Becoming a Priestly People: A Biblical Theology of Liturgical Sacrifice as Spiritual Formation

Ximena DeBroeck
BECOMING A PRIESTLY PEOPLE: A BIBLICAL THEOLOGY OF LITURGICAL SACRIFICE AS SPIRITUAL FORMATION

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By

Ximena DeBroeck

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Approved March 22, 2017

________________________________
William M. Wright IV, Ph.D.
Associate Professor of Theology
(Committee Chair)

________________________________
Bogdan G. Bucur, Ph.D.
Associate Professor of Theology
(Committee Member)

________________________________
George Worgul, Ph.D.
Professor of Theology
(Committee Member)

________________________________
Marinus C. Iwuchukwu, Ph.D.
Associate Professor of Theology
(Chair, Department of Theology)

________________________________
James C. Swindal, Ph.D.
Professor of Philosophy
(Dean, McAnulty School of Liberal Arts)
ABSTRACT

BECOMING A PRIESTLY PEOPLE: A BIBLICAL THEOLOGY OF
LITURGICAL SACRIFICE AS SPIRITUAL FORMATION

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May 2017

Dissertation supervised by William M. Wright IV, Ph.D.

The centrality of sacrifice in the Judeo-Christian tradition is undeniable; nevertheless, unidimensional presentations of sacrifice have contributed to an incomplete, and at times distorted understanding. This work does not aim to resolve every ambiguity or misunderstanding, rather, it presents a canonical approach interpretation and brings attention to three underappreciated dimensions of sacrifice: first, the relationship between the external actions of the ritual and the internal dynamic of spirituality and morality; second, the reality that sacrifice refers not only to death, but to a way of living; and third, atonement and reconciliation are not the only reasons to offer sacrifice. My thesis is that to live as covenantal people, with a holy and priestly character, it is essential to explore these three underappreciated aspects.

This study offers a nuanced biblical theology of liturgical sacrifice as an action of covenantal love, covenantal faithfulness and covenantal obedience, which serves to guide the spiritual formation of the believer. Sacrifice is of interest not only for the academia, but also for the disciple and the community: each individual disciple is called to live a holy, sacrificial, and priestly life within the community, and the Church -as a community of disciples- is called to live out sacrificially the mission to evangelize and “Go therefore and make disciples of all nations” (Matt. 28:19).
DEDICATION

To

Lukas Joseph
Charae Maria
Katherine
Christina and Joe
Andrew
Robert
Mike
Mom & Dad

For it is hesed that I desire, not sacrifice,
and knowledge of God rather than burnt offerings (Hos. 6:6)
ACKNOWLEDGMENT

First and foremost, I give thanks to God Almighty. To him, I offer a sacrifice of thanksgiving and praise for abiding in me, for inviting me to abide in him and to participate in his life, and for his covenantal sacrificial love, revealed in and through creation, redemption, and sanctification.

I owe my greatest thanks and gratitude to my family, those to whom I dedicate this work, as well as my sister and brother, and their families. Their constant prayers sustained me throughout this journey. Many of them spent countless hours reading draft after draft and learned, along with me, much about sacrifice. Their love is a witness of the meaning of sacrifice.

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

Abbreviations for Reference Sources and Works


PL  *Patrologia Latina*

SC  *Sacrosanctum Concilium*

Abbreviations for Bible Translations

LXX  Septuagint


WLC  Westminster Leningrad Codex
1.1. Introduction

The concept of sacrifice, present in different religions, is surrounded with ambivalence and misunderstanding. Initially, I began reflecting on sacrifice because of its ubiquitous presence in Scripture and in Christian teaching. I noticed its presence throughout the Bible; I noticed its presence in the sacrificial language of the Liturgy as well as in the prayer life of the Church. In this overwhelming presence of the concept of sacrifice, I found an invitation to reflect on the why, the how, and the so-what of sacrifice. In other words, my quest was one of seeking to find the meaning of being called to live a life of sacrifice.

As I continued to probe the subject deeper, I have been faced daily with the ambiguity of sacrifice and the layers of misunderstanding surrounding it. This occurs not only on an individual basis, but also at the corporate level. As I struggled to articulate how we as God’s people—communally—are called to live out this ambiguous and at times "charged" concept, my quest broadened from a search for meaning of how sacrifice applies to me individually to how it applies to the community of believers. Academically, it is an important endeavor to articulate a composite and more holistic understanding of sacrifice. Yet, this is not uniquely an academic exercise, for it has important pastoral ramifications. On one level, there is a responsibility to shine fresh light on the concept of sacrifice and integrate it in the formation of future ministers. On another level, there is a duty to visit this concept anew as it impacts not only how we participate in the Liturgy but also how we understand the practice of sacrifice in our daily lives.
The secular appropriation of the term often contributes to possible distortions of its religious meaning. For instance, the influence of the concept of civic sacrifice, or time sacrificed for the sake of a specific pursuit, or any connotation of sacrifice as a means to an end, add to the many possible distortions of the religious connotation of sacrifice. In fact, secular notions of sacrifice often add layers of confusion and limit a holistic understanding of sacrifice. A common secular perception that sacrifice is that it is a loss of something or, at best, an exchange or a transaction for a desired outcome. Inadvertently, this notion has influenced the way many believers interpret sacrifice as a way to bargain with God.

The notion of sacrifice finds specific expression in the biblical tradition, where it is an essential, yet multi-faceted component of the biblical narrative. In a general religious sense, sacrifice has been understood as something given to a deity. As Robert Daly observes, in the ancient world’s understanding of sacrifice to the gods, “The emphasis is on the giving, not on the giving up.” The nature and purpose of sacrifice varies across the different religions, but there is an element of constancy in all of them: a ritual accompanies the sacrificial offering. In the biblical tradition, sacrifices are offered for distinct reasons, they are accompanied by prescribed rituals, and they are considered liturgical actions.

Systematic theologians have articulated some aspects of sacrifice, yet these provide an incomplete understanding of the concept. Because sacrifice is such a complex notion, a one-dimensional presentation is not sufficient. Certain aspects of sacrifice are more prominent

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than others, and at times this reality has limited the possibility of a multidimensional understanding of sacrifice. Three single-dimensional presentations of sacrifice are most common: first, sacrifice consists of ritual external practices; second, sacrifice is an economic transaction with the sole purpose of effecting atonement; third, sacrifice is a violence concept that serves to condone and perpetuate oppression of those already marginalized. While each of these statements presents some component about sacrifice, neither presents a complete picture of what sacrifice is. To identify sacrifice with ritual only, reduces the action to a formulaic observance and it does not offer a complete presentation; although ritual is present, there is more to sacrifice than the ritual. Equally, to define sacrifice simply as an economic transaction, which effects ransom, payment, or atonement, does not present a complete meaning of sacrifice; although atonement can be the purpose of sacrifice, it is not the only purpose. Likewise, while some sacrifices are bloody, some are non-bloody offerings; furthermore, to associate sacrifice with violence does not communicate an accurate reality of sacrifice.

The present analysis does not aim to resolve every misunderstanding concerning sacrifice. Rather, it will journey inside the biblical sacrificial rituals to expose and wrestle with underappreciated aspects of sacrifice. It will refract the ritual, as though it were light passing through a prism, so that its distinct colors – ‘aspects’ – might emerge. To see the distinct ‘colors’ or facets of sacrifice, this study proposes looking inside the ritual through the prism of the biblical narrative and exploring the insights that are offered in the unfolding of salvation history. This study will consider liturgical sacrifice, as an action of covenantal love, covenantal faithfulness and covenantal obedience, which serves to form in the worshipers an identity as priestly and holy people. Liturgical sacrifice is a ritualized action, yet when practiced beyond the ritual, it serves to guide the spiritual formation of the participants such that they conform more closely to the image
and likeness of Christ; therefore, it can lead believers towards a deeper participation in the life of the Trinity.

1.2. Statement of the Problem – State of the Question

Scholars have addressed the challenges concerning the meaning of the many purposes of sacrifice and offered countless critiques questioning the relevance of sacrifice in a postmodern context. Nevertheless, a systematic presentation of sacrifice in the biblical tradition, which uncovers underappreciated aspects of sacrifice and connects it to the formation of a priestly character in God’s people, opens new paths of conversation to continue the quest for the meaning of a controversial yet central concept.

In the Judeo-Christian tradition, the question concerning the meaning of sacrifice has been addressed throughout the centuries. Rabbinic literature, such as the Midrash, the Mishnah and the Talmud, has offered an insight from the Jewish tradition.³ A distinct purpose for sacrifices can be found in chapter 9 on the Midrash on Leviticus 7:11-12, “This is the ritual of the sacrifice of the offering of well-being that one may offer to the LORD. If you offer it for thanksgiving, you shall offer with the thank offering unleavened cakes mixed with oil, unleavened wafers spread with oil, and cakes of choice flour well soaked in oil.”⁴

And this is the Law of the sacrifice of the peace-offering which one may offer unto the LORD. If he offer it for a thanksgiving… A sin-offering is brought for a sin, likewise is a guilt-offering brought for a sin, but a thank-offering is not brought for a sin, but he offers it for a thanksgiving… R. Judan had said ‘But among the upright there is favour, refers to a man who brings a sacrifice not for any sin of his [as it is said], If it be for a thanksgiving, he [i.e. God] will bring him near [unto Himself]… R. Simon had said, Only he who is at peace (shalem) may offer up peace-offering (shalamim) but a mourner may not bring a peace-offering.⁵

⁴ Unless otherwise noted, all Scripture quotes are taken from the NABRE edition.
⁵ Midrash Rabbah, Leviticus, chapter 9 (tzav):1, 5, 8, 106,111,115.
Reflections on the work of Maimonides present ambiguity in understanding the relevance of sacrifice. He gave sacrifice much emphasis in one of his works, but declared its superfluity in another work. In his Mishnah on the Torah, Maimonides gave considerable attention to organizing the sacrificial material found in the Torah. Nevertheless, in his work Guide for the Perplexed, he affirmed that, “…sacrificial worship was never God’s primary desire for humankind.”

In the earliest Christian days, during the Apostolic time, Paul explains Christ’s death as sacrificial and exhorts the community to participate in the new life received through Christ.

For there is no distinction, since all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God; they are now justified by his grace as a gift, through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus, whom God put forward as a sacrifice of atonement by his blood, effective through faith (Rom. 5:22b-25).

I appeal to you therefore, brothers and sisters by the mercies of God, to present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God, which is your spiritual worship (Rom. 12:1).

Likewise, the Letter to the Hebrews explicates Christ’s sacrifice on the cross in light of the Old Testament sacrifices and summons the believers to participate in His sacrifice:

But when Christ came as a high priest of the good things that have come, then through the greater and perfect tent (not made with hands, that is, not of this creation), he entered once for all into the Holy Place, not with the blood of goats and calves, but with his own blood, thus obtaining eternal redemption. For if the blood of goats and bulls, with the sprinkling of the ashes of a heifer, sanctifies those who have been defiled so that their flesh is purified, how much more will the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered himself without blemish to God, purify our conscience from dead works to worship the living God! (Heb. 9:11-14).

We have an altar from which those who officiate in the tent have no right to eat. For the bodies of those animals whose blood is brought into the sanctuary by the high priest as a sacrifice for sin are burned outside the camp. Therefore, Jesus also

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suffered outside the city gate in order to sanctify the people by his own blood. Let us then go to him outside the camp and bear the abuse he endured. For here we have no lasting city, but we are looking for the city that is to come. Through him, then, let us continually offer a sacrifice of praise to God, that is, the fruit of lips that confess his name. Do not neglect to do good and to share what you have, for such sacrifices are pleasing to God (Heb. 13:10-16).

The complexity of the concept of sacrifice in the Christian tradition is indeed multilayered. Nevertheless, by analyzing the meaning of sacrifice from the biblical perspective, this study proposes to address some of the difficulties which have surfaced in contemporary systematic theology. Given that the Tradition of the Catholic Church, through her Pontiffs and through the Ecumenical Council Vatican II, has affirmed that Scripture is the soul of theology, it is fitting to propose biblical insights to address concerns introduced by systematic theologians.

The difficulty of penetrating the deepest meaning of sacrifice has been more intensely examined in the last decade by many theologians. Since this study offers a biblical theology approach, only a brief review of the systematicians’ critique is presented with the intentional purpose of dialoguing with them from the biblical vantage point. A review of literature concerning the state of the theological question, specifically in the field of biblical theology, follows the concise presentation of some controversial points in the interpretation of sacrifice. Some of the systematic theologians whose work has contributed to this ongoing conversation include: S. Mark Heim, Dennis King Keenan, Erin Lothes Biviano, as well as Robert Daly S.J.

7 The quote to which reference is made is “The study of the sacred page should be, as it were, the very soul of theology.” It was most recently used by Pope Benedict XVI in the Apostolic Exhortation Verbum Domini, 31 (September 30, 2010). It also appears in the Second Vatican Ecumenical Council, Dogmatic Constitution on Divine Revelation Dei Verbum, 24 (November 18, 1965); cf. Leo XIII, Encyclical Letter Providentissimus Deus (18 November 1893), Pars II, sub fine: ASS 26 (1893-94), 269-292; Benedict XV, Encyclical Letter Spiritus Paraclitus (15 September 1920), Pars III: AAS 12 (1920), 385-422.

biblical scholars and biblical theologians has been very helpful in deepening my understanding of the richness of the meaning of sacrifice. The works of Walther Eichrodt, Gerhard von Rad, Bernhard Anderson, Brevard Childs, Jacob Milgrom, and Walter Brueggemann were particularly important to my research. Robert Daly’s work, from the perspective of a liturgical theologian, presented possible distortions in the understanding of sacrifice, as well as new insights. Each of these scholars, from their specific area of expertise, offers a unique contribution concerning different aspects of sacrifice. What follows is a brief overview of their contributions to the state of the question of this study.

A. Controversial Points in the Interpretation of Sacrifice

1. Sacrifice interpreted only as a concept centered on ritualistic external practices

The biblical codes of sacrifice prescribe ritual practices for the cultic offerings. The ritual practices associated with sacrifice and which are understood to be expressions of the relationship with God –holiness– need to be in harmony with the ethical actions which express the relationship with neighbor –justice–. These ritual sacrifices should be guided by an interior disposition, not simply by an external ritual. Unfortunately, in ancient Israel times, as well as in modern times, there is a risk to overemphasize the formula of the ritual and eclipse the interiority of the ritual. In the words of Walter Brueggemann,

The failure to maintain the dialectic [of holiness and justice] and the temptation to fall out one side or the other—all justice and no holiness, all holiness and no justice—

happens in Judaism and produces odd configurations of practice. But of course, the same distortion of the dialectic is evident in Christian practice.9

It is possible to continue a given ritual practice when the understanding of the ritual has been lost, or worse yet, when it has not been appropriated. It is not as though the ritual has an inherit magic which has been lost. Rather, what has been disrupted is the relationship between the ritual and the believer. It is possible to practice the ritual by strict observance of the formula without ever entering into its words and actions.10 This is precisely what could be misunderstood about the celebration of the Mass as a memorial of Christ’s sacrifice. The Second Vatican Council, in its Constitution Sacrosanctum Concilium, clarifies,

But in order that the liturgy may be able to produce its full effects, it is necessary that the faithful come to it with proper dispositions, that their minds should be attuned to their voices, and that they should cooperate with divine grace lest they receive it in vain. Pastors of souls must therefore realize that, when the liturgy is celebrated, something more is required than the mere observation of the laws governing valid and licit celebration; it is their duty also to ensure that the faithful take part fully aware of what they are doing, actively engaged in the rite, and enriched by its effects.11

2. Sacrifice interpreted purely as an economic transaction effecting atonement

To construe sacrifice as an economic transaction which effects only atonement does not present a complete view of the different reasons which motivate the offering of sacrifice. Undeniably, atonement is one of the purposes of sacrifice. Nevertheless, there are other reasons, such as thanksgiving or praise, which prompt sacrifice offering. These other purposes have not

10 Michael Warren, At This Time, In This Place: The Spirit Embodied in the Local Assembly (Harrisburg, PA: Trinity Press International, 1999), 9-10.
11 Paul VI, Sacrosanctum Concilium [Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy] (December 1963), §11
been appreciated with the same attention that has been given to atonement. Grounded on the thought of Rene Girard, S. Mark Heim critiques the understanding of sacrifice purely as atonement. He offers thought provoking summaries of the interpretation of sacrifice in the Pauline writings and in the Letter to the Hebrews and concludes that in Christ sacrifice is reversed,

...The crucifix corresponds to the visible victim, to the fact that at the center of sacrifice there is a real suffering person, whatever mythic stories or horrific accusations may be put in place to obscure that fact.... Christ returns in the Holy Spirit as an advocate, a power to overcome sacrifice. The risen Christ ‘occupies’ the cross, as one might occupy a railway track to prevent its use to transport prisoners to a concentration camp...We are saved from sacrifice because God suffered it.

Dennis King Keenan presents an interesting perspective about sacrifice, as he addresses it from and through a philosophical lens. He considers the frequently utilized economic image of sacrifice, where sacrifice, in the secular or religious context, is a kind of ‘investment’ for a later ‘pay-off’ or ‘return’. Keenan expands on the work of Luce Irigaray, the French feminist philosopher, who argues for a revelation of a hidden sacrifice, which is the ‘sacrifice of the economic sacrifice’.

Sacrifice is sacrifice only as the sacrifice of sacrifice. Sacrifice is (genuinely) sacrifice only as the sacrifice of (an economical understanding of) sacrifice. It is necessary for sacrifice to consume itself in an all-burning holocaust in order to be what it “is.” Sacrifice sacrifice. This is an imperative that “works” in a variety of

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12 The French anthropologist René Girard provides an explanation to what is behind ritual sacrifice and how the narrative of the gospels is unique in presenting the cross of Christ as a phenomenon different from ritual violence. His anthropological explanation provides a way to understand the triumph of the resurrection. Girard proposes that humans develop mimetic desires as they try to imitate what others have or do, as they covet what others have. Eventually this leads to mimetic rivalry and conflict. The conflict finds resolution in the victimization of an innocent scapegoat, which provides for a time void of conflict. Girard identifies Satan with the momentum –mimemic contagion- that moves the mimetic conflict into violence and he argues that Christ was crucified as a result of humanity’s mimetic desires. Satan is the mimetic contagion and Satan leads to the violence that ends the conflict. Christianity offers a narrative different from mythical sacrifices, in that the victim of the violence is risen from the dead to break the cycle of violence.

ways (and should be read as such). The first “sacrifice” in this strange imperative is an ethical action that one is obliged to do (for sacrifice to genuinely be sacrifice), but that interrupts itself in the very “doing” of the action. Rather than merely a work to be accomplished, or an action to be performed, sacrifice is experienced as a call to action that calls itself into question.14

Perhaps Keenan’s most important contribution to this study are the insights he offers concerning Christian sacrifice, which is rooted in the sacrifice of Christ and re-presented at every Mass. He does not propose dispensing with the sacrificial dimension of the Mass, but rather approaching the Liturgy with a fresh perception of Christ’s sacrifice continued in and through the Liturgy and in which we are called to participate, by first appropriating it.15

3. Sacrifice interpreted as a rationalizing factor to condone violence and oppression

The perspectives of liberation theology, as well as that of feminist and womanist theologians, have offered the critique that sacrifice can become an excuse for oppression of gender, race, or both.16 This distortion in the understanding of sacrifice has been articulated by Rebecca Ann Parker, a feminist theologian, who was sexually abused as a child. As she grew up, she began to interpret sacrifice as losing part of herself, for the sake of preserving relationships. She shares her personal story,

The gesture of sacrifice was familiar. I knew the rubrics of the ritual by heart: you cut away some part of yourself, then peace and security are restored, relationship is preserved, and shame is avoided.
I could have drawn you a picture of the steps. First I bow my head. I cast my eyes down to indicate my subservience to the other whose will or needs I am obeying. I close my mouth. I do not speak…

15 Ibid., 8.
I recognize that Christianity had taught me that sacrifice is the way of life. I forgot
the neighbor who raped me, but I could see that when theology presents Jesus as
God’s sacrifice of his beloved child for the sake of the world, it teaches that the
highest love is sacrifice. To make sacrifice or to be sacrificed is virtuous and
redemptive.

But what if this is not true? What if nothing, or very little, is saved? What if the
consequence of sacrifice is simply pain, the diminishment of life, fragmentation of
the soul, abasement, shame? What if the severing of life is merely destructive of
life and is not the path of love, courage, trust and faith? What if the performance
of sacrifice is a ritual in which some human beings bear loss and others are
protected from accountability or moral expectations?17

While Parker’s experience certainly presents a fair critique in the perception of the
meaning of sacrifice, the removal of the language of sacrifice from the theological discourse and
from Christian practice would not remedy the problems of misunderstanding and distortion of the
term. Feminist criticism has stimulated new conversation and interest in this area, such that
attempts have been made at finding new ways to articulate the mystery behind ancient rituals.

In her work The Paradox of Christian Suffering, Erin Lothes Biviano considers the
connection between sacrifice and one’s identity. She explains that the New Testament narrative
describes Jesus’ actions as well as Christian discipleship by using sacrificial vocabulary. Biviano
urges for a re-interpretation of the meaning of sacrifice in the life of the believer, and considers
this effort essential for the dynamic relationship between sacrifice and Christian identity.

…early Christianity came to recognize the believer’s life as sacrificial, precisely
because the early movement had come to identify Jesus as a sacrificial offering, within
the tradition that gave sacrifice a special religious meaning…Sacrifice hints at a deep
human need to connect with God and communicate one’s hopes and needs in a
tangible, visible way.18

17 Rita Nakashima Brock and Rebecca Ann Parker, Proverbs of Ashes: Violence, Redemptive Suffering, and the

B. Biblical Theology Interpretation of Sacrifice

The study of sacrifice from a biblical perspective has taken two distinct trajectories, one for the Old Testament, and one for the New Testament. In the Old Testament, the study has concentrated primarily on the ritual itself, “the historical realia of the cultus.”19 In other words, the focus of biblical scholarship has been on the historical character of the objects of the ritual as well as on the legal codes surrounding the rituals. This emphasis has provided two paths of study: first, the re-construction of the cultic history of Israel from the patriarchal period to the return of the exile and second, the purpose of sacrifice in ancient Israel.20

However, the function of sacrifice in the final form of the biblical canon, as a whole, has not received comparable attention. In the Jewish tradition, the Mishnah and the Temple Scroll have provided some preliminary insight into this particular area of research. In the Christian tradition, studies of the Old Testament sacrificial system pointed allegorically to a fulfillment in Christ’s atoning death.21 Yet, it is essential to recognize that not all the sacrifices in the cultic system were atoning sacrifices. On the other hand, study of sacrifice in the New Testament has offered a different perspective. The differences can be appreciated from three specific angles, namely, the attitude held by Christians about sacrificial rituals in Judaism and in pagan religions, the interpretation of Christ’s death as sacrificial, and the sacrificial imagery as a template for the Christian life.22

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20 Ibid.
21 Ibid., V. 882-886.
1. *Walther Eichrodt (1890-1978)*\(^{23}\)

The covenant holds a unique place in Eichrodt’s biblical interpretation. He considered the covenant as a central theme to the biblical narrative and developed a theology that focused on the covenantal relationship between God and the people. Although there is mutuality in the relationship, the two parties are not equal. His theology distinguishes clearly between the sovereignty of God and the obedience which man owes to God.\(^{24}\)

In his *Theology of the Old Testament*, published in the early 1930’s, Eichrodt provided a substantial theology of the Old Testament sacrifices with particular attention to obedience. He was concerned with obedience not simply to the ritual prescriptions, but to the heart or the spirit of the Law. He explained that sacrifices were offered to express thanksgiving, communion or fellowship with God, as well as atonement. Indeed, it is important to underscore that essential to his explanation is the centrality of obedience,

> Atonement does not depend on the frequency of the offerings or the ingenious agglomeration of the most effective possible rites, but on the obedient performance of what the covenant God himself has ordained for the maintenance of his covenant. This also eliminates the idea that there is something especially meritorious in the act of sacrifice, for the apparatus of sacrifice is itself a gift graciously vouchsafed by the covenant God in order to give men the opportunity for confession and reparation.\(^{25}\)

Furthermore, Eichrodt noted that the prophets and psalmists rejected the notion that sacrifice alone is a sufficient means of expiation. The objections against the abuse of sacrifice

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\(^{23}\) Walther Eichrodt was born in Germany. He received his doctoral degree from the University of Heidelberg and taught for nearly four decades at University of Basel.


continued during the post-exilic period, when the practice of sacrifice became an observance of legal regulations. Legalistic ritual practice emphasizes the obedience to the Law but eclipses the importance of obedience of the heart.26

This was the case at the time of the Pharisees, who were precise about following the precepts of the Law but whose heart was far from God,

But the Pharisees had lost the power to discern God’s part in the work of cultic atonement; they saw only man’s performance and thought that this *per se* atoned for sin and merited the divine forgiveness. In sacrifice the Pharisee drew near to God with just as much confidence because of his piety as he did in any his other acts of obedience [to the Law].27

2. *Gerhard von Rad (1901-1971)*28

Von Rad’s work on the Old Testament was published originally in German in the 1950’s, twenty years after Eichrodt’s work, and translated into English a decade later. His thought focused on two main points, namely the re-telling of God’s mighty deeds for his people, and worship as the locus for the transmission of the narrative. He explained that in the Old Testament one finds a continuous retelling of God’s actions, whereby each generation had to appropriate the narrative and make it relevant for their age.29

A theology of the Old Testament was a relatively new field in the late 1950’s when Gerhard von Rad expressed his thoughts on the various functions of sacrifice. He noted that the first five

26 Ibid., 166-169.
27 Ibid., 170.
28 Gerhard von Rad was born in Nürnberg. He studied at the University of Erlangen and at the University of Tübingen. His dissertation was entitled “The People of God in Deuteronomy.” He developed interpretation method which has been known ‘tradition history.’
chapters of Leviticus presented details about the rubrics of specific ritual sacrifices, but did not offer much information concerning the meaning of the rites themselves. Placing the concept of sacrifice within the context of the Mosaic covenant, von Rad explained that sacrifice could be offered for a variety of purposes, including gift, communion, or atonement.30

He summarized that sacrifices, as gifts, are generally offered during times of distress, whereas communion sacrifices generally occur in the context of ritual meals, constituent of covenant ceremonies. According to von Rad, the expiatory sacrifices were more complex to interpret, because it was common to offer a specific sacrifice for several reasons, such that the motives blended together.31

The simple idea of sacrifice as gifts of course pre-eminent in the case of all vows made in times of great distress (Gen. 28:10-22; Jdgs. 11:30; 2 Sam. 15:7-9). But all official non-monetary payments, the first fruits, are also to be understood in the same way: in principle, the whole of the harvest is holy to Yahweh, but in token of man’s obligation and of his gratitude, he gives back to God what is holiest, the first fruits or the first born... The meal at Sinai in Exod. 24:9-11 is a good example of a very primitive communion sacrifice... The solemn sacrifices after the bringing up of the Ark to Jerusalem (2 Sam. 6:17; 1 Kgs. 8:63) were certainly also substantially controlled by the idea of sacrifice as communion.32

Given the range of possible intentions for offering sacrifice, von Rad noted that expiatory atonement is indeed a prominent purpose. This affirmation invites other points of discussion, such the nature of the sins which needed atonement and precisely what element of the sacrifice effected the atonement. Arguing from a text in Leviticus, von Rad explained that the blood effects atonement because of the life it contains. As was stated by von Rad, “Expiation therefore does not

31 von Rad, Old Testament Theology., vol. 1 The Theology of Israel’s Historical Traditions, 254-255.
32 Ibid., 254.
depend on the blood, but upon the life, whose bearer the blood is.” He held that the text “For the life of the flesh is in the blood; and I have given it to you for making atonement for your lives on the altar; for, as life, it is the blood that makes atonement” (Lev. 17:11) is critical to this understanding.

An added layer of complexity identified by von Rad is the reality that the depth of meaning of a specific type of sacrifice might have changed over time. He noted that it is quite possible that while the external dimension of the ritual is preserved throughout the centuries, nonetheless, there is an evolution in the understanding of meaning. According to his keen observations,

It is probably true for the general field of comparative religion, and certainly true for Israel, that ages which offered their sacrifices in naïve faith had little or nothing to say about the meaning of these sacrifices. It is only when certain tensions appear between the world of the rites and the men who perform them, that theories about sacrifice arise, as well as the need for their rational clarification… In theory, then, we have to distinguish between the “basic idea” in a sacrificial act and the reason for its performance. But in practice it was probably the reason which determined the way in which the specific sacrifice offered was understood.

This reality, identified by von Rad, is evident as the canon of the Hebrew Scriptures unfolds. The ritual actions remain the same, but tensions arise in the time of the prophets, such that the prophets criticize a perception of ‘naïve faith’ in the ritual actions alone and challenge God’s people to go beyond those actions and search for the reason behind the actions. And so, it is in our times, the criticism that continues to surround the concept of sacrifice originates in the tensions of our own times.

33 Ibid., 270.
34 Ibid., 262, 269.
3. *Bernhard Anderson (1916-2007)*\(^{36}\)

The American Old Testament scholar Bernhard Anderson advanced von Rad’s thought on the centrality of re-telling the story of God’s actions –von Rad’s *story telling theology*—. He referred to his own approach as a movement from the analysis of the text to a synthesis of the message. Acknowledging the great diversity of themes in the Old Testament, Anderson recognized the centrality of the covenant and chose to follow the sequence of the canon –*Torah, Nevi‘im, Ketuvim*– as a path to engage the Old Testament message.\(^{38}\)

His contributions have been acknowledged to be among the most important in the field of biblical theology. Brueggemann considers Anderson the ‘A’ of the ABC’s of Old Testament theology and compliments his synthesis and exposition of the covenants. For Brueggemann, the following three points about Anderson’s contributions are of great interest:

a) a deeply-thought wisdom about the faith of the text that is not twisted by fad,

b) a pastoral sensitivity that recognizes the complexity and ambiguity of lived faith, and

c) a contemporaneity that is located at the front edge of the difficult interpretive, theological issues we face.\(^{39}\)

Recognizing that the question of historicity continues to present challenges for biblical theology, Anderson, at the dawning of the third millennium, cautioned that historical skepticism is the greatest threat to biblical interpretation in post-modern times. He affirmed the role of history

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\(^{36}\) Bernhard W. Anderson was educated at Yale. He was an accomplished academic, having taught at the Theological School of Drew University, Princeton Theological Seminary, and Boston University School of Theology. As a United Methodist pastor, he also brought his contributions to the pastoral field.


in theology and returned to the biblical narrative to engage the discussion of the historicity of divine revelation.\textsuperscript{40}

From this perspective, Anderson explained that the notion of a bloodthirsty God desiring blood sacrifices is not constituent to Israel’s theological history. The priestly material in Scripture presents the sacrificial system as intimately connected to the relationship that God desires with the people. God stipulates the offering of sacrifices, not to be pacified, but as a means to ritualize reconciliation, when sin has created distance between himself and his people,

Although Leviticus uses the archaic expression “the food of God” (Lev. 21:6), the whole idea of God hungering for food or savoring the odor of sacrifice is repudiated. That notion is foreign to Israel’s experience of worship (Ps. 50:20). Rather, in Priestly theology these rituals metaphorically express God’s readiness to establish good relations. They are ritual ways of expressing belief in God’s power to overcome the sin that distances people from God so that they may live in communion or fellowship with God.\textsuperscript{41}

Anderson emphasized the atoning dimension of the Levitical sacrifices. Yet, he presented an important distinction between two theological concepts associated with atonement, namely propitiation and expiation. He explained that in propitiation, “…God, who is angry and alienated by human sin, requires something to appease divine anger before showing favor to the sinner. The hindrance of reconciliation lies with God.”\textsuperscript{42} However, in expiation, “…the hindrance to right relationship with God lies in human sin and the obstacle is overcome by the God-provided means of grace.”\textsuperscript{43} As Anderson affirmed, with any discussion of atoning sacrifice, it is important to be

\textsuperscript{40} Bernhard W. Anderson, “The Bible in a Postmodern Age,” \textit{Horizons in Biblical Theology} 22, no.1 (June 2000): 14-16.
\textsuperscript{41} Anderson, \textit{Contours of Old Testament Theology}, 118.
\textsuperscript{42} Ibid., 120.
\textsuperscript{43} Ibid.
mindful of the distinction between propitiation and expiation. He maintained that atonement is more about expiation than about propitiation, since it is at God’s initiative that reconciliation is possible.

He concluded by explaining that Christ’s sacrifice on the cross has fulfilled the purpose of the cultic sacrifices of the Old Testament. Furthermore, he argued, that Christ’s sacrifice not only revealed the Father’s forgiving love, but allowed us to offer ourselves as living sacrifices, “I appeal to you therefore, brothers and sisters, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God, which is your spiritual worship” (cf. Rom. 12:1).44

A missing component in Anderson’s biblical interpretation of sacrifice is the concept of sacrifice for the sake of celebration of communion. He described the ‘peace offering’ or *shelamim* as “…a social occasion for celebrating the I-Thou covenantal relationship: communion with God and fellowship with one another.”45 Nevertheless, this dimension of sacrifice as communion is not presented in his conclusions, only the atoning dimension is offered. Sacrifice as an expression of communion is precisely one of the underappreciated aspects of sacrifice.

4. Brevard Childs (1923-2007)46

Brevard Childs, an American Old Testament scholar, held that the best way to approach the theology of the Old Testament is by employing a canonical approach, in other words, by

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44 Ibid., 121.
46 Brevard Childs studied at Princeton Theological Seminary and then received a doctorate from the University of Basel. He taught at Yale for more than forty years.
considering the final form of the text as it appears in the biblical canon. His influence on the field and his legacy has been recorded in many journal articles and four foundational books. The approach used by Childs is one of one of Scripture and Tradition. He understood the canon “…not to be a late ecclesial imposition on the text, but a theological decision made by the tradition that governs the church in its reading of scripture.”

Childs gave special attention to the witness provided in and through the Old Testament. He considered the distinct witness of the texts in the Torah from those in the Prophetic corpus. From that vantage point, Childs interpreted sacrifice as atonement, which corresponds to an understanding from the perspective of priestly theology, but not from that of prophetic theology.

For Childs, the Mosaic covenant is a central biblical theme. He explained that the cultic system was established in order to regulate Israel’s life within the covenant. Childs noted that because the cultic material is not presented evenly throughout the Old Testament, it was difficult to understand entirely the role of the cultic system in the everyday life of the Israelites; he referred to this problem as a fragmentary presentation of the cultus. Additionally, he stated that the cultic material in Leviticus presents a incomplete view of the ritual, where the mechanics of the cult or the occasions for the ritual are not always explained.

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47 The canonical approach or canonical criticism, as it is often known, is explained further in the methodology section of this proposal.


Childs affirmed that sacrifice as atonement is central to the theology of Leviticus. He introduced the thought on atonement by H. Gese, who held that the meaning of the verb to atone (kipper) is to restore a right relationship with God.\textsuperscript{51} Sin wounded the relationship and it can only be restored by a substitution of life or by a complete surrender of one’s life. Childs returned to Gese’s contributions to explain that, under the priestly and the prophetic theology, this total surrender of self was ritualized in animal sacrifice.\textsuperscript{52}

Although Gese’s thought was foundational to the initial reflections posed by Childs, later their views on sacrifice differed somewhat. Using the canonical approach, Childs suggested a trajectory of thought on sacrifice which was distinct from that of Gese. Childs advanced two different understandings of sacrifice and atonement in the Old Testament. The two distinct interpretations come from different perspectives, a priestly theology and a prophetic theology, and yet, the two coexisted in tension. The priestly theology provided an understanding of ritual sacrifice as a means for atoning for sins within the context of the covenant. Through the perspective of the prophetic theology, ritual sacrifice could no longer atone for sins; the sins were of such enormous magnitude such that the covenant was damaged to the point that only judgment and a new covenant would be viable alternatives.\textsuperscript{53}

\textsuperscript{51} Ibid., 168-169. Brevard Childs considers H Gese to be an expert on the topic of atonement in the Old Testament and refers to Gese’s work “The Atonement” in Essays in Biblical Theology, published in 1981. Childs states, Gese argues that the basic meaning of the verb to atone (kipper) is restoring a right relationship with God which has been disrupted through sin by means of a substitution of life…According to Gese, the significant contribution of priestly theology was in ritualizing this concept of atonement within the sphere of sacrifice…Atonement was effected by the slaying of a specially designated animal whose shed blood was bearer of the substituted life instead of the offerer, and his identification was symbolized by the laying of hands.

\textsuperscript{52} Ibid., 169.

\textsuperscript{53} Ibid., 170-171.
According to Childs not much can be said with certainty concerning the intention for the sacrifice. He explained that the biblical text does not speak directly about communion, gift, or expiation as reasons behind the ritual sacrifice. This assertion invites further examination of the text to explain the reason behind those ritual sacrifices which were not prescribed for atonement.

5. Jacob Milgrom (1923-2010)

An expert in the book of Leviticus, the American Jewish biblical scholar Jacob Milgrom offered important contributions to the biblical understanding of sacrifice as a multidimensional gift. He affirmed that the concept of sacrifice is extremely complex and that it was difficult to articulate a single theory that could include the sacrificial systems of all societies. Instead he proposed to consider sacrifice as a “flexible symbol which can convey a rich variety of possible meanings.”

Milgrom underscored concern for the poor as an important aspect of the sacrificial system. This concern is made evident by the instructions which allowed for everyone, regardless of financial means, to be able to offer an acceptable sacrifice. This observation is important, as it points to the universality of ritual sacrifice across economic strata.

Furthermore, Milgrom noted that for ancient Israel, sacrifices had the overarching purpose of being a gift to God. In the ritual of sacrifice, the object passes from the realm of the common and becomes consecrated. Milgrom argued that the gift is offered to procure God’s assistance,

54 Ibid., 157.
55 Jacob Milgrom was born in New York. He studied at Brooklyn College and at the Jewish Theological Seminary. He taught at the University of California at Berkeley for almost thirty years. He has been recognized as an expert on the book of Leviticus.
57 Ibid., 51.
either external or internal, “The help requested of God stems from two needs: (1) external aid, to secure fertility or victory, in other words, for blessing; and (2) internal aid, to ward off or forgive sin and impurity, that is, for expiation.”

There is one additional important point concerning ritual sacrifice, which Milgrom addressed. He offered observations on the relationship between the prophets and the cult. Many of the prophets critique the empty ritual, that is void of any transformation in the moral and ethical life of those participating in the ritual. While some scholars have proposed that the prophets rejected any form of cult, Milgrom explained that, “…the prophets did not object to the cult per se but only to its abuse: those who leaned their hand on their sacrificial animals or raised their hands in prayer had blood on their hands (cf Isaiah 1:15).” Specifically, he spoke about Amos and Jeremiah who critique the ritualism in the midst of immoral behavior, i.e. the ritual without a transformation of the heart,

In sum, Jeremiah and Amos have nothing whatever to say concerning the fixed Temple sacrifices such as the tāmīd. Rather, they turn to the people and urge them to renounce their individual offerings because this ritual piety is vitiated by their immoral behavior. They underscore this point with the claim that the wilderness covenant never enjoined upon the individual Israelite to honor God with sacrifices.

