



## *Blood Ritual*

### *3: Human Sacrifice, the Talmud, and the Moloch Problem*



**Blood Ritual:** — Blood ritual is fundamental to Judaism. Some blood sanctifies, some blood defiles. Let's see what the Talmud doctrines are.

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No one today seriously suggests present-day Jews sacrifice children to Moloch. Moloch (sometimes spelled "Molech") was an Old Testament god whom the Hebrews worshipped from time to time, and to whom they sacrificed their children. The Babylonian Talmud, however, still permits Jews to sacrifice children to Moloch — under certain conditions.

#### ***LORD God Accepts Human Sacrifice***

First, let's get perspective. Some mistakenly believe human sacrifice is forbidden in the Old Testament. Certainly, some of the prophets railed against it. But in at least one book, LORD God accepts human sacrifice. And in another book, LORD God is appeased by human sacrifice.

In the following account from the Book of Judges, the Israelite warrior Jephthah is about to set off to make war on the Ammonites. In payment for victory, Jephthah promises LORD God he will sacrifice the first "whatsoever" that comes from his house to greet him upon his return. Unless Jephthah keeps oxen, sheep, goats, or chickens in his living room, he must expect the promised victim will be a human being. Notice that Jephthah does not promise to sacrifice "an ox" or "a goat," etc. (7)

- 30. And Jephthah vowed a vow unto the LORD, and said, If thou shalt without fail deliver the children of Ammon into mine hands,**
- 31. Then it shall be, that whatsoever cometh forth of the doors of my house to meet me, when I return in peace from the children of Ammon, shall surely be the LORD's, and I will offer it up for a burnt offering.**

— [Judges 11:30-31 \(KJV\)](#)

The first to pass through the doors of Jephthah's house upon his return is his only child, his beloved daughter.

- 34. And Jephthah came to Mizpeh unto his house, and, behold, his daughter came out to meet him with timbrels and with dances: and she was his only child; beside her he had neither son nor daughter.**
- 35. And it came to pass, when he saw her, that he rent his clothes, and said, Alas, my daughter! thou hast brought me very low, and thou art one of them that trouble me: for I have opened my mouth unto the LORD, and I cannot go back.**

— [Judges 11:34-35 \(KJV\)](#)

Let us reflect for a moment. We know Jephthah vowed to LORD God to sacrifice "whatsoever" first came out of the door of his house. We suspect Jephthah plans to sacrifice one of his servants. But when the "whatsoever" turned out to be Jephthah's daughter, Jephthah is surprised. Notice his daughter's reaction:

**Moloch** as pictured by an unknown artist [\(6\)](#)

Moloch was an idol worshipped by the Hebrews and some other people of the area. The priests burned a large fire within the idol, and according to a number of Biblical and Talmudic references, the Hebrews sacrificed their children to the god by throwing them — live — into the fire (the children were termed "thy seed," and the act, "pass[ing them] through the fire" in KJV). Accounts vary in details, e.g., the god was Canaanite in origin and only intermittently adopted by the Hebrews; the children were killed before they were burned (*Catholic Encyclopedia*, s.v. [Moloch](#)); the god was Carthaginian and the children were cast into the fire by priests, not parents (Gustave Flaubert [\[5\]](#)); etc.



**Molk** defined as "the practice of human sacrifice"

"The rite of the human sacrifice 'Molk' as a [sacrificial] offering is peculiar of a mentality which didn't exist in the Greek or Roman society.

"If Phoenicians thought that a God wanted the destruction of a town or a country, they didn't [hesitate] to offer him human lives, avoiding in this way the anger and the curse of the god and blaming on few people.

