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THE MARTYROLOGICAL AKEDAH:

THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN RELIGIOUS IDEOLOGY AND RITUAL

YOEL H. KAHN

Thesis Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of
Requirements for Ordination

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Table of Contents

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I should like to dedicate this thesis to my rabbis and teachers, Bernard H. Mehlman and Ronne Friedman:

אביו הביאו לעולם הזה; רבו גלגדו חכמה כביוא לעולם הבא.

בבא מציעא לג.

Introduction

In the late 20th century, all Jewish activity occurs against the background of the Holocaust and the founding of the modern State of Israel. Many people, reflecting on the diametrically opposed characters of the two events and their proximity in time are convinced that the two are inextricably linked together. We read in the New Union Prayerbook: "No people has known tragedy such as ours! None has known such joy!" Jewish history is periodicized for us into two epochs, pre- and post- Holocaust/Israel. Thus, this thesis about medieval poetry began with a question about modernity: how have modern Jews understood the catyclismic events of our time.

Important as these shaping events are to us, however, theyare only the latest in a series of catyclismic events in Jewish history over the last two thousand years. Beginning with the destruction of the Second Temple and the exile from the Land of Israel, each new tragedy has called for the reinterpretation of the extant religious system in order to explain and integrate the new life-circumstances. After the destruction of the Temple, the outstanding example is the expulsion from Spain in 1492. The rippled effects of forced departure from the homeland-in-exile were

felt for the next hundred years, culminating in the development of Lurianic Kabbbalah in Safed. Luria explained the reality of exile as a reflection of the exile within the Godhead itself. The moment of shevirat hakelim, the breaking of the vessels of emanation, was projected back to the first moment of emanation from Ein-Sof. Exile was then understood as the product not of more human sin but as a fundamental dimension of the cosmos.

Less well documented are the effects of yet a third such crisis: the First Crusade and its aftermath in 1096. The Crusade wreaked murder and devestation on the Jewish communities throughout the Rhineland, destroying entire Jewish populations there. This pattern of destruction was repeated by successive Crusades in the years that followed. The magnitude of the destruction and loss for these communities, relative to the size and scope of what constituted their Jewish world, was as great as any other before or since. In this thesis, I investigate how the survivors and observers of these Crusader tragedies gave meaning to the deaths of the thousands of martyrs, adding new layers of meaning to received religious symbols and traditions.

It is common to find anachronistic details in midrashic accounts of biblical events which date from the period of the midrash's composition. For example, Rabbi Jonathan taught that the Jews deserved redemption from

Egypt because they did not change their names during their four hundred years of bondage. "They entered as Reuven or Simeon and they left as Reuven or Simeon. They did not call Reuven, Rufus...or Benjamin, Alexander" (Ex. R. 1:28). This text obviously dates from the Hellenistic period when assimilation, symbolized by the threat of adopting a Greek name, was a major threat. In this example, the contemporary circumstances are explicitly projected onto and compared to the heroic past which is held up for emulation. While much more sophisticated, at heart Luria's theology of exile functions in a similar manner. The already existing motif--in this case the breaking of the vessels--is reinterpreted to provide a better fitting model for the contemporary historical circumstances. Neither resistance to Greek assimilation nor the exile from Spain are explicitly mentioned in their justifying myth, for the religious believer implicitly understands the analogy and draws the appropriate conclusions. This model is the basis of Sh. Spiegel's Me-Agadot HaAkedah (trans. The Last Trial). Spiegel believes that the witnesses and survivors of the Crusader-era tragedies identified themselves with the midrashic figures of Abraham and Isaac at Mt. Moriah. According to Spiegel, the poets expanded the midrashic account of Isaac to encompass their own experiences. Specifically, the idea of Isaac's life being threatened twice is a reflection, writes Spiegel, of those 11th-

century Jews whose lives were endangered by successive Crusades. I am greatly indebted to Spiegel's work: The Last Trial has shaped my thinking throughout this thesis. My arguments and conclusion, though, differ from his.

I shall argue in the following chapters that the Crsuader-era Rhineland Jews went beyond mere explanation of present fate as a reenactment of a historical model. They explicitly celebrated the exceptional aspects of their own experience of martyrdom as unique and possessing ultimate meaning greater than that previously ascribed to the Akedah. The salvific power assigned to Isaac's offering in the rabbinic Doctrine of the Akedah is transferred to the martyrs themselves. I call this new doctrine of the special significance of the martyrs' deaths, modeled as its on the rabbinic Akedah, the Martyrological Akedah. The deaths of the martyrs are described as simultaneously reenacting the Akedah on Mt. Moriah and meeting the ritual requirements for sacrifices in the Temple cult. Past and future meet when the reenactment of the historical cult is the vehicle for the cult's redemptive restoration. The history and significance of the Martyrological Akedah are presented in the following five chapters.

In the first chapter, the rabbinic Doctrine of the Akedah is discussed. The two main theories of the origin of the rabbinic Akedah (by P. R. Davies and G. Vermes) are explored. Davies considers the Akedah a response to early

Christian atonement theory. Vermes links the emergence of the Doctrine of the Akedah of the Jewish experience of martyrdom during the Hasmonean revolt. A careful reading of the texts which allegedly demonstrate the connection between the Akedah and martyrdom shows that the linkage is frequently read in to the texts. Some of the texts described as "rabbinic" were probably written under the influence of the Martyrological Akedah after 1096. At the end of Chapter I, I list the criteria of the Martyrological Akedah, which include the use of technical sacrifice language, reference to the original Akedah, and, above all, the equation of the contemporary martyrs with Isaac.

The historical circumstances surrounding the Jewish experience of martyrdom in the late11th and 12th centuries are presented in Chapter II. The religious fervor of their day predisposed the Jews towards martyrdom when their messianic hopes were suddenly converted into tragedy. Our knowledge of the actual historical events of 1096 derives from three Hebrew narrative accounts written in the middle of the 12th century. These descriptions influenced the authors of liturgical poetry, the major vehicle of literary religious expression. (The prose authors wrote piyyutim as well.) This thesis studies a selection of piyyutim written in the Rhineland between 1096 and 1196 and published in A. M. Habermann's Gezeirot Ashkenaz V'Tzorfat.[1]

In the following chapter, Chapter III, I translate and

analyze the piyyutim which express the Martyrological Akedah and which I call Martyrological Akedot. These piyyutim describe the deaths of the martyrs in accordance with the midrashic description of Isaac's Akedah, and characterize the martyrs as voluntary sacrifices in the Temple cult. These martyrs are just like Abraham and Isaac--or even better. For if Abraham sacrificed but a single son, the number of Akedot slaughtered in a single day in the author's age "are too numerous to count." The messianic excitement of the period is reflected in the acute messianism, and its accompanying call for revenge, which informs all of the piyyutim.

The wider influence of the Martyrological Akedah is considered in Chapter IV. When the promised redemption did not occur, the Doctrine of the Martyrological Akedah was integrated into the mainstream of the religious tradition. In order to do so, the acute messianism of the piyyutim was neutralized by incorporating the salvation symbolism of the Martyrological Akedah alongside the channeled redemption symbolism already present. Two examples are the insertion of the call for revenge inserted in the Passover Haggadah immediately before the invitation to Elijah, herald of the Messiah, to enter; and the inclusion of Martyrological Akedot in the Selichot liturgies preceding Rosh HaShanah. Originally the Martyrological Akedah broke away from the rabbinic Akedah by urging active, imminent messianic

salvation; it survived through its inclusion in the deferred messianism of the liturgical calendar. The Av HaRachamim prayer, which entered the liturgy during the early 12th century, was also composed under the direct influence of the Martyrological Akedah. The alternative explanation by the Hasidei Ashkenaz of the Crusader-era martyrdom, and their consequent distancing from the Martyrological Akedah, is also discussed in this chapter.

The last chapter, Chapter V, presents my conclusions about the Jewish religious response to communal tragedy and its integration into a religious system. The relationship of ritual to ideology as presented in some general scholarly works is applied to the evidence from the Martyrological Akedah. This chapter is followed by an appendix listing the poems studies in Chapter III along with an analysis of their motifs.

Chapter I

The rabbinic Doctrine of the Binding of Isaac--the Akedah--and its ritualized expression in the synagogue service are central elements of the total world-view and organizing structure of rabbinic Judaism.[1] Yet as Spiegel showed, this "comprehensive theological doctrine" is distinct from the simple biblical narrative on which it is based, Genesis 22, which, in fact, does not even have a "doctrine of the Akedah"; nor does the term "Akedah even appear there.[2] In the biblical narrative, Abraham offers Isaac on the altar as commanded by God, and then removes him again upon God's instruction. Here, Abraham is the hero of the drama for it is his faith which is being tested, whereas Isaac is a silent and passive participant. In the rabbinic expansion of the story, by contrast, what I will refer to as the Doctrine of the Akedah, Isaac, not Abraham, is the primary actor in the drama, a willing victim who voluntarily offers himself as a sacrifice in order to atone for others. Agreeing with Spiegel in his emphasis that not every rabbinic statement about Genesis 22 is necessarily part of the Akedah material, P. R. Davies characterizes the Doctrine of the Akedah as "the haggadic presentation of the vicariously atoning sacrifice of Isaac in which he is said...to have shed his blood freely and/or to have been

reduced to ashes.[3]

The significance of both the rabbinic Doctrine and the biblical tale of the Binding of Isaac in the Jewish religious tradition cannot be underestimated. References to it are found throughout the liturgical calendar and the ritual system. Isaac is associated with the Paschal lamb,[4] the blowing of the Shofar on Rosh HaShanah[5] and the entire Rosh HaShanah service.[6] The sacrificial service in the Temple is intended to recall the offering of Isaac.[7] The daily morning prayer service in the synagogue includes the text of the biblical account of the Akedah as a required reading.[8] Explicit reference to the merit of Isaac's sacrifice is part of the Tachanun service. Pesikta de Rav Kahana teaches that it is by Isaac's merit that the dead are resurrected.[9]

Clearly, scholars agree on distinguishing between the narrative of Genesis 22--"the biblical Akedah"[10]--and the rabbinic expansion, the Doctrine of the Akedah--including both theological development and its supporting midrashic expansion: I propose here to add yet a third layer of development, which I call "the Martyrological Akedah." The "Martyrological Akedah" distinguishes and explains the phenomenon of martyrs identifying their own self-sacrificial behavior with that of Isaac. I begin my analysis in this chapter by discussing the rabbinic Akedah. After presenting the two main theories which attempt to

explain the origins of the Doctrine of the Akedah and explaining why I find neither one persuasive, I will introduce my alternative model. Only then will I explain more fully what I mean by "the Martyrological Akedah" and its place in the history of Jewish religious ideas.

The doctrine of the special merit of Isaac is both part of, and competitive with the larger, important rabbinic doctrine of zechut avot--the merit of the ancestors. Zechut avot generally refers to the three patriarchs.[11] It is through their merit that the world is founded and that Israel was redeemed from Egypt and received the Torah at Mt. Sinai.[12] Clearly, the doctrine which teaches that Isaac's merit earns favor for his descendants, the people of Israel, is part of this larger notion. Yet the singling out of the special merit of Isaac also competes with the merit of the fathers, since it is not "Abraham, Isaac and Jacob" together whose righteous lives have earned the merit that intervenes for the Jewish people, but the special merit of Isaac alone, earned through his voluntary sacrifice on Mt. Moriah. The competition between these two doctrines illustrated in Leviticus Rabbah 2:11, where the offering of the sacrifices is specifically and exclusively associated with the Binding of Isaac.

> In the hour that our Father Abraham bound Isaac, the Holy Blessed One prepared two lambs, one for the morning [offering] and one for the evening [offering]. Whenever the

> Israelites would offer their tamid sacrifices on the altar and read this passage: "Tzafonah lifnei Adonai" (Lev 2:11), the Holy Blessed One remembers the Binding of Isaac. I bring to witness heaven and earth, whether Israelite or gentile, whether man or woman, whether male slave or female slave, whoever reads this passage: "Tzafonah lifnei Adonai," the Holy Blessed One remembers the Binding of Isaac as it is said: "Tzafonah lifnei Adonai..."[13]

This passage is a play on Leviticus 1:11. The simple meaning of "tzafonah is the north side of the altar, but the rabbis are reading it as "tzafoon--hidden." The merit of Isaac is treasured before God and the offering of the tamid brings it forth.[14] This emphatic concentration on Isaac is immediately followed by another opinion which defends the wider application of zechut avot by linking the sacrifice first to all three patriarchs and then to all of the righteous leaders of Israel up to and including the Tannaim:

> Another explanation: "Tzafonah before the Lord" refers to the deeds of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob which are treasured up (tzefunim) with Him. Whence do we know that this word is an expression meaning the laying up of a treasure?--Since it is said: "New and old have I laid up (tzafanti) for thee, O beloved" (Song of Songs 7:14). Abraham, Isaac and Jacob are meant by "old ones," Amram son of Kohat, and the worthy men who were in Egypt are meant by "new ones" as it is said: "New and old..." Alternatively, the company of Moses and the company of Joshua and the companies of David and Hezekiah are meant by "old ones;" while the companies of Ezra, Hillel and of R. Jochanan b. Zakkai and of R. Meir and his colleagues are meant by "new ones"...[15]

Forcefully refuting the exclusive focus on Isaac, this

passage underlines the merit of all the righteous.

The two major theories about the origins of the Akedah are expounded most recently by P. R. Davies and G. Vermes, respectively.16 Both explain the emergence of the rabbinic Doctrine of the Akedah as a "reaction formation" to negative historical circumstances. Davies links the development of the Doctrine of the Akedah to the growth of the Christian doctrine of the Passion of Christ and the powerful symbol of Jesus' crucifixion. In his analysis, the Akedah emerges to combat the potential threat presented by Jesus, by offering an equally powerful alternative.

Vermes, on the other hand, considers the Akedah a response to the Jewish experience of martyrdom and locates the development of the Doctrine in the time of the persecutions of Antiochus Epiphanes (168-167 B.C.E.) far before Christianity even began. For Vermes, the emergence of the Akedah is an effort to integrate a historical experience which is inconsistent with the world view presented by the religious system until then, in that Jews had never experienced martyrdom, and so had no ready explanation for it. The Akedah, according to Vermes, is the product of an effort to present martyrdom as an ideal already hallowed for generations. In his interpretation, Jews in the second century B.C.E. came to believe that the religious ideal was already firmly located in their historical tradition. In turn, this belief served to

explain their particular contemporary historical circumstances. Vermes obviously would not agree with my distinction between the rabbinic Akedah and the Martyrological AKedah, since in his analysis, the former already includes the latter, in that it is the immediate product of the historical experience of martyrdom and persecution, occasioned two centuries before the common era.