6. Walter Brueggemann (1933–)

Walter Brueggemann has made significant contributions to the field of biblical theology. He is well known as a biblical scholar, as a theologian, as well as a gifted preacher. Brueggemann’s methodology employs rhetorical criticism and a more recent field in biblical criticism, known as
sociological criticism. He goes beyond looking for the center of the Old Testament, as Eichrodt did and although he advances von Rad’s story-telling theology, he goes a step further and examines how the social and cultural contexts influence the story and the telling of the story. He also pushes beyond the boundaries which Childs had set within the canon. He proposes a cultural criticism through which one looks back for the influence of other cultures on the narrative of Israel and looks forward to look for ways in which that narrative can influence and transform our present culture.61

Brueggemann allows sociology to assist his interpretation but does not give it ultimate control. Anderson clarifies that Brueggemann’s approach is by no means reductionist,

Sociology of this kind helps to understand the “bipolar” dynamic of Old Testament theology: the conflict between “cultural embrace” and “cultural criticism.” Brueggemann wants to avoid the reduction of theology to sociology. He declares that God is not only “in the fray” (the social process) but “above the fray” (beyond the reach of sociological analysis). “The poets and narrators in ancient Israel,” he says, “do in fact, speak the mind of God,” who is beyond the historical process.62

Influenced by the prophetic motif of the legal courtroom, Brueggemann develops a model of a courtroom witness to present Israel’s narrative. He uses the metaphor of Israel taking the witness stand before the nations. In Brueggemann’s approach, the trial paradigm has three elements: (1) Israel gives testimony or witness about a liberating God—witness on the exodus—(2) the nations and Israel present a counter-witness about God in the midst of chaos, and (3) Israel responds with a new testimony which reflects its growing faith and trust in Adonai. Brueggemann names these three elements in his courtroom trial metaphor: testimony, dispute, and advocacy.63

63 This is the schema presented in Brueggemann’s Theology of the Old Testament. Anderson comments on this approach in Contours of Old Testament Theology, 26.
Brueggemann considers the Exodus and the time at Sinai to be a central formative experience in the identity and life of Israel. He observes that throughout its ancient history, Israel repeats the experience of liberation, of covenant making, of journeying through the wilderness, and of remembering God’s promises. All the while,

Israel always again travels this way as the people of YHWH entrusted with YHWH’s Torah, the instruction that sustains a peculiar identity in the world. The Torah from YHWH is a summons to an alternative life marked by both joy and confidence, above all characterized by listening…. Israel is to “hear and do,” or as the Sinai pledge has it, to “do and hear” (Exodus 24:7). It is in the hearing that Israel becomes and remains the people of YHWH.\textsuperscript{64}

The biblical narrative reveals that radical obedience\textsuperscript{65} is the condition of the Mosaic covenant. Brueggemann affirms that within this context, instructions arise which guide the people of God into being “an ordered cultic community that is preoccupied with the maintenance of itself as an adequate residence for YHWH…”\textsuperscript{66} In other words, the cultic system provides a means to guide people in their journey to living as God’s chosen people, with whom God dwells.

Brueggemann notes that there is a second essential aspect of the sacrificial system, namely the ethical dimension. The ritual prescriptions are centered on the relationship with God, but the concrete expression of that relationship is lived in the relationship with neighbor. The vertical relationship with God (holiness) and the horizontal relationship with neighbor (justice) need to exist in harmony. Neither Judaism, nor Christianity endorse a choice of one relationship over the

\textsuperscript{64} Brueggemann, \textit{Old Testament Theology}, 217.

\textsuperscript{65} Hearing, listening, obeying can be used interchangeably to communicate the meaning of the Hebrew term \textit{shema’}.

other, rather both traditions exhort an approach that is both/and. Brueggemann summarizes this point by recalling the thought of Abraham Heschel, who emphasized a passion for social justice being rooted in a life of holiness.\textsuperscript{67}

7. \textit{Robert Daly, S.J. (1940- )}

Robert Daly is not a biblical theologian. As a liturgical theologian, he has considered sacrifice from the perspective of its integral role in the Christian liturgy. His work has made notable contributions in the study of sacrifice. Daly’s research provides an overview of the meaning of sacrifice as it appreciated through the lens of scripture. His work on sacrifice is substantial, as it spans over forty years, to include three books and more than twenty journal articles or articles in theological dictionaries. Uniquely relevant to the aim of this research, is Daly’s latest book, \textit{Sacrifice Unveiled: The True Meaning of Christian Sacrifice}, published in 2009. In this work, Daly surveys the earliest developments of the Christian doctrine of sacrifice, then proceeds to unveil any distortions found in atonement theories. He concludes by unveiling new horizons for the understanding of sacrifice, namely he offers a trinitarian insight that can be transferred to the life of the Christian. After decades of study and research, Daly proposes that sacrifice can be understood as participation in the self-gift of the persons of the Trinity. This trinitarian insight is the result of his editing the posthumous publication of \textit{The Eucharist in the West}, the great work of his mentor, Edward J. Kilmartin.

The central reality of Christian sacrifice is that it is a profoundly interpersonal Trinitarian event. It is an even that begins…with the self-offering, self-giving, self-communication gift of God, the Father in the sending of the Son. It continues in a second moment with the totally free self-giving, self-communicating response of

\textsuperscript{67} Ibid., 214.
the Son, in his humanity, and in the power of the Holy Spirit, to the Father and for us.68

Daly arrives at this trinitarian insight after a journey through the Hebrew Bible which includes the sacrificial system of the Mosaic Law as well as the prophetic critique of sacrifice. Daly then continues with a presentation of sacrifice in the gospel accounts, in Pauline letters, in the Epistle to the Hebrews, and in the Book of Revelation. He also offers a summary of the early doctrine of sacrifice in Patristic sources. Throughout this journey, he devotes special attention to sacrifice as atonement and unveils possible distortions or incomplete understandings of sacrifice.

1.3. Purpose and Direction of this Study

The intended purpose of this dissertation is to articulate a biblical theology of liturgical sacrifice with special attention to the intimate connection between the ritual practices and the life of the worshiper. The present work does not aim at resolving the problems of ambiguity, controversy, or misunderstanding in the interpretation of the concept of sacrifice, which have been raised by systematicians. Rather, it seeks to consider liturgical sacrifice in the biblical tradition and to articulate a biblical theology of liturgical sacrifice with special attention to the intimate connection between the ritual practices and the life of the worshiper.

My thesis is that to live out the covenantal election of God’s people to be holy and priestly, it is essential to explore and understand these three underappreciated, perhaps even neglected, dimensions of sacrifice: first, the relationship between the external actions of the ritual and the internal dynamic of spirituality and morality; second, the reality that sacrifice refers not only to

68 Daly, *Sacrifice Unveiled*, 228-229.
death, but to a way of living; and third, atonement and reconciliation are not the only reasons to offer sacrifice.

As it was mentioned previously, the critiques which have been made and continue to be made concerning the topic of sacrifice focus primarily on these three points:

1. Sacrifice consists only of ritual external practices, such that the sacrificial action is basically a formulaic observance, empty of any interior meaning.
2. Sacrifice is an economic transaction with the sole purpose of effecting atonement.
3. Sacrifice is a violent concept that serves to condone and perpetuate oppression of those already marginalized.

While these points describe some aspects of sacrifice, they do not present a complete picture.

The literature review has demonstrated that although sacrifice is a multi-dimensional concept, not all dimensions have been given the same amount of attention. Specifically, it is the atoning aspect of sacrifice which has been studied more thoroughly. Related to this aspect, some critiques have surfaced, particularly concerning the violence, which is generally associated with the bloody aspect of some liturgical sacrifices. However, those liturgical sacrifices which were offered for celebration of communion with God or simply as gift, have not been given much consideration. Furthermore, the spiritual and ethical relevance of the meaning of sacrifice, occurring in the context of covenant, has not been analyzed in much depth.

The biblical and systematic theologians discussed in the previous section have been instrumental in my study. Eichrodt’s thought provided special attention to the importance of obedience to the covenant; von Rad, from his perspective on story-telling, noted atonement as
prominent purpose of sacrifice; Anderson observed that expiatory atonement and a blood-thirsty God are not constituent to Israel’s theological history; Childs affirmed that the biblical text did not speak directly about the reasons behind the ritual sacrifices; Milgrom’s comprehensive studies on the cultic system presented sacrifice as a flexible symbol which can convey many meanings; Brueggemann emphasized the ethical dimension of sacrifice; and Daly offered a Trinitarian insight and unveiled possible distortions in the understanding of sacrifice.

Despite their great contributions, I consider that there are still some underappreciated aspects of sacrifice which will be presented in the present work. This dissertation seeks to synthesize what has been already proposed and point our attention in the direction of the three sacrificial dimensions, noted above, which have received little or no attention.

1.4. Methodology

This study proposes to articulate a biblical theology of sacrifice which draws on a canonical approach. This method has been utilized to study overarching themes in the biblical narrative such as canon, liberation, and law; however, it has not been applied to the study of sacrifice. The theological concept of sacrifice is most often considered as one of the subjects of systematic theology, specifically dogmatic theology, insofar as it is intrinsically connected to Christology and soteriology. However, this study will present an analysis of sacrifice from the trajectory of biblical theology, whereby the biblical meaning of sacrifice, in the canonical form of selected texts, will be explored. Applying this method to study sacrifice offers new possibilities of conversation which could be easily missed when addressing sacrifice from other perspectives.

This method analyzes the final form of the biblical text within the context provided by the biblical canon as an entire unit. The focus with canonical approach is not exclusively on each
stage of the literary evolution of the text, but rather on the final form of the text which appears in the accepted canon of Scripture. While this method recognized the contributions of diachronic criticism, it is a synchronic method. Unlike the earlier criticisms of the historical critical method, canonical approach facilitates the analysis of a text from a scientific hermeneutic of faith. Hahn observes that, “This approach offers exegete and theologian alike a broader interpretative perspective than any single text can provide, one that reflects the historical continuity and theological unity of God’s saving plan.”69 The two foundational principles operating in canonical approach are the canon and the testimony of believing community.

A. Canonical Approach / Canonical Criticism

1. Canon

The canon, in its narrowest sense, refers to the list of authoritative books, which have been accepted in Judaism and in Christianity since the beginning of the first century A.D.70 The Septuagint, the Dead Sea Scrolls, and the New Testament reveal differences in each of their respective canons. Presently, the major Christian denominations accept canons represented by slightly different lists of books. Nevertheless, canonical criticism is not concerned with the history of such lists, or the councils that pronounced them authoritative.71 Aware of these differences, 


70 Despite the challenge of the different accepted canons within the Hebrew and Christian traditions, whether the Hebrew canon or the Greek canon**, this approach still offers the best possibility to interpret a text not only from a literary analytical perspective, but also from a theological perspective, grounded on the intrinsic unity of the text as well as its connection to the lived faith experience of the believer.

**The Greek Canon contains 7 books not found in the Palestinian Canon.
These books are known as Deuterocanonical: Tobit, Judith, 1 Maccabees, 2 Maccabees, Wisdom, Sirach (Ecclesiasticus), and Baruch.

canonical criticism uses the canon as a structural principle, “...letting the final shape of the Christian Bible serve as the object of [the] study instead of the history of development that lies behind the formation of the canon.”

Canonical criticism considers the final biblical text as a unified whole. In other words, the operating principle in canonical criticism is that the biblical text has a unified voice, which transcends the source or the redactor. That unified voice is the Inspiring Author of the text, namely God. It is this principle of the one divine voice, speaking through many human voices, which guide another operating principle, that of unifying themes that are constituent of the message in the biblical text. Mary Callaway uses beautiful imagery to express this reality, “Like a variety of garments dyed various shades of the same hue, the books of the Bible could be unified by their tincture with a unifying theological concept.”

2. Testimony of the Believing Community

The second structural principle used by canonical criticism is the testimony of the believing community, in other words, this principle considers the biblical text vis-à-vis the community that received the text. Terrence Keegan states, “Canonical critics agree with the reader-response critics that it is the reader who produces the meaning of the text but insist as one of their fundamental presuppositions that it is only the believing community that is capable of reading and interpreting the Bible.” Therefore, it is accurate to say that, although certainly the historical and literary elements are incorporated into the theological lens, the nature of canonical criticism is more

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73 Callaway, “Canonical Criticism,” 147.

theological, than literal. In fact, it is the reception history of the text as Scripture, in a specific historical context, which shapes the theology of the text. Additionally, the believers’ identity is shaped by the faith traditions. In other words, canonical criticism addresses the two-way process which exists between the tradition shaping the believers and the believers on-going shaping of the traditions. Callaway explains,

…Its [canonical criticism] underlying concern is to find the locus of authority in the biblical texts by analyzing the ways in which the texts were authoritative for the believing communities that received them as scripture…The biblical text is seen as the product of the believing community, but at the same time the community’s identity has been shaped by reflection on its religious traditions. The voices of individual authors preserved within the text are of less significance than the ‘voice’ of the text received by the community. \(^{75}\)

3. The Contributions of James Sanders and Brevard Childs

In the latter part of the twentieth century, some scholars became increasingly aware that as a result of a more scientific interpretation of Scripture, a gap had grown between theological studies and scriptural studies. \(^{76}\) Canonical criticism engages in the process of interpretation of Scripture through a theological lens, which not only narrows the gap between theology and Scripture, but actually links the two.

Beginning in the 1970’s, the work of the scholars Brevard Childs and James Sanders, has been foundational in the flourishing of canonical criticism. Concerned with the growing gap between biblical scholarly study and theology, Brevard Childs wrote *Biblical Theology in Crisis*

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\(^{75}\) Callaway, “Canonical Criticism”, 147.

\(^{76}\) Pablo Gadenz notes that in 1961, Karl Rahner already wrote about a division between theologians and exegetes as a result of modern biblical interpretative methods. A concise presentation of the problem and exhortation to move towards a renewed complementarity of scholars is found in “Overcoming the Hiatus between Exegesis and Theology: Guidance and Examples from Pope Benedict XVI” in *Verbum Domini and the Complementarity of Exegesis and Theology*, ed. Scott Carl (Grand Rapids, MI: William B Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2015), 41-42.
in 1970; however, most of the development of the method that he calls *canonical approach* was
developed between 1980s and 1990s. Childs’ principal concern is to study the final text to
understand the entire bible, Old and New Testaments, as witnessing to Jesus Christ.

Interestingly, Childs does not simply consider the final form with a synchronic approach,
but rather he attempts to retrieve the diachronic dimension present in the synchronic canonical
form. Childs considers other tools used in the historical critical method, yet his goal is to evaluate
the theological meaning of the final text. The canonical approach that Childs uses, enables him
to engage in a biblical theology that is descriptive – includes historical and literary criticisms - and
also normative – focuses on the spiritual and moral reception. In other words, “For Childs the
focus is not the process of reinterpretation or the hermeneutic leading to the final form of the text,
but its theological shape.”

In his book *Torah and Canon*, published in 1972, James Sanders identifies the Exile to
Babylon and the destruction of the Second Temple as the two historical events that threatened the
identity of the Jewish people, as chosen by God, and served as the instrumental catalysts for the
formation of the canon. Sanders considers that the process of canonization of the text within the
believing communities is essential to canonical criticism and he affirms that it is this method which
will redirect the scientific criticism back to the faith communities,

Canonical criticism might be seen in metaphor as the beadle (*bedelos*) who now
carries the critically studied Bible in procession back to the church lectern from the

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77 Mead, *Biblical Theology*, 142-143.
78 Callaway, “Canonical Criticism,” 146.
79 Ibid., 147.
scholar’s study. And canonical criticism may permit the current believing communities to see themselves more clearly as heirs of a very long line of shapers and reshapers of tradition and instruct the faithful as to how they may faithfully perceive the Bible even yet as adaptable for life.81

In summary, these two scholars emphasize a different principle of canonical criticism. Childs stresses the canonical shape of the text, while Sanders accentuates the process of canonization within the believing communities;82 they even use different in the terminology to describe the method,83 yet they agree on the objective of the method. Thus, as previously stated, canonical criticism narrows the gap between theology and Scripture by actually linking the two.

B. Course of Argument

First, the present study will consider texts from the Old Testament, moving from the Torah to the Prophetic Literature. The inquiry on the Torah will begin by focusing on selected texts from Exodus, so as to examine the role of sacrifice in the context of the Mosaic covenant. At Sinai, God made a covenant with the Israelites, whereby they were elected by God to be a holy nation, a kingdom of priests. As noted in the biblical text below, the language indicates this is a conditional covenant: if you obey my voice (v.5). God invited the Israelites, his chosen people, to listen to his word and obey his commandments.

You have seen what I did to the Egyptians, and how I bore you on eagles’ wings and brought you to myself. Now therefore, if you obey my voice and keep my covenant, you shall be my treasured possession out of all the peoples. Indeed, the whole earth is mine, but you shall be for me a priestly kingdom and a holy nation. These are the words that you shall speak to the Israelites (Exod. 19:4-6).

82 Mead, Biblical Theology, 142.
83 Sanders uses the term ‘canon criticism’ whereas Childs prefers to use the term ‘canonical approach’.
The obedience of the people is essential to the covenant. However, as salvation history unfolds in the biblical canon, Scripture reveals that God is not simply asking for an outward obedience to the ritual, but rather obedience to His voice, to his commandments to be in right relationship with him and neighbor. The role of obedience to God’s voice, insofar as it is constituent of sacrifice, and the connection between ritual and ethics are underappreciated aspects which will be discussed in this study.

Exploring texts from Leviticus, in the context of the Sinai Covenant, will provide the literal and historical meaning for the ritual sacrifices. Childs, reflecting on scholars before him, who paved the way for Old Testament theology, including von Rad, explains that, “The Priestly tradition of the tabernacle provides the means by which the presence of Yahweh which had once dwelt on Sinai would now accompany Israel in the tabernacle on her journey toward the Promised Land.” The theological message of the canonical form of Leviticus witnesses to the role of sacrifice on the journey to an encounter with God.

Continuing the pilgrimage through the canon, from Torah to Nevi‘im, will reveal what Brevard Childs calls the different theologies of sacrifice. With the preoccupation on purity as essential in order to have access to the LORD’s presence, sacrifice as purification and atonement is certainly emphasized in the Priestly theology of the Torah. However, this is not the case in the prophetic theology of the Nevi‘im, where the moral and ethical dimensions of the ritual are accentuated. Childs and Brueggemann offer much insight on this area. A selection of texts from the prophetic literature will witness to the voice of the prophets offering a critique of the cultic

practices that, while following the prescribed rituals, rendered the sacrifices empty. It is in these
texts that one begins to see more explicitly the reality inside the ritual, and the reality about being
a *priestly kingdom*. Brueggemann explains, “What seems to be important in these prophetic
polemics is that the cult should be a witness to and embodiment of the practice of communion with
Yahweh in Yahweh’s true character as sovereign and merciful.”85

In the gradual witnessing of Scripture, the deeper meaning of sacrifice is not fully
apprehended until there is someone who concretely models for the believing community the
meaning of offering sacrifice and having the priestly character that reflects back to Sinai, to the
moment when they were elected to be a covenantal people. Christ’s sacrifice not only is the
exemplar for how to be a priestly people, but forms the people anew into a covenantal community.
The focus of the study will then move to the New Testament where divine revelation reaches its
fullness in the person of Christ, who is the model of holiness and priestly character for the Christian
life.

To this end, the study will be directed to selected texts from the Gospel account according
to Mark, the Letter to the Romans, and the Letter to the Hebrews. These texts will reveal that
sacrificial language and imagery is applied both to Jesus’ death and to the Christian life. Christ is
presented as the sacrificial Lamb whose blood redeemed humanity and inaugurated the New
Covenant community, and thus restored the community’s identity to be the priestly kingdom and
the covenantal people of the Mosaic covenant. Christ’s sacrifice is superior to any previous animal
sacrifices. He lives and dies in obedience, which constitutes the perfect covenantal sacrifice and
the perfect expiatory sacrifice.

C. Delimitations of this Study

The texts presented in this dissertation are only representative, but not exhaustive of all texts dealing with sacrifice, either directly or indirectly. In the Old Testament chapters, texts from the Psalms and other wisdom literature were omitted, as the message in those texts reveals a message comparable to that of the theology in prophetic literature.

Likewise, the chapter on the New Testament discusses only a sampling of texts with sacrificial motifs. Texts representing the synoptic accounts, Pauline literature, and the Letter to the Hebrews were included. Nevertheless, Johannine texts were omitted. While texts from the Gospel according to John and texts from Revelation are of significance to the discussion on sacrifice, they were not included due to scope and length constraints.

1.5. Contribution of this Study

The criticisms concerning the ambiguity in the meaning of sacrifice, the multi-valence of the term ‘sacrifice’, and its relevance in postmodern times abound. Nevertheless, because of its centrality in Christianity, it is imperative that we continue to explore ways to discuss it, and more importantly, ways to integrate it in our daily lives in wholesome and authentic ways. Sacrifice is not only a theme of interest for academia, but bears enormous impact on the life of a Christian disciple. The implications affect Christianity on two levels. First, how the individual disciple lives a holy, sacrificial, and priestly life within the community; and second, how the Church—as a community of disciples—sacrificially lives out the great apostolic mission to evangelize, that is to “Go therefore and make disciples of all nations” (Matt. 28:19).

This study engages the three single-dimensional aspects, aforesaid noted as common criticisms, and furthers the discussion to present a more holistic understanding of sacrifice. A
moderate amount of reflection has been offered concerning the ritualistic and formulaic dimension and challenging a practice of sacrifice that connects ritual and ethics. Concerning the purpose of sacrifice, most the publications have dealt with its atoning dimension. Lastly, pertaining to the critique offered by feminist theologians, works have been published that call for a much-needed correction of the distortion of certain aspects of sacrifice, which throughout history could have contributed to violence and oppression. Nevertheless, removing the concept from the theological discourse completely, as sometimes it has been proposed, is not the solution to the problem. Denying the reality of the atoning dimension would not be an authentic avenue to discover the deeper and broader meaning of sacrifice.

This study offers a needed systematic presentation on sacrifice from within the biblical tradition. This presentation offers unique contributions by retrieving an underappreciated context of sacrifice, namely the context of covenant, which complements the atoning dimension. With this background, the witness of Christ’s life and death is understood in covenantal and relational terms. His life is revelatory of the Father’s love and exemplary of the priestly character that we are called to have as children of the covenant. It is Christ who models and gives the example of what it means to have a priestly character and what it means to offer sacrifice. Christ’s life and death are sacrificial, and his example invites others to live likewise. Christ came to inaugurate the

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86 Heim, Saved from Sacrifice, 292-329. S. Mark Heim opposes the violence often associated with sacrifice, and proposes a theology of the cross that does not hold sacrifice at its core, I unequivocally advocate a reversal of polarity in our common theology of the cross. We are not reconciled with God and each other by a sacrifice of innocent suffering offered to God. We are reconciled with God because God at the cost of suffering rescued us from bondage to a practice of violent sacrifice that otherwise would keep us estranged, making us enemies of the God who stands with our victims...So long as our peace depends on scapegoats, we are never truly reconciled with each other (320). The risen Christ ‘occupies’ the cross, as one might occupy a railway track to prevent its use to transport prisoners to a concentration camp. It cannot be used for that purpose without opposition, an apposition that has infiltrated our language and our consciousness. The empty cross stands for a life without sacrifice (328).
kingdom (cf. Matt. 4:17; Mark 1:15; Luke 17:20-21), not a kingdom of this world (cf. John 18:36), but the priestly kingdom from the Mosaic covenant.

While Christ’s death certainly communicates the atoning dimension of sacrifice, the covenantal dimension must be incorporated. Furthermore, it is important to be mindful of the dynamic of self-gift and blessing from Christ to the Father, which is offered, not only to atone, but to celebrate communion with the Father and to offer him thanksgiving and praise. Therefore, this examination uncovers aspects of sacrifice, which had been overlooked, and which can be best appreciated only after the ritual is observed through the prism of sacred scripture. The conclusions offer a springboard for future reflection on our ongoing journey to discover our identity as a priestly kingdom invited to participate in the life of the Trinity. This study presents a nuanced appreciation of the biblical theology of liturgical sacrifice as spiritual formation in the life of the disciple and the community of disciples.

1.6. Organization of this Study

Having established the foundational elements of this study (i.e. what, why, how) in the first chapter, I have organized the rest of the dissertation in four additional chapters. Two of these which consider sacrifice through the biblical lens of selected texts of the Old Testament, whereas one is dedicated to New Testament texts. In the final chapter, I present conclusions as well as applications relevant to spiritual formation.

The second chapter presents the Mosaic Covenant as the context within which to study sacrifice. The theological concepts of covenant and election are examined as gifts of God’s goodness. It is in the context of this covenantal relationship that the people will learn to form their identity as priestly people; they will have to discover what it means and how to live as such. The
sacrificial system from Leviticus [the five types of sacrifices outlined in the first seven chapters of the book of Leviticus are: burnt offering (‘ōlâ), grain offering (minhâ), peace offering (šêlāmîm), sin/purification offering (haṭṭâ’î), and guilt offering (‘āšām)] is read in light of and as part of the covenantal obedience prescribed at Sinai. This chapter underscores the role of sacrifice in forming a priestly people and therefore a covenantal people.

The third chapter presents the voice of selected prophets who are representative of different periods in the history of Israel. It is important to present the material found in the First Book of Samuel, which contains material dating to the pre-monarchic and early monarchic periods. This material comes from the voice of a prophet, and as such, along with the other prophets selected, offers the unified message of critique of ritual sacrifices. One of the roles of the prophets is to challenge the people to live in right relationship with God and others, in other words to return to the covenant. The people at times confuse the enacting of the ritual as synonymous with staying in covenant, therefore this prophetic critique is an essential step on the journey to unpack the meaning inside the ritual.

The presentation on the prophetic material proceeds according to historical periods: first with Samuel in the monarchical period; followed by First Isaiah, Hosea, Amos, and Jeremiah in the time of the divided kingdom. The presentation then continues with Ezekiel and Second Isaiah during the exile and concludes with Trito-Isaiah and Malachi in the post-exilic time. These prophets named the empty worship that had become routine and reminded their audiences of the obedience which is the essential element inside the ritual.

The fourth chapter provides a survey presentation of the life and the death of Christ as the participatory template and cause for the Christian life, spoken in sacrificial terms. The sacrifices
of the Old Testament had the purpose of atoning/reconciling communion with God, but also of celebrating communion with God. Although his death is understood as the ultimate sacrifice, through the discussion of selected texts, I propose that his entire life, lived as a life of obedience and faithfulness to the covenant, was also a sacrifice. Selections from the Gospel according to Mark will include: his baptism, the cleansing of the leper, the ransom saying—which occurs after the third passion prediction—, and the institution narrative. These passages provide insight to the sacrificial nature of his life as well as his death, and are also occasions for instruction on the sacrificial life of discipleship. Furthermore, the Suffering Servant is fulfilled in Christ. Jesus’ sacrificial death serves as the model for the humble, self-giving life of the disciple. The analysis of selected texts from the Letter to the Romans facilitate the articulation of important theological themes associated with sacrifice: expiation, redemption, reconciliation, and justification. This chapter concludes with a discussion of sacrificial motifs in the Letter to the Hebrews. Specifically, I consider passages which reveal the superiority of Christ’s priesthood and sacrifice, as well as texts which exhort the Christian believers to live a sacrificial life.

The final chapter reviews the complexity and multivalence of the concept of sacrifice and reiterates the relevance of addressing the underappreciated aspects of sacrifice. In it, I provide a synopsis of a biblical theology of liturgical sacrifice, using a canonical approach, and suggest that this approach affords as an understanding of sacrifice as spiritual formation. Without this perspective, it is easy to overlook certain aspects of sacrifice and thus it becomes common place to reduce sacrifice to ritualistic violence for the sake of reconciliation. To appreciate the multivalence of sacrifice, it is fundamental to consider other facets of sacrifice, such as the interior disposition of obedience on the part of the person offering the sacrifice; the totality of intentions or purposes behind the ritual, which include reconciliation and celebration of communion; and the
reminder that it is the life in the he blood, which atones, and gives new life. However, what is most important is to situate liturgical sacrifice in the context of the covenant. It is this reality, which is essential to understand the role of sacrifice in forming God’s people as holy and priestly, living a covenantal relationship.

Finally, this chapter concludes with a presentation on the spirituality of liturgical sacrifice, which includes reflections on a sermon by Saint Peter Chrysologus, who reminds us that “Each of us is called to be both a sacrifice to God and his priest.” reflections on one of the Eucharistic prayers, and on a prayer composed by the youngest Doctor of the Church.

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87 From a sermon by Saint Peter Chrysologus, given on the text of Romans 12:1-2 and used as the second reading in the Office of Readings for the Tuesday in the Fourth Week of Easter, Sermon 108: PL 52, 499-500.
CHAPTER 2 - SACRIFICE IN THE OLD TESTAMENT – THE TORAH

2.1. Introduction

Sacrifice was an essential element of the worship life of ancient Israel, yet until the last half of the twentieth century, little attention was devoted to the sacrificial system presented in the Old Testament. There was a perception that it was unnecessary to give much consideration to the sacrifices of old. As recently as 1946, Millar Burrow stated, “Large areas of Hebrew religion, such as animal sacrifice or the veneration of sacred places, require relatively little attention, because they ceased to be important for the religion of the New Testament.”

H. H. Rowley argued against this sentiment and proposed that the lack of concern for the sacrificial system is a result of the perceived anti-cultus prophetic message. Rowley insisted that sacrifice is central not only to the understanding of the New Testament, especially the Letter to the Hebrews, but it is also predominant throughout the Old Testament. Therefore, it would be unavoidable to study the Bible without discussing and wrestling with the concept of sacrifice.

During the twentieth century, biblical scholarship witnessed a heightened interest in the study of Israel’s religion and dedicated more attention to the topic of sacrifice. However, as Balentine notes, such studies were generally descriptive in their nature, and failed to address the theology of sacrifice,

But almost since its inception the history of religions approach has steadfastly restricted itself to an investigation of information in the text that might be objectively correlated with verifiable times, places, names, and practices. As a result, much light has been shed on, for example, the history of the sacrificial

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89 Chapter 3 of this dissertation will treat the prophetic message concerning sacrifice and will clarify the perceived generic anti-cultic message.

system, or on certain religious institutions, like the priesthood. But this approach typically has given little, if any, attention to broader theological issues. What, for example, is the theology of sacrifice?91

This chapter focuses on sacrifice in the context of the Mosaic covenant. Choosing this moment in salvation history as the entry point, for the discussion of the biblical theology of sacrifice in this work, does not negate the historical and canonical presence of sacrifice prior to the book of Exodus. The book of Genesis reveals instances of sacrifice, some are obvious expressions, while others are more veiled examples, but nevertheless, sacrifice is present prior to Moses.92 The offering of sacrifices by the patriarchs was an individual act of worship, present without a detailed account for a codified sacrificial system. Rowley states that, “The patriarchal offerings were the expression of their individual veneration for the deity and the vehicle of their personal worship rather than their participation in an established cultus.”93 The establishment of a codified cultus occurs in the setting of the covenant with Moses, and it is precisely the covenant which gives explicit theological meaning to the sacrificial system.

2.2. The Book of Exodus – the Mosaic Covenant as the Context for the Sacrificial System

The theological meaning of sacrifice is found implicitly in the book of Genesis. Nevertheless, this vision is gradually unveiled in the remaining books of the Torah, with a pivotal point in the book of Exodus. Sacrifice, priesthood, and worship are intimately connected and it is practically impossible to understand one apart from the other. The exodus event and what unfolds

92 From the narrative of primeval history to the patriarchal history, accounts of sacrifice abound. Some of these texts narrate the offering of a sacrifice, others narrate the building of altars, which implicitly point to an eventual offering of a sacrifice: Abel and Cain in Gen. 4:2-7; Noah in Gen. 8:20-21; Melchizedek in Gen. 14:18-20 (bread and wine); Abraham in Gen. 12: 7-9; 15, Gen. 17:9-14, Gen 22:1-19; Jacob in Gen. 28:18-22; 35:6-7.
thereafter provide the setting for understanding this interconnectedness, which in turn will give theological light to appreciate the essence of sacrifice.

In the beginning, God created humanity to be in communion/relationship with God and with neighbor; furthermore, God gave humans freedom to choose to be in communion. As sin entered the world, humans lost this freedom. True worship was only possible if they were in communion with God. In losing freedom to be in relationship with God, they became slaves and could not offer true worship.

The Hebrew verb ‘āḇad and its cognate substantive forms ‘āḇōḏāh and ‘eḇed are essential to the understanding of the connection between freedom and true worship. The verb ‘āḇad can be translated as to serve, while the cognate nouns can be translated as service – ‘āḇōḏāh– and servant – ‘eḇed– respectively. Although the terms can refer to the action of labor, quite often the term is used to indicate service and worship to God. However, the range of meaning of these terms includes the antonyms to enslave, servitude, slavery, slave as well as service to other gods or idolatry. Davis explains that in ancient societies ‘working for someone’ means working

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94 Ellen Davis notes the occurrence of the verb ‘āḇad in Exod. 8:1, 8:20, 9:1, and 9:13 to describe activity toward God, specifically an act of worship. See Ellen Davis, Getting Involved with God, (Lanham, MD: Cowley Publications, 2001), 191-192.

95 See for example, Exod. 1:14; Lev. 25:39,46; Jer. 22:13; Jer. 25:14; Jer. 27:7; Jer.30:8; Jer. 34:9,10.

96 Some examples are: Exod.1:14; Exod. 2:23 (twice in verse); Exod.5:9; 5:11, Exod. 6:6; Exod. 6:9; Deut. 26:6; 1 Kgs. 12:4; Neh. 5:18

97 Cf. Deut. 7:16; Deut. 12:2,30; Deut. 7:4; Deut. 8:19; Deut. 11:16; Deut. 13:7; Deut. 13:14; Deut. 17:3; Deut. 28:14,36,64; Deut. 29:25; Deut. 30:17; Deut. 31:20; Josh. 23:16; Josh. 24:2,16; Judg. 2:10; Judg. 10:13; 1 Sam. 8:8; 1 Sam. 26:19; 1 Kgs. 9:6,9; 2 Kgs. 17:35; 2 Chr. 7:19,22; Jer. 11:10; Jer. 13:10; Jer. 16:11,13; Jer. 22:9; Jer. 25:6; Jer. 35:15.
for a master, whether human or divine. The identity of the master whom Israel will serve is at stake. If Israel serves YHWH, they have freedom, but if Israel serves other gods, they are slaves.

The slavery in Egypt is not only about physical slavery, but also about spiritual bondage, which becomes an obstacle to freedom to worship and to offer sacrifice. Thus, in a sense, in the Exodus, the Israelites are being moved from service/slavery to Pharaoh to service/worship of the LORD. The purpose for granting freedom to the Hebrew people is revealed first in the Moses’ call narrative and reaches a climactic point at the moment of covenant making. God reveals his name to Moses and charges him to announce to the elders of Israel that the God of the patriarchs, aware of the people’s current state of slavery, will give them freedom so that they can offer sacrifice and worship freely,

“A long time passed, during which the king of Egypt died. The Israelites groaned under their bondage – ‘āḇōḏāh – and cried out, and from their bondage – ‘āḇōḏāh – their cry for help went up to God” (Exod. 2:23).

“They will listen to you. Then you and the elders of Israel will go to the king of Egypt and say to him: The LORD, the God of the Hebrews, has come to meet us. So now, let us go a three days’ journey in the wilderness to offer sacrifice – ṭzbaḥ – to the LORD, our God” (Exod. 3:18).

“So you will say to Pharaoh, ‘Thus says the LORD: Israel is my son, my firstborn. I said to you: Let my son go, that he may serve – ‘āḇāḏ – me” (Exod. 4:22-23a).

“Say to him: The LORD, the God of the Hebrews, sent me to you with the message: Let my people go to serve – ‘āḇāḏ – me in the wilderness. But as yet you have not listened” (Exod. 7:16).

“Then the LORD said to Moses: Go to Pharaoh and tell him: Thus says the LORD: Let my people go to serve – ‘āḇāḏ – me” (Exod. 7:26[8:1]).

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98 Davis, *Getting Involved with God*, 192.
“So Moses and Aaron went to Pharaoh and told him, “Thus says the LORD, the God of the Hebrews: How long will you refuse to submit to me? Let my people go to serve – ‘ăbad–99 me” (Exod. 10:3).

And thus, continues the narrative. After a series of plagues or trials, the people are liberated. God accompanies them on the journey, guarding and guiding them toward Sinai. When they reach Sinai, God, through Moses, communicates his covenantal invitation to Israel.

19:4 You have seen how I treated the Egyptians and how I bore you up on eagles’ wings and brought you to myself. 5 Now, if you obey me completely and keep my covenant, you will be my treasured possession among all people though all the earth is mine. 6 You will be to me a kingdom of priests, a holy nation. That is what you must tell the Israelites (Exod. 19:4-6). 100

This passage not only communicates the invitation to the covenantal relationship, but also delineates the stipulations of the covenant. The covenant begins a new relational moment for Israel. As Peterson succinctly presents, “Such terminology [the text of Exod. 19:5-6] suggests that the engagement with God at Sinai was to inaugurate a total-life pattern of service or worship for the nation. Their salvation had been in fulfillment of the covenant made with the patriarchs and

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99 The NRSV translates ‘ăbad as worship

“Say to him, 'The LORD, the God of the Hebrews, sent me to you to say, “Let my people go, so that they may worship – ‘ăbad– me in the wilderness” (Exod. 7:16).

“Then the LORD said to Moses, “Go to Pharaoh and say to him, ‘Thus says the LORD: Let my people go, so that they may worship me’” (Exod. 7:26[8:1]).

“Then the LORD said to Moses, “Go to Pharaoh and say to him, ‘Thus says the LORD: Let my people go, so that they may worship me” (Exod. 10:3).

100 Emphasis was added to these two phrases, kingdom of priests, a holy nation. They are pivotal to the material presented throughout this dissertation.

The NRSV translation is slightly different, v.5. if you obey my voice actually offers a better translation of the Hebrew tišmo’ā ḇo·qō·lî

You have seen what I did to the Egyptians, and how I bore you on eagles’ wings and brought you to myself. Now therefore, if you obey my voice and keep my covenant, you shall be my treasured possession out of all the peoples. Indeed, the whole earth is mine, but you shall be for me a priestly kingdom and a holy nation. These are the words that you shall speak to the Israelites (Exod. 19:4-6).
now they were being told how to keep that covenant and live out the relationship it implied.”

This pivotal moment explicitly names the call for humanity which was implicitly communicated in the patriarchal narratives.

The Mosaic covenant outlines God’s desire for the people. God’s vision is that the people be a *kingdom of priests*. This declaration connects important points that had already been anticipated in earlier passages from Exodus and the connection gives clarity to the purpose for the liberation from slavery. In other words, God gave the freedom so that people could offer sacrifice (Exod. 3:18) and thus worship freely (Exod. 4:22-23; 7:16; 8:1; 10:3). The call to offer sacrifice and worship is the external expression of the call to be a priestly people. Furthermore, as Merrill notes, the priestly calling has a missionary dimension insofar as the Israelites as a kingdom of priests would intercede on behalf of the other nations and be an example of the essence of living a life of sacrifice.

At Sinai, the Israelites have accepted God’s invitation and have become a people of the covenant. During their time at Sinai, they receive regulations and guidance to help them live out the covenantal relationship which they have entered. In other words, the regulations will guide them in living out their new identity as the people of the covenant. Their actions will have to be consistent with their words of acceptance of the covenant. Balentine explains,

> When Israel leaves Sinai for the land of Canaan, it departs as both a covenant community (Exod. 19-24) and a worshiping community (Exod. 25–Num. 10:28). In a word, it is a community constituted by its commitment to “covenant holiness.” Such a community, the Torah asserts, is commissioned to love God absolutely and to live by that love. At the same time, by departing Sinai, Israel also becomes a

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community on the move. It is a community on a journey away from the sacred mountain where covenant obedience and ritual holiness might enjoy an unthreatened harmony and toward the land of Canaan, where the obstacles to realizing covenant holiness in concrete terms will be significant indeed.... For the journey that lies ahead, Moses recalls the Sinai experience in order to review one last time the critical role that worship will play in their constitution as a people of God.103

The liturgical life is how Israel lives out its covenantal identity. This is the external expression in and through which this newly formed community lives out their call to being priestly. However, there is more to being a people of the covenant and more to being priestly. To be a people set apart as a priestly kingdom and a holy nation, they must keep Torah which includes, among other observances, the offering of liturgical sacrifice. The God who revealed himself to Moses, who liberated the people and established the covenant, is also the God who will give them instructions to guide the sacrificial system which would become the ritualized actions of a people with priestly character. Kraus explains,

The great achievement of the Old Testament is the inclusion of the whole sacrificial system within the saving events and the fact of the בְּרִית [berit]. The God who has confronted his people and still repeatedly confronts them in revelation and manifestation of himself with the call יְּהוָ֖ה אֲנִִ֥י [ani YHWH] influences every aspect of the cult. This means most of all the magical idea of sacrifice is broken down. The personal majesty of Yahweh gives a new direction to the magical powers set in motion by the offerings, and even when the ‘sacred realm’ is the real goal of the rites and sacral undertakings the personal God stands at the centre of this ‘realm’.104

The liberating God, who invites the people to live in covenant, not only gives them instructions that guide the ritual offering of sacrifices, but also forms them as a priestly people through the practice of the ritualized actions.

