

# Messiah and the blood sacrifice

In previous months we have gone through some of the typical objections that Jewish people have for rejecting the possibility that Yeshua is their promised Messiah. In this issue we want to deal with this objection:

**Judaism teaches that repentance, prayers and good deeds (mitzvot) are substituted for the animal sacrifices. So, why talk to us of blood sacrifices? This is an old-fashioned concept.**

It is in the book of Leviticus, particularly chapters 1-7, that God's requirement of the sacrificial system is set forth. Two fundamental principles for being reconciled to a Holy God are given: (1) The principle of substitution: this was accomplished when the person offering the sacrifice laid his hand on the head of the animal acknowledging his sin and symbolically placing his sin on the innocent animal. (2) The principle of propitiation: the offering of the blood was the tangible and visible evidence of God's justice and mercy being satisfied by the offerer in the exchange of life with that of the animal. God required blood sacrifices as we learn from Leviticus 17:11 "For the life of the flesh is in the blood, and I have given it to you on the altar to make atonement for your souls; for it is the blood by reason of the life that makes atonement."

After the Temple was destroyed in 70 A.D. Johannon Ben Zakkai, the chief Rabbi in Jerusalem, taught that since God allowed the Temple to be destroyed, God's people could find atonement through prayer, repentance and mitzvot (good deeds). But was he correct? Would God provide atonement through repentance, prayer and mitzvot?

The Old Testament strongly teaches that forgiveness of sin comes only by a sacrifice which includes the shedding of blood. (Exodus 12:13; Leviticus. 17:11; 16:6, 21) In the Torah the sin offering made atonement for sin. Through this sacrifice, the people of Israel learned that sin required an exchange of life; the life of the animal in exchange for the life of the person who sinned.

The rabbis use Psalm 51:14-17; Isaiah 1:10-15; Amos 5:21-14; and Micah 6:6-8 to show that sacrifices are unnecessary. However, when using these Scriptures they ignore the historical context. The prophets were teaching Israel that the offering of sacrifices had become a mere outward ritual without an inner spirit of repentance and humility. In light of this, God despised their sin offerings. It was a form of religion without a repentant heart required by Torah. (Deuteronomy 6: 5, 13, 18; 10:12; 11:13,22) The truth that God still requires sacrifices is even alluded to in the *Siddur* or Jewish Prayer book:

*Master of the Worlds, You commanded us to bring the continual offering at its set time, and that the Kohanim (priests) be at their assigned service, the Levites on their platform, and the Israelites at their station. But now, through our sins, the Holy Temple is destroyed, the continual offering is discontinued, and we have neither Kohen (priest) at his service, nor Levite on his platform, nor Israelite at his station. But you said "Let our lips compensate for the bulls" (Hosea 14:2)— therefore may it be Your will, O Lord our God and the God of our forefathers, that the prayer of our lips be worthy, acceptable and favorable before You, as if we had brought the continual offering at its set time and we had stood at its station.*

That sacrifices are essential for atonement can further be seen in the movement to rebuild the Temple by the Temple Institute in Jerusalem. This rabbinical organization has assembled all the items needed for the offering of sacrifices. They are training men of priestly descent to offer the sacrifices. The only ingredient missing is the Temple itself. Each year a group of Jewish men attempt to bring a foundation stone for a new Temple to the Temple Mount in Jerusalem. Every year they are turned away by the Israeli Defense Forces and police. The government fears that any attempt to build the Temple would precipitate revolt by the Palestinians who claim authority over the Temple Mount because of the presence of the "Dome of the Rock" and the Al Aqsa Mosque.

The Jewish Scriptures teach that a sacrifice is needed for reconciliation with God. It is necessary for God's justice. Before the Temple was destroyed, God provided an acceptable means of atonement, His promised Messiah. Isaiah 53, written 700 years before Yeshua was born describes God's provision for our sin. God's justice in punishing sins is provided for in Yeshua. He bore our sins on Himself and satisfied God's justice. God's mercy is demonstrated as well in Yeshua. God sent the gift of His Son to pay the penalty for us. All that remains is to personally believe God and trust in His sacrifice for our sins. When we put our faith in Messiah, we meet the requirements of God's Holy law.

**-Roy Schwarcz**