

# SACRIFICIAL CATEGORIES AND PERSONALITY TYPES

RUSSELL JAY HENDEL

## OVERVIEW AND GOALS

This paper explores symbolic interpretation of the sacrificial procedures. In the first section, I clarify the importance of such a symbolic interpretation. In the sections that follow, I review a psychological theory of personality types, sacrificial law, and the proposed personality-sacrificial correspondence. In the final sections, I present applications.

Statistically, sacrifices are a significant part of the Jewish religion. One-fifth of the pentateuchal books (Leviticus) and one-third of the talmudic orders (Kodashim) are devoted to sacrifices. Thus the meaning and interpretation of sacrifices must be addressed.

Two schools of thought have emerged on the subject.<sup>1</sup> One of them interprets sacrificial laws as lacking intrinsic value, concessionary and transitional stages in weaning the Israelites away from idolatrous practices which frequently included sacrifices. Advocates of this approach can cite strong biblical evidence to support their thesis, since the sacrifices were frequently associated with decadence and corruption.

An opposing school of thought interprets the sacrifices as providing symbolic guidance on core Jewish moral values and attitudes. This school includes prestigious advocates from both the early medieval scholars such as Nahmanides and 19th century scholars such as Samson Raphael Hirsch. The advocates of this approach can also point to strong biblical and talmudic support, for the Bible, as interpreted by the Talmud, describes the sacrifices as representing an intimate love relationship between God and Israel which will be renewed in the messianic era.

We see that Jewish sources host diametrically opposite viewpoints on the interpretation, value and attitude toward sacrifices. This paper is properly classified as belonging to the school of thought that interprets sacrifices symbolically.

*Russell Jay Hendel has a Ph.D. in mathematics from the Massachusetts Institute of Technology and is a professor of mathematics at Towson University, Maryland. He moderates an Internet discussion group at [www.rashivomi.com](http://www.rashivomi.com)*

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There are several approaches to symbolic interpretation of sacrifices. For example, Rashi connects several sacrifices as symbolically recalling the story of the Golden Calf.<sup>2</sup> In contrast, Hirsch, following earlier authorities, symbolically interprets sacrifices as reflecting social hierarchy. He associates sacrifices of birds with the lower poverty-stricken classes, of sheep/goats with classes of people who are followers, of rams with leaders, and of oxen with co-workers of God – the High Priest and High Court – who assist God by plowing a course for the community in the field of life.<sup>3</sup>

In this paper I present a third symbolic approach exclusively based on personality. The basic goal of this paper is to show a one-to-one correspondence between the six basic personality types and the six distinct categories of items that can be offered as sacrifices. It is rather remarkable that the six basic personality types used in a wide variety of modern settings, and which were developed independent of any biblical source, correspond naturally and exactly to the six categories of items that can be offered as sacrifices.

#### THE HOLLAND THEORY OF PERSONALITY AND ENVIRONMENTS

The interpretation of sacrifices does not deal with personalities only, but rather with the interaction between personalities, environments, and conditions. For example, the sacrifices related to sin, thanksgiving, and childbirth are all different, indicating that the Bible symbolically wanted different personality responses to different situations.

Therefore, for the purposes of this paper I use the Holland personality theory. Its strength is precisely that it studies the optimum interaction between personalities and environments. Although initially conceived as a theory of vocational types, it applies more broadly to personality types and environments. The Holland theory has "contributed profoundly to psychology's conceptualization of people and work environments," "has generated international interest," is considered one of the foremost theories on people and environments, and correlates well with other personality theories.<sup>4,5,6</sup>

This theory categorizes each person, each vocation, and each environment as primarily belonging to one of six types labeled Realistic, Investigative, Artistic, Social, Enterprising, and Conventional (collectively labeled RIASEC.). A brief but intuitive summary, based on Holland's own comprehensive description, is provided in the list below.<sup>7</sup>

An obvious problem is that there are more than six personality types. How, then, can we use a list of six personality types to talk about a wide variety of people? To address this problem, current practice uses a variety of assessment vehicles to evaluate numerically each person, each environment, and each vocation, relative to all six RIASEC types. The individual, environment, or vocation is then assigned a three-letter code corresponding to the three highest scoring RIASEC types. These three-letter codes are highly accurate and highly descriptive of the individual, the environment, or the vocation.

As a simple example, a "rabbinic personality" or a "rabbinic environment" might be primarily classified as requiring leadership and the ability to socialize and work with people. Secondly the rabbinic personality/environment might be classified as investigative, reflecting an interest in learning and other intellectual pursuits. Therefore, the rabbinic personality/environment is assigned the three RIASEC categories which correspond to a leadership-socialization-investigation. The Holland theory predicts that a person with these three personality tendencies – a tendency and preference to lead, to socialize, and to do investigative work – would fit best in a rabbinic environment.

