



**SoulSpa 3.23 • P. Vayikra**  
**March 21, 2026 • 3 Nisan 5786**

בָּרוּךְ אַתָּה יְהוָה  
אֱלֹהֵינוּ מֶלֶךְ הָעוֹלָם  
אֲשֶׁר קִדְּשָׁנוּ בְּמִצְוֹתָיו  
וְצִנּוּנוּ לְעִסוּק בְּדִבְרֵי תוֹרָה:

*Barukh Atah Adonai  
eloheinu melekh ha'olam  
asher kidshanu b'mitzvotav  
v'tzivanu la'asok b'divrei Torah.*

Blessed are You, YHVH, our God,  
eternal sovereign, who sanctified us  
in God's *mitzvot* and commanded us  
to busy ourselves in words of Torah.

**Orientation to the Book of Leviticus**

ט.ה.ר (t-h-r) pure > *uncharged*

ט.מ.א (t-m-' ) impure > *charged*

ק.ר.ב (k-r-v) proximity, inwardness > *sacrifice*

ע.ל.ה ('-l-h) ascent > *burnt offering (olah)*

⋮

**▶ Vayikra: a Poem by Rick Lupert**

**Leviticus 1:1**

וַיִּקְרָא אֱלֹהִים מִן הַשָּׁמַיִם אֶל־מֹשֶׁה וַיְדַבֵּר יְהוָה אֵלָיו  
מֵאֶתֶר מוֹעֵד לֵאמֹר:

1-3. YHVH called to Moshe and spoke to him from  
the Tent of Witnessing, saying...



WHY IS THIS IMPORTANT AT ALL?

- personal proximity = individual effort, can't be outsourced
- physical, visceral = emotionally impactful
- sensory impacts = use all the pathways
- “expensive” effort = bringing our best

**Leviticus 1:1-13**

וַיִּקְרָא אֶל־מֹשֶׁה וַיְדַבֵּר יְהוָה אֵלָיו  
 מֵאֵהָל מוֹעֵד לֵאמֹר: דַּבֵּר אֶל־בְּנֵי  
 יִשְׂרָאֵל וְאָמַרְתָּ אֲלֵהֶם אָדָם כִּי־  
 יִקְרִיב מִכֶּם קֹרְבָן לַיהוָה  
 מִן־הַבְּהֵמָה מִן־הַבָּקָר וּמִן־הַצֹּאן  
 תִּקְרִיבוּ אֶת־קֹרְבַנְכֶם: אִם־עֹלָה  
 קֹרְבָנוּ מִן־הַבָּקָר זָכָר תָּמִים יִקְרִיבוּ  
 אֶל־פֶּתַח אֵהָל מוֹעֵד יִקְרִיב אֹתוֹ  
 לְרַצְנוֹ לִפְנֵי יְהוָה:

1-3. YHVH called to Moshe and spoke to him from the Tent of Witnessing, saying: Speak to the Children of Israel and say to them, “When one of them *korban-ifies* from themselves a *korban* to YHVH, bring a *korban* from the cattle, from the herd or from the flock. If one’s *korban* is an *olah* from the herd, the *korban* will be an unblemished male: make a *korban* as one wills at the opening of the Tent of Witnessing before YHVH.”

Our own mortality  
 Amidah: “God of death and life”

וְסָמַךְ יָדוֹ עַל־רֹאשׁ הָעֹלָה וְגִרְצָהּ לוֹ  
 לְכַפֵּר עֲלָיו: וְשַׁחַט אֶת־בְּנוֹ הַבָּקָר  
 לִפְנֵי יְהוָה וְהִקְרִיבוּ בְנֵי אֶהֱרֹן  
 הַכֹּהֲנִים אֶת־הַדָּם וְזָרְקוּ אֶת־הַדָּם  
 עַל־הַמִּזְבֵּחַ סָבִיב אֲשֶׁר־פֶּתַח אֵהָל  
 מוֹעֵד: וְהִפְשִׁיט אֶת־הָעֹלָה וְנָתַח  
 אֶתָּהּ לַנְּתֻחִיהָ:

4-6. One will place one's hand on the head of the *olah*, for it to be desired for their atonement. One will slaughter the bull before YHVH, and Aharon’s sons, the *kohanim*, will *korban-ify* the blood, sprinkling the blood on the altar around the opening of the Tent of Witnessing. One [of them] will spread out the *olah* and cut it into pieces.

