



Parshat HaShavuah

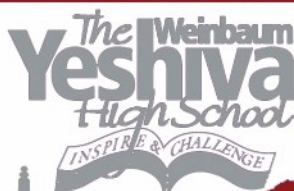
ויקרא

VAYIKRA

MARCH 16, 2013

ה' ניסן תשע"ג

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Ashreinu

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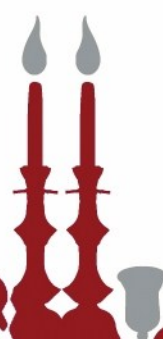
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Motzei

Shabbat

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Enriching and Enhancing Your Study of the Weekly Torah Portion

RABBI JOSH GRAJOWER 1

LIVING (NOT TWEETING) THE MOMENT

RABBI JOSH GRAJOWER

EFRAIM SCHACTER ('16) 2

While adults tend to look at our youth's obsession with social media with a bit of disdain, this epidemic seems to have encapsulated our entire society. We are constantly checking our e-mails, texting, and downloading the latest app. There are many benefits to our technological advancements, but there are also many drawbacks.

ARIELLA MAMANN ('16) 3

SIMCHA STADLAN ('16) 3-4

MATTHEW SILKIN ('14) 4

The greatest is possibly our inability to simply live in the moment—it has become so difficult to devote all our attention to one task. While at work, we are in touch with family and friends and reading articles about current events, while our time with our family is spent checking our work e-mails.

In פרשת ויקרא the Torah describes all the different sacrificial offerings, and the very end of the parsha, delves into the קרבן אשם. The Torah explains that this offering is brought if a person is unsure whether or not he has sinned. But what if the latter is true and this person has in fact not sinned? Why must one be required to bring an offering simply because one *might* have sinned?

Rav Ovadiah Sforno, in his 15th century commentary, suggests that when a person is not careful and allows even the smallest room for doubt about his actions, that is in and of itself a sin! A person needs to be present in every moment and be cognizant of all his actions.

While we unfortunately do not have a בית המקדש at the moment, we have a lot to learn from the concept of a קרבן אשם. Today, possibly more than ever, we are challenged to *really* live each moment of our life. We need to pay attention to the one person who is talking to us, focus on the one task at hand, and be present in each moment (and only tweet it afterwards).





BLOODY TEMPLE

EYFRAIM SCHACTER ('16)

As we begin Sefer Vayikra, we see that the main function of the Mishkan is to spill blood and sacrifice animals. Nowadays, we have great difficulty with this “primitive” practice. It is hard to relate to blood and sacrifices. After all, it is quite a significant portion of Hashem's Torah. We cannot simply say, “it no longer matters to us” being as the Torah is eternal. So, what is behind the emphasis on blood?

In addition to the Torah's general fascination with the blood of the sacrifices in this week's Torah portion, we also see its central importance to a close relationship with Hashem. The very first Rashi on the sefer comments: "Calling (Moshe by name) preceded every statement or command (that Hashem said to Moshe). The use of *vayikra*—calling—shows affection."

The obvious question is: If Hashem calls Moshe by name every time He speaks to him throughout the Torah, why is this only mentioned in the beginning of Sefer Vayikra? One could posit that whatever is about to be discussed in Vayikra is most appropriate for this concept of affection. That is why calling Moshe by name, a sign of endearment, is only discussed here because somehow the subject of blood and sacrifices is most endearing to Hashem.

So we must not only explain why the Torah is preoccupied with blood, but also why the service of blood is most endearing to Hashem. This also clarifies an age-old custom to begin a child's Torah education with Sefer Vayikra. Somehow we sense that the concept of sacrifices and blood is such an integral a part of Judaism that we build the foundation of our children's education upon it. Why?

It is all about having a realistic view of who we are as human beings. Some religions and spiritual philosophies preach that in order to become holy you must transcend the physical world. The human body with its base desires is just a distraction from pure and intelligent, sophisticated growth. Therefore, it is not important to involve oneself in regulating physical activity. Rather, you should spend effort honing your thoughts, emotions, and feelings. Deal with the mind and not with the body.

These philosophies poke fun at the Torah with its emphasis on the minutia of what foods you can and cannot eat, and when you can or can't turn on lights, etc. They say that the Torah is a "kitchen religion" and not appropriate for an educated, moral individual.

History has shown, however, that such an "intellect-only" approach does not produce morality. In fact, by repressing the body and not allowing the body to become sanctified through spiritual regulation, those who claim to be moral can end up performing ultimate evil. Ian Kershaw's book, "Hitler 1889-1936 Hubris" describes how much Hitler, may his memory be erased, loved the symphonies of Wagner as a spiritual, sophisticated, and cultured person. Kershaw also shows a picture of Hitler carefully feeding deer as a moral and concerned animal lover. Yet, this so-called moral sophisticate perpetrated genocide of mammoth proportions.

This is what the blood in the Temple represents. We might be under the impression that when coming close to Hashem in His Temple we should only think lofty, spiritual, and other-worldly thoughts while ignoring the physical body. Therefore, the Torah deals in blood. We must recognize that the blood, the physical body and life force, also must be used as part of one's spirituality. The Torah tells us that the body is a necessary component in coming close to Hashem and gives us directives, through the commandments, as to how to utilize the body's spirituality. We do not run away from our bodies. We sanctify them.

