

The Parshah in a Nutshell

Parshah Vayikra

Vayikra 1:1-5:26

G-d **calls** to **Moses** from the **Tent of Meeting**, and communicates to him the laws of the **korbanot**, the **animal** and meal offerings brought in the Sanctuary. These include:

The "ascending offering" (*olah*) that is wholly raised to G-d by the **fire** atop the Altar;

Five varieties of "meal offering" (*minchah*) prepared with fine flour, olive oil and frankincense;

The "**peace offering**" (*shelamim*), whose meat was eaten by the one bringing the offering, after parts are burned on the Altar and parts are given to the Kohanim (priests);

The different types of "sin offering" (*chatat*) brought to atone for **transgressions** committed erroneously by the High Priest, the entire community, the king, or the ordinary Jew;

The "**guilt offering**" (*asham*) brought by one who has appropriated property of the Sanctuary, who is in **doubt** as to whether he transgressed a divine prohibition, or who has committed a "betrayal against G-d" by swearing falsely to defraud a **fellow man**.



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Vayikra

Vayikra 1:1-5:26

The second half of the Book of

Exodus--whose reading we concluded last week--was taken up primarily with the details of the Sanctuary's construction; in Exodus' concluding verses, we read how the Sanctuary was erected and the Divine Presence came to dwell in it. Thus the Sanctuary commenced its function as the "Tent of Meeting" between G-d and man: the place that is the focus of man's endeavor to serve his Creator, and where G-d communicated to man and made His presence felt within a humanly-constructed abode.

In the Parshah of **Vayikra**, which opens the book of Leviticus, **G-d speaks to Moses** from the

Commentary

G-d speaks to Moses: *And He called to Moses (1:1)*

Said Rabbi Tanchum ben Chanilai: Normally, a burden which is heavy for one is light for two, or one heavy for two is light for four; but can a burden too heavy for 600,000 be bearable for one? Now all Israel were standing before Mount Sinai, and saying: "If we hear the voice of G-d... any more, we shall die" (Deuteronomy 5:22), whilst Moses heard the voice by himself and remained alive.

(Midrash Rabbah)

Vayikr^a (Leviticus 1:1)

Said Rav Assi: Why do young children begin [the study of Torah] with the book of Leviticus, and not with Genesis? Surely it is because young children are pure, and the *korbanot* are pure; so let the pure come and engage in the study of the pure.

(Midrash Rabbah)

Rabbi Menachem Mendel of Lubavitch (who later became the third Rebbe of Chabad) entered *cheder* on the day after Yom Kippur of the year 1792, eleven days after his third birthday. The child's grandfather, Rabbi Schneur Zalman of Liadi, instructed Reb Avraham the *melamed* to begin the first lesson with the opening verses of *Vayikra*.

Following the lesson, the child asked: "Why is the word *vayikra* written with a little *aleph*?"

For a long while Rabbi Schneur Zalman sat in a deep meditative trance. Then he explained:

Tent of Meeting and begins His communication of the laws governing the bringing of the *korbanot*, the animal and meal offerings that are the central feature of the service performed in the Sanctuary.

And He called to Moses; and G-d spoke to him out of the Tent of Meeting, saying:

Speak to the children of Israel, and say to them: A man who shall bring near of you an offering to

Commentary

"The first man, Adam, was 'the handiwork of G-d,' and G-d attested that his wisdom was greater than that of the angels. Adam was aware of his own greatness, and this awareness caused him to overestimate himself and led to his downfall in the sin of the Tree of Knowledge.

"Moses, who possessed a soul deriving from *chachmah* of *atzilut* (the highest manifestation of the divine wisdom), was also aware of his own greatness. But this did not lead him toward self-aggrandizement. On the contrary, it evoked in him a broken and anguished heart, and made him extremely humble in his own eyes, thinking to himself that if someone else had been blessed with the gifts with which he, Moses, had been blessed, that other person would surely have achieved far more than himself. Thus G-d testifies in the Torah that 'Moses was the most humble man upon the face of the earth.'

