

If one from among you should bring an offering

וַיִּקְרָא אֶל מֹשֶׁה וַיְדַבֵּר ה' אֵלָיו מֵאֹהֶל מוֹעֵד לֵאמֹר: דַּבֵּר אֶל בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל וְאָמַרְתָּ אֲלֵהֶם אָדָם כִּי יִקְרִיב מִכֶּם קָרְבָן לַה' מִן הַבְּהֵמָה מִן הַבֶּקָר וּמִן הַצֹּאן תִּקְרִיבוּ אֶת קָרְבַּנְכֶם: (ויקרא א א-ב).

God summoned Moshe and spoke to him from the tent of meeting, saying:

Speak to Bnei Yisrael, and say to them: If one [אדם] from among you should bring an offering of livestock to God, you shall bring your offering from the herd or from the flock.

(Lev. 1:1-2)

Sifra, Vayikra Dibbura d'Nedavah, Section 2: How is an offering made?¹

If one from among you should bring an offering – Could this be an obligation? It is therefore written, "If one ... should bring an offering" therefore, this is voluntary.²

An offering to God – he must sanctify it before offering it up; these are the words of R. Yehudah.³ R. Shimon said: from where is it derived that one should not say: "To God, a burnt-offering," "To God, a meal-offering," "To God, a peace-offering," but instead should say, "A burnt offering to God," "A meal offering to God," "A Peace-offering to God?" It is therefore written, "an offering (korban) to God." Now is this not a *kal vachomer*?⁴ If with respect to what is destined to be sanctified, the Torah states that the name of Heaven is to be mentioned only after "korban" – how much more so must the name of Heaven not be mentioned in vain!⁵

Vayikra Rabbah, Section 2: A selection of comments on 'One' and 'Bnei Yisrael'

1: *Speak to Bnei Yisrael, and say to them: If one from among you should bring an offering of livestock to God* – "The son who is dear to me, Ephraim;" there are ten who were called 'dear': Torah, and prophecy, and wisdom, and knowledge and foolishness, and wealth, and the righteous, and the death

¹ The transition to Vayikra is accompanied by two primary midrashic compilations: one is tannaitic – the Sifra (Torat Kohanim), and the other is amoraitic – Vayikra Rabbah. A synopsis (in Hebrew) of these midrashic compilations can be found [here](#) and [here](#).

² The Torah opens the instruction of sacrifices with voluntary offerings, and only later lists the sin offering (חטאת) guilt offering (אשם) and other obligatory offerings, both public offerings, and private ones (e.g. offerings brought by a birthing mother or a leper), and other categories such as the peace offering (שלמים), discussed in [Shelamim are Peace](#) in Parashat Tzav. But, all of these are discussed only after the voluntary offerings. The midrash (Vayikra Rabbah, Emor, 27:12) states: "in the future, all the sacrifices will be nullified, but the thanksgiving sacrifice is never nullified; all the gratitude is nullified, but the thanksgiving offering is never nullified." Perhaps this is also the case with regard to prayer, which is modeled after sacrifices; the verse in Tehillim states, "Please accept the willing praise of my mouth, Hashem" (Ps. 119:108); does this mean in the future ideal world there will be nothing but prayers of thanksgiving?

³ In other words, the one offering the sacrifice has to state in advance that the animal is sanctified as a sacrifice to God: the act of sacrifice is dependent on stating this orally, which is considered an oath. Chazal emphasized that it is best to make this declaration just before bringing the offering, to avoid failing to fulfill the oath, or to avoid bringing it later than promised (in practice, stating orally is not required, and deciding to bring a sacrifice is sufficient).

