

Introduction to Parsha #24: Vayikra¹

READINGS: ***Torah Vayikra:*** **Leviticus 1:1 – 5:26**
 Haftarah: **Isaiah 43:21 – 44:26**
 B’rit Chadasha: **Hebrews 10:1-23**



... and He [the Holy One] called/cried out ...
[Leviticus 1:1(a)]

This Week’s Amidah prayer Focus is the *G’vurot*, the Prayer of His Powers, Part II

Vayikra el-Moshe – *And He [the Holy One] called/cried out for Moshe ...* ***vayedaber Adonai elav me’Ohel Mo’ed*** – *and the Holy One spoke to him from within the Tent of Meeting* **Leviticus 1:1a.**

Towards the end of Sefer Sh’mot we finally caught the vision. We downloaded the most amazing set of blueprints and specifications the world has ever seen. We gathered – and extravagantly donated – huge quantities of ‘almost heaven’ materials. We put aside our differences, our personal trauma and cynicism, and threw ourselves into the project with radical abandonment. We learned how to work together, collectively, in unifying synergy, rather than every man for himself, as he determined was right in his own eyes, as we had always done before. We put our hands, hearts, and backs into the plan ... and we built the Mish’kan, exactly as the Holy One had designed it. Selah! And now, at the center of our Sinaitic camp, there stands a structure unlike anything the world has ever seen – a *Mik’dash*, or place of flowing, pulsing holiness energy. The treasured tablets of testimony the Holy One inscribed with His own ‘finger’ occupy the place of ultimate honor at the epicenter of the structure. Every passageway, every threshold, every chamber, and every furnishing has been anointed liberally with the oil that carries the aroma of Messiah. Aharon and his sons are dressed in the special linen robes of beauty and

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holiness the Holy One designed. The Holy One has responded by descending majestically in Clouds of Glory and resting upon our camp. He apparently intends to dwell among us. His Manifest Presence now fills – and sanctifies - every square centimeter of the set aside space. A Great Cloud hovers over the structure by day; tongues of fire dance over its courts by night. As promised in Exodus 25:9, the God of Avraham, Yitzchak, and Ya'akov now *shakans* - i.e. *abides/resides/holds court* - right in the midst of us. The era of *Imanu-El* – i.e. God with us, dwelling in our midst – is officially underway! ***Behold, the Tabernacle of God will be with men, and He will be our God, and we will be His People***² *Selah!* That is fantastic – it really is ... but *what do we do now?* The door of His palace is open. Like a lighthouse shining into the fog of human lostness the Tabernacle beckons whosoever wills to seek counsel from or audience with the all-Wise, all-Good Creator. Our camp is His headquarters, His command and control center, and His communications hub. We are also learning to serve Him as *Kingdom courtiers*. What an honor! What a privilege! But correspondingly, **WHAT A RESPONSIBILITY!**

What Does the Creator's Indwelling of the Tent-Like Structure at the Epicenter of our Camp Portend For Us – and for the World?

Our minds are racing with a mixture of curiosity and anticipation – we are anxious to learn how ordinary human beings – men, women, and children of flesh and folly - are supposed to deal with a time of Divine Visitation. What does He want from us? We stare at the threshold that separates the One Who created the universe from the common things of our world. Who will cross that threshold first - and what protocol should he follow? It does not seem appropriate that he - that anyone – should go empty-handed. How - considering our fallen state - do we approach the Holiest of All? We don't know Heavenly courts protocol. We are Eliza Doolittle, and He is Henry Higgins. Even Moshe is *standing back in wonder, trembling in fear at the thought of stepping across the Mish'kan's threshold*.

Not to worry - the Holy One is about to download for us the Court protocols for His Kingdom. He is about to teach us what we need to do to acclimate ourselves into His Beauty Realm, and approach, delight in, absorb, and be transformed by His glory.

And so, the third book of Torah says, *He called*. His voice was heard – and it was calm, beautiful, and cordial. *Vayikra*, we are told: *And He called*. Ah, Beloved. He called then, and He is calling still. It is His delight to issue the 'great invitation'. He does not tire or grow weary. Day after day, year after year, generation after generation, He calls – and wait for a response, from whosoever will ... even if it is

² See Revelation 21:3.

only one soul. Will you be that ‘one’ soul this year? You have a *part to play in the Holy One’s Grand Plan for the redemption of mankind and for the restoration of Creation*, you see. The calling you are receiving is not primarily for you to learn how to do great *exploits for God*. The calling of the Holy One is about *something* that seems like foolishness to the world, yet makes it completely uncomfortable. At times this calling *fascinates the people of the world and opens their eyes* to a world beyond the tedium and boredom of life focused upon only man and nature. At other times, however, this calling makes the people of the world so furious that a number of them feel compelled to do anything they can to *shut you up* if not *stamp you out*. The calling consists of five elements:

1. The Honor of your presence is requested ...
2. The Ultimate Extreme Bridal Makeover is ON!
3. Be/become holy AS I AM HOLY.
4. I want to take you on a journey from the deep darkness of your world into the glorious light of Mine.
5. There are some things about you, and the way you think, speak, behave, prioritize things, and react to people and situations that is going to need to change drastically, so that you can model My goodness and glory to the peoples of the world and release a blessing of shalom over every family on the face of the earth.

