

## Sacrificial Cult from a Different Perspective

Written by Administrator

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The scribes, the priests and the false prophets of Judah in the days of Jeremiah - boasted about the **Law of God**. They claimed that their religious rites were derived from God's Law. But the prophet Jeremiah sternly condemned their practices and said:

"A horrible and shocking thing has occurred in the land. The prophets prophesy lies, the priests rule by their own authority, and My people love it this way. How can you say, We are wise, for **w e have the Law of Yahweh, when actually THE LYING PEN OF THE SCRIBES HAS WRITTEN IT FALSELY**" [Jeremiah 5:30-31 and 8:8].

The prophet Jeremiah could not accept the Law which the scribes of his day handed to the people. He emphatically stated that **the lying pen of the scribes had FALSIFIED THE LAW GOD GAVE TO MOSES**. This means that Jeremiah did not believe that the Law in possession of the scribes in his day was **the original, authentic and inspired Law** that God actually gave to Moses. It will be plainly documented that Jeremiah most definitely did not believe that God prescribed the commands concerning **blood sacrifices and burnt offerings**. He regarded the sacrificial system as **interpolations and the result of the LYING PEN of the corrupt scribes**. Of course, Jeremiah was not the only prophet who regarded the sacrificial cult as product of the lying pen of the scribes - but other major prophets believed the same. They all had some harsh words to say **against the bloody sacrifices and the shrine worship**

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. There was also an ancient Jewish sect in the territory of Ephraim by the name of

### **Nasaraeans**

who practiced asceticism and rejected the scribal version of the Law. They claimed that the Law used by the adherents of Normative Judaism was a

### **later fabrication**

. Church Father Epiphanius wrote regarding them:

“The Nasaraeans held that the **Jewish form of the Pentateuch** was not that which Moses received but a **later**

### **fabrication**

; the

Nasaraeans claimed that they possessed the true law” [Epiphanius, in his ‘Ossaean’].

Matthew Black in *The Scrolls and Christian Origins* on page 66 states:

“Special interest attaches to Epiphanius’s **Jewish sect of the Nasarenes, located by him in the ancient Gilead and Bashan**

. They display some of the same characteristics as their neighbours, the Dositheans, and like the Samaritans, had a variant, if not different, form of Pentateuch from the Jewish Pentateuch;

**they declared that the Jewish Pentateuch was not the one received by Moses, but a later fabrication**

. The second main difference was

**their rejection of all animal sacrifice and abstention from eating the flesh of animals**

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This Jewish sect was in existence centuries before the Christian Era. Already at that time these true believers rejected the Jewish Pentateuch [Five books of Moses] as not originally inspired by God. They had their own version of the Pentateuch which they claimed contained the original, unadulterated writings of Moses. Since this Jewish sect rejected all manner of animal sacrifice and the eating of animal flesh - it must be that no trace of this was found in the Pentateuch they used. Otherwise how could they reject these rites as **later interpolations**? The Elephantine Jews built their own temple in Egypt - the very replica of the one in Jerusalem - but they refused to offer any bloody sacrifice, claiming that in former times only an oblation [bloodless sacrifice]

was actually prescribed by God.

*The International Standard Bible Encyclopedia*,  
Vol. 2, on p. 60, corroborates this fact:

“Meal offerings [oblations] and incense are specified as THE ONLY ritual procedures to be followed, AS WAS DONE FORMERLY. Another smaller Aramaic text dealing with the proposed reconstruction of the temple states specifically that sheep, oxen, and goats WERE NOT OFFERED THERE.”

This is the earliest extra-biblical document from which we can deduce that certain Jews did not accept the Jewish Pentateuch which was regarded as infallible among the Jews in Palestine. This ancient papyrus written in Aramaic, dated to the 5th century B.C.E., plainly reveals that the Jews of Elephantine did not accept the Jewish Pentateuch in its entirety. The pre-Christian Essenes displayed the same tendencies. They also rejected the sacrificial cult and abstained from eating the animal flesh.

Before we thoroughly examine the Bible in order to find out what it has to say regarding the bloody sacrifices and burnt offerings, I want you to be aware of the fact that the original apostles

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and the believers they converted most definitely rejected the Temple cult and the bloody sacrifices as not originally being implemented by God. Paul however held a different view. These original believers and followers of Jesus were vegetarians and abhorred the slaughter of animals for either sacrificial rites or human consumption. The original believers founded by Jesus and his apostles were called **NAZARENES and EBIONITES** - but are more commonly referred to as **JEWISH CHRISTIANS**

. The Ebionite view is summarized by professor Everett Ferguson in the following manner:

“The Ebionites, as Jews, believed in the one God, the law, and the hope of Israel...as Christians, they accepted Jesus as the Messiah, but regarded him as a man, the true prophet like Moses [Deut. 18:15], who became the Messiah by reason of his righteous life. **He came to destroy the temple and its cultus and instituted water baptism in place of sacrifice as the means of forgiveness of sins. They used the Gospel of Matthew...They removed MANY PASSAGES from the Old Testament as ‘false pericopes’, claiming that passages about animal sacrifice and the monarchy and offensive stories about the patriarchs were INTERPOLATIONS**

” [Backgrounds of Early Christianity, p. 578].

The Ebionites or Nazarenes were original followers of Jesus. They did not regard Jesus as ‘divine’ but rather regarded him as the **PERFECT MAN** - the true Prophet of whom Moses wrote in Deuteronomy 18:15. They rejected the Temple cult and the bloody sacrifices. They claimed that passages supporting the Temple cult were not originally written by Moses but were later interpolations.

