

OHRNET

VAYIKRA, 3 NISAN, MARCH 21, 2026
• VOL 33 NO. 24

PARSHA INSIGHTS

by Rabbi Yaakov Asher Sinclair

More Elusive Than Loch Ness Monster

"He shall lay his hand on the head of the burnt offering, and it will be accepted for him to make atonement on his behalf."(1:4)

More elusive than the Loch Ness monster or the Yeti is a species called the Self-Made Man.

Reports of his existence are frequent, but to date he has never been positively identified.

A typical reported sighting: Morris is one of the biggest corporate stock whizzes on Wall Street. He is the president of Engulf Inc., one of the top Fortune 500 companies. But did Fortune really give him his success? Maybe it came from elsewhere?

Morris gets up every morning at four thirty and works almost without a break till late every night.

But did Morris give himself this strength, this drive, or maybe it came from somewhere else?

Bankruptcy courts are littered with financial whizzes. And even those who make it to the top, can, in a few seconds, succumb to a heart attack, and the president of Engulf Inc. suddenly becomes a statistic in a study on heart disease.

When we're successful, it's all too easy to pat ourselves on the back and congratulate ourselves on how clever we are.

"He shall lay his hand on the head of the burnt offering, and it will be accepted for him to make atonement on his behalf."

The act of pressing one's hand onto the sacrifice teaches us humility. As the person leans onto the animal, he recognizes that all his actions, all his successes, come only from relying on Hashem - from 'leaning' on Him. In other words, we bring *ourselves*, acknowledging that we are never 'self-made'.

Just as the atonement depends on Hashem accepting the sacrifice, so too, our success depends on Divine approval. Thus, even as we strive for security or victory when fighting our enemies, we place our trust not in our hand, but in Hashem who accepts our offering and guides us to victory and freedom.

Even when Israel's security seems strong, we must never forget Who it is that fights our battles.

PARSHA OVERVIEW

The Book of Vayikra (Leviticus) also known as *Torat Kohanim* — the Laws of the Priests — deals largely with the *korbanot* (offerings) brought in the Mishkan (Tent of Meeting). The first type of offering is called a *korban olah*, a burnt-offering. The animal is brought to the Mishkan's entrance. For cattle, the person bringing the offering sets his hands on the animal. Afterwards, it is slaughtered, and the *kohen* sprinkles its blood on the Altar. The animal is skinned and cut into pieces. The pieces are arranged, washed and burned on the Altar.

A similar process is described involving burnt-offerings of other animals and birds. The various meal-offerings are described. Part of the meal-offering is burned on the Altar, and the remaining part is eaten by the *kohanim*. Offering any kind of leaven or honey on the Altar is prohibited. The peace-offering (*Shelamim*) — parts of which are burned on the Altar and parts of which are eaten by the *kohanim* and by the owner — can be from cattle, sheep or goats.

The Torah prohibits eating blood or “*chelev*”, certain fats of the animal. The offerings that atone for inadvertent sins committed by the *Kohen Gadol*, by the entire community, by the Nasi (“Prince”) and by the average citizen, are detailed. Laws of the guilt-offering, which atones for certain verbal transgressions and for transgressing laws of ritual purity, are listed. The flour-offering for those who cannot afford the normal guilt-offering, the offering to atone for misusing sanctified property, laws of the “questionable guilt” offering, and offerings for dishonesty — are detailed.

Q & A

Questions

1. Who does the word “*eilav*” in verse 1:1 exclude?
2. Name all the types of animals and birds mentioned in this week's Parsha.
3. What two types of sin does an *olah* atone for?
4. Where was the *olah* slaughtered?
5. What procedure of an animal-offering can a non-kohen perform?
6. Besides the fire that the kohanim bring on the altar, where else did the fire come from?
7. At what stage of development are *torim* (turtledoves) and *bnei yona* (young pigeons) both unfit as offerings?
8. What is *melika*?
9. Why are animal innards offered on the altar, while bird innards are not?
10. Why does the Torah describe both the animal and the bird offerings as a “satisfying aroma”?
11. Why is the term “*nefesh*” used regarding the flour offering?
12. Which part of the free-will mincha offering is burned on the altar?
13. The Torah forbids bringing honey with the mincha. What is meant by “honey”?
14. When does the Torah permit bringing a leavened bread offering?
15. Concerning *shelamim*, why does the Torah teach about sheep and goats separately?
16. For most offerings the kohen may use a service vessel to apply the blood on the mizbe'ach. For which korban may he apply the blood using only his finger?
17. Who is obligated to bring a *chatat*?
18. Where were the remains of the bull burned while in the wilderness? Where were they burned during the time of the *Beit Hamikdash*?
19. What two things does a voluntary *mincha* have that a *minchat chatat* lacks?
20. What is the minimum value of a *korban asham*?

