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## MAIMONIDES' ATTITUDE TOWARDS SACRIFICES

### INTRODUCTION

Approximately one fifth of the Pentateuch and one third of the Talmud are devoted to *korbanot*—sacrifices. Birth, salvation from distress, the joy of the festivals, inadvertent sin—are all associated with *korbanot* or related procedures. Even with the destruction of the House of Holiness the centrality of *korbanot* in religious life was not extinguished. Many prayers are centered around them. We constantly seek their renewal in an era of peace and political freedom which will allow us to serve God as in former years.

It is the object of this essay to study Maimonides' attitude toward sacrifices. Many scholars regard the Rambam's views on *korbanot* as the most difficult part of the *Moreh*.<sup>1</sup>

To understand the Rambam's position more fully, it is helpful to review his controversy with the Ramban on this subject. According to Rambam, God gave us the *korbanot* in order to wean us away from the idolatrous practices of the heathen nations in which we had lived. God therefore redirected the sacrificial urge to Him, and commanded us to offer sacrifices to Him, so as to uproot the erroneous views we had acquired.<sup>2</sup>

Ramban, in his commentary, disagrees:

And behold, these words are worthless, they make a big breach, raise big questions, and they make the Table of God polluted. For the *korbanot* are not *only* to remove erroneous opinions from the wicked and foolish. Scripture says of them that they are fuel for the Divine fire, for the purpose of giving the scent of satisfaction . . .<sup>3</sup>

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As is clear from the word *only*, the Ramban does not necessarily disagree with the thesis that *korbanot* help uproot idolatrous opinions. What he does object to is the Rambam's omission of other reasons for the *korbanot*. Whereas the Rambam regards sacrifices as a reaction to certain evils in the world which are either already existing or which threaten to emerge, the Ramban, endows *korbanot* with intrinsic value.

Their differences are also revealed in their explanation of *ketoret*. *Ketoret* is a perfume. It represents the highest dedication to God of all the *korbanot*. It is offered on the Golden Altar and expresses the idea of the total sublimation of the entire personality to the will of God to become a scent of satisfaction to God. King David said, "May my prayer be acceptable before you like the *ketoret* . . ." <sup>4</sup> Once a year, on the Day of Atonement the High priest went into the Holy of Holies with the *ketoret*. Through the *ketoret* Aaron was able to atone for Israel and stop the plague which arose because of God's wrath. <sup>5</sup>

Nevertheless, the Rambam insists in identifying the *ketoret* with a preventive function. He states that the *ketoret* was included in the *korbanot* procedures to remove a bad odor arising from the animals. <sup>6</sup> *Ketoret* is regarded as a deoderant—a substance which counteracts bad odors. Hence *ketoret* has a predominantly negative effect.

On the other hand, the Ramban uses the idea of *ketoret* in a positive effect—as perfume, a substance which emits pleasing odors. This difference is methodology between the Ramban and the Rambam is important in understanding their differences as to the meaning of *korbanot*.

### I

Sin-offerings are explained by Maimonides as symbolic procedures designed to secure atonement (i.e., removal of something evil—sin). <sup>7</sup> Peace-offerings or the elevation offering cannot, however, be explained as a symbolic procedure whose purpose is to bring about closeness to God; for closeness to God is something good and positive in and of itself. Hence, it becomes necessary for Rambam to explain these other offerings as prophylactics

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guarding against certain erroneous opinions. The Ramban, on the other hand, assigns them the purpose of leading to closeness to God. The closeness that arises from striving upwards to greater spiritual height, or of clinging to the spiritual level one had been at before sin, or from total sublimation of the entire personality to the Divine Will.

In many ways, these views are more complementary than conflicting. Certainly the Rambam will have to admit that anything which uproots heathen opinions brings one closer to God. Similarly the Ramban will have to concede that by becoming closer to God we inevitably remove ourselves from erroneous opinions and beliefs. The important point of contention lies on the *emphasis*. The Rambam emphasizes the prophylactic-preventive nature, while the Ramban emphasizes the positive nature.

## II

In reviewing Talmudic-Midrashic literature we are faced with a number of instances supporting the Ramban's view: *korbanot* are looked on as intrinsically of value in and of themselves.

