



## Mordekhi's Drash for Shabbat March 15, 2008 / II Adar 8, 5768

### Parashah #24

Torah: *Vayikra* (And He called), *Vayikra* (Leviticus) 1.1-5.26(6.7);

Shabbat Zachor<sup>1</sup>: *D'varim* (Deuteronomy) 25.17-19

Haftorah: *Yesha'yahu* (Isaiah) 43.21-44.23; *Sh'mu'el Alef* (1 Samuel 15.2-34)<sup>2</sup>

Suggested Messianic Writings: Hebrews 10.1-18

Shalom,

We now begin a most interesting portion of Torah – the book of *Vayikra*, or *Leviticus*. Many people tend to skim, or maybe skip, this book, wondering about the purpose of all the sacrifices, offerings, commandments and the relevance to modern-day life. The title *Leviticus* comes from the Latin Vulgate translation<sup>3</sup> and means, “pertaining to the Levites.” The Hebrew title is *Vayikra*, meaning “And He called,” which are the opening words of the book. The book of *Sh'mot* (Exodus) has just ended, with the Glory Cloud of HaShem filling the newly built Tabernacle to the extent that Moshe was unable to enter. The idea here is that Moshe is being invited to come to the Tabernacle and speak to HaShem, as He begins to relate some new commandments.

But what was the purpose of all the animal sacrifices? Here are some thoughts from Project Genesis<sup>4</sup>: “Animal sacrifice was meant as a way of intense confrontation with sin. The repentant would bring an animal for a sacrifice, lean himself upon the animal's head, perhaps look into those large, shining eyes, and be forced to come to terms with the destruction that sin causes. When the animal was finally slaughtered and offered on the altar, one was supposed to feel that it really should have been him or her up on that altar. Today, with the absence of the Temple in Jerusalem, animal sacrifices are no longer practiced. A close reading of the Prophets reveals that this is due to the fact that insincere offerings became the norm during the end of the first Temple period. G-d does not want the destruction of His creations, and when the sacrifices ceased to elicit the internal response for which they were meant, the offerings themselves ceased. In their place, we offer tears and the sincere longing of heartfelt prayer.” May I add that the very purpose of all the sacrifices was to point the way to the One – Yeshua the Messiah – who would become the ultimate answer to the sin problem; it should have been you and me up on the “altar of sacrifice.”

*Vayikra* begins with the theme of *offerings*, קָרַבַּן *kohr-bahn*, from the root קָרַב *kah-rahv*, which means, “to approach, bring near.” The ArtScroll commentary notes that “an offering is the means to bring ourselves closer to God and to elevate ourselves. For this reason, the common translation, *sacrifice*, does not capture the essence of the word.” (The Hebrew for *sacrifice* is זָבַח *zeh-vakh*, and refers more to the slaughter itself. The English word *slaughter* can seem a harsh word, but the initial meaning is, “the killing of animals for food,” which is primarily what most of the burnt offerings were, food for the Priests.)

The first offerings spoke of are עֹלָה קָרַבָּנוֹ *olah kohr-bahn*, sometimes translated as “burnt offerings,” but more literally “elevation offerings,” as the ArtScroll Chumash translates. *Olah* means, “a step, or stairs, as ascending; ascent, go up to.” The word *holocaust* (going up in smoke) is from this root. *Aliyah* (ascent) is also from the same root; *aliyah* is the term used when a Jewish person moves to Israel – they are making *Aliyah*. The *olah kohr-bahn*, elevation offering, “expressed the individual's self-surrender to God's will.”<sup>5</sup> It should give us thought that *the first commandments* of the “book of commandments” pertain to *giving to G-d*. The theme of the whole book is *holiness*, so is it possible that the first “step” in our walk of holiness is in our voluntary offerings to our Creator? There is truly something that affects the spirit of man when we give – even secular society likes to give to worthy (or sometimes unworthy) causes. How much greater to give to the object of our worship, the Living Uncreated G-d!

*Vayikra* 1.3 states that the offering is to be given לְרֵצוֹן *lee-r'tsoh-noh*, translated “voluntarily” by ArtScroll; the root being רָצוֹן *rah-tsohn*, “delight, pleasure.” But it must also be noted that the Torah states *when* you bring an offering, not *if* you bring an offering. According to the ArtScroll commentary, Jewish law would state that if one refused to bring an offering, he could be “coerced” into being “willing” by the court, “until he expressed his willingness,” because “the Jewish soul always wants to do the right thing, but external influences and temptations cloud a person's judgment. The coercion applied by the court merely counters those external influences and allows the essential goodness of the soul to come through.”