Matthew Black states:

“He [Lohmeyer] draws attention to the evidence of Epiphanius for the attitude of the **pre-Christian Nasaraoi to Temple sacrifice and their asceticism, and to the LATER NAZORENE REJECTION OF THE TEMPLE CULTUS. James, the Lord’s brother, was a life long**

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### **Nazarite; one of the MAIN elements in the Nazarite asceticism of James was HIS ABSTENTION FROM FLESH**

” [Scrolls and Christian Origins, p. 82].

Wayne Meeks quoting an early document *The Ascent of James* states:

“James spoke against the Temple and the sacrifices and against the fire of the altar” [The Writings of Paul, p. 177].

F. Bruce writes:

“The Ebionites rejected the Old Testament sacrificial law **as not authentic**. Hence in their Gospel Jesus, who according to Matthew 5:17 came not to abolish the law and the prophets but to fulfill them, declares:

**I came to abolish sacrifices, and if you do not cease from sacrificing, the wrath will not cease from you**

” [Jesus and Christian Origins, p. 108].

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The Ebionites firmly believed and observed the Law. They claimed that Jesus never abolished any point of the Mosaic Law originally implemented by God through Moses. They rejected certain parts of the Law used by Normative Judaism and taught that Jesus actually came to **abolish these false and spurious INTERPOLATIONS**

. Thus there is no contradiction in their teaching whatsoever regarding Jesus' mission. He never abolished anything he regarded as

**authentic**

. It is the Christian Church which contradicts itself when it acknowledges all points of the Mosaic Law as authentic and originally being implemented by God - while at the same time claims that Jesus actually

**abolished and nailed the Mosaic Law to a cross**

. The Jews believed that the blood of the victims they offered in sacrifice

**appeased God and cooled off His WRATH**

. Jesus told them that this was not so. He told them that by butchering innocent animals they only increase His wrath which will not cease unless they abolish their abominable sacrificial cult.

Rev. Adam Findlay writes regarding the Ebionites:

“a party of Jewish Christians who saw in Jesus a man on whom the Spirit descended at his baptism to fit him for his mission. **In practice they were vegetarians, looking with abhorrence on flesh as food and slaying of animals for sacrifice**

” [The Apocryphal Gospels from the History of Christianity in the Light of Modern Knowledge].

The Ebionites abhorred the idea of killing animals. They insisted that it was not the will of God for man to butcher His living creatures. They were strict vegetarians living on innocent food that grew out of the soil.

Henry Chadwick states:

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“From Irenaeus onwards [early 2nd century] **Jewish Christianity is treated as a DEVIATIONIST SECT rather than as a form of Christianity with the best claims to continuity with the practice of the primitive church at Jerusalem. The Jewish Christians called themselves EBIONITES, a name derived from the Hebrew word meaning ‘the poor’**; it was probably a conscious reminiscence of a very early term which is attested by St. Paul’s letters as an almost technical name for the Christians in Jerusalem and Judaea” [The Early Church, pp. 22-23].

The early true believers called themselves by the name **Nazarenes** while at the same time used the derogative name

**bionites**

, which signified their opposition to riches and luxurious lifestyle. They lived in great poverty, rejecting private property and holding all things in common. The name Ebionites from Hebrew *ebionim*

signifies

**the poor ones**

. Theodore Ghaster in the *Dead Sea Scriptures*

points out that the term Ebionite also signifies

**asceticism**

, that is,

**self denial**

. It is important for you to realize that the early believers commonly called

**Jewish Christians**

whose leaders were James and Peter were called by the names

**NAZARENES and EBIONITES**

. These believers were not called

**CHRISTIANS**

. The name Christian was adopted by followers of Paul in Antioch.

Let us now carefully look into the Bible in order to find out whether there be any passages which clearly refute the Temple cultus with its bloody sacrificial rites. In Jeremiah 7:21-23 we are explicitly told that God never gave any commands in regards to sacrifices and burnt offerings:

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“This is what Yahweh Shaddai the Elohim of Israel, says: Go ahead, you can add your burnt offerings to your other sacrifices [fellowship offerings], and eat flesh yourselves! **When I brought your fathers out from the land of Egypt, I SAID NOTHING TO THEM, I GAVE THEM NO ORDERS, ABOUT BURNT OFFERINGS AND SACRIFICES**”.

Did you get that?

Jeremiah plainly states that when God liberated Israelites from the slavery in Egypt and led them out of the house of bondage **He never gave them any regulations or commands in regards to burnt offerings and sacrifices**. That is, He did not ask them to offer bloody sacrifices nor did He require them from their hand. This statement of Jeremiah is of extreme significance. If anyone wanted to uphold the sacrificial system it should have been Jeremiah. For he was not only a prophet but also a

**priest**

[Jeremiah 1:1]. He was a descendant of Abiathar the High Priest who himself was a descendant of Eli from Shiloh. Solomon deposed him as High Priest and replaced him with Zadok for supposedly supporting Adoniah in his claim for the throne. He expelled him to his fields in Anathoth, allegedly to fulfill the prophecy originally given to Eli that no descendant of his will

be a priest [1 Kings 2:26-27. See also 1 Samuel

2:27-33]. Scholars point out that the priests of Shiloh - descendants of Eli did not offer sacrifices. They had their fields of which they lived. The texts in Samuel portraying Eli and his sons as sacrificing and involved in horrible atrocities are not authentic. If they were then Jeremiah himself would have been an

**illegitimate priest**

. Since he was a prophet chosen by God from his mother's womb he had to be a righteous man and his priesthood had to be legitimate. Abiathar the High Priest was deposed and replaced because he could not go along with Solomon's religious institutions and sacrificial rites.

