

# The Disposition of Sin in the Old Testament

By Bernard Spencer

## INTRODUCTION

“In the beginning God created...” and “God saw that it was good.”

“If Adam had not transgressed the law of God, the ceremonial law would never have been instituted.”<sup>1</sup> Sin, transgression of the law,<sup>2</sup> is here seen as being the cause of the institution of the ceremonial law. When man sinned he separated himself from God, the source of all life.<sup>3</sup> Therefore, if man was to live, sin must be put away and man must be reconciled to the God he had rebelled against. God, in His foreknowledge and love seeing that some time must elapse before He dealt decisively with sin, assured man He did have a plan that would spare him from receiving the full result of his sin,<sup>4</sup> that together with Christ,<sup>5</sup> they had devised and would now institute a system of sacrifices<sup>6</sup> to reveal His plan and keep before man “that which the serpent made Eve disbelieve, that the penalty of disobedience is death.”<sup>7</sup> This plan also pointed out that eternal life could only be regained as a gift from God.<sup>8</sup> The system of sacrifices, or ceremonial system, as God’s immediate response to sin, is therefore a mediatorial system;<sup>9</sup> mediating between two estranged parties. Its conclusion was also a promise of the ultimate destruction of the evil one.<sup>10</sup> The mediatorial or sacrificial system is most fully presented in Scripture in the records of the Mosaic Tabernacle and its services and the temples that succeeded it. The system of sacrifices typified a Savior to come.<sup>11</sup> The sanctuary service pre-figured in symbols the work of that Savior, Christ, for our redemption.<sup>12</sup> It now becomes easy for us to understand that “the subject of the sanctuary...should be clearly understood by the people of God.”<sup>13</sup> It is true that when Jesus, the Christ, died on the cross He brought to an end the sacrificial system of the Old Testament<sup>14</sup> but “the types are not declared to be null and void for they point to the reality and to Christ’s work in the heavenly sanctuary.”<sup>15</sup>

Finally, in scripture the disposition of sin is seen in three stages, or aspects; first, the promise of God to act on man’s behalf; much of the Old Testament is concerned with this stage. Secondly, God’s act of redemption at the cross; and the proclamation to all of that act. Finally, the judgment, which results in the total eradication of evil.<sup>16</sup>

Our discussion in this paper will center around the first phase, God’s promise and the manner of its realization as revealed through the use of symbol. Therefore this brief study of the disposition of sin in the Old Testament, while not limiting itself to the sanctuary service, will center around it.

## THE SYSTEM

“The sacrificial system committed to Adam was...perverted by his descendants. Superstition, idolatry, cruelty, and licentiousness corrupted the simple and significant service that God had appointed. Through long intercourse with idolaters, the people of Israel had mingled many heathen customs with their worship; therefore the Lord gave them at Sinai definite instruction concerning the sacrificial service.”<sup>17</sup>

In presenting some of this instruction the outline below will be followed.

- A. The sanctuary.
  - 1. The building (briefly).
  - 2. The furniture.
    - a. Altar of burnt offering.
    - b. Laver.
    - c. Candlestick.
    - d. Table of Shewbread.
    - e. Altar of incense.
    - f. Ark of the covenant.
      - 1) Mercy Seat.
      - 2) Shekinah.
- B. The Priests.
  - 1. Common priests.
  - 2. The High Priest.
- C. The sacrificial methodology.
  - 1. Corporate sacrifices.
    - a. The daily.
    - b. The yearly.
  - 2. Individual sacrifices.
    - a. Sin offering.

The Tabernacle was made of “a large amount of the most precious and costly material...”<sup>18</sup> It “was so constructed that it could be taken apart and borne with the Israelites in all their journeyings. It was therefore small, being not more than fifty-five feet in length, and eighteen in breadth and height. Yet it was a magnificent structure. The wood employed for the building and its furniture was that of the acacia tree, which was less subject to decay than any other to be obtained in Sinai. The walls consisted of upright boards, set in silver sockets, and held firm by pillars and connecting bars; and all were overlaid with gold, giving to the building the appearance of solid gold.<sup>19</sup> The roof was formed of four sets of curtains, the innermost of ‘fine twined linen, and blue, and purple, and scarlet: with cherubim of

cunning work;’ the other three respectively were of goats’ hair, rams’ skins died red, and sealskins, so arranged as to afford complete protection.<sup>20</sup>

“The building was divided into two apartments<sup>21</sup> by a rich and beautiful curtain, or veil, suspended from gold-plated pillars; and a similar veil closed the entrance of the first apartment. These, like the inner covering, which formed the ceiling, were of the most gorgeous colors, blue, purple, and scarlet, beautifully arranged, while inwrought with threads of gold and silver were cherubim to represent the angelic host who were connected with the work of the heavenly sanctuary and are ministering spirits to the people of God on earth.

“The sacred tent was enclosed in an open space called the court, which was surrounded by hangings, or screens, of fine linen, suspended from pillars of brass. The entrance to this enclosure was at the eastern end. It was closed by curtains of costly material and beautiful workmanship, though inferior to those of the sanctuary. The hangings of the court being only about half as high as the walls of the tabernacle, the building could be plainly seen by the people without.”<sup>22</sup>

In the court that enclosed the Tabernacle, close to the entrance was the altar of burnt offering. Upon this altar, made of brass, were offered all the sacrifices made by fire. Its horns were sprinkled with the atoning blood.<sup>23</sup>

