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The Forms and Meaning of Ancient Judahite Sacrificial System: A Discussion Based On Leviticus 1-7

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ABSTRACT
Sacrifices are performed in almost every human society of which ancient Israel is not exempted. Since sacrifices do not take place anywhere and anyhow, the article describes sacred places and objects in ancient Israelite society. In the main, this article looks at the forms of the sacrifices and their meaning as described in Leviticus 1-7. It helps one to understand the purposes of performing these sacrifices. This article also shows the roles of both the priest and the offerors in performing sacrifices. The article, in addition, seeks to explain the role of blood in the ancient Israelite sacrificial system. The article demonstrates that sacrifice was a means of restoring a broken relationship between YHWH and his people caused by their sins.

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INTRODUCTION

In ancient Israelite society, salvation was paramount for the survival of individuals and the community. The uncertainties and anxieties which come from daily problems, the fear of evil spirits and malicious persons, and consequences of sin call for action. The idea of the cosmic struggle is strong in the understanding of the nature of the universe in ancient Israelite society. In order to achieve salvation, individuals and the community require the 'balance of power' to favour the supplicant. This tilting of cosmic power for the individual's benefit or for the benefit of the community is referred to as 'maintaining the cosmological balance'. To maintain and reactivate the protective presence of the benevolent divine force, the individual and the community must maintain the cosmological balance through protective and preventive rites. It is in this direction that sacrifice plays a major role.

In this article, the Author is concerned with the forms and meaning of ancient Israelite sacrifice. It is not his intention to go back to the origins of sacrifice and to ask about its original significance.[1] Various theories have been propounded on this, and it has been argued that in its beginnings, sacrifice was designed to effect communion between the worshipper and the god,[2] that it was a gift to the god to secure his help,[3]

[1] On sacrifice in a wider context cf. Henri Hubert and Marcel Mauss, *Sacrifice: Its Nature and Function*, trans. Wilfred D. Halls (London: Cohen & West, 1964); James Hastings, ed., *Encyclopaedia of Religion and Ethics*, (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1908-1927), 11:1-39, where many scholars write on sacrifice in primitive religion and in the historical religions; Edward B. Tylor, *Religion in Primitive Culture* (New York: Harper & Row, 1958); Edwin O. James, *Origins of Sacrifice* (London: John Murray, 1933); William Robertson Smith, *Religion of the Semites: The Fundamental Institutions* (New York: Schocken, 1972); George B. Gray, *Sacrifice in the Old Testament: Its Theory and Practice* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1925); Samuel Henry Hooke, *The Origins of Early Semitic Ritual* (London: OUP, 1938).

[2] Smith, *Religion of the Semites*, 245.

[3] Tylor, *Religion in Primitive Culture*, 340-41. Gray emphasises the gift element in sacrifice but recognises also other elements (*Sacrifice in the Old Testament*, 11); Hooke argues that all sacrifices are either gifts or connected with the slaying of the god and ideas arising from this (*Origins of Early Semitic Ritual*, 63-65), while Ludwig Koehler finds all to be either gifts or communion sacrifices (*Old Testament Theology*, trans. Andrew S. Todd [London: Lutterworth Press, 1957], 182).

or food to sustain the god,[4] or that it was believed to release power through the death of the victim.[5] All these ideas can be found in ancient Israelite sacrifices. As R. de Vaux rightly states, 'sacrifice is one act with many aspects'; however, 'we must beware of simple explanations'.[6]

SACRED PLACES AND OBJECTS

Sacred Places

Space plays an important place in ritual organisation. It is only when ritual actions are performed in an appropriate spatial setting that one realises their effects and meanings. As F. Gorman notes, 'where the ritual is performed, the movement from one space to another within a complete ritual process can provide important clues to the purpose and meaning of a ritual because the spatial categories themselves are socially meaningful elements of the ritual process.'[7] In religious ritual action, space is sacred and so is distinguished from other spaces. Sacred space is the place where the deity breaks into profane space by bringing order and differentiation.[8] In ancient Israel, before the centralisation of worship in Jerusalem, sacred places for family worship were located in household shrines, as well as in sanctuaries and high places[9] in villages inhabited by various clans. Tribal gatherings took place at major sanctuaries such as Shechem, Shiloh, Gilgal after seasonal harvests.[10] Many sacred places were also associated with trees, mountains[11] or springs.[12]

During the period of the monarchy, Jerusalem became the most important of all the sacred places in ancient Judah. This was because of the skilful steps taken by David in introducing a new priesthood: that of Zadok, which gave him firm leadership over all cultic matters. Another aspect that made Jerusalem important was the transfer of the ark to Jerusalem, which gave it prestige and made it the most important rallying point for the worship of YHWH. Hence, a special sanctity was reserved for Jerusalem, which seemed to have prompted the Israelites to resort to the mythological ways of thinking prevalent among the people of Mesopotamia.[13] The Judahites had the notion that God had destined the temple to be built in Jerusalem, which was to be the meeting point of heaven and earth, the dwelling place of Yahweh.[14] Indeed, Jerusalem was thought of as the 'navel of the earth' (Ezekiel 38).

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[4] Edvard Westermarck, *The Origin and Development of Moral Ideas*, 2nd ed. (London: Macmillan, 1917), 2:611; Walther Eichrodt, *Theology of the Old Testament* (London: SCM, 1961-1967), 1:141-44.

[5] James, *Origins of Sacrifice*, 256; Hubert and Mauss approach this theory in saying that, by the death of the victim, sacrifice establishes communication and achieves desired objectives (*Sacrifice*, 41-42, 133).

[6] Roland de Vaux, *Ancient Israel: Its Life and Institutions*, trans. John McHugh (London: Darton, Longmans & Todd, 1961), 451.

[7] Frank H. Gorman, *The Ideology of Ritual: Space, Time and Status in the Priestly Theology* (Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1990), 32.