At the core of sacrifice, according to Walter Eichrodt, is the relationship which God desires with his people.105 The sacrificial rituals called for the offering of something material for distinct purposes. Nevertheless, the sacrifices prescribed centered around the covenantal relationship. The covenant holds the place of primacy and the sacrifices were offered for the sake of the covenant. They were offered to maintain, enhance, or restore covenantal communion. Walter Brueggemann presents a summary of three important intentions for which Israel offered sacrifices,

1. Sacrifice is the presentation of gift, an act of recognition, generosity, and gratitude toward YHWH who is the initial giver of all that Israel has. The offer of a gift not only situates Israel before YHWH in an act of committed generosity, but also characterizes YHWH as the primal and quintessential giver. The presentation of a material gift of value (characteristically a sacrifice “without blemish”) costs the worshiper in an act that binds the worshiper to YHWH…

2. The offering of an animal and vegetable sacrifices creates an occasion for a meal, and a meal is the quintessential social occasion of being with another in joy and well-being. This the sacrifice is an act of communion wherein Israel can “enjoy” the company of YHWH (see Exod. 24:11)…

3. There are, in Israel’s liturgic practice, need for acts of expiation whereby Israel’s disobedience or violation or holiness has created a palpable impediment to communion with YHWH…106

The concept of communion with God can summarize the specific intentions of the different sacrifices. Following the Sinai theophany in Exodus 19, Exodus 20 begins with the presentation of the Decalogue, and it concludes with general instructions concerning sacrifice, which indicate God’s desire to bless the people and to be in communion with them.

20:22 The LORD said to Moses: This is what you will say to the Israelites: You have seen for yourselves that I have spoken to you from heaven. 23 You shall not make alongside of me gods of silver, nor shall you make for yourselves gods of gold. 24 An altar of earth make for me, and sacrifice upon it your burnt offerings and communion

sacrifices, your sheep and your oxen. In every place where I cause my name to be invoked I will come to you and bless you (Exod. 20:22-24).

In summary, the exodus had a deeper meaning than liberation from oppressive social circumstances. The freedom was a freedom from slavery in Egypt, but more accurately it was a freedom for worship. This was a freedom from false ‘āḇōḏāh for the sake of true ‘āḇōḏāh. Once the people were liberated and reached a safe destination, Sinai, God established a covenant with them, through which he called them to be a kingdom of priests and a holy nation. Ritual sacrifice is an essential component of the covenant. As such, sacrifice is a means for living out and maintaining communion in the covenantal relationship with God.

2.3. The Book of Leviticus – the Instructions for the Sacrificial System

The narrative concerning the revelation at Sinai begins in Exodus 19, continues throughout the entire book of Leviticus and extends to the first ten chapters of the book of Numbers. The themes of priestly people, sacrifice, and worship are strong threads connecting these three books of the Torah. Jacob Milgrom has expressed this connection by explaining that these books contain instruction on different aspects of the cult. In Exodus, the instructions concern the instruments of the cult; in Leviticus, the instructions prescribe the sacrificial rituals of the cult; and in Numbers, the instructions pertain the carrying out of the sacrificial cult for the people on the journey.

In what follows, I will focus on the instructions presented on the first seven chapters of Leviticus. The instructions are addressed to all the people of Israel, not just the priests. The

107 Emphasis mine.
108 Milgrom, Leviticus 1-16, 1.
109 The phrase used at the beginning of the instructions in Lev 1:2; Lev 4:2; Lev 7:23; Lev 7:29; Lev 12:2 is "Speak to the sons of Israel —dabber ’el-bonê yiśrā‘ēl—דַּבֵּר אֶל-בְּנוֹי יִשְׂרָאֵל" This phrase expressed in the masculine plural has a universal message to all the people of Israel.
prescriptions concerning the sacrificial system found in this portion of the Torah need to be read with a covenantal perspective. In his book Engaging with God, David Peterson notes that, “Here [in the book of Leviticus], the regulations are given as a continuation of the revelation of God to Moses at Mount Sinai (Lev. 1:1, cf. 27:34), and therefore as a provision for Israel seeking to live out its role as ‘a kingdom of priests and a holy nation’ (Exod. 19:6).”

The book of Leviticus contains much more than simply instructions on the ritual cult. There is much theology communicated in the literal meaning of the text. Milgrom affirms that “Theology is what Leviticus is all about. It pervades every chapter and almost every verse. It is not expressed in pronouncements, but embedded in rituals.” The message concerning sacrifice in Leviticus is so essential, that this is the book first introduced to young Jewish children in their study of Torah. Quoting the haggadic midrash on Leviticus – also known as Wayikra Rabbah – Milgrom presents the rabbinic perspective, “Why do young children commence with the Priest’s manual (i.e. Leviticus) and not with Genesis? — Surely it is because young children are pure and sacrifices are pure; so let the pure come and engage in the study of the pure.”

My presentation of the five sacrifices presented in Lev. 1-7 will include a brief explanation of the meaning of the Hebrew term which names each sacrifice, a presentation of the materials used in each of the offerings, and an analysis of the intention or function of each sacrifice. This approach will facilitate an evaluation of each sacrifice from its historical, literary, and theological dimensions. The scholar Nobuyoshi Kiuchi notes that a mere evaluation of the ritual does not afford the necessary consideration of the relationship between the person offering the sacrifice and

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110 Peterson, Engaging with God, 38.
111 Milgrom, Leviticus 1-16, 42.
112 Midrash Leviticus Rabbah 7:2 in Milgrom, Leviticus 1-16, 3.
the offering itself. Examining this relationship, we can ascertain the theological meaning of the sacrifice. He remarks that, in general, the text of Leviticus does not explicitly state the intention of the sacrifice because it was implicitly understood by its original audience.113

A. The Burnt Offering – ‘ōlä (Lev. 1:1-17; 6:8-13[1-6 Hb]

The Hebrew term ‘ōlä literally means “an ascending offering” or “that which ascends” or “an offering of ascent”.114 The term actually describes what happens to the offering, given that the entire animal, except for the skin, is burnt. In other words, since as the entire animal is consumed by the fire, the smoke and aroma ascend to the heavens. Therefore, the term ‘ōlä accurately describes the ascending or going up of the smoke.115 There is evidence of practice of this type of sacrifice in the Ugarit and Hittite civilizations, which predate Israel.116

There are two possible meanings of the term ‘ōlä, the first one is “burnt offering” – from the Ugarit for burnt, šrp– and the second one is “whole offering” – from the Hebrew for wholly or entirely, kālîl כִֵּ֥לי (Lev. 6:22[6:15]; 6:23[6:1])—. The common translation of ‘ōlä as “whole burnt offering” takes into consideration the two possible meanings of the Hebrew term.117 In addition to the term ‘whole burnt offering’, ‘holocaust’ has also been used as a translation for the Hebrew term ‘ōlä.118

117 Milgrom, Leviticus 1-16, 172.
118 This is the term used in the Latin (Biblia Sacra Vulgata). The Romance languages, French, Italian, Portuguese, and Spanish, have retained the term ‘holocaust’ in their vernacular translations.
1. The materials of the ‘ōlâ offering

The material to be presented is an offering of livestock, a male without blemish from the herd –a bull– (Lev. 1:3-9) or from the flock –a sheep or goat– (Lev. 1:10-13), or an offering of birds –turtledove or young pigeon, without specific prescription for a male bird– (Lev. 1:14-17). The three separate sections of instructions, noted above, present three different categories of animals which could be offered. Although for other sacrifices, for instance the peace offering–šēlāmîm, the instructions specify provisions according to the economic status of the worshiper, that is not the case with the ‘ōlâ, Lev. 1:1-17, [emphasis mine]

If a person’s [‘āḏām] offering is a burnt offering from the herd, the offering must be a male without blemish. The individual shall bring it to the entrance of the tent of meeting to find favor with the LORD, and shall lay a hand on the head of the burnt offering, so that it may be acceptable to make atonement for the one who offers it. The bull shall then be slaughtered before the LORD, and Aaron’s sons, the priests, shall offer its blood by splashing it on all the sides of the altar which is at the entrance of the tent of meeting. Then the burnt offering shall be flayed and cut into pieces. After Aaron’s sons, the priests, have put burning embers on the altar and laid wood on them, they shall lay the pieces of meat, together with the head and the suet, on top of the wood and the embers on the altar; but the inner organs and the shanks shall be washed with water. The priest shall then burn all of it on the altar as a burnt offering, a sweet-smelling oblation to the LORD.

If a person’s burnt offering is from the flock, that is, a sheep or a goat, the offering must be a male without blemish. It shall be slaughtered on the north side of the altar before the LORD, and Aaron’s sons, the priests, shall splash its blood on all the sides of the altar. When it has been cut into pieces, the priest shall lay these, together with the head and suet, on top of the wood and the embers on the altar; but the inner organs and the shanks shall be washed with water. The priest shall then offer all of it, burning it on the altar. It is a burnt offering, a sweet-smelling oblation to the LORD.

If a person offers a bird as a burnt offering to the LORD, the offering brought must be a turtledove or a pigeon. Having brought it to the altar, the priest shall wring its head off and burn it on the altar. The blood shall be drained out against the

Although the principal meaning of the term holocaust is the biblical whole burnt offering, after World War II, the term has been widely applied to the brutal extermination of Jews in the European crematoria. It is probable that the term was adopted to capture the image of smoke rising to the heavens. However, this is misuse and distortion of the term. The genocide which occurred is not the whole burnt offering from Scripture. The term shoah –destruction- is the term generally used by Jewish sources.
side of the altar. He shall remove its crissum by means of its feathers and throw it on the ash heap at the east side of the altar. Then, having torn the bird open by its wings without separating the halves, the priest shall burn it on the altar, on the wood and the embers. It is a burnt offering, a sweet-smelling oblation to the LORD.

Certainly, the options for what animal can be offered are described in descending order of size and cost. Lev. 1:1-9 presents instructions concerning the offering of a bull, the largest and most expensive of the animals. Lev. 1:10-13 details instructions regarding the offering of a sheep or a goat, both smaller and less expensive than the bull. Lastly, Lev. 1:14-17 deals with the smallest and least costly of all animals. Additionally, there is variance in the ritual procedure for each of the different offerings. For instance, the laying of hands on the animal is only specified in v. 4, when the offering is a bull. Nevertheless, the economic or social status of the person bringing the offering is mentioned in none of the sections.

Although the financial means of the person making the offering could have influenced the decision of which animal was presented for the ‘ōlā, the choice of animal represented something more than the worshiper’s status. Kiuchi notes that the absence of any specific instruction from the text suggests that the choice reflects the spiritual needs of the worshiper,

...the identification of the offerer with the animal invites the reader to explore the possibility that the animal for the burnt offering reflected the offerer’s heart. Thus an ox or a bull was a costly sacrificial animal and generally represented a person’s wealth. If the offerer felt his earthly desires lay with his material possessions, he was expected to offer such an animal. While animals such as sheep and goats were smaller than a bull, they by no means represented an inferior sacrifice. For although they represent helpless, weak animals that require a shepherd’s care, spiritually the weakness they represent is comparatively better than the weakness of worldly wealth represented by the bull.119

2. The intention of the ṭōlā offering

The ṭōlā is the sacrifice most often mentioned in the Old Testament. Watts refers to it as the “paradigmatic offering” in the Israelite cult. Moreover, Kiuchi affirms that it constitutes the pattern for the other sacrifices, “both ideologically and procedurally.” Scholars pose multiple intentions for offering this sacrifice. They also note that the ṭōlā is presented as a voluntary offering, in contrast to other offerings which are mandatory to remove guilt. Nevertheless, the Torah legislates specific occasions, such as daily offerings, feasts, or purification rituals, that call for ṭōlā offerings.

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Kiuchi departs from the majority opinion held by most scholars, including as Milgrom, who affirm that the third set of instructions, Lev. 1:14-17, was an addition to allow a means of sacrifice for the poor – see Jacob Milgrom, *Leviticus: a Book of Ritual and Ethics, a Continental Commentary* (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 2004), 23.


121 See Kiuchi, *Leviticus*, 60. After the construction of the Tabernacle has been completed, as narrated in Exod. 36-40, the LORD gives Moses instructions on the sacrificial system. The instructions begin with the ṭōlā


The legislated offering of ṭolah include:

1. Daily, a male lamb in the morning and a male lamb in the evening (Ex 29:38-42; Num. 28:1-8)
2. Each Sabbath, to additional lambs (Num. 28:9-10).
3. At each new moon – beginning of each month – two young bulls, one ram, and seven male lambs (Num. 28:11-14)
4. Each day of the Feast of Unleavened Bread – 7 days – two young bulls, one ram, and seven male lambs (Num. 28:17-25)
5. Feast of Weeks – Feast of Firstfruits –, two young bulls, one ram, and seven male lambs (Num. 28:26-31)
6. Feast of Trumpets, one young bull, one ram, and seven male lambs (Num. 29:1-6)
7. Day of Atonement, one young bull, one ram, and seven male lambs (Num. 29:7-9), as well as the special burnt offerings for atonement, one ram for the high priest, and one ram for the people (Lev. 16: 3, 5, 24)
8. Feast of Booths – Feast of Tabernacles – 7 days
   i. First day, thirteen young bulls, two rams, fourteen male lambs (Num. 29:12-13)
   ii. Second day, twelve young bulls, two rams, fourteen male lambs (Num. 29:17)
   iii. Third day, eleven bulls, two rams, fourteen male lambs (Num. 29:20)
   iv. Fourth day, ten bulls, two rams, fourteen male lambs (Num. 29:23)
   v. Fifth day, nine bulls, two rams, fourteen male lambs (Num. 29:26)
   vi. Sixth day, eight bulls, two rams, fourteen male lambs (Num. 29:29)
   vii. Seventh day, seven bulls, two rams, fourteen male lambs (Num. 29:32)
   viii. Eighth day, one bull, one ram, seven male lambs (Num. 29:35-36)
9. Certain purification rituals,
   i. After childbirth, one lamb (Lev. 12:6) or for the poor, two turtledoves or two young pigeons (Lev. 12:8)
   ii. On the eighth day after being cleansed from leprosy, a male lamb (Lev. 14:10, 13,19-20) or for the poor, one turtledove or one young pigeon (Lev. 14:21-22, 30).
   iii. On the eighth day after cleansing of male abnormal genital discharge, one turtledove or one young pigeon (Lev. 15:13-15)
a. **Expiation** – Milgrom holds that the ‘ōlā was probably the earliest form of expiating sacrifice recorded in the Bible (Job 1:5; 42:8). He argues that ‘ōlā was used for expiation before the purification and reparation offerings were included in the sacrificial system. Milgrom explains, “Furthermore, evidence for the early provenience of the expiatory burnt offering is detectable in the requirement that all public animal sacrifices must be male. The only reasonable explanation of this fact is that the all-male ‘ōlā was first the only expiatory sacrifice.” An indication of this expiatory intention is noted in Lev. 1:4, “You shall lay your hand on the head of the burnt offering, and it shall be acceptable in your behalf as **atonement** for you.” Anderson refers to this as a vestigial usage of expiation. Nevertheless, all subsequent discussion of atonement in Leviticus refers to the purification or to the reparation sacrifices.

b. **Gift for homage, petition, or thanksgiving** – Milgrom argues that the more widely attested purpose for ‘ōlā was that of a gift. He explains that homage, thanksgiving or petition could be motives for the gift. For instance, when Saul offered sacrifice without waiting for Samuel as he had been instructed, he defended his actions to Samuel and explained that he offered sacrifice to petition favor, “I said, ‘Now the Philistines will come down upon me at Gilgal, and I have not entreated the favor of the LORD’; so I forced myself, and offered the burnt offering” (1 Sam 13:12).

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iv. On the eighth day after cleansing of female abnormal discharge –beyond the days of her menstrual cycle-, one turtledove or one young pigeon (Lev. 15:28-30)

v. On the eighth day after cleansing and shaving the head following defilement of a Nazirite by a corpse, one turtle dove or one young pigeon (Num. 6:9-11)

123 Milgrom, *Leviticus 1-16*, 176.

124 Ibid.

125 Emphasis added.


127 See Milgrom, *Leviticus 1-16*, 175-176. Milgrom offers the texts cited above as examples of instances when the ‘ōlā is offered as gift.
Since the time of David, kings presented ‘ōlâ sacrifices during the annual feasts (cf. 2 Sam. 6:18; 2 Sam. 24:25; 1 Chr. 21:26; 1 Kgs. 9:25). These offerings are an example of ‘ōlâ as gift for homage.

c. Gift for total consecration – The complete burning of the animal was the crowning point of the whole burnt offering. This would aim at creating a consciousness of the calling of self-gift to God. Kurtz referred to it as “…the sacrifice of entire, full, unconditional self-surrender…. It was intended as a symbolic manifestation and realization of the duty and readiness of the person sacrificing to make a complete and sanctified surrender of himself.”  128 The interpretation of total consecration or surrender by offering a costly gift can summarize the intention of the ‘ōlâ.  129 Kiuchi’s words emphasize this understanding, “The central message of the offering [the ‘ōlâ] is that a man cannot be accepted by the LORD without complete surrender and a laying bare of his egocentric nature before the LORD.”  130

Even though the primeval and patriarchal narratives occur prior to the prescriptions of the Levitical cult, examples of ‘ōlâ in those narratives are most helpful in understanding the concept of ‘total surrender’ as the fundamental meaning of the ‘ōlâ. Kiuchi affirms that because Noah and Abraham were ‘blameless’ –tāmîm–, they were able to offer their ‘ōlâ sacrifice as surrender. He explains ‘blamelessness’ as ‘wholeheartedness,’ expressed it in their obedience to the LORD. Thus, their sacrifices (Noah’s in Gen. 8:20 and Abraham’s in Gen. 22) were sacrifices of total surrender, insofar as these men were wholehearted.  131 The centrality of being blameless, also understood as being righteous or in right relationship with God, in the offering of the ‘ōlâ is

129 Rowley, Worship in Ancient Israel, 120-121.
130 Kiuchi, Leviticus, 60.
131 Ibid., 63-64.
conveyed in the requirement of an unblemished (blameless) tāmîm animal (Lev. 1:3, 10). While tāmîm refers to an animal without defect, Kiuchi clarifies that the same adjective as applied to humans does not imply absolute moral perfection, but rather speaks to the ‘perfect sincerity’ of heart or, to put it another way, to the wholehearted disposition with which they present the sacrifice.132

The sacrifice made by Abraham in the binding of Isaac exemplifies the ‘total surrender’ aspect of the ʿôlâ. Immediately prior to the establishment of the covenant by circumcision, the LORD commands Abram to be blameless –tāmîm– and to walk in his presence (Gen. 17:1). Abram then receives a new name, a new identity and is transformed to live in obedience and with ‘perfect sincerity.’ With this disposition, Abraham responded with total surrender to God’s command, “Take your son, your only son Isaac, whom you love, and go to the land of Moriah, and offer him there as a burnt offering [ʿôlâ] on one of the mountains that I shall show you” (Gen. 22:2).133 In God’s calling Abraham to be tāmîm, Kiuchi affirms, the LORD was preparing the patriarch to respond wholeheartedly to the command to offer his son Isaac. Furthermore, he observes that actually this command required both men, Abraham and Isaac, to be tāmîm as they prepared to offer the ʿôlâ.134

d. Assurance of Divine Presence – The sacrificial ritual code prescribes that the ʿôlâ be offered twice a day as a public offering (Exod. 29:38-46 and Lev. 6:13 [6:6]. These sacrifices

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132 See Kiuchi, Leviticus, 55. He gives examples of biblical texts which use tāmîm to describe the character of Noah (Gen. 6:9) and of Abraham (Gen. 17:1).
133 Emphasis added.
134 Generally, the narrative of Gen. 22 is associated with the sacrifice required of Abraham in the obedient response to God’s command to sacrifice Isaac. Nevertheless, Isaac also was wholehearted, and walked with his father, in surrender, trusting that God would provide the sacrificial lamb for the ʿôlâ. Kiuchi comments on the complete trust expressed by both, father and son. See Kiuchi, Leviticus, 64.
are to take place once in the morning and once in the evening, together with a cereal offering. This came to be known as the tāmīd offering, which literally means ‘continually’; it has been also called the ‘perpetual sacrifice’. Milgrom notes that the usage of tāmīd emphasizes the importance of the fire burning perpetually, even after the sacrificial animal has been consumed. He explains that the divine fire which came from heaven in Lev. 9:24, “Fire came forth from the LORD’s presence and consumed the burnt offering” and the fat on the altar. Seeing this, all the people shouted with joy and fell prostrate,” is the fire which must kept burning so that subsequent sacrifices might be accepted.

In Exodus 29:38-42, the LORD gives instructions to Moses regarding a regular daily offering, called tāmīd, which consists of a burnt offering and a grain offering. As the narrative continues, a clear connection is made between the offering of the tāmīd and the presence of God among the people. God promises to Moses that his presence will be among the people, and that they will know the God who gave them freedom,

43There, at the altar, I will meet the Israelites; hence, it will be made sacred by my glory. 44Thus I will consecrate the tent of meeting and the altar, just as I also consecrate Aaron and his sons to be my priests. 45I will dwell in the midst of the Israelites and will be their God. 46They shall know that I, the LORD, am their God who brought them out of the land of Egypt, so that I, the LORD, their God, might dwell among them (Exod. 29:43-46). [emphasis mine]

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136 Emphasis added. Fire – ’ēš– is associated with particular theophanic narratives, see for example Exod. 3:2; Exod. 13-21-22; Exod.19:18, among the occurrences of fire in the context of a theophany.
137 Milgrom, Leviticus I-16, 388 -389.
138 29:38Now, this is what you shall regularly [tāmīd] offer on the altar: two yearling lambs as the sacrifice established for each day; one lamb in the morning and the other lamb at the evening twilight. 39With the first lamb there shall be a tenth of an ephah of bran flour mixed with a fourth of a hin of oil of crushed olives and, as its libation, a fourth of a hin of wine. 40The other lamb you shall offer at the evening twilight, with the same grain offering and libation as in the morning. You shall offer this as a sweet-smelling oblation to the LORD. 41Throughout your generations this regular burnt offering [‘ōlat tāmīd] shall be made before the LORD at the entrance of the tent of meeting, where I will meet you and speak to you (Exod. 29:38-42).
Frank Gorman explains that the LORD’s promise to dwell in the midst of the people connects the promises made to Abraham, the deliverance from slavery, and the Sinai covenant. He states,

An important theological relationship is established between divine presence, the story of promise, the history of redemption, and ritual enactment! …ritual is the primary way in which Israel relates to and interacts with the God who brought the nation out of bondage in order to dwell in its midst.139

The instructions concerning the ṭāmīd provide a deep theological message about the faithfulness of God. Moreover, the ritual of the ṭāmīd is meant to be a daily reminder of the reason for their freedom. God gave them freedom, so that he might dwell among them (v. 46). Through the offering of ṭāmīd the people can celebrate this communion with God.

e. **Pleasing God or Divine Acceptance** – The pleasing odor or aroma associated with the whole burnt offering (Lev. 1:9, 13, 17)140 gave rise to a theology of divine acceptance of the sacrifice, which is also present with the other sacrifices. Approaching sacrifice with the understanding of gift, this theology of acceptance proposes that God as recipient of the gift reciprocates the gift by granting blessings. The LXX renders the Hebrew phrase pleasing odor ṭēḥ-ṭḗōwā̀ḥ as ṭēmē ṭēōdias. According to Robert Daly, this translation communicates two points of development in the theology of sacrifice: first, that God accepts the sacrifice because he freely chooses to do so and second, that there is an expectation that the sacrifice will reach God and somehow influence him. Daly explains this paradox in these words,

First, it [the theology of acceptance] emphasizes that God’s acceptance of the sacrifice is a totally free act. God, in other words, is ‘bound’ to accept something from human beings only to the extent that God freely chooses to do so. But second,

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139 Gorman, *Divine Presence and Community*, 45.
140 The pleasing odor is also associated with other sacrifices, as will be noted on a subsequent section of this chapter.
the sacrifice is really expected, somehow, to reach God; it is expected to ‘make an impression’ on or ‘arouse an effect’ in God. This apparent contradiction is the same paradox that is implicit in the traditional theology of prayer. Prayer ‘works’; prayer is effective; but God, nevertheless, remains totally free, transcendent, immutable.

The next chapter will present additional discussion concerning God’s acceptance of sacrifice, particularly, from the prophetic perspective.

B. The Grain Offering — minhā (Lev 2:1-16; 6:14-23[7-16])

The literal meaning of the Hebrew term minhā is “gift” or “tribute.” In the texts which are attributed to the Priestly source, the term is used exclusively to indicate non-animal sacrifices. This usage accounts for approximately seventy percent of the occurrences. Nevertheless, in texts from older sources, the term minhā was used to designate bloody and non-bloody sacrifices, which were entirely burnt, and in some instances, it was used in a non-cultic context, simply as gift.

The offerings of Abel and Cain (Gen. 4:3-5) were of different elements, yet they were described with the same term, minhā. The texts which narrate the offerings made by Gideon (Judg. 6:19-21), and those which Solomon made for the Temple dedication (1 Kgs. 8:64) have an

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**Of the 213 occurrences of the term minhā, 70% are used for the cereal offering, 14% for animal sacrifices, and 16% for gift or present in a non-cultic setting.


143 The texts which narrate the offerings made by Gideon (Judg. 6:19-21), and those which Solomon made for the Temple dedication (1 Kgs. 8:64) have an
implicit meaning that the *minḥā* burned entirely along with the *ʿōlā.* The *minḥā* that Jacob offers Essau as a reconciliatory present or gift (Gen 32:13, 18, 20, 21) is an example of the usage of the term *minḥā* in a non-cultic setting.

Following Rabbinic tradition, Milgrom describes the *minḥā* as the *ʿōlā* of the poor. He explains that it would have been cost prohibitive for the poor to offer whole burnt offerings of animals. Therefore, the cultic system permitted an alternate *ʿōlā* for the person of lower economic resources. Milgrom notes that, “Thus the cereal offering must be viewed as a discrete, independent sacrifice that functions to duplicate the manifold purposes of the burnt offering for the benefit of those who cannot afford a burnt offering of quadruped or bird.”

1. *The material of the minḥā offering*

The elements to be presented for the offering include raw flour (Lev. 2:1-2), cooked flour in unleavened cakes or unleavened wafers, baked on a griddle or cooked on a pan (Lev. 2:4-5, 7), oil, frankincense, and salt (Lev. 2:13). Oil was added always to the offering of cooked or uncooked grain (Lev. 2:1-2, 4-7). The significance of mingling oil with the *minḥā* is connected to the use of oil for consecration. Therefore, oil serves to consecrate the grain such that the offering would be accepted by God. Frankincense would be included also, but only when the grain was uncooked.

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144 Milgrom, *Leviticus 1-16,* 200-201.
146 Other instances of non-cultic usage include gifts/tribute given as a sign of submission in a political context.
(Lev 2:2-2). Milgrom suggests that the omission of frankincense from the cooked grain offering was an allowance for the poor, who did not have the means for even a small amount of this expensive spice.149

In the instructions, there are clear prescriptions that leaven or honey should never be used in the minḥā offering, “Every grain offering that you present to the LORD shall be unleavened, for you shall not burn any leaven or honey as an oblation to the LORD” (Lev. 2:11) and also “It [the grain offering from which the sons of Aaron partake] shall not be baked with leaven. I have given it to them as their portion from the oblations for the LORD; it is most holy, like the purification offering and the reparation offering” (Lev. 6:17[6:10]. The fermenting action of leaven is a multivalent symbol in Scripture. Although sometimes it is symbolic of agency in transformation, most often it is used as a symbol of corruption and death.150 The Talmud presents yeast as that which corrupts the heart.151 Therefore, the absence of leaven in the minḥā represents a sacrifice without corruption. Furthermore, Kiuchi observes that yeast and honey are connected to the Passover. The Israelites ate unleavened bread before their hasty exodus from Egypt. The prohibition to use honey reminds them of the journey ahead toward the Land of milk and honey. Regarding the dual prohibition concerning yeast and honey, Kiuchi concludes that, ‘...[it] appears

149 Milgrom, Leviticus 1-16, 198-199.
150 Leaven as a negative symbol appears in the New Testament, see Matt. 16:6, 16:12; Mark 8:15; Luke 12:1; 1 Cor. 5:6-8; Gal. 5:9
...R. Alexandri on concluding his prayer used to add the following: ‘Sovereign of the Universe, it is known full well to Thee that our will is to perform Thy will, and what prevents us? The yeast in the dough –the evil impulse, which causes a ferment in the heart– and the subjection to the foreign Powers. May it be Thy will to deliver us from their hand, so that we may return to perform the statutes of Thy will with a perfect heart!’ (emphasis mine).
to signify that the offerer ought to revert to the initial covenant allegiance exhibited by Israel in the exodus.”

Similarly, the instruction concerning the use of salt in the minḥâ fits well with the incorruption aspect of this sacrifice, “You shall season all your grain offerings with salt. Do not let the salt of the covenant with your God be lacking from your grain offering. On every offering you shall offer salt.” (Lev. 2:13). Salt has been used as a preservative of foods since ancient times. This quality renders salt as “the ideal symbol of the perdurability of a covenant.”

In his classic book, *The Scriptural Doctrine of Sacrifice*, published over a century ago, Alfred Cave communicates in poetic language a summary of the meaning of the minḥâ offering. Attending to the unique symbolism of each element, Cave states,

Oil and salt were mingled with the varieties of meal, in harmony with the common symbolism of those things,—the former, to show that without a special consecration no offering could be acceptable; and the latter, the salt of the covenant of thy God’ (Lev. 2:13), to symbolize the divine compact by the terms of which presentations might be made. Incense was also added, according to the invariable symbolism, to represent the prayers of the offerer which were to rise as a sweet-smelling savour. Leaven and honey, on the other hand, were rigidly excluded because of their fermenting and destructive qualities—so fitting an emblem of the tendency to degeneration incident to humanity.

2. *The intention of the minḥâ offering*

The minḥâ could be offered together with animal sacrifices or by itself.

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See also Kiuchi, *Leviticus*, 72. He notes, “Furthermore the presence of the phrase ‘the eternal covenant of salt’ in Num. 18:19 suggests, first, that the salt itself represents a covenant relationship, and, second, that salt is associated with the idea of duration, being itself a preservative.”

154 Cave, *The Scriptural Doctrine of Sacrifice*, 133.
a. **As accompanying sacrifice** – The minḥâ could be offered together with the whole burnt offering or with the peace offering. W. Robertson Smith explains that, “When the Hebrew ate flesh, he ate bread with it and drank wine and when he offered flesh on the table of his God, it was natural that he should add to it the same concomitants which were necessary to make up a comfortable and generous meal.”¹⁵⁵ Scholars do not present a clear intention for presenting the minḥâ when it is offered as a complementary sacrifice.

b. **Gift for homage and loyalty** – When offered as an independent sacrifice, the intention of the minḥâ is somewhat similar to that of the whole burnt offering, to the extent that it is a gift for homage or thanksgiving.¹⁵⁶ Milgrom considers the minḥâ to function as the ōlā of the poor, in which case, the intention of total consecration would apply.¹⁵⁷

However, the ‘ōlā and the minḥâ should not be understood as synonymous offerings of homage. Unlike the ‘ōlā, the minḥâ is not burned completely; only a small portion is burned and the rest belongs to the priest (Lev. 2b-3). Additionally, there is an important difference in the term used for the offerer. The distinction is lost in most modern translations, but it is clear in the original Hebrew. The introductory clause of the minḥâ instructions states, “Wəmēpēš, kî-τααρίq̄ qār̄ban minḥâ Yahweh,” (Lev. 2:1)–best translated as **when a soul brings a cereal offering to the LORD**–, whereas for the ‘ōlā, the introductory clause states, “...’āḏām, kî-yaaqrîb mikkem qārbān Yahweh,” (Lev. 1:2b)–...if **a man among you brings an offering to the LORD**.¹⁵⁸ Kiuchi proposes that the distinction between

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¹⁵⁸ Most modern English translations render both introductory translations with the English indefinite pronoun **anyone**, or the indefinite adjective **any person**, or sometimes with the indefinite article, **a person**. Yet the Hebrew terms used are different. Emphasis added.
soul—nepeš—and man—ādām—points to an important theological concept, namely that nepeš is that innermost aspect of the man which reveals the condition of the heart. Hence, the loyalty or homage signified by the minḥā is at the very core of the man, at his nepeš.159

c. Pleasing God or Divine Acceptance and Assurance of Divine Presence— The pleasing odor or pleasing aroma is also associated with the grain offering (Lev 2:2, 9, 12, 6:15[6:8]; 6:21[6:14]).160 The same phrase réah-nihōwah, used in the instructions for the ōlā, is used in the prescriptions for the minḥā and therefore the theology of divine acceptance of the sacrifice which is associated with the whole burnt offering can also be applied to the grain offering.161 The phrase has also been translated as sweet smelling (NAB-RE). It has a connotation of a smell which is a smell of rest or a soothing smell. It is the same phrase which appears in Gen. 8:21, after Noah had offered the ōlā. The disposition of the heart in giving the best of the self, Van Dam observes, is what produces the ‘sweet smelling’ or the ‘pleasing odor’ which rejoices the LORD.162

There are specific instructions for a tāmīd grain sacrifice to be offered by Aaron and his son, in the morning and in the evening of the day of his anointing (Lev. 6:20[6:13], and most likely thereafter. This specific minḥā has been called the priestly minḥā.163 F. Gorman remarks that

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159 Kiuchi, Leviticus, 66, 69, 73.
160 The pleasing odor is also associated with other sacrifices, with the whole burnt offering, Lev 1:9, 13, 17
161 See discussion in section A.2.e. above, p. 60-61.
163 See Kiuchi’s for his explanation proposing an alternate translation of the text of Lev. 6:20a[6:13a], as This is the offering that Aaron and his sons shall present to the LORD from the day he is anointed [emphasis mine]. This is the offering that Aaron and his sons shall present to the LORD on the day he is anointed [emphasis mine].
although the term tāmîd is used in this text, this particular occurrence pertains to the Aaronic line and should not be confused with the tāmîd commanded in the text of Exod. 29:38-46, which calls for the people’s continual offering—tāmîd—of ʿōlā and minḥā every morning and every evening.164 This tāmîd of minḥā which is required of Aaron and his sons is offered in addition to the tāmîd of the nation.

C. The Peace Offering – šēlāmîm (Lev. 3:1-17; 7:11-36)

Two Hebrew terms, appear in Scripture alone or combined, to refer to this sacrifice: zebah –זֶבַּח, zibhē-šēlāmîm –זִיבְּחִֵ֧י שְּל מִָ֛ים, and šēlāmîm –שְּל מִָ֖ים. Scholars have discussed the difficulty with assigning a precise translation. The term zebah literally means ‘sacrifice’ but specifically a ‘sacrifice of a slaughtered/slain animal.’ Different varieties of zebahim include the zebah tôdâ (thanksgiving sacrifice), the zebah yāmîm (annual sacrifice), the zebah pesah (paschal sacrifice). The term zibhē-šēlāmîm in the Priestly source texts encompasses these three types of zebahim. However, not all slaughter sacrifices are šēlāmîm, some are ʿōlôt. Milgrom proposes that the šēlāmîm was a particular type of zebah, much in the same way that an olive tree is a type of tree, or phrased in a different way, “šēlāmîm is a variety of the genus zebah.”165

There is great difficulty in assigning an unequivocal translation to the term šēlāmîm. Milgrom presents plausible translations based on the etymology of the root šlm, but he ultimately

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165 Milgrom, Leviticus 1-16, 218.
chooses the term ‘well-being’ offering. Considering that the root of the term šēlāmîm is šālōm (šlm) the translation ‘peace’ offering is often used. However, Anderson articulates the paradox of this rendering by asking, “Just what is peaceful about this sacrificial rite?” He explains that many scholars pose that the term ‘peace’ refers to the harmonious covenantal relationship –šālēm– between God and the people. Anderson asserts that the intention and use of this sacrifice provide a better insight to its meaning than simply turning to etymology.

1. The material of the šēlāmîm offering

The material to be presented is an offering of livestock, a male or female without blemish from the herd –a bull– (Lev. 3:1) or from the flock –a lamb or goat– (Lev. 3:6-7, 12). The blood rite is similar to that of the whole burnt offering: first the person bringing the animal slaughters it at the threshold of the Tabernacle, then, the priests take its blood and sprinkle it around the altar at the door of the Tent of Meeting (Lev. 3:2, 8, 13).

Unlike the ‘ōlâ offering, the animal of the šēlāmîm is not burnt entirely. Only certain parts of the animal are burnt on the altar: the fat covering the entrails and that fat that is on the entrails, the two kidneys with the fat which is on them, and the appendage of the liver (Lev. 3:3-4, 9-10, 14-15). The priests receive the right thigh as stipend for performing the blood rite (Lev. 7:33-34)

166 Milgrom, Leviticus 1-16, 220
**The following are possible derivations of the root šlm,
   i. šālôm, peace – the sacrifice effects peace among altar, priest, and offerer
   ii. šālēm, whole, harmonious – the offerer who is wholesome, someone who is well, brings šēlāmîm , but someone who is a mourner cannot bring šēlāmîm. Hence ‘well-being’ is the translation preferred by Milgrom.
   iii. šēlēm, sacrifice of friendship, eaten before the LORD, the sacrifice effected communion between the offerer and God as symbolized in the meal
   iv. šēlēm, repay, the offering of the sacrifice repays God, thanks God for his blessings
168 Ibid.
and the animal’s breast for burning the fat (Lev. 7:31, 34). The rest of the flesh of the animal is given to the offerer. Specially concerning this, the šēlāmîm offering is unique insofar as this is the only one among the slaughtering sacrifices, whose flesh is eaten by the worshiper/offerrer. Nevertheless, in order to share of the sacrificial meal, the person must be in a condition of ritual purity. Any condition which caused ritual impurity excluded individuals from presenting this sacrifice and therefore from partaking of the meal, “If, however, someone in a state of uncleanness eats the meat of a communion sacrifice belonging to the LORD, that person shall be cut off from the people” (Lev. 7:20). The state of ritual purity of the person does not reflect his ethical or moral conduct.169

2. The intention of the šēlāmîm offering

Leviticus presents three different types or species of šēlāmîm sacrifices: tôdâ –תּוֹדֵה– or thanksgiving sacrifice, the neder – נֶדֶר– or votive or vowed sacrifice, and the nēdābâ – נְדָב ה– or freewill offering (Lev. 7:11-38). While the differences between these three types of šēlāmîm are somewhat subtle, nevertheless they cannot be ignored, lest all šēlāmîm would be categorized as being the same. The distinctions can be made based on the presence of any accompanying offerings, the time allotted to consume the sacrificial flesh, and most importantly, the motive associated with the specific type of šēlāmîm.

a. Thanksgiving– tôdâ – As the name states, gratitude is the motive of this šēlāmîm.

Leviticus does not codify specific occasions which would necessitate a thanksgiving offering to

169 See Victor Hamilton, Handbook on the Pentateuch, 2nd ed. (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2005), 260. Hamilton explains that ritual uncleanliness is not synonymous with immorality. According to the Lev. 7:20, if someone ate in a state of impurity, he would be excluded from the community, in other words, consuming the meat in a state of ritual impurity would excommunicate someone.
be made. However, turning to rabbinic teachings on Psalm 107, Milgrom notes that four specific occasions require a *tôdâ* offering: the safe return from a journey (Ps. 107:4-8), the release from prison (Ps. 107:10-16); the recovery from illness (Ps. 107:17-22), and the safe return from sea travels (Ps. 107:23-25). The *tôdâ* is the unique among the three types of *šēlāmîm*, insofar as it is the only one to be accompanied by a *minḥâ* (Lev. 7:12) and also by an offering of *leavened bread*, which is not burnt at the altar, but rather given to the priest as stipend for carrying out the blood ritual of the sacrifice (Lev. 7:13-14). The flesh of the *tôdâ* sacrifice must be consumed on the same day of the offering (Lev. 7:15).

b. **Votive offering—neder** – This offering is also known as the ‘vowed’ offering. As Ronald Hyman has described, vows in ancient Israel had several major aspects: they were voluntary, they could be made by men or women, by individuals or communities, and they consisted of a promise made to God –by the one making the vow– if a certain condition were met. The fulfillment of the promise made would be accompanied by a sacrificial offering or would simply consist of the carrying out that which was promised. Concerning the *neder*, Rowley explains that it was “…the fulfillment of a conditional promise which had been made and whose condition had been fulfilled.”

c. **Freewill offering—nēdābâ** – This type of *šēlāmîm* is the one offered most frequently; generally, it was offered as a voluntary sacrifice. The only feast for which a *nēdābâ*
sacrifice was prescribed was the Festival of Weeks (Deut. 16:10-11).\textsuperscript{174} It was not required for the other yearly festivals or for the weekly observances (cf. Lev. 23, Num. 28-29, Deut. 16).\textsuperscript{175} Therefore, it seems that when \textit{nēdābā šēlāmīm} sacrifices were offered at these feasts, they would fall in the category of voluntary freewill offerings –\textit{nidbōt}.\textsuperscript{176}

According to Milgrom, the \textit{nēdābā} “is the spontaneous by-product of one’s happiness whatever its cause.”\textsuperscript{177} The freewill offering represents a sacrifice or gift of praise and thanksgiving that is not motivated by any exterior reason. It is not an offering thanking God for safe travels, for freedom after imprisonment, for the return of health, nor for the fulfillment of a condition attached to a vow. It simply is a gift from the heart. Rowley conveys a summary of the essence of the \textit{nēdābā} sacrifice: “Every obligation to God, whether voluntarily undertaken or not, must be acknowledged, if right relations were to be maintained, and the freewill offering as the expression of the heart’s devotion was designated to ensure right relations and therefore well-being.”\textsuperscript{178}

d. Joyful Celebration of Communion – Although the intention for offering each of these sacrifices is different, there is one common element to all three: namely the joy associated with the sacrificing, as the offerers partake of the flesh. An explicit mention of this joy is found outside the book of Leviticus. In his second sermon in Deuteronomy, Moses renews the covenant

\textsuperscript{174} Lev. 23:15-22 contains the instructions for the prescribed sacrifices for the Feast of Weeks, and calls for “two male lambs a year old as a sacrifice of \textit{peace offerings} – \textit{וּשְּנִֵ֧י כְּב שִָ֛ים בְּנִֵ֥י ש נ ָ֖ה לְּזִֶ֥בַּח} – without specification as to the type of \textit{šēlāmīm}. However, the instruction in Deut. 16:10 specifies, “Then you shall keep the feast of weeks to the \textit{LORD} your \textit{God} with the tribute of a \textit{freewill offering}... – \textit{וְּע שִַ֜ית חֵַּ֤ג ש בֻעֹ֣ות לַּיהו ֵּ֣ה אֱלֹהֶָ֔יךָ מִסַָּ֛ת} – \textit{nidbōt}.