“Between the altar and the door of the tabernacle was the laver, which was also of brass, made from the mirrors that had been the freewill offering of the women of Israel. At the laver the priests were to wash their hands and their feet whenever they went into the sacred apartments,<sup>24</sup> or approached the altar to offer a burnt offering to the Lord.”<sup>25</sup> This provision was a continual reminder that “all defilement must be put away from those who would come into the presence of God.”<sup>26</sup> “...He was so high and holy that unless they did comply with these conditions, death would follow.”<sup>27</sup>

In the first room of the tabernacle were three pieces of furniture; the candlestick on the south side, the table of shewbread on the north side and the golden altar of incense to the west.<sup>28</sup>

The candlestick had seven branches and seven lamps. “Its branches were ornamented with exquisitely wrought flowers, resembling lilies, and the whole was made from one solid piece of gold. There being no windows in the tabernacle, the lamps were never all extinguished at one time, but shed their light by day and by night.”<sup>29</sup> The lamp burned “pure olive oil beaten.”<sup>30</sup>

The table of shewbread was overlaid with pure gold including its ornamental crown. Each Sabbath the priests placed twelve cakes on it, arranged in two piles and sprinkled with frankincense.<sup>31</sup> The loaves from the previous week, being accounted holy, were to be eaten by the priests,<sup>32</sup> while the frankincense that had been on them was burned.<sup>33</sup>

The golden altar of incense was just before the veil which separated the holy place, or first apartment, from the most holy place. The fire upon this altar had been kindled by God Himself and was sacredly cherished.<sup>34</sup> Each morning and evening at exactly the same time as the daily sacrifice was offered the priests burned incense.<sup>35</sup> When a sin offering was slain the horns of the golden altar were touched with the blood, and upon the great Day of Atonement it was sprinkled with blood.<sup>36</sup>

In the most holy place was the ark, "a chest of acacia wood, overlaid within and without with gold, and having a crown of gold about the top. ...The cover of the sacred chest was called the mercy seat."<sup>37</sup> It was "a magnificent piece of workmanship, surmounted by two cherubim,"<sup>38</sup> one standing at each end.<sup>39</sup> "One wing of each angel was stretched forth on high, while the other was folded over the body...in token of reverence and humility. The position of the cherubim, with their faces turned toward each other,<sup>40</sup> and looking reverently downward toward the ark, represented the reverence with which the heavenly host regard the law of God and their interest in the plan of redemption."<sup>41</sup> This mercy seat was wrought of one piece of solid gold.<sup>42</sup>

The ark is perhaps more commonly known as 'the ark of the covenant'. This is because it contained the tables of stone upon which God Himself had inscribed the ten commandments, which commandments were the basis for the covenant made between God and Israel.<sup>43</sup>

Above the mercy seat was "the visible manifestation of Jehovah's presence; ..."<sup>44</sup> called the Shekinah. "...From between the cherubim, God made known His will. Divine messages were sometimes communicated to the high priest by a voice from the cloud. Sometimes a light fell upon the angel at the right, to signify approval or acceptance, or a shadow or cloud rested upon the one at the left to reveal disapproval or rejection".<sup>45</sup>

This is in brief a description of the tabernacle constructed under Moses' supervision in response to God's expressed will and revealed plan. "After the settlement of the Hebrews in Canaan, the tabernacle was replaced by the temple of Solomon, which, though a permanent structure and upon a larger scale, observed the same proportions, and was similarly furnished. In this form the sanctuary existed – except while it lay in ruins in Daniel's time – until its destruction by the Romans, in A. D. 70."<sup>46</sup>

The priests were the special workmen of the tabernacle and in accordance with their office a special dress was appointed them.<sup>47</sup> “The robe of the common priest was of white linen, and woven in one piece. It extended nearly to the feet and was confined about the waste by a white linen girdle embroidered in blue, purple and red. A linen turban, or miter, completed his outer costume.”<sup>48</sup>

“The garments of the high priest were of costly material and beautiful workmanship, befitting his exalted station. In addition to the linen dress of the common priest, he wore a robe of blue, also woven in one piece. Around the skirt it was ornamented with golden bells, and pomegranates of blue, purple, and scarlet. Outside of this was the ephod, a shorter garment of gold, blue, purple, scarlet, and white. It was confined by a girdle of the same colors, beautifully wrought. The ephod was sleeveless, and on its gold-embroidered shoulder pieces were set two onyx stones, bearing the name of the twelve tribes of Israel.

“Over the ephod was the breastplate, the most sacred of the priestly vestments. This was of the same material as the ephod. It was in the form of a square, measuring a span, and was suspended from the shoulders by a cord of blue from golden rings. The border was formed of a variety of precious stones,<sup>49</sup> the same that form the twelve foundations of the City of God. Within the border were twelve stones set on gold, arranged in rows of four, and, like those in the shoulder pieces, engraved with the names of the tribes.<sup>50</sup> “At the right and left of the breastplate were two large stones of great brilliancy. These were known as the Urim and Thummin.”<sup>51</sup> By them the will of God was made known through the high priest. When questions were brought for decision before the Lord, a halo of light encircling the precious stone at the right was a token of divine consent or approval, while a cloud shadowing the stone at the left was an evidence of denial or disapprobation.