[8] Ronald A. Simkins, *Creator & Creation* (Peabody, Massachusetts: Hendrickson, 1994), 132.

[9] A high place consisted primarily of three things: an altar for sacrifice, a stone pillar and a wooden post. According to Helmer Ringgren, in the Canaanite religion, the stone pillar served as a symbol of the masculine divinity and the wooden post a symbol of the mother-goddess of fertility (*Israelite Religion*, 2nd ed., trans. David Green [London: SPCK, 1969], 157).

[10] The agricultural pilgrimage festivals to major shrines included the Feast of Tabernacle, Weeks, and Unleavened Bread, the last of which was eventually connected to the Passover (Exod 23:14-17; 34:18-24). Originally, the Passover was a household celebration (Exod 12:1-13, 43-49) and continued to be until the time of Josiah's reform, when it became, a pilgrimage festival (Deut 16:2, 5-7). Until the Deuteronomic reform, these harvest festivals followed the agricultural calendar: barley in spring (the Feast of Unleavened Bread), wheat in the early summer (*Sukkot*, or the Feast of Weeks), and fruit from orchards and vineyards in the fall (the Feast of the Tabernacles).

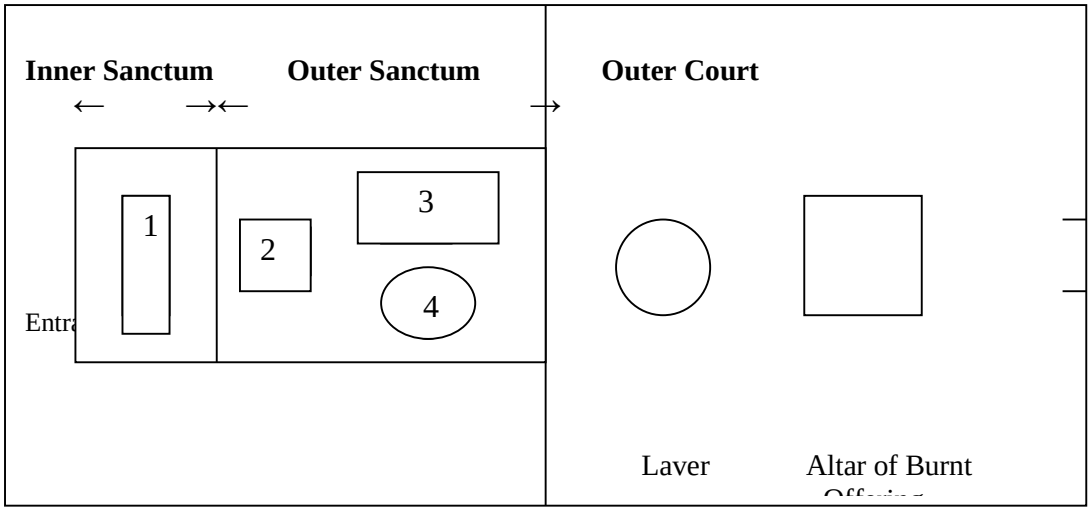
[11] A high mountain was also perceived as YHWH's dwelling-place. A high mountain was close to his heavenly dwelling; in ancient cosmology mountain peaks communicated directly with heaven. In ancient Israel, the theme of the mountain of the gods, mythical in origin, was transposed onto an historical plane because the decisive event for the constitution of the people took place on a mountain. The dwelling-place of YHWH on Sinai left an impression not only among those who directly witnessed the theophany, but also centuries later Sinai was considered the pre-eminent place of revelation. 1 Kings 19 may depict a pilgrimage by the northern tribes to Sinai. Some biblical texts (e.g., Deut 33:2; Judg 5:5 and Ps 68:7-8) suggest that it was from Sinai and not from heaven that YHWH set out at the time of his manifestations.

[12] The Hebrew Bible mentions the 'oak of Moreh' at Shechem (Gen 12:6) and the 'oak of Mamre' in Hebron (Gen 13:18). At both sites it is reported that Abraham built an altar to Yahweh. Abraham is also described as having planted a tree at Beer-sheba, where he called on the name of Yahweh (Gen 21:33; see also Gen 23:17; Judg 4:5). It is obvious from Abraham's sacrifice on the mountain in Moriah and Elijah's sacrifice on mountain Carmel that mountains were sacred sites for the worship of God. Sinai-Horeb and Zion maintained their sacred status in the biblical account of Israelite 'history' (see Exod 3:12 and Ps 68:15-16. Other mountains, however, were subjected to prophetic censure because of their alleged association with Canaanite cults (Ezek 18:6, 11, 15; Jer 3:2, 6; Hos 4:13). Sacred springs and wells also played a role in ancient Israel. According to the account in Numbers 20, Israel camped at a sacred district called Kadesh (i.e., 'holy'). It was there that Moses struck a rock from which the waters of Meribah flowed. In the patriarchal traditions, the well at Beersheba (Gen 21:30-31; 26:31-33) was located in the vicinity of the altar which Isaac built when Yahweh appeared to him there (Gen 26:23-25). The naming of Beer-lahai-roi, 'the well of one who sees', in Gen 16:14 is explained on the grounds of Hagar's encounter with the angel of Yahweh. In addition, Adonijah is said to have sacrificed by the Serpent's Stone, beside En-rogel, a spring in the Valley Kidron (1 Kgs 1:9).

[13] Walter Harrelson, *From Fertility Cults to Worship*. (Missoula, Montana: School Press, 1952), 36.