Let us analyze the word *korban* which derives from the root *karov* with the *nun* being added as a suffix.<sup>8</sup> *Korbanot* are looked on as a "nearings," objects by means of which we get nearer to God. If the Rambam were correct, then the sacrifices should be termed *rachkan* from *rachok*—to get far away.

The words for offering bread which were used in regard to the *korbanot* also indicated a positive attitude. Their scent is pleasing to God. Similarly it says,

And the *Minchah* offering of Judah and Jerusalem shall be sweet to God as it was in the old days and in the former years.<sup>9</sup>

There are many statements reflecting an analogy between *korbanot* in the God-man relationship, and sex in the male-female relationship. The House of Holiness, for example, is compared to the marital bed. Just as a bed has two purposes, relaxation and reproduction, so does the Sanctuary have the same two purposes.<sup>10</sup> The *korbanot* are equated with kisses and car-

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esses and the *ketoret* is equated with perfume.<sup>11</sup> This equation between the *korban* service and sexual relations<sup>12</sup> is so often taken for granted that the Talmud will sometimes assume the equation without explicitly stating it.<sup>13</sup>

There are many statements in the Talmud showing the predominantly positive attitude toward *korbanot*. Consider the famous saying in *Pirke Avot*:<sup>14</sup>

By virtue of three things is the Cosmos sustained: (1) By virtue of the Torah, (2) by virtue of the service; and (3) by virtue of acts of *chesed*.

Does the word service refer to *korbanot* or to prayers? In the *Moreh* we are told very clearly:<sup>15</sup>

. . . the sacrificial service is not the primary object . . . supplications, prayers, and similar kinds of worship are nearer to the primary object, and indispensable for obtaining it . . . Now God sent Moses to make a kingdom of priests and a holy nation by means of the *knowledge of God* . . . The Israelites were commanded to devote themselves to His service; compare “. . . and to serve Him with all your *heart*.”<sup>16</sup>

Maimonides then goes on to explain why it was nevertheless necessary to have sacrifices. We see here very clearly that the highest form of service is the “service of the heart.” In both the *Mishneh Torah* and the commentary on the *Mishnah*, however, the Rambam directly contradicts this. Rambam quotes the above aggadic statement in the *Mishneh Torah* to prove that *korbanot* are very important, and that one should not belittle their importance because of man’s smallness of knowledge and understanding in these matters.<sup>17</sup> Similarly in the commentary on the *Mishnah*:

. . . he said that through (1) wisdom—and this is the Torah, and in (2) perfection of virtues—and this is acts of *chesed*, and (3) through observance of the commandments of the Torah—and this is the *korbanot*—[through them] shall there be perpetuation of . . .<sup>18</sup>

We have here very explicitly that the “service” which sustains the world is the *korbanot*. In the above commentary the *korbanot* are taken as archetypical for all performance of *mitzvot*. Clearly,

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we are not dealing here with something which is only a prophylactic.<sup>19</sup>

### III

In the preceding paragraphs I indicated the difficulties between these views and those of the Talmud as well as between these views and the Rambam's own views. In similar cases in the *Moreh* where the Rambam disagreed with certain accepted opinions in the Talmud he at least mentioned them and pointed out he was disagreeing with them.<sup>20</sup> However, in the *Moreh's* lengthy discussion on *korbanot* we have no mention of the predominantly positive attitude to *korbanot*.

While the Rambam is not inconsistent with these sources, his omission of any reference upon the value of sacrifices is very noticeable and requires explanation.<sup>21</sup>

There are a number of answers. Perhaps the most straightforward is one which denies Maimonidean authorship to the *Moreh*. It suffices to deny authorship of the third part of the *Moreh*.<sup>22</sup> The trouble with this approach is the lack of any historical evidence to support it.

Other approaches have sought to seek some distinction within *korbanot*. Certain types of *korbanot* are said to be intrinsically "good" or positive in nature, while certain others are seen only in a preventive-prophylactic light. There are some people who distinguish between voluntary and obligatory *korbanot* while others distinguish *korbanot* brought near on the *bamot* and those brought near on the *mizbayach*.<sup>23</sup> This approach, however, fails to include all cases the Rambam considers. We have seen that the Rambam gives a preventive-prophylactic reason to *ketoret*. Yet the *ketoret* is an obligatory *korban* which could only be brought on the golden *mizbayach*. Furthermore, it would certainly be odd for the Rambam to explain only one type of *korban* and not at least mention that he is not considering the other type. Again, the feeling that something is "missing" in the *Moreh* is aroused.

