וַיִּקְרָא

VAYIKRA/*AND HE CALLED*

Vayikra/*Leviticus* 1:1-5:26

We begin our third book of the Torah with יהוה "**calling**" (וַיִּקְרָא) to Moshe. This is not the first time the Almighty has "**called**" out to Moshe. The first "**calling**" was that very significant moment at the "**burning bush**," followed by a positive response from Moshe:

> **Shemot/Exodus 3:4** So when יהוה saw that he turned aside to look, Elohim **called** (וַיִּקְרָא) to him from the midst of the bush and said, "Moshe, Moshe!" And he said, "**Here I am**."

The second significant "**calling**" to Moshe occurred on Mt. Sinai, followed by obedience:

> **Shemot 19:3** And Moshe went up to Elohim, and יהוה **called** (וַיִּקְרָא) to him from the mountain, saying, "Thus you shall say to the house of Ya'acov, and tell the children of Israel…**20** Then יהוה came down upon Mount Sinai, on the top of the mountain. And יהוה **called** (וַיִּקְרָא) Moshe to the top of the mountain, and **Moshe went up**.

This week brings us to the third significant "**call**":

> **Vayikra/Leviticus 1:1** Now יהוה **called** (וַיִּקְרָא) to Moshe, and spoke to him from the Tabernacle of meeting, saying…

יהוה's "**calling**" was an invitation to draw near. To draw near was the purpose of the sacrifices that we will begin to study. יהוה, who has now taken up residence in the Tabernacle, is "**calling**" out, inviting the people to draw near to Him in intimate relationship. He will continue to give instructions on how this will happen through the details of the different offerings. In the Brit Chadasha, the word for "**calling**" is "**klesis**", meaning an invitation, i.e., a call to embrace the salvation and the intimacy of a relationship with Yeshua:

> **Ephesians 1:18** the eyes of your understanding being enlightened; that you may know what is the hope of His **calling** (κλῆσις), what are the riches of the glory of His inheritance in the saints

> **Ephesians 4:1** I, therefore, the prisoner of Adonai, beseech you to walk worthy of the **calling** (κλῆσις) with which you were called

> **2 Peter 1:10** Therefore, brethren, be even more diligent to make your **call** (κλῆσις) and election sure, for if you do these things you will never stumble

There is a concept that connects the Levitical offerings with Messiah and His followers. That concept is "**salt**."

Vayikra 2:13 'And every offering of your **grain offering** you shall season with **salt** (מֶלַח - melach); you shall not allow the **salt** (מֶלַח - melach) of the covenant of your Elohim to be lacking from your grain offering. **With all your offerings you shall offer salt** (מֶלַח - melach).

Notice that "**salt**" is first mentioned in reference to the "**grain offering**," yet it is clear that with "**all offerings you shall offer salt**." What is the reason for adding "**salt**" to everything? Before we attempt to answer that, let's take a look at a few verses to read how "**salt**" was used throughout the Bible, first in the Hebrew Scriptures:

Devarim/Deuteronomy 29:21 "And יהוה would separate him from all the tribes of Israel for adversity, according to all the curses of the covenant that are written in this Book of the Torah, [22] "so that the coming generation of your children who rise up after you, and the foreigner who comes from a far land, would say, when they see the plagues of that land and the sicknesses which יהוה has laid on it: [23] 'The whole land *is* brimstone, **salt**, and burning; it is **not sown, nor does it bear, nor does any grass grow there**, like the overthrow of Sodom and Gomorrah, Admah, and Zeboim, which יהוה overthrew in His anger and His wrath.'

Zephaniah 2:9 Therefore, as I live," Says יהוה of hosts, the Elohim of Israel, "Surely Moab shall be like Sodom, And the people of Ammon like Gomorrah -- Overrun with weeds and **saltpits**, And a **perpetual desolation**. The residue of My people shall plunder them, And the remnant of My people shall possess them."

Jeremiah 17:6 For he shall be like a shrub in the desert, and shall not see when good comes, but shall inhabit the parched places in the wilderness, *in* a **salt land *which is* not inhabited**.

These verses suggest that there is no possibility of anything growing in a "**salty**" place, it is a complete desolation, devoid of life. When a city was destroyed, it was often "**sown with salt**" in order to make the fields and vineyards unusable:

Judges 9:45 So Abimelech fought against the city (Shechem) all that day; he took the city and killed the people who *were* in it; and he demolished the city and **sowed it with salt**.

Looking at the above verses, we understand that "**salt**" kills, prevents growth, and causes the place that was "**salted**" to become desolate. Yet "**salt**" also has "**healing**" properties:

2 Kings 2:19 Then the men of the city said to Elisha, "Please notice, the situation of this city *is* pleasant, as my lord sees; but the water *is* bad, and the ground barren." [20] And he said, "Bring me a new bowl, and put **salt** in it." So, they brought *it* to him. [21] Then **he went out to the source of the water, and cast in the salt there**, and said, "Thus says יהוה: '**I have healed this water**; from it there shall be no more death or barrenness.' " [22] So the **water remains healed to this day**, according to the word of Elisha which he spoke.

