

PARSHAT ACHAREI MOT

PART I - QUESTIONS FOR THE 'SHABBOS TABLE'

WHAT'S SPECIAL ABOUT THE LAND OF ISRAEL?

1. Review the closing psukim of chapter 18 (i.e. 18:24-30), in light of the opening psukim of that chapter (i.e. 18:1-5).

According to these psukim (especially 18:25-28), how (and why) does the land of Israel 'punish' Am Yisrael for not keeping God's laws.

Then, see the famous Ramban on 18:28 - where he articulates his approach to what is special about the land of Israel.

See also Ramban on Breishit 28:21, in regard to the meaning of Yaakov's statement of "v'haya Hashem li l'Elokim".

[No matter what your 'political' opinions may be, it will serve as something appropriate to study on Yom Atzmaut!]

AVODAT YOM KIPPUR

1. In the Torah, we find the concept of KEDUSHA in three realms:

"kedushat zman" - in time

"kedushat makom" - in space (or geographic place)

"kedushat adam" - man (or living things)

Based on your previous knowledge, bring an example of each type of KEDUSHA. What would you consider the highest level of KEDUSHA in each of these three realms?

As you study chapter 16, can you find an example of each of these three types of KEDUSHA?

If so, would you consider this significant? Explain why.

Relate your answer to the importance of the AVODAH of the KOHEN GADOL on Yom Kippur? [The questions in Part Two (for this week's shiur) will relate to this topic in greater detail.]

2. Note how chapter 16 discusses the special AVODA performed on Yom Kippur while chapter 17 discusses the prohibition against offering sacrifices OUTSIDE the confines of the MISHKAN.

Are these two chapters thematically related? If so, how?

Bring at least two examples to support your answer.

[Be sure to relate to the "se'irim" (see 17:7).]

Why do you think that they are juxtaposed?

Based on their respective headers (16:1 & 17:1), would you conclude that these two parshiot were given at the same time? Explain why yes, or why not.

Relate your answer to the overall structure of Sefer Vayikra as discussed in our introductory shiur and the nature of the laws that relate to the Mishkan.

THE 'MURDER' OF ANIMALS

1. Review 17:1-7, noting how these psukim forbid slaughtering any animal, unless it is brought as an offering to God in the Mishkan. Note as well the reason(s) that the Torah provides for this prohibition!

In your opinion, does this law apply only to 'offerings' [korbanot], or to any animal? In other words, according to the simple meaning of these psukim, would it be permitted to slaughter an animal (that was not intended to be a korban) to eat its meat?

Compare this prohibition to a similar set of laws about offering animals outside the Mikdash in Devarim 12:20-28. What is similar to Vayikra 17:1-7, and what is different? Can you explain why (i.e. how the laws in Devarim relate to the situation in the land of Israel, while the laws in Vayikra may apply to the desert)?

Then, see Ramban on 17:2-3 - and enjoy! It's a bit lengthy, but very interesting.

2. Next, note that the Torah compares this slaughter of animals (outside the framework of an offering in the Mishkan) to 'murder' - see 11:4 - "dam ya'chasehv l'ish ha'hu - dam shafach" - it is though this person has spilled blood! Furthermore, this transgression falls under the severe category of "karet" - being cut off from the Jewish nation (see 11:4).

In your opinion, what is so terrible about this sin?

Compare the wording of this prohibition to God's blessing to the children of Noah after the Flood in Breishit 9:1-6, noting what they are permitted to eat, compared to what was permitted to Adam ha'Rishon in Breishit 1:29-30! In your opinion, is there any meaning to the textual parallel between Vayikra 17:4 and Breishit 9:4-5?

Then, see the short commentaries of Ramban and Seforno on 17:4 - for a very interesting insight!

3. In 17:5, the Torah explains that a reason for this prohibition is to prevent Bnei Yisrael from making offerings to the "seirim" - which literally would be translated as 'goats'! In your opinion, does this reason make any sense?

Then, see commentaries of Rashi, Ibn Ezra, and Ramban, noting how they pretty much agree to a very different translation here for the word "se'irim". Note how they provide a textual reason for this translation as well.

Then, see Rashbam on 17:5, noting how his interpretation is slightly different. In your opinion, would he agree with Rashi?