וְנָתְנוּ בְנֵי אֶהֱרֹן הַכֹּהֵן אֵשׁ עַל־  
 הַמִּזְבֵּחַ וְעָרְכוּ עֲצִים עַל־הָאֵשׁ:  
 וְעָרְכוּ בְנֵי אֶהֱרֹן הַכֹּהֲנִים אֶת־  
 הַנְּתֻחִים אֶת־הָרֹאשׁ וְאֶת־הַפָּדָר  
 עַל־הָעֲצִים אֲשֶׁר עַל־הָאֵשׁ אֲשֶׁר  
 עַל־הַמִּזְבֵּחַ: וְקִרְבוּ וַיְכַרְעוּ יָרֵחַץ  
 בְּמַיִם וְהִקְטִיר הַכֹּהֵן אֶת־הַכֹּל  
 הַמִּזְבֵּחַ עֹלָה אֲשֶׁה רִיח־נִיחֹחַ  
 לַיהוָה.

7-9. The sons of Aharon the *kohein* will put fire on the altar, and arrange wood on the fire. Aharon's sons, the *kohanim*, will arrange the pieces, the head and the fat on the wood that is on the fire that is on the altar. One [of them] will *kirbo* and wash its innards and legs in water; and the *kohein* will put incense on everything on the altar, to be an *olah* for a fire of pleasing odor to YHVH.

וְאִם־מִן־הַצֹּאן קֹרְבָנוּ מִן־הַכֶּשֶׁבִּים  
 אוֹ מִן־הָעִזִּים לְעֹלָה זָכָר תָּמִים  
 יִקְרִיבוּ: וְשַׁחַט אֹתוֹ עַל־יָד הַמִּזְבֵּחַ  
 צָפֹנָה לִפְנֵי יְהוָה וְזָרְקוּ בְנֵי אֶהֱרֹן  
 הַכֹּהֲנִים אֶת־דָּמוֹ עַל־הַמִּזְבֵּחַ סָבִיב:

10-11. If one’s *korban* is an *olah* from the flock, of sheep or of goats, one will make one’s *korban* a male without blemish. It will be slaughtered before YHVH on the north side of the altar, and Aharon’s sons, the *kohanim*, will dash its blood against the altar all around.

וְנָתַח אֹתוֹ לַנְּתֻחָיו וְאֶת־רֹאשׁוֹ וְאֶת־  
 פָּדָרוֹ וְעֵרַף הַכֹּהֵן אֹתָם עַל־הָעֲצִים  
 אֲשֶׁר עַל־הָאֵשׁ אֲשֶׁר עַל־הַמִּזְבֵּחַ:  
 וְהִקְרִיבוּ וְהִכְרָעוּ יָרֵחַץ בְּמַיִם  
 וְהִקְרִיב הַכֹּהֵן אֶת־הַכֹּל וְהִקְטִיר  
 הַמִּזְבֵּחַ עֹלָה הוּא אֲשֶׁה רִיח־נִיחֹחַ  
 לַיהוָה:

12-13. When it has been cut up into sections, the *kohein* will lay them out, with the head and the suet, on the wood that is on the fire that is on the altar. The *insides* and the legs will be washed with water; the *kohein* will *korban-ify* and turn it all into smoke on the altar. It is an *olah*, an offering by fire, of pleasing odor to YHVH.