Vermes' study of the Akedah is entitled "Redemption and Gen. 22."[17] In this essay, he argues persuasively for the early dating of the rabbinic Akedah, by presenting three main arguments to support his theory: 1) the evidence of early rabbinic texts, e.g. the Targumim, IV Maccabees, and Pseudo-Philo; 2) the symbol of the Akedah in the Temple cult's sacrificial system; 3) the Sitz im Leben of the Hasmonean revolt. While the evidence of the early literary texts is most convincing, the evidence from the Temple cult is less clear-cult. Finally, I can not agree with his direct linkage of the emergence of the Doctrine of the Akedah with a particular historical event. Thus, while Vermes appears to be correct about the emergence of the doctrine early in the rabbinic period, his explanation of the circumstances behind it and his effort to date it so precisely are unacceptable. To see why this is so, we now turn to his argument in detail.

The earliest literary expression of the Doctrine of

the Akedah, the targumic versions of Gen. 22,[18] are Vermes' most convincing evidence for the early emergence of the rabbinic Doctrine. The targumic accounts include these common features: 1) Isaac knew in advance that he was destined to be the sacrifice; 2) Isaac asked Abraham to bind his hands securely so that "I might not struggle in the time of my pain and disturb you and render your offering unfit {i.e. blemished};"[19] 3)Isaac offered himself and stretched out his neck before his father; 4) Abraham prayed that the binding of Isaac would be remembered on Isaac's behalf in the time of his children's need.[20] Vermes quotes extensively from other rabbinic sources to illustrate the sharing of these features by the various exegetical accounts of the Akedah. In his Jewish Antiquities, Jospehus characterizes Isaac as the willing sacrifice who "heard his fathers words with joy and ran to the altar." The voluntary nature of the sacrifice is emphasised in Sifrei Deuteronomy 32 where "b'chol nafshecha--with all your heart" (Dt. 6:6) is explained in the name of Rabbi Akiba as referring to Isaac "who bound himself upon the altar."[21] (The attribution of this interpretation to Rabbi Akiba parallels the more familiar account in Ber. 61b. While this account may well represent one of the earliest texts identifiable as part of the Martyrological Doctrine of the Akedah, it is not useful in establishing the dating of the rabbinic Akedah, since even

if it was original to Akiba, a possibility which I strongly doubt, it is too late for Vermes' argument.) IV Maccabees and Pseudo-Philo also exhibit familiarity with features of the Doctrine of the Akedah.[22] Another piece of textual evidence presented by Vermes is the first usage in Ta'anit 16a of the liturgical formula: "May the One who answered Abraham on Mt. Moriah, answer us." The formulaic opening is later expanded to encompass many other biblical and historical examples. Vermes holds that the original text reflects the tradition that Abraham prayed and was answered on the mountain, in accordance with the targumic descriptions.[23] This example too, though, is hardly probative of the early influence of the Doctrine. "The One who answered Abraham" could easily be interpreted as the angel who "answered" Abraham in telling him not to sacrifice Isaac according to the simple biblical story.[24]

The atoning value of Isaac's sacrifice is dependent on his death. Yet the inescapable feature of the original account is that he did not die--in fact, it is the most important part of the Biblical account! But the expiatory role which Isaac assumes in the rabbinic Doctrine of the Akedah requires his death. Thus, though he did not die "God regards the ashes of Isaac as though they were piled upon the altar."[25] The "ashes of Isaac" are mentioned numerous times in the rabbinic literature. The Targum to I Chronicles 21:15 reads: "He beheld the ashes of the Akedah

of Isaac in the foundation of the altar,"[26] and it was taught in the name of R. Isaac Napha that the proper location of the rebuilt Second Temple was determined when the builders discovered Isaac's ashes on the spot.[27] Even if Isaac did not die, thus leaving no ashes, he atoned through the offering of his blood, in accordance with Yoma 5a: "There is no atonement except by blood." Two different midrashic accounts teach that Isaac lost as much as a fourth of his blood on Mt. Moriah.[28]

Vermes concludes that the evidence from the early rabbinic sources "show that the essence of the targumic exegesis of Genesis [22] was already traditional in the first century A.D." (sic).[29] He thus answers scholars like P. R. Davies, who explain the development of the Akedah doctrine by the rise of early Christianity, and consider the increasing veneration of Isaac and the emphasis on his voluntary self-sacrifice as a Jewish answer to the Passion of Christ. Instead, Vermes suggest that the emphasis on the voluntary nature of Isaac's sacrifice is a product of the Jewish experience of martyrdom in the early rabbinic period (i.e. from the mid-second century B.C.E. to the beginning of the Christian era).[30]

The second major argument presented by Vermes is the Akedah symbolism connected exegetically to the sacrificial system. According to the targumic accounts of the Akedah, Isaac knew and met the standards for a biblical offering:

he asks his father to bind him "so that I may not struggle... and render Your offering unfit [blemished]."[31] In this way, the sacrifice of Isaac prefigures the sacrificial system, which, in turn, is modeled on Isaac's offering and is rendered efficacious by virtue of his merit. "The lamb was chosen to recall the merit of the lamb of Abraham who bound himself upon the altar and stretched out his neck for Your Name's sake..."[32] The most striking example of the explanation of the sacrificial cult's symbolic dependency on the Akedah is the passage from Leviticus Rabbah 2:11, cited at the beginning of this chapter:

> In the hour that our Father Abraham bound Isaac, the Holy Blessed One prepared two lambs one for the [future] morning [tamid offering in the Temple] and one for the evening [offering]. Whenever the Israelites would offer their tamid sacrifice on the altar and read this passage: "Tzafonah lifnei Adonai," the Holy Blessed One remembers the binding of Isaac...

We will return to Vermes' analysis of the sacrificial cult and his third argument, the historical circumstances of the Hasmonean revolution, later in this chapter. First, it is necessary to introduce P. R. Davies theory of the emergence of the rabbinic Akedah. Writing with B. D. Chilton, Davies argued against Vermes' relatively early dating of the Doctrine of the Akedah, holding, instead, that it is a direct response to the development of the doctrine of Christ's Passion.[33] He emphatically claims

that "there is no pre-Christian Akedah."[34] In particular Davies draws our attention to the passage in Leviticus Rabbah 2:11, quoted in its entirety at the beginning of this chapter, in which the universal significance of Isaac's suffering is illustrated. In this passage, Isaac suffers not only for the people of Israel but for everyone: "I bring to witness heaven and earth, that whether Israelite or gentile, whether man or woman, whether male slave or female salve, who ever reads this passage: 'Tzafonah lifnei Adonai,' the Holy Blessed One remembers the Binding of Isaac..." Davies considers this a clear emulation of Christian claims about Jesus. This is the first of several examples which Davies cites to show that the Akedah can only be explained as the result of a Jewish effort to answer the claims Christianity made for Jesus' saving power.

Davies ignores a possible additional aspect of the Leviticus Rabbah passage which would tend to support his reading. The alternative opinion which follows the application of Leviticus 1:11 to the Akedah applies the verse to all righteous Jews throughout time. Both midrashic explanations of what is "remembered before God" could therefore represent Jewish responses to Jesus. The first is an explicit parallel, raising Isaac to a level on a par with Jesus. Faced with the need to answer the claim of Jesus' power, but uncomfortable pitting Isaac against

Jesus and thereby perhaps giving greater legitimacy to the claim of Jesus' saving power, the midrash presents a radically alternative explanation of the same passage. In place of the universalisitic application of of the merit earned by Isaac alone, the complementary passages teaches that it is the merit of all of the righteous Jews through the generations which is remembered before God. This passage first lists only the patriarchs but then continues with "the companies of David and of Hezekiah" and then, "those of Ezra, Hillel, R. Johanan b. Zakkai and R. Meir and his colleagues are intended..."[35] While the merit is earned by a far wider group, those who benefit and are remembered before God by virtue of the merit of these men can only be the people of Israel. Resisting the effort to locate Israel's merit exclusively in the distant patriarch, the merit of Israel is earned by those very rabbis who defend and expound the legal tradition which Jesus, according to Christian doctrine, replaces.

Davies also cites the evidence of Genesis Rabbah 56:3: "'Abraham took the wood for the burnt offering...' Like the one who carried his cross on his shoulder. 'And the two went on together...' One to bind and one to be bound, one to slaughter and one to be slaughtered."[36]

This sounds like the comments of the Church Fathers who saw in Isaac the typology of Jesus, in that Isaac's role was to hint at what was to come in the future,

without, however, actually fulfilling the promise--that is, without actually being sacrificed. For example, Iraneaus taught: "Christians should be alert to bear the cross just as Isaac bore the wood for the burnt offering."[37] The familiarity of the Church fathers with the midrashic tradition concerning Isaac is illustrated by examples like the Epistle of Clement, XXX 2-4, "Isaac, knowing the future with confidence, was joyfully led forth as a victim."[38]

Davies and Vermes differ on the correct dating of Pseudo-Philo and IV Maccabees. Davies holds that both are substantially later than Vermes would admit, dating Pseudo-Philo at 70-135 C.E. and IV Maccabees at 70-117 C.E.[39] Since these texts already display the Akedah Doctrine, these texts are obviously important for his post-Christian dating of it. He also cites the early second century Epistle of Barnabas which speaks of Jesus "fulfilling the type given in Isaac," in order to buttress his contention that the Christian Doctrine of Atonement preceded the Jewish Akedah. However, it is not in the least surprising to find early Christians viewing the Akedah as a pre-figurement of the Passion of Christ. The connection, after all, is already found in Paul's New Testament writings. The point is that such evidence is no way helps us answer the question of which doctrine came first, Christ's Passion or Isaac's Akedah. The discovery of mutual influence going

both way between rabbinic Judaism and nascent Christianity cannot determine the relative dependence of either one upon the other. The two doctrines could be mutually reenforcing or even share common features derived from a common cultural-religious history.[40] The mutual influence of Jewish and Christian doctrines and their symbolic manifestations will be of significance in our discussion of the Akedah in the medieval period.

Davies goal is not so much to demonstrate the dependence of the Akedah on Christian atonement so much as to prove the independent origins of the New Testament. "New Testament atonement theory betrays no obvious dependence on an Akedah doctrine..."[41] In order to understand how Davies explains the symbolism of the sacrificial system to support this contention, we must first return briefly to Vermes interpretation of the sacrifices. The critical question turns on who was first identified with the Paschal lamb on Passover, Isaac or Jesus.

In Vermes opinion, the original symbolic meaning of the Passover sacrifice was to recall the blood of the Akedah. Certainly, the Paschal lamb, prepared and sacrificed each year, recalls the blood of the first Passover in Egypt. But that original Passover in Egypt occurred only by virtue of the merit of Isaac. "'And when I see the blood, I will pass over you ' (Ex. 12:13)--I see

the blood of the Binding of Isaac."[42] The association of Isaac and Passover is thus ancient and primary, according to Vermes. The emphasis on Isaac during Rosh HaShanah and the identification between the shofar and the ram are later developments after the disassociation of Isaac from Passover because of the Christian adoption of Akedah imagery. [43]

Davies, on the other hand, struggling to preserve the independent beginnings of Christian doctrine, presents the reverse explanation: He considers the association between Isaac and Rosh HaShanah as primary and the connection of Isaac to Passover as a secondary development in response to the challenge of Christianity.[44] He argues that the Passover sacrifice could not be easily linked to the Akedah, while the daily tamid sacrifice could. The Passover sacrifice is eaten, while it is the tamid which is burnt upon the altar, and thus only it is converted to "dust and ashes" which, in turn, are remembered before God.[45] It was the tamid, and not the Passover sacrifice, which was bound down upon the altar when it was offered.[46] Isaac, holds Davies, was conceptually located in the tamid sacrifice. Therefore, Jesus could not have supplanted Isaac as the Passover sacrifice, but, as explained above, Isaac must have come to be associated with Passover only in response to the already extant link to Jesus. [47]

The typology, then, which sees Isaac's sacrifice as a

foreshadowing of the future crucifixion of Jesus, according to Davies, is a product of the competition between church and synagogue in the second century. This is illustrated for him by the Mechilta's comment on Exodus 12:13: "'When I see the blood I will pass over you...' I see the blood of Isaac's Akedah.'"[48] His purpose in the entire debate is clearly revealed in Davies concluding statement on the origin of the link between Jesus and Passover:

> The representation of Jesus as a Paschal lamb owes virtually everything to the historical fact that Jesus happened to have been crucified at Passover time. The Christian Passover connection therefore was inevitable regardless of the existence or non-existence of the Akedah.[49]

To recapitulate, both Vermes and Davies explain the emergence of the rabbinic Akedah as the response to a specific set of historical circumstances: Vermes dates it to the Jewish experience of martyrdom during the Hasmonean revolt in the second century before the common era and Davies insists that it does not emerge until the second century of the common era in reaction to the increasing veneration of Jesus. It is my opinion that while each view has something to contribute, neither is entirely correct. Ultimately, this debate is probably unresolvable. Much of the discussion turns on the dating of the individual proof-texts. Yet each of these ancient literary texts represents the coalesence of a large body of oral traditions whose prior history is unrecoverable. Thus, while we may have the

first literary record of the rabbinic Akedah in the Targumim, the oral interpretations on which they are based may have been circulating for many generations. The emergence of a religious doctrine cannot be dated with precision in the manner of a patented invention. The effort to apply form-critical criteria suffers from the absence of any explicit or exclusive connection to the posited historical environment, as Vermes must himself realize in his strenuous effort to connect the emergence of the Doctrine of the Akedah with the Hasmonean revolution. (The detailed evaluation of this effort is included in the introduction to the Martyrological Akedah at the end of this chapter.) Our inability to establish precedence in appearance and influence similarly inhibits the attempt by Davies to demonstrate that the Akedah developed only after the emergence of New Testament atonement theory. The evidence of the Targumim would seem to preclude this conclusion. Further, the wide-spread familiarity with the exegetical traditions presented in the early sources argues for an older folk tradition being translated into a literary form against the sudden birth of a totally new idea.[50] The Christian veneration of Jesus certainly led the rabbis to seek compensating Jewish parallels for the redemptive power attributed to him,[51] but, unless the Targumim are to be dated impossibly late, those parallels must already have been at hand in the tradition.

Certainly, the explicit Christian identification of Jesus' Passion with the Akedah seems to argue for the latter's priority.