"As they believed no other sacrifices better than this could appease the anger of that god, Carthaginians vowed themselves to the human sacrifices and in

**36. And she said unto him, My father, if thou hast opened thy mouth unto the LORD, do to me according to that which hath proceeded out of thy mouth; forasmuch as the LORD hath taken vengeance for thee of thine enemies, even of the children of Ammon.**

— [Judges 11:36](#) (KJV)

She expresses no surprise that LORD God would accept a human sacrifice, nor does she protest; she does not say, "Father, let's use some common sense. You know LORD God is dead set against human sacrifice. He must have thought an ox would meet you on your return, or perhaps a goat, or one of the chickens. There must be a misunderstanding." Instead, she urges her father to keep his promise. She says:

**37. And she said unto her father, Let this thing be done for me: let me alone two months, that I may go up and down upon the mountains, and bewail my virginity, I and my fellows.**

Jephthah agrees:

**38. And he said, Go. And he sent her away for two months: and she went with her companions, and bewailed her virginity upon the mountains.**  
**39. And it came at the end of two months, that she returned unto her father, who did with her according to his vow which he had vowed: and she knew no man. And it was a custom in Israel,**  
**40. That the daughters of Israel went yearly to lament the daughter of Jephthah the Gileadite four days in a year.**

— [Judges 11:38-40](#) (KJV)

None but perfect animals are permitted to be ritually sacrificed in Judaism. Notice that Jephthah's daughter, too, is a perfect sacrifice — she is a virgin. Notice that LORD God does not stop this human sacrifice, as he stopped the sacrifice of Abraham's son.

The Old Testament does not specify how Jephthah sacrifices his daughter, but following the correct methods for animal sacrifice, he would slit her throat first and drain her blood into a Temple service vessel; cut off her arms, legs, and head; cut the torso in sections, remove her entrails and wash them; pour, sprinkle, and smear her blood at prescribed points around the altar; and burn the flesh. Or of course, a priest might do this for him. Read [Animal Sacrifice and the Third Temple](#) for details. [\(11\)](#)

### ***LORD God is Appeased by Human Sacrifice***

In 2 Samuel 21, David is king over Judah. A famine oppresses the land; King David learns that LORD God is punishing Israel for King Saul's sin (Saul attacked the Gibeonites in violation of Joshua's treaty [Joshua 9:15](#)). Therefore, in order to relieve the famine, David must appease the Gibeonites. On negotiation, the Gibeonites demand to be given seven descendants of Saul to be hanged "unto the LORD." David picks two of Saul's sons and five of Saul's grandsons. Coincidentally, the five grandsons are the children of Michal, the woman David had wanted to marry (see [1 Samuel 18:25](#)). David gives these Israelites to the Gibeonites so the Gibeonites can hang them.

**1. Then there was a famine in the days of David three years, year after year; and David enquired of the LORD. And the LORD answered, It is for Saul, and for his bloody house, because he slew the Gibeonites.**  
**2. And the king called the Gibeonites, and said unto**

order to increase the value of the sacrifice, they offered even their children's life." — City of Castelvetrano-Selinunte (1)

Thus we see that according to the above scholar, Molk (= Moloch?) was a word describing the practice of human sacrifice, rather than a specific deity. This conforms with the *Catholic Encyclopedia's* statement that the ancient Hebrews may have thought they were sacrificing their children to LORD God. (4)

The writer for the City of Castelvetrano-Selinunte, (1) in saying that human sacrifice "didn't exist in the Greek or Roman society," was limiting his statement to the Classical Greeks, of course.



Mask of Agamemnon, 16th Century BC

Homer records the dilemma of Mycenaean king Agamemnon, who must either sacrifice his daughter Iphigeneia, or give up his ambition to fight the Trojan War. Agamemnon chooses the sacrifice, but the daughter is saved by the goddess Artemis. (8) In retelling the story, Classical Greek playwright Aeschylus (*Agamemnon*) allows the girl to die. However, Aeschylus surrounds the incident with the strongest expressions of disapproval:

"The chorus disapprove of his decision, and describe the sacrifice in sickening detail, as a murder repugnant to any normal human being. Agamemnon's feelings are perverted from the norm, as are those of all the characters in the trilogy (esp. Atreus, Thyestes, Clytemnestra, Orestes). The sacrifice is not only morally wrong, but futile: the sacrificer becomes the victim. Agamemnon is killed by Clytemnestra who is killed by Orestes." — James Hunter (9)

them; (now the Gibeonites were not of the children of Israel, but of the remnant of the Amorites; and the children of Israel had sworn unto them: and Saul sought to slay them in his zeal to the children of Israel and Judah.)

