

Łukasz Niesiołowski-Spanò
(University of Warsaw)

CHILD SACRIFICE IN SEVENTH-CENTURY JUDAH AND THE ORIGINS OF PASSOVER

In the reconstruction of historical events and history of religion in Judah in the pre-exilic period, scholars make use of a few extra-biblical sources, mostly Assyrian, and a large amount of archaeological data, including the corpus of inscriptions. Therefore, there is a relatively coherent view of the history of entire region, including Judah. Nevertheless, the decisive source for reconstructing the religion in Judah in the seventh century BCE is – obviously – the biblical text.

The biblical historiography of Judah in the seventh century is dominated by the notion of the rule of the “bad” king Manasseh (687–642 BCE), acting under foreign influences (2 Kings 21:1–18), and the “good” reign of Josiah (640–609 BCE), inspired by religious piety (2 Kings 22–23). This tradition ascribes the worst sins to Manasseh, including blaming him for the fall of Jerusalem, which took place half a century after his death (2 Kings 21:11–15)! On the other hand, the “good” Josiah is credited with having found in the Temple the scroll of the law, which urged him to conduct acts that showed him to be religiously pious. The biblical accounts suggest in this matter that the law found in the Temple by Josiah should be linked with Deuteronomy. These suggestions (cult centralisation, prohibition of foreign gods and cults, etc.) derive from the principles which compelled Josiah to act and conduct his religious reform, and which are the same as the main ideological postulates of Deuteronomy. The identification of Josiah’s scroll of law from Jerusalem Temple with the biblical Book of Deuteronomy, put forward by the authors of the Book of Kings, is accepted by large number of modern scholars. Nevertheless, the stereotype of the antinomy of “good” and “bad” kings deserves scholarly scepticism regarding its historicity.¹ In addition, it may be argued show that the creation, and certainly the acceptance by the ruling king, of Deuteronomical

¹ Deconstruction of the biblical portrait of the “bad” rule of Manasseh in details, and in my view convincingly, was recently presented by Francesca Stavrakopoulou (*King Manasseh and Child Sacrifice: Biblical Distortions of Historical Realities*, Berlin 2004) and Ernst Axel Knauf, “The Glorious Days of Manasseh”, in: L. L. Grabbe (ed.), *Good Kings and Bad Kings. The Kingdom of Judah in the Seventh Century BCE*, 2007², pp. 164–188. Cf. also G. W. Ahlström, *The History of Ancient Palestine*, Sheffield 1994², pp. 716–753; G. Garbini, *Scrivere la storia d’Israele*, Brescia 2008, pp. 138–171; Z. Zevit, *The Religions of Ancient Israel. A Synthesis of Parallax Approaches*, London–New York 2001, pp. 469–477; M. Liverani, *Israel’s History and the History of Israel*, London 2005, pp. 143–182.

Laws as the normative legislation, should not be dated to the late seventh century BCE, nor any other period of Judahite monarchy.² Deuteronomy was composed at the beginning of the fifth century BCE at the earliest, when the kingless community of the Jews organized their new rule in Jerusalem under the Persian authority. If this date for the composition of Deuteronomy is accepted, the Deuteronomistic account about the pious king should be placed in this same Persian period. Despite my suggestion concerning the changing of the date of text's composition from the seventh-sixth to the fifth-fourth century, the historical value of the account in itself should not be totally dismissed; although, it must be remembered that the story was composed according to an ideology that was anachronistic for the story itself.

Archaeological data, as well as the biblical texts, attest that for Judah, the period of *Pax Assyriaca* was a time of relative growth and profound changes in many aspects, including religious life. In recent scholarship the impact of the imperialistic policy of Assyria concerning Judah was often discussed.³ I will not concentrate on this question here; my interest will be focused on two rituals which, according to the Bible, were practised at this time in Judah. Both were, still according to the Scripture, especially important in the seventh century BCE. I refer to Passover (2 Kings 23:21–23) and *molk* sacrifice, often alluded to, for instance, in the passages about “passing through fire” (2 Kings 21:6).

