



לקוטי שיחות  
PROJECT  
LIKKUTEI  
SICHOS

## **Sicha Summary**

Chelek 17 | Bechukosai | Sichas 3

### **The Context:**

The beginning and the end of every book of Torah have thematic harmony. The book of *Vayikra* begins by introducing the sacrifices: “When a person from amongst you will sacrifice....” (*Vayikra* 1:2) The final *parshah* of the book of *Vayikra*, *parshas Bechukosai*, begins with the verse, “If you follow My statutes and guard My commandments and perform them...,” and ends with the law of firstborn animals, which are consecrated to G-d from the womb, (*Ibid* 27:26), and the command to tithe every tenth newborn lamb and calf and to offer it as a sacrifice. (*Ibid* 27:32)

What is the thematic connection between the beginning and end of *parshas Bechukosai*, and the beginning and end of the entire book of *Vayikra*?

Based on the Chassidic explanations of these various laws and concepts offered by the Alter Rebbe in *Likkutei Torah*, we discover a coherent theme.

### **The theme of Vayikra:**

The sacredness of a firstborn animal is designated “from Above”; G-d’s command automatically endows a firstborn animal with its sacred status. The sacredness of the tithed animal, however, is designated by the person who counts the animals and declares the tenth to be holy.

In other words, the firstborn animal represents an essential, foundational holiness, while the animal tithe represents an acquired, earned holiness.

This explains why the law of the firstborn animal is still practiced today, while our Sages discontinued the law of the animal tithe. (*Bechoros* 53a)

The essential holiness endowed by G-d can never be abrogated, but in times of exile, human-made holiness can be hard to achieve.

This also explains the order in which these laws appear: The Torah first discusses holiness granted by G-d — the firstborn animal, “an inspiration from Above.” Only then can a person begin his own spiritual work, alluded to by the animal tithe, an “inspiration from below.”

This conclusion of *Vayikra* mirrors the deeper meaning alluded to in the book’s opening. The Alter Rebbe explains that the opening clause of the book, “When a person from among you offers...,” refers to G-d prodding and inspiring a person to draw close to Him. (“Adam/person” alludes to the “Supernal Person” — G-d — who “offers,” or brings close, the person to their divine service.) The continuation of the verse, “from animals, from cattle or from lambs you shall bring your sacrifice,” alludes to the person doing his own spiritual work, offering his own “animal” to G-d.

### **The Theme of Bechukosai:**

The same dichotomy of Divine inspiration and internal, self-motivated progress is found in the beginning of *Bechukosai*. The Alter Rebbe explains that the clause, “If you follow my statutes” alludes to the essential divinity of the soul and its capacity for limitless spiritual advancement. (The Hebrew word for “statutes,” *chukim*, also means to “engrave,” *chakikah*, alluding to the soul that is engraved with an immutable connection to G-d. Additionally, the word for “follow,” “*teileichu*,” suggests constant movement.)

The second clause of the verse, “and guard My commandments,” alludes to the work of the human being in preserving and “guarding” his innate spiritual inspiration through his own divine service, which consists of fulfilling G-d’s commandments practically.

### **The Conclusion:**

The conclusion of a book delivers the overall message and intended objective of the book. Thus, the fact that the book of *Vayikra* ends with the

animal tithe, alluding to the human being's independent divine service, implies that this is the deepest form of connection with G-d.

Why is the limited, human approach to divine service more desirable than a Divinely gifted enlightenment?

G-d desired that we should make a home for Him in this world by our own effort and within human parameters. Therefore, a Divinely gifted inspiration does not fulfill G-d's desire, for it is not a function of our effort, and cannot be assimilated within our own identities. A person's efforts to assimilate the Divine within his own consciousness is the desired objective of Creation.

This is alluded to at the very end of *Likkutei Torah*, which is also based on *Sefer Vayikra*. At the end of the supplemental section of the book, the Alter Rebbe explains that Yom Kippur represents essential, non-contingent spiritual delight, and Shemini Atzeres, the conclusion of the Tishrei holiday season, represents the translation of that delight into a tactile, consciously grasped experience. Shemini Atzeres being the final holiday implies that its delight is loftier than that of Yom Kippur. In light of the above discussion, this is clear: When spiritual delight is expressed in tangible ways, through the body's joy of food and drink, then the Divine objective for Creation is realized.