Finally, compare this pasuk to the special offering of "seirim" on Yom Kippur, as describe in Vayikra 16:5-10 and 16:21-22. Could this parallel provide us with a different explanation for the mention of "seirim" in 17:5? Could this also explain the juxtaposition between chapters 16 & 17 in Sefer Vayikra?

FORBIDDEN BLOOD

3. At the end of chapter 17 we find once again in Sefer Vayikra the prohibition against eating blood. Why do you think that these laws (i.e. 17:10-16) are included in the same 'parshia' together with the laws of "shechutei chutz" (i.e. 17:1-9)? [In other words, how are the laws of eating the blood of any animal relate to the prohibition against offering an animal outside the Mikdash?]

Note as well that the prohibition to eat blood was also discussed earlier in Sefer Vayikra - note 3:17 & 7:26-27?

How are the details of this prohibition here in chapter 17 different than those details in 3:17 and 7:26-27?

Relate to WHERE in Sefer Vayikra each 'parshia' is located and its local context.

TO'EY'VOT

4. In chapter 18 we find a lengthy list of prohibitions that are all later defined in 18:26 as "TO'EY'VOT". Based on this list, how would you define a TO'EY'VA? In general, what category of law would you consider this list? [i.e. bein adam l'chaveiro, la'makom, / social justice, morality, ritual, social?]

Note the use of the word "to'eyva" in Breishit 43:32, 46:34 and Shmot 8:22. Is its usage in those contexts similar to its usage in chapter 18?

In your opinion, how are these laws different than the laws found in the Ten Commandments or Parshat Mishpatim (which are not defined as TO'EY'VOT)?

Finally, note the phrase "toeyvat Hashem" in Devarim 22:5, 23:19 & 25:16, and their contexts. Can you explain the difference between what the Torah refers to as a "toeyva" in contrast to a "toeyvat Hashem" (and why)?

In general, what makes a certain action a "to'eyvah"?

KIPPURIM & THE MIZBACH KETORET

5. In Shmot 30:10, the concept of "kippurim" is mentioned (in relation to the MIZBACH KETORET), even though the precise date for when this korban is to be offered is not mentioned. [See Shmot 30:10 and its context.]

How does that parshia (Shmot 30:1-10) relate to our Parsha (i.e. Vayikra chapter 16)?

In your opinion, why do you think that no specific date is given for this YOM KIPPUR korban in Shmot 30:10?

[In your answer, relate to the events of chet ha'egel, and WHY the 10th of Tishrei was chosen for YOM KIPPUR, as detailed in Vayikra chapter 23!]

In your opinion, and based on this question, had it not been for "chet ha'egel", would there have been a 'YOM KIPPUR' in the holiday cycle? Explain!

[Relate to the holidays that are mentioned in Chumash before the story of chet ha'egel.]

PART II - QUESTIONS FOR PREPARATION (for weekly shiur)

1. Read chapter 18, paying careful attention to its opening and closing psukim. In what way is the overall topic of this chapter different than the topics discussed in chapters 16 & 17 (and for that matter in all of Sefer Vayikra thus far)?

2. How does the topic of chapter 18, especially its header (see 18:1-5), relate to the topics found in chapter 19 [i.e. Parshat Kedoshim], and to the primary topics found in the remainder of Sefer Vayikra? [Be sure to relate to the "tochacha" in chapter 26 as well, especially to its closing pasuk!]

3. Review 18:1-5. How would you define this set of psukim?

In what manner do they form a unit?

Is the commandment in 18:1 something new, or have Bnei Yisrael heard this before; and if so, when? [Be sure to relate to Shmot 6:2-8 & 20:1-2.]

In these psukim, what is the meaning of the phrase "ani Hashem elokeichem", and why is it repeated so many times?

Has this phrase been mentioned earlier in Sefer Vayikra?

Is it mentioned again later in Sefer Vayikra?

If so, where and how often?

Relate these five psukim to 18:24-30; 19:19,37; & 20:22.

4. Make a very general outline of the major topics of Sefer Vayikra (from chapter 1 to 27), paying careful attention to where we find laws that relate to the Mishkan, and where we find laws that relate to 'daily life'.

How does chapter 18 relate to your outline?

From what perspective could you consider chapter 18 a 'transition' point in Sefer Vayikra?

Would you say that there are TWO halves to Sefer Vayikra?

If so, what are they, and do they relate to 18:1-5?