\textsuperscript{175} The requirement for \textit{‘ōlā} is specified in Num. 28-29, as part the prescriptive sacrifices for the new moon offerings and the yearly festivals.

\textsuperscript{176} See Kurtz, \textit{Offerings, Sacrifices, and Worship in Ancient Israel}, 280.

\textsuperscript{177} Milgrom, \textit{Leviticus 1-16}, 219.

\textsuperscript{178} Rowley, \textit{Worship in Ancient Israel}, 123.
with the people and immediately before the proclamation of the blessings and curses associated with the covenant, the people are told, “and you shall sacrifice peace offerings, and shall eat there; and you shall rejoice before the LORD your God” (Deut. 27:7). Milgrom explains that, “For the commoner, the occasion had to be a celebration—and because the meat was probably too much for the nuclear family, it had to be a household or even a clan celebration—hence the joyous character of the sacrifice.”

There is an overarching intention of communion in all the šēlāmîm. Kraus makes a distinct observation that the communion function of these sacrifices is connected to the covenant. He proposes that the meal shared is a symbol of communion. He explains,

…in important passages of the Old Testament as well as belongs to the sphere of the brīth and effects the communion between God and his people. What was pointed out in connection with the gift offering is also true of the peace offering—that the decisive factor is not magical influences, but a personal communication which is achieved in the brīth.

A clear example of this connection is revealed in Exod. 24:11, where following the ratification of the Sinai covenant with the offering of ōlōt and zōbāhîm šēlāmîm (Exod. 24:5), Moses and the elders ‘eat and drink’ with God after the ratification ceremony.

e. Similarities and differences among the three šēlāmîm – The freewill offerings and the votive offerings are similar to each other and yet they clearly are distinct from the thanksgiving offerings in two specific points: they are not accompanied by cereal offerings, and

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179 Deut. 16:10-11 gives another example of the people rejoicing after offering a šēlāmîm, although it refers specifically to a nēdābā.
180 Milgrom, Leviticus 1-16, 221.
181 Kraus, Worship in Israel, 119.
the flesh of the sacrificial animal may be consumed over a two-day period (Lev. 7:16-18). Unquestionably, the instructions are clear that the thanksgiving offering is to be offered together with a grain offering (Lev. 7:12-14).

The šēlāmîm as well as the minhā and the 'ōlā are considered voluntary offerings, in contrast with the other two sacrifices, (the haṭṭā’t, and the 'āšām) which are classified as mandatory. Yet, Kiuchi argues for a renewed evaluation of the presumed quality of the šēlāmîm as an optional sacrifice. He affirms that giving thanks to God ought not be optional, but rather obligatory. Equally with the votive offering, he indicates that since the offerer made a promise, he is under obligation to fulfill his promise. However, he concedes that the freewill offering can be optional. He conveys that the inner emotion of thankfulness culminates in the outer expression of the ritual. When someone recognizes the salvific actions of the LORD, he or she ought to present a šēlāmîm in order to express thankfulness. Kiuchi concludes, “…one’s inner impulse towards the LORD must be expressed outwardly in the form of offering sacrifices. One aspect of true spirituality is that worship should not be confined to the heart, but that inner emotion and attitude should be expressed outwardly in the form of sacrifice.

D. The Purification/Sin Offering—hattā’t (Lev. 4:1–5:13; 6:24-30[17-23])

The concern for accuracy in translation is perhaps more important with this sacrifice than it was with the other three. The Hebrew term haṭṭā’t is most commonly translated as ‘sin offering.’

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See footnote #171 for an exception to šēlāmîm being voluntary. A nēdābā šēlēm is prescribed for the Feast of Weeks (Deut. 16:10).

However, Milgrom explains that the term חַָ֗טֶאת is a derivative of the verb הָטָֽטָא which has different meanings according to the form in which it is used and in his assessment, “This translation [sin offering] is inaccurate on all grounds: contextually, morphologically, and etymologically.”184 He prefers to translate חַָ֗טֶאת as ‘purification offering’ The contextual use of חַָ֗טֶאת indicates that it is associated with offerings related to ritual purity, like those offered by a new mother after childbirth. A grammatical parsing of the term reveals that its usage is a derivative of the verbal form that has the meaning of ‘cleansing, decontaminating, purifying,’ in contrast with the other verbal form whose meaning is to sin.185

1. The material of the הָטָֽטָא offering

The material of the הָטָֽטָא is legislated according to the role of the offerer within the community as well as his or her financial means. A young bull is the prescribed offering for a priest (Lev. 4:3-4) or for the whole congregation186 –represented by the elders– (Lev. 4:14-15). An unblemished male goat is the offering required of a ruler (Lev. 4:23-24), while an unblemished female goat or a female lamb is required of someone who is not a priest or a ruler (Lev. 4:27-28, 32). There are allowances made for the poor, whose prescribed offering can be two turtledoves or two pigeons (Lev. 5:7), or when offering the birds would be a burden, a small amount of flour without oil or frankincense is prescribed (Lev. 5:11).

184 See Milgrom, Leviticus 1-16, 253.
Perhaps the earliest translation inaccuracy can be found in the LXX, where the term חַָ֗טֶאת is translated as ἁμαρτία. Milgrom affirms that, “It is, however, important to note that if the rabbinic sources had been carefully read, the subsequent translations could have avoided this mistake.”184

The meaning of the verb חָטֶאת in the qal form/stem is to sin, to do wrong; however in the pi’el form/stem its meaning is to cleanse, to expurgate, to decontaminate
Milgrom notes that the הָטָֽטָא “Morphologically, it appears as a pi’el derivative.”

186 Generally, a bull is the sacrifice prescribed only when the offerer is a priest or a Levite. On the Day of Atonement, the congregation is prescribed to bring a goat as הָטָֽטָא; however, the text in Leviticus 4 presents an exemption by also prescribing the bull for the assembly.
Whether from the livestock or the birds, the blood of the animal is the essential element of the ḫaṭṭāʾ. Even though the blood rite is also present in the ʿōlā and šēlāmîm offerings, in the ḫaṭṭāʾ, this rite is of unique importance. With the ʿōlā offering (Lev. 1:5, 11) and the šēlāmîm offering (Lev. 3:2, 8, 13), the blood of the animal, which was previously killed by the person bringing the sacrifice, is collected by the priest and then sprinkled around the altar at the door of the Tent of Meeting. However, the blood rite of the ḫaṭṭāʾ is much more involved, having specific prescriptions depending on the offerer. The blood of a ḫaṭṭāʾ belonging to the priest or to the congregation is brought inside the Tent; some of it is sprinkled seven times in front of the veil of the Holy of Holies, and some placed on the horns of the incense altar. The rest is poured out at the base of the sacrificial altar at the entrance of the Tent (Lev. 4:5-7; 16-18). When the ḫaṭṭāʾ is offered by a ruler or by a commoner, i.e. someone who is not a priest or a ruler, the sprinkling of blood in front of the veil is omitted (Lev. 4:25, 30, 34). If the ḫaṭṭāʾ is from a poor offerer, who brings birds, the blood rite is simplified, requiring only that some of the blood be sprinkled on the side of the sacrificial altar, the and the rest to be poured out at the base of the altar (Lev. 5:9).

The extensive instructions for the blood rite in the ḫaṭṭāʾ communicate the importance of blood as an essential material of this offering. Blood which renders someone ritually impure is precisely the element that cleanses, purifies, and even expiates. Milgrom refers to this as a first principle of the ḫaṭṭāʾ, “Blood is the ritual cleanser that purges…”187 The blood has the power to expiate because the LORD has given the blood of sacrifice for that purpose, “the life –nepeš– of the flesh is in the blood, and I have given it to you to make atonement –kappêr– on the altar for yourselves, because it is the blood as life that makes atonement –kappêr–” (Lev. 17:11). This

187 Milgrom, Leviticus, 31.
principle on the role and efficacy of blood is at the core of theologies of atonement, which have focused on a significant, but singular aspect of sacrifice.\textsuperscript{188}

Analogously to what occurs with the šēlāmīm offering, the entire animal of ḥaṭṭā’t is not burnt. Some parts are burnt on the sacrificial altar, other parts are given to the priest for consumption, and the rest is disposed as with the other sacrifices. Only certain parts of the animal are burnt on the sacrificial altar, namely, the fat covering the entrails and that fat that is on the entrails, the two kidneys with the fat which is on them, and the appendage of the liver (Lev. 4:8-10, 19, 26, 3, 35).

If the material of the ḥaṭṭā’t is flour, then only a portion—a handful—is burnt, and the rest is given to the priest, as is the case with the minḥā offering. If the animal offered is a bull—in which case, the offering comes from a priest or a congregation—no one can consume its flesh (Lev. 6:30[6:23]). The remainder of the sacrificed bull, after the prescribed parts are burnt as an offering, is carried outside the camp, burnt there, and the ashes disposed (Lev. 4:11-12, 21).

However, if the ḥaṭṭā’t is an animal of the flock, goat or lamb—offered by a ruler, or someone who is not a priest or a ruler—, the priest who performs the blood rite, along with any other priest who assisted, is commanded to consume the flesh of the flock in the court of the Tent of Meeting (Lev. 6:26, 29[6:19, 22]. Milgrom notes that the text of Leviticus does not specify the time during which the flesh of the flock ḥaṭṭā’t must be consumed. He states, “…it is clearly impossible for a single priest to consume the entire animal in a single day.”\textsuperscript{189} In any case, the offerer does not consume any of the flesh of the ḥaṭṭā’t.

\begin{footnotesize}
\begin{enumerate}
\item[188] The role of the blood as a purifying agent and its significance in atonement sacrifices will be presented in the next section of this chapter.
\item[189] Milgrom, Leviticus 1-16, 402
\end{enumerate}
\end{footnotesize}
2. *The intention of the ḥaṭṭāʾ offering*

Scholars have not reached any consensus on the intention of the ḥaṭṭāʾ offering. The two different terms used to translate the Hebrew term ḥaṭṭāʾ indicate two possible intentions. If the term is translated as ‘purification offering’, its function is purification. However, if the term is translated as ‘sin offering’, its function is expiation. Although a connection can be made between the two, especially if expiation is considered to be a purification from sin, the two terms are not synonymous.

Some scholars have argued for either an exclusive meaning as purification or atonement, while others have proposed both purposes coexist. As was previously noted, Milgrom held that in the rabbinic tradition, the primary function of the ḥaṭṭāʾ was purification. The Jewish biblical scholar Baruch Levine prefers to use the translation ‘sin offering’ and considers that expiation is the function of the ḥaṭṭāʾ, as he explains that the purpose was, “…to purify the offender of his guilt.”  

The scholar Nobuyoshi Kiuchi, who credits Milgrom with the most systematic study of the ḥaṭṭāʾ, presents additional biblical perspective from the New Testament, where the function of this offering is expiation, as it is expressed in the Letter to the Hebrews with reference to the Day of Atonement ḥaṭṭāʾ. The essential points of these two distinct, but yet connected, functions of this offering are presented below.

a. **Purification** – As noted previously, the rendering of the term ḥaṭṭāʾ as a purification offering can be argued from contextual, morphological and etymological perspectives.

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Anderson presents the cases of the woman after childbirth (Lev. 12), the person with a genital discharge (Lev. 15), the installation of a new altar (Lev. 8), and the ordination of a priest (Lev. 9), as instances where purification, not expiation or atonement, is the clear function of the ḥattāʾ offering. He appeals to the ritual text concerning a postpartum woman to demonstrate that the biblical language used speaks of ritual cleansing, not forgiveness of sins (Lev. 12:8). The interpretation of a purifying function invites further investigation insofar as it is necessary to understand who or what is in need of purification, and why the purification is needed.

According to Milgrom, it is the sancta\textsuperscript{193} that needs purification, not the offerer of the sacrifice. In ancient Israel, the cultic system is intimately connected to the codes of purity. The theology presented in the Levitical sacrifices illustrates this connection. Anthropologist Mary Douglas proposes that purity and the cult are connected in the book of Leviticus in a manner that offers an alternative theodicy to that of pagan cultures. She holds that,

\begin{enumerate}
\item Anderson, “Sacrifice and Sacrificial Offerings,” 879.
\item In order to illustrate the linguistic challenge of the terms in question, selected translations appear below. The first translation is the one offered by Anderson himself, then Milgrom’s, followed by frequently used translations.
\item Anderson’s …..and the priest shall perform purgation [kipper] for her and she shall be clean.
\item Milgrom’s If, however, her means do not suffice for a sheep, she shall take two turtledoves or two pigeons, one for a burnt offering and the other for a purification offering. The priest shall make expiation on her behalf, and shall be pure.
\item JPS If however, her means do not suffice for a sheep, she shall take two turtledoves or two pigeons, one for a sin offering. The priest shall make expiation on her behalf, and she shall be clean.
\item RSV And if she cannot afford a lamb, then she shall take two turtledoves or two young pigeons, one for a burnt offering and the other for a sin offering; and the priest shall make atonement for her, and she shall be clean.
\item NRSV If she cannot afford a sheep, she shall take two turtledoves or two pigeons, one for a burnt offering and the other for a sin offering; and the priest shall make atonement on her behalf, and she shall be clean.
\item NABRE If, however, she cannot afford a lamb, she may take two turtledoves or two pigeons, the one for a burnt offering and the other for a purification offering. The priest shall make atonement for her, and thus she will again be clean.
\item Here and thereafter the term sancta will be used to refer to the sacred spaces. The term is the plural form of the noun sanctus. It is a term commonly used by scholars who study ancient cultic practices and issues concerning ritual purity.
\end{enumerate}
The theodicy has to be changed: his friends will no longer be able to tell a sick man that he has been seized by a leprosy demon or a woman that her child has died because a female demon took it. Suffering and sorrow still remain, and so does death. The priests are expected to explain, give comfort, and help. This is what the doctrine of purity does. If you fall sick, it could be that God has broken out on you because you unknowingly incurred impurity….A sacrifice will put it right, or a wash and waiting till evening, according to the gravity of the transgression.194

The instructions presented in the Book of Leviticus demand that the sanctuary be kept holy and purified, lest God, who is holy, could not dwell there. The theodicy presented in Leviticus is pragmatic and is more concerned with actions to remedy a problem rather than explanations.195 God’s departure from his dwelling place would compromise the identity of the community. The sacrificial system addresses practical ways to remedy this potential problem. Regarding this matter, Frank Gorman explains, “This sacrifice [the ḫaṭṭāʾ] functions to purify the tabernacle from impurity generated by the life of the community, to restore the sacred status of the holy area…”196

The ḫaṭṭāʾ is the sacrifice prescribed in cases of ritual or moral impurity. The sources of ritual impurity include certain foods that are deemed unclean as well as unavoidable, natural life cycle processes. Some instances of physical impurity do not properly belong to the life cycle but cannot be avoided, such is the case of the priest, who because of his duties, comes in contact with animal blood.197 Physical, ritual impurity, originating from child birth, skin diseases, or genital discharges, is treated at length in Lev. 12-15 and is remedied through ritual washing. Although

physical impurities are not sinful in their nature, they nevertheless render the person ritually impure.\textsuperscript{198} There are two narratives recorded in Scripture (Num. 12 and 2 Chr. 26) where leprosy is presented as punishment for sinful behavior. However, Klawans clarifies that in Scripture, the leper is considered ritually impure, but never guilty.\textsuperscript{199} In the case of moral impurity, caused by unintentionally or unknowingly committing a transgression, Milgrom affirms that the guilt felt by the offender upon realization of the wrongdoing effects interior purification. Whether the impurity is physical or due to unwitting sin, he emphasizes that the ḥaṭṭāʾt does not purify the person making the offering.\textsuperscript{200}

As additional support for understanding the purification function of the ḥaṭṭāʾt, Milgrom presents the blood rite as the key to understanding this sacrifice. Having affirmed that, “The ḥaṭṭāʾt blood, then, is the purging element, the ritual detergent,” he emphasizes that blood, is never applied to a person.\textsuperscript{201} Furthermore, this sacrifice is prescribed for objects, and although objects can become defiled, they do not have the capacity to sin.

The ḥaṭṭāʾt purifies the sancta whether the pollution is due to impurities or to unwitting wrong-doings. In the case of impurities, the person first does the ablutions required to remove the impurity and then offers the ḥaṭṭāʾt. In this instance, the words of the ritual communicate that the person is rendered clean –ṭāhēr–. The person who contaminates the sancta due to unwitting sin is never called impure and does not require ritual ablutions, but he is still guilty of having polluted the sanctuary and has the duty to offer a sacrifice which can purify the sancta. When the

\textsuperscript{199} Klawans, \textit{Impurity and Sin in Ancient Judaism}, 24-25.
\textsuperscript{200} Gorman, \textit{Divine Presence and Community}, 34-35; Milgrom, \textit{Leviticus}, 30; \textit{Leviticus 1-16}, 254.
\textsuperscript{201} Milgrom, \textit{Leviticus 1-16}, 254-255.
ḥaṭṭā’ṯ is offered for this reason, the text communicates clearly that the person is forgiven—nislaḥ—. Milgrom notes that the forgiveness received is not for the sin itself, but for the contamination that the sin caused. He summarizes, “Thus the impure person needs purification and the sinner needs forgiveness. 202

Leviticus states clearly that sins that require the prescribed haṭṭā’ṯ offerings are sins committed unwittingly (Lev. 4:2, 13, 22, 27). Although the Hebrew text is not identical in the four verses cited, Lev. 4:2 can give important insight as to the nature of the relation between the offender and the transgression. Levine translates the clause of 4:2 as ‘when a person unwittingly commits an offense.’ He explains that the adverb unwittingly bišēgāgâ (בִּשְּג גָּ) was interpreted in the rabbinical tradition as having two related meanings,

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202 Milgrom, *Leviticus 1-16*, 256.

The texts below illustrate the linguistic detail treated by Milgrom as he makes the distinction between someone with a physical impurity needing to be cleansed in contrast with someone who has a moral impurity—even unwittingly—needing forgiveness.

**Lev. 12:6, 8 — haṭṭā’ṯ offered for purification after childbirth**

Notice the difference in the these two translations of the term haṭṭā’ṯ

**RSV** 6 And when the days of her purifying are completed, whether for a son or for a daughter, she shall bring to the priest at the door of the tent of meeting a yearling lamb for a burnt offering and a young pigeon or a turtledove for a sin offering… 8 And if she cannot afford a lamb, then she shall take two turtledoves or two young pigeons, one for a burnt offering and the other for a sin offering; and the priest shall make atonement for her, and she shall be clean.

**NABRE** 6 When the days of her purification for a son or for a daughter are fulfilled, she shall bring to the priest at the entrance of the tent of meeting a yearling lamb for a burnt offering and a pigeon or a turtledove for a purification offering… 8 If, however, she cannot afford a lamb, she may take two turtledoves or two pigeons, the one for a burnt offering and the other for a purification offering. The priest shall make atonement for her, and thus she will again be clean.

**Lev. 4:26 — haṭṭā’ṯ offered for unwitting sins committed by a ruler.**

**RSV** And all its fat he shall burn on the altar, like the fat of the sacrifice of peace offerings; so the priest shall make atonement for him for his sin, and he [the ruler] shall be forgiven.

**NABRE** All its fat he shall turn into smoke on the altar, like the fat of the sacrifice of well-being. Thus the priest shall make atonement on his behalf for his sin, and he [the ruler] shall be forgiven.
(1) inadvertence with respect to the facts of the law; and (2) inadvertence with respect to the nature of the act. In the first situation, the offender might be unaware that the act was in violation of the law, or at the very least, might not know the specific penalties for such actions...Inadvertence with respect to the nature of the act itself would occur if, for example, a person ate forbidden fat, thinking it was ordinary fat, which is permitted.203

The text of Lev. 4:13 illustrates another aspect concerning the offender, namely the realization that a transgression was committed. Levine renders וּוְּא שֵָֽמ and "the whole community of Israel has erred...and they realize their guilt." He emphasizes that realizing guilt is different from incurring guilt. The Hebrew term communicates that something becomes known which was previously not known.204 Milgrom clarifies this verse further by presenting the argument that the term yišgû (יִשְּגָו) is pivotal to the understanding of the entire chapter because it does not simply mean to err, but to err inadvertently.205

An additional aspect concerning the term ‘unwittingly’ is the concept of ‘consciousness’. Kiuchi remarks that the haṭṭā’i is prescribed only after the offender recognized the act as a sin. In other words, the offender has to acquire consciousness that the action committed is a violation of a commandment. He notes that the consciousness refers to the nature of the act not the commission

203 Levine, Leviticus: The JPS Torah Commentary, 19.
204 Ibid., 22.
205 Milgrom, Leviticus 1-16, 228-229, 241-242. Milgrom provides a detailed analysis of the position of yišgû within the structure of the chapter. In his analysis, he substantiates his rendering of the term yišgû as ‘to err inadvertently’. He explains that the root of yišgû אֲשַׁג is šgh in contrast to the root šgg of bišēgāgā which is used in v. 2, 22, and 27. Nevertheless, there is linguistic relation between the biconsonantal root šgg and he affirms that the choice of the variant root šgh is intentional. He presents the following chiastic structure to show the pivotal place of yišgû (229).

v.2 A + B tehēťa’ bišēgāgā
v.3 A yehēťa’
v.13 B yišgû
v.22 A yehēťa’
v.27 A + B tehēťa’ bišēgāgā
of the act.\textsuperscript{206} Kiuchi’s words are clear on this matter, “…the distinction between consciousness of an act and consciousness of the acts’s being a sin is crucial to the understanding of שגגה.”\textsuperscript{207} Given these clarifications, an unwitting or inadvertent sin or transgression is an action committed consciously but without awareness of its status as a violation, and which upon realization of the transgression generates guilt.

Yet even unwitting violations of God’s commandments cause defilement of the sacred objects and or the sacred space. Milgrom classifies the divine commandments in two categories, ‘performative’ (the ‘do’s) and ‘prohibitive’ (the ‘don’ts). Performative commandments are violated by neglect of the action prescribed, in other words, the violations are wrong doings of omission. On the other hand, a violation of prohibitive commands involves commission of prohibitions.\textsuperscript{208} Both types of violations defile the sanctuary. Anna Lee considers transgressions to be like a pollutant that contaminates the atmosphere with damaging consequences.\textsuperscript{209} The only way to remedy the pollution of the sancta is through purification sacrifices. Employing imagery from classic British literature, Milgrom explains,

> The violation of a prohibitive commandment generates impurity and, if severe enough, pollutes the sanctuary from afar. This imagery portrays the Priestly theodicy that I have called the priestly Picture of Dorian Gray. It declares that while sin may not scar the face of the sinner, it does scar the face of the sanctuary. This image graphically illustrates the Priestly version of the old doctrine of collective responsibility. When the evildoers are punished, they bring down the righteous with them. Those who perish with the wicked are not entirely blameless,

\textsuperscript{207} Ibid., 26.
\textsuperscript{208} Milgrom, Leviticus 1-16, 229-230.
however. They are inadvertent sinners who, by having allowed the wicked to flourish, have also contributed to the pollutions of the sanctuary.210

Considering purification, rather than atonement, as the function is the haṭṭāʾi is the minority position, and according to Anderson, it is a challenge to reconsider the haṭṭāʾ from this perspective. Advancing Milgrom’s argument, Anderson stresses that if it were the individual who needed the purification, the blood would be placed on him or her, rather than on the sancta. Additionally, Anderson notes that the status of the person who has committed the wrong doing, albeit unwittingly, determines the area of the sancta that has become defiled and thus that needs purification.211

The four categories of individuals prescribed to offer the haṭṭāʾ are: the anointed priest, the entire congregation, a ruler, and a commoner—who is neither a priest nor a ruler—. The status of each of these categories of offenders determines the impact of the sin on the community and therefore the level of defilement of the sancta.212 When an individual commits a sin unwittingly, his offense pollutes the courtyard, and purification is accomplished by the priest placing the blood on the horns of the sacrificial altar (Lev. 4:25, 30, 34).213 If the entire community or a priest has committed a sin unwittingly, the pollution extends beyond the courtyard into the entire sanctuary, requiring more extensive purification. Consequently, the priest sprinkles the blood in front of the veil of the Holy of Holies and also places the blood on the horns of the altar of incense (Lev. 4:6-

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210 Milgrom, Leviticus, 15.
213 Lev. 4:25 specifies the blood ritual when the person bringing the haṭṭāʾ is a ruler, whereas Lev. 4:30, 34 is concerned with the commoner.
Summarizing this pattern of graded impurity and purgation, Milgrom states, “In this way the graded purgations of the sanctuary lead to the conclusion that the severity of the sin or impurity varies in direct relation to the depth of its penetration into the sanctuary.”

There are two actions associated with the blood rite of purification. One is described with the verb *nātan* (to put, to place) and the other one with the verb *hizzāh* (to sprinkle). In his analysis, Kiuchi affirms that the gesture of sprinkling blood is more potent than the gesture of placing blood. He also suggests that the sprinkling gesture of the priestly and community *ḥattāʾ* prescribed in the Lev. 4:6, 17 anticipates the same action which is carried out on *Yôm Kippûr* (Lev 16:14-15). The blood ritual of this holiest of days in ancient Israel calls for the sprinkling of the blood of the bull (for the sins of the priest) and the blood of the male goat (for the sins of the congregation) before the mercy seat. Milgrom explains that the purification of the Holy of Holies is necessary because of blatant and unrepented sin which pollutes not only the courtyard and the Holy Place but also pierces the veil. This severe pollution can only be remedied once a year during *Yôm Kippûr*.

b. Expiation / Atonement – This is the function most often associated with the ḥattāʾ offering. Milgrom’s argument in favor of the purification function consists of a detailed presentation which demands looking at the text through a different, perhaps underappreciated lens. However, Milgrom renders purification not as the primary function of the ḥattāʾ, or as one of its functions, but rather as the only possible function. The contribution made by Milgrom concerning

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214 Lev. 4:17-18 gives the details of the blood ritual when community has committed the offense, while Lev. 4:6-7 deals with the blood ritual of a ḥattāʾ if the offender is a priest.

215 Milgrom, Leviticus I-16, 257.


217 Milgrom, Leviticus I-16, 257, 1031-1033.
the purificative dimension of this sacrifice is invaluable. Nevertheless, Anderson notes the serious complications which arise from such a position, as he states, “Things become more difficult when Milgrom attempts to argue that the purification offering has no role whatsoever in removing human sin.”

Undoubtedly, the language of the haṭṭāʾ ritual speaks of forgiveness. The text prescribes the sequence of ritual actions to be carried out and then it indicates clearly that the priest, who carries out the blood rite, “makes atonement” —wēkipper— (וְּכִפֵֶ֨ר) for the offender, who then “shall be forgiven” —wēnislah— (וְּנִסְּלִַּ֥ח). “...Thus the priest shall make atonement on their [the assembly’s] behalf, that they may be forgiven” (Lev. 4:20). This linguistic pattern repeats itself for the ruler (Lev. 4:26), for the commoner (Lev. 4:31, 35), and for the poor (Lev. 5:10, 13).

Nevertheless, Milgrom affirms that the forgiveness received by the offender is not for the transgression itself, but for the consequence that such action brings, namely the defilement of the sanctuary. He supports that forgiveness for the sin actually takes place by a sense of guilt for having defiled the sanctuary. Arguing against Milgrom’s stance on forgiveness being effected when the individual has remorse, Kiuchi emphasizes that it is not in the experience of guilt, but in the ritual action that the offender is forgiven: “Sequentially forgiveness (גָּזַל) is always granted after the kipper-acts and never before them (Lev. 4:20, 26, 31, 35; 5:10,13).” Furthermore, Kiuchi affirms that the kipper-act deals directly with sin, not only with the defilement of the sancta

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219 Milgrom, Leviticus 1-16, 256.
221 Kiuchi, The Purification Offering in the Priestly Literature, 35.
as a consequence of sin. He proposes that in addition to pollution, there is a punitive consequence of sin. The kipper action effects expiation for punishment.222

Given that the blood rite holds the key to understanding the ḥaṭṭāʾ, the final point to consider are the actions associated with the blood rite. Two actions have been already discussed, namely those expressed by the verb nātan – to put, to place – and by the verb hizzāh – to sprinkle –. These two actions concern what the presiding priest does with the blood. They are transitive verbs whose object is the blood. The last action to discuss is that of the verb kāphar (כ Phương). It communicates what is effected through the blood; in other words, the blood is the subject. The verb has distinct meanings depending on its verbal stems or verbal forms. In the piʿel form, it means to atone, to make atonement, to expiate. In the pual form, it means to be atoned. In the hithpael form, it means to be expiated, to be forgiven. In the qal form, it means to cover.

Scholars have used the meaning of derivatives of the simple qal stem and of the intensive stems – piʿel and pual – to interpret atonement.223

The topic of atonement or expiation has been the subject of much research. Within that topic, the role of blood vis-à-vis atonement is a discrete area of further inquiry. Even though the

222 Ibid., 35-36.
223 “כ Phương” (kāphar),” BDB, 497-498.

verb
Qal – כ Phương
1. to cover or pitch

Piʿel – כ Phương
1. to cover over (figurative), pacify, make propitiation;
2. to cover over, atone for sin without sacrifice:
   man as subject (Exod. 32:30); God as subject (Deut.34:43)
3. to cover over, atone for sin and persons by legal rites

Pual – כמ ר
1. to be covered over, to be atoned for

Hithpael – ית כמ ר
1. to be covered over, to be atoned for, to be forgiven

Niphal – וְנִכַּמֵר
1. to be covered over, to be atoned for, to be forgiven

224 Detailed studies on interpretation of the various verbal stems of כ Phương have been done by many scholars including Hartmut Gese, Frank Gorman, Baruch Levine, Jacob Milgrom, and Nobuyoshi Kiuchi, to name a few.
purpose of this research does not call for an in-depth study of atonement or of blood as the atoning instrument, it would be remiss to exclude a discussion on this topic, albeit brief.

Why is blood so critical to understanding the expiating/atonning function of the ḫaṭṭāʾ? The essential role of *blood* in expiation/atonement is somewhat puzzling, considering that contact with blood or consuming animal blood is prohibited because it causes defilement and impurity. Major treatments of the prohibitions concerning blood appear in Gen. 9:4-7, Lev. 7:26-27, 17. And yet, blood has been named the ‘ritual detergent’ and the blood ritual is central to the ḫaṭṭāʾ. Brevard Childs remarks that despite the complexity of the blood ritual and the debates surrounding its meaning, the text of Lev. 17:11 gives the best explanation on the atoning function of the blood. He notes that this text is not without grammatical interpretative difficulty of its own,

However, in general, it is clear that the blood is the substance of life, sacred to God, which through its shedding, serves symbolically to represent the offering of the life of the one sacrificing. The connection between the power of expiation and the life in the blood is everywhere assumed, but nowhere fully articulated.225

Slight variations in the translation of the text of Lev. 17:11 have influenced the interpretation offered.226 F. Gorman notes that the role of blood in relation to the atoning sacrifice

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226 A sampling of translations of the Hebrew text appear below.

Milgrom’s own translation presents one critical variance, namely, life IS the blood, in contrast to life IS IN the blood.

**BHS**

כִי־הָדוֹם וּאֱבוֹנִי לֹא־פָּרְצַה בָּעָל־רֶעֶיהֶם לִפְשֵׁיתָן לְפַסְחָה לְחֵרֵמָה לְחֵרֵמָה לְחֵרֵמָה לְחֵרֵמָה לְחֵרֵמָה לְחֵרֵמָה לְחֵרֵמָה לְחֵרֵמָה לְחֵרֵמָה לְחֵרֵמָה לְחֵרֵמָה לְחֵרֵמָה לְחֵרֵמָה LHS

**JPS**

For the life of the flesh is the blood, and it is I who have assigned it to you upon the altar to expiate for your lives, for it is the blood, as life, that expiates.

**RSV**

For the life of the flesh is in the blood; and I have given it for you upon the altar to make atonement for your souls; for it is the blood that makes atonement, by reason of the life.

**NRSV**

For the life of the flesh is in the blood; and I have given it to you for making atonement for your lives on the altar; for, as life, it is the blood that makes atonement.
does not occur prior to the Mosaic covenant. He underscores the importance of this text as it refers directly to the role of the blood of sacrifice in the altar and he affirms that the precise translation of this text is problematic. Nevertheless, in Gorman’s opinion, two things are certain from the text, first that blood is outside of human bounds and second that God has a purpose for blood in the sacrificial ritual.227

Mary Douglas offers an interesting perspective on the riddle of the use of blood in atonement. She advocates a connection of the passage from Lev. 17:11 to the creation theology revealed in Genesis. The link which Douglas presents focuses on God as creator of life. Therefore, the blood of the animals, which carries their life, belongs to God. Since the blood belongs to God, God alone has the authority to decide how or why blood can be used. She explains, “God made life, the life of all creatures belongs to God. If he had not given or assigned the blood of sacrifice for that specific purpose, there could be no atonement.”228

Additionally, Douglas observes that purification and atonement are not mutually exclusive. From an etymological angle, she states that atonement is a rite of purification as it changes the condition of that which is ritually impure or unclean. Her remarks are a reminder of the broader

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228 Douglas, Leviticus as Literature, 233.
range of meaning of purity, which encompasses both a physical, exterior aspect, but also a spiritual or moral interior aspect, “Even in English, the idea of purity goes deeper than washing clean. A ‘pure’ virgin is not necessarily a well-scrubbed girl. ‘Pure’ intentions are intentions unmixed with ulterior motives…..Purification also has the sense of refining in metallurgy.”

This lack of exclusivity between purification and atonement has been observed by other scholars who offer other possible areas of intersection between the two concepts. Sylvain Romerowski reflects on the seamless convergence of purification, forgiveness and atonement. He maintains that,

…purification and atonement are not ideas far apart from each other. As a matter of fact, the image of purification can be used for the forgiveness of sin that results from atonement, forgiveness being viewed as the removal of the objective defilement that results from sin. However, it is important to see that the Old Testament sacrifices had an atoning value, that there was no such purification without expiation.

At the expense of a life, blood can atone, but only as the instrumental purifying and atoning agent chosen by God for that purpose. It is during Yôm Kippûr that the ritual of purification and atonement reaches its summit. Victor Hamilton remarks that the Hebrew plural noun ‘atonements’ -kippûrim כִפֻרִים- (Lev. 23:27, 28, 25:9) is a more accurate description of the three atonements that occur on that day. On the Great Day –as the rabbinic literature calls it–, atonement and purification are made for: (1) the transgressions of the high priest, (2) the pollution of the sanctuary, and (3) the offenses committed by nation of priestly people.

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229 Ibid.
231 Peterson, Engaging with God, 41.
Aware of the great difficulty in reaching a consensus regarding purification and atonement in Old Testament theology, Childs summarizes the following important conclusions which are most valuable in understanding the intention and function of the ḥaṭṭā’ī:

1. God is the decisive one at work in effecting atonement. The priest remains the necessary vehicle. Similarly, the blood has no independent role, but performs the function commanded by God.

2. The desire for atonement arises from a need for restitution and involves a continuing sense of unworthiness and impurity before God.

3. Atonement reflects an understanding of life given for the one who is offering the sacrifice. The ritual retains the note of an objective guilt which can only be removed through sacrifice or substitution. No one theory of transference is explicit in the biblical text, but restitution, identification, and substitution all play a role within the priestly system.

4. Both the corporate community in Israel as well as the individual worshiper are involved in atonement and the two recipients are not easily separated.

5. High-handed, willful sin is not atoned for within the sacrificial system. Only in the prophetic eschatological hope (Isa. 4.2ff) or through the incomprehensible mercy of God is there reconciliation from such offences (Hos. 6.1ff).


As has been noted with the other sacrifices, translation issues also figure into the last kind of sacrifice: the ’āšām. The Hebrew term ’āšām is often translated as “guilt offering.” However, other terms have been used. The choice for the term “guilt offering” originates in the etymology of the root בָּשָׁם which is used to communicate concepts related to guilt, including to be guilty, or

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234 The translation of the term ’āšām in languages other than English is not uniform either. In Spanish, the term used is ‘guilt’, ‘sin’, or ‘expiation’. In French, the two terms used are ‘trespass’ and ‘guilt’. The Italian translations use either ‘guilt’ or ‘reparation’. The modern English translations use ‘guilt offering’ as the preferred translation. However, the new NABRE uses the term ‘reparation offering.’
to feel guilt. The term “trespass offering” is also used. Milgrom argues for a rendering of the term as “reparation offering.” He prefers this translation because of the reparation characteristic which is unique to this sacrifice.

1. The material of the 'āšām offering

The 'āšām is unique in the sacrificial system. As we have seen, other kinds of sacrifices could feature different materials being offered, depending on who was offering them. For the slaughtering sacrifices, the animal could be a bull, an ox, a lamb, a goat, a pigeon, or a turtledove. But with the 'āšām, the sacrificial animal was almost always a ram without blemish (Lev. 5:15, 18, 6:6[5:25]). The only exceptions to bringing a ram was the leper who had been cleansed and the Nazirite who had become ritually impure. On the eight day after a leper had been healed, he or she was required to present a lamb as the 'āšām (Lev. 14:12, 21, 24-25). Similarly, after the required cleansing, the Nazarite was required to bring a series of sacrifices, one of which was a

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235 “אָשָׁם – (‘āšām),” BDB, 79d-80a

noun masculine: offence, guilt
1. offence, trespass, fault
2. guilt
3. compensation, restitution
4. trespass offering / guilt offering including a) the ordinary trespass offering of ram with restitution; b) the trespass offering of the leper or the Nazirite; and c) the suffering servant of Isa. 53:10 offers himself as 'āšām

“אָשָׁמ – (‘āšam),” BDB, 79c

verb to offend, to be guilty
Qal – אָשָׁמ 1. to commit an offence, a trespass, to do a wrong, or an injury
2. to become guilty
3. to be held guilty, to bear punishment

Niphal – וַאֲשֹּם 1. to suffer punishment

Hiphil – בָּאָשִים 1. to declare them guilty


237 See Anderson, “Sacrifice and Sacrificial Offerings,” 875. Anderson only mentions the Nazarite offering as the exemption to bringing a ram. However also see Kurtz, Offerings, Sacrifices and Worship in the Old Testament, 435-436 for an explanation on the ritual offerings after a leper was cleansed.
one year old lamb as the 'ाśām offering (Num. 6:9-12). Kiuchi notes that in comparison with a female lamb, which is the prescribed animal for the ḫaṭṭāʾ of a commoner, the ram required as the 'ाśām is of more value.238

Some of the instructions concerning the parts of the 'ाśām animal that constitute the actual material of the offering bear similarities with the instructions provided for the šēlāmîm and the ḫaṭṭāʾ offerings. Only certain parts of the ram are burnt: namely all the fat, the fat tail, the fat covering the entrails, the two kidneys with the fat which is on them, and the appendage of the liver (Lev. 7:3-5). The blood rite is of great importance in the 'ाśām as it is in the ḫaṭṭāʾ. The blood of the ram is thrown on the sacrificial altar (Lev. 7:2).

