



# Likkutei Sichos

Volume 17 | Vayikra | Sichah 2

## Heartfelt Intent

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## 1.

### A POINT OF ORDER

The order of the sacrifices whose laws are written in our *parshah* begins with the *olah*,<sup>1</sup> the *minchah*,<sup>2</sup> and the *shelamim*,<sup>3</sup> which are all **voluntary** offerings. Right at the beginning of our *parshah*, on the clause,<sup>4</sup> “When a man among you brings an offering,” Rashi explains: “*When he brings* — Scripture here is speaking of voluntary offerings.” Afterward — the Torah describes the *chatas*<sup>5</sup> and *asham*, which are **obligatory** offerings.

We need to clarify: It is true that *Rashi* is compelled to say, based on the wording of the verse, that “Scripture here is speaking of voluntary offerings.” However, we can ask regarding the verse itself: Why does the Torah begin {its discussion of the sacrifices} with voluntary offerings? It would seem to make more sense to first know the laws of the obligatory offerings that a Jew **must** bring, and only then, the laws of the **voluntary** offerings.

Since this is a difficulty related to the **simple meaning**<sup>6</sup> {*pshat*} of the verse, Rashi should have addressed it. We must say that {since Rashi does not address this matter} this issue does not actually present a difficulty in *pshat*. (Alternatively, this difficulty is real but can be resolved by applying an earlier interpretation of Rashi’s.)<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> {Commonly translated as “an elevation offering,” it was consumed completely on the altar.}

<sup>2</sup> {Commonly translated as “a meal offering,” its primary ingredient was grain.}

<sup>3</sup> {Commonly translated as “a peace offering,” portions were eaten by the *kohanim* and by the owners.}

<sup>4</sup> Rashi’s commentary on *Vayikra* 1:2.

<sup>5</sup> {Often translated as “a sin offering,” it was brought for the violation of specific sins.}

<sup>6</sup> {*Pshuto shel Mikra*, in the original Hebrew. Rashi writes in his commentary to *Bereishis* 3:8: “I have come only to explain the plain meaning of the Torah.” Rashi’s approach is to address all difficulties in understanding *pshat*.}

<sup>7</sup> {This is a general rule in Rashi’s commentary. Rashi will rely on an earlier interpretation from a previous verse to understand a difficulty in a later verse and will not repeat the interpretation.}

## 2.

### A REBUFFED EXPLANATION

We may possibly resolve this question (albeit with difficulty) based on **Rashi's interpretation** of the verse {referring to the *olah*},<sup>8</sup> “It shall become acceptable for him, to atone for him.” {Rashi comments:} “*It shall become acceptable for him* — What does the offering make acceptable? {His failure to perform} an *asei*<sup>9</sup> or a *lav shenitak le'asei*.”<sup>10</sup> Meaning, an *olah* is a voluntary offering which a person is not **obligated** to bring. However, this offering “makes acceptable” and removes the person's liability for punishment. Consequently, the *olah* offering is also related to an “obligation.”

This explains the order — first the *olah*, followed by the *chatas*, and afterward the *asham*. A Jew would more likely, Heaven forbid, transgress a minor transgression, obligating him to bring an *olah*, which atones for {the transgression of} an *asei* and a *lav shenitak le'asei*, than for a person to violate a more **severe** transgression, obligating him to bring a *chatas*, which atones for violating a prohibition that is punishable by *kares*<sup>11</sup>. Nonetheless, a *chatas* precedes an *asham* because a *chatas* is brought to atone for considerably more transgressions than an *asham*, which is brought only to atone for **specific** transgressions.<sup>12</sup>

However, this explanation does not bear scrutiny. If the Torah introduced the *olah* offering first (**not** because it is a voluntary offering, rather) because of its similarity to obligatory sacrifices (it atones, etc., for violating an *asai*, etc.), how does it make sense to interject (between the *olah* and *chatas*) with the other voluntary offerings — the *minchah* and *shelamim* {which are totally *unrelated* to obligatory sacrifices}?

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<sup>8</sup> *Vayikra* 1:4.