The Miter of the high priest consisted of the white linen turban, having attached to it by a lace of blue, a gold plate bearing the inscription, “Holiness of Jehovah.” Everything connected with the apparel and deportment of the priests was to be as to impress the beholder with a sense of the holiness of God, the sacredness of His worship, and the purity required of those who came into His presence.”<sup>52</sup>

“The duties of the priests were manifold. They were employed by God as agents, to represent Him and to officiate in the demonstration of His plan for redeeming men from sin. Their work, in summary form, was to be holy unto the Lord, make atonement for themselves, represent God to the nation, pray for pardon of public and national sins, make atonement for the people, assist individuals in

offering an acceptable sacrifice, teach the people the significance of the services at the sanctuary, and assist in the moving of the sanctuary.”<sup>53</sup>

The sacrificial methodology is divisible into two parts; corporate sacrifices and individual sacrifices. The corporate were the daily and the yearly. Though there were many sacrifices offered by individuals we will limit our discussion to the lamb of the sin offering.”<sup>54</sup>

The daily service for the nation of Israel was performed at the altar of burnt offering in the courtyard and in the holy place.”<sup>55</sup> It consisted of “the morning and evening burnt offering, the offering of sweet incense on the golden altar, and the special offerings for individual sins. And there were also offerings for sabbaths, new moons, and special feasts.”<sup>56</sup> The showbread was also considered a part of the daily service though it was only renewed once each week.”<sup>57</sup>

“Every morning and evening a lamb of the year old was burned upon the altar, with its appropriate meat offering, thus symbolizing the daily consecration of the nation to Jehovah, and their constant dependence upon the atoning blood of Christ. God expressly directed that every offering presented for the service of the sanctuary should be ‘without blemish’. Exodus 12:5”<sup>58</sup>

The daily sacrifice was accompanied by an offering of incense on the golden altar. “In the offering of incense the priest was brought more directly into the presence of God than in any other act of the daily ministrations. As the inner veil of the sanctuary did not extend to the top of the building, the glory of God, which was manifest above the mercy seat, was partially visible from the first apartment. When the priest offered incense before the Lord, he looked toward the ark; and as the cloud of incense arose the divine glory descended upon the mercy seat and filled the most holy place, and often so filled both apartments that the priest was obliged to retire to the door of the tabernacle.”<sup>59</sup> This incense not only had a definite symbolical meaning but it fed the sacred flame, causing the sanctuary to be filled with a “fragrant cloud, day and night. Its fragrance extended for miles around the tabernacle.”<sup>60</sup>

The most important part of the daily service was the special offering brought by individuals wishing forgiveness of their sins.<sup>62</sup> “Day by day the repentant sinner brought his offering to the door of the tabernacle, and, placing his hand upon the victim's head, confessed his sins, thus in figure transferring them from himself to the innocent sacrifice. The animal was then slain. ...The blood, representing the forfeited life of the sinner, whose guilt the victim bore, was carried by the priest into the holy place and sprinkled before the veil, behind which was the ark containing the law that the sinner had transgressed. By this ceremony the sin was, through the blood, transferred in figure to the

sanctuary. In some cases the blood was not taken into the holy place; but the flesh was then to be eaten by the priest, ... Both ceremonies alike symbolized the transfer of the sin from the penitent to the sanctuary."<sup>63</sup>

Because this daily work of confessing sin and transferring it to the sanctuary defiled the holy places, they needed to be cleansed.<sup>64</sup> This cleansing service concluded the yearly round of ceremonies at the sanctuary, which began again the same day with the offering of the evening daily sacrifice,<sup>65</sup> and made complete the symbolic representation of God's method of dealing with sin; the realization of which was still future.

The biblical record of this service of cleansing is recorded in the sixteenth chapter of Leviticus. "And the Lord said unto Moses, Speak unto Aaron thy brother, that he come not at all times into the holy place within the vail before the mercy seat, which is upon the ark; that he die not: for I will appear in the cloud upon the mercy seat. Thus shall Aaron come into the holy place: with a young bullock for a sin offering, and a ram for a burnt offering."<sup>66</sup> Verse four states that Aaron was also to bathe and put on special clothes before entering the most holy place. He was to wear these special clothes until the scape goat bearing the sins of Israel, in figure, had been sent away.<sup>67</sup> He was also to "take of the congregation of the children of Israel two kids of the goats for a sin offering and one ram for a burnt offering."<sup>68</sup> Next Aaron was to "take the two goats, and present them before the Lord at the door of the tabernacle of the congregation. And Aaron shall cast lots upon the two goats; one lot for the Lord, and the other lot for the scapegoat."<sup>69</sup> "... And Aaron shall bring the bullock of the sin offering, which is for himself, and shall make an atonement for himself, and for his house,<sup>70</sup> and shall kill the bullock of the sin offering which is for himself."<sup>71</sup> Having done this Aaron was to enter the most holy place. No one but the high priest was allowed to "look upon the sacred grandeur"<sup>72</sup> of the apartment, and even he could enter there but once a year, "because it was the special dwelling place of God's visible glory."<sup>73</sup> This visible glory was that which no man might look upon and live.<sup>74</sup> Therefore God directed "and he shall take a censer full of burning coals of fire from off the altar before the Lord, and his hands full of sweet incense beaten small, and he shall bring it within the vail: and he shall put the incense upon the fire before the Lord, that the cloud of the incense may cover the mercy seat that is upon the testimony, that he die not:"<sup>75</sup> "On the one day of the year appointed for ministry in the most holy place, the high priest with trembling entered God's presence, while clouds of incense veiled the glory from his sight."<sup>76</sup> The people waited for his return in solemn silence. "The host of worshippers, bowed in silent awe, offered their petitions for God's mercy."<sup>77</sup> "Their earnest desires were to God for his blessing."<sup>78</sup>



