

## Parsha Shiur by Rabbi Mayer Friedman

### פרשת ויקרא

#### ויקרא אל משה וידבר ה' אליו מאהל מועד לאמר

**“He called to Moshe, and Hashem spoke to him from the Tent of Meeting, saying” (1:1)**

The Yalkut Shimoni writes that some people have the custom that children who are learning Torah for the first time begin with Sefer Vayikra so that “the pure ones should be engaged in concepts of purity.” The Avnei Azel writes that an additional relationship between Sefer Vayikra and the education of children is that bringing up children with a Torah education requires sacrifices. Sometimes it can be expensive. It may require financial and emotional sacrifices, but by teaching children Sefer Vayikra, it teaches their parents as well as the children themselves the value of sacrifices for Torah purposes. R' Meir Shapiro says: “Pay attention to children of the poor, for the Torah will emanate from them.” Why is this necessarily so? He answers that because the parents of these children had to give up more in order to provide a Torah education for their children, they will be blessed that their children will be exceedingly successful in their Torah studies.

**דבר אל בני ישראל ואמרת אליהם אדם כי יקריב מכם קרבן לה' מן הבהמה מן הבקר ומן הצאן תקריבו את קרבנכם**

**“Speak to the Children of Israel and say to them: When a person from among you will bring an offering to Hashem: from the animals - from the cattle and from the flocks you shall bring your offering” (1:2)**

The posuk literally means "when a person brings from yourself." What does this mean? The Seforno writes: When a person brings a sacrifice, he must bring from himself as well by humbling himself and confessing his sins. Hashem does not want the sacrifice without the humility of the person. One must give of himself to Hashem by repenting and lowering himself. The sacrifices are only a vehicle that helps facilitate repentance. A sacrifice without the humbling thoughts alongside it loses its true purpose.

Although we do not have sacrifices today, we still have the main part of the sacrifices, the repentance that goes along with it. As we read the chapters dealing with sacrifices in the upcoming weeks, we should realize that we can still achieve an atonement through repentance. That is what we must focus on today. Hopefully, the reading of these parshiyos will heighten the awareness within us of what our responsibility to do teshuva really demands of us.

**דבר אל בני ישראל ואמרת אליהם אדם כי יקריב מכם קרבן לה' מן הבהמה מן הבקר ומן הצאן תקריבו את קרבנכם**

**“Speak to the Children of Israel and say to them: When a person from among you will bring an offering to Hashem: from the animals - from the cattle and from the flocks you shall bring your offering” (1:2)**

The Ramban writes that when one brings a korban he should think that the animal is only a substitute for himself. Because he sinned, he himself deserves to be slaughtered. However, he brings the animal in place of himself. The Alshich writes that the lesson of the Ramban is that one must realize how severe a sin truly is. We often do not understand the ramifications of our misdeeds. But when a person brings a korban, he really sees the punishment that he deserves in action and it gives him a wake-up call. Since we do not have sacrifices today, we should seek other means of recognizing our sins. But we can also remember that if such a visual lesson is necessary to teach a person the gravity of a sin, then the immense reward for a mitzva is also something that people do not realize and need to appreciate. The power, greatness and uniqueness of a mitzva is often greatly undervalued. This is another idea that we have to instill in ourselves. When a person has an opportunity to do a mitzva, he should realize the importance of the mitzva and grab the chance to do it.

The Sefer HaChinuch, in describing the prohibition to place chametz on the altar, writes that the ideas behind all of the sacrifices is that it is as if the person is sacrificing his own flesh and blood and placing the animal or flour on the altar is a substitute for himself. When one places flour on the altar, it cannot be chametz. When one bakes bread, the dough takes a lot of time to rise. Matza, on the other hand, is made very quickly so that there is not sufficient time for the dough to rise. Therefore, Hashem forbids chametz on the altar so as to send us a message

that we should act quickly and avoid laziness. “Zerizus,” “zealousness,” is a virtuous character trait that we must all work hard to acquire. This world is a world of activity where we must constantly be actively involved in the performance of mitzvos. The mishna in Pirkei Avos says: “Do not say when I have time I will learn, perhaps you will not have the time.” Only quick action can be brought close to Hashem. He does not desire procrastination, nor for its symbol to be brought on His altar.

On Pesach, we remove all chametz from our house to remove the idea of laziness from our hearts. Hashem took us out of Egypt in order to be able to keep the Torah. We remind ourselves that we must use the time that we have in this world and not waste even a second. The Mishna in Pirkei Avos says: "The day is short, the work is abundant, the workers are lazy and the boss is demanding." There is a lot of work to be done and we have to use our time to accomplish. Even though the task is tremendous, another Mishna in Pirkei Avos says: "The work is not yours to complete, but you are not permitted to avoid it." We each have a responsibility to do our part in the greater task of the Jewish nation and we must do so zealously.

**אם עלה קרבנו מן הבקר זכר תמים יקריבנו אל פתח אהל מועד יקריב אתו לרצנו לפני ה'**  
**“If one's offering is an olah-offering from the cattle, he shall bring a perfect male; he shall bring it to the entrance of the Tent of Meeting, in accordance with his will, before Hashem” (1:3)**

Why are the laws of the olah enumerated first? The korban olah was brought as an atonement for evil thoughts. Since the thoughts always precede the actions, it is appropriate to discuss the korban that atones for thoughts first. The lesson of this idea is that we must recognize the direct connection between our minds and our actions. We have to guard our thoughts and what enters our minds. We have to understand that our thoughts have a direct influence on our actions.

Thus, our head is the most vulnerable part of our bodies. We must make a fence around our heads as we go through life in the modern-day society. We must take special measures to protect our heads, just as Yaakov Avinu did when he placed stones around his head, the only part of his body that he protected.

This is why Torah learning is so important. Chazal teach us, "Great is learning Torah for it brings to deed." The idea of learning Torah is to infuse ourselves with proper thoughts that will spur us to act properly. The more that we involve ourselves with holiness, the better our actions will be.

Baruch College/NYU Parsha Shiur  
Shiur given by Rabbi Mayer Friedman  
Written by Michael Gutmann