[14] The term 'Israel' is used in four senses in the texts of the Hebrew Bible: politically, territorially, ethnically, and religiously, which can cause a great amount of confusion. In this article, I shall use the terms 'Israel' and 'Israelite' to designate the post-exilic community of true

The Temple of Solomon (1 Kgs 6) consisted of three parts (see the diagram below), the vestibule and two rooms, one behind the other. (1) The vestibule (אוּלָם), often referred to as the outer court, was enclosed by curtains supported on pillars. It was oblong in shape and the entrance was on the east side; within the outer court was an area that had two articles of furniture, the bronze altar of sacrifice where all of the sacrifices were made, and the bronze laver for cleansing, where the priests washed their hands and their feet. (2) The first of the two rooms was called הֵיכָל or קֹדֶשׁ ('the holy place'), sometimes referred to as the shrine[15] or the outer sanctum. It contained the table shewbread,[16] the golden lampstand, and the golden altar of incense. (3) the second was called דְּבִיר ('the back room') or קֹדֶשׁ הַקָּדָשִׁים ('the most holy place' or 'the holy of holies'), sometimes called the *adytum*[17] or the inner sanctum. It had the form of a windowless cube ten metres on each side and contained the Ark of the Covenant.[18] Only the high priest could enter this chamber only once a year, on the Day of Atonement (Leviticus 16).



1. Ark; 2. Altar of Incense; 3. Table; 4. Menorah

Sacred Objects

Ritual materials and objects can be categorised into two types: those that are used to perform the ritual and those upon which the ritual is performed. In ancient Israel, the former includes materials and objects such as the special clothing worn by the priest who performs the ritual, animals and birds, water, incense, and the ashes of a heifer and blood. The second type includes the *kappōret* (covering) on the ark in the holy of holies and the altars. Altars were the central objects on which sacrifices were made. They were erected where the people were confronted by the manifestation of the holy. This was in accordance with the idea that a site was made holy with the appearance of the God. Altars offered a special possibility for communication with God. They were originally made of undressed stones or special earth.

believers who lived in Yehud and worshipped Yahweh Elohim, the new monotheistic and universalistic deity who was the focus of emerging forms of Judaism. Members of the diaspora who recognised Jerusalem as the only legitimate temple site for offering animal sacrifices to Yahweh Elohim and accepted the Torah as binding were probably also considered to be part of 'Israel'. I will never use the term to designate the northern political kingdom that bore that name, which existed from ca 975-721 BCE, nor its territory or people. The related adjective 'Israelite' will never be used to refer to either a member of that kingdom, its territory, or any religious practices or beliefs of its national cult dedicated to Yahweh and his consort. 'Judah' and 'Judahite' will be used to describe the forerunner of religious 'Israel': the kingdom of Judah and its national cult of Yahweh Sebaot and his consort Asherah. Some traces of this earlier religion are preserved in the Hebrew Scriptures, though they predominantly reflect the later worship and theology of Yahweh Elohim.

[15] Jacob Milgrom, *Leviticus 17-22*, AB 3A (New York: Doubleday, 2000), 135.

[16] The bread of the Presence or 'showbread' consisted of twelve loaves of unleavened bread, which were placed on the table 'before the face of YHWH' every Sabbath; hence the name 'bread of the face'. After a week, it was eaten by the priests.

[17] Milgrom, *Leviticus 1-16*, 135.

[18] The ark was considered a dwelling-place of YHWH, so that the terms 'YHWH' and 'Ark of YHWH' were sometimes interchangeable. For instance, in Num 10:35-36, Moses addressed the ark as to YHWH; when the ark sets out Moses will say, 'Arise, O LORD, and let thy enemies be scattered; and let them that hate thee flee before thee.' Similarly, when it rests he will say, 'Return, O LORD, to the ten thousand thousands of Israel.' This concept is also clear from the cry of the Philistines when, during their war with Israel, the ark was brought into the Israelite camp. In fear they cried out, 'A god [*elohim*] has come into the camp . . . woe to us! For nothing like this has happened before' (1 Sam 4:7).

SOURCE FOR THE SACRIFICES

Sacrifices constituted the main act of worship among the Israelite. However, detailed regulations regarding them remains obscure. We have no theory of sacrifice, no theological interpretation or justification of the sacrificial cult. The reason is that the priestly editors of the Pentateuch considered the sacrifices self-evident; they did not need to explain it. The laws regulating sacrifice constitute a sort of handbook for priests; they show no interest in the theoretical basis of sacrifice.[19] In addition, the sacrificial practice of Judah did not remain constant through the centuries. The sacrificial laws that have been preserved in the Priestly Code (P),[20] were edited in the post-exilic period and reflected relatively late conditions. They cannot be used to elucidate the pre-exilic sacrificial system. There is no doubt, however, that P continued and developed older forms of sacrifice and perhaps, added new forms,[21] but there is not enough information about this development.

Leviticus 1-7 is the primary source for the study of P's sacrificial system.[22] However, this source does not offer a full treatment of the sacrificial system.[23] It does not review the whole set of sacrifices known by P. The incense offering, which the high priest was required to offer daily (Exod 30:7-8), is not referenced nor is the drink offering, which was offered twice a day to YHWH alongside the burnt offering and the grain offering (Exod 29:38-42a). The ordination offering, which was of major importance for priestly ordinations, is mentioned just once, in Leviticus 7:37, with no details provided. In addition, Leviticus 1-7 does not indicate the circumstances in which all the various sacrifices are to be offered; the few that are described are only partially sketched in their details. Except for two instances (Lev 4:13-21; 6:12-16), only private sacrifices are considered.[24] Notwithstanding these limitations, the place of Leviticus 1-7 in its larger context, the types of materials offered to YHWH, the verbs used to express the act of sacrificing, and the stereotypical formulas expressing the expected result of sacrifice provide some clues about the underlying theology of sacrifice. In this article discussion will focus on the five sacrifices outlined in Leviticus 1-7.

