

Pastor-teacher Don Hargrove
Faith Bible Church
May 23, 2011
<http://fbcweb.org/doctrines.html>

JEWISH APOLOGETICS (55)
ANSWERING JEWISH OBJECTION #46
(DDR #674)

Objection #46: According to Proverbs 16:6, love and good deeds make atonement. So who needs sacrifice?

Proverbs 16:6 By lovingkindness and truth iniquity is atoned for, And by the fear of the LORD one keeps away from evil.

Brown's short response to this objection:

If I were to follow your logic, I could just as easily say, "According to Proverbs 16:6, love and good deeds make atonement, so who needs Yom Kippur (the Day of Atonement)?" That is to say, if atonement can be made between man and God through doing good, then there is no need for suffering and chastisement, no need for prayers and confession, no need even for the Day of Atonement. What Bible-believing Jew would hold to such a view? This points us to the real meaning of this verse, namely, "Through lovingkindness and truth, sin is *wiped away*." In other words, on a practical, person-to-person level, being loyal, loving, and truthful will overcome and eradicate the prior effects of sin. But the verse is not directly related to issues of atonement, purification, and forgiveness in the sight of God, nor is it reasonable to think that the Lord would overthrow countless verses in the Torah with one phrase in Proverbs.¹

The word translated "atoned" (*kipper*) does not always mean "atone." Sometimes it refers to human relationships and simply means to placate or appease (e.g., Jacob wanting to atone/appease Esau, cf. Gen. 32:21). The context always determines how a word is used. Brown demonstrates that Proverbs is dealing with human interpersonal relationships and not with ritual requirements in dealing with sin and guilt before God. Indeed, it is ludicrous to think that

¹Michael L. Brown, *Answering Jewish Objections to Jesus: General and Historical Objections—Volume 2*, (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Baker Books, 2000), 123-126. In his book, Brown lists the objection and then gives a short response that is followed by a more developed response. This DDR series, for the most part, tracks the objection and his *short* response, after which you will find my comments. I highly recommend his book if you are interested in his longer responses (there is far too much material to include in the DDRs).

Proverbs 16:6 is repudiating the entire divinely ordained system of atonement that runs through the Pentateuch which always includes blood.

The point of Proverbs is not that love and good deeds can satisfy the perfect righteousness of God but that they can clean up the mess that sin creates in our interpersonal relationships. By love and good works one can help to placate or improve a relationship with someone one has sinned against. When man sins against God, no amount of good works can take care of the consequences of sin and relative righteousness. Christ bore all of the sins on the Cross, and for the believer the sole issue for restoration to fellowship is confession of sin (1 John 1:9). However, there are times when we have wronged/sinned against someone where we can improve the relationship through love and good works. Love and good deeds can make things better between humans and bring them together [sort of an “atonement”]. If a husband who has offended or neglected his wife, bought her some chocolates, flowers, and a “love card” out of his genuine love for her, would that not tend to bring some peace [atonement] in their interpersonal relationship? This has nothing to do with atonement before God—certainly not about replacing the need for sacrificial atonement that is required in man’s relationship with a holy and righteous God.

In Him,

Pastor Don