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***In Memory of Rabbi Abraham Leibtag***

**Shiurim in Chumash & Navi by Menachem Leibtag**

***PARSHAT ACHAREI MOT***

It is interesting to note that on Yom Kippur shacharit we read Vayikra chapter 16, while at mincha we read Vayikra chapter 18. Now the reason why we read chapter 16 is simple, for it details the special AVODAH of the Kohen Gadol on Yom Kippur in the Bet ha'Mikdash. However, why do read specifically chapter 18 for mincha? After the prohibition of "arayot" (the primary topic) contains no obvious connection to Yom Kippur?

Some explain that this custom is simply for convenience; i.e. as we may be too tired to roll the 'sefer' to another location, we simply read a chapter nearby to what we read in the morning. However, based on the following shiur, we can offer a more significant explanation.

As we will show, chapter 16 constitutes the climax of the first half of Sefer Vayikra for on Yom Kippur, as the "kohen gadol" enters the "kodesh ha'kdoshim" on the "shabbat shabbaton", Am Yisrael ascends to the highest level in all three realms of "kedusha":

1) "kedushat adam" - kohen gadol 2) "kedushat makom" - kodesh k'doshim 3) "kedushat zman" - shabbat shabbaton

However, it is just as important to remind ourselves that these concentrated levels of "kedusha" must be incorporated into daily life. In the following shiur, we show how the transition that takes place in Sefer Vayikra, beginning in chapter 18 (the Torah reading at Mincha on Yom Kippur), reflects this concept of the emination of "keduasha".

INTRODUCTION - SEFER VAYIKRA & PARSHAT ACHAREI MOT

Does Sefer Vayikra deal exclusively with laws that relate to the Mishkan? Up until Parshat Acharei Mot that certainly seems to be the case.

However, in the middle of Parshat Acharei Mot, an abrupt change takes place. All of the sudden, towards the end of this week's Parsha (see chapters 18), we find a set of laws [the "arayot"] that appear to be totally unrelated to the Mishkan. Furthermore, in Parshat Kedoshim, we find yet another set of laws that have nothing at all to do with the Mishkan.

So what keeps Sefer Vayikra together? Should we conclude that it is primarily laws relating to the Mishkan plus a few 'add- ons'?  Or, is there some thematic significance in this transition that could lead us to a deeper understanding of what the sefer is all about?

In this week's shiur, we attempt to answer this question by taking a closer look at the transition that takes place in chapter 18.

TWO SECTIONS IN SEFER VAYIKRA

We begin this week's shiur with a quick overview of Sefer Vayikra to help clarify our opening statement. Simply review the primary topics of each chapter in Sefer Vayikra. [It is recommended that you first take a few minutes to scan of the Sefer (using a Tanach Koren) to verify our conclusions.]

The following table summarizes Sefer Vayikra according to its primary topics. As you review this table, note how chapter 18 marks the beginning of this transition.

PART I - THE MISHKAN AS PRIMARY TOPIC

CHAPTER TOPIC

1 - 5 MISHKAN/ korbanot of the individual [ndava and chova]

6 - 7 MISHKAN/ how the korbanot are offered [by the kohanim]

8 - 10 MISHKAN/ its dedication ceremony [narrative]

11 - 15 MISHKAN/ "tumah & tahara" [who can enter...]

16 MISHKAN/ "avoda" of the kohen gadol on Yom Kippur

17 MISHKAN/ no korbanot permitted outside the Mishkan

PART II - MISC. TOPICS

CHAPTER TOPIC

18 GENERAL/ prohibited marriage relationships etc.

19 - 20 GENERAL/ "kdoshim t'hiyu" [a variety of laws]

21 - 22 KOHANIM/ special laws regarding the kohanim

23 HOLIDAYS/ focus on the agricultural aspect

24 MISC./ re: Menorah, Shulchan & capital punishment

25 SHMITA/ the seven year shmita & Yovel cycle

26 TOCHACHA/ reward & punishment for keeping the laws

27 VOWS/ "erchin", valuation of pledges

As the above table shows, the first seventeen chapters of Sefer Vayikra form a distinct unit, for that entire section discusses various laws concerning the Mishkan. In contrast to that unit, the remaining ten chapters (18->27) discuss a wide ranges of topics, some Mishkan related; others not. At first glance, it is difficult to find a common theme to this second section. Nonetheless, it is clearly distinct from the first section of the sefer.

To uncover the thematic significance of this division, let's take a closer look at the beginning of chapter 18, i.e. at the very spot where this transition between the two halves of Sefer Vayikra takes place.