"In the letters of the Torah, which G-d gave at Sinai, there are three sizes: intermediate letters, oversized letters, and miniature letters. As a rule, the Torah is written with intermediate letters, signifying that a person should strive for the level of "the intermediate man" (a concept that Rabbi Schneur Zalman puts forth in his *Tanya*). Adam's name is spelled with an oversize *aleph* (in Chronicles 1:1), because his self-awareness led to his downfall. On the other hand, Moses, through his sense of insufficiency, attained the highest level of humility, expressed by the miniature *aleph* of *Vayikra*.

(From the talks of the sixth Lubavitcher Rebbe, Rabbi Yosef Yitzchak Schneerson)

man: *A man (adam) who shall bring near of you an offering to G-d (1:2)*

Why does G-d use the word *adam* for "man" (instead of the more common synonym *ish*)? To teach us that a person cannot offer to G-d what has not been honestly obtained by him. G-d is saying: "When you bring an offering to Me, be

G-d; of the cattle, of the herd and of the flock, shall you bring near your offering...

The first *korban* to be described is the *olah*, the "ascending" offering (commonly referred to as the "burnt offering"), whose distinguishing feature is that it is raised to G-d, in its entirety, by the fire atop the Altar.

If his offering be an Ascending Offering of the herd, let him offer a male without blemish; to the entrance of the Tent of Meeting shall he bring it near, that he may be accepted in goodwill before G-d.

Commentary

like Adam the first man, who could not have stolen from anyone, since he was alone in the world."

(Midrash Tanchuma; Rashi)

When we speak of Adam as one who "was alone in the world," we are speaking of the very first hours of his life. Thus we are speaking of Adam before he partook of the Tree of Knowledge--of man still unsullied by sin.

This is the deeper significance of the Torah's reference to the bearer of a *korban*--which has the power to obtain atonement for a transgression--as an "Adam." Every man, the Torah is saying, harbors in the pith of his soul a pristine "Adam," a primordial man untouched by sin. Even at the very moment his external self was transgressing the divine will, his inner essence remained loyal to G-d; it was only silenced and suppressed by his baser instincts. It is by accessing this core of purity, by unearthing that part of himself that did not sin in the first place and restoring it to its rightful place as the sovereign of his life, that man attains the state of *teshuvah*--return to his original state of perfection. (The Lubavitcher Rebbe)

of you: *A man who shall bring near of you an offering to G-d (1:2)*

The verse does not say, "a man of you who shall bring near an offering," but, "a man who shall bring near of you an offering"--the offering must come from within the person. It is the animal within man that must be "brought near" and elevated by the divine fire upon the Altar.

And he shall lean his hand upon the head of the offering; and it shall be accepted for him to make atonement for him.

And he shall slaughter the bullock before G-d; and the priests, Aaron's sons, shall bring near the blood, and sprinkle the blood round about upon the Altar that is by the entrance of the Tent of Meeting.

And he shall skin the offering, and cut it into its pieces

And the sons of Aaron the priest shall put fire upon the Altar, and arrange the wood upon the fire. And the priests, Aaron's sons, shall arrange the parts, the head, and the fat upon the wood that is on the fire which is upon the Altar. Its inwards and its legs shall he wash in water.

*And the priest shall burn all on the Altar, an ascending offering, a fire-offering of a sweet **savor** to G-d.*

The *olah* can also be a male sheep or goat, in which case the same procedure is followed.

A turtledove or young pigeon can also be brought as an "ascending offering." Instead of being

Commentary

savor: *An ascending offering, a fire-offering of a sweet savor to G-d (1:9)*

It is pleasurable to Me that I have spoken and My will was done. (Sifri; Rashi)

[Regarding the offerings,] it is said: "This is an ordinance for ever to Israel" (II Chronicles 2:3). Rabbi Giddal said in the name of Rav: This refers to the Altar built in heaven where Michael, the great Prince, stands and offers up thereon an offering.

Rabbi Yochanan said: It refers to the scholars who are occupied with the laws of Temple service--The Torah regards it as though the Temple were built in their days.

