

1) רצה ה' אלהינו בעמך ישראל ובתפלתם והשב את העבודה לדביר ביתך. ואשי ישראל ותפלתם. באהבה. ....  
תקבל ברכון. ותהי לרצון תמיד עבודת ישראל עמך.  
Daily Amidah Liturgy: יהי רצון מלפניך ה' אלהינו ואלהי אבותינו. שיבנה בית המקדש במהרה בקמינו.

### Sacrifices and their Substitutes: The Problem of the Sign

2) The entire history of the concept of structure must be thought of as a series of substitutions of center for center." Jacques Derrida [France, 1930-2004] Writing and Difference, 1978

3) Leviticus 17:11. [Thus] one "soul" [blood of the sacrifice] shall atone for another soul. Rashi.

4) כי לא-דברתי את-אבותיכם, ולא צויתים, ביום הוציא (הוציא) אותם, מארץ מצרים--על-דברי עולה, ונבחה  
כי אם-את-הדבר הזה צויתי אותם לאמר, שמעו בקולי--והייתי לכם לאלהים, ואתם תהיו-לי לעם; ונהלכתם, בכל-הדרך  
אשר אצווה אתכם, למען, ייטב לכם Jeremiah, 7:22-23

Isaiah 1 למה-לי רב-זבחתיכם יאמר יהוה, שבשתי עלות אילים וסלב מריאים; ודם פרים וכבשים ועתודים, לא תפצתי

5) Once R. Yochanan ben Zakkai and R. Yehoshua were leaving Jerusalem, the latter gazed upon the destroyed Temple and cried out, "Woe to us! The place where Israel obtained atonement for sins is in ruins!" R. Yochanan said to him, "My son, be not distressed. We have one atonement equal to it. It is charity, as it says "I desired charity not sacrifice." (Hosea 6:6). *Avot d'Rabbi Natan* Ch. 4.

6) R. Dustai b. Yannai taught: Come and see how Hashem is not like human beings. When a human being brings a gift to the king, there is doubt whether it will be accepted or not; and if it is accepted, whether he will [get to] see the king. But the Holy One, blessed be He, is not [like that]; if a man gives a coin to a poor man, he is rewarded and experiences the appearance of the *Shechina*, as it is written [Psalms 17:15] "In tzedeq will I behold your face." Talmud, *Baba Batra*, 10A

7) R. Nehemia said: Precious is affliction, for just as sacrifices are means of atonement so too are afflictions...And affliction atones even more than sacrifices. For sacrifices affect only one's money, but afflictions affect the body. *Mechilta*, *Bachodesh* 280.

8) R. Yehoshua b. Levi said: prayer was instituted corresponding to the daily sacrifices  
רכי יהושע בן לוי אמר תפלות כנגד תמידין תקנום Talmud, *Brachot*, 26B

9) "When R. Sheshet kept a fast, he concluded his prayer [with] the following: 'Master of the Universe, You know full well that in the time when the Temple was standing if a man sinned he used to bring a sacrifice, and though all that was offered of it was its fat and blood... atonement was made for him. Now I have kept a fast and my fat and blood have diminished. May it be Your will to account my fat and blood which have been diminished as if I had offered them before You on the altar.'" Talmud, *Brachot* 17A<sup>3</sup>

10) Rabbi Akiva said: Happy are you, Israel! Who is it before whom you become pure? And who is it that purifies you? Your Father who is in heaven, as it is said: "And I will sprinkle clean water upon you and you shall be clean" (Ezekiel 36:25). Mishna *Yoma*, 8:9

11) There were two motives that kept alive the study of *Seder Kodashim* even after its laws had fallen into disuse [because of the *churban*]. One sprang from the unquenchable hope that the Temple would sooner or later be rebuilt, involving the restoration of the sacrificial cult, so that the knowledge of its laws would once again be essential. The other was the belief that the study of the sacrificial laws could serve as a surrogate for the Temple cult and was no less efficacious than the actual offering of the sacrifice itself. Dr. Isidore Epstein [England, 1894-1962], Notes on Seder Kodashim, Volume I.

