

THE SHEPHERD OF ISRAEL

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IS A HUMAN SACRIFICE ACCEPTABLE TO GOD?

By MOSES GITLIN

SOMETIMES you may chance to hear a talk on the radio or to read a newspaper article which treats of the passion, that is, the sufferings of *Yeshua* the Messiah as the offering for the sin of the world. This thought of *Yeshua's* sufferings as an offering is for us Jews painful and abhorrent. It is painful because it brings back memories of pogroms, which were often motivated by the vengeance of so-called Christians, in retaliation for the crucifixion. It is abhorrent because of its seeming connection with the abominable cult of human sacrifice.

Let us consider the negative attitude of our Jewish brethren toward Jesus' sufferings as a sacrifice.

Human Sacrifices in the Worship of Idols

We need not dwell at length on the question of human sacrifice in the worship of idols. We all realize that in the very act of bringing human sacrifice before idols, idolatry is committed, and idolatry is a profanation of God's name. It is, therefore, clear that human sacrifice to idols is an abomination to God.

In the portion *Achrey mois* are these words: "And thou shalt not give of thy children as a sacrifice to Molech." Alas, many a person transgressed this command. Our Old Testament condemns Mesha, King of Moab; Ahaz, King of Judah; and Manasseh, King of Judah for this sin.

Human Sacrifice in the Worship of God

In the portion *Ki Siso* we are told that Moses our teacher was once ready to bring himself as a sacrifice for his Jewish brethren, but God did not accept him. Moses cried to God, "Yet now, if thou wilt forgive their sin—; and if not, blot me, I pray thee, out of thy book which thou has written." But God answered Moses, "Whosoever hath sinned against me, him will I blot out of my book."

In the book of Micah the prophet, the thought is explained even more clearly: "Wherewith shall I come before the Lord, and bow myself before the high God? . . . shall I give my firstborn for my transgres-

sion, the fruit of my body for the sin of my soul?"

It would seem that these quotations from the *Tenach* lay the foundation principle that human sacrifices are not well pleasing to God. However, we find in our Jewish tradition and customs many indications that, while the rule is against human sacrifice, there is an exception to the rule, which shows the tendency, possibility, and necessity of a certain human sacrifice.

Human Sacrifice a Rabbinical Teaching

We Jews believe that we can bring a part of ourselves as a sacrifice for our sins and be forgiven for them. For example, on the eve of the Day of Atonement, before *Kol Nidre*, there is a prayer called "the prayer of purity," wherewith we supplicate in these words, "And through the fact that our fat and our blood are diminished by the fasting, let it be forgiven wherein we have sinned, and done iniquity, and transgressed before Thee, and let our fasting be reckoned before Thee just as if we should offer our bodies upon the altar, and let it be accepted before Thee as a pleasant odor, as an offering and a burnt offering." Hence we see that we Jews pray and hope that our fat and blood will be an offering for our own sin.

When we Jews are compelled to go through a time of trouble, we say, "Let even this be our penance." We hope, thus, that our sufferings will be a sacrifice to free us from the punishment in the world to come.

We Jews also consider our death as an atonement for our sins. In the short confession which a strict Jew repeats on his deathbed, he prays to God in these words, "O may my death be an atonement for all the sins, iniquities, and transgressions that I have sinned, that I made iniquity and that I transgressed before Thee."

In our high holiday prayers we cry to God so often, "Remember the covenant with Abraham." The expression "covenant with Abraham" usually means the circumcision. We Jews hope strongly through circumcision salvation will come. At every rite of circumcision we say the prayer, "Oh, God, grant that our loved ones may be saved from perishing for the sake of the covenant which is made in our bodies." And a proof of this is the fact that Moses our teacher's life was spared, because his wife circumcised his son.

In our high holiday prayers we rely often also upon the offering of our patriarch Isaac, almost as upon a human sacrifice for our sins. One prayer begins with the words: "Remembering the binding of Isaac;" another prayer begins with the words: "And through the merit of the son, the bound one, may our condemnation be brought to naught." And still another prayer reads, "And look upon the ashes of Isaac which were heaped up upon the altar. And remember today the binding of Isaac for his posterity."

And even when we Jews say in half-jest about someone, "Let him be accepted as an offering for me," we again confirm the

WHY DID MESSIAH HAVE TO DIE?

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thought that it is possible for a human being to be a sacrifice to God for us.