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The people of Jerusalem did not acknowledge Jeremiah as a priest. Pashur the chief priest and the governor of the Temple hated Jeremiah and beat him. He placed him in stocks at the Upper Gate of Benjamin at the Temple [Jeremiah 20:1-2]. The prophets and priests of Judah wanted to kill Jeremiah [Jeremiah 26:7-8]. Later Jeremiah was barred from the Temple and so he had to send Baruch his scribe with a written book in order to deliver the message in the Temple. Now please note the text of Jeremiah 7:21-23 as it stands in the Peshitta Bible – accepted by all Christians of the East. The text is translated from Aramaic into English by Dr. George Lamsa:

“...add your burnt offerings to your sacrifices and eat meat WHICH I DID NOT COMMAND your fathers to eat. NEITHER did I command them concerning either burnt offerings or sacrifices in the day when I brought them out of the land of Egypt...”

This text was also quoted in the Gospel of the Holy Twelve by Jesus himself:

“Put your blood sacrifices to your burnt offerings, and away with them, and cease ye from the eating of flesh, for I spake not to your fathers nor commanded them, when I brought them out of Egypt, concerning these things. But this thing I commanded saying: Obey my voice and walk in the ways that I have commanded you, and ye shall be my people, and it shall be well with you. But they hearkened not, nor inclined their ear.”

Jeremiah maintained that God never gave any commands to the Israelites in regards to sacrifices and burnt offerings. The Levitical source of course bluntly contradicts Jeremiah:

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“These, then, are the regulations for the burnt offerings, the grain offerings, the sin offerings, the repayment offerings, the ordination offerings, and the fellowship offerings. **There on Mount Sinai in the desert, YAHWEH GAVE THESE COMMANDS TO MOSES on the day He told the people of Israel to make their offerings**” [Leviticus 7:37-38].

This text claims that all commands connected with the bloody sacrificial cult was given to Moses by God. Jeremiah on the other hand quotes God Himself claiming that the sacrificial system did not come from Him.

Who is right?

It may help to know that Jeremiah was not the sole witness quoting God Who testified that the sacrificial cult was not instituted by Him. Please note Isaiah quoting God saying the following:

“You did not bring Me sheep for your holocausts, nor honor Me with your sacrifices. **I DID NOT EXACT FROM YOU THE SERVICE OF OFFERINGS**

. You did not buy me sweet cane for money, nor fill me with the fat of your sacrifices; instead, you burdened me with your sins, and wearied me with your crimes” [ Isaiah 43:23 The New American Bible].

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In this text God plainly states that He **did not exact** the service of sacrifices. To exact means: **to demand, ask for, request**

. The word

*service*

comes from a Hebrew word

*abad*

which means:

**to serve, worship**

. The Israelites offered their sacrifices to God. But He did not accept them. He did not regard them as for Him because He never asked for them in the first place. Their sacrifices were in honor of Satyrs [Leviticus 17:7]. God refused to accept their sacrifices because they were abominable to Him. He abhorred the idea of slaughtering animals. The translators of the King James Bible render the above phrase in the following manner:

“I have not caused thee to serve with an offering, nor wearied thee with incense”.

The Greek Septuagint Bible – a version originally used by Greek speaking Jews and the early Church Fathers renders this text in the following manner:

“Thou hast not brought me the sheep of thy whole-burnt offering; neither hast thou glorified me with thy sacrifices. I HAVE NOT CAUSED THEE TO SERVE WITH SACRIFICES, neither have I wearied thee with frankincense. Neither hast thou purchased for me victims for silver, NEITHER HAVE I DESIRED THE FAT OF THY SACRIFICES: but thou didst stand before me in thy sins, and in thine iniquities.”

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In the books of Moses we read that the Israelites presented bloody sacrifices during the forty years of their wandering through the desert. But the prophets reject this claim as spurious. Listen to what the prophet Amos states:

“I hate, I despise your feast days; I will not delight in your solemn assemblies. If you offer Me burnt offerings, and your food offerings, I will not approve; nor will I regard the peace offerings of your animals...**Have you brought near sacrifices and food offerings to Me forty years in the desert** ? [Amos 5:21-23,25].

The Good News Bible renders verse 25 as follows:

“People of Israel, I did not demand sacrifices and offerings during those forty years that I led you through the desert”.

Amos quotes God as testifying that no sacrifices and food offerings were offered to Him in the desert. The righteous Stephen of the New Testament apparently believed so. He quoted the text of prophet Amos which agrees with the Septuagint:

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“People of Israel! It was not to Me that you slaughtered and sacrificed animals for forty years in the desert. It was the tent of the god Molech that you carried, and the image of Rephan, your star god; they were idols that you had made to worship. And so I will send you into exile beyond Babylon” [Acts 7:42-43 Good News Bible].