Those who accept Maimonidean authorship create a dichotomy within the Rambam himself or Judaism. This dichotomy

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can be extremely crude in nature such as ascribing senility to the Rambam when he wrote the *Moreh*.

A more sophisticated approach taken is to posit an irreducible tension between law and philosophy, from the nature of law itself. Its disciplined structure prevents the emergence of concepts which are suitable only in the domain of philosophy.<sup>24</sup>

Of course, from a logical point of view this does solve the problem. However, the tensions posed by the views in the *Moreh* create not only logical problems but they also create aesthetic and moral problems whose solution is equally deserving of our attention. Many feel it philosophically unsatisfying to assume a dichotomy between law and philosophy. The legal structure of a culture should mirror its ideological views. To say otherwise, is to rob the idea of philosophy of any claim to relevance.

Our solution to the tensions posed by the *Moreh* must occur within Halakhah. It must solve not only logical problems but aesthetic and moral ones as well. In short, we think it preferable to have a solution to the problem which (a) will solve the logical problems, (b) not create unpleasant dichotomies, (c) preserve the image of Rambam as an intellectual giant and deeply spiritual personality, and (d) preserve the view on *korbanot* expounded in the Talmud and *Midrashim*.

In finding a solution possessing these characteristics it is necessary to consider the following passages:

Rabbi Simlai said: "Whenever you find a point (apparently) supporting the heretics, you find the refutation at its side." They (the heretics) asked him again: "What is meant by, 'And God said: 'Let us make man . . .?'" "Read what follows," replied he: "not, 'And gods created (in the plural) man' is written here, but 'and God created (singular) man'." When they went out his disciples said to him: "Them you have dismissed with a reed, but how will you answer us?" Said he to them: "In the past Adam was . . ."<sup>25</sup>

An idolater asked Rabbi Johanan the son of Zakkai: "These rites that you perform look like a kind of witchcraft. You bring a hefer, burn it, pound it, and take its ashes. If one of you is defiled by a dead body you sprinkle upon him two or three drops and you say to him: You are clean!" Rabbi Johanan asked him: "Has the demon of madness ever possessed you?" "No," he replied. "Have you ever seen a man possessed by this demon of madness?" "Yes," said he. "And what do

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you do in such a case?" "We bring roots," he replied, "and make them smoke under him, then we sprinkle water upon the demon and it flees." Said Rabbi Johanan to him: "Let your ears hear what you utter with your mouth! Precisely so is this spirit a spirit of *toomah*; as it is written, 'And also I will cause the prophets and the unclean spirit to pass out of the land',<sup>26</sup> Water of purification is sprinkled upon the *tamay* and the spirit flees. When the idolater had gone Rabbi Johanan's disciples said to their master: "Master! This man you have put off with a reed but what explanation will you give to us?" Said he to them: "By your life! The Holy One, Blessed is He . . ." <sup>27</sup>

It is related of King Ptolemy that he brought together seventy-two elders and placed them in seventy-two rooms, without telling them why he had brought them together, and he went in to each one of them and said to him, "Translate for me the Torah of Moses your master." God then prompted each one of them and they all conceived the same idea and wrote for him: God created in the beginning,<sup>28</sup> I shall make man in image and likeness,<sup>29</sup> and he finished on the sixth day and rested on the seventh day,<sup>30</sup> male and female he created him,<sup>31</sup> come let me descend and confound their tongues,<sup>32</sup> and Sarah laughed among her relatives . . .<sup>33</sup>

The Mishnah in Sotah states that the Sotah was told things that were not proper to be related to her.<sup>34</sup> In discussing this cryptic passage the Talmud points out that among other things it refers to the incident of Reuben.<sup>35</sup> As is well known—according to the Talmud<sup>36</sup> Reuben did not sleep with Bilhah. He rather interchanged beds to try and get his father to live with Leah. Rashi also states that the incident of Reuben refers to the interchanging of beds.<sup>37</sup> The Rambam, however, is quite startling in his formulation of the halakhah:

