

Micah 6:7

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

Will the LORD be pleased with thousands of rams, or with ten thousands of rivers of oil? shall I give my firstborn for my transgression, the fruit of my body for the sin of my soul?

Analysis

Will the LORD be pleased with thousands of rams, or with ten thousands of rivers of oil? shall I give my firstborn for my transgression, the fruit of my body for the sin of my soul? The hypothetical offerings escalate to absurdity, exposing the bankruptcy of works-righteousness. "Thousands of rams" (באלפי אילים) and "ten thousands of rivers of oil" (בריבבות נחלים) propose extravagant quantities far exceeding normal sacrifices. The hyperbole reveals desperation—how much is enough to satisfy God?

"Shall I give my firstborn for my transgression" (האתן בכורֵי פשָׁע) reaches horrific conclusion: child sacrifice. Though Mosaic law explicitly forbade this (Leviticus 18:21, 20:2-5; Deuteronomy 12:31), apostate kings like Ahaz and Manasseh practiced it (2 Kings 16:3, 21:6). The parallel phrases "my firstborn" / "fruit of my body" and "my transgression" / "sin of my soul" emphasize the most precious offering for the most serious offense. But God never required or desired human sacrifice—it represents paganism's ultimate perversion.

This verse exposes two errors:

1. quantitative thinking—assuming more sacrifice produces more favor,
2. substitutionary misunderstanding—believing human effort can atone for sin.

Only God's provision suffices. The irony: while Israel speculated about hypothetical child sacrifice, God would actually give His Son as the real, effective sacrifice for

sin (John 3:16; Romans 8:32). Christ is the true Firstborn offered for our transgression, the ultimate "fruit of the body" given for our souls' sin (Isaiah 53:10; 2 Corinthians 5:21).

Historical Context

Child sacrifice was practiced by surrounding nations (particularly Molech worship—Leviticus 18:21) and tragically adopted by apostate Israel during periods of idolatry. Archaeological evidence from Carthage (Phoenician colony) reveals tophet sites where children were sacrificed. Though debated, some scholars believe similar practices occurred in Judah's Valley of Hinnom (Gehenna) during Ahaz and Manasseh's reigns (2 Kings 23:10; Jeremiah 7:31, 19:5).

The question's rhetorical nature suggests Micah's audience knew God didn't require literal child sacrifice, yet it serves two purposes:

1. exposing the absurdity of escalating religious works,
2. highlighting that no human offering, however costly, can atone for sin.

Only divine provision suffices—ultimately fulfilled in Christ's substitutionary death. As Abraham discovered (Genesis 22), God provides the lamb for sacrifice; humans cannot save themselves through works.

The reference to "firstborn" connects to Exodus 13:2 where God claimed Israel's firstborn, redeemed through animal substitution. This foreshadowed Christ, God's Firstborn (Colossians 1:15; Romans 8:29; Hebrews 1:6), who was not spared but given for us (Romans 8:32). Micah 6:7's rhetorical question finds answer in the gospel: God gave what we could never offer—His own Son as perfect, sufficient sacrifice (Hebrews 10:10-14).

Related Passages

Hebrews 11:1 — Definition of faith

Romans 1:17 — The righteous shall live by faith

Study Questions

1. How does the progression from ordinary sacrifices to child sacrifice illustrate the futility of trying to earn God's favor through human effort?
2. What does this verse teach about the nature of sin's seriousness—that no human offering, however precious, can atone for it?
3. How does Christ's sacrifice as God's true Firstborn fulfill and end the futile search for adequate human offerings?

Interlinear Text

בָּרְכָב	וְתִ	אִיל	יָם	בְּאָלִף	וְיְהוָה	בְּיַרְאָךְ	הִ
be pleased	Will the LORD	with thousands	of rams	or with ten thousands	the fruit	for my transgression	shall I give
H7521	H3068	H505	H352	H7233	H6529	H6588	H5414
גַּתְלִי	שְׁמָן	בְּכָרְבִּי	בְּאַתְּ	פְּשָׁע	פָּר	נַעֲלֵי	שְׁמָן
of rivers	of oil	my firstborn	for my	for	the fruit	shall I give	of oil
H5158	H8081	H1060	H6588	H6529	H6588	H5414	H8081
בָּטָן	חַטָּאת	נַפְשִׁי	אֶת	בְּטָן	אֶת	חַטָּאת	בָּטָן
of my body	for the sin	of my soul	for	of my body	for	the sin	for the sin
H990	H2403	H5315	H5315	H990	H2403	H5315	H2403

Additional Cross-References

2 Kings 16:3 (References Lord): But he walked in the way of the kings of Israel, yea, and made his son to pass through the fire, according to the abominations of the heathen, whom the LORD cast out from before the children of Israel.

Psalms 51:16 (Parallel theme): For thou desirest not sacrifice; else would I give it: thou delightest not in burnt offering.

1 Samuel 15:22 (References Lord): And Samuel said, Hath the LORD as great delight in burnt offerings and sacrifices, as in obeying the voice of the LORD? Behold, to obey is better than sacrifice, and to hearken than the fat of rams.

Psalms 50:9 (Parallel theme): I will take no bullock out of thy house, nor he goats out of thy folds.

Jeremiah 7:31 (Parallel theme): And they have built the high places of Tophet, which is in the valley of the son of Hinnom, to burn their sons and their daughters in the fire; which I commanded them not, neither came it into my heart.

Hosea 6:6 (Parallel theme): For I desired mercy, and not sacrifice; and the knowledge of God more than burnt offerings.

2 Kings 23:10 (Parallel theme): And he defiled Topheth, which is in the valley of the children of Hinnom, that no man might make his son or his daughter to pass through the fire to Molech.

2 Kings 21:6 (References Lord): And he made his son pass through the fire, and observed times, and used enchantments, and dealt with familiar spirits and wizards: he wrought much wickedness in the sight of the LORD, to provoke him to anger.

Isaiah 40:16 (Parallel theme): And Lebanon is not sufficient to burn, nor the beasts thereof sufficient for a burnt offering.

Leviticus 18:21 (References Lord): And thou shalt not let any of thy seed pass through the fire to Molech, neither shalt thou profane the name of thy God: I am the LORD.