In the Epistle of Barnabas we find reference to Isaiah 1 where God denounces the bloody sacrifices. Then we find a quotation from the Old Testament which does not exist in the Hebrew Masoretic text. The passage reads:

“For so the Lord saith again to those heretofore: **Did I at all command your fathers when they came out of Egypt concerning burnt offerings of sacrifices**  
? But this I commanded them, saying, Let none of you imagine evil in your hearts against his neighbour, and love no spurious oath” [2:9-10].

The Israelites most definitely did not offer sacrifices to God during the forty years in the desert. After all, they did not even serve Him during that time. They invented their own abominable system of worship. Listen to what is written in Ezekiel - quoting the very words of God:

“When I chose Israel, I made them a promise. I revealed myself to them in Egypt and told them: I am the LORD your God. It was then that I promised to take them out of Egypt and lead them to a land I had chosen for them, a rich and fertile land, the finest land of all. I told them to throw away the disgusting idols they loved and not to make themselves unclean with the false gods of

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Egypt, because I am the LORD their God. **But they defied me and refused to listen.** They did not throw away their disgusting idols or give up the Egyptian gods. I was ready to let them feel the full force of my anger

### **there in Egypt**

. But I did not, since that would have brought dishonor to my name, for in the presence of the people among whom they were living I had announced to Israel that I was going to lead them out of Egypt. And so I led them out of Egypt into the desert. I gave them my commands and taught them my laws,

### **which bring life to anyone who obeys them**

. I made the keeping of the Sabbath a sign of the agreement between us, to remind them that I, the LORD, make them holy.

### **But even in the desert they defied me**

. They broke my laws and rejected my commands,

### **which bring life to anyone who obeys them**

. They completely profaned the Sabbath. I was ready to let them feel the force of my anger there

### **in the desert**

and to destroy them. But I did not, since that would have brought dishonor to my name among the nations which had seen me lead Israel out of Egypt. So I made a vow in the desert that I would not take them to the land I had given them, a rich and fertile land, the finest land of all. I made the vow because they had rejected

my commands, broken my laws, and profaned the Sabbath - they preferred to worship their idols. But then I took pity on them. I decided not to kill them there in the desert. Instead, I warned the young people among them:

### **Do not keep the laws your ancestors made; do not follow their customs or defile yourselves with their idols**

. I am the LORD your God. Obey my laws and my commands. Make the Sabbath a holy day, so that it will be a sign of the covenant we made, and will remind you that I am the Lord your God.

### **But that generation also defied me**

. They broke my laws and did not keep my commands,

### **which bring life to anyone who obeys them**

. They profaned the Sabbath. I was ready to let them feel the force of

my anger there in the desert and

### **kill them all**

. But I did not, since that would have brought dishonor to my name among the nations which had seen me bring Israel out of Egypt. So I made another vow in the desert. I vowed that I would scatter them all over the world. I did this because they had rejected my commands, broken my laws, profaned my Sabbath,

### **and worshipped the same idols their ancestors served**

” [Ezekiel 20:5-24 Good News Bible].

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This text clearly reveals the wickedness of the Israelites while they were still in Egypt. It was not God they served. Neither did they offer sacrifices to Him in the desert. But they served the gods of Egypt. Both adults and children alike. This text reveals that Moses was just a figure in the desert. God had to send other prophets in order to uphold the integrity of Moses. But the Israelites refused to listen to them. This is what Jeremiah states:

“From the **day** your forefathers **left Egypt** until now, DAY AFTER DAY, again and again I sent you My servants the prophets. But they did not listen to Me or pay attention” [Jeremiah 7:25-26].

That God hates the slaughter of innocent animals in sacrifice and that He regards that act as **trampling and desecration of His courts**  
- is clearly revealed by prophet Isaiah who wrote:

“Hear the word of Yahweh, rulers of Sodom. Listen to the Law of our Elohim people of Gomorrah. **Of what benefit to Me are your many sacrifices, says Yahweh? I am fed up with burnt offerings of rams and the fat of fattened cattle, and the blood of bulls; I do not delight in the blood of lambs and he-goats. When you COME TO SEE MY FACE, WHO HAS REQUIRED THIS FROM YOUR HAND - THIS TRAMPLING OF MY COURTS**  
? [Isaiah 1:10-13].

God stated that He is fed up with the blood and fat of innocent animals they were butchering in

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the Temple courts. The Temple was a place where they appeared to seek the face of God. It is obvious that God never commanded or instituted the sacrificial rites because He stated: **Who has required this at your hand**

? He further states that by slaughtering and sacrificing innocent victims on the altar of the Temple they were actually

**trampling and defiling the Temple courts**

. Just try to picture the slaughtering of the Passover lambs in one single afternoon.

Thousands of innocent lambs were butchered. Can you imagine the bloody scenario on the Temple mount? Can you imagine the horror God must have felt? When Solomon “dedicated” the Temple he butchered

**22,000 oxen and 120,000 sheep and goats**

[2 Chronicles 7:5]. This was supposedly for a pleasing aroma to God. But can you imagine the actual bloody mess and stench from the meat and fat burnt on the altar? Does God need to smell the aroma from

**butchered innocent victims**

? Do we have to resort to killing and butchery in order to appease God? Listen to what God has to say regarding this:

“Hear, O My people, and I will speak, O Israel, and I will testify against you...I blame you not for the lack of your sacrifices and burnt offerings, which are continually before Me. **But I have no need of a bull from your stall or of goats from your pens**

, for every animal of the forest is Mine, and the cattle on a thousand hills. I know every bird in the mountains, and the creatures of the field are Mine.