<sup>9</sup> {A positive commandment.}

<sup>10</sup> {A negative commandment that is commuted to a positive commandment.}

<sup>11</sup> {According to Rashi, this refers to the premature death of the sinner and his offspring (Rashi on *Bereishis* 17:14).}

<sup>12</sup> {Thus, making it more likely for a person to bring a *chatas* offering. According to our line of reasoning, this places the *chatas* offering before the *asham* offering.}

We are forced to say that the Torah wishes to introduce voluntary sacrifices before obligatory ones. And thus the *olah* offering is discussed prior to the *chatas* sacrifice, because the *olah* offering is a type of voluntary sacrifice.

### 3.

WHY DOES THE OFFERING OF AN INDIVIDUAL COME FIRST?

This will be clarified by prefacing with another perplexing question: Why does the Torah begin its discussion here with the (obligatory) offerings of individuals and not with the **communal** offerings? At first blush, the reverse would have been more reasonable: The Torah ought to first give commands relevant to the entire community and only afterward commands relevant to individuals!

Seemingly, we can tentatively answer: Communal offerings are (mainly) tied to specific times of the year (Shabbos, Yom Tov, etc.). In contrast, offerings of individuals (voluntary or obligatory) can be brought **at any time**. Thus, the Torah portion dealing with the offerings begins its discussion with offerings of individuals. [And the laws of the **tamid** offering — which was brought twice daily — is actually discussed **earlier** in *parshas Tetzaveh*].<sup>13</sup>

This reasoning only serves to clarify why the Torah addresses offerings of individuals before communal offerings. It is still baffling, and calls for explanation, why the laws of the communal offerings are **entirely** omitted from *parshas Vayikra*<sup>14</sup> (and *parshas Tzav*), and only mentioned in *parshas Achrei*,<sup>15</sup> *Emor*,<sup>16</sup> and (primarily in) *parshas Pinchas*!<sup>17</sup>

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<sup>13</sup> *Shemos* 29:38.

<sup>14</sup> Aside from the one instance in *Vayikra* 4:13.

<sup>15</sup> *Vayikra* 16:5.

<sup>16</sup> *Vayikra*, ch. 23.

<sup>17</sup> *Bamidbar*, ch. 28, 29.

## 4.

### A QUESTION OF TIMING

The explanation:

The simple meaning of the passage in our *parshah* and in (the first part of) *parshas Tzav* dealing with offerings suggest that these verses were said before (the **later** narrative),<sup>18</sup> “Moshe called to Aharon... take for yourself a calf...” — the inauguration of Aharon and his sons on the eighth day of the *milluim*.<sup>19</sup> As such, it is clear why the Torah must begin with the laws of the *olah*, etc., because in order to be able to offer the sacrifices on the eighth day of the *milluim*, Aharon and his sons had to be familiar with their laws.

Just as the commands detailing how to bring the offerings on the eighth day of the *milluim* were relevant to *Aharon* and his sons, the commandants (in *parshas Vayikra* and *Tzav*) were relevant to all the Jews. So all the Jews had to know what kinds of offerings they were able (or obligated) to bring immediately after the *Mishkan*'s inauguration on the eighth day of the *milluim*.

This would be appreciated especially if we posit that (also) *parshas Vayikra*, and *Tzav* were said at the **beginning** of the seven days of the *milluim*. If so, then the laws of *parshas Vayikra* and *Tzav* would also have been apropos (not only on the **eighth** day of the *milluim* but also) on all eight days of the *milluim*.

Therefore, the Torah **here** {in *parshas Vayikra*} did not need to include commandments regarding the communal offerings (for Yom Tov, etc.) which are found in *parshas Achrei*, *Emor* and *Pinchas*. For in our *parshah*, the Torah only mentions offerings that were (or could have been) relevant at that time.

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<sup>18</sup> *Vayikra* 9:1,2.

<sup>19</sup> {This refers to the eight day inaugural process by which Moshe demonstrated to Aharon and his sons how to perform the service in the *Mishkan*.}

There was even no necessity to command all the **Jews** (as the *parshah* begins, “speak to all the Jews”) about the communal offerings — those that were brought during the *milluim* that were not part of “those that were commanded on that day”<sup>20</sup> (the *musaf* offering for *Shabbos* and *Rosh Chodesh*) — since the person bringing the communal offerings during the days of the *milluim* was **Moshe** (as **Rashi** previously noted).<sup>21</sup> And Moshe certainly knew what sort of sacrifice had to be offered and how to offer it, just as he knew the laws of **all** the sacrifices that he offered during the seven days of *milluim* (including — the *Shabbos* offering, the *chatas*, etc.).