“. . . and we tell her the incident of Reuben with his father's concubine according to the literal meaning of the Biblical text . . . in order to make it easier for her until she confesses . . ." <sup>38</sup>

Thus according to the Rambam we actually lie and malign Reuben in order to make it easier for the Sotah to confess.<sup>39</sup>

There is a common denominator to these incidents. In the first two we have a confrontation between a pagan and a Rabbi in which the pagan attacks Judaism. The Rabbi's reaction is to answer with a "broken reed." Only after the pagan has left, does the Rabbi tell his students the real answer. More startling is the

incident with King Ptolemy. We see here an actual distortion of Biblical texts. Finally, in the case of the Sotah we see an obligation to recall someone's bad behavior, and according to the Rambam, to actually fabricate slander about the individual in order that the woman may confess. Thus in all of them we have some situation which warrants some form of speech which would normally be immoral in nature and prohibited.

Thus it would seem that the underlying Halakhic principle in these sources is the following: Suppose the following two conditions are met:

- (a) We are dealing with an ignorant or sinful person;
- (b) there is a possibility that if the truth is told then this person will misconstrue fundamental tenets of Judaism or will continue or aggravate his (or her) sin.

Apparently under these circumstances there is a moral obligation to engage in some of the types of speech that the Torah normally prohibits provided that the utterance of this type of speech will prevent the misconstrual of fundamental beliefs of Judaism or will prevent the furtherance of sin. The types of forbidden speech that may be uttered include distorting the truth, telling a half-truth, lying by omission, and actual lying. (There is a further controversy between Rashi and Rambam as to the quality of forbidden speech. According to Rashi one can recall the bad deeds of people provided that one does not malign people. According to Rambam, the scope of forbidden speech is wider, though it is not entirely clear how far he extends this principle.)

How does this principle obviate the difficulty of the Rambam's explanation of *korbanot*? We recall that the primary difficulty in the Rambam's position was his *omission* in not mentioning the positive side of *korbanot*. The law we have just stated covers certain cases where *omission* is obligatory. Suppose we knew that in the Rambam's time, attacks on Judaism were leading to a misunderstanding of Judaism or a lessening of religious observance—that is, that premises (a) and (b) above are satisfied. If this could be done, then we would have the following solution to our problem.



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People had attacked Judaism for believing in the allegedly pagan institution of sacrifices. Therefore they could not accept as Divine a Torah which had such allegedly pagan commandments. Would it not be logical to say that the Rambam deliberately omitted certain truths about *korbanot* so as to preserve respect for Judaism? By using the method of "answering with a reed" and seemingly agreeing that *korbanot* are pagan, but that God commanded them as a concession to the idolatrous propensities of the time, the Rambam preserved respect for the Torah. People would not attack the rest of the Torah because *some* parts were commanded as a reaction to psycho-spiritual states of a particular time and place.

Historical sources stating that the situation was precisely that way are revealed in the Rambam's own writing. In his introduction to *Kadoshim* the Rambam states:

And the thing which brought me to this (i.e., to writing the introduction)—even though the categories of *korbanot* is an explicit thing, they are mentioned in Biblical verses, and it is impossible to offer an innovation or new minute detail—is the fact that this matter—that is, *korbanot*—has already become lost through our many sins. Furthermore, only a few people watch it, and its knowledge is not habitual with any person—even if he studied it a lot, because there is no action to reinforce the habit. No one asks, no one seeks, no one desires any aspect of them at all to such an extent, that the great scholar and the fool of the masses are equal. Most students do not know matters of the *korbanot* which are talked about in many verses.<sup>40</sup>

Furthermore in the *Mishneh Torah* the Rambam states:

It is proper for man to analyze the ethics of the Holy Torah and to know their ultimate purpose according to his strength. Anything in which he cannot find a reason and he doesn't know for it a cause—let this thing not be light in his eyes, and let him not break through to go up to God lest God perish him. Let not his thoughts be in it as it is in mundane matters . . . A fortiori for the commandments that the Holy One Blessed is He has enacted—that a person should not rebel against them because he doesn't know their reason . . . Our sages have said: Statutes have I enacted for you and you have no permission to think against them. Man's inclination pushes him and the non-Jewish nations argue against them . . . Even King David was greatly troubled by the heretics and from the non-Jews who would