The origins of Passover seem to be connected with the reign of Josiah, at least according to 2 Kings 23:21–23, 2 Chronicles 35:1–19, and 1 Esdras 1:1–20. The only earlier Passovers, i.e. before Josiah, according to the biblical tradition, were supposed to be organized in the time of Joshua (Josh. 5:10–11), Judges (2 Kings 23:22), or Samuel (1 Esdras 1:18), all in all in the mythical pre-history of the Hebrews, in their pre-monarchic past. The only exception is to be found in Chronicles (2 Chr. 30), where the origins of Passover are connected to the king Hezekiah (716–687 BCE) instead of Josiah. This tradition seems, however, to be anachronistic and depends on the story about good king Josiah; and as such might be considered secondary. The seventh-century origins of Passover might be also deduced from the absence of any connection of the feast with the mythic founders of Jerusalem cult – kings David and Solomon. If one believes in the text literally, the precise date of the first Passover might be found in the passage which states that the feast originates in “in the eighteenth year of the reign of Josiah” (1 Esdras 1:22), i.e. in 622 BCE.

The aetiological account about the origins of Passover, links this feast with the myth of Exodus. By placing the “original” Passover within the Wilderness-story, the Bible openly claims that the feast serves as a way of remembering the mythical event:

For the Lord will pass through to strike down the Egyptians; when he sees the blood on the lintel and on the two doorposts, the Lord will pass over that door and will not allow the destroyer to enter your houses to strike you down. You shall observe this rite as a perpetual ordinance for you and your children. When you come to the land that the Lord will give you, as he has promised,

² Ł. Niesiołowski-Spanò, “Kiedy napisano historię Izraela?” [When was the history of Israel written?], *Collectanea Theologica* 75, 4, 2005, pp. 5–16.

³ Cf. S. Długoborski, “Wpływ imperialnej Asyrii na religię Judy” [Influence of the imperial Assyria on the religion of Judah], *Scripta Biblica et Orientalia* 3, 2011, pp. 143–156.

you shall keep this observance. And when your children ask you, ‘What do you mean by this observance?’ you shall say, ‘It is the Passover sacrifice to the Lord, for he passed over the houses of the Israelites in Egypt, when he struck down the Egyptians but spared our houses’. And the people bowed down and worshiped. (Exod. 12:23–27)⁴

However, the Passover of Exodus differs from the Passover of Josiah. The later, as might be inferred, was founded as the temple ritual. This might be argued on the basis of Deuteronomic law concerning the sacrifice: “You shall offer the Passover sacrifice for the Lord your God, from the flock and the herd, at the place that the Lord will choose as a dwelling for his name” (Deut. 16:2; cf. 2 Chr. 35:1–19). As sacrifice is placed within the temple venue in the monarchic period, the monarch himself ought to play the dominant role in it.⁵ On the contrary, the Exodus-Passover is described as family feast, or even a “nomadic” one, in the sense of its connection to a non-urban society. These discrepancies may be explained as the result of mixing different traditions, different feasts, or the different scope of the literary accounts. This is not an appropriate place to discuss in depth the issues of origins and the date of the Exodus story about the first mythical Passover. Suffice it to say that the story of the “nomadic” origins of Passover postdates the reality of monarchial cult, or was written in opposition to it. In Exodus there are no hints of the monarchial cult, which obviously was the only plausible religious and cultic context in the pre-exilic period. The lack of any traces of the reality of monarchial religion must be explained as the result of post-monarchial origin of the story, or (which I find less plausible) its creation in opposition to the official, state religion and cult. The later of these possibilities is less probable, because the only “anti-monarchic” tradition originating in pre-exilic times, found in the Prophets, is based on critics of the monarch(s), but not the negation of the institution in itself. Stories in Exodus represent a “no-king reality”, rather than anti-king attitude. Therefore, the best solution is to see the Exodus accounts as a post-exilic literary creation, which did not have to refer to monarchial institutions, because of lack of such institutions at the time of its origin.⁶

The Exodus account presents the legendary explanation of the feast name.⁷ This kind of etymological explanation is often called a folk etymology. This is, however, a misleading term, because stories in the Bible have nothing to do with folk, i.e. popular traditions, being created exclusively by the elite members of the Jewish *literati*. The assumption that the biblical text(s) reflect popular tradition is a pure speculation. As often in the case of such aetiologies, the phonetic similarity does not provide the real etymology of the term.⁸ This is the case here.