## 5.

### THE SACRIFICES MOST LIKELY BROUGHT DURING THE *MILLUIM*

On this basis, we understand why the Torah begins with the voluntary offerings (and not the obligatory ones): It would be unreasonable to assume that during the seven days of *milluim*, the Jews would sin unintentionally, thereby becoming liable to bring an obligatory offering. This would have been especially true regarding the eighth day of the *milluim*, when the *Shechinah*<sup>22</sup> was present in the *Mishkan* which served as “testimony for the Jewish people that Hashem overlooked the incident of the Golden Calf.”<sup>23</sup>

In contrast, it **does** make sense that the Jewish people, who had donated to the construction of the *Mishkan* with exuberant generosity, would have brought **voluntary** offerings at the first opportunity, immediately following the dedication of the *Mishkan*.

Thus, the Torah first focuses on the offerings that were more likely to have been brought during the seven days of *milluim* — voluntary offerings. Only afterward does the Torah deal with the laws of the obligatory offerings.

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<sup>20</sup> *Shemos* 40:29.

<sup>21</sup> *Shemos* 29:22.

<sup>22</sup> {This refers to an expression of G-dliness that can be felt in this world.}

<sup>23</sup> Rashi *Shemos* 38:21.

## 6.

### A PROFOUND INSIGHT

The deeper reason why the Torah begins its discussion of sacrifices with the voluntary offerings will be understood based on the following preface:

As known, a person's intent and thoughts when he offers a sacrifice is what matters most. As our Sages say,<sup>24</sup> "Whether a person brings a substantial offering or a meager one {each has equal merit}, provided that his heart is directed towards Heaven." This principle also applies to the offerings that a person brings to obtain atonement, which depends mainly on the person's intent. As *Ramban* explains,<sup>25</sup> when a person brings an offering, he must reflect "that he transgressed against his G-d with his body and soul, and that he would have deserved that his blood be spilled and his body burned if not for the kindness of the Creator, Who accepted an exchange of... its blood (of the offering) instead of his blood, a soul for a soul." This meditation enables the offering to atone.

We can also derive this idea from the word "***korban***."<sup>26</sup> One connotation of this word is "drawing close."<sup>27</sup> Meaning, by offering a sacrifice, a person's abilities and senses are brought close to Hashem.<sup>28</sup>

In light of this, we must clarify: Since a person's intent before and during the act of offering a sacrifice is of fundamental importance (rather than the act of offering itself), how could the Torah have omitted entirely the requirement to have the proper thought and intent, etc.?

This is why the Torah begins with the laws of voluntary offerings, קרבנות נדבה — the entire basis of these offerings is only the generosity of a

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<sup>24</sup> *Menachos* 110a.

<sup>25</sup> *Vayikra* 1:9.

<sup>26</sup> {Hebrew word for "offering."}

<sup>27</sup> {"*Kiruv*," in the Hebrew original, etymologically related to "*korban*."}

<sup>28</sup> See *Sefer HaBahir*, ch. 46, p. 109; see also *Zohar*, vol. 3, p. 5a; *Shelah*, "*Taanis*," p. 211b; *Peri Eitz Chaim*, "*Shaar HaTefillah*," p. 85.

person's **heart**, נדיבת הלב (to Heaven). By first discussing voluntary offerings, the Torah teaches us that a person's heartfelt intention is the overarching prerequisite to the entire idea of offerings — it is the primary point of **all** offerings, including obligatory offerings.

This is also why Rashi is deliberate in his wording: “The **subject** we are discussing is voluntary offerings.”<sup>29</sup> The “subject” of offerings, of all offerings, is, in essence, reflected in voluntary offerings, because the main point of all offerings is the generosity of spirit and the intent of the person bringing the offering.

## 7.

SUBCONSCIOUSLY, EVERY JEW HAS GOOD INTENTIONS

On a deeper level: The intent and generosity that all offerings require is **inherent** in the **inner depths** of **every single** Jew. But only when a person brings a voluntary offering — which he brings (not out of a sense of obligation or compulsion, but rather) as a goodwill **gift** — is his inner depth **visibly** recognized.

