

Vayikra

THE WEISS EDITION

*Light  
points*

FROM THE TEACHINGS OF  
THE LUBAVITCHER REBBE ON THE  
WEEKLY TORAH PORTION



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# ויקרא *Vayikra*

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1:1 | א:א

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וַיִּקְרָא אֶל מֹשֶׁה

*And He called to Moshe*

## *It's All in the Aleph*

The letter א in the word ויקרא, “And He called,” at the start of the Book of Vayikra, is laden with paradox.

On the one hand, the name of the letter א, *aleph*, is related to the Hebrew word *aluph*, “chieftain”—alluding to G-d, “Chieftain of the Universe.”<sup>1</sup> In addition, the letter א is what distinguishes G-d’s communication with Moshe from His communication with the gentile prophets, such as Bilaam; G-d’s communications with Bilaam are introduced with the term ויקר, “And He happened upon,”<sup>2</sup> instead of ויקרא, “And He

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1. Likkutei Torah, Tazria 23c.

2. Bamidbar 23:4.

called.” As Rashi explains, the word ויקר denotes coincidence and impurity, whereas ויקרא denotes affection.<sup>3</sup>

On the other hand, despite its prominence, the א of ויקרא is written in smaller script than all the other letters, suggesting that this א is trifling and insignificant!

These conflicting implications can be understood in light of the message conveyed by the word ויקרא, *vayikra*—to call out. *Vayikra* is the mission that G-d asks of every Jew, to *call out* to others who may be distant, and draw them close to the Torah and its observance.

One must know that a person who accepts upon himself the holy task of ויקרא is imbued with an א, representing the “Chieftain of the Universe” who empowers him to act on His behalf. He therefore can—and must!—go about his G-dly mission with a spirit of strength, authority, and confidence in his ability to positively impact his environment.

At the same time, however, the person calling out recognizes that his strengths and accomplishments are not his own; they are his only by virtue of being an agent of the “Chieftain of the Universe.” Thus, the presence of the *aleph* in his activities makes him modest and small.

To call attention to the *humility* imbued in the agent of *vayikra* through his empowerment by the “*Aluph*-Chieftain,” the א of ויקרא is smaller than all the other letters in the Torah.

—*Sichos Kodesh 5741, vol. 2, pp. 615–619, 801*

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3. Rashi, Vayikra 1:1.

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 א:ב | 1:2
 

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אָדָם כִּי יִקְרִיב מִכֶּם קָרְבָּן לַיהוָה

*A man who shall bring from you an offering to G-d...*

## Why Korbanos? That's Why

The significance the Torah attributes to animal sacrifice is mystifying. Why would the physical slaughter and burning of an animal be our primary form of Divine worship?<sup>4</sup> Would not a more spiritual exercise, in which the Jew's attachment to G-d is sensed and experienced, be more suitable as the focal point of the Temple service?

In truth, however, the significance of the sacrifices lies precisely in their seeming lack of spiritual experience. The Torah's word for sacrifice is *korban*, from the word *karov*, "close," indicating that the purpose of the sacrifices is to *arouse* and express the Jewish people's *inherent* "closeness" to G-d—a closeness that surpasses even the attachment we develop through observing His commands. As such, we can understand why the sacrifices atone for transgressions of the Torah: a sacrifice reveals the Jew's essential and unbreakable bond with G-d, thereby repairing any deficiency in their relationship caused by a breach of Torah observance.

This closeness could not be adequately expressed in a service that highlights the Jew's unique spiritual capacities, for this essential bond with G-d is not contingent on the Jew's efforts or spiritual awareness; it is purely the result of G-d's existential choice of His beloved nation. The unbreakable

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4. See Avos 1:2; Yerushalmi, Taanis 4:1.

bond between the Jewish people and G-d is therefore best expressed through a Jew offering a *korban*, the *spiritual value* of which is not obvious, save for the fact that *G-d* has deemed it desirable for a Jew to offer a sacrifice to Him.

—*Likkutei Sichos, vol. 22, pp. 3-4*

מפני מה מתחילין לתינוקות בתורת כהנים, ואין מתחילין  
בבראשית? אלא שהתינוקות טהורין והקרבנות טהורין,  
יבואו טהורין ויתעסקו בטהורין (ויקרא רבה ז, ג)

*Why do schoolchildren begin their learning with Toras  
Kohanim (the Book of Vayikra) and not with Bereishis?  
Since the children are pure and the sacrifices are pure,  
let the pure come and deal with the pure. (Vayikra  
Rabbah 7:3)*

## The Pure

Even before Jewish children are old enough to understand what it means to observe the Torah, their first studies of Jewish texts begin, according to age-old tradition, with the book of Vayikra. According to the Midrash, this is because Vayikra teaches the laws of sacrifices, and “since the children are pure and the sacrifices are pure, let the pure come and deal with the pure.”