(Talmud, Menachot 110a)

slaughtered through *shechitah* (cutting of the throat), the bird is killed by *melikah*--nipping off the head from the back of the neck. The blood is applied to the wall of the Altar, and the bird's **crop** and its adjoining feathers are removed and discarded; then the bird's body is **burned** upon the Altar.

Meal Offerings

And a **soul** who shall offer a meal offering to G-d...

Commentary

crop: And he shall remove its crop with its feathers, and cast it beside the Altar (1:16)

The bird flies about and swoops throughout the world, and eats indiscriminately; it eats food obtained by robbery and by violence. Said G-d: Since this crop is filled with the proceeds of robbery and violence, let it not be offered on the altar... On the other hand, the domestic animal is reared on the crib of its master and eats neither indiscriminately nor of that obtained by robbery or by violence; for this reason the whole of it is offered up.

(Midrash Rabbah; Rashi)

burned: And he shall rend it by its wings... and the priest shall burn it on the altar (1:17)

The wings, with the feathers, were burned with it. An ordinary being, should he smell the odor of burning feathers, is nauseated thereby... Why then all this? Just in order that the Altar may be sated and glorified by the sacrifice of a pauper. (Midrash Rabbah; Rashi)

soul: A soul who shall offer a meal offering to G-d (2:1)

Why is the meal-offering distinguished in that the expression "soul" is used? Because G-d says: "Who is it that usually brings a meal-offering? It is the poor man. I account it as though he had offered his own soul to Me."

Why is the meal-offering distinguished in that five kinds of oil dishes are stated in connection with it? This can be likened to the case of a human king for whom his friend

Meal offerings, called *menachot* ("gifts"), are prepared of fine flour, with olive oil and frankincense. The priest removes a *kometz* ("handful"--actually the amount grasped by his three middle fingers), to be burned on the Altar; the remainder is eaten by the priests.

There are five types of donated meal offerings: 1) the standard "meal offering" whose *kometz* is removed before it is baked; 2) the "baked meal offering," which came in two forms: loaves or 3) flat matzot; 4) the "pan-fried" meal offering; 5) the *minchat marcheset*, deep-fried in a pot.

The following rule applies to all the meal offerings (including the "loaves"):

*No meal offering, which you shall bring to G-d, shall be made **leavened**; for you shall burn no*

Commentary

had prepared a feast. The king knew that his friend was poor [and had only one food to offer him], so he said to him: "Prepare it for me in five kinds of dishes so that I will derive pleasure from you." (Talmud, Menachot 104b)

It is said of a large ox, "A fire-offering, a sweet savor"; of a small bird, "A fire-offering, a sweet savor"; and of a meal-offering, "A fire-offering, a sweet savor." This is to teach you that it is the same whether a person offers much or little, so long as he directs his heart to heaven.

(Talmud, Menachot 110a)

An ox was once being led to sacrifice, but would not budge. A poor man came along with a bundle of endive in his hand. He held it out towards the ox, which ate it... and then allowed itself to be led to sacrifice. In a dream it was revealed to the owner of the ox: "The poor man's sacrifice superceded yours."

Once a woman brought a handful of fine flour, and the priest despised her, saying: "See what she offers! What is there in this to eat? What is there in this to offer up?" It was shown to him in a dream: "**Do not despise her!** It is regarded as if she had sacrificed her own life."

(Midrash Rabbah)

leavened: No leaven... [shall be present] in any offering of G-d (2:11)

leaven, **nor** any honey, in any offering of G-d made by fire...

Another rule is that,

Your every meal offering shall you season with salt; never shall you suspend the **salt covenant** of your G-d.