Sholom Spiegel proposes an alternative explanation which is consonant with the model of religious development in which ritual is given priority that is at the heart of this thesis. In The Last Trial, Spiegel suggests that the Akedah reflects an ancient, pre-Israelite tradition: "Who knows? Maybe in the blood of Isaac's Akedah, as in his sacrifice in the first month of spring, there is a speck of a hint that the roots of that haggadah on the slaughter of Isaac reach back to a remote past of the world of idolatry, possibly before biblical religion came into being.[52] Later he observes that "both differentiae and parallels in the two traditions on the one bound and the one crucified seem to point rather to a common source in the ancient pagan world." [53] While Davies remarks that Spiegel's theory "is most unlikely to be pursued..let alone accepted,"[54] is probably correct, the theory may still be true, however unproveable.[55]

It is my thesis that in addition to the biblical and rabbinic Akedah there is also a third level of interpretation, which I call the Doctrine of the Martyrological Akedah. The critical distinction between the rabbinic Doctrine and the Martyrological Akedah is the martyrs' replacement of Isaac as the source of atonement.

According to the rabbinic doctrine of the Akedah, Isaac's voluntary self-sacrifice atones for the people of Israel for ever. The blowing of the ram's horn, the Passover sacrifice and the sacrificial cult are all reminders before God of Isaac's original "unblemished offering (olah temimah)"[55] According to the Martyrological Akedah, however, the martyrs themselves become the source of atonement for the people. The martyrs do not simply pray for Isaac's intervention but do as he did. Just as Isaac's acts had redemptive significance so do the martyrs perceive their own acts as redemptive. While the concept of vicarious atonement was already part of the rabbinic Akedah, the significance of the new interpretation is the assignation of similar power to contemporary "Akedot." The criteria of the Martyrological Akedah, as used in this thesis are: 1) the use of technical sacrificial vocabulary; 2) the explicit comparison to the rabbinic Akedah; 3) the description of the martyrs' actions as redemptive.[56]

Did the Martyrological Akedah develop during the rabbinic period? Although Vermes subsumes the features of the Martyrological Akedah within his description of the rabbinic Akedah, he finds evidence which meets all three criteria in rabbinic sources. As we learned above, Vermes explains the development of the Doctrine of the Akedah as a product of the Jewish experience of martyrdom. In his analysis, the Doctrine of the Akedah developed during the

persecutions of Antiochus Epiphanes in 167 B.C.E. and he goes so far as to assign it to a specific occasion--the martyrdom of the seven sons of a pious woman (called, in later texts, Hannah).[57] But the original version of the story, found in II Maccabees 7 makes no mention of vicarious atonement or of the Akedah. This explicit comparison is to be found only in later periods, as for example in the version cited by Spiegel:

> Their mother wept and said to them: "Children do not be distressed for to this end were you created --to sanctify in the world the name of the Holy One, Blessed Be. Go and tell Father Abraham: 'Let not your heart swell with pride. You built one altar but I have built seven altars and on them have offered up my seven sons. What is more, yours was a trial; mine was an accomplished fact.'"[58]

This version of the story is best known from Yalkut Shimoni but is traceable to Midrash Lamentations Zuta.[59] It is not known from any other source. Moshe Herr dates the midrash, which is the earlier source of the two, "no earlier than the 10th century."[60] While I cannot prove that this version of the story of the righteous woman circulated only after the tragedies of 1096, it certainly cannot be offered as an example of the Martyrological Akedah from the rabbinic era.

The only early text which Vermes cites that could possibly meet the criteria of the Martyrological Akedah is IV Maccabees, where, according to Vermes, "Isaac is the proto-martyr."[61] The two passages he cites, IV Maccabees

13:12 and 16:20, certainly do praise Isaac as a willing sacrificial victim, in accordance with the rabbinic exegesis: "Isaac did not shrink when he saw the knife lifted against him by his father's hand."[62] While this text may have very well been intended to exhort its listeners to follow Isaac's example, it does not constitute " a comprehensive theological doctrine," It is elsewhere in IV Maccabees that the blood of the martyrs is given atoning value: "Cause our chastisement to be an expiation for them. Make my blood their purification and take my soul as a ransom for their souls."[63] Even Vermes admits, though, that the text lacks any explicit reference to Isaac.[64] In other words, IV Maccabees contains both the necessary reference to Isaac and the idea of the martyrs' death as an expiation, but the two are not connected together; whereas it is precisely the connection between the two that we require.

Vermes argues that the common link between Isaac and the martyrs is their shared identification with the Suffering Servant of Isaiah 53. The Servant is the martyrs whose blood is expiatory for the transgressions of the people. "The leading idea of Isaiah 53 is parallel in leitmotif to the targumic tradition on Gen. 22...On the targumic level, the resemblances are plainly realized and the nature and affect of the Servant's passion are applied to the sacrifice of Isaac so that Gen. 22 becomes the story

of a just man who offered himself for the sake of sinners.[65] However, nowhere in the exegetical tradition are Isaac or the martyrs compared to the Servant. While a complete evaluation of this argument is beyond the scope of this thesis, the evidence he offers is tenuous at best.[66]

If Vermes is correct, then the Doctrine of the Akedah is inseparably bound up with the rabbinic teaching on martyrdom. Yet there are plenty of texts on each theme which are in no way connected to the other. Rabbinic teaching on martyrdom developed independently of the Doctrine of the Akedah. If Davies' agenda is to prove the independence of the New Testament doctrine so that he therefore insists that Christian atonement predates Jewish Akedah, Vermes wants to refute him and prove the non-Christian origins of an important Jewish idea. The Doctrine of the Akedah can easily find a place in the total world view of Pharisaic Judaism without reliance on the unfounded theory that it suddenly appeared from nowhere in 168 B.C.E. No can we doubt the effect of competition and mutual reenforcement between the Akedah and Christian atonement in the first centuries of the common era.

We must conclude that although special value may have been assigned to the blood of the martyr, there was no explicit, worked--out martyrological reinterpretation of the Akedah during the rabbinic period. Rabbinic reports of martyrdom do not link the martyr's Sanctification of the

Name to the Akedah. The single notable exception is the passage in Sifrei Deuteronomy which compares Rabbi Akiba to Isaac.[67] But this text reflects the voluntary nature of each one's self-sacrifice, without any suggestion that the death of Akiba is a form of atonement. This further proposition does not appear before certain versions of Midrash Eleh Ezkarah, which, we shall see, were probably written later still, under the influence of the Crusader-inspired Martyrological Akedah.[68]

It is certainly possible, and even likely, that the seeds of the Doctrine of the Martyrological Akedah were planted long before the tragedies of 1096. Like the rabbinic Doctrine of the Akedah, the basic ideas and motifs may have been circulating for generations before they erupted into popular consciousness. As we shall see in the next two chapters, it was not until the tragic events of 1096 and the years which followed that a doctrine and literature emerged to offer a new understanding of the Akedah, overlaying the inherited rabbinic traditions, and merging the act of sanctifying God's Name with the reenactment of the original voluntary sacrifices in the Temple cult, giving new meaning to each.

Chapter II

In the fall of 1095, Pope Urban II called for a campaign to capture the Holy Land and Jerusalem from the Moslems. In March of 1096, four months before the "official" crusade of the knightly class was prepared to depart, thousands of impoverished people, led by Peter the Hermit, marched from France into Germany. The same spring, other charismatic leaders gathered similar groups throughout northwestern Europe. Although the Crusaders did not appear to be threatening to the Jews, at least initially, the leaders of French Jewish communities did send warnings ahead to their counterparts in the Rhineland. Accounts differ as to whether the Crusaders actually attacked the Jews of Rouen and other French cities or not.[1] The fate of individual Jewish communities turned on the political and military power of their local protector, their own material and political resources, the behavior of the local Christian community and the Crusader mobs surrounding them. Anti-Jewish violence was almost exclusively limited to the episcopal cities in the Rhineland.[2] The Jews typically sought the protection of the local bishop, while the bishop himself was under increasing attack from the local merchants and the crusading lower-classes.[3] If the attacks on the Jews were motivated by economic and political

reasons, there was ample religious fervor and ideology to justify and encourage the behavior.[4] The Crusaders consistently offered captured Jews the choice of accepting baptism and living unharmed or being put to death. (According to Christian teaching, only the elect could live on earth when it became the Kingdom of God. Elimination of the non-believer was considered as valid a means as conversion in the effort to bring about the kingdom.)[5] Most of the violence of the First Crusade occurred between Passover and Shavuot in the spring of 1096. Many, if not all, of the Jews of Speyer, Worms, Cologne, Mainz and Trier were killed, either immediately upon the mobs' arrival at the town or after a few anxious days of refuge in the local castle. Those high church officials, like the Archbishop of Trier, who attempted to stop the pursuing mob usually ended up having to flee themselves.[6] By the time the People's Crusade was decisively stopped in Hungary, far short of the Holy Land, more than 5,000 Jews and been killed.[7] While many of the Jews were murdered by the mobs, thousands chose to die by their own hand rather than fall into the hands of their enemies. According to their own and contemporary Christian chronicles, the Jews took pride in the opportunity to die sanctifying God's Name. Parents killed their own children and then one another for the sake of Kiddush HaShem. According to contemporary Jewish accounts, the martyrs were ritually killed as if they were

sacrificial offerings in the Temple cult. The terrible massacres of 1096 marked "the beginning of a tradition... Thereafter, the massacre of Jews was to remain a normal feature of popular, as distinct from knightly, crusades."[8] Although the tragic events of 1096 were unfortunately only the first in a painful succession, all modern commentators on the period consider the events of 1096 "the critical turning point in Jewish history."[9] Contemporary observers, like Rabbi Eliezer bar Natan, considered the events of 1096 as a turning point too.[10] The medieval Jews referred to each successive event as a "gezeirah, decree." According to Yitzchak Baer, the earliest use of the phrase nigzera gezeirah to describe a time of persecution is in Midrash Eleh Ezkarah.[11] The midrash itself, though, was influenced by the massacres which accompanied the First Crusade.[12] Baer concludes: "Only since 'Gezeirat 4846' [1096] did the term 'gezeirah' come to refer to the destruction and persecution of entire communities.[13] Jewish documents from the 12th and much of the 13th century simply use "ha-gezeirah" to refer to the tragedies of 1096.

Knowledge of the actual historical circumstances of the Crusader massacres is limited.[14] The primary sources are three Hebrew narrative accounts dating from the 12trh century.[15] The earliest account is that of Solomon ben Samson whose account was probably written in 1140, forty-four years after the events he describes. Despite the

intervening years, the account is generally considered to be reliable.[16] The second account was written by Rabbi Eliezar bar Natan, the author of the halachic work, Even HaEzer. Rabbi Eliezar wrote his narrative account from eye-witness and other reports during the first half of the 12th century. The third account, Ma'aseh HaGezeirot HaYeshanot is by an anonymous author. The date of composition of this version is also unknown. Some scholars believe that this account is actually the earliest of the three.[17] Baer holds that all three accounts are the product of one editor working with a singly original source.[18] Joseph Hacher questions the validity of the anonymous source altogether and persuasively argues that it is both independent of the other two and historically inaccurate.[19]

Scholars cannot agree on the historical veracity of the narrative accounts in general. Baer, in his introduction to Habermann's Sefer Gezeirot, reports that "as a rule [the narrative accounts]...correspond to reality as much as was possible and to a greater degree in fact then is the case with other reports in the course of Jewish history."[20] Spiegel notes that the Christian sources from the period confirm the accuracy of the Hebrew reports.[21] In fact, the Hebrew narratives themselves reflected the versions of the historical events found in Christian chronicles.[22] The Jews read the documents and letters

which were sent home by the Crusaders abroad, publicizing, though, only those details which recounted the failings of the Crusaders as evidence of God's revenge against their enemies.[23] Spiegel observes that "the Hebrew stories were written to encourage [faint] hearts and to strengthen weak knees."[24] While the fact of the Jew's martyrdom has never been disputed, the detailed ritual enactment of their deaths described in the narrative descriptions may have been the product of the chronicler's interpretation. Despite his prior claim that the narrative accounts are historically accurate, Baer writes later in the same essay quoted above that the religious symbols and allusions should not be understood at face value: "It appears that later editors exaggerated the descriptions in their religious laments...and interpreted religious metaphors as tragic reality."[25]

It is not our purpose to evaluate the historical truth of these accounts. What actually happened in the Rhenish communities is less significant here than the interpretation and presentation of the events by the survivors and successors. Obviously, the Hebrew historical narratives do not record any evidence of those Jews who chose to accept baptism and convert. Nor is it likely that the enthusiasm for martyrdom was universal as the accounts present.[26] On the other hand, there is just cause to believe that the narrative and verse portrayal of ritual

self-sacrifice in the different Jewish communities accurately reflect the actual historical events. I will return to this point in Chap. V below.

My initial intent in this thesis was to study the Jewish liturgical response to the Crusades. The primary literary, liturgical and religious response to the tragedies that accompanied the Crusades are the piyyutim composed by the survivors in the Rhineland. The style and language of the poems indicate that they were written for the synagogue.[27] The relationship of the poems to the narrative accounts is not entirely clear. While it has been argued that the poems are dependent on the narratives, there is no reason to preclude their simultaneous composition. The authors of the narratives also wrote piyyutim themselves.[28] A complete survey of the piyyutim written during this period is beyond the scope of this thesis, but we have a valid sample of this material in A. M. Habermann's Sefer Gezeirot Ashkenaz V'Tzorfat.[29] This book is the primary source for all recent scholarship and most of the poems in it are being published for the first time.[30] My study encompasses seventeen poems composed between 1096 and 1196 and one assigned to this period by Habermann but whose date of composition is unknown. This poem and two poems written in response to mob violence before 1096 are discussed in comparison to the seventeen which constitute the study proper. While persecutions

certainly continued after 1196, they were by and large isolated events as opposed to the campaigns of violence during the prior century. Further, the originality of the compositions begins to erode at this time.

