashed against the altar and onto the people. Without the continual burnt offering, no other sacrifices were possible. So too, without the covenant status, no further relationship with God was possible.

It is most likely a reference to the continual burnt offering which prompts Yochanan the Immerser to declare Yeshua as “the Lamb of God.” (John 1:29)⁸

⁸ First Fruits of Zion, *Weekly eDrash: The Daily Continual Burn Offering* (http://ffoz.org/resources/edrash/tetzaveh/the_daily_continual_burnt_offe.php).

As we can see the tamid offering was the first offering (an 'olah) presented at the beginning of each day. Jacob Milgrom takes note of the tamid in his JPS commentary to Numbers:

Abravanel remarks that the initial prescription ordaining the *tamid* “throughout the generations at the Tent of Meeting” (Exod. 29:42) means that it never ceased. In support, one should note that the text of the first public sacrifices in the Tabernacle explicitly states that it was offered “in addition to the burnt offering of the morning” (Lev. 9:17), meaning the *tamid*.⁹

It is the tamid that is also described in these verses:

1 ADONAI said to Moshe, 2 "Give an order to the people of Isra'el. Tell them, 'You are to take care to offer me at the proper time the food presented to me as offerings made by fire, providing a fragrant aroma for me.' 3 Tell them, 'This is the offering made by fire that you are to bring to ADONAI: male lambs in their first year and without defect, two daily as a regular burnt offering. 4 Offer the one lamb in the morning and the other lamb at dusk, 5 along with two quarts of fine flour as a grain offering, mixed with one quart of oil from pressed olives. 6 It is the regular burnt offering, the same as was offered on Mount Sinai to give a fragrant aroma, an offering made by fire for ADONAI. 7 Its drink offering is to be one-quarter hin for one lamb; in the Holy Place you are to pour out a drink offering of intoxicating liquor to ADONAI. 8 The other lamb you are to present at dusk; present it with the same kind of grain offering and drink offering as in the morning; it is an offering made by fire, with a fragrant aroma for ADONAI. (Numbers 28:1-8)

With the tamid now explained we are better poised to examine the remaining five offerings of Leviticus chapters 1-5. These five are the types of offerings introduced in the opening pages of Leviticus:

'Olah (Burnt Offering) – Lev. 1:1-17

Minchah (Grain Offering) – Lev. 2:1-16

Sh'lamim (Peace Offering) – Lev. 3:1-17

Chata'at (Sin Offering) – Lev. 4:1-35; 5:1-13

'Asham (Guilt Offering) – Lev. 5:14-26

The first three could easily be considered “freewill offerings,” brought before HaShem by anyone at various times in the life of anyone in the community. The last two were required to make restitution for various sins. Such korbanot

⁹ Jacob Milgrom, *The JPS Torah Commentary to Numbers* (Jewish Publication Society, 1990), p. 240.

(chata'at and 'asham) are referred to as "expiatory." The expiatory korbanot shall occupy the bulk of the latter part of this commentary. Chabad.org will supply us with our standard descriptions of the first three korbanot.¹⁰

'Olah (Burnt Offering)

The first korban to be described is the olah, the "ascending" offering (commonly referred to as the "burnt offering"), whose distinguishing feature is that it is raised to G-d, in its entirety, by the fire atop the Altar.

The olah can also be a male sheep or goat, in which case the same procedure is followed.

A turtledove or young pigeon can also be brought as an "ascending offering." Instead of being slaughtered through shechitah (cutting of the throat), the bird is killed by melikah--nipping off the head from the back of the neck. The blood is applied to the wall of the Altar, and the bird's crop and its adjoining feathers are removed and discarded; then the bird's body is burned upon the Altar.¹¹

Upon analysis, we see that the daily 'olah service involved three different locations, in descending holiness:

- On top of the altar.
- Next to the altar.
- A ritually clean place outside the camp.

For Rabbi Abraham Isaac Kook (1865-1935), first Chief Rabbi of the Land of Isra'el, the completely burnt offering was a metaphor for the very highest level of contact between man and God. The fire on the altar reflects sublime experiences of inspiration and prophecy. At this level, the material world is of no consequence. The fire totally consumes the flesh of the offering, freeing man from the shackles of his physical reality.

The kindling of the holy flames on man's soul is outside the framework of normal life. Such Divine interaction is beyond the ordinary structures of human existence, both individual and collective. The 'olah offering burns on the altar itself.

Minchah (Grain Offering)

And a soul who shall offer a meal offering to G-d...