⁴ [an extrapolation from a minor premise to a major one]

⁵ There can be an element of commitment in voluntary sacrifices as well, since committing to offering a sacrifice is the equivalent of a vow: "Whatever your lips utter you must diligently perform, just as you *have voluntarily vowed* to the Lord your God with your own mouth" (Deut. 23:24); and see [as you have voluntarily vowed](#) in Parashat Ki Tetze. If one decides to state the intention to offer a sacrifice he must use the formulation "sacrifice to God" rather than "for God is this sacrifice" in case he is prevented from completing the sentence and utters God's name in vain. Midrash Tanhuma, Bereishit, 6: "R. Shimon b. Yochai says: Woe to blasphemers who take the name of the Holy One lightly, for one should not say: 'To God an offering,' 'to God a burnt offering.' But rather, 'if one from among you should bring an offering of livestock to God,' or 'a sin offering' or 'a burnt offering' or 'a meal offering.'"

of the pious, and piety, and Israel [...] how do we know that Israel were called 'dear'? As it is written, "The son who is dear to me, Ephraim" – Israel remains dear to me.⁶

4: *Speak to Bnei Yisrael* – R. Yudan in the name of R. Yishmael b. Nahman: This is analogous to a king who had an undergarment. He would instruct his servant to fold it and shake it out and take care of it. The servant said: Sire, of all the garments you have, why is this the only one you concern yourself with? The king responded: this is the one closest to my body. So too Moshe said to God: King of the Universe, of the seventy nations of the world, why do you only send me to command Israel; "instruct Bnei Yisrael," "Speak to Bnei Yisrael," "Tell Bnei Yisrael?" God said: because they are closest to me, as it is written, "For as a belt is bound around the waist of a man [so I bound all the people of Israel]" (Jer. 13:11).⁷

6: R. Yehoshua of Sahnin in the name of R. Levy said: even the Torah honored Israel when it said: "if one from among you should bring an offering." In contrast, when the Torah speaks of something shameful it doesn't say, 'one *from among you* who might have leprosy in his flesh,' but instead says, "one who might have a swelling or a rash..." (Lev. 13:2).⁸

7: R. Berakhya said: God told this person:⁹ Son of Adam, your offering shall be like the offering of Adam; everything belonged to him, and he could not bring a stolen offering; similarly, you shall not bring a stolen offering. If you do so, "This will please God more than an ox, more than a bull with its horns and hooves" (Ps. 69:32).¹⁰

⁶ The midrash continues to praise Am Yisrael and describes their preciousness: "God said: Israel are precious to me [...] if Pharaoh had requested the weight of each and every one of Israel in precious stones, surely I would have given them to him."

⁷ The midrash continues with additional parables that praise Israel and highlight their endearment: "They are the first ones to declare that I was king over the sea," "They are the ones who accepted my kingship in Sinai." These midrashim refer specifically to the beginning of the verse, "speak to Bnei Yisrael," and ignore the second part of the verse, "If one [אדם] from among you should bring an offering." When the verse in Yirmiyahu is read in context this is not praise, but rather a criticism of Israel: "For as a belt is bound around the waist of a man so I bound all the people of Israel and the whole house of Judah to me, declares God, to be my people for my renown and praise and honor; but they have not listened."

⁸ This midrash refers to the fact that the verse begins with 'Bnei Yisrael' and continues with the term אדם. However, the midrash views the אדם as an integral part of Bnei Yisrael, as emphasized by the phrase 'from among you.' In the laws of tzaraat, which certainly pertain to Bnei Yisrael and not to all people, the Torah does not state 'from among you,' while in this verse it goes out of its way to emphasize 'from among you.' Ibn Ezra, Ramban, Hizkuni, and others 'correct' the order of the text, changing the order from אדם כי יקריב מכם כי יקריב מכם (the translation of the verse above reflects this 'corrected' order); this interpretation clarifies that 'from among you' is an extension of 'Bnei Yisrael,' and that the purpose of the verse is to honor Bnei Yisrael. The disadvantage of this commentary is that it ignores the significance of the phrase אדם instead of viewing the deliberate addition as significant. Similarly, the midrash later notes the distinction between the verse "there will be no pauper *among you*" and the verse "paupers will never cease from *within* (מקרב) the land;" the midrash explains that while paupers may never cease from the land, there will be no paupers *within* the nation of Israel.