THE FIVE SACRIFICES

The introductory formulas in Leviticus 1-7 allow us a better understanding of how P views sacrifice.[25] Although these formulas introduce the content, their primary purpose is to distinguish among the various kinds of sacrifices. There is significance in the variations in their formulations. P subdivides Leviticus 1-7 into two larger sections, chapters 1-5 and 6-7.[26]

The first section is introduced as a discourse that YHWH instructs Moses to address to the people (Lev 1:2a). This section reviews all the types of sacrifice that the ordinary person may offer to YHWH, with special emphasis on the deity's share of each one. The second section is introduced as instructions that Moses is to give to the priests (Lev 6:2). Unlike the first, this section is concerned principally with what remains after YHWH has received his part of the sacrifice, often called the 'residual substance'. Here P follows a different order than the one in Leviticus 1-5.

The Fire Offerings (אִשֶּׁה)

Leviticus 1-3 gives three types of sacrifices that are termed fire offerings. These are the burnt offering, which is given entirely to YHWH except for the hide (Lev 1), the cereal offering, which is divided between

[19] Helmer Ringgren, *Sacrifice in the Bible* (New York: Association Press, 1962), 13.
[20] The Priestly Code (P) refers to Leviticus 1-16.
[21] For instance, in the time of Eli the priests took their share of the sacrificial meat while boiling. But later law specifies the portion meant for the priests was to be received in its raw state. In the law of Deuteronomy, the priestly portion is defined as the shoulder, the two cheeks, and the maw (Deut 18:3), while in the Priestly Code the priests received the breast and the right thigh (Lev 7:34).
[22] Leviticus 1-5 gives basic instructions about the types of sacrifices to be offered. Much of the information here is on the person who brings the sacrifice. Leviticus 6-7 is more directly concerned with the priest themselves. This block of text discusses the 'law' of the main offerings listed in chs 1-5. Thus, chs 6-7 seem to go over the instructions in chs. 1-5.
[23] Alfred Marx, 'The Theology of the Sacrifice According to Leviticus 1-7', in *The Book of Leviticus: Composition and Reception*, ed. Rolf Rendtorff and Robert A. Kugler; (Atlanta: SBL, 2003), 103. According to David Baker, the function of Leviticus 1-7 was to give the regulations of the cult in specific cases, rather than describing a specific set of rituals as they happened on a given occasion; it was to serve as a reference for officiants and offerors ('Leviticus 1-7 and the Punic Tariffs', *ZAW* 99 (1987): 193.
[24] Marx, 'Theology of Sacrifice', 103.
[25] Marx, 'Theology of Sacrifice', 107.
[26] Baker, 'Leviticus 1-7', 194.

YHWH and the priests (Lev 2), and the well-being offering, which is divided among YHWH, the priests and the offeror (Lev 3). The details of each of these is discussed.

The Burnt Offering (עוֹלָה)

The Hebrew root עלה means 'to ascend' and connotes the burnt offering 'goes up' in smoke to God. Sometimes it is called a כָּלִיל, which gives the characteristic feature of this sacrifice; the root כלל means 'entire' or 'complete'. With the exception of the skin, the *entire* victim is burnt on the altar (see 1 Sam 7:9; Deut 33:10; cf. Ps 51:21 where עוֹלָה is used alongside כָּלִיל).

Leviticus 1 gives the regulation of this sacrifice. The victim was to be a male animal without defect (v. 3); it could be a big animal, such a bull (vv. 3-5), a smaller animal such a sheep or a goat (v. 10) or a bird (v. 14). The type of animal chosen for this sacrifice seems to have depended on the offeror's financial circumstances. In the case of a bull, sheep or goat, the offeror was to present the animal at the entrance to the Tent of Meeting, then lay a hand on its head and slaughter it before YHWH. He then would accept the sacrifice as atonement for the offeror. The offeror was to skin the victim, cut it into pieces and wash the entrails and feet (vv. 6, 9), though Ezekiel consigns this duty to the Levites (Ezek 44:11).[27] The priests' duties were to collect the blood and sprinkle it against the altar, to set the meat on the altar, and to burn it (Lev 4:7, 18, 25, 30, 34; 9:9). When the victim was a bird, everything was done at the altar by the priests: they would wring its head and allow its blood to flow down the side of the altar. Then they would divide it in two and burn it. According to Numbers 15:1-16, the burnt offering was accompanied by a cereal offering of the finest ground flour mixed with oil and a libation of wine. Finally, P indicates that a burnt offering was offered twice a day as a public offering: once in the morning and once in the evening (Exod 29:38-40; Num 28:2-2).[28]

B. Levine has proposed that the primary function of the burnt offering was to attract the attention of the deity 'with the objective of evoking an initial response from the deity prior to bringing the primary concerns of his worshippers to his attention'.[29] He suggests that the purpose of the burnt offering was to invoke the deity before joining with him in a fellowship of sacrifice, which was the context for petition and thanksgiving. In his understanding, this explains why the peace offering (as a gift of greeting, a present to the deity) follows the burnt offering rather than precedes it. The deity needed to indicate his readiness to 'come' to the worshipper before a gift could be offered to him. Levine cites, for example, Numbers 23:1-6 ('perhaps the Lord will come to me') and 1 Kings 18 to buttress his point.

Levine's interpretation of the function of the burnt offering makes sense of both the narrative accounts and the order of sacrifice. At the same time, however, it must be recognised that in the priestly legislation (e.g. Lev 1:4, 9:1, 14:20, and 16:24) and narrative texts (e.g., Job 1:5; 42:8; cf. Ezek 45:15, 17), the burnt offering also had an expiatory function which does not fit his proposal. The עוֹלָה seems to have been used for a wide range of purposes: to express homage to God and to win his favour by a costly gift;[30] to appease God's wrath (1 Sam 7:9; 2 Sam 24:21-25); to rejoice (Lev 22:17-19; Num 15:3). This suggests that one should not assume that a single purpose was present in every instance of a particular sacrifice. In fact, one cannot always understand the function or motivation of this sacrifice.[31]

The Grain Offering (מִנְחָה)

The term מִנְחָה, in P usage, denotes a cereal or grain offering, but there is evidence that earlier it was used broadly for all sacred offerings.[32] It was used for Cain's vegetable offering and Abel's animal offering (Gen 4:2-4), and Elijah's sacrifice on Mount Camel (1 Kgs 18:29). It is not known when and how it came to have the specialised meaning in P.