So ... do you want to know what it is like where I stay? Well ... it’s time you found out. The door is always open; come and see. Just follow the bloody footprints of Messiah, and you will find the way.

We are *hosting Royalty* now, and that means we are ‘on the clock’ at all times. The first thing we need to do is master *the protocols of each palace threshold*, the *decorum of each palace chamber*, the *etiquette of each station/furnishing’s avodah*, and *the place each interaction plays in the Grand Plan* for the Redemption of Mankind as a Species, Bloodline by Bloodline, and for the Restoration of Creation, Geographical Coordinate by Geographical Coordinate, to its intended Edenic state of Beauty, Fruitfulness, and Shalom.

***Welcome to the Official Approach Protocols of the King’s Courts:
A Short Course on Approaching, Conversing With,
and Serving the King in His Amazing Beauty Realm***

Who can ascend the hill of the Holy One? And who can stand in His holy place³? Shall we enter, and approach the Creator of the Universe, empty-handed? What level of honor is due? What protocols must be followed? What level and elements

³ The vocabulary is drawn from Psalm 24:3. The Psalmist immediately answers: *He who has ‘clean hands and a pure heart’, who has not lifted up his soul to an ‘idol’, nor sworn deceitfully.*

of etiquette do these hallowed courts – and our even more Worthy Host – call for? How EXACTLY are we to ‘*do fellowship and communion*’ with the Glorious King of all Kings, Who stretches out the Heavens like a curtain, and spreads them out as a tent to dwell in⁴?

These are all fascinating questions, right? Because deep down, all men *long*, even *faint*, for the courts of our Creator⁵. And if we ever pause our frenzied activities for a moment or two, and let our minds get quiet, we find that our souls really do *cry out for the living God*. Some call it the ‘*longing for Eden*’ – have you been feeling it lately? If so, Beloved, I have some really *good news* for you: the third book of Torah, the study of which we are embarking upon, is the Holy One’s invitation to act on that deep longing in responsible and satisfying ways –and it is His Wise, Fatherly Instruction Manual on how to attain to the highest objectives of that primordial cry.

Of course, the longing to draw near to, be awestruck by, delight in, and re-establish intimate communion with our Creator is by no means new. The first book of Torah, *Sefer B’reshit*, explained how this longing came to exist – and how the ancients and patriarchs dealt with it. The second book of Torah, *Sefer Sh’mot*, explained how that longing can go dormant for decades – and sometimes even slip into suspended animation for generations – but can never be completely extinguished. Indeed, *Sefer Sh’mot* showed how societal upheaval, stressful situations, cultural persecutions - and sometimes even something as subtle as the changing of the seasons – can awaken the deep longing, stir the primordial cry, lift our heads out of the fleshly realm, and redirect our gaze back where they belong – to the Courts and the Throne of the King of kings. As the lovesick Shulamite blurts out in the Song of Songs:

*Draw me unto You ... and let us run together! Take me into the king’s chambers!
We will rejoice in You and be glad; we will extol Your love more than wine!
Rightly do they love You!*

*Tell me, O You Whom I love, where You feed Your flock -
where You make it rest in the heat of the day!
For why should I be as one who veils herself among the flocks of Your companions?
[Song 1:7]*

Ah, yes – we know that longing, don’t we? It is a part of the human condition. Which brings us back to the first eruption of the longing - in Genesis 4. Do you remember Hevel? In seeking to restore the communion between humankind and the Holy One that had been disturbed by Adam and Chava’s folly, Hevel *brought of the firstborn of his flock and of their fat/fullness*. **Genesis 4:4a**. What was the

⁴ See Isaiah 40:22.

⁵ This vocabulary is borrowed from the sons of Korach, as recorded in Psalm 84:1-2.

Holy One's response to Hevel's overture? Torah tells us that Hevel hit on something. The Holy One, we are told, '*respected*' – *i.e. looked with favor*⁶ – upon Hevel and his manner and attitude of approach. **Genesis 4:4b**. Alas, with Kayin, who opted for a different approach, it was not so. Never forget this contrast, Beloved. Restoring intimate communion and trust – once it is broken – can be tricky business. There are issues of motive, means, and protocol to be addressed. But with the Holy One, all things are possible – for those who *sh'ma, learn the protocol of the Courts, and come when – and as – he is called*.

