

March 16, 2013

VAYIKRA – And He Called

This week's *parasha* deals entirely with the complexities of the Temple offerings. If it was a **burnt** offering, it had to be a male without defect from the herd or flock, **OR** it could be a dove or pigeon, **OR** it could be a grain offering made with fine flour and olive oil. On the other hand, if it was a **peace** offering, it could be male **or** female from the herd or flock. Furthermore, if a *kohen* sinned, the offering had to be a bull. **But**, if some other leader sinned who was not a *kohen*, it had to be a male goat, and if an individual who was **not** a leader sinned, it had to be a female lamb – or possibly a female goat. It really gets complicated as to what animal was required, where the animal was to be slaughtered, what parts were burned and where they were burned, and what was done with the blood, and how that was done, etc., etc. There were a lot of requirements.

The rules seem endless, but there must have been some reason for the subtle differences for each sacrifice, but I haven't figured that out yet. But as Steve Caldwell pointed out two weeks ago, details are important, and if HaShem says to offer a lamb, a goat just won't do the trick. With all of these sacrifices going on, it would appear that the Israelites were destroying their livestock for no apparent reason, but this is the wrong conclusion. From the very beginning with Able and Cain, we were taught to recognize that life was sacred. And every week, we read what Moses taught us: that the blood of the sacrifice was a substitute for the soul. So, here's how it worked:

When Israel left Egypt, they received the Law at Sinai. With the introduction of the Law, came violation of the Law. With the violation of the Law, there had to be a way to deal with the matter of guilt. The Law provided grounds for guilt, and the sacrificial system provided a way for atonement. Although HaShem is the very essence of forgiveness and kindness, those words that do not appear in the book of Leviticus. "Repentance" and "grace" aren't there either - I check it out in my Strong's exhaustive concordance. The word that is used frequently, however, is "atonement." Atonement could only be achieved by offering a sacrifice, and a sacrifice could be offered only by a *kohen*, and a *kohen* could do his job only within the Temple.

In the *Haftarah* reading, *HaShem* is chiding His chosen people because they were not honoring Him with their sacrifices, but all of this changes in the B'rit Chadasha. The writer of Hebrews is quick to point out that "it is impossible for the blood of bulls and goats to take away our sins." Besides, when the Temple was destroyed, the sacrificial system was taken away. When Yeshua died on a tree, a better system was put into place. We have been separated from HaShem and been made holy through the offering of Yeshua's body – the only perfect sacrifice.

Focus: The Perfect Sacrifice

Hebrew reading Leviticus 1:1-2

English reading Leviticus 1:1-9

Haftarah Isaiah 43:22-25

B'rit Chadasha Hebrews 10:4-10