This is how you shall eat it: your loins girded, your sandals on your feet, and your staff in your

⁴ Biblical texts according to the *New Revised Standard Version*.

⁵ N. Wyatt, “Royal Religion in Ancient Judah”, in: F. Stavrakopoulou, J. Barton (eds.), *Religious Diversity in Ancient Israel and Judah*, London–New York 2010, pp. 61–81.

⁶ J. Van Seters, *The Life of Moses. The Yahwist as Historian in Exodus-Numbers*, Westminster 1994; B. Adamczewski, *Retelling the Law. Genesis, Exodus-Numbers, and Samuel-Kings as Sequential Hypertextual Reworkings of Deuteronomy*, Frankfurt am Main 2012.

⁷ Cf. R. de Vaux, *Ancient Israel: Its Life and Institutions*, London 1997², pp. 484–493, esp. 488–490.

⁸ G. Garbini, *Note di lessicografia ebraica*, Brescia 1998, pp. 105–111.

hand; and you shall eat it hurriedly. It is the Passover of the Lord (פסח הוא ליהוה). For I will pass through the land of Egypt that night, and I will strike down every firstborn in the land of Egypt, both human beings and animals; on all the gods of Egypt I will execute judgments: I am the Lord. The blood shall be a sign for you on the houses where you live: when I see the blood, I will pass over you (פסחתי עלכם), and no plague shall destroy you when I strike the land of Egypt. (Exod. 12:11–13)

The connection of the feast and sacrifice's name with the verb meaning 'to be lame', and referring to God's passing over the Hebrew houses, does not provide a solid etymology. Suffice it to point to the fact that if the sacrifice name had been created according to the Exodus story, the very name should refer to the effective action of the God, i.e., killing of the foreign firstborn, not the omission of the others. Along the logic of such etymology, according to Exod. 12:12, the name of the feast would not be *pesah*, but rather *nākāh* – 'to strike', 'to kill'.

Thus said, let us turn back to the name of the sacrifice. Should it really be linked to the verb 'to be lame'?

The abovementioned passage from Exodus refers to God's omission of, or the passing over of the houses of the Israelites, but the verb might be understood as well as meaning the protection of the houses.⁹ This meaning of the verb *psh* is attested e.g., in Isaiah: "Like birds hovering overhead, so the Lord of hosts will protect Jerusalem; he will protect and deliver it, he will spare (פסח) and rescue" (Isaiah 31:5).¹⁰ The verb *psh* is paralleled with the verb *mlt* – 'to protect', 'to escape'. Similar meaning of the word, deriving from the same root, might be proposed for certain *happis^ehîm*, mentioned in the well-known passage about David's conquest of Jerusalem (2 Sam. 5:6–8). Instead of 'the lame' at the walls of Jerusalem (as rendered in most translations and commentaries), the term might refer to the technical military usage, meaning the people serving as the protectors, defenders.¹¹

This meaning of the root *psh* and words derived from it, help to explain the proper name of the person – *Paseah* (פסח), mentioned in the Bible (Neh. 3:6; Ezra 2:49; 1 Chr. 4:12) and on one seal from seventh/sixth century BCE,¹² which thanks to our understanding of the root, might be rendered as 'saved (by God)', or '(may God) protect'.

