

והיית לנו לעינים

“...and you *shall be* as eyes for us...”

a view from a *GER*

יונתן נח בן אברהם

yonason noach *BEN AVRAHAM*

Parashas *KI SEITZEI*

In the Book of *Devarim* (Deuteronomy), long after the animal sacrificial system has been introduced in the Book of *Vayikra* (Leviticus), we find a clear statement that should give Christians pause: *Devarim 24:16* reads, “*The fathers shall not be put to death for the children, nor shall the children be put to death for the fathers; every man shall be put to death for his own sin.*” With this *passuk* (verse) in mind, we will examine the veracity (or fallacy) of a concept that if misunderstood can be the difference between eternal life, or eternal death.

Christianity: Defined, then Debunked with One Verse from *Tanakh* THE Definitive Polemic against *Vicarious Atonement*

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IMPORTANT NOTE FOR CONSIDERATION: Please, Jewish-Christian (Messianic Jewish) reader of the following polemic, consider the timing of the writing of the books that comprise the Jewish Scripture when considering the evidence presented below. The statement of the Torah (*Devarim 24:16*³⁸), an anti-vicarious atonement statement, was in the Jewish lexicon for over 660 years before the birth of the Prophet Isaiah. The Book of Psalms, from which our polemic is taken, existed for at least 200 years before Isaiah was even born. And consider that the #1 Christian proof text from the Book of Isaiah is followed by the following anti-vicarious atonement teachings from *bona fide* Jewish Prophets:

Yirmiyahu (Jeremiah) 31:28-29 “In those days they shall say no more, *The fathers have eaten sour grapes, and the children’s teeth are set on edge*. But every one shall die for his own iniquity; every man who eats sour grapes, his teeth shall be set on edge.

Yechezkel (Ezekiel) 18:1-4 “And the word of the Lord came to me, saying, What do you mean by repeating this proverb concerning the land of Israel, saying: *The fathers have eaten sour grapes, and the children’s teeth are set on edge*? As I live, says the Lord God, you shall not have occasion any more to use this proverb in Israel. Behold, all souls are mine; as the soul of the father, so also the soul of the son is mine; the soul that sins, it shall die.”

Thus, Messianic Jew, your “favorite proof text” was preceded and followed by texts of the Jewish Scriptures that preclude an interpretation of Isaiah 53 that allows for vicarious atonement. Jesus did not (could not) die for your sins, and you are still in your own sin. Please take advantage of the true atonement provided by the Jewish Scripture, YOUR Jewish Scriptures:

³⁸ Cf. **II Kings 14:6** “But the children of the murderers he did not kill; according to that which is written in the book of the Torah of Moses, because the Lord commanded, saying, *The fathers shall not be put to death for the children, nor the children be put to death for the fathers; but every man shall be put to death for his own sin.*” See also **II Chronicles 25:6**.

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Tehillim (Psalms) 51:3-5, 17-19 “Be gracious to me, O God, according to your loving kindness; according to the multitude of your mercies blot out my transgressions. Wash me thoroughly from my iniquity, and cleanse me from my sin. For I acknowledge my transgressions; and my sin is always before me ... O Lord, open you my lips; and my mouth shall declare your praise. For you do not desire sacrifice; or else would I give it; you do not delight in burnt offering. The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit; a broken and contrite heart, O God, you will not despise.”

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If limited to a single paragraph a Christian would define his “faith” as follows:

“G-d created within Adam perfection, a perfectly clean, unblemished soul. But Adam sinned, and thus he, and his offspring after him, all became sinning beings – they all have blemished souls. G-d cannot abide with sin, He cannot allow imperfection to live with Him in heaven, and thus all of mankind was destined, because of the sin of Adam, to reside for eternity in hell. But G-d, in the animal sacrificial system, gave the world a hint how mankind could return to a state of being sin-free. G-d intimated *symbolically* that the Second Part of the Triune G-dhead would take on the form of a man, would “pay the price for our sins” through his grueling death on the cross³⁹. And all that is required of mankind is to believe that Jesus of Nazareth is the Messiah, and to accept his atoning death, his pain and suffering, in place of their own.”

