

Torah Portion: Vayikra (Leviticus 1:1-6:7)

[The focus of this Torah portion series is family structure and function as revealed in Scripture. I.e., headship, patriarchy, marriage, etc, graduating to understanding the community and Israel as a whole. If you have not read other portions up to this point, you may want to, as parts build on previous lessons in Torah, available at: <https://natsab.com/torah-portion-series/>]

Much like last week's portion, this one is a little 'light' in our focus area of headship and patriarchy, but never fear. We have some LOADED portions coming up. Sexuality and cleanliness as well as holiness factor greatly into family and marriage structure and there are multiple chapters ahead that will take us deeply into what a Torah community should look like as well as proper familial relationships, etc. Just take a quick peek forward to Leviticus 12, 18, 25, 26, and 27 before serious sections in Numbers and Deuteronomy.

This week, the portion focuses on very important regulations regarding various offerings. Many others delve into the depth of each type of offering, its purpose and details. That will not be replicated here. There is something interesting that we see.

Leviticus 1 Then the LORD called to Moses and spoke to him from the tent of meeting, saying, ²"Speak to the sons of Israel and say to them, 'When any man of you brings an offering to the LORD, you shall bring your offering of animals from the herd or the flock. ³ If his offering is a burnt offering from the herd, he shall offer it, a male without defect; he shall offer it at the doorway of the tent of meeting, that he may be accepted before the LORD. ⁴ He shall lay his hand on the head of the burnt offering, that it may be accepted for him to make atonement on his behalf. ⁵ He shall slay the young bull before the LORD; and Aaron's sons the priests shall offer up the blood and sprinkle the blood around on the altar that is at the doorway of the tent of meeting. ⁶ He shall then skin the burnt offering and cut it into its pieces.

Until this point in history, the firstborn male has been the priest of the family and the man was head of his individual house. It is a principle we have repeatedly focused on as articulated by Paul in 1 Corinthians 11:3. Recall,

1 Corinthians 11:³ But I want you to understand that Messiah is the head of every man, and the man is the head of a woman, and God is the head of Messiah.

God's authority structure is God => Messiah => man => woman. We have seen in part that woman is to be in a covered and protected place under the loving headship of a man, whether father, husband or other man such as brother or mature son. This is evident from Genesis 1:27 on, particularly in the Creation account as well as throughout the Torah. Paul supports this same structure in all of his apostolic writings. We considered it most recently during the Exodus 12/13 portion.

Adam, 'man,' was responsible for Chava, his woman. As we considered before, Adam *could* have *not* eaten and instead acted as the priest and protector of Chava by immediately consulting with God before touching the fruit from the Tree of Knowledge. Instead of functioning as the priest, he chose to *follow her* into sin, presumably because he was more concerned with losing her than he was with either obedience or death. As it turned out, a sacrifice was made and they were banished from the Garden after being clothed/covered with skins.

Later, we see Noah, Abraham, Isaac and Jacob offering on their own behalf and on behalf of their family. They functioned, or had authority, as priests in their 'house.' That authority is altered *slightly* when the firstborn were redeemed and the Levites assumed a portion of that role, though their duty is more within the realm of assisting the High Priest who himself is an earthly image of the Messiah. What our passage above illustrates is that the man, the head of the home, has the primary responsibility of bringing the offering, confessing over it his sin (or that of his household), slaying it and skinning it. The priests only took the blood into the Tabernacle, to the altar and before the Priest.

The point is, the man still has a *huge* role as priest in his home. Our passage uses the phrase, 'when any man of you.' The Hebrew for 'man' is H120, 'Adam.' In most cases throughout Scripture, this refers specifically to male, though in a few cases, 'mankind' can be in view.

With rare exception, the reference for sacrifice and offering points at the responsibility of the man for his house. We see striking examples of the whole house paying a price for one man's unrighteousness, e.g., Korah, Achan, while in other cases, the whole house is blessed for one man's righteousness, e.g., Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Joshua, Caleb, Pinchas, etc.

There are a very few cases in the Torah where it seems that a woman is to bring a direct sacrifice, as in Numbers 12. Even when she brings the offering, notice the command is given to the 'sons of Israel.' It is the heads of the houses that are to implement this command in their homes.

Even Leviticus 4:27, declaring the actions for a 'common person' is a reference to the people of the Land who are not Israelite, v. uncovered or separated citizens. This is not to say that uncovered women had no recourse, but the Torah is pretty clear, the expectation was that all women would be under headship and if they weren't they were in a very difficult spot. We'll see this more as we move into Numbers 30, laws regarding land ownership, representation in the gate before the elders, etc. Simply, these commandments regarding offerings are written with the expectation that a man would carry them out for himself and the household he had authority over.

A further evidence from this portion is the representative nature of confession by elders or leaders on behalf of the congregation or the specific group of people affected by the sin. See these two verses as examples,

Leviticus 4:¹³ 'Now if the whole congregation of Israel commits error and the matter escapes the notice of the assembly, and they commit any of the things which the LORD has commanded not to be done, and they become guilty; ¹⁴ when the sin which they have committed becomes known, then the assembly shall offer a bull of the herd for a sin offering and bring it before the tent of meeting. ¹⁵ **Then the elders of the congregation** shall lay their hands on the head of the bull before the LORD, and the bull shall be slain before the LORD.

Leviticus 4:²² 'When a leader sins and unintentionally does any one of all the things which the LORD his God has commanded not to be done, and he becomes guilty, ²³ if his sin which he has committed is made known to him, he shall bring for his offering a goat, a male without defect. ²⁴ He shall lay his hand on the head of the male goat and slay it in the place where they slay the burnt offering before the LORD; it is a sin offering.

Deuteronomy 21 'If a slain person is found lying in the open country in the land which the LORD your God gives you to possess, *and* it is not known who has struck him, ² then your elders and your judges shall go out and measure *the distance* to the cities which are around the slain

one. ³ It shall be that the city which is nearest to the slain man, that is, the elders of that city, shall take a heifer of the herd, which has not been worked and which has not pulled in a yoke; ⁴ and the elders of that city shall bring the heifer down to a valley with running water, which has not been plowed or sown, and shall break the heifer's neck there in the valley. ⁵ Then the priests, the sons of Levi, shall come near, for the LORD your God has chosen them to serve Him and to bless in the name of the LORD; and every dispute and every assault shall be settled by them. ⁶ All the elders of that city which is nearest to the slain man shall wash their hands over the heifer whose neck was broken in the valley; ⁷ and they shall answer and say, 'Our hands did not shed this blood, nor did our eyes see *it*. ⁸ Forgive Your people Israel whom You have redeemed, O LORD, and do not place the guilt of innocent blood in the midst of Your people Israel.' And the bloodguiltiness shall be forgiven them. ⁹ So you shall remove the guilt of innocent blood from your midst, when you do what is right in the eyes of the LORD.

The bottom line that we can see in this passage is another affirmation of the role and responsibility of the man as head of his home and the safety net God institutes for a woman who chooses to follow a righteous man. It is not fully articulated here, but as part of the larger picture we see that the Torah consistently teaches and upholds the authority structure implemented from before the sin of Adam in the Garden.

Shabbat shalom!