

Blood and vampires - the peshat of Dracula

Andrew Margolis

andrew@margolis.org

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Video Clips: Nosferatu (1922), Dracula (1931), Buffy the Vampire Slayer (1997-2003), Twilight (2008), Juda (2017)

Mishnah Zevachim 5:

איזהו מקומן של זבחים

Which is the place for the offering of the sacrifices? Most holy sacrifices are slaughtered on the north side of the altar. The bullock and the goat of Yom Kippur are done at the north, and the receiving of their blood is performed with ministering vessels at the north, and their blood requires sprinkling between the poles of the ark, on the curtain, and on the golden altar. The omission of a single application of the blood invalidates them. The priest would pour out the remainders of the blood on the western base of the outer altar, but if he did not pour it out, he did not invalidate the sacrifice.

Leviticus:

Ch. 7 v.2 Guilt offering אֲשַׁח – "...the blood shall be dashed on all sides of the altar"

Ch.8 v. 15 "Moses took the blood and with his finger put some on each of the horns of the altar, cleansing the altar; then he poured out the blood at the base of the altar. Thus he consecrated it in order to make expiation upon it. (עָלִיוּ לְכַפֵּר)"

Ch.8 v.23-24 "Moses took some of its blood and put it on the ridge of Aaron's right ear, and on the thumb of his right hand, and on the big toe of his right foot. Moses then brought forward the sons of Aaron, and put some of the blood on the ridges of their right ears, and on the thumbs of their right hands, and on the big toes of their right feet; and the rest of the blood Moses dashed against every side of the altar."

Ch.8 v.30 "And Moses took some of the anointing oil and some of the blood that was on the altar and sprinkled it upon Aaron and upon his vestments, and also upon his sons and upon their vestments. Thus he consecrated Aaron and his vestments, and also his sons and their vestments."

Ch. 6 v.20: Sin offering חֲטָאת - "...when there is sprinkled of the blood thereof upon any garment, thou shalt wash that whereon it was sprinkled in a holy place."

Ch. 7. V.26-27 "you must not consume any blood, either of bird or of animal, in any of your settlements. Anyone who eats blood shall be cut off from his kin."

Ch. 17 v.10-14 "And if anyone of the house of Israel or of the strangers who reside among them partakes of any blood, I will set My face against the person who partakes of the blood, and I will cut him off from among his kin. For the life of the flesh is in the blood (כִּי נַפְשׁ הַבֶּשֶׂר, בַּדָּם הוּא), and I have assigned it to you for making expiation for your lives upon the altar; it is the blood, as life, that effects expiation (כִּי-הַדָּם הוּא, בְּנִפְשׁ יִכַּפֵּר). Therefore I say to the Israelite people: No person among you shall partake of blood, nor shall the stranger who resides among you partake of blood. And if any Israelite or any stranger who resides among them hunts down an animal or a bird that may be eaten, he shall pour out its blood and cover it with earth. For the life of all flesh — its blood is its life (כִּי נַפְשׁ כָּל בֶּשֶׂר דָּמוֹ בְּנִפְשׁוֹ הוּא). Therefore I say to the Israelite people: You shall not partake of the blood of any flesh, for the life of all flesh is its blood (כִּי נַפְשׁ כָּל בֶּשֶׂר דָּמוֹ הוּא). Anyone who partakes of it shall be cut off."

Genesis: Ch.9 v. 4 "Only flesh with the life thereof, which is the blood thereof, shall ye not eat. (אֲךָ בֶּשֶׂר בְּנִפְשׁוֹ דָּמוֹ לֹא תֹאכְלוּ)"

Deuteronomy: Ch.12 v.23 – 25: "But make sure that you do not partake of the blood; for the blood is the life, and you must not consume the life with the flesh (כִּי הַדָּם, הוּא הַנֶּפֶשׁ; וְלֹא-תֹאכַל הַנֶּפֶשׁ, עִם-הַבֶּשֶׂר). You must not partake of it; you

must pour it out on the ground like water: you must not partake of it, in order that it may go well with you and with your descendants to come, for you will be doing what is right in the sight of the Lord.”