⁹ This 'one' [אדם] mentioned in the verse, who wishes to offer a voluntary sacrifice.

¹⁰ Throughout midrashic literature this verse is understood as referencing Adam's offering. For example, in Avot deRabbi Natan, Nusach A, 1: "When evening fell, Adam saw the world darken; he turned west and said: It is because I have sinned that God is darkening the world for me, since Adam did not know that this is the way of the world. When morning came, he saw the world alight, and turned to the East and was very happy; he stood and built altars and brought an ox whose horns go before his hooves and sacrificed it as a burnt offering, as it is written, 'This will please God more than an ox, more than a bull with its horns and hooves' (Ps. 69:32). The ox offered by Adam and the bullock offered by Noah and the ram offered by Avraham instead of his son upon the altar – in all of these their horns went before their hooves." See also the Talmud in Avoda Zara 8a; Hullin 60a; Shabbat 28b; Rosh Hashana 26a; and more. Adam also merited the hidden light (see [ha-Or she-nignaz](#)) and this initiated the tradition of the priestly garments (Bemidbar Rabbah 4:8) and in this Adam is [compared to Moshe](#), linking the beginning of Vayikra with the beginning of Bereishit. One who brings a voluntary offering to the Temple is cautioned to ensure he acts like Adam, and avoid bringing a stolen offering; moreover, Adam offered his burnt offering in gratitude to God for giving him light and understanding that darkness is "the way of the world." But once the midrash makes the comparison to Adam, how can it cope with the verse's exclusivity toward "from among you," and deny the descendants of Adam the ability to offer sacrifices to God?

12:¹¹ *You shall bring your offering from the herd or from the flock* – Blessed is God who counts himself among the early pious ones: Adam sacrificed a bullock on his altar, as it is written, "This will please God more than an ox, more than a bull with its horns and hooves" (Ps. 69:32); Noah followed the Torah's instruction, as it is written, "and Noah built an altar for God" (Gen. 8:20); Avraham kept the entire Torah, as it is written, "because Avraham listened to me..." when he sacrificed a ram; Yitzhak [...]; Yaakov [...]; Yehuda [...]; Yosef [...] – they all kept the Torah of their own accord, even before it was given. Therefore, God loved them wholly, and compared their names to his own. The verse says about them, "Blessed are those whose ways are blameless, who walk according to the law of God" (Ps. 119:1).¹²

9: *If one (אדם) from among you should bring an offering* (Lev. 1:2) – why does the verse [use the word אדם to describe the one sacrificing] instead of stating איש as it is written elsewhere, "Speak to all the congregation of Israel ... and let them take a lamb for the household of every man (איש)" (Ex. 12:3); here too the verse should say, 'Let each man (איש) take cattle!'¹³ Why does it say instead אדם? In order to include the convert.¹⁴

From among you – to distinguish from the gentile, who may only offer a burnt-offering.¹⁵ R. Shimon b. Gamliel said: Seven regulations were set by the Sanhedrin, and this was one of them: a gentile who came from across the sea who would bring wine for his offering can offer his wine with the offering; but if he did not bring wine to pour on the offering, wine is brought for his offering from public funds.¹⁶

¹¹ This selection from sections 8, 9, 10 seems sequential in the midrash, and we omitted parts that were off topic for this discussion.

¹² The midrash continues the idea in the previous section and returns to Sefer Bereishit in light of the word אדם: God counts Himself among the righteous ancestors – Adam, Noah (and perhaps Hanokh, Shem and Ever), and the patriarchs. The midrash emphasizes the process of convergence toward God's chosen people, through the patriarchs who kept the laws of the Torah before it was even given, until the acceptance of the Torah at Sinai. This may be a hint to the nations who rejected the Torah and refused to continue the path of the righteous ancestors; see [Mitzvot before Sinai](#) on Lekh Lekha and [The Patriarchs kept the Torah](#) in Toldot. In light of this, what is the midrashic comment on אדם – is it a specific reference to Adam, or a more general statement about the early generations of humanity; and does this include or exclude the nations, and the converts? Who are those "whose ways are blameless?"

