

# Shabbat Spice

PARSHAT VAYIKRA



## Connecting Through Commandments

By Amanda Dilamani

This week, we begin reading the 3rd book of the Torah - Sefer Vayikra. The Sefer starts off saying "*vayikra el Moshe*" meaning "*And he called to Moshe.*" Here, G-d is calling out to Moshe, to give him a set of instructions for how the Jewish people will need to give "*korbanot*" moving forward. The parsha goes on to describe the most meticulous details associated with the different types of sacrifices that can be offered up to G-d, how one differs from the next, the measurements, what they should be accompanied by, and so on. He explains the different sacrifices that atone for guilt or sins, and distinguishes between sins committed inadvertently and sins committed on purpose.

When reading this parasha, and more broadly this *sefer* for the 1st time, I honestly found it to be quite dry and technical. Living in a time period when we no longer give sacrifices makes it that much harder to relate to this *sefer* on a personal level. We read about them, we're supposed to yearn for their return, but we've never done this ourselves, nor known anyone who has. And for me personally the descriptions of sacrifices didn't sound particularly inspiring or spiritual. Blood poured here, fat laid on the altar there, didn't exactly sound too enticing. So how do we connect to a *sefer* where the *mitzvot* seem so foreign to us?

The English translation for the word "*korban*" is sacrifice or offering. Essentially, to give something up. However, the word "*Korban*" literally means to draw close.

Thus, when an individual presented an offering at the Temple, it was meant as a concretization of the desire to draw closer to G-d, the Absolute, "that which is sacred," or to whatever else works for you to express this. One comes close to G-d by giving back, or giving up, some of the life which we have been gifted to nourish and sustain us. While we can't literally do the action in today's time period, understanding the symbolism behind the action really provides so much more meaning to reading about it.

The question I was still left with though is why does it need to be so technical? The mitzvah sounds nice but there are so many rules and regulations in order to perform it. It almost takes the enjoyment out of doing it. Similarly, many of the other commandments we follow as Jews come with what feels like a thousand rules on how to follow them. For example, when thinking about *bilchot Shabbat*, there are so many technical rules that keeping it seems almost daunting. When you take a step back though, you realize that all these rules and regulations are really just there as a steppingstone in order to connect. For me personally, the rules and regulations on not using electricity allow me to really disconnect from the mundane and feel Hakadosh Baruch Hu's presence on Shabbat.

It's not always easy to connect or know how to, but having some sort of framework and guidance allows us to feel the closeness of Hashem as we attempt to follow the 613 *mitzvot*. May we always strive to use the framework G-d gave us to continue to draw closer to him.

Shabbat Shalom!

CANDLE LIGHTING 6:53PM | SHABBAT ENDS 8:02PM

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## Modern Day Korban

By Alexa Khojahiny

This week, we begin the third book of the Torah, Parashat Vayikra. Bnei Yisroel had just completed building the *Mishkan* in the last few chapters of Shemot. This Parsha begins with Hashem calling on to Moshe and listing the *Korbanot* (sacrifices) that are commanded to be performed in the *Mishkan*. In our eyes today, Sefer Vayikra can be difficult to understand since we aren't able to fulfill these specific mitzvot, but we can try to find the deeper meaning and apply it to our everyday lives.

In the first word, "*Vayikra*," the letter *aleph* is miniature, which displays a powerful message. When Moshe Rabbeinu was writing the Torah, he decided to keep it that way for a reason. In this case, one opinion mentions how Moshe Rabbeinu's humility shines through from this action. "*Vayikra*" with an *aleph* meant that Hashem called on him in particular. Moshe didn't want anyone thinking he was too important or great that G-d singled him out to talk, so he kept the *aleph* small altering the word to mean "by chance."

We can learn so much from Moshe's modesty, and how he wished to be perceived throughout all future generations. Moshe, the greatest of all prophets, who led us out of Egypt, lived by example and taught us how being humble is truly an important trait to carry. Like that miniature *aleph*, sometimes when you feel small and insignificant, that's when Hashem calls on you the most.

Another way we can apply this Parsha to our lives today is by recognizing that even though we can't necessarily perform *Korbanot* the same today, we do in a sense sacrifice a lot as Jews. As women, daughters, mothers and friends, we prioritize our beliefs even if it takes time from our own personal enjoyment. With Pesach coming, cooking, cleaning, and all preparations, it can sometimes feel draining and overpowering. If we try to remember that all of this is a "sacrifice" to keep our traditions and *mitzvot* alive, it's all worth it. It's a lesson and reminder to take time to appreciate all the sacrifices our parents, grandparents, and those around us did and continue to do for us to be here.

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