

Vayikra 2017

1.

Starting from Vayikra

It used to be customary to teach children sefer Vayikra prior to any other area of Torah. This custom has very early roots and this custom is even related in the Midrash Raba (7, 3). The aforementioned Medrash asks, 'why do the children start their learning from safer Vayikra as opposed to sefer Berashis (which is seemingly more logical since sefer Berashis precedes safer Vayikra)? Rabbi Asi answers: the pure (children) should come and deal with that which is pure (the korbanos). The children are pure without sins.

Seemingly it would be more logical for children not to begin learning from sefer Vayikra for numerous reasons. Why should they begin learning something so unrelatable and inapplicable? Since it is so irrelevant, many find learning about korbanos boring. The Chafetz Chaim writes in his introduction to Mishna Berurah that learning all of the Shulchan Aruch is important. But the section Orach Chaim is the most important to learn first because it is the most applicable.

Rabbi Shimshon Pinkes answers this by means of an analogy to a car. Someone purchased a new car. He didn't know why it stopped working. He was very upset and went to the seller to complain. The seller asked him if he put more gas in the car. He responded what is gas. The seller told him that the lack of gas was the problem and that he wasn't at fault what so ever. The seller told him 'don't worry about the details of what gas is right now. First just get the gas in the car.' He went to the gas station to fill his car up with gas. As he was about to fill his car with gas he smelt the smell of it. He said I'm not going to put this smelly and dirty water into my new car. **This new owner doesn't know anything about cars. He should have listened to those who have more experience than he.** Hashem understands the depth of our souls. Hashem made our souls holy and pure. Our souls will function properly and go in the proper path if we learn and perform mitzvos. The Rambam (Shemoni Perakim) learns ways that we can spiritually heal ourselves from ways that we can physically heal ourselves. For example, someone who goes to the doctor because of a wound that has a discharge emanating from it. He asks the doctor to provide some sort of cream which will heal the wound. The doctor responds that the main wound is internal and you must take antibiotics. **The patient doesn't completely understand the doctor's instructions but nevertheless listens. We don't necessarily understand why children start from the beginning of sefer Vayikra, but we must nevertheless listen.**

We don't know how the Torah fights the yeitzer hara, but it does. The Gemara in Kiddushin (30b) relates that Hashem created the yeitzer hara and the antidote/spice to cure the yeitzer hara; Torah. Rabbi Pinkes (Tiferes Shimshon pages 12-13) adds that we should not handcuff a child who can't sit still to a chair. This will only temporarily solve the problem. The way to permanently solve the problem is by healing his soul. Teach him Torah.

We also don't know how teaching someone about the creation of the world makes him more religious. How does this prevent us from getting angry and not stealing? How does learning about Yosef and his brothers prevent us from getting jealous? How does hearing the Shofer prevent us from getting angry? How does eating matzah help our minds? We don't know,

but we know it works. The Torah and mitzvos go straight into our blood and internally heal us.

2.

What is the reason for bringing korbanos?

What is the reason for bringing korbanos? The Ibn Ezra (1, 1) offers four reasons. Firstly; the **korbanos atone for sins that we violated**. Another reason is it's like ruach hakodesh, the korbanos can foretell the future. The Kuzari (3, 53) says that **when one properly brings a korban he will have truthful dreams**. The Kol Yehuda explains that this person will have **ruach hakodesh or prophecy**. The Ibn Ezra suggests a third reason. **When one brings a korban he will understand the secrets of nature**. How does bringing a korban help one better understand nature? By slaughtering an animal one will learn more about animal's bodies and most likely be more interested in nature. The Ibn Ezra suggests a fourth reason. Many korbanos are given to the Kohanim and Leviyim. The **korbanos thus financially support the Kohanim**.

