

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)

In the Ramban's introduction to Sefer Vayikra, he explains the content of the sefer. With the Mishkan now complete, the Divine Presence now rests among the Jewish people. However, when people sin, the Divine Presence will leave them. A קרבן is a way of earning atonement for sins and enabling the Divine Presence to remain. Therefore, the Torah deals with the laws of קרבנות immediately following the construction of the Mishkan. In fact, all of Sefer Vayikra is related to קרבנות. The Ramban writes that most of the other laws contained in the second half of the sefer are laws that require a person to bring קרבן, such as the laws of צרעת, a woman who gives birth, the laws of the festivals and the laws of Shabbos, which requires a קרבן of one who does work. All the laws included in this sefer revolve around the general theme of קרבנות.

R' Nissan Alpert writes that we learn an important foundation in Torah study from this Ramban. When a person studies a certain area in Torah, he has to broaden his studies and understand the subject completely by delving into related discussions. A person should have a desire to become knowledgeable in all aspects of Torah and not merely to focus on a limited group of subjects. We see this method of study in the flow of the gemara as well, where topics that are interconnected though not entirely related are always brought up in the discussion. The Torah teaches this by dealing with the subject of קרבנות on a broad level and including many different types of laws that relate to this topic in the one sefer.

ושחט אתו על ירך המזבח צפנה לפני ה' וזרקו בני אהרן הכהנים את דמו על
המזבח סביב

“He shall slaughter it at the northern side of the altar before Hashem; and the sons of Aharon the priest shall throw its blood on the altar all around” (1:11)

Why are קדשי קדשים slaughtered on the north side of the מזבח? The Midrash says that the ram which was substituted for Yitzchak Avinu at the Akeidah was also slaughtered on the north side of the מזבח. R' Pesach Tzvi Frank asks: Why do we commemorate the sacrifice of the ram rather than Yitzchak's willingness to submit himself, which took place on the מזבח itself? He quotes the Maharal Diskin, who says that the common practice in those days was to slaughter a sacrifice on the מזבח. But when Hashem told Avraham to take the ram instead, he did not want to take Yitzchak off the מזבח and replace him with the ram in case the ram would become invalidated and he would have to use Yitzchak as the sacrifice. Instead, he slaughtered the ram where it was, on the north side of the מזבח because he desired to perform Hashem's command in the best possible manner. By slaughtering his קרבן on the north side of the מזבח, a person expresses his commitment to follow the example of Avraham and follow Hashem's mitzvos in the best possible manner.

This is a lesson for us regarding all mitzvos that we do. We should strive to fulfill all mitzvos in the best way possible and that to be cognizant of this commitment whenever a mitzvah comes our way.

דבר אל בני ישראל לאמר נפש כי תחטא בשגגה מכל מצות ה' אשר לא תעשינה
ועשה מאחת מהנה

“Speak to the Children of Israel saying: When a person will sin unintentionally from among all the commandments of Hashem that may not be done, and he commits one of them” (4:2)

The Daas Zekainim points out that the Torah places the guilt for a sin on a person's נפש, his soul. The guilt is attributed to the soul and not the body because the soul is holy, a part of Hashem's Throne of Glory. This is similar to a civilian and a royal officer who commit the same sin and the king allows the civilian to go free while the officer will be punished. When the people question this, the king explains that the officer should know better because he has a close relationship with the king. Similarly, because the

soul is closer to Hashem, it is held accountable for wrongdoings and needs to find atonement. A person should recognize that he has this holiness within him and that he soils it when he sins. A person should remind himself that it is unbecoming for him to sin because he has such a holy entity contained within himself.

וְאִם נֶפֶשׁ אַחַת תַּחַטָּא בְּשִׁגְגָה מֵעַם הָאָרֶץ בַּעֲשֻׂתָהּ אַחַת מִמִּצְוֹת ה' אֲשֶׁר לֹא תַעֲשִׂינָהּ
וְאִשָּׁם

“If an individual person from among the people of the land shall sin unintentionally, by committing one of the commandments of Hashem that may not be done, and he becomes guilty” (4:27)

The Kli Yakar notes that when the Torah says that “a person sins,” it says “when a person sins.” However, when the subject is “one person,” then the posuk says “if one person sins.” What is the reason for this distinction? He answers that it is common for a person to sin if members of his community and the people with whom he associates commit the same sin. Because it is natural for this to happen, the Torah phrases it as “when” because it is likely to occur. However, it is not common for “one person” to sin in a way that nobody around him is doing and to act sinfully of his initiative. Therefore, the Torah refers to that situation as “if one person sins.”

The lesson we learn from this is that we see how much a person is affected by his community and by the people around him. It is common for a person to pick up bad deeds from those who he deals with all the time. A person must make sure that he surrounds himself with good people who will be a positive influence on him and that he lives in a community which will help him grow rather than pull him down.

*Parsha Shiur by Rabbi Mayer Friedman
Written by Michael Gutmann*