3. Wherefore David said unto the Gibeonites, What shall I do for you? and wherewith shall I make the atonement, that ye may bless the inheritance of the LORD?
4. And the Gibeonites said unto him, We will have no silver nor gold of Saul, nor of his house; neither for us shalt thou kill any man in Israel. And he said, What ye shall say, that will I do for you.
5. And they answered the king, The man that consumed us, and that devised against us that we should be destroyed from remaining in any of the coasts of Israel,
6. Let seven men of his sons be delivered unto us, and we will hang them up unto the LORD in Gibeah of Saul, whom the LORD did choose. And the king said, I will give them.
7. But the king spared Mephibosheth, the son of Jonathan the son of Saul, because of the LORD's oath that was between them, between David and Jonathan the son of Saul.
8. But the king took the two sons of Rizpah the daughter of Aiah, whom she bare unto Saul, Armoni and Mephibosheth; and the five sons of Michal the daughter of Saul, whom she brought up for Adriel the son of Barzillai the Meholathite:
9. And he delivered them into the hands of the Gibeonites, and they hanged them in the hill before the LORD: and they fell all seven together, and were put to death in the days of harvest, in the first days, in the beginning of barley harvest.

— [2 Samuel 21:1-11](#) (KJV)

LORD God did not explicitly request the hangings. But LORD God imposed an insufferable famine on the Israelites, LORD God named the Gibeonites as the people to be appeased, and the Gibeonites named the penalty. When it was done, LORD God apparently found the human sacrifice to be satisfactory: the chapter continues with accounts of battles, and the famine is not mentioned further. This sequence — an angry god causes a natural disaster, innocent life is slain to appease the god's anger, and the hardship ceases — this is the same sequence of events found in the human sacrifice rites of other primitive religions.

### ***The Moloch Prohibition***

With these precedents in mind, let us now look at two passages from the Old Testament concerning child sacrifice to the idol *Moloch* (or "Molech"). In the following passages, the words "seed" and "children" are synonymous. First, from Leviticus 18:

King James Version

**21. 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.**

— [Leviticus 18:21](#) (KJV)

English Standard Version

**21. You shall not give any of your children to offer them (1) to Molech, and so profane the name of your God: I am the LORD.**



**The Book of Jeremiah,**  
King James Bible

30 For the children of Israel and the children of Judah have only done evil before me from their youth: for the children of Israel have only provoked me to anger with the work of their hands, saith the LORD.

31 For this city hath been to me as a provocation of mine anger and of my fury from the day that they built it even unto this day; that I should remove it from before my face,

32 Because of all the evil of the children of Israel and of the children of Judah, which they have done to provoke me to anger, they, their kings, their princes, their priests, and their prophets, and the men of Judah, and the inhabitants of Jerusalem.

33 And they have turned unto me the back, and not the face: though I taught them, rising up early and teaching them, yet they have not hearkened to receive instruction.

34 But they set their abominations in the house, which is called by my name, to defile it.

35 And they built the high places of Baal, which are in the valley of the son of Hinnom, to cause their sons and their daughters to pass through the fire unto Molech; which I commanded them not, neither came it into my mind, that they should do this abomination, to cause Judah to sin. — Jeremiah 32:30-35

— [Leviticus 18:21](#) (ESV)

An ESV footnote gives a literal translation of the original Hebrew phrase: "1. Hebrew to make them pass through [the fire]." Now let's look at Second Kings 23:

King James Version

**10. 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 23:10](#) (KJV)

English Standard Version

**10. And he defiled Topheth, which is in the Valley of the Son of Hinnom, that no one might burn his son or his daughter as an offering to Molech. (1)**

— [2 Kings 23:10](#) (ESV)

An ESV footnote gives a literal translation of the original Hebrew phrase: "Hebrew might cause his son or daughter to pass through the fire for Molech."