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argue against the *chukkim*. But whenever they pursued him with false arguments, which they offered because of the smallness of man's knowledge, he would increase clinging to the Torah . . . And all *korbanot* are among the *chukkim*. Our sages have stated that through the merit of the service of *korbanot* the world is sustained.<sup>41</sup>

We can now conclude that conditions (a) and (b) that we mentioned above are both satisfied. That condition (a) is satisfied is clear from the introduction to *Kadoshim*. The Rambam very explicitly mentions the great ignorance people had about *korbanot* and he almost apologizes for having to write something so elementary. From the *Mishneh Torah* it would seem that to a certain extent people were lessening religious observance because of their misunderstandings. However, for the satisfaction of condition (a) it is sufficient to demonstrate ignorance.

That condition (b) is satisfied seems to be clear from the *Mishneh Torah*. The Rambam, who in the *Mishneh Torah*, is known for his terseness, repeatedly emphasizes, in one form or another, that man must accept God's commands even if he does not understand them. In the same paragraph the Rambam repeats *ten* times the prohibition of thinking lightly about *Chukkim* and treating them like mundane matters!<sup>42</sup> The strong and picturesque language is also highly uncharacteristic of the *Mishneh Torah*. The reference to rebellion against the Torah because of misunderstanding, as well as the example of King David, seem to confirm the idea that the Rambam was facing a religious crisis in his time arising from a conflict between the views of the Torah and the erroneous opinions of the heretics. We know from other sources that the Rambam in general, did not think too highly of people who just plunge into philosophy—he calls them destroyers of the world.<sup>43</sup>

It is clear from these sources that, on the one hand, people were totally ignorant of the most elementary laws about the *korbanot*, while on the other hand, they were constantly being pursued, and religion itself was attacked because of the lack of understanding of these commandments. Rambam's response becomes perfectly understandable and morally correct. By *omitting* certain of the reasons relating to *korbanot* he can agree with the premise that sacrifices are heathen and pagan! He notes, how-

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ever, that God used extreme wisdom in making this "concession" to the people to remove them from these erroneous opinions. By so doing Rambam helped strengthen religion since people no longer attacked the rest of it.

A possible confirmation of our approach to the *Moreh* may be found in the Ralbag's commentary on Job. For the Ralbag notes that the Rambam's interpretation of certain sections of Job is forced. To account for his error the Ralbag says:

And I think that that which caused the Rambam to interpret Bildad's opinions in this manner is because of the philosophical opinions on Divine Providence that existed in his own day. And because he saw a vague relationship between Bildad's opinions and the opinions of the Metuzela he attributed the Metuzela's opinion to Bildad.<sup>44</sup>

The Ralbag also attributes the distortions which the Rambam made in the *Moreh* to his wanting to make various Judaic notions appear "modern." Thus he shows how the current philosophical views on Divine Providence can be found in Job.

The Ralbag, of course, is dealing with certain difficulties in regard to the *Moreh's* views on Job. We have dealt with *korbanot*. It is possible, however, that our remarks might be more generally applied to other difficult sections of the *Moreh*. The extent to which this can be done is dependent on the results of such scholarly research which will throw light on the precise nature of the religious crisis in the Rambam's time.

It should be noted that our thesis presupposes that the *Moreh* was a work of an exoteric nature. For we explicitly posit that the work was meant to be read by certain types of people who were ignorant of many laws. Actually, however, we only assert this exoteric nature with regard to the sections on reason for the commandments. Indeed, certain scholars would agree that, ". . . the *Guide* contains a public teaching and a secret teaching. The public teaching is addressed to every Jew including the vulgar."<sup>45</sup> It is also clear from the Rambam's letters that he intended certain parts of the *Moreh* for a wider audience.

It could also be maintained that the *Guide* was written for a more esoteric audience, without harming our position appreciably. For the Rambam might have intended that his readers

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would then in turn communicate these ideas to the masses according to their needs.<sup>46</sup>

### IV

In light of the above findings we must now analyze the reactions of various other authorities to the Rambam. We shall consider two: the Ramban's, and Rabbi Samson Raphael Hirsch's. At first glance we seem to be in a dilemma. Why did they object so vehemently?