**If I were hungry I would not tell you, for the world is Mine, and all that is in it. Do I eat the flesh of bulls or drink, the blood of goats? SACRIFICE THANK OFFERING TO ELOHIM, fulfill your vows to the Most High, and call upon Me in the day of trouble; I will deliver you, and you will honour Me**

” [Psalm 50:7-15].

God does not need to eat the flesh of animals or drink their blood. He does not delight in burning of the animal fat. Neither does He need to drink the wine which they poured over the sacrifices. The pagan gods indulged in all these rites. God is perfect in justice Who does not take pleasure on expense of someone else. He is merciful and compassionate **FATHER!** He

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does not delight in the death of His creatures. God delights in our

### **thank offerings and sacrifices of the lips**

. He delights when we pray to Him and glorify His majestic Name - not when we butcher and slaughter LIVING, INNOCENT ANIMALS. In verse 23 God states:

“Giving THANKS is the SACRIFICE THAT HONOURS ME, and I will surely save all who obey Me”.

In Psalm 51:16-17 we read:

“You **do not desire sacrifice**, or I would bring it; You **do not delight in burnt offerings**. My sacrifice O Elohim is a broken spirit; a broken and contrite heart, O Elohim you will not despise”.

The author states that God does not desire sacrifices therefore the author states that he would not offer them. The deceived sacrificers thought that God delighted in the “pleasing aroma of the burnt offerings” - but the author of this Psalm claims that God DOES NOT DELIGHT in burnt offerings. God delights in the sweet fragrance of our worship of Him and the sacrifice of righteousness. In Revelation 5:8 we are told that each elder held a golden bowl filled with incense which was **the prayer of the saints**. The Dead Sea Scriptures state:

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“They shall atone for guilty rebellion and for sins of unfaithfulness that they may obtain loving kindness for the Land without the flesh of sacrifices and the fat of sacrifice. **And prayer rightly offered shall be as an ACCEPTABLE FRAGRANCE OF RIGHTEOUSNESS, and perfection of the way as a delectable free-will offering**”.

In Hosea 6:6 we read:

“For I request mercy, NOT SACRIFICE, and the acknowledgment of Elohim rather than burnt offerings”.

If the Jewish hierarchy realized the **depth and abundance of God’s MERCY** they would not have condemned the innocent animals to slaughter. Forgiveness is obtained from God on the basis of His MERCY, LOVE and COMPASSION and not on the basis of the SHED BLOOD which is supposedly essential to APPEASE AND COOL OFF THE WRATH OF GOD. The adherents of Judaism portray God so angry that the blood of animals had to cool Him off. The adherents of Christendom claim that the blood of innocent animals was not sufficient to appease the WRATH OF GOD so His “divine Son” had to be sacrificed as a **propitiation for sin**

. The word  
*propitiation*

means:

**to appease someone who has been offended**

. The Christian Church adopted the stance of Paul, the apostle of the Gentile Church who taught the universal atonement on the basis of the sacrifice of Jesus. James and other apostles were shocked by his teaching and out rightly rejected Paul’s views. In Psalm 40:6-7 we read:

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“Sacrifice and offering **You did not desire**, but my ears You have opened; **burnt offerings and sin offerings YOU DID NOT REQUEST**

. Then I said, Here I am, I have come - with the scroll written for me. I desire to do Your will O my Elohim; Your Law is within my heart”.

This text is said to refer to Jesus. God’s original pure Law was within his heart. If the sacrificial law was originally implemented by God - then Jesus could have never said: **burnt offerings and sin offerings YOU DID NOT REQUEST**

! Jesus was not only to declare that God never requested the sacrificial rites by quoting Hosea 6:6 but he also fundamentally opposed the sacrificial cultus and took some drastic steps to manifest his views. Almost all Christians are aware of the fact that Jesus drove out of the Temple courts all the animals used in sacrifice as well as those who bought and sold them.

They think that the priests turned the Temple into the **common market place**

. They do not realize that

**buying and selling of sacrificial animals**

was acceptable as far as the Jewish Pentateuch was concerned.

Matthew, Mark and Luke claim that Jesus cleansed the Temple shortly before the Passover on which he died. All three claim that Jesus said that the Jews turned the Temple **into the DEN OF ROBBERS**

John alone claims that the cleansing of the Temple occurred at the very beginning of his ministry and that Jesus charged the Jews of turning the Temple into

**A MARKET**

. What we need to realize first of all is the fact that the animals were not kept in the Temple itself. Neither was buying and selling occurring in the Temple itself. No person was allowed into the Temple except the very priests. The buying and selling of animals and the exchanging of currency occurred in the

**court of Gentiles**

- the furthest district of the Temple grounds.

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The next thing you must realize is the fact that the Sadducees did not turn the Temple courts into the common market place where you would go shopping. They kept the animals allowed for sacrifice at the Temple grounds so that those who came from far or those who did not have an animal for sacrifice could buy some. Since the only currency in which the sacrificial victim could have been bought was a

### **Tyrian coin**

they had money changers available to convert the common money into the Tyrian coin. The money changers were also there in order to collect the Temple tax prescribed in the Jewish Pentateuch. The comment in

*The New American Bible*

in reference to Matthew 21:12 also acknowledges these facts:

“The activities going on in the Temple area **WERE NOT SECULAR but connected with the TEMPLE WORSHIP**

. Thus Jesus’ attack on those so engaged and his charge that they were making God’s house of prayer a den of thieves constituted a claim to authority over the religious practices of Israel and were a challenge to the priestly authorities. These activities were carried on in the court of the Gentiles, the outermost court of the Temple area. **Anim**

### **als for sacrifice were sold**

; the doves were for those who could not afford a more expansive offering [Lev. 5:7]. Tables of the money changers: only the coinage of Tyre could be used for the purchases; other money had to be exchanged for that”.