Montague Summers: The Vampire, His Kith and Kin (1928):

Red was the colour of the hair of Judas Iscariot, and of Cain ...I have not met with the following tradition save orally, but it is believed in Serbia, Bulgaria, and Rumania, that there are certain red-poll'd vampires who are called "Children of Judas," and that these, the foulest of the foul, kill their victim with one bite or kiss which drains the blood as it were at a single draught. The poisoned flesh of the victim is wounded with the Devil's stigmata, three hideous scars shaped thus, XXX, signifying the thirty pieces of silver, the price of blood.

Dracula:

Chapter 18: “Thus when we find the habitation of this man-that-was, we can confine him to his coffin and destroy him, if we obey what we know. But he is clever. I have asked my friend Arminius, of Buda-Pesth University, to make his record; and, from all the means that are, he tell me of what he has been. He must, indeed, have been that Voivode Dracula who won his name against the Turk, over the great river on the very frontier of Turkey-land. If it be so, then was he no common man; for in that time, and for centuries after, he was spoken of as the cleverest and the most cunning, as well as the bravest of the sons of the ‘land beyond the forest.’ That mighty brain and that iron resolution went with him to his grave, and are even now arrayed against us.”

Chapter 11: “My wrist bled freely, and quite a little pool trickled on to the carpet. I saw that my friend was not intent on further effort, and occupied myself binding up my wrist, keeping a wary eye on the prostrate figure all the time. When the attendants rushed in, and we turned our attention to him, his employment positively sickened me. He was lying on his belly on the floor licking up, like a dog, the blood which had fallen from my wounded wrist. He was easily secured, and to my surprise, went with the attendants quite placidly, simply repeating over and over again, "The blood is the life! The blood is the life!"

Chapter 18: "I used to fancy that life was a positive and perpetual entity, and that by consuming a multitude of live things, no matter how low in the scale of creation, one might indefinitely prolong life. At times I held the belief so strongly that I actually tried to take human life. The doctor here will bear me out that on one occasion I tried to kill him for the purpose of strengthening my vital powers by the assimilation with my own body of his life through the medium of his blood, relying of course, upon the Scriptural phrase, 'For the blood is the life'".

Chapter 2: “a tall old man, clean shaven, save for a long white mustache and clad in black from head to foot, without a single speck of color about him anywhere ... his face was a strong, a very strong, aquiline, with high bridge of the thin nose and peculiarly arched nostrils, with lofty domed forehead, and hair growing scantily round the temples but profusely elsewhere. His eyebrows were very massive, almost meeting over the nose, and with bushy hair that seemed to curl in its own profusion. The mouth, so far as I could see it under the heavy moustache, was fixed and rather cruel-looking, with peculiarly sharp white teeth. These protruded over the lips, whose remarkable ruddiness showed astonishing vitality in a man of his years. For the rest, his ears were pale, and at the tops extremely pointed. The chin was broad and strong, and the cheeks firm though thin. The general effect was one of extraordinary pallor.”

Chapter 11: “a tall, thin chap, with a `ook nose and a pointed beard, with a few white hairs runnin' through it. He had a `ard, cold look and red eyes, and I took a sort of mislike to him, for it seemed as if it was `im as they was hirritated at. He `ad white kid gloves on `is `ands.”

Chapter 13: “He was very pale, and his eyes seemed bulging out as, half in terror and half in amazement, he gazed at a tall, thin man, with a beaky nose and black moustache and pointed beard, who was also observing the pretty girl. He was looking at her so hard that he did not see either of us, and so I had a good view of him. His face was not a good face; it was hard, and cruel, and sensual, and his big white teeth, that looked all the whiter because his lips were so red, were pointed like an animal's.”