For Christian and Jew, the Crusader period was permeated by an atmosphere of religious excitement and messianic fervor.[31] The heightened religious activity in the Christian community had an impact on its Jewish neighbors. Death in holy battle--for the sake of God's Name--was a glorious end for Christian and Jew alike.[32]

Messianic expectations were highly aroused in the German Jewish community throughout this period. Since the mid-ninth century, messianic prophecies had been a regular occurrence.[33] Prior to the onset of the violence, 1095-1096 had been fixed by several seers as the year of the Messiah's arrival.[34] The consciousness of living during an extraordinary time "sharpened the preparedness of Jews" to perform extraordinary acts when the "joy of prophecy [was suddenly turned] into sorrow."[35] The massacres themselves were interpreted by many as "chevlai hamashiach--the Messiah's birth-pangs."[36] A genizah fragment reports on a prophet who arrived in Alexandria from Marseilles announcing the ingathering of the exiles would begin 1226 and the Messiah's arrival in 1253. According to Y. Assaf, this was none other than Rabbi Ezra the Prophet of Montcontour whose prophecy was endorsed by Rabbi Eliezar

the Pious of Worms.[37] The relationship of the Crusader massacres, the martyrological Akedah and German Pietism will be discussed in Chap. IV. Having considered the tradition-history of the Doctrine of the Akedah and the historical circumstances of the Crusader-inspired violence, we are ready to study their unique meeting in the Martyrological Akedah.

Chapter III

In this chapter, I turn to the piyyutim written in response to the massacres which accompanied the first Crusades. These piyyutim are the primary liturgical expression of what I have called the Martyrological Akedah. In order to make the analysis clearer, we shall distinguish in this chapter between those piyyutim customarily called Akedah piyyutim and these special Crusades-influenced compositions. The former I call "Covenant Akedot" while I refer to the latter as "Martyrological Akedot."

The rubric selichot piyyutim includes all piyyutim written to embellish the liturgy during the penitential season, the common theme of which is the petitioning of God for forgiveness of sin, and thus their name. Within this larger group, a specific sub-set is called "Akedot." the Akedah piyyut emerged as a distinct literary form during the Middle Ages. It is distinguished by the invocation of the memory of Isaac's Akedah and the petitioning of God to remember the covenant. In the liturgy for the Selichot services preceding Rosh HaShanah, Akedah piyyutim are interspersed in the liturgy according to the particular tradition of individual communities.[1]

The appeal to the merit of Isaac's sacrifice demonstrates the on-going power of the rabbinic Doctrine of the Akedah, which the authors of the Covenant Akedot

accepted as they retold the story of his Binding in accordance with the midrashic expansion of the biblical account, emphasizing Isaac's uniqueness among the patriarchs. A typical example is the Akedah piyyut Emunah Omen in which the first twenty-seven lines are devoted to retelling the midrashic version of the original Akedah and the last three implore God to "withhold Your anger" on Isaac's account.[2] Consistent with the rabbinic Doctrine of the Akedah, these poems ask God to remember Isaac on behalf of the petitioners:

> He hurried to take the knife,
> Therefore save their seed from an unworthy death.
> The only one was bound like a sheep for slaughter,
> Therefore accept our prayer as if it were a sacrificial offering.[3]

This retelling of the Akedah doctrine in the liturgy represent a ritual reenactment of the historical event. While the first Akedah was unique, its repetitions are eternal. The Akedah is invoked in the holiday liturgy as part of the cyclical yearly ritual drama by which the historical merit of Isaac's sacrifice atones again and again for later ages transgressions.

The Martyrological Akedot produced by the Jews of the Rhineland during the 12th century are quite different. They do not ask God to remember only the merit of Isaac; but go further than that, actually calling upon God to mark

the sacrifices of their own generation as equal to, if not greater than his. These piyyutim were not written just for the High Holidays. Nor were they intended to be included in the on-going, cyclical redemption drama of the traditional Jewish liturgy and calendar. They are prayers permeated with an imminent, dynamic messianic hope whose urgency has been augmented by the very sacrifices which the authors and their communities had witnessed.

As explained in Chap. I, the Martyrological Akedah is distinguished from the rabbinic Akedah through Isaac's atoning role being supplanted by the contemporary martyrs. In the new doctrine, the sacrificial imagery applied rabbinically to Isaac alone is projected onto the new martyrs.[4] The piyyutim which reflect this new doctrine are further distinguished from the Covenant Akedot by their general absence of specific references to the liturgy of the penitential season, showing they were composed for use through-out the year. Instead of the Covenant Akedah's refrain of: "Remember Isaac," they lament: "Remember our Akedot." These piyyutim are similar to, but technically distinguishable from, similar martyrologies of the time that mourn the victims of persecution, praise their faith and courage, invoke God's mercy and revenge, and may even suggest that the deaths of the righteous are atonement for the group--but which lack the necessary element that marks the Martyrological Akedah: reference to Isaac, the

sacrificial cult or the Akedah to which their own martyrdom is likened.

An intermediate example which combines features of both types of Akedot is Rabbi Eliezer bar Natan's poem, "The Covenant and the Promise."[5] Rabbi Eliezer combines typical Covenant Akedah language with references to the martyrs of his own generation. Several references to the High Holiday liturgy clearly show that the poem was written for the synagogue service on Rosh HaShanah: "You say: 'salachti lefanecha' (I have forgiven You) (l. 12); "Our judgement comes from before You" (l. 13); "The Book of Remembrances lies open before You" (l. 15); "We read the 'thirteen' [attributes] before You" (l. 19). This is a reference to the thirteen attributes of God which are the key to securing God's forgiveness.[6] The poem concludes: O King who sits on the throne of mercy!" which, given the context of the entire poem, is probably an allusion to the movement of God from the throne of judgement to the throne of mercy, an important motif of the holidays. The reading of the thirteen attributes is one route to invoking God's mercy.[7] Another appeal is the remembrance of Isaac's Akedah which is common to both the Covenant and Martyrological traditions.[8] In the Martyrological tradition alone we find the remembrance of the martyrs replacing the remembrance of Isaac in the appeal to God's mercy. All three are found here.

The special merit of Isaac is invoked in the opening lines of the poem: "The Covenant and the Promise (which You swore)" and in l. 5, where the merit of the first Akedah is recalled. R. Eliezer does not stop at the binding of Isaac, however. He enters the realm of the Martyrological Akedah by invoking also the martyrdom of the willing sacrifices in his own day as sources of atonement for the survivors. "If with one [i.e. Isaac] You found grace, certainly through these will You atone for sins" (l. 6.). These contemporary Akedot offer themselves now as did Isaac long ago: "See how they offered their body [lit.: "their fat," as the fat of the sacrificial offerings in the Temple cult was offered up] all of their flesh" (l. 8). As Isaac's ashes come before God for eternal remembrance, so should these Akedot (Eliezer's term) be remembered for ever:

> Pure of Vision, see their binding! Torn in Your house, watch their sacrifice.
>
> May their offering appear always before You; may they be acceptable and atone for eternity. (N 107, 9-10)[8a]

Here, the role Isaac occupies in the rabbinic Doctrine of the Akedah, as expressed in the Covenant Akedot, is supplanted by the suffering of the martyrs themselves; the martyrs do not here merely <u>invoke</u> Isaac--they <u>become</u> Isaac. They do not call upon the merit earned by Isaac, but on their own merit which has been won in the same way that

Isaac won his.

The contrast becomes clearer if we compare Rabbi Eliezer's poem to a non-Akedah piyyut by Rabbi Joseph bar Natan, El Erech Apayim.[9] This is a High Holiday piyyut which describes the martyrs of the Crusader period as sacrifices but does not identify them as Akedot or compare then in any way with Isaac.

God, endlessly patient, showing mercy to thousands,
We have come to pray in Your house and courts...
Remember the greatness of Your mercy for those who stand [before You]
Shine upon our cause that we need not depart still yearning.
Multiply the cleansing--make us shining and clean--of our transgressions.
Purify us from our sins, let no error remain.
Weigh our merits and our cause in justice, Raiser of the Fallen
Whiten our sins like snow and pure wool.
Purify our hearts from any hidden impurity.
Cast our sins into the sea, into a flaming river.
For evildoers shall not come before You
or shall speakers of lies be acceptable before Your eyes. (H 69, 1-12)

It is clear from several references, beginning with the title, that this piyyut was written for the High Holidays.

The first line quotes the opening words of the thirteen attributes of God. Lines 5, 8, and 9 speak of cleansing from sin, and line 10 is a reference to the tashlich ceremony on Rosh HaShanah afternoon. God is asked to judge the case of His people in lines 4 and 7.

The contemporary experience of the people is portrayed in lines 14-18:

> Hear the cry of Your people, seek out the pursuers
> Mortified and oppressed, they emerge anxious and pressed.
> Rebuked each morning, remaining angry,
> Their faces hidden, faces furiously angry,
> Sheep for slaughter, considered as sheep and oxen.

The first part of line 18, "Sheep for slaughter," is from Psalm 44:8 and has no necessary connection to either the rabbinic or the Martyrological Akedah. True, the martyrs are killed for the sake of God's Name, but there is no mention of atonement, Isaac, the Temple cult or the actual binding. The piyyut ends with messianic hope:

> This is the Lord we await, thirsty and weary.
> Hope by hope they await and yearn
> For the unity of His Name they are slaughtered and burned.
> For Him we will offer up both body and soul.
> Quickly may He advance His mercy (our heads are bent).
> Order Your servant's redemption, for Your salvation do they

await. (H 69, 33-38)

It is possible that lines 36 and 37 ought to be considered an expression of the Martyrological Akedah: by virtue of the martyrs' readiness to give up their lives and their actual sacrifice, redemption should arrive soon. However, the only technical sacrifice term used in the piyyut is nashlim (rendered "offer up" in l. 36). It is preferable, I think, to read this conservatively. None the less, using a strict definition of Martyrological Akedah, as defined above, fourteen of the seventeen piyyutim included in Habermann's Sefer Gezeirot Ashkenaz V'Tzorfat and dateable between 1096 and 1196 can be classified as Martyrological Akedot. With the sole exception of Eliezer's poem, quoted above, none are explicitly identifiable as having been written for the High Holiday season.

The High Holiday Covenant Akedot commonly retell in verse the midrashic version of the Akedah. Many of the Martyrological Akedot, by contrast, describe in graphic detail the deaths of the contemporary martyrs, employing the imagery of the AKedah and the technical terms of cult sacrifice. Despite their painful content, the poems were written as elaborately rhymed acrostics, true to the style of their day. While the outstanding feature of these poems is their common invocation of the Doctrine of the Martyrological Akedah to explain the nations

circumstances, many articulate eloquent defenses of religious faith as well. We should not be surprised that with the atoning value assigned to the martyrs' deaths an urgent messianism is expressed in many of the poems. The redemptions for God's chosen is coupled with a call for the strongest possible punishment on those who have brought this tragedy down so that the spilt blood of the martyrs will be avenged. Powerless themselves, these medieval Jews asked that the hand of God, which was to redeem them from their oppressors, would also smite the latter down. This linkage of redemption and and revenge may explain the origins of a passage in the Passover Haggadah, a question that will be addressed in the next chapter. The balance of this chapter is devoted to an analysis of the literary expression of the Martyrological Akedah.

Rabbi Akiba was martyred at the hands of Rome in 135 C.E. during the Bar Kochba revolt. His example created an ideal of martyrdom which was combined with the motifs of the Akedah to produce the medieval self-perception of what was expected of a martyr. Rabbi Akiba is famous for having died with the words of the Shema on his lips. Actually, he was reciting the Shema at the hour of his death because it was the time for the daily morning prayer.[10] Akiba was not trying to set an example of how to behave in exceptional circumstances, but to teach that in exceptional times one's obligations remain unchanged. From that point on, however,

the recital of the Shema at the moment of death became a visible sign of the voluntary assumption of martyrdom. In the narrative and poetic accounts of the massacres which accompanied the First Crusade, the Shema is called "the blessing of sacrifice:"

We readied the slaughter of children
The blessing of sacrifice was offered:
"Hear O Israel Adonai is our God
Adonai is One" and we were united.
We were killed for the sanctity of His Name,
Our women and children falling by the sword. (9-10)

The medieval payyetanim emphasized again and again how the deaths of the martyrs were identical in every respect to the Akedah of Isaac. According to several midrashic accounts, Abraham and Isaac hurried (a play on words, turning on the significance of Vayashkem in Gen. 22:3) to do God's will on Mt. Moriah as if they were on their way to a wedding.[11] This motif is merged with the Akibaite model in order to create a new ideal for the martyr to emulate:

They rejoice to declare Shema Yisrael
Their mouths declare the blessing of their sacrifice.
Together, fathers and sons, brides and grooms,
Hurry to the slaughter as if they were in the
wedding procession...
Tears of fathers and sons meet and fall.
They scream the blessing of sacrifice, "Shema Yisrael."

(F 64, 25,28, 47-48)

One poem projects the blessing back to Isaac on Mt. Moriah where his "Amen" is another dimension of his readiness to be sacrificed. Following a lengthy accounts based on the midrashic expansion of the Akedah, the piyyut continues:

> The blessing for sacrifice covered the poor lad. He answered and said: "Amen. So may it be." He hurried to bring the wood and the fire to prepared the offering for sacrifice. (P 111, 13-14)

As the first Akedah was a test of faith, so the righteous in this generation are tried for their faith. The trial is a sign of spiritual strength since God tests only the strongest.

> Young men emerged, each from his room, to sanctify the great Name
> Since today He tries His chosen ones. They accepted the decree from heaven... (D 61, 9-10)
>
> * *
>
> God tests His righteous ones...
> As the artisan tests the clay vessel with a mallet.
> "You gave a banner to those that fear You " (P 111,1-2)

The banner (nes) is the badge of the test and refers back to nisa ("God tested Abraham) in Genesis 22:1. The exegesis is taught in the name of Rabbi Jonathan in Genesis Rabbah 55:2.

> If Isaac was a perfect sacrifice, no less were these

perfect offerings, too:

> Holy One, surely You will remember this Akedah with the Akedah of Isaac... (S 138, 19:1)
>
> * *
>
> How great is the cry of the children, seeing their siblings slaughtered in panic.
> The mother ties her son down lest his trembling invalidate [the offering]. The father blesses before slaughtering the offering.(D 61, 15-16)

In the following four stanzas, this piyyut portrays in detail the cruel deaths suffered by the community, before asking why the angels did not intervene here as they did at Mt. Moriah. Spiegel quotes the text in The Last Trial:[12]

> O Lord, Mighty One dwelling on high!
> Once, over one Akedah, Ariels cried out before Thee!
> But now how many are butchered and burned!
> Why over the blood of children did they not raise a cry?
> (D 61, 27-28)

While Spiegel is correct in citing this example of the identification with the original Akedah, the translator misses the point of the text in his rendition of the third line. "Butchered and burned" is not an accurate translation of "ne'akadim v'niklalim." The reference is directly to Isaac's Akedah: they are "bound" like Isaac, and "consumed" as he was, and as the sacrifices were. Not

only do they compare themselves to Isaac; the payyetanim do not hesitate to consider their own trial as even greater than his:

> His father tied him who was offered on Mt. Moriah,
> Who prayed he should not kick and disqualify the slaughter.
> But we without being tied are slain for his love...
> {J 84, 14:1-4}

According to the rabbinic Akedah, Isaac stretched forth his neck so his father could complete the sacrifice. This example was emulated by Rabbi Kalonymus and others[13] and may clarify a difficult line found in another poem: "He sanctified his head like the Binding of Moriah" {O 109, 20}.