That is how a believing Christian would summarize his or her “faith.” Yes, the Christian would like to go one for pages and pages, offering proof-texts from the “Old Testament,” as well as how their theology is nothing more than the next logical step forward from Torah Observant Judaism. But IF limited to a single paragraph, the above paragraph would suffice.

The Christian “proof-text” for this concept of vicarious atonement comes from the book of *Yishayahu* (Isaiah), Chapter 53, which reads in part(KJV), “...***Surely he hath borne our griefs, and carried our sorrows: yet we did esteem him stricken, smitten of God, and afflicted. But he was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities: the chastisement of our peace was upon him; and with his stripes we are healed....***” This “proof-text” is so convincing (re-assuring) to the Christian mindset that they believe all one has to do is read this chapter from the Book of Isaiah and the reader will be transformed and immediately accept Jesus of Nazareth as his “lord and savior.”

One of the tenets of *Yiddishkeit* (Torah Observant Judaism) regarding atonement teaches that our own personal pain and suffering – whether emotional, such as (*chas v'shalom*) the death of a child, or the heart-ache one experiences on *Yom Kippur*, or physical, such a the stubbing of a toe, or the pain of a kidney-stone – can (if acknowledged as such) be a *kapara* (atonement) for sins that we have committed. If a Jew were to convey this part of Torah – that our pain and suffering can be an atonement – to a Christian, the Christian would reject the claim immediately. “It’s only the pain and suffering of Jesus that atones for sin,” the Christian would say, “It’s only the Messiah’s pain and suffering that *pays the price* for our sin.”

³⁹ **QUESTION:** Where is there any hint in the sacrificial system, as define by the Jewish Scriptures, that the animal brought as an offering is made to suffer? If there was no suffering, then how is this a “hint” at the suffering death of Jesus of Nazareth on a Roman cross? Missionaries go into great detail regarding the animal sacrificial system, showing how the details all point toward Jesus. What about this “detail”?

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Now that we have seen how a Christian would define the way of atonement, and after offering a Torah Teaching about atonement, let's see what *Tanakh* has to say. But before we do so, we would ask a Christian reader of this polemic a question:

“**IF** there were a sentence in the Talmud (Codified Jewish Law) that read, ‘*Look at my pain, and my suffering, and forgive their sins,*’ would not a Christian jump at such a teaching as a proof-text for their belief? Would not the Christian interpret, “... my pain ... my suffering ... forgive their sins,” as indisputable evidence for the Christian doctrine of vicarious atonement?”

The response from the believing Christian would be a deafening, “YES!”

Unfortunately, for Christians, such a sentence does exist, and it is found within what Christians refer to as the Old Testament. However, in order to make clear to Christians that their desire to read Jesus’ death on the cross into any Torah Teaching that allows for it, we offered the above “IF” question on a sentence that does not exist. The real verse is found in the Book of *Tehillim* (Psalms) 25:18 [Judaica Press *Targum*], and it reads:

ראה עניי ועמלי ושא לכל חטאותי

“*Look upon my affliction (suffering) and my pain (effort); and forgive all my sins.*”

NOTE: The “and” before “forgive all my sins” connects the first two elements, “affliction/suffering,” and “pain/effort,” with the concluding ramification of those first two elements: “and forgive all my sins.”

And just in case a Christian might think that the above JEWISH translation is a mistranslation, we offer the following CHRISTIAN translations:

Septuagint (Benton Translation⁴⁰): “*Look upon mine affliction and my trouble; and forgive all my sins.*”

King James Version: “*Look upon mine affliction and my pain; and forgive all my sins.*”

Revised Standard Version “*Consider my affliction and my trouble, and forgive all my sins.*”

New Revised Standard Version: “*Consider my affliction and my trouble, and forgive all my sins.*”

English Standard Version “*Consider my affliction and my trouble, and forgive all my sins.*”

New American Standard Bible “*Look upon my affliction and my trouble, And forgive all my sins.*”