Human Sacrifice in the Vicarious Death of the Messiah

Modern Jewish commentators declare that the prophecy of Isaiah chapter fifty-three refers to all Israel. Granting it—it is still a proof that God accepts a human sacrifice, because here He accepts Israel's physical sufferings as a human sacrifice for the sin of the world. However, our ancient Jewish commentators interpreted this prophecy as applying to the Messiah. Here is some evidence.

In the service for the Day of Atonement, in the prayer "Then before the beginning" we pray in the following words, "Messiah our righteousness has departed from us; we shudder and we have no one to justify us; our crookedness and yoke of transgressions He bore; and He was bored through for our transgressions; He bore on His shoulders our sins; we are healed through His wounds; forgiveness did He find for our sins."

This prayer confirms the thought that God does accept a certain human sacrifice. It confirms our assertion that the Messiah was to offer his body as a sacrifice for the sin of Israel. This prayer confirms the fact that Isaiah fifty-three refers to the Messiah. It is clear that the central thought, style, and phraseology of this prayer were taken from Isaiah fifty-three.

Now a question arises. Why did Messiah have to offer His body as a sacrifice for the sin of Israel? Our answer is that King Solomon said, "For there is not a just man upon earth, that doeth good, and sinneth not." God's attribute of justice demands that He punish the sinner, but God's attribute of mercy urges Him to forgive the sinner. Hence, God made a plan to meet both demands. He established sacrifices. The sacrifices, as it were, took the punishment of sin and gave forgiveness for the sinner. Through the sacrifices sin was punished with death and the sinner was favored with mercy. "For the life of the flesh is in the blood: and I have given it to you upon the altar to make an atonement for your souls; for it is the blood that maketh an atonement for the soul" (Leviticus 17:11).

There are, however, some sins for which even a sacrifice could not atone. For instance, sins of adultery, murder, blasphemy, and the like could not be atoned by any sacrifice but were punished by death. Why even the sacrifice of a holy man could not suffice to make atonement for such sins! The Messiah is the only one who is worthy and of sufficient merit for God to accept His sufferings and His sacrifice, because He is the Servant of the Lord who is "exalted, and extolled, and very high." He is higher than everyone, because He is the Only One who is without fault. He is the Holy One of Israel. He, the Messiah, has

not a single sin; He did not need to expiate for His own sin. He could, therefore, take upon Himself the sin of Israel and of the whole world.

The Messiah, therefore, says in the Psalms, "Sacrifice and offering thou didst not desire; mine ears hast thou opened: burnt offering and sin offering hast thou not required. Then said I, Lo, I come: in the volume of the book it is written of me, I delight to do thy will, O my God; yea, thy law is within my heart" (Psalm 40:6-8).

The Human Sacrifice of Jesus the Messiah

We bring to you the good news that the Messiah has already come. The Messiah is *Yeshua Hanotzri*. He is the only One in the history and experience of our Jewish people who possesses within His person and His experience all the signs of the Messiah. He came over nineteen hundred years ago to fulfill God's promise in Isaiah chapter fifty-three, which speaks of the Messiah as a sacrifice for sin. *Yeshua Hamoshiach* secured the redemption of our soul through His death on the cross. He arose and ascended on high, where He is now the Mediator for us. He promised to come the second time to fulfill the prophecy of Isaiah chapter eleven which speaks of the Messiah as King of Israel, and then He will bring the redemption of Israel, and the redemption of the world.

Esteemed Reader! You believe that God will forgive you for the sake of Abraham our father's offering in the circumcision, for the sake of Isaac, our father's offering, and for the sake of your own offering on the Day of Atonement when you lose a little fat and blood. Our Holy Scriptures give you no ground for such a belief and in your own heart you know that all of these things have up to this day not given you, or anyone else, the desired salvation. We, however, appeal to you on the ground of Holy Writ, and from our personal experience, and beg of you, "Believe on the Lord *Yeshua* the Messiah, and you shall be saved."

A DRINK FROM THE FOUNTAIN

For scarcely for a righteous man will one die: yet peradventure for a good man some would even dare to die. But God commendeth his love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us. Much more then, being now justified by his blood, we shall be saved from wrath through him. For if, when we were enemies, we were reconciled to God by the death of His Son, much more, being reconciled, we shall be saved by His life. And not only so, but we also joy in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom we have now received the atonement (Romans 5:7-11).

