

Theology on the Web.org.uk

Making Biblical Scholarship Accessible

This document was supplied for free educational purposes. Unless it is in the public domain, it may not be sold for profit or hosted on a webserver without the permission of the copyright holder.

If you find it of help to you and would like to support the ministry of Theology on the Web, please consider using the links below:



Buy me a coffee

<https://www.buymeacoffee.com/theology>



<https://patreon.com/theologyontheweb>

[PayPal](#)

<https://paypal.me/robbradshaw>

A table of contents for *The Expositor* can be found here:

https://biblicalstudies.org.uk/articles_expositor-series-1.php

performed also this still greater service, that they did something toward breaking down the barrier betwixt Jew and Gentile and making the Christian ideal of the brotherhood of believers more easy of acceptance.

DAVID SMITH.

THE SEMITIC SACRIFICE OF RECONCILIATION.

IN a call which I made on Dr. Fred Bliss, of Beirut, who was for ten years the archæologist of the Palestine Exploration Fund, he spoke of the custom of making a feast in connexion with a reconciliation effected between two persons who had been at enmity and compared the sacrifice made on that occasion to a peace-offering.¹

At last it seemed as if there might be some trace of that which has been known to the critics as the "sacrificial meal." It was with this thought that I entered upon a new investigation. Dr. Bliss had spoken of the custom as prevalent in Syria. At an early day I began to question the natives as to its existence. The first interview which I had was with Ḥayil, of Ḳaryatên, a member of the old Syriac Church, who had mingled for long periods at a time with different tribes of the Arabs during more than twenty years.

He gave the following illustration of a reconciliation from his own experience. Enmity had developed between him and a Şulêb Arab, to such an extent that the Şulêbi threatened if he found him alone in the wilderness the result would be serious, and Ḥayil assured the Şulêbi that if he met him single-handed in Ḳaryatên he would show him no mercy. Finally mutual friends intervened and brought about a reconciliation. Ḥayil went to the wilderness to the tent of his Şulêb enemy. A sacrifice was killed and prepared as a feast, of which Ḥayil, the Şulêbi

¹ *Journal*, xiv., Spring of 1902, Beirut.

and the mediators partook. The ones who had been at enmity kissed each other's beards, and peace was established.

It at once seemed to me as if in this incident there was an illustration of the reconciliation between Jacob and Laban, after Jacob had fled from his father-in-law and they had a "sacrificial meal" on the heap of stones at Galeed before they parted, that the enmity which had existed between them might be removed.¹ In all this the emphasis seemed to be laid in J on a "sacrificial meal,"² in which the idea of fellowship was predominant.

But very suddenly and unexpectedly, on visiting two of the three Syriac villages, Bakh'a and Ma'lûla, where Syriac is still the vernacular, a very different idea was emphasized.

At the house of Sheik 'Abd er-Raḥim, of Bakh'a, we were enjoying our midday meal. All the people of the village are Moslems, except the servant of the Mezâr, Abu Shibân, who is a Christian, but who, strangely enough, lives six hours distant at Dêr 'Aṭiyeh. We talked of many things until I finally asked him if he knew of sacrifices of reconciliation. He replied that he did, and gave

¹ Genesis xxxi. 45, 46. Kautzsch, *Die Heilige Schrift des Alten Testaments*, Leipzig, 1896, assigns this passage to J, and translates it: "Hierauf nahm er JAKOB einen Stein und richtete ihn auf als Malstein. Da sprach Jakob zu seinen Stammgenossen: Lest Steine auf! Da 'lasen' sie Steine auf und errichteten einen Steinhaufen; dann hielten sie dort auf dem Steinhaufen das [Opfer] Mahl." Whether this should be called a "sacrificial meal" must depend on the usage of the primitive Semites.

² It is an interesting question whether E, ver. 54, indicates anything different from J. If sacrifice consisted among the primitive Semites simply in slaughtering, as is universally the case among the Semites at the present day, the meal which follows being incidental, both writers could express the same idea. Indeed they must express the same idea if modern Semitic usage in sacrifice is a survival of primitive usage.

