

הַדְּבָרָא
הַטֵּהִי



Ashreinu | אשרינו

Enhancing your Study of the Weekly Torah Portion



Kosher for Pesach Korban

Mrs. Amy Horowitz

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Rina Pollack ('24)

Amir Rindsberg ('24)

Mia Kogan ('23)

Elisha Marcus ('23)

Among the laws of *korbanot* that are detailed in this week's parsha is an interesting inclusion:

”כֹּל-הַמִּנְחָה אֲשֶׁר תִּקְרִיבוּ לַה' לֹא תַעֲשֶׂה חֶמֶץ כִּי כֹל-שָׂאֵר וְכֹל-דָּבָשׁ לֹא-תִקְטְרוּ מִמֶּנּוּ אֲשֶׁה לָהּ”

“No meal offering that you offer to Hashem shall be made with leaven, for no leaven or honey may be turned into smoke as an offering by fire to Hashem” (Vayikra 2:11).

A *korban mincha*, an offering made of a small amount of flour and oil, cannot be brought with any type of leavening agent, i.e., *chametz*. Although perhaps with Purim around the corner we have already started thinking about Pesach in

the back of our minds, it is still kind of a surprise to encounter a prohibition of *chametz* that has nothing to do with the coming holiday!

Why is *chametz* prohibited when bringing a *korban mincha*? What do the two even have to do with each other?

Let's consider the whole point of bringing a *korban*, which is to forge a connection with God. The animal we sacrifice represents our understanding that we can elevate even our most basic, materialistic selves to something holy by serving Hashem. Our *korban* demonstrates that we want to live a life of *kedusha* and connection with HaKadosh Baruch Hu.

But sometimes, despite our soul's deep desire to connect with God, we make choices that drive us further from that relationship. What gets in the way?

The gemara (Brachot 17a) relates that after he davened, R' Alexandri would say: "Hashem, it is our desire to do Your will, but the *chametz* in the dough prevents us!" How might we understand R' Alexandri's statement, that *chametz* is what stands in the way of my ability to really serve and connect with Hashem?

Reflecting on the nature of *chametz* reveals that *chametz* happens when a leavening agent (something that makes the dough rise) is given the time to work its magic. Each of these two components perhaps indicates a quality that potentially damages our ability to connect with God.

First, time. The midrash, in a play on words between matzot and mitzvot, suggests that we have to be careful to not let a mitzvah opportunity lag (become *chametz*). Too often, instead of jumping at the chance to do a mitzvah, we procrastinate, telling ourselves we'll do it later, or another time. We allow our mitzvot to become *chametz*, to lag, to wait until the timing is more convenient for us.

Second, the rise of the dough. Matzah is flat, but challah is puffy. When it comes to challah, the inflated dough is delicious, but a personality that is "puffed up", arrogant, full of itself, is not quite as appealing. Humility is a quality that I think we all appreciate and is especially precious to God.

So why can't we mix *chametz* with our korban? If our korban symbolizes our relationship with God, then there's no place for *chametz* on that altar! A relationship with God is not built on laziness and arrogance, but on commitment and good character. With every delicious bite of challah this weekend, let's remember that while there's a place for *chametz* at our Shabbat table, there's no place for "*chametz*" in our relationship with Hashem!

For Your Sake

Rina Pollack ('24)

It's often hard for us to understand the reasoning behind *korbanot*, like those mentioned in this week's parsha, Vayikra. Why would Hashem want us to sacrifice something physical for a spiritual being like Him? How can something so physical, like *korbanot*, make Hashem happy?

Rabbi Poupko suggests that if we shift our focus to realize that all of the mitzvot are for our own benefit and to improve our relationship with God, we find the answer. The word *korban* itself has the root ב-ר-ק, which means to come close. When we give to someone else, we come closer to them. We can learn from this that the generosity demonstrated by *korbanot* strengthens relationships, especially with Hashem. Giving *korbanot* was a way to connect with Hashem. Psychologically, giving increases our affection towards the receiver and vice versa. By giving *korbanot*, our love towards Hashem increases.

Rabbi Farhi explains that the *korban oleh* specifically is significant because Hashem only expects us to give what we can afford. A poor person and a rich person can achieve the same spiritual connection, because their contribution is proportional to their wealth. Hashem wants all Jews to have an equal opportunity to grow and become closer to Him, through the intriguing mitzvah of giving *korbanot*.

Help Wanted

Amir Rindsberg ('24)

The word *vayikra* translates in English to: "and he called." An entire *sefer* of Chumash bears this name, as well as the first parsha in the *sefer*. Why is *vayikra* such an important word that it became the title of one of the five *sifrei*

Chumash? Hashem considers calling out to others to be important, which can teach us a powerful lesson about accepting help. At the beginning of Vayikra, Hashem tells Moshe to tell Bnei Yisrael the laws regarding the Beit Hamikdash, like the instructions for the different sacrifices. Hashem goes through Moshe to get the message to Bnei Yisrael instead of telling them directly. Why doesn't Hashem just tell Bnei Yisrael Himself? Why does He need Moshe to get the job done?

Hashem already tried talking directly to Bnei Yisrael at Har Sinai, but that didn't go very well. They got scared and so Moshe took over. This is why from then on, Hashem went through Moshe as an intermediary to deliver messages to Bnei Yisrael. This can teach us a tremendous lesson. Hashem saw the circumstance and knew He needed Moshe's help. In our lives, we often have difficulty accepting any kind of help without society seeing us as weak and incapable. However, just the title of this week's parsha teaches us that asking for help is important and beneficial.

