

Notes of Parshah Vayikra

The third book of the Torah, Vayikra is called Leviticus in Latin because the book describes in detail the role of the Levites in the Ohel Moed, the Tent of Meeting. The Book of Vayikra has come to be known as Torat Kohanim, the Instruction book of the Priests for that very reason.

The first word of parshat vayikra is the word vayikra. When looking at the word one would notice that the last letter of the word is a miniature alef. The word Vayikra means and (God) called. It is one of two places in the Torah where this word is used when God is speaking to Moses. Usually the phrase “God spoke to Moses saying” is the prelude to God giving Moses some useful information or command. In this case God is calling to Moses a friend calls to another, in a loving way. This is the reason why the alef is miniaturized, to show the loving relationship between God and Moses.

The pasuk continues with God saying to speak to the children of Israel and say. It is interesting to note that the rules and laws that will follow are for the Levites but all of Israel needs to hear them.

The first concept that God passes to Moses is that if a person, the Hebrew is Adam, denoting humankind and not man, brings a sacrifice it must be an animal from his own flock and one that is without blemish. This shows that not only are you supposed to bring a personal animal but one that is a choice animal.

The Torah tells how sacrifices began almost with the beginning of the Torah with Cain and Abel. Archaeologists have found evidence of sacrifices that are 70,000 years old. Most times sacrifices were given to give praise to God, or for a sin offering.

Once the Temple was destroyed in Jerusalem in 70 CE by the Romans the Rabbi decreed that sacrifices would stop. Verbal prayer took the place of animal sacrifice.

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Rambam stated in his work, *The Guide for the Perplexed*, that sacrifices were never really truly prayer that in fact the Israelites were given the command to bring sacrifices so that they would not feel different than their neighbors. Rabbi Abraham Joshua Heschel stated in his book, *Man's Quest for God* that prayer was not a substitute for sacrifice but prayer was sacrifice.

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