With this brief introduction, we next list the six Holland personality types. Although in this description we focus on people, the theory is equally applicable to vocations and environments.

1. The Real personality type is interested in working with inanimate things. For example, people who like to spend time fixing cars and other mechanical devices would be classified as primarily Real.<sup>8</sup>
2. The Investigative personality type is interested in experimenting with new ideas. An important secondary emphasis in the Investigative personality is newness – the capacity to break with non-established ideas and traditions. For example, scientific researchers, political dissidents, and philosophers, such as Voltaire, are classified, by Holland, as Investigative. Holland also classifies teenagers involved in rebellion, people with lack of family security, and people who have a facility to break relationships as belonging to the Investigative category. In other words, it refers to personalities involved in personal search whether this search is socially acceptable or not.
3. The Artistic personality type is interested in working with emotions. For example, people who like to create poetry, musical compositions, and other forms of art, would be classified as primarily Artistic.<sup>9</sup>



4. The Social personality type is interested in working with other people, in situations based on friendship relationships. For example, a person who enjoys going to meetings and obtaining members for his favorite club and organization would be classified as primarily Social.
5. The Enterprising personality type is interested in working as a leader of other people. For example, as discussed above, people who enjoy rabbinic work would be classified as primarily Enterprising.
6. The Conventional personality type is interested in productivity based on routine activities. For example, people who enjoy secretarial work or housework would be classified as primarily Conventional.<sup>10</sup>

#### OVERVIEW OF BIBLICAL SACRIFICES

The biblical sacrifice system is legally complex. In this section I present a simplified overview of it. All biblical offerings can be uniquely characterized by five parameters:<sup>11</sup>

1. the category of the item offered – that is, oxen, sheep, rams, birds, flour, incense;
2. the purpose of the offering – that is, expiation of sin, peace-thanks-giving, burnt, guilt;
3. the occasion of the offering occasion – that is, birth, a festival, personal occasions;
4. the participation in the offering – individual or community;
5. the obligation to make the offering – voluntary or involuntary.

Two offerings with identical values for these parameters are identically treated. The treatment of the offering can be characterized by a variety of parameters such as:

1. what is placed on the altar fire – that is, all or some organs, whether they are consumed and if so by the priest or owner;
2. what other placements (besides placement on the fire) are required – for example, the placement/spilling of blood.

In this paper I study exclusively the category of the item offered. For those categories that have sub-categories I deal exclusively with the parent category.<sup>12</sup> There are only six categories of sacrificial items that can be offered:

1. animal – kids, sheep/goats;<sup>13</sup>
2. animal – rams;<sup>14</sup>



3. animal – oxen;<sup>15</sup>
4. animal – birds (turtledoves/young pigeons);<sup>16</sup>
5. plant/agricultural – mincha offerings made from flour, oil, wine, frankincense;<sup>17</sup>
6. perfumes – the incense offerings made from a compound of 11 perfumes.<sup>18</sup>

#### THE PERSONALITY-SACRIFICE CORRESPONDENCE

This section and the next two sections present a proposed personality-sacrifice correspondence. I start by presenting some obvious correspondences. I then discuss criteria of symbolic interpretation. These criteria, while allowing for disagreements, facilitate the uncovering of an underlying symbolic interpretation consistent with all viewpoints. The resulting underlying unity enables us, in the following section, to present an almost unique personality-sacrifice correspondence that is independent of the subjectivity of symbolic interpretation.

Matching the six RIASEC categories and the six categories of items that can be offered as sacrifices, the following correspondences may be proposed:

1. The Bible uses sheep to symbolize followers and rams<sup>19</sup> to symbolize social leaders. This suggests that the sacrificial sheep and rams correspond respectively to the Social and Enterprising RIASEC personality types.
2. In a similar manner, oxen symbolize productivity,<sup>20</sup> leading to the association of oxen and the Conventional personality type.
3. If one accepts the distinction that the Social and Enterprising RIASEC personality types deal primarily with people, while the Real RIASEC personality type deals primarily with inanimate things, then Mincha plant offerings can correspond to the Real personality type that deals with inanimate things.<sup>21</sup>
4. The perfume-*ketoret* sacrifices seem to correspond to the Artistic RIASEC personality type.<sup>22</sup>

#### SYMBOLISM

A general overview of symbolic interpretation is presented by the author in an article<sup>23</sup> that summarizes both Hirsch's theory of symbolism<sup>24</sup> and alternative secular approaches. All symbolic interpretations generally use four basic methods: Symbolic interpretation by (a) function, (b) form, (c) linguistic association in the culture, and (d) explicitly indicated symbolism. Interpreters of the symbolism may disagree on the intensity of symbolic interpretation and the degree

to which it is carried, but they do not disagree on the use of these basic four methods.