Thus, in the opinion of the Christian “Old Testament,” a sinner can ask HaShem that He look at, “my pain,” and “my affliction,” and to “forgive all my sins,” and, in the opinion of the “Old Testament,” the necessity of any “part” of G-d becoming a man in order to die for the sins of mankind is shown to be totally unnecessary. And with but one *passuk* (verse) from the Book of *Tehillim* (Psalms), coupled with the clear statement from *Devarim* (Deuteronomy) 24:16 “*The fathers shall not be put to death for the children, nor shall the children be put to death for the fathers; every man shall be put to death for his own sin.*” the misconception of vicarious atonement has been shown to be erroneous.

⁴⁰ See **NOTE REGARDING the SEPTUAGINT** following this section on why we label the Septuagint a “Christian Translation.”

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This clear refutation of the entire reason behind Christian Theology should cause a Christian who is more interested in truth than in the apologetics of his religion to have a stomach ache. The Christian who is interested in truth – which all Christians claim to be – should recognize the above refutation, come to terms with it, and purge Christianity from his being, and (*Zechariah 8:23*) “...take hold of the robe of a Jew, saying, We will go with you; for we have heard that God is with you.” But, unfortunately for the vast majority of Christians, that is not going to happen – no matter how clear the above proof-text might be. The reason that Christianity will not just dry up and blow away with the wind is because the Christian is certain of his beliefs, his belief system, and the ramifications therein. And if he accepts the above admonition he will have to come to grips with what this author (a convert from Christianity to Torah Observant Judaism) had to come to grips with: that he has been (unintentionally) lied to regarding Jesus of Nazareth, and the Triune G-d.

In our next example, we will look at exactly why Christianity will not be relegated to the trash heap, and it is not because we have not refuted this false belief/faith system with one verse from the “Bible,” but rather because most people simply do not actually hear/understand the words that enter their ears/minds. They either don’t hear the words, or do not grasp the ramifications of those words, or they will “violently” (at least “violence” against their own minds and the Truth of HaShem’s Torah) defend long held beliefs so as not to upset their “faith” as it currently exists in their minds.

The ability to hear the sound that a voice makes does not (necessarily) equate with hearing/understanding the message that that voice is trying to convey

Rav Ya’akov Weinberg, *zt”l*, former Rosh Yeshiva at *Ner Yisroel* in Baltimore, MD tells the following story that (paraphrased) goes something like this:

“A few years ago there was a group of secular Jewish professionals – doctors, lawyers, professors, et al – who got together once a month at one of their member’s homes for a dinner party. Each month the host was tasked with providing a guest speaker – an author, philosopher, etc. – to enlighten the group. One month I (R’ Ya’akov Weinberg) was the invited guest. I spoke about the topic of “Evidence that G-d spoke at Sinai.”

“As I got deeper into the topic, one of the audience, a man, spoke up, ‘Rabbi, I want you to stop talking.’ Everyone, including myself, was stunned at this request. I paused momentarily, and then I continued speaking. A few moments later the same man said, ‘Rabbi, I need you to stop talking. If you continue talking, I’m going to have to change my life and I like my life, so please stop talking.’

“Again I and the rest of the audience were speechless, at least momentarily. I, of course, began speaking again, and the man promptly got up and left the home. I tried to find out who he was, but no one would divulge his name to me, so I never learned his name.”

We are assuming for the sake of argument that there were eighteen people in attendance at Rav Weinberg’s talk, and that of those eighteen, only one of them really listened to what Rav Weinberg had said, only one of them understood the ramifications of the evidence presented, that G-d actually spoke at Mt. Sinai, and only one of them grasped the truth that had been placed before him, and only one of them didn’t abuse his mind to create apologetics which would have allowed him to sit through the lecture without altering his settled upon life. The lesson of this story is, of course, that the vast majority of us refuse to allow ourselves to be challenged, refuse to allow words that might upset the applecart containing our long-held *weltanschauungs*, and refuse to act upon the truths that are presented to us, as the *yetzer*

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hara is anti-growth, anti-truth, anti-acknowledgement of a truth so evident that it all but knocks us over the head.