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[27] In 2 Chr 29:22, 24, the priests slaughtered the victims, but because the victims were many, the Levites assisted the priests in skinning the victims (v. 34). In 2 Chr 35:11, the Levites slaughter and flay the animals, while the priest dispose of the blood.

[28] Ezekiel mentions only a daily morning burnt offering (46:13).

[29] Baruch A. Levine, *Leviticus*, JPS Torah Commentary (Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society, 1989), 22.

[30] Cf. de Vaux, *Ancient Israel*, 36. Vaux thinks that maybe the burnt offering was originally to express homage to God and to win his favour. The phrase 'pleasing odour' to the Lord (Lev 1:9, 13, 17, etc.) may support this purpose.

[31] Patrick D. Miller, *The Religion of Ancient Israel* (London: SPCK, 2000), 109.

[32] Gray, *Sacrifice in the Old Testament*, 398.

The grain offering was an offering from the harvest of the land, which is the only type that required no bloodshed. It was composed of fine flour mixed with oil and frankincense. Sometimes, this offering was cooked into cakes prior to taking it to the priest. These cakes, however, had to be made without leaven (Lev 2:4, 5, 11a) because yeast was not to be burnt in an offering to God (Lev 2:11b). Leavened bread was food that has been fermented. Fermentation is equivalent to decay and corruption and for this reason, was prohibited on the altar.[33] Every grain offering had to have salt in it (Lev 2:13), perhaps as a symbol of the covenant. Only a portion of this offering was burned on the altar (Lev 2:2, 9), with the remainder going to the priests (Lev 2:3, 10a).

In non-Priestly sources, the grain offering was burnt on the altar in its entirety (e.g. Judg 6:19-21; 13:19-20). How can this difference be reconciled? A note is made in relation to Milgrom's answer to this question.[34] In both Assyrian and Hittite cults, entire grain offerings and incense were burnt to the individual and family deities on roof altars. This method may have been used by the Judahite women who offered cakes and incense to the Queen of Heaven (Jer 7:18; 19:13; 44:17; cf. vv. 18-19). The injunction that in Israel's cult, frankincense was to be added to the grain offering and not to any of the blood offerings may be traced to this older practice of the burning of both incense and grain offering on private altars. The instruction that only a portion be burnt on the altar and the remaining was to go to the priests may be evident of a polemic against a popular folk religious practice of burning incense and grain offering to the gods of heaven. If so, Leviticus 2:3 and 10 would be intended to make it clear that the grain offering and incense were to be offered only in the presence of the priest, to discourage the private offering of grain and incense.

There remains another problem to solve: the portion owed to the priest. Leviticus 2:10 and 7:10 indicate that the portion of the grain offering (both raw and cooked) that remains after the offering of a token portion to YHWH was for the priests. However, Leviticus 7:9 shows that the cooked grain offering went to the officiating priest. As suggested by Milgrom, it is more likely that with a combination of two traditions concerning the grain offering is being dealt with;[35] the local sanctuary (*bāmâ*) and regional sanctuary (e.g., Shiloh) in which only one priestly family officiated, and that of the Jerusalem Temple, which employed a whole cadre of priests. Perhaps as the priests officiating in the Jerusalem Temple increased, it became necessary to distribute the all cereal offerings (raw and cooked).[36]

Some biblical texts (e.g., 1 Kgs 18:36; 2 Kgs 16:15; Ezra 9:4-5; Dan 9:21; Ps 141:2) suggest that, at some period, possibly during the time of the monarchy or after the exile, the grain offering was sacrificed daily in the evening on its own. Numbers 28 indicates that a grain offering and a burnt offering were sacrificed in the morning and the evening.

It seems that the grain offering had a close association with the burnt offering (see, e.g., Num 28-29 and Lev 23:37). Milgrom has suggested that the procedure for the grain offering in Leviticus 2 was perhaps inserted between the procedure of the burnt offering in Leviticus 1 and of the peace offering in Leviticus 3 because the grain offering became a regular accompaniment to the burnt offering (e.g., Lev 14:20; Numbers 28-29).[37] If this is the case, a problem rises as to when to identify the grain offering an integral part of the burnt offering, and when it served as a discrete, self-sufficient sacrifice. Milgrom acknowledges this problem but does not offer any solution of his own.[38]

Albeck has suggested that when the grain offering occurs before the blood offerings in the list, it stands as a discrete sacrifice (e.g, Num 18:9-14; Ezek 44:29), but when it occurs after the blood offerings it is an adjunct (e.g., 14:10; Num 6:14-15; Ezek 45:17, 24-25; 46:14).[39] The problem with Albeck's suggestion is that in Ezekiel 45:17 the schema breaks down. The order is: the sin offering, the grain offering, the burnt offering, and the peace offerings. In this instance, the grain offering occurs between blood offerings. So, the prescriptive order does not necessarily determine the actual procedure.