As we saw in Chap. I, the original Egyptian Passover occurred by virtue of Isaac's merit. Isaac's Akedah, the Exodus from Egypt and the suffering of his own generation all come together in Rabbi Joel bar Isaac's lament:

> Isaac's dust and ashes surely demand: do not be deaf to the plea of his offspring. On Your doors they knock like a beggar or pauper--his blood must be avenged. Remember the many hardships of the righteous: make a sign with them for goodness. Bring them from jail and prison--may this blood be a sign.
> Switch the offered and torn ram. Remember for his seed how

he fell and was brought low, and to God he cried out and God passed over: "And He saw the blood and passed over" (Ex. 12:13)....

As the first was tested by God's word, so the latter ones in their innocent are tried by the hand of a Redeemer--within sight and bearing witness to these nations where God has placed Israel.

He [Abraham] hurried to bring one [Isaac] and it is credited to his children for all time,

But now so many slaughter their children...

The eyes of the Almighty will look on: the blood of a priest, son of a priest, will cleanse.

Cling to this and atone and lead us from this house... (P 111, 18-22, 31-36)

Line 35, "The eyes...," is a pun based on TP Berachot 4:7. The "priest, son of a priest" literally means "the tosser, son of a tosser," based on the Numbers 19:19-22 where the priest is instructed how to toss purifying water. The role is a hereditary one passed from priestly father to priestly son. The Palestinian Talmud asks: "Who may toss? The tosser, son of a tosser, may toss (i.e. cleanse)." In this martyrological piyyut, the priest does not toss the cleansing water but the blood of the priest's body is tossed and effects the cleansing, which is to say, atones. The conversion of the priest from officiant at the sacrifice to sacrificial offering is reflected in the closing line of

the piyyut (l. 40), in which "the blood" refers to the martyrdom of the priests: "No altar, no altar ledge con contain their blood. Therefore, may this atone for the sin of Jacob."

According to the rabbinic Akedah, Isaac was the model for all future sacrifice. His offering at Moriah was perfect in every way--and thereby conformed to the strict rules which forbade the sacrifice of a blemished animal. The medieval martyrs matched every gesture described in the midrashic expansion of the original Akedah and simultaneously portrayed the sacrifice like an offering in the Temple cult in Jerusalem.[14] Over and over, the victims of the Crusader mobs are characterized equally as perfect and without blemish. Since they were unblemished and innocent of any wrong-doing, they were worthy of being sacrificed.

> The corpses of the innocent without blemish were abandoned
> Dragged and tossed naked to be despoiled...
> Shelamim [whole-offerings] and olot [burnt-offerings], grooms and brides
> Todot [thank-offerings] and belulot [meal offerings, youths and maidens and the best of the communities.
> Brothers together, their blood spilled as one,
> So sisters in awe of the Unique Name were slaughtered to unite it. [E 63, 14-15,21-24]

The different types of sacrifice which were so important to the discussion of the rabbinic interpretation of the Akedah and its symbolism are not cultically relevant in the 12the century, more than a thousand years after the last sacrifices were offered at the Temple in Jerusalem. But in a symbolic way, so long after the cult has ceased, the thank-offerings and the whole-offerings and the meal-offerings can be used stylistically as interchangeable items with new significance. The essence of the sacrificial offering is the same in every case and it is this metaphor which the 12th-century Rhineland Jews acted out. Their grooms and brides, youths and maidens are offered as free-will sacrifices to God. "They offered up their sons as a voluntary offering..." {R 133, 6:6}

Priests brought their offerings to sacrifice
Mothers and their children, bound,
And burned their flesh in the fire.
Tossing the blood of sisters and brothers,
Offering up [lehaktir] the assigned portions.

Literally and ultimately, they acted out the offering of themselves as the sacrifice described in Berachot 17a:

> Master of the world, it is revealed before you that when the Temple stood, a person would sin and bring an offering before you. But all that would be offered of the sacrifice is the fat and the blood and they would atone for the sinner. Now that I have sat and fasted, my fat and my blood are diminished. May it be acceptable before You to consider my diminished fat and blood as if they had been offered before You on the altar...

Remember how they offered their souls to death;
this one to be killed and slaughtered, keeping Your word.
See their fat, in its entirety consumed [hiktiru]. View their blood as if it were poured on the base [yesod] of the altar.
Pure of Vision, see how they are bound (lit.: their Akedah). Torn in Your house, look upon their sacrifice!
May their offering [korban] always appear before You; may it be acceptable and atone for ever.
Let the worthiness of their labor be a reminder before You as the recalling of the burnt offerings atones before You
Turning Your wrath from Your children, announcing the message: "I have forgiven your transgression"...
(N 107, 7-12)

Children and women together they offered up [hishlimu] to be bound...
Year old sheep for a pure offering
Whole-offerings like the required sacrifice
Saying to their mothers: "Do not show mercy
We have been summoned from above to be an offering to the Lord..."

Infants and babes sacrificed whole as an offering
As the ashes of Your offering are swept up, remember
all of your sacrifices [minchotecha] Selah.
{H 69, 17, 21-24, 31-34}

The martyrs are summoned from above (l. 24) just as Isaac was called from heaven. (The comparison occurs a second time in ll. 57-60.) The bulk of the poem describes the martyrs' deaths as if they were part of the sacrificial cult. Cultic terms include: "offering" (l. 10), "offered up" (l. 17), and all of lines 21, 22, and 31. The sweeping of the ashes, included here in line 32, is described in M. Tamid 1:4. This section of the lengthy poem concludes: "May the offering of Yehudah waft as a pleasing odor [before You]" (l. 40).

The Martyrological Akedot offer two different explanations of the origin of the violence their authors witnessed. Some intimate that the destruction visited upon the community was on account of the nation's sins. Others make no mention of sin at all and explain the suffering exclusively as being for the sake of God's glory. Two poems by Rabbi Kolonymus bar Judah, the father of Rabbi Eliezar the Pious, are included in our study. Rabbi Kolonymus eulogized the martyrs:

They gathered together to offer their souls in awe
They were united in strength to sanctify the Unique
name.

{G 66, 32-33}

The second poem by Rabbi Kolonymus explains the martyrdom in the same way:

Surely you see how these Akedot are bound.
Beloved in life and not separated in death
They devoted themselves to sanctifying Your Name

{F 64, 32-34}

The messianic conclusion to this poem includes a petition for forgiveness of sin. Although not an example of the source of the persecutions being attributed to sin, it does illustrate Rabbi Kalonymus' understanding of atonement:

Show grace to Your creation, protect us under Your wing
Let love cover up all our transgressions.

The "love" which Rabbi Eliezer speaks of is the martyrs' self-sacrifice. Elsewhere, the persecutions are described as an effort to break the bonds of love which bind Israel to God.[15] The Jewish people maintains its faith and courage in the face of persecution out of love for God.

After the destruction of the Second Temple, the Jews explained their loss: "We were exiled from our land on account of our sins." This theodical explanation reappears in some of the Martyrological Akedot. The terrible destruction began, it is explained, as the result of the nation's sins:

We cannot dwell on the sleeping ones

They are inscribed for life eternal.
But as for ourselves, we are very guilty:
For we have transgressed the commandments of purity.
{D 61, 30}[16]

* *

Woe to us because we sinned...
{R 133, 11}

It is not the martyrs personally, however who have sinned; they are innocent and their deaths atone for the entire community. This model of atonement was surely familiar to the Jews after centuries of contact with Christianity. As explained in Chap. I, one explanation of the original assignment of atoning worth to Isaac's sacrifice is that it represented a Jewish answer to the power attributed by the Church to Jesus. During the Crusader period, the Jews were surely influenced by the example of the Crusaders themselves who were promised absolution from sin in exchange for their participation in the Crusades. The Jews' atoning pilgrimage was not the the Holy Land but to the door of the synagogue or their home where they died sanctifying God's Name and securing atonement.[17]

Whatever the original source of the martyrdom, the deaths of the righteous vicariously atones for the nation:

And their killing will be forgiveness and atonement for us.
{I 81, 22}

* *

May their sacrifice always appear before You
May it be acceptable and atone forever.
{N 108, 10-11}

* *

By this may be atoned the sin of Jacob...
{P 111, 42}

The two explanations for the origin of the persecutions--God is testing the righteous and God is punishing sin--are presented side-by-side. If the Rhineland Jews were ready to be tested by God, they were also not afraid to challenge the Creator. This people has been punished enough, they insist!

For You are just and we have sinned with all our means
For we did not listen to the voice of Jeremiah's vision
As he interpreted it would be, so it has come to pass.
But now, O God, how long? You have punished twofold
with the storm of pain.
Appear God and execute judgement on the enemy who has
been a marauding bear
Upon the House of Israel and upon the people of the
Lord who have fallen by the sword.
{O 110, 2:9-14}

Even if God had turned his face from the community for a short while, the suffering of the innocent would surely earn divine favor. The silence of God is a continuing

complaint of the authors of the Martyrological Akedot. Yet the very fact of the authorship and recitation of these poems illustrates the people's faith.

> We called you from our sorrow in the midst of our pain
> Our God, why did you abandon us far from our salvation?
> (J 84, 19:3-4)

Even those piyyutim which border on the blasphemous, as the three examples cited below do, conclude with a traditional statement of faith:

> Do they give bribes to you, One God? Do You show favor and take bribes?
> (A 9, 9)
>
> * *
>
> Modest and worthy daughters of kings are pulled in wagons and dragged before you, O King of Kings, dweller above. We shall recite the multitude of sorrows...
> (D 61, 21-22)
>
> * *
>
> There is none like you amongst the deaf, silent and quiet to the oppressed, our sorrows are many...
> (J 90, 1)

The first line of this piyyut is a pun, playing on the opening line of the service for the reading of the Torah on the Sabbath morning, Psalm 86:8: "There is none like you amongst the gods (elohim) is turned into "amongst the deaf (ilamim)." After describing various acts of martyrdom, the

poem concludes:

> You have hidden Your face from the call of their anguish
> Turn from nothingness [ain ode] to their offering and suffering.
> Suffering, Your people say You are separated from them...
> Rock of Ages, do not be as one who is deaf!
> (J 90, 35-38)

The call to revenge the injustice done echoes throughout the Martyrological Akedot. Small in number and dependent on the aristocracy for protection, the Jews channeled their hostility into verse and demanded of God that He avenge the criminal acts. The punishment of the perpetrators would also be a just reward for the Jews' faith and another sign of God's presence and power. [18]

The call for revenge is, of course, not limited exclusively to Akedah piyyutim. Habermann includes one piyyut by an anonymous author, erroneously identified in the past as Rashi, which describes in graphic detail (and carefully rhymed couplets) the punishments to be brought down upon the people's oppressors.[19] Although many of the piyyutim mention specific places, people and dates, this poem lacks any hint of the date and location of its composition. The author asks God to bring these punishments on his enemies--not having any other means to effect them--but

the poem reflects no particular theological doctrine. It is the only poem of this type Habermann includes. The piyyut concludes:

> Bring these on Edom and Ishmael and all the army of Rome. And with them the rest of Your enemies, nation by nation.
> (M 105,41)

Edom was originally a euphemism for Rome. By the medieval period, it was a synonym for Rome, the rabbinic symbol for first the political and then the religious power associated with the city, and the repeated focus of the medieval authors' anger:

> Roman and Edomite intend to extinguish the love.
> Ignite sparks of fire and flame...
> Punish them as they have done, according to the evil of their deeds.
> Visit upon them, Lord, the work of their own hands.
> Cast your wrath upon the nations who have destroyed your children, for they have devoured Jacob...
> Rain down from heaven brimstone and fire and sulphur.
> Let there be sacrifice for the Lord in Batzrah and great killing in the land of Edom
> Battle and wars and revenge by the hand of the white and ruddy One, wearing red:
> "An uproar from the city, thunder from the Temple"
> Deposing and burning Esau and his generals.

Let the voice of the Lord complete the punishment of His enemies

As the emergence of the mighty sun will shine upon those who love Him.

(L 92, 39-40,43-48,53-58)

This poem quotes fragments of verses from various redemptive prophesies. The Redeemer appears wearing red, the color of judgement. The white and ruddy One (Song of Songs 5:10) may be either God or the Messiah. This figure appears in another poem: "The white and ruddy One from Sa'ir."[20]

Customarily, we would expect that it is God as Judge, executor of divine justice, who weighs misdeeds and punishes the evildoers, as in this example:

Bring them down to the valley without a grave to be judged. Look, God of Justice! Execute the sentence...

(S 137, 27:1)

In the majority of the piyyutim, though, it is not God the Judge but God the Merciful One who exacts vengeance. It is the martyr's sacrifice which moves God to mercy and redemption, and with them, to revenge. This recalls again the High Holiday motif of Isaac's remembrance leading God to move from the throne of judgement to the throne of mercy. It is out of mercy that God sends redemption and revenge. In these piyyutim, the two acts are inseparable.

For Your unity, praised and awesome One, Dweller on

high, we worship you in awe day and night. Avenge our cause, demand vengeance, Highest on high, Who sits on the throne of mercy.

(D 61, 33)

The messianic vision of these medieval Jews did not include the peaceful meeting of all nations on God's Holy Mountain. Upon the Messiah's arrival, the Jews will rejoice in their return to Zion while their enemies are deservedly punished. After the call to "Bring them down to the valley without a grave" (quoted above), the same piyyut continues its messianic motif in the following three stanzas. The final stanza reads:

Be strong and firm, amen. The believer trusts with faith

His promise will soon be realized and the word quickly realized

The walls of the city restored and the castle will be prepared

The redeemed of the Lord will be returned and shall come into Zion in joy.

