

Parsha Shiur by Rabbi Mayer Friedman

פרשת ויקרא

**דבר אל בני ישראל ואמרת להם 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 Or HaChaim asks: Why does the Torah use the words "dabeir" and "amarta," both of which mean the same thing, "to say"? He answers that there are two categories of sacrifices, voluntary and obligatory. "Dabeir," a harsher language, is the command regarding obligatory sacrifices. "Amarta," the softer language, refers to the voluntary sacrifices.

The posuk teaches that only behemos, domesticated animals, may be used as sacrifices but not chayos, wild animals. The Midrash brings three reasons why behemos were chosen for sacrifices. Behemos are domesticated and are easy to find. They are also generally chased while chayos are predatory and chasers. Thirdly, chayos are bold and brazen while behemos are not. The Ben Ish Chai says that this third reason is the most important of the three. In Yeshaya Perek 11, the prophet says that in the times of Moshiach the chayos will be tamed and will live in harmony with behemos and men. Yet, nevertheless, the sacrifices will only be brought from the behemos because, even though they will be commonplace and tranquil, the innate character deficiency of the chayos will still be there. The posuk in Tehillim 51 says that "a broken spirit is a sacrifice to Hashem." Only behemos may be used as sacrifices because they possess this quality of a lowly spirit.

R' Shlomo of Radomsk writes that when a person takes a simple animal and brings it as a korban, it becomes holy and its blood is sprinkled before Hashem. Certainly, if an animal can be transformed into an object of holiness, so too if a person accepts upon himself to become holy, he will be able to attain a special level with hard work and improvement. He will be able to achieve a level of sanctity just like the animal that is brought as a sacrifice. We learn from the laws of the sacrifices how much we are able to accomplish if we dedicate ourselves to a holy purpose.

**ושסע אתו בכנפיו לא יבדיל והקטיר אתו הכהן המזבחה על העצים אשר על האש עלה
הוא אשה ריח ניחח לה'**

“He shall split it - with its feathers - he need not sever it; the Kohen shall cause it to go up in smoke on the Altar, on the wood that is on the fire - it is a burnt-offering, a fire-offering, a satisfying aroma to Hashem” (1:17)

The Mishna in Menachos (110a) comments that the bird brought by the poor man and the bull brought by the rich man are both equally described as "a satisfying aroma to Hashem." This teaches us that whether one gives a lot or a little, as long as he has the right intentions and in his heart he wants to serve Hashem, it is pleasing to Him.

The Or HaChaim says that this Mishna answers a very important question. One could have asked that the Torah should have only mentioned the satisfying aroma with regards to the poor man's bird and we would understand that certainly this would be true for the rich man's animal. Based on this Mishna, we understand that a person should not say that while Hashem accepts the poor man's sacrifice, it is still not as special as an animal sacrifice. The Torah has to write both because they are on the same level. One cannot derive a "kal vachomer" from the bird to the animal because the bird is no less important than the animal. As long as a person does what he can according to his capabilities, it will find favor in Hashem's eyes.

כל המנחה אשר תקריבו לה' לא תעשה חמץ כי כל שאר וכל דבש לא תקטירו ממנו
אשה לה'

“Any meal-offering that you offer to Hashem shall not be prepared leavened, for you shall not cause to go up in smoke from any leavening or any honey as a fire-offering to Hashem” (2:11)

Why are chametz and honey not allowed to be brought on the altar? The Sefer HaChinuch writes that the reasons for these mitzvos are hidden and we do not understand them. He writes, however, that he undertook a commitment to explain mitzvos to young people that they should get a taste for mitzvos and they should want to do them. Therefore, he says, he made an attempt to find some form of an explanation for these commandments.

We learn a very important lesson from the Chinuch about how to be successful in training the children of our time. From the beginning of their study of Torah, they need to know that the mitzvos have reasons and that they serve a purpose. They need to realize that the Torah is not an impenetrable closed book that we cannot understand. If they do not recognize this, they will rebel and their talents and potential contributions to the Jewish people will be wasted. Every educator should see to it that he or she fulfills the words of the Chinuch. Children should be given reasons for mitzvos and should understand what they are doing. They need to feel a sweetness and a sense of purpose when learning Torah and doing mitzvos.

The Sefer HaChinuch goes on to write 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 as a substitute for himself. When one places flour on the altar, it should not be chametz. When one bakes bread, the dough takes a lot of time to rise. Matzah, 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.

One of the primary mitzvos of Pesach is to get rid of all our chametz. One of the reasons for this prohibition is that it is a symbolic act reminding us to banish all laziness and sluggishness from our lives. Instead, we should make sure to act with swiftness and zerizus to fulfill the will of Hashem. Not only is it important to remove chametz and eliminate sloth, it is also a mitzvah to eat matzah, bread that is baked in a hurry, and emphasize an eagerness in our fulfillment of mitzvos.

The Sefer HaChinuch further explains that honey symbolizes sweetness and foods that are unhealthy. Through this prohibition, Hashem reminds us to take care of our bodies and avoid the sweets, just as Hashem does on His altar.

The Baal HaTurim gives a different reason and writes that the honey is sweet, just as temptation and the evil inclination are sweet. Hashem, through this prohibition, directs us to avoid the sweet temptation of sin and do what is right.

Kesharim Baruch College/NYU Parsha Shiur

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