Even if we contend that the Ramban in his commentary wanted to remind people of the true reason for *korbanot* (lest they think that the Rambam's reason is the real one), this would not explain the vehement language with which he criticizes the Rambam. If the Rambam had to do what he did how can the Ramban object?

The answer to this, may be found in seven otherwise superfluous words which the Ramban adds in his commentary. After objecting to Rambam's explanation, and before discussing the mystical implications of the scriptural passage under discussion, the Ramban states:

And these are words which will be accepted by people—they attract the heart like Aggadic stories.<sup>47</sup>

Thus we have here quite explicitly what the point of controversy is. For the Rambam and Ramban agree that *korbanot* have a predominantly positive nature augmenting and enhancing the God-man relationship; they also agree that when necessary the truth should be omitted or distorted and if necessary lies told. What they do disagree on, however, is the necessity of using this method with *korbanot*. According to Rambam, at this time the people would not be receptive to the true interpretation. They could only see an imitation of ancient paganism. Ramban, on the other hand, explicitly states that the true explanation is understandable and enjoyable like *aggadah*. Hence there is no need for distortion. (In terms of the criteria we mentioned previously the debate is over the satisfaction of (b). For

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before lying it is necessary that we are convinced that the truth, if told, will cause harm. However, if telling the truth will accomplish our goal, then clearly, it is not permissible to lie.) Thus the controversy lies in the estimation of psychological-intellectual state of the mass of Jews at the time.

Rabbi Hirsch's view on the *Moreh*, particularly on the section dealing with *korbanot*, is a bit difficult. At first glance we would suppose that he was agreeing with the Ramban whom he very often followed. However, a careful examination of their criticisms shows that this position is not without difficulty. The Ramban, although very vehement against the Rambam, nevertheless, directs his remarks against the Rambam's *views*. Rabbi Hirsch, however, does not attack the Rambam's views as much as he attacks the Rambam's *methodology*.<sup>48</sup>

This is probably what motivated Rabbi Hirsch in his criticism of the Rambam. Let us not forget, that Rabbi Hirsch lived at a time when people were in danger of losing their religious commitment. He considered some of the problems of his time to be traceable back to certain of the underlying methodology mentioned in the *Moreh's* third part. He was thus highly sensitive to the grave dangers involved in distorting certain religious principles the way the Rambam had. He consequently disagreed with the wide extension the Rambam had given the halakhic principle we developed.<sup>49</sup>

It will require more investigation to determine the precise degree to which Rambam extended this principle. Our intention has been only to introduce the principle and hope it leads to a better understanding of the *Moreh*, and a higher appreciation of the Rambam. Certainly in our own times, when it is possible that we may be able to renew some or all of the *korbanot*, it is all the more important that people do not let previous misconceptions of *korbanot*, as concessions to pagan propensities, detrimentally influence their decisions regarding its renewal.

*Korbanot* are one of the most important religious procedures in Judaism. Therefore it is important to understand its true nature so that when they and the Temple are renewed they will serve their true purpose of enhancing man's spiritual nature enabling him to come closer to God.

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### NOTES

1. See the Introduction to *Seder Kadoshim* in the Soncino translation of the Talmud: "No part of Maimonides' *Guide* has aroused more controversy than his theory regarding sacrifices." Similarly, Friedlander in his preface to his translation of the third part of the *Guide* quotes the Bodl. MS. 2240, 3a which contains a document signed by Josselman and other Rabbis, declaring that they accept the teaching of Maimonides as correct with the exception of his theory about angels and sacrifices.

2. *Moreh*, Part III, Chapter 32.

3. Ramban's commentary, Leviticus I:9.

4. Psalms 161:2.

5. Cf. Numbers 17:12.

6. *Moreh* III, 45.

7. *Ibid.*, III, 46.

8. This etymology is very old. It goes back to the *Zohar* on the beginning of Leviticus. It is quoted both by Ramban and Rabbi Hirsch in their commentaries (See Leviticus I:9 and I:2 respectively).