¹⁰ http://www.chabad.org/parshah/in-depth/default_cdo/aid/39682/jewish/In-Depth.htm

¹¹ Ibid.

Meal offerings, called menachot ("gifts"), are prepared of fine flour, with olive oil and frankincense. The priest removes a kometz ("handful"-- actually the amount grasped by his three middle fingers), to be burned on the Altar; the remainder is eaten by the priests.

There are five types of donated meal offerings: 1) the standard "meal offering" whose kometz is removed before it is baked; 2) the "baked meal offering," which came in two forms: loaves or 3) flat matzot; 4) the "pan-fried" meal offering; 5) the minchat marcheshet, deep-fried in a pot.

The following rule applies to all the meal offerings (including the "loaves"):

No meal offering, which you shall bring to G-d, shall be made leavened; for you shall burn no leaven, nor any honey, in any offering of G-d made by fire...

Another rule is that,

Your every meal offering shall you season with salt; never shall you suspend the salt covenant of your G-d.

This latter rule applies to all korbanot: "With all your offerings you shall offer salt."

Another meal offering mentioned here is the minchat bikkurim (also called the "omer") brought on the second day of Passover from the year's very first barley harvest. In this minchah, the kernels are roasted by fire before they are ground into flour.

(In addition, a meal offering accompanied all animal offerings.)¹²

Sh'lamim (Peace Offering)

The shelamim, or "peace offering," could be either male or female, and either from "the herd" (i.e., an ox or a cow), a sheep or a goat.

Like the olah, its blood was sprinkled upon the Altar; but unlike the olah, which "ascended" in its entirety upon the Altar, the meat of the shelamim was eaten by the "owner"--the one who brought the offering (two portions of the animal, the breast and the right thigh, were eaten by the priests). Only certain parts of the animal were burned on the fire atop the Altar:

¹² Ibid.

The fat that covers the inwards, and all the fat that is upon the inwards, and the two kidneys and the fat that is on them, which is by the flanks, and the appendage of the liver which he shall remove with the kidneys.

If the peace offering is a sheep, "the whole fat tail, up to the backbone" was added to these.

And the priest shall burn it on the Altar; it is [divine] food, a fire-offering, a sweet savor to G-d.

Because they are offered to G-d on the Altar, these specified veins of fat, which the Torah calls cheilev, are forbidden for consumption in all animals: "It shall be a perpetual statute for your generations throughout all your habitations: all cheilev and all blood, you shall not eat."¹³

Expiatory Sacrifices

A quote from the JPS Commentary to Leviticus is in order before we study the last two types of korbanot:

Chapters 4 and 5 contain the laws governing expiatory sacrifices, the purpose of which is to secure atonement and forgiveness from God. These offerings are efficacious only when offenses are inadvertent or unwitting. They do not apply to defiant or premeditated crimes. Whenever an individual Isra'elite, a tribal leader, a priest, or even the chief priest, or the Isra'elite community at large is guilty of an inadvertent offense or of failing to do what the law requires, expiation through such sacrifice is required.

The laws of chapters 4-5 do not specify all the offenses for which such sacrifices are mandated. We may assume, as did the rabbinic sages, that there is a correspondence between those offenses requiring the expiatory offerings and those punishable by the penalty known as karet, the "cutting off" of the offender from the community: The expiatory sacrifices are required for inadvertent transgressions that, if committed defiantly, would bring upon the offender the penalty of karet.¹⁴

It is important that we understand that the Torah does not clearly describe sins of "intent" in easy to understand terms. To be sure, "unintentional sins" are represented by a very technical term known in Hebrew as "bishgagah" (בִּשְׁגָגָה), a

¹³ Ibid.

¹⁴ Baruch A. Levine, *The JPS Torah Commentary to Leviticus* (Jewish Publication Society, 1989), p. 18.

word only found 6 times in Leviticus altogether.¹⁵ Tim Hegg remarks on bishgagah in this short commentary on the topic of “forgiveness:”