An example will suffice to illustrate this point: The 11 ingredients of the *ketoret*, incense offered on the golden altar, nicely illustrate the idea that opposing symbolic interpretations identically use the same four basic methods. Quite startlingly, Maimonides and Hirsch, while disagreeing sharply, both interpret the *ketoret* functionally. Maimonides considers it as a deodorant, whose function is to remove the bad odors arising from the animals slaughtered in the Temple.<sup>25</sup> In this interpretation, the sole symbolic purpose of the *ketoret* requirement is to symbolically re-affirm the value that God must be approached in a pleasant environment.<sup>26</sup> By contrast, Hirsch interprets the *ketoret* as a perfume, symbolizing the highest level of spiritual sweetness attainable by the soul in its relationship with God.

Thus, both interpret the *ketoret* functionally: its purpose is to arouse a sensation of sweetness. However, they disagree on the intensity of symbolic interpretation: Maimonides is consistent with his viewpoint that sacrifices do not have intrinsic religious value and hence he interprets the *ketoret* prophylactically, while Hirsch sees it as having intrinsic value as a symbol of spiritual sweetness. In this sense, it would correspond to the Artistic RIASEC personality type, the personality type that is primarily concerned with human emotions.

This example offers the possibility for unique symbolic interpretation of the six categories of sacrificial items by function, form (attributes) and biblical linguistic associations. Such an approach would give a uniform commonality to all symbolic interpretations, and still allow for serious disagreement on the intensity and the degree to which the function and form interpretations are applied. Although the selection of functions and attributes (form) is itself subjective and subject to controversy, we nevertheless have a plausible method which should yield reasonably uniform results.

#### THE COMPLETE PERSONALITY-SACRIFICE CORRESPONDENCE

Using the approach we have defined, we now present the complete RIASEC-sacrificial associations with an emphasis on functional interpretation:

1. Sheep – social animal, follower – Social
2. Ram – social animal, leader – Enterprising
3. Plant (flour, oil, wine) – non-living (inanimate) – Real

4. Perfume – affecting emotions – Artistic
5. Oxen – productivity – Conventional
6. Birds – non-established, no fixed home – Investigative

To defend the last association of birds/Investigative, I use Hirsch's symbolic analysis. He showed that birds, as mentioned in the Bible, are primarily symbols of poverty and homelessness; beings who lack an established home and achieve success and escape through air-borne flight.<sup>27</sup> These two characteristics of birds – lack of establishment and achievement in the air – correspond nicely to the primary attributes of the Investigative RIASEC personality type; a focus on new but non-established ideas.

#### APPLICATION OF THE SACRIFICIAL-PERSONALITY CORRESPONDENCE

This symbolic sacrificial-personality association facilitates the priest functioning as a counselor. Can it be assumed that the priest used this association in giving guidance, and shown that priests were taught to give such guidance? If not, what value does this theoretical association have if practicing priests were ignorant of it?

One can respond to this by pointing out that the Bible, in several places, either explicitly or in theory, advocates the priests as the Torah and spiritual leaders of the nation.<sup>28</sup> More importantly, one may assume that the Bible intended the sacrificial procedures to affect unconsciously the one who offers the sacrifice, even if neither the priest nor the one who offers were aware of these symbolic intents. To illustrate this point of unconscious affect, Hirsch cites a story of a person who was saved from sin when, during the preparation for a sinful act, he saw his *tzizit* and became aware of their symbolism. Hirsch wryly points out that this person did not have explicit intent in wearing the *tzizit*, but nevertheless they provided latent unconscious symbolic meaning which saved him at a critical point.<sup>29</sup>

A second issue is the fact that certain sacrifices are obligatory, while others are voluntary. For example the *ketoret*, corresponding to the Artistic RIASEC category, may only be offered as an obligatory offering and may not be offered by lay individuals. This seems to contradict our thesis that the priest could guide Artistic personalities.

However, this is not a serious problem. The modern romantic approach perceives art as providing personal expression,<sup>30</sup> but in biblical times it was primar-



ily used as a means of national expression. The famous biblical poets – the 10 authors of the Psalms, the author of Song of Songs – were not romanticists painting personal expressions but ministers of the nation presenting national aspirations. Such an approach may bother 20th-century minds but, in terms of our basic correspondence, is consistent with biblical practices.

