Korbanot: Ramban vs. Rambam

**רמב"ן ויקרא פרק א**

והנה בכתוב הזה טעם הקרבנות שהם אשה ריח ניחוח לה'. ואמר הרב במורה הנבוכים (ג מו) כי טעם הקרבנות, בעבור שהמצרים והכשדים, אשר היו ישראל גרים ותושבים בארצם מעולם, היו עובדים לבקר ולצאן, כי המצרים עובדים לטלה והכשדים עובדים לשדים אשר יראו להם בדמות שעירים, ואנשי הודו עד היום לא ישחטו בקר לעולם. בעבור כן צוה לשחוט אלה השלשה מינין לשם הנכבד כדי שיודע כי הדבר שהיו חושבים כי הם בתכלית העבירה הוא אשר יקריבו לבורא, ובו יתכפרו העונות. כי כן יתרפאו האמונות הרעות שהם מדוי הנפש, כי כל מדוה וכל חולי לא יתרפא כי אם בהפכו. אלה דבריו ובהם האריך:

והנה הם דברי הבאי, ירפאו שבר גדול וקושיא רבה על נקלה, יעשו שולחן ה' מגואל שאיננו רק להוציא מלבן של רשעים וטפשי עולם, והכתוב אמר כי הם לחם אשה לריח ניחוח:

וגם כי לפי שטותם של מצרים לא תתרפא מחלתם בזה, אבל תוסיף מכאוב, כי מחשבת הרשעים הנזכרים לעבוד למזל טלה ומזל שור שיש להם כח בהם כפי מחשבתם, ולכן לא יאכלו אותם לכבוד כחם ויסודם, אבל אם יזבחו אותם לשם הנכבד זה כבוד להם ומעלה, והם עצמם כך הם נוהגים, כמו שאמר (ויקרא יז ז) ולא יזבחו עוד את זבחיהם לשעירים, ועושי העגל זבחו לו. והרב מזכיר שהיו מקריבים ללבנה בכל ראשי חדשיהם, ולשמש בעלותה במזלות הידועים להם בספריהם. ויותר תתרפא המחלה באכלינו מהם לשובע שהוא אסור להם ומגונה בעיניהם ולא יעשו כן לעולם:

והנה נח בצאתו מן התיבה עם שלשת בניו אין בעולם כשדי או מצרי הקריב קרבן וייטב בעיני ה' ואמר בו (בראשית ח כא) וירח ה' את ריח הניחוח. וממנו אמר אל לבו לא אוסיף עוד לקלל את האדמה בעבור האדם (שם). והבל הביא גם הוא מבכורות צאנו ומחלביהן, וישע ה' אל הבל ואל מנחתו (שם ד ד), ולא היה עדיין בעולם שמץ ע"ז כלל. ובלעם אמר את שבעת המזבחות ערכתי ואעל פר ואיל במזבח (במדבר כג ד), ואין דעתו עתה לשלול ממנו אמונות רעות, ולא נצטוה בכך, אבל עשה כן לקרבה אל האלהים כדי שיחול עליו הדבור. ולשון הקרבנות את קרבני לחמי לאשי ריח ניחוחי (שם כח ב), וחלילה שלא יהא בהם שום תועלת ורצון רק שוללות ע"ז מדעת השוטים:

**ויותר ראוי לשמוע הטעם שאומרים בהם**, כי בעבור שמעשי בני אדם נגמרים במחשבה ובדבור ובמעשה, צוה השם כי כאשר יחטא יביא קרבן, יסמוך ידיו עליו כנגד המעשה, ויתודה בפיו כנגד הדבור, וישרוף באש הקרב והכליות שהם כלי המחשבה והתאוה, והכרעים כנגד ידיו ורגליו של אדם העושים כל מלאכתו, ויזרוק הדם על המזבח כנגד דמו בנפשו, כדי שיחשוב אדם בעשותו כל אלה כי חטא לאלהיו בגופו ובנפשו, וראוי לו שישפך דמו וישרף גופו לולא חסד הבורא שלקח ממנו תמורה וכפר הקרבן הזה שיהא דמו תחת דמו, נפש תחת נפש, וראשי אברי הקרבן כנגד ראשי אבריו, והמנות להחיות בהן מורי התורה שיתפללו עליו. וקרבן התמיד, בעבור שלא ינצלו הרבים מחטוא תמיד. ואלה דברים מתקבלים מושכים את הלב כדברי אגדה:

**ועל דרך האמת** יש בקרבנות סוד נעלם, תכנס בו ממה שאמרו רבותינו בספרי (פנחס קמג) ובסוף מנחות (קי א), אמר שמעון בן עזאי בא וראה מה כתיב בפ' הקרבנות שלא נאמר בהם לא אל ולא אלהיך ולא אלהים ולא שדי ולא צבאות אלא יו"ד ה"א שם המיוחד, שלא ליתן פתחון פה לבעל הדין לחלוק. ושמא תאמר לאכילה הוא צריך, תלמוד לומר אם ארעב לא אומר לך כי לי תבל ומלואה (תהלים נ יב), לא אמרתי לכם זבחו אלא כדי שיאמר ויעשה רצוני:

**Guide, 3:46**

THE precepts of the eleventh class [have been] described use in general terms (chap. xxxii.). I will now proceed to give the reason of each precept separately…

Most idolaters objected to killing cattle, holding this species of animals in great estimation. Therefore the people of Hodu [Indians] up to this day do not slaughter cattle even in those countries where other animals are slaughtered. In order to eradicate these false principles, the Law commands us to offer sacrifices only of these three kinds: "Ye shall bring your offering of the cattle [viz.], of the herd and of the flock" (Lev. i. 2). Thus the very act which is considered by the heathen as the greatest crime, is the means of approaching God, and obtaining His pardon for our sins. In this manner, evil principles, the diseases of the human soul, are cured by other principles which are diametrically opposite.