...A study of the words “unintentional” and “intentional” when describing sin reveals something different, however. In Leviticus 6:1-7, the sins for which a person may bring a guilt offering (אָשָׁם, ‘*asham*) include lying, theft, fraud, perjury, and debauchery. Yet in Leviticus 4, the sins of a leader or a common person for which a guilt offering may atone are called “unintentional” (בִּשְׁגָגָה, *bishgagah*). That is actually not a very good translation, however, for it makes it appear as though one can lie, steal, defraud, perjure oneself, and engage in all manner of debauchery without direct intent to do so! Actually, this word does not describe one’s attitude or intentions in the matter, but simply the class of sins for which there existed a prescribed sacrifice. The basic meaning of the word is “mistake” (and thus the English translators’ “unintentional”) but also simply means “unacceptable behavior.” What is striking is that nowhere in the Torah are “intentional sins” described. Rather, the opposite of so-called “unintentional” sin is the sin “of a high hand” (בְּיַד רָמָה, *b’yad ramah*) as in Numbers 15:30. This describes rebellion, a sin for which there is no expiation. Thus, as long as a person persists in his rebellion, there is no means of forgiveness. Only when he turns from his rebellion and seeks atonement through the prescribed sacrifices is he forgiven. There are therefore only two classes of sins described in the Torah: *bishgagah* (usually translated “unintentional”) for which there is expiation, and *b’yad ramah*, the “high hand” for which there is no expiation.¹⁶

Levine continues in his commentary to Leviticus to explain ‘asham and chata’at:

In substance, chapters 4-5 prescribe two principle sacrifices: the [chata’at] and ‘asham. The object of the [chata’at], usually translated “sin offering,” was to remove the culpability borne by the offender, that is, to purify the offender of his guilt (4:1-5:13). The “‘asham” usually translated “guilt offering,” was actually a penalty paid in the form of a sacrificial offering to God. It applied when one had unintentionally misappropriated property that belonged to the sanctuary or had been contributed to it; or, in certain cases, when one had sworn falsely concerning his responsibility toward the property of others. A false oath brings God into the picture directly. The sacrifice did not relieve the offender of his duty to make full restitution for the loss he had caused another. In fact, the offender was fined 20 percent of the lost value. The ‘asham merely squared the offender with his God, whose name he had taken in vain (5:14-26).¹⁷

¹⁵ Leviticus 4:2, 22, 27; 5:15, 18; 22:14.

¹⁶ <http://torahresource.com/EnglishArticles/ForgivenessTRNL.pdf>

¹⁷ Baruch A. Levine, *The JPS Torah Commentary to Leviticus* (Jewish Publication Society, 1989), p. 18.

Let us provide brief descriptions of the chata'at and the 'asham respectively:

Chata'at (Sin Offering)

The sin offering proper is a sacrifice consisting of either a beast or a fowl and offered on the altar to atone for a sin committed unwittingly. The rules concerning the sin offering are as follows: If the anointed priest or the whole congregation commits a sin through ignorance, the sin offering is a young bullock without blemish. Should the ruler so sin, his offering is a male kid without blemish. But when a private individual sins, his offering must be either a female kid or a female lamb without blemish, or, if he is too poor to provide one of these, a turtledove.

Sin offerings were brought on other occasions also. On the Day of Atonement the high priest inaugurated the festival with two sin offerings—a bullock as his own offering, and a male kid for the congregation. The flesh of these was not eaten, but after the fat had been removed the carcasses were burned outside the camp (Lev. 26:3, 5, 10-11, 25, 27). A woman, after the days of her purification had been fulfilled, was required to bring a dove for a sin offering, in addition to a burnt offering. A leper, on the day of his cleansing, was required to bring, besides other offerings, a female lamb or, if he were too poor, a dove for a sin offering (Lev. 12:6; 14:10, 19, 22).

'Asham (Guilt Offering)

Torah.org makes this note concerning the 'asham:

The Asham offering has many applications. Like the Chatas, it is a sin offering, however, the Asham atones for intentional sinning. Swearing falsely is one such example. "G-d is the unseen Third Party Who is present wherever and whenever one man has dealings with another, even if no other witnesses are on hand. G-d Himself is the Guarantor for the honest dealings between men. If therefore this guarantor is invoked as a witness when any factor in these dealings has been disavowed, it is not merely an act of ordinary faithlessness. For in this case the offender has pledged his priestly character, his relationship to G-d, as surety for his honesty".¹⁸

A standard Judaic definition of the 'asham might read something like this: *A guilt offering is an offering to atone for sins of stealing things from the altar, for when you are not sure whether you have committed a sin or what sin you have committed, or for breach of trust. The Hebrew word for a guilt offering is 'asham. When there was doubt as to whether a person committed a sin, the person would*

¹⁸ <http://www.torah.org/learning/rabbis-notebook/5762/tzav.html>

*bring an 'asham, rather than a chata'at, because bringing a chata'at would constitute admission of the sin, and the person would have to be punished for it. If a person brought an 'asham and later discovered that he had in fact committed the sin, he would have to bring a chata'at at that time. An 'asham was eaten by the cohanim.*¹⁹

Sinless Perfection?