One Small Step for Man – One Giant Leap for Mankind

As the third book of Torah opens He Whom our soul now loves more than any other – and reveres more than anything - is now physically only a few short steps away. His Kingdom is 'at hand'. But alas, we have no clue how to reach across the few short feet that now separate us from Him. We are men of unclean lips, dwelling in the midst of a people – indeed a species - of unclean lips. How can we cross over to where He is? If even Moshe cannot enter His Courts – how on earth can we? Never have a few short steps seemed such a great, unattainable distance!

We have come so far – but it has finally hit us: we have absolutely no idea how to bridge the matter of the few feet that now separate us from our King. He is going to have to make a way where there is no way. He is going to have to create that way the same way He created the Universe – with the breath of His Mouth and the Creative Energy of His Words. He is going to have to initiate, empower, and choreograph every aspect of our 'crossing over.' And we are just going to have to learn to walk in the way - and follow the protocols - that He provides for us.

A Call is Going Forth; The Lines of Communion Between Man and His Creator Are Open Again!

Something wonderful and world changing is happening at Sinai! The most beautiful sound in the cosmos - the Beautiful, Harmonious, Soul-Stirring Voice of the Bridegroom-King – is ringing out. After taking our breath away by condescending to fill and indwell the cherubim-themed structure we spent the last 5 ½ months building, He is calling for His Friend Moshe! The message is unmistakable: *Come, Come, Come!* He longs to take His conversation with the human beings He created to a much deeper and more relational level. Indeed, He seeks to go far beyond conversation with one man to intimate communion with whoever among men will come. He wants to hold court on earth, before human courtiers, as He has held court in the Heavenly Realm, before angelic hosts, from

⁶ The Hebrew verb used in this context is *sha'ah, shin, ayin, hey*, meaning to *give eye-attention to and see something special or noteworthy* in it.

before the foundation of the world. He is ready to implement the next phase of His Grand Plan of Redemption and Restoration.

Entering a New Season Of Intense, Radical Bridal Preparation

Welcome to the book of Torah I call the Bridegroom King's *Instruction Manual for the Bride Who Would Make Herself Ready*. Each year the Holy One offers us this book to assist us in preparing our hearts for a season of new growth, increased fruitfulness, deeper intimacy, and higher accountability. The season I am talking about is the season of *being drawn* unto our Bridegroom and *running with Him*. **Song of Songs 1:4**. This is a season of intimate co-laboring with our King. It begins with the remembrances of *Passover*. It proceeds throughout all the *Days of Unleavened Bread* and *Counting the Omer* all the way to the *Feast of Weeks*. This is our appointed season of betrothal passion and intense, radical bridal preparation. This is the season each year when Bridegroom-King awakens, captivates the hearts, inspires the minds, restores the souls, and methodically 'makes disciples', of ordinary men, women, and children.

The theme of the season is beautifully expressed in the Song of Songs as follows: ***“Lo, the Winter is past; the rain is over and gone. Flowers appear on the earth; the season of singing has come, and the voice of the turtledove is heard in our land. The fig tree puts forth her green figs, And the vines with the tender grapes release a good smell. Rise up, my love, my fair one, And come away!”*** **Song 2:11-13.**

Rise up indeed, O Bride who would make herself ready! The Bridegroom of Heaven bids us come away with Him! Before we *rise up* and *go away with Him* as our ancestors did on the first Passover, however, we would perhaps do well to take a look at *the garments we are wearing*. It would behoove us to look closely at *the lifestyle we are living*, at *the priorities we are following*. It would be appropriate for us to look long and hard at both the *substance and quality of not only the vertical but also the horizontal conversations and interactions to which we have gotten accustomed* – and where each has either stagnated or strayed from the Holy One's glorious plan for His people. Are the garments we are wearing, the lifestyle we are living, and the priorities and interaction/behavior patterns in which we are indulging, consistent with our calling to be the pure, spotless Bride the Holy One is calling us to be? Or are we perhaps in desperate need of the ultimate extreme bridal “make-over”?

The Ultimate Extreme Bridal “Make-Over”

Most people today think of the third book of Torah in accordance with the Latin name *Leviticus*. This Latin name means *laws of the Levites*. But neither this nor any other book of Torah – or indeed of all of Scripture – was penned in Latin.

Latin is not, and has never been, and will never be the language of the Bible. It is, instead, the language of bawdy Roman Emperors and out-of-touch Cardinals and Popes. The language of Divine Revelation is *Hebrew*. Hence it should surprise no one that the Latin ‘nickname’ Leviticus is not this book’s *real* name. The real name of the Book is *Vayikra* – a Hebrew phrase meaning “*and He called*”. And the subject matter of the book is not a bunch of “*laws of the Levites*” as the Latin name suggests. The focus of this *sefer Torah* is exactly what its Hebrew name *Vayikra* declares – *i.e.* the substance of *the Holy One’s calling* upon the lives of His People. *Vayikra* introduces us in earnest to *the depth, the breadth, the height and the circumference of that glorious calling*, and to *what our reasonable response to that call – i.e. our reasonable avodah - should be*. I therefore have come to call this book of Torah ‘*the Protocol for the Ultimate Extreme Bridal Makeover*’.