All references are to the verses and Rashi's commentary, unless otherwise stated.

Answers

1. 1:1 - Aharon.
2. 1:2,14, 3:12 - Cattle, sheep, goats, turtledoves (*torim*), and doves (*bnei yona*).
3. 1:4 - Neglecting a positive command, and violating a negative command which is rectified by a positive command (*lav hanitak l'asei*).
4. 1:5,11 - In the Mishkan Courtyard (*Azarah*) on the north side of the Mizbe'ach.
5. 1:5 - Shechita - ritual slaughter.
6. 1:7 - It descended from Heaven.
7. 1:14 - When their plumage turns golden. At that stage, *bnei yona* are too old and *torim* are too young.
8. 1:15 - Slaughtering a bird from the back of the neck using one's fingernail.
9. 1:16 - An animal's food is provided by its owner, so its innards are "kosher"; birds, by contrast, eat food that they scavenge, so their innards are tainted with "theft."
- 10.1:17 - To indicate that the size of the offering is irrelevant as long as your heart is directed toward G-d.
- 11.2:1 - It is typically a poor person who brings a flour offering. Therefore, G-d regards it as if he had offered his *nefesh* (soul).
- 12.2:1 - The *kometz* (fistful).
- 13.2:11 - Any sweet fruit derivative.
- 14.2:12 - On Shavuot.
- 15.3:7 - Because they differ regarding the *alya* (fat tail): the lamb's *alya* is burned on the altar whereas the goat's is not.
- 16.3:8 - The *chatat*.
- 17.4:2 - One who accidentally transgresses a negative commandment whose willing violation carries the *karet* (excision) penalty.
- 18.4:12 -
 - a. Outside the three camps.
 - b. Outside Jerusalem.
- 19.5:11 - *Levona* and oil.
- 20.5:15 - Two shekalim.

COUNTING OUR BLESSINGS

by Rabbi Reuven Lauffer

Sheva Brachot (Part 5)

A husband and wife are one soul, separated only through their descent to this world. When they are married, they are reunited again.

Zohar HaKadosh

The third of the *Sheva Brachot* is: **Blessed are you, Hashem, our G-d, King of the universe, Who fashioned the man.**

Why is this blessing included as part of the *Sheva Brachot*? In *Bereshit* (1:26) Hashem declares, “Let us make man in Our image, after Our likeness.” The use of the plural term “us” is unexpected. It would seem to make more sense had Hashem said “Let *Me* make man.”

Among the several fascinating interpretations offered to explain why Hashem speaks in the plural is that of the Zohar HaKadosh. The Zohar HaKadosh (1:13) offers an astonishing insight. When Hashem said “Let *us* make man”, He was talking to mankind. It is as if Hashem is saying to each and every one of us, “I am giving you all the raw material that you need. I am placing your soul in a corporeal body so that you can exist in the physical world. I am equipping you with your traits and your capabilities. I am supplying you with everything that you need to reach your potential. And now it is up to you to stretch beyond the physical and to identify and to connect to the Divine that is within you.”

Or, in the words of Rabbi Mendel Kaplan (1913-1985), the legendary educator, *Maggid Shiur* and spiritual mentor in the Talmudical Yeshiva of Philadelphia, “The whole aim and purpose of a Jew is that your grandfather should recognize you, and your grandson should recognize you!” And, perhaps, it is possible to add that a person should recognize themselves.

The Gemara relates (*Chagigah* 12a) that Reish Lakish, on expounding the Name of Hashem “*E-l Shad-dai*”, explains that it means “*Ani Hu sheamarti leolam di* – I am the One Who told the world ‘enough’.” The word “*di* – enough” infers that there was room for more but by declaring “enough” Hashem deliberately left the world unfinished. It goes without question that Hashem could have created a world that is perfect. A world that requires no human participation to bring it to a state of completion. But Hashem chose to leave the world incomplete so that *we* should bring it to a state of perfection. In the words of the Zohar HaKadosh, “Let *us* make man” means that human beings have become partners with Hashem in the creation. The Zohar HaKadosh continues, “Hashem made us in such a way that we are able to benefit from each other and to fill the needs of each other.”

And that is the connection between our blessing and the *Chattan* and the *Kallah*. As they stand under the *chuppah* and start the process of building their home together, our blessing is informing them that the foundations that they are preparing must reflect the fact that they are partners with Hashem. Partners in building, not just their own personal home, but, in a certain way, the whole world. Because each Jewish home has the potential to be a *Mikdash Me'at* – a microcosm of the Holy Temple.