I cannot discuss the combination of the *mazzēbah*, which the primitive Semite must have regarded as a representation of Deity (cf. Gen. xxviii. 18-22), and a heap of stones, now used among the Semites as a place of sacrifice, as a rude altar. It is doubtful whether, when the narrator said, "God is witness betwixt me and thee" (ver. 50b) and "This heap be witness and the pillar [Malstein] be witness" (ver. 52a), he intended to convey an idea essentially different. This seems unlikely when we remember that to-day the notion of Deity is connected with sacred stones.

the following account: "When there is a disagreement between two men, if one has killed the relative of another, the avenger of blood takes a razor and passes it over the neck of the murderer in token of reconciliation. They have a feast afterwards. They kill an animal and repeat the first Sura of the Koran (*fâtiha*) over it. They have a sacrifice to the face of God for the peace. Because they come and eat the sacrifice together they become brothers. It is a *fedou* for the blood, because it is slain for the shed blood (that is, for the murdered). This blood (that is, of the animal) is shed for the other (that of the murdered man); *ed-dem bedl¹ dem*, "blood instead of blood"; *fejr² ed-dem ghatta³ dak ed-dem*, "the bursting forth of the blood covered that blood."

Here indeed they became brothers by eating the sacrifice together. But in the clearest terms the idea is expressed that the blood of the victim is shed for that of the murdered man, and that without the shedding of this blood there can be no reconciliation. Singularly enough this custom was related by a Moslem as current among the people of his faith, though such a representation of substitute blood is repugnant to Moslem theology, and hence the transmission of this account through a Moslem is an infallible indication that it is the survival of an ancient Semitic custom.

At the village of Ma'lûla, in an interview with the wife of the Sheik, at whose house we spent the night, we had another illustration of the same idea, both from her and from others. She is a member of the Greek Church.

¹ Cf. Lane, an Arabic-English Lexicon, under *bedalûn*, "a substitute; a thing given, or received, or put or done, instead of, in place of, in lieu of, in exchange for, another thing; a compensation. . . . Verily thy substitute is Zeyd. . . . With me is a man who stands in his stead, and is in his place."

This word refers to the "bursting forth of blood," because of the ritualistic opening of jugular vein.

³ In classical Arabic *ghattahu fil-mâ'* signifies "he immersed, immersed, dipped, plunged, or sunk him, or it in the water." Lane, *op. cit. sub voce*.

Her home, until her marriage a few years ago, was in Dêr 'Atiyeh, where she had frequently heard Moslems speak of the custom of reconciliation between the murderer and the avenger of the murdered which I give in her own words: "If the avenger of blood is willing to pardon the murderer, the latter brings a sheep and the avenger of blood kills it. The avenger knows he has rights through this blood because blood has been shed. The sacrifice is "blood instead of blood," *dem bedl dem*. The friends of the murderer come to the father of the murdered man, and ask him whether he will heartily pardon the murderer, and if he says "Yes," they reply, "Then take this sheep as if it were instead of the murderer." He then takes it and slays it as if it were blood instead of blood. After that they have a feast. An old man added, "the avenger of blood uses a razor, drawing it across the throat of the murderer, to show that he could cut his throat if he liked and that he pardons him." After they have had the feast they kiss each other. In recent times the Christians have dropped the sacrifice altogether and use simply the razor.¹

At Şêdnâya, on the way from Ma'lûla to Damascus, we spent the night at the house of a Greek Christian. Mr. Jabbûr, my companion and interpreter, asked him about the sacrifice of reconciliation. He spoke of it as "a lamb instead of the murderer,"² *charûf mukâbil katil*.

A more elaborate account of the reconciliation between the murderer and the avenger of blood was given by "Diab 'Alwad of Kafr Hârib above the Sea of Galilee": When peace is secured by the family of the murdered man through the promise of the avenger of blood and the promise of the honourable people of the Arabs, the family of the murderer bring one or more sheep to the house or tent of the avenger

¹ *Journal*, xv., Summer 1902.