In today’s world most people have at least a basic level of familiarity with the cosmetological term ‘*make-over*’. What that term refers to of course is *a quick, short-term upgrade in one’s personal appearance* usually intended to help the person look one’s best for a particular social event. The standard elements of the *makeover* are a new haircut and/or hairstyle, a massage, a manicure, a facial, perhaps a change in make-up techniques and, a new outfit complete with a couple of coordinating fashion accessories. For those who seek a more dramatic change than the basic makeover provides the world of marketing has developed a much more intensive procedure many have dubbed the ‘*extreme make-over*’. The *extreme makeover* is a much more drastic, invasive, and transformative process designed to permanently change not only a person’s *physical image* but also his or her *self-concept* and *lifestyle*. This process usually begins with *multiple levels of reconstructive surgery* – nips and implants here, tucks and liposuction there, lap-bands, hair transplants, etc. It then usually also includes high-tech orthodontics, a new diet, an intense ‘body sculpting’ exercise regimen, abrasive and restorative dermatological treatments of various kinds, and of course a *totally new wardrobe*.

So ... what does this have to do with the Book of ‘Leviticus’? Well, if any betrothed bride ever needed an *extreme makeover* before she could possibly be prepared to become one with the bridegroom to whom she was betrothed, it was – and for that matter *still is* - the Holy One’s Redeemed Community. Would you really expect the Holy One to leave that situation uncovered? Of course not. He will *spare no expense* to make His Beloved *radiant* and *glorious*. He will *pay any price* necessary to present His Betrothed to Himself as a pure, spotless Bride without spot or wrinkle. And it is going to be through the brilliant protocols He is going to lay out in the third Book of Torah that He intends for His Betrothed Bride-to-be to not only *maximize her outward appearance* but also to *reshape her self-concept* and *sanctify her lifestyle*.

How will the Holy One transform His chosen Bride-People to become a pure, spotless Bride to the King of King? He has designed for her – for us - the ultimate extreme Bridal makeover!

The Biblical Imagery – the Preparation of a Reluctant Queen

Consider the pattern set in this regard in the Book of Esther. As you will recall after it was determined that the Persian queen Vashti was determined to be unworthy to serve due to her non-responsiveness to the king's summons that a group of new bride-candidates was selected and brought forth from their homes. They were escorted to the royal courts. They were placed in the care of one of the king's most trusted representatives. In Esther 2:12-13 we are told that:

*Each young woman ... completed twelve months' preparation,
according to the regulations for the women,
and thus were the days of their preparation apportioned:
six months with oil of myrrh,
and six months with perfumes and preparations for beautifying women.*

*Thus [prepared, each] young woman went to the king
and she was given whatever she desired
to take with her from the women's quarters to the king's palace.*

Does that not sound like an extreme makeover process to you? And that is very closely analogous, we will discover, to what the Holy One is going to be doing in the Book the world calls Leviticus.

The Stunning Parallels

The Holy One has brought his bride candidates out of their house of bondage. He has also now brought them to the courts of His palace – in this case the *Mish'kan*. He will now *entrust the Bride-candidates to the care of his trusted representative, Moshe, and assign them a retinue of servants* - in the form of Aharon, his sons, and the Levi'im [Levites].

The Holy One will *let each of the candidates select what they wish to take with them, to adorn themselves, when they are called into His chambers for their individual 'night with the King' experience*. He will set out for us *a very special 'Bride's diet'*. As part of the makeover and sanctification process, there will certain things that we may have eaten – or seen eaten - before that we will never, ever eat again. A marriage covenant means we only eat what He eats. A bride only eats the food provided to her by her Bridegroom.

The Holy One will then provide for the Bride-Candidates *external signs of*

separation – these will run the gamut from hairstyles to skin treatments to cleansing protocols. The Holy One will then *provide them a whole new wardrobe* [i.e. the *mitzvot* of Torah] with which the Bride-candidates are to clothe themselves. The Holy One will also provide *a regimen for exercising His covenant-faithfulness in interpersonal relations*. And His focus through all of this will be on *providing a way for his Betrothed Bride to become radiant, glorious, spotless, undefiled, and ready to assume her role as His queen*. As a faithful Bridegroom, He will be constantly about the process of transforming us, from the inside out. Through the protocols that He has lovingly designed, He will conform us to the *essential qualifications* of His Bride.

