



# ALIYA-BY-ALIYA SEDRA SUMMARY

RABBI REUVEN TRADBURKS  
RCA ISRAEL REGION

## PARSHAT VAYIKRA

The theme of the parsha is sacrifices. Different offerings will be required in a variety of circumstances later in the book of Vayikra. This parsha outlines the rules of those offerings; not when they are brought, but how they are brought. Later we will learn about when they are required to be brought.

The parsha outlines how to do an: Olah, a fully burned offering, Shlamim, an offering consumed by the Kohanim and by the owner, the Mincha flour offerings, Chatat, a sin offering, and Asham, a guilt offering.



### 1ST ALIYA (VAYIKRA 1:1-13)

And He called to Moshe, and G-d spoke to him. When a person brings an **Olah**, it may be brought from cattle or sheep. If from **cattle**, the procedure is: the owner places his hands on the animal, it is slaughtered before G-d, the blood is sprinkled about the altar, the fats are burned and the entire offering is burned. If either **sheep** or goat, the same is done: slaughter same place, sprinkle blood, offer fats, and completely burned.

The first words of the parsha baffle the commentaries. No English teacher would allow a student to start a book “And He called to Moshe.” Who is the He? Nothing has happened in the book yet that we can refer the He to. Why begin with “And He called”?

Clearly, the Torah is deliberately referring back to the previous story. And continuing it. At the end of Shmot the Mishkan was

completed. The thick cloud descended, indicating G-d’s presence. Moshe could not enter the area of the Mishkan due to the cloud. G-d now beckons Moshe to enter, to teach the laws of offerings.

This interaction frames the book of Vayikra. In Shmot, G-d descended to us. He commanded the Mishkan, as a place to meet with us. He descended and filled the place. He approached us. And now? Our turn. Now we approach Him. In Shmot we built Mishkan, a meeting place for G-d to meet us. Now, in Vayikra, the Jewish people approach Him. The offerings are the way to approach Him. This book then is a seamless continuation of the last; there He approached us, here we approach Him.



### 2ND ALIYA (1:14-2:5)

If the Olah is from **birds**, the procedure is similar: blood sprinkled, organs burned, and completely burned. If a **nefesh** shall bring a **flour** offering, the procedure is: the flour is mixed with oil and frankincense. The Kohen takes a finger full, burns it on the altar. The remainder is eaten by the Kohanim. The flour offering may also be **baked** or **fried** as a thin matza with oil.

The Olah offering is a sliding scale. Cattle, sheep, goat, birds, flour. While the heart may stir one to approach G-d, the pocket may demur. Rashi points out that when describing the one who is bringing a flour offering, the least expensive one, the Torah uses the word **nefesh**, as if to say it is the soul that is bringing this inexpensive flour offering. For

some, the flour offering is as big a sacrifice as the bull is to another.



### 3RD ALIYA (2:6-16)

Or one may bring a fried **soft** flour offering. In each of these, the Kohen brings the mincha offering to the altar, offering a finger full. The remainder is eaten by the Kohanim, treated as holy of holies. No offering of this sort may be chametz or with honey. Only the **first fruits** offering contain chametz and honey. The **Omer** offering is from new barley of parched ground kernels with oil and frankincense.

How can we find meaning in sacrifices? Let me offer the following.

In life, we experience a plethora of feelings and emotions. Success brings satisfaction; failure, disappointment. At times, we feel desperate, beaten down by challenges and uncertainty. Threats of war or of illness make us feel anxious, worried. Sin can engender a deep sense of worthlessness. At other times we feel exuberant, blessed, fortunate. That the sun has shone upon us. Gratitude, appreciation; hearts full.

Life is full of experiences of anxiety, of triumph and of disappointment. A sensitive soul needs to express itself; the religious soul needs to frame these emotions in relationship to G-d.

There are occasions outlined later in this book where offerings are required. And there are occasions when we offer these voluntarily.

An Olah is an offering that is completely burned. It expresses a complete submission to G-d. It is brought in a variety of contexts: communal offerings, individual obligatory offerings, voluntary. But whatever the context, it conveys resignation or submission. This is indeed a core attitude we have in our relationship with G-d. It can be paired

with joy, with guilt, with appreciation – but resignation and submission form the root of our religious experience. When an Olah offering is brought it can be an expression of profound appreciation, but conveying that appreciation with resignation: that it is not my hands that have wrought my success, but that I as a Jew am charged with living hand in hand with G-d. My success demands an expression to G-d, as does my desperation. I give my life wholly to Him – both my success and my despair. This complete resignation is expressed in the Olah – an offering completely burned. As if to say, I am in Your hands.



### 4TH ALIYA (3:1-17)

The **Shlamim** offering may be brought from cattle. The owner places his hands on the head, the Kohanim take the blood after slaughter and sprinkle it on the altar, and the fats are burned. If it is brought from sheep, the same procedure is followed. Or if brought from goats. An eternal law is that no blood or fats may be eaten.

The Shlamim is eaten by the owner along with the Kohen; not totally burned as is the Olah. As such, it expresses a partnership between man and G-d. It has a mood of celebration. Perhaps the joy that at a certain level, while submissive to G-d we also partner with Him. There is complexity in human experience, combining both submission and partnership.