And Aaron was to “take the blood of the bullock, and sprinkle it with his finger upon the mercy seat eastward; and before the mercy seat shall he sprinkle of the blood with his finger seven times. Then shall he kill the goat of the sin offering, that is for the people, and bring his blood within the veil, and do with that blood as he did with the blood of the bullock, and sprinkle it upon the mercy seat, and before the mercy seat: and he shall make an atonement for the holy place, because of the uncleanness of the children of Israel, and because of their transgressions in all their sins: and so shall he do for the tabernacle of the congregation, that remaineth among them in the midst of their uncleanness.”<sup>79</sup> When the priest went from the holy place into the most holy the veil was pushed aside allowing anyone in the holy place to look directly into the most holy, hence God’s instruction “and there shall be no man in the tabernacle of the congregation when he goeth in to make an atonement in the holy place, until he come out, and have made an atonement for himself, and for his household,<sup>80</sup> and for all the congregation of Israel.”<sup>81</sup> “Before the mercy seat God conversed with the high priest. If he remained an unusual time in the most holy the people were often terrified, fearing that because of their sins, or some sin of the priest, the glory of God had slain him. But when the sound of the tinkling of the bells upon his garments was heard, they were greatly relieved. He then came forth and blessed the people.”<sup>82</sup>

“And when he hath made an end of reconciling the holy place, and the tabernacle of the congregation, and the alter, he shall bring the live goat:”<sup>83</sup> This was the goat on which the lot fell to be the scapegoat.<sup>84</sup> “And Aaron shall lay both his hands upon the head of the live goat, and confess over him all the iniquities of the children of Israel, and all their transgressions in all sins, putting them upon the head of the goat, and shall send him away by the hand of a fit man into the wilderness: and the goat shall bear upon him all their iniquities unto a land not inhabited: and he shall let go the goat in the wilderness.”<sup>85</sup> “Not until the goat had been thus sent away did the people regard themselves as freed from the burden of their sins.”<sup>86</sup> “And he that let go the goat for the scapegoat shall wash his clothes, and bathe his flesh in water, and afterward come into the camp.”<sup>87</sup>

“And Aaron shall come into the tabernacle of the congregation, and shall put off the linen garments, which he put on when he went into the holy place, and shall leave them there: And he shall wash his flesh with water in the holy place, and put on his garments, and come forth, and offer his burnt offering, and the burnt offering of the people, and make an atonement for himself, and for the people. And the fat of the sin offering shall he burn upon the alter. ... And the bullock for the sin offering, and the goat for the sin offering, whose blood was brought in to make atonement in the holy place, shall one carry forth without the camp; and they shall burn in the fire their skins, and their flesh, and their dung.

And he that burneth them shall wash his clothes, and bathe his flesh in water, and afterward he shall come into the camp. And this shall be a statute for ever unto you: that in the seventh month, on the tenth day of the month, ye shall afflict your souls, and do no work at all, whether it be one of your own country, or a stranger that sojourneth among you: For on that day shall the priest make an atonement for you, to cleanse you, that ye may be clean from all your sins before the Lord. It shall be a sabbath of rest unto you, and ye shall afflict your souls, by a statute for ever. And the priest, whom he shall anoint, and whom he shall consecrate to minister in the priest's office in his father's stead, shall make the atonement, and shall put on the linen clothes, even the holy garments: And he shall make an atonement for the holy sanctuary, and he shall make an atonement for the tabernacle of the congregation, and for the altar, and he shall make an atonement for the priests, and for all the people of the congregation. And this shall be an everlasting statute unto you, to make an atonement for the children of Israel for all their sins once a year. And he did as the Lord commanded."<sup>88</sup>

## INTERPRETING THE SANCTUARY AND ITS SERVICES

“The whole system of types and symbols was a compacted prophecy of the gospel, a presentation in which were bound up the promises of redemption.”<sup>89</sup> It was a “presentation of christianity.”<sup>90</sup> It was God’s intent to teach the people “the great truths relative to Christ’s death and ministrations.”<sup>91</sup> The truths He wanted them to learn dealt with the problem of sin, beginning with the day the individual was presently living, through to the ultimate resolution of the conflict between good and evil.<sup>92</sup> He further desired to teach them that the only way they could be right with Him was to follow the plan He had laid out.<sup>93</sup>

This message was contained in every aspect of the sacrificial system. The angelic figures woven into the veils of the tabernacle represented the angels who are connected with the plan of salvation, in the work of the heavenly sanctuary and in service to God’s people on earth.<sup>94</sup> The most holy place was the center of the symbolic service of atonement and intercession and “formed the connecting link between heaven and earth.”<sup>95</sup> The ark of the covenant was kept here, and the law of God which He wrote on stone with His own finger. The law “pronounced death upon the transgressor.”<sup>96</sup> The cover of the ark, known as the mercy seat was where the presence of God was revealed, “and from which, by virtue of the atonement, pardon was granted to the repentant sinner. Thus in the work of Christ for our redemption, symbolized in the sanctuary service, ‘mercy and truth are met together; righteousness and peace have kissed each other.’ PS. 85:10.”<sup>97</sup>

It was this blending of mercy and justice that was expressed in the basic colors of the sanctuary: white, representing purity; blue, representing law; red, representing blood, or the death of the Savior in our behalf, and purple, the blending of justice (blue) and mercy (red).

The division of the sanctuary into two parts represented two phases of the Savior’s work in dealing with sin, as was emphasized in the two separate services composing the yearly cycle. Whereas the work of the holy place preceded the work in the most holy, we know that before the sinner can be freed from the guilt of his sins (which was typified by the work of the Day of Atonement), he must plead the merits of the Savior symbolized by the continually ascending incense.<sup>98</sup> It is also clear that for the savior to be able to present His merits on our behalf He must die, on our behalf.

This death of the Messiah was the heart of the sacrificial system, but here it will suffice to note that when the incense was offered on the golden altar a sacrifice was simultaneously offered on the brass altar. Thus we see that by offered blood, representing the death deserved by the transgressor,

which offering being initiated by the guilty one constituted an acknowledgement of his sin, or a confession of sin, and by incense, representing our Redeemer's merits, and intercession, God is approached. The Messiah's perfect righteousness, through their faith in Him, is imputed to them. Thus they approach God.

