

The Pardes Center for Jewish Educators presents

# An Interactive PARSHA EXPERIENCE



**Parsha:** Tzav

**Title:** It's No Sacrifice at All

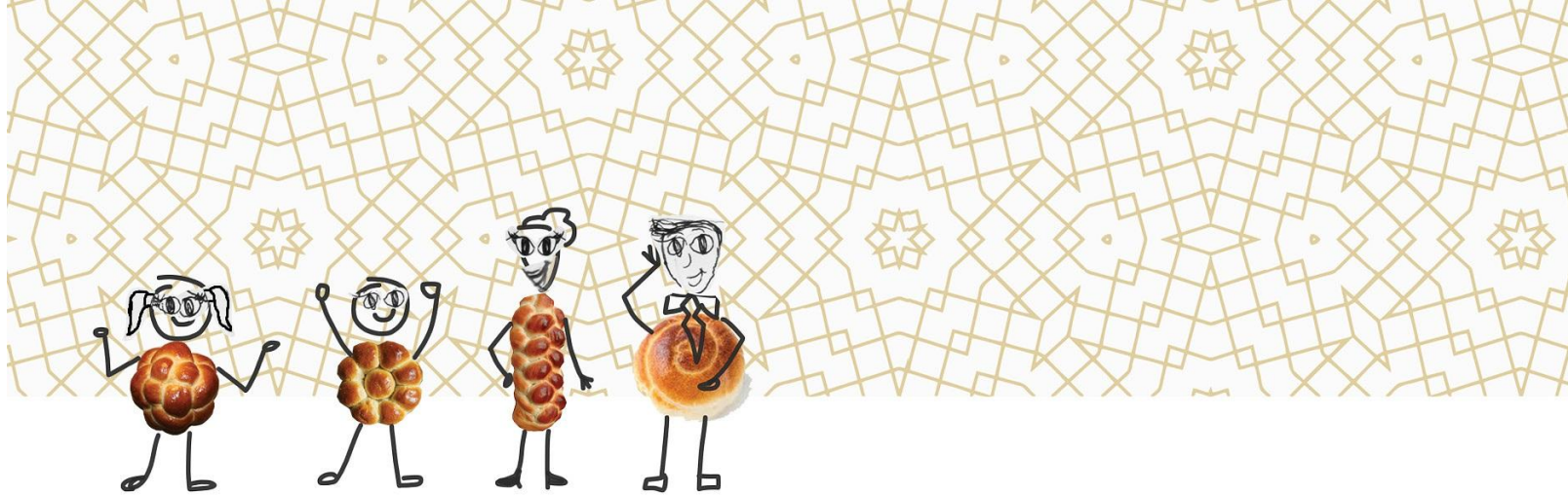
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## The Parsha at First Glance

### Spotlight on the Parsha:

This week's *parsha* carries on the theme of *korbanot* (offerings) from last week and teaches us what exactly Aharon and his priestly offspring are commanded to do with those offerings (the name of the *parsha*, *Tzav*, means "command!").

There are so many offerings: peace offerings, *mincha*/flour offerings, sin



offerings, guilt offerings, burnt offerings, thanksgiving offerings, freewill/voluntary offerings. Each one has its own rules and regulations: which animals or grain can be used for it, who can eat it, how long they have to eat it, where it is offered, the timeframe for offering it up, which parts get offered up and which get eaten.

After speaking about all these offerings (are you hungry yet?) it makes sense that the Torah continues on with how Aharon is formally entered into the role of the *Kohen Gadol* (High Priest) through a special inauguration ceremony. It is, after all, Aharon and his descendants who are responsible for offering up all these korbanot.

### Zooming In:

Why does the Torah take so much time and effort to explain korbanot? In fact, there are more verses in the Torah that deal with offerings and the place where they are offered than those that deal with the coming out of Egypt! Why are offerings so important? Does God actually *need* animal or flour offerings?

We often think of korbanot as *sacrifices* because in giving a *korban* we are losing something valuable. Sacrificing an animal is no small change! A sheep is worth \$200 plus, and a cow at least \$1,000. By giving up something of value we may think we are praising or saying sorry to God. Something like: “Hey God! Look, I just gave you a \$1,500 cow - that’s a whole lot of sorry! So I expect a little bit of forgiveness in return.” But is that really what’s happening? Perhaps something else is going on.