(S 137, 30:1-4)

Another example of revenge and the messianic return intertwined:

(The blood of the martyrs) shall cry and call forever before their Creator

Avenge the blood of Your servants from the hands of the

spillers
Punish them like the evil of their deeds
"Give them anguish of heart; Your curse be upon them,"
(Lam. 3:65)...
All the evil of my persecutors will come before You.
Pursue in anger and destroy them from under the heavens
of God
Declare a day of reckoning for the evil of my neighbors
Before my eyes will be seen vengeance amongst the
nations for the blood of Your servants.
We shall retell Your praises from generation to
generation, God
Grant glory for Your Name and not for us, God, not for
us
Our prayer and our petitions are to have mercy on our
remnant
Be strong and be strengthened for the sake of our
people.
(J 84, stanzas 26, 28, 29)

The righteous are tested for the sake of God's glory. Just as the suffering was necessary to honor God, so the reward given is not based on the merit but for the sake of God's glory.[21] In stanza 26 above, the blood of the martyrs cries out as Abel's did from the ground. The messianic era proclaimed in line 28:3 is realized "for Your Name, God, and not for us..."

In the messianic age, the sacrificial cult will be restored. As we have seen, these medieval Jews considered their own martyrdom as a redemptive reenactment of the cult's rituals. Isaac's original sacrifice was considered the model on which the cultic sacrificial system was designed. The long lament by Rabbi Ephraim bar Jacob concludes each stanza describing how the contemporary martyrs died with the first line of Parashat Tzav, Lev. 6:2, "This is the law of the offering burnt on the fire." Since the martyrs completed the requirements for the ritual offering, the poet asks that salvation be hurried and the sacrificial system restored in Jerusalem:

> As for me, how long must I wait to be returned by the hand of Ben Naflai and Elijah the prophet.
> Upon all my evil neighbors bring evil woes to their souls, let evil be repaid to them.
> Your hand has not been slow to do good to me, May Your words be fulfilled and may we honor You in the city of my home...
> I will offer up bulls on your altar forever, with Your favor in Jerusalem, Your city, in her glory,
> And the tamid then shall be kept as an eternal offering always "This is the law of the offering burnt on the fire..."
>
> (R 133, end)

The power of these poems flows from their vivid

descriptions and the fervent, urgent messianism throughout. Having survived the terrible tests, the people anticipate the messianic salvation:

> Save the plucked brands from the flaming fire (Amos 4:11)
>
> Take away the soiled garments to cleanse the people (Zech. 3:4)
>
> Dress them in redemption, a coat of remembrance
>
> The entire people will say "Amen" and praise God.
>
> (F 64, 30:1-4)

The surviving remnant, which Moses of Coucy called the "messianic generation" are the "brands plucked from the fire." Having been cleansed they are dressed now in protective, redemptive cloth.[22] The poem speaks of the messianic rewards the people will yet enjoy:

> The hidden divine stream will complete their reward
>
> Eight garments of glory and two <u>atarot</u> on their crown
>
> The necklace of gold around their neck.
>
> (F 64, 23:2-4)

Each example cited could be augmented by several others from the texts used in this study. We have now seen how the Martyrological Akedah was given literary form in the Martyrological <u>piyyutim</u>. Whether in the form of lament, eulogy or petition, each poem contributes to the popular perception of the martyrs' deaths possessing ultimate significance.

Chapter IV

The piyyutim presented in the last chapter represent the primary literary expression of the Doctrine of the Martyrological Akedah. Before turning to other examples of the penetration of the Doctrine into the religious world of the Ashkenazic Jews of the 12th century, it may be helpful to review the development of the Martyrological Akedah being presented here. In Chap. II, we explored the pervasive presence of the Doctrine of the Akedah in rabbinic Judaism. While this doctrine was no doubt influenced by the competing claims of Christianity during the first centuries of the Common Era, its development occurred over a long period of time and its roots may extend back to proto-historical literary-cultural motifs. Scholars have commonly assumed that the increasing persecution of Jews in late antiquity and the consequent veneration of martyrdom led to a deepening emphasis on Isaac's example as a voluntary martyr. This expanded appreciation of Isaac's role, many explain, grew even wider during the Middle Ages.[1]

The novel claim being argued here is that the Crusader-era persecutions brought forth a new doctrine, not just an elaboration of the old, wherein Isaac's sacrifice is no longer venerated as the sole ideal model; instead the contemporary martyrs themselves become parallel sacred

figures worthy of veneration. We have, then, two different Akedah doctrines, the rabbinic Akedah and the Martyrological Akedah, in which Isaac and the martyrs, respectively, vicariously atone for the people's transgressions. The full treatment of the topic of vicarious atonement in Judaism would take us well beyond the scope of this thesis. Relevant to our discussion, however, is the dating of the first instance in the literature where we find the doctrine that the undeserved death of martyrs serves as a vicarious atonement. This theme is found in Midrash Eleh Ezkarah and the piyyut by the same name which is included in the liturgy for Yom Kippur afternoon.[2] The deaths of the ten martyrs are vicarious atonement for Joseph's ten brothers who sold him into slavery but were never punished for their deed. In an early article, Solomon Zeitlin was shocked enough by the contents of the midrash to claim that the poem and its theme of atonement have "nothing of the spirit of rabbinic Judaism."[3] The four extant versions of the midrash are studied in an unpublished HUC-JIR rabbinic thesis by Bernard Frankel.[4] While all four explain the martyrs' deaths as atonement for Joseph's theft and sale by his brothers, the fourth and most recent recension goes further, to place special emphasis on the idea of vicarious atonement.[5] Frankel concludes that the redactor of this version was influenced by the martyrs of 1096 and the years that followed.[6] The

replacement of Isaac by the martyrs in the Doctrine of the Akedah did not necessarily begin in 1096. However, the events of that year were sufficiently acknowledged as a turning point in history, by its own generation and by those that followed, that they crystallized the new identification of martyrs as Isaacs in their own right.

In the rabbinic Akedah, Isaac is a salvific figure. The first redemption, the Exodus from Egypt, occurred in his name, the Paschal sacrifice is offered in Isaac's memory, and Passover is considered the season of redemption. The redemptive symbols of the holiday promise transcendent, ultimate release. The celebration continues, though, year after year, never final. Central to Passover myth and faith is the messianic conclusion of the Seder service: "Next year in Jerusalem!," the very words of which admit that this year we are still firmly planted here. Similarly, in the Rosh HaShanah liturgy, we find the blowing of the Shofar, which is said to recall Isaac's offering and move God from the throne of Justice to the throne of Mercy, so that the worshipers are inscribed in the Book of Life for the coming year--but only for the coming year. The ritual must be repeated next year. The hope of final messianic salvation permeates all of the liturgy. But even at the two times in the liturgical calendar when salvific hope is at its peak, at Passover and at Rosh Hashanah, ultimate redemption is deferred year

after year. The believer may say: "We are not worthy enough," but it is critical to understand that the on-going religious system depends on the continuous deferral of ultimate redemption. As Gershom Scholem has demonstrated, messianic movements, which preach imminent ultimate redemption, are always unsettling to the religious status quo.[7]

The Doctrine of the Martyrological Akedah, I believe, had just such an unsettling effect. The binding of the martyrs moves God from Justice to Mercy as does the blowing of the Shofar on Rosh Hashanah. But in contrast to the non-ultimate power of the rabbinic Akedah on Rosh HaShanah, the result of this heavenly movement in the Martyrological Akedah is <u>ultimate</u> redemption--the arrival of the Messiah. The salvific power of the Akedah is removed from its limited place within the High Holiday cycle. The movement from Justice to Mercy, which until now has been limited to the High Holidays, is freed from the constraints of an annual liturgical cycle, and the significance of the divine movement in powerfully reinterpreted. In the Martyrological Akedah, as in the rabbinic Akedah, redemption is earned through the martyr's self-sacrifice.

The redemptive significance imputed to the martyrs' deaths by the Martyrological Akedah is consistent with the acute messianism of the period, as described in Chap. II above. What happened, however, when the messianic fervor

subsided without the arrival of redemption? Was the Doctrine suppressed or was the relatively new Martyrological Akedah reinterpreted so as to be usable in a less urgently messianic context? Yet another possibility is for the Doctrine's proponents to go "underground" and become a secret group or minority sect.[8] Habermann's volume, filled with these piyyutim which were, by large, not admitted into the official synagogue liturgy, suggests an answer. The large number of messianic compositions testify to their popularity when they were written. But these explicit testimonials to messianic redemption were largely ignored by future generations. The central concept of the Doctrine--the atoning value of the martyrs' sacrifice, minus the dimension of messianic urgency--was inserted into the liturgy of the calendar-bound redemption cycle. The "heretical" imminence promised by the Martyrological Akedah was incorporated and channeled into the yearly liturgical cycle when the martyrs joined Isaac in the rabbinic Akedah.

A thorough investigation of the history of the Martyrological Akedah, its relation to the developing exegetical traditions about Isaac and to the Akedah piyyut is a task we shall leave to others. Briefly, it is noteworthy that of the eighteen poems listed under the rubric "Akedah" in Davidson's Thesaurus, eleven can be dated to our period.[9] Three of these eleven are discussed in Chap. III.[10] A comparison of the Appendix of this thesis and the

relevant sections of Zunz's Literaturgeshichte shows that many of the poems written under the direct influence of the Martyrological Akedah are not labeled by Davidson or others as "Akedot."[11]

One example of the neutralization of the messianic expectations of the Martyrological Akedah is the inclusion of Martyrological Akedot in the liturgy for the Ninth of Av. Goldschmidt's Seder Kinot includes four Martyrological Akedot.[12] Three of the four are included in this study.[13] By their inclusion in the liturgy of the Ninth of Av, the uniqueness of the particular time of their composition--the Crusader-era massacres--is absorbed into the chain of national tragedies. The martyrdom of the generation is at once brought into the structure of the total religious history and made to cast off its unique, special redemptive--and therefore, heretical--character.

The best-known source dating from our period is Abraham ben Azriel's work Arugat HaBosem, a commentary on piyyutim written about 1234.[14] The poems themselves do not appear but the words or phrase being explained are quoted. The topical index lists seven piyyutim under the heading "Akedah." Of these seven, one only mentions the Akedah in a passing reference. Of the remaining six, five are of the type we have called Covenant Akedot and only one is a Martyrological Akedah. Why are the poems missing from the source most likely to contain them? Heavily influenced by

German Pietism, Abraham ben Azriel was a disciple of Rabbi Judah the Pious and his successor, Rabbi Eleazar of Worms. In order to understand the absence of Martyrological Akedot from his book, we must turn to the interpretation of martyrdom in the thought of of German Pietism.

The Martyrological Akedah assigned the death of the martyrs special significance in the process of redemption, so that martyrdom takes on a unique status possessing special rewards. The German Pietists, however, explain the call to martyrdom differently. According to their theology, all of life is a series of trials. Suffering through trials is nothing less than the fulfillment of the purpose of humanity's creation. Joseph Dan traces the pietistic ideal of ascetic renunciation to the experience of Jewish martyrdom in 1096 and the following years. Viewing life as a trial, the practice of ascetic discipline oriented the Pietists for future martyrdom.[15] The German Pietists raised suffering, for the first time in Jewish history, to a regular part of their religious system.[16] Dying for Kiddush HaShem represented "nothing but the climax to the daily negation [of pleasure expressed through] overcoming desire in food, drink, sex and the like..."[17] While death as a martyr was the highest test a person could stand, it still was only another in the series of tests that organized life itself. Collective martyrology enjoyed no special place in the theology of German

Pietism.[17a] Taken as a necessary and worthy trial by God, the mass martyrdom did not produce the aggresive demands for revenge which characterized the messianism of the Martyrological Akedot.[18]

While always small in number, the influence of the teaching of Hasidei Ashkenaz on their contemporaries was substantial. If they did reject the Martyrological Akedah, and the poetry which reflected the Doctrine, it was probably by substituting their own interpretation of their generation's experiences, which envisioned all of life as a trial. Rabbi Akiba faced the challenge of ultimate trial by subsuming the extraordinary within the ordinary--he continued his habitual behavior, including the recitation of the daily Shema, unchanged. In their description of all life as a trial, Hasidei Ashkenaz accepted the extraordinary as the expected standard.

The German Pietists did, however, actively participate and even encourage the messianic urgency of the day, in that the leaders were "almost certainly involved in computing the date" of the Messiah's arrival and were they had an exclusive claim on the correct information.[19] At the same time, however, they cautioned the people against trusting in popular prophetic figures, their followers were ready and eager to believe in the Messiah's arrival.[20] Thus, Rabbi Judah the Pious advised "whoever prophesizes about the coming of the Messiah, know that he practices

witchcraft or demonology..."[21] Nonetheless, the same author reports about women in the Slavic lands "who spontaneously could recite all of the consolations in Isaiah and the populace knew all of the words of comfort..."[22] The pronouncement of Ezra the Prophet of Montcontour that the messianic age would begin in 1226 and culminate in 1240 was widely reported. After several days of fasting and prayer, Rabbi Eleazar of Worms was "granted the revelation that all his words were truth and not deception."[23]

We have seen how the Martyrological Akedah lifted the Doctrine of the Akedah out of its calendar-bound, non-absolute redemptive place and invested it with dynamic immediate messianism. The Messiah's failure to arrive required a new interpretation of the Doctrine. The most important contribution of the Doctrine for the Jews of the Middle Ages was its bestowal of meaning on the deaths of vast numbers of their communities. The significance of the martyrs' deaths thus remained, even if the urgent messianism first ascribed to them was replaced by inclusion in the on-going, liturgical cycle. An example of the integration of the Martyrological Akedah into the extant liturgical-redemptive cycle is the well-known section of the Passover Haggadah which begins: "Cast our Your wrath..." This verse from Psalm 79:6-7 is followed by a number of additional verses, which vary according to

different rites,[24] but in every case introduce the Hallel section of the service and immediately precede the invitation to Elijah, herald of the Messiah, to enter. The linkage of redemption and revenge, so central to the Martyrological Akedah, is abundantly evident here. An anonymous poem, which Habermann credits to a witness of the events of 1096, includes a particularly hostile attack on Esau, Rome and Christianity,[25] and includes among its various calls for revenge none other than Psalm 79:6-7 (with changes in the first verse): "Cast out Your wrath upon the nations who have destroyed Your children/ For they have consumed Jacob and laid waste his habitation..."[26] While I do not believe there is a necessary textual link between the verse's appearance in this piyyut and its entry into the Haggadah, a strong argument can be made that this section of the Haggadah entered under the influence of the Crusader-era tragedies, thereby refuting the existential and ideological crisis precipitated by and reflected in the Martyrological Akedah. The original time and provenance of this section of the Haggadah are unknown. It is not known by the Gaonim nor amongst the majority of Rishonim and it is absent from the majority of Genizah fragments.[27] The first known usage is in Machzor Vitry and the verse, and the variant expansions of it, are found in all editions of the Haggadah thereafter.[28] Goldshmidt suggests that the liturgical sections of Machzor Vitry were composed "no

earlier than approximately 1100" and possibly at a later date.[29] Thus, though Goldschmidt suspects that the custom of reciting these verses at the Seder may have been an ancient custom "lacking definite status in the Middle Ages,"[30] the absence of prior references and its location in the Haggadah suggest that this unit is not as ancient as he thought, but rather entered the Seder night liturgy under the influence of the Martyrological Akedah.