The prescriptions for the 'ाśām stipulate not only that the ram be unblemished, but also that it can represent a given value, which would correspond to the level of offense.239 Scholars are not in agreement on the exact meaning of the phrase bēʾerkēkā, which is concerned with the monetary equivalence, “...the wrongdoer shall bring to the LORD as reparation an unblemished ram from the flock, at the established value240 in silver shekels according to the sanctuary shekel, as a reparation offering” (Lev. 5:15). Anderson states that unlike any other sacrifice, the animal of the 'ाśām could be converted into an equivalent value in silver241 However, Kiuchi argues against this possibility, affirming that, “As the ram is indispensable for expiation, it seems unlikely it is ‘convertible’ to money. Hence bēʾerkēkā should be rendered ‘valued’.”242 On this point, Milgrom

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238 Kiuchi, Leviticus, 112.
239 See Milgrom, Leviticus 1-16, 326. He explains that the value of the ram should be corresponded to the level of transgression. In other words, the greater the transgression, the greater the value of the ram to be offered.
240 Emphasis added.
242 See Kiuchi, Leviticus, 113. The term 'erkēkā occurs most frequently in Lev. 5 and 27 and once in Num. 18:16.
agrees with Kiuchi. He suggests that a better way to understand the phrase in question is that the value of the ram of the 'āšām should be a value equivalent to the guilt incurred. Nevertheless, Milgrom notes that this possible interpretation concerning monetary value is problematic as it would imply the priest would have to find a ram whose value would be exactly the value of the desecrated sancta.243

 Concerning value, what can be said with certainty about the 'āšām is that this is the only sacrifice which involves monetary restitution as a constituent element of the offering. The amount required is one-fifth of the value of the damage caused (Lev. 7:16). Milgrom notes that one-fifth is a small price to pay for causing sacrilege to the sanctum.244 The penalty of one-fifth of the value is a common administrative practice, which served to fund the expenses of the Temple, according to Levine.245 The explanation offered by Kiuchi is more comprehensive. He states that the offender pays the priest the estimated value of the damages plus a penalty of one-fifth of the estimated value. In other words, the offender pays 120% of the value of the damages.246 This restitution of the 20% penalty in addition to the value of the damage is explicit in the text (Lev. 6:5[5:24].

2. The intention of the 'āšām offering

The ambiguity in translating 'āšām is an indication of the challenge in discerning the intention of this sacrifice. Anderson states that the 'āšām is the most difficult sacrifice to

243 Milgrom, Leviticus 1-16, 326; Milgrom, Leviticus, 55.
244 Ibid., 328.
245 Levine, Leviticus: The JPS Torah Commentary, 31,192.
246 Kiuchi, Leviticus, 113.
understand, and he credits Milgrom with providing the most comprehensive study.²⁴⁷ Milgrom holds that the concept of guilt is associated with both the 'āšām and the ḥaṭṭāʾṯ, but in the 'āšām, there is a movement towards developing a moral conscience in the young nation who has been called to be a priestly people.²⁴⁸

The guilt awakened in the offender is connected to three very specific sets of transgressions for which the 'āšām is prescribed: (1) offenses against ‘the holy things of the LORD’—the sancta—(Lev. 5:14-16), (2) unwitting or suspected offenses against the holy things of the LORD (Lev. 5:17-19), and (3) offenses against the LORD by having offended neighbor, especially by having invoked an oath (Lev. 6:1-7[5:20-26]. Scholars have proposed two intentions or functions of the 'āšām in relation to the offenses mentioned.

a. Reparation – This is the only sacrifice with a clear instruction calling for reparation for specific offenses. The term translated as ‘make restitution’ or ‘repay’ is a conjugated form of the verb šalēm. The following are included within the range of meaning of this verb: ‘to make restitution’, ‘to pay’, ‘to finish’, ‘to repay’, ‘to complete’.²⁴⁹

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²⁴⁸ Milgrom, Leviticus, 51.
²⁴⁹ “šalēm – (šalēm),” BDB, 1022b

Nevertheless, reparation is prescribed only for two of the three sets of transgressions mentioned above (Lev. 5:16 and 6:5[5:24]. The instructions for the second set have a different formulation (Lev. 5:17-19). The similarities between this text and the instructions for the ḥattāʾt have proven to be a puzzle for exegetes, insofar as both are prescribed for sins committed unwittingly or unknowingly. The core of the difficulty lies in two Hebrew phrases: wēlōʾyāda – translated as ‘without knowing it’ or ‘though he does not know it’– (v. 17), and wēhû’ lōʾ yāda – translated as ‘unknowingly’, ‘he did not know’, or ‘unwittingly’– (v. 18). Anderson explains the distinction between the unwitting offences for which the ḥattāʾt is prescribed and those transgressions which necessitate the ṭāʾāšām. If the inadvertent sin is eventually known to the offender, the ḥattāʾt is required. However, if the unwitting sin is not made known to the offender, the ṭāʾāšām is prescribed.

Kiuchi notes that in the interpretation of many scholars, the lack of knowledge is in reference to the previous set of offenses, namely sacrilege against the sancta (Lev. 15-16).250 Contributing to the conversation, Levine adds that in rabbinic tradition it is held that the offender did not know for certain, but only suspected that he or she committed the transgression.251 Milgrom advocates that when someone experiences grief and attributes this suffering to an unknown offense against the sancta, reparation for the unknown transgression is prescribed and offered with the hope that the grief will diminish.252 Hamilton’s words present a concise summary which is helpful in clarifying the reparation dimension of the ṭāʾāšām,

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250 Kiuchi, Leviticus.
251 Levine, The JPS Torah Commentary: Leviticus, 32.
252 Milgrom, Leviticus, 55.
The common denominator for this sacrifice is that it covers those cases in which the sin committed results in another party suffering some kind of loss in regard to rightful ownership. The wrong or deprived party may be God himself (the point of the two cases given in 5:14-16 and 5:17-19) or another human being (6:1-4[5:20-23]). For this reason [the loss of rightful ownership] restitution, plus 20 percent, is at the heart of this sacrifice.253

b. **Expiation** – Milgrom proposes that the Levitical corpus presents three criteria in order for expiation to be effected through sacrifice: the unintentional nature of the sin, the remorse of the offender, and the reparation made by the offender.254 However, scholars agree that the sins named in Lev. 6:1-4[5:20-23] are deliberate transgressions.255 Even if atonement or expiation for deliberate sins is not possible in the theology of Leviticus, Milgrom explains that ’āšām is the exception. This is the only offering that can effect expiation of intentional offenses.256

Blood is the instrument of expiation in the ’āšām as it in in the haṭṭāʾ. The blood rite through which atonement is effected is not mentioned in Lev. 6:1-4[5:20-23] which mention deliberate transgressions. However, it occurs in Lev. 7:1-2. The text prescribes the throwing of blood on the sacrificial altar, and in this regard, it is similar to the blood rite in the haṭṭāʾ offered by the ruler and the commoner. Kiuchi observes that the uniqueness in the atonement process of intentional sins through the ’āšām rests on the admission of the offense and subsequent confession.257 According to F. Gorman, it is in the acknowledging that the actions committed have offended God and neighbor, that the transgressor actualizes the interior contrition without which

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255 The sins named in this pericope include robbery, misappropriation of property, swearing an oath falsely, and denying an offense.  
expiation for deliberate sins is not possible. Hamilton notes that situating the confession of the offense before offering the ʿāšām is essential. As it is in this manner that the deliberate sin can be considered inadvertent sin and thus eligible for expiation. He emphasizes the importance of contrition as he quotes Milgrom, “It is not the deliberate sinner who is excluded from sacrificial expiation, but the unrepentant sinner.”

F. Instructions Concerning the Order of Multiple Sacrifices

Lev. 1-7 provides instructions concerning the elements to be offered as sacrifice, the ritual actions involved in the offering, as well as occasions which mandate offerings, as in the case of the expiatory sacrifices. However, these chapters are silent concerning the sequence to be followed when multiple sacrifices are offered, such as for the consecration of a priest, purification rituals, and annual feasts.

F. Gorman notes that Lev. 8-9 are narratives about one-time inaugural ceremonies: Lev. 8 is concerned with the ordination of the Aaronic priests while Lev. 9 narrates the inauguration of the sacrificial system for the nation. Nevertheless, the sequence described in these chapters is helpful in understanding the pattern present in multiple offerings. Lev. 8 and 9 describe the following sequence: first the ḥattāʾ, followed by the ʿōlā, and lastly the šēlāmîm.

The ritual for those with skin diseases is prescribed in Lev. 11. They are required to present sacrifices on the eighth day after the ritual washings have been completed. They offer the ʿāšām sacrifice, then the minḥā and lastly the šēlāmîm. The instructions for those with genital discharges

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258 Gorman, Divine Presence and Community, 44.
are found in Lev. 15. On the eighth day after the washing ritual, they are prescribed to offer a ḥaṭṭāʿ sacrifice followed by the ʿōlā offering.

The rituals for Yôm Kippûr are so complex and unique that an entire chapter is devoted to them. They are prescribed in Lev. 16 and reveal the sequence of ḥaṭṭāʿ followed by ʿōlā for the priest as well as for the nation. Furthermore, Hamilton points out that additional information concerning purification offerings, containing the same sequence, is found in Numbers.261

When multiple sacrifices are offered, Anderson comments that the ḥaṭṭāʿ is offered first so that the sancta can be purified to receive the rest of the sacrifices.262 Aptly, Hamilton remarks that the ḥaṭṭāʿ always occupies the first place. He explains, “The point is that sin has to be dealt with first. To talk about consecration and fellowship with God while ignoring unconfessed sin is a priori impossible and impermissible.”263 The covenantal relationship has to be reconciled before the joyful celebration can take place.

2.4. Conclusions

Much debate has taken place concerning the intention and ultimate purpose of the ḥaṭṭāʿ and the ʿāšām. Two possibilities were presented for each of these sacrifices. After examining the two intentions of the ḥaṭṭāʿ, it can be concluded that although they are distinct, they are not mutually exclusive. Purification focuses on the decontamination of the sancta and does not have a direct effect on the individual. Expiation or atonement has a direct effect of forgiving the person. When the sancta are purified, the presence of God in the sanctuary is safeguarded, which then

enables the possibility of communion between God and the people. Likewise, the two intentions of the 'āšām reflect different purposes, which do not oppose but complement each other. When reparation is made, those offended receive restitution for damages, however it does not forgive the offender. Expiation, in either the 'āšām or the ḥattā’t, effects forgiveness, so that individuals can enjoy non-fractured communion with God. In either case the telos of the offering is restoration of communion with God.

It is imperative that the ritual actions of sacrifice be examined, reflected, and appropriated in a profound manner. What is at the core of sacrifice in the texts of the Old Testament? Considering a hermeneutical triad, whereby the use of specific language helps understand the text in its historical background so that the theological meaning can be discerned more clearly, the following conclusions can be offered:

1. **Language** – The terms used to refer to sacrifice are varied, both in the ancient Hebrew text, as well as in the ancient LXX, Vulgate, and also the modern languages. It seems most appropriate to expand our linguistic imagination so that when we speak of sacrifice, the terms ‘offering’ and ‘gift’ can also be used.

2. **Material used for the Sacrifice** – The contextual, historical analysis of the sacrificial system of ancient Israel has revealed a practice that included blood offerings as well as bloodless offerings. Although the slaughtering of animals is prominent in four of the five sacrifices, other elements were also gifts to the Lord. There were allowances made for the poor, so that even when they could not afford an animal from the herd or flock, they could offer birds, or even grain. Whatever the material offered, it did call for a giving of a part of what
one owns, and it can even be said, for a giving of what is of a certain value to the offerer. Therefore, sacrifice is a ritualized action that provides the template for the gift of self.

3. Intention for offering the Sacrifice – The assessment of the intentions behind each of the sacrifices of ancient Israel provide an understanding regarding the function effected by the sacrifice. It is in answering the question why is sacrifice offered? that one can find the theological implications. Is sacrifice offered simply because instructions for a ritual are given? Or is there a deeper meaning to the ritual? A word study – albeit brief – is helpful in understanding the historical background which ultimately leads to a theological message.

The intention and purpose for offering sacrifice are multiple. Sacrifices can be offered as a free gift of love, as a votive offer, as a sign of total surrender, as purification, atonement, or reparation. The overall conclusion concerning the function of sacrifice can only be understood in the context of the covenant, which is first revealed in the Torah. It is here that God reveals his foundational design for humanity and for the world. The covenant between God and Israel is not about an exchange of material goods, it is about a relationship of communion, a relationship of love between the two parties. At times the communion is fragmented, wounded, and it needs to be reconciled. At other times, the relationship is flourishing. In either case, there is reason to celebrate the covenantal relationship. While not all sacrifices are atoning or expiatory, however, I argue that all offering of sacrifice is for the sake of communion. Some sacrifices are restorative, some are celebratory. All are gifts of love.
CHAPTER 3 – PROPHETIC CRITIQUE OF SACRIFICE

3.1. Introduction

Having explored the meaning of sacrifice in the Torah and within the context of the Mosaic covenant, this chapter considers other dimensions of sacrifice which are revealed in the next section of the Old Testament, namely the Prophetic Books. The Torah laid the foundation for understanding the relationship into which God was inviting humanity. It is precisely in the context of the covenantal relationship that biblical sacrifice can be best understood.

The Levitical code outlined the ritual actions which would enable the Israelites to express something about the state of the covenantal relationship. When Israelites had been faithful to the covenant and desired to express gratitude, they would offer sacrifice as thanksgiving: the tôdâ. At other times, they pledged their re-commitment to the relationship and offered a sacrifice which would express total surrender: the ōlâ. When they failed to stay faithful to the covenant in one way or another, they offered sacrifice to atone and to be purified: the hattā’ī. Some sacrifices seem to have had a dual dimension, i.e. atoning and fellowship. In many instances, the biblical scholars are still not in agreement about the precise purpose of certain sacrifices. What seems clear, however, is that the Israelites would follow the Levitical instructions as carefully as they could, but it was up to God to accept the offering. Gerhard von Rad summarized this clearly when he stated,

Sacrifice was, and remained, an event which took place in a sphere lying outside of man and his spirituality: man could as it were only give it the external impulse; its actual operation was not subject to the control of his capacity or capabilities: all this rested with Yahweh, who had the power to accept the offering and let it achieve its purpose. But if sacrifice was a cultic event of this objective kind, then there must also have been in Israel formative concepts connected with it. Taken as a whole, the formative concepts are the following, which could of course in turn be
differentiated in different ways: the ideas of gift, of communion, and of atonement.264

But readers of the Old Testament recognize that ritual sacrifice also became the object of prophetic critique. As typified in the words of Isa. 1:11,

What do I care for the multitude of your sacrifices?
says the LORD.
I have had enough of whole-burnt rams
and fat of fatlings;
In the blood of calves, lambs, and goats
I find no pleasure

This chapter focuses on the prophetic critique of the ritual sacrifices. In order to provide the context for this critique, the chapter begins by providing an overview of the overall mission of the prophets in the context of the Mosaic and Davidic covenant traditions. With that background in place, the chapter continues with a presentation of the voice of selected prophets who offer a critique of sacrifice in different periods of the history of Israel: the early united monarchy, the divided kingdom, the exile, and lastly with the return from exile.

The discussion of the prophetic critique is critical for the understanding of the connection between the external dimension of the ritual and the internal disposition of the worshiper. The prophets illustrate the need for authenticity in the life of the one offering sacrifice. They raise an awareness concerning those elements which are truly essential in sacrificial offerings.

3.2. The Identity and Mission of the Prophets in the Context of the Covenant

Prophets are mediators between God and humanity. In general, Christian tradition holds the prophets to be God’s messengers who uttered prophecies, which would ultimately be fulfilled

by Christ. While it is true that many prophecies are messianic, in the interpretative tradition of the Hebrew Bible, prophets are people chosen by God and called to be teachers of the Torah. Gowan states that they are theologians charged with the mission of instructing the Israelites on the centrality of the covenantal relationship in their lives and reminding them to remain faithful to the covenant.265

Prophets are summoned by God to be his spokespersons. They speak with authority and deliver a message that responds to particular situations of crisis. At the same time, their message also triggers a crisis. Brueggemann explains,

They [prophets] characteristically perceive their time and place as a circumstance of crisis, a context in which dangers are great and life-or-death decisions must be made. Or perhaps it is better to say that the appearance and utterance of the prophets evokes a crisis circumstance where none had been perceived previously. That is, the prophets not only respond to crisis, but by their abrupt utterance, they generate crisis.266

How is it then that the prophetic message, considered to function as crisis intervention and crisis trigger, results in a critique of the cult? The prophets respond to political, social, ethical, and religious crises. Political crises arose from conflict with surrounding kingdoms, while social and ethical crises occurred when social justice was lacking. Religious crises resulted from idolatrous practices and also from offering sacrifice simply as a ritual practice. In other words, sacrifice offered solely as an external ritual action constitutes false worship. An individual who offers sacrifice merely to follow the prescription of the ritual fails the covenant on two levels: first, there is a lack of authenticity in the relationship with God; second (and related to the first), there is lack


266 Brueggemann, Theology of the Old Testament, 624.
of justice in the relationship with neighbor. Rowley states, “…the abundance of victims on the altar cannot atone for men in a society that tolerates theft, adultery, and slander.”

Although there was a time in the history of biblical interpretation, when the prevailing thought was that prophets were opposed to cultic sacrifices entirely, modern scholarship nuances this interpretation. Peterson explains that

It was fashionable to treat the prophets as essentially critics, even opponents of the cult, and to view them as the only source of everything that was praiseworthy in the faith of Israel…There are certainly numerous passages in the writing prophets condemning priests and people for their corruption of the sacrificial system. These deal with the introduction of pagan ideas and practices into Israelite worship, or the attempt to worship other gods whilst still claiming to serve the LORD, or the hypocrisy of engaging in the sacrificial ritual without genuine repentance and a desire to live in obedience to God’s moral law.

A more accurate understanding about the relationship of the prophets to the cult is that they are not opposed to the cult in general, but rather to the cult which is simply carried out in a formal, yet inwardly empty manner. In other words, what the prophets opposed was abuses of the cult. Childs explains, “Many of their well-known attacks on sacrifice and ritual (Amos 4:4ff.; Isa. 1:10ff.; Micah 6:6ff.; Jer. 7:1ff.) appear now to be ad hoc formulations within an invective and directed to certain abuses, but were not ideologically based on an anti-cultic principle.”

Interestingly, Walther Eichrodt suggests that perhaps the practice of offering sacrifice perfunctorily could be associated with the attributes of the individuals, who were responsible for the cultic actions, i.e. the Levitical priests. The prophets were not directly involved with the actual ritual, but rather observe, from a distance, as it were, the signs of the times and offer a critique of

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what is not right with the rite. Eichrodt makes a noteworthy distinction between the office of the Levitical priest and that of the prophet. The distinction which he highlights goes precisely to the root of the problem: ritual sacrifice performed in a manner void of commitment to the relationship with God. The Mosaic covenant is first and foremost about the relationship which God makes with Israel. The sacrifice is the instrument divinely appointed as the means to restore or celebrate the relationship.

Eichrodt notes that the prophet has a ‘charismatic’ quality to his office, which the Levitical priest does not. The rūaḥ of the LORD called the prophet and imbued the prophet with charisms. These charisms made it possible for the prophet to challenge both king and priest and instruct them anew on the centrality of the covenant vis-à-vis actions performed by individuals. In Eichrodt words,

King and priest were united in a common interest in the stability and continuity of settled forms of community life…Moreover the king’s religious pretensions to being the fount of absolute authority in his role as son of God, and to concentrating the whole life of the nation on the service of himself, could be more easily combined with the religious practice of the priesthood that with that of the prophets. All that the former required was a nominal subjection to the God whom it represented, and a guarantee that the cult would be sumptuously maintained. As a result of this close association with the political power, and a consequent dependence upon it even in the religious sphere, the priesthood came more and more to stand at the opposite pole from the prophetic movement.270

Even though the prophet was among the leaders of Israel, alongside the king and the priest, Merrill observes that, “…rather than standing within the circles of established religion and politics, the prophets stood outside as correctors or advisers. Even so they were not viewed as opponents

to the temple and state, but as spokesmen of God who were called to speak words of blessing, encouragement, advice, rebuke, or judgment to people, priest, and king as the need required.”

In essence, the prophets were not against rulers, commoners, or institutions. Their mission was to bring God’s word to the people and to remind them of their covenantal call as chosen by God to be a holy nation and a kingdom of priests.

To be sure, the prophet was not critiquing the priesthood per se, nor was he critiquing the action of the ritual itself. Unfortunately, as Anderson notes, often scholars have dismissed the entire concept of biblical sacrifice in the Old Testament. Particularly, he indicates that in Christian scholarship, the prophetic critique of sacrifice has taken center stage and often it has been interpreted as questioning the relevance of many precepts of the Mosaic Law.

What the prophet was critiquing was the ‘power’ assigned to the ritual. The prophet emerged as someone who, being completely dependent on and inspired by God, could distinguish between the effect of human actions and God’s actions. In Eichrodt’s observation,

This personal element in man’s relationship with God is also implied quite essentially by the emphasis on the prophet as charismatically endowed in contrast to those who were merely religious functionaries. The individual who belongs to the priestly class is committed to the traditional stock-in-trade of the whole system, and so tends to experience relationship with God more as matter of mastering a whole series of rules and ordinances and institutions, an essentially technical process demanding no readiness for personal decision…By contrast, in the case of the prophets the coming and going of the endowment and operations of the spirit ensured that their fundamental feeling should be one of constant dependence on a divine power quite outside human control.

271 Merrill, Kingdom of Priests, 379.
Because of this utter reliance on God, the prophet could follow and enter into the actions of a prescribed ritual, while maintaining the primacy of the covenant relationship. Therefore, the prophet was able to discern what was lacking in the simple performance of a ritual and the danger with assigning atoning power to the ritual alone.

A canonical approach to interpreting Scripture undoubtedly reveals that the priestly and prophetic understanding of sacrifice are related to each other, and yet distinct. While it is true that the Torah presents atonement as one of the purposes for offering sacrifice, this effect is not to be understood as a magical enterprise at the hands of the Levitical priest. From a different context, the Prophetic corpus reveal a period in the history of Israel, when sin had corrupted every fiber of the life of the nation such that sacrifices could no longer effect the sacrificial atoning function presented in Leviticus. Brevard Childs summarizes this well as he explains,

On the one hand, the priestly institution provided a means of atoning for sins committed within the covenant. It was not a superstitious form of *ex opere operato*, but a profoundly theological interpretation of atonement as a gracious means of access into the presence of God which sin had disrupted. On the other hand, the prophets were dealing with sins of high-handed rebellion which could no longer be encompassed within the framework of the covenant, but undermined its very existence.274

The material presented thus far has situated the covenant as the context for understanding the prophets and their mission. Since the connection of king and prophet was also noted, it is important to address specific distinctive points about prophecy in the pre-monarchical Mosaic covenant in contrast to prophecy in the Davidic covenant.

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274 Childs, *Old Testament Theology in a Canonical Context*, 170-171
A. Prophecy in the Mosaic Covenant Tradition

The Mosaic covenant is a conditional covenant. Obedience to God’s voice is the condition upon which the people’s faithfulness to the covenant will be judged. The identity of the Israel nation is dependent on their obedience to God, as Brueggemann explains, “The constituting of Torah-Israel is, from the outset, marked by a summons to obedience that has a conditional quality to it. Yahweh’s first utterance to Moses at Sinai culminates in a radical call to obedience.”

4You have seen what I did to the Egyptians, and how I bore you on eagles’ wings and brought you to myself. 5Now therefore, if you obey my voice and keep my covenant, you shall be my treasured possession out of all the peoples. Indeed, the whole earth is mine, but you shall be for me a priestly kingdom and a holy nation. These are the words that you shall speak to the Israelites” (Exod. 19:4-6).

According to the Mosaic covenant, the people’s faithfulness or infidelity to the covenant, would result in blessings or curses, respectively. Deuteronomy, in particular, outlines these blessings and curses (cf. Deut. 28). Freedom was given to the Israelites so that they can freely enter into relationship with God. Freedom, however, can be misused. Freedom can lead to

276 Emphasis added to focus the reader’s attention to the condition of obedience, which is central to the Mosaic covenant. Additionally, the phrases indicated the new identity that the nation would have as a covenantal people.
277 The consequences of obedience or disobedience to the precepts of the covenant have been discussed at length by many scholars. Among the many sources which present this topic, the following can be consulted: Childs, *Old Testament Theology in a Canonical Context*, 226-227; Merrill, *Kingdom of Priests*, 184-185. A full treatment of covenant theology is beyond the scope of the present work. Nevertheless, in order to discuss a biblical theology of sacrifice, it is essential to be familiar with key points of the covenant in the history of Israel. Therefore a very concise presentation of these key points is offered here.
fulfillment and blessing if it is chosen to love, to show mercy, and to live in justice. However, freedom can be filled with chaos if it in exercising it, God, the source of all freedom is forgotten, and freedom is chosen for hatred, to act without compassion, and to oppress others. In the last of his three discourses, Moses invites the Israelites to make a choice: life or death,

> I call heaven and earth today to witness against you: I have set before you life and death, the blessing and the curse. Choose life, then, that you and your descendants may live, by loving the LORD, your God, obeying his voice, and holding fast to him. For that will mean life for you, a long life for you to live on the land which the LORD swore to your ancestors, to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, to give to them (Deut. 30:19-20).

The choice between life and death, which Moses presents, is a consequence of the choice between obedience and disobedience (Deut. 30:15-20). His words illustrate the importance of obeying God’s voice so that freedom may be lived for the purpose for which God intended it: to live as free covenantal people. Some of the prophets who critiqued the practice of sacrifice, did so from the perspective of the Mosaic covenant and challenged commoner, priest, and king to use the freedom they had received –as a gift from God– to obey God’s word and stay faithful to the covenant.

B. Prophecy in the Davidic Covenant Tradition

Unlike the Mosaic covenant, which is conditional, the Davidic covenant is unconditional. In fact, one of the characteristics of the covenant with David is the unconditional promise of steadfast love (cf. 2 Sam. 7:8-16; Ps. 89).

> When your days have been completed and you rest with your ancestors, I will raise up your offspring after you, sprung from your loins, and I will establish his kingdom. He it is who shall build a house for my name, and I will establish his royal throne forever. I will be a father to him, and he shall be a son to me. If he does wrong,
I will reprove him with a human rod and with human punishments; but I will not withdraw my favor (ḥeseq) from him as I withdrew it from Saul who was before you. Your house and your kingdom are firm forever before you; your throne shall be firmly established forever (2 Sam. 7:12-16).

This covenant is not conditioned by the behavior and obedience of the people. It is a covenant of promise solely dependent on God’s grace. Nevertheless, there is one element of conditionality in the Davidic covenant. Insightfully, Anderson notes, “…the influence of the Mosaic covenant is apparent as evident in the conditional ‘if’: the king is subject to God’s law (cf. Deut. 17:18-20). Furthermore, as Anderson explains, the interaction of the two covenants can be evident in that, “God’s unconditional covenant with David is qualified by the conditional ‘if’ of the Mosaic covenant, so that if kings misuse the power of their office, thereby ignoring God’s ‘decrees,’ they will be punished. If a king fails to follow in the way of the LORD, he will be chastised (2 Sam. 7:14); however, the promise of the steadfast love will never be withdrawn (2 Sam. 7:15).

The two institutions centralized in Jerusalem, kingship and worship in the Temple, were new in respect to the Mosaic covenant, and they became symbols to express the relationship between God and Israel. These two institutions would often become the focal points of accusations by the prophets, who critiqued the practice of sacrifice after the Davidic covenant.

279 Anderson, Contours of Old Testament Theology, 207.
280 Ibid., 241.
281 Hebrew tradition holds that the Temple was built on the pattern of the heavenly sanctuary. This creates provides a connection between the temple and the cosmos. The Temple is a miniature sanctuary of the cosmos, or a micro-cosmos. Likewise, the entire universe is considered as a cosmic scale temple, or a macro-temple. This interconnection is operative in many of the prophetic messages concerning worship and sacrifice. See Anderson, Contours of Old Testament Theology, 204. He explains the role of the Temple in cosmic symbolism: “...the institutions of temple and monarchy are cosmological symbols that usher us into the spacious dimension of the cosmic order. The primary axis is vertical, the relation between heaven and earth, the cosmic order in relation to the social order, in contrast to the horizontal plane of history that, as in the Abrahamic or Mosaic covenant, moves from promise toward fulfillment. In adopting this pattern of symbolization, Israel has, so to speak, ‘entered the cosmos.’
The prophetic messages were directed to any and all who did not practice authentic worship. They challenged either the king, who was abusing his office, or the king, as well as the commoner, and the priest who worshipped in a sanctuary other than the Jerusalem Temple or anyone who worshipped in vain.

The distinction between these two covenants also distinguishes their unique characteristics. However, by no means does this mean that the two covenants are in opposition to each other, nor does it mean that prophets who critiqued sacrifice in the context of one covenant were in complete juxtaposition to those who made the critique in the context of the other covenant. On the contrary, in spite of some differences, there are many points of connection and continuity in both covenants. Since relationship is at the heart of both covenants, Brueggemann brilliantly explains that, “…if this relationship is indeed one of passionate commitment, as it surely is, it is undoubtedly the case (by way of analogy) that every serious, intense, primary relationship has within it dimensions of conditionality and unconditionality that play in different ways in different circumstances.”

Therefore, the prophetic critique of sacrifice needs to be understood in the context of the continuity and tension between both covenants.

3.3. Samuel – Monarchical Period (11th–10th c., BC)

Classified as an Historical book in the Christian canon, 1 Samuel, belongs to the Nevi’im in the Hebrew canon, where it is considered one of ‘Former Prophets. In the Christian tradition, Samuel is not classified as one of the classic or literary prophets, rather, he is known as a pre-literary prophet. Samuel has a unique place in the history of Israel as he was the instrument

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which God used to transition the Israelites from the period of the confederation of tribes to the period of the monarchy. Following his call narrative (1 Sam. 3:1-18), Samuel is called a prophet (1 Sam. 3:20), and was commissioned by God to anoint Saul (1 Sam. 9:15 – 10:1) as the first ruler (*nagid*)\(^{283}\) of Israel (1 Sam. 9:16, 10:1).

Under the Mosaic law, there were provisions made for Israel to be ruled by a king, whom the LORD would appoint when they entered the land. The king would be chosen by God and he would rule within the parameters of the limitations set forth in the Torah (Deut. 17:14-20). Saul was a Benjaminite,\(^{284}\) whose leadership ushered in a new time in the socio-political life of Israel. Nevertheless, the Mosaic covenant was still operative in his time.

1 Samuel 13:1-14; 15:1-23

Scripture does not present Saul as the model leader. This first *nagid* of Israel had to defend Israel against hostile neighboring nations. He was an apt military leader, but became envious of David (1 Sam. 18:10-16). However, his greatest flaw was his lack of obedience. Specifically, 1 Sam. provides two instances of disobedience by Saul. The first incident is narrated in 1 Sam. 13:1-14. This narrative is connected to the instructions which Saul received in 1 Sam. 10:8, “Now go down ahead of me to Gilgal, for I shall come down to you, to offer burnt offerings and to sacrifice communion offerings. Wait seven days until I come to you; I shall then tell you what you must do”. Saul had engaged in battle with the Philistines and when he arrived at Gilgal, he offered

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\(^{283}\) תֶּן גִיד, *BDB*, 617d. The Hebrew *nagid* is translated as ruler, leader, commander, prince, captain

\(^{284}\) When considering the unity of the biblical message, Saul’s lineage would elicit a certain uncertainty as to the quality of his leadership, for when Jacob spoke his last words to his sons, he told them that the scepter would not depart from the tribe of Judah (Gen. 49:10).
sacrifice without waiting for Samuel, as he had been instructed previously (1 Sam 13:8-12).\textsuperscript{285}

Concerning this act of disobedience, Francesca Murphy explains,

Samuel as a prophet is God’s intermediary. If he [Samuel] said that warfare was not to be initiated without him, and the burnt offering was the immediate antecedent of the call to attack, then Saul had decided to conduct war without the presence of God in his spokesman. He had decided to conduct “godless war.” Saul was setting himself above the word of the LORD, as personified by Samuel and his instruction.\textsuperscript{286}

Saul asked for burnt offerings (‘ûlû) and communion offerings (šĕlāmîm). Given the context of imminent war, it could be expected that the šĕlāmîm was probably a votive offering (neder) offering. Concerning the ‘ûlû, Milgrom suggests that it was offered to entreat favor from the LORD.\textsuperscript{287} The sacrifice offered by Saul, in this case, seems to have the requisite intention and ritual performance. Nevertheless, sacrifice is not to be offered as a mechanical action disconnected from obedience. Thus, since Saul did not wait for Samuel, as instructed, his offering is blemished by his disobedience.

The second incident of disobedience occurs in 1 Sam. 15. The chapter opens with Samuel reminding Saul that his anointing came from God and that he must obey (listen) to the voice of God: “Samuel said to Saul: ‘It was I the LORD sent to anoint you king over his people Israel. Now,

\begin{enumerate}
\item[285] He waited seven days, until the appointed time Samuel had set, but Samuel did not come, and the army deserted Saul. He then said, “\textit{Bring me the burnt offering and communion offerings!”} Then he sacrificed the burnt offering. \textsuperscript{9} As he finished sacrificing the burnt offering, there came Samuel! So Saul went out toward him in order to greet him. \textsuperscript{10} Samuel asked him, “What have you done?” Saul explained: “When I saw that the army was deserting me and you did not come on the appointed day, and that the Philistines were assembling at Michmash, \textsuperscript{11} I said to myself, ‘Now the Philistines will come down against me at Gilgal, and I have not yet sought the LORD’s blessing.’ So I thought I should sacrifice the burnt offering (1 Sam. 13:8-12).

\begin{quote}
וַיַָּ֖עַּל ה עֹל ָֽה׃
א ל ַ֔יָ֖ה ע ל  הָ֖וְה שְל מִָּ֑ים
יֵֹ֣אמֶר ש אָ֔וּל הֵַּ֣שוּ

\end{quote}

\textsuperscript{9} Francesca Aran Murphy, \textit{1 Samuel, Brazos Theological Commentary on the Bible} (Grand Rapids, MI: Brazos Press, 2010), 111.

\textsuperscript{286} Milgrom, \textit{Leviticus 1-16}, 175.
therefore, listen\textsuperscript{288} to the message of the LORD” (15:1). The instructions given to Saul this time concern the attack against the Amalekites and the complete destruction of all spoils of war.\textsuperscript{289} After defeating the enemy, Saul destroyed only that which had little or no value. However, he spared their king and the best of the herd, the cattle, and the flock, and all that was good (15:9).

Saul’s decision to save some lives, rather than to exterminate all, has been interpreted, at times, as a virtuous action. After all, he chose life over death. Nevertheless, as Murphy affirms, “The drama of this text is the question of Saul’s obedience to God’s instruction.”\textsuperscript{290} As the story unfolds, Samuel met Saul after the battle and realized that Saul had not obeyed. The narrative gives details that raise the question of individual guilt vis-à-vis collective guilt. Firstly, 15:9 indicates that Saul and the people spared King Agag as well as the animals, then 15:15 presents Saul declaring that the people spared the best of the animals to offer sacrifice. When questioned further by Samuel in 1 Sam. 15:19, Saul insisted that his actions were all obedient, but he squarely placed the blame of disobedience on the people (1 Sam. 15:20-21), albeit on account of offering sacrifice.

At this point, the words of the prophet Samuel are clearest about God’s preferential desire for obedience to his word, not simply the ritual action of sacrifice,

\begin{quote}
But Samuel said:
\textit{“Does the \textsc{lord} delight in \textbf{burnt offerings and sacrifices} as much as in \textbf{obedience to the \textsc{lord’s} command}?}

\textbf{Obedience is better than sacrifice,}

\textit{to listen, better than the fat of rams.}
\end{quote}

\textsuperscript{288} See \textit{BDB}, 1033b; 1116b. The Hebrew term \textsuperscript{279} שלם\textsuperscript{280} \textsc{šāmā}’ can be translated as \textit{to obey, to hear, or to listen} (\textsuperscript{279} שלם\textsuperscript{280} \textsc{shema} in Aramaic).

\textsuperscript{289} The text of 1 Sam 15:2, “Thus says the \textsc{lord} of hosts: I will punish what Amalek did to the Israelites when he barred their way as they came up from \textsc{egypt}.” provides additional information which is helpful in understanding the context for the instruction which Saul received. The background concerns the narrative of Exodus 17:8-14 when the Amalekites attacked the Israelites at Rephidim and then the \textsc{lord} promised to erase the bad memory of Amalek.

\textsuperscript{290} Murphy, \textit{1 Samuel}, 134.
For a sin of divination is rebellion, and arrogance, the crime of idolatry. Because you have rejected the word of the LORD, the LORD in turn has rejected you as king (1 Sam. 15:22-23) [emphasis added].

Although the offering of sacrifice has its place in helping humans express something about their relationship with God, McCarter explains that they can easily become hypocritical actions, “What Yahweh requires is diligent obedience, without which the prescribed acts of the cult, ordinarily good and proper in themselves, become vain deeds of hypocrisy.”

Furthermore, this indictment, poetically presents Saul’s disobedience as an act of rebellion and his arrogance and stubbornness as a sin equal to committing idolatry. As Klein emphasizes, the simple performance of ritual sacrifices is inferior to the obeying of God’s voice, “The accusation is further expanded by labeling disobedience as rebellion (cf. Deut. 9:23 and Josh. 1:18) and equating such rebellion with the sin of divination. Divination is consistently prohibited in the Old Testament.”

1 Sam. 15 presents nagid and people as failing to respond in obedience. In one sense, the lack of obedience is both individual and communal. Yet, given Saul’s role as their leader, the greater responsibility is placed on him. On this point, Murphy comments, “The idea of collective guilt is commonplace throughout the Old Testament: but so is the idea of representative guilt. The two are similar but not identical: collective guilt entails that a group is in it together: representative guilt entails that one person is guilty on behalf of the others.” All deceived themselves in thinking that they were doing the right thing by saving the best of the flock for sacrifice. Their

293 Murphy, *1 Samuel*, 138.
rationalization of their actions is symptomatic of a deeper problem, namely that of separation from God which cannot be remedied simply by the offering of a sacrifice. With precise rhetoric, Murphy explains,

Rather than nail him [Saul] on a cultic detail, Samuel is bringing him back to the truth of the event, by showing him that his circumlocution, switching destruction into sacrifice, was disobedience to the “word of the LORD.” By rejecting God’s word, Saul has separated his human freedom, as chief, from the divine freedom… Saul “feared the people, and obeyed their voice” because he was too “small in his own eyes” to grasp the powerful potential of his human freedom and unite it to God’s freedom.294

3.4. Amos, Hosea, First Isaiah – Divided Kingdom (8th c. ,BC)

The division of the Kingdom, which occurred following Solomon’s reign, in the latter part of the tenth century, caused not only a divided leadership, but also a decentralized worship. At the onset of the division, Jeroboam I, the first leader of the northern Kingdom made two calves of gold and placed them in the ancient shrines of Dan and Bethel, thus enabling worship at places other than the Temple in Jerusalem (1 Kgs. 12:25-33). The inhabitants of the southern kingdom, whose first leader was Rehoboam, Solomon’s son, were victims of increased forced labor as well as other social injustices. During the ninth century, worship of Baal, especially in the North, was rampant and the abuses of the people at the hands of the ruling monarch continued (1 Kgs. 21:1-16).

During the eighth century, the divided kingdom faced unique realities that continued to pose a threat to their relationship with God and neighbor. Idolatry was a sin common to the north and the south. Jeroboam II was the king in the north for approximately forty years (786-746) and during his reign, many enjoyed increased material prosperity at the expense of the oppression of the lower classes (2 Kgs. 14:23-29). In the south, the kings and the people, instead of trusting in

294 Murphy, 1 Samuel, 144.
the LORD, turned to foreign alliances for protection against political enemies (2 Kgs. 16:1-20). In this context that the prophets Amos, Hosea, and Isaiah delivered their message. Even though their message concerned various themes, this work will focus only on selected passages which addressed the offering of sacrifice.

A. Amos 5:21-27 – righteousness and right relationship

Amos, a man from the southern village of Tekoa, was called by God to be a prophet in the north. However, his message did not concern exclusively those in the northern kingdom. In the first two chapters, Amos uttered messages of judgement against the nations: Damascus (Arameans) (1:3-5), Gaza (Philistines) (1:6-8), Tyre (Phoenicians) (1:9-10), Edom (1:11-12), Ammon (1:13-15), Moab (2:2-3) as well as against Judah (2:4-5) and Israel (2:6-16). Amos 3 begins with a reminder to Israel of the gift of freedom they received and their election as a chosen people, and then turns to denunciations of many transgressions. Amos 4 consists mainly of oracles of punishment to Israel, and Amos 5 presents the prophet lamenting for the sins of Israel. It is in the context of this lament that the following pericope appears,

5:21 I hate, I despise your feasts,  
I take no pleasure in your solemnities.