It's All About Embracing the Call and Learning the Protocol To Be Re-Made Into a Holy Nation

The most basic definition of what our Divine Bridegroom is calling us *to* is found in chapter 19 at verse 2: ***Speak unto all the witness throng of B'nei Yisrael, and say to them: You are to be holy: For I, the Holy One your God, [am] holy.*** See also Leviticus 11:44, where we are told: ***Consecrate yourselves, and be holy; for I [am] holy.*** Again in the next verse, Leviticus 11:45, the Holy One says: ***I am the Holy One Who brought you up from Egypt to be your God; Therefore, be Holy, for I am holy.*** And He hits the same theme in the same words in Leviticus 20:26, saying: ***You are to be holy to Me, because I, the Holy One, am holy; and I have set you apart from the nations to be My own.***

In all, the Holy One is going to say the same thing four times in this Book. I think He *means for it* – i.e. our *becoming holy - to happen*, don't you? Moreover, we will discover that our calling as *k'doshim* [holy ones, saints], is not found only in Leviticus, but continues throughout the TaNaKh and the B'rit Chadasha – being consistent all the way through the end of the book of the Revelation. See for instance **Matthew 5:13-16, Philippians 2:12-16, I Peter 2:9-12, Revelation 5:8 and 19:8**. This call is not just for 'one night with the king' – it is for *eternity with the Bridegroom*.

It is *very, very important that we get this*. Individually and corporately what we are called for – what we are to become - is “*holy*” [Hebrew *k'dosh - qof, dalet, shin*]. So let us pause for a few moments to contemplate what the Divine invitation to ***be/become Holy as He is Holy*** means.

A Nation Full of Ordinary People Who Are All Called to be 'Holy'

We to whom the Holy One has extended his “scepter” are all Divinely ordained – and are being prepared – to be called to be an *am kedoshim* – i.e. a nation of *holy ones*. That is why, contrary to popular theological opinion, the book of Leviticus is not an outmoded book of regulations for a superseded priesthood. It is instead *the*

genetic blueprint of new creations of God. It is part of every redeemed person's DNA.

What does 'holy' [Hebrew *kadosh*] mean? Let us look closely at the Hebrew word picture created by the hieroglyphic-like letters that make up the word *kadosh*. The first letter is the *qof*, which pictures which pictures an enclosure – a *private garden, or place or person marked off and set apart*, so to speak. The second letter is the *dalet*. That letter is a picture/hieroglyphic for a doorway, or passageway. The third letter is the *shin*. This letter represents the *flames/tongues of fire*, evidencing the Manifest Presence of the Holy One. The picture created by the combination of these hieroglyphic letters is that of a holy people/nation serving as a portal through which the flames of the Holy One's Manifest Presence are released. That is, of course, what the Bridegroom-King's call to holiness is all about.

What the Calling to Kedusha – i.e. Holiness Energy – Means To Real People In Real Time

In the opening section of this study it was stated that the primary focus of the Book of Torah we are about to study will be upon *the substance, the depth, breadth, height and circumference of the Holy One's calling upon our lives*. The calling is, as aforesaid, going to boil down to '***Be holy as I am Holy!***'. In our study of Exodus however we learned that our calling as covenant partners of the God of Avraham, of Yitzchak and of Ya'akov consists of *three separate elements*. In other words, to be *holy as He is Holy* we have to *cover three separate bases*.

We learned from our studies in parsha Yitro that the first part of our covenantal calling is *relational*. Specifically, we are called to walk to and fro upon the earth as the Holy One's *am segulah*⁷ [*specially cherished and cared for people*]. We also learned that a second part of our calling as covenant partners of the Holy One is *functional*. We are to function as His *mamlaket kohanim* [*priestly kingdom/kingdom of priests*]. We are to serve as *royal emissaries and ambassadors*⁸. And finally, we learned also that a third part of our Bridal calling is *positional*. We are to be His *goy kadosh* [*nation unlike, and which remains physically and spiritually distinct from, the other nations and*

⁷ *Am* [*ayin, mem*, Strong's Hebrew word #5971, pronounced *awm*] means people, or nation. *Segulah* [*samech, gimel, lamed, hey*, Strong's Hebrew word #5459, pronounced *seg-ool-law'*] is the feminine form of a Hebrew noun that Strong's defines as meaning 'to shut up' [i.e. to enclose, or lock up, as one lock's up a treasure in a secure place].

