

Purpose of the Sacrifices

Introduction

Why Specifically Sacrifices?

A significant portion of Torah is devoted to the laws surrounding sacrifices. Nowhere, though, does the Torah explain why Hashem chose this mode of worship as opposed to any other. Is asking for forgiveness or thanking Hashem really best accomplished through an animal offering? What about the process makes it better than praying or serving God in any other manner? What does offering a gift to God do for the person bringing it? What effect, if any, does it have on Hashem?



Views of the Prophets

Given the significant number of chapters in the Torah devoted to sacrificial worship, it is natural to assume that sacrifices are viewed in a favorable light. Verses which speak of offerings as being "גרים נחום לי" or "לרצנו לפני יי" would also appear to support this notion. However, several statements of the prophets appear to question the value of sacrificial worship. For example, Yeshayahu 1 appears to intimate that Hashem has no desire for the nation's offerings:¹

(יא) למה לי רב זבחיכם יאמר יי שבעתי עלות אילים וחלב מריאים ודם פרים וכבשים ועתודים לא חפצתי. (יב) כי תבאו לראות פני מי בקש זאת מידכם רמס חצרי. (יג) לא תוסיפו הביא מנחת שוא קטרת תועבה היא לי חדש ושבט קרא מקרא לא אוכל און ועצרה.

(11) To what purpose is the multitude of your sacrifices unto Me? Saith the Lord; I am full of the burnt-offerings of rams, And the fat of fed beasts; And I delight not in the blood Of bullocks, or of lambs, or of he-goats. (12) When ye come to appear before Me, Who hath required this at your hand, To trample My courts? (13) Bring no more vain oblations; It is an offering of abomination unto Me; New moon and sabbath, the holding of convocations— I cannot endure iniquity along with the solemn assembly.

Yirmeyahu 7:22 goes a step further. This verse even appears to question whether Hashem ever commanded the Children of Israel to bring sacrifices:²

כי לא דברתי את אבותיכם ולא צויתים ביום [הוציא] (הוציא) אותם מארץ מצרים על דברי עולה וזבח.

For I spoke not unto your fathers, nor commanded them in the day that I brought them out of the land of Egypt, concerning burnt-offerings or sacrifices;

How can such statements be reconciled with the commands in Torah? What do they reveal about Hashem's attitude towards the sacrificial service?

Anti-idolatrous Practice?

Vayikra 17 offers a different perspective on the role played by sacrifices:

(ג) אִישׁ אִישׁ מִבֵּית יִשְׂרָאֵל אֲשֶׁר יִשְׁחַט שׁוֹר אוֹ כֶּשֶׁב אוֹ עֵז בַּמַּחֲנֶה אוֹ אֲשֶׁר יִשְׁחַט מִחוּץ לַמַּחֲנֶה. (ד) וְאֵל פֶּתַח אֹהֶל מוֹעֵד לֹא הֵבִיאוּ לְהִקְרִיב קֶרֶבֶן לַיהוָה לְפָנָי מִשְׁכַּן יְיָ דָם יִחָשֵׁב לְאִישׁ הַהוּא דָם שֶׁפָּדַךְ וְנִכְרַת הָאִישׁ הַהוּא מִקֶּרֶב עַמּוֹ. (ה) לְמַעַן אֲשֶׁר יָבִיאוּ בְנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל אֶת זִבְחֵיהֶם אֲשֶׁר הֵם זִבְחִים עַל פְּנֵי הַשְּׁדָה וְהֵבִיאוּ לַיהוָה אֶל פֶּתַח אֹהֶל מוֹעֵד אֶל הַכֹּהֵן וְזָבְחוּ וְזָבְחֵי שְׁלָמִים לַיהוָה אוֹתָם. (ו) וְזָרַק הַכֹּהֵן אֶת הַדָּם עַל מִזְבֵּחַ יְיָ פֶּתַח אֹהֶל מוֹעֵד וְהִקְטִיר הַחֵלֶב לְרִיחַ נִיחַח לַיהוָה. (ז) וְלֹא יִזְבְּחוּ עוֹד אֶת זִבְחֵיהֶם לְשִׁעִירִים אֲשֶׁר הֵם זִנִּים אֲחֲרֵיהֶם חֻקַּת עוֹלָם תְּהִיָּה זֹאת לָהֶם לְדוֹרָתָם.

(3) What man soever there be of the house of Israel, that killeth an ox, or lamb, or goat, in the camp, or that killeth it without the camp, (4) and hath not brought it unto the door of the tent of meeting, to present it as an offering unto the Lord before the tabernacle of the Lord, blood shall be imputed unto that man; he hath shed blood; and that man shall be cut off from among his people. (5) To the end that the children of Israel may bring their sacrifices, which they sacrifice in the open field, even that they may bring them unto the Lord, unto the door of the tent of meeting, unto the priest, and sacrifice them for sacrifices of peace-offerings unto the Lord. (6) And the priest shall dash the blood against the altar of the Lord at the door of the tent of meeting, and make the fat smoke for a sweet savour unto the Lord. (7) **And they shall no more sacrifice their sacrifices unto the satyrs, after whom they go astray.** This shall be a statute for ever unto them throughout their generations.

These verses appear to suggest that at least some acts of sacrifice might be commanded not for their inherent value, but as a means to prevent idolatry. Should such reasoning be applied across the board, or is this case exceptional? Is it possible that the entire system was commanded only to combat mistaken beliefs and practices?

Procedural Details

The reasons behind the various details of the sacrificial process are not delineated in Torah, but the specifics should shed some light on the purpose of the commandment as a whole:

- **Choice of animals** – Is there any significance to the choice of animals that are offered for various sacrifices? Why do we sacrifice cattle, sheep, goats, turtle-doves, and pigeons, but not other living creatures?
- **Laying of hands (סמיכה)** – Why does the person bringing the sacrifice lay his hands on it (Vayikra 1:4) before slaughtering it?

- **Blood rites** – Why is the blood of the animal sometimes poured and sometimes sprinkled? And what accounts for the variation regarding the location upon which it is offered (Vayikra 1:5, Vayikra 4:1-7)?
- **Prohibition of leavening and honey** – Why is it prohibited to bring a leavened offering or one sweetened with honey (Vayikra 2:11-12)?
- **Obligation to add salt** – Why must salt accompany every sacrifice (Vayikra 2:13)?

