

# Sacrifices are for Today

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## **BNAI YAHSUA SYNAGOGUE OF PROSPERITY, SC**

Once upon a time, a pig and a chicken were walking down a village street. They came upon a church sign, which was advertising a breakfast to be held in a few days.

At the bottom of the sign the menu was given, it read 'Ham and eggs will be served from 6:30 to 8:00 am.' The chicken turned to the pig and said, "See!! Even we can help the work of the church!!!"

"Yes," said the pig, "but yours is only a contribution, mine is a SACRIFICE."

Admit it, we hate sacrifice. Giving up anything goes against the grain of our life. The constant desire to receive doesn't want to release. Asking most people to sacrifice is akin to asking a cat to take a bath. It just isn't fun. For the majority, life is devoted to pleasure, comfort, and the absence of pain. This should not be so for the believer.

Life is to be more than just the pursuit of happiness.

Each saint is to live in constant submission to the Creator and His Word. In regards to sacrifices, we are no different than our ancestors who have come before us. The sacrificial system remains.

Throughout the Scriptures, the Hebrews were commanded to offer sacrifices as a way of drawing near to YHWH. Similarly, we too have been ordered to give up what is most precious. Our bodies are to be offered upon an altar to YHWH\* as a living contribution. Like the son of Avraham, every believer has been called to a place of sacrifice.

\*(YHWH is the ancient Hebrew Name of the Creator, revealed to Moshe at the burning bush, and translated with all capitalized letters in English Bibles.)

"Present your bodies a living sacrifice, kadosh (holy), acceptable to YHWH, which is your act of reasonable worship. And be not conformed to this olam hazeh (this world): but be transformed by the ongoing renewing of your mind, that you may discern what is the tov (good), acceptable, and even the perfect, will of YHWH," Romiyah / Romans 12:1,2.

## **Avraham, our example**

Many years ago, Avinu Avraham (our father Avraham) was told by YHWH to travel with his son to the Mountain of Moriah. Yitz'chak is to be bound as a sacrifice. The promised son, Avraham's own flesh and blood, is to be killed. Somehow, Avraham obeys in total faith. He rises early the next morning and starts on the three-day journey. Avraham and Yitz'chak (Isaac) reach the mountain. The wood for the altar is placed on the back of Yitzchak, while Avraham carries the knife and the fire. The two ascend to worship. When they arrive, Avraham makes the preparations to offer his only true son to the Almighty. As the father raises his hand to slaughter his son, an angel from Shamayim (heaven) stops the act. A ram is substituted for the son. The animal is sacrificed and the son is saved. Our Jewish brothers call this account "the Akeidah."

"Akeidah" is the Hebrew word for "binding." It is only used one time in the entire Bible. This is in Beresheet (Genesis) 22:9, when Avraham tied up his son to the altar to kill him. The specific usage of this Hebrew word is found nowhere else in the Scriptures. It appears here to stress the fact that Avraham was willing to sacrifice everything for YHWH. The Encyclopedia Judaica says that the "Akeidah has become in Jewish thought the supreme example of self-sacrifice in obedience to the Almighty's will." Avraham's obedience is so great, that he was willing to submit his own son to death.

During the Akeidah, Avraham set an example for his seed to follow. We are to give up that which is most precious, in order to receive life anew. One ancient Jewish writing teaches that it was during the Akeidah that "water was crowned with fire." This phrase reveals that YHWH's attributes of mercy and judgment are totally equal. Water is crowned with fire. Through true sacrifice, a person can walk in the balance of the two extremes of judgment and mercy. When a person sacrifices, mercy is extended and judgment is given, at the same time. How? The sacrifice itself is judged, while the one offering the sacrifice is pardoned. Mercy kisses judgment.

In all actuality, the concept of sacrifice is not about loss, but about investment. Avraham understood this. "By emunah (trusting) Avraham, when he was tried, offered up Yitzchak: and he that had received the promises offered up his only brought-forth son, of whom it was said, That in Yitzchak shall your zera (seed) be called: Accounting that YHWH was able to raise him up, even from the dead; from where also he received Him in a figure , " Ivrim / Hebrews 11:17-20. Through emunah, Avraham knew that if his son had died, that he would be resurrected. Though Avraham would give up his son for a short time, he would receive Yitzchak back.

