



PARSHAS VAYIKRA – MR ELI FRIEDWALD

Sefer Vayikra is centred on the details of the *korbonos*. Despite our deep conviction that the *avoda* in the *Beis Hamikdash* was *Hashem's* will, it is difficult for the modern mind to identify with the concept of animal sacrifice, as a means of serving *Hashem* or atoning for sins. Indeed, the Rambam famously suggests in his *Moreh Nevuchim*, that the ritual of sacrifices is *bedieved* and was instituted only in order to wean Israel away from idolatry which is why the animals slaughtered for *korbonos* were sheep, goats and cattle, as precisely these animals were thought to be gods by different nations, in ancient times. Yet the same Rambam in the *Mishneh Torah*, takes a diametrically opposite stance and states that *korbonos* are a *chok*; the entire world continues to exist only because of the merits of the *korbonos*. Certainly the latter view of the *Rambam* is accepted by most *rishonim*, in particular the *Ramban*, who strongly attacks the *bedieved* view expressed in the *Moreh*.

More particularly, it is interesting to see the insights of the *meforshim* into specific *korbonos*. For example, the *korbon chatas* was brought by individuals who committed certain grave sins through negligence. *Ramban* explains that sins committed negligently blemish the soul and distance the sinner from *Hashem*. The *chatas* offering enables the sinner to draw closer to *Hashem* and thereby to remove the soul's blemish (for this reason, the Torah uses the expression '*nefesh ki sechteh*').

The *Sefer Hachinuch*, in contrast to *Ramban*, suggests that sacrifices were intended as an educational and corrective act, which is effective only for sins of negligence. Since one's heart is drawn after one's actions, repentance from a sinful act can only be achieved by further actions. He must take a sacrifice from his flock, bring it to the Temple, perform *semicha* and *vidui* and all the other rules pertaining to the sacrifice.

Abarbanel has a different view. He suggests that the *chatas* offering is a punishment, through the monetary loss which it entails for the negligent sinner. The cost of the *korbon* animal will make an impact on the sinner and deter him from repeating his error.

Other commentators suggest that the *chatas* offering is required for a negligent sin, to overcome the sinner's presumption that he has not really done anything wrong, since his violation was not a deliberate one. The requirement for a *korbon* with all its attendant rules, clearly indicates otherwise. This idea is in line with a famous *chiddush* of the *Lubavitcher Rebbe*, who explains why it is that the *asham talui* – the *korbon* animal prescribed for one who transgresses a doubtful violation (*safek issur*), is more costly than the one prescribed for a *chatas* offering in respect of a definite violation (*vadai issur*). The doubtful sinner is likely to feel less pangs of conscience than the definite sinner (he will convince himself that he did nothing wrong) and therefore the Torah requires a heavier *tikkun* from him.

The insights of the *mefarshim* into the reasons behind *korbonos* provide a wealth of wisdom and mussar to this otherwise technically detailed topic.

This article is dedicated in honour of the recent birth of our new granddaughter. May Basya Malka bring much joy and *nachas* to her dear parents and to all her family.