

"When a man among you brings an offering to Hashem." (1:2)

So begins the *Sefer* which deals with the *korbanos*. Some suggest that the *korbanos* raise the specter of needless killing, or reinforce primitive barbaric tendencies. Regrettably, such notions are based in the minds of those who seek to eliminate traditional *Torah* observance.

In his *Moreh Nevuchim*, *Rambam* pursues an historical approach in order to explain the animal sacrifices. Surrounded by pagans on all sides, *Bnei Yisrael* might have desired to imitate the popular animal sacrifices and temple worship. Hashem responded by including these rituals in our own worship. Hashem marked clear and definite restrictions to define what is within the boundaries of *Torah* worship. It may seem that the *Rambam* relegates an almost apologetic importance to *korbanos*. On the contrary, he devotes an entire section of his *Yad Ha'Chazakah* to the intricate laws and regulations which concern *korbanos*.

Ramban openly takes issue with the negative quality of the *Rambam's* explication of *korbanos*. In a more positive orientation *Ramban* posits that *korbanos* are an expression of the sinner who has sinned with his body. Consequently, when the lifeblood of the animal is sprinkled upon the *Mizbayach*, the sinner realizes that, indeed, his own blood should have been spilled for his violation of Hashem's trust. This thesis applies to all *korbanos* which are directed towards expiating sin.

The point of contention with the *Ramban's* approach is that Hevel offered the first flock of his sheep without having committed a prior sin. Noach, the "*ish tzaddik*," offered sacrifices upon surviving the *mabul*, flood. The **Meshech Chochmah** reconciles the opinions of the *Ramban* and *Rambam* by applying them to two disparate forms of sacrifice. The *korbanos* offered privately upon the *bamos*, private altars, were to assuage the people and dislodge them from the pagan rituals. The *bamah* was of a personal nature. The individual had the opportunity to express himself favorably to Hashem. This is consistent with the *Rambam's* theory that *korbanos* were a means to protect the people from the onslaught of paganism.

The *korbanos* which were offered in the *Bais Ha'Mikdash*, however, were intended to unite man with his Maker. They were to expose him to the sanctity of the Sanctuary, stimulating his desire to attain purification via repentance. The distinction between the *bamah* and the *Bais Ha'Mikdash* is expressed by the concept of "*re'ach nicho'ach*," the sweet savory smell, which "goes up" to Hashem. The "*re'ach nicho'ach*" is mentioned only concerning sacrifices which were offered in the *Bais Ha'Mikdash*. In fact, in the *Talmud Zevachim* 113, *Chazal* state that there is no *re'ach nicho'ach* from *korbanos* offered upon a *bamah*.

Horav Eliyahu Schlesinger, Shlita, suggests that herein lies the difference between prayer offered in the *Bais Ha'Knesses* and personal supplication offered outside the *shul*. After the destruction of the *Bais Ha'Mikdash*, our lips took the place of sacrifices, our entreaty through prayer

and devotion supplanted the *korbanos*. Certainly personal prayer, regardless of where it is offered, has great merit. It is, however, viewed as a *korban* offered upon a *bamah*. *Tefillah* which is conveyed in a *shul*, a house designated and maintained for worship, is parallel to the *korbanos* in the *Bais Ha'Mikdash* which render a *re'ach nicho'ach*.

The purpose of *korbanos* is to bring us closer to Hashem. Kayin offered a sacrifice to Hashem for no apparent purpose. In no way did he attempt to elevate himself spiritually, to bring himself closer to Hashem. *Horav* Schlesinger notes that regarding Hevel's *korban*, the *Torah* states, *ubtm, urufcn tuv od thcv kcvuw "And Hevel also brought of the firstlings of his flock" (Bereishis 4:4)*. The words *tuv od*, can be interpreted as "also himself." Hevel's focus in bringing the *korban* was to bring himself closer to Hashem through the medium of sacrifice. It was the lofty purpose of the *korban* that granted its efficacy and acceptance by Hashem.

This same idea applies to *tefillah*. One prays to Hashem as an avenue by which to draw himself nearer to Hashem, as he ennobles himself spiritually. *Tefillah* for the sake of praying, because it is the thing to do, is not *tefillah*. As the *Baal Shem Tov* commented, "*One, who after he prayed, remains the same as he was before he prayed, is viewed as if he never prayed at all.*"