⁸ According to Gesenius' Lexicon the verb root *kahan* in its *pa'al* form means "to presage, predict, prophesy", and, by extension, to undertake any one's cause; to act as a deputy, or delegate, by [with authorization] presenting the words of the one whose cause he has undertaken to third persons; to stand up on behalf of such authorizing person and speak on his behalf; and to labor in the authorizing person's cause. **Gesenius' Hebrew-Chaldee Lexicon to the Old Testament, p. 385** [in relation to word number 3547]. As is pointed out in Wednesday's Study from parsha *Tetzaveh*, to *kahan* is to reveal Messiah according to a Divinely imparted message, delivered by angels/keruvim/serafim.

peoples of the world]. The *extreme makeover* protocol set forth in the Book many call Leviticus is specifically designed by the Holy One to Divinely empower and train us to walk efficiently and effectively in *all three phases* of this Bridal calling to holiness.

The Relevance Factor

As we begin the study of *Vayikra* therefore please do not let your mind tell you this book is written for or about *someone else*. Please do not allow yourself to think this is an outdated training manual of relevance only to a select group of “*sons of Aharon*” and “*Levites*” who lived during Tabernacle and Temple times prior to 70 CE. Please do not let yourself buy into the theory that this book is about *another time, another place, another people* and *another covenant*. That kind of dismissive approach to this book – a book that consists in large part of the very words of the Holy One - is I guess the kind of thing that is to be expected from *detached scholars*, from *aloof theologians*, and for that matter from *wounded warriors with lukewarm hearts*. But with the help of the Holy One may *our* approach in these studies toward the precious words of the Holy One *never* be the approach of either scholars, theologians, or battle-scarred veterans of religious wars.

May we always approach the precious words of Torah *with the wide-eyed wonder of little children*. May we never consider even a syllable that our Divine Bridegroom has uttered – much less whole chunks of His revealed Word - as ‘*irrelevant*’. And may our hearts leap and dance at every syllable with the burgeoning passion of a betrothed maiden reading a passionate letter from a beloved Bridegroom.

Be assured that the wonderful life-giving words of the Holy One in *sefer Vayikra* are not by any means *dead letters on parchment* to be autopsied with the cold hands of scholars. Nor are they *laboratory specimens of ancient religious literature* to be dissected and doctrinalized with the warped cynicism of theologians. This *sefer* of Torah – like every other piece of Scripture – is a *love-letter to a Beloved Bride-to-be written with the Divine Hand*. You and I – not someone else - are *the intended recipients*. You see, Dear Reader, the reason behind the ‘holiness calling’ of this Book is that *the Holy One is calling you and me to draw near to and become of one mind and spirit with Him*. He is calling us into His Courts to find - *in and through intimate communion with Him* - the ability to live the lifestyle we have been redeemed to live. What this *sefer* of Torah is about is nothing short of how to prepare for a walk of daily intimacy with our Divine Bridegroom. Reduced to its essence, the Divine call to holiness is an invitation to experience the supreme pleasure of life – a life of *responsible, wise, compassionate co-regency with the Creator of the Universe*.

The Secret to Understanding this Book

It may help in this regard to recall the spiritual law we learned in connection with the *Mish'kan* discourse of the Book of Exodus – *i.e. the 'faithful saying' of offsetting spiritual/physical parallel*. That 'faithful saying' states that:

*Every action of man that the Holy One directs to be done
in the earthly Mish'kan, in the physical realm,
corresponds to an eternal reality
related to Messiah in the Heavenly Mish'kan, in the spiritual realm,
and to the functions we are to fulfill, as the Temple of His Spirit,
in the natural realm of our earthly lives.*

Every time you see a reference to the *Mish'kan* in Sefer *Vayikra* therefore *try to look through the glass darkly* and see all the way to the Chambers of the Great King in Heaven.

As we discussed in detail in our study of Sefer *Sh'mot* the *mish'kan* is a place of rich symbolism, a place that exists in and constitutes a portal between two realms. One of the realms in which the *mish'kan* exists is earthly; the other realm in which it exists, however, is heavenly. Just as every structural element, furnishing, wall hanging and tent peg in the earthly realm of the *Mish'kan* is symbolic of an eternal truth of the Heavenly realm so are all human actors who come to the *mish'kan's* earthly realm - and all human activities engaged in by those actors while there - symbolic of things eternal and Divine. Similarly, every time you see a reference in this book to the blood or fat of a bull, or goat, or lamb or pigeon, look through the earthly shadow to the eternal reality in the Heavenly realm to which that blood points us. And finally, every time you see a reference to any action being performed by Aharon, by any of his sons, or by the members of the Levitical tribe in the *Mish'kan*, the camp, or outside the camp, look through the oil of anointing on those priests and Levites all the way to the risen, interceding Messiah. After all, as we discussed before, Aharon and his sons are *mere actors* in a Divine Passion Play. They are merely modeling for us the more Excellent, Eternal, priesthood of Messiah that is spoken of plainly in Psalm 110.