As the Torah begins the narrative that contains the command to build the Tabernacle, Hashem reveals its *raison d'être* (*Shemot* 25:8), “They shall make a sanctuary for Me, so that I may dwell among them.” The commentaries point out that, seemingly, the verse should have said, “They shall make a sanctuary for Me, so that I may dwell *in* it.” But Hashem says, “...so that I may dwell *among them*.” The Rabbis explain that Hashem is teaching us a fundamental lesson. Our relationship with Hashem is not reserved only for the “religious” moments in our lives. We should not make the mistake of imagining that Hashem can only be found in the synagogue during our *Tefillot*. That when I am in the synagogue I am with Hashem, and when I leave, I leave Him there.

Nothing could be further from the truth! When Hashem states, “They shall make a sanctuary for Me, so that I may dwell among them.” He is telling us that, because we are partners with Him in the creation, He will dwell in each and every Jewish home so long as it is established in purity and sanctity.

And that is the essence of our blessing. As Rabbi Yitzchak Hutner so eloquently describes: There are two structures mentioned in the Torah, the Ark that Noach built and the Tabernacle. A Jewish home must be both an Ark and a Tabernacle. Our homes must keep the forces of corruption outside just like the Ark did. And our homes must also be a Tabernacle, imbued with holiness so that they become a fitting place for the *Shechinah* to dwell in.

To be continued...

Ohrnet Magazine is a weekly Torah magazine published by Ohr Somayach Institutions, POB 18103, Jerusalem 91180, Israel · Tel +972-2-581-0315 · Email. info@ohr.edu

Contributing authors, editors and production team: Rabbi Yitzchak Breitowitz - Rav of Kehillos Ohr Somayach, Rabbi Reuven Chaim Klein, Rabbi Reuven Lauffer, Rabbi Yaakov Meyers, Mrs. Rosalie Moriah, Rabbi Moshe Newman, Rabbi Shlomo Simon, Rabbi Yaakov Asher Sinclair, Rabbi Yehuda Spitz, Mrs. Rachel Sagiv, Rabbi Reuven Subar.

©1992-2025 Ohr Somayach Institutions – All rights reserved – This publication contains words of Torah. Please treat it with due respect. Editor’s disclaimer – Ohrnet Magazine is not intended to be a source for halachic rulings. In any real and specific case one should consult a qualified halachic authority for ruling.

TAAMEI HAMITZVOS – Reasons behind the Mitzvos

by Rabbi Shmuel Kraines

Hanging an Executed Person

Mitzvos 536-537 in *Sefer HaChinuch*

Capital punishments serve both to atone for the wrongdoer and to deter the public from following his example. A person who is executed for worshiping idols or for blaspheming is hanged after the execution because these sins call for a greater deterrent. The hanged corpse is clearly visible to the public, and its sight instills fear of punishment within them (*Yalkut Mei'am Loez*). Since the sinner rejected the Torah, which is called “the Tree of Life,” he is hanged from a wooden beam (*Rabbeinu Menachem HaBavli*).

The Torah commands us to bury the corpse and not to leave it hanging overnight for several reasons: (a) the atonement has already been completed (*Onkelos*); (b) it is disrespectful to Hashem for a person created in His image to hang overnight (*Rashi*); (c) displaying the corpse excessively makes people discuss the blasphemy or the rationale of the idolatry, leading to further sin and desecration of Hashem’s Name (*Ramban*); and (d) displaying the executed person excessively may lead his relatives to question the judgment and curse the judges (*Rashbam*).

The Torah is particular about burying the corpse before nightfall to protect it from the influence of forces of impurity, which are more active at nighttime (*Rabbeinu Menachem HaBavli*). Therefore, the executed person is hanged just before nightfall and then immediately released and buried.

While an executed person is hanging, Hashem says, “My head is heavy; my arm is heavy,” expressing suffering (as it were) over the loss of a Jew. On a deeper level, the commentators explain that the “head” and the “arm” allude to Hashem’s *tefillin*, in which are written the praises of the Jewish People and which symbolize His bond with them (see *Berachos* 6a). When a Jew sins so severely that he needs to be executed and even hanged, that bond is “heavy” for Hashem, so to speak (glosses of *Nefesh HaChaim* 2:11). If this is the love that Hashem feels toward a Jew who has committed severe sins after his atonement, how much more is the love He feels toward Jews who strive to perform His will and who never commit such sins in the first place.