¹³ This midrash focuses on the Torah's use of the word אדם instead of איש (both synonyms for 'man' or 'person'). The comparison to the verse that describes taking the Paschal lamb is unclear: it may be connected to the use of איש in the specific context of sacrifice.

¹⁴ Presumably the convert mentioned here is not one who converted to Judaism, who is considered a full Jew and needs no inclusion, but rather a גר תושב – a 'resident convert' – a non-Jew who lives among the Jews in Israel (and therefore accepts some general Torah laws that apply to the public sphere).

¹⁵ A non-Jew can bring a voluntary burnt offering; the distinction here is generally understood as the non-Jew's exclusion from *semicha* – the act of leaning on the sacrifice before it is offered; see also Rosh Hashana 33a; Hagiga 16b; Eruvin 96b regarding *semicha* for women.

¹⁶ A non-Jew can bring sacrifices to the Temple, and if his sacrifice is lacking any required component that is added to offerings – such as wine, oil, or grain – these can be taken from the Temple funds, which are provided by donations! The source for accepting a sacrifice from non-Jews is found in the Talmud, Menahot 73b: "As it is taught: 'Any man [*ish ish* ... that brings his offering].' Why does the verse state [twice] "*ish ish*"? In order to include the gentiles, who can pledge to bring vow offerings and gift offerings like a Jew." Including the non-Jew in the laws of sacrifices is not derived from the word אדם in the second verse of Leviticus, but rather from the doubling of the word איש in another verse, in Parashat Emor (Lev. 22:18). Later in the sugya R. Yossi expands this to include thanksgiving offerings and other sacrifices, while R. Akiva limits the inclusion of non-Jews to voluntary burnt offerings. R. Shimshon Raphael Hirsch comments on this verse: "The altar of the God of Israel accepts the sacrifice of all people ... the primary concept of sacrificial offerings, which is that man devotes himself to the Heavens – exists in the heart of the non-Jew." See also the discussion in Hullin 13b, which states that we accept offerings from gentiles without concern for heresy: "There is no heresy among the nations." Conversely, when a Jew offers a sacrifice, "From among you – and not from all of you, excluding the heretic; from among you – to exclude some of you, but not to exclude the non-Jew." In other words the inclusion 'from among you' can sometimes be exclusionary specifically to Israel. For the halakhic practice, see Rambam, Hilkhot Maaseh ha-Korbanot 3:2, who limits the type of sacrifices a non-Jew can offer.

8: *One (אדם) from among you who might bring an offering* – The word אדם is a term of endearment, and brotherhood, and friendship. When God spoke to Ezekiel he called him 'son of Adam' – the son of worthy people, son of righteous people, son of charitable people, son of those who humble themselves to honor God and to honor Israel all their lives.¹⁷

Another idea: What is 'son of Adam'? This is similar to a human king, whose wife and sons rebelled against him, and he banished them from his house. He then sent for one of her sons and told him: son of so-and-so, come and I will show you my home and my dwelling apart from your mother. Have I any less glory with your mother outside it? This is similar to Ezekiel [...] God showed him His entire chariot, and told him: Son of Adam, is this my glory, since I elevated you above all the nations of the world?¹⁸ Have I any less honor, or my home any less glory? Perhaps you might say I have no one to worship me? I have 496,000 angels who stand and sanctify my name daily from sunrise to sunset and say, "Holy, holy, holy" and "Blessed is God's honor from his place!"¹⁹ Not to mention seventy tongues in the land.²⁰ And why do you act in such evil, inappropriate ways? [...] But what can I do, but act for the sake of my great name, which was placed upon you, as it is written, "But for the sake of my name, I brought them out of Egypt. I did it to keep my name from being profaned in the eyes of the nations" (Ez. 20:9).²¹

Midrash Agaddah, Vayikra, Parashat Behukotai, 27: No Human Sacrifice!