9. Mal. 3:4.

10. E.g., *Shir Hashirim Rabbah*; I, 16:3.

11. *Ibid.*, I, 2:1.

12. *Sanhedrin* 7a.

13. It is important to emphasize that *Chazal* are not using this as a metaphor to indicate that *korbanot* are an expression of love (an *emotional* state only). They are identifying *korbanot* as an act of *physical* love—sex. To elucidate this we can divide the general phenomenon of love into four phases: (i) the general state of love (corresponding to which we have the general commandment to love God); (ii) the performance of concrete actions by each of the lovers to provide and fulfill the wishes and desires of the other (thus man does the commandments and God reciprocates by protecting man); (iii) dialogues expressing mutual love, common interests and commitments (thus we have prayer from man to God, and *Talmud Torah* and prophecy from God to man); and (iv) sex (*korbanot*)—specific procedures heavily involving physical objects whose purpose is to *induce* a psychological state wherein it is conducive to feel closeness. The ultimate goal is true love and commitment. This, however, does not negate the indispensibility of certain means toward these goals.

14. *Avot*, I:2.

15. *Moreh*; III:32. (cf. Laws of Prayer in the *Mishneh Torah*; 1:1 where the Rambam states "service of the heart-prayers").

16. Deut. 11:13.

17. *Mishneh Torah*; *Meeilah* 8:8.

18. Rambam's commentary on *Avot* I:2.

19. Consider the morning offering. Its basic constituents consists of taking a lamb, throwing its blood upwards towards the lower half of the altar and then bringing the meat on the altar, divided up according to the prescribed divisions. Thus we have the following equation:

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<p>The community of Israel brings near to God an unblemished lamb—<i>masculine</i> and in its <i>first</i> year. The <i>lamb's blood</i> is received in a vessel of the <i>House of Holiness</i>. The <i>blood</i> is then thrown upwards (on the altar), while the various organs of the <i>lamb</i> are brought as</p>	<p>=The community of Israel          =brings itself nearer          =to God          =as an unblemished lamb          =in the <i>virility</i> of youth.          =God's flock dedicate their <i>personalities</i>          =to their mission of being a          "holy nation" (cf. Ex. 19:6).          =Their <i>personalities</i> must then strive          =upwards (to the Divine heights),          =while various organs of          activity of <i>God's flock</i> are brought as</p>
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"Bread for the Divine  
 fire, to become a scent  
 of being pleasing to God."

לחם אשה לריח ניהח לד'

(Ps. 79:13; 95:7, 100:2 23:1; Numbers 27:17; Jer. 50:17; Ez. 34; I Lev. 17:11).

It is the Bible that explicitly makes the identifications: "Israel"="God's flock"; "blood"="personality"; "korban"="nearing". The Bible likewise instructs the man who feels the need of coming "nearer" to God to bring his "nearing" as bread for the altar fire to become a scent of being pleasing to God.

20. *Moreh* III:48 (cf. his explanation of שלוח הקן in which the Rambam takes note of the Talmud's opinion but says "We follow the other opinion").

21. It is important to realize that many sources which seem to support the Rambam may actually not do so. The best example is the famous Midrash (Lev. Rabbah, 22:8) which compares the Jews after leaving Egypt to the son of a king who would eat *nevelot* and *terefot*. To prevent this, the king invited his son to eat with him. Similarly God invited us to sacrifice to Him. Consider by analogy, the son of a king who associated with bad women. To prevent this, the king arranged for his son to be with good women. It would be absurd to state that the reason for associating with good women is to avoid bad women. We must distinguish between a catalyst and a cause. The association with bad women, the eating of *nevelot*, or our association with pagan tendencies was only a catalyst to speed up the reaction. It is clear that association with good women as well as eating at one's father's table have value in and of themselves. Similarly for *korbanot* they have value by themselves even though the original historical catalyst may have been prophylactic in nature.

22. E.g., Rabbi Jacob Emden in his *Siddur Hallon Shebi'i* says: "The book *Moreh Nevuchim* is not the work of art of the great scholar Rambam, may his memory be a source of blessing; rather it comes from someone who wished to strangle himself and hung himself on a mighty tree."