(e) The Ramban (1, 9) says the reason for bringing korbanos is an explicate pasuk. The pasuk (1, 9) says that **korbanos are "a satisfying aroma to Hashem."**

(f) The Ramban (Moreh Nevuchim 3, 46) says we bring korbanos because the Egyptians worshiped animals. **We therefore sacrifice these animals in order to demonstrate that what they think is such a big sin, slaughtering them, is really a mitzvah. We want to show them that they are animals, not gods.**

The Ramban disagrees and says that we wouldn't be commanded to do something just in order to teach others a lesson and disprove them. Rather explains the Ramban, we bring korbanos because of the reason related in the pasuk because the korbanos are "a satisfying aroma to Hashem." The Ritva (sefer Hazecaron) defends the Ramban. The Ramban never meant that we bring korbanos because other nations think that these animals are gods. Rather, (g) **we bring korbanos because some Jews think that these animals are gods**. The Ritva offers a proof from another Ramban (Moreh Nevuchim 3, 32). The Ramban says that when the Jews were in Egypt they incorrectly brought korbanos and worshiped idolatry. In order to offset this false perception we are commanded to bring korbanos to Hashem. The Ramban continues to question the Ramban. Seemingly bringing korbanos is beneficial to the Egyptians. If the korbanos will not be consumed (some korbanos aren't) then this will help their gods. The Egyptians themselves do this. The Kesef Mesukak answers this question and defends the Ramban. Since it is the norm for these Egyptians to sacrifice animals in an idolatrous manner, we are therefore commanded to do the opposite; bring korbanos to Hashem, for the right reason. When these korbanos are offered for the right reason, then it will not help their idolatry. The Ramban continues to question the Ramban. When Noach and his three children exited the teivah there were not any Egyptians. He still brought a korban (Berashis 8, 21). Hashem liked this korban and decided not to curse mankind anymore. Hevel also brought a korban that Hashem liked (Berashis 4, 4). Bilaam also (Bamidbar 23, 4) built alters and brought korbanos. The Ramban concludes and says it can't be that they brought korbanos to change the bad beliefs of the other nations. **Rather, (h) they brought korbanos in order to get closer to Hashem**. Bilaam brought a korban in order to get closer to Hashem. The word קרבן means close. They wanted to get closer to Hashem. The Ritva yet again defends the Ramban. By Noach the pasuk says that the korban was a good aroma. Meaning, Noach brought the korban differently than others. The other people brought their

korbanos in an idolatrous manner, unlike Noach. The Ramban offer another answer. (i) We act based on three factors: the way we think, speak and act. Semicha, leaning on the animal corresponds to act. Our verbal confession corresponds to speech. Burning the innards corresponds to our thoughts and desires. **When we bring the korban we must think that we should be instead of the korban. Our blood should be instead of the blood of the animal. It is only because of Hashem's compassion that we are able to bring the korban instead of ourselves.** (This answer is similar to the first answer of the Ibn Ezra (1, 1) who said the korbanos atone for sins that we violated. The Ramban essentially elaborates on this reason.)
 (j) **We bring korbanos for kabalistic reasons.**

The Chinuch (mitzvah 95) says similar to the Ramban and the Ibn Ezra. Many times our heart follows our actions. Therefore when one sins it is not enough to verbally apologize and confess our sin, rather, we must go through a whole process. We must take our animals from our pens and burden ourselves to bring the korban to the Kohen. This long process will prevent us from sinning in the future.

The Meshech Chachma tries to make peace between the Rambam and the Ramban. He says that the Rambam is referring to the korbanos sacrificed on a bama (portable altar outside of the Beis Hamikdash.) Since the korbanos are publically offered, therefore, they will offset the idolatry. The Ramban is referring to korbanos in the Beis Hamikdash itself. These korbanos will atone for our sins.

(k) According to my humble opinion one could offer another answer based on a fundamental philosophical machlokes. We believe in mixing physical with spiritual unlike other nations who believe in complete separation between the two. This is why some of them think it is holy to remain single. We do not believe this. On the contrary, getting married elevates us and is very holy. The physical turns into spiritual. Even though seemingly getting married and having relations is the most mundane act, nevertheless it isn't. This is holy when done properly. If the parents daven that their children should be God fearing and talmedai chachamim and the wife goes to the mikvah etc. then this is very holy. The Mishna in Avos (2, 17) says let all your deeds be for the sake of heaven (כל מעשיך יהיו לשם שמים). Even optional matters that we do can be a mitzvah. For example, if we eat in order to serve Hashem better than this eating is a mitzvah. (See Rabbeinu Yona ibid and Shulchan Aruch (231). This is what קידוש on Shabbos and Yuntif tries to accomplish. We take the physical meal and try to uplift it by making it spiritual. **Perhaps this is the explanation of the korbanos. We take something which is so physical and try to uplift it in order to make it spiritual. These korbanos represent our ability to take something so physical and make it spiritual.**