

Parshas Vayikra – Shemaya Ormonde *(reprint)*

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This week we merit to start Sefer Vayikra. Of all the 5 books of the Torah, Sefer Vayikra is the most difficult for us to appreciate and understand. We live in an era without Korbonos and we are bereft of our Holy Temple. However we know that the Torah is eternal and is meaningful to us even if the ideas may at first sight seem foreign. In fact hidden within the first Rashi of the Sedra is perhaps one of the most important lessons we can ever learn.

Rashi teaches us that when Hashem spoke to Moshe, He always preceded the prophecy with a calling. This calling was an expression of the great love Hashem shows His people. Although this message is very uplifting for us and helps us to understand the special connection we have with Hashem why are we taught this lesson at the beginning of this Sefer. Hashem had been speaking to Moshe long before this prophecy. Presumably before each of his prophecies in Sefer Shemos, Hashem called out to Moshe. In fact, this is the place you would least expect to learn the lesson of Hashem's deep love for us as the majority of sacrifices in Sefer Vayikra deal with a sinner moving through a process of atonement. A sinner seems to be the one person to whom Hashem will not desire to display His great love. Rashi also tells us that this expression of Vayikra belongs to the realm of angels. It is incumbent upon us to try to understand the depth of this statement.

In order to understand this Rashi we must try and understand the level of angels. Angels are totally attached to Hashem and are totally committed to carrying out God's will. This is the reason why Hashem's name appears as a suffix at the end of each angel's name eg Michael. The angels are totally committed and attached to G-d and give themselves over to Him fully. This means that they attach G-d's name to their own. Since they are connected to G-d totally and absolutely this means they are eternal and will never lose their special connection.

The message Rashi is teaching us is that just as the angels connection to G-d is eternal so is the bond between Hashem and Klal Yisrael. Sefer Vayikra is about attaining this permanence in our relationship with Hashem. In Sefer Shemos we were put on the path of Torah and Mitzvos whilst in Sefer Vayikra we make this level everlasting and permanent. Our relationship with Hashem will last forever and will never be extinguished. Angels will forever be on the level of the special love connoted by Vayikra. Man on the other hand needs a way whereby if they sin they can again merit Hashem's special love once more. This is the secret of the sacrifices that gives man atonement. Sefer Vayikra and its sacrifices allow the special bond between Hashem and His people to last forever and never break. Since Sefer Vayikra allows us to reach the level to merit Hashem's love it is certainly the most fitting place for Hashem to reveal to us the special love shown to the Jewish people before each and every prophecy.

In the dayainu we will recite in just a couple of weeks time, the last and greatest kindness we are obligated to thank Hashem for is the Beis Hamikdash and the ability to attain atonement. This ability to achieve atonement means that however low we sink Hashem will never forsake us and we will forever remain on the level of angels - eternal and forever connected to G-d. May we internalize this message on our journey through the Sefer and may it be Hashem's will that this love will be openly revealed for all to see.