The silly thing about this is that it is precisely this “pain” of change that can be a *kapara* for past (unintentional) false beliefs, and can be the embodiment of *Tehillim* 25:18 (paraphrased),

“Look at the emotional pain I am feeling over the realization that I have held false positions and beliefs, observe the suffering I am feeling over coming to terms with all the ramifications thereof, and Please, lord, forgive me for those past (unintentional) sins.”

Rashi, we believe, points out the intransigence of the *yetzer hara* (the animal/evil inclination), and its ability to remain firmly entrenched in a false position – even when confronted with the truth of a situation. The “problem” with this teaching of Rashi is that it is split up between two Torah Portions, *Parashas Balak* and *Parashas Pinchas*, thus epitomizing what is commonly known as “the *chollent* problem,” – “Oh, but that was last week’s *Parasha*, and now we’re on to this week’s *Parasha*.”

The *passukim* from *Parashas Balak* read (*Bamidbar* 25:7-8) “***And when Phinehas, the son of Eleazar, the son of Aaron the priest, saw it, he rose up from among the congregation, and took a javelin in his hand; And he went after the man of Israel into the tent, and thrust both of them through, the man of Israel, and the woman through her belly ...***” The *passuk* from *Parashas Pinchas* reads (*Bamidbar* 25:11) “***Phinehas, the son of Eleazar, the son of Aaron the priest, has turned my anger away from the people of Israel, while he was zealous for my sake among them, that I consumed not the people of Israel in my jealousy.***”

The last Rashi of *Parashas Balak* reads (in part), “**through her stomach ... He aimed for the male organ of Zimri and her female organs and everyone saw that he had not killed them for nothing.**” The first Rashi of *Parashas Pinchas* reads (in part), “**Phinehas the son of Eleazar the son of Aaron the kohen ... Since the tribes were disparaging him, saying, “Have you seen the son of Puti, whose mother’s father [Jethro] fattened calves for idols, and who killed a chieftain of an Israelite tribe?”** For this reason, Scripture traces his pedigree to Aaron.”

Thus, in the time it takes to read three verses from the Torah, albeit split up by an entire week, and rehashed over a different “*chollent*,” we learn how when Pinchas acted, everyone saw the righteousness of his action; yet almost as fast as the eye can blink, these same were attacking Pinchas for having killed one of their chieftains – or, as applied to our current subject – for having killed one of their long held beliefs.

The EXPECTED/ANTICIPATED CHRISTIAN RESPONSE

A true believing Christian will look at our polemic and quickly come to the conclusion that we are an agent of Satan who is attempting to lure them into an eternity in hell. Thus, the believing Christian will not be dissuaded from his “faith” no matter what the argument. But, none the less, we offer the following verses that use the same root words as are found in *Tehillim* 25:18 in order to show the error of their beliefs – even according to one of their own translations.

NOTE: NKV = New King James translation of the Christian Bible

AFFLICTION (Strong’s Number 6040)

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NKJ Genesis 16:11 And the Angel of the LORD said to her: "Behold, you *are* with child, And you shall bear a son. You shall call his name Ishmael, Because the LORD has heard **your affliction**.

NKJ Genesis 29:32 So Leah conceived and bore a son, and she called his name Reuben; for she said, "The LORD has surely looked on **my affliction**. Now therefore, my husband will love me."

NKJ Genesis 31:42 "Unless the God of my father, the God of Abraham and the Fear of Isaac, had been with me, surely now you would have sent me away empty-handed. God has seen **my affliction** and the labor of my hands, and rebuked *you* last night."

NKJ Exodus 3:7 And the LORD said: "I have surely seen **the oppression** of My people who *are* in Egypt, and have heard their cry because of their taskmasters, for I know their sorrows.

