

Parshat Vayikra
Abby's Bat Mitzvah D'var Torah
Abby S. and Rabbanit Yael Keller ('22)

Abby's bat-mitzvah celebration was supposed to happen this weekend. She has been learning with second year student Yael Keller. Since Abby is not able to share her d'var torah with her community in person this weekend we are sharing her hard work with the whole Maharat community.

The first word in this week's parsha is the one that gives the sefer its name - Vayikra, when God calls to Moshe. Rashi notes that the word vayikra is *derech chibah*, a demonstration of God's love for Moshe. God doesn't just start speaking, but calls out to Moshe first. Rashi goes on to explain that calling out to Moshe is in contrast to the less intentional, less holy way God reveals God's self to other nations. Rabbi Alex Israel elaborates, explaining that when God speaks to Moshe, whom God loves, God is intentional. God wants Moshe to be ready. If we think back to last week's parsha, we remember that Sefer Shmot concludes with the image of God's divine glory settling onto the mishkan, but Moshe is not yet allowed in. Why wasn't he allowed in? What was he waiting for? Rabbi Israel suggests that Moshe was waiting for God to call him. To invite Moshe in, to invite him to prepare for a divine interaction. Abby, the wonderful young woman who is the guest writer below, has been preparing diligently for her bat mitzvah, which marks her entry as an adult into our community. Like Moshe, she is thoughtful and intentional in creating her relationship with God and her community and learning her parsha for this milestone. She is excited to have the opportunity to share her thoughts virtually, if not physically as she originally intended. As a community, I know we will attempt to emulate God and call "Vayikra" to her, welcoming her into the community as a full adult with love and intention. -- Yael Keller

Abby's Dvar Torah:

My parsha is about sacrifices and how to do them. There are two types of sacrifices in my parsha - mandatory ones that you have to do and voluntary ones that you can do. First, I'm going to explain all the types of sacrifices in my parsha. Then, I'll share a question I had when I studied my parsha. Next, I'll review a few answers I found and finish by telling you my own ideas.

In my parsha there are three kinds of voluntary sacrifices - *olah*, *mincha* and *shlamim*.

1. The *Olah* you burn on the *mizbayach* (altar in English) and it can be three types of animals - *bakar* - cattle, *tzon* - sheep, and *oaf* -birds.
2. The *Mincha* is a flour offering that can be cooked in three ways - in the oven, the griddle or the frying pan.
3. The last one is the *shlamim*, which is a peace offering and the bringer of the sacrifice gets to eat part of it. It can also be three types of animal - *bakar*, *tzon*, and *ayz* which means goat.

There are two types of mandatory sacrifices in my parsha.

1. There is a *chatat* you bring for general sins or for three specific kinds of sins:
 - The first is for not testifying when you see someone do the wrong thing.
 - The second is if you touch an impure animal or impure person.
 - The last sin is when you make a promise you can't keep.
2. The second type of mandatory sacrifice is called the *asham*, that you bring for stealing from the *beit hamikdash*, or stealing from other people, or if you were unsure that you had sinned.



My question is about the *olah* and the *mincha* in the voluntary offerings and the different kinds of people who bring these two sacrifices. In the first perek in the second verse we learn about the *Olah*. The verse says:

דַבֵּר אֶל־בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל וְאָמַרְתָּ אֲלֵהֶם אָדָם כִּי־יִקְרִיב מִכֶּם קָרְבָן לַיהוָה

Which means “Speak to B’nei Yisrael, and say to them: When any of you, an **Adam**, presents an offering to Hashem.”

Then in chapter two when we learn about the *mincha* the torah tells us in chapter 2, verse 1

וְכִשְׁ יִתְקַרֵב קָרְבָן מִנְחָה לַיהוָה

Which means “When a person, a **Nefesh** presents a mincha sacrifice to Hashem.”

Why does the Torah call a person “*adam*” in one place and “*nefesh*” in the other when it is trying to describe the person who brings the sacrifice?

The Torah uses two words to describe the people - *Adam* and *Nefesh*- to show us that those two people offer sacrifices differently. In the commentaries that I studied, the *Adam* and the *Nefesh* were different types of people, both in how much money they could spend and the way they thought about becoming closer to Hashem through their sacrifice.

Rashi explains that we call a person “*Adam*” for the *Olah* because the animals *bakar*, *tzon* and *oaf* are more expensive so the person who sacrifices them is richer. Only rich people can sacrifice these, because poor people don’t have enough money to buy these animals. The “*Nefesh*” is a poor person because they can only bring the mincha, which is not as much money and is all they can afford. When the poor person brings it, God realizes they are trying their best and bringing their whole soul, in hebrew *Nefesh*, which is why the person is called a *Nefesh*.