Philosophical Issues

In trying to determine both the purpose of the sacrificial system and whether it is an ideal form of worship, commentators are influenced by their positions on a number of other philosophical issues:

- **Role of prayer** – How does prayer compare to sacrifices? Are these distinct but equal models of worship, or is one of them the ideal which should be preferred over the other?
- **Purpose of Mitzvot** – Must the Torah's laws represent an ideal and be inherently valuable, or might they simply be addressing human needs and nature? Is it possible that some Mitzvot might have been commanded only as a concession to human foibles or to correct misguided beliefs?
- **Eternal nature of Torah** – Are all of the Torah's laws equally relevant and useful to all generations, or is it possible that some were meant mainly for a particular time period?

¹ See similar comments by other prophets in Shemuel I 15:22-23, Yeshayahu 43:23-24, Yeshayahu 56:7, Hoshea 6:4-7, Mikhah 6:6-8, and verses in Tehillim 40 and Tehillim 50.

² See Amos 5:25 who also questions, "הֲזָבְחִים וּמִנְחָה הַגִּשְׁתֶּם לִי בַמִּדְבָר אַרְבָּעִים שָׁנָה בֵּית יִשְׂרָאֵל".

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Exegetical Approaches

This topic has not yet undergone editorial review

Overview

Commentators debate both the value and purpose of the sacrificial system. Several sources view sacrifices as merely a corrective to negative beliefs or behavior, rather than possessing independent value. Thus, Rambam asserts that sacrifices were commanded to wean the nation away from the idolatrous practices to which they had been previously exposed. Alternatively, Ralbag focuses on potential future misdeeds, emphasizing the role of sacrifices in enabling a fresh start. He asserts that all sacrifices, and not merely sin-offerings, played a role in the atonement process.

Other exegetes, though, view sacrifices as intrinsically positive, seeing in them the ideal way to connect with the Divine. These sources vary regarding the specific benefits afforded by the system. Ramban points to the role of sacrifices in inviting the Divine presence and continuing the experience of revelation at Sinai, while R. Saadia Gaon and Shadal focus on how they provide a means for the nation to honor and thank Hashem. Finally, R. D"Z Hoffmann sees in sacrifices a symbol of utter submission and obedience to God.

All of these positions are not necessarily mutually exclusive, and it is possible that there were multiple purposes and that a mixture of objectives were attained through the sacrificial rites.

Antidote to Idolatry

Sacrifices are not an ideal form of worship, and were instituted only as a means to wean the nation away from idolatry.

SOURCES: Vayikra Rabbah,¹ R. Yosef Bekhor Shor,² Rambam Moreh Nevukhim, Ralbag,³ R. Yosef ibn Kaspi⁴

Concession to human needs – Rambam explains that even though animal sacrifice was not Hashem's desired mode of worship, He nonetheless permitted it since that was the worship to which the nation was accustomed.⁵ Living among idolaters who served their gods through sacrifices and temples, the Israelites would have found it unfathomable had such practices been forbidden.⁶ Thus, knowing that people can not change overnight from one extreme to another, Hashem maintained some aspects of the service with which the people were familiar, but ensured that they sacrificed to Him alone. As such, He hoped to gradually wean the Israelites away from idolatrous practices.

Prayer as primary mode of service – Rambam's attitude towards sacrifices is consistent with his view that prayer is the primary form of service to Hashem. He reads the verse "וְעַבְדְתֶם אֶת י"י אֱ-לֹהֵיכֶם" as a command to serve Hashem through prayer specifically (and does not think that it refers to sacrifices at all). Service of Hashem relates to speech and thought rather than actions.

Eternal value of Mitzvot? Rambam does not view the Torah's commandments as necessarily representing an ideal, but rather as addressing the reality of people's nature and needs. Thus, he allows for the possibility that certain commandments could be simply practical advice,⁷ or concessions to human foibles. A possible implication of this might be that not all mitzvot were meant to remain for eternity. This possibility, however, is vehemently rejected by many commentators,⁸ and it does not appear that even Rambam himself would subscribe to this position.⁹

Details of sacrifices – Rambam views many of the details of the sacrificial service as aimed at differentiating it from idolatrous practices:

- **Cattle and sheep** – Hashem commanded that the nation sacrifice specifically sheep, goats, and cattle since it was these animals who were most revered and worshiped by other nations. Slaughtering these animals as sacrifices served to underscore the impotence of these "gods".¹⁰
- **Sprinkling of blood** – Since idolaters viewed the blood of animals as impure, and only those who wanted to connect to demons would eat of it, the Torah, in contrast, had blood play a role in atonement and purification, and prohibited all from consuming it.¹¹
- **Prohibition of honey and leavened bread** – As idol worshipers normally sweetened their sacrifices and accompanied them with leavened bread, Hashem commanded the opposite, prohibiting leavening and honey and prescribing that sacrifices be offered with salt.¹²

"וְלֹא יִזְבְּחוּ עוֹד אֶת זְבַחֵיהֶם לְשֵׁעִירִים" – These sources¹³ point to this verse in support of this approach, as it suggests that Hashem obligated the nation to bring Him sacrifices to prevent their giving of them to the demons ("שֵׁעִירִים").

Attitude of the prophets – As further evidence for this position, Rambam points to the many prophets who tell the people that Hashem has no desire for their sacrifices. He claims that the prophets all agree that Hashem's intention in commanding sacrifices was only for the people to attain belief in Him, but that the sacrifices had no inherent worth.¹⁴

Purpose of the Mishkan – According to Rambam, the Mishkan, like sacrifices, was not the preferred way of worshipping Hashem and was similarly commanded only as a concession to human needs.¹⁵

Types of sacrifices – Rambam does not appear to differentiate between the purposes of different types of offerings.¹⁶

Sacrifices before the Mishkan – Ramban challenges this approach from the characters in Tanakh, such as Kayin and Hevel, and Noach, who brought sacrifices when no idolatry existed. These people were ostensibly neither imitating nor reacting to idolatrous practices, but instead found something intrinsically positive about worshipping Hashem in this manner.¹⁷

"אִשָּׁה רִיחַ נִיחֹם לַיהוָה" – Ramban further questions Rambam from this phrase, as it suggests that the sacrifices were pleasing to Hashem, and not simply a means to negate idolatry.¹⁸ Rambam could respond that the word "לַיהוָה" refers back to "אִשָּׁה" and not "רִיחַ נִיחֹם". If so, the verse is simply saying that the sacrifice is for God, not that its smell is pleasing to Him.

Press space – Ramban points out that the Torah devotes more press space to sacrificial procedures than to any other law. If, as the Rambam suggests, they are not inherently significant for all generations, why

dedicate to this topic most of an entire Sefer?¹⁹



Atonement for Sins

Sacrifices are a necessary part of the atonement process, aiding a sinner to cleanse himself of his misdeeds.