## **Altar call and offering**

Churches have "altar calls" every Sunday. This is a time for believers to come forward with their sins and problems to find solace through prayer. Sadly though, most "altar calls" do not involve death or sacrifice but people falling in the floor. True "altar calls" should involve sacrifice of self upon the altar of YHWH.

When one gives Himself to YHWH, he opens himself up to receive from YHWH. "Whoever finds his life will lose it, and whoever loses his life for my sake will find it," Mattityahu / Matthew 10:39.

Even if sacrifice looks like losing, it is actually about receiving. When a person gives an offering, they are emptying their hands to be filled again. It is better to give than receive. Just picture a person clenching a lamb that is to be offered, and then releasing that lamb to be killed. Only after the animal is sacrificed can the blood be applied.

To give up something, to sacrifice a desire or habit, is to release control and accept liberation. It is only when a person gives, that they can accept back a blessing. Sacrifice is surrender.

To surrender is to give up, loose, and be conquered in battle. This is a great picture of the struggle waging inside every man. For before an army surrenders, there is usually a great battle. Combat is fierce during the fight. But, when one side surrenders, things change. Those who were once fighting against the enemy are now ruled. We don't need to fight YHWH! We just have to surrender! Waive the white flag, and be ruled by the Man of War. Receive mercy from the Great King. Surrender and receive.

With the Akeidah, we can glean the powerful concept that sacrifice of animals was in reality a substitute for human sacrifice. Human sacrifice? This is what YHWH wanted all along. "The multitude of your sacrifices, what are they to me?" says YHWH, "I have more than enough of burnt

offerings, of rams, and the fat of fattened animals; I have no pleasure in the blood of bulls, and lambs, and goats. Your hands are full of blood; wash and make yourselves clean. Take your evil deeds out of my sight! Stop doing wrong, learn to do right! Seek justice, and encourage the oppressed. Defend the cause of the fatherless, plead the case of the widow. "Come now, let us reason together," says YHWH. "Though your sins are like scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they are red as crimson, they shall be like wool. If you are willing and obedient, you will eat the best from the land," Yesha'yahu / Isaiah 1:11-19.

## **Kill the animal soul**

YHWH wants us to sacrifice. Our lives are to be surrendered to Him. We are to kill our self-interest. We are to destroy our ego. We should slaughter the animal-like soul and its fleshly desires. Animal soul? Yes, man has an animal soul. In the beginning YHWH created the world and then populated it with various types of animals. Beautiful birds, magnificent fish, crawling insects, and huge land animals were all made by the spoken word of Elohim. Every living being was endowed with a soul. This is called "nefesh" in Hebrew. "And Elohim created great whales, and every living creature that moveth, which the waters brought forth abundantly, after their kind, and every winged fowl after his kind: and Elohim saw that it was good," Beresheet 1:21. The word translated for "creature" here and throughout the Bible is "nefesh." Animals have a nefesh and so does mankind. "YHWH Elohim formed man of the dust of the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man became a living nefesh," Beresheet 2:7. The nefesh is found within man, animals, and throughout all of creation. It is associated with the body and concealed in the blood. "The nefesh of the flesh is in the blood," Vayikra 17:11.

Ancient Jewish writings describe the nefesh as the "animal soul." Nefesh is the animalistic desires inside man. These desires are influenced by the five senses. What you taste, see, touch, hear, and smell feed your animal soul / flesh. In the Bible, "nefesh" is most often translated "soul, life, creature, appetite, will, desire." Strong's Exhaustive Concordance and Dictionary defines the nefesh as "that which breathes,

the breathing substance or being, soul, the inner being of man, the seat of the appetites." The nefesh is also the ego. In the Newer Testament it is called "the flesh" and rabbinic sages have labeled it the "yetzer hara." Left uncontrolled, the nefesh/yetzer hara will lead man to break YHWH's commands and abandon His instructions.