Adapted from Rabbi Boruch Leff—Aish.com



TRUE JEW

ARIELLA MAMANN ('16)

As we begin reading the book of Vayikra, we see that this week's parsha focuses in on korbanot that are required in cases of sin and other significant occasions. The parsha goes through, specifically, what types of korbanot are permitted by Hashem.

The sacrifices that are allowed are of the domesticated animals—not wild animals of any kind. The most powerful animals are the wild ones because they run freely and are feared by others. The same fate goes for nations as well. The most powerful nations today are the ones with big armies and threatening weapons. But as the korbanot teach us, power is not always so crucial.

The Torah introduces the ideas of justice and morality. Threatening nations might currently have power, but eventually that power fades. The Jewish nation has not only defeated those “powerful” nations, but we have also gained our own power and respect by having strong Jewish values of fairness and righteousness.

REAL RELATIONSHIPS

SIMCHA STADLAN ('16)

The commandment of korbanot is introduced at the beginning of Parshat Vayikra. The Torah states in the first pasuk, "He called to Moshe and Hashem spoke to him from the *Ohel Moed* saying." Already in the first pasuk, there is an obvious question: is not the word "לאמר", "saying", superfluous?

Rashi, quoting the Sifra (2:13), explains that Hashem instructs Moshe to present the laws of korbanot to Bnei Yisrael, and Moshe needs to return to Hashem and inform Him whether the people have willingly accepted them. What is the reason for this unprecedented instruction? Why in the context of korbanot is Moshe directed to investigate Bnei Yisrael's willingness to perform a mitzvah? In Masechet Shabbat 88a, the gemara teaches that when Bnei Yisrael are receiving the Torah at Har Sinai, Hashem lifts the mountain on top of them, intimidating the Jewish people to accept the Torah. Bnei Yisrael are coerced into accepting the Torah and therefore, Hashem wants to hear that Bnei Yisrael willingly undertake the mitzvah of korbanot. Being as, a korban is not adequate if not given voluntarily (Rosh Hashana 6a).

The puzzling prerequisite to the mitzvah of korbanot can be better understood from the Ramban's explanation on this commandment. The Ramban clarifies that the sacrifice of the animal itself is not the significance of this mitzvah; while watching one's korban burn and sprinkling the dead animals blood, one must introspect and realize that this animal is a sacrificial substitution for himself. It is this spiritual reflection and the new understanding of Hashem's mercy that is the essence of this physical commandment.

Hashem realizes that a person cannot be forced into having a relationship and loving someone, let alone if that someone is the Creator of the Universe—the Supreme Being who provides us with everything and demonstrates His love for us endlessly. In order to conceptualize and appreciate the ultimate experience of having a relationship with Hashem, one must demonstrate a desire to connect with Him and express his willingness to sacrifice a korban to Hashem.

Continued page 4



Nowadays, without the direct pathway to Hashem through the korbanot, we have the mitzvah of prayer. Corresponding to the korbanot, this mitzvah is dependent on *kavana*, intention and willingness to perform it and connect with Hashem. Demonstrated in many laws pertinent to the commandments of Shema and Shemoneh Esrei, one must display intent and enthusiasm for the prayer to be accepted.

As a medium to build our relationship with Hashem, prayer must be performed with alacrity; one must have the desire and be willing while uttering the words of prayer in order to be engaged—to feel the spiritual transcendence and power of tefillah and, in result, have a relationship with Hashem.

Hashem does not require our physical gifts and praise because He always loves us; the commandments to provide Hashem with korbanot and daven are for us—to focus on building and strengthening our relationship with Hashem. Without willingness and desire, these actions are meaningless to Hashem and, even more importantly, to us.

SELECTIVE HEARING MATTHEW SILKIN ('14)

Quite often, people succumb to a non-infectious disease known as selective hearing. Symptoms of this disease include being given orders which are promptly ignored as they are deemed unimportant. The afflicted will then be reprimanded, but they will then defend themselves by saying that they did not hear the order, although it was quite audible.

The book and parsha of Vayikra begin with Hashem calling to Moshe to teach him about the korbanot. Rashi explains that Hashem uses a thundering voice, but only Moshe is able to hear it. Why, then, is such a thunderous voice needed if it was only Moshe who was able to hear it?

Rashi explains that this thundering voice could, in fact, have been heard by everybody. However, only Moshe hears it, which serves as punishment for the Jews' apparent "selective hearing" at Har Sinai, with the sin of the golden calf.

Hashem is teaching the Jews a lesson—if you choose not to listen to one thing, then I will make sure that you do not hear anything else. Accordingly, since the Jews do not listen during the episode of the golden calf, Hashem makes sure that they will not hear any of the commandments.

Pesach is coming soon, and that means that we will either tell or listen to someone else tell the Pesach story during the Seder. The challenge of the Seder—no, the challenge of Pesach itself—is this: are we going to listen to the story and learn from the past, or are we going to contract the dangerous disease of "selective hearing" and not listen to a word? This Pesach, make the correct choice, and pay attention during the Seder—it just might work to your benefit.

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