If the abovementioned understanding of the root *psh* is accepted and applied to the Exodus 12, the name of Passover sacrifice would be connected to the sense of 'protection' and 'saving'. Undoubtedly, such understanding fits much better with the name of the principal feast than with the one associating the ritual with being lame. The sacrifice of 'protection', or 'protecting' one, should have a special status. Such an unusual status for this feast, showing its importance, is reflected for instance in biblical laws allowing strangers to participate in the ritual, or

⁹ G. J. Botterweck, H. Ringgren (eds.), *Theological Dictionary of the Old Testament*, vol. XII, Grand Rapids 2003, pp. 1–29.

¹⁰ L. Koehler, W. Baumgartner, J. J. Stamm (eds.), *The Hebrew and Aramaic Lexicon of the Old Testament*, vol. 3, Leiden 1996, s.v.; W. H. Irwin, *Isaiah 28–33: translation with philological notes* (Biblica et Orientalia 30), Rome 1977, p. 114; T. F. Glasson, "The 'Passover', a Misnomer: The Meaning of the Verb Pasach", *Journal of Theological Studies* 10, 1959, pp. 79–84.

¹¹ Cf. Ł. Niesiołowski-Spanò, *Dziedzictwo Goliata. Filistyni i Hebrajczycy w czasach biblijnych* [Goliath's Legacy. Philistines and Hebrews in Biblical Times], Toruń 2012, pp. 274–276.

¹² N. Avigad, B. Sass, *Corpus of West Semitic Stamps Seals*, Jerusalem 1997, no. 323.

regarding the exceptions from the taboo of uncleanness provoked by the contact with dead (Num. 9:1–14).¹³

Importantly, the Exodus-Passover is also connected with another type of ritual, namely the offering of the firstborn. Already in its founding text in Exodus, Passover is joined with the sacrifice of the firstborn of both humans and animals: “For I will pass through the land of Egypt that night, and I will strike down every firstborn in the land of Egypt, both human beings and animals; on all the gods of Egypt I will execute judgments: I am the Lord” (Exod. 12:12). The Bible thus expresses the notion of God killing the firstborn in Egypt, as well as the religious law about the dedication of every firstborn, of every species to God: “Consecrate (קדש) to me all the firstborn; whatever is the first to open the womb among the Israelites, of human beings and animals, is mine” (Exod. 13:2). This very text should be interpreted in the sacrificial sense. This point of view is supported by the text reflecting the interpretation of the law in Exodus 13 in the times of Jesus:

When the time came for their purification according to the law of Moses, they brought him up to Jerusalem to present him to the Lord (as it is written in the law of the Lord, “Every firstborn male shall be designated as holy to the Lord”), and they offered a sacrifice according to what is stated in the law of the Lord, “a pair of turtledoves or two young pigeons”. (Luke 2:22–24)

In the sacrificial context of Luke 2:22–24, the meaning of verb *qds* in Exod. 13:2 is not obvious: it may suggest not only sacrifice, but also dedication. Exod. 13:2 differs however from other, mostly prophetic texts, referring to the dedication of the firstborn:

“With what shall I come before the Lord, and bow myself before God on high? Shall I come before him with burnt offerings, with calves a year old? Will the Lord be pleased with thousands of rams, 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?” He has told you, O mortal, what is good; and what does the Lord require of you but to do justice, and to love kindness, and to walk humbly with your God? (Mi 6,6–8)

Moreover I gave them statutes that were not good and ordinances by which they could not live. I defiled them through their very gifts, in their offering up all their firstborn (בהעביר כל־פטר רהם), in order that I might horrify them, so that they might know that I am the Lord. (Ezek. 20:25–26)

Micah 6:7 uses the verb *ntn* – ‘to give’, to describe the act connected to the firstborn, while in Ezekiel 20:26 we find verb *br* – ‘to take away’, ‘to carry’, and in *hiphil* – ‘to cause to pass over’, ‘to cause to cross over’. These passages recall the prophecy of Jeremiah, even if prophet does not mention the firstborn:

For the people of Judah have done evil in my sight, says the Lord; they have set their abominations in the house that is called by my name, defiling it. And they go on building the high place of Topheth, which is in the valley of the son of Hinnom, to burn their sons and their daughters in the fire (לשרף את־בניהם ואת־בתיהם באש) – which I did not command, nor did it come into my mind. (Jer. 7:30–31)

¹³ For biblical taboo, see e.g.: J. S. Wasilewski, *Tabu* [Taboo], Warsaw 2010, esp. pp. 85–123, and M. Douglas, *Purity and Danger. An analysis of concepts of pollution and taboo*, New York 1966.