**R. Yosef Hirschman, “Drawing Close With A Korban”**

*Korban*, a word used only in the context of **relationship** to [God], derives from the root *karev* – **closeness**. In the verb form it means “to draw close.” It follows, then, that a *korban* is the means to achieve a **closer relationship**. A *korban* draws close. It is far removed from any connotation of destruction, annihilation and loss. And its object is not to appease or satisfy the Recipient, but to bring the giver closer.

## Ellen Frankel, The Five Books of Miriam

LEAH THE NAMED TEACHES: In contrast [to the Hebrew], the English word “sacrifice” comes from a Latin root meaning “make sacred.” [In] these differing interpretations lie two fundamentally different understandings of what it means to offer something to God.

OUR DAUGHTERS ASK: How do you transform something profane into something sacred?

THE SAGES IN OUR OWN TIME ANSWER: According to the Christian understanding of the word, to sacrifice means to give something up in order to appease God or pay homage to God. What you gain in doing so is believed to more than compensate you for what you lose: protection from divine punishment for our sins.

THE RABBIS EXPLAIN: But [Judaism] understands sacrifice quite differently. In our view (which, of course, is the Torah’s view), **the primary function of “sacrifice” is to restore the spiritual equilibrium of the community...** For when we inadvertently sin against God, one another or community, we upset the delicate balance so carefully regulated and maintained by God’s law. In “going public” with their error at the Temple altar, the people proffered a peace offering, asking God to be lenient with them as they encroached upon sanctified space. But after their offering had been accepted, they still needed to right the wrongs they had done – by reimbursing the victim, paying a fine, or discharging other legal penalties.

OUR MOTHERS SUGGEST: In a very real sense, the ancient Israelite system of sacrifice served the same function that psychotherapy does today. Those of us plagued by feelings of **guilt, shame, anxiety, depression, and other “sins”** harmful to our souls seek out women and men specifically trained in the art of expiation, who for a sacrificial fee help us to surrender these burdens to God (or a Higher Power) and reach a new psychic balance. We too must still right the wrongs we have committed – but we no longer need to drag [them] behind us, like a fatted ox or sheep..... **These we can turn over to God [for release].**

A form of “tum’ah” (impurity, charged state)

Leviticus as process to grapple with spiritual ‘barriers’ to closeness

### Sforno on Lev. 1:2

אָדָם כִּי יִקְרִיב מִמֶּנּוּ. כִּי יִקְרִיב מֵעֲצָמָם בְּיָדֵי דְבָרִים וְהִקְנָעָה, עַל דְּרָדָּ וְיִנְשָׁלְמָה פְּרִים שְׁפָתֵינוּ (הוֹשֵׁעַ יֵד:ג), וְכִאֲמָרוֹ “זָבְחֵי אֱלֹהִים רוּחַ נִשְׁבָּרָה” (תהלים נא:יט), כִּי אֵין חֶפֶץ בְּכִסְיֵיהֶם הַמִּקְרִיבִים בְּלִתֵּי הַקְּנָעָה קוֹדֶמֶת. וְכִבֵּר אֲמָרוּ זְכוּרֹנָם לְבָרְכָה מִמֶּנּוּ. וְלֹא כֻלָּם, לְהוֹצִיא אֶת הַמוֹמָר.

*When one of them **korban-ifies** from themselves* – When one **draws close** to God by means of confessing sin and humility, as in (Hos. 14:3), “We will pay with bulls of our lips” and (Ps. 51:19): “An offering to God [is] a shattered spirit.” God does not desire simplistic **sacrifices** unless one **humbled oneself** first. Our sages note that Torah says here *mikem* [=from themselves], not *kulkhem* [=all of them], **to prevent hypocrisy.**

“WE WILL DO AND WE WILL HEAR.”

### Rabbi Dr. Hillel Ben David, “Drawing Near to Hashem”

If you want to come near to [God], it must come “from you.” ... Whenever we find a **korban** in the Tanach, we find that it is always associated with the name of [YHVH]. It is not associated with the names *Elohim*, *El*, or *Shaddai*.... [YHVH] is associated with the attribute of loving-kindness and *rahannim* [=mercy, compassion]. It is not associated with the attribute of Judgment. **This tells us something very profound about the **korbanot**...** Because “Hashem desires the heart,” Hashem wants us to give from our hearts.