Hashem, the most powerful Being to ever exist, was able to accept help by appointing Moshe; how much more so we should not be ashamed to ask for or receive help. We too can accept help and emulate this aspect of Hashem.

Every Letter Counts

Mia Kogan ('23)

This week's Parshat Vayikra opens with the phrase, "וַיִּקְרָא אֶל-מֹשֶׁה" written with a small aleph. Why is the aleph small? The Ba'al Ha-Turim suggests that the word *vayikar*, which is *vayikra* without the aleph, means "casually calling", while the word *vayikra* means "to call with love." Moshe is the greatest prophet of the Jewish people, as we are informed:

"וְלֹא-יִקָּם נָבִיא עוֹד בְּיִשְׂרָאֵל כְּמֹשֶׁה"

"There will never be another prophet like

Moshe in Israel" (Devarim 34:10). Even though the non-Jews could boast of having a great prophet of their own, Bilaam, when Hashem speaks to Bilaam the pasuk reads, "וַיִּקְרָא אֱלֹקִים אֶל-בְּלָעָם" (Bamidbar 23:4). The aleph of *vayikra* is left out to illustrate that Hashem did not revel in the prophecy to Bilaam and only appeared to him in a casual, off-hand manner.

Being the ultimate humble person, Moshe preferred to write *vayikar* in reference to his relationship with Hashem. However, because of His deep love for Moshe, Hashem insisted that he write *vayikra* with an aleph. Moshe and Hashem compromised, and *vayikra* became written with a small aleph.

The Damesek Eliezer gives a second opinion. Concerning Moshe, the Torah says, "כִּי קָרַן עוֹר פָּנָיו" – "The skin of his face became radiant" (Shmot 34:29). The Midrash Rabbah explains that there was excess ink in Moshe's quill after he wrote the Torah, which dripped on his face and became the "rays of light". But is it possible that Hashem miscalculated and gave Moshe extra ink? Although Hashem wanted Moshe to write down *vayikra* with an ordinary aleph, Moshe insisted on writing it with a small aleph, and a small quantity of ink was left over, which became Moshe's "rays of light".

Putting these two ideas together, it seems that it is Moshe's humility that becomes his most "radiant" quality. We can learn from this that what makes us each shine are our internal values and good qualities, and not our efforts to seek the spotlight.

Stay Connected

Elisha Marcus ('23)

Parshat Vayikra begins almost immediately after the Mishkan was completed and Hashem "moved" into it. The second pasuk of this *sefer* says:

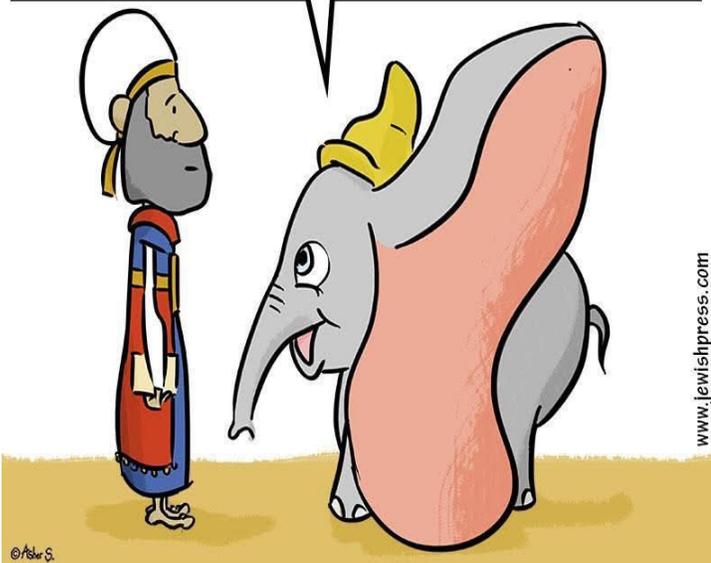
“דַּבֵּר אֶל בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל וְאָמַרְתָּ אֲלֵהֶם אָדָם כִּי יִקְרִיב מִכֶּם
קָרְבָן לַה' מִן הַבְּהֵמָה מִן הַבֶּקָר וּמִן הַצֹּאן”

“Speak to the children of Israel and say to them, ‘When a man among you brings an offering to Hashem from animals - from the cattle or from the sheep - you will bring your offering’ (Vayikra 1:2).

Now the obvious question is: why did Hashem ask this of **כלל ישראל** ? On a basic level He wants the Jews to serve Him by sacrificing animals to him. However, on a deeper level this pasuk means so much more than just giving Hashem sacrifices. In order to answer this question we need to go back to the **חטא העגל**, when the Jews sinned with the golden calf and Hashem forgave them. Now what does this have to do with this pasuk? The answer is that Hashem wants us to come back to Him; that even when we fall so far or think there’s no point, Hashem wants us to come back to Him because He loves us and He gives us ways to connect to Him, such as korbanot. These aren’t just things that Hashem is commanding us to do, but opportunities for us to get closer to Him through his mitzvot. Have a great Shabbos!

MESHUGANA MEMES

Take me off that sacrifice list and I'll make a fool out of myself in a Disney movie for you children's entertainment..



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FACULTY ADVISOR

RABBI AVI HOCHMAN

DEVELOPERS

NAVA SHEKHTER (' 24)

RIVKA REICH (' 24)

A KYHS PARSHA PUBLICATION



ravh@yeshivahs.org