The Hebrew root of korban – קֹרְבָן – is קרב, which means ‘to come close.’ This means that we are not sacrificing animals or money, but rather *giving* something in order *to come close* to God. This is why we translate ‘korban’ as an offering rather than a sacrifice. We are not losing a sheep, cow or money, but gaining a chance to deepen our relationship with God. This can mean being thankful for some good that came into our life, or trying to repair our relationship with God



after making an error. God does not want our animals or flour. God wants us to get close to Him!

### Questions for Consideration:

- When you give a gift do you think more about what it cost you, or more about the happiness of the person who received it? Is your answer always the same or does it depend on what you gave and who you gave to?
- When you receive a gift do you care more about the actual gift, or about the thoughtfulness of the person who gave it?
- What feelings do you experience when someone gives you something really thoughtful?

## The Parsha Through Another Lens

### Text Study:

There is an idea that if you want to understand the root or underlying purpose of an action or word in the Torah, you need to go back to the first time that action or word occurred in the Torah. So when was the first offering in the Torah? Let's find out...

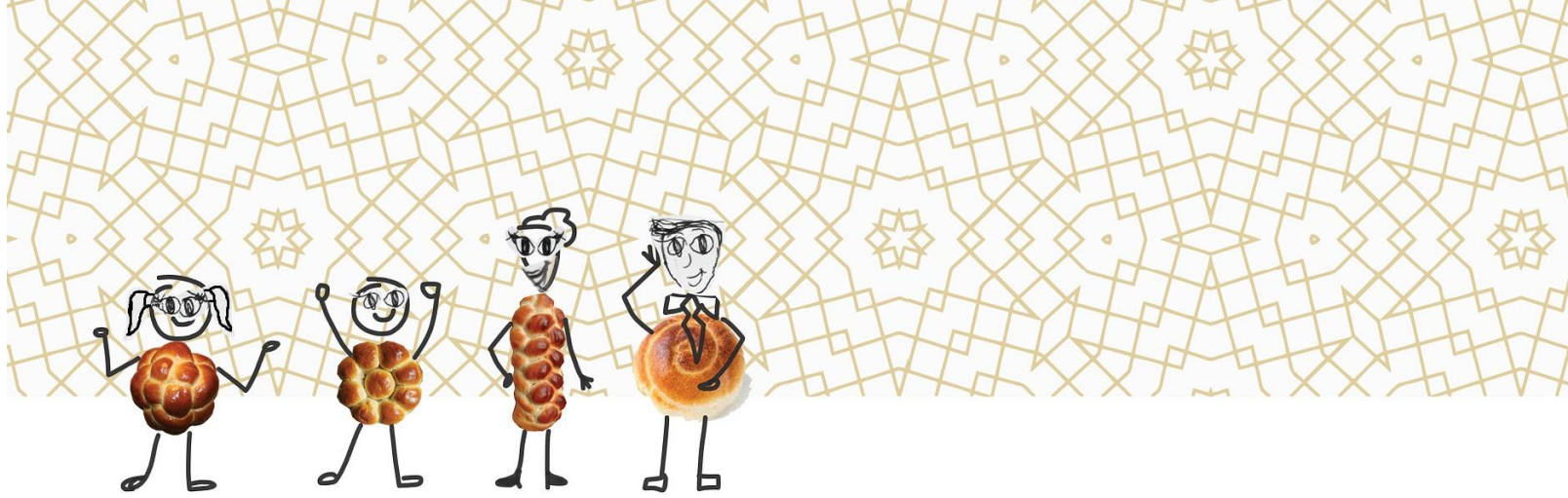
#### Bereishit 4:3-5

3. In the course of time, Kayin brought an offering to God from the fruit of the soil;

4. and Hevel also brought the choicest of the firstlings of his flock. God paid attention

ג וַיְהִי מִקֶּץ יָמַיִם וַיָּבֵא קַיִן מִפְּרֵי  
הָאֲדָמָה מִנְחָה--לַיהוָה.

ד וְהֶבֶל הֵבִיא גַם-הוּא מִבְּכֹרוֹת  
צֹאֲנוֹ וּמִחֲלֵבֶהוּן ; וַיִּשַׁע יְהוָה אֶל-



<p>to Hevel and his offering,</p> <p>5. but to Kayin and his offering He paid no attention. Kayin was much distressed and his face fell.</p>	<p>הָבֵל וְאֶל-מִנְחָתוֹ.  ה וְאֶל-קַיִן וְאֶל-מִנְחָתוֹ לֹא שָׁעָה;  וַיַּחַר לְקַיִן מְאֹד וַיִּפְּלוּ פָּנָיו.</p>
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- Why did God pay attention to Hevel’s offering and not to Kayin’s?
- The text says that ‘God paid attention to Hevel and his offering.’ It would have been more efficient for the text to say that ‘God paid attention to his offering.’ What message could the Torah be giving us by adding ‘to Hevel and his offering’?