SOURCES: Tanchuma, Ibn Ezra, R. Yosef Bekhor Shor,²⁰ Ramban,²¹ Sefer HaChinnukh, Ralbag,²² Sforno, Netziv

How do sacrifices aid in the atonement process?

- **Exchange for sinner** – According to most of these commentators, the sacrifice serves as a substitute or redemption (כופר נפש) for the sinner, as it is killed in the individual's stead.²³ Ramban adds that in watching the animal slaughtered, the person is forced to recognize that it should have been his blood which was spilled had it not been for Hashem's mercy.²⁴ This knowledge should prevent him from sinning further.
- **Fresh start** – R. Yosef Bekhor Shor and Ralbag, in contrast, assert that the atonement process is necessary to enable people to start afresh. If there was no way of cleansing one's self from sin, people would be less likely to be wary of future sins, thinking that they would remain stained regardless.²⁵ On the other hand, knowing that one's slate has been wiped clean provides an incentive to subsequently remain pure.²⁶

Animals rather than words?

- **Physical substitute** – If a sacrifice is supposed to stand in for the individual, it is clear why a living being must be used.²⁷ Sefer HaChinnukh adds that words alone do not affect a person in the way that an active process does. It is only through the visual of seeing the animal die, that the wrongness of the sinner's actions seeps into his heart.
- **Words don't suffice** – According to R. Yosef Bekhor Shor, in contrast, it is unclear why the "restart process" had to be accomplished specifically through animal sacrifice rather than prayer or the like. Ralbag opines that had a person simply confessed his sins or repented in his heart, he would not think that this sufficed to achieve penance, so therefore Hashem provided an active ritual for him to partake in.

Details of bringing sacrifices:

- **סמיכה and ידיו** – Ramban notes that sacrifices are accompanied by the individual's laying of hands on the animal and a confession, as the main goal of the offering is to atone for sins. Ralbag and Sforno further suggest that the laying of hands signifies the individual's transferring of his transgressions onto the animal.²⁸
- **"על כל קרבנך תקריב מלח"** – R. Yosef Bekhor Shor claims that salt, a substance which lasts forever, is symbolic of the fact that sacrifices serve as an eternal covenant of atonement.
- **Prohibition of blood and fat** – If the blood is meant to represent the soul of the sinner, it is logical that it cannot be eaten by the individual bringing the sacrifice.
- **Giving of limbs to priest** – Sforno suggest that a sinner gives of the limbs he used for sin (via the animal's parallel limbs) to the priest who had, in contrast, used his body to serve Hashem. This exchange promotes atonement, as the priest helps to carry the burden of the sins as well.²⁹

Are all sacrifices aimed at atonement? While the verses explicitly relate the *טַחַת* and *שָׁם* to expiation from sin, this is not true of the other sacrifices, making one question if this approach can work for all types of offerings³⁰:

- **All for atonement** – These sources all point to the phrase "וְנִרְצָה לוֹ לְכַפֵּר עָלָיו" by the Olah offering to prove that it too plays a role in atonement (though they differ regarding which crime is being expiated).³¹ Ralbag and Netziv³² add that despite the silence in the text, the Minchah and Shelamim offering also come to atone.³³ As such, all offerings might have an expiatory component.
- **Some for atonement** – It is also possible that there is a distinction between obligatory and voluntary sacrifices:
 - Sefer HaChinnukh concedes that the atonement explanation of sacrifices does not seem to suffice for voluntary offerings. However, he suggests that nonetheless the humbling process attained by the slaughter is a goal even without sin, and thus there is a similar purpose to all sacrifices.
 - Ibn Ezra, Ramban, and Ralbag³⁴ suggest that there might be more than one purpose for the bringing of sacrifices. As such the achieving of atonement might be the primary goal of certain offerings but only secondary (or even nonexistent) in others.

"אִשָּׁה רִים נִחוּם לִי" – These commentators might suggest that this phrase is a metaphoric way of saying that sacrifices are pleasing to Hashem since they serve to redeem the nation and bring them back to the correct path.³⁵

Sacrifices before the Mishkan – According to Sforno, until the Sin of the Golden Calf, there were only voluntary sacrifices.³⁶ It was only in the aftermath of the people's sin,³⁷ when the nation proved itself unworthy, that the system of obligatory offerings in a centralized location and under the guidance of priests was instated. Abarbanel³⁸ adds that it was only then that Hashem realized the need to institute a process of atonement through sacrifices.³⁹

"וְלֹא צִוִּיתִים... עַל דְּבַר עוֹלָה וְזָבַח" – Sforno claims that Yirmeyahu's words can be taken at face value. At the time of the Exodus, Hashem had not desired that there be a sacrificial system; the institution was only created in the aftermath of the Sin of the Golden Calf.

General attitude of the prophets towards sacrifices – These sources might explain that none of the prophets really meant to insinuate that Hashem was against the sacrificial system. Hashem was rather expressing that He preferred that the nation not sin to begin with and thus not need to offer sacrifices for atonement.⁴⁰



Connecting to the Divine

Sacrifices help individuals connect to Hashem.

Inviting the Divine Presence

The sacrifices were intended to prepare either the nation as a whole, or each individual, to receive the Divine presence and thereby continue the experience of revelation begun at Sinai.

SOURCES: Kuzari, Ramban, Ralbag⁴¹

השראת השכינה: For the individual or nation?

- **Individual** – R. Yehuda HaLevi asserts that people must prepare themselves to receive Divine inspiration, or Hashem's spirit won't cling to them. The sacrifices serve as the spiritual nourishment needed by man to connect to Hashem. Ralbag similarly suggests that sacrifices help prepare a person to attain prophecy.
- **National** – Ramban, in contrast, explains that sacrifices also invite Divine inspiration on a national level, and views them as a prerequisite for Hashem's presence to dwell in the Mikdash.⁴²

Why via animals? These sources offer different explanations as to why receiving Divine inspiration was contingent specifically on animal sacrifice:

- **Physical and metaphysical connected** – R. Yehuda HaLevi draws a comparison to a human's need for physical nourishment to ensure that the soul clings to the body, suggesting that there is a similar need for a physical offering so that Hashem can cleave to man.
- **Isolate the intellect** – Ralbag asserts that, in order to prophesy, an individual must isolate his intellect by anesthetizing his other senses. Watching the animal die on the altar allows his physical aspects to slumber (in empathy with the animal and in recognition of its mortality), preparing the intellect for Divine inspiration.
- **Symbolic of a dwelling place** – This approach could also suggest that if the Mishkan was meant to house Hashem's presence, it needed to resemble a King's palace,⁴³ with all the accompanying accoutrements, light, bread, incense and meat.⁴⁴
- **Covenantal meal** – It is also possible that the sacrifices were meant to reenact the meal which usually accompanied a covenant.⁴⁵ If the Mishkan was meant to be an extension of the revelation at Sinai,⁴⁶ the bringing of sacrifices could be seen as the continuous renewal of the Sinaitic covenant and the accompanying revelation of Hashem.⁴⁷