Because the people have forsaken me, and have profaned this place by making offerings in it to other gods whom neither they nor their ancestors nor the kings of Judah have known; and because they have filled this place with the blood of the innocent, and gone on building the high places of Baal to burn their children in the fire as burnt offerings to Baal (לשרף את־בניהם באש עלות לבעל), which I did not command or decree, nor did it enter my mind. Therefore the days are surely coming, says the LORD, when this place shall no more be called Topheth, or the valley of the son of Hinnom, but the valley of Slaughter. (Jer. 19:4–6)

The abovementioned passages from Jeremiah use terminology similar to that found in Deuteronomy:

You must not do the same for the Lord your God, because every abhorrent thing that the Lord hates they have done for their gods. They would even burn their sons and their daughters in the fire to their gods (כי גם את־בניהם ואת־בנותיהם ישרפו באש לאלהיהם). (Deut. 12:31)¹⁴

The same ban is repeated also in Leviticus:

You shall not give any of your offspring to sacrifice them in *molk* (לאִתֶּן לְהַעֲבִיר לְמֹלֵךְ), and so profane the name of your God. (Lev. 18:21)

Any of the people of Israel, or of the aliens who reside in Israel, who give any of their offspring to *molk* (יתן מִזְרְעוֹ לְמֹלֵךְ) shall be put to death; the people of the land shall stone them to death. I myself will set my face against them, and will cut them off from the people, because they have given of their offspring to *molk* (מִזְרְעוֹ נָתַן לְמֹלֵךְ), defiling my sanctuary and profaning my holy name. (Lev. 20:2–3)

Leviticus 18:21 uses the verb *br*, while Lev. 20:2–3, in reference to the same ritual, makes use of the verb *ntn*. This equivalence may suggest that both expressions may, in Leviticus as much as in prophetic texts, refer to the same entity. Hence there is no obstacle to comparing *ntn* + *b^ekôr* in Micah 6:7 with *br* + *peṭer rāḥam* in Ezekiel 20:26.

Therefore, the passages in Exodus as well as in some prophetic texts suggest that there was a period when a ritual involving a kind of offering of the firstborn children to the deity was practiced in Judah. Furthermore, the passage in Micah 6:7 points to the redemption or purification function of this ritual. The harsh critique expressed in the Book of Jeremiah (Jer. 7:30–31, 19:4–6) attests that this ritual was practised until the last years of the existence of the kingdom of Judah, i.e. the early sixth century BCE.

If, however, we accept the existence of a ritual involving the offering of the firstborn, then it needs to be explained why in some cases it is openly linked to blood-sacrifice.

In Ezekiel and Jeremiah this ritual is undoubtedly meant in the form of a sacrifice: “their offering up all their firstborn” (Ezek. 20:26), “to burn their sons and their daughters in the fire” (Jer. 7:31). Furthermore, Jeremiah *explicite* points to the *tophet* as the sacrificial spot: “Topheth, which is in the valley of the son of Hinnom”.

¹⁴ J. Van Seters, “From Child Sacrifice to Pascal Lamb: A Remarkable Transformation in Israelite Religion”, in: *idem*, *Changing Perspectives I. Studies in the History, Literature and Religion of Biblical Israel*, London–Oakville 2011, p. 400.

To sum up this part: it has to be admitted that biblical references to Passover as a ritual, involving offering of the firstborn, by virtue of vocabulary and grammatical usage lead to linking them with the blood-sacrifice offered within the Jerusalem *tophet*.¹⁵ On the bases of the passages concerning the activity of King Josiah,¹⁶ we may link the *tophet*-sacrifices with the particular kind of sacrifices, namely the *molk*-sacrifice.