Now let's look at the relevant cite from the Babylonian Talmud.

*(When excerpting the Talmud, we sometimes omit footnotes and non-germane text. The omission of text is indicated by an ellipsis [...]. The full text and footnotes may be found by following the hot link at the end of the excerpt. It is our pleasure to make available the text of the complete tractates cited in this article, so you may read the Talmud in full context.)*

**MISHNAH.** HE WHO GIVES OF HIS SEED TO MOLECH INCURS NO PUNISHMENT UNLESS HE DELIVERS IT TO MOLECH AND CAUSES IT TO PASS THROUGH THE FIRE. IF HE GAVE IT TO MOLECH BUT DID NOT CAUSE IT TO PASS THROUGH THE FIRE, OR THE REVERSE, HE INCURS NO PENALTY, UNLESS HE DOES BOTH.

— Babylonian Talmud, [Tractate Sanhedrin 64a](#)  
Soncino 1961 Edition, page 437

Following the Mishnah is a discussion among the sages. One of the Talmud Sages, Rabbi Ashi, comments as follows:

**GEMARA.** R. Ashi propounded: What if one caused his blind or sleeping son to pass through, (3) or if he caused his grandson by his son or daughter to pass through? — One at least of these you may solve. For it has been taught: [*Any men ... that giveth any of his seed unto Molech; he shall he put to death ... And I will set my face against that man, and will cut him off from among his people;*] because he hath given of his seed unto Molech. Why is this stated? — Because it is said, *there shall not be found among you any one that maketh his son or his daughter to pass through the fire.* From this I know it only of his son or daughter. Whence do I know that it applies to his son's son or daughter's son too? From the verse, [*And if the people of the land do any ways hide their eyes from the man] when he giveth of his seed unto Molech [and kill him not: Then I will ... cut him off.]*

— Babylonian Talmud, [Tractate Sanhedrin 64b](#)  
Soncino 1961 Edition, page 439

Rabbi Dr. Freedman, one of the translators of the Soncino Tractate Sanhedrin, clarifies the passage. In a footnote, Rabbi Dr. Freedman confirms that the Talmud Sages use "seed" to denote living children, in the same sense as the Biblical translators



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understand the term in the above Biblical quotes. In this footnote, Rabbi Dr. Freedman paraphrases the question from Rabbi Ashi:

3. Is *'thou shalt not cause to pass'* applicable only to a son who can naturally pass through himself, but not to a blind or sleeping son, who must be led or carried, or does it apply to all?

— Rabbi Dr. Freedman

Other footnotes within the same context clarify the fine point of distinction being drawn in the Mishnah and subsequent debates among the sages:

5. Lev. XVIII, 21. This proves that the offence consists of two parts; (i) formal delivery to the priests, and (ii) causing the seed to pass through the fire.

— Rabbi Dr. Freedman (2)

5. As two separate offences, proving that giving one's seed to Molech is not idolatry. The differences [sic] is, that if one sacrificed to Molech, or caused his son to pass through the fire to some other deity, he is not punished.

— Rabbi Dr. Freedman (3)

Following the Mishnah, Sanhedrin 64a and 64b contain a rousing debate between the Sages concerning:

- the circumstances under which worshipping an idol is idolatry,
- which idols may be worshipped without indulging in idolatry,
- which parts of child sacrifice in what combination are punishable, and
- how children may be sacrificed without violating Leviticus.

Interested students should look up Sanhedrin 64a and 64b and read the entire text, including footnotes. The complete version of Come and Hear™ contains Sanhedrin 64a-64b at [http://www.come-and-hear.com/sanhedrin/sanhedrin\\_64.html](http://www.come-and-hear.com/sanhedrin/sanhedrin_64.html). For those to whom Tractate Sanhedrin is not available, the relevant text is included in the [Appendix: Extract from Sanhedrin 64a and 64b](#).