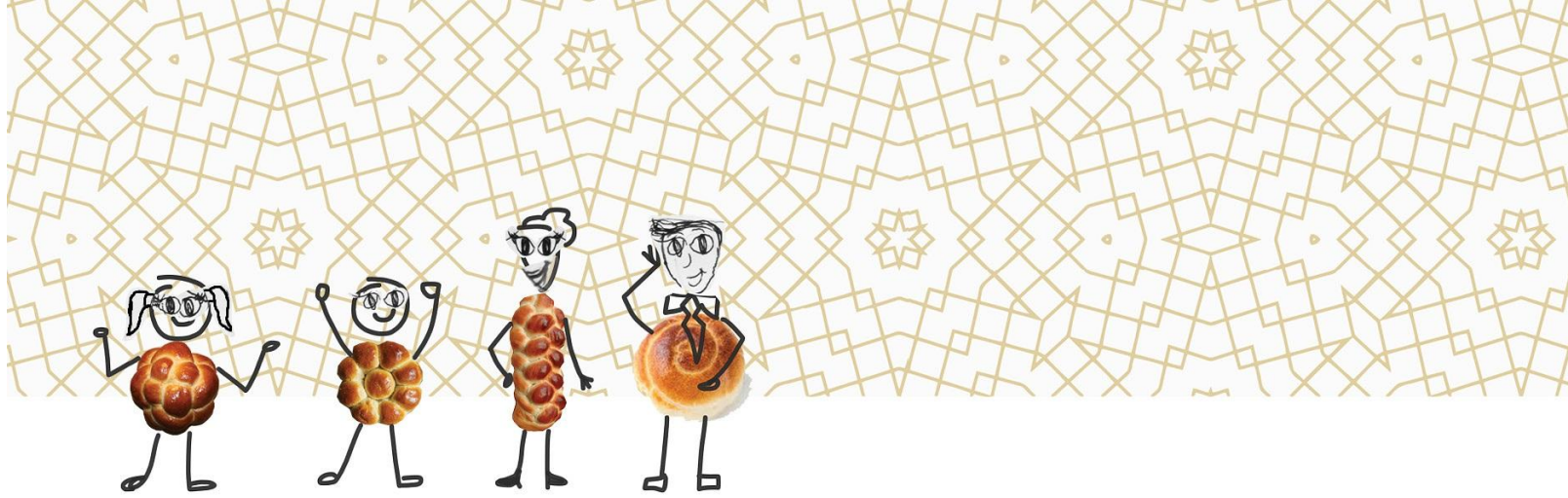
The following midrash highlights a particular problem with Kayin’s offering:

**Sefer HaYashar 6:6**

But to Kayin and his offering [God] paid no attention and had no respect; for he [Kayin] offered to God the very worst of the fruits of the ground.

Kayin’s offering was truly a sacrifice; he felt he was losing something and did not want to sacrifice his personal resources, so he gave second-rate produce. On the other hand, Hevel’s offering was from the best of his flock (notice in verse 4 above - it says he brought “the choicest”), no expense spared, and he *wanted* to give it. No wonder that God paid attention to Hevel and his offering, because the essence of an offering is not the produce or animal but the *motivation* of the person offering it.

- Why do you think God cares so much about people and their motivations?



## Let's Make a Modern-Day Offering:

This week's parsha can inspire us to make our own offering! We are not going to buy a sheep or cow, since without a Temple it is forbidden to make that type of offering. But we can try and experience the tension between seeing a korban as a sacrifice ("I don't really want to give, but I will anyway") or as an offering ("I really do want to give!").

1. Choose a local charity that distributes used clothes, toys, etc.
2. Give each person a minute to think about one item they own that they will give (offer) to the charity.
  - Variation 1: If there are a few options for charities in your area, each person can choose which charity they want to donate to.
  - Variation 2: If the group is older, or there are no charities, each person could commit an amount of money or time to give to charity.
3. Discuss the following:
  - Were some objects too valuable for you to consider giving?
  - Were some objects too inferior for you to consider giving?
  - Did you experience any internal conflicts when deciding on your object? Can you describe the conflicts?
  - Can you think of other 'modern-day offerings' that we could make to God?

## Shabbat Shalom!