Therefore there is no **commandment** in the Torah for this type of offering; Rashi only describes the **reality** — “the subject we are discussing is voluntary offerings.”<sup>30</sup> All offerings **are** voluntary {in a sense} because every Jew in his inner depth and soul **possesses** this generosity of spirit and this intent.

This is also why we find the following **ruling** regarding offerings:<sup>31</sup>

{The seemingly superfluous words} “he shall offer it” teaches that they coerce him {to bring the offering}. I might have thought that it could be {offered entirely} against his will {by confiscating it from him and sacrificing it}; yet the verse states: “According to his will.”

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<sup>29</sup> Rashi's commentary on *Vayikra* 1:2.

<sup>30</sup> Rashi's commentary on *Vayikra* 1:2.

<sup>31</sup> *Kidushin* 50a.



How can these texts be reconciled? They {the court may} coerce him until he says: “I *want* to bring the offering.”

As the *Rambam*<sup>32</sup> explains (in regards to *get*<sup>33</sup>):

Since he desires to be part of the Jewish people, and to perform all the *mitzvos* and eschew all the transgressions, it is only his evil inclination that pressures him {to refuse}. Therefore, when he is strong-armed until his {evil} inclination relents, and he consents {to divorce his wife}, he is deemed to have performed the divorce willingly.

The same way this applies to “his will,” it also applies to all the devotional intentions a person must have in mind in order to bring an offering. This includes drawing “close {to Hashem},” קירוב, etymologically related to “sacrifice,” קרבן — drawing one’s senses and abilities close to Hashem, as explained above. This yearning is contained in the inner recesses of every Jew, as expressed in the well-known aphorism of the *Alter Rebbe*:<sup>34</sup> “A Jew neither wants, nor is able, to be separated from G-dliness.”

## 8.

### THE DEEPER MEANING OF ADAM

In light of this, we understand why the Torah refers here to a Jew by the term *adam*, **man**: “A man<sup>35</sup> (who will bring **from you**” (meaning, from among the Jewish people, to whom this verse was addressed)): The term “man” {*adam*} derives from the expression, “*adameh la’elyon*,”<sup>36</sup> referring to the soul which is an actual part of Hashem.<sup>37</sup> This soul is in “every Jew,

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<sup>32</sup> *Mishneh Torah*, “*Hilchos Geirushin*,” ch. 2.

<sup>33</sup> {A halachic divorce document}.

<sup>34</sup> *Hayom Yom*, p. 73.

<sup>35</sup> {*Adam* in the original Hebrew}.

<sup>36</sup> *Yeshaya* 14:14. {Literally “comparable to (the One) On High.” This title denotes how the Jewish people closely resemble Hashem}.

<sup>37</sup> *Tanya*, ch. 2.

whether a *tzaddik* or a *rasha*,”<sup>38</sup> and is why every Jew possesses a generous spirit and a desire to be close to Hashem.

This is also the reason (according to the “wine of Torah”) for Rashi’s interpretation<sup>39</sup> {of the word} “*Adam*.” “Why is this term “man” employed here? Just as the first man did not offer sacrifices from anything stolen, since everything belonged to him, so you, too, shall not offer anything that was stolen.” We need to clarify: The *Gemara*<sup>40</sup> teaches that the word, מִמֶּנּוּ, “from you” precludes anything stolen {from being offered}. Why does Rashi teach that stolen items are precluded {from being offered from an exegesis} based on the word “*adam*,” which is only an **allusion** — “Just as the **first** man, etc.”?

The explanation:

The statement, “since everything belonged to him” only applies to the earlier stage of Adam’s life, while he was still in *Gan Eden*<sup>41</sup> before the sin of the Tree of Knowledge. This is the point of the allusion that Rashi offers: The “man” — *adameh la’elyon* — that is found in every Jew, is comparable to *Adam HaRishon*<sup>42</sup> as he was **before** the sin. A person stands at a spiritual level that is beyond the possibility of sin. Bringing an obligatory offering to atone for a sin definitely has no bearing on such a person. This idea finds expression in voluntary offerings, which are brought (not to expiate for **sins** but rather) out of the generosity of a Jew’s heart, in order to draw closer (“*kiruv*,” similar to “*korban*”) to G-dliness.

