

Parshas Vayikra and Zachor

This week's Parsha is the first of the third book, Vayikra, as well as the additional portion that is read to remember to forget Amalek.

The book of Vayikra, and this parsha focuses on the rules of the Korbanos, and the work of the Kohanim. Although Kohanim have a specific role in the service to Hashem, they are the arbiters of service in the Beis Hamikdash (and before that the Mishkan), the whole book is also speaking to the rest of the Jews. There are obviously laws and rules to the service of the Kohanim that do not apply to Leviim and Yisraelim, but if there wasn't a more global application, the Torah wouldn't have spent so much time on it. Practially, the Korbanos and how to prepare them, and all the services in the Beis Hamikdash are also a result of the Korbanos required by the rest of the Jews. As well, practically, much of the pesukim also are the source for the status of Tuma and Tahara, and Kashrus, and have practical implications for all three sectors in the Jews.

The Alter Rebbe in a Ma'amer on the Parsha, focuses on the second posuk specifically the words: **דַּבֵּר אֶל־בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל וְאָמַרְתָּ אֲלֵהֶם אָדָם כִּי־יִקְרִיב מִכֶּם קָרְבָן לַיהוָה מִן־הַבְּהֵמָה מִן־הַבֶּקָר וּמִן־הַצֹּאן תִּקְרִיבוּ אֹת־קָרְבָנִים:**

The Alter Rebbe asks questions based on the verbiage and words used, specifically there are other more direct ways to state when a person brings a Korban. In the way it is written it translates "Speak to the children of Israel, and say to them, man who (will) bring, from you, a sacrifice to Hashem...." The wording is such that the

preparation is hidden, and singular, and the conclusion of the posuk is revealed and plural. And, the posuk should have stated, Adam Mikem Ki Yakriv, a person, from you who will bring a korban...

The Alter Rebbe in summary explains through deep Chassidic insight, that a physical Korban, is one manifestation of the posuk, but there is a spiritual, and metaphysical type of sacrifice that is required by us to Hashem.

Ibn Ezra, and other commentaries explain that the wording is interesting, and he explains (like Rashi) that the wording is to state that property that is stolen cannot be brought as a Korban. Sforno explains That the a person who brings a Korban must have humility before he is ready to have a Korban accepted by Hashem. One must work on their own haughtiness and spirit before they are ready to make an offering. The implications according to Chassidus to our times now (where don't physically have the opportunity to bring animal sacrifice) is to make sacrifices in other ways with our property, and our selves (as we say in Shema and you shall love Hashem with all your heart, with all your soul, and all your property). A Korban represents something deeper than the animal that is brought as an offering, it is a part of you that is brought to Hashem. In this way, the concept of Korbanos doesn't end, because there is no physical temple to bring an "offering". The Alter Rebbe explains that part our purpose on earth is to turn everything around us into something spiritual (Iskafya, Hisapcha).

The Gemara in Eruvin 69b on the first pesukim of the parsha explain that there are exclusions to those who can bring an offering (such as an apostate). This applies

to the physical animal that is brought. But in our times, even an apostate can so to speak bring a Korban, in that at any time the apostate truly asks for forgiveness and gives of themselves to draw G-dliness down into the world and bring their Neshama closer to Hashem. The Gemara in Chagiga in other places provides insight into instances where a Jew can do something profound, and be forgiven (Example Chagiga 5a, 5b, and the conclusion of Chagiga). In the conclusion of Chagiga, the final passage states that Afilu Poshei Yisrael Mileim Mitzvos K'Rimon. That even the sinners of the Jews are filled with Mitzvos like a pomegranate. Which means, that the opportunity to bring "sacrifices" to Hashem, is not (post Beis Hamikdash) limited to animals, but parts of ourselves. The gemara in Megila 8a explains on these pesukim about personal responsibility, which is concomitant with the Gemara in Pesachim 62a that a person themselves must bring the sacrifice, and one cannot appoint a messenger in their stead.

On a regular week, when just Parshas Vayikra is read, the haftora is read from Yishayahu chapter 43:21-44:23. In this part of Yishayahu, the Jews are being warned for their deviating from service to Hashem, but even still Hashem loves and chooses us, and that he forgives, and ultimately will rebuild the Beis Hamikdash. Yishayahu reminds the Jews of what Hashem did for the nation (overturning nature) to redeem them (i.e., splitting of the sea etc.).

Yishayahu says 44:1 that Hashem chose Yaakov (as opposed to anyone else- such as Eisav), which means that Hashem's commitment to us, regardless of our state remains close, and us, without the physical Beis Hamikdash, can and still remain close

to Hashem, just now, with a unique Avoda of "sacrifice".

In addition to the regular Parsha, we read the passage from Devarim about remembering to forget Amalek. The Haftora for that passage is from Shmuel 15:2-34 (for Ashkenazim and 15:1-34 for Sephardim).

The Haftora expounds on the three requirements of the nation when entering the land of Israel. 1) to appoint a king 2) destroy amalek 3) build the Beis Hamikdash. The simple connection therefore is to remind us of the destruction of Amalek. The Haftora also relates the 15:4 that to avoid counting Israel directly – sheep were a replacement. Using sheep as a method of census (versus a coin) compares as a practical implication of what a Korban is. It is a representation of our soul that is given to Hashem.

In all what we see, even today, Korbanos remain an important tenet of our faith, and our service to Hashem.

Good Shabbos