Another example of the influence of the Martyrological Akedah on the liturgy is the Av HaRachamim prayer. The prayer only appears in Ashkenazi prayerbooks, with a variety of suggestions for its use. Most traditions read it on most but not all Shabbat mornings.[31] Commentators have observed that it dates from the Crusader-era persecutions.[32] Abraham ben Azriel mentions the prayer in Arugat HaBosem and says that it is read in the synagogue on Sabbath mornings between Passover and Shavuot.[32a]

Av HaRachamim petitions God to remember the "pious pure and innocent" who were martyred for the sake of the Name. T'mimim is a technical sacrifice term which means unblemished. It is used through out the Martyrological Akedot to describe the martyrs as worthy sacrificial offerings. The application of II Samuel 23, "Beloved in life..." to the martyrs is identical to its use in the piyyut "The Voice is the Voice of Jacob."[33] Similarly, the expansion of M. Avot 5:23: "They were faster than eagles

and braver than lions to the will of their Creator" is also found in the piyyutim.[34] Customarily understood as an elegy for the martyrs, Av HaRachamim is a call for messianic vengeance in accordance with the Martyrological Akedah: "May our God remember them for good and avenge the blood of His servants which has been shed."[35] All of the verses used in the call for vengeance, which constitute the entire second half of the prayer, are familiar to us from the Martyrological Akedot. The call for revenge is even stronger in the version of the Prayer found in early prayerbooks, quoted by Baer: "May vengeance for the spilt blood of Your servants be known amongst the nations in our days and before our eyes." This was removed, explains Baer poignantly, "for the sake of peace."[36]

We have examined two additional liturgical products of the Martyrological Akedah, "Cast out Your wrath..." in the Passover Haggadah and the Av HaRachamim prayer. While a detailed chronological reconstruction cannot be offered at this time, we can say that the survivors of the massacres channeled the messianic hope contained in the Martyrological Akedah into the liturgy. The martyrs were raised to a level on a par equal to the greatest of the patriarchs and simultaneously integrated into the continuing religious structure of the pre-messianic world.

Chapter V: Conclusions

We have seen how the symbol of the Akedah was intrinsicly linked to the sacrificial cult and the symbolism of redemption. Despite the efforts to link the origins of the Doctrine of the Akedah directly to the challenge presented by Christian atonement doctrine or the Jewish experience of martyrdom, the Akedah's roots are deeper than both. This is not to deny the mutual influence of the Akedah and Christian atonement teaching on one another during the rabbinic period.[1] A more unilateral influence was exerted on the Martyrological Akedah by the medieval portrayal of Jesus.

The texts which purport to show the early rabbinic linkage of Jewish martyrdom and vicarious atonement, represented by the motif of the Akedah, e.g. "Hannah and her Seven Sons" and Midrash Eleh Ezkarah were probably written after 1096. The expanding development of the midrashic portrayal of Isaac under the influence of the events of 1096 and the following years is further illustrated by the resurrection motif climaxes Spiegel's Me-Agadot HaAkedah. In the Akedah piyyut of Rabbi Ephraim of Bonn, Isaac is slaughtered twice! According to Spiegel, this reflects the historical experience of the Jewish communities assaulted by successive crusades.[2] The growth in popularity of the Covenant Akedah reflects the medieval Jews' affection for and

identification with Isaac.[3]

In this thesis, another aspect of the medieval embrasure of Akedah symbolism has been studied--the Martyrological Akedah. In the Martyrological Akedah, Isaac is pushed aside to be replaced by the contemporary martyrs themselves. Isaac's place in the formula of redemption is assumed by the martyrs. The emergence of the Doctrine, although disruptive to the inherited religious system, arose to explain the immediate existential circumstances of the Rhineland Jews in the 12th century.

In the rabbinic Akedah, the redemptive significance of Isaac's self-sacrifice was highlighted ritually, e.g. through the symbol of the Paschal lamb. The piyyutim studied in this thesis were read ritually but not ritual enactments themselves--they were one step removed from the action. Frequently in the Jewish tradition, the ritual recital of an act is considered to be equal to its performance.[4] "We perform in rituals, and doing becomes believing..." The religious Doctrine of the Martyrological Akedah must have had some ground in the real historical behavior of the Jews massacred during the First Crusade. The first martyr to perceive his or her own immediate circumstances as a "Moriah-moment" and express this in some word or action that was meaningful to another laid the groundwork for the rapid evolution of the Doctrine of the Martyrological Akedah. Clifford Geertz explains that

"religious performances... for participants ...are enactments, materializations, realizations of it--not only models of what they believe, but also models for the believing of it."[5] In our case, the ritual preceded and suggested the theological explanation. The succeeding generations inherited both example and Doctrine, which prepared them for martyrdom when their lives were threatened.

According to Geertz, the search for meaning is at the core of religion. "The search for interpretability is the focus of the religious task, and the challenge suffering presents is a threat to the interpretability of experience."[6] The ritual recital of the circumstances of the martyrs' deaths and their theological justification and veneration answered the "threat to interpretability" presented by the violence and communal destruction. The Martyrological Akedah did not have a separate, organized doctrinal existence outside of the liturgical piyyutim being recited in the synagogues. Geertz characterized the response to the possibility of non-meaning as:

> the formulation, by the means of symbols, of an image of such a genuine order of the world which accounts for, and even celebrates, the perceived ambiguities, puzzles and paradoxes in human experience. The effort is not to deny the undeniable..but to deny that there are inexplicable events, that life is unendurable and justice is a mirage.[7]

The Martyrological Akedot served all these functions. The ritual repetition of the horrible circumstances met the

need of the people to tell the story: there was no effort to "deny the undeniable." The symbol of the Akedah is the vehicle for the "celebration" of death as martyrs. The assurance of the salvific power of the deaths of the martyrs and the assurance of God's vengeance served to deny that "justice is a mirage."

Barbara Myerhoff has explained that one of the messages of ritual actions, aside from their particular symbolic messages, is to make a statement about continuity. She notes that it is difficult "to make a convincing statement about continuity in a one-of-a-kind situation."[8] The Martyrological Akedah wavered between uniqueness and continuity. On the one hand, the martyrs' deaths were another link in the chain of Akedah-inspired redemptions. But because of the neutralization of the redemptive power of the Akedah in rabbinic Judaism, these particular circumstances were characterized as sui genris. This tension was only resolved when the messianic urgency of the Martyrological Akedah was neutralized through the integration of its central idea into the structure and symbols of the extant religious system. This problem was also faced by the German Pietists, who resolved it in a different fashion. Instead of identifying with historic examples, and thereby making this one-time ritual part of a series, they turned all of one's daily life into a ritual trial, so that the ultimate trial of martrydom was the

climax of a ritual pattern repeated throughout one's life.

The final question concerns the relationship to history. The Martyrological Akedah gained its power by insisting that the unique events of Crusader-era were outside of history--and would lead to the post-historical Messianic Age. The teachings of the Doctrine could only be preserved and used by the religious system when they were successfully brought into history--and the historical clock was permitted to move forward. Our contemporary 20th century generation faces an identical challenge in its efforts to give meaning to the events of our own recent history.

Notes

Notes to Introduction

[1] A complete study of the Martyrological Akedah would include research in : 1)the balance of the piyyutim found in Habermann's volume; 2) other piyyutim written by the authors included here; 3) piyyutim written during the same period by others. Manuscripts sources for the latter two groups can be found in Zunz's Literaturgeschichte de Synagogalen Poesie (Berlin:1859), chapters 6, 8, 9, and 10 (pp. 265-331 only). The only other published collection of piyyutim I know of is S. Bernfeld, Sefer HaDemaot (Berlin: 1857-1862). (The Institute for the Study of Hebrew Verse also has occasional publications.) Additional sources can be found in the short bibliography in Habermann, p. 245. Individual piyyutim are scattered throughout various collections of selichot; many are listed in the notes to The Last Trial. The only translations into English I know of are found in T. Carmi, Penguin Book of Hebrew Verse (New York: 1981) pp. 372-387.

Notes to Chapter I

[1] It is important to remember that the Jewish community during the Tannaitic and Amoraic period was composed of a variety of different groups, with different interests, agendas and values. "Rabbinic Judaism" was not a monolithic structure. The major intellectual-religious groups among Ashkenazic Jews during the 12th and 13th centuries are identified in I. Twersky. "Religion and Law" in S. D. Goiten, ed. Religion in a Religious Age ((New York: 1974), pp. 69-74.

[2] Sh. Spiegel. "Me'Agadot haAkedah" in Alexander Marx Jubilee Volume (New York: 1943) = Sh. Spiegel. The Last Trial. Trans. J. Goldin (New York: 1967). Other studies include: G. Vermes. "Redemption and Gen. 22" in Scripture and Tradition in Judaism. (Leiden: 1961) pp. 193-222; P. R. Davies and B. D. Chilton. "The Aqedah: A Revised Tradition-History" in CBQ 40 (1978), pp. 514-546; P. R. Davies. "Passover and the Dating of the Aqedah" JJS XXX,1 (Spring 79) pp. 59-67; I. Levi. "Le sacrifice d'Isaac et la mort de Jesus" REJ 64 (1912,II); H. J. Schoeps. "The Sacrifice of Isaac in Paul's Theology"JBL 65 (1946) pp. 385-392; M. Robinson. "The Binding of Isaac in Hebrew Literature" (Hebrew) reprinted in E. Yassaf, ed. The Sacrifice of Isaac (Jurusalem: n.d.)

[3] Davies, Aqedah, p. 515.

[4] J. Z. Lauterbach. Mekilta-de Rabbi Ishmael (Philadelphia: 1933) vol. I, pp. 57, 88.

[5] Rosh HaShanah 16a

[6] Pesikta de-Rav Kahana 151b; Lev. R. 29:3; Pesikta Rabbati 167a. See Spiegel, Trial, Chap. IX.

[7] Lev. R. 2:11; M. Tamid 4:1.

[8] While this might be expected to replace the offering of the daily tamid sacrifice after the desctruction of the Temple, it does not eneter into the liturgy until the Middle Ages. See "Akedah" Encyclopedia Judaica (Jerusalem: 1972) vol. 2, p. 481.

[8a] In this chapter, the poetry translations are identified by a letter which corresponds to the list of poems in the appendix. This is followed by the beginning page of the poem and the line numbers, counting from the poems first line. The longest poems are identified "stanza:line."

[9] See Vermes, Redemption, p. 207, n. 6. on the location of this passage. W. Braude and I. Kapstein. Pesikta de-Rav Kahana (Philadelphia: 1975) Supplement 1:20, p. 459.

[10] Davies would object to the term "biblical Akedah." I am at a loss for a better term to use in its place.

[11] A lengthy discussion can be found in S. Schechter. Aspects of Rabbinic Theology (New York: 1961) chap. 12.

[12] Gen. R. 28:1,2; Ex. R. 1:36, 15:6.

[13] H. Freedman and M. Simon, trans. Midrash Rabbah (London: 1983) vol. IV, p. 31.

[14] Ibid.

[15] Ibid.

[16] See note 2 above.

[17] G. Vermes. "Redemption and Genesis 22" in Scripture and Tradition in Judaism (Leiden: 1961) pp. 193-222.

[18] Ibid., pp. 194-196. It is not my intention to deny the association of I-IV Maccabees with martyrdom. The church preserved the books, according to Augustinius, on "account of the extreme and wonderful suffering" of the

martyrs. E. J. Bickerman. "The Dating of IV Maccabees" in Louis Ginzberg Jubilee Volume (New York: 1945) p. 106.

19 Fragmentary Targum to Gen. 22:10.

20 Ibid., vs. 14.

21 I, XIII, 1-4, sec. 232, cited in Vermes, Redemption, p. 198.

22 E. Finkelstein. Sifrei Deuteronomy (New York: 1969) p. 58.

23 Vermes, Redemption, p. 198; Iv Macc. 13:2, 16:20.

24 Vermes, Redemption, p. 195. See, though, p. 211, n. 1.

25 Ta'anit 16a; Gen. R. 49:11, 94:15; TP Ta'anit 65a; Sifra, 162c; Lev. R. 36:5; Tanchuma Toledot 7.

26 Cited in Spiegel, Trial, p. 43.

27 Ibid., p. 44.

28 D. Hoffman. Mechilta de-Rabbi Simon b. Jochai (Frankfurt: 1905), p. 4; Tanchua, Vayeira, 23.

29 Vermes, Redemption, p. 198.

30 Ibid., p. 202.

31 Fragmentary Targum to Gen. 22:10.

32 Fragmentary Targum to Lev. 22:7. The lamb on Moriah is named "Isaac" according to Midrash HaGadol on Gen. 22:13; see Spiegel, Trial, p. 40, nn. 12-14.

33 Davies, Aqedah, p. 539.

34 Ibid., p. 517.

35 Freedman, Midrash vol. IV, p. 31.

36 S. Buber. Midrash Tanchuma (Vilna:1913) Vayeira 46, p. 114.

37 Contra Haereses IV.5.4 Migne, P.G. VII, col. 985, cited in Spiegel, Trial, p. 84. Similar statements are made by Tertullian (Adv. Marc. II, 118, Adv. Jud., 10, 13), Augustine and others.

[38] Compare IV Macc. 13:26. The early Church's identification of Jesus with Isaac was not exclusive. Jesus is also compared, for example, to Jacob. Initially, the parallels in birth between Issac and Jesus were considered to be more significant than the similarities in their deaths.

[39] Davies, Aqedah, p. 517.

[40] See p. 25, and n. 53 below.

[41] Davies, Passover,p. 66.

[42] Lauterbach, Mechilta, pp. 57,88.

[43] Vermes, Redemption, p. 216, n. 6.

[44] Davies, Passover,p. 67.

[45] See above note 26.

[46] M. Tamid 4:1.