### Hizkuni on Lev. 1:2

**אדם** לרבות גרים, שהם מקבלים ברית כישראל ולרבות אפי' א"י ואע"ג דאדם משמע כאן ישראל ... מכם דמשמע מכם ולא מאומות אחרות והוי מעוט אחר מעוט ....

*A person* [*Ed.* – literally “man”] – Including converts who took on the covenant like Israel, and including those who did not, though here only Israelites are addressed [expressly].... The sages understood gentiles as included.

Native-born Jews  
Chosen-status Jews  
Non-Jews

### Torat Kohanim, Emor 22:18

איש איש מבית ישראל ומן הגר בישראל אשר יקריב קרבנו לכל נדריהם וגוי, בישראל לרבות נשים ועבדים.

Any person in the house of Israel, and among converts in Israel, who *korban-ifies* a *korban* in all their vows, etc. “In Israel,” this category includes women and slaves.

### The Women’s Torah Commentary

*When any of you...* The Hebrew has “when an *adam* from among you.” Because the word *adam* refers to a human being in a generic sense (see Gen. 1:26; 5:2), the language of this verse makes clear that the laws apply to both women and men....

*...presents an offering.* English has no good way of reproducing the important wordplay embedded in this phrase. The two Hebrew words translated as “presents” and “offering” (*yakriv...korban*) are derived from the same root, *k-r-b*, meaning “to come near.” Thus, the language of sacrifice carries a sense of coming close to the Divine, describing a safe way to interact with the supreme power. The precautions taken by ancient worshippers and priests (such as approaching only in specified ways and times) are analogous to those taken by modern technicians when handling radioactive material: potent energy that can heal and kill must be approached with maximum attention to protective procedures. **IT IS A DECISION TO... be vulnerable, to approach, to connect**

### R. Shefa Gold, Vayikra

= “from ourselves”  
— mikem /  
מִכֶּם

THE MEDICINE that *Vayikra* gives us for the ‘dis-ease’ of our alienation from God is described in the language of *korbanot*, the “sacrifices.” Literally, *korbanot* means “bringing ourselves near” again to God. The *korbanot* were a powerful and effective means of engaging all of the senses, witnessing the power of Life and Death, and then sharing a sacred meal in the Presence of God. The result was experienced as total purification — removal of obstructions and a re-connection to the flow of God’s love and presence. And for a time this was a spiritual technology that worked well.

OUR TRADITION TELLS US that prayer now takes the place of the sacrifices. **The spiritual challenge of *Vayikra* is to make our prayer-life as powerful, as intense, and as effective as the sacrificial system was for our ancestors.**

### Song of Songs 2:10-16

עָנָה דוֹדִי וְאָמַר לִי  
קוּמִי לָךְ רַעֲיָתִי יָפְתִי וְלִכְי־לָךְ:  
כִּי־הִנֵּה הַסֶּתִּי עָבַר  
הַגֶּשֶׁם חָלַף הַלֶּדֶד לוֹ:  
הַנִּצְּנִים נִרְאוּ בְּאֶרֶץ  
עַת הַזְּמִיר הֵגִיעַ  
וְקוֹל הַתּוֹר נִשְׁמַע בְּאֶרְצֵנוּ: ...  
דוֹדִי לִי וְאֲנִי לוֹ  
הִרְעָה בְּשׁוֹשַׁנִּים:

My beloved spoke thus to me,  
“Arise, my darling! My fair one, come away!  
For now the winter is past,  
The rains are over and gone.  
The blossoms have appeared in the land,  
The time of pruning has come;  
The song of the turtledove is heard in our land....  
My beloved is mine and I am his  
Who shepherds among the lilies.