Paradoxically, with regard to *molk*-sacrifices a large number of sources is available. The very name of the sacrifice, even if misread by many scholars, is preserved in the Hebrew Bible¹⁷ and in epigraphical sources, mostly from the Punic world. In opposition to the interpretation regarding the biblical sources, shared by many scholars who understand the *molk* references as referring to an unknown deity Molok, and as such derived from the root *mlk*, I suggest to understand it as the participle from the root *hlk* – ‘to go’, meaning “(that which) was sent”. This very form appears in a number of Punic inscriptions preserved in the cemeteries, where votive grave-stelae with inscriptions like *mlk lb l* – “(sacrifice) *molk* for Baal” (cf. i.a. *KAI* 61, 98, 99, 103, 105, 109, 167) were placed upon the urns containing ashes of incinerated babies and sacrificial animals.¹⁸ Undoubtedly, in the Punic usage the word *molk* denotes the sacrifice itself, i.e. the entity (either animal or child) that was killed, and as such sent to the deity. It may be supposed that such a sacrifice was one of the most important and powerful rituals men could have offered to the gods.

The *molk*-sacrifices, or rather the child-sacrifices in the form of *molk*-offering, were well rooted in Hebrew tradition (it is not necessary to ask here whether a real or imagined one). It may be seen in a number of biblical passages referring to the sacrifice of a child. This must be the obvious context of ‘*akedah* – the Isaac sacrifice (Gen. 22:1–18)¹⁹ and probably the sacrifice of Jephthah’s daughter (Jdg. 11:30–40). This practice must be seen in the light of the biblical authors’ constant disapproval of this ritual. Despite their condemnation, it is hardly possible to deny that if the king offered such sacrifice (royal figures are often linked

¹⁵ Cf. Z. Zevit, *The Religions of Ancient Israel. A Synthesis of Parallaxic Approaches*, London–New York 2001, pp. 549–552, who thinks that in Jeremiah we are not dealing with a sacrificial ritual, but with a burial. However, in the light of the Punic data, where ashes of incinerated children were found mixed with ashes of animals in the same urns, one is inclined to think of a sacrificial ritual rather than a burial.

¹⁶ “He defiled Topheth (תֹּפֶת), which is in the valley of Ben-hinnom, so that no one would make a son or a daughter pass through fire as an offering to *molk* (מֹלֶךְ)” (2 Kings 23:10).

¹⁷ *Status questionis* presents A. Piwowar, “Pochodzenie i natura starotestamentalnego kultu Molocha”, *Scripta Biblica et Orientalia* 1, 2009, pp. 107–134; cf. also A. Tronina, *Księga Kapłańska* (Nowy Komentarz Biblijny 3) [The Book of Leviticus (New Biblical Commentary 3)], Częstochowa 2006, pp. 271–274.

¹⁸ The literature in this field is particularly extensive, cf. useful synthesis by S. Brown, *Late Carthaginian Child Sacrifice and Sacrificial Monuments in their Mediterranean Context*, Sheffield 1991, and in particular: G. Garbini, *La religione dei Fenici in Occidente*, Roma 1994, pp. 67–81; J. S. Runding, “Pozo Moro, Child Sacrifice, and the Greek Legendary Tradition”, *Journal of Biblical Literature* 123 (2004), pp. 425–447; A. Wypustek, “The Problem of Human Sacrifices in Roman North Africa”, *Eos* 81, 1993, pp. 265–274; F. Stavrakopoulou, *King Manasseh and Child Sacrifice: Biblical Distortions of Historical Realities*, (BZAW 338) Berlin 2004 and classical O. Eissfeldt, *Molk als Opferbegriff im Punischen und Hebräischen und das Ende Gottes Moloch*, Halle 1935.

