

"And He (Hashem) called unto Moshe, and Hashem spoke to him." (1:1)

The well established custom has been to begin teaching a child *Chumash* from *Sefer Vayikra*, even though *Sefer Bereishis* and *Sefer Shemos* might be more pedagogically appealing because of the various narratives, *Chazal* comment, "ohruvyc uexg,hu ohruvy utch," *Let pure souls come and occupy themselves with pure things.* **Horav Moshe Swift, zl**, elucidates *Chazal's* words in the following manner. *Torah* is not merely a book of knowledge, it is a book of life. It is the source of life for our people. Its focus is not the brain, but rather the *neshamah*, soul. *Torah* penetrates the soul of a Jew and imbues him with purity. It molds his character, while it shapes his thought process.

True, the young child does not yet have the acumen for grasping the profundities of the laws of sacrifices, but that is not the essence of *Torah* study. The *Torah*, as *Horav* Swift aptly explains, is *zor'ea tzedakos*, a seed planted in the soul. Properly cultivated, the seed will develop, so that the individual child matures into a *ben Torah*, a child of the *Torah*. The child whose pure innocent ears have heard the pure words of *Torah* will develop a relationship with Hashem in which the spirit and the flesh become one. Such a child will grow up with a different attitude toward life, morality and purity.

We may suggest another reason for initiating a child's education with the laws of *korbanos*. To be a Jew demands that one realize that he is accountable for whatever he does. The word "coincidence" does not reflect a *Torah* orientation. Nothing is coincidental! When one does not act in accordance with the dictate of Hashem, he must seek penance. He offers a *korban* to bring himself near to Hashem to expiate his inappropriate behavior, to "apologize" and demonstrate his remorse. Indeed, if one performs an *aveirah b'shogeg*, sins inadvertently, he must still offer a *korban*. The well worn excuse of, "I didn't think," is not legitimate in our *Torah* society. A Jew must always think - think about before Whom he stands and Who has granted him his mission in life. When the child is made aware of his lofty charge, he will endeavor to carry out his mission responsibly.