### The Medieval Argument over Sacrifices

12) And at that time [of the Exodus], the way of life generally accepted and customary in the whole world, and the universal service upon which we were brought up in Egypt, consisted in offering various species of living beings in the temples in which images were set up, in worshipping the latter and in burning incense before them . . . . For one could not then conceive the acceptance of (a Law without sacrifices) considering the nature of man, which always likes that to which it is accustomed. At that time, this would have been similar to the appearance of a prophet in these times who, calling upon the people to worship God, would say: "God has given you a Law forbidding you to pray to Him, to fast, or to call upon Him for help in misfortune. Your worship should consist solely in meditation without any (actions)...Therefore, He suffered these kinds of worship to remain, but transferred them from created or imaginary things to His own name. . . Thus He commanded us to build a Temple. . . to have an altar for His name. . . to have sacrifice offered up to Him . . . to bow down in worship before Him and to burn incense before Him . . . Through this divine ruse [trick] it came about that the memory of idolatry was effaced and. . . the true foundation of our belief-namely the existence and oneness of the deity-was firmly established. At the same time, [the Jews] had no feeling of repugnance and were not repelled because of the absence of modes of worship to which they were accustomed. Maimonides [Spain; Egypt, 1138-1204], Guide of the Perplexed. 3:32

13) Far be it that they should have no other purpose and intention except the elimination of idolatrous opinions from the minds of fools. . . The Torah says plainly that sacrifices are, "for a pleasing odor." A person should realize that he has sinned against his God with his body and his soul and that his blood should really be spilled and his body burned. . . so that its blood should be in place of his blood. When Noah came out of the Ark with his three sons, there were as yet no Chaldeans or Egyptians in the world, yet they brought an offering pleasing to God. Abel likewise 'brought of the first born of his flock and the fat'. ... yet (at that time) there was as yet not the slightest trace of idol worship in the world. Ramban [Spain; 1194-1279], Vayikra 1:9.

14) You know from texts of the Torah . . . that the First Intention of the Law as a whole is to put an end to idolatry, to wipe out its traces and all that is bound up with it, even its memory. Maimonides, Guide, 3:29.

15) The comparison of sacrifices to prayer and meditation does not necessarily imply that one practice supercedes the other. The comparison can imply supercession only if we assume that it is possible for human beings to contemplate God... But if God is unknowable, if the divine essence is inconceivable, then the case for meditation will be just as difficult to defend...Prof. Ehud Benor, Worship of the Heart, 1995.

16) המלך המשיח עתיד לעמוד, ולהחזיר מלכות בית דוד ליושנה הממשלה הראשונה, ובונה מקדש, ומקבץ נדחי ישראל וחוזרין כל המשפטים בימיו, כשהיו מקודם: מקריבין קרבנות Maimonides, Laws of Kings, 11:1

### The Messiah and the Frustration of Waiting

17) Although wealth has been soaring over the past half a century, happiness, measured by national surveys, has hardly budged. People fear that mankind is failing to manage it properly—with the result that, in important ways, their children may not be better off than they are. The forests are disappearing; the ice is melting; social bonds are crumbling; privacy is eroding; life is becoming a dismal slog in an ugly world. "Onward and Upward," The Economist, December 17, 2009.

18) The magnitude of the Messianic idea corresponds to the endless powerlessness in Jewish history during all the centuries of exile, when it was unprepared to come forward onto the plane of world history. There's something preliminary, something provisional about Jewish history; hence its inability to give of itself entirely. For the Messianic idea is not only consolation and hope. Every attempt to realize it tears open the abysses which lead each of its manifestations ad absurdum. There is something grand about living in hope, but at the same time there is something profoundly unreal about it... Thus in Judaism the Messianic idea has compelled a life lived in deferment, in which nothing can be done definitively, nothing can be irrevocably accomplished. One may say, perhaps, the Messianic idea is the real anti-existentialist idea....