If you can look beyond the temporal to the eternal and beyond the physical to the spiritual, you will see that in the Book of Leviticus what our Bridegroom is doing is calling us to leave our *religious comfort zones* and step into our *prophetic destinies*. He is calling us unto Himself so that He can *purify our hearts, renew our minds, and restore our souls*. He is calling us to model to the world what it is means, in unity with the Messiah, to be covenant partners of the Creator of the Universe in day-to-day life - to *reflect His holiness, and do His Will* on earth just as it is in Heaven. Let's get started, shall we?

The Cloud Fills the Mish'kan – Who Can Enter?

As the book of Exodus ended, at the conclusion of the dedication of the *Mish'kan*, the 'anan [cloud] of the Divine Presence first descended upon, then filled, the *Mish'kan*. When the *Radiant Cloud* came a curious thing happened - Moshe was unable to enter the *Mish'kan*. Remember, however, that the main idea behind building the Tabernacle was that the Holy One would *meet and speak with Moshe* [the friend of the Bride] in the *kadosh k'doshim* [holy of holies], above the ark, “*between the wings of the cherubim*”. But if Moshe cannot even enter the *Mish'kan*, how can he get into the *kadosh k'doshim* to meet with and hear from the Holy One? Did somebody *goof*? How is this supposed to work? Ah, now we remember. Esther knew it well – one cannot enter into the inner court of a King unless/until one is *bidden* to enter – *i.e.* unless/until one is CALLED. Esther 4:11. Hence the 3rd book of Torah – *Vayikra* – “*and He called ...*”

The Theme That Runs Throughout Sefer Vayikra – And All of Holy Writ

The name *Vayikra* is taken from the first phrase of the text that reads: ***Vayikra el-Moshe*** This Hebrew phrase is usually translated “*and He called*” Moshe ...”¹⁰ The entire theme of the book is summed up in this very important first phrase – *and He called*. You see, what this book is all about is the Holy One’s calling for His people to approach Him – like Ahasuerus of Persia “called” Esther by extending his scepter to her.

Do you hear your Bridegroom-King calling, Dear Reader? He wants His people to *draw near* Him. He wants His people to *approach* Him. He wants His people to *know* Him. He wants His people to *love* Him. He wants His people to *walk with Him through the trials and challenges of this world*. And He wants His people to *mature into His Pure, Spotless Bride*.

A Travelogue of The Parsha That Kicks Off the Book of the Bridegroom’s Calling

The setting for the entire book of *Vayikra* is at Mount Sinai. The narrative begins on or about 1 Nisan in the year following the Exodus, on the day the glory of the Holy One filled the newly erected and assembled *Mish'kan*. The Holy One

⁹ The Hebrew word our English Bibles translate as ‘called’ in this passage is *qara, qof, resh, alef*, Strong’s Hebrew word #7120, pronounced *kaw-raw*. The first Biblical usage is early in the creation account of Genesis 1, where we are told: *God called [qara] the light ‘Day’* [Hebrew *yom*], *and the darkness He called [qara] Night* [Hebrew *lailah*].” It would seem that the Hebrew word picture would be that of ‘calling forth’, or ‘summoning’.

¹⁰ Of course, the first parsha of the book is also called by the same name, since the first words of the book are also the first words of the parsha.

commences the next download of glorious revelation by calling Moshe to another God-encounter - the first ever to occur within the *Mish'kan* itself. Moshe is empowered to enter the Glory Cloud. The Holy One then begins the download by instructing Moshe regarding the various steps of the Passion Play choreography He has scripted for the *Mish'kan* that now sits in the center of the Camp.

What the Holy One is going to teach us in this download is the process by which He intends for His covenant people to testify to each other and to the world of His *worth*, of His *covenant faithfulness*, of His *goodness*. These are the protocols and patterns through which Covenant Partners of the Holy One in every generation and every part of the world are to testify to the world of the great *forgiveness* our Bridegroom-King offers to those who seek it, as well as the fearsome judgment He has in store for those who choose to another way, and who reject Him and persecute His people – and absolutely refuse to turn from their destructive ways and receive His forgiveness, His cleansing, His empowerment, and His love.

This week, in the opening parsha of *Vayikra*, the Holy One will teach Moshe 5 different choreographed steps that the people, under the oversight of Aharon and his sons, are to learn and do. The first is called *korban olah*, often inartfully translated into English as ‘burnt offering’. The second is called *korban minchah*, often translated into English as ‘grain offering’ [KJV, ‘meat offering’]. The third is called *korban shelem*, often translated into English as ‘peace offering’. The fourth is called *korban chata*, often translated into English as ‘sin offering’. The fifth is called *korban asham*, often translated into English as ‘guilt offering’. We will, I believe, discover that there is far more to these 5 steps of the dance of redemption than the English translation of ‘offering’ could ever even imply, much less convey.