Although no purpose is given for the grain offering, it may have symbolised the recognition by a society based, to a great extent, on agriculture of God's blessing of the harvest. The part that was burnt

[33] Milgrom, *Leviticus 1-16*, 188.
[34] Milgrom, *Leviticus 1-16*, 201-202.
[35] Milgrom, *Leviticus 1-16*, 202.
[36] The same reason may be given to the transformation of the right thigh given to the officiating priest (Lev 7:32-33) to that of the entire priests (9:21 and 10:15).
[37] Jacob Milgrom, 'Sacrifices and Offerings, OT', in *IDBSup* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1976), 769.
[38] Milgrom, *Leviticus 1-16*, 200.
[39] Hanokh Albeck, *Commentary to the Mishnah, Holy Things* (Jerusalem: Bialik Institute, 1956), 364-65 cited in Milgrom, *Leviticus 1-16*, 200.

upon the altar was called אזכרה (‘remembrance’ or ‘memorial’; Lev 2:2; 5:12; 9:16) to suggest the sacrifice was to bring the offerer into gracious remembrance. The bringing of a representative portion of the grain harvest was another outward expression of devotion. This is supported by the מִנחָה ‘gift’, which is used to designate this offering (Gen 4:3-4, and 1 Sam 2:17). The word could also mean ‘tribute’ (Judg 3:15; 2 Sam 8:2).

iii. The Peace Offering (שְׁלָמִים)

The Hebrew word שְׁלָמִים is difficult to translate. The usual rendering ‘peace offering’ does not give the full meaning. Although the word שלם, derived from the same root, means peace, it does not exhaust the nuances of the term. The use of the adjective שָׁלֵם in an expression as his heart was שָׁלֵם, in complete harmony, with God gives a clue. The sacrifice then has a purpose of establishing communion with God.

There are two characteristic features of this sacrifice. First, the victim is immolated. Secondly, the victim is shared between YHWH, the priest, and the offeror; because of this it is better referred to as a communion offering[40] or shared offering.[41] Like the burnt offering, the victim could be a bull, a sheep or a goat, but unlike the burnt offering, the victim could be either male or female; in addition, birds were not acceptable. The offeror was to present the victim, lay a hand upon it and slaughter it. The priest would then pour the blood around the altar. The fat around the entrails, the two kidneys, and in the case of sheep, the fat in the tail were all to be burnt on the altar. Like the blood, the fat belonged to YHWH (Lev 3:16-17; cf. 7:23-25). The breast and the right thigh were the share of the priests (Lev 7:28-34; 10:14-15). The remaining flesh belonged to the offeror and was to be cooked in a pot, not roasted as in the Passover sacrifice.[42] The family of the offeror was to eat the cooked meat with the offeror.

Most importantly, this offering is associated with celebratory occasions, both those reflected in the festivals and in personal occasions of celebration (Num 10:10). The book of Leviticus especially associates the peace offering with three kinds of celebrative and often personal sacrifices. First is the sacrifice of praise or thanksgiving, which is offered on the occasion of a solemnity and in gratitude for God’s deliverance (Lev 7:12-15). Second are the freewill sacrifices, which are offered out of devotion. It is ‘the spontaneous by-product of one’s happiness whatever its cause’ (Lev 7:13).[43] The third is the votive sacrifice, which is offered in payment of a vow to the deity to secure the deity’s help (Lev 7:13).

If the offering was a thanksgiving sacrifice, the meat was to be consumed the same day, none was to remain until morning (Lev 7:15). In both the freewill and votive sacrifices, the meat could be kept until the day following, but what remained over to the third day was to be burned (Lev 7:16-17). The most satisfactory explanation of this distinction is that the thank-offering was a response to experienced acts of YHWH’s goodness, while the votive and the free-will offerings were linked with the expectation of benefit and with supplicatory prayer.

Peace offerings were made on solemn occasions of various kinds. They could be in gratitude for a great victory or for the election of a king (1 Sam 11:14-15), before a war (1 Sam 10:8; 13:9), at cultic festivals (Exod 32:6, 8; 1 Kgs 8:62-66; 9:25; Amos 4:4) and at thanksgiving (Ps 107:22). It is important to note that, irrespective of the occasion, peace offerings were celebrated in the presence and before the face of YHWH.

The significance of this offering lies in the idea and expectation that the meal eaten together will create *communion*: a person who eats with another person becomes united with the person and declares that they are closely bound together.[44] This offering creates a twofold *communion*: the communion among the people who eat the victim and the communion of the people who are eating together and YHWH. For this reason, this offering is sometimes referred to as a *fellowship* offering.

The question as to whether peace offerings were perceived as shared with YHWH in the sense that he partook of the food needs not be discussed here. References to the altar as the table of YHWH (Ezek 44:16; Mal 1:12) or to the food of YHWH (Lev 3:11; 21:6, 8; 22-25; Num 28:2) suggest such a notion. De

[40] Roland de Vaux, *Studies in Old Testament Sacrifice* (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 1964), 31.
[41] Harold H. Rowley, *Worship in Ancient Israel: Its Forms and Meaning* (London: SPCK, 1967), 52.
[42] For the meaning of these two modes of cooking, see Ronald S. Hendel, ‘Sacrifice as a Cultural System’, *ZAW* 101 (1989), 383-87.
[43] Milgrom, *Leviticus 1-16*, 419-20.
[44] Hans-Joachim Kraus, *Worship in Israel: A Cultic History of the Old Testament*, trans. Geoffrey Buswell (Richmond, Virginia: Knox, 1962), 118.