HaShem's intent is to draw us close to him in genuine, loving fellowship. To this end, he has designed the entire flow of the Torah to lead us to the goal of developing the kind of trusting faithfulness that produces obedience and surrender to his Son, Yeshua HaMashiach! In the Torah, we see that a broken and contrite heart is the seedbed that will produce such a trust in HaShem. The sacrifices make up for the fact that we are less than perfect (sinless or blameless) in our attempt to secure a right relationship with our Heavenly Abba. Does the Torah expect perfection? No. Rather, it anticipates our failures and shortcomings, and consequently, makes the necessary provisions for them to be taken care of. Consider the example of the parents of Yochanan the Immerser (John the Baptist) in Luke 1:6. The Torah states, in no uncertain terms that,

"Both of them were righteous before God, observing all the mitzvot and ordinances of ADONAI blamelessly."

Does this mean that they were perfectly sinless? Of course not. They were human like the rest of us. The Torah simply recognized their abilities and efforts when it came to walking obediently in a genuine relationship with HaShem, and made it possible to maintain a right and healthy relationship through its system of offerings. But, as I stated earlier, the heart was the beginning of such a genuine relationship. Even the "Shema" testifies of this truth (read Deuteronomy 6:4-5)! Moreover, **"the obedience which flows from a genuine heart of trust is the natural, expected result of true, biblical faith!"**

"Calling Moshe..."

The closing book of Sh'mot and the opening few lines of Vayikra have been rightfully recognized by our sages as forming a complete unit of thought. It is easy for us to lose sight of this fact because of the separation of the books themselves. But remember, in the original scrolls no such separation existed. In Sh'mot 40:35 we read,

"Moshe was unable to enter the tent of meeting, because the cloud remained on it, and the glory of ADONAI filled the tabernacle."

Our opening verse in Leviticus reads in Hebrew,

¹⁹ <http://www.jewfaq.org/gorbanot.htm>

וַיִּקְרָא אֶל-מֹשֶׁה וַיְדַבֵּר יְהוָה אֵלָיו מֵאֹהֶל מוֹעֵד לֵאמֹר

"Vayikra el-Moshe va'y'daber ADONAI ey'layv mey'Ohel Mo-eyd, leymor:"

Which is translated,

"ADONAI called to Moshe and spoke to him from the tent of meeting. He said,"

Concerning their relationship, the phrase "called to Moshe" is very rarely used in the Torah. Usually we find HaShem speaking to, saying, or commanding him, but seldom calling him. The famous medieval sage Rabbi Moshe ben-Maimon, Maimonides (affectionately known as the "RaMBaM") comments on this opening verse in Vayikra:

"So great and awesome was the glory of God that covered the new Tabernacle that even Moses was afraid to enter until God "called" [to reassure him that the Tabernacle had been built to benefit Israel]."

Today HaShem is still speaking...bidding...indeed "calling" unto his children. The B'rit Chadashah (Apostolic Scriptures) informs us,

"God, who at sundry times and in divers manners spake in time past unto the fathers by the prophets, Hath in these last days spoken unto us by his Son, whom he hath appointed heir of all things, by whom also he made the worlds; Who being the brightness of his glory, and the express image of his person, and upholding all things by the word of his power, when he had by himself purged our sins, sat down on the right hand of the Majesty on high." (Hebrews 1:1-3, KJV)

Yes, HaShem is calling to us through the person of his only, unique Son! He desires for us to draw close to him in with a true heart! The paradox lies in the fact that unless he draws us, we will not seek his face, yet he bids us to seek him so that in seeking, he may indeed be found!

"Hasheevaynu ADONAI eylecha, v'nashuvah, chadeysh yameynu k'kedem."

(Bring us back to You, HaShem, and we shall return, renew our days as of old. Lamentations 5:21, ArtScroll Series)

The closing blessing is as follows:

***"Baruch atah YHVH, Eloheynu, Melech ha-'Olam,
asher natan lanu Toraht-emet,***

***v'chay-yeh o'lam nata-b'tochenu.
Baruch atah YHVH, noteyn ha-Torah.
Ameyn."***

(Blessed are you O' LORD, our God, King of the Universe,
you have given us your Torah of truth,
and have planted everlasting life within our midst.
Blessed are you, LORD, giver of the Torah.
Ameyn.)

"Shabbat Shalom!"

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