

## The Two-Edged Sword and the Living Sacrifice

**Hebrews 3 and 4** expands on **Psalm 95:7** - "To day if ye will hear his voice"

and **Psalm 95:11** - "Unto whom I swear in my wrath that they should not enter into my rest."

We "enter into the rest" by becoming living sacrifices.

**Romans 12:1** - "I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service."

This is explained in scripture using various metaphors and images.

Jesus' crucifixion was the means for Christ to become the sin offering "once and for all."

The "sacrifice" aspect of His death is expounded in the Book of Hebrews.

The children of Israel were promised a "rest" or a "resting place" in the Promised Land. But the generation that left Egypt murmured and contended with God 10 times, culminating in the "evil report" brought by the spies, and God finally swore that they would never enter into the land because of their unbelief, but they would die in the wilderness and the sand would swallow them up.

"The generation of the wilderness have no part in the world to come" - (Tzeror Hammor, fol. 118. 1.)

The Syriac translation has "their bones fell in the wilderness" - they lay scattered and unburied, and exposed to view, as an example of divine vengeance. Only Joshua and Caleb were spared.

In **Psalm 95:7**, David says, "today if you will hear His voice, harden not your hearts."

**Hebrews 4:8** - "For if Jesus had given them rest, then would he not afterward have spoken of another day."

"Jesus" here should be "Joshua" - the same name. The Aramaic versions add "the son of Nun."

The name Joshua is "Yehoshua" in Hebrew. Later it was shortened to "Yeshua" in the centuries before Christ, and was translated into the Greek as "Jesus" in the Septuagint.

Joshua was a type of Christ, but he did not fulfill the prophecy that David gives in **Psalm 95**.

“Today” - It was said that if Israel would repent but one day, or keep the sabbath but one day, the son of David, the Messiah, would come; since it is said, "today if you will hear his voice" (d); which the Chaldee paraphrase renders "his Word", his essential Word, the Lord Jesus Christ.

(Babylonian Talmud, Sanhedrin, fol. 98. 1. Shemot Rabba, sect. 25. fol. 109. 3. & Shirhashirim Rabba, fol. 19. 3.)

See **Hebrews 3:13** - “But exhort one another daily, while it is called Today; lest any of you be hardened through the deceitfulness of sin.”

The Syriac version of the phrase in the Psalm renders it, "until that day which is called today," looking to the future days of Messiah.

**Hebrews 4:10** - "For he that is entered into his rest, he also hath ceased from his own works, as God did from his."

The "he" is singular, and doesn't mean "believers who enter into His rest."

It means Christ. When Christ completed his "work" of salvation, ascended and sat down on the right hand of God, He rested. Just as God rested after His work of creation.

This is an important distinction, because the only reason we get to enter into His rest, is because we are "in Him."

We do this by going to the cross, identifying with Christ's sacrifice and his death, dying to self.

Spiritually, it was a real sacrifice, with aspects that are revealed when we examine the way a Levitical sacrifice was performed.

**Hebrews 4:12** - "For the word of God is quick (living), and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart."

"two-edged sword" can be translated as "sacrificial knife."

Who is the Word of God? The “Word of God” was a known name of the Messiah among the Jews.

"Word" = *Logos* - a word that carries immense weight in both Jewish mysticism and Greek philosophy.

The Targums always translated any reference to God as "The Word of God."

Philo ascribes to the "Logos" or Word the term "a cutter." He cuts and divides all things, even all sensible things, yea, atoms, and things indivisible ...

Perhaps the sword is “two-edged” because it both brings death, but opens a way for life.

The prophets were channels for this Word:

Sometimes it is depicted as a weapon of vengeance against God's enemies:

**Judges 3:16** - "But Ehud made him a dagger which had two edges, of a cubit length; and he did gird it under his raiment upon his right thigh."

Samuel confronted King Saul for disobeying God, and punctuated his message by slaying the Amalekite King Agag:

**1 Samuel 15:33** - “As thy sword hath made women childless, so shall thy mother be childless among women. And Samuel hewed Agag in pieces before the LORD in Gilgal.”

This was a physical display of Paul’s spiritual command concerning spiritual warfare:

**2 Corinthians 10:5-6** - “Casting down imaginations, and every high thing that exalteth itself against the knowledge of God, and bringing into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ; And having in a readiness to revenge all disobedience, when your obedience is fulfilled.”

**Isaiah 49:2** - "He made my mouth like a sharp sword; He hid me in the shadow of His hand."

**Hosea 6:5** - "Therefore I have hewn them by the prophets; I have slain them by the words of My mouth, and My judgments go forth like lightning."

**Ephesians 6:17** - "And take the helmet of salvation and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God."

Associated with God's judgment:

**Revelation 1:16** - "And he had in his right hand seven stars: and out of his mouth went a sharp twoedged sword: and his countenance was as the sun shineth in his strength."

**Revelation 2:12** - "And to the angel of the church in Pergamos write; These things saith he which hath the sharp sword with two edges"

**Revelation 19:15** - "And out of his mouth goeth a sharp sword, that with it he should smite the nations: and he shall rule them with a rod of iron: and he treadeth the winepress of the fierceness and wrath of Almighty God."

Christ and the Sword are the same.

“ Dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow” - The joints and marrow are hidden within the body.

So penetrating is the divine Word, that it reaches the most secret and hidden things of men

“Dividing asunder of soul and spirit” - this refers to several names with which the soul of man is called by the Jews, "soul, spirit, and breath"; the latter of these, they say, dwells between the other two. (Zohar in Gen. fol. 55. 2. & 113. 1, 2. & in Exod. fol. 58. 3, 4. & in Lev. fol. 29. 2. T. Hieros. Celaim, fol. 31. 3. Tzeror Hammor, fol. 2. 1.)

The sword penetrating to this hidden place where human life resides results in our seeing the true nature of the “thoughts and intents of the heart,” and in thereby accepting our death.

Another biblical picture of this is having a “circumcised heart” - another cutting procedure.

**Hebrews 4:13** - "Neither is there any creature that is not manifest in his sight: but all things are naked and opened unto the eyes of him with whom we have to do."

Philo speaks of the flaming sword of the Logos and says the divine Word reaches to, and comprehends all things, nothing escapes him: and this phrase is very commonly used of the divine Being by the Jews, "all things are manifest before him."

“manifest in his sight” - The phrase is also used by the Rabbis in describing the animal to be sacrificed.

“The words are an allusion to...the putting of a creature in such a posture when sacrificed; or rather to the cutting up of it, and laying open its entrails: and especially to the manner of doing it among the Jews, with which these persons the apostle writes to were acquainted: and it was this; when the lamb for the daily sacrifice was slain, the priest hung it up by the foot, and skinned it; and when he came to the breast, he cut off the head; and having finished the skinning of it, he divided the heart, and took out the blood; then he cut off the shoulders; and when he came to the right leg, he cut it off, and then cut it down through the backbone, and , "all of it was manifest before him" - Gill's Exposition

**Hebrews 4:15** - “For we have not an high priest which cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities; but was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin.”

The divine Logos, or Word, is often called a priest, and a high priest, by Philo

**Hebrews 4:16** - “Let us therefore come boldly to the throne of grace”

The Jews often speak of "a throne of judgment" and "a throne of mercy" (Megillat Esther, fol. 95. 1.)

And so they make the first man Adam to pray to God after this manner:

"let my prayer come before the throne of thy glory, and let my cry come before the throne of thy mercy." (Raziel, fol. 3. 1.)