Vaux, however, without any proof, says that there is no evidence that this notion was held during the monarchic period. He thinks that the expressions 'food for Yahweh' and 'table of Yahweh' were first introduced during the Exile in a Babylonian environment and states that 'they simply bear witness to the Yahwistic religion's power of assimilation'.[45] For de Vaux, the best answer to this question is that the blood and the fat belonged to YHWH alone because they are sacred. The blood contains life and so human beings have no right to consume it. In sum, de Vaux thinks that parts of the meat given to YHWH were not meant for him to eat.[46] H. Rowley supports this interpretation and cites Deuteronomy 12:7 to stress that the worshippers were to eat *before* YHWH, not *with* him. If YHWH were conceived of as sharing the meal, he would have demanded some of the best cuts.[47]

However, it can be argued that Deut 12:7 is a late tradition and does not reflect the original intention of the 'fellowship-meal'. In most ancient sacrifice, the god of the clan shared the flesh of the victim at a feast by receiving the blood and pieces of fat. There was a joint participation in the living flesh and blood of the victim between the god and his worshippers,[48] and so the expressions could equally mean that both YHWH and his worshippers partook of the same sacrificial victim.[49]

The Sin Offerings (חטאת)

The second set of sacrifices in Leviticus 4-5 are each introduced with נֶפֶשׁ כִּי, followed by a reference to the sin that has been committed. P distinguishes between two kinds of sins: the חטאת, a transgression of a prohibitive commandment and the מעל, the trespass against property. They correspond to two kinds of sacrifices, the חטאת, the sin offering, and the אשם, the reparation offering. Unlike the first three offerings, these two sacrifices were compulsory. They were performed to appease YHWH's anger against the sinner and to avert punishment. In sin offerings, the victim varied according to the status of the wrongdoer: an ox for the sin of the high priest and for the sin of the community; a he-goat for the sin of a leader of the community; and a goat or a sheep for the sin of the individual. Concession was made for the poor; they could offer two turtle-doves or two pigeons: one for a sin sacrifice and the other offered as a burnt offering. The distinctiveness of this sacrifice is twofold: the function of blood and the use of the flesh of the victim (Lev 4:1-5:13; 6:17-23).

***Sin Offering* (חַטָּאת)**

This offering was designed to deal with sin that was committed unintentionally. The sin offering was used to cleanse a holy place as in Leviticus 16:16. It was also used to cleanse people. It is worth noting that people consecrated are cleansed again by a sin offering when their holiness has been defiled by some event (Num 6:5-12). The sacrifice varied according to who committed the sin. If the priest or the congregation of Israel sinned, then a bull was required. A leader of the people had to bring a male goat, while anyone else sacrificed a female goat or a lamb. The poor were allowed to bring two turtle-doves or two young pigeons. The one bringing the offering was to place a hand on the animal and then slaughter it. When the priest or the congregation sinned, the blood was sprinkled seven times before the veil in the sanctuary and some of it was placed on the horns of the altar. The rest of the blood was poured out at the base of the sacrificial altar (Lev 4:5-7, 17-18). For others who sinned, the sprinkling of the blood before the veil was omitted. The blood was smeared with a finger on the horns of the altar of sacrifice and the rest was poured at its base (Lev 4:25, 30, 34). The same internal organs that were designated for burning in the peace offering were likewise to be disposed of in this sacrifice. The rest of the animal was taken outside of the camp to the place where the ashes of the sacrifices were disposed and there it was burned. These disposal procedures were not followed when the sin offering was made on behalf of a non-priestly person (Lev 6:24-30). In this case, the priest was allowed to eat some of the meat.

[45] de Vaux, *Studies in Old Testament Sacrifice*, 40.
[46] de Vaux, *Studies in Old Testament Sacrifice*, 42.
[47] Rowley, *Worship in Ancient Israel*, 125.
[48] Smith, *Religion of the Semites*, 345.
[49] William Oscar E. Oesterley, *Sacrifice in Ancient Israel: Their Origin, Purpose and Development* (London: Hodder, 1937), 173.

The Guilt Offering (אָשָׁם)

In the guilt offering, the blood was thrown against the altar and not poured at its base (Lev 7:2). The fat of the victim was burned on the altar (Lev 7:3-5) and the flesh eaten by the priests (Lev 7:8). Procedurally, the ritual was very similar to that of the sin offering for a lay person. However, with the guilt offering, a payment was to be made in addition to the animal sacrifice (Lev 5:16).[50] A person who took something illegally was expected to repay it in full and add 20 percent of the value and then bring a ram for a guilt offering. Other instances in which the guilt offering was prescribed included the cleansing of a leper (Lev 14:1), having sexual relations with the female slave of another person (Lev 19:20-22), and for the renewing of a Nazirite vow that had been broken (Num 6:11-12).

Since both the sin and the guilt offerings involved diverse rituals, there must have been some distinction between them but, as the present text stands, it is difficult to distinguish between them.[51] In Leviticus 5:6-7, the guilt offering is called the sin offering. Both types of offering also were made for similar types of sin. Some scholars think that the sin offering was only meant for involuntary acts while the guilt offering was for voluntary and involuntary acts that involved some assessable injury. This is difficult to accept because after childbirth, a woman was required to make a sin offering (Lev 12:6, 8); it is hard to think that this was an involuntary act. In the case of a cleansed leper and of a Nazirite who has contacted impurity, both a sin offering and a guilt offering were prescribed. It is hard to see how an assessable injury was involved in either of these cases. The two offerings cannot be distinguished along voluntary and involuntary lines. The present form of the law probably represents a later systematic and simplified form of an earlier practice that is no longer completely understood. Since the two terms seem occasionally interchangeable, it is best not to bother with precise definition, more so because no special regulations are provided for the guilt offering, and the supplement in Leviticus 7:1-7 shows that the procedure in both cases was essentially the same.[52]

THE ROLE OF BLOOD IN SACRIFICE

A discussion of sacrifice, especially the sin offerings, is incomplete without a consideration of the role of blood in the ancient Judahite sacrificial system. The discussion begins by looking at the law prohibiting the eating of blood. However, the discussion would be limited to Leviticus 17:10-12 because it is the only passage in Leviticus that speaks about the prohibition against eating blood.