Another lesson from the holy place comes from the showbread which was always present on the table for it. This showbread was "an acknowledgement of man's dependence upon God for both temporal and spiritual food, and that it is received only through the mediation of Christ."<sup>99</sup> This lesson was also taught to the Israelites when God fed them with manna during the wilderness years, and when He preserved their clothes so that none of them wore out. The showbread, which was always present, was covered with frankincense when it was replaced each Sabbath. The fact it was always there pointed to Christ, the Living Bread, who is always in God's presence, ready to act on our behalf.<sup>100</sup> When the showbread was replaced the frankincense that had covered it was burned, producing a sweet aroma. Perhaps this represented the sweetness of blessings already received through the promised Messiah.

Before a priest offered a sacrifice he was to wash his hands and feet. Therefore there was a laver in the courtyard between the altar of burnt offering and the tabernacle. Its presence was a continual reminder that all defilement must be put away by all who would approach into the presence of God.<sup>101</sup>

The priests themselves were expressive of the truth in God's plan for dealing with sin.

The sin offering, to be discussed later, represented Christ as a sacrifice, but the high priest represented Christ as a mediator.<sup>102</sup> His beautiful garments represented the character of Jesus,<sup>103</sup> and when he removed the glorious garments and officiated in the simple robe on the day of atonement he was pointing forward to the laying aside of Jesus of His glory as the Son of God and His taking the body of a servant,<sup>104</sup> when He came to earth incarnate. "Everything connected with the apparel and deportment of the priests was to be such as to impress the beholder with a sense of the holiness of God, the sacredness of His worship, and the purity required of those who came into His presence."<sup>105</sup>

Every morning and evening a lamb of a year old was burned upon the brass altar. This sacrifice symbolized "the daily consecration of the nation to Jehovah and their constant dependence upon the atoning blood of Christ."<sup>106</sup> Sometimes the question arises as to why the great number of sacrifices and the answer is that it was to show man's constant and total dependence upon God – here emphasized morning, where the day was beginning and evening, when the day was nearly over and man might be

inclined to feel less of a dependence on God than at other times. As has been noted, the sin offering pointed to Christ, the Lamb of God which taketh away the world's sin. The death of the lamb at the hand of the sinner pointed to the fact an innocent one must die for our sins. The "penalty of sin was transferred to the innocent beast, which thus became the man's immediate substitute, and typified the perfect offering of Jesus Christ. Through the blood of this victim, man looked forward by faith to the blood of Christ which would atone for the sins of the world."<sup>107</sup> The blood of this innocent victim was then carried into the holy place and sprinkled there, thus transferring, through the blood, the sin, in figure, to the sanctuary. This transfer was effected through the understanding that the guilt of the sinner had been transferred to the victim where the sinner confessed his sins over his head, and when the blood, in which was the life of the lamb,<sup>108</sup> representing the forfeited life of the sinner, was taken in and 'left' there. When, in some cases, the blood was not taken into the sanctuary, but the priest, who was "to bear the iniquity of the congregation,"<sup>109</sup> pointing forward to Jesus work, ate the flesh, the transfer of sin from the sinner to the sanctuary was still symbolized.<sup>110</sup> This was brought about by his offering a lamb for a sin offering, as he could not, being a sinner, atone for the sin.<sup>111</sup>

So, "in type, the blood of the sin offering removed the sin from the penitent but it rested in the sanctuary until the Day of Atonement."<sup>112</sup> This means that the blood of the victim had not atoned for the sin, but that it provided a means by which the sin was transferred to the sanctuary. "By the offering of blood, the sinner acknowledged the authority of the law, confessed the guilt of his transgression, and expressed his faith in Him who was to take away the sin of the world; but he was not entirely released from the condemnation of the law."<sup>113</sup> For the man to be totally separated from the condemnation of the law the Day of Atonement must provide for the sanctuary to be cleansed.

Christians through all ages have looked forward with great longing to the time when Christ will return to this earth to cleanse it entirely of sin. The symbolic presentation we are reviewing informs us that before sin can be fully destroyed, typified by the closing event of the Day of Atonement, the sanctuary must first be cleansed. The message of the two apartments and their separate services is that when the sinner has confessed and been forgiven, when Christ has died in his place, and the merits of intercession of the Redeemer made available to all who will accept them, there is yet a whole phase of the work of redemption to be done. In the typical service the sanctuary was to be cleansed of the sins that had been transferred there, so, in the fact symbolized by the typical cleansing we recognize that only the sins confessed and transferred there are dealt with.<sup>114</sup> In the Day of Atonement the cleansing of the sanctuary was accomplished "by the removal, by virtue of the blood of the sin offering, of the sins

by which it had been polluted.”<sup>115</sup> This cleansing was accomplished in part by the priest sprinkling the blood upon the mercy seat, which was directly above the tables of the law. “Thus the claims of the law, which demanded the life of the sinner, were satisfied.”<sup>116</sup> “Thus is represented the union of justice and mercy in the plan of human redemption.”<sup>117</sup>

When the priest had finished his work of atoning for “the holy place, and the tabernacle of the congregation, and the altar, ...Aaron shall lay both his hands upon the head of the live goat and confess over him all the iniquities of the children of Israel, ...and shall send him away by the hand of a fit man into the wilderness: And the goat shall bear upon him all their iniquities unto a land not inhabited:...”<sup>118</sup> This goat, known as the scapegoat, or Azazel, “typified Satan, upon whom the sins of the truly penitent will finally be placed.”<sup>119</sup>

When the people saw the priest confess the sins, that had accumulated through the year in the sanctuary, over the head of the scapegoat and the goat being led away, they realized that this visible act meant their sins were permanently separated from them. This was the culmination of the year’s round of ceremonies. They also saw that while the man who led the goat away was in no wise responsible for the bearing of sin, which was the goat’s responsibility, yet he became unclean and had to wash before he could reenter the camp. This must have added its own dimension to the lessons they had been symbolized through the year; specifically that merely coming in contact with sin defiles one.<sup>120</sup> The people must have felt a profound, solemn, joy as they realized that the sacrificial service meant that one day there would be no more sin; no sorrow, no death, no need to kill innocent lambs, because the Innocent would have died for the guilty and evil would finally be destroyed – never to return.

