



# Shabbat Table Talk Page

## Overview

- **Parashah: Vayikra (ויקרא , "and He called")**
- **Chapters: Leviticus 1:1-6:7**



בְּרוּךְ אַתָּה יְהוָה אֱלֹהֵינוּ מֶלֶךְ הָעוֹלָם, אֲשֶׁר קִדְּשָׁנוּ בְּמִצְוֹתָיו, וְצִוָּנוּ לְעֲסוֹק בְּדַבְּרֵי תוֹרָה

– Torah Study Blessing –

## Synopsis

Recall that the climax of the revelation given at Sinai was the commandment to construct the Sanctuary, otherwise called the Mishkan or the “Tabernacle.” Nearly half of the Book of Exodus is focused on the Tabernacle, and the book concludes with the Shekhinah Glory of God filling the Holy of Holies section of the Tent (Exod. 40:34-35).

The Torah portion for this week is Vayikra (“and He called”), which is the very first section from the Book of Leviticus. Vayikra begins where the book of Exodus left off, with God calling to Moses from the Tent of Meeting to explain the laws of various animal and grain offerings (korbanot) that may be offered at the Tabernacle. Over 40 percent of all of the Torah’s commandments are found in this central book of the Scriptures, which functioned as a guide for the priests and Levites who were responsible for overseeing the worship of the ancient Israelites.

Only three kinds of animals were acceptable for sacrifice upon God’s altar: defect-free oxen (a bull or cow), sheep (a ram or ewe), or goats (a buck or doe). Each kind of these animals is domesticated and peaceful. Besides these mammals, only two birds were allowed to be sacrificed: turtledoves and pigeons, both of which are likewise non-raptorial and peaceful. In addition to these animal sacrifices, a poor person could offer various grain offerings which were used to provide bread for the priests.

Five basic categories of sacrifices are described. The whole burnt offering (olah) was a sacrifice consumed entirely by the fire on the altar. The grain offering (minchah) was a measure of unleavened flour mixed with oil and incense burned on the altar, with the remainder given to the priests. The peace offering (shelamim) was a sacrifice that was shared with everyone in thanks to God on joyous occasions. The sin offering (chatat) was a sacrifice (or grain offering) offered to atone for accidental sin, whereas the guilt offering (asham) was a sacrifice offered to atone for defrauding others or for swearing falsely. Note that unlike other offerings, the sin and guilt sacrifices were *required* for atonement to be made. They had to be offered by the High Priest who would sprinkle the blood of the sacrifice seven times inside the Tabernacle on the Golden Altar. The fat of the sacrifice was burned on the copper altar, but the rest of the animal (its hide, flesh, and its body parts) was taken “outside the camp” to be burned with fire.



## Basic Questions

1. What other names are common for the Book of Leviticus? <sup>1</sup>
2. What does the word korban (קָרְבָּן) mean? <sup>2</sup>
3. What kinds of animals could be offered at the Mishkan? <sup>3</sup>
4. What was forbidden to be offered with grain offerings? <sup>4</sup>
5. What additional ingredient was required to be added to all offerings, and why? <sup>5</sup>
6. What is an olah offering? <sup>6</sup>
7. What is a minchah offering? <sup>7</sup>
8. What is special about a peace offerings (shelamim)? <sup>8</sup>
9. What part of an animal sacrifice *always* belongs to God? <sup>9</sup>
10. What was done with the blood of the sacrificed animals? <sup>10</sup>
11. What two animal products are we forbidden to eat? <sup>11</sup>
12. Who must bring a sin offering (chatat)? <sup>12</sup>
13. Can grain be given as a chatat (sin) offering? <sup>13</sup>
14. When an animal was to be sacrificed, why were both hands placed on its head? <sup>14</sup>
15. What is distinctive about a guilt offering (asham)? <sup>15</sup>
16. What percentage of the 613 laws of the Torah are given in the Book of Leviticus? <sup>16</sup>

<sup>1</sup> The Book of Sacrifices; the Laws of the Kohanim, Sefer Vayikra.

<sup>2</sup> It is a general word for “offering” or “gift.” It comes from the root (karov) which means to come near.

<sup>3</sup> Defect-free cattle: oxen (a bull or cow), sheep (a ram or ewe), or goats (a buck or doe). The poor could offer turtledoves and pigeons.