Little wonder that overtones of Messianism have accompanied the modern Jewish readiness for irrevocable action in the concrete realm, when it set out on the utopian return to Zion. It is a readiness which no longer allows itself to be fed on hopes. Born out of the horror and destruction that was Jewish history in our generation, it is bound to history itself and not to meta-history; it has not given itself up totally to Messianism. Whether or not Jewish history will be able to endure this entry into the concrete realm without perishing in the crisis of the Messianic claim which has virtually been conjured up—that is the question which out of his great and dangerous past the Jew of this age poses to his present and to his future. Prof. Gershom Scholem, [1897-1982; Germany/Israel] The Messianic Idea in Judaism, 1971.

19) אל יעלה על הלב שבימות המשיח יבטל דבר ממנהגו של עולם או יהיה שם חידוש במעשה בראשית אלא עולם כמנהגו נוהג Do not presume that in the Messianic age any facet of the world's nature will change or there will be innovations in the work of creation. Rather, the world will continue according to its normal course. Maimonides, Laws of Kings, 12:1.

20) The Messiah not only has not come but also will never have come...he will always be coming. Prof. Steven Schwarzschild [U.S.A. 1924-1989] The Pursuit of the Ideal, 1990.

21) The Messiah's coming is not an actual end but means merely the infinity of his coming, which in turn means the infinity of [ethical] development. Hermann Cohen [Germany; 1842-1918] The Ethics of Maimonides, 1908.

22) I have no idea how one should pray for something one holds beforehand is impossible...The eternal which we Jews mean lies not in the infinite but rather in the "speedily, and in our days". What is not to come save in eternity, will not come in all eternity. Franz Rosenzweig [Germany; 1886-1929] Letter to Benno Jacob.

23) מקדש העתיד שאנו מצפין בנוי ומשוכלל הוא יגלה ויבא משמים שנא' (שמות טו) מקדש ה' כוננו יריך The future Temple will be completely built and brought down from heaven. Rashi, Commentary on *Sukkah* 41A

24) One has failed to say anything about the Messiah if one represents him as a person who comes to put a miraculous end to the violence in the world, the injustice and contradictions which destroy humanity but have their source in the nature of humanity...Messianism is not the certainty of a coming a man who stops History. It is my power to bear the suffering of all. It is the moment when I recognize this power and my universal responsibility. Emmanuel Levinas, Difficult Freedom, 1963.

25) "Jewish nation have no fear, *Moshiach* will be here this year. We want *Moshiach* now, we don't want to wait!" At a Chabad children's rally, April 2, 1991

## Zionism and the End of History

26) Human actions in history produce additional results beyond their immediate purpose and attainment, beyond their immediate knowledge and desire. They gratify their own interests; but something more is thereby accomplished which is latent in the action though not present in their consciousness and not included in their design ["the cunning of reason."]. G.W.F. Hegel [Germany; 1770-1831]. Reason in History.

27) [According to R. Avraham I. Kook] In the divine cosmic order, where every detail has its own place and *telos*, the true meaning of a person's action may be unknown to himself. He may fancy himself as motivated by A, yet the ultimate meaning of his action may be B. The same applies to the Zionist pioneers. They may subjectively think they are motivated by secular, political ideas, but truly they are acting within a cosmic scheme of a divine will, in which their seemingly secular and even atheistic motivation is nothing else than an external cover for the true meaning of their action as related to God's redemptive structure. These people may contribute toward the ultimate messianic coming even while they deny it; hence they have to be seen as tools and vessels in the hands of divine providence. Unbeknownst to themselves, they serve the labour of the divine. In Rabbi Kook's words, "a Jewish nationalist, no matter how secularist his intention may be, is, despite himself, imbued with the divine spirit even against his own will." Professor Shlomo Avineri, The Making of Modern Zionism, 1981.

28) How is it that the movement for concrete redemption in our time, including the settlement and conquest of the Land [of Israel] and the abandonment and abolition of exilic existence, did not originate with the religious? How is it that some religious spokesmen even withheld their support for Zionism and the movement for redemption? They failed to recognize that it was not that we mortals were forcing the End, but rather that the Master of the House, the Lord of the Universe, was forcing our hand; that it was not human voices that broke down the wall separating us from our land, but the voice of the living God calling upon us to "Go up!.. It is not we who are forcing the End, but the End that is forcing us!" R. Zvi Yehudah Kook. Quoted in Prof. Aviezer Ravitzky, Messianism, Zionism, and Jewish Religious Radicalism, 2007.