A NEW HEADER

For a start, let's read the opening five psukim of chapter 18, noting how they form a separate 'parshia':

"And God told Moshe, speak to Bnei Yisrael and tell them: - ANI HASHEM ELOKEICHEM - [I am the Lord Your God!] DO NOT act as the Egyptians did, and do not act as the Canaanites... do not follow their laws. [Instead] KEEP MY LAWS... for ANI HASHEM ELOKEICHEM.  Keep My laws and My commandments which man must do and live by keeping them for ANI HASHEM." (18:1-5)

Review these psukim once again, noting how they focus on a very general topic, i.e. how Bnei Yisrael should conduct their lives - rejecting the customs of Egyptian and Canaanite culture and following God's laws instead. Clearly, these psukim form an introduction for the entire set of mitzvot that will follow.

[Not only do they 'set the stage' for the laws of ARAYOT (prohibition of certain marital relationships) that follow in 18:6-23, they also introduce ALL of the mitzvot that follow until the TOCHACHA at the end of the Sefer. Compare phrase "chukim & mishpatim" in 26:46 with 18:3-5; compare also them of chapter 26 with 18:24-29!.]

We will now show how 18:1-5 serves not only as introduction to chapter 18, but can also be understood as the INTRODUCTION to the entire 'second half' of the Sefer Vayikra.

We begin our discussion by paying special attention to a key phrase that is repeated several times in this introduction, and that will appear numerous times again in the second half of the Sefer.

ANI HASHEM

Review 18:1-5 once again, noting the Torah's repeated use of the phrase ANI HASHEM [or alternately ANI HASHEM ELOKEICHEM]. Not only is this phrase mentioned THREE times in these opening psukim, it is also repeated over FIFTY times from this point in Sefer Vayikra until the end of the sefer. Furthermore, this phrase is included in most every pasuk that introduces or summarizes a key topic!

[See, for example, 18:30; 19:2,3,4,10,12,14,16,18,30-32,36-37; 20:24-26; 22:2,3,16,31-33; 23:22,43; 24:22; 25:17,38,55; 26:1-2,13,44-45 & their context (that will keep you busy).]

In contrast, this phrase is found only once in the first half of the Sefer.

[See 11:44-45/ note that even here it is used in relation to kashrut rules concerning permitted animals, laws which are only tangentially related to the Mishkan.]

Hence, the Torah's emphasis upon the phrase of ANI HASHEM should provide us with a clue to the overall theme of the second half of the sefer.

LIMITATION OR EMANATION

At first glance, it seems rather absurd that when Sefer Vayikra describes the laws of the Mishkan - the site where God's SHCHINA is present - the phrase ANI HASHEM [lit. I am God] is barely mentioned; yet when it discusses various laws which must be kept OUTSIDE the Mishkan, the phrase is emphasized over and over again! If the phrase ANI HASHEM commands us to remember that we stand before God, should not that message be most emphatic in the Mishkan itself?

One could suggest that this is precisely the point that Sefer Vayikra wants to make, for it is worried that we may arrive at the wrong conclusion - that God's Presence is LIMITED to the Mishkan! After all, if indeed God's SHCHINA now dwells of God's in the Mishkan, as emphasized in Sefer Shmot and the first half of Sefer Vayikra, one could easily conclude that God's SHCHINA is only in the Mishkan, and nowhere else.

We are all too familiar with the consequences of this 'mistaken conclusion', i.e. where one's spiritual behavior is meticulous while visiting God's residence (be it the Mishkan, or a synagogue), in contrast to the more secular nature of his behavior once he leaves its environs.

[For example, one who behaves 'properly' at shul, but at      home or at work acts in any manner which he pleases.]

The second half of Sefer Vayikra may come to counter this misconception. The Mishkan does not LIMIT the SHCHINA to its confines, rather, it serves as conduit to allow God's presence to EMANATE from the Mishkan to the entire land. Ideally, man's experience in the Mishkan should leave a profound effect on his way of life outside the Mishkan. As we will soon explain, this concept relates to the very essence of KEDUSHA.

From a thematic perspective, one could apply this explanation to the two halves of Sefer Vayikra. Even though the primary topic of Sefer Vayikra is laws relating to the Mishkan, the second half of Sefer Vayikra intentionally includes numerous mitzvot that serve as an example of how we TRANSLATE the intense level of SHCHINA found in the Mishkan into the daily walks of life.

In the Mishkan itself, it is clear that 'ANI HASHEM'. Outside its confines, man must be constantly reminded that God's presence remains everywhere.

[This concept of the Mishkan serving to funnels the 'shchinah' from heaven to a fountain-like source on earth from which it can emanate to all mankind is reflected in the n'vuot of Zecharya (see 14:8-9) and Yeshayahu (2:1-5).]

A THEMATIC PROGRESSION

To better appreciate the meaning of these two sections, it is helpful to first review our earlier observations regarding Sefer Vayikra as explained in our introductory shiur.

In contrast to the other books of Chumash which are 'narrative based' (i.e. they begin and end with a story), Sefer Vayikra is 'commandment based' (i.e. it contains a collection of various mitzvot which God commanded Moshe and Aharon to instruct Bnei Yisrael). Therefore, the progression of parshiot in the sefer is thematic as opposed chronological.