NKJ Exodus 3:17 "and I have said I will bring you up out of **the affliction** of Egypt to the land of the Canaanites and the Hittites and the Amorites and the Perizzites and the Hivites and the Jebusites, to a land flowing with milk and honey." ' "

NKJ Deuteronomy 16:3 "You shall eat no leavened bread with it; seven days you shall eat unleavened bread with it, *that is*, the bread of **affliction** (for you came out of the land of Egypt in haste), that you may remember the day in which you came out of the land of Egypt all the days of your life.

NKJ Deuteronomy 26:7 "Then we cried out to the LORD God of our fathers, and the LORD heard our voice and looked on our affliction and our labor and our oppression.

NKJ 2 Kings 14:26 For the LORD saw *that* the **affliction** of Israel *was* very bitter; and whether bond or free, there was no helper for Israel.

NKJ Isaiah 48:10 Behold, I have refined you, but not as silver; I have tested you (Israel) in the furnace of affliction.

NKJ Psalm 9:13 Have mercy on me, O LORD! Consider **my trouble** from those who hate me, You who lift me up from the gates of death,

NKJ Psalm 31:7 I will be glad and rejoice in Your mercy, For You have considered **my trouble**; You have known my soul in adversities,

NKJ Psalm 44:24 Why do You hide Your face, *And* forget **our affliction** and our oppression?

NKJ Psalm 119:153 Consider **my affliction** and deliver me, For I do not forget Your law.

NKJ Lamentations 1:3 Judah has gone into captivity, Under **affliction** and hard servitude; She dwells among the nations, She finds no rest; All her persecutors overtake her in dire straits.

NKJ Lamentations 1:9 Her uncleanness *is* in her skirts; She did not consider her destiny; Therefore her collapse was awesome; She had no comforter. "O LORD, behold my affliction, For the enemy is exalted!"

NKJ Lamentations 3:19 Remember my **affliction** and roaming, The wormwood and the gall.

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PAIN (Strong's Number 5999⁴¹)

NKJ Isaiah 53:11 He shall see the **labor** of His soul, *and* be satisfied. By His knowledge My righteous Servant shall justify many, For He shall bear their iniquities.

NKJ Habakkuk 1:3 Why do You show me iniquity, And cause *me* to see **trouble**? For plundering and violence *are* before me; There is strife, and contention arises.

⁴¹ **H5999** אָמַל *amal* {aw-mawl'}
 □ from 05998; TWOT - 1639a; n m/f
 □ AV - **labor** 25, mischief 9, misery 3, travail 3, trouble 3, sorrow 2, grievance 1, grievousness 1, iniquity 1, miserable 1, pain 1, painful 1, perverseness 1, toil 1, wearisome 1, wickedness 1; 55
 □ 1) toil, trouble, labor 1a) trouble 1b) trouble, mischief 1c) toil, labor

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NKJ Psalm 25:18 Look on my affliction and my pain, **And** forgive all my sins.

NOTE: A basic tenant of Christian theology is that it is not through effort at keeping HaShem's Commandments that one forges a relationship with Him, but rather only through "faith in the vicarious atoning death of Jesus on the cross," that one can do away with the sins that all human being commit. However, it seems that this Psalm also seems to dispel that belief of Christianity. The following verses are evidence of this claim:

NKJ Genesis 41:51 Joseph called the name of the firstborn Manasseh: "For God has made me forget all my **toil** and all my father's house."

NKJ Deuteronomy 26:7 "Then we cried out to the LORD God of our fathers, and the LORD heard our voice and [He] looked on our affliction and our labor and our oppression.

NKJ Psalm 90:10 The days of our lives *are* seventy years; And if by reason of strength *they are* eighty years, Yet their boast *is* only **labor** and sorrow; For it is soon cut off, and we fly away.

NKJ Psalm 105:44 He gave them the lands of the Gentiles, And they inherited the labor of the nations,

NKJ Psalm 107:12 Therefore He brought down their heart with **labor**; They fell down, and *there was* none to help.

NKJ Ecclesiastes 1:3 What profit has a man from all his **labor** in which he toils under the sun?

NKJ Ecclesiastes 2:21 For there is a man whose **labor** *is* with wisdom, knowledge, and skill; yet he must leave his heritage to a man who has not labored for it. This also *is* vanity and a great evil.