[47] Davies, Passover,p. 66. In Davies, Aqedah, p. 546, n. 81, he objects to the "confusion between redemption...and expiation." Passover, is redemptive he claims, but there is no evidence of expiation in the holiday's symbolism. What he fails to bserve is that there is a continuum between expiation (i.e. atonement) and redemption. While perhaps latent in rabbinic Judaism in comes to full fruition in Lurianic Kabbalah and especially in Rav Kook's Orot HaTeshuvah. It also play s a significant role in 13th century German Pietism. A contemporary Christian view is found in the discussion of sin in G. Gutierrez. A Theology of Liberation (New York: 1973) pp. 175-176.

[48] Davies, Aqedah, p. 536.

[49] Davies, Passover,p. 66.

[50] For a complementary illustration, see P. Brown. The Cult of the Saints (Chicago: 1981) p. 33.

[51] For example, see the ashes in Ta'anit 16a.

[52] Spiegel, Trial, pp. 59, 85-87.

[53] Ibid.

[54] Davies, Passover,p. 59.

55 In a chapter entitled "The System Shattered and Renewed," Mary Douglas demonstrates how that which is most taboo, can, under certain ritual conditions, be made most holy. This may be parllel to the ritual enactment of human offering in ancient Near Eastern culture. See Purity and Danger (London: 1966), pp. 159ff. On the other hand, I do consider the suggestion that the Suffering Servant, Isaac and Jesus are all examples of "symbolic royal humiliation" unworthy of pursuit or acceptance. See R. H. Rosenberg. "Jesus, Isaac and the Suffering Servant" JBL 84:381-8 (Dec. 1965).

56 Gen. R. 26:3.

57 Vermes, Redemption, p. 204. Also see G. Cohen, "The Story of Hannah and Her Seven Sons in Hebrew Literature" (Hebrew) in M. M. Kaplan Jubilee Volume (New York: 1953), pp. 109-122.

58 Spiegel, Trial, p. 15.

59 D. Hyman. Mekorot Yalkut Shimoni. (Jerusalem: 1965).

60 "Midrashim, Smaller." EJ, vol 16, p. 1515.

61 Vermes, Redemption, p. 198.

62 IV Macc. 16:20.

63 IV Macc. 6:28-29.

64 Vermes, Redemption, p. 198, n. 11.

65 Ibid., p. 202.

66 Compare Vermes on the Targum to Job 3:18 to Braude, PdRK, S1:20, p. 459.

67 Sifrei 32.

68 See Chap. IV below.

Notes to Chapter II

1 Norman Cohn, The Pursuit of the Millenium (New York: 1970) p. 68.

2 Ibid.

3 Ibid., pp. 48, 68.

[4] Ibid., p. 70.

[5] Also see "Kiddush HaShem" Encyclopedia Judaica (Jerusalem: 1970) vol. 10, p. 981.

[6] Examples is from Cohn, p. 69. Descriptions of the violence can be found in J. W. Parkes, The Jew in the Medieval World (London: 1938) pp. 57-92 and in S. W. Baron, A Social and Religious History of the Jews (New York: 1957) vol. IV, pp. 166-179.

[7] "Crusades" EJ vol. 5. p. 1135. Cohn, p. 69, says 4,000 to 8,000.

[8] Ibid., pp. 69-70.

[9] J. Hacher, "Regarding the Events of 1096" Zion XXXI (1966), p. 226. See note 2 for a chronology of the period. Other examples include "1096 marked a turning point in Jewish history," Baron, History, IV, p. 89; "[The year was a] decisive turning point in medieval Jewish-Christian relations," Parkes, Jew, p. 81.

[10] Hacher, "1096." p. 225.

[11] A. Jellinick, Beit HaMidrash (Vilna: 1853-77) vol. II, pp. 65-67.

[12] See Chapter IV. Also see Baron, History, vol. I, p 231; II, p. 370, n. 9; IV, p. 285, n. 6.

[13] Y. Baer, "The Decrees of 1096" (Hebrew) in Sefer Assaf (Jerusalem: 1942) p. 135, n. 38.

[14] Baron, History, IV, p. 89.

[15] First modern edition is A. Neubauer and M. Stern,,ed. Quellen zur Geschichte der Juden in Deutschland (Berlin: 1892). For a bibliography of sources and early scholarship, see Parkes, Jew, p. 60. Recent scholarship relies on the versions printed in Habermann.

[16] See Baron, History, vol. IV, p. 97. Although Haabermann suggests that the author of the account is the contemporary and friend of Rashi, R. Sason, others consider this most unlikely. See E. E. Urbach, Ba'alei HaTosafot (Jerusalem: 1955) p. 157, n. 62.

[17] Habermann, Gezeirot, p. 92.

[18] Baer, "Decrees," p. 130. On the independence of

Rabbi Eliezar's account from Solomon ben Samson's, see Urbach, Ba'alei, p. 157, n. 62 and Baer, "Decrees," p. 127.

19 Hacher, "1096," p. 229.

20 Habermann, Gezeirot, p. 6, translated in Spiegel, Trial, p. 25.

21 Ibid.

22 Baer, "Decrees." p. 128.

23 Introduction to Habermann, Gezeirot, p. 3; Baer, "Decrees", p. 130.

24 But see his approving quote of Baer in Trial, p. 25.

25 Habermann, Gezeirot, p. 4.

26 Consider the experience at Masada, where our knowledge of the groups commitment to die is based on the reports of two memebers of the zealot communith who hid, avoiding the slaughter and surviving to tell the tale.

27 Spiegel, Trial, p. 17.

28 Rabbi Eliezar and Solomon ben Samson are two examples.

29 Habermann = Book of Decrees of Ashkenaz and France: Memorial Accounts from Contemporaries of the Crusader Period and a Selection of Their Poems (Jerusalem: 1945).

30 See the notes to the Introduction for manuscript sources.

31 Cohn, Pursuit, Chap. I, passim: J. Katz, Exclusiveness and Tolerance (New York: 1962) p. 86.

32 R. Seltzer, Jewish People, Jewish Thought (New York: 1980). Baer, "Religious and Social Tendency of Sefer Hasidim" in Zion III (n.s.: 1938) p. 50.

33 J. Mann, "Messsianic Movements in the Period of the First Crusades" in The Collected Articles of Jacob Mann (Gedara: 1971) vol. I, p. 186.

34 Compare Scholem, Major Trends in Jewish Mysticsm, p. 244, concerning the same phenomenon in 1492.

[35] Baron, History, vol. IV, p. 96.

[36] Mann, "Movements," p. 182. Cf. the poetic use in Habermann, Gezeirot, p. 10.

[37] Sh. Assaf, "New Documents about Converts and about a Messianic Movement" (Hebrew) in Zion V (n.s.: 1940) pp. 116-124; G. Scholem, Major Trends in Jewish Mysticsm (New York: 1968) p. 84. Although Jacob Mann counts no less than eight messianic movements during the early crusades, most of those he presents were limited to Byzantium and the East.

Notes to Chapter III

[1] See the Introduction to E. D. Goldschmidt. Order of Selichot (Jerusalem: 1965).

[2] E. D. Goldschmidt. High Holiday Prayerbook (Jerusalem: 1971) vol. II, p. 661.

[3] Goldschmidt, Selichot, p. 225.

[4] Contrast Tanchuma, "Tzav," 13, where the knife is checked but the emphasis is on the virtue of fulfilling the mitzvot with the sacrificial emphasis found in the narrative accounts to Habermann, Gezeirot, pp. 45-46.

[5] Habermann, Gezeirot, pp. 107-108.

[6] Ex. 34:6-7.

[7] Rosh HaShanah 17b.

[8] Lev. R. 23:24.

[9] Despite their names, the two authors are apparently unrelated.

[10] Berachot 61b.

[11] Consider the quote from Geertz, p. 82, n. 7.

[12] Spiegel, Trial, p. 20.

[13] Habermann, Gezeirot, p. 61, l. 12.

[14] Baer, "Decrees," p. 136.

[15] C.F., e.g, Habermann, Gezeirot, p. 74, stanza 14,

p. 92.

[16] Translated in T. Carmi, Penguin Book of Hebrew Verse (New York: 1981) p. 375. He render the phrase "Precepts of right."

[17] "Crusades" EJ vol. 5, p. 1135.

[18] C.P. Baron, History, vol. IV, p. 80, 144.

[19] This particular poem appears much more like a minstrel's song than a synagogal composition.

[20] Habermann, Gezeirot, p. 113.

[21] See note 18.

[22] The "redemptive clothing" is a familiar midrashic theme: see, for example, Midrash Petirat Aharon where it is a central motif.

Notes to Chapter IV

[1] See, for example, the popular article by Dov Noy included in E. Yassaf, ed. The Sacrifice of Isaac (Jerusalem: n.d.)

[2] The poem Arzai HaL'vanon, also about the ten martyrs, dates from this period as well. I. Davidson, Thesaurus of Medieval Hebrew Poetry (New York: 1970), vol. I, # 7564. See E. D. Goldschmidt, Order of Lamentations for the Ninth of Av (Hebrew) (Jerusalem: 1968), p. 12, n. 33.

[3] S. Zeitlin. "The Legend ofthe Ten Martyrs and its Apocalyptic Origins" JQR 36:1 (1946), p. 10.

[4] B. Frankel. "An Analysis and Comparison of the Midrash Eleh Ezkarah." HUC-JIR, New York, 1963. [Unpublished rabbinic thesis]

[5] Frankel's recension H. See A. Jellinick, Beit HaMidrash (Vienna: 1853-78) vol II, p. 84.

[6] On the popularity of the midrash during our period, see E. Urbach, Ba'alei HaTosafot (Jerusalem: 1955), pp. 311-312.

[7] See Scholem, The Messianic Idea in Judaism (New York: 1971).

[8] Ibid.

[9] Davidson, Thesaurus. Dateable to the period: Aleph 332, 396, 953, 2406, 3203, 5465, 5962, 8492, 8772, Bet 1045, Yud 2817. Probably Sefardic are: Aleph 6742, Semach 141, and Ayin 1053. Aleph 6273 is from the early 18th century.

[10] Aleph 332 = Habermann N 109; Aleph 953 = O 111; Yod 2817 = A 9.

[11] Compare the sources found in the notes to Spiegel.

[12] Goldschmidt, Lamentations, pp. 23, 26, 30, 34.

[13] Ibid., all but p. 23, which includes the sentence: "We did not merit raising them [our children] to [a life of Torah], we shall offer them as a burnt-sacrifice [olah]..."

[14] Avraham ben Azriel, Arugat haBosem, E. E. Urbach, ed. (Jerusalem: 1939-63)

[15] J. Dan, "The Problem of Kiddush HaShem and Martyrology in the Ideology of German Pietism" in Proceedings of the 11th Annual Historical Conference (Jerusalem: 1968).

[16] I. G. Marcus, Piety and Society (Leiden: 1981), p. 150, n. 57.

[17] Urbach, Ba'alei, p. 326. Also see F. Y. Baer, "Religious Social Tendency of Sefer Hasidim" Zion III (n.s.; 1938).

[18] Dan, "Problem," p. 129.

[19] Ibid., p. 126.

[20] Ibid., p. 125.

[21] Ibid.

[22] Ibid., p. 123, Parma mass., sec. 212.

[23] G. Scholem, Major Trends in Jewish Mysticsm, p. 85; Sh. Assaf, "New Documents on Converts and on a Messianic Movement" Zion V (n.s.: 1940), p. 116.

Notes to Chapter V

[1] See S. Lieberman. "The Martyrs of Caesarea" in Annuaire de L'Institute de Philogie et d'Histoire Orientales et Slaves VII (1939-1944); "Roman Legal Institutions in Early

[24] E. G. Goldschmidt. Passover Haggadah (Hebrew) (Jerusalem: 1981) p. 62.

[25] Habermann, Gezeirot, pp. 90-92.

[26] Ibid., l. 43. The text is related to Jer. 10:25.

[27] Goldschmidt, Haggadah, p. 62.

[28] Ibid.

[29] "Machzor Vitry" EJ vol. 11, p. 736.

[30] Goldschmidt, Haggadah, p. 64.

[31] In Gates of Repentence and the Goldschmidt Machzor itappears in the Yom Kippur liturgy.

[32] E.g., P. Birnbaum, Daily Prayerbook (New York: 1969) p. 383.

[32a] Urbach, Arugat, vol. IV, p. 48.

[33] Habermann, Gezeirot, p. 64.

[34] Habermann, Gezeirot, p. .

[35] The editors of GOR certainly understood this. Compare the abridged version they include, p. 435.

[36] I. S. Baer, Siddur Avodat Yisrael p. 233.

Notes to Chapter V

[1] See S. Lieberman. "The Martyrs of Caesarea" in Annuaire de L'Institute de Philogie et d'Histoire Orientales et Slaves VII (1939-1944); "Roman Legal Institutions in Early Rabbinic and in the Acta Martyrum" JQR XXXV (1944) pp. 1-58.

[2] Spiegel, Trial, Chap. X.

[3] See my comments on the dating of the Akedot piyyutim in the notes to the Introduction and Chap. III.

[4] Consider the Lev. R. passage discussedin Chap. I, the Avodah service on Yom Kippur, and the entire post-70 relationship to prayer.

[4a] B. Myerhoff. Number Our Days (New York: 1980) p. 86.

[5] C. Geertz. "Religion as a Cultural System" in Anthrolpological Approaches in the Study of Religion. M. Banton, ed. (New York: 1965) p. 29. See the bibliopgraphy there, pp. 44-46.

[6] Ibid., p. 14.

[7] Ibid. , p. 23.

[8] Myerhoff, Number, p. 93.

Appendix

Letter	Pages	HHD	Akedah	Sacr.	Mess.	Rev.	Sin	
A	9				X			
B	16-18				X			
C	21-23				X			
D	61-62		X	X		X	X	
E	63-64		X	X		X		
F	64-66		X			X	X	
G	66-69		X					Temple
H	69-71		X	X				
I	82-84			X	X		X	
J	84-88		X	X		X		
K	89-90	X		X	X		X	
L	90-92		X	X	X	X		"Cast out..."
M	105-107					X	X	See p. 93,
N	107-108	X	X	X			X	n. 19
O	109-111		X	X	X		X	
P	111-112		X	X			X	
Q	113-114		X	X	X			
R	133-136		X	X	X		X	
S	137-141		X	X	X		X	
T	147-151			X	X			

Letter corresponds to the use of the poem in Chap. IV.

Pages refers to Habermann, Gezeirot.

Akedah means the use of the word "Akedah" or explicit reference to Gen. 22.

Sacrifice denotes the use of technical sacrificial language.

Messianism denotes explicit messianic references and prayer.

Sin means the description of the people as sinners or the destruction as punishment for sin and the explicit description of the martyrdom as a source of atonement.

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