The 1908 *Catholic Encyclopedia* contains an entry on Moloch that is of interest. The *Catholic Encyclopedia* states that the children were burned "after the victims had been put to death" — without citing any authority. This statement is directly contradicted by Rabbi Ashi and by Rabbi Dr. Freedman in the passages quoted above, wherein they consider the case of "a blind or sleeping son, who must be led or carried" to the fire. (Paragraphing has been added to this *Catholic Encyclopedia* excerpt to aid in readability).

The chief feature of Moloch's worship among the Jews seems to have been the sacrifice of children, and the usual expression for describing that sacrifice was "to pass through the fire", a rite carried out after the victims had been put to death.

The special centre of such atrocities was just outside of Jerusalem, at a place called Tophet (probably "place of abomination"), in the valley of Geennom. According to III (I) Kings, xi, 7, Solomon erected "a temple" for Moloch "on the hill over against Jerusalem", and on this account he is at times considered as the monarch who introduced the impious cult into Israel. After the disruption, traces of Moloch worship appear in both Judah and Israel.

The custom of causing one's children to pass through the fire seems to have been general in the Northern Kingdom [IV (II) Kings, xvii, 17; Ezech. xxiii, 37], and it gradually grew in the Southern, encouraged by the royal example of Achaz (IV Kings, xvi, 3) and Manasses [IV (II) Kings, xvi, 6] till it became prevalent in the time of the prophet Jeremias (Jerem. xxxii, 35), when King Josias suppressed the worship of Moloch and defiled Tophet [IV (II) Kings, xxiii, 13 (10)]. It is not improbable that this worship was revived under Joakim

and continued until the Babylonian Captivity ...

... Of late, numerous attempts have been made to prove that in sacrificing their children to Moloch the Israelites simply thought that they were offering them in holocaust to Yahweh. In other words, the Melech to whom child-sacrifices were offered was Yahweh under another name. To uphold this view appeal is made in particular to Jer., vii, 31; xix, 5, and to Ezech., xx, 25-31. But this position is to say the least improbable. The texts appealed to may well be understood otherwise, and the prophets expressly treat the cult of Moloch as foreign and as an apostasy from the worship of the true God. The offerings by fire, the probable identity of Moloch with Baal, and the fact that in Assyria and Babylonia Malik, and at Palmyra Malach-bel, were sun-gods, have suggested to many that Moloch was a fire- or sun-god.

— Catholic Encyclopedia (4)

### ***Lessons Learned***

It is indeed unfortunate that the Jewish religion has not repudiated the doctrine that children may be sacrificed to Moloch. That doctrine, along with prayers in the Jewish liturgy calling for the return of ritual blood sacrifice (see [Animal Sacrifice and the Third Temple](#)), surely adds credence to charges that Jews engage in the ritual blood sacrifice of children. (See, for example, William Thomas Walsh's *Isabella of Spain* (12) concerning the ritualistic murder of a four-year-old Spanish boy; and a historical overview of the subject, *Jewish Ritual Murder, a Historical Investigation*, written in 1941 by Hellmut Schramm, Ph.D. (10))

Many societies and religions have practices in their histories of which they are not proud. Certainly the United States had slavery, as did many other countries. Catholicism had the persecution of Protestants, and Protestants had the persecution of Catholics; Europe had feudalism, Mexico had human sacrifice, and India had widow burnings (*sati*, the practice of burning a widow at her late husband's funeral). Scandinavia had the Vikings and reavers, Italy had the excesses of the Roman Empire, and China had foot-binding. Among all those people there came the admission, eventually, that those practices were not appropriate, and as hard on the pride as it was, they accepted responsibility and repudiated their former behaviors.

