

## **BRIEF NOTES ON “VEGETARIANISM” IN THE BIBLE WITH ADDENDUM**

In his original creation intent, God gave humans plants with seeds and fruit trees with seeds to eat, Gen 1:29. There is no killing or violence allowed or contemplated. This is the paradisiacal state. With sin and the expulsion from Eden, God’s original creation intent goes awry, and God repents of having created, Gen 6:5-13. God destroys the world with the flood, a type of cleansing, and after the new creation (which also takes place on a New year’s Day, Gen 8:13, when the flood waters dried), God decides to ‘lower the standards’ by allowing the killing of animals for food, Gen 9:1-7.

The origin of the ritual slaughter of animals may be found in blood taboos; there was unease with killing and blood spilling, so animals were offered to God ritually; this was the purpose of the temple. Some prophets disagreed with, say, the laws in Leviticus (Wayyikra); see, e.g., Amos 5:22; Jer 7:21-28. There are texts which predict a return to paradise in the messianic age (the End will correspond to the Beginning). The most famous is Isa 11:1-9, when the descendant of David inaugurates an era when killing will be over, where the wolf shall lie with the lamb and the lion will eat hay, and there will be intimate relations with (“knowledge of”) Yahweh as in the beginning.

The end of the world as we know it vision of Dan 7 symbolizes a return to God’s original creation intention (that humans would govern beasts, Gen 1:28; see the different command after the Fall in Gen 9:2): the savage beasts who kill and exploit have their power taken away, and it is in turn given to “one like a son of man,” originally meaning “human being,” but which came to mean the Messiah, that is, a final redemption figure. It is interesting to note that Daniel, in order to keep kosher, eats a vegetarian diet, Dan 1:8-17.

Part of my thesis argument is that Jesus inaugurates the eschatological age (end of the world as we know it) with his Passion, in which he offered himself as a sacrifice, Letter to the Hebrews 10:1-18. This means the end of the Temple and the end of killing and a return to the paradisiacal state (we are challenged to make this a reality). He is the New Adam who obeyed and overturned the first Adam’s sin, humbling himself instead of wanting to be like God. Note the garden in Gospel of John 18:1 (where Jesus struggled to be obedient), and in John 20:15 (where Mary Magdalene supposedly “mistakes” Jesus for a gardener, but he is!, like Adam, Gen 2:15). At the end of the Christian Bible, in Revelation 22, there is no more curse (see Gen 3:14-19), and a return to Paradise.

## ADDENDUM

A recent book which I have had the opportunity only to peruse is that of ALFRED MARX, *Les systèmes sacrificiels de l'Ancien Testament: Formes et fonctions du culte sacrificiel à Yhwh* (Supp. Vetus Test. 105; Leiden: Brill, 2005), reviewed by James W. Watts in *Review of Biblical Literature* (May 2007; it can be read on the Society of Biblical Literature's website (<http://www.sbl-site.org>)). As indicated in the review, Marx (50, 77-80, 86-87, 202-204) says that Israel's sacrifices were a feudal tribute, that is, rental fees to God as the owner of the Land (see Lev 25:23). He notes that *minhāh* (usually, "cereal offering," though not always) means "tribute," and that the vegetable offerings could have represented the Land itself. I would further state that the purpose of the temple was to legitimize the bloody sacrifice of animals (mostly for eating purposes). In the return to mankind's original state (the goal of the eschatological hope), these violent killings would end (cf. Isa 11:6-9, featuring a vegetarian lion, etc., and Dan 6:23-25; Daniel was a vegetarian, Dan 1:12-17); the concession (allowing the killing of animals for food) made after the flood (Gen 9:1-7; cf. Gen 1:28-31) would end. Watts states that Marx sees, "In P's unique attention to vegetable offerings (Lev 2) [an anticipation of] an eschatological time marked by nonviolence (222)." Recall also that in Mal 3:3-4, what the Levites, who shall have been purified by the Lord who comes to his temple, will offer is the *minhāh*. The *kōpher* ("ransom") of Exod 30:12 in order to enter the Land accords very well with Marx's idea; we could almost speak of a toll. (from footnote 81 in my Mark notes).