I now explore how the priest could vocationally counsel those who offer sacrifices, whether explicitly or unconsciously. Some simple examples are the bringing of lambs, goats, and rams for voluntary peace and thanksgiving offerings. Such voluntary offerings indicate personality preference. The symbolic interpretation of the procedures as well as the priest's own knowledge of the individual may then be used to assist that person.

A more complex illustration is provided by the childbirth offerings (Lev. 12:6-8). Under ordinary circumstances it was a sheep. Using the sacrificial-personality correspondence one would symbolically interpret this as follows: The transition from pregnancy to motherhood is best accomplished through social means; the prospective mother should follow the flock of other mothers she is friendly with and adapt their best practices.

However, poor mothers were required to bring a bird burnt offering. Recall that birds correspond to the Investigative type, which I showed above corresponds to investigation for new but non-established ideas. It is indeed reasonable to assume that poor women typically do not have the economic resources to follow the flock of traditional mothers using best practices for new-born infants. The Bible, by requiring a bird burnt offering, is in effect symbolically advising poor mothers: The transition from pregnancy to motherhood is best accomplished by innovating, researching, and investigating non-standard ways to provide for the new infant's needs.

Each of the above two symbolic interpretations emanated from simply stated symbolic equations: sheep = Social for non-poor women and bird = Investigative for poor women. Here, in the case of childbirth, the Bible, through its sacrifice procedures, is teaching that motherhood requires substantively different guidance for rich and poor mothers.

One further point: The childbearing offerings are obligatory. And indeed, in the above examples the mother did not volunteer her personal expression that she wished to bring a sheep or bird. However, the Bible's requirement to bring a sheep or bird, depending on socio-economic status, has relevant meaning: The

Bible is dictating the optimal personal approach to motherhood depending on economic status. The priest's job is consciously or unconsciously to assist the mother in her transition to this new experience of motherhood.

## CONCLUSION

In this paper I have presented a natural one-one correspondence between the basic categories of items offered as sacrifices and the six basic personality types in the widely-used Holland theory. This correspondence opens the door to viewing the sacrifice offerings as psychological counseling sessions. I believe this thesis if properly developed could transform our entire perspective on Leviticus.

## NOTES

1. Details and sources on the ideas presented in the following overview may be found in R. Hendel, "Maimonides' Attitude Toward Sacrifices," *Tradition* 13 (1973) pp. 163-180.
2. E.g., Rashi Numbers 19:2 or Leviticus 9:2
3. Samson Raphael Hirsch, *Commentary on the Pentateuch, Commentary to Leviticus*, trans. Isaac Levy (New York: Bloch Publishing Company, 1962).
4. Kristin Oliver and Charles Waehler, "Investigating the Validity of Holland's (1959,1997) RIASEC Typology Among Native Hawaiians," *Journal of Counseling Psychology* 52 (2005) pp. 448-452.
5. J.L. Swanson and P.A. Gore, Jr., "Advances in vocational Psychology theory and research," In S.D. Brown and R.W. Lent (Eds.), *Handbook of Counseling Psychology* 3rd ed., (New York: Wiley, 2000) pp. 233-269.
6. Filip De Fruyt and Ivan Mervielde, "RIASEC Types and Big Five Traits as Predictors of Employment Status and Nature of Employment," *Personnel Psychology*, 52 (1999) pp. 701-727.
7. J. Holland, A. Powell, B. Fritzsche. *SDS Professional Users Guide* (Odessa, FL: Psychological Assessment Resources Inc., 1994).
8. The Social and Enterprising types deal with (animate) people; By contrast the Real type deals with (inanimate) things
9. The Investigative and Artistic types deal with non-animate non-physical ideas and emotions. By contrast the Real, Social, and Enterprising types deal with people or things.
10. The emphasis in the Conventional type seems to be on productivity, rather than on the type of work. The explicit identification, in this paper, of the Conventional personality type with productivity, seems to be new, though it is certainly consistent with explanations and examples presented in the literature.
11. The classifications I present are summarized in the classical codes such as Maimonides, *Mishneh Torah, Ma'aseh HaKorbanot, Menachot*, et al. However, the classifications are also stated in explicit biblical verses: The main relevant passages are Leviticus 1-8, Exodus 30:1-9, Numbers 15:1-16, 28-29. Further biblical passages (such as Leviticus 16 describing the Yom Kippur service) deal with specific occasions. In the sequel, to avoid the appearance of the dependence of our results on particular legal codes, I will cite original biblical verses.