[...] at that time, God was angry [at Yiftach]; he said: if a dog or a pig would have emerged from the house, would you have sacrificed it to my name? So what did God do? He gave his daughter the idea to come out toward him, in order to teach all subsequent people who take an oath the laws of oaths, as it is written, "and behold, his daughter was coming out toward him" (Judg. 11:34).²² When Yiftach saw her, he said, "oh my daughter, you have done me in" (11:35). When he wanted to offer her as a sacrifice, his daughter said: oh father, I was coming out to express joy that you vanquished God's

¹⁷ This midrash links the word אדם in the verse, which describes the person sacrificing an offering to God, with the prophet Ezekiel, who is called upon by God using the name בן אדם (son of Adam), on 93 (!) different occasions in the book of Ezekiel. 'Son of Adam' is an honorary epithet: "The son of worthy people, son of righteous people, son of charitable people, son of those who humble themselves to honor God and to honor Israel all their lives." Perhaps these qualities merit Ezekiel the honor of seeing the divine chariot.

¹⁸ In other words, 'is this worthy of my honor?'

¹⁹ Referring to Ezekiel as Son of Adam before showing him the divine chariot is simultaneously a call of closeness and distance: he is given the opportunity to see the divine chariot despite his humanity, but on the other hand, the gap also emphasizes his humanity, especially compared with the army of angels who stand to praise God daily. Perhaps the parallel on earth is the priests who serve in the Temple and come as close to God as humanly possible, also emphasizing the gap from non-priests. The prophet Malachi (2:7) compares the ideal priests to angels.

²⁰ This minor addition returns the midrash to the realm of people, and once again hints at the nations offering sacrifices to the God of Israel: "From the place the sun rises to the place it sets my name shall be great among the nations; and in every place incense shall be offered unto my name, and a pure offering: for my name shall be great among the nations" (Malachi 1:11). Even if they do not accept God as their own, this indicates an acknowledgement of God; see Menahot 110a; Bemidbar Rabbah 16:27; Tanhuma Ekev, 4; and more. The midrash links the use of אדם at the beginning of Vayikra with Ezekiel's 'Son of Adam,' and derives from here that non-Jews can bring offerings to the Temple. We added the verse in Malachi which glues these together.

²¹ According to the midrash, Bnei Yisrael, who are the primary addressees of the parasha, cease to act appropriately as expected from an אדם – a child of Adam, and God is forced to redeem them in defense of his name. Here the אדם indicates Israel's disgrace, instead of praise, as if to say, if you are an אדם, act in a manner that is appropriate for a descendent of Adam. The midrash goes on (section 9): "*Livestock...from the herd or from the flock* – once the verse said livestock, why should it specify 'from the herd or from the flock?' To indicate that we accept offerings from those who are wicked among Bnei Yisrael in order to welcome them under the wings of the *shechina*, apart from the heretic, and one who uses the prohibited wine, and one who publicly desecrates Shabbat." We see here that while we are not concerned with heretics among the nations, Jews are held to a higher standard.

²² This is the story of Yiftach's daughter (Judg. 11). See [Yiftach's Daughter](#) in Parashat Behukotai.

enemies, and now you want to slaughter me? Does the Torah state that Israel are to offer a human sacrifice? Does it not say, "If one from among you should bring an offering of livestock to God," and not a human sacrifice? She told him: Amend your ways, for you are mistaken! But he told her: "My daughter, I have made an oath that the first one to come out of my home will be slaughtered for God. She said: But can an oath always be kept? Yaakov proves that this is not so, since he took an oath and said, "I will give you a tenth of anything you give me" (Gen. 28:22), but God gave him 12 sons and one daughter; and did he sacrifice even one of his children to God? When the righteous Hannah took an oath and said, "And I shall give him to God all the days of his life" (1Sam 1:11), did she then sacrifice her son to God? She brought all these proofs, but he would not accept them.²³

Shabbat Shalom!