"וַיִּרְא כְבוֹד ה' אֶל כָּל הָעָם" – Ramban attempts to prove that animal sacrifices are the necessary prerequisite for Divine inspiration from the fact that the Divine presence only filled the Tabernacle after offerings were given on the eighth day of the consecration ceremony.⁴⁸ As further evidence, he points to Bilam who brings sacrifices so as to receive Divine inspiration and prophecy. Ralbag similarly points to many cases throughout Sefer Bereshit where Hashem appears to someone soon after they build an altar.⁴⁹

Service of Hashem – Ramban's attitude towards sacrifices is consistent with his view of prayer as only a secondary form of service to God. He claims that the commandment includes only calling out to Hashem in times of distress; all other prayers are not obligatory from the Torah at all.⁵⁰ True service of Hashem is via sacrifices, not through word alone, but also via deed.⁵¹

Purpose of commandments – This position assumes that commandments must have worth in and of themselves, and that Hashem would be unlikely to command something only to negate a false view or practice.⁵²

"וְנָחָה רוּחַ אֱלֹהֵינוּ עַל אֱלִישָׁע" – Ramban explains the words "רוּחַ יְיָ נִחוּם" in light of the phrase "וְנָחָה רוּחַ אֱלֹהֵינוּ עַל אֱלִישָׁע," suggesting that the offering of a sacrifice enables a resting of the Divine spirit. He further uses this verse as

proof that sacrifices were an ideal desired by Hashem with inherent worth, rather than simply a means to wean the people away from idolatry as the Rambam argues.

"וְנִרְצָה לוֹ" – This phrase, too, suggests that sacrifices were pleasing to Hashem.

Meaning of קרבן – Ramban suggests that the word "קרבן" is "לשון קריבה ואחדות" and means to come close. Thus, the word itself hints to the sacrifice's purpose: to bring humans closer to the Divine.

Purpose of the Mishkan – According to Ramban, the Mishkan as a whole was aimed at facilitating the continuation of the Divine revelation which began at Mt. Sinai. It housed the Ark and Tablets of the Covenant, thereby mystically transforming the building into an extension of Sinai and enabling the one-time Divine revelation to become a continuous one.⁵³

Sacrifices before the Mishkan – Ramban claims that the fact that sacrifices were given from the earliest of times, suggests that there was something inherent in the process which helped people in their relationship with the Divine. It was only after the revelation at Sinai, however, that they became obligatory, since it was then that Hashem wanted to turn the Mishkan into a portable Sinai with the Divine spirit ever present.

Types of sacrifices – According to Ramban, it is possible that Hashem commanded to offer עולות and שלמים specifically so as to reproduce the sacrifices brought during the ceremony at Sinai.⁵⁴ The אשמים and חטאות, on the other hand, are meant to purify the Mishkan after people sin so as to prevent Hashem's presence from leaving the sanctuary.

Details:

- "עַל כָּל קִרְבָּנְךָ תִּקְרִיב מֶלַח" – Salt, a symbol of eternity, might represent the eternal nature of the Covenant of Sinai.
- **Sprinkling of blood** – This, too, might be meant to re-enact the sprinkling of blood that accompanied the Covenant of Sinai.⁵⁵

Attitude of the prophets towards sacrifices – These sources would likely explain that the prophets did not oppose sacrifices in and of themselves. They only argued that bringing sacrifices without keeping the terms of Hashem's covenant would be of no utility.

"וְלֹא צִוִּיתִים... עַל דְּבָרֵי עוֹלָה וְזֶבַח" – These sources could explain that Yirmeyahu is not claiming that Hashem did not command sacrifices at all, but only saying that sacrifices were not more important than good deeds. See also Devarim 5:3, Devarim 11:2-7 and Yirmeyahu 16:14-15, where the formulation "כי אם... לא..." does not come to totally negate the first fact mentioned but only to express that it might be less important than the second one being discussed.

"וְלֹא יִזְבְּחוּ עוֹד אֶת זִבְחֵיהֶם לְשִׁעִירָם" – These sources could explain that it is the prohibition to eat meat wherever one desires, rather than the entire system of sacrifices, which was instituted to combat worship of שדים.



Gratitude and Honor

Bringing sacrifices to Hashem is a means through which the nation can honor and show gratitude to Him.

SOURCES: R. Saadia Gaon, Shadal⁵⁶

Why via sacrifices? According to both R. Saadia Gaon and Shadal, the sacrificial system stemmed from people's innate need to relate to Hashem in the way that they relate to humans: through giving.⁵⁷ They differ, however, in whether they view the institution as being initiated by Hashem or the people:

- **Hashem** – R. Saadia suggests that Hashem, cognizant of human needs, set up a system through which the nation would honor and thank Him the way they would a king, by giving of their best: meat, wine, incense and fat.
- **The people** – Shadal, in contrast, suggests that people had originally brought sacrifices of their own volition. Seeing that the practice was of great benefit to the nation as it inculcated belief in God's providence and increased the people's respect for Him, Hashem had it continue and obligated it, despite the fact that he Had no need for the offerings.

Animal sacrifice versus prayer: which is the ideal? While R. Saadia believes that there is a fundamental need to worship Hashem via sacrifice specifically (as one must give to Hashem of the best of one's possessions), Shadal opines that in reality the nation could just as easily have honored Hashem through praise and song. However, Shadal claims that due to people's nature, if that was the method chosen, the nation would not have come to internalize Hashem's majesty to the same degree. Since other nations worshiped through active sacrifices, the people would have viewed mere words as an inferior mode of worship, and concluded that Hashem must be an inferior god, and they an inferior people.⁵⁸

Purpose of mitzvot – Shadal agrees with Rambam that certain commandments might be given even if they don't have intrinsic worth, but asserts that this is only as long as they serve to bring people to better themselves or increase their belief in God.⁵⁹ For him, the purpose of Torah is not "ללמד את העם חכמה ודעת", so it is more important that a commandment teach towards righteousness than towards truth. In addition, in contrast to Rambam, Shadal's theory does not suggest that in future times the sacrificial system will be aborted (since man's nature will always make sacrifices necessary), thus averting the issue that there might be something in Torah that is not relevant for all times.