If not, how do chapters 18->20 relate to chapters 1->17?

[See also Parshanut section below.]

5. Which topics in your outline relate in one form or other to the concept of "kedusha - i.e. something being designated or set aside to serve God"? How does this relate to 19:1-2?

6. Note the phrase "chukim u'mishpatim" in 18:1-5 as well as in 18:24-30). Compare this with that same phrase in Vayikra 26:46 (note also 26:27-33), and relate this to your answer to the above question. [Note as well Devarim 5:1, 6:1, and 26:16!]

Similarly, can you suggest a connection between the word "torot" in 26:46 and a certain part (or section) of Sefer Vayikra? In your answer relate to the phrase "zot torat..." that appears numerous times from chapter six through chapter 15.

7. In general, which mitzvot in Sefer Vayikra relate to the Mikdash itself, and which mitzvot related to the daily life of an individual living in the land of Israel?

How does (or should) the Mikdash affect daily life? Or re-phrased - how (and why) should the fact that God's "shechina" rests among Bnei Yisrael in the Mishkan affect what God expects from our general behavior?

PART III - PARSHANUT

THE INTERNAL ORDER OF SEFER VAYIKRA

1. See the first Ramban in Sefer Vayikra (his intro. to the book), where he discusses the overall theme of the Vayikra and its flow

of topic. Based on this Ramban, how would Ramban explain the logic behind the change in topic that begins in chapter 18 (or basically, why are the laws of forbidden marital relationships included in this book)?

Note how Ramban relates to this introduction in his commentary to 19:2! See also Ramban on 16:1, where he relates once again to the entire structure of Sefer Vayikra, and where he explains his approach that Chumash is written in 'chronological order' (and when and why he accepts certain exceptions to that rule).

WHEN THE LAWS OF AVODAT YOM KIPPUR WERE GIVEN

2. The first pasuk in Acharei Mot (16:1) tells us WHEN this commandment was given to Moshe, i.e. after the death of Nadav and Avihu.

Why do you think it is necessary for the Torah to include this information?

Does the Torah usually inform us concerning when each mitzva was given?

Can you think of any other examples of mitzvot which are introduced in a similar fashion?

If indeed this mitzvah was given after the death of Nadav and Avihu, where in Sefer Vayikra should it have been recorded?

Relate this to Vayikra 10:1-11.

How does this relate to the controversy of "ein mukdam u'muchar ba'torah"?

Next, read Rashi 16:1.

How does Rashi answer the above questions?

Read Ibn Ezra 16:1.

How does Ibn Ezra answer the above questions?

On what do they argue, on what do they agree?

Does either commentary relate to the chronological issue of when this parsha was first given?

Then, read Ramban on 16:1.

How does Ramban answer the above questions?

How does he relate to the chronological issue?

Does he agree or disagree with Rashi?

[Note that he quotes Rashi at the end of his commentary.]

WHICH MIZBEIACH NEEDS KAPARA?

3. Review 16:18 in its context from 16:14-20. Based on your understanding of this pasuk, WHICH Mizbeiach does 16:18 refer to: the Mizbach ha'nchoshet [ha'olah] - outside the Mishkan, or the Mizbach ha'zahav [ha'ktoret] - located inside the Mishkan? On what did you base your answer?

Now, see Rashi on 16:18. How does he answer this question, and how does he deal with the problematic verb that seems to contradict his interpretation?

Next, see Ibn Ezra. How is answer different than Rashi's?

In your opinion, which pirush makes more sense?

[Relate in your answer to 16:16.]

Finally, see Ramban on 16:18 (the first part is enough).

How does he answer this question. Be sure that you understand his proof from the Mechilta (and from 16:20).

Note also Shmot 30:10 (in relation to 30:1-10). How does this pasuk affect one's interpretation of 16:18?

A PLACE TO CHANGE CLOTHING?

4. Review 16:23, in its context from 16:14-26, paying attention to the flow of events. What is problematic with 16:23, both in simple pshat of the pasuk, and in relation to WHEN Aharon was supposed to do this?

See Rashi, noting how quotes Yoma 32a in his interpretation.

Then, see Ramban, noting not only how he quotes Rashi, but especially how he explains these psukim in accordance with that Gemara. [Note how he explains that in pshat - this pasuk needs to be read in search of "drash"!]

b'hatzlacha,
menachem