In regards to John 2:14 we read:

“Oxen, sheep and doves: **intended for sacrifice**. The doves were the offerings of the poor [Lev. 5:7]. Money changers: for a Temple tax paid by every male Jew more than nineteen years of age, with a half shekel coin [Ex. 30:11-16], in Tyrian currency”.

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All biblical scholars agree that activities going on in the Temple courts in Jesus' day were **perfectly lawful**

as far as the

### **Jewish Pentateuch was concerned**

. In Deuteronomy 14:22-27 we find the command that those who live too far from the chosen place should take the silver with them and buy the sacrificial animals at the chosen place. Since the Jewish Pentateuch which is also recognized by the Christian Church sanctions sacrificial cult and buying sacrificial animals at the chosen place - why then did Jesus take such a drastic action? Why did he charge the Temple clergy of turning the Temple into the

### **Den of Robbers**

?

The answer is obvious. He objected to the sacrificial cult in general. He agreed with Jeremiah that the sacrificial cult was the product of the lying pen of the scribes. It will also become apparent that Jesus regarded the killing of animals as **murder**. Jesus did not think that the Temple should be Jewish only. Nor that it should be a place of sacrifice. He stated that the Temple should be

**The House of**

### **Prayer for ALL NATIONS**

. Jesus believed in the Synagogue and not Temple. In the Synagogue

### **prayer**

was offered as a sacrifice. In the Temple

### **animals**

were butchered. In the House of PRAYER all nations should participate. In the Temple only those of Jewish ancestry were allowed to worship. Gentiles were allowed in the outermost court. When condemning the activities in the Temple courts Jesus referred to two Old Testament prophets: Isaiah and Jeremiah - who both opposed the sacrificial cult:

“Is it not written: My house shall be called a HOUSE OF PRAYER FOR ALL NATIONS? But you have made it A DEN OF ROBBERS” [Mark 11:17].

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When Jesus stated that God's House should be called the "House of Prayer for all Nations" he referred to Isaiah 56:7. The second statement "Den of Robbers" comes from Jeremiah 7:11 - the very chapter where Jeremiah claimed that sacrificial cult did not come from God 7:21-23. What did Jesus mean when he stated that the Sadducees [the priests] transformed God's House of Prayer into the DEN of ROBBERS? The answer is quite astonishing. The word *den* has been translated from the Greek word

*spelaion*

- number #4693 in Strong's and means:

*a grotto, a cavern*

. Grotto means:

*a cave*

. Cavern means:

*a hollow cave*

. The Greek word

*spelaion*

has been translated

*den*

and

*cave*

by the King James translators in the New Testament. The word

*den*

itself means

*a cave*

. The word

*den*

in Jeremiah 7:11 comes from a Hebrew word

*mearah*

- number #4631 which means:

*dark cavern or cave*

. This Hebrew word has been translated

*cave, den*

and

*hole*

in the Old Testament of the King James Bible. In the New Testament of the King James Bible the word

*den*

appears three times. Each time referring to Jesus' statement

*a DEN of robbers*

. The word

*cave*

appears only in John 11:38 in reference to the

**tomb**

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of Lazarus - since his grave was a

**cave**

. In the Old Testament we read that Abraham bought a field with a CAVE. This cave became the

**grave or burial place**

:

“Afterwards Abraham buried his wife Sarah **in the cave** in the field of Machpelah near Mamre [which is at Hebron] in the land of Canaan. So the field and

**the cave**

in it were legally transferred over to Abraham by the Hittites

**as a burial site**

” [Genesis 23:19-20].

According to the masoretic text, Abraham himself was buried in the same CAVE [Genesis 25:10]. Isaac, Rebekah and Jacob were also buried in the same cave [Genesis 49:29-32]. Jesus charged the priests of transforming the House of Prayer into the **GRAVEYARD**. By perpetually cremating the holocausts on the altar - the Temple became the graveyard. But what did Jesus actually want to express by the word

**robbers**

? The English word

*robber*

comes from the word

*rob*

which means:

*to seize and carry off the property of by unlawful violence or threat of violence*

. This word is distinguished from the word

*thief*

in that it involves

**violence**

whereas the word

*thief*

only implies

*stealing*

. The word

*robbers*

in Jeremiah 7:11 comes from the Hebrew word

*periyts*

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- number #6530 in Strong's and means:

**violent ones i.e. TYRANTS**

. This word is also translated

**destroyers**

and

**ravenous**

in the King James Bible. In the New Testament the word

*robber*

has been translated from the Greek word

*leistes*

used to render the Hebrew word Jesus actually spoke. It is number #3027 in Strong's and means:

**to plunder, a brigand**

. The word

*brigand*

means:

**a robber in a band of outlaws**

. An outlaw is a

**violent robber**

who resorts to

**murder**

. When the Temple guards were sent to arrest Yahshua in the Garden of Getsemane, Jesus stated:

“Am I a robber, said Jesus, that you have come out with swords and clubs to capture me?”  
[Mark 14:48].