29) The Ashkenazi Chief Rabbi, David Lau, said he would like to see the Jewish temple rebuilt on the Temple Mount in Jerusalem. To build it, "there was no need to remove any of the Muslim shrines on the Temple Mount, where there was plenty of room for Jews, Christians, Muslims, everyone," he said. "When you see the prophets, the writings of the sages, you understand that whoever went there came back full of inspiration, emotion, joy and satisfaction, so I yearn for those days." Sue Surkes, "Israel chief rabbi urges rebuilding Jerusalem Temple." The Times of Israel, June 9, 2016.

30) Shortly after the [1967] war, the government decided not to allow Jews to pray on the Temple Mount. Jews could pray below the Mount, at the Western Wall...Prof. Hillel Weiss [Bar-Ilan University] argued "I want ... a Temple-based state, where the state's entire content revolves around the Temple...After 1967, there were people who wanted to go up to the Mount immediately and perform sacrifices. But a status quo was achieved within a week and a half, and Moshe Dayan and the rabbis collaborated and succeeded in removing the Mount from the thoughts of the average Jew...The redemption arrived in the Six-Day War, but then they reversed course. The State of Israel did not even want to capture the Old City or the Temple Mount. Moshe Dayan said, 'I want none of that Vatican.' And the rabbinate collaborated with that."

Arnon Segal [journalist for *Makor Rishon*] does not accept the annulment of sacrificial practices as a positive development of Judaism. "It's just a matter of habit. Some people think the redemption has arrived, and they do not grasp the absence. The absence is that we do not truly have Judaism. All the prayers are only a substitute for the real thing. The prayers were institutionalized after the Temple was destroyed. It is only a memory of something. But what about true Judaism? We are not true Jews, we are only perpetuating something that existed in the past. I see nothing wrong about the Temple. I see it as the End of Days" Segal said. Shany Littman, "Following the Dream of a Third Temple in Jerusalem," *Ha'aretz*. October 4, 2012.

31) In January 1991, Rabbi Menachem Froman could still [write] that, "In the perception of the national-religious public [... there is] opposition to any ascent to the walls of the Temple Mount... The attitude of sanctity toward the Temple Mount is expressed not by bursting into it but by abstinence from it." No longer...In a survey conducted [in May 2014] among the religious-Zionist public, 75.4 percent said they favor "the ascent of Jews to the Temple Mount," compared to only 24.6 percent against.

Motti Inbari, in his book Jewish Fundamentalism and the Temple Mount (2009), draws a connection between the weakening of the Gush Emunim messianic paradigm, which was profoundly challenged by the Oslo process, and the surge of interest in the mount...The final, crushing blow to the Kook-based messianic approach was probably delivered by the Israeli withdrawal from the Gaza Strip, in 2005, and the destruction of the Gush Katif settlements there. The Gush Emunim narrative, which talks about unbroken redemption and the impossibility of retreat, encountered an existential crisis...Many religious Zionists are thus turning toward the mount in place of the belief in step-by-step progress and in place of the conception of the sanctity of the state... State consciousness is abandoned, along with the patience needed for graduated progress toward redemption. In their place come partisan messianism and irreverent efforts to hasten the messianic era – for apocalypse now. Dr. Tomer Persico, "Why Rebuilding the Temple Would Be the End of Judaism as We Know it." *Ha'aretz*, November 13, 2014.

32) The Jewish people have proliferated too much philosophically to agree on a singular set of practices and customs. Is it not detrimental to return to a monolithic model that dismisses the plethora of views and practices we have cultivated today?...Your people must be a light to the nations, not a source of darkness by returning to a practice once deemed honorable but now perceived by the global masses as barbaric. The Jewish people have transitioned in our own existential consciousness and our spiritual relationship to our animal's slaughter has been altered irrevocably. Your holy prophets taught that we must prioritize kindness and justice over sacrifices. They taught Your people to dream of a world where poverty is eradicated, equality is spread, and injustice is wiped out. I yearn with every fiber of my being for this world. Is it my responsibility to teach future generations of children that our foremost dream is a physical structure governed by centralized authority that calls for mass animal sacrifice? R. Shmuly Yanklowitz, "Please G-d, Help me to understand why we must pray for a Third Temple!" Times of Israel. January 2, 2015.

