

Philosophies of the Korbonos
Parsha Vayikra
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Parsahas Vikra as well a great deal of Sefer Varikra is devoted to the subject of korbonos, sacrifices. Given that this entire subject is difficult for the Western mindset to relate to, it is worthwhile to see how the great chachamim of the ages dealt with the philosophy behind the korbonos. Below the positions of the Rambam, Ramban and Kli Yakar are explained.

In his classic work, the *Moreh Nevuchim*, Guide for the Perplexed, the Rambam explains that our sacrifices were a concession to the way Bnai Yisroel were oriented at the time of their exodus from Mitzrayim and receiving the Torah. The Bnai Yisroel were accustomed to seeing animals worshipped. For instance, in Mitzrayim the lamb was worshiped as is well known and the Mesopotamians worshiped demons depicted as goats. In addition, we see in India till this very day the cow is treated as a sacred animal and never slaughtered. By ordering Bnai Yisroel to bring these very same animals as sacrifices, they were shown that Hashem was the one fit to be worshiped and in this way they were weaned away from idolatry.

The Ramban strongly disagrees with this philosophical understanding. The Ramban states that it does not seem logical would ask us to bring specific sacrifices just disprove the notions of those who worship animals as deities. The Ramban further states that this means would not wean them away from idolatry because using such animals as sacrifices increases their reverence for the animal and strengthens their idolatrous convictions, especially if they are used for sacrifice and not eaten. Furthermore, what need was there for Adam, Hevel and later Noach, when he came out of the Teivah, to wean away from idolatry? Yet, the Torah tells us that these individuals all brought korbonos. Rather, the Ramban states, the purpose of korbonos is for kapparah. All of our actions involve thought speech and action [*machshavah*, *dibbur* and *Maase*]. The placing of hands on the animal [*semicha*] corresponds to the action, the confession corresponds to the speech and the burning of the fats and inwards corresponds to the inner thoughts and desires and the sprinkling of the blood corresponds to the blood inside him. The purpose of all of these sacrificial procedures is to make us realize that everything that is happening to the animal should be happening to the person bringing the sacrifice but Hashem is accepting the animal as a substitute and all of the animal's parts are his stand-ins. Furthermore, the Ramban states that the

korbonos have a hidden, mystical side to them as well that is beyond the rational understanding.

The Kli Yakar explains how all of the animals brought as sacrifices are species with horns. Horns can be used for goring. Goring can be directed upward symbolizing a motion of goring towards Hashem or to the sides symbolizing towards other people. Therefore, the Gemara[Shabbos 28B]tells us the animal Udum brought as a sacrifice had only one horn since there were no other people for him to contend with; there was only Hashem for him to deal with. The Kli Yakar also explains that the status of the one committing the sins also affects the size and type of korbon. When the Sanhedrin or Kohen Gadol sins, the damage is greatest so the korbon is a bull. When an average persons sins, there is less damage done so the korbon is a lamb or baby goat in most cases. When a poor person sins the damage is even less so birds or a flour offering are the korbon. The Kli Yakar then explains that the Olah is brought for sinful thoughts that were checked before they led to any action. Hence, the Olah was a male animal symbolizing strength in controlling oneself from acting upon one's bad thoughts. The sin offering was usually a female animal symbolizing the lack of strength to control one's actions. The fats of the animal were burned on the altar symbolizing the fat or over satiation. The giving of the meat of the sin offering to the Kohanim is a gesture of chesed which is a kapparah for the sins as will. The *Shlamim* peace-offerings are shared by the altar, Kohanim, and the people bringing it symbolizing peace and goodwill with everyone getting a portion, thus symbolizing peace with Hashem and everyone else involved.