Repudiating the Talmud doctrines that approve of ritually sacrificing children (under certain conditions) would go a long way to creating good will between Judaism and people of other religious faiths. Christians and Muslims, too, should reexamine the Old Testament Scriptures. Is this really the church/mosque they want their children attending?

Thank you for your consideration of the above,

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#### *Appendix: Extract from Sanhedrin 64a and 64b*

The full folio can be found at [http://www.come-and-hear.com/sanhedrin/sanhedrin\\_64.html](http://www.come-and-hear.com/sanhedrin/sanhedrin_64.html)

#### Note:

- The 1961 Soncino footnotes have been renumbered for this hypertext presentation.
- The symbol [H] represents an unprintable Hebrew character, word, or phrase.
- Unusual terms and abbreviations are defined in the [Soncino Talmud Glossary](#).
- Molech is an alternate spelling of Moloch.
- The sages frequently use "it" when referring to the progeny considered for sacrifice to Moloch. It may be this is only a grammatical device to keep the pronoun in agreement with the word "seed," or it may be a part of the depersonalization process in considering the children for sacrifice.

#### Sanhedrin 64a

[...]

**MISHNAH.** HE WHO GIVES OF HIS SEED TO MOLECH INCURS NO PUNISHMENT UNLESS HE DELIVERS IT TO MOLECH AND CAUSES IT TO PASS THROUGH THE FIRE. IF HE GAVE IT TO MOLECH BUT DID NOT CAUSE IT TO PASS THROUGH THE FIRE, OR THE REVERSE, HE INCURS NO PENALTY, UNLESS HE DOES BOTH.

**GEMARA.** The Mishnah (1) teaches idolatry and giving to Molech. (2) R. Abin said: Our Mishnah is in accordance with the view that Molech worship is not idolatry. For it has been taught, [if one causes his seed to pass through the fire,] whether to Molech or to any other idol he is liable [to death]. R. Eleazar son of R. Simeon said: If to Molech, he is liable; if to another idol, he is not.

Abaye said: R. Eleazar son of R. Simeon and R. Hanina b. Antigonus said the one and same thing. R. Eleazar son of R. Simeon, that which has just been stated. R. Hanina b. Antigonus — as it has been taught: R. Hanina b. Antigonus said: Why did the Torah employ the word Molech? To teach that the same law applies to whatever they proclaimed as their king, even a pebble or a splinter. (3) Rabina (4) said: The difference between them is in respect of a temporary Molech. (5)

1. On 53a.
2. As two separate offences, proving that giving one's seed to Molech is not idolatry. The differences [sic] is, that if one sacrificed to Molech, or caused his son to pass through the fire to some other deity, he is not punished.
3. Molech is connected with the idea of kingship. This shews that he too regards any fetish as a Molech.
4. In his view they did not say the one and the same thing.
5. I.e., anything which was only temporarily worshipped as Molech, such as a pebble which would obviously not be a permanent idol.] According to R. Hanina b. Antigonus, he is executed even then. But R. Eleazar son of R. Simeon holds that the law applies only to a permanent idol worshipped as Molech.

### Sanhedrin 64b

R. Jannai said: Punishment is not incurred unless one delivers his seed to the acolytes of Molech, (1) for it is said, *And thou shalt not give of thy seed to pass through the fire to Molech.* (2) It has been taught likewise: I might think, that if one caused his seed to pass through the fire to Molech, without first delivering it to the priests, he is liable: therefore the Writ teaches, *Thou shalt not give.* If he gave it to the priests, but did not cause it to pass through the fire, I might think that he is liable: therefore the Writ states, *to pass through.* If one delivered it [to the priests of Molech], but caused it to pass through to some other deity, I might think that he is punished: therefore the Writ teaches, *to Molech.* Now, if he delivered it to the priests and caused it to pass to Molech, but not through the fire, I might think that he is liable: but, as here is written, *to pass through;* and elsewhere it is stated, *There shall not he found among you any one that maketh his son or his daughter to pass through the fire:* (3) just as there, the reference is to fire, so here too; and just as here the reference is to Molech, so there too.

