

VAYIKRA 5778

Parshas Vayikroh is an introduction to the entire topic of korbonos spread over the entire Sefer Vayikroh and contains most of the details about korbonos.

The parshah could have started as “Vayedaber Hashem el Moshe leimor”, but here, it made it very clear what kind of special command this is. It uses a term of endearment. But Moshe Rabbeinu is given a lot of details about a mitzvah that seems very foreign to many people.

Korbonos began with Odom Horishon. Right after he was created he took an ox and brought it as a korbon on Har Habayis—in the place he was created. The Rambam writes that there is an undisputable mesorah that the place where Dovid Hamelech built a mizbeach was the place of the Akeidoh, and the place where Noach and Kayin and Hevel and Odom all brought korbonos. It was the place where Hashem took the earth to make Odom, and he brought a korbon on that very spot so that it will be a kapporoh for him. Korbonos have their source in the original relationship between Hashem and the human being. The moment Odom realized he was created from earth, he knew intuitively it is appropriate that he bring a korbon on that spot.

Korbonos form a major part of the Torah and go all the way back to pre-avodo zero, pre-cheit Odom Horishon history.

The Rambam considers it among the chukim in Hilchos Me’ilah. What this means is that every mitzvah has the capacity among other things to benefit us in this world. When we don’t understand this benefit we call it a chok. But, there are other aspects of this mitzvah.

Every mitzvah is multi-dimensional. It is part of darkei avodo which elevates our neshomo and also has a positive impact on us in this world. It isn’t always clear how every mitzvah benefits us. But Odom Horishon wasn’t bringing a korbon for pragmatic reasons. Whenever people achieve something significant, they bring a korbon. It is intuitive. Kayin and Hevel brought a korbon after they established a way of earning a parnassah. When Noach and his family were saved, he brought a korbon.

Why?

A person has a deep desire to devote a part of himself and to show that he wants to give something back to Hashem.

What is the difference between Kayin’s korbon and Hevel’s korbon? Kayin took some of his fruits—the inferior ones. He knew he was supposed to bring a korbon out of gratitude, but he did it begrudgingly. Hevel heivi gam hu—Hevel brought a part of himself, so he brought the best.

Avrohom Ovinu is about to slaughter Yitzchok and the angel stays his hand. When he was told to do it initially, he didn’t have to ask what it was for. He didn’t hesitate. He understood what a korbon represents—sacrifice—and he is being asked to make

the ultimate sacrifice. And instead, he brought a ram. What is happening?

Avrohom understands that he has to give up the most valuable thing. When you are an eved Hashem, nothing can be too valuable that it can’t be given up for Hashem. The Rambam says the Torah is raising Avrohom as an example of how much a person has to give up for Hashem when He demands it. He has to be willing to give up everything.

There can be nothing more valuable to a person than Yitzchok was to Avrohom. No-one could have been loved and cherished more by a father—this son is what he was waiting for and what he invested in for his entire life. Hashem now asks: you have to choose between that long-awaited son and Hashem. Avrohom answers that he chooses Hashem.

He is there at Har Habayis waiting to do the Akeidoh, and Hashem says no at the last minute. So Avrohom takes a ram and shows he was really willing to give up everything when Hashem asked him to.

A person wants to show devotion and give. It is a natural part of his essence.

Right after Odom is created, he becomes aware of who he is and what Hashem has done to bring everything into existence. He wants to express his willingness to give it all back. Since Hashem created him to live, Odom gives a substitute instead.

When Noach comes out of the Teivoh he sees he is the only one Hashem chose to save. He wants to reciprocate the tremendous chessed and show his devotion; to show his willingness to give something back—as a substitute for himself.

A korbon chattos is offered as a substitute for the sinner himself. The gemara in Sanhedrin says every aveiroh really deserves capital punishment. Why? Because Hashem, the Creator of the universe, told you to do something, and you defy it? Every aveiroh is a rebellion against Hashem, and every shogeg shows you didn’t really care enough to take the right precautions not to violate the command of Hashem. For that, you should also be chayav misoh.

Hashem did us a chessed by allowing a kapporoh instead of taking your life. If it was intentional, a person gets malkos instead. If you were a shogeg, it really should be you on the mizbeach being slaughtered. But Hashem accepts a substitute.

Hevel brought a korbon to show that everything he achieved really belongs to Hashem. A part of what I achieved is given back as a token. It is a part of himself.

There is a korbon oloh—everything goes up to be burned.

Other korbonos are shared with kohanim and shared with the owners.

When bringing an oloh and chattas, the owner puts his hand

on the animal and says vidui. Why? He is saying this is my substitute—my kapporoh. This is the concept of a kapporoh—because really, I deserve to die, but instead, this animal will die. This is one type of korbon.

Todah and Pesach are unique types of shlomim.

When a person confronts Hashem, sometimes it is in recognition that you deserve to die and Hashem shows mercy. Other times you don't say vidui, you say Hallel—you are thanking Hashem for everything you received from him.

When a non-Jew wants to thank Hashem, he has to bring an oloh. For a Jew, he brings a shlomim. Because Hashem knows a Jew can serve Him in an integrated way, where body and neshomo come together for a higher purpose.

We say Hallel and declare that we use the pleasures in this world as a part of avodoh. I eat a meal in the way that elevates my body and my baser drives. This is the biggest token of thanks to Hashem.

A Todah is different. One has to eat a tremendous amount of food in a short amount of time. This forces him to invite many other people and explain to them all the chessed he received from Hashem.

Pesach must be eaten in even less time, and again with groups of people. It has aspects of a korbon tzibbur—eating together and saying Hallel together—recognizing that Hashem took us out of Egypt to become a unique people. Through eating the korbon Pesach we explain our national existence and how we

are fulfilling this national purpose together.

A korbon expresses a lot of ideas. It is a derech avodoh, expressing our deep relationship with Hashem. He is owed everything. He doesn't ask for everything but I want to show that I am willing to give up everything he has given me.

The Yerushalmi Brochos resolves an apparent conflict between Hashem and human beings: who does the world belong to? The answer is that before we make the brocho it belongs to Hashem. After the brocho—after we recognize that it all belongs to Hashem and He allows us to use it with the right conditions—then we can enjoy this world. We first have to recognize everything comes from Hashem. We have no right to use it selfishly and abuse it in the way that debases us and distances us from Him.

This is the idea behind korbonos, and it has to filter down to everything we have in life. We give ma'aser as a statement that Hashem gives us everything and we give away part of it as a token to show we are willing to give it all back. We deserve nothing.

There are different ways to do avodas Hashem—tefillah is one of them, but yiddishkeit is a religion of action. The ultimate action is giving a korbon—it is a powerful symbolic gesture—acting out the deep feeling that my life, and everything I have, is His.

This is the theme that goes through the next few weeks about korbonos and the Yom Tov of Pesach as well.