This is also the reason why we were commanded to kill a lamb on Passover, and to sprinkle the blood thereof outside on the gates. We had to free ourselves of evil doctrines and to proclaim the opposite, viz., that the very act which was then considered as being the cause of death would be the cause of deliverance from death. Comp. "And the Lord will pass over the door, and will not suffer the destroyer to come unto your houses" (Exod. xii. 23). Thus they were rewarded for performing openly a service every part of which was objected to by the idolaters…

The idolaters did not offer any other bread but leavened, and chose sweet things for their sacrifices, which they seasoned with honey, as is fully described in the books which I named before: but salt is not mentioned in any of their sacrifices. Our Law therefore forbade us to offer leaven or honey, and commanded us to have salt in every sacrifice

**Moreh Nevuchim 3:32**

On considering the Divine acts, or the processes of Nature, we get an insight into the prudence and wisdom of God as displayed in the creation of animals, with the gradual development of the movements of their limbs and the relative positions of the latter, and we perceive also His wisdom and plan in the successive and gradual development of the whole condition of each individual. The gradual development of the animals' movements and the relative position of the limbs may be illustrated by the brain…In a similar manner did God provide for each individual animal of the class of mammalia. When such an animal is born it is extremely tender, and cannot be fed with dry food. Therefore breasts were provided which yield milk, and the young can be fed with moist food which corresponds to the condition of the limbs of the animal, until the latter have gradually become dry and hard.

Many precepts in our Law are the result of a similar course adopted by the same Supreme Being. It is, namely, impossible to go suddenly from one extreme to the other: it is therefore according to the nature of man impossible for him suddenly to discontinue everything to which he has been accustomed…The Israelites were commanded to devote themselves to His service; comp. "and to serve him with all your heart" (*ibid*. xi. 13); "and you shall serve the Lord your God" (Exod. xxiii. 25… *But the custom which was in those days general among all men, and the general mode of worship in which the Israelites were brought up, consisted in sacrificing animals in those temples which contained certain images*, to bow down to those images, and to burn incense before them; religious and ascetic persons were in those days the persons that were devoted to the service in the temples erected to the stars, as has been explained by us. *It was in accordance with the wisdom and plan of God, as displayed in the whole Creation, that He did not command us to give up and to discontinue all these manners of service*; for to obey such a commandment it would have been contrary to the nature of man, who generally cleaves to that to which he is used; it would in those days have made the same impression as a prophet would make at present if he called us to the service of God and told us in His name, *that we should not pray to Him, not fast, not seek His help in time of trouble;* *that we should serve Him in thought, and not by any action*. For this reason God allowed these kinds of service to continue; He transferred to His service that which had formerly served as a worship of created beings, and of things imaginary and unreal, and commanded us to serve Him in the same manner; viz., to build unto Him a temple, to have the altar erected to His name, *to offer the sacrifices to Him*, to bow down to Him and to burn incense before Him…By this Divine plan it was effected that the traces of idolatry were blotted out, and the truly great principle of our faith, the Existence and Unity of God, was firmly established; this result was thus obtained without deterring or confusing the minds of the people by the abolition of the service to which they were accustomed and which alone was familiar to them.

I know that you will at first thought reject this idea and find it strange; you will put the following question to me in your heart: *How can we suppose that Divine commandments, prohibitions, and important acts, which are fully explained, and for which certain seasons are fixed, should not have been commanded for their own sake, but only for the sake of some other thing: as if they were only the means which He employed for His primary object*? What prevented Him from making His primary object a direct commandment to us, and to give us the capacity of obeying it? Those precepts which in your opinion are only the means and not the object would then have been unnecessary. Hear my answer, which will cure your heart of this disease and will show you the truth of that which I have pointed out to you. There occurs in the Law a passage which contains exactly the same idea; it is the following: "God led them not through the way of the land of the Philistines, although that was near; for God said, Lest peradventure the people repent when they see war, and they return to Egypt; but God led the people about, through the way of the wilderness of the Red Sea," etc. (Exod. xiii. 17). *Here God led the people about, away from the direct road which He originally intended, because He feared they might meet on that way with hardships too great for their ordinary strength*; He took them by another road in order to obtain thereby His original object. *In the same manner God refrained from prescribing what the people by their natural disposition would be incapable of obeying, and gave the above-mentioned commandments as a means of securing His chief object, viz., to spread a knowledge of Him [among the people], and to cause them to reject idolatry*…

As the sacrificial service is not the primary object [of the commandments about sacrifice], whilst supplications, prayers, and similar kinds of worship are nearer to the primary object, and indispensable for obtaining it, a great difference was made in the Law between these two kinds of service. The one kind, which consists in offering sacrifices, although the sacrifices are offered to the name of God, has not been made obligatory for us to the same extent as it had been before. We were not commanded to sacrifice in every place, and in every time, or to build a temple in every place, or to permit anyone who desires to become priest and to sacrifice. On the contrary, all this is prohibited unto us...All these restrictions served to limit this kind of worship, and keep it within those bounds within which God did not think it necessary to abolish sacrificial service altogether. But prayer and supplication can be offered everywhere and by every person.

Because of this principle which I explained to you, the Prophets in their books are frequently found to rebuke their fellow-men for being over-zealous and exerting themselves too much in bringing sacrifices… Samuel therefore said, "Has the Lord as great delight in burnt-offerings and sacrifices as in obeying the voice of the Lord" (1 Sam. xv. 22)?” Isaiah exclaimed, "To what purpose is the multitude of your sacrifices unto me? says the Lord" (Isa. i. 11)…