R. Aha the son of Raba said: If one caused all his seed to pass through [the fire] to Molech, he is exempt from punishment, because it is written, *of thy seed* implying, but not all thy seed. (4)

R. Ashi propounded: What if one caused his blind or sleeping son to pass through, (5) or if he caused his grandson by his son or daughter to pass through? — One at least of these you may solve. For it has been taught: [*Any men ... that giveth any of his*

*seed unto Molech; he shall he put to death ... And I will set my face against that man, and will cut him off from among his people;] because he hath given of his seed unto Molech. (6)* Why is this stated? (7) — Because it is said, *there shall not be found among you any one that maketh his son or his daughter to pass through the fire. (8)* From this I know it only of his son or daughter. Whence do I know that it applies to his son's son or daughter's son too? From the verse, [*And if the people of the land do any ways hide their eyes from the man] when he giveth of his seed unto Molech [and kill him not: Then I will ... cut him off.] (9)*

Now the Tanna commences with the verse, '*because he hath given of his seed*', but concludes with '*when he giveth of his seed*'? — This is to intimate another deduction. (10) Thus: [*because he hath given] of his seed*: From this I know only that the law applies to legitimate seed [that being the normal meaning of the word]; whence do I know that it also applies to illegitimate seed? (11) — From the verse, *when he giveth of his seed. (12)*

Rab Judah said: He is only liable to punishment if he causes his seed to pass through in the normal way. How is that? — Abaye said: There was a loose pile of bricks in the middle, and fire on either side of it. (13) Raba said: It was like the children's leaping about on Purim. (14) It has been taught in support of Raba. Punishment is incurred only for causing one's seed to pass in the normal fashion; if he caused him to pass through on foot, he is exempt. (15) He is liable only for his own issue; e.g., for his son and daughter, he is punished; but for his father or mother, brother or sister, he is not. If he passed through himself, he is free from punishment. (16) R. Eleazar son of R. Simeon ruled that he is liable. Further, whether to Molech or to any other idol, he is liable. R. Eleazar son of R. Simeon said: If to Molech, he is liable; if to another idol, he is not.

'Ulla said: What is R. Eleazar son of R. Simeon's reason? — Scripture saith, *There shall not be found among thee ... (17)* '*among thee*' means in thyself. (18) And the Rabbis? Do they not interpret '*among thee*' thus? Surely we have learnt: If one must search for a lost article of his own and of his father's, priority is given to his own. And we observed thereon: Why so? — To which Rab Judah replied: Scripture saith, *Save that there shall be no poor among thee, (19)* teaching that one's own loss has priority over that of any other man? (20) There the deduction follows from '*save that*'. (21)

R. Jose, son of R. Hanina said: Why is extinction thrice threatened for idolatry? (22) — One teaches extinction for the normal worship of idols; one for abnormal; and one for the service of Molech. (23) But on the view that Molech worship is included in general idolatry, why is extinction mentioned in its case? — To apply to one who causes his son to pass through to an idol [not Molech], where such is not the normal mode of worship. Now, on the view that a *megaddef* (24) is a worshipper of idols, (22) why is extinction stated for it? (25) — Even as it has been taught: (26) *That soul shall surely be cut off from among his people; (27)* he shall be cut off in this world and in the next: this is R. Akiba's view. (28) R. Ishmael said: But the verse has previously stated '*that soul shall be cut off: (29)* are there then three worlds? (30) But [interpret this:] '*and [that soul] shall be cut off*' — in this world: '*he is to be cut off*' — [of the following verse, and denoted by the infinitive] (31) in the next; whilst as for the repetition [the finite form of the verb], (32) that is because the Torah employs human