Robbers were confronted with swords and clubs because they were **violent ones**. In John 19:40 we are told that Barabbas who was released instead of Jesus was a

**robber**

[leistes]. In Luke 23:18 we are plainly told that Barabbas was cast into prison because of rebellion and

**murder**

. Barabbas was a ROBBER, that is,

**MURDERER**

.

Jesus thus charged the priests with

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### **murder**

. He claimed that by perpetually butchering the innocent animals on the sacrificial altar they have become the

### **violent ones**

. By perpetual slaughter and cremation of the victims they have transformed the Temple into the

### **graveyard**

. The prophet Isaiah quoted Yahweh as saying:

“For I Yahweh love justice, I hate **KILLING for burnt offering**” [Isaiah 61:8].

The King James Bible reads:

“For I the LORD love judgment, I hate **ROBBERY for burnt offering**”.

It is just not possible to present a burnt offering to God without actually **slashing the throat** of an innocent animal. By shedding its blood one commits

### **violence**

. God abhors the

### **cut throats**

. He even regards the slaughter of an animal for sacrifice as

### **murder**

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. In Isaiah 66:1-4 God is quoted as saying:

“Heaven is my throne and the earth is my footstool. Where is the house you will build for me? Where will my resting place be? Has not my hand made all these things, and so they came into being? Declares the LORD. This is the one I esteem: he who is humble and contrite, and trembles at my word. **But whoever SACRIFICES A BULL is like one who KILLS A MAN, and whoever offers a lamb, like one who breaks a dog’s neck; whoever makes a grain offering is like one who presents pig’s blood, and whoever burns memorial incense, like one who worships an idol. THEY HAVE CHOSEN THEIR OWN WAYS, and their souls DELIGHT IN THEIR ABOMINATIONS...they did EVIL IN MY SIGHT AND HAVE CHOSE WHAT DISPLEASE ME**” [New International Version].

In this text God plainly states that the Israelites have chosen **their own way of worship** - with **blood sacrifices, burnt and grain offerings** which He regards as **EVIL**

. As far as God is concerned it is murder to kill animals. He equates killing of a bull with killing of a man. He equates their sacrifices to pig and dog - animals abhorred by the Jews. God states that they delight in their **abominable sacrificial system**

. From the first day in Egypt, God tried to teach His people not do practice the sacrificial rites but they rejected His ways as **strange**

. Please note what prophet Hosea states:

“The more altars the people of Israel build to ATONE FOR SIN, the more places they have FOR SINNING! I wrote them the GREAT THINGS OF MY LAW, but they REJECTED THEM AS **STRANGE**”

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**They offer sacrifices to Me and eat the meat of the sacrifices. But I, the LORD, am not pleased with them**

” [8:11-13 Good News Bible].

The people of Israel rejected the perfect statutes and commands of Yahweh which if a man keeps will live. They regarded them as STRANGE - not suitable to their cravings and lusts. They chose to worship God in **the heathen ways** - offering of sacrifices and partaking of its flesh. But God was not pleased with that kind of worship. He never asked them to offer Him their bloody sacrifices.

In Ecclesiastes 5:1 we read:

“Guard your feet when you go to the House of Elohim, **and draw near to hear RATHER THAN TO GIVE A SACRIFICE, as do the fools. For they do not know that in doing so THEY DO EVIL**”.

The author of this text states that fools offer bloody sacrifices without realizing that in doing so they actually commit evil. In Proverbs 15:8 we read:

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“The sacrifice of the wicked is an ABOMINATION to Yahweh; but the PRAYER of the JUST is His delight”.

We are not told that the sacrifice is not acceptable because one may live a sinful life - as commonly supposed. In fact the Jewish Pentateuch prescribes sacrifices as **various sin offerings** . The

author calls it

**the sacrifice of the wicked**

because in order to sacrifice an animal one must commit a wicked crime of

**SLAUGHTER**

. That this interpretation must be correct is evident from the last part of the verse. We are not told that the objection to sacrificing was only because the offerer was not obeying the will of God in his daily walk of life. The author specifies that the

**PRAYER**

[rather than animal sacrifice] is a DELIGHT to God. The word

*just*

in this text denotes

**justice and equity**

.

In Proverbs 21:27 we read:

“Sacrifice from evil men God loathes - much more, when it is offered **to atone for crime**”  
[Moffat Bible].

God hates sacrifices in general. He especially hates sacrifices which are presented in order to

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atone for sin. God hates this system because it portrays Him as a tyrant. According to this sacrificial system God is portrayed as a “**wrathful God**” who can be appeased only through the shedding of blood.

In Amos 4:4-5 [King James Bible] we are told:

“Come to Beth el, and transgress; at Gilgal multiply transgressions; and bring your sacrifices every morning, and your tithes after three years: and offer sacrifice of thanksgiving with leaven, and proclaim and publish the free offerings: for this liketh you, O ye children of Israel, saith the Lord GOD”.

God taunts the people of Israel. He tells them to go to Beth el and Gilgal - two shrines of sacrificial cult. He tells them to go there and present offerings in exactly the same manner as recorded in the Jewish Law. But God states that by doing so they actually **commit sin**. In Jeremiah 6:20 God states:

“To what benefit to Me is the incense you bring from Sheba or sweet fragrance from a distant land? **Your burnt offerings are not acceptable; your sacrifices do not please Me**”.