Commentary

Leaven, which is dough that has fermented and risen, represents self-inflation and pride, and there is nothing more abhorrent to G-d. In the words of the Talmud, "G-d says of the prideful one, 'He and I cannot dwell together in the world.'" (The Chassidic Masters)

nor: No leaven, nor any honey, in any offering of G-d (2:11)

Ultra-sweet honey and ultra-sour leaven, are opposite extremes; G-d does not like extremes. (The Rebbe of Kotzk)

salt covenant: Never shall you suspend the salt covenant of your G-d... with all your offerings you shall offer salt (2:13)

When G-d separated the supernal waters from the lower waters (see Genesis 1:6-8), He made a covenant with the lower waters that their salt will be offered on the Altar.

(Rashi)

The world is one part wilderness, one part settled land, and one part sea. Said the sea to G-d: "Master of the Universe! The Torah will be given in the wilderness; the Holy Temple will be built on settled land; and what about me?" Said G-d: "The people of Israel will offer your salt upon the Altar." (Yalkut HaReuveni)

The *korban*, which was the vehicle of the elevation of the world to G-d, had to include "representatives" of all four sectors of the creation: the inanimate world, the vegetable world, the animal world, and the human world. Thus the *korban* was offered by a human being, and consisted of an animal, grain, and salt. (Rabbi Isaac Luria)

This latter rule applies to all *korbanot*: "With all your offerings you shall offer salt."

Another meal offering mentioned here is the *minchat bikkurim* (also called the "omer") brought on the second day of Passover from the year's very first barley harvest. In this *minchah*, the kernels are roasted by fire before they are ground into flour.

(In addition, a meal offering accompanied all animal offerings.)

The Peace Offering

The *shelamim*, or "**peace** offering," could be either male or female, and either from "the herd" (i.e., an ox or a cow), a sheep or a goat.

Like the *olah*, its blood was sprinkled upon the Altar; but unlike the *olah*, which "ascended" in its entirety upon the Altar, the meat of the *shelamim* was eaten by the "owner"--the one who brought the offering (two portions of the animal, the breast and the right thigh, were eaten by the priests). Only certain parts of the animal were burned on the fire atop the Altar:

The fat that covers the inwards, and all the fat that is upon the inwards, and the two kidneys and the fat that is on them, which is by the flanks, and the appendage of the liver which he shall remove with the kidneys.

If the peace offering is a sheep, "the whole fat tail, up to the backbone" was added to these.

Commentary

peace: And if his offering be a sacrifice of peace offering (3:1)

Why is it called a "peace offering"? Because everyone partakes of it. The blood and fat go to the Altar, the breast and thigh to the priest, and the hide and flesh, to the owner. (Torat Kohanim)

*And the priest shall burn it on the Altar; it is [divine] **food**, a fire-offering, a sweet savor to G-d.*

Because they are offered to G-d on the Altar, these specified veins of fat, which the Torah calls *cheilev*, are forbidden for consumption in all animals: "It shall be a perpetual statute for your generations throughout all your habitations: all *cheilev* and all blood, you shall not eat."

The Sin Offerings

The *korbanot* discussed up to this point are "donations"--offerings pledged out of a desire to give to G-d. Now the Torah moves on to discuss obligatory offerings, such as the *chatat*, the "sin-

Commentary

food: *And the priest shall burn it on the Altar; it is food... to G-d (3:11)*

Do you think that He needs to eat? Does not the verse (Psalms 50:12-13) proclaim, "Should I hunger, I would not tell you, for the world, and all it contains, is Mine... Do I eat the flesh of bulls, or drink the blood of goats?" But it is not for My desire that you are offering, [says G-d,] but for your own, as it is written (Leviticus 19:5), "For your own desire, you should offer it." (Talmud, Menachot 110a)

When the Torah refers to the *korbanot* as "G-d's bread," this is obviously a metaphor; but what is its significance? In what sense are we "feeding" G-d when we offer up to Him ourselves and our material resources in the quest to serve Him?

Our sages have said that "G-d fills the world as a soul fills a body." On the human level, food is what sustains "life," which is the assertion of the soul's powers via its physical vessel, the body. And so it is with the divine life-force that suffuses the created existence: "G-d's food" is what we would call whatever it is that asserts the divine reality as a manifest presence in our physical world.