23. Cf. the Introduction to *Sefer Kadoshim* (Soncino Press). Rabbi Dr. I. Epstein on pages xx-xxxii discusses the problem, quoting sources from both the *Mishneh Torah* as well as the *Moreh*. Cf. also "משך חכמה" by

מאיר שמחה בהן מדיוינסק

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a הוצאת ספרים אשכול.  
ויקרא.

See his remarks on the beginning of

24. See Chapter 6 of Leo Strauss' *Liberalism: Ancient and Modern* (Basic Books Publishers)—the Chapter entitled "How to begin to Study the Guide of the Perplexed." See especially p. 162. Also see Section VI (p. 78-94) in Strauss' *Persecution and the Art of Writing* (Free Press).

25. *Bereshit Rabbah* 8:9.

26. *Zach.* 13:2.

27. *Bamidbar Rabbah* 19:8.

28. Cf. *Gen.* 1:1.

29. *Ibid.*, 1:26.

30. *Ibid.*, 1:26.

30. *Ibid.*, 2:2.

31. *Ibid.*, 5:2.

32. *Ibid.*, 11:7.

33. *Ibid.*, 18:12. See also *Megillah* 9a-b.

34. *Sotah* 7a.

35. *Sotah* 7b.

36. *Shabbat* 55a. Almost all major commentators agree on this. See Rashi, Ibn Ezra, Ramban, etc. on *Gen.* 35:22.

37. Rashi on *Sotah* 7b beginning with the word "Yehuda," near the bottom of the page.

38. *Mishneh Torah*; Laws of *Sotah*; 3:2.

39. Rashi, of course, is quite understanding as he interprets the Talmud literally—"We tell her the incident of Reuben," so Rashi says that we tell what happened (not what didn't happen).

40. Introduction to Rambam's commentary on *Seder Kadoshim*.

41. *Mishneh Torah*; *Meilah* VIII:8.

42. (i) . . . and something which he doesn't find a reason . . . let it not be light in his eyes,

(ii) let him not break through . . . lest God perish him,

(iii) let not his thought . . . as his thoughts in weekly matters,

(iv) . . . *a fortiori* to *mitzvot* . . . a person should not rebel,

(v) and he should not become enwrapped . . . false on the Name,

(vi) and let not his thought . . . like his weekday matters,

(vii) Does it not say . . . he shouldn't imagine that they (*Chukkim*) are inferior to the *Mishpatim*,

(viii) Our sages . . . you have no permission to think against them,

(ix) And a man's inclination surrounds him . . . and see how King David suffered . . . he would increase clinging to Torah,

(x) and all *korbanot* are among *Chukkim* . . .

43. *Laws of Idolatry*; 2:3. Note that there is some similarity between the phrases of this passage and that in *Meilah*.

44. Ralbag's commentary on *Job*, Chapter 8, towards the end.

45. See note (25), page 145. On page 148 he says, "But we must not forget that the *Guide* is written also for atypical addresses. In the first place certain



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chapters of the *Guide* are explicitly said to be useful for those who are simply beginners."

46. See the letter of Maimonides to the Jews of Marseilles printed in the Summer '72 issue of *TRADITION*, especially pages 137, 139 and 135. Rambam addressed this to the Jews of Marseilles and refers them to the *Moreh* in connection with the justification or refutation of certain philosophical works. He even refers the reader to his commentary on the *Mishnah* as well as to the *Moreh*, thus indicating, that at least on certain matters, the Rambam had a wider audience in mind.

47; Ramban; Commentary to Leviticus 1:9.

48. See the 18th of Rabbi Hirsch's *Nineteen Letters*. Rabbi Hirsch praises the Rambam for preserving medieval Judaism but also severely criticizes him for the effect the *Moreh's* views were having at Rabbi Hirsch's time. There is difference in tone between the Ramban and Rabbi Hirsch. Ramban although using quite strong language, nevertheless is basically criticizing the *view* of the Rambam. Rabbi Hirsch however criticizes the *methodology* of the Rambam. For this reason I feel that Rabbi Hirsch simply disagreed with the wide extension the Rambam had given the halakhic principle we developed.

49. Of course (e.g., those who put the Rambam in *cherem*), thought the Rambam really held the views he expounded on sacrifices. Our purpose in this section was merely to point out that other avenues of explanation may be used in certain cases.