Prophet Micah regarded the sacrificial system as not authentic for he wrote:

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“Yahweh has a case against His people; He is lodging a charge against Israel...With what shall I come before Yahweh and bow down before the exalted Elohim? **Shall I come before Him with burnt offerings, with calves a year old? Will Yahweh be pleased with thousands of rams, with ten thousand rivers of oil? Shall I offer my firstborn for my transgression, the fruit of my body for the sin of my soul**

? He has showed you, O man, what is right. What does Yahweh require of you?

**To practice JUSTICE, to LOVE MERCY and to LIVE IN HUMBLENESS before Elohim**

” [Micah 6:2,6-8].

The Deuteronomic text stated:

“To that place you must go; **there bring your offerings and sacrifices**, your tithes and special gifts, what you have vowed to give and your freewill offerings, and the firstborn of your herds and flocks” [12:4-7].

Micah most definitely was not interested in offering sacrifices and burnt offerings to God. He was not interested to make sacrificial vows and freewill offerings. He was not interested to go to the central shrine and present his firstborn of the flocks and herds. Neither did he believe in the bloody atonement for sin. Micah states that the sacrificial system God did not require of His people. But he requires man to do what is right and just. To love justice, mercy and humbleness. God wants His people to be of contrite heart and spirit - not slaughtering and butchering **cute, innocent calves and lambs**. In *Homily III*, chapter 45 - a document incorporated in Clementina, dating back to the second century preserves a speech of apostle Peter regarding blood sacrifices:

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“But that He is not pleased with sacrifices, is shown by this, that those who lusted after the flesh were slain as soon as they tasted it, and were consigned to a tomb, so that it was called **the grave of lusts**

[Kibroth Haatavah].

**He then who at the first was displeased with the slaughtering of animals, NOT WISHING THEM TO BE SLAIN, did not ordain sacrifices as desiring them; nor from the beginning did He require them. For neither are sacrifices accomplished without the SLAUGHTER OF ANIMALS, nor can the firstfruits be presented**

”.

In *Homily III*, chapter 26 Peter states regarding true prophet the following:

“He **hates sacrifices, bloodshed, and libations**...he quenches the fires of the altars, represses wars...makes men liberal...prescribes justice”.

In *Homily III*, chapters 43 and 44 Peter states:

“If He commits pilfering, who administers justice? If he is unjust, who is just? **If He is fond of**

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**fat, and sacrifices, and offerings, and drink offerings, who then is without need, and who is holy, and pure and perfect  
?”**

In Jeremiah 9:24 God states:

“but let him who boasts boast about this: that he understands and knows Me, that **I am the LORD, Who exercises KINDNESS, JUSTICE and RIGHT ON EARTH, for in THESE**

**I delight**

”.

If God delights in justice, kindness and righteousness - how can we even think that He sanctioned and commanded the slaughtering of all innocent animals in sacrifice to Him? If God really prescribed this rite and other sacrificial rites - where murder of innocent animals is demanded - would it not stain His perfect character? What should innocent animals think of Him? What if a RED HEIFER was to tell God:

“O God, what injustice have I done to you? In what manner have I offended you? Did I go about fighting wars, making people and other animals slaves? Did I invent weapons of war and all kinds of revelries and immoralities? Have I ever cursed and blasphemed your majesty? Did I despise you and sinned against you? Did I not actually live according to the instincts inbuilt in

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me by Your will? Was it not man who lived like a wild beast? Was it not man himself who practiced all kinds of evils and abominations? Was it not man who even sexually defiled me and other animals? Was it not man who is full of wickedness and who actually curses you to Your face? Is it not man who has committed so many crimes that they could not be recorded in millions of years? Does man have emotions? So do I. Does man feel pain? So do I. Does man eat and drink? So do I. Does man procreate his race by sexual means? So do I. Is man moved with joy when he has an offspring? So am I. Does man feel sorrow and pain when his offspring dies? So do I. Is man a living creature, created from the dust of the Earth? So am I. Does man sustain his life by breath, water and food? So do I. Does man rest and sleep when tired? So do I. Does man have red blood? So do I. Does he enjoy when bled to death? Neither do I. Why, then, O God, should you choose to have my throat cut and my blood spilt for the crime of another? In what way have I ever offended you to deserve such a brutal treatment? Why should my INNOCENT blood be used to pay for the wicked crime of ANOTHER? If my blood is to be a mere symbol of

“Jesus” - as Christians believe - why resort to such a tyranny for the sake of symbolism? Is it because I have less intelligence, reason and wisdom than a man? Is it because I cannot indulge in great controversies and philosophies like man? Well, I can only do that which you by instinct put in me. Was I brought into existence so that my blood may be shed and my living flesh be eaten? If that is the purpose then I would have been better off not to have been born”.

I would like you to put yourself in the place of God. If you were God, would you have prescribed the sacrificial system with all its rites as you read in the Jewish Pentateuch? I think I know the answer. But then you may say that God had no choice but prescribe it. But God always has a choice and He is never trapped. He is above all things and He can always devise a system that is in accordance with His perfect will and character. God is HOLY and JUST and God could not have prescribed such an abominable cult because He says that when all the Earth finally comes to know Him then there will no longer be shedding of blood for the lion will eat grass like a herbivorous animal and the lamb will graze together with a wolf. The reason why people today think that God prescribed the abominable sacrificial cult is because they have neither known God nor His Son Jesus or the spirit of the true prophets.