SUMMARY OF VAYIQRA

QORBAN ‘OLA

HaShem calls Moses from the Mishkan (Tabernacle) and instructs him on the laws of the sacrifice (qorban) called “Ola”. This sacrifice is completely incinerated by fire, and its meat cannot be consumed. The Tora discusses the laws of domestic animals – cows, sheep, or goats – that can be sacrificed for this offering. God instructs Moses on the laws of birds that can be sacrificed for the Ola offering. The text continues with the description of three types of voluntary offerings of vegetable products: unleavened flour, baked bread, and an offering of a fried paste. These offerings also contained olive oil and a special type of incense. The Tora then describes the last type of voluntary food offering, the fried food offering, and the barley offering – the Omer – which takes place on the second day of Pesach. The text also indicates that salt should be added to animal sacrifices or other offerings as a symbol of our eternal covenant with Him. The Tora prohibits including leaven or honey in the offerings.

SHELAMIM

Then the “peace offering,” or “shelamim,” is described. This sacrifice could be offered from cows, sheep, or goats. Most of this sacrifice was consumed by those who offered it and their family or friends. But some of the animal fats were consumed on the altar. The priests, Cohanim, also received a portion of the meat from this sacrifice. The Tora prohibits consuming the blood and fat of the animals that were sacrificed, and even those that were eaten normally outside of the Temple.

CHATAT

The text describes the “sin offering,” or chatat, which was offered when an individual was guilty of inadvertently transgressing a commandment. Special sacrifices of chatat are

also required if the High Priest had sinned or if the Sanhedrin (the Supreme Court of Justice of the Jewish people) had issued a verdict that resulted in an error and caused the population to sin. The case of a political leader (nasi) who had sinned is described as well. The last type of chatat is the one that a common person who had sinned should offer. The variable offering (qorban ole veyored), a variant of the offering for an inadvertent sin, is also described. This sacrifice was offered with animals, birds, or flour, depending on what each individual could afford: a person of means brought a sheep or a goat; a person with fewer resources brought two birds, and an individual with very limited brought a portion of flour.

ASHAM

The last sacrifice discussed in this section of the Tora is the “guilt offering,” or “asham.” The three categories of this sacrifice are discussed: 1) the offering brought by one who has wrongly appropriated something that belongs to the Temple (me’ilah or sacrilege) 2) the asham offering brought by one who has falsely sworn regarding a sum of money owed to another person, clarifying that this sacrifice does not exempt the debtor from settling their debt – and adding a fine – with their creditor. 3) the asham offering brought by a person who believes, but is not entirely sure, that they have transgressed a Tora prohibition.