Before concluding this brief discussion of the disposition of sin in the Old Testament one more question should be examined briefly. Was forgiveness of sin ever granted to an individual in the Old Testament dispensation who did not confess his sin in connection with the offering of an animal sacrifice?

In Exodus 34:7 and Numbers 14:18 we read that the Lord keeps mercy for thousands, that he forgives iniquity and transgression and sin but that He will by no means clear the guilty. If God will forgive iniquity, transgression, and sin, then are the guilty who He won’t forgive to be equated with all who don’t offer a blood sacrifice? To determine the answer to this question let’s look briefly at some of the sins God grants forgiveness, and some He refuses to forgive, and try to determine the basis for His action.

## FORGIVENESS REFUSED

In Genesis 4:4,3, and 5, we read that Abel brought an offering of his flock and that God “had respect until Abel and his offering”, but to Cain who brought of the fruit of the ground “He had not respect”. In this passage God clearly refuses a bloodless offering. This lesson is re-emphasized in the sacrificial methodology we have been examining in this paper.

In I Samuel 3:14 another facet of the problem comes to view when God swears “that the iniquity of Eli’s house shall not be purged with sacrifice nor offering forever”. Here forgiveness is refused, if a sacrifice were offered, because “his sons made themselves vile”, which Eli knew, “and he restrained them not.” Verse 13. Forgiveness is refused to those who allow others, for whom they are responsible, to continue unrestrained in sin. In Numbers 15:30 the Lord declares that the person who sins ‘with a high hand’ will be cut off; symbolizing a refusal to grant forgiveness probably, and perhaps death (cf. Ex. 31:14,15). In this passage God is showing that men can go so far in sin as to suffer permanent loss. These might be considered sins that have exceeded the atonement prefigured in the sacrificial system. Outright intentional murder was a sin of this category (f. Num. 35:16-21,31). Expiation is not limited simply to sins committed inadvertently, however, for some sins specifically mentioned as forgivable are only committed voluntarily (cf. Lev. 5:14-19; 19:20-22; Num. 5:5-8).

Among these voluntary sins that can be forgiven is where we must look for the answer to our question; does God ever forgive sin apart from blood sacrifice in the Old Testament dispensation?

Numbers 31 recounts the experience of the Israelites being sent to avenge themselves of the Midianites. The war was successful but the warriors did not do as they were supposed to. Verse 50 records of them “We have therefore brought an oblation for the Lord, what every man hath gotten, of jewels of gold, chains, and bracelets, rings, earrings, and tablets, to make an atonement for our souls before the Lord”. Again in Numbers 16 we read of the Israelites murmuring against Moses and Aaron the day after God’s judgment on Korah, Dathan and Abiram. As a result of their actions God made a plague to break out among the people and while many people were dying Moses said to Aaron “Take a censer, and put fire therein from off the altar, and put on incense, and go quickly unto the congregation, and make an atonement for them: ...and Aaron did as Moses commanded, and ran into the midst of the congregation; ...and he put on incense, and made an atonement for the people. And he stood between the dead and the living; and the plague was stayed” (vs. 46-48).

We have seen that forgiveness is refused when a bloodless sacrifice is chosen in opposition to God's plain instruction. We have also seen that if one fails continually in his responsibility to check sins within his control, God will eventually refuse to accept his sacrifice; that while conscious, voluntary sins can be forgiven there is an aggressive willful (high-handed) sin that God won't forgive. Also, we have found that when men desire to be right with God He may accept of them what they have (i.e. gold) when it is willingly offered as an atonement for their own sin (perhaps it is significant to note that what they offered was a portion of what they had 'gained' in connection with their sin). Finally, Moses records that atonement was made by Aaron at this (Moses) command (Moses was as God to Aaron cf. Ex. 4:16) by the means of incense.

In conclusion, it does seem that there was a bloodless atonement recognized by God in the Old Testament, but it is never set forth as an alternate method to that which was clearly taught; the sacrifice of animals as a symbol of the Innocent One who would one day have to suffer in behalf of fallen man. When we keep in mind the representative, didactic nature of the sacrificial methodology, texts like Psalm 51:16,17, "For thou desirest not sacrifice; else would I give it: thou delightest not in burnt offering. The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit: a broken and contrite heart, O God, thou wilt not despise" are seen not as opposing the instruction regarding sacrifices but as explaining their relationship to a personal experience between a sinful man and his God.



## IN SUMMARY

When the penitent brought his lamb, and after confessing his sin over its head, took its life, he was reminded that the Innocent must suffer for the guilty. Every dying lamb further reminded him that though his sins were forgiven, they were not forgiven free; the penalty had to be paid. This kept constantly before him the fact that his hope lay in the death of a representative. The sinless character of the representative was revealed in the innocence of the lamb and the fact everything connected with the sacrificial service had to be cleansed, except the lamb. Finally, the necessity of the cleansing of the sanctuary as a part of the salvation process pointed out that the death of even hundreds of animals could not atone for his sins; that the animal was significant only in teaching a vital lesson and demonstrating a personal relationship. The whole sacrificial system emphasized God's holiness and abhorrence of sin, and that men could not come into contact with sin without becoming polluted.