Chapter 26: “We found Hildesheim in his office, a Hebrew of rather the Adelphi Theatre type, with a nose like a sheep, and a fez. His arguments were pointed with specie, we doing the punctuation, and with a little bargaining he told us

what he knew. This turned out to be simple but important. He had received a letter from Mr. de Ville of London, telling him to receive, if possible before sunrise so as to avoid customs, a box which would arrive at Galatz in the Czarina Catherine. This he was to give in charge to a certain Petrof Skinsky, who dealt with the Slovaks who traded down the river to the port. He had been paid for his work by an English bank note, which had been duly cashed for gold at the Danube International Bank. When Skinsky had come to him, he had taken him to the ship and handed over the box, so as to save portage. That was all he knew.”

Chapter 14: “I rose and bowed, and he came towards me; a man of medium weight, strongly built, with his shoulders set back over a broad, deep chest and a neck well balanced on the trunk as the head is on the neck. The poise of the head strikes one at once as indicative of thought and power; the head is noble, well-sized, broad, and large behind the ears. The face, clean-shaven, shows a hard, square chin, a large, resolute, mobile mouth, a good-sized nose, rather straight, but with quick, sensitive nostrils, that seem to broaden as the big, bushy brows come down and the mouth tightens. The forehead is broad and fine, rising at first almost straight and then sloping back above two bumps or ridges wide apart; such a forehead that the reddish hair cannot possibly tumble over it, but falls naturally back and to the sides. Big, dark blue eyes are set widely apart, and are quick and tender or stern with the man’s moods.”

Ethel Alec-Tweedie, Behind the Footlights:

“There is no doubt that Irving’s personality is strong and his appearance striking. He is a tall man for I suppose he is about six feet high thin and well knit, with curiously dark and penetrating eyes which are kindly, and have a merry twinkle when amused. The eyebrows are shaggy and protruding, and, oddly enough, remained black after his hair turned grey. He almost always wears eyeglasses, which somehow suit him as they rest comfortably on his aquiline nose. His features are clear-cut and clean-shaven, and the heavy jaw and slightly underhanging chin give strength to his face, which is always pale; the lips are thin and strangely pallid in colouring. Irving, though nearing seventy, has a wonderfully erect carriage, his shoulders are well thrust back and his chest forward, and somehow his movements always denote a man of strength and character. The very dark hair gradually turned grey and is now almost white; it was fine hair, and has always been worn long and thrown well back behind the ears.”

Wikipedia:

“In the last several decades, literary and cultural scholars have offered diverse analyses of Stoker's novel and the character of Count Dracula. C.F. Bentley reads Dracula as an embodiment of the Freudian id. Carol A. Senf reads the novel as a response to the New Woman archetype, while Christopher Craft sees Dracula as embodying latent homosexuality and sees the text as an example of a 'characteristic, if hyperbolic instance of Victorian anxiety over the potential fluidity of gender roles'. Stephen D. Arata interprets the events of the novel as anxiety over colonialism and racial mixing, and Talia Schaffer construes the novel as an indictment of Oscar Wilde. Franco Moretti reads Dracula as a figure of monopoly capitalism, though Hollis Robbins suggests that Dracula's inability to participate in social conventions and to forge business partnerships undermines his power. Richard Noll reads Dracula within the context of 19th century alienism (psychiatry) and asylum medicine. D. Bruno Starrs understands the novel to be a pro-Catholic pamphlet promoting proselytization.”

Genesis:

Ch 2. v.7: Then the LORD God formed man of the dust of the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man became a living soul.

(וַיִּפַח וּבָאָפִי נְשָׁמַת חַיִּים ; וַיְהִי הָאָדָם לְנֶפֶשׁ חַיָּה.)

Ch.2 v. 10: And out of the ground the LORD God formed every beast of the field, and every fowl of the air.

(וַיִּצַר יְהוָה אֱלֹהִים מִן-הָאֲדָמָה, כָּל-חַיַּת הַשָּׂדֶה וְאֵת כָּל-עוֹף הַשָּׁמַיִם.)

S. R. Hirsch: (Commentary on Acharei Mot)

“In animals, not only the body, but the life itself, the nefesh, came from the earth, whereas in Man, only the body was dust of the earth, afar min haadama, but his life, his nefesh chaya, his living soul, was a breath of God himself, and so does not belong to the dust, the afar.”