However, this {desire to come closer to Hashem} exists with respect to **all** offerings (even offerings that are brought {to atone} for a **sin**) as mentioned earlier. As soon as a Jew resolves to bring an offering to atone for his sin, the “*adam*” in him, which is beyond sin (similar to *Adam*

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<sup>38</sup> *Tanya*, ch. 1.

<sup>39</sup> *Vayikra* 1:2.

<sup>40</sup> *Sukkah* 30a.

<sup>41</sup> {The Garden of Eden.}

<sup>42</sup> {Lit., “the first man.”}

*HaRishon* before his sin, as mentioned earlier) is revealed. With this energy, the sin is wiped away, atoned for entirely — “to atone for him.”

## 9.

### AN EXPRESSION OF AFFECTION

In light of all the above, we understand why the Torah prefaces the laws of offerings with “He {Hashem} called, ויקרא, to Moshe.”<sup>43</sup> As Rashi explains at length, this diction is “an expression of affection, which is used by the ministering angels, etc.” We might ask: (a) Why does the Torah specifically use this wording in the portion dealing with the offerings? (b) Why does Rashi explain **at length** that ויקרא, “Hashem called,” is an expression of affection, etc.?

The explanation: As discussed earlier, the first thing the Jewish people wanted to do immediately following the dedication of the *Mishkan* was to bring **voluntary** offerings. This demonstrates how Jewish people exceedingly cherished the *Mishkan*, etc. “As water reflects a face back to a face, so {Supernal} Man’s [Hashem’s] heart is reflected back to a man”<sup>44</sup> — Hashem expresses His great affection toward the Jewish people at that time. Therefore, Rashi also explains this at length.

## 10.

### PRECIOUS, PRECIOUS

Another point: As known, the phrase, “He called to Moshe” confers strength, enabling the Jewish people to engage in the *avodah* of *korbanos*, in which the essential factor is the spirit of generosity, as elucidated above.

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<sup>43</sup> {*Vayikra* 1:1.}

<sup>44</sup> *Mishlei* 27:19. {The translation reflects the homiletic interpretation of the verse.}

The Torah thus prefaces {the sacrificial laws} with the phrase, “He called to Moshe,” language of **affection**: The Jews’ *generosity of the heart* toward Hashem sprung from the affection Hashem that showed the Jewish people — “He called to Moshe.”<sup>45</sup>

On this basis, we also understand why Rashi concludes, “whereas to the prophets of the other nations Hashem revealed Himself fleetingly {implied by the word, ויקר}...” We might ask: Why is it relevant to make a distinction **here** between, “He called {*vayikra*},” said in reference to Moshe, and,<sup>46</sup> “He happened upon {*vayikar*},” said in reference to *Billam* (a **gentile** prophet)? This can be explained based upon our discussion above:

This generous spirit found in every single Jew, regardless of one’s external appearance, evinces the distinction between Jews and gentiles: Jews are **inherently** good and holy; any deficiencies are only due to (in the words of Rambam) “his {evil} inclination that pressures him.”<sup>47</sup> In contrast, “if a gentile possesses a good quality, it is extrinsic.”<sup>48</sup>

This distinction is rooted in the fact the Jewish people are privy to {the Divine influence implicit in the clause}, “**He called** to Moshe” — alluding to Hashem’s **affection** for the Jewish people. As a result of Hashem cherishing and choosing the Jewish people, they are **constantly** bound inwardly with G-dliness.

-From talks delivered Shabbos *parshas Vayikra* 5732 & 5733 (1972 & 1973)

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<sup>45</sup> “For each and every soul of the House of Israel comprises within it something of the quality of our teacher Moshe, peace unto him.” (Tanya, ch. 42. See *Iggeres HaKodesh*, end of ch. 27 (“*Biur*”).

<sup>46</sup> *Bamidbar* 23:4.

<sup>47</sup> {See fn. 33.}

<sup>48</sup> *Maamar*, “*Shabbos Bereishis*,” 5699. {Even acts of generosity can have self-serving motives, and therefore, they are not purely good.}