

בס"ד

THE RASHI OF THE WEEK

Week of

Parshas Vayikroh

7 Nissan, 5785 – April 5, 2025

Compiled from the works of
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The Lubavitcher Rebbe

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**An Outline of the Rebbe's Explanation of Rashi
Parshas Vayikroh**

Likkutei Sichos Volume 17, Pages 9 – 16

Rashi in His Own Words

ויקרא א' - ב': דבר אל בני ישראל ואמרת אליהם אדם כי יקריב מכם קרבן לה' מן הבהמה מן הבקר ומן הצאן תקריבו את קרבנכם:
רש"י ד"ה אדם כי יקריב מכם: כשיקריב, בקרבנות נדבה דבר הענין:

Vayikroh 1:2: Speak to the Jewish Nation and say, "When a man from among you brings a sacrifice to the Lord from animals, from cattle or the flock, you shall bring your sacrifice.

Rashi Heading – When a man from among you brings a sacrifice: *when* he brings. The Torah discusses voluntary sacrifices¹.

Synopsis

This week's Torah portion, Vayikroh, begins by explaining the various sacrifices brought in the Tabernacle (and later in the Temple). Rashi explains that the first sacrifices that the Torah discusses are free-will offerings; it discusses obligatory sacrifices later. Rashi derives this from the fact that the Torah starts by saying, "*When* a man among you brings a sacrifice." The word "when" implies that he was not obligated to do so.

Rashi demonstrates that this is the case based on the wording of the verse. However, the beginning student still cannot understand *why* this is so. One would think that the Torah would first teach us the laws of obligatory sacrifices. We have noted many times that Rashi explains everything we cannot understand, according to Peshat. The fact that he does not explain this means one of two things. Either this is not a difficulty, or if it *is* a difficulty, Rashi explained it earlier.

The answer to this question will become apparent after posing yet another question. Why does the Torah begin the laws of sacrifices with individual offerings? One would think that the Torah should have first taught about communal offerings, those that are brought on behalf of the entire Jewish Nation. The Torah begins with offerings for individuals rather than the community. Furthermore, it starts with optional rather than obligatory offerings. Why is this so?

The Torah is preparing us for the grand day of the actual inauguration of the Tabernacle. Everything was in place. The Kohanim and the Levi'im were ready, and all the Jews were ready. G-d's presence rested on the Mishkan – Tabernacle. It was unlikely for there to be a need to bring obligatory offerings, which were most often

1. The Torah is not dealing with an obligatory sacrifice. Had that been the case, the verse would have said, "a man from among you *will* bring a sacrifice." From the fact that the Torah says "*when* a man from among you brings ..." Rashi concludes that he *decides* to bring an offering, i.e. that we are dealing with a voluntary offering.

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brought for sins. The Divine revelation that all Jews witnessed at the Tabernacle made it unlikely that anyone would sin. However, each Jew who had donated so generously for the Sanctuary's construction was prepared to be generous in bringing voluntary sacrifices.

Rashi's Explanation

This week, we begin studying and reading Vayikroh, the third book of the Torah. In the Torah's second book, Shemos, we learned of the Jew's servitude in Egypt. We read how Hashem miraculously freed the Jews to give them the Torah seven weeks later. The book concluded with G-d's command to build a Sanctuary for Him in the wilderness. The Torah taught each detail regarding each part of this Tabernacle. At this point, our current book continues to teach us about the many sacrifices and offerings we would bring to the Sanctuary.

After telling us that Hashem called to Moshe, the Torah tells us that He told Moshe² to "Speak to the Jewish Nation and say to them, 'When a man from among you brings a sacrifice to the Lord; from animals, from cattle or the flock you shall bring your sacrifice.'" Rashi cites the words "when a man from among you brings a sacrifice" and explains that "voluntary sacrifices is the concept which is under discussion." In other words, Rashi clarifies that the Torah begins teaching the laws of voluntary offerings.

Difficulties in Understanding Rashi

While we see from Rashi that the Torah begins this book³ with the laws of voluntary sacrifices, *why* the Torah does so is unclear. It would seem logical for the Torah first to teach us obligatory offerings. This question appears to be noticeable, and even a young child would ask this question. We have often stated that Rashi answers every question a beginner might not understand. There are two possibilities when we encounter an apparent difficulty that Rashi does not explain. Either, the truth is there is no question at all. The other is that Rashi answered it earlier⁴. We need to understand which of the two is true in our case.

The Explanation

To answer this question, we must answer another question. This Torah portion (continuing into the beginning of next week's portion) does discuss voluntary sacrifices. However, it discusses only individual offerings rather than those brought on behalf of the entire Jewish community. One would think that the laws of the sacrifices should begin with those we bring on behalf of all Jews. This should be followed by offerings that

2. Our Parshah, Vayikroh 1:2.

3. The Book of Vayikroh is often referred to by the Sages as Toras Kohanim, meaning the laws regarding priestly matters. That is because this book is primarily dedicated to sacrificial law.

4. As stated in the text this point has been discussed many times. For example, see Likkutei Sichos Volume 16, Page 458 in the footnotes.

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individuals are required to offer. Following that, it would seem logical to discuss the offerings that individuals bring as donations.