Other benefits of sacrifices

- R. Saadia suggests that the bringing of sacrifices enables a give-and-take relationship with Hashem. Though Hashem has no need for any of the foods brought to him, He uses the offerings as an opportunity to return a gift to the people.⁶⁰
- Shadal points to the interpersonal benefits gained by the centralized aspects of the sacrificial system. The need to bring sacrifices to one specific location served to unite the people as they came together and worried for one another. It further ensured proper worship as each could correct another's mistakes.

Purpose of the Mishkan – According to this approach, the Mishkan as a whole served the same purpose as the sacrifices, being a means to glorify God in a manner analogous to human modes of honor. Shadal emphasizes how building a luxurious house replete with golden vessels and servants adorned in finery increased the respect the people felt towards Hashem.⁶¹ As above, he adds that having a central building to which all could come together also served the purpose of unifying the nation and spreading love among them.

Types of sacrifices – Shadal differentiates between the purpose of Olot and Shelamim, suggesting that Olot were brought to honor Hashem while Shelamim served to enhance love and friendship between people.⁶² This matches the two goals he thinks the Mishkan and the sacrificial system as a whole serve. He further suggests that individual offerings might have individual goals, whether to ask for forgiveness, request help, or express gratitude.

Sacrifices before the Mishkan – Shadal suggests that people, from the earliest of times, brought all sorts of sacrifices, either to thank God, appease him, or request of Him (and it was these actions which led to the institution in the first place). R. Saadia, in contrast, maintains that only עולות were brought before the receiving of the Torah.⁶³

""אִשָּׁה רִים נִחוּם לִי"" – These sources, too, might suggest that this verse proves that sacrifices are pleasing to God.

"וְלֹא יִזְבְּחוּ עוֹד אֶת זְבַחֵיהֶם לְשִׁעִירָם" – According to Shadal, these verses are focusing on the prohibition in the Wilderness to eat meat for pleasure wherever one desires. It is this prohibition (rather than the obligation to bring sacrifices as a whole) which comes to counter the possibility that one sacrifice to the שעירים. Thus the verse can not be brought as evidence that the system in its entirety was instituted to combat idolatry.

Attitude of the prophets towards sacrifices – Shadal understands these verses as a condemnation of sacrifices which are unaccompanied by proper deeds,⁶⁴ and as an attack against the misconception that sacrifices alone (without repentance and change of action) can appease God.⁶⁵ He points to Devarim 10:17, "אֲשֶׁר לֹא יִשָּׂא פְּנִים וְלֹא יִקָּח שֹׁדֵד" to emphasize how Hashem, unlike what was believed about other gods, can not be bribed.

"וְלֹא צִוִּיתִים... עַל דְּבַר עוֹלָה וְזָבַח" – Shadal asserts that Yirmeyahu is only saying that this was not the first commandment given after the Exodus.⁶⁶ Beforehand, the people received the Decalogue and the many interpersonal laws of Parashat Mishpatim. By giving the laws in this order Hashem wanted to ensure that the people realized that the goal of the commandments is not mainly to honor Hashem (who has no need of the glory), but to aid mankind to be the best they can be.



Symbol of Submission

Sacrifices are meant to symbolize that a person and all his possessions belong to and depend upon Hashem. As such, in offering a sacrifice the individual expresses his total dedication, surrender, and unconditional obedience to Hashem.

SOURCES: R. D"Z Hoffmann

Types of sacrifices – R. Hoffmann explains how each type of sacrifices helps an individual express his dedication to Hashem:

- **Olah** – As an individual offers an animal to be totally consumed for God, he feels as if it stands in for his own life, and thus demonstrates his willingness to give of his entire being to Hashem.⁶⁷
- **Minchah** – A Minchah,⁶⁸ taken from the staples of man's sustenance, represents the dedication of one's possessions to the service of Hashem.

- **Shelamim** – Shelamim, from the root "שלם" or whole, symbolize man's cognizance that he is whole only due to Hashem's providence. The offering is a show of trust in Hashem in whose hands the individual entrusts his life.
- **Sin-offerings (חטאת ואשם)** – If sacrifices are meant to demonstrate total obedience, there must also be a corrective for those who disobey. Sin offerings allow the individual to express regret and reconnect to Hashem.

Details of sacrifices

- **Choice of animals** – R. Hoffmann suggests that the animals chosen for the Olah were those which could best represent humans. R. Hirsch adds that cattle signify a being which works in the service of a higher authority, while lambs stand for those which are cared for by another. As such, when individuals bring an Olah, they might either be showing their readiness to serve Hashem and fulfill His obligations, or expressing their recognition that their fate and care is in the hands of Hashem, their Shepherd.⁶⁹
- **Sprinkling of blood** – The sprinkling of the animal's blood symbolizes man's life and soul which he dedicates to God.
- **סמיכה** – R. Hoffmann understands סמיכה to be the authorizing of another to take one's place or serve as one's representative.⁷⁰ The person bringing the sacrifice authorizes the animal to act as his substitute.
- **No leavening** – R. Hoffmann follows Abarbanel in viewing fermentation as a sign of moral corruption. As such, it is disassociated from the sacrificial service.
- **No honey** – R. D"Z Hoffmann agrees with Rambam that the prohibition of honey relates to a distancing from idolatrous practices.

Meaning of the term קרבן – R. Hoffmann asserts that קרבן comes from the language of "קירבה", signifying that sacrifices are meant to bring a person close to Hashem.

Sacrifices before the Mishkan – R. Hoffmann assumes that one can learn about the nature of the commanded sacrifices from those sacrifices discussed in Sefer Bereshit, and especially from Akeidat Yitzchak. In going to sacrifice his son, Avraham displayed his total submission to Hashem's will and complete obedience to do as asked, even to the point of death. In the end, though, the ram served as Yitzchak's substitute, and became the prototype of all future sacrifices. In offering a life to Hashem, every individual makes the same declaration as Avraham, that he is submitting himself to God.

"וְנִרְצָה לֹ" / "וְנִרְצָה לֹ" – According to R. Hoffmann, these phrases mean that the offering is pleasing to Hashem, as it reflects the individual's fulfillment of Hashem's will;

אֲשֶׁה רִיחַ נִיחֹם לִי" – R. Hoffmann explains that the fragrance of the sacrifices is a source of "נחת רוח" to Hashem as He sees the nation doing His bidding.