The Beit Yisrael, Rabbi Yisrael Alter, the fourth rebbe of Ger, says the *Adam* feels proud and knows she brought a great offering because it is so expensive and grand. The *Nefesh* feels kind of embarrassed of what she brought because it isn’t as good as what the *Adam* brought. The Beit Yisrael explains that the *Nefesh* is bringing a better sacrifice, even though it is less grand, because she knows that she can always do better and work on what she brings to try and bring an *Olah* next time. The *Adam* brought the best possible thing already, so she can’t really look towards bringing something better next time.

After learning these answers, I thought I would rather be a *Nefesh*. First you try to show God you are spiritual and then you can save up your money and try to have a great sacrifice. Being spiritual is a connection that you have or you don’t have and the *Adam* might not really have that.

In Vayikra Rabba the Rabbis tell a story that explains that it is best to have **both** the *Adam* and the *Nefesh* part of you to be able to have the perfect sacrifice, which is being closer to Hashem. The story is that an owner of an orchard leaves two people to watch his first fruits - a lame person and a blind person. They both want to have the fruits, but they can’t, because one can’t see and one can’t walk. The lame person goes on top of the blind person’s back. Then the lame person directs the blind person where to go and the blind person carries the lame person so they can get and eat the fruit. They worked together and they could better achieve things. The *Nefesh* and the *Adam* are like the blind person and the lame person. Each one is missing something - the *Nefesh* is missing the very nice offering of an animal, but the *Adam* is missing the spiritual offering.



The parable is saying that both the *Nefesh* and the *Adam* are good sacrifices to God. They both are trying to get closer to God, even if one person is rich and materialistic and one is poor and spiritual.

Although we don't bring sacrifices today, we should show the *Nefesh* and *Adam* parts of ourselves. For example, the *Adam* part of a person could buy a nice siddur. The *Adam* looks forward to having a connection with God and she could do that by holding and looking at something very beautiful. The *Nefesh* could use a siddur that was passed down to her from her ancestors and that is the *Nefesh* part because that person is still having a connection with God in a good way and having a special bond through her ancestors, even if her siddur is not as nice. Another example is my bat mitzvah project where I helped raise money for *Challah For Hunger* by making challah. The *Adam* part of a person would donate money towards the cause. The *Nefesh* part would participate in making challah.

As I prepare to become a bat mitzvah who does lots of mitzvot, I realize I am sometimes an *Adam* and sometimes a *Nefesh*. As an *Adam* I really enjoy the mitzvah of giving tzedakah. But, I learned that we don't always have to give expensive things or have the nicest and most beautiful things to do mitzvot and be a good person and liked by God. We also need to be spiritual and try our best.

One more thing I learned from the word *Adam* was not to worry about what others think. I learned that the person is called *Adam* to remind us of the first person. The first man wasn't ever doing mitzvot to show off for his friends, because he didn't have any friends! We also shouldn't bring sacrifices or daven in a certain way or do mitzvot just because they look good to others. It is okay to be a *nefesh* and be spiritual, but you can also be an *Adam* depending on how you feel about doing mitzvot that day. For example, when I daven, I am like the first *Adam*. I am not worried about what other people think or do. I am just talking to Hashem, which is also spiritual like the *Nefesh*. If you focus on your relationship with Hashem and not about how it will look to your friends, you will have the best relationship you can with Hashem.

I want to thank my family. Mom, thanks for always coming to gymnastics meets with me and making my bat mitzvah the best it could be. Abba, thanks for making pancakes in the morning, it's such a delicious way to start a Sunday. I really enjoyed going through the bat mitzvah process with you. Jacob, thanks for being the brother I can always count on to have fun with at home. I had fun with you at camp when we went to camp together and love getting to spend family time together. I want to thank my grandparents, aunts, uncles, all my cousins, and all my friends who would have come from near and far to celebrate with me. I also want to thank Yael Keller for your patience and your time to help me learn about my parsha and write this d'var torah. I learned a lot from you. Thank you.



Yael Keller is the former Director of Operations at Maharat. She earned a Masters in Public Policy from the Heller School for Social Policy and Management and a Masters in Jewish Professional Leadership at the Hornstein Jewish Professional Leadership Program at Brandeis University. Upon graduation, she was the Director of Programming at Uri L'Tzedek, the Orthodox Social Justice movement. In graduate school she was an intern at the Joint Distribution Committee in Israel, where she worked on the grant writing team, advocating for Jews at risk throughout the world and a site educator at Impact Boston, where she facilitated a teen experience focused on social action,

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community service and advocacy. Before graduate school, Yael spent three years in Washington, DC, working at the Jewish Community Relations Council of Greater Washington and Hillel's Schusterman International Center. She also spent a semester in Israel studying at the Pardes Institute of Judaic Studies before attending the Hornstein Program. Yael earned her B.A. in Government and Politics at the University of Maryland. She was active in her campus Hillel, serving as a student leader and board member.



Abby is a 6th grader at Jack M. Barrack Hebrew Academy. She prepared this d'var Torah for her bat mitzvah, which is postponed until September. When not learning Torah, Abby loves spending time with her family and competing in gymnastics.