NKJ Ecclesiastes 2:24 Nothing *is* better for a man *than* that he should eat and drink, and *that* his soul should enjoy good in his **labor**. This also, I saw, was from the hand of God.

NKJ Ecclesiastes 3:13 and also that every man should eat and drink and enjoy the good of all his **labor** -- *it is* the gift of God.

NKJ Ecclesiastes 4:9 Two *are* better than one, Because they have a good reward for their **labor**.

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FORGIVE (Strong's Number 5375)

NKJ Genesis 4:13 And Cain said to the LORD, "My punishment *is* greater **than I can bear** [LXX, Brenton translation "*to be forgiven*." Douay-Rheims (1899) "*than that I may deserve pardon*."]

NKJ Genesis 50:17 "Thus you shall say to Joseph: "I beg you, please **forgive** the trespass of your brothers and their sin; for they did evil to you." ' Now, please, **forgive** the trespass of the servants of the God of your father." And Joseph wept when they spoke to him.

NKJ Exodus 10:17 "Now therefore, please **forgive** my sin only this once, and entreat the LORD your God, that He may take away from me this death only."

NKJ Exodus 23:21 Beware of Him and obey His voice; do not provoke Him, for He will not **pardon** your transgressions; for My name *is* in Him.

NKJ Exodus 32:32 "Yet now, if You will **forgive** their sin -- but if not, I pray, blot me out of Your book which You have written."

NKJ Exodus 34:7 "keeping mercy for thousands, **forgiving** iniquity and transgression and sin, by no means clearing *the guilty*, visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children and the children's children to the third and the fourth generation."

NKJ Leviticus 16:22 "The goat **shall bear** on itself all their iniquities to an uninhabited land; and he shall release the goat in the wilderness.

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NKJ Numbers 14:18 'The LORD is longsuffering and abundant in mercy, **forgiving** iniquity and transgression; but He by no means clears *the guilty*, visiting the iniquity of the fathers on the children to the third and fourth *generation*.' 19 "Pardon the iniquity of this people, I pray, according to the greatness of Your mercy, just as You have **forgiven** this people, from Egypt even until now."

NKJ Joshua 24:19 But Joshua said to the people, "You cannot serve the LORD, for He *is* a holy God. He *is* a jealous God; He will not **forgive** your transgressions nor your sins.

NKJ 1 Samuel 15:25 "Now therefore, please **pardon** my sin, and return with me, that I may worship the LORD."

NKJ 1 Samuel 25:28 "Please **forgive** the trespass of your maidservant. For the LORD will certainly make for my lord an enduring house, because my lord fights the battles of the LORD, and evil is not found in you throughout your days.

NKJ Job 7:21 Why then do You not **pardon** my transgression, And take away my iniquity? For now I will lie down in the dust, And You will seek me diligently, But I *will* no longer *be*."

NKJ Psalm 32:1 A Psalm of David. A Contemplation. Blessed is he whose transgression is forgiven, Whose sin is covered ... 5 I acknowledged my sin to You, And my iniquity I have not hidden. I said, "I will confess my transgressions to the LORD," And You forgave the iniquity of my sin. Selah

NKJ Psalm 85:2 You have **forgiven** the iniquity of Your people; You have covered all their sin. Selah

NKJ Psalm 99:8 You answered them, O LORD our God; You were to them God-Who-Forgives, Though You took vengeance on their deeds.

NKJ Isaiah 2:9 People bow down, And each man humbles himself; Therefore do not **forgive** them.

NKJ Isaiah 33:24 And the inhabitant will not say, "I am sick"; The people who dwell in it *will be forgiven* *their* iniquity.

NKJ Hosea 14:2 Take words with you, And return to the LORD. Say to Him, "Take away all iniquity; Receive *us* graciously, For we will offer the sacrifices of our lips.

NKJ Micah 7:18 Who is a God like You, Pardoning iniquity And passing over the transgression of the remnant of His heritage? He does not retain His anger forever, Because He delights *in* mercy.

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