[10]If any man of the house of Israel or of the strangers that sojourn among them eats any blood, I will set my face against that person who eats blood, and will cut him off from among his people. [11]For the life of the flesh is in the blood; and I have given it for you upon the altar to make atonement for your souls; for it is the blood that makes atonement, by reason of the life. [12]Therefore I have said to the people of Israel, No person among you shall eat blood, neither shall any stranger who sojourns among you eat blood. (RSV)

These verses contain a chiastic structure consisting of a prohibition against eating blood, probably in meat[53] (v. 10), the reason for this prohibition (v. 11), and a repetition of the prohibition (v. 12).[54] The prohibition against eating eating blood in v. 10 is motivated by the idea that blood is identical with נֶפֶשׁ, the life-force.[55] This rationale is developed into a complex motivation in v. 11aβ. According to this verse, blood is 'given' by YHWH to the Isaelites for the specific purpose of atoning for and even ransoming their lives. The use of the *piel* of כפר here in connection with the application of blood on the altar recalls the Priestly doctrine of purification and atonement in Leviticus 1-16, so the expression לְכַפֵּר עַל־נַפְשֹׁתֵיכֶם has usually been rendered by 'to make atonement for your lives'.

[50] Vaux calls it a reparation offering (see *Studies in Old Testament Sacrifice*, 98).

[51] See Johann Heinrich Kurtz's discussion on the difference between the two (*Offerings, Sacrifices and Worship in the Old Testament*, trans. James Martin [Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1998], 189-212).

[52] Ringgren, *Israelite Religion*, 172.

[53] As argued by Milgrom, the phrase 'to eat blood' most likely refers to eating meat with the blood in it ('A Prolegomenon to Leviticus 17:11', in *Studies in Cultic Theology and Terminology*, SJLA 36 [Leiden: E J Brill, 1983], 99); see Gen 9:4 and Deut 12:23.

[54] Milgrom, *Leviticus 17-22*, 1469.

[55] This rendering is generally admitted, so Rolf Rendtorff, 'Another Prolegomenon to Leviticus 17:11', in *Pomegranates and Golden Bells*, ed. David P. Wright et al (Winona Lake, Ind.: Eisenbrauns, 1995), 24; Milgrom, *Leviticus 17-22*, 1472.

Verse 11 gives two reasons not to eat bloody meat.[56] The first is that life is in the blood: 'For the life of the flesh is in the blood . . .' (v. 11aα). The idea behind this is that since the blood contains the life of the animal, and since it is wrong to consume the life of an animal, which belongs solely to God, it is wrong to consume the blood of an animal (cf. v. 14; Gen 9:4; Deut 12:23). The life of all creatures is God's property, so human beings have no claim on it.[57] The phrase '. . . and I [the LORD] have given it [the blood] for you' implies the 'owner' of the blood is the LORD, which supports the above reasoning. In addition, there is similarity between human life and animal life. 'An animal also has a *nepeš* (Gen 9:10; Lev 1:10, 46; 24:18; Num 31:28); . . . it is responsible under the law (Gen 9:5; Lev 20:15-16; cf. Exod 21:28-32) and is a party to God's covenant (Gen 9:9-10; Lev 26:6, 22; cf. Hos 2:20).'[58] Animal life that is in the blood is therefore of high value and needs to be treated with respect. Humans are not to appropriate life by eating blood; it belongs to God. All together, v. 11 may be translated as follows: 'for the life of the flesh is in the blood, and I myself have given it to you to ransom your lives, for it is the blood that ransoms by means of/as the life'. The life of the offeror is ransomed by means of the life of the animal, which is a payment to which the offended party, YHWH, has agreed.

The second reason for the prohibition against the consumption of the blood is that God has a special purpose for it: to make atonement for the souls of the people (v. 11aβ). This phrase implies that, since God, the owner of the blood, has given it to make atonement, therefore, any other use of blood is forbidden. This is grounded in its relation to the life of the animal. So, the blood is able to atone for the life of the offeror because of the life it contains.

To ensure that the blood goes to its owner, God, Leviticus 17:1-9 insists that all slaughter of animals should take place in a sacrificial context, none is to be carried out away from the shrine (Lev 17:7-9).[59] The execution of this stipulation seems practically impossible. This problem is underscored by Deuteronomy 12:20-25, which allowed slaughter anywhere, provided the blood was drained out of the animal. The impractical nature of the demand for slaughter at the temple only suggests that perhaps Leviticus 17 should be seen as an idealised system detached from reality or assume that it envisages a society small enough in number and territory to allow a trip to the altar and back within a day or so.[60]

CONCLUSION

In this article an attempt has been made to sketch the sacrificial system of ancient Judah, at least as P outlines it. The study has shown that sacrifice was to take place in the temple, which is the affirmation of YHWH's sovereignty. The believer recognised that everything came from God, the creator and disposer of all things, and expressed this by offering to God all or part of the elements of sacrifice. The Article has also shown that sacrifice in ancient Judah was not to take place randomly. It was to be performed in sacred zones, using a schema in which both the priests and the offerors had their parts to play. The discussion has demonstrated the multi-purpose nature of ancient Judahite sacrifice: it was a means of restoring a broken relationship; it appeased God's anger aroused by sin via the death of the victim, which symbolised the death of the sinner מוֹעֵד. Furthermore, the significance of blood in the ancient Judahite sacrificial system has been established as well. The blood-life of the sacrificial animal atoned for the life of the offeror. Finally, the sacrificial system taught the necessity of dealing with sin and, at the same time, demonstrated that YHWH had provided a way for dealing with sin.

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[56] Karl Elliger, *Leviticus*, HAT 4 (Tübingen: Mohr, 1966), 220.
[57] Arie Noordtzij, *Leviticus*, trans. Raymond Togtman, BSC (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1982), 177.
[58] Milgrom, *Leviticus 1-16*, 712.
[59] The exception to this rule was the case of clean wild animals or birds, which could be hunted, killed and eaten away from the shrine, provided the blood was drained onto the earth (Lev 17:13-14).
[60] Lester L. Grabble, *Leviticus* (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1993), 78.

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