



ארגון רבני צהר



הסתדרות הציונית העולמית
המערך לשירותים רוחניים בתפוצות

Parashat Vayikra

Leading with Confidence and Love

-Rabbi Yosef Zvi Rimon-

The book of Vayikra opens with a call to Moshe: "And He called to Moshe, and Hashem spoke to him from the Tent of Meeting," and ends with a summary statement: "These are the commandments that Hashem commanded Moshe to [tell] the children of Israel on Mount Sinai."

The book of Bamidbar ends with a similar statement: "These are the commandments and the ordinances that Hashem commanded the children of Israel through Moshe in the plains of Moav, by the Jordan, at Jericho." Recognizing this parallel, Rav Moshe Lichtenstein pointed out that the difference between the two endings is in the context. While the context in Vayikra is Ohel Moed (the Tent of Meeting) or Mount Sinai, the context in Bamidbar is the Plains of Moav, the geographic location of the Israelite camp. When a couple gets married, each one has a number of basic things that he or she is expected to do. However, beyond those, there are things that each party will learn or acquire over time. A marital relationship presents certain life challenges, which require appropriate and correct responses. "So said the Lord: I remember to you the lovingkindness of your youth, the love of your nuptials, your following Me in the desert, in a land not sown" (Yirmiyahu 2:2).

The people of Israel married Hashem. A covenant was established. First, in Vayikra, the Torah lists the basic and necessary *mitzvot* that remain valid in the abstract, independent of any external factors and influences. These are the *mitzvot* of Ohel Moed and Mount Sinai. On the other hand, in Bamidbar most of the *mitzvot* are reactionary to the changing environment in which the people find themselves. Thus, writes the Ramban in his introduction to Bamidbar, most of the commandments in that book are based on the necessities of the changing reality faced by the people.

The book of Vayikra completely ignores the elements of space and time. The *mitzvot* are given in the abstract. On the other hand, in the book of Bamidbar a significant number of the *mitzvot* is derived from various events and experiences, in a manner analogous to the challenges faced by the parties to a marital covenant. For example, the commandment to perform a second Pesach (Pesach Sheni) was given because the people were faced with the reality of having a number of their members be ritually unclean at the time of celebration of the Pesach festival. These ritually unclean people proceeded to approach Moshe with the following request: "Those men said to him, "We are ritually unclean [because of contact] with a dead person; [but] why should we be excluded so as not to bring the offering of the Lord in its appointed



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time, with all the children of Israel?" (Bamidbar 9:7). The essence of *Tara'at* can be learned by a *fortiori* consideration of the case of Miriam the prophetess; the concept of priestly gifts follows in the wake of the Korach-led divisiveness that permeated the Israelite camp; the legislation concerning inheritance was imparted as a result of the efforts of the daughters of Tzlofchad, etc.

The verse that closes the book of Vayikra speaks only of *mitzvot*, while the final verse in the book of Bamidbar speaks also of rules. Rules are a form of statutory regulation that develops in response to the changing reality.

The book of Vayikra contains the basic elements that are present at the beginning of the marriage between Hashem and the Jewish people. At the wedding, everyone involved tries hard to forget or disregard any issues that might arise in the future, any hardship or difficulty that might present itself over the course of a lifetime. Later, in the book of Bamidbar, the people will actually face the challenges produced over the course of a dynamic life experience.

Our Sages in the midrash (Vayikra Rabbah, Tzav 7:3) state that children are first taught the book of Vayikra: "Rav Assi said: why is it that young children began their Torah studies with Vayikra and not with Bereishit? Because young children are pure and the sacrifices explained in Vayikra are pure, so the pure should come and study the pure."

Rav Lichtenstein, of blessed memory, explained that the children follow in the footsteps of the nation as a whole. Their first step is to create a relationship with Hashem, to enter into a covenant, without considering the potential difficulties and problems that may arise down the road. They open the book of Vayikra. They operate in the abstract, in a disconnect from reality, from the elements of space and time. They connect with Hashem. After they mature they will learn how to handle the various challenges that will come their way, how to integrate the unique bond between Hashem and the people of Israel with the dynamic existence of each and every Jew and of the Jewish people as a whole.

A leader that is afraid of each and every step will not be able to lead. He or she will not be able to accept the yoke of leadership upon him or herself, because he or she will be afraid of the various challenges that will present themselves along the way. On the other hand, an overconfident leader may fall and even cause those who follow him or her to fall as well.

A leader should enter his or her position of leadership with a pure and simple perspective, a perspective of faith and hope, a perspective of connection and love. If the leader is constantly obsessed with the difficulties with which he or she is or will be



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faced, he or she will also assume the mantle of leadership from a place of weakness. Difficulties will most certainly arise down the road and the leader should face them with care and caution; however, once the bond of hope and love has been established, with God's help the leader should be able to overcome the difficulties, move forward, repair whatever requires repair and perfect what must be perfected.

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