

# **Dvar Torah** by **Rabbi Chanoch Yeres**

to his community at

Beit Knesset Beit Yisrael, Yemin Moshe

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## **VAYIKRa**

With the Holiday of Pesach approaching, we begin the third book of the Torah, Sefer Vayikra. The focus of this book is the commandments concerning Korbanot - the sacrifices offered in the sanctuary, brought from the animal, vegetable, and the mineral world. All brought on the Mizbei'ach.

The name Leviticus that means the laws of the tribe of Levi. The Talmud refers to it as Torat Kohanim, the laws of the kohanic family. The contemporary world negated the idea of animal sacrifices as too primitive. Today, the remnants of the idea of sacrifices are limited to biblical references in our morning and Musaf tefilla. The medieval philosopher, Rambam, tried to see the biblical commandment of sacrifices as a concession to religious practices of the time.

Better to G-d, than to some idolatry and better a lamb and not a child. Rambam does not negate G-d's command in this area, but it is obvious that it is challenging to him.

However, I saw a very interesting idea that rejects Rambam's course of

thinking. Perhaps, one can say that sacrifices are innately and intrinsically important in the Jewish worldview, though their purpose may be so subtle and hidden from all but the most committed. The actual biblical term used for sacrifice, KORBAN, is from the root, which means to approach or to come near. The purpose of our sacrifices is to bring man a little closer to G-d. Whatever is living or, for that manner, not living, animal or mineral, all of creation, all is His. That farmer who brings his lamb all the way to Jerusalem to offer to a G-d he cannot see, hear or understand, offering a part of himself translated as in two different ways.

The words in the verse can be ADAM KI YAKRIV MEIHEM (Vayikra 1:2)

"If one from among you shall sacrifice" or it can be read "If one sacrifices, let it be of himself".

The entire animal in us brought upon the altar. The animal kingdom, created as it was for the service of humankind, reaches its highest level when it substitutes for all that is animal within man. Some see the Korban with symbolism.

Others see it as a stage in our spiritual development. Others request that we set aside our understanding all together.

Who is correct? Who grasps the real concept of sacrifices? We may need

to wait until the Temple is rebuilt to fully understand.

The forthcoming Pesach Sacrifice brings the topic down to bear. Korbanot, in general, represents one of many areas in which we must surrender our complete understanding to the awesome mystery of the Creator of our Universe. Now, on the threshold of the Holiday of Pesach, the need to relinquish our intellect to the power of our Redeemer is clearer now than ever before. 🪧