Mehalkei Hamayim

Mayim Achronim:

Additional factors in the offering of sacrifices may be derived from the story of Kamtza and Bar Kamtza. In that story, Rabbis refused to accept a sacrifice from the emperor because it had a blemish, ignoring the important factor of maintaining peace with the monarchy. This decision led to the destruction of the Temple. Another midrash that minimizes the law against accepting sacrifice from non-Jews is the following story of R. Yossi b. Halafta:

Psikta Rabbati, Addendum 1, Section 1: Ox or Sheep

The Rabbi teaches us: Do we accept a sacrifice brought by a non-Jew? The Rabbis taught that a non-Jew can offer donations, but not sacrifices, because their sacrifices are unacceptable to God, as Shlomo said: "The sacrifice of the wicked is detestable" (Pro. 21:27). Once a gentile asked R. Yossi b. Halafta: why do you not accept our sacrifices? Does it not say, "From the place the sun rises to the place it sets my name shall be great among the nations; and in every place incense shall be offered unto my name, and a pure offering: for my name shall be great among the nations" (Malachi 1:11)? R. Yossi responded: You read what suits you and do not read that which does not. When Bilaam and Balak wanted to offer sacrifices to God he would not accept them, as it is written, "Will God be pleased with thousands of rams..." (Micha 6:7), as it is written, "and Hashem your God did not wish to listen to Bilaam" (Deut. 23:6) [...] He said, surely the Torah was referring to the wicked, for God rejects even the offering of a wicked Jew. Moreover, why are you citing prophets instead of the Torah itself!²⁴ R. Yossi responded: You are correct that this is an explicit verse: [...] "Nor shall you accept

²³ This tragic episode was discussed at length in [Yiftach's Daughter](#) in Parashat Behukotai, where we noted that the severe indictment the midrash presents is not only against Yiftach, but also against Pinchas, who failed to nullify Yiftach's oath in order to preserve his own honor. We also showed that according to Resh Lakish the vow was not even valid, and all Pinchas had to do was correct Yiftach's misimpression. Here the midrash wanted to highlight the heartbreaking cry of Yiftach's daughter: "Does the Torah state that Israel are to offer a human sacrifice? Does it not say, 'If one from among you should bring an offering of livestock to God,' and not human sacrifice?" This is similar to Yirmiyahu's outcry: "And they go on building the high place of Topheth, which is in the valley of the son of Hinnom, to burn their sons and their daughters in the fire—which I did not command, nor did it come into my mind" (Jer. 7:31; see also 19:5; 32:35). This is a relevant message for our generation, when some people question the morality of the Torah's commandment to sacrifice animals, and a reminder of the culture against which the Torah had to battle. Rambam addressed this matter in his Guide to the Perplexed (III: 32).

²⁴ The gentile who argued with R. Yossi b. Halafta seemed to know the rabbinic sources on the matter, and his arguments are sound. See Sifra Vayikra, Dibura Dinedava, 2:2, which indicates that the verse is stated about Bnei Yisrael, not about the converts: "Adam – to include the converts, and exclude the heretics ... just like Israel accept the covenant, the

any such animals from a foreigner to offer as food to your God; since they are mutilated" (Lev. 22:25), but I will accept sacrifices from Israel, as it is written, "An ox or a sheep or a goat..."²⁵

converts accept the covenant, but the heretics are excluded, since they do not accept the covenant, and they breached the covenant, as it is written, "The sacrifice of the wicked is detestable."

²⁵ The last verse cited by R. Yossi b. Halafta, "Nor shall you accept any such animals from a foreigner to offer as food to your God," does not exclude sacrifices offered by gentiles; see Sifra, Emor, 7, which explains that this is in reference to the daily burnt offering. See also Yerushalmi, Avodah Zarah 2:1, in the discussion about David accepting offerings from Arvana Hayevusi; and see [Purchasing the Temple Mount](#) for Yom Yerushalayim. This matter demands more exploration.