We also explained that the sefer, referred to by Chazal as TORAT KOHANIM, begins as an 'instruction manual' for the Mishkan. Even though we expected that Sefer Vayikra would deal exclusively with Mishkan related commandments, as was the case in the first seventeen chapters, the second half introduces a wide range of mitzvot which must be kept outside the Mikdash for they reflect how God's presence in the Mishkan should affect our behavior in all aspects of life.

This can explain the internal progression of parshiot as well. For example, in chapter 18 we are told how one should not act, while in chapter 19 we are instructed how one SHOULD ACT, i.e. Parshat K'DOSHIM T'HIYU - acting in a sanctified manner in all walks of life.

KEDUSHA

This concept, i.e. SETTING ASIDE one special site (e.g. the Mishkan) where God's Presence is more intense - IN ORDER to bring sanctity to all surrounding areas, can be understand as the most basic concept of KEDUSHA.

For example, we can explain the KEDUSHA of SHABBAT in a very similar manner, i.e. we SET ASIDE one day of the week, sanctifying it with a special level of SHCHINA - IN ORDER to infuse every day of the week with sanctity as we anticipate SHABBAT. [See Ramban on Shmot 12:1 in his explanation of KIDUSH ha'CHODESH!]

A additional example is the KEDUSHA on AM YISRAEL, i.e. God SET ASIDE a special nation (see Sefer Breishit), sanctifying it with special mitzvot (see Sefer Shmot) - IN ORDER to deliver God's message of sanctity to all mankind (see Devarim 4:5-8).

In case you didn't catch on yet, the three above examples are taken from the three most basic types of KEDUSHA - MAKOM (place), ZMAN (time), and ADAM (man).

A THEME FOR SEFER VAYIKRA

With this background, we can suggest a common theme for all the mitzvot in the second half of the sefer and their relationship to the first half of the sefer. These final chapters of Vayikra can be divided according to these three basic realms of "kedusha" (sanctity or holiness):

1) ADAM - man / chapters 18->22 e.g. kedushat Am Yisrael and/or kohanim 2) ZMAN - time / chapter 23 e.g. shabbat and "moadim" (holidays) 3) MAKOM - place or land / chapters 24-26 e.g. the laws of SHMITA in the land of Israel

Furthermore, this same concept of "kedusha" is also the primary theme of the first half of Sefer Vayikra for the Mishkan itself is also referred to as a MIKDASH (note how the word "mikdash" evolves from the same shoresh - k.d.sh. - as "kedusha"). As we explained above, the shoresh k.d.sh. implies setting aside something for a special purpose (see Breishit 2:3, 38:21 and Shmot 13:1!); and in the classic case of "kedusha" for a divine purpose.  The Mikdash is a special sanctuary set aside for the worship of God.

Likewise, in "kedushat adam", Am Yisrael is set aside to serve God; so too the kohanim etc. In "kedushat zman", shabbat and moadim are set aside from the other days of the week for a divine purpose. In "kedushat makom", the land of Israel is set aside from all others as God's special land.

Based on this analysis, we can suggest an overall theme for Sefer Vayikra. Recall that at Har Sinai, before receiving the Torah Bnei Yisrael entered a covenant to accept God's laws in order to become a "mamlechet kohanim v'GOY KADOSH" (see Shmot 19:4-6). Sefer Vayikra explains HOW Bnei Yisrael become a GOY KADOSH, not only by worshiping God in the MISHKAN, but also by keeping the mitzvot of kedushat ADAM, ZMAN, & MAKOM - the constant reminders of ANI HASHEM ELOKEICHEM - in their daily lives.

TORAT KOHANIM

This observation can help us appreciate the name that Chazal's use to describe Sefer Vayikra - TORAT KOHANIM [Laws for Priests].  Based on our original analysis this name would appear to be a bit inaccurate, for Sefer Vayikra includes many laws that have nothing to do with Kohanim and/or the Mishkan.  However, based on this deeper theme in second half of Sefer Vayikra, one could understand the word 'KOHANIM' of the name TORAT KOHANIM as a reference not only to the KOHANIM who work in the Mishkan, but also to the entire nation of Israel who serve as a MAMALECHET KOHANIM v'GOY KADOSH - a nation of priests in service of God to bring His Name to all mankind.

This recognition of ANI HASHEM, experienced at an intense level when one visits the Mishkan, must be internalized to affect one's conduct, even outside the Mishkan, and in all walks of life.

ON YOM KIPPUR

As Yom Kippur draws to its close, or possibly its true climax, we must remind ourselves of this hashkafic message of the second half of Sefer Vayikra. This may be the reason why Chazal saw it appropriate that we read this pivotal chapter (18:1-30) at Mincha time, for Yom Kippur marks not only the culmination of the year which has passed, but also sets us in the proper direction for the new year which is about to begin.