

Many modern educated people tend to object to the idea of sin and sacrifice: “I don’t need a sacrifice! I can just repent. I’m basically a good person. I’m good enough. Besides, sin isn’t all that important anyway.” In contrast, people concerned with these issues (like followers of Messiah Yeshua) may seem to be either neurotically obsessed for emphasizing sin, naively barbaric for extolling sacrifice—or both!

THE ISSUE OF SIN MINIMIZED

For most people sin and sacrifice are just not very relevant issues. Sin for the most part is viewed as a moral lapse in judgment and is atoned for with something between a sincere apology and a life sentence. The basic idea is that people are generally good, with a few obvious exceptions.

I remember handing out some Good News literature several years ago in New York City a few weeks after *Yom Kippur* (the Day of Atonement). I saw one of New York’s finest, and since his Police ID revealed he was from my side of the family, I offered him a brochure. When he saw that the title spoke of the need for atonement and forgiveness, he said, “Forget it; I don’t need that. The people I arrest need *that* message.”

“Really,” I said, “and where were you on Yom Kippur?”

“In the synagogue,” he shot back, “where I was supposed to be!”

“And what did you do in the synagogue?” I asked.

“Why I was...” His voice trailed off as his fist began automatically beating his chest, as all orthodox Jews are trained to do as they repent of sins on that day.

His voice changed and he said, “Okay, I’ll read one of your pamphlets.” As he thought of Yom Kippur, he remembered that on the Day of Atonement, everyone must acknowledge that they have sinned.

At least once a year the Torah reminds us not to be self-righteous (Lev. 23:29). In *the Prophets* and *the Writings*, the Scriptures are perfectly clear as well regarding the sinful nature of all people:

All we, like sheep, have gone astray; each one has turned to his own way (Isaiah 53:6).

כָּלֵנוּ כַּעֲזָאן תָּלַעְנוּ אִישׁ לְדַרְכּוֹ פָּגַעְנוּ
וְיְיָ הַפְּגִיעַ בּוֹ אֵת עֵזֶן כָּלֵנוּ:

“All of us are as an unclean thing, and all our righteousnesses as filthy rags” (Isaiah 64:6).

“The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked; who can know it?” (Jeremiah 17:9).

עֵקֶב הַלֵּב מִכֹּל וְאָנָּשׁ הוּא מִי יִדְעֵנּוּ:

“There is none that does good, no, not one.” (Psalm 14:3b)

אֵין עֲשֵׂה-טוֹב אֵין גִּם-אֶחָד:

“In Your sight no man can be justified” (Psalm 143:2b).

God calls sin *wicked* and deserving of judgment, as it is rebellion and disobedience to Him. For a person to label sin as unimportant doesn’t make it any less wicked, just as changing the label on a bottle of rat poison to read

“fruit juice” doesn’t make the contents any less deadly. In fact, now it becomes even more dangerous, since someone may think that taking a drink could actually be nutritious!

If this seems like an overstatement, understand that the Scriptures reveal just how disastrous sin is. According to the Prophet Ezekiel said:

“The soul that sins, it shall die!” (Ezekiel 18:4b).

הַנֶּפֶשׁ הַחַטָּאת הִיא תָמוּת:

This is the eternal judgment that is also spoken of by Daniel the Prophet. There is a time of resurrection when eternal judgment will be dispensed:

“Those who sleep in the dust of the earth will awake, some to everlasting life and some to everlasting contempt” (Daniel 12:2).

וְרִבְיִים מִזִּשְׁנֵי אֲדָמַת-עָפָר יִקְוּנוּ
אֶלֶּה לְחַיֵּי עוֹלָם וְאֶלֶּה לְתַרְפוּת לְדָרְאֵזֶן עוֹלָם:

Isaiah reveals that though people think they pray and are heard by God, their sins actually break that prayer connection:

“It’s not that God is unable to hear you or help you, but your sins have made a separation between God and you, so that He will not hear you.” (Isaiah 59:1-2)

GOD’S WAY OF ATONEMENT

God’s way of forgiving sins is as misunderstood as sin itself. People discuss whether the Temple, which was a place of sacrifices, will ever be rebuilt in Jerusalem. The problem with rebuilding the Temple is not a Muslim Mosque atop

WHY DO WE NEED A SACRIFICE TO ATONE FOR SINS?

the Temple Mount, but many centuries of traditional rabbinical teaching. Tradition has erroneously taught our people that we do not need *blood atonement* for sins. Yet the Scriptures state that blood sacrifice is *necessary to atone* for sins:

“The life of the flesh is in the blood; and I have given it to you upon the altar to make atonement for your souls; for it is the blood that makes atonement for the soul” (Lev. 17:11).

כִּי נֶפֶשׁ הַבֶּשֶׂר בַּדָּם הוּא וְאִנִּי נִתְּתִיו לָכֶם עַל-הַמִּזְבֵּחַ לְכַפֵּר עַל-נַפְשׁוֹתֵיכֶם כִּי-הַדָּם הוּא בִגְגֹשׁ וְכַפֵּר :

In fact, Yom Kippur is only a Day of Atonement if atonement is made God’s way: *by blood sacrifice* (Leviticus 16). Merely acknowledging and even repenting of one’s sins is no more effective than attempting to dismiss one’s murder charge by apologizing to the offended party. Sin is horrific to God, and He is the offended party.

GOD’S WAY OF ATONEMENT

All the sacrifices of Scripture were to illustrate the final, perfect sacrifice that God himself would provide in the Messiah:

“Surely He has borne our griefs and carried our sorrows; yet we esteemed Him stricken and afflicted by God... But he was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities... the Lord has laid on Him the iniquity of us all... He was cut off from the land of the living for the transgression of my people was He stricken... He shall make His soul an offering for sin... My righteous

Servant shall justify the many, for He shall bear their iniquities... He bore the sin of many and made intercession for the transgressors.” (Isaiah 53:3-12, selections)

This pictures for us God’s provision for our sins through the Messiah’s atonement.

The prophet begins the chapter by asking, *“Who has believed our report?” (Isaiah 53:1).* That’s still the question today: Who will believe God, His view of sin, and His way of forgiveness? The New Covenant provides what the Hebrew Scriptures predicted: *“God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were yet sinners, Messiah died for us” (Romans 5:8).* All who trust in Messiah Yeshua for their atonement receive forgiveness for their sins, and best of all, an eternal relationship with God!

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For all questions in the series, see *The Messianic Answer Book*. The book and series are available at:



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