Remarkably, the only reference in the Torah to sacrifices being “pure” is with regard to those offered by Noach after the Flood: “Noach built an altar to G-d, and he took from all the pure animals and from all the pure fowl, and brought up burnt offerings on the altar.”<sup>5</sup> The pure animals referred to there are the kosher animals, “which are destined to be pure for Israel.”<sup>6</sup>

Noach’s sacrifices predated not only G-d’s command to the Jewish people “to distinguish between the impure and

5. Bereishis 8:20.

6. Rashi, Bereishis 7:2.

the pure”<sup>7</sup> and observe a kosher diet, but also the era of the patriarchs, of whom our Sages say, “They observed the entire Torah even before it was given.”<sup>8</sup> Thus, by referring to the sacrifices as “the pure,” the Midrash alludes to the potential of the sacrifices to reveal G-d’s essential love for the Jewish people, a bond that “predates” and transcends even the attachment we develop by observing His Torah.

Accordingly, we can understand the tradition to introduce children to Torah study with the book of Vayikra. Children begin their school years long before they are of the age of responsibility to observe the Torah and mitzvos. Moreover, at that age they are too young even to digest the idea of obligation, or to be trained for the duties that they will have upon reaching the age of majority. Their early reading of the Torah therefore symbolizes a Jew’s inherent connection to G-d and His Torah, a connection that transcends even the actual observance and study of the Torah and its laws. Since the sacrifices likewise reflect this pure and inviolable relationship with G-d, it is most appropriate that “the pure come and deal with the pure.”

—*Likkutei Sichos*, vol. 22, pp. 1-6

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7. Vayikra 11:47.

8. Kiddushin 82a.



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 ב:א | 2:1
 

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וְנִפֵּשׁ בִּי תִקְרִיב קָרְבָּן מִנְחָה

*And if one offers an offering of a minchah...*

## *The Selfless Fuel of Sacrifice*

The word *minchah* means “a grain offering,” which makes the phrase *korban minchah*—“a grain offering offering”—seem redundant. The Midrash therefore interprets the additional word *korban* to allude to another genre of offerings that a person may donate and offer upon the altar,<sup>9</sup> namely stand-alone offerings of oil, wine, incense or wood, which are typically components of a (larger) *korban*, but which may also be offered individually.

The Midrash’s view that wood is among the components of a sacrifice is somewhat puzzling. After all, the purpose of the wood is simply to fuel the altar’s fire. Why does the Midrash regard it as part of the sacrifice?

In a certain sense, however, the wood accompanying the sacrifice represents the underlying theme of all sacrifices, even more so than the sacrifices’ other components.

Ramban<sup>10</sup> explains that the objective of the sacrifices is to arouse the individual to offer himself—his inner qualities and character—to G-d. The animal he burns on the altar substitutes for him physically, but a spiritual offering is still expected of him.

In particular, each sacrifice draws attention to a unique aspect of the person’s character that he must channel in the

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9. See Toras Kohanim ad loc.

10. Ramban, Vayikra 1:9.

service of G-d. Common to all sacrifices, however, is the underlying readiness to offer yourself—ultimately, your entire being—to G-d.

This self-sacrifice required for every offering is represented by the one component that all the sacrifices have in common: the wood used to fuel the fire. And for good reason, because the firewood is the epitome of selflessness and abnegation.

Unlike the other components of the sacrifice, burning the firewood is not said to arouse “a pleasing fragrance for G-d.”<sup>11</sup> Nevertheless, it is entirely burned and consumed in order to facilitate the arousal of that Divine delight—the credit for which will ultimately be attributed to “someone else.”

Thus it is truly the firewood alone that meets the definition of *korban*, a sacrifice.

—*Likkutei Sichos*, vol. 22, pp. 7-13

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11. Vayikra 1:9.



לזכות  
הת' לוי יצחק שי'  
לרגל הכנסו לעול המצוות בשעטו"מ  
ביום ה' ניסן ה'תשפ"ה

יה"ר שיגדל להיות חסיד,  
ידא שמים ולמדן  
לנח"ר הוריו וכל משפחתו שיחיו

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נדפס ע"י הוריו  
הרה"ת יעקב וזוגתו מרת חנה דבורה  
שיחיו  
פלדמן



לעילוי נשמת  
הרה"ת חיים שמואל מנחם מענדל  
בן הרב סעדיה ע"ה ליבעראוו  
גלב"ע ו' ניסן ה'תש"פ  
תנצב"ה

לעילוי נשמת  
הרה"ת אפרים שאלתיאל  
ב"ר יחיאל מיכל ע"ה  
האגער  
גלב"ע ביום ג' ניסן ה'תשע"א  
תנצב"ה  
נדפס ע"י בני משפחתו שיחיו

*Light points is Project of*