² Perhaps the sentence should be translated, "A lamb stands opposite to (that is, represents) the murderer." Cf. Steingass, *The Student's Arabic-English Dictionary*, London, 1894, under *qabil*.—III.

of blood. The murderer is not with them. He is outside. As it is always customary among the Arabs to drink coffee before a feast, the avenger of blood makes coffee. The sheep stands outside. When they are about to hand around the coffee for the people to drink one or two of the honourable men ask the "owner of the blood," the father or brother of the murdered man, for permission to bring the murderer before him. When this is granted they drink the coffee. The murderer is then presented to the avenger of blood kneeling. The avenger takes a razor and shaves a little of the hair of his head. No sooner is this done than one of the women who is present utters a cry of joy (*zaghâriṭ*). The family of the "owner of the blood" kill the sheep which was brought by the family of the murderer; then the woman makes the *zaghâriṭ* again. This is a sign of joy that the blood has been covered literally, "blood went away from his neck" (*raḥ ed-dem min raḥbatu*)¹ not to be required any more. Immediately a man goes up to the roof of the house carrying a white flag, sometimes attached to a long spear, and makes proclamation:

<i>er-râyat el-mabnîyah</i>	The banner that is raised
<i>min esh-shâm la-hadiyah,</i>	From Damascus to Hadiyah
<i>liḍ-ḍuyât wa-lîl-mahallîyah</i>	For guests and for residents,
<i>hadî er-râyat fulân,</i>	This is the banner of so and so,
<i>bîyaḍ allâh thanâh.</i> ²	May God whiten his reputation.

When the crier mentions his name the woman makes the *zaghâriṭ* again. As soon as the sacrifice is killed the enmity ceases between the murderer and the avenger of blood. The significance of killing the sacrifice is the "plucking out of enmity" and the establishment of peace between the two persons. The common people say "So and so attained the

¹ Cf. Lane, *op. cit.* *raḥabatûn* . . . "By a synecdoche, it is applied to the whole person of a human being: as in the saying *ḍanbuhu fi raḥabatihî*, his sin, or his crime, etc., be on his own neck; meaning, on himself . . . and *a'taka allâh raḥabatahu*, "may God emancipate him."

² For *thanâhu*.

peace, he killed his sacrifice," which is an Oriental way of saying, "He attained the peace by killing his sacrifice," *fulân ašlah dabah dabâhêhu*.

They show great pleasure in the forgiveness. They have dancing. The men make a ring and a woman dances in the midst of it with a sword in her hand. There is horse-racing and singing from village to village."¹

While the idea of vicarious blood is not emphasized in this account it is not absent, for the person of the murderer is not cleared from blood until the sacrifice has been killed, and the attainment of peace is conditioned on the sacrifice. In the words of a Moslem at 'Ain Jenneh, "the lamb makes the peace and removes the enmity," *el-charûf yaj'al es-şulh wa-yarfa' el-'adâwat*; clearly this means the same thing as the expression used by the Syriac Moslem, *dem bedl dem*.²

It is true that in other parts of the country different ideas are emphasized in the account given of the reconciliation, so that in the explanation of the ceremonies observed the thought of the vicarious sacrifice has been lost, though so far as I can learn "the bursting forth of blood" is never omitted.

A Ruala Arab said: "There is an animal killed for the peace between them both. They simply have the feast."³

The Sheik of Burme, in 'Ajlûn, a Moslem described three ways by which the avenger of blood might become reconciled. These may all be considered preliminary to the special ceremonies already detailed, for in every case sacrifices are provided by the family of the murderer: (1) He accepts payment, for which a trustworthy man becomes surety; (2) he shaves a little of the hair of the murderer, and says, "I leave you free to the face of God," that is, "I do not exact blood, or money; God may, if He choses, exact blood, He is the avenger; (3) he does not demand the

¹ *Journal*, xvi., Kafr Harib, Summer of 1902.

Ibid. 'Ain Jenneh.

³ *Ibid.* Encampment of Ruala.

blood and therefore feels free to strip the murderer of all his property.¹

Bernaba, a Greek Christian of Kerak, indicated still another mode of reconciliation, though sacrifice is observed as an essential part: "Among the Moslems the murderer gives one or two of his daughters to the avenger of blood, so that he may bring about love between the two families. Sometimes the murderer gives one girl and one man. There are also two men who furnish bail, one that the avenger will not take vengeance on the murderer, and the other who arranges the payment.² After all the preliminaries are adjusted the murderer brings sacrifices. They eat them together to celebrate the peace. Then they display the white flag at the top of the tent. After the feast the marriage takes place at such time as is most agreeable to the parties concerned.

On the way to Tafileh we fell in with a Bedawin cut-throat³ who gave much the same version as the others: "They have sacrifices of reconciliation. The murderer brings the sacrifices for the peace. The avenger shaves off some of his beard.⁴ In token of reconciliation they kiss each other on the head and on the beard. If the avenger does not demand any payment of the murderer he will shave his forehead and set him free. They then raise a white banner and the women make the *zaghârit*."⁵

¹ *Ibid.*, Burme.

