Jewish Tribune – Achrei-Mos Kedoshim

**A Book of Two Halves**

Sefer Vayikra is a book of two halves and the abrupt change takes place in the middle of our sedra, Achrei Mos.

The first 17 perokim of Sefer Vayikra all relate to the Mishkan. It covers topics such as korbonos, rules of kohanim, tumah and taharah, the dedication ceremony of the Mishkan and the avodah of the Kohen Gadol on Yom Kippur.

Then, halfway in to our sedra, from perek 18 onwards, Sefer Vayikra deals with a litany of miscellaneous topics starting with prohibited relationships and then “kedoshim tihiyu” to shemittah, erechin vows and much in between.

Notably, the phrase “Ani Hashem Elokeichem” appears over fifty times from perek 18 onwards and only once in the first 17 perokim of Vayikra.

Rav Menachem Leibtag gives the following wonderful explanation.

Some people may mistakenly think that the Shechina, the Divine Presence of Hashem, is limited to the Mishkan, Beis HaMikdash or even just our own shuls. This is not true. Hashem’s Presence and message must be disseminated into everyday life. Judaism is 24/7, 365 days a year. Yiddishkeit is less of a theology and more of a way of life.

To convey this idea, the phrase “Ani Hashem Elokeichem” is not needed in the first half of Sefer Vayikra as that primarily deals with the Mishkan. Even the one time it does appear in the first 17 perokim of Vayikra is in relation to Kashrus and not the Mishkan per se.

But when Sefer Vayikra moves on to cover a host of miscellaneous topics, the phrase “Ani Hashem Elokeichem” needs to be repeated over and over to remind us to bring Hashem in to every aspect of our lives.

This is a message we need to convey and model to our children and students. To live a life of Torah, recognising that Hashem’s Presence goes beyond the walls of shul, and adhere carefully to halocha which demonstrates that HKBH is wholly integrated into our daily lives.

The disconnect between theory and practice is not new. The story is told of a proud owner of a *pardes*, an orange grove, in Petach Tikva. He was enjoying watching the fruit of his labour when an “oleh chadash” who had only recently arrived in the holy land, sauntered into the orange grove and helped himself to some oranges.

The owner shouted at him to go away, but his protests were ignored. The trespasser continued to enjoy the sweet oranges despite the protestations.

The owner then confronted the man, “Adoni – **כתוב בתורה לא תגנוב!** - it is written in the Torah “do not steal”!

The trespasser smiled and said: “How wonderful it is to be in Israel, we eat oranges and hear words of Torah!”

One of Rav Reuven Feinstein’s talmidim once accidentally broke a tape recorder he had borrowed. He claimed that he did not have to pay for the damage because “it was an accident”. Reb Reuven was astounded that the boy did not connect the incident to his learning. The Yeshiva were then learning **פרק המפקיד** and surely knew that a **שואל** was **חייב באונסין**, and was responsible to pay for accidental damages to a borrowed object.

Again, the root of the problem is the disconnect between theory and practice. The proliferation of “Ani Hashem Elokeichem” in the middle of our parsha until the end of the sefer reminds us to bring HKBH in to every aspect of our lives and to connect the theory to the practice.

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