¹⁹ O. Boehm, “Child Sacrifice, Ethical Responsibility and the Existence of the People of Israel”, *Vetus Testamentum* 54, 2004, pp. 145–156.

to it in biblical accounts), it must have had a key function for the community. The kings' making their sons "pass through fire" should not be viewed as actions of a degenerated sadist, but rather as prayerful acts of pious monarchs of their epoch, who trusted in the powerful efficiency of the precious ritual that guaranteed divine protection. *Molk*-sacrifice, where a victim – most probably the person who was the most important, precious and close to the donor – was offered, had to have, in the opinion of the donor at least, the greatest value, and as such to "guarantee" a lot from the gods. Such an interpretation makes the association of *molk*-sacrifice and the Passover, as the protection-sacrifice *par excellence*, justified.

Furthermore, in Christian theology Jesus' death is openly linked to the Passover sacrifice (Jesus as the Passover lamb). This is so not because of any direct allusion to the Exodus-story, but to the highest sacrifice, used as protection and salvation for the community. Jesus – the new Passover lamb – saves entire humankind.

The link between *molk*-sacrifice and the Passover may be traced also in the Christian mass tradition. Both rituals are in a way re-used in the Christian language of the mass, i.e. the new sacrifice. The mass in itself refers to the Passover ritual by calling Jesus the lamb ("Lamb of God, who takes away the sins of the world, have mercy on us"). On the other hand, the mass as a sacrificial ritual is also rooted in the *molk*-ritual, or in its language. The Latin mass, being a form of the sacrifice, ends with the words "Ite, missa est" (*You may go, it is sent*), and the Latin name of the mass itself (*missa*) derives from the verb used there. It is obvious that the verb *mitto*, *-ere*, ("to send") in this phrase refers to the sacrifice, which was sent (to God). Interestingly enough, this very expression is semantically identical to the Semitic word *molk* – "(that which) was sent".²⁰ Hence it may be said that the similarity between Christian mass-sacrifice, repeating the death of Jesus, with *molk*-sacrifice has a "genetic" base.

What does all this mean for the historical evidence of religion in Judah in the seventh century BCE?

The "invention" of Passover is openly linked to Josiah, and this tradition has to be dealt with seriously. King Manasseh and other "bad" kings were blamed for their behaviour, including sacrificing their sons, i.e. practicing *molk*-sacrifice. Practicing of these rituals is referred to already in late eighth century, in passages in Isaiah (Isa. 30:29–33);²¹ this makes the attestation of *molk*-sacrifice older than Passover. Constant repetition of the ban on child-sacrifice in Pentateuch and Jeremiah attests to the long life and popularity of this ritual. The repetition of the ban shows the need for and actuality of such a prohibition. This tradition should be treated seriously, as well. Since both rituals – Passover and *molk*-sacrifice – had a similar aim, i.e. the protection of the community, both rituals may be linked to each other.²²

Leaving aside the origins of bloody child sacrifice (*molk*), one may venture the hypothesis that it was an immanent element of monarchic rituals in Judah in the times of Manasseh and Josiah. It was the king who was responsible for this most

²⁰ G. Garbini, *I Fenici. Storia e religione*, Napoli 1980, pp. 187–203.

²¹ Z. Zevit, *The Religions of Ancient Israel. A Synthesis of Parallaxic Approaches*, London–New York 2001, pp. 521–522.

²² Cf. J. Van Seters, "From Child Sacrifice to Pascal Lamb: A Remarkable Transformation in Israelite Religion", in *idem, Changing Perspectives I. Studies in the History, Literature and Religion of Biblical Israel*, London–Oakville 2011, pp. 399–408.

precious sacrifice, thanks to which the entire population was protected. In the late seventh century, some kind of cult reform was undertaken, or at least its advocates were active, and child sacrifice was replaced by other kinds of sacrifice. These new kinds of sacrifice received a new name. It is reasonable to think that Jeremiah, one of the most vivid critics of child sacrifice (cf. Jer. 19:4–6; 32:34–35), was among the promoters of the new ritual. On the other hand, Jeremiah does not mention Josiah's reform or his supposed role in the religious innovations. All in all, the *molk*-sacrifice was replaced by Passover, and the ritual moved from the *tophet* into the Jerusalem Temple. Lambs replaced children as sacrificial victims. Despite all these changes, the ritual in itself kept the same function – it guaranteed God's protection and salvation to the community.