This means that sin was dealt with in the Old Testament by a symbolical procedure involving three steps reflecting one basic principle; the three steps being

1. Recognition of Wrong doing
2. Following God's prescribed method to find reconciliation.
3. An expression of faith; recognition of the symbolic nature of the sanctuary system, and looking beyond the symbol to the real, the promised Lamb of God.

The basic principle reflected was to have the people continually recognizing and expressing their constant dependence of God while trusting in Him as the seeker of their good and the holder of the solution to their crisis.

## CONCLUSION

Because there was no reality in the sacrificial system – the parts, though real were serving the function of a symbol – the method for the disposition of sin in the Old Testament was for the sinner to believe (have faith) in God's good intent for him, accept that God had something He could and would use to undo the results of the sin, and look forward with action altering hope.

This means that the formula for the salvation of the soul in the New Testament – for by grace are you saved through faith, that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God – is also the formula for the salvation of the soul in the Old Testament. Faith, obedience, and hope that alters conduct, is the

formula for salvation in both the Old and New Testaments; one portrayed by the professors use of visible symbols, the other one portrayed by the life of the professor.

## APPENDIX A

### Duties of the Priests

#### Leviticus

- 1:5 Take blood and sprinkle it upon the alter by the door of the tabernacle.
- 1:6-17 Assist in preparation and burning of sacrifice.
- 2:1-16 Assist offerer of offerings and oblations.
- 9:3, 4 Get the people ready to meet the Lord.
- 9:7 Make atonement for himself and the people.
- 16: Officiate on Day of Atonement.
- 21:6f Be holy unto God.

#### Numbers

- 3: Care for money ransoming the firstborn.
- 4:15 Cover holy things when tabernacle moved.
- 4:16 Care for holy oil and incense when tabernacle moved and in service.

#### I Kings

- 8:3 Carry the ark when it was being moved.

- Represent God to the nation. D.A. 156
- Pray for the pardon of public and national sins. D.A. 99
- Pray for the coming of Messiah. D.A. 99
- Teach God's law in public assemblies. P.K. 465
- Bear the sins of the people, sometimes. P.P. 354, 355
- Mediate for the people as a representative of Christ. P.P. 426, G.C. 422.
- Eat shewbread removed from sanctuary. P.P. 348
- Explained symbolism of sacrificial offerings. I S.M. 107

## FOOTNOTES

1. Ellen G. White, Selected Messages, I (Washington, D.C.: Review and Herald, 1958), p. 230.
2. Cf. I John 3:4.
3. Isaiah 59:2.
4. Genesis 3:15.
5. Ellen G. White, Christ in His Sanctuary; a Compilation from the Writings of Ellen G. White (Mountain View, Calif.: Pacific Press Publishing Assn., 1969), p. 21.
6. “Animals or agricultural products brought to the Lord as an expression of worship, gratitude, or dedication, or for the expiation of sin.” Siegfried H. Horn, “Sacrifices and Offerings”, Seventh-day Adventist Bible Dictionary (Commentary Reference Series, Vol. VIII; Washington, D.C.: Review and Herald Publishing Co., 1960), p. 939.
7. White, CHS, p. 20.
8. Genesis 2:17; 3:19,15; Romans 6:23.
9. Edward Heppenstall, Our High Priest (Washington, D.C.: Review and Herald, 1972), p. 51.
10. Cf. Genesis 3:15; Ezekiel 28:8,16,18; Isaiah 14:15.
11. White, CHS, p. 21.
12. Ibid., p. 27, 28.
13. Ibid., p. 124.
14. Daniel 9:26, 27; Ellen G. White, The Story of Prophets and Kings (Mountain View, Calif.: Pacific Press, 1943), p. 365.
15. Heppenstall, op. cit., p. 53; cf. Hebrews 9:24.
16. Ibid., p. 14.
17. White, CHS, p. 22; cf. Francis D. Nichold, ed., et al. The Seventh-day Adventist Bible commentary, I (Washington, D.C.) Review and Herald, 1953), pp. 1107, 1008.
18. Ellen G. White, The Story of Patriarchs and Prophets (Mountain View, Calif.: Pacific Press, 1958), p. 343; cf. Exodus 35:4 – 36:16.
19. Cf. Exodus 36:20-34.
20. Cf. Exodus 36:14-19.
21. Called the holy and the most holy in Ellen G. White, The Great Controversy Between Christ and Satan (Mountain View, Calif.: Pacific Press, 1911), p. 412; called the holy place and the tabernacle of the congregation in Leviticus 16.

22. White, PP, p. 347.
23. Ibid.
24. “The priests were not allowed to enter the sanctuary with their shoes on their feet; for the particles of dust cleaving to them would desecrate the holy place. They were to leave their shoes in the court before entering the sanctuary, ...” Ellen G. White, Gospel Workers (Washington, D.C.: Review and Herald, 1948), p. 173.
25. White, PP, p. 348.
26. White, GW, p. 173.
27. Ellen G. White. Testimonies to the Church, II (Mountain View, Calif.: Pacific Press, 1948), p. 614.
28. White, PP, p. 348.
29. Ibid.
30. Cf. White, 9T p. 248.
31. White, PP, p. 348.
32. Ibid.
33. Ibid., p. 354.
34. Ibid., p. 348.
35. White, PP, p. 348.
36. Ibid.
37. White, GC, p. 412.
38. White, PP, p. 348.
39. Representing love to ones neighbor.
40. White, PP, p. 348, 349.
41. Ibid.
42. Ibid.; Nichol, op. cit., p. 1109.
43. White, PP, p. 349.
44. White, PP, p. 349 – Note the similarity to the Urim and Thummin.
45. White, GC, p. 412. “A most splendid sanctuary...according to the plan shown to Moses in the mount, and afterward presented by the Lord to David,” White, CHS, p. 41.
46. White, PP, p. 350.