22 Even though you bring me  
your burnt offerings (עֹלָ֛וֹת) and grain offerings (מִנְּחֹתֵ ֹ֖ו)
I will not accept them;  
Your stall-fed communion offering (שִֶ֥֑לֶם),
I will not look upon them.

23 Take away from me  
your noisy songs;  
The melodies of your harps,  
I will not listen to them.

24 Rather let justice (מִשְּפִ֑ט) surge like waters,  
and righteousness (צְּדָקָה) like an unfailing stream.

25 Did you bring me sacrifices (הַּזְּב ֶ֑חָים) and grain offerings (מִנְּחֵַ֨ה)  
for forty years in the desert, O house of Israel?
Yet you will carry away Sukuth, your king, and Kaiwan, your star-image, your gods that you have made for yourselves, 

As I exile you beyond Damascus, says the LORD, whose name is the God of hosts (Amos 5:21-27).

In the verses immediately preceding this pericope (5:7-20), Amos uttered an anguished speech of the reality facing Israel. The Day of the LORD, which was anticipated to be a day of the LORD’s great victory over the nations, would now be a day of judgment on Israel for their transgressions. Their manner of offering sacrifices, while they carried their lives with blatant disregard for others, rendered their sacrifices unacceptable to God. The verbs hate (šānê) and despise (mā’as) are strong terms which communicate intensity in disgust and rejection of that which has provoked the feeling, namely the ritual formalism (5:21). Reflecting on the language which describes the LORD’s feelings, Rabbi Heschel explains,

It was not only inequity that had aroused the anger of the LORD; it was also piety, upon which His words fell like a thunderbolt. Sacrifice and ritual were regarded as the way that leads to the Creator. The men and institutions dedicated to sacrificial worship were powerful and revered…We are ready to judge a ritual act on its own merit. Properly performed, its value is undisputed. Yet, the prophet speaks with derision of those who continue ritual with inequity.295

Sacrifices, even when following the specified ritual formula, are not substitute for ethical conduct. What God desires is judgment/justice (mišpāṭ) and righteousness (ṣēdāqā) (5:24).296


296 The term מִשְׁפָּט (mišpāṭ) can either be translated as judgment or justice. In either case, it has a legal connotation. The LXX translated this term as κρίμα, which means judgment, or punishment.

The term צְדָקָה (ṣēdāqā) can either be translated as righteousness or justice. It has the connotation of virtuosity, or being in right-relationship. The LXX translated this term as δικαιοσύνη, which means righteousness, God’s action of putting man in right-relationship with himself.
The righteousness should be continuous, like a stream, not intermittent. Some scholars have proposed that mišpāṭ and šēdāqā are used synonymously in this passage. Although that is plausible, it is also reasonable to posit that mišpāṭ speaks of the divine judgment as a result of the empty ritual actions described in 5:22-23. To indicate the futility of the sacrifices offered, God recounts their history during their journey to the Promised Land (5:25). Persuasively Chisholm writes the following:

Recalling the period of the wilderness wandering, he [the LORD] asked “Did you bring me sacrifices and offerings forty years in the desert, O house of Israel?” The question appears to anticipate a negative answer. This raises a problem since the Pentateuch clearly depicts Israel sacrificing to God during this period. The question may be exaggerated for effect. Though Moses gave Israel numerous laws about sacrifices and offerings, the sacrificial system per se could not be fully implemented until the people settle in the land. Though important, sacrifices were never the essence of God’s relationship with his people. Loyalty, expressed through obedience, was always the highest priority. Sacrifices had significance only when offered by one who was committed to God and obedient to his moral will. One could rephrase the question, “Did you bring only sacrifices and offerings?” The implied answer would be: “No, I required and still do demand something much more basic from you—obedience.”

One final point concerning this passage is the use of the second person plural possessive your, indicated in Hebrew by the possessive suffix kem (ךֶם), to qualify whose sacrifices are rejected. Eidevall affirms that this usage signifies a total rejection of the cult, but yet specific to

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298 Temba L. J. Mafico, “Just, Justice,” *Anchor Bible Dictionary*, 6 vols., ed. David Noel Freedman (New York, NY: Doubleday, 1992), III, 1128. Mafico explains, “Justice was central among the Israelites because they were very much concerned with social relationship among themselves as a people covenanted to God and also among the nations surrounding them. In this connection as Judge (šōpēṯ), God would administer justice by punishing those whose conduct made th elives of others very difficult in the world.”

the situation of lack of righteousness. Since the sacrificial system was given to the Israelites by the LORD himself, it was easy for them to confuse vigilant adherence to the rubrics for an authentic relationship with God and others. As we shall see, this theme is present in the message of other prophets as well. Through the words of the prophet Amos, the people are challenged to understand the deeper meaning of sacrifice. Sacrifice is not a substitute for right relationship.

B. Hosea 6:1-6 – knowledge of God and covenantal love

Hosea was a contemporary of Amos. He was called by God to prophesy primarily to the northern Kingdom, also known as Ephraim. The message of Hosea challenged the religious and moral actions of the Israelites, as well as the politics of the kingdom. The covenant is a central leitmotif in Hosea. The other themes in Hosea flow directly from covenant and return to covenant. His message consists of accusations against the people for breaking the covenant as well as invitations to return to the covenantal relationship.

Marriage and loving parent are the metaphors which Hosea uses for covenant, but marriage is the prominent metaphor. With this image, Hosea illustrates the infidelity of the Israelites, comparing them to an adulterous spouse, and in contrast, he emphasizes the faithfulness of God. In Heschel’s thought this is an audacious image,

To Hosea, marriage is the image for the relationship of God and Israel. This is one of the boldest conceptions of religious thinking. It may lack the excitement of adventure, but it has the aura of sublimity. It involves restraint, bringing with it duties and responsibilities, but it also endows a nobility that is a synonym for eternity. Israel is the consort of God...Even the description of God as the Consort of Israel fails to convey the love of God. A husband publicly betrayed by his wife

301 Andersen and Freedman, Amos, 529.
is prevented by law and by emotion from renewing his marital life with her. But God’s love is greater than law and emotion.302

Hosea 1-3 develops the theme of the marriage metaphor for the covenant. This metaphor is unique in Hosea, as he enacts in his life the message of the faithful husband inviting the unfaithful spouse to return to the marriage. Chapter four consists of oracles of accusation against Israel and chapter five continues with oracles of judgment. The next two chapters, six and seven, are an invitation to repentance and return to the covenant.

Closely connected to the marriage metaphor, in Hosea, we find the important concepts of knowledge and covenantal love. These two themes, vis-à-vis sacrifice, are the core of the following pericope,

6:1 “Come, let us return (wənāšūḇāh) to the LORD,
For it is he who has torn, but he will heal us;
he has struck down, but he will bind our wounds.

2 He will revive us after two days;
on the third day he will raise us up,
to live in his presence.

3 Let us know (wənēḏō ‘āh), let us strive to know (āḏa’at) the LORD;
as certain as the dawn is his coming.
He will come to us like the rain,
like spring rain that waters the earth.”

4 What can I do with you, Ephraim?
What can I do with you, Judah?
Your loyalty (wəḥasdēḵem) is like morning mist,
like the dew that disappears early.

5 For this reason I struck them down through the prophets,
I killed them by the words of my mouth;
my judgment (ūmišpāṭēḵā) shines forth like the light.

6 For it is loyalty (hesed) that I desire (ḥāḇašti), not sacrifice zāḇaḥ,
and knowledge (wəḏa’at) of God rather than burnt offerings (mē’ōlōwt).

(Hosea 6:1-6).

302 Heschel, The Prophets, 50-51.
Hosea’s message in this passage begins with an invitation to return to the LORD, who alone could heal the wounds of transgression (6:1). The people receive an oracle of hope that they would be revived to live in the presence of the LORD (6:2). However, this restoration should not be mistaken for a fait accompli, as though it were the expected result of a ritual action. God is ready to heal and to restore, but the Israelites must strive to know the LORD. The exhortation ‘to know God’ is emphasized by the repeated used of the verb yada‘, which occurs twice in the same verse (6:3). The importance of knowing God is further accentuated in this pericope by the use of the phrase, knowledge of God – daath Elohim – (6:6). Matthews stresses this reality as he asserts, “For Hosea this theme [knowledge of God] is the key to a true understanding of the covenant and of God’s relationship with the people.”

The people’s lack of knowledge of God has compromised their relationship with him, as well as their offering of sacrifice. In the Hebrew language, to know has a deeper meaning that pure acquaintance with someone or just intellectual knowledge. Heschel explains: “Hosea’s central complaint against the people is that they do know God…In Hebrew yada‘ means more than the possession of abstract concepts. Knowledge encompasses inner appropriation, feeling, a reception into the soul. It involves both an intellectual and an emotional act.” In other words, to know God is to have intimacy with God.

Pivotal to understanding the centrality of the covenant and the role of sacrifice in Hosea is the theme of loyalty/love (hesed). Chisholm observes that, “The Hebrew term [חֵֶ֫סֶד] translated

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304 Heschel, The Prophets, 57.

305 The Hebrew term חֵֶ֫סֶד does not find an accurate translation in modern languages. Semitic words have a broader range of meaning than modern language terms. Often this causes great difficulty in translation and consequently in interpretation of the Biblical text. The term חֵֶ֫סֶד can be best understood as covenantal love. However, it is often translated as steadfast love, mercy, loyalty, kindness, goodness.
‘love’ refers to commitment or devotion to the LORD that is based on a recognition of his sovereign authority and is demonstrated through obedience to his covenantal laws. God desired such allegiance above all else, even sacrifices.”

The prophet describes hesed in contrasting perspectives in 6:4 and in 6:6. The former occurrence compares hesed (covenantal love) to the morning mist and the dew that fades easily. This is the hesed of the fickle and capricious people of Israel and Judah. They are not steadfast in their covenantal commitment. And yet, in the second occurrence, in 6:6, the LORD states that what he desires is hesed, not sacrifice. Given the immediate context of 6:4, the hesed that God desires in 6:6 is not the ephemeral kind, like mist and dew, but rather a hesed that remains. Knowledge of God and faithful love is better than sacrifice.

C. Isaiah 1:10-17 – good deeds and care for the needy

From a canonical perspective, Isaiah is the first among the latter prophets of the Nevi’im, as well as the first in the Christian canon of classical or literary prophets. Biblical scholars suggest that in its sixty-six chapters, three separate time periods in Israel’s history can be noted. They consider chapters 1-39 as the first literary unit of the book of Isaiah, corresponding to the eighth century, and refer to it as First Isaiah or Proto Isaiah. The prophet’s ministry spanned approximately forty years, during which the Kingdom of Judah faced difficult socio-political crisis, particularly as the kingdom of Assyria expanded its territory, eventually making Judah its vassal territory.

A comparison of modern and older English translation of חסד in Hosea 6:4 and 6:6 shows unquestionable variances:


The people of the northern Kingdom had failed to respond to the prophecies and pleas of made by Amos and Hosea. As a result, the biblical writers present the destruction of the Kingdom of Samaria at the hands of Assyria as the inevitable consequence. Isaiah delivered oracles of judgment and condemnation against the Ephraimites. Heschel offers the following observation, “The Northern Kingdom was doomed; Ephraim as a people would cease to exist (7:8); Isaiah had no role to play in its destiny (28:1-4). With a few exceptions, his message was directed to Judah.”

Unlike Amos and Hosea, Isaiah had multiple and direct interactions with the King of Judah.

Isaiah’s message includes oracles of accusation, as well as oracles of hope. As Matthews observes, “Isaiah’s message is that of a well-educated man committed to the Davidic monarchy, the Jerusalem Temple, and Jerusalem/Zion itself as the place where God has caused his name to dwell (compare Deut. 12:11 and Isa. 12:6; 18:7). Even so, as a prophet he condemns individual Davidic kings, the temple community, and the inhabitants of Judah and Jerusalem for their failure to keep the covenant with Yahweh (28:1-28).”

Isaiah presents a critique of the cult, which is consistent with Amos, Hosea, and Micah, the prophets of the 8th century. This critique, according to Joseph Blenkinsopp is “…common to the first generation of classical prophecy.” The poem in Isaiah 1 is an oracle of judgment. The first section of this oracle concerns the rulers who offer a multitude of sacrifices, while neglecting holy and moral living (1:10-17).

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308 Heschel, The Prophets, 63.
Hear (šimʿū) the word of the LORD, 
princes of Sodom!
Listen to the instruction (tūraṯ) of our God (ʿēlōhēnū) 
people of Gomorrah!

What do I care for the multitude of your sacrifices (ziḇhēkem)?
says the LORD.
I have had enough of whole-burnt (ʿōlōṯ) rams (ʿēlim) 
and fat of fatlings;
In the blood (wāḏam) of calves, lambs, and goats
I find no pleasure (lō ḥāḇāṣātī).

When you come to appear before me, 
who asks these things of you?
Trample my courts no more!
To bring offerings (minḥaṯ) is useless;
incense (qāṭōreṯ) is an abomination to me.
New moon and Sabbath, calling assemblies—
festive convocations with wickedness—
these I cannot bear.

Your new moons and festivals I detest (šā·nəʾāḥ); 
they weigh me down, I tire of the load.

When you spread out your hands, 
I will close my eyes to you;
Though you pray the more, 
I will not listen.
Your hands are full of blood (dāmîm)!

Wash yourselves clean!
Put away your misdeeds from before my eyes;
cease doing evil;

learn to do good.
Make justice (miṣpāṯ) your aim: redress the wronged,
hear (šipṭū)311 the orphan’s plea, defend the widow. (Isa. 1:1-17).

The passage opens with an exhortation to hear/obey (šāmaʾ) the word of the LORD (1:10).

By comparing the audience to the princes of Sodom and the people of Gomorrah, Isaiah evokes history (Gen. 19) to deliver a strong accusation of their sinfulness. The next four verses (1:11-14)

311 The NABRE translates the Hebrew verb “שפט” as “hear,” while the RSV and NRSV use “defend.” The translation “hear the orphan’s plea” should be understood in the legal context of ‘hearing’ as in “hearing a case.” “שפט,” BDB 1047b. The verb means to judge, to act as a law-giver, to decide a controversy, to execute judgment
consist of a series of questions and exclamatory sentences in which the LORD is denouncing cultic practices. The opening of the pericope names several offerings (Isa. 1:11). The first reference is a general pronouncement against slaughtering sacrifices, the zebohîm.\(^{312}\) The list continues with whole burnt rams (‘ôlôt ’ê·lim), which are among the sacrifices for priestly ordinations (Lev. 8:18; 9:2), during Yom Kippur (Lev. 16:3; 16:5) and during the Feast of Weeks (Lev. 23:18). The denunciation concerning the “fat of fatlings” and “the blood of calves, lambs, and goats” (1:11) can encompass any and all the animal sacrifices: the whole burnt offering (‘ôlâ), the peace offering (šelâmîm), the purification/sin offering (hattâ’î), or in the case of a purification offering for a leper or a for Nazarite, the reparation/guilt offering (‘âšâm). The LORD declares that he does not find delight in these blood offerings (1:11).\(^{313}\)

Since the LORD does not desire the bloody sacrifices, then who is asking for these? Such is the question posed as the oracle continues (1:12). The listener is challenged to reflect on the motivation behind the bloody offerings. Moreover, God declares that the grain offering (minhâ), the only sacrifice not included in the aforementioned bloody sacrifices, is not only useless, but also repugnant (1:13).

In addition to denouncing the offering of sacrifice, the prophet targets the gathering of the assemblies (1:14) and even the prayers (1:15). The hinge point of this passage appears in the final

\(^{312}\) Recalling from chapter 2, the term zebah literally means ‘sacrifice’ yet specifically a ‘sacrifice of a slaughtered/slain animal’. Some slaughtered sacrifices were šelâmîm and some were ‘ôlâ.

\(^{313}\) The Hebrew expression לִֹּ֥א ח פ ָֽצְּתִּי (find no pleasure) is the negation of the verb ḥāpēṣ ŋôn. It is the same verb used in Hosea 6:6 For it is love – ḥâdê – that I desire – ḥāpēṣ –, not sacrifice.

“غنيיה,” BDB, 342c This verb can be translated as to find pleasure, to delight, to desire. Humans take pleasure in things, or in being with someone, or they desire to do something. God delights in persons or is pleased to do something.
sentence of 1:15, “Your hands are full of blood”. The Hebrew term for “blood” occurs in the plural form, which has specific connotations. Leclerc explains, “The plural form ‘bloods’ (dāmîm) often refers to bloodshed by violence (Gen. 4:10). This seems to refer not only to the blood of cultic sacrifices (1:11), but to the blood later specified as the blood of murders (1:21) and social evil (5:7).”

Matthews notes that, like Amos, Isaiah condemns empty ritual practices and insists on righteous living. Leclerc thus explains the connection between ethics and worship:

The close link between cultic observance and ethical conduct is signaled by the terms ‘Wash! Clean yourselves!’ [1:16] These are actions at home in the cultic sphere, but here they serve to make the transition to the ethical conduct that will reinvigorate cultic practice with the integrity of a moral social life. The impurity that nullifies cultic offerings is ‘washed away’ by a change in conduct. Cult and conduct are not separate spheres of life: they are concomitant realities of authentic religious life.

The need to live a life that is congruent with the liturgical religiosity is the clear message. Blenkinsopp observes, “The washing of blood-stained hands is symbolic of moral cleansing, for the second of the two verbs (hizzakkû, ‘purify yourselves’) pre-eminentley carries the meaning of moral and inner purification (e.g. Ps. 73:13; Job 15:14; Prov. 20:9).”

Isaiah declares that the sacrifices, the gatherings, the prayers (in other words, any and all external pious actions), are all empty, unless they are accompanied by righteousness towards neighbor. When the people learn to do good and to care for the needy, represented in “the orphan

316 Leclerc, Yahweh is Exalted in Justice, 33.
317 Blenkinsopp, Isaiah 1-39, 185.
and the widow” (1:17), then and only then will their sacrifices be meaningful. The covenantal relationship with God cannot be lived simply by practicing prescribed sacrifices. It is lived out in and through the relationship within the covenant community. Sacrifices disconnected from righteous living cannot reconcile the people and God.

3.5. Jeremiah – Divided Kingdom (7th – early 6th c., BC)

During the tumultuous years of the 8th century, the northern and southern Kingdoms endured continuous invasions from Assyria. The Assyrian western expansion eventually resulted in the Fall of Samaria, with the deportation of its inhabitants to Assyrian territories in 722 BC (2 Kgs. 17:4-6; 17:23), as well as Judah’s vassalage to Assyria (2 Chr. 28:16-21). In the earlier part of the 7th century, Judah had a period of relative rest before the next storm of attacks from foreign invaders. Nevertheless, on the home front, the threat of idolatry continued to plague Judah. King Josiah instituted a religious reform during his reign and renewed the covenant with the LORD (2 Kgs. 23 and 2 Chr. 34:29-33). Following the renewal of the covenant, the people celebrated the Passover observing the prescribed tradition (2 Chr. 35:1-19). Unfortunately, Josiah’s reform did not last long. Merrill observes that the reform had not “penetrated to the level of permanent life-changing renewal.”

It was in the days of King Josiah (640-609 BC) that Jeremiah was called to be a prophet (Jer. 1:1-3). He ministered during and after the reign of Josiah into the period of the Babylonian Exile.

Obedience to the covenant is a central element of Jeremiah’s message. Jeremiah delivered many oracles of judgment, urging people to repent, as well as oracles of hope and restoration,

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318 Merrill, Kingdom of Priests, 446.
encouraging people to remain steadfast. Nevertheless, as Lundbom notes, “The bulk of Jeremiah’s oracles are speeches by the divine messenger sent to announce judgment upon Judah.”

Jeremiah announced that judgment was inevitable as the consequence of ongoing disobedience. Brueggemann captures Jeremiah’s theological theme clearly: “It is evident that his poetic utterances were shaped, albeit in quite imaginative ways, as speeches of judgement that served to indict Jerusalem for its disobedience to YHWH’s Torah and to sentence Jerusalem to the punishments that follow upon Torah disobedience.”

Jeremiah 7:21-26

The “Temple Sermon”, one of the most prominent oracles of judgment, has been recorded in chapters 7 and 26. Jeremiah’s ancestry from a priestly family (1:1) who lived in Anathoth, an area near the old sanctuary of Shiloh are important in his message, especially since the same priestly line connected linked Shiloh with the Temple of Jerusalem. Regarding his association with the Temple and the cultic life, Lundbom has remarked that, “During the Josianic years, Jeremiah was actively pursuing the vocation of a prophet, preaching Yahweh’s word, attending Temple worship, doing intercessions, and perhaps leading Temple liturgies (3:21-23/25; 10:23-25; 14:1-9; 19-22).” Jeremiah’s message reveals his commitment to urging the people to proper worship. On this matter, Matthews explains that:

The sermon reflects Yahweh’s concern over foreign influences brought on by Egyptian control of Judah (starting in 609). While the prophet is aware of the political realities of that time, Jeremiah focuses on the covenant and proper worship.

321 Lundbom, Jeremiah 1-20, 107.
322 Ibid., 110.
practices…At Yahweh’s command, Jeremiah stages his confrontation with the Jerusalem leaders at the temple’s entrance, which is the physical conduit between secular and sacred space. Since he comes here on a major feast day, his audience will include not only the people of Jerusalem but also persons and officials from all over the kingdom. 323

The Temple Sermon forms a literary unit which encompasses the collection of oracles proclaimed in Jer. 7:1–8:3.324 Lundbom considers 7:29 to be a lament verse and excludes it from the Temple Sermon. He proposes the following literary structure:

Three oracles on Temple worship (7:1-15)
Instructions to Jeremiah (7:16-20)
Oracle to the people (7:21-26)
Instructions to Jeremiah (7:27-28)
[lament fragment (7:29)]
Three Temple and Valley oracles (7:30-8:3)325

The entire sermon is a summons to Judah to amend their ways and live according to the Torah (7:3-7). The following pericope, a literary subunit (see above), is an oracle to the people:

7:21 Thus says the LORD of hosts, the God of Israel: Heap your burnt offerings (ōlōṯēḵem) upon your sacrifices (zibhēḵem); eat up the meat!
22 In speaking to your ancestors on the day I brought them out of the land of Egypt, I gave them no command concerning burnt offering (ʿōlā) or sacrifice (wāzābāh). 23 This rather is what I commanded them: Listen (šimʿū) to my voice; then I will be your God and you shall be my people. Walk exactly in the way I command you, so that you may prosper.
24 But they did not listen to me (wəlō šāmaʿī), nor did they pay attention. They walked in the stubbornness of their evil hearts and turned their backs, not their faces, to me. 25 From the day that your ancestors left the

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324 See Brueggemann and Limahl, An Introduction to the Old Testament, 213. Lundbom, in Jeremiah 1-20 uses the term Temple Sermon for 7:1-15; nevertheless, he does consider 7:16-8:3 to be material pertaining to worship.
325 See Lundbom, Jeremiah 1-20, 454 (for exclusion of 7:29 from Temple Sermon); 455-459 (for the structure of the 7:1-15 subunit); 473-474 (for the directive to Jeremiah not to pray for the people); 480-481 (for the oracle to the people and the second directive to Jeremiah); 489-490 (for the poem fragment in the form of a lament); and 493-494 (for three more oracles, which balance the oracles in 7:1-15).
land of Egypt even to this day, I kept on sending all my servants the prophets to you. 26 Yet they have not listened to me (וַלֹּ שָׁמַעְתִּי) nor have they paid attention; they have stiffened their necks and done worse than their ancestors (Jer. 7:21-26).

This subunit follows the instructions to Jeremiah not to pray for the people. This placement is important to argument of the entire sermon. As Lundbom observes, “The juxtaposition of the present passage to vv. 16-20 will call attention to Yahweh’s refusal to hear Jeremiah’s prayers on the one hand and the people’s refusal to hear Jeremiah’s preaching on the other. The latter may even be taken as the cause for the former.” 326

Jeremiah had already censured the offering of whole-burnt offerings and sacrifices, along with incense offerings, while the people disobeyed and rejected the Torah (6:19-20). From that perspective, this passage appears to be confusing. If the LORD is not pleased with the sacrifices offered, why would he encourage the people to offer sacrifice and even partake of the meat? The irony in the opening verses of the pericope unfolds in what appears to be an urging to bring sacrifices (7:21). This verse goes beyond the imperative to heap the sacrifices; it includes the imperative to eat the meat/flesh (וּקְלַעְתָּ שָׁאָשׁ). Mindful that the meat of the ‘ōlā could not be consumed, Lundbom suggests that at this point, considering that the disobedience to the covenant had already been so great, the particular violation of eating the flesh of the ‘ōlā is of little consequence. 327

As the pericope continues, it becomes clear that what appeared to be an invitation or exhortation (7:21), is actually a rhetorical tool that allows the narrative to move towards a point of

326 Lundbom, Jeremiah 1-20, 485.
327 Ibid., 481.
contrast (7:22-23). According to Lundbom, there are two possible interpretations for Jer. 7:22-23. The first possibility is that Jeremiah reflects the Deuteronomist influence and from that perspective, the Decalogue given at Sinai, not the cultic system, was the law during the time in the wilderness. The second possibility considers a rhetorical feature used in Hebrew, which allows for contrast. Thus, Lucas observes that, “It is therefore possible to understand Jeremiah as saying here (speaking of God), ‘I did not speak…concerning burnt offerings and sacrifices only. But, more importantly, this command I gave…’” Concerning this second possible interpretation, Lundbom explains,

A second interpretation sees Jeremiah employing a type of *distributio* in Hebrew rhetoric, where a first statement is negated *only* to emphasize a second statement that matters more. According to this view, Jeremiah does not mean to say that sacrifices were never offered in the wilderness, simply that what was really important to Yahweh in the wilderness, and at Sinai, was obedience and that the same holds true for the present day.

This second possibility offers an interpretation of Jer. 7:22-23 that is consistent with Samuel’s message to Saul, “Obedience is better than sacrifice” (1 Sam. 15:22). The conditional statement of 7:23, “Listen (*šim ‘ū*) to my voice; then I will be your God and you shall be my people” echoes the establishment of the covenant at Sinai, “Now, if you obey me (*jišmə ‘ū*) completely and keep my covenant, you will be my treasured possession among all peoples, though all the earth is mine” (Exod. 19:5).

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328 Lundbom, *Jeremiah 1-20*, 482.
330 Lundbom, *Jeremiah 1-20*, 482.
The next verse uses the figurative language of ‘turning their backs, not their faces’ to recall the infidelity of the wilderness generation (7:24). Lundbom explains that the phrase *wayyihyú lē’āhór wēlō’ lēpānîm* occurs only once in the Old Testament and it can be best understood as “…people who are walking away from Yahweh instead of toward him, with the result that Yahweh sees only their back(s).” Jeremiah is thus reminding the people that the LORD had commanded their ancestors to listen/to obey his voice, and to walk in his ways. And yet, listen, the ancestors did not; obey, they did not; walk with God, they did not. Instead they wounded the relationship and walked away from God (7:23-24).

The oracle continues with the affirmation that God never tired of reaching out to his people, and inviting them to return to him (7:25). The phrase “my servants the prophets” (*āḇḏay hannāḇî’îm*), used to identify God’s messengers, appears elsewhere in Jeremiah (25:4; 26:5; 29:19; 35:15; and 44:4). The term “servant” occurs often in prophetic literature, and its theological significance is developed to a greater extent in Isaiah’s servant songs. This part of the Temple Sermon concludes with the indictment that Jeremiah’s audience failed to listen to God’s voice, and did worse than their ancestors (7:26).

Jeremiah’s Temple Sermon is not a message of absolute rejection of sacrifice. Lucas affirms that although the sacrificial cult was instituted by God as a means of worshiping him, the moral law was also given by God. Moreover, he summarizes the message of the Temple Sermon as a denunciation against the offering of material sacrifices while breaking the moral law of the

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331 The phrase *wayyihyú lē’āhór wēlō’ lēpānîm* in 7:24 is translated as ‘*turned their backs, not their faces, to me*’ in the NABRE and as ‘*went backward and not forward*’ in the RSV.

The specific transgressions addressed in the Sermon (7:8-9 and 7:18) describe violations of the Decalogue and thus provide a foundation for the observation made by Lucas. Through Jeremiah, God communicates the same message about obedience, which he had communicated through Samuel. Eloquenty Lundbom observes that in Temple Sermon, Jeremiah gives the same message to the nation, that was given centuries earlier by Samuel to Saul. For Saul and for Israel the message is the same: God desires obedience more than sacrifice.


Following the Babylonian conquest of Assyria in the late 7th century, any region which was under vassalage to Assyria became vassal to Babylon. Such was the case with Judah. Between the years 597 and 587 BC, the inhabitants of the southern Kingdom were exiled to Babylon. The exile not only signified the loss of the land and subsequent displacement of the people, but also the destruction of the city, and most importantly the Temple. Without the Temple, God would not dwell among the people, and the locus for offering of sacrifices would be lost. The exile was the context for the prophetic messages found in Ezekiel and in Second Isaiah. The two passages presented below do not present a critique of the sacrificial system. Rather they provide a different prophetic perspective which is helpful in gaining insight about essential aspects of sacrifice.

A. Ezekiel 36:24-28 – new heart, new spirit

Unlike any other prophet, Ezekiel was among those living in exile when he was called to be a prophet (Ezek. 1:1-3; 3:1-11). Furthermore, Ezekiel had a concern with the sacrificial cult from a very different perspective than other prophets. The Temple and the sacrificial system

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334 Lundbom, Jeremiah 1:20, 485.
occupy center stage in his message. Chisholm observes that Ezekiel’s priestly lineage probably accounts for this emphasis.335

The concern with the purity of the sacred vessels, addressed by Ezekiel, has great affinity with the perspective in Leviticus. In a vision concerning judgment, Ezekiel, saw the Glory of the LORD leaving the Temple as a result of the defilement of LORD’s house, caused by the sins of the people, which included sins against God and sins against neighbor (Ezek. 8-11).

Ezekiel did not have any oracles that considered the sacrifices useless. Quite the contrary, the last vision, received 25 years after the exile (40:1) and narrated in chapters 40-48, is a vision of hope in which the Temple and the sacrificial system are central to the restoration of God’s people. His vision included precise and detailed instructions concerning the new Temple (40:5-42:20; 43:13-17) and the sacrifices which were to be offered at the time of Temple’s dedication and subsequently (43:18-27). The dedicatory sacrifices included a bull for a ḥattāʾ (43:19, 21), a male goat without blemish for a ḥattāʾ (43:22), an unblemished bull and a ram for the ‘ōlā (43:23-24). Furthermore, for seven days, additional sacrifices were prescribed, a goat, a bull, and an unblemished ram for a daily ḥattāʾ (43:25). The repeated ḥattāʾ offerings would assure that the sacred things had been purified in order to welcome God’s presence once again. After the seven days were completed, beginning with the eighth day and continuing thereafter, the priests were commanded to offer ōlā and šēlāmīm. The LORD would then accept the sacrifices and be pleased with the people (43:27).

Sacrifices had already been prescribed of old, and the cultic practice had been observed. However, the message in Amos, Hosea, Isaiah and Jeremiah critiqued certain aspects of the cult.

So, what exactly is different about Ezekiel’s message? If Ezekiel was delivering a prophecy which included a new Temple and the re-establishment of a sacrificial system, what would make the offering of these sacrifices different, from past offerings, so that the denouncements of previous prophets would not be uttered again? The answer to these questions is found in Ezek. 36:24–28 – and oracle about the new covenant:

36:24 I will take you away from among the nations, gather you from all the lands, and bring you back to your own soil. 25 I will sprinkle clean water over you to make you clean (ūṭḥartem); from all your impurities and from all your idols I will cleanse you. 26 I will give you a new heart (lēḥ), and a new spirit (wəʳūḥ) I will put within you. I will remove the heart of stone from your flesh and give you a heart of flesh. 27 I will put my spirit (rūḥī) within you so that you walk in my statutes, observe my ordinances, and keep them. 28 You will live in the land I gave to your ancestors; you will be my people, and I will be your God (Ezekiel 36:24-28).

Because of their sin, the people had defiled themselves, the Temple and the land. However, after the time in exile, the LORD would return the people to the land (v. 24) and cleanse them. In fact, the LORD himself would make the people clean again. He would cleanse them from the impurity and defilement caused by their sin (v. 25). It is in the giving of a new heart and a new spirit that the LORD cleanses the people (v.26a). And not just any new heart or any new spirit, but a heart of flesh, and the LORD’s own spirit (v. 26b-27). Only with the LORD’s spirit within the people, would they be able to keep the LORD’s decrees. The verse that follows (v. 28) reveals a renewal of a promise made several times before in the narrative of salvation history (Ex 6:7; Ex. 29:45; Lev. 26:12; Jer. 7:23 to name a few instances).

The sacrifices to be offered in the new Temple (43:18-27) would be different because the people themselves would be transformed. In the newness of heart and spirit is found the essence which makes the sacrifices acceptable to God. Chisholm explains,
However, simply bringing his sinful people back to the land would not suffice. They must be cleansed and transformed into a new community that would obey God. Using the imagery of ritual cleansing, the LORD promised to wash away their moral impurities and idolatry. He would transform their hearts and spirits, enabling them to give him their undivided loyalty (v. 26; see 11:19; 18:31).336

A new heart and a new spirit are given to offer acceptable sacrifices.

B. Isaiah 53:5-11 – the life and death of the just Servant, who has knowledge of God

The second literary unit of the book of Isaiah (chs. 40-55), often referred to as Deutero Isaiah or Second Isaiah, presents a message of hope for those in exile. The prophet proclaimed the good news that restoration was at hand, albeit through the unlikely instrument of King Cyrus of Persia (44:28; 45:1). VanGemeren notes that the time of restoration is not just restoration to the land once lost, but more profoundly to an existence where God’s righteousness reigns, and the people can return to right relationship. This time can be conceptualized as a time of new exodus.337

A theme that is central to the message of restoration in Isaiah is that of the ‘Servant’.338 The four Servant poems reveal various facets of the Servant’s identity and mission.339 Nevertheless, an ambiguity concerning the Servant’s identity is present in the text. Childs observes the following: “The canonical process has preserved the tradition of the Servant in a form which reflects a great variety of tensions. The polarity remains between the Servant as a corporate reality

336 Chisholm, Handbook on the Prophets, 279.
338 The identity of the Servant has been debated at length by scholars. Some have argued for an individual being the servant, while others have proposed that Israel is the servant. An in depth presentation on this issue is beyond the scope of the present work. However, I suggest that the role of the servant, as it pertains to a share in God’s mission of justice (right relationship), can be applied to both, individual and community. The particular connection between sacrifice and the servant can also be considered through both lenses, individual as well as communal.
and as an individual, between the typical features and the historical, between a promised new Israel of the future and a suffering and atoning figure of the past.\textsuperscript{340}

Even though sacrificial language only appears in the Fourth Servant Song, a fuller meaning of the role of sacrifice in the life of the Servant can be discovered when the Fourth Song is considered \textit{vis-à-vis} the other three songs. In this regard, it is valuable to present a brief panoramic view of all four Servant Songs prior to considering the Fourth Song, where the sacrificial element is most prominent. In the First Song (42:1-4) the Servant is identified as one being chosen,\textsuperscript{341} and having received the \textsc{Lord}'s spirit in order to bring instruction and justice to the nations. The Second Song (49:1-6) continues the theme of election, expanding the time of election to the time in the womb. The \textsc{Lord} has formed and called the Servant, from the womb, to be a light to the nations, so that salvation could reach all. As a bridge to the last poem, the Third Song (50:4-9) presents the qualities given to the Servant in order to fulfill the mission described in the first two songs, and anticipates elements of sacrifice described in the last song. The Servant has received words of hope to console others and an open ear to obey and thus to walk in God's ways. Additionally, the Third Song announces that the Servant will be rejected by some, but his innocence will be upheld by the. In this manner, the Third Song introduces elements of suffering and guilt, which are further developed in the Fourth Song.

The Fourth Song (52:13-53:12) is the longest and most complex. Scholars have suggested possible structures to facilitate analysis of this poem. In the present work, I suggest a structure with three sections: first, an introduction of the Servant, by the \textsc{Lord}, as the exalted witness to the


\textsuperscript{341} This theme of election reflects back on God choosing Israel for a covenant relationship (Exod. 19:4-6).
nations (52:13-15); second, a third-person description of the unjust suffering of the Servant (53:1-6); and a continuation of the description of the suffering of the Servant with strong sacrificial themes (53:7-11a), followed by a conclusion where the LORD promises to count the Servant among the strong ones (53:11b-12).

The introductory section the Fourth Song reveals a Servant who is greatly disfigured, to the point of not being recognized by others. Yet this Servant will be exalted and will startle the nations (52:13-15). The second section describes the Servant as one who has known suffering and rejection, who has been wounded for the sins of others, and who has been an instrument for their healing. Of special interest to our discussion is the description of the Servant as one has been burdened with a guilt which is not his own (53:4-6). This language is evocative of the scapegoat of Yom Kippur 342 (Lev. 16:5; 7-10, 16, 21-22), and as such, it serves as a transition for the next section of the poem (53:7-12), which is laden with sacrificial motifs. Three are three important lexical links between certain Yom Kippur passages and those of the Fourth Song:

1. *nasa* (נָשָׁא): to bear, to carry, to lift, to take away.343
   
   Yet it was our pain that he *bore* (*nāšā*), our sufferings he endured… (Isa. 53:4)
   
   The goat will *carry off* (*wənāšā*) all their iniquities to an isolated region. When the goat is dispatched into the wilderness (Lev. 16:22).

2. *pēša‘* (פֶשַע): transgression, rebellion.344
   
   But he was pierced for our *sins* (*mippəšā‘ēnū*), crushed for our iniquity.

342 The ‘scape goat’, also known as the ‘goat for Azazel, is not killed. It is led into the wilderness, cut off from the land. It bears the sin of the nation and it atones for sin, in life, not in death.

343 “ָשָׁא,” BDB, 669d: verb: to lift, to lift up, to bear, to carry, to take away, to cause one to bear iniquity.

He bore the punishment that makes us whole,
by his wounds we were healed (Isa. 53:5).

Thus he shall purge the inner sanctuary of all the Israelites’ impurities
and trespasses (ūmippiš ‘ē-hem), including all their sins (Lev. 16:16).

3. ‘āvōn (עָוֹן): iniquity, punishment for iniquity, guilt.345
But he was pierced for our sins,
crushed for our iniquity (mē‘āvōnōtēnū).
He bore the punishment that makes us whole,
by his wounds we were healed (Isa. 53:5).

We had all gone astray like sheep,
all following our own way;
But the LORD laid upon him
the guilt (‘āvōn) of us all (Isa. 53:6).

The goat will carry off all their iniquities (‘āv·nōṯām) to an isolated region. When the
goat is dispatched into the wilderness (Lev 16:22).

As noted above, the last section of the Fourth Servant Song contains many sacrificial
themes (53:7-11a), and it is followed by a conclusion where the LORD promises to count the
Servant among the strong ones (53:11b-12). In what follows, the section which offers further
insights on the significance of sacrifice in Second Isaiah’s message will be discussed:

53:7 Though harshly treated, he submitted
and did not open his mouth;
Like a lamb (kaššeh) led to slaughter
or a sheep (ūḵorāḥēl) silent before shearsers,
he did not open his mouth.
8 Seized and condemned, he was taken away.
Who would have thought any more of his destiny?
For he was cut off from the land of the living,
struck for the sins of his people.
9 He was given a grave among the wicked,
a burial place with evildoers (‘āšīr).
Though he had done no wrong,
nor was deceit found in his mouth.345

345 “עָוֹן,” BDB, 730d: noun, masculine: iniquity, guilt of iniquity, punishment of iniquity, consequence of iniquity.
But it was the LORD’s will (ḥāpēš) to crush (dakkōʾōw) him with pain. By (ʾim-) making his life (naḇ̄-šō) as a reparation offering (ʾāšām), he shall see his offspring, shall lengthen his days, and the LORD’s will shall be accomplished through him. Because of his anguish he shall see the light; because of his knowledge (bəḏaʾtô) he shall be content; My servant (ʾabdî), the just one (ṣadīq), shall justify (yaṣdīq) the many, their iniquity (waʿawônōtām) he shall bear.

The mention of a lamb (šeh) 53:7 recalls any of the animal sacrifices which prescribe a lamb as the offering, specifically, the whole burnt offering (ʿōlâ), the peace offering (šēlāmîm), the purification/sin offering (ḥaṭṭāʾt), or in the case of a purification offering for a leper or for a Nazarite, the reparation/guilt offering–ʾāšām. The description of the fate of the Servant continues is 53:8-9. He is unjustly condemned and after his death, he will receive a grave among those who are wicked and will be buried with those who are rich/evildoers (ʿāšîr).

