



Festival Focus

A significant part of *Parashat Emor* is dedicated to the laws of our festivals. Interestingly, this section is preceded by a particular law which dictates that one must wait until the eighth day after an ox, sheep or goat has been born to offer it as a *korban* (*Vayikra* 22:27). Further, when the section about the holidays is read as part of the Yom Tov *kriah*, the segment begins with this law as an introduction. What is the connection between the two?

Rav Goldstein in *Sha'arei Chayim* explains that the beauty of the festivals is that the Jewish people are charged with sanctifying these days. We are all familiar with the *brachah*, “*mekadesh Yisrael vehazemanim*.” From where does the Jew draw such holiness to sanctify time? From the legacy imparted by our *Avot Hakedoshim* known as the “*Merkavah*,” the channel to transmit the *Shechinah* and infuse us with the capacity to access exalted levels of holiness. He quotes the Targum Yonatan who offers a homiletic interpretation regarding the listed animals as analogous to each of the *Avot*. The ox reflects the strength of Avraham Avinu, the sheep symbolizes Yitzchak Avinu who was offered as a sacrifice on the altar, and Yaakov Avinu is echoed in the goats as he gave his father goats to receive his

blessings. Thus, the introduction bespeaks these great individuals who set the stage and tone for the festivals.

Indeed, the Tur links each *chag* to one of the *Avot*, furthering this connection. Pesach is characterized by the *chesed* and *emunah* of Avraham Avinu. The ram that was sacrificed in place of Yitzchak Avinu at the *akeidah* whose horn was blown at Matan Torah connects Yitzchak Avinu to *Shavuot*. The Torah tells us that Yaakov Avinu built *sukkot* for his cattle modeling how to use wealth in our transient world to serve Hashem, expressed in the message of *Sukkot*. When observing these festivals, we can try to connect to the personalities who invested deep spiritual reservoirs in each of the *Yomim Tovim*.

Rav Goldstein offers a second insight as to why this section is coupled with the festivals. “When an ox... is born...”; the ox remains the same ox even as it grows. Although there may be physical changes as the animal develops, an ox pretty much remains the same its entire existence. These *pesukim* bring to the fore the stark contrast between animal and man; we are meant to use the *chagim* as a means to further our growth and closeness to Hashem. Rav Schorr would often comment that one should never say, “Yom Tov is over.” A Yom Tov is never over, it must always remain part of us and our spiritual development, progress and striving. ■