Attitude of the prophets towards sacrifices – R. Hoffmann points out that Yeshayahu and Yechezkel both speak about sacrifices being part of the future worship in the Mikdash. This suggests that they, too, saw worth in the system. Prophets who rhetorically question "הֲחָפֵץ לִי" בְּעֹלוֹת וּזְבָחִים" and the like, were simply expressing that Hashem did not desire only sacrifices, but also that the people abide by His word. Since a sacrifice is a statement of obedience, it is meaningless if it is not accompanied by proper action.⁷¹



Combination

As many of the above approaches are not mutually exclusive, it is possible that the sacrificial system served multiple purposes.

¹ See Abarbanel whose version of the Midrash differs from the printed edition, reading, "אמר המלך יאכלם על" instead of "שולחן זה תדיר". According to his version, the Midrash has the king actively commanding that a non-desired food be eaten at his table, so as to teach his son to veer away from it. This is analogous to Hashem's commanding that non-desired sacrifices be offered on His altar as a means to wean the people away from idolatry.

R. D"Z Hoffmann, however, attempts to prove that Abarbanel's version is mistaken, preferring the wording of the printed editions, which he claims can not be brought in support of this approach. The statement "אמר" "המלך זה יהיה תדיר על שלחני" simply means that the king asked that his son eat regularly by him, so as to keep an eye on him. So too, Hashem asks that the nation not eat בשר תאוה wherever they please, but rather sacrifice it and eat in Hashem's "home" where good influences will keep them away from idolatry.

Accordingly, the Midrash is not suggesting that sacrifices were not desired, only that eating in Hashem's house is.

Nonetheless, there is still room to interpret the Midrash to mean that sacrifices were not inherently beneficial and were only instituted as a means to end idolatrous practices.

² This is how R"Y Bekhor Shor explains Vayikra 17:7, but see below that he does also assert that sacrifices have inherent worth for the role they play in the atonement process. His language, "ולא ירגילו לעבודה זרה" "ושיתכפרו מעוונם" suggests that he believed they played a dual role. It is possible that he differentiates between the various types of sacrifices, viewing sin-offerings in one light, but voluntary offerings in another.

³ Ralbag believes that sacrifices serve multiple purposes, one of them being to distance the people from idolatry.

⁴ Interestingly, one of the earliest formulations of this position appears in the polemical assertions of Justin Martyr. Given its natural appeal to Christian theologians, it is perhaps not surprising that this position did not achieve great popularity among Jewish exegetes living in Christian Europe.

⁵ See also Ibn Kaspi's somewhat sharp formulation: "ידוע שמשמע"ה כתבו בספרו מוכרח ואנוס, כי אין חפץ לשם" "בעולות וזבחים, רק הכרח מנהג האומות כולם בזמן שהוא הביאם לזה".

⁶ He compares it to someone in his day prohibiting prayer, fasting or calling out to God in times of distress.

⁷ See, for example, his understanding of the laws of kashrut and the ketoret.

⁸ See Ramban and R. Hoffmann who attack the possibility that there won't be sacrifices in the future, pointing to descriptions of future sacrifices in Yeshayahu 56, Yechezkel 20 and Yechezkel 43.

⁹ Rambam's ninth principle of faith states that the Torah's laws are immutable, suggesting that he too would be uncomfortable with the notion that the laws of sacrifices were only for one era. Moreover, in his Hilkhos Melakhim he explicitly states that there will be sacrifices in the time of the Mashiach. Finally, he discusses the laws of sacrifices at length in his Mishneh Torah, devoting two entire books (Avodah and Korbanot) to the topic, without ever indicating that any aspect of them would be irrelevant for the future.

¹⁰ See Purpose of the Pesach for his similar understanding of the Pesach.

¹¹ Rambam notes the parallel language by the punishment of those who eat blood and those who give of their seed to the Molekh (Vayikra 20), "ונתתי את פני בנפש ההוא והכרתי אתו", explaining that the punishment of

both is so severe since both are related to idolatry. [See Giving One's Seed to Molekh for this and other readings of the prohibition.]

¹² Ralbag follows Rambam in his explanation but also offers a second possibility. He suggests that leavened bread and honey require processing (by man or bee). Since Hashem wanted to rid people of the belief that industry is better than nature, He commanded that the foods accompanying sacrifices be in their natural state.

¹³ The Rambam himself does not bring the verse as evidence since he understands it to be the source for the prohibition of eating meat for pleasure (בשר תאוה) outside of the Mikdash.

¹⁴ He explains Yirmeyahu's words "וְלֹא צִוִּיתִים... עַל דְּבַר עוֹלָה וְזָבַח" in the same manner: Hashem's first intention was simply that the people recognize Him. The sacrifices were not commanded for themselves, but only to achieve this goal. [Rambam also raises the possibility that Yirmeyahu is saying that these mitzvot were not the first ones commanded. First the nation received laws at Marah, which included Shabbat and setting up a judicial system. Shabbat was the first law commanded since, before all else, the nation needed to recognize God as creator.]

¹⁵ See Purpose of the Mishkan.

¹⁶ R"Y Bekhor Shor and Ralbag, on the other hand, likely do. Ralbag explicitly speaks of the role of the Olah in attaining prophecy and both explain how sin offerings aid in the atonement process.

¹⁷ Ritva attempts to defend Rambam's position by arguing that idolatry already existed in Noach's time (even though the idolaters had all been wiped out in the Flood). However, his response regarding Kayin and Hevel is difficult to understand.

¹⁸ One could similarly ask from the language of "וְנִרְצָה לוֹ" which also implies that sacrifices are to Hashem's liking.

¹⁹ See Rav Hirsch, The Nineteen Letters, Letter # 18 who similarly argues, "if sacrifice...was mainly designed as a protest against the then prevalent polytheistic sacrificial custom, how absurd it is then to fill three or four folios with investigations concerning the manner of offering sacrifice, which parts thereof may be used, the persona who may officiate, and the times at which they can be offered..."

²⁰ On Vayikra 17:7, R"Y Bekhor Shor also speaks of the role that sacrifices play in negating idolatrous practices. However, more often he speaks of their value in the atonement process.

²¹ Ramban brings more than one reason for the command to offer sacrifices. He speaks of their role in atonement as "דְּבָרִים מִתְקַבְּלִים מוֹשִׁיכִים אֶת הַלֵּב כְּדִבְרֵי אַגְדָּה", preferring to see them as a means to attain Divine inspiration. See below.

²² Ralbag suggests that there could be several reasons for the sacrificial system, writing, "וְרָאוּ שֶׁתִּדְעוּ כִּי". "הַתּוֹרָה תִּשְׁתַּמֵּשׁ בְּעֵינָיו אֶחָד לְתוֹעֵלוֹת רַבּוֹת". In addition to the role they play in atonement, they also serve to negate idolatrous practices and can aid a person to attain prophecy.