During the days of preparation for using the Tabernacle, Moshe himself served as Kohen Gadol – High Priest. Even on the final day of the inauguration, Moshe continued to serve as High Priest when the Sanctuary was finally put into service⁵. Moshe had learned all of these laws directly from G-d. He knew how to offer the required communal offerings. The Jewish people, however, were anxious to begin using the Mishkan. The majority of obligatory offerings are brought to atone for sins. It would be difficult to fathom that during such an auspicious time as the dedication of the Sanctuary, any individual would need to bring such an offering. This certainly could not have been the case on the eighth and final day when the Tabernacle was erected to serve its true purpose. At that time, Hashem's presence rested upon the Mishkan⁶! This served as "testimony for the Jews that Hashem had forgiven them for the sin of the golden calf⁷." At this point, the Jews who had donated so generously for the building of the Tabernacle were anxious to finally present offerings with the same generosity. That is why the Torah begins discussing free-will offerings, which the people bring to thank Hashem.

A Deeper Lesson from Rashi

There is a deeper reason that the Torah begins teaching us the details of sacrifices (primarily) by telling us the laws of optional offerings. Why does the Torah start by teaching us the rules of one who *donates* a sacrifice? It would seem more appropriate to begin with the law of obligatory sacrifices.

The main point of an offering is not the sacrifice itself. It is not the animal, the grain, or the wine brought together with the animal. Instead, it is the intent and thought that goes into the offering. This is in keeping with the words of the Sages⁸. "Regardless of whether one gives much or little (it is equally pleasing to Hashem), provided that he directs his heart to Heaven." The same is true of mandatory sacrifices, which are brought to atone for sin. The atonement is brought about by the thought that goes into the sacrifice. That plays a more significant role than the actual animal and that which accompanies it. The Ramban writes⁹ that the one bringing the offering must consider that "he has sinned to G-d with both his body and soul. If not for Hashem's kindness, it would be fitting that *the individual's* blood is sprinkled on the altar and that *his* body is offered." We see that the power of a sacrifice to atone is derived from the person's feelings and thoughts, not solely from the fact that he brought an offering.

5. See Rashi's comments to Parshas Pekudei, Shemos 40:29. After that point Aharon took over and served in his appointed position.

6. Parshas Pekudei, Shemos 40:34.

7. See Rashi's comments at the beginning of the Torah portion of Pekudei.

8. See the end of Talmud Menochos. See also Rashi's comments to our Parshah, Vayikroh 1:17 and 2:1.

9. See his commentary to our Parshah, Vayikroh 1:9. Other commentaries also offer the same explanation.

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The root of the Hebrew word for a sacrifice, "Korbon – קרבן," is related to the word "Kiruv – קירוב," which means drawing close. The idea of a sacrifice is to bring one's abilities and senses closer to Hashem¹⁰.

Based on the above, we remain with what appears to be a difficulty. The Torah gives us countless details about the physical requirements for sacrifices and all that accompanies them. However, it seems to skip over the essential aspect of an offering, and it hardly tells us a word about the intentions and thoughts that must accompany each offering! The Torah seems to offer only one word in this regard; it tells us that one must bring the sacrifice "willingly"¹¹.

To teach us this all-important factor, the Torah begins the laws of sacrifices by telling us of free-will offerings. It first tells us of those offerings that one brings from the generosity of his *heart*. It does so to let us know that the heart is the introduction to all of the sacrifices.

That also explains why Rashi writes, "Voluntary sacrifices are the *concept* the Torah is discussing here." Why does Rashi use the term concept? Why does he not say, "The Torah is discussing voluntary sacrifices here?" To teach us that the *entire concept* of sacrifices is that they are voluntary. One must give a sacrifice wholeheartedly, and the primary factor of every sacrifice is the generosity and intention of the heart.

The goodwill and the heart of each Jew are understood. Because each Jew has a Divine soul, which is a veritable part of Hashem¹², he wants to come closer (Korbon - קרבן) to G-d from the depths of his soul. This is true even when it does not appear to be the case superficially.

That is why the Torah contains no command to offer a sacrifice with one's heart's proper intention. Rashi is simply stating a fact. "A voluntary sacrifice is the concept which is under discussion." No matter what sort of sacrifice it may be, the truth is that its essence is *voluntary*. The Jew brings the offering from the depth of his heart. Granted, it is more *evident* that it is from one's heart if it is a voluntary offering. However, any sacrifice comes from the depths of a Jew's soul.

That is also why the Torah uses the word "man" when referring to the Jewish people. The Torah says, "When a *man* from among you brings a sacrifice to the Lord." The Hebrew word for man (which the Torah uses here) is "Adam - אדם." The term Adam is related to the verse¹³ "I will liken myself (אדמה) which is related to אדם) to the 'Most High,' i.e., Hashem" The Divine soul of a Jew, which, as previously mentioned, is a part of Hashem, is likened to the "Supernal Man."

10. See Sefer Habahir, Chapter 46. See also Zohar Section III, Page 5, a. This is also found in Sheloh Tractate Taanis, Page 211, Side b, and in Pri Eitz Chaim, The Gate of Tefillah Chapter 5.

11. Our Parshah, Vayikroh 1:3.

12. See Tanya, the beginning of Chapter 2.

13. Yeshaya 14:14.

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Hence, we begin the third book of the Torah, knowing that each Jew is a part of Hashem. The actual will of every Jew is to do what G-d wants, and any appearance to the contrary is simply because his evil inclination coerced him.

(Adapted from a talk given on Shabbos Parshas Vayikroh, 5732 and 5733)

I hope you gained as much by reading this as I did by translating and adapting it.

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