"**Salt**" is mentioned in the context of enhancing the taste of food:

> **Job 6:6** **<u>Can flavorless food be eaten without salt</u>**? Or is there *any* taste in the white of an egg?

One of the positive qualities of "**salt**" is that it is a preservative, in that it causes things to continue to exist. Vegetables, meat, and fish would spoil quickly if left in their natural state, but pickled with "**salt**" they can be preserved for long periods of time. The preservative power of "**salt**" is the quality most appropriate in the spiritual context of the sacrifices. The sacrifice makes atonement for the person, thereby facilitating his continued existence.

As we have reviewed different verses in the Hebrew Scriptures, we have seen the inherent qualities of "**salt**" – some negative, some positive. On the one hand, "**salt**" destroys and does not allow growth; on the other hand, it exists forever, preserving and enhancing the flavor of food. Existence versus destruction. These are opposites.

Thirteenth century Rabbi Bachye wrote:

> Salt possesses two contrary, contradictory powers, and they are water and fire, which correspond to the two qualities by virtue of which the world exists – the attribute of mercy and the attribute of strict justice. For this reason, God says "the salt of the covenant of your God": the covenant of God is compared to salt, because through this the world is either preserved or destroyed, as our Rabbis taught: (God) saw that (the world) could not exist through strict justice (alone); therefore He added to it the attribute of mercy. Similarly, salt can preserve or kill off. It preserves meat for a long time, and gives flavor to all foods, but it also kills, for a place that has been salted will not give forth any vegetation…

To preserve or to kill…in this sense, "**salt**" is similar to the two possible ramifications of the covenant. יהוה's covenant preserves and gives life (when one is obedient), or it can also destroy (when purposely violated). Thus, we may say that the covenant is the (spiritual) "**salt**" of this world. So, the "**salted**" sacrifices can point to either life or death. While a person may be guilty for his sin…even deserving of death, there is a substitute to take his place. This is both justice AND mercy existing simultaneously.

The Almighty made a "**salt covenant**" as recorded in Scripture three times:

> **Vayikra 2:13** 'And every offering of your grain offering you shall season with salt; you shall not allow the **<u>salt of the covenant of your Elohim</u>** to be lacking from your grain offering. With all your offerings you shall offer salt.
>
> **Bemidbar/Numbers 18:19** "All the heave offerings of the holy things, which the children of Israel offer to יהוה, I have given to you and your sons and daughters with you as an ordinance forever; it *is* a **<u>covenant of salt</u>** forever before יהוה with you and your descendants with you."
>
> **2 Chronicles 13:5** "Should you not know that יהוה Elohim of Israel gave the **<u>kingdom over Israel to David forever, to him and his sons</u>**, by a **<u>covenant of salt</u>**?

In two of the three verses above, "**covenant of salt**" is mentioned in the context of offerings. Yet in the verse in **2 Chronicles**, there is no mention of offerings. We are instead informed that יהוה Elohim gave the "**kingdom over Israel to David forever, to him and his sons**." Is not Yeshua's offering the fulfillment of this "**covenant of salt**"? Is He not the "**King over Israel**," and the "**Son of David**?"

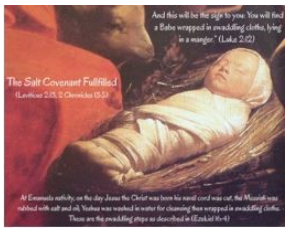
> **Matthew 1:1** The book of the genealogy of Messiah Yeshua, the **Son of David**, the Son of Avraham
>
> **John 12:13** took branches of palm trees and went out to meet Him, and cried out: "Hosanna! 'Blessed *is* He who comes in the name of יהוה!' The **King of Israel**!"

If Yeshua is the fulfillment of the "**covenant of salt**," we should be able to make connections, right? How about we begin with Yeshua's birth? "**Salting**" is one of the actions performed on a newborn baby. The Israelites used to rub infants with a small amount of "**salt**" to make the skin dense and firm and to purify and dedicate the newborn to the Almighty. **Ezekiel** makes mention of the practice with reference to the Israelites who were unfaithful to Adonai and His commandments. **Ezekiel** uses the symbolic acts of washing, salting and swaddling, hinting that their failure to perform this tradition was consistent with their disloyalty and unfaithfulness to Elohim:

> **Ezekiel 16:3** "and say, 'Thus says Adonai יהוה to Jerusalem: "Your birth and your nativity *are* from the land of Canaan; your father *was* an Amorite and your mother a Hittite. [4] "*As for* your nativity, on the day you were born your navel cord was not cut, nor were you washed in water to cleanse *you;* **you were not rubbed with salt** **nor wrapped in swaddling cloths**.

Did you ever notice those details before? The Gospel writer, **Luke**, points the reader to **Ezekiel** as he mentions **Yeshua**, a baby "**wrapped in swaddling cloths**." In fact, in order to make sure you don't miss it, **Luke** mentions it twice. According to the practice of that day, we can assume that the baby **Yeshua** would have been "**rubbed with salt**."