²³ See Ibn Ezra on Shemot 12:7 who views the role played by the blood in the Pesach offering in a similar light. For elaboration, see Purpose of the Pesach.

²⁴ He suggests that as the individual watches each part of the animal be sacrificed, he thinks of his parallel limbs and how they aided him in sin. The guts and kidneys are the seat of thought and desire which led him to err, while the thigh represents his legs and hands which did the action. The animal's blood represents the sinner's soul. As such, watching the animal burn is a powerful symbol of the sinner's own potential fate.

²⁵ See also Ra'avad, HaEmunah HaRamah 3 "בְּרִפּוּאָה הַנִּפְשִׁית" who explains similarly and Shadal below who views the purpose of some of the individual sacrifices in the same manner.

²⁶ R"Y Bekhor Shor makes an analogy to a person who is wearing pure white clothing and therefore is very careful lest he get them dirty. Once he blackens them, however, he is not nearly as cautious.

²⁷ Sefer HaChinnukh and Sforno further explain why animals (rather than fish or the like) were chosen. Sforno suggests that since animals provide man with food, clothing, and milk, they are vital to his survival and as such an appropriate redemption for his soul. In addition, since they are the most similar creatures to humans, they are the most fitting to serve as his substitute. Sefer HaChinnukh adds that the only difference between humans and animals is the knowledge given to mankind. In his sin, however, the individual did not make good use of his intellect, lowering him to the level of animal.

²⁸ As evidence, they point to the ceremony of the two goats on Yom HaKippurim, where the verse more explicitly connects the ritual of the laying of hands and transfer of sins, "וְסַמְּךָ אֶהְרֵן אֶת שְׁתֵּי יָדָיו עַל רֹאשׁ הַשְּׂעִיר" "הַסִּי וְהִתְעַדָּה עָלָיו אֶת כָּל עֲוֹנוֹת בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל... וְנָתַן אֹתָם עַל רֹאשׁ הַשְּׂעִיר"

²⁹ He quotes Bavli Pesachim 59b, "הַכֹּהֲנִים אוֹקְלִים וּבְעָלִים מִתְנַכְּרִים".

³⁰ See R. D"Z Hoffmann who questions this approach on these grounds. He also notes that not all sacrifices were from animals, so such offerings can not be understood to substitute for the blood of man.

³¹ See R. Akiva in Bavli Yoma that one brings an Olah if one has not observed a positive commandment or has transgressed a negative commandment that is linked to a positive one (לאו שניתק לעשה). The Yerushalmi Yoma (see also Vayikra Rabbah and others), on the other hand, suggest that the sacrifice is brought for negative thoughts, while R. Yosef Bekhor Shor posits that it is brought simply in case one has sinned, even if one is unaware of a particular misdeed. Finally, Netziv suggests that it comes to atone for any action against Hashem which prevented the individual from attaining knowledge of Hashem. He bases himself off the verse in Hoshea which says, "כִּי הִסְדּוּ חֲפָצַי וְלֹא זָבַח וְדַעַת אֶ-לֹהִים מַעֲלוֹת". If Hashem says He prefers knowledge of God to Olot, it must be a deed which led to lack of this knowledge which requires one to bring an Olah.

³² See also Tanchuma which mentions the Shelamim but not the Minchah.

³³ Ralbag proves this from the fact that there is a laying of the hands, which he views as a sign of transfer of sin, on the Shelamim offering just like on other sacrifices. He also points to the rebuke to Eli's sons where they are told, "אִם יִתְנַכְּרֵ עֹנֵן בֵּית עֲלֵי בְזָבַח וּבְמִנְחָה" which suggests that normally sins could be forgiven via a Zevach or Minchah.

³⁴ Ibn Ezra writes, "גַּם יִתְכַּן לְהִיּוֹת מִצוּה אַחַת בְּעִבּוּר דְּבָרִים רַבִּים, כַּמִּצּוֹת הַעוֹלָה וְכַל הַקֶּרְבָּן". Ramban echoes the thought, "וְאִמַּת הוּא שִׁישׁ לְמִצּוֹת הַתּוֹרָה תּוֹעֵלוֹת מְרֻבּוֹת גּוֹפְנוֹת נְרָאוֹת וְרוֹחֲנוֹת", as does Ralbag who says, "וְרֹאוּי שֶׁתִּדְעַ כִּי הַתּוֹרָה תִּשְׁתַּמֵּשׁ בְּעִנִּין אֶחָד לְתוֹעֵלוֹת רַבּוֹת".

³⁵ The fact that this phrase is not found by the obligatory sin offering of the Asham might argue against this point.

³⁶ These were not necessarily brought to expiate for sin, but as offerings of the righteous.

³⁷ He maintains that the command to build the Tabernacle is written out of order and actually occurred only after the sin.

³⁸ However, Abarbanel differs from Sforno in that he suggests that Hashem had previously commanded that there be a Tabernacle and it was only the sacrifices themselves which were introduced later. See Purpose of the Mishkan for elaboration.

³⁹ Shadal questions Abarbanel on this point, finding it incredulous to suggest that Hashem only realized the nation's potential for sin after the Golden Calf. Even without this failure, it should have been evident that everyone errs and would eventually sin.

⁴⁰ See Shemuel, Yeshayahu 1, Yirmeyahu, and Mikhah who all present Hashem as not simply denying His need for sacrifices, but also expressing His desire that the nation cease their evil ways and do good.

⁴¹ Ralbag suggests that voluntary sacrifices such as the Olah, and those brought by individuals before the building of the Mishkan, were meant to aid an individual in the attainment of prophecy. However, he does not seem to view this as a goal of all sacrifices and makes no mention of continuing the revelation at Sinai. See above that he also speaks of the role sacrifices play in gaining atonement or distancing people from idolatry.

⁴² He also explains that in atoning for the nation's sins, the sacrifices further insure that the Divine presence does not then desert the sanctuary.

⁴³ Cf. R. Saadia Gaon and Shadal below..

⁴⁴ See Purpose of the Mishkan for elaboration of this approach

⁴⁵ Other examples in which treaties are sealed with a meal include the stories of Yaakov and Lavan in Bereshit 31:44-54, Yitzchak and Avimelekh in Bereshit 26:28-31, the Children of Israel at Mount Sinai in Shemot 24:3-11, and David and Avner in Shemuel II 3:19-21. For further discussion of the issue, see Treaties and Yitro's Sacrifices and Eating Bread Before God

⁴⁶ See point below.