Most people mistakenly think the nefesh is their true identity, so they live their lives constantly searching for satisfaction in the material. Such actions only lead to false fulfillment and sin. " Each one is tempted when, by his own evil desire (or nefesh), he is dragged away and enticed. Then, after desire has conceived, it gives birth to sin; and sin, when it is full-grown, gives birth to death ," Ya'akov 1:14-16.

When the animal soul controls a person, the end result is self, nervousness, and habitual sinning. What begins as a thought produces a spoken word, which leads to an action, which creates a habit, which generates a lifestyle, which determines a person's character and reputation. "An evil inclination of the nefesh is at the beginning like a fine hair-string, but at the finishing like a thick rope," says Rabbi Kimchi.

The animal soul, the "nefesh habahamit" in Hebrew, is the essence of physical life. The nefesh can be compared to a wild land animal that roams the land for food. Its desires always seek to be fulfilled, yet the nefesh is never satisfied. "The animal soul of man is the land animal in man אִשָּׁה, אִשָּׁה" a wholly material being, individualistic and self engrossed as the soil from which it is fashioned," wrote one Rabbi. It is this animal soul that must be sacrificed and given up. Like the animals that were laid upon the altar, we are to kill the desires within us. Otherwise, these desires will kill us! The wages of sin is death.

To overcome the flesh takes a choice by the believer to follow the Messiah in a lifestyle of Torah observance and total dependence upon Yahweh the Father. "My children I have created the evil impulse, and I have created the Torah as an antidote to it. If you occupy yourselves with the Torah you will not be delivered to the power of the yetzer hara,"

says one Jewish writing. " If anyone wants to come after me let him say 'no' to himself (nefesh/flesh) and take up his execution stake and keep following Me," Sefer Mark 8:34.

## Laws of Sacrifice

It is odd, that the majority of the mitzvot in the Torah, deal with the issue of temple worship and sacrifices. These commands are highly structured and controlled. Yet, even the rabbis have been perplexed that more of Torah is about sacrificing than any other subject. Why would Elohim use exact details to describe the sacrificial system, yet be silent in regards to the specifics of so many other issues? Why would the Bible speak about the correct way to kill animals and be silent on stem-cell research, global warming, and such?

The detailed commands surrounding the temple and tabernacle show us how meticulous we should be when coming before YHWH. Each of the sacrifices commanded in the Scriptures, from the red heifer to the Passover lamb, points to the Moshiach's sacrifice.

Many people get confused regarding sacrifices. The truth is that since the temple is not standing, one actually obeys the Torah by not offering animal sacrifices. However, none of the Torah has passed away. The mitzvot concerning the sacrifices remains. " [The grass withers and the flowers fall, but the word of our YHWH remains forever,](#)" Yesha'yahu / Isaiah 40:8. The sacrifices before Yahshua pointed to His coming. However, they did NOT stop when He came. Yahshua went to the Temple. The sacrifices continued being made until the Temple was destroyed in 70 CE. The book of Acts shows that the early believers continued to make sacrifices at the Temple. Rabbi Sha'ul (Paul) also made sacrifices and took vows at the Temple AFTER Yahshua's death. Just as the sacrifices before His coming pointed to Him, the sacrifices AFTER His coming pointed BACK to Him.

When Yahshua surrendered His life, He set the prime example for us to follow. May we pray, " [not my will, but thine will be done.](#)" This is the whole issue of the sacrifices and the binding of Yitzchak. Yahshua gave up his very life and has called us to do the same. We are to climb upon the altar and offer ourselves to Him. "[Present your bodies a living sacrifice, kadosh \(holy\), acceptable to YHWH, which is your act of reasonable worship. And be not conformed to this olam hazev \(this world\): but be transformed by the ongoing renewing of your mind, that you may discern what is the tov \(good\), acceptable, and even the perfect, will of YHWH](#) ," Romiyah / Romans 12:1,2.

## **Think about it**

How can you apply this teaching to your world?

What is there in your life that you are holding back from YHWH?

Is there a habit that you need to give up?

Have you accepted YHWH's rule for your life?

Do you hold back gifts and offerings or do you give freely?

How would you react if you were told to surrender what is most precious?

Is the animal soul ruling, or are you sacrificing it daily?

Do you read the Torah as completely valid for today?