

Parsha Plug: Parshat Vayikra

ויקרא א:ב	Vayikra 1:2
דִּבֶּר אֶל־בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל וְאָמַרְתָּ אֲלֵהֶם אָדָם כִּי־יִקְרִיב מִכֶּם קָרְבָן לַיהוָה מִן־הַבְּהֵמָה מִן־הַבֶּקֶר וּמִן־הַצֹּאן תִּקְרִיבוּ אֶת־קָרְבָנְכֶם:	Speak to B'nai Yisrael and say to them: "When a person from [among] you brings a sacrifice to the Lord; from animals, from cattle or from the flock you shall bring your sacrifice."

אבן עזרא ויקרא א:ב	Ibn Ezra on Vayikra 1:2
מכם. מאוחר וכן הוא אדם מכם כי יקריב קרבן וכמוהו רבים או יהי מכם ממנוכם או יהיה מכם רמז להוציא את הגזל כי כן כתוב שונא גזל בעול:	From among you: This word appears later in the sentence than is syntactically called for. The sentence is understood as if it read, "any man <i>among you</i> who brings a sacrifice". Many Hebrew sentences exhibit similar constructions or the Torah employs synecdoche and connotes "from your possessions" by the words "from you". By altering its location in the sentence, and stressing "from <i>you</i> ", the Torah alludes to the unacceptability of bringing offerings of stolen animals. Compare, "I hate robbery with burnt offerings" [Yeshayahu 61:8].

רבינו בחיי ויקרא א:ב	Rabbeinu Bachya on Vayikra 1:2
אדם כי יקריב מכם. מתוך הלשון הזה נראה כי אפשר להקריב קרבן מן האדם לפי שהיה לו לומר אדם מכם כי יקריב קרבן, אבל הכתוב הוא מונעו ואוסרו, ובאורו, אדם כשירצה להקריב מכם קרבן לה' מן הבהמה מן הבקר ומן הצאן תקריבו, לא מן האדם, וזהו מאמר הנביא (ירמיהו י"ט:ה) אשר לא צייתי ולא דברתי ולא עלתה על לבי. ומפני זה התחילה פרשת הקרבנות במלת אדם, לומר כי אדם יהיה המקריב ולא הקרבן....ובמדרש אדם כי יקריב מכם, למה נאמר אדם, מה אדם הראשון לא הקריב מן הגזל שהכל היה שלו, אף אתם לא תקריבו מן הגזל.	When a person among you brings an offering: According to the grammar of our verse it could be inferred that a human sacrifice is theoretically permissible. If God had wanted to rule out such a possibility the Torah should have written "a man among you who wants to offer a sacrifice." But a closer look at the text will show that the meaning is this: "If someone among yourselves feels the urge to sacrifice himself to the Lord, you are to do this by means of offering a domestic animal such as a specimen from the cattle or the flock. You are not to take a human being as a sacrifice to the Lord." This is as it is said in Yirmiyahu 19:5 (where the prophet chastises the people for offering human sacrifices including their children to Baal), as God says: "I have never commanded, never decreed, and which never came to My mind." In view of all that we have said, the Torah was careful to commence the legislation with the word אדם כי יקריב, "a man who will offer an offering." He is the sacrificer, not the sacrificed...The Midrash comments on this verse that the reason that the Torah chose the word אדם is to teach that just as when Adam offered a sacrifice, he used an animal which was his (seeing he owned all of the earth), so any offering to God must be legally owned by the person offering it.

ספורנו ויקרא א:ב	Seforno on Vayikra 1:2
אדם כי יקריב מכם כי יקריב מעצמכם בוידוי דברים והכנעה על דרך ונשלמה פרים שפתינו וכאמרו זבחי אלקים רוח	When a person among you brings an offering: When he brings himself close to God by means of a confession of his sins and by humbling himself. The concept parallels the verse in Hoshea 14:3, "We will pay with bulls after having done so first with our lips." Tehillim 51:19 warns "an offering for God is such only if accompanied by a broken

spirit.” The psalmist means that God is not interested in the fools who offer sacrificial animals if they have not first humbled themselves. Our sages paraphrase this when pointing out that the Torah does not write here כולכם, your entire selves, but מכם, something emanating from you, “by excreting the spiritually unworthy parts of you.” [traditionally this refers to the heretic, but here it means our sins and evil inclination].

