

Vayikra clearly articulates the process and all the gory - yet sacred - details for sacrifices. The details are to make us mindful of what we are doing. There are many object lessons in this parsha.

One lesson - Sacrifice is not the best translation for **קרבן** The root is **ב ר ק** meaning to bring close or to approach. **בני ישראל** will approach G-d through killing prime livestock. G-d's own creatures are to be slaughtered by the sons of Aaron. Only creatures without blemish are to be chosen. Are the creatures with blemishes any less the wondrous creatures of G-d? Perhaps we have a case of divine LOOK-ISM?

Rabbi Samson Raphael Hirsch explained that it is not LOOK-ISM. The point G-d makes in his demand for creatures without blemishes is: religion should be vigorous, all men should participate, not just the grieving, the weak, and the ailing. The priesthood should not exploit the miserable and the weak because of their misfortunes, but demands the participation and adherence of the strong, the vigorous, in short: everyone. The animals without blemishes represent that vigor and the **קירבה** all mankind should want with its Creator.

The prophets speak out against mere perfunctory execution of the **קרבנות** . Man is supposed to learn and be reminded of his obligations and his behavior through these actions.

Rabbi Kotzk suggests there is symbolic meaning why no dvash (honey) or leaven can be used in the sacrifices. He teaches us: "In serving G-d one should not be too sour or too sweet, or too abstract." This thinking dovetails with Rabbi Yosef Shaul Nathansohn who rejected extremism in the service of G-d. We should choose the middle road, much like the golden path of the Rambam. Now THAT is a good lesson for all mankind EVERYWHERE.

The HEART of the matter (not the kidneys or the fat, or the blood !!!!) is expressed nicely and neatly through the logic of the Hebrew and the importance of clothes!

Four words:

מעיל מעל

Robe of the high priest vs a breach of trust

בגד בגד

Garment vs faithlessness or treason

We read in the parsha:

נפש כי תמול מעל

"If a person commits a breach of trust..." then there are instructions for guilt offerings.

False promises are nothing but a garment. OR, perhaps truth is often cloaked by a robe, the **מעיל**

Is it more than coincidence in Hebrew that בגד בגד play exactly the same word game, garment and treason? The words remind us to speak truth and act fairly.

Hundreds of words later, at the very end of the parsha, we are unequivocally told that a breach of trust between man and man is regarded as a breach of trust against G-d. Is G-d the immutable moral physics by which life is best lived? Honesty IS the best policy, sacrifices won't help, if we lie to and cheat other human beings.

Dan Ariely, a behavioral economist, wrote a book entitled THE HONEST TRUTH ABOUT DISHONESTY – HOW WE LIE TO EVERYONE ESPECIALLY OURSELVES. It is about the small cheating – taking pencils at the office - more than about the big cheating – Bernie Madoffs and others of his ilk.

Examples: making up data, cheating in the academic world (the sugar research at Harvard as a big example), business plans and rosy reports from startups to major companies, use of “fudge factors,” healthcare providers adding services or treatments more for the benefit of the giver than the patient, real estate agents “self dealing,” enhanced athletes, self puffery, and the famous “what the hell” effect. We are surrounded by these behaviors, and the enemy is us. Sacrifices won't clean up these acts.

For some fun, and even more humility, visit the Gallup poll web site for lists about the most and least honest professions as perceived by others. We'll just note that nurses are at the top of the list, while members of Congress are at the bottom!!!!!! Animal sacrifices in Washington would not help.

In short:

“Honest to G-d” is a VERY important saying!!!! It articulates exactly what G-d wants.

If you do all the necessary sacrifices, and say all the right things, BUT cheat, lie, and are not “honest to G-d” then you might as well also just eat cheeseburgers for lunch on Yom Kippur.