### Song of Songs 6:1-4

אָנָּה הִלַּךְ דוֹדְךָ הִנְיָה בְּנָשִׁים  
אָנָּה פָּנָה דוֹדְךָ  
וַיִּבְקֹשׁוּנוּ עִמָּךְ:  
דוֹדִי יָרַד לְגַנּוֹ  
לְעִרְגוֹת הַבֶּשֶׂם לְרַעוֹת בַּגָּנִים  
וְלִלְקֹט שׁוֹשַׁנִּים:  
אֲנִי לְדוֹדִי וְדוֹדִי לִי  
הִרְעָה בְּשׁוֹשַׁנִּים:  
יָפָה אַתְּ רַעֲיָתִי כְּתִירְצָה  
נְאֻמָּה כִּירוּשָׁלַם אֲיָמָה כְּנִדְגָלוֹת:

“Whither has your beloved gone, fairest of women?  
Whither has your beloved turned?  
Let us seek him with you.”  
My beloved has gone down to his garden,  
To the beds of spices, to shepherd in the gardens  
And to pick lilies.  
I am my beloved’s and my beloved is mine;  
He shepherds among the lilies.  
You are beautiful, my darling, like Tirtzah,  
Lovely as Jerusalem, awesome as bannered hosts.

### Shir HaShirim Rabbah 6:4

יָפָה אַתְּ רַעֲיָתִי כְּתִירְצָה, רַבִּי יְהוֹדָה  
בְּרַ סִימּוֹן פֶּתַר קִרְיָה בְּקִרְבָּנוֹת,  
יָפָה אַתְּ רַעֲיָתִי כְּתִירְצָה, אֱלוֹ  
הַקִּרְבָּנוֹת, שְׂאֵתָם מִתְרַצִּים  
בְּקִרְבָּנוֹת, הֵיאָדָּ מַה דָּאֵת אָמַר:  
וְנִרְצָה לוֹ לְכַפֵּר עָלָיו. נְאֻמָּה  
כִּירוּשָׁלַם אֱלוֹ הַקִּדְּשִׁים  
שְׁבִירוּשָׁלַם הֵיאָדָּ מַה דָּאֵת אָמַר:  
כְּצֵאוֹ קִדְּשִׁים כְּצֵאוֹ יְרוּשָׁלַם.

*You are beautiful, my darling, like Tirtzah* – R. Yehudah bar  
Simon opened this verse to be about *korbanot*. “You are  
beautiful, my darling, like Tirtzah” [=desired, (f.)] – these are  
the *korbanot*, as you achieve mutual desire [with God] via  
*korbanot*, as in (Lev. 1:4), “For it to be desired for their  
atonement. “Lovely as Jerusalem,” these are the [Holy of]  
Holies in Jerusalem, as in (Ezek. 36:38), “Like the consecrated  
flock, like the flock of Jerusalem.”

ד"א יָפָה אַתְּ רַעֲיָתִי כְּתִירְצָה, אֱלוֹ  
נְשֵׁי תִירְעוֹ, דְּאָמַר רַבִּי נְשֵׁי תִירְעוֹ  
כְּשֵׁרוֹת הֵיוּ, עִמָּדוֹ וּמַחוֹ עַל עֲצָמוֹן  
וְלֹא נָתְנוּ מִנְזָמִיָּהֶם לְמַעֲשֵׂה הָעֵגֶל,  
אָמְרוּ מַה לִּיסְטִטִּירִין הַקִּשָּׁה שְׁבִירוֹ  
הַקַּב"ה, לִיסְטִטִּירִין הַרְדָּה עַל אַחַת  
כְּמָה וְכְמָה.

Another matter, “You are beautiful, my darling, like Tirtzah”  
– These are the women of the desert generation, as Rav said:  
The women of the desert generation were upright: they stood  
and asserted themselves, and did not give their rings for the  
Golden Calf. They said: If the Holy Blessed One would  
smash a hard idol, all the more so [offerings *korbanot* without  
the humble heart open to love].