נשברה, כי אין הפץ בכסילים המקריבים בלתי הכנעה קודמת, וכבר אמרו ז"ל מכם ולא כלכם, להוציא את המומר:

Rabbi Jonathan Sacks, *Vayikra 5772- Self and Sacrifice*

[I]n Hebrew the word order of [our pasuk] is strange and unexpected. We would expect to read: adam mikem ki yakriv, “when one of you offers a sacrifice”. Instead what it says is adam ki yakriv mikem, “when one offers a sacrifice of you”. The essence of sacrifice, said R. Shneur Zalman, is that we offer ourselves. We bring to G-d our faculties, our energies, our thoughts and emotions. The physical form of sacrifice – an animal offered on the altar – is only an external manifestation of an inner act. The real sacrifice is mikem, “of you”. We give G-d something of ourselves. Let us stay with this idea and pursue it further. In sacrifice, what do we give G-d? The Jewish mystics, among them R. Shneur Zalman, spoke about two souls each of us has – the animal soul (nefesh ha-behamit) and the G-dly soul...What we offer G-d is (not just an animal but) the nefesh ha-behamit, the animal soul within us. The verse uses three words for the animals to be sacrificed: behemah (animal), bakar (cattle) and tzon (flock). Each represents an animal-like feature of the human personality. Behemah is animal instinct itself. The word refers to domesticated animals. It does not imply the savage instincts of the predator. What it means is something more tame. Animals spend their time searching for food. Their lives are bounded by the struggle to survive. To sacrifice the animal within us is to be moved by something more than mere survival...The G-dly soul within us is the force that makes us look up, beyond the physical world, beyond mere survival, in search of meaning, purpose, goal. The word bakar, cattle, in Hebrew reminds us of the word boker, “dawn”, literally to “break through”, as the first rays of sunlight break through the darkness of night. Cattle, stampeding, break through barriers. Unless constrained by fences, cattle are no respecters of boundaries. To sacrifice the bakar is to learn to recognize and respect boundaries – between holy and profane, pure and impure, permitted and forbidden. Barriers of the mind can sometimes be stronger than walls. Finally tzon, flocks, represents the herd instinct – the powerful drive to move in a given direction because others are doing likewise. The great figures of Judaism – Abraham, Moses, the prophets – were distinguished precisely by their ability to stand apart from the herd; to be different, to challenge the idols of the age, to refuse to capitulate to the intellectual fashions of the moment. That ultimately is the meaning of holiness in Judaism. Kadosh, the holy, is something set apart, different, separate, distinctive. Jews were the only people in history consistently to refuse to assimilate to the dominant culture or convert to the dominant faith. The noun korban, “sacrifice”, and the verb le-hakriv, “to offer something as a sacrifice” actually mean “that which is brought close” and “the act of bringing close”. The key element is not so much giving something up (the usual meaning of sacrifice) but rather bringing something close to G-d. Le-hakriv is to bring the animal element to be transformed through the Divine fire that once burned on the altar, and still burns at the heart of prayer if we truly seek closeness to G-d...We can redirect our animal instincts. We can rise above mere survival. We are capable of honouring boundaries. We can step outside our environment. We can transcend the behemah, the bakar and the tzon...Poetry, music, love, wonder – the things that have no survival value but which speak to our deepest sense of being – all tell us that we are not mere animals, assemblages of selfish genes. By bringing that which is animal within us close to G-d, we allow the material to be suffused with the spiritual and we become something else: no longer slaves of nature but servants of the living G-d.