The *grain-offerings*, or *meal-offerings*, were the only offerings that were neither cooked nor baked. The ArtScroll commentary notes that grains are a staple of our diet, thus representing our very existence. The grain offerings therefore were an acknowledgement that life is from G-d alone. Vayikra 2.13 states that every grain offering was to be seasoned with salt. In *Mattityahu* 5.13, Yeshua said to his Jewish audience, “You are the salt for the Land. But if salt becomes tasteless, how can it be made salty again? It is no longer good for anything except being thrown out for people to trample on.” Salt can be good, or salt can be bad, depending upon how it is used. If you plant a garden and cover the soil with salt, hoping to “pre-season” your vegetables, you may not have much of a harvest. But if you pick those grown vegetables (from non-salted soil) and pickle them with salt, the salt preserves them. Salt will melt ice and keep your vehicle from sliding around, but that same salt will also corrode your vehicle.

Salt in Hebrew is מֶלַח *meh-lakh*, which means, “powder, specifically salt (as easily pulverized and dissolved).” The root word is מָלַח *mah-lakh*, which means, “to rub to pieces or pulverize; to disappear as dust.” I have a theory here. The Covenant of Salt mentioned in Vayikra 2.13 is rather mysterious; this is the first of only just a few appearances of that phrase in Scripture. My theory is this: you will remember that when the serpent was cursed in the Garden in *B’resheet* (Genesis) 3, he was told that he would “eat dust as long as you live.” Look at the root word of salt – *mah-lakh*, to disappear as dust. Could it be that the Covenant of Salt and Yeshua’s words about salt were to remind the Jewish people that *hasatan*, the adversary, would be “at their heels” constantly, “eating” the dust of Israel, that is, continually seeking to destroy Israel? Was the Covenant of Salt possibly a simple reminder that by offering our “dust,” or ourselves, to G-d, He will subdue the enemy under our heel? The serpent was told in *B’resheet* 3 that he would from that point on crawl on his belly; *Sha’ul* (Saul/Paul) speaks in Romans 16 of men of evil intent, who are “serving their own *belly*” (my emphasis). And then *Sha’ul* declares that we are to “be wise concerning good, but innocent concerning evil, and G-d, the source of shalom, will soon *crush the Adversary under your feet!*” If “the Rock which the builders rejected... falls on [them, they] will be *crushed to powder*” (Luke 20.17-18) – is this salt that has lost its seasoning? Are these offerings that were insincere? Thus the need for a book – Vayikra – that teaches about living a life of holiness.

*Divrei-Hayamim Bet* (2 Chronicles) 13.5 says that David was given rulership of Israel forever by a Covenant of Salt. The “forever rulership” of David is of course through the Messiah. Messiah was born of man – dust – and will be returning as conquering King. He has crushed the Adversary once, but the next time it will be for good and for eternity. Another possible idea of the serpent eating dust as long as he lives is the fact that Messiah was indeed born of “dust,” and His presence would always be in the face of the serpent.

So as you come into Purim time (14<sup>th</sup> of Adar [Adar II during this leap year], March 21 in 2008), remember the evil that Amalek has done to Israel in the past; be aware that the spirit of Amalek is on the move to destroy Israel once again. And...

שְׁאַלוּ שְׁלוֹם יְרוּשָׁלַם – *Sha’alu shalom Yerushalayim* – Pray for the peace of Jerusalem!

## B'rakhot v'todah rabbah

(Blessings & thank you very much)

### Mordekhi (Marc)

This Yeshua, who has been taken away from you into heaven, will come back to you in just the same way as you saw him go into heaven.

(Acts 1.11 CJB)<sup>i</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Shabbat *Zachor* (Remember!) What Amalek did to you. Coming into the season of Purim, we are to remember how Amalek attacked the tired stragglers of Israel as they were leaving Egypt; in the Samuel reading, we remember King *Sha’ul*’s (Saul’s) disobedience in destroying Agag, king of Amalek, and also keeping livestock that was to have been destroyed. Haman was a descendant of this wicked king. As we remember the evils of Amalek, we must be aware that the spirit of Amalek is alive and is rising up in another effort to totally destroy Israel in our own time.

<sup>2</sup> The Deuteronomy and 1 Samuel readings are for Shabbat *Zachor*. Leviticus, Isaiah and Hebrews are this week’s regular readings.

<sup>3</sup> Fifth century translation of Scripture into Latin, authorized by the Pope in 382AD. The “Old Testament” was translated into Latin directly from the Hebrew Tanakh, rather than from the Greek Septuagint, the source of many Bibles, which itself was a translation from Hebrew into Greek a couple of centuries before Yeshua’s birth.

<sup>4</sup> Torah.org

<sup>5</sup> From Rabbi Hertz’ commentary.