<sup>4</sup> Leaven (chametz) and honey (devash), since both induced fermentation (i.e., decay/death).

<sup>5</sup> Salt (melakh) because it preserved the offering and prevented rotting (decay symbolizes death).

<sup>6</sup> A (male) whole burnt offering, “an ascending offering, a fire-offering of a sweet savor to God” (1:9).

<sup>7</sup> An unleavened grain offering that could be mixed with five different kinds of oil and spices. A portion of the grain was burned on the altar and the rest donated to the priests. The grain offering was often given by the poor.

<sup>8</sup> Everyone benefited from it: The blood and fat went to the Altar (God); the breast and thigh went to the priests, and the hide and flesh went to the owner, who shared them with his family and friends in a communion meal.

<sup>9</sup> The fat (chelev): “All the fat is the LORD’s” (Lev. 3:11).

<sup>10</sup> It was sprinkled around the altar and sometimes applied to the horns of the altar. On the Day of Atonement, blood was applied to the horns of the altar of incense and dashed (or sprinkled) upon the kapporet (Mercy Seat) 7 times.

<sup>11</sup> The Torah states we may not eat blood or fat.

<sup>12</sup> Anyone who sinned by oversight or without willful intent (i.e., accidentally).

<sup>13</sup> Yes, though no oil or frankincense may be mixed with the unleavened fine flour.

<sup>14</sup> To symbolize that it is a substitute for the person who brought it. The laying on of hands is called semikhah.

<sup>15</sup> Restitution had to be made (usually 20%) along with the sacrifice.

<sup>16</sup> Over 40%.



## Discussion Topics

1. The climax of Sinai was the commandment to construct the Tabernacle, which in turn centered upon the laws of the altar. Discuss the narrative of redemption beginning with the blood of the lamb in Egypt, the giving of the law code to Israel, and how these relate the sacrificial rites. What do you think God was trying to teach Israel through this sequence of revelation?
2. In modern English the word “sacrifice” usually means an act of self-deprivation, when we give up something of value for the sake of a greater value. In the Torah, however, the idea of sacrifice has more to do with making an offering to God as a means of drawing near to Him. Is there a real distinction here, or do these really mean the same thing?
3. The very first sacrifice revealed in the Torah was offered by God Himself, when He slaughtered a lamb to cover the shame of Adam and Eve (Gen. 3:21). Later Adam’s sons Cain and Abel made offerings but only Abel’s was accepted. Why? Name some other examples of sacrifices that were offered to God *before* the construction of the Tabernacle.
4. The New Testament explains that Yeshua is the fulfillment of all the sacrifices required at the Tabernacle, and we are declared righteous when we trust in Him as our High Priest of the New Covenant with God. Christians are now called to offer “sacrifices of praise” and to live as *korban chai* – a “living sacrifice” before God. Discuss what these things mean...
5. The Bible is described as a “book of blood and a bloody book.” The sacrificial system functions as a “parable” for us, or a metaphor of God’s redemptive plan later revealed in the life and death of Yeshua. The Mercy Seat (kapporet) represents both the Throne of God as well as the Cross of Yeshua, where propitiation for our sins was made (Rom. 3:25). By faith we “lean our hands” upon the head of Yeshua, trusting that He is our Sin Bearer before the Father. Discuss the divine “life-for-life” principle of Yeshua’s life given for you...
6. Participating in a substitutionary sacrifice ritual caused the sinner to recognize the nature of his offense and his culpability: “Were it not for God’s acceptance of this sacrifice in my stead, I would merit a place upon the altar.” This idea is similar to the theology of “penal substitutionary atonement,” that is, God’s demand for justice is “satisfied” with the *exchange* of a sacrificial victim’s blood. In other words, punishment for sin must involve the shedding of blood, and the sacrifice “pays the penalty” for the sinner’s offense against a holy God. Discuss the idea of substitutionary atonement. How are your sins imputed to Yeshua? How does His blood cleanse you from sin and death?

## For Next Week:

- Read parashat **Tzav** (i.e., Leviticus 6:8-8:36)
- Read the Haftarah (Jeremiah 7:21-8:3; 9:22-24)
- Read the New Testament (Hebrews 7:23-8:6)