⁴⁷ See Purpose of the Shulchan and Lechem HaPanim and the opinion of R. Hovav Yechieli ("תערך לפני שלחן") – "השולחן ולחם הפנים", Megadim 44 (5766): 33-49.) who explains the need for the Table and showbread in this manner.

⁴⁸ See Vayikra 9:22-23. It is right after Aharon finishes the sacrificial service ("וַיֵּרַד מִעֲשֵׂת הַחֹטֵאת וְהַעֲלָה") that Hashem's presence descends ("וַיֵּרָא כְבוֹד יְיָ אֵל כָּל הָעָם"). Ramban similarly points out that Mt. Moriah was chosen as the site of the Beit HaMikdash since it was there that David offered sacrifices to God.

⁴⁹ See, for example, Bereshit 12:7-8, 26:24-25, 35:7-9.

⁵⁰ As opposed to the Rambam who learns the mitzvah of prayer from the verse, "וּלְעַבְדוֹ בְּכָל לְבַבְכֶם" (Devarim 10), Ramban learns it from "וְכִי תִבְאוּ מִלְחָמָה בְּאֶרְצְכֶם עַל הַצָּר הַצָּר אֶתְכֶם וְהִרְעַתְכֶם בְּחֻצְרֹת וּנְזַכְרְתֶם לִפְנֵי יְיָ" in Bemidbar 10. This verse emphasizes calling to God when faced by an enemy. He understands the verse in Devarim to refer to a much more general service of God - the keeping of Hashem's ways with proper intent. [Whereas Rambam understands "service of the heart" to refer to the method in which you serve God, via speech and internal thought, Ramban understands it to refer to the intention accompanying one's actions.]

⁵¹ It is only because of the destruction of the Temple that prayer has become a primary form of service.

⁵² In combating Rambam's view of sacrifices, Ramban writes, "וחלילה שלא יהא בהם שום תועלת ורצון רק שוללות". "לעבודה זרה מדעת השוטים".

⁵³ For elaboration, see Purpose of the Mishkan.

⁵⁴ See Shemot 24, "וַיַּעֲלֵנוּ עֹלֹת וַיִּזְבְּחוּ זִבְחִים שְׁלָמִים". This, though, simply begs the question of why specifically those sacrifices were brought then.

⁵⁵ In Hebrew the term for making a covenant, is "לכרות ברית", literally to "cut a covenant". The idea might have been to hint that any who do not abide by the terms of the agreement will be cut off. Thus, too, blood was sprinkled during the ceremony as a visual of this potential fate.

⁵⁶ This is how Shadal views communal sacrifices and the need for a sacrificial system as a whole. He does, however, also suggest that individual sacrifices served more specific goals, such as attaining atonement or seeking aid. He follows R"Y Bekhor Shor in highlighting the need of an individual for a process by which he can see himself as cleansed from sin.

⁵⁷ Shadal writes: כִּי לֹא יִתֵּן לְאָדָם לְהִתְנַהֵּג עִם אֱלֹהֵיוּ כִּי אִם עַל דֶּרֶךְ שֶׁהוּא מִתְנַהֵּג עִם מֶלֶךְ בֶּשֶׁר. וּדָם.

⁵⁸ In this, Shadal's approach is similar to Rambam. However, he understands this to be true of every generation and not just those who left Egypt. People in all ages tend respect that which is given more honor and appears more glorious. Therefore, for all times, worship via sacrifices in a magnificent house is necessary.

⁵⁹ He even suggests that certain commandments might intentionally promote erroneous beliefs as long as these misconceptions are benign and promote good deeds or the like. See, for example, his understanding of Tzaraat and the "evil eye" in Half Shekels – For Census or Tabernacle?.

⁶⁰ In return for honoring Hashem with their possessions, Hashem listens to the people's supplications and saves them from distress. R. Saadia points to Mishlei 3:9-10 where this reciprocal relationship is expressed: "כִּבְדֵּךְ אֶת יְיָ מִהֲוֹנֶךָ וּמִרְאֵשִׁיתֵךְ כֹּל תְּבוּאֹתֶיךָ וַיִּמְלֵאוּ אֶסְמִיךָ שִׂבְעָה וַתִּירוֹשׁ יִקְרִיךָ יִפְרְצוּ".

⁶¹ He reiterates that the nation believed that the more glorious the house and servants, the more important must be the king whom they are serving.

⁶² Shadal suggests that this is the reason one is prohibited from leaving over from the sacrifice. In order for the individual to finish eating the sacrifice in Yerushalayim, he is forced to share it with strangers, enabling everyone to meet new people and connect.

⁶³ Based on this, R. Saadia attempt to prove that Yitro, who offered "עֹלָה וְזִבְחִים" must have come to Mt. Sinai only after the receiving of the Torah. For elaboration, see Chronology – Shemot 18.

⁶⁴ He points to Vayikra 26:31, "וְהִשְׁמוּתִי אֶת מִקְדָּשֵׁיכֶם וְלֹא אָרִים בְּרִים נִחְסְכֶם" as evidence that this attitude is present in the Torah as well.

⁶⁵ He similarly explains that there is no sin offering for a crime done intentionally since one cannot bribe God into forgiveness.

⁶⁶ Cf. Rashi Yirmeyahu 7:22.

⁶⁷ In this aspect R. Hoffmann is similar to Ramban and Ibn Ezra above. However, while all agree that the animal serves as a substitute for the person, who feels as if he should have been the one sacrificed, they disagree regarding the goal of the process. Ibn Ezra and Ramban claim that the process serves to redeem the sinner and aid his atonement, while R. Hoffmann suggests that the sacrifice demonstrates man's willingness to give himself completely to God, unconnected to sin.

⁶⁸ R. Hoffmann understands the word מִנְחָה to mean tribute, a gift given to one of higher standing. In general, a tribute can be given either for the purpose of appeasement or as a sign of submission. R. Hoffmann suggests that the Korban Minchah is of the latter category.

⁶⁹ R. Hoffmann explains that it was for this reason that the daily Tamid offering was always from a lamb.

⁷⁰ Thus when appointing Yehoshau his successor, Moshe lays his hands on him. Similarly, when the Levites are consecrated to serve as the nation's representatives in the Mikdash, the people lay forth their hands on them as well. He reads the ceremony of the goats on Yom HaKippurim in the same manner, suggesting that the act of סְמִיכָה does not transfer the sins (this is accomplished by the confession), but rather authorizes the goat to replace the sinning nation.

⁷¹ R. Hoffmann does not say this explicitly but it is implied by his general approach.