With our every act of serving G-d, we fulfill the divine purpose of creation--that "there be for Him a dwelling in the physical realms." We thus breathe life into the world-body, asserting and manifesting its quintessence and soul.

(The Chassidic Masters)

offering" brought to atone for an inadvertent transgression of the divine will.

And G-d spoke to Moses, saying:

... If a soul shall sin through ignorance against any of the commandments of G-d, and shall do one of the things that must not be done...

Different offerings are prescribed depending on the stature of the transgressor.

If the anointed priest does sin to the guilt of the people, he shall bring... a young bullock without blemish to G-d.

A similar offering is also brought in the case that the entire community commits a transgression as a result of an erroneous ruling by the Sanhedrin (High Court).

If the entire congregation of Israel shall sin through ignorance, and the thing be hid from the eyes of the community, and they have done something against any of the commandments of G-d concerning things which should not be done...

When the sin which they have sinned is known, then the congregation shall offer a young bullock for the sin, and bring it before the Tent of Meeting. And the elders of the congregation shall lean their hands on the head of the bullock before G-d..

Both the High Priest's sin offering and that of the congregation was distinguished in that it had to be a male bullock (the ordinary sin-offering was a female sheep or goat); it had to be offered by the

Commentary

stature: *If the anointed priest does sin to the guilt of the people (4:3)*

When a leader sins, this becomes the excuse for everyone else's wrongdoings. (The Gaon of Lissa)

High Priest; its blood was sprinkled "indoors"--inside the Sanctuary on the Golden Altar and opposite the *Parochet*; after the *chalabim* were burned on the Altar, the rest of the animal was not eaten by the priests (as was the case with ordinary sin-offerings) but rather "the skin of the bullock, and all its flesh, with its head, its legs, its inwards and its dung, even the whole bullock shall he carry forth outside the camp to a clean place... and burn it on the wood with fire."

A *nassi* (king) who commits an inadvertent transgression brings an offering similar to the standard sin-offering, except that it must be a male goat.

Anyone else who sins inadvertently, brings

a kid of the goats... [or] a lamb... a female without blemish.

And he shall lean his hand upon the head of the sin offering, and slaughter it for a sin offering in the place where they slaughter the burnt offering.

And the priest shall take of the blood of the sin offering with his finger, and put it upon the horns of the Altar of Burnt Offering; and all the [remaining] blood he shall pour into the foundation of the Altar.

And he shall remove its fat, as the fat is removed from... the peace offering; and the priest shall burn these upon the Altar, upon the pyres of G-d.

And the priest shall make atonement for his sin that he has committed, and it shall be forgiven him.

With certain transgressions (such as failure to fulfill an oath to bear **witness**, or entering the

Commentary

witness: *If a person sin... and is a witness (5:1)*

If a person witnesses a wrongdoing of his fellow, this is a message to him that he, too, is guilty of a similar failing.

Sanctuary in a state of ritual impurity), the sin-offering brought depended on the financial ability of the transgressor. One who could not afford a female sheep or goat, brought two turtledoves or two young pigeons--one bird to be brought as an "ascending offering" and the second bird as a sin offering. A person of even lesser means, who could not even afford two birds, brought a meal offering, on which "he shall put no oil upon it, neither shall he put any frankincense upon it, for it is a sin offering."

Guilt Offerings

For certain transgressions, the offering brought in atonement is not a "sin offering" but an *asham* ("guilt offering"). An *asham* is distinguished from the standard sin offering in that it was a male sheep, and that it had to be worth at least "two shekels of silver of the shekel of the Sanctuary."

Three types of *asham* are described in our Parshah. The first is brought by one who unintentionally made unauthorized use of property belonging to the Sanctuary--a crime called *me'illah* ("betrayal"). He must pay back what he had expropriated and add to that an additional **one-fifth** of its value, and also bring an

Commentary

(Rabbi Israel Baal Shem Tov)

Guilt: *And if a person sin... though he know it not, he is guilty (5:17)*

One who knows for certain that he transgressed, brings a sin offering; one who doubts if he transgressed, must atone with a guilt offering. Why does the one who has perhaps not transgressed require the more valuable offering? Because his regret is not as complete. (Raavad)

one-fifth: *He shall restore it in the principal, and shall add the fifth part more to it (5:16)*

The addition should be a fifth of the addition and the principle together (i.e., he must add 25% of the principle);

asham to obtain atonement for his unintentional trespass.