## phraseology. (33)

1. He explains this to be the meaning of the Mishnah UNLESS HE GIVES IT TO MOLECH.
2. Lev. XVIII, 21. This proves that the offence consists of two parts; (i) formal delivery to the priests, and (ii) causing the seed to pass through the fire.
3. Deut. XVIII, 10.
4. Probably because this would not be accounted a normal mode of Molech worship: cp. pp. 438, 440.
5. Is 'thou shalt not cause to pass' applicable only to a son who can naturally pass through himself, but not to a blind or sleeping son, who must be led or carried, or does it apply to all?
6. Lev. XX, 2f.
7. Since the passage commences by explicitly referring to this offence, why is it repeated?
8. Deut. XVIII, 10.
9. Lev. XX, 4. Hence the law applies also to grandsons.
10. I.e., from the first verse, because etc. we learn that the law applies to one's grandsons too; *when he giveth* is stated in order that another law may be deduced.
11. Not in the modern sense, but seed from a woman forbidden to him.
12. This is superfluous, since it has already been stated twice in that passage that the reference is to this effect. Hence it indicates the application of the law to illegitimate seed.
13. The victim walked along that pile to Molech, but was not burnt. The statement that Hezekiah was smeared with the blood of the salamander to render him fireproof (63b), shewing that the victim was actually burnt, does not refer to Molech, but to the divinities of Sepharvaim (Rashi).
14. Probably referring to a game played on Purim when children jump over a fire lit in a pit. According to this, a pit was dug and a fire lit therein, and the victim leaped over it (So Rashi). Jast. translates: 'like the stirrup (a ring suspended from a frame) thrust over a bonfire on Purim;' cp. Aruch.
15. This proves that the victim did not walk, but leaped to it.
16. This too proves that the victim was not burnt in passing through the fire to Molech.
17. Deut. XVIII, 10.
18. Hence his view that one is liable if he passes through himself.
19. Deut. XV, 4.
20. The questioner understood this to be deduced from 'among thee' — in thyself. Since this is not taught in the name of any particular Tanna, it should agree with the Rabbis too.
21. Heb. [H], implying an admonition to avoid any action which may lead to poverty. Naturally, this is not to be interpreted as permitting dishonesty, but merely insists that poverty must not be courted.
22. Twice in Lev. XX, 2-5: *Whosoever be he ... that giveth of his seeds to Molech ... I will cut him off from among his people ... And if the people of the land ... kill him not: Then I will set my face against that man ... and will cut him off.* Once in Num. XV, 30f. *But the soul that doeth aught presumptuously ... the same reproacheth the Lord; and that soul shall be cut from among his people. Because he hath despised the word of the Lord.* This refers to idolatry.
23. Which is not included in general idolatry, as stated above.
24. In Num. XV, 30, the Heb. for 'he reproacheth' is

- megaddef.
25. The meaning of megaddef is disputed in Ker. 7b. By a 'worshipper of idols' is meant, e.g., one who sings hymns in a heathen Temple.
  26. Since, being a normal part of idolatry, it is understood.
  27. Num. XV, 31. Continuing the verses quoted in note 3. In the Heb, as usual, this emphasis is denoted by the repetition of the verb, [H]
  28. He interprets the doubling of the verb as referring to two worlds.
  29. Ibid. 30.
  30. Rashi explains that this question is not put to R. Akiba, because he interprets *megaddef* in that previous verse as referring to blasphemy, not idolatry. But this question is rhetorically stated by R. Ishmael on his own assumption that *megaddef* means an idol worshipper.
  31. [H]
  32. [H]
  33. In ordinary human speech, such repetition is quite common.

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1. "The Tophet and the rite of human sacrifice," *Comune di Castelvetrano-Selinunte*, <http://www.centrocomp.it/castelvetrano/selinunte/thetophet.html> cached at <http://www.come-and-hear.com/editor/br-thetophet>
2. Soncino Tractate Sanhedrin 64b, page 438, note 5 available in Come and Hear™ hypertext as [Sanhedrin 64b, note 2](#)
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12. *Isabella of Spain* by William Thomas Walsh, London, Sheed & Ward, 1931

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