33) "The theory of evolution (*hitpattehut*) is increasingly conquering the world at this time, and, more so than all other philosophical theories, conforms to the kabbalistic secrets of the world. Evolution, which proceeds on a path of ascendancy, provides an optimistic foundation for the world. How is it possible to despair at a time when we see that everything evolves and ascends? When we penetrate the inner meaning of ascending evolution, we find in it the divine element shining with absolute brilliance. It is precisely the Ein Sof *in actu* which manages to bring to realization that which is Ein Sof *in potentia*...The evolutionary way of thinking has caused considerable upheaval among many people whose thought had been wont to run in certain regular, well defined paths. Not so, however, for the select hard-thinking few who have always seen a gradual, evolutionary development in the world's most spiritual essence. For them it is not difficult to apply, by analogy, the same principle to the physical development of the world. It is indeed fitting that the emergence of the latter should parallel the spiritual development of all being...The essential need of the hour is therefore an educational effort to propagate the broader view, the grander and more refined conception that we have alluded to above. Rabbi A. I. Kook, *Orot Hakodesh*, 1938

#### Searching for the Truth, or the Failure of the Sign

34) The absolute invisibility of the origin of the visible, the unattainment of presence or beingness in any form...gives rise to a structure of replacements such that all presences will be supplements substituted for the absent origin, and all differences, within the system of presence, will be the irreducible effect of what remains *epekeina tes ousias* (beyond representation)." Jacques Derrida, "Plato's Pharmacy" in Dissemination, 1981.

35) Western Philosophy.... has also been in a broader sense, 'logocentric', committed to a belief in some ultimate 'word', presence, essence, truth or reality which will act as the foundation for all our thought, language and experience. It has yearned for the sign which will give meaning to all others, – 'the transcendental signifier' – and for the anchoring, unquestioning meaning to which all our signs can be seen to point (the transcendental signified'). Prof. Terry Eagleton, Literary Theory: An Introduction, 1996.

36) God wishes to be loved, not only feared and admired – a nearly impossible quest, given the total dependency of humans on him. With such dependency, the human temptation to form an instrumental relationship to God will always lurk in the background. Can someone love a person on whom his fate and that of his loved ones are dependent? The tendency to instrumentalize is in fact immanent in the nature of this great asymmetry of power... Assuming the dependency on God, is a genuine sacrifice possible here? What sort of offering can be brought to God...? Prof. Moshe Halbertal, On Sacrifice, 2012.

37) The Messiah is Myself [Moir]; to be Myself is to be the Messiah. Emmanuel Levinas, Difficult Freedom. 1963.

38) For life to be livable, truth on earth cannot be what it is in heaven. Truth in heaven may be platonic – eternal, harmonious, radiant. But man cannot aspire to such truth, and if he does, he will create conflict not peace. Men kill because they believe they possess the truth while their opponents are in error... Truth on the ground is multiple, partial. Fragments of it lie everywhere. Each person, culture and language has part of it; none has it all. Truth on earth is not, nor can it aspire to be, the whole truth. It is limited, not comprehensive; particular, not universal. When two propositions conflict it is not necessarily because one is true the other false. It may be, and often is, that each represents a different perspective on reality... In heaven there is truth; on earth there are truths. R. Jonathan Sacks, The Dignity of Difference. 2002

39) Religion directs one's attention to the absolute. The more one is focused on the absolute, the more human behavior appears as wanting. The more human behavior appears as wanting, the more devastating corrective measures will have to be. Prof. Kenneth Seeskin, Jewish Messianic Thoughts in an Age of Despair, 2012.

If you have further questions or thoughts, please write me at [emalamet@rogers.com](mailto:emalamet@rogers.com)