

# Maamarei Mordechai

הסבר לפי ממש פשוט

Parshas Vayikra 5785

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Moshe is taught about the korbanos.

**דָּבַר אֶל-בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל וְאָמַרְתָּ אֲלֵהֶם אָדָם כִּי-יִקְרִיב מִמֶּנּוּ קָרְבָן לַיהוָה מִן-הַבְּקָר  
וּמִן-הַצֹּאן תִּקְרִיבוּ אֶת-קָרְבָנְכֶם:**

“Speak to Bnei Yisroel and say to them, “Every man—because he will offer an offering for Hashem—it shall be from his domesticated animals, from his cattle and from his flock, you shall bring close the offering.” (Vayikra 1:2).

The Torah is teaching three basic principles about korbanos. They have to be from either cattle or flock; they have to be for Hashem; and they are meant to be brought close. Why are only certain animals meant to be brought as a korban?

A korban must, obviously, be brought from a kosher animal. However, not every kosher animal is fit for a korban. Fish and locusts are excluded. Further, most birds are excluded to. Many kosher mammals are also excluded. There are three categories of animals that are kosher for korbanos: cattle, flock, and certain birds. The cattle category includes only bulls, cows, and oxen. (Ibid 1:3,4:3). The flock animals are only sheep—rams, ewes, lamb—and goats. (Ibid 1:10, 4:23). Two birds, turtledove (ibid 1:14) and pigeons (ibid 5:7), are acceptable. Then there is the non-animal korban, and that is the flour and oil offering. (5:11).

All forms of cervine (deer, hart, gazelle) and other bovine (bison) are unfit. Interestingly, Hashem brought quail to Bnei Yisroel when Bnei Yisroel wanted meat. (Shmos 16:13). Quail, though, is unfit for a korban. Why are only some animals fit for a korban?

The Torah calls korbanos the bread of Hashem. (Vayikra 21:6). It also calls the burning of the offerings a “pleasant odor” to Hashem. (Ibid 3:11). Yet, Hashem, clearly does not need to eat or smell. These are just terms for humans to think there is some benefit given to Hashem. The Torah teaches that the purpose of the korban is not to feed Hashem but for the person to come closer to Hashem. “You shall bring your offering close.” (Ibid 1:2). Some korbanos are mandatory. They are demanded for forgiveness—the chatos and asham—and some for times of thanksgiving like the shlamim and todah. There are daily offerings like the tamid pairs, and those given in awe after life events like the ola and chatos after childbirth or a period of nezirus. No matter what the occasion, the purpose is to bring the giver closer to Hashem.

Kayin, the farmer, decided to bring a thanksgiving offering to Hashem. (Bereishis 4:3). He is the first recorded person to have that notion. He brought a voluntary offering of vegetables. (Ibid). Learning from the good actions of his older brother, Hevel brought

from the choicest of his flock. (Ibid 4:4). Hashem turned to Hevel and his gift offering of flock. (Ibid). However, Hashem did not turn to the vegetarian gift offering. (Ibid 4:5).

Hashem was showing mankind what was fit for korbanos. Vegetables are unfit for an offering. The thought was good. However, Hashem taught mankind early on: “Isn’t it that if you do good then there is support, but if you do not do good, then sin inclines toward the door.” (Ibid 4:7). This means, if you do good – as defined by Hashem – then there is blessing. The word תָּשָׁב (support) or וַיִּשָּׁב (and He turned) are all from the root word of שָׁבַע (salvation). Hevel had a good korban so Hashem gave him salvation, uplifted him, and blessed him. Kayin’s offering did not end up giving him salvation. When one does not do what Hashem considers good, that is when sin lies in wait by his door. Hashem continued. “And to you, you have desire, and you can master it.” (Ibid). Meaning, although this was the incorrect korban, he showed his desire to offer something to Hashem. He has the ability to be master over himself because he desires to do good. He merely needed fine-tuning.

Later, Hashem says that Hevel’s blood is calling from the ground. (Ibid 4:10). It was not necessarily Hevel’s blood. It was the blood of his offerings. Hevel gave flock animals while Kayin gave vegetables. Hashem indicated that it was the blood that was the main part of the offering. The Torah says numerous times that blood shall not be eaten. (E.g., Vayikra 7:26, 17:10). Yet, it is the blood that causes the offering to work. “Because the life of flesh is blood, and I have given to you the top of the mizbeach, for expiation for your souls, because it is the blood that causes expiation.” (Ibid 17:11).

After Kayin and Hevel, Noach gave korbanos. He gave of every kosher animal and every kosher bird. (Bereishis 8:20). He did not limit the korbanos to the specific animals stated in Vayikra, but he did give kosher animals. Melchizedek also brought a korban. He gave a mincha offering of flour and oil – bread, and he did nesech hayayin – the wine libation (ala Bamidbar 15:5). After the incident of Kayin, the world knew that offerings were to be of animals. Simple offerings could be mincha cakes.

Avraham gave a non-descript korban when he came to Eretz Canaan. (Bereishis 12:7). The Covenant of the Parts indicated to him which animals are fit for korbanos. He brought a calf, a she-goat, a ram, a turtledove, and a pigeon. (Ibid 15:9). These are all animals fit for korbanos. In lieu of offering Yitzchok, Avraham brought a ram. (Ibid 22:13). The offerings of Yitzchok and Yaakov are non-descript. However, it is implied that they understood the tradition of what can be offered.

While fish are kosher and are blessed to be fruitful, they do not provide blood to effectuate the offering. The common-denominator of animals that are fit are those that are essential to human work and existence. Cattle are used as beasts of burden and for their hides. Flock animals are used for milk and wool. While other kosher animals serve as food sources, they are (and even to this day) secondary food sources. They also are not essential partners in working the ground and providing clothing. It is the life-blood that serves as the life-blood of the korbanos. A person comes close when he gives what is dear to him. Vegetables are food, but that is all they are. To come close to Hashem, one must offer what he finds essential to living. It is the giving that brings him close.