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איז א קרבן פון א מענטשן אנגענומען פאר גאט?

פון משה גיטלין

דעם גרונט פרינציפ אז מענטשלעכע קרבנות זענען ניט וואוילגעפעליק פאר גאט. דאך געד פינען מיר אין אונדזערע טראדיציעס און מיט הניב, א סך אנווייזונגען, אז כאטש אין אלגע מיין זענען מיר קעגן מענטשלעכע קרבנות, זענען דא אבער פיל אויסנאמען וואס ווייזן אן אויף דער טענדענץ, מעגלעכקייט און נייטיקייט פון א געוויסן מענטשלעכן קרבן.

א מענטשלעכער קרבן ביי די רבנים

מיר יידן גלויבן אז מיר קענען מקריב זיין צו גאט א חלק פון אונדז זעלבסט, אז דאס זאל זיין א קרבן פאר אונדזערע זינד. למשל, ערב יום כיפור, פאר כל נידרו, בעטן מיר אין תפילת זכאי:

„און דורך דער פארמינערונג פון אונדזער

ריב צו זיין פאר זיין יידיש פאלק, אבער גאט האט עס ניט אנגענומען. משה רבינו האט גער בעטן, „אצינד, אויב דו וועסט פארנעבן זייער זינד, — און אויב ניט, מעק מיך אויס, איך בעט דיך, פון דיין בוך וואס דו האסט געשריבן.“ אבער גאט האט אים געענטפערט, „ווער עס האט געזינדיקט צו מיר, אים וועל איך אויסמעקן פון מיין בוך.“

אינם ספר מיכה הנביא, זעט מען דעם געדאנק מיט מער קלארקייט:

„מיט וואס זאל איך קומען פאר יהוה, זיך בייגן פאר גאט אין דער הייד? ... זאל איך געבן מיין בכור פאר מיין פארברעד, די פרוכט פון מיין ליב פאר די זינד פון מיין זעל?“

מיר זען פון דידאזיקע פסוקים פונם תנ"ך

עס קען זיין אז אין דידאזיקע צייטן וועט איר הערן א שמועס איבערן ראדיא, אדער לעזן אין דער צייטונג אן ארטיקל וואס באהאנדלט די ליידין פון ישוע המשיח אלס א קרבן פאר די זינד פון דער וועלט. דער געדאנק פון ישוע המשיחס ליידין אלס א קרבן איז פאר אונדז יידן א ליידיג דער און אן עקלאהפטער געדאנק, ווייל עס דערר מאנט אונדז אין די פאנגראמען קעגן יידן און עס דערמאנט אונדז אויך אין גאטס פארבאט קעגן מענטשלעכע קרבנות וואס מע פלעגט ברענגען צו די אפגעטער.

מענטשלעכע קרבנות צו די אפגעטער

געוויס ווייסן מיר אז מיט א קרבן פון א מענטשן פלעגט מען דינען די אפגעטער. דאס איז א פארשוועבונג פן גאטס נאמען און אן אומד זיירדיקייט פאר גאט ב"ה.

אין דער סדרה אחרי מות געפינען מיר די פאלגענדע ווערטער: „און פון דייע קינדער זאלסטו ניט געבן אויף מקריב זיין צו מולך.“ טראץ דעם האבן פיל עובר געווען אויף דעם געבאט. דער תנ"ך פארדאמט מייעע מלך מואב, אהו מלך ישראל, און מנשה מלך יהודה פאר דידאזיקע זינד.

מענטשלעכע קרבנות אינם דינסט פון גאט ב"ה

אין דער סדרה כי תשא ווערט דערציילט אז משה רבינו איז געווען אמאל גרויס זיך מק

פארוואס האט משיח געמוזט שטארבן?

דער געדאנק פונם משיחס שטארבן איז מסתמא פרעמד פאר אייך. אבער ווי קומט עס אז מיליאנען מענטשן זאלן אין דעם גלויבן? זיי האבן עס געלערנט פון אונדזער תנ"ך, תורה, נביאים וכתובים. איר קענט זיך זעלבסט איבערצייגן אויב איר וועט אונדז שרייבן און פארלאנגען דאס ביכעלע פארוואס האט משיח געמוזט שטארבן פון ד"ר טשאַרלס פיינבערג. מיר וועלן עס אייך שיקן אומזיסט און פאסט פרוי. שרייבט:

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