

WHY SACRIFICES?

Moshe, Why did sacrifices become part of Judaism?

My response:

Of course, we don't know exactly what the rationale was, but we can bring our most rational thinking to the Five Books of Moses

Let's start with my idea that G-d doesn't need anything from us. He doesn't need our prayers and He doesn't need our gifts of gold, silver, animals, grain, or wine. He only wants the types of things a parent wants, namely that we, His children, realize our full potential and succeed in life

He has already made it abundantly clear in the Laws that all life is sacred. For example, even animals and the fields should be rested.

Now, for us, part of wisdom is not to overestimate our position and to acknowledge the non-material realm. This takes the form of humans showing respect to G-d in many ways. One thing Jews did was to build a magnificent temple and fill it with beautiful worship services. How is such an institution to be supported by the Israeli public, and in particular how will the priests and levites be fed? The answer is: agricultural donations.

Sacrifices are very much misunderstood by both Jews and non-Jews. People consider them a total waste of life. Actually the sacrifices were a celebration of edible gifts. Animals, grain, and wine were the only contributions available to a primarily farming and herding society and these contributions maintained the temple staff. Yes, there were elaborate presentation ceremonies but very important was the utilitarian aspect of the system. The word "offering" is much better than "sacrifice". The latter ignores the important sustenance that the offerings provided for those who joyously led the country's affirmation of G-d.

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