346 The translations offered for the term ʾāšām in verse 10c reflect the textual difficulties in the text. Only the NABRE translates the term as reparation offering. See below for other translations of the term.

NRSV When you make his life an offering for sin,
RSV when he makes himself an offering for sin
VUL si posuerit pro peccato animam suam
LXX εὰν δοτέ περὶ ὑμπριὼς

347 whole burnt offering (ʿōlâ), offered as total consecration; the offering can be from the flock (sheep or goat) (Lev. 1:10-13). See chapter 2, section 2.3.A.1 peace offering (šēlāmîm), as thanksgiving, votive, or freewill sacrifice; the offering can be from the flock (lamb or goat) (Lev. 3:6-7, 12). See chapter 2, section 2.3.C1 purification/sin offering (ḥaṭṭāʾt), as purification or as atonement sacrifice; an unblemished female goat or a female lamb is required of someone who is not a priest or a ruler (Lev. 4:27-28, 32). See chapter 2, section 2.3.D.1 reparation/guilt offering (ʿāšām), as reparation or as atonement; a one year old lamb, for the leper who has been cleansed (Lev. 14:10-14) or for the Nazarite who has become ritually impure, and after the required cleansing has been completed (Num. 6:9-12). See chapter 2, section 2.3.E.1

348 The term ‘ā·šîr (ע שִָ֖יר) in 53:9a, which literally means rich has been translated as either evildoer or rich. Thus, “He was given a grave among the wicked (roṣāʾîm בָּשֻׁמְשָׁם) a burial place with evildoers (ʿāšîr ע שִׁיר)” McKenzie holds that the translation of the term as evildoers is a “conjectural emendation”—see John L. McKenzie Second Isaiah. vol. 20, The Anchor Bible (New York, NY: Doubleday, 1968), 130.
Familiar sacrificial language abounds in 53:10-11a. Nevertheless, there is an element of newness in these two verses: in identifying the Servant as the offering, they deviate from the familiar elements offered as sacrifice. The term ḥāḇēṣ, which is often associated with sacrifice, appears in 53:10a, but its sacrificial meaning is difficult to appreciate in English translations. The Hebrew verb ḥāḇēṣ is translated in this verse as ‘willing’; however, it is a term commonly associated with divine acceptance or rejection of a sacrifice. When God is the subject, the meaning indicates that God has pleasure or delights in actions, objects, or persons or a pleased to do something. The verb is used in the same banyan (Qal) in Isa. 1:11; Hos. 6:6; Ps. 40:7; Ps. 51:18 to indicate the LORD’s displeasure with sacrifice. It is difficult to understand that the LORD would desire ‘to crush’ the Servant with pain or find pleasure in the suffering of the Servant who is ‘crushed’ (53:10a-b). The verb daka means to crush, to oppress, to bruise, or to break. This hardly seems consistent with the image of the LORD, revealed in other prophetic texts, as one who is not pleased with sacrifice or does not desire sacrifice.

The textual difficulties continue in 53:10c, as the life of Servant is to be offered as 'āšām (reparation offering). The challenges presented by the ambiguous and complex grammar of the text are explained by Chisholm:

The second poetic line of verse 10c is notoriously difficult to understand. It reads literally, “if you (or “she”) makes a reparation offering, his life.” The verb form is

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349 See “ח פֵץ,” BDB, 342c. This verb (ḥāḇēṣ) can be translated as to find pleasure, to delight, to desire. Humans take pleasure in things, or in being with someone, or they desire to do something. God delights in persons, actions, or objects or is pleased to do something. The verb is used in the same banyan (Qal) in Isa. 1:11; Hos. 6:6; Ps. 40:7; Ps..51:18 to indicate the LORD’s displeasure with sacrifice.

“…In the blood of calves, lambs, and goats, I find no pleasure lō-ḥāḇāṣṭāti’” (Isa. 1:11)”

“For it is love (ḥesed ḥes) that I desire (ḥāḇāṣti ḥāḇēṣ), not sacrifice…” (Hos. 6:6)

“It is love that I desire, not sacrifice…” (Ps. 40:7).

350 “ד כ א,” BDB, 193d: verb: to crush, to oppress, to bruise, to break, to be made humble or contrite.

351 In the LXX, ḫūʾ is translated, in this verse, as περὶ ἁμαρτίας – sin offering. However, the most common translation of the LXX for ḫūʾ is πλημμελείας.
either second masculine singular or third feminine singular. If the former, it must be addressed to the servant or to God. However, the servant is only addressed once in this song (see 52:14a), and God speaks or is spoken about in this song; he is never directly addressed. Furthermore, the idea of God himself making a guilt offering makes no sense. If the verb is taken as third feminine singular, then the grammatically feminine noun “life” at the end of the line is the likely subject. In this case one may take his life as the equivalent to a pronoun and understand it as the subject of the verb, “if he (lit., “his life”) makes a guilt offering.” But does the image of the servant presenting such an offering make any sense? The servant’s suffering might constitute such an offering, but the preceding context views his suffering as past, while the verb form here is imperfect, suggesting the offering is something the servant presents after his suffering has been completed. Perhaps the background of the image can be found in the Mosaic law, where a healed leper would offer a guilt offering as part of the ritual designed to restore him to ceremonial cleanliness (see Lev. 14). Earlier in the song the servant is pictures as being severely ill (v. 4a). This illness (a metaphor for the guilt of the people’s sin) separated him from God. However, here we discover the separation is not final; God is willing to receive an offering from him, as it were.352

If the reparation/guilt offering (’āšām) of the Servant353 is invoking allusion to the offering prescribed on the eighth day following the ritual cleansing of a leper (Lev. 14:10-14), when the purpose of the offering is restoration of the individual to the worshipping community. This interpretation is very possible, particularly if one considers that sin breaks the communion between God and the people, thus separating the person from God and from the community. In this context, it is possible to understand that the LORD would desire this ’āšām. Nonetheless, Blenkinsopp affirms that in 53:10b, the connection between the נִפֶשׁ and א ש ם recalls the expiatory principle present in the blood as stated in Lev. 17:11. He concludes that the restoration of the relationship with God is fundamental in the rite the ’āšām.354

352 Chisholm, Handbook on the Prophets, 121.
353 According to the prescriptions in Leviticus, the animal to be offered as ’āšām is a ram. However, the text of the Fourth Servant Song, Isa. 53:7ff only mentions a lamb. A lamb, however, can be offered as a ’āšām in the case of a purification offering of a leper or a Nazarite.
Nevertheless, 53:11 goes on to provide key qualities of the Servant, which make it possible for him to become the 'āšām which restores (šādēq) those who are guilty of wrong doing, back to a right relationship with God. The Servant has knowledge (da’at) of God and is himself just (šaddiq) (53:11). Concerning righteousness, Sloane explains that “…the Servant is the representative who embodies (true) Israel and Israel’s role in the world and amongst the nations: this is the righteous Servant, the one fully committed to justice, who demonstrates to Israel what it means to be Israel…”

The text of the Fourth Song poses not only textual challenges, but theological ones as well. This is especially pertinent to the Servant, whose human life becomes a substitution victim in the 'āšām. Furthermore, is it simply substitution or is it substitution as representation? Since the Servant is the representative of Israel, a common interpretation is that the Servant’s suffering and death can be understood as a substitutionary sacrifice. Nevertheless, as Sloane suggests, interpreting the passage as penal substitution is not correct. Concerning the Levitical sacrificial system, he argues that it “…operates not with forensic notions of guilt and punishment, but ritual or symbolic notions of life and order, and death and disorder…Sacrifice in Leviticus, then, while related to notions of substitution, is not primarily understood in terms of penal substitution.”

Advancing the notion of representation and exemplary sacrifice, Blenkinsopp suggests that the sacrifice motif applies not only to the Servant’s death, but to his life as well.

The interpretation of the Servant’s life as sacrificial can be supported by detailed study of a textual difficulty in 53:10c. The difficulty lies in the particle “אִם־ (‘im), which can be translated

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356 Ibid., 14.
357 Blenkinsopp, “The Sacrificial Life and Death of the Servant, 14.
as if or when. However, since 53:10d implicitly announces that the Servant has not died, by stating that the Servant will see his descendants and will prolong his days (as a declarative statement in the future tense), Barré suggests that the particle ‘im be translated as O that. Thus rendering 53:10c as a prayer for the restoration of the Servant who has suffered greatly.  

The concept of life, not just death, as sacrifice invites new reflection on the topic of sacrifice. As Barrios suggests, the newness in the sacrifice also encompasses other dimensions. Despite the many textual challenges presented by the Fourth Servant Song, he observes that the text reveals a newness in ‘sacrifice’, which is connected to a new election, and a new mission. He explains that the free and obedient self-gift of the servant constitutes the ‘new’ sacrifice. Furthermore, Barrios notes that this ‘new’ sacrifice becomes a ‘new teaching’:

It is interesting to note that the servant displays freedom in his readiness to accept any word from God, and his message is profound: without speaking a word, he leaves room for the other Word. In the servant’s mission, with his sufferings, obedience to the voice of the LORD is emphasized. Furthermore, his obedience is connected to sacrifice: the sign of the servant’s obedience is precisely a perfect disposition to sacrifice…With any sacrifice, there are expected rewards, according with the intention of the offering: reparation, forgiveness, thanksgiving, or votive offering. However, with the servant’s sacrifice, the reader encounters a gratuitous sacrifice.

Since the servant knows God, he is righteous. Therefore, he can reconcile and be an exemplar for an acceptable sacrifice. This pericope from the Fourth Servant Song illustrates that

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358 Michael Barré, “Textual and Rhetorical-critical Observations on the Last Servant Song [Isaiah 52:13-53:12],” The Catholic Biblical Quarterly 62, (2000), 22-23, 26. He proposes an alternate division of the MT tšym šm as tšy m’sm, which could offer a reading of 53:10c-e as a prayer. He notes that this pattern/construction is supported by Job 11:6. His suggested translation is as follows:

53:10c  ‘im tašši | tašše mē’āšam napšọ – O that you would let him forget his guilt/ punishment,

| yir’eh zera | ya’ārik yāmīm – let him see (his) offspring, let him lengthen (his) days!

| {wēḥēpheṣ yhwḥ bēyādo yislāḥ} – {And the will of Yahweh will enjoy success through him}. |


360 Ibid., 49. Translation mine.
offering sacrifice is not just a matter of following the prescribed ritual, but more importantly, what is essential to the sacrificial offering is the disposition with which said sacrifice is offered. Hence, the Servant’s life, and not just his death, is sacrificial.

3.7. Third Isaiah, Malachi – Post-Exile (mid to late 6th c., BC)

After Persia had conquered the Babylonians, King Cyrus allowed the exiles of Judah to return to their homeland (Ezra 1:1-11; 2 Chr. 36:22-23). Their deportation to exile was not easy for them and neither was their journey back to Jerusalem. Upon their return, they faced many challenges: resettle the land, rebuild the Temple, rebuild the city, and more importantly re-establish their identity as God’s people and thus, renew their understanding of the relationship to which God had called them during the Mosaic covenant, and later affirmed during the time of the Davidic covenant.

The concept of sacrifice was intrinsically connected to the challenges faced during the return. On a practical, although more superficial level, the rebuilding of the Temple would allow them to have the locus to offer the sacrifices, which they could not offer during the time in exile. However, on a deeper level, the renewed understanding of the covenantal relationship and the role of sacrifice in the relationship had to be interpreted and lived through a fresh lens. The questions of ritual vis-à-vis ethics as well as the purpose and practice of correct ritual of sacrifice had to be addressed again by the prophets of the post-exilic period. The two prophetic texts presented in this section address the tension regarding sacrifice, which was present in the post-exilic context.

A. Isaiah 66:1-3 – contrite spirit and justice

In the third literary unit of the book of Isaiah, also referred to as Trito-Isaiah ( Isa. 56-66), the prophet delivered messages of challenge and redemption. According to Matthews, the prophet
exhorts the people to understand that the new Temple would not be the solution to the problems that had resulted in their exile. A right relationship was and would continue to be the operating principle. He affirms, “Thus Third Isaiah finds it necessary to call the people to remember the simplicity of their covenant agreement and to make their community more inclusive.”

In Isa. 66:1-3, the message of the LORD to those living in the traumatic post-exilic period centers around the new Temple, the offering of sacrifice, and the disposition of the one offering sacrifice. Leclerc poses that these verses are concerned not only with place but also with manner of worship.

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66:1 Thus says the LORD:
The heavens are my throne,  
the earth, my footstool.  
What house can you build for me?  
Where is the place of my rest?
2 My hand made all these things  
when all of them came to be—oracle of the LORD.
This is the one whom I approve:
the afflicted one, crushed in spirit  
(ūnokēh-rūaḥ),  
who trembles (wōhārēd) at my word.
3 The one slaughtering an ox, striking a man,  
sacrificing (zōbēah) a lamb, breaking a dog’s neck,  
Making an offering (minhāh) of pig’s blood,  
burning incense, honoring an idol—  
These have chosen their own ways,  
and taken pleasure in their own abominations.

66:2 But this is the one to whom I will look,  
d to the humble and contrite in spirit (ūnokēh-rūaḥ)  
who trembles at my word.
66:3 Whoever presents a grain offering,  
d like one who offers swine’s blood;  
whoever makes a memorial offering of  
frankincense, like one who blesses an idol.

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362 The people in Judah during the immediate post-exilic period included not only those who were returning from Babylon, but also those who, being insignificant in the eyes of King Nebuchadnezzar, had been left behind, namely the unassuming ‘people of the land.’
363 Leclerc, Yahweh is Exalted in Justice, 156.
The LORD reminds the people of his sovereignty and, with rhetorical questions, he affirms that a structure build with human hands cannot contain his presence (66:1-2a). The motif of the Servant from the Fourth Servant Song continues, as the LORD announces his approval of the one who is afflicted/humble and crushed/contrite in spirit. Additionally the image from the Third Song (50:4b-5), of the Servant who listens, is reflected in the one who trembles/reveres at the LORD’s word.

A denouncement of those who offer sacrifice, while lacking in charity towards neighbor, continues in the following verse (66:3). The mention of the ox and the lamb (66:3a-b) are references to the all the animal sacrifices, –the ťôlā, the šêlāmîm, the haṭṭā’t–, and in the case of a purification offering for a leper or Nazarite, the 'āšām. The gift/grain sacrifice (minḥā), which is the sacrifice in 66:3c, has presented textual difficulties.

364 “עִני, (‘ānî), BDB, 776d: adj: afflicted, poor, humble, needy, oppressed (by the rich), Israel as poor and needy. plural form בָּני (‘āniyîm).

“עָנָי,” (nâkêh), BDB, 646d: adj: smitten, stricken, crippled of feet. Used as a construct with rûaḥ in Isa. 66:2 to indicate ‘contrite of spirit’. The term ‘contrite’ in Ps. 51:19[51:17] is a translation of נִדְּכֶה, the niphal participle of the verbal form נָכַה (nâkâ) [BDB, 645a). In Isa. 53:4, the hophal perfect מַכְּכֶּה (mukkêh) of מַכָּה (nâkâ) occurs to indicate ‘to be smitten with disease by God’.

The Hebrew phrase נְכֵה־רָוֵע has been translated as ‘crushed in spirit’ or ‘contrite in spirit’. The former recalls language from Isa 53:10a, while the latter speaks more of an ‘interiority’ of the offerer. These variances have produced different translations of 66:2b

NABRE the afflicted one, crushed in spirit

NRSV the humble and contrite in spirit

VUL ad pauperculum et contritum spiritu

LXX ἀμπελλόν καὶ ἡσόζον

365 “חָרֵד,” (hârêd), BDB, 353d: adj. verb: trembling (from fear), in awe and reverence (at God’s word).

366 Ox were sacrificed as a peace offering – šêlāmîm (Lev 4:10; 7:23).

Concerning the sacrifice of lambs, see footnote no. 62. “

367 The meaning of the original Hebrew is not certain. There is an implied relative clause, which does not always appear in the translations. With this implied clause, v. 3c could be interpreted as ‘the one who offers a minḥâ unworthily is as one who would offer a gift of pig’s blood.”
void of ethical behavior.\textsuperscript{368} The right relationship with God has to be lived out in continuous righteousness towards neighbor.\textsuperscript{369} The first and last chapter of Isaiah function as bookends of this essential aspect of sacrifice. The people’s sacrifice is acceptable to God only insofar as their actions in community reflect justice.

B. Malachi 1:6-14 – pure offering from a new kingdom of priests

The discussion of sacrifice in the prophetic corpus concludes with a brief presentation of Malachi, the last book in the prophetic books. As a post-exilic prophet, Malachi shares the concerns of Trito-Isaiah. However, Malachi’s message addresses a different issue concerning sacrifice. At the return of the exile, one of the concerns of the people was to remain in right relationship with God. Frequently they believed that this could be accomplished with the right manner of offering sacrifice. Hence, as Newsome explains, “…in Malachi is evident a preoccupation with the mechanics of the cult, a concern which Amos (Amos 5:21-24) and Jeremiah (Jer. 7:4), to name but two of Malachi’s predecessors, would have found objectionable.”\textsuperscript{370}

\textsuperscript{1:6} A son honors his father,  
and a servant fears his master;  
If, then, I am a father,  
where is the honor due to me?  
And if I am a master,  
where is the fear due to me?  
So says the \textsc{LORD} of hosts to you, O priests (hakkōhānîm),  
who disdain my name.  
But you ask, “How have we disdained your name?”  
\textsuperscript{7} By offering defiled food on my altar!  
You ask, “How have we defiled it?”  
By saying that the table of the \textsc{LORD} may be disdained!

\textsuperscript{368} Chisholm, \textit{Handbook on the Prophets}, 136.  
\textsuperscript{370} James D. Newsome, \textit{The Hebrew Prophets} (Atlanta, Georgia: John Knox Press, 1984), 193.
When you offer a blind animal *for sacrifice* (lizbō̂ah),
is there no wrong in that?
When you offer a lame or sick animal,
is there no wrong in that?
Present it to your governor!
Will he be pleased with you—or show you favor?
says the LORD of hosts.

So now implore God’s favor, that he may have mercy on us!
You are the ones who have done this;
Will he show favor to any of you?
says the LORD of hosts.

Oh, that one of you would just shut the temple gates
to keep you from kindling fire on my altar in vain!
I take no *pleasure* (ḥēpes) in you, says the LORD of hosts;
and I will not accept *any offering* (ū·min·ḥāh) from your hands!

From the rising of the sun to its setting,
my name is great among the nations;
*Incense* (muqṭār) *offerings* (mug·gāš)
are made to my name everywhere,
and a *pure offering* (ū·min·ḥāh ṭə·hō·rāh);
For my name is great among the nations,
says the LORD of hosts.

But you profane it by saying
that the LORD’s table is defiled,
and its food may be disdained.

You say, “See what a burden this is!”
and you exasperate me, says the LORD of hosts;
You bring in what is mutilated, or lame, or sick;
you bring it as an *offering* (hamminḥāh)!
Will I accept it from your hands?
says the LORD.

Cursed is the cheat who has in his flock an intact male,
and vows it, but *sacrifices* (wazōbēḥāh) to the LORD a defective one instead;
For a great king am I, says the LORD of hosts,
and my name is feared among the nations.

The passage above is part of Malachi’s second oracle (1:6-2:9). This oracle denounces
the religious leaders for neglecting to honor God because of their failure to follow the sacrificial
ritual instructions properly. Malachi was denouncing the priests of being contemptuous in their duties and careless in accepting blemished offerings. Yet, this negligence, according to Matthews, is symptomatic of something else, “The complaint of a systemic failure to comply with prescribed sacrificial rituals may be compared with the more common prophetic complaint that sacrifices have become a form of insincere worship and have therefore become unacceptable to Yahweh (Hosea 8:11-14; Isa. 1:11-14; Jer. 6:20”).

The oracle begins by establishing the theme of a familial relationship as primary to the context of the discourse (1:6). The law, including the sacrificial law, exists only secondarily to the relationship. The denouncing is directed to priests, presumably those in charge of the cultic system. The accusations about offering food or animal sacrifices which were either defiled or blemished alternate with questions posed by the accused (1:7-8). Immediately the text reveals an ironic command urging those at fault to ask for mercy (1:9). The LORD replies by stating that he would prefer the gates of the Temple to close, so that empty sacrifices could no longer be offered (1:10a-b). The LORD does not find pleasure/delight (ḥāpēṣ) in those who bring the sacrifices nor will he accept their offerings (1:10c-d).

The themes of divine sovereignty and that of true worship coalesce in the next verse (1:11). As VanGemeren notes, “Indeed the LORD would rather receive true worship from his children

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374 "ח פֵץ," BDB, 342c. The verb ḥāpēṣ can be translated as to find pleasure, to delight, to desire. This is the verb used in Hosea 6:6 and in Isa. 1:11 and Isa. 53:10. See also fn. 346.
living anywhere in his kingdom than suffer through the rituals in the Temple.”375 The LORD declares once again that he is displeased with the sacrifices offered (1:12-14). The sacrifices mentioned in this oracle encompass both slaughtering sacrifices (zeḇāḥ) (1:8, 14) as well as non-bloody sacrifices (minḥā) (1:10, 11, 13). The cultic system had become routine again, and was therefore in vain.376 The LORD’s judgment concerning sacrifice is clear—in contrast to the empty, mechanical sacrifices offered at the Jerusalem, which are not acceptable, the pure offering of the nations will not be rejected.

3.8. Conclusions

This chapter has focused on the motif of cultic sacrifice in the prophetic writings. The prophets were called by God to be his messengers and their mission was to be spokespeople for the covenant. They would instruct the people in the ways of the LORD and deliver messages of judgment or compassion, within the context of the covenant. It was also in this covenantal context that the sacrificial system was established. The covenantal relationship has a place of primacy and the ritual offering of sacrifices comprises an element within the covenant. With great persuasion, Brueggemann articulates this reality:

The absence of interpretive comment on the gestures of sacrifice and the efficaciousness of the act in itself of course left open the possibility that sacrifices could come to be regarded as mechanical acts that could automatically “fix” the covenantal relationship…The propheticpolemics against such liturgic acts characteristically condemn sacrifices that have become pro forma performances without serious covenantal engagement.377

375 VanGemeren, Interpreting the Prophetic Word, 205.
377 Brueggemann, Worship in Ancient Israel, 22.
The prophets exhort the people to re-commit and re-engage to the covenantal relationship sincerely. It was in the context of the establishment of the Mosaic covenant that the people received the explicit call to be “a kingdom of priests, a holy nation” (Exod. 19:6). They received the Levitical prescriptions for sacrifice as a means to guide them to become a priestly and holy people. These practices, at times, would become routine and spiritually empty. By critiquing the practice of empty sacrificial offerings, the prophets responded to religious and ethical crises. At the same time, they triggered a crisis which evoked repentance to lead the people of God and the back to the covenant.

Many were the prophets who were called to accompany the people to live their identity as a priestly and holy people of God. Some of the accounts of the prophets appear outside of the corpus of the Prophetic books. Moses, for instance, is the prophet par excellence, against whom all other prophets were compared (Deut. 18:15). He was not only the mediator for the covenant, but the one who gave the people the earliest instructions about the covenant. Yet, given the aim of this chapter, to examine sacrifice under the prophetic lens, it is not possible to discuss all the prophetic figures at length. Rather, the messages of specific prophets were discussed in order to reflect on the essential elements of sacrifice, which at times might have become eclipsed by the performance of specific ritual actions.

At the time of the establishment of the monarchy, God’s people were formed as a kingdom under the leadership of Saul. An initial reading of the narrative of 1 Sam. 15:1-24, might seem to communicate that Saul was doing the right thing. After all, he presented a votive sacrifice and saved lives. Nevertheless, Samuel clearly and firmly told Saul that listening to the and LORD’s obeying his voice are essential and more important than sacrifice. Although the people were living
under the rule of a king, they still had to learn what it meant to live as a kingdom of priests. Simply offering sacrifice would not constitute them as kingdom of priests. Although, sacrifice is what priestly people offer, Saul’s message would teach them that at the heart of becoming a priestly and holy people was not the exterior ritual of offering sacrifice, but instead, the obedience to God’s voice.

Social, political, and religious difficulties threatened the people’s identity as God’s chosen people. Near the end of the 10th century BC, the kingdom divided, after only a century of existing as a united monarchy. Amos, Hosea, and Isaiah were among those called to prophesy during the 8th century BC. Amos, the prophet of the South, criticized and denounced the Israelites for offering sacrifices that were disconnected from righteous actions in the covenant community. Through Amos, the LORD communicated his hatred for their liturgical gatherings and his rejection of their sacrifices. Moreover, he reminded the people that right relationship is essential (Amos 5:21-27).

Also, prophesying in Israel, Hosea criticized the sacrificial system. He denounced the people’s lack of knowledge of God, which had resulted in duplicity in their lives. They were offering the prescribed Levitical sacrifices, and at the same time committing idolatry by worshipping Baal. God, through Hosea, communicated to his people that more than sacrificial offerings, he wanted to be loved and known by them (Hos. 6:6). Serving as a prophet in Judah, Isaiah also denounced their sacrificial practices because of the oppression of the poor and the generalized disconnection to their ethical conduct. Through him, the LORD expressed his displeasure in the sacrifices, which had become abominations. Communicating God’s message, Isaiah reminded the people that the sacrifice which would be acceptable to God was not that of animals or grain, but rather to do good and seek justice (Isa. 1:10-17).
In 722 BC, the northern Kingdom was conquered by Assyria, and its people were subsequently deported to foreign lands. The kingdom of David had been reduced to the inhabitants of Judah and Benjamin in the South. In 701 BC, while Hezekiah was King of Judah, Sennacherib of Assyria invaded Judah (2 Kgs. 18:13-37; 2 Chr. 32:1-19). With the LORD’s help Sennacherib was defeated and Jerusalem was spared (2 Kgs. 19:35-37; 2 Chr. 32:20-23). The time following Sennacherib’s attack, during the early years of the 7th century BC there was a period of relative peace from foreign invaders. Unfortunately, although the political situation had settled, the kings who succeeded Hezekiah led people into idolatry again. With God’s guidance, King Josiah brought about a time of religious reform toward the last part of the 7th century, in 622 BC (2 Kgs. 23; 2 Chr. 34:29-33).

It would seem God’s people were beginning to turn their lives around and understand the responsibilities of the covenant and the role of sacrifice in that context. Alas, that was not the case. It was then that the prophet Jeremiah was called to journey with the people of Judah into the most tragic time of their existence, as they were exiled to Babylon. Some of Jeremiah’s most condemning messages regarding sacrifices were delivered from the Temple. He denounced the people’s sacrifices, which had been compromised because of their idolatrous practices and their unethical conduct (Jer. 7:21-26). He summoned Judah to return to the covenantal relationship and to the responsibility of obedience. Jeremiah exhorted them to open their hearts to listen and obey God’s word:

9 More tortuous than anything is the human heart, beyond remedy; who can understand it?
10 I, the LORD, explore the mind and test the heart, Giving to all according to their ways, according to the fruit of their deeds (Jer. 17:9-10).
The dawning of the 6th century BC was a time of great pain and sorrow for God’s people. The Kingdom of Judah, having survived as an Assyrian vassalage territory, was eventually conquered by Babylon. Most of the inhabitants, except for the poor people of the land, who posed little or no threat to the Babylonian empire, were exiled to Babylon. Not only had Judah lost the land and the king, both symbols of their status as kingdom, but they also lost the Temple. The very place, which was God’s dwelling place and the locus for the ritual sacrifices, was now destroyed. They struggled to find God’s presence in their lives and to find a way to communicate with God without being able to offer sacrifice, as a mediation to restore or celebrate the covenantal relationship. How could they be “a kingdom of priests” without kingdom and without Temple?

It was in the midst of the exile that Ezekiel was called to be God’s prophet. He was given visions of destruction and visions of restoration. He saw the kāḇôḏ of the LORD leaving the Temple, yet the kāḇôḏ was with him in the exile, and so, even though God was not in the Temple, he was with the people. Nevertheless, how could they offer sacrifice without the Temple? A new Temple was revealed to Ezekiel in a vision of restoration. However, the new Temple, of itself, would be insufficient. God, through Ezekiel, promised the people a new heart and a new spirit (Ezek. 36:24-28). Only then, would it possible for God’s people to offer sacrifice, not as an empty ritual, but as a means to continue to deepen their identity as his people, priestly and holy.

Second Isaiah also prophesied during the exile. His unique message in the Fourth Servant Song, however, does not concern a denunciation of sacrifice. Rather, in this poem, Deutero-Isaiah challenged his audience to consider another dimension of sacrifice as he introduced the Servant as the one who becomes sacrifice (Isa. 53:7-11). The attributes and mission of the Servant were already presented in the other three Servant Songs: one who is called to bring justice (Isa. 42:1-4)
and to be a light to the nations (Isa. 49:1-6); one who listens to the LORD and who instructs and gives hope (Isa. 50:4-5). The Servant is also one who suffers (Isa. 50:6-9; 52:13-15; 53:1-6) and who is willing to be taken as “a lamb led to the slaughter” or “a sheep silent before shearsers” (Isa. 53:7). The imagery of the lamb suggests that the Servant is offered as total surrender in the ʿōlā, or as thanksgiving or free will offering in the šēlāmīm, or even, as reparation in the ʿāšām. Sacrifice is not just about an animal or grain being offered, but sacrifice is about a Servant who knows God, who is obedient, who is just, and who willingly offers his life and even his death as reparation, as total self-gift, as communion, and all for the sake of others. The Servant becomes sacrifice to give an example to others how to be sacrifice, in other words, to show others the meaning of being a “kingdom of priests.”

The return from exile later in the 6th B.C. marked the next step on the journey, and prophets accompanied the people once again. After facing many challenges associated with the return, the people of Judah—those who had returned from exile as well as those who had not been taken to Babylon—rebuilt the city of Jerusalem and the Temple. However, the prophetic indictments of unethical conduct and their failure to be authentic with God indicated that they still had much to learn. The last chapter of Trito-Isaiah reveals a message about sacrifice which is particularly significant, especially when considering its place within the rest of the Book of Isaiah. The message in Isa. 66:1-3 reveals that the one who offers a true sacrifice is one with a contrite spirit (also translated as crushed spirit), which flows well from the nuanced notion of the Servant as sacrifice. The Servant himself becomes sacrifice, as he approaches the sacrificial ritual as an act of self-gift, with a contrite and humble spirit. This disposition of self-offering allows the one presenting sacrifice to live a life of justice with neighbor. In other words, the end of the Book of Isaiah mirrors the message at the beginning of the book. The theme of righteousness as essential
to sacrifice brackets this book and serves to awaken in the people a consciousness that justice, right relationship, is at the core of sacrifice and covenant.

The prophet Malachi closes the canonical collection of the prophetic books. The end of the prophetic corpus is also punctuated with a message concerning sacrifice. Defiled sacrifices do not conform to the Levitical prescriptions. This applies to the lack of attention to the ordinances, and also to the disposition of half-heartedness. Through Malachi, the LORD reveals that he instead of receiving slaughtered sacrifices at the Temple, he would prefer non-bloody sacrifices that truly reflect a righteous relationship (Mal 1:6-14).

The Pentateuch provides the narrative of the Mosaic covenant and the establishment of the Levitical sacrificial system. Leviticus, as part of the torah (instruction) of the LORD, communicated the various purposes for sacrifice: an unsolicited, free-will gift of love; a votive offering; a sign of total surrender; an offering for purification; an offering for atonement; or a gift of reparation. However, in the context of the covenant, the purposes can be summarized as offerings for restoration of communion or for celebration of communion. In as much as the purpose and the prescriptions for the ritual had been set forth at Sinai, these were not sufficient in themselves to guide God’s people in actualizing the call they received at Sinai to become a holy nation and a kingdom of priests. The rubrics and purposes, as important as they were, only communicated realities about the external aspect of sacrifice. It is in the prophetic mission to be Israel’s conscience and awaken God’s people to see beyond the external aspects and look deeply into the internal dimension of sacrifice.

Through their messages, the prophets taught much about sacrifice and challenged God’s people to understand that a sacrifice is not acceptable to God unless it is accompanied by the
following qualities in the life of the one presenting the sacrifice: an active listening to God’s voice; a willingness to live in obedience to God’s word; a desire to know God and to live from that knowledge of God; a disposition of humble and contrite spirit; a life of witnessing to God’s love lived out as a just and right relationship with neighbor; in other words, a willingness to become total self-gift as a gift of reparation, as a gift of thanksgiving, or as a gift for communion.

God’s people at times confused the enacting of the ritual as synonymous with living in covenantal relationship. Nevertheless, God spoke through the prophets and, through their critique of empty sacrifice, guided the people, his treasured possession, to understand sacrifice as an external expression of a reality that begins internally, namely the willingness to be self-gift. Only when life is lived as sacrifice can sacrifice be offered in an acceptable manner. Jesus Christ is the perfect expression of sacrifice, in his life and in his death, he exemplified self-gift. The next chapter will discuss passages from the New Testament canon which present sacrifice embodied in Christ’s life and death.
CHAPTER 4 – SACRIFICE IN THE LIFE AND DEATH OF JESUS CHRIST 
AND IN THE LIFE OF THE CHRISTIAN

4.1. Introduction

The previous two chapters presented important aspects concerning the biblical theology of sacrifice through the lens of various texts from the Old Testament. The Mosaic covenant provided the context in which the concept of sacrifice can be best understood. At Sinai, God chose the Hebrew people to be his “treasured possession” and called them to be “a kingdom of priests, a holy nation” (Exod. 19:5-6). This vocation of Israel situates the establishment of the sacrificial system within the context of the covenantal relationship. The Old Testament sacrifices were offered as purification, as reparation, as total surrender, as pure gift, or as thanksgiving. In other words, the Levitical sacrifices were the means through which the people could either celebrate or restore communion with God. The ritual actions of the sacrifices would guide their journey to become a kingdom of priests. This is the narrative found in the pages of the Torah.

Throughout their journey to the Promised Land, and later on when they were constituted into a kingdom, the Israelites struggled to stay faithful to the covenant and to understand the true essence of sacrifice. God sent the prophets to accompany and guide the people along their journey. These messengers of God criticized the mechanical practice of the cultic rituals and were instrumental in communicating what was needed for a sacrifice to be accepted favorably by God. From Samuel to Malachi, from the establishment of the monarchy to the return from exile, a critique of empty rituals was presented continuously. God’s people received prophetic messages which denounced the offering of sacrifices as mere external actions disconnected from fidelity to the covenant. According to the prophetic voices, sacrifices would only be accepted by God when the one making the offering listens to God’s voice, obeys God’s word and knows God. The
worshiper would have a contrite spirit, be just, and live in a right relationship with neighbor. Theologically speaking, a true sacrifice can only be offered by one willing to become sacrifice, to become self-gift.

TheServant Song in Isa. 53 epitomizes the qualities which need to be embodied in the life of the worshiper. Isaiah’s message presents the Servant as one who, being just himself, can justify (Isa. 53:11). The Servant is willing to make his life as a reparation offering for the iniquities of others, because only he could make such reparation. His disposition is pure, he has a humble heart, he listens and obeys God’s voice, he knows God because he is in communion with God. Being in communion with God, he wants to restore this communion to others and thus is willing to live and die as sacrifice. Christ lives and dies as the Servant prophesied by Isaiah.

This presentation of the biblical theology of sacrifice will continue in this chapter through the lens of selected passages of the New Testament: The Gospel according to Mark, the Letter to the Romans, and the Letter to the Hebrews. In analyzing the passages of each of these books, this chapter will consider sacrifice in the life of Christ as well as in the life of the Christian.

As a practicing Jew, Jesus “had sacrifice offered for him, or offered it himself: at his presentation in the temple, at his last Passover, and presumably on those other occasions when he went up Jerusalem for the feasts.”378 The biblical texts which most often associate Christ with sacrifice refer to his death. Although this is an undisputable reality, there are other subtle and underappreciated texts that speak to Christ’s life as sacrifice. The concept of sacrifice in the life and death of Christ will be discussed, noting the continuity and discontinuity with the Old

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Testament sacrifices. Additionally, the concept of sacrifice in the life of the Christian will be considered, particularly, as he or she is called to follow Christ’s example.

4.2. Sacrifice in Mark’s Gospel Account

Rather than considering four different gospels in the New Testament, a more accurate description would be to consider the Good News—the Gospel—as having been narrated by four different authors. Mark wrote his account not as an eyewitness, but as a follower of an eyewitness of the events. Papias (late 1st c.) and Clement of Alexandria (late 2nd c.) both identify Mark as a follower of Peter.379 Although, presently, a minority of scholars do not consider Mark as the first Gospel account, most of the scholarship from the nineteenth century upholds the Markan priority.380 The passages from Mark’s account which are discussed below are a representative selection of texts concerned with sacrifice, either in Christ’s life and death or in the life of the believer.

A. Mark 1:11 – The Baptism of Jesus

“…’You are my beloved Son; with you I am well pleased’” (Mark 1:11)

Immediately following the announcement of the beginning of the Good News, John the Baptist is introduced and Mark continues with the Baptism of the Jesus. Mark succinctly recounts the events surrounding Jesus’ baptism, and notes that from the heavens, a voice says, “You are my beloved Son; with you I am well pleased” (Mark 1:11).


380 A discussion of Markan vs. Matthean priority is beyond the scope of this dissertation, and therefore the topic will not be addressed.
Linguistically, there are two key phrases in this verse, which use sacrificial language, and thus have important connotations for the present work. The first phrase, “my beloved Son” is a translation of “huios mou ho agapētos.” The phrase “beloved son” is used also in the LXX version of Gen. 22:2, “huion sou ton agapēton,” to translate the Hebrew בְּנֵךְ אֶת־יְחִָֽדְּךֵָ֤ אֲשֶֽׁר־א הַּ ב (your son, your only [one], whom you love). This is the well-known passage where God asks Abraham to offer Isaac, his beloved son, as a burnt offering (‘ōlâ): “Then God said: Take your son Isaac, your only one, whom you love, and go to the land of Moriah. There offer him up as a burnt offering on one of the heights that I will point out to you” (Gen. 22:2).

Although the terms “beloved” and “son” do not appear next to each other in the Hebrew text of Gen 22, (rather the text could be rendered best as “your son...whom you love”); nevertheless, this is the only time in the Hebrew Bible in which the terms “beloved” and “son” occur in the same phrase. In this way, the notion of “beloved son” and “sacrifice” are linked.

The second phrase with sacrificial overtones is “with you I am well pleased.” This phrase appears in Isa. 42:1, in the opening verse of Isaiah’s First Servant Song, “Here is my servant whom I uphold, my chosen one with whom I am pleased...” As such, it connects the identity and the mission of Isaiah’s Servant with the person of Christ. Furthermore, the Servant Songs conclude in the Fourth Song’s composite presentation of a Servant who is willing to live, and die, as sacrifice, as gift for others, which brings another point of connection to Christ. Deeper reflection on the text continues to illustrate further that indeed the Son embodies Isaiah’s Servant. Whereas the poem in Isa. 42:1 refers to God being pleased with the Servant, Mark 1:11 indicates that the Father is “pleased” with the Son (cf. Matt. 3:17; Luke 3:22). The Greek term for “pleased” is
eudōkēsa, which is the aorist indicative of eudokeó. According to Schrenk, this verb is used here with the Son as the dative object to indicate the Father’s election of the Son as well as the Father’s contentment with the Son’s obedience in accepting the incarnation. Additionally, Schrenk notes that the term εὐδοκία, a cognate of εὐδοκέω, (which does not occur in Hellenistic koine), appears in the LXX as to translate rāṣṣāh, a term associated with a ‘sacrifice which is pleasing to God.

The sacrificial connection between “beloved son” and “pleased” is remarkable. On this connection, Jon Levenson remarks:

When, in the synoptic gospels, a heavenly voice declares, just after Jesus’ baptism, “You are my beloved son, (huios mou ho agapētos); with you I am well pleased” (Mark 1:11 and parallels), a reference to that other beloved son, Isaac, is surely to be understood. And a Jewish audience, versed in the Torah and perhaps even in the Septuagint as well, would have recognized the dark side of the heavenly announcement: that the destiny of the son so loved and so favored included a symbolic death at the hands of his loving father.

The connections between the Old Testament sacrificial language and the Father’s declaration at the Baptism of Christ, (including the use of eudokia, which denotes a sacrifice pleasing to God), point to an identification of Christ’s life and death with sacrifice.