Having said this, one may suggest the following reconstruction of the origins of Passover. Originally, Passover sacrifices were functionally mixed with *molk*-sacrifices in that they had the same purpose. The only difference lies in the victim: the former used children, and the new ritual introduced the replacement victims – animals. Originally, the ritual was performed in the Jerusalem Temple and was closely related to the central cultic activity of the king.²³ There were no connections of the Passover sacrifice with the Exodus story. Its function was stated in its name – *psh* – meaning “a protecting sacrifice”. The role of this sacrifice, as the key ritual for the community, might be compared with Babylonian *Akitu* ritual of the New Year Feast. As such, the ritual had an obvious urban aspect and was closely related to the king's ritual duties performed in the Jerusalem Temple. Political changes at the end of the seventh century BCE influenced changes in the monarchic rituals, including replacement of the child sacrifice practiced in the *tophet* into annual lamb sacrifice in Jerusalem's Temple. Passover became the central sacrifice, offered under king's supervision once a year, in Jerusalem.

It is impossible, at this point, to prove or disprove that the offering of the Passover sacrifice by the heads of families originated already in the late monarchic period in Judah. However, the period of the Babylonian exile provides perfect circumstances for the switching of practice of the offering being noble and conducted in the temple, to the ritual being familial and conducted in households. As during the time of the Babylonian captivity there was neither a king nor a temple, the ritual had to be offered in a different manner, and this is why private religious practice had to take over. The temple aspect of Passover was reintroduced only in the late fifth century BCE, when the new cultic calendar was established for the population of the Persian province of Jehud.²⁴ This is the period when the ritual was joined to the Exodus story. The new myth about Jewish people leaving Egypt for their promised land was used as the mythical prototype for the old ritual.

²³ Cf. T. Prosic, *The Development and Symbolism of Passover until 70 CE*, London 2004.

²⁴ L. Niesiołowski-Spanò, “Passover, the Jewish Cultic Calendar and Torah”, *Palamedes. A Journal of Ancient History*, 2, 2007, pp. 35–54; S. Chavel, “The Second Passover, Pilgrimage, and the Centralized Cult”, *Harvard Theological Review*, 102, 2009, pp. 1–24.

OFIARY Z DZIECI W JUDZIE W VII WIEKU P.N.E.
I POCZĄTKI ŚWIĘTA PASCHY*Streszczenie*

Tekst ma za zadanie przedstawienie genezy święta Paschy. Tradycja biblijna wspomina o owym święcie w kontekście mitycznej przeszłości Hebrajczyków (np. w księdze Wyjścia i Jozuego), lecz zarazem wyraźnie łączy początki owego święta z okresem panowania króla Judy Jozjasza (640–609 p.n.e.). W artykule staram się pokazać, że związek Paschy z opowieścią o Wyjściu Izraelitów z Egiptu ma wtórny charakter i zatem nie odzwierciedla genezy samego rytuału.

Jednocześnie teksty Starego Testamentu wskazują na żywotność w Judzie VII w. p.n.e. religijnej praktyki polegającej na składaniu dzieci w ofierze (ofiary typu *molk*). Przedstawiona jest tu hipoteza, zgodnie z którą tzw. reforma Jozjasza nie miała charakteru radykalnego oczyszczania religii judejskiej, lecz polegała głównie na odejściu od ofiar z dzieci (*molk*) i zastąpienia ich centralną ofiarą ochronną, polegającą na ofiarowywaniu zwierzęcia zastępczego (jagnię paschalne).

Zaproponowano również inne niż zwykle wyjaśnienie etymologii samej nazwy święta, a zatem nie od *ps̄h* w znaczeniu „kuleć”, lecz „chronić”. Pierwotna Pascha przedstawiona została, jako rytuał odbywany w Świątyni Jerozolimskiej, a główną osobą odpowiedzialną za kult był monarcha.