> **Luke 2:7** And she brought forth her firstborn Son, and **wrapped Him in swaddling cloths**, and laid Him in a manger, because there was no room for them in the inn.
>
> **Luke 2:12** "And this *will be* the sign to you: You will find a **Babe wrapped in swaddling cloths**, lying in a manger."



For young Jewish parents, "**salt**" represented a testimony that the parents would raise the child to be faithful to the "**covenant**." "**Salted**" at birth, Yeshua was immediately identified as an offering associated with the "**covenant of salt**!" "**Swaddling cloths**" is another highly significant detail, however we'll have to touch on that at another time!

In the 1st century, King Herod held a monopoly on "**salt**" coming from the Dead Sea. This is where the priests got their supply of "**salt**" necessary for Temple rituals and offerings. Roman soldiers were

sometimes paid with "**salt**" money. Slaves were often traded in "**salt**," and this is the origin of the expression that someone is "**not worth his salt**."

Yeshua knew the mentality mindset of the Romans, the priests, the Jews, and the non-Jews. Everyone in that day would have understood Yeshua's comment about "**salt**":

> **Matthew 5:13** " **You are the salt of the earth**; but **if the salt loses its flavor, how shall it be made salty again**? **It is then good for nothing** but to be thrown out and **trampled underfoot** by men.

"**Salt**" is a preserving agent. As believers in Yeshua we, as the "**salt of the earth**" should be slowing the decay of this "**earth**." We should create a thirst in others for the truth. Rav Sha'ul (Paul) writes about this in **Colossians**:

> **Colossians 4:6** *Let* your **speech** always *be* with grace, **seasoned with salt**, that you may know how you ought to answer each one.

"**Salt without flavor**" was used in the construction of Roman roads. In ancient times the Romans used "**salt**" as a binding agent in the crude cement and mortar used to hold stones, dirt, and aggregate together when building roads. "**Salt**" left roads barren and without vegetation – the opposite of bringing life to the "**earth**." This use of "**salt**" is what Yeshua is referring to when he says "**it is then good for nothing but to be thrown out and trampled underfoot**." In this case, our "**salty**" words no longer enhance the truth to others.

Yeshua continues on with:

> **Matthew 5:14** "You are the **light of the world**. A city that is set on a hill cannot be hidden. [15] "Nor do they light a lamp and put it under a basket, but on a lampstand, and it gives light to all *who are* in the house. [16] "Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your **good works** and glorify your Father in heaven.

A "**salty**" believer is a "**light to the world**." Through his "**good works**" he draws others to our Heavenly Father. He is rightly playing his role as the "**salt of the earth**." But it's not so easy:

> **Mark 9:49** " For everyone will be **salted with fire**, and **every sacrifice will be seasoned with salt**. [50] "Salt *is* good, but if the salt loses its flavor, how will you season it? Have salt in yourselves, and have peace with one another."

What is the source of this "**fire salt**"? And notice the above connection with this week's Torah portion – "**every sacrifice will be seasoned with salt**."

Hebrews 12:29 For **our Elohim *is* a consuming fire**.

Jeremiah 20:9 Then I said, "I will not make mention of Him, nor speak anymore in His name." But **He was in my heart like a burning fire Shut up in my bones**; I was weary of holding *it* back, And I am not able.

The Almighty's "**consuming fire**" is what molds us into the image of Yeshua. We are purified through "**trials**" and tests. As we experience the "**fire salt**" of His testing, we can either turn toward Him or away from Him. We either become "**salty**" or "**without flavor**."

1 Peter 4:12 Beloved, do not think it strange concerning the **fiery trial** which is to try you, as though some strange thing happened to you; [13] but rejoice to the extent that **you partake of Messiah's sufferings**, that when His glory is revealed, you may also be glad with exceeding joy.

As members of Yeshua's "**royal priesthood**," we have access to the "**salt covenant**." Like the priests of the Tabernacle, we need to bring an "**offering**," and don't forget…all offerings must be "**salted**." יהוה made a "**covenant of salt**" with us and we in turn give Him an "**offering**" with "**salt**":

1 Peter 2:9 But you *are* a chosen generation, a **royal priesthood**, a holy nation, His own special people, that you may proclaim the praises of Him who called you out of darkness into His marvelous light

Romans 12:1 I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of Yah, that you **present your bodies a living sacrifice**, holy, acceptable to Yah, *which is* your reasonable service. [2] And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, that you may prove what *is* that good and acceptable and perfect will of Yah.

We must never lose the taste of Yeshua's "**salt**" within us. And therefore, we can "**count it all joy**" when we go through "**trials**," knowing that Yeshua is "**salting**" us with the flavor of the Father's love.

James 1:2 My brethren, **count it all joy** when you fall into various **trials**, [3] knowing that the testing of your faith produces patience. [4] But let patience have *its* perfect work, that you may be perfect and complete, lacking nothing.

Shabbat Shalom!
Ardelle