Haftarah Vayikra

Isaiah 43:21 – 44:26

This week’s haftarah¹¹ comes from the Scroll of *Yeshayahu* [Isaiah]. In this haftarah the prophet Isaiah speaks the Word of the Holy One concerning the ugly mutation of the wonderful *korban* [approach] system that the Holy One taught Moshe in parsha *Vayikra*. After *Sh'lomo* [Solomon] and his successors led the nation of Israel into idolatry, the Aharonic priesthood became increasingly corrupt. This led to a corresponding spiritual decline among the masses. This resulted in a societal malaise. As a result, the *beautiful flowing lifestyle of intimacy* that we see described in the Book of Leviticus became perverted. The pathways designed by

¹¹ The *haftarah* is a text selected centuries ago by the rabbis from the books of *Nevi'im* (Prophets) to be read publicly in the synagogue following the reading of the prescribed Torah reading for each Sabbath or *mo'ed*. The *haftarah* usually has a thematic link to the Torah reading that precedes it. Although in Jewish tradition many selections from *Nevi'im* are read as *haftarot* over the course of the year, the books of *Nevi'im* are *not* read in their entirety each year by the majority of Jewish people.

the Holy One for intimacy and world-changing impact were transmuted by corrupt kings and priests and backslidden people into a *burdensome yoke of man-focused, man-designed religion*. Yeshayahu therefore declared in the Name of the Holy One a “*You don’t bring me flowers anymore!*”-type accusation:

*You have not brought Me lambs for burnt offerings.
You have not honored me through approach protocols -
though I have not burdened and wearied you
with My requests for grain offerings and incense.
You have not brought me fragrant incense
or pleased me with the fat from the sacrifices.
Instead, you have burdened Me with your sins and wearied Me with your faults.*

[Isaiah 43:23-24]

Yeshayahu addresses this perversion of the Holy One’s instructions by issuing two kinds of rebukes to the people. First he points out to them that even when they are in exile with no Temple and are thus not "burdened" [as they had come to think of it] by the various *korbanot*, they still did not pray or repent of their sins. Secondly the prophet points out that one of the major things that led to the exile in the first place was our misuse of the *korban system* – by choosing to render their ‘sacrifices’ to idols instead of or in addition to the Holy One and by reducing the *korbanot* of the Divine Passion Play our Bridegroom wrote for us to a legalistic, ritualistic religious system devoid of passion. He therefore accuses us of *sending the wrong message to the world*.

Yeshayahu explains that we were created to praise the Holy One– and to bring Him honor in every aspect and interaction of our lives. The prophet then shows us how miserably we have thus far failed of that essential purpose:

*... the people I formed for myself, that they might set forth my praise.
Yet you have not called on me, Ya`akov; but you have been weary of me, Yisra'el.
You have not brought me of your flock for korbanot olahot;
neither have you honored me with your korbanot.*

Notwithstanding our waywardness, the Holy One goes on to declare that He intends not only to forgive but to completely restore us. He promises to send "*rain upon dry ground*". And in accordance with the theme of parsha *Vayikra* He calls us to Himself. What is the Bridegroom-King’s call? Through Yeshayahu the call is *shuva eylai, ki g'al'ticha* - *return to me, and I will redeem you*. And He promises:

*I, even I, am he who blots out your transgressions for my own sake;
and I will not remember your sins.*

Heaven help us – the prophet of the Holy One has nailed us all. Christian, Jew, Messianic – it doesn’t matter. We have all sinned in this regard. We have all fallen far short of the glory of the One Who called us. We have all, to one degree or another, in one way or another, misrepresented the Holy One, His character, and

His priorities to the world. It is time to make t'shuvah. It is time to receive – and impart – a better revelation.

A B'rit Chadasha Reading Corresponding to Parsha Vayikra
Hebrews 10:1-23

This week's B'rit Chadasha reading is from the Book of Hebrews – a letter written to the scattered myriads of 1st Century Jews who acknowledged Yeshua as the Messiah promised in Torah. At one point in the discussion the writer of Hebrews quotes a verse from the TaNaKh that his readers should know very well:

*Therefore when he comes into the world, he says,
"Sacrifice and offering you didn't desire, but a body did you prepare for me;
In whole burnt offerings and sacrifices for sin you had no pleasure."
Then I said, 'Behold, I have come
(In the scroll of the book it is written of me) to do your will, God.'"*
[Hebrews 10:5-7]

When will we learn that ***every picture tells a story?***

*May the fire of the Holy One burn within your hearts,
And may the resulting glow tell the world that you have approached
and communed with the Holy One.*

The Rabbi's son

Amidah Prayer Focus for the Week
The G'vurot, Part II

Rav l'hoshea

(You are) Mighty to Save

M'chalkel chayim b'chesed

(You) sustain the living with covenant love

m'chai'ai maysim b'rachamim rabim

(You) resurrect the dead with overflowing compassion