

PARSHAT VAYIKRA
LEVITICUS 1:1-5:26
7 ADAR II 5782/10 MARCH 2022



Study for Bullfight No. 1
Painting by Francis Bacon (1969)

THE BEAST WITHIN

1. אִם כִּי־יִקְרִיב מִכֶּם קֶרְבָּן לַיהוָה... (Leviticus 1:2)
When any of you presents an offering to God [of cattle...]

Each of us has two souls: the Godly soul and the animal soul (nefesh ha-behamit). The essential purpose of our lives is to enable the Godly soul to prevail over the tendencies of the animal soul. Even the animal soul shares in a love of God, as the Shema states. “When a human being from among you will bring...” The syntax reveals a deeper meaning: “When a human being will bring from among you...” And what is the offering we are to bring? It is from our animal soul. (Rabbi Schneur Zalman of Liadi)

2. Sublimation of instinct is an especially conspicuous feature of cultural development; it is what makes it possible for higher psychical activities, scientific, artistic or ideological to play such an important part in civilized life. (Sigmund Freud, Totem and Taboo)

3. The beast in me
Is caged by frail and fragile bars
Restless by day and by night
Rants and rages at the stars
God help the beast in me

The beast in me
Has had to learn to live with pain
And how to shelter from the rain
And in the twinkling of an eye
Might have to be restrained
God help the beast in me

Sometimes it tries to kid me
That it's just a teddy bear
Or even somehow manage
To vanish in the air
Then that is when I must beware

Of the beast in me
That everybody knows
They've seen him out dressed in my clothes
Patently unclear
If it's New York or New Year
God help the beast in me
The beast in me

(Nick Lowe, "The Beast in Me")