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### 5TH ALIYA (4:1-26)

When a **nefesh sins**: if the **Kohen** sins in his official capacity, he brings a **Sin offering** of a bull. The Kohen places his hands on the head, the Kohen sprinkles the blood toward the curtain of the Holy of Holies and on the incense altar. The fats are burned. The bull is burned outside of the holy area, where other ashes are deposited. If the **entire people** err in committing a **sin**, a bull is brought as a sin offering. The elders rest their hands on the head of the animal, the Kohanim sprinkle the blood in front of the Holy of Holies and on the incense altar. Its fats are burned and the bull is burned outside of the holy area as was the Kohen's sin offering. When the **Ruler** inadvertently commits a **sin**, he brings a goat. He places his hands on its head, the Kohanim place the blood on the altar corners and its fats are burned.

This aliya describes 3 sin offerings brought by leaders: the Kohen, the Sanhedrin when it makes a ruling that all the people follow and that they realize was in error, and the King. True leaders must recognize that though they hold higher office than the rest of the people, they remain subservient to G-d. Papal infallibility is not a Jewish notion; here we assume that the Kohen (the religious leader), the Sanhedrin, (the judiciary) and the King, the executive will all sin. And admit their sins.



### 6TH ALIYA (4:27-5:10)

If a **person sins** inadvertently, he brings a goat as a sin offering. He places his hands on the head, the blood is placed on the corners of the altar, the fats are burned. He may bring a sheep; the procedure is similar. If one withholds testimony resulting in an unnecessary oath, unknowingly violates

the laws after becoming impure, or takes any oath unnecessarily, a confession is made and an offering brought. The offering may be brought from sheep or goats. If the **owner cannot afford** these, then he may bring **2 birds**, one an olah and one a sin offering.

It is crucial to note that the sin offering is not the first sacrifice in the descriptions of offerings. It is the 4th, following the Olah, Shlamim and Mincha. Sacrifices are not brought only to atone for sins. And not all sins can be expiated through sacrifices. Some do not rise to the need for a sacrifice. And for some, a sacrifice does not suffice for atonement. The offerings rather span the gamut of human experience and more accurately express a desire to engage G-d in all sorts of experiences, not just when needing atonement.



### 7TH ALIYA (5:11-25)

And if **he cannot afford** these, then he may bring a **flour** offering, though without oil or frankincense, as this is a sin offering. A finger's full is brought on the altar; the Kohanim consume the rest. If a person uses **sanctified property**, he needs to bring a ram to atone as an **Asham**. And to compensate the holy fund with a 1/5 additional penalty. If a person is **unsure of a sin**, he needs to bring a ram to atone as an Asham. If a person **denies** a financial obligation and swears falsely, he must make restitution with an additional 1/5 and to bring a ram to atone.

These offerings are required to be brought to the Mishkan and later, to the Temple in Jerusalem. The experience of the grandeur of those places would generate humility. Healthy humility, knowing our place as both majestic beings and meek in His presence is generated by the experience of sacrifice in the holy place.

## MAFTIR - PARSHAT ZACHOR (DEVARIM 25:17-19)

Remember what Amalek did to you when you left Egypt, attacking the weak when you were tired. When you settle in the Land, eliminate the remnant of Amalek.

There is a mitzvah to hear the reading of Zachor once a year. This is not the narrative of Amalek's attack. That occurred in Sefer Shemot, right after the crossing of the sea. This reading is from Devarim, on the cusp of entering the Land of Israel.

Here the Torah ascribes Amalek's willingness to attack due to its lack of fear of G-d. There is some historic irony and historic truth here. Attacks on the Jewish people can be by those lacking fear of G-d. And attacks on us can be by those acting in the name of G-d. G-dless have attacked; Nazis and communists. And holy crusaders have attacked us; Christians and modern fanatical Islam.

## HAFTORAH PARSHAT ZACHOR 1 SHMUEL 15:2-34

This week's special haftorah highlights the theme of Hashem's command to destroy the people of Amalek. This echoes the subject matter found in the Torah reading of Amalek's unprovoked attack on the Israelites as the Israelites traveled in the wilderness and our eternal responsibility to avenge this horrendous crime.

Shmuel addresses King Shaul and commands him to wage battle against Amalek, and leave no survivors - neither humans nor beasts. The army of Bnei Yisrael kills the entire population with the exception of the king, Agag, and they also spare the best

of the cattle and sheep.

Hashem then conveys the following message to Shmuel: "I regret that I have made Shaul king." Hashem says, "For he has turned his back from following Me, and has not fulfilled My words."

Shaul admits that he had transgressed and then invites the prophet to join him in his return home. Shmuel refuses his offer. "Hashem has torn the kingdom of Israel from you, today; and has given it to your fellow who is better than you." Shmuel then kills the Agag. ■



### STATS

24th of 54 sedras; 1st of 10 in Vayikra.  
Written on 215 lines in a Torah, ranks 19.  
21 Parshiot: 13 open, 8 closed.  
111 pesukim - ranks 26 (2nd in Vayikra).  
Same number of pesukim as Eikev.  
1673 words - ranks 20 (1st in Vayikra).  
6222 letters - ranks 20 (1st in Vayikra).  
The sedra is of average length, but its pesukim are longer than average for the Torah.



### MITZVOT

16 mitzvot: 11 positive, 5 prohibitions.  
The book of Vayikra has the largest number of mitzvot among the five Chumashim - 247, 40% of Taryag. On the other hand, Vayikra is the shortest Book by far - in number of columns and lines in a Sefer Torah, number of pesukim, words, and letters. This makes the mitzvah stats even more impressive.