² A truce is frequently arranged so that the murderer may have time to collect the amount laid on him by the avenger of blood. The regular payment required is 33,300 piasters, but the owner of the blood says, "For the sake of so and so I will cut the total sum down to so many thousand piasters." Payment is made in animals as well as money, which the murderer may beg during the truce from friends or strangers. Sometimes the avenger remits the payment altogether.

³ We travelled with him several hours. He opened his whole heart to us and bewailed the departure of the good old times, before the Turkish Government laid its hand on the Bedawin, when the Arabs of Tafileh could cut the throats of those of Shôbek as easily as sheep, "yes more easily."

⁴ "He shaves his cheek and sends him free," *yuzayyîn ghâribhu wa-ya' tikhhu*. *Journal*, xvi. On the way to Petra, summer of 1902.

An aged Arab whom we interviewed at a well, about three hours from Shôbek, on the way from Tafileh, emphasized the sacrifice. "If they do not kill a sacrifice nothing is done. If they kill a sacrifice they say, 'We went to him, and killed a sacrifice and secured the peace, and he has no right to ask anything further from us.' When they kill the sacrifice everything is completed. The murderer comes and kisses the beard of the avenger of blood and asks his forgiveness. He replies, 'I have surrendered my rights to you.'"

The final testimony was from the Sheik of the Habâhbi, near Shôbek: "If they kill the sacrifice there will be peace. In arranging for payment they give some of their girls or some of their flocks. The blood of the sacrifice does not suffice without payment. They put up a white banner and say, 'It is for the one who made the peace.'"

We cannot doubt that in the sacrifice of reconciliation we have a primitive Semitic institution. It exists from one end of Syria to the other, from Karyatên to Petra, among Syrians and Bedawins, and possesses the same essential elements. Doubtless some emphasize the feast more than they do the slaughtering of the animal, the fellowship in eating together more than the substitute blood; but when we review all the facts there seems no reason for doubting that the original element of the sacrifice is explained by the expressions: *dem bedl dem*, *fejr ed-dem ghatta dak ed-dem*, *charûf mukâbil katil*, *fulan ašlah dabah dabâhêhu*, etc., not in the feasting is the reconciliation, it is in the blood which has been shed.

This primitive institution puts the phraseology of the Apostle Paul in Ephesians ii. 13-17 in an interesting light, since, in the expressions used, he seems to betray familiarity with the sacrifice of peace. It is, of course, not necessary to insist on a parallelism in all details.

The blood of Christ may be described as *dem bedl dem*,

that is according to Semitic ideas the vicarious blood, without which no sacrifice of reconciliation could be complete. In the words of an Arab at Wâdi Wa'leh, *bela fejr¹ dem la yatimm en-nidr*, "without the bursting forth of blood the vow will not be fulfilled." A similar idea is expressed by the author of the Epistle to the Hebrews (ix. 22b): "Apart from shedding of blood there is no remission." In this case the blood of Christ is shed for Jew and Gentile as a substitute for the blood due from them. Thus Christ through His death becomes "peace," the very term we have already had, "the lamb makes the peace and removes the enmity." Through Him God "whitens the reputation" of Jew and Gentile, through His blood. Through the Cross "the enmity is removed" which existed between Jew and Gentile. Like the crier on the housetop, who makes proclamation regarding the murderer, he proclaims peace, though not to "guests and residents," but to those who had been at variance.

These parallels in thought and expression can hardly be accidental, but seem rather to be an adaptation to the customs connected with reconciliation which must have been well known to the Apostle Paul.

SAMUEL IVES CURTISS.

DIALOGUES ON THE CHRISTIAN PROPHETS.

VI.

Tradition in St. Paul—Rules of the Prophets—The Montanists—A "Charismatic" Ministry—How Prophetic Literature was lost.

Mason. I have been pondering what you said, Riddell, when we met last, about the rules of procedure given by St. Paul to the Corinthian Church (1 Cor. xiv. 29). They seem to me to be important, but they are "overlooked and disregarded," as Bishop Butler would say, by "the generality of the world."

¹ This is a Bedawin form for *fejr*, Kurdish *fejran*.