

D'var Torah for Parshat Emor  
By Mikel Garner

This week's Torah portion is Emor, which offers many rules about which animals may be chosen for *korbanot* (sacrificial offerings). But first, in chapter 21, verse 17, the Torah talks about the qualifications of the *kohanim*, the individuals who officiate with the *korbanot*:

דַּבֵּר אֶל־אַהֲרֹן לֵאמֹר אִישׁ מִזֶּרְעֶךָ לְדֹרֹתָם אֲשֶׁר יִהְיֶה בּוֹ מוּם לֹא יִקְרָב לְהִקְרִיב לַחֶם אֱ־לֹהֵיוֹ:

Speak to Aaron, saying: Any man among your offspring throughout their generations who has a defect, shall not come near to offer up his God's food.

In Chapter 22, verse 20, the Torah speaks about blemishes that disqualify animals from being brought as *korbanot*:

כָּל אֲשֶׁר־בּוֹ מוּם לֹא תִקְרְבוּ בּוֹ לְרִצּוֹן יְהוָה לָכֶם:

Any [animal] that has a blemish, you shall not offer up, for it will not be favorable for you.

It seems unfair that no person with a blemish may offer sacrifices and animals with blemishes can't be offered. Doesn't the Torah teach us not to judge a book by its cover? So why is it that bad looking people and imperfect animals can't be involved in this great honor? This is what S'forno had to say:

וְזֶה כִּי "הַצֹּר תָּמִים פָּעֻלוֹ" (דברים לג, ד), חֲפִץ בְּתַמִּימוֹת וְשִׁלְמוֹת הַנִּקְרָב וְהַמִּקְרִיב: שְׂיִהְיֶה הַנִּקְרָב עַל שְׁלֵמוֹתוֹ הַטְּבָעִי, וְהַמִּקְרִיב עַל שְׁלֵמוֹתוֹ הָאֱלֹהִי לְהַדְמוֹת לְיוֹצְרוֹ כְּפִי הָאֲפֹשֶׁר.

*"This is because "G-d is a rock. His actions are perfect". He desires the perfection and completeness of both what is offered and of the one who offers it. The animal should have physical completeness and the person should have spiritual completeness to emulate his Creator as much as possible."*

The S'forno's answer or explanation is that this Mitzvah is teaching us an important lesson in how to set our goals as we live by Hashem's Mitzvot. *Korbanot* teach us that we should aim for perfection. They give us a visual reminder of what we should aim for in what is really important. The outsides of the Kohen and the animal have to be as close to perfect as possible to reflect how we should aim to look on the inside.

What can we learn from this lesson? We know that human beings cannot be perfect. But we should do the best we can, realize that our lives are honoring Hashem and not be satisfied with being mediocre. We should try to always grow in good traits (midot), and be a role-model for other people. The laws of *korbanot* are reminders that we should keep improving what is important; our actions and our midot.

Hashem loves us for who we are, and through the Torah, he shows how much we can grow to be even greater. The images of the animal and kohen without blemishes remind us how much confidence Hashem has in us to make choices that will lead to greatness in what truly is important.