A second type of "guilt offering" is the *asham talu*, brought by one who thinks he may have unwittingly committed a transgression, but is not sure (for example, he had two pieces of meat before him and ate one of them; later, he discovers that one of them was *cheilev*--forbidden fat--a trespass which would obligate him to bring a sin offering if he would know with certainty that he committed it).

The third and last *asham* of our Parshah is the one brought in atonement by one who swears falsely in the process of defrauding his fellow man:

*If a person sin, and commit a **betrayal against G-d**, and lie to his fellow regarding that which*

Commentary

this is the opinion of Rabbi Yoshiah. Rabbi Jonathan says: a fifth of the principle. (Talmud, Bava Metzia 54a)

betrayal against G-d: *If a person sin, and commit a betrayal against G-d, and lie to his fellow (5:21)*

Said Rabbi Akiva: Why does the Torah consider him to have committed "a betrayal against G-d"? ... Because in defrauding his fellow, he is also defrauding the Third Party to their dealings. (Rashi)

How is the offender also defrauding G-d? On the most basic level, he is defying the Supernal Author of the command, "You shall not steal." Another explanation is that although it may be that not a single earthly soul knows what really happened between the litigants, G-d is the omnipresent witness to their dealings; so in addition to lying to his fellow, he is lying in face of the all-knowing "Third Party to their dealings."

A deeper understanding of the defrauder's crime against G-d can be derived from another saying by Rabbi Akiva, in which he speaks of how G-d "acquired and bequeathed His world" to man (Talmud, Rosh Hashanah 31a). Chassidic teaching explains this to mean that the concept of human "property rights" over the resources of G-d's the world is divinely ordained, and is integral to the divine purpose in creation: in order for man to be able develop his environment into a "home for G-d," thereby making the

was delivered him to keep, or in a loan, or in a thing taken away by violence, or withholding payment; or he found a lost object and has lied concerning it; if he swears falsely in any of all these that a man does, sinning in that...

He shall restore it in the principal, and shall add the fifth part more to it, and give it to him to whom it belongs, in the day of his [atonement of his] guilt.

And he shall bring his guilt offering to G-d, a ram without blemish out of the flock, according to the value of a guilt offering, to the priest.

And the priest shall make atonement for him before G-d: and it shall be forgiven him for anything of all that he has done wherein to incur guilt.

Commentary

world a true divine "acquisition," each individual's proprietorship over the portion of creation he is charged to develop must be defined and safeguarded. Hence G-d's "bequest of His world" to man is at the very heart of His own ownership--this is the manner in which the Creator Himself desired that His "acquisition" of creation be realized.

Thus the Torah says: "If a person... commit a betrayal against G-d, and lie to his fellow." You have not only lied to your fellow--you have betrayed the "Third Partner", depriving Him of His ownership of His world as He Himself defines it. (The Lubavitcher Rebbe)

The Offered Beast

Based on the teachings of the Lubavitcher Rebbe
 Courtesy of MeaningfulLife.com

Why, if a person sinned and wished to make atonement, or he was just in a generous mood and wished to offer something to G-d, does he sacrifice an innocent animal? Why doesn't he sacrifice himself, for example?

Answer the Chassidic masters: he does.

The Torah, they explain, makes this very point in the verse that introduces the laws of the *korbanot*:

A man who shall bring near of you an offering to G-d, from the beast, from the cattle and from the sheep, you shall bring close your offering...

As Rabbi Schneur Zalman of Liadi points out, the verse does not say, "a man of you who shall bring near an offering," but, "a man who shall bring near of you an offering" -- the offering brought is "of you". The sacrificed animal is a projection, in the extra-human sphere, of a process transpiring in the intra-human sphere.