47. Ibid.
48. Cf. Isaiah 54:12b, for possible significance.
49. White, PP, p. 350, 351. Note: The beautiful dress of the high priest represented the character of Jesus. Cf. Ellen G. White, The Desire of Ages (Mountain View, Calif.: Pacific Press, 1940), p. 709.
50. White, PP, p. 351.
51. For a partial listing of additional responsibilities see Appendix A.
52. For detailed list see Nichol, op. cit., pp. 698-706.
53. White, PP, p. 352.
54. Ibid.
55. White, PP, p. 354.
56. Ibid., 352.
57. Ibid., p. 353.
58. Ellen G. White, Spiritual Gifts (Washington, D.C.: Review and Herald, 1945) IV, part a page 10.
59. Leviticus 4:20, 26, 31, etc.
60. White, PP, p. 354.
61. White, GC, p. 418.
62. White, PP, p. 355.
63. Verse 2, 3.
64. Compare v. 4 and vs.. 22-24a.
65. Verse 5.
66. Verse 7, 8. Gaster lists three principle interpretations of the term.
  1. It characterized the animal itself and stand for the “goat that departs”.
  2. It denotes the place to which the animal was dispatched.
  3. It is the name of the demon inhabiting the desert. J. C. Rylaarsdam, “Atonement, Day of”, Interpreter’s Dictionary of the Bible (New York: Abingdon Press, 1969), I, 325, 326.
67. The Jews interpreted this reference to ‘his family’ to mean his wife, so they selected a ‘spare’ wife for him in case his own wife should die suddenly (M. Yoma 1:1).
68. Verse 11.

69. White, SG, loc. cit.
70. Leviticus 16:2; White, SG, part a, p. 10; Leviticus 16:34.
71. Ellen G. White, Ministry of Healing, (Mountain View, Calif.: Pacific Press, 1942), p. 437.
72. Leviticus 16:12, 13.
73. White, MH, p. 437.
74. Ibid., p. 438.
75. White, SG, loc. cit.
76. Verses 14-16.
77. White, SG, p. 10.
78. Verse 17.
79. White, SG, loc. cit.
80. Verse 20.
81. Verse 10.
82. Verses 21, 22.
83. White, PP, p. 355.
84. Verse 26. Note: "Increasingly the people participated in the goats departure, pulling out its wool, pricking it, spitting on it, and urging it to begone (Barn. 7 ` 8; Yoma 6:4)". Rylaarsdam, op. cit. p. 315. "...According to legend, a scarlet thread tied to the door of the sanctuary turned white at the very moment the goat was pushed over the precipice, as a sign that the people were cleansed of their sins." (Yoma 6:8; cf. Isaiah 1:18). Ibid.
85. Verses 23-25, 27-34. This sixteenth chapter of Leviticus can be summarized as:
- Verses 2-11; preparation for entering the sanctuary.
  - Verses 12, 13; directions for preserving the priests' life when he is in the immediate presence of God.
  - Verse 14 atonement for himself and his family.
  - Verses 15-10 cleansing work for the sanctuary.
  - Verses 20-22 separation of the peoples accumulated sins from the nation of Israel.
  - Verses 23-28 concluding ceremonies.
  - Verses 29-34 significance and duration of the Day of Atonement.
86. White, CHS, p. 42.

87. (Ellen G. white, Review and Herald, 70:177, March, 1893). Quoted in Nichol, op. cit., p. 1140.
88. Heppenstall, op. cit., p. 95.
89. White, PP, p. 358.
90. It should be noted that the disposition of sin as revealed in Scripture is linked with a particular progression of events in the realization of the truths presented in the symbols. Therefore it would be of value to attempt to determine the effect of the 'turn' in eschatology, which takes place in relation to the Jew's rejection of Jesus as the Messiah, on the process of the actualization of the truths represented symbolically prior to that rejection. Though this study is beyond the limits of this brief paper it might be worthwhile to note that the effect would only become noticeable in studying comparatively Old Testament 'fulfilment' and New Testament fulfilment. That is, the effect of eschatology is to be found in the fulfillment of the symbol rather than in the symbol itself or the interpretation of its promise.
91. White, CHS, p. 25.
92. Ibid., p. 27.
93. White, PP, p. 349.
94. Ibid.
95. White, CHs. P. 32.
96. White, CHS, p. 33.
97. Ibid.
98. White, CHS, p. 34.
99. White, PP. p. 350.
100. White, CHS, p. 99.
101. White, DA, p. 709.
102. Philippians 2:6f.
103. White, PP, p. 351.
104. White, CHS, p. 31.
105. White, SM, p. 230.
106. Leviticus 17:11.



107. Leviticus 10:17.
108. White, CHS, p. 96.
109. (ST March 14, 1878), quoted in Nichol, op. cit., p. 1111.
110. White, CHS, p. 38.
111. Ibid., p. 36.
112. Ibid., p. 116.
113. White, CHS, p. 38.
114. Ibid., p. 36.
115. Ibid., p. 92.
116. Leviticus 16:20-22.
117. White, CHS, p. 99.
118. This must have helped them to better understand that as the wages of sin is death, death thereby becomes a representative of sin. Therefore anyone coming into contact with death is unclean.
119. White, CHS, p. 21, 21.
120. Ibid.

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