12. I explicitly note that these sacrificial categories of items may have different rules for the treatment parameters I have enumerated above. For example the perfume offering (incense) can only be offered by the community, and can only be offered in obligatory status. I discuss the consequences of voluntary - obligatory status below and show that it does not affect our thesis that offerings mirror personality and environment types.
13. Leviticus 1:10, Leviticus 3:6,12. Also cf. Numbers 15:11. Deuteronomy 14:4 shows that sheep and goat kids are identically classified as kid.
14. E.g., Numbers 6:17; also cf. Numbers 15:6.
15. E.g., Leviticus 3:1, Leviticus 1:3, Also cf. Numbers 15:8.
16. Throughout the Bible, without exception, turtledoves and young pigeons are always listed as the birds used in a bird offering. Hence I treat them as one category. Cf. Leviticus 1:14, 5:7, 12:8, Numbers 6:10, etc.
17. Leviticus 2. Technically, the flour, oil, and wine are plant derivatives not actual plants. Furthermore, certain Mincha offerings have a frankincense component which is a perfume. Thus the precise statement is that the Mincha offerings use primarily plant derivatives and one perfume (By contrast the *ketoret* (incense) offering is exclusively perfume).
18. Exodus 30:34-38.
19. The flock animals - sheep and goats - are traditionally symbolically interpreted as metaphors for followers who belong to a common group. Cf. Psalm 77:21, 78:52, 79:13, 80:2, 95:7, 100:3. By definition, rams are the older members, and hence the leaders, of the flock. Biblically we find supportive verses for the idea that rams symbolize leaders: E.g., Ezekiel 17:13, Ezekiel 31:11
20. E.g., Job 24:3 or Maimonides, *Hilchot Nachalot* 11:6.
21. Modern biology classifies plants, animals, and humans as animate since for example they can all reproduce. However, the Bible never refers to plants as animate. The Hebrew words *hai* and *nefesh* exclusively refer to animals, people and Divine entities. Hence, one is justified in classifying plants as inanimate.
22. I interpret perfume functionally, as an item whose primary affect is arousal of emotions. The *ketoret* had one bad-smelling perfume. Similarly art can be used for purposes of evoking both pleasing and negative emotions.
23. R. Hendel, "Genesis 1 Speaks about the Creation of Prophecy, Not the Creation of the World," *B'or Hatorah*, 13E (2002) pp. 71-87.
24. Samson Raphael Hirsch (trans. Jacob Breuer), "Guidelines for a Jewish Symbolism," in *Timeless Torah, An Anthology of the Writings of Rabbi S.R. Hirsch*. (New York: Samson Raphael Hirsch Publication Society, Feldheim, 1957).
25. Hendel, 1973, op. cit.
26. Cf. Malachi 3:7-8
27. Cf. Isaiah 16:2, Proverbs 27:8, 26:2. Perhaps the contrasts of birds and animals in the covenant of cuts, Genesis 15:9-21, best illustrates this symbolic point, that birds can escape by virtue of their capacity to fly - they are not tied to a particular territory. However they are helpless.
28. Cf. explicit statements in Deuteronomy 17:8-12 and Malachi 2:7
29. Talmud Bavli, Menachot, 44a. See Samson Raphael Hirsch's commentary on the Pentateuch Leviticus 23:24 (trans. Isaac Levy) (NY: Bloch Publishing Company, 1962) p. 676. "The student of whom the talmudic passage speaks had possibly no thought in his mind at the time he attached the *tzitzit* to his garment, or when he wore it, of the meaning of it. But in the excited moment of sexual



temptation their admonishing and warning meaning suddenly struck him and they became the savior of his morality."

30. Edmund Wilson, *Axel's Castle* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1959) pp. 1-25.



עשה תורתך קבע

**THE TRIENNIAL BIBLE READING CALENDAR**  
DEDICATED TO THE MEMORY OF CHAIM ABRAMOWITZ

January	Jeremiah	41 – 52
	Ezekiel	1 – 16
February	Ezekiel	17 – 45
March	Ezekiel	46 – 48
	Hosea	1 – 14
	Joel	1 – 4
	Amos	1 – 7
April	Amos	8 – 9
	Obadiah	1
	Jonah	1 – 3
	Micah	1 – 7
	Nahum	1 – 3
	Habakkuk	1 – 3
	Zephaniah	1 – 3
	Haggai	1 – 2
Zechariah	1 – 4	
May	Zechariah	5 – 14
	Malachi	1 – 3
	Psalms	1 – 15