Man, says the Talmud, is a world in miniature. Which means that the world is a man in macro. Our world contains oceans and continents, forests and deserts, men and beasts; so, too, does man. The human psyche includes a **subconscious "sea"** and a "terrestrial" persona; it has lush forests and **barren deserts**; and it has a "human soul" and an "animal soul."

The human soul -- also called the "G-dly soul" -- embodies all that is upward-reaching and transcendent in man. It gravitates to its source in G-d, driven by an all-consuming love for G-d and the desire to lose itself within His all-pervading essence. Its modes of expression are the thought, speech and deed of Torah--the means by which man achieves closeness and attachment to his Creator.

The "animal soul" is the self that man shares with all living creatures: a self driven and fulfilled by its physical needs and desires. Its vehicle of expression are the endeavors of material life.

"A man who shall offer of you an offering to G-d, from the beast, from the cattle and from the sheep, you shall bring close your offering." When a person brings an animal from his paddock as a gift to G-d, the gesture is devoid of meaning unless he also offers the animal within himself.

The Ox and the Plow

What is to be done with this animal?

The beast within man has not been placed there just so that it should be suppressed or uprooted. "Much grain is produced with the might of the ox," remarked the wisest of men, and the Chassidic masters say that this is a reference to the animal inside our hearts. An ox run amok will trample and destroy, but when dominated by a responsible human vision and harnessed to its plow, the beast's vigor translates into a "much grain" -- a far richer crop than what human energy alone might produce.

The same is true of the beast in man. Nothing -- not even the G-dly soul's keenest yearnings -- can match the intensity and vigor with which the animal soul pursues its desires. Left to its own devices, the animal soul tends toward corrupt and destructive behavior; but the proper guidance and training can eliminate the negative expressions of these potent drives and exploit them towards good and G-dly end.

The first type of *korban* described in our Parshah is the *olah* -- the "ascending" offering, commonly referred to as the "burnt offering." The *olah* is unique in that it is an absolute offering: after it is slaughtered in the Temple courtyard and its blood is poured upon the Altar, it is raised up upon the Altar and is burned, in its entirety, as "a fiery pleasure unto G-d."

The burning of something is the physical counterpart of the sublimation process described above. When a substance is burned, its outer, material form is eliminated, releasing the energy locked within. This is the inner significance of the *korban*: the animal energy within man is divested of its material forms and offered upon the altar of service to G-d.

The Eaten Offerings

After detailing the various types of *korban olah*, the Torah goes on to discuss the other two primary categories of offerings -- the *korban chattat* ("sin offering") and *korban shelamim* ("peace offering")

Like that of the *olah*, the blood of these offerings was poured on the Altar. But unlike the wholly burnt offering, only certain parts of *chattat* and

shelamim "ascended" by fire. The Torah designates certain veins of fat (called the *chalabim*) which should be removed and burned. But the meat of the *korban* was eaten under special conditions of holiness. (The meat of the *chattat* was eaten by the priests, and that of the *shelamim* by the person who brought the offering, with certain portions given to the priests).

There are portions of our material lives which, like the burnt offering, are wholly converted to holiness: the money given to charity, the leather made into *tefillin*, the energy expended in Torah study, prayer and the performance of a mitzvah. But there is also the money we spend to feed our families, the leather we make into shoes, the energy we expend on the everyday business of physical life. But these, too, can be serve as a *korban* to G-d, when they are "eaten in holiness" -- when the money is honestly earned, the food is kosher, and our everyday activities are conducted in a way that is considerate of our fellows and faithful to the divine laws of life.

The "blood" of the animal soul -- its fervor and passion for material things -- must be poured upon the Altar; its "fat" -- its excessive indulgence and pleasure-seeking -- must be burned. But the gist of the animal self -- its "meat" -- can be sanctified even when it is not wholly converted into a holy act. As long as they are "eaten in holiness," our material endeavors can be a means of a "bringing close" (--the meaning of the word *korban*) of man to G-d.