At his Baptism, Jesus receives in his humanity the anointing of the Spirit. By his willingness to be anointed, he publicly accepts his mission as the Christ. His mission, in fulfillment

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381 εὐδόκησα is the indicative aorist active, 1st person singular of εὐδοκέω


383 Ibid., 743. Occurrences in the Old Testament where רַצָּה is used to refer to a sacrifice pleasing to God include: Lev. 19:5; 22:19; Isa. 56:7; Jer. 6:20; Ps. 19:14, etc.

of the mission of Isaiah’s servant, is to receive the Spirit and to bring justice to the nations (Isa. 42:1,3-4); to be a light to the nations and to bring salvation to the ends of the earth (Isa. 49:6); to sustain the weary and to instruct (Isa. 50:4); to give his life as reparation for sins, to bear the iniquity of others and to justify [the many] (Isa. 53:10-11). This mission begins with his life, which is lived as total gift. His life was spent revealing the Father’s love, bringing justice, teaching and preaching the Good News, forgiving sins, restoring those who were isolated from the community. All this he did because he knew the Father intimately. In other words, his entire life was lived as sacrifice.

B. Mark 1:40-44 – Christ Cleanses a Leper

“Moved with pity, he [Jesus] stretched out his hand, touched him, and said to him, ‘I do will it. Be made clean’” (Mark 1:41)

In Mark’s account, Jesus begins his public ministry, with the words, “This is the time of fulfillment. The kingdom of God is at hand. Repent, and believe in the gospel” (Mark 1:15). This proclamation of the kingdom’s arrival, at the start of his public ministry, is the pattern in the three Synoptic accounts. This triggers a memory of the time of the establishment of the Mosaic covenant where the Israelites where called to be a kingdom (Exod. 19:4-6). This would not be an ordinary kingdom, but a kingdom of priestly and holy people ruled by God as their King (Isa. 52:7). This is one of the many echoes of Kingdom, a theme to which the evangelists return to frequently. This Kingdom which Christ proclaimed and inaugurated is a kingdom of priests and through his life and death he taught what such kingdom meant. His teachings during his public ministry fulfill the Mosaic instructions and through his actions he fulfilled the meaning of sacrifice.

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385 This proclamation also appears in Matt. 4:17 and in Luke 4:21. In Luke, the proclamation is implicit, as it follows the reading of the passage from Isa. 61:1-2, announcing a time of the restoration of the Kingdom.
After the brief proclamation that the Kingdom is at hand, Mark continues the account of Jesus’ ministry in Galilee, beginning with the calling of the first disciples (1:16-20) and then with a series of healings: a man with an unclean spirit (1:21-28); Simon Peter’s mother in-law, who was sick with a fever (1:29-31); as well as other healings of many more, who were afflicted with illnesses or demons (1:32-39). The account then turns to a leper who begs to be cleansed.

1:40 A leper came to him [and kneeling down] begged him and said, “If you wish, you can make me clean.” 41 Moved with pity, he stretched out his hand, touched him, and said to him, “I do will it. Be made clean.” 42 The leprosy left him immediately, and he was made clean. 43 Then, warning him sternly, he dismissed him at once. 44 Then he said to him, “See that you tell no one anything, but go, show yourself to the priest and offer for your cleansing what Moses prescribed; that will be proof for them.” (Mark 1:40-44).

This account is significant for many reasons. Firstly, the immediate canonical context places this text amid healings and other miracles, which allow for those who are afflicted to be healed and restored to the community. Secondly, the healings and cleansing occur in the context of the announcement of the coming of the Kingdom. The eschatological Kingdom was announced by prophets as a time of joy and healing for God’s people, healing in the physical (Isa. 29:18; 43:8; Zeph. 3:19; Mal. 4:2) and in the spiritual sense, a time when God would be their true good shepherd and king (Ezek. 34:11-16). Thirdly, the language of cleansing the leper points back to the Levitical sacrifices. The Greek verb used in Mark, katharizó, is the same verb used in the LXX to refer to those sacrifices offered as purification/sin offering (ḥaṭṭā‘) for someone ritually unclean (Lev. 12:7) as well as to those sacrifices made during Yom Kippur which were offered to make atonement (Lev. 16:30-33).

386 Emphasis added on the following terms which have sacrificial connections to the Levitical instructions: make me clean–καθαρίσαι (1:40); Be made clean–καθαρισθῇ (1:41); was made clean–ἐκαθαρίσθη (1:42) cleansing –καθαρισμὸν (1:44)
The leper did not ask for healing but for cleansing. In the Levitical instructions concerning ritual impurities, which require ritual washing, the verb to clean or to be cleansed (taher translated as katharizó and hagnizó in LXX) is used. However, a different verb (kaphar translated sometimes as hagnizó and also as hilaskomai), is used in the instructions concerning sacrifices that use the blood ritual to purify the sacred vessels and space after defilement by unwitting sins or by ritual impurity. Sometimes this verb is also translated as to clean or to be cleansed. Either way, whether someone was ritually unclean, or whether he or she had committed an unwitting sin, the result was the same, the sancta would be defiled. This defilement would prevent God from dwelling in the Temple and thus people would not be able to celebrate communion with him. A leper was excluded from the community and from worshiping until healing, cleaning, and offering of sacrifice had taken place. The process was lengthy: once healing had occurred, the leper would shave, then wash the body and the clothes, and then present sacrifices so that atonement can be made on his behalf (Lev. 14).

Even though the leper asked only to be made clean (1:40), Jesus’ words and actions were healing, cleansing, and restorative. The leprosy was healed and the man was made clean (1:42). He could once again be in community. Commenting on the leper, Healy notes that, “His deepest desire is to be free once again to partake in the worship of God’s people.”

Until the time of Christ, only the blood ritual of the ḫattāʾi or the ‘āšām sacrifice could make atonement and render someone clean. But Christ’s words and actions effect what was previously only possible with the blood of slaughtered animals. Since life was sacrificial, his words and deeds fulfilled the sacrifices of old. Furthermore, instead of being defiled by touching someone with leprosy, Christ’s touch

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actually effected the healing. Fulfilling the mission of Isaiah’s Servant, Christ bore the sickness (ḥōlī – malakia) (Isa. 53:3-4) of the one who was afflicted and healed him.

C. Mark 10:45 – Christ Declares his Life will be Given as a Sacrifice of Ransom

“…to give his life as a ransom for many” (Mark 10:45)

The Greek term lytron recalls sacrificial language from the Old Testament and is of great importance in articulating Christ’s sacrifice. This noun it appears only twice in the gospel accounts, once in Mark and once in Matthew; however, its cognate forms appear in Luke, in Pauline texts, in the letter to the Hebrews, in Acts, and in the Letter of Peter. The text from Mark 10:45 has been studied at length by theologians and scholars interested in soteriology, in Christology, and specifically, in atonement. Robert Daly considers this verse, along with the words of institution of the Eucharist, to be one of the two sayings of Jesus with the most explicit sacrificial language. The full text of the saying is as follows: “For the Son of Man did not come to be served but to serve and to give his life as a ransom for many.”

388 Emphasis added in all quotes below:
In addition to Mark 10:45, the only other occurrence of λύτρον – lytron – (noun) is in Matthew 20:28:
“Just so, the Son of Man did not come to be served but to serve and to give his life as a ransom for many”

However, ἀντίλυτρον (antilytron) is found in 1 Tim 2:6 where it also has the meaning of ransom.

389 verbal cognate: λυτρόω (lutroó) – 3 occurrences

Luke 24:21: “…the one to redeem Israel…” / “…οὗτος ἐστιν ὁ μέλλων λυτρόωσαι τὸν Ἰσραήλ…”
Titus 1:18: “realizing that you were ransomed …” / “εἰδότες ὅτι οὐ φθάρτος, ἀργυρίῳ ἢ χρυσίῳ, ἐλυτρώθητε…”

noun cognate: λύτρωσις (lutrósis) – 3 occurrences

Luke 1:68: “…and brought redemption to his people.” / “…καὶ ἐποίησεν λύτρωσιν τῷ λαῷ αὐτοῦ
Luke 2:38: “…all who were awaiting the redemption of Jerusalem” / “…πᾶσιν τοῖς προσδεχομένοις λύτρωσιν Ἱερουσαλήμ”
Heb. 9:12: “…thus obtaining eternal redemption.” / “…ἀιώνιαν λύτρωσιν εὐράμενος.”

noun cognate: λυτροτής (lutrótēs) – 1 occurrence

Acts 7:55 “…God sent as [both] ruler and deliverer, …” / “…τούτων ὁ θεός καὶ ἠργονικὸς καὶ λύτροτης ἀπέσταλκεν…”


391 Emphasis added.
This saying occurs at the end of the pericope (10:35-45) which follows the third passion prophecy in Mark (10:32-34). For a third time, the disciples continue to struggle to comprehend the meaning of Jesus’s words when he speaks about his passion. Their responses reveal their lack of understanding. As it was the case with the other two passion prophecies (8:31-33 and 9:30-32), Jesus addresses their comments with words of instruction on the deeper meaning of his mission which reveals the love of the Father and effects salvation.

After Jesus spoke about being condemned to death for the third time, James and John asked Jesus, “Grant that in your glory we may sit one at your right and the other at your left.” (10:37). Jesus reminds them that they were not to act like Gentile rulers who make their superiority and power known, but rather be a humble servant to others (10:41-44). In that context, Jesus states, “whoever wishes to be great among you will be your servant [διάκονος]; whoever wishes to be first among you will be the slave [δοῦλος] of all. For the Son of Man did not come to be served but to serve and to give his life as a ransom for many” (10:43b-45).392

There is a great contrast between what James and John consider greatness and what Jesus teaches as, i.e. serving others. The “ransom saying” shows that Jesus himself exemplifies such a moral teaching. The image of a servant who gives his life as a ransom recalls the Suffering Servant Song of Isaiah 53. Daly notes that the phrase “for many” represents a reference to Isaiah’s fourth servant song.393 In giving his life as a ransom and being a servant to all, Jesus reveals his mission.

392 Emphasis added, on the English text above, as well as on the Greek text below.
The Greek term *lytron* and its derivatives have been translated as “ransom”, “liberation”, or “redemption”. In secular literature, *lytron* is used to express the price paid by someone, usually a relative, to set a captive free.\(^394\) The exact price had been stated at times, but often it was not specified.\(^395\) In the LXX, the term *lytron* and its cognates appears twenty times. It can mean the price used to free a slave, (e.g. Lev. 25:51) or the price paid to save someone’s life (Exod. 21:30).\(^396\)

As it was already noted, the “ransom saying” occurs only in Mark and in Matthew. It appears in the context of the account of Jesus addressing the request made by the sons of Zebedee (Mark 10:35-45; Matt. 20:20-28). This account deals with the disciples’ understanding of what constitutes greatness in the Kingdom announced by Jesus, and it follows the third prediction of the Passion (Mark 10:32-34; Matt. 20:17-19; Luke 18:31-34), but is not found in Luke.\(^397\) Luke presents the teaching on the meaning of the greatness in the Kingdom of God in the context of the institution narrative, immediately following the foretelling of the betrayal.\(^398\) In Luke, Jesus teaching focuses on service, without any mention to ransom (Luke 22:24-27). Finlan indicates that, “The ransom saying is copied by Matthew (20:28), but not by Luke. Luke has the same pericope, but has Jesus ably communicating the central point selfless service without ransom.


\(^{398}\) Ibid., §237b, 185-186.
imagery, saying “I am among you as one who serves” (Luke 22:27).”\textsuperscript{399} The focus on service by Luke suggests that service, seen as gift of self, are constituent of the ransom offered by God.

In addition to the meaning of payment to purchase freedom, in the LXX, \textit{lytron} and its cognates are used to refer to God’s actions and God’s strength which liberate the people (Exod. 6:6; Mic. 6:4; Isa. 35:10; Isa. 51:11; Jer. 15:21; Jere. 31:11; Sir. 51:2; Ps. 68:18 [69:18]). Mann notes that in the LXX uses of \textit{lytron} and \textit{lutroó} are not associated with remission for sin. He suggests that,

Isaiah 53:11 must be read in the light of the emphasis given to the word as referring to God’s mighty act by which the deliverance from Egypt was achieved (Exo. 6:6; Deut. 7:8; 9:26; Isa. 43:1; Mic 6:4) and of the act of deliverance from the exile (Isa. 52:3; 62:12; Mic. 4:10; Jer. 16:14). Nowhere are the two Greek words used for a sin offering. Instead the sense is that of God as champion of his people, coming to intervene for the deliverance from slavery to freedom.\textsuperscript{400}

The slavery from which people are being liberated in and through Christ is not a slavery to foreign nations and empires, as was the case with the slavery in Egypt and the time of exile in Babylon. Rather, God, through and in Christ, is liberating humanity from the slavery to sin. As John preached a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins, and baptized many in the Jordan (Mark 1:4-6), he announced, “One mightier than I is coming after me” (1:7). The term \textit{ischuros}, translated here as “mightier”, also has a connotation of stronger, and more powerful.\textsuperscript{401} In this way, John announces that someone stronger than him will come to liberate from the power of Satan, in a way that he cannot. Jesus is the Stronger One, the who can bind (\textit{dēsē/deó}) Satan: “But no one


\textsuperscript{401} “\textit{ἰσχύος},” Danker, \textit{Greek New Testament Lexicon} in BibleWorks 10. The range of meaning includes strong, mighty, having great power.
can enter a strong man’s house to plunder his property unless he first ties up the strong man” (3:27).

On this point, Martin observes:

No one can rob a house that a man is guarding without first overpowering him. Jesus compares Satan to a strong man who has certain possession, namely, those possessed by evil spirits. Satan may be strong, but Jesus is stronger: Jesus is the mightier one who was announced by John (1:17).402

Moreover, in other narratives of exorcisms, Mark continues to illustrate the link between Christ’s work and liberation from unclean spirits. Christ’s words and actions have the strength to subdue even a legion of unclean spirits “who is so strong that no one can bind him even with chains and fetters (5:3).”403 These examples illustrate that the use of λύτρον can be understood to be consistent with the LXX meaning of God’s mighty acts of liberation.

The phrase “to give his life” has the implicit meaning of dying. However, Eberhart proposes that although the phrase certainly has that meaning (as in Rom. 4:25; John 10:17-18; John 15:12-14) other usages of the phrase suggest that the meaning is not exclusive to dying.

Instead such formulas [the phrase give his/her/their life] refer in a wider sense to the perils of a special assignment and the courage of those willing to engage in it. He [Jesus] sympathized with the poor, outcast, and marginalized of his society and publicly questioned both political standards and religious authorities of his day…His goal was to bring change for the better of humanity…Formulas that Jesus “gave his life,” then, really mean that he “put his life on the line.” They certainly include the extreme of death, but are not limited to it.404

402 George Martin, Bringing the Gospel of Mark to Life: Insight and Inspiration (Huntington, IN: Our Sunday Visitor, 2005), 73.


In his observations, Eberhart offers a nuanced meaning of “to give his life” which by no means takes away from the more common understanding of this phrase, namely giving one’s life to the point of death. It is undeniable that Jesus died on the cross, yet, it must be emphasized that in his death, in his “giving of life”, there is a liberating and redeeming quality, which can only be fully appreciated in light of the full range of meaning and uses of lytron in the LXX (including deliverance of slaves in Exod. 21:30). Therefore, “the giving of life as a ransom” of the Jesus’ saying in Mark 10:45 is connected to an eschatological time of exodus and liberation. Nevertheless, according to Pitre, this important theme is often underappreciated in the exegesis of Mark 10:45. In addition to the Suffering Servant in Isa. 53, Pitre argues for a strong connection to the “Son of Man” in Daniel, as well as to the theme of new exodus present throughout the Old Testament. Furthermore, Pitre notes that it is only by examining other prophetic messages, as well as the anticipated theme of new exodus, can the difficult saying in Mark 10:45 be understood more clearly. On this, Pitre remarks eloquently:

When seen in the light of these points [the connection to Daniel’s “Son of Man” and the eschatological restoration of the Kingdom], Jesus’ otherwise mysterious words in Mark 10:45 become amazingly clear. He is declaring that the messianic Son of Man will give his life in the eschatological tribulation in order to release (“ransom”) the scattered tribes of Israel (the “many”) from their exile among the Gentile nations. That is, he will give his life, in a king of new Passover, in order to bring about a New Exodus: the long-awaited return from exile.

Mindful of the multiple contributions of the various voices of the Old Testament, who in harmony sing a new song of hope and redemption, I would be remiss not to return to Isaiah’s Servant as a connecting theme. The “ransom saying” in Mark 10:45: “For the Son of Man did not

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406 Ibid., 43.
come to be served but to serve and to give his life as a ransom for many” bears remarkable connections to the Suffering Servant poem: “but to serve” (cf. Isa. 53:11 – the just [righteous] Servant serves many); “and to give his life” [psyche] (cf. Isa. 53:12 – he poured out his life [psyche] to death); “as a ransom for many” (cf. Isa.53:11 – he justifies the many, he will bear the iniquities of many; Isa. 53:12 – he bore the sins of many). The Servant gives his life for “the many” as part of Israel’s redemption.

Given the range of meaning of the term lytron and the possible ways to interpret the phrase to give his life, it could be summarized that, in his life as in his death, Christ’s actions redeemed and liberated humanity, leading it to a New Exodus. It is not possible to separate his redeeming death from his life of liberating, healing, and restoring those who were captives, wounded, or broken.

D. Mark 14:24 – Christ the new Passover, the Blood of the Covenant
   “This is my blood of the covenant…” (Mark 14:24)

In all the Gospel accounts, Christ has a final meal– the Last Supper– in the context of the Passover celebration. There are significant layers of meaning in this passage. Several sacrificial images merge during the last meal, which Christ shared with his disciples. The first image which bears a sacrificial motif is the Passover, the actual event surrounding the Exodus as well as its annual memorial celebration, with the mandate of the lamb sacrifice (Exod. 12). Secondly, another image is that of covenant, since covenant ratification ceremonies involve a sacrifice ritual (Exod.

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24). Neither of these first two images has any atoning connotation. Thirdly, another sacrificial image can be recognized, that of the blood ritual associated with atonement, which recalls a different kind of Levitical sacrifice. The schema below illustrates these sacrificial images:

The Feasts of Passover and Unleavened Bread provide the immediate context for this meal. These in turn recall a broader canonical context in the Torah narrative. Exo. 12:1-28 narrates the institution and regulations of the Passover and Unleavened Bread.410 Exod. 13:3-9 then presents the instructions for keeping the memorial of the Feasts of Passover and Unleavened Bread.411 Lev. 23:4-8 and Deut. 16:1-12 further echo the instructions of Exodus, concerning the who, what, when, and how to keep the feasts, including the offering of sacrifice. Additionally, Num. 28:16-25 presents specific prescriptions concerning the sacrifices to be offered during these two connected liturgical feasts.

C.S. Mann notes the deliverance motif in the Passover context, “God redeemed Israel from slavery, a deliverance symbolized by the Passover blood.”412 Christ’s blood then constitutes a new

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409 Τοῦτο ἐστιν τὸ αἷμα μου τῆς διαθήκης τὸ ἐκχυνόμενον ὑπὲρ πολλῶν (Mark 14:24).

410 “This day [the day of the Passover of the LORD] will be a day of remembrance for you, which your future generations will celebrate with pilgrimage to the LORD; you will celebrate it as a statute forever. 15For seven days you must eat unleavened bread” (Exod. 12:14-15).

411 “Moses said to the people, “Remember this day on which you came out of Egypt, out of a house of slavery. For it was with a strong hand that the LORD brought you out from there. Nothing made with leaven may be eaten… 6For seven days you will eat unleavened bread, and the seventh day will also be a festival to the LORD. 7Unleavened bread may be eaten during the seven days, but nothing leavened and no leaven may be found in your possession in all your territory. 8And on that day you will explain to your son, ‘This is because of what the LORD did for me when I came out of Egypt.’ ” (Exod. 13:3-8).

412 Mann, Mark, 578.
Passover blood, which will deliver anew. It will mark a new exodus not from a literal slavery in Egypt, but from a spiritual, figurative Egyptian slavery, a slavery of sin and broken relationships with God, and consequently with neighbor.

The Sinai covenant established with Moses, whereby the Israelites were called to be “a kingdom of priests, a holy nation” (Exod. 19:4-6), was ratified ritually in a ceremony with the blood of bulls sacrificed as ‘ōlâ and šēlāmîm offerings (Exod. 24:5-8),

24:5 Then, having sent young men of the Israelites to offer burnt offerings and sacrifice young bulls[413] as communion offerings to the LORD, 6Moses took half of the blood and put it in large bowls; the other half he splashed on the altar. 7Taking the book of the covenant, he read it aloud to the people, who answered, “All that the LORD has said, we will hear and do.” 8Then he took the blood and splashed it on the people, saying, “This is the blood of the covenant which the LORD has made with you according to all these words.”[414]

As this text indicates, the covenant ratification ceremony includes sacrifices which signify total surrender (‘ōlâ) and communion (šēlāmîm), not atonement. Essential to the present discussion is the expression “blood of the covenant” (ḏam-habbə-rîṯ), which only appears twice in the Old Testament: once in Exod. 24:8 and once in Zech. 9:11.415 In Mark 14:24, as well as the other synoptic accounts (Matt. 26:28 and Luke 22:20), Christ connects his blood to the covenant. Mann explains that, “The Covenant between God and Israel was signified by the ‘blood of the

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413 The Hebrew פָּרִים –pārîm– is translated as young bulls (NAB-RE) or oxen (RSV & NRSV).
414 Emphasis added.
415 Apart from Exod. 24:8, the expression “blood of the covenant” only occurs once more in the Old Testament. It appears in Zech. 9:11, where it is used with a pronominal suffix:
   “As for you, by the blood of your covenant I have freed your prisoners from a waterless pit.”
   In the Hebrew text it appears as בְּדַם בְּרִיתֵךְ. The suffix ְךֶ is the 2nd person, singular feminine possessive, “your.” The term has been translated as the blood of your covenant (NAB-RE) and the blood of my covenant (RSV & NRSV). Since the suffix ְךֶ is not used, my is not an accurate translation.
covenant,” first in circumcision and then in the Covenant of Sinai. Jesus makes the link with the Israelite Covenant by the use of my in the phrase blood of the Covenant.”

Christ blood ratifies the covenant in a new way. The ratification ritual no longer involves sprinkling of the sacrificial blood, but rather drinking of it, and in so doing, a participation in the sacrifice. Christ has given new meaning to sacrifice, which is Jesus’ death as the “ransom for many.” As Maloney states, “Jesus establishes a bond of loving self-giving with his disciples…” The new meaning is two-fold, Christ not only reveals the centrality of love in the sacrificial act of self-gift, but also invites his disciples to partake in self-giving as a covenantal sacrifice.

Furthermore, another dimension of newness in the covenant is the birth of a new community. Recalling the Exodus reference of deliverance, this new community is also a liberated community. Michael Gorman explains that to be a disciple of Christ is to belong to the new community, which can identify with God’s sacrificial love and participate in it.

The Son of God did what he did in life and in death because that is what it means to be the Son of God. Thus, discipleship is not merely following the Son of God who accidentally or arbitrarily died, but following the one who has died because that is the fullest manifestation of the self-giving and reconciling nature of the Son

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416 See Mann, Mark, 578-579. Mann quotes the work of J.A. Emerton “The Aramaic Underlying to haima mou tēs diathēkēs in Mark 14:24,” JTS 6.1955, pp 238-240, and “to haima mou tēs diathēkēs: The Evidence of the Syriac Versions,” JTS 3.1962, 111-117) who proposes that in Mark “Jesus used the rare but entirely permissible “construction of genitive after a noun with a pronominal suffix (a very common construction in later Syriac)”…and that this… “was to avoid any suggestion that the Covenant was of Jesus’s own making; he was but the instrument and the vehicle of its inauguration through his blood—the Covenant was of God’s own making (579).

417 See Mann, Mark, 579. He explains that the use of the adjective “new” recalls Jeremiah’s prophecy of newness in the covenant. Mann remarks, “The distinctive note in the Pauline form is the adjective “new” before Covenant, which recalls Jeremiah 31:31. Some Markan manuscripts add the adjective by ways of assimilation to the Pauline account, and the same is true of some manuscripts of Matthew.”


of God, and thus of God himself...To be the new covenant people is truly a new experience of knowing, loving, participating in, and being like God.\textsuperscript{420}

In this new ratification of the covenant, the people are offered a New Exodus. This new liberation has an atoning sacrificial motif, communicated with the language of Christ’s blood is being \textit{shed for many}. Painter shows the connection to the Suffering Servant’s sacrifice when he writes, “The notion of \textit{one for the many} echoes the language concerning the suffering servant (Isaiah 53:11,12) whose work makes \textit{many} righteous, who \textit{pours out} his life (\textit{nepesh}) to death and bears the sins of \textit{many}.\textsuperscript{421} Mary Healy explains the atoning dimension of Christ’s sacrifice, “That it [Christ’s blood] will be shed \textit{for many} means that Jesus’ death is more than a martyrdom; it is an efficacious sacrifice, providing the total forgiveness of sin that was only foreshadowed in the animal sacrifices of the old covenant.”\textsuperscript{422}

\textbf{4.3. Sacrifice in the Letter to the Romans}

The concept of sacrifice is addressed throughout the Pauline corpus. According to Daly, Paul presents a biblical theology of Christian sacrifice which is anchored on three pillars: the sacrifice of Christ, Christians as the new Temple, and the life of Christians as sacrifice.\textsuperscript{423} The next section of this chapter will concentrate on selected passages from the Letter to the Romans.

\begin{itemize}
\item Gorman, \textit{The Death of the Messiah and the Birth of the New Covenant}, 35-36.
\item Healy, \textit{The Gospel of Mark}, 286.
\item Daly, \textit{Sacrifice Unveiled}, 54-55 cites the following among the passages which address the sacrifice of Christ for the world: 2 Cor. 5:14-15, 21; Gal. 2:20, 3:13-15; Eph. 5:2, 25; Col. 1:24; Rom. 3:24-25, 5:6-11; 8:3, 23, 32; 1 Tim. 2:5-6; Titus 2:13-14. Additionally, he cites the following among those which address the sacrifice of the Christian: 2 Cor. 4:10-11; Gal. 2:19-20; Rom. 8:36; 12:1-2.
\end{itemize}
The length of this Epistle has determined its placement as first in the Pauline corpus. Nevertheless, it is also important to acknowledge how instrumental Romans has been in the articulation of Christian theology. Quoting Joseph Fitzmyer’s remarks, Greenman and Larsen affirm that, in fact, it would be quite possible to write Christian theology by studying the history of interpretation of Romans.424 Without a doubt, this Letter has been considered as the most influential theological work of Christianity.425 Many aspects of Christian theology find scriptural foundations in Romans and this includes the meaning of Christ’s death as redemptive.426

In Romans, Paul discusses the righteousness of God as being fully revealed in Christ. God’s fidelity to the covenant was continuously preached by the prophets. It was witnessed in the life of Jesus by those who journeyed with him, and it was preached anew by Paul. In her evaluation of Paul’s kerygmatic presentation in Romans, Grieb notes that,

The story of what God has done in Jesus Christ, which appears just below the surface of Paul’s argument for the righteousness of God in Romans, can be summarized as follows: First, it is the story of what God has done to save the lost world of creation and humanity in the sacrifice of Jesus Christ (Rom. 1-3), climaxing in 3:31-31. Then Paul underlines the story of the faithfulness of Jesus by comparing it to the earlier story of the faithfulness of Abraham in Romans 4. Paul’s discussion of Abraham is followed in Romans 5-8 by a narrative flashback to the human story in Adam –to our bondage to sin and death through human disobedience– now contrasted with our deliverance from sin and death through the faithful obedience of Jesus Christ.427

424 Jeffrey P. Greenman and Timothy Larsen “Introduction,” in Reading Romans through the Centuries: From the Early Church to Karl Barth, eds. Jeffrey P. Greenman and Timothy Larsen (Grand Rapids, MI: Brazos Press, 2005), 14.


Grieb’s observations cohere with points which are addressed in Hebrews: Christ’s sacrifice, and in particular his obedience as sacrifice, effect the forgiveness of sins, which animal sacrifices could not effect. Christ’s sacrificial love restored us into right relationship with the God and it gave us the example for a sacrificial life. This section will consider two passages from Romans which deal with Christ’s sacrifice (3:24-25 and 5:9-11) and one passage which is concerned with sacrifice in the life of the believer (12:1).

A. Romans 3:24-25 – Christ’s Sacrifice Effects Expiation and Redemption

“redemption in Christ Jesus, whom God set forth as an expiation,” (Rom. 3:24-25)

Since the concept of Christ’s sacrifice as expiatory is central to Christian theology, this passage has been the object of much study and reflection. The entire pericope (3:21-26) merits careful evaluation, as it is essential in the discussion of the topic of expiation. This pericope follows Rom. 1:18 – 3:20, which treats the universal problem of sin and provides the setting for the climatic assertion in 3:25 of the revelation, in an unexpected way, of God’s righteousness.

Paul sets his presentation in the context of proclaiming God’s faithfulness to the covenantal promises. Immediately following the salutation in chapter one, Paul quotes the prophet Habakkuk (Hab. 2:4)428 and affirms that God’s fidelity/faithfulness is revealed in his righteousness, “For in

428 The prophet Habakkuk was delivering a message of hope to God’s people, who were suffering at the hand of the Babylonians –Chaldeans–, in the period encompassing the last years of the 7th c., BC through the earlier years of the 6th BC. The prophet reminded the people that God’s fidelity will prevail and that the people’s faithfulness should be expressed in their trust in God’s faithfulness. Those who trust will live; in other words, justification is effected by God, but has to be accepted and lived by the people.

Paul uses Habakkuk’s message in the same manner to exhort the Christians to fidelity/faithfulness. Hab. 2:4 is used in Rom. 1:17 and in Gal 3:11. The author of the Letter to the Hebrews also uses it in Heb. 10:38.

4b but the just one who is righteous because of faith shall live.
it [the Gospel—the euangelion] is revealed the righteousness of God from faith to faith; as it is written, “The one who is righteous by faith will live.” (Rom. 1:17). Paul states the thesis for his rhetorical argument in Rom. 1:16-17.

The concepts of God’s righteousness and fidelity, being central to Paul’s thought are essential to interpreting not only Romans but all his letters. On this matter, Dunn explains,

The nub of what is being revealed is contained in the next four words—“from faith to faith.” The phrase can and probably should be taken as play on the ambiguity of the word faith/faithfulness, in the sense “from God’s faithfulness (to his covenant promises) to man’s response of faith.” This fits well with the concept of God’s righteousness and with the quotation from Habakkuk about to follow…What should not escape notice is the fact that Hab. 2:4 can serve as a proof text for his thematic statement precisely because its central phrase (“from faith”) can be understood to embrace both the preceding “faith” phrases. This point is so important for the exegesis of Romans that it is worth emphasizing.429

Having this understanding will contribute to a better integration of all themes in Paul’s message, including a more robust interpretation on the passages concerning sacrifice.

In 1:18-32 – 3:20, Paul contrasts the righteousness of God with the unrighteousness of humanity. With precise rhetoric, Paul recounts that all people, Jew and Gentile alike, have sinned. In other words, Paul systematically describes the universality of sin.430 This is the setting for the pericope which speaks of God’s response for the universal need for salvation, as it is revealed in Christ Jesus.

3:21 But now the righteousness of God has been manifested apart from the law, though testified to by the law and the prophets, 22 the righteousness of God through faith in Jesus Christ for all who believe. For there is no distinction; 23 all have sinned


and are deprived of the glory of God. They are justified freely by his grace through the redemption in Christ Jesus, whom God set forth as an expiation, through faith, by his blood, to prove his righteousness because of the forgiveness of sins previously committed, through the forbearance of God—to prove his righteousness in the present time, that he might be righteous and justify the one who has faith in Jesus. (Rom. 3:21-26).

1. apolutρόσις – redemption

All humanity has sinned, and yet because of God’s covenantal love, “They are justified freely by his grace through the redemption (apolutρόσις) in Christ Jesus whom God set forth as an expiation, through faith, by his blood, to prove his righteousness because of the forgiveness” (Rom 3:24-25). Humanity is justified (restored to right relationship with God), freely as a gift from God. Paul writes that justification has taken place though the redemption in Christ. The Greek term apolytrōseōs, translated as redemption occurs only ten times in the New Testament: one time in Luke, seven times in the Pauline corpus, and twice in Hebrews. The highest occurrence in the Pauline epistles suggests the importance of this term in Paul’s thought. The term literally means ransom or deliverance. In the writings of Philo (Quod Omnis Probus Liber sit, 114) and Josephus (Jewish Antiquities 12:27), apolytrōseōs was used to describe the liberation of

431 Theologically, 3:25 contains a message which has shaped much of the soteriology articulated by Paul. Linguistically, it presents certain peculiarities. The use of hapax legomena in this verse is rather unusual. Dunn Romans 1-8, 163-164, observes, “The surprising cluster of Pauline hapax legomena (hap. leg.) within such a short compass certainly encourages such a conclusion [that this verse is pre-Pauline]: προσίθημι (only in 1:13, but probably not the same sense), ἱλαστήριον (hap. leg.), ἑνδειξις (only in 2 Cor. 8:24 in the same sense), πάρος (hap. leg.), προγίνομαι (hap. leg.), ἀμάρτημα (only in 1 Cor 6:18).”

432 apolytrōseōs, translated as “redemption”, is the genitive form of apolutρόσις.

433 Occurrences of ἀπολύτρωσις in the New Testament: Lk 2:28; Rom 3:24, 8:23; 1 Cor 1:30; Eph. 1:7, 1:14, 4:30; Col. 1:14, Heb 9:15, 11:35.

434 “ἀπολύτρωσις,” Danker, Greek New Testament Lexicon in BibleWorks 10. The range of meaning includes payment for freedom, ransom, price of release, freedom/liberation from an oppressive circumstance. Additionally, it can mean deliverance from slavery, through payment.
It is believed that many among those who were receiving Paul’s letter in Rome had been themselves slaves. The use of lytron in other It is believed that many among those who were receiving Paul’s letter in Rome had been themselves slaves. Appealing to a condition known to his audience, Paul uses the metaphor of deliverance from the captivity resulting from war to proclaim deliverance from slavery to sin.

Without the preposition apo, the term lytron is already familiar, from the discussion of Mark 10:45. As when the term lytron was used in Mark, so too in Rom. 3:24, with the compound term apolytron, Paul is evoking Old Testament’s images of God’s mighty acts of deliverance from Egypt at the time of the Exodus (Exod. 15:13; Ps. 77:15, 78:35) or later from exile in Babylon (Isa. 41:14, 43:1), a time of New Exodus for God’s people.

The liberation from slavery in Egypt is intrinsically connected to the covenant. Lyonnet and Sabourin observe this unmistakable connection to the Mosaic as well as to the Abrahamic covenant when they explain,

As early as the Pentateuch we can observe not only the technical use of the term [the term being ἀπολύτρωσις—the technical use being that of liberation of captives], but we must also notice how closely the liberation from the Egyptian servitude (which more and more has been considered as a figure of the servitude under sin) is connected with the covenant of Sinai by which Israel was made “the possession of God” (Ex. 19:5f) or “a purchased people” (1 Pet. 2:9). It may suffice to quote a few passages: Ex. 6:7: “I have remembered my covenant (with Abraham)…I am the LORD, and will free you from under the burdens of the Egyptians and I will deliver you from their slavery, and will redeem (lutrōsomai, gā’alti) you by my outstretched arm…

435 See Lyonnet and Sabourin, Sin, Redemption, and Sacrifice, 80. Lyonnet notes that in The Jewish War II, 14,1, Josephus writes about Albinus [Roman procurator of Judea] having accepted “ransoms” from relatives of prisoners (apelutrou tois sungenesi). See also Dunn, Romans 1-8, 169.
436 Dunn, Romans 1-8, 169.
437 Lyonnet and Sabourin, Sin, Redemption, and Sacrifice, 91.
God’s mighty acts of deliverance were an expression of his love for humanity and of his faithfulness to the covenants with Abraham, Moses, and David. Compellingly, Paul advances his argument stating that God’s faithfulness has been revealed through the redemption effected by Christ: “They are justified freely by his grace through the redemption (apolytrōseōs) in Christ Jesus” (3:24).

2. *hilastērion* – expiation

In 3:25, Paul continues to make the bold statement that it was in Christ Jesus, in “whom God set forth as an expiation (*hilastērion*), through faith (dia [tēs] pisteōs), by his blood (en tō autou haimati), to prove his righteousness because of the forgiveness of sins previously committed.” The Greek term *hilastērion* is a *hapax legomena* in the New Testament. In fact, Dunn notes that *hilastērion* is almost singularly a term used in the LXX. Since Paul’s thought was developed from concepts revealed in the Old Testament, we therefore turn to the usage of *hilastērion* in the LXX, as that would have been the context most familiar to Paul and his audience.

In the LXX, *hilastērion* is used to translate the term *kappōret* (כַּפֵֹ֫רֶת) (usually rendered as “mercy seat” in English). The most common usage of *kappōret* is associated with the building of the Ark of the Covenant (Exod. 25:17-22; Exod. 37:6-9), and with the rituals for the Day of

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440 *kappōret* (כַּפֵֹ֫רֶת) appears a total of 27 times in the Hebrew Bible: 18 times in Exodus, 7 times in Leviticus; once in Numbers; once in 1 Chronicles.

In Exodus, the first 10 occurrences pertain to the instructions of the building of the Ark of the Covenant: (Exod. 25:17, 25:18, 25:19, 25:20, 25:20, 25:21, 25:22, 26:34, 30:6, 31:7); the next occurrence concerns preparations for the building of the Tabernacle (Exod. 35:12); the next 5 pertain to the actual making of the Ark (Exod. 37:6, 37:7, 37:8, 37:9, 37:9); and the last two occurrences speak of the כַּפֵֹ֫רֶת once the work of building had been completed (Exod. 39:35, 40:20).

All of the 7 occurrences in Leviticus appear in the context of *Yom Kippur* (Lev. 16:2, 16:2, 16:13, 16:14, 16:14, 16:15, 16:15).
Atonement. The *kappōret* is to be set up on top of the Ark. This would be ‘the place’ upon which the *LORD* would appear to give instructions to Moses. On *Yom Kippur*, Aaron would burn incense before the *kappōret*, so that the burning incense would form a cloud covering the *kappōret* (*Lev. 16:13*). During the rite, when the blood of the sin offerings was sprinkled on and before the *kappōret* (*Lev. 16:14-15*), the blood was placed as close as possible to the *LORD*, whose presence above the *kappōret* was understood (*Lev. 16:2*).441

The first occurrence of *kappōret* is in *Exod. 25:17*: וְּעַשָּׁה תֵּא-קָפֹרֶת [וְּעַשָּׁה-כַּפָּרֶת], literally “and you shall make a mercy seat [kappōret]”. The LXX translates the sentence as: “καὶ ποιήσεις ἱλάστηριον ἐπίθεμα”. Thus, the LXX renders *kappōret* “an expiating headpiece.” Since the first usage of *hilastērion* in the LXX is as an adjective, not as a noun, Büchsel suggests that the LXX is using “the term for a headpiece or *vessel* of expiation rather than for the *place* of expiation.”442 Although the terms are certainly not synonymous, there is an intimate connection between the *apolytrōseōs* in Christ and *hilastērion*. As Büchsel explains,

> It is hard to say with any clarity whether Paul in R. 3:25 is thinking of the ἱλαστήριον in particular or as a means of expiation in general…Nevertheless, whatever the final meaning of ἱλαστήριον, it certainly denotes that which expiates sins. By means of it [the ἱλαστήριον], is the ἀπολύτρωσις or redemption of the sinner and therewith the revelation of God’s righteousness. The ἱλάσκομαι contained in ἱλαστήριον naturally does not mean “to propitiate,” as though God were an object. This is excluded by the fact that it is God who has made the ἱλαστήριον what it is. In this whole context *God is subject, not object*…Only men, or the sins of men can be the object of ἱλάσκομαι.443

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443 Ibid., 320 [emphasis mine].
The term *hilastērion* is certainly associated with sacrifice. However, even in the sacrificial context, it has a diverse range of meaning, which can influence the overall interpretation given to Rom.3:24-25. Citing Ziesler’s work, Choe offers a summary of the three possible interpretations of *hilastērion* as propitiation, expiation, or mercy seat:

*Propitiation* is the action of turning away God’s displeasure; it is directed *towards God*. *Expiation* is the removal of sin from the sinner, and so is *human-directed*.... The *mercy-seat*... was regarded as the special focus of God’s presence and of his forgiving of Israel’s sins…. Thus, the word in v.25 has been variously held to mean that on the cross, God’s anger was turned away from humanity by a sacrifice which he found uniquely acceptable (*propitiation*), that in the cross God found a means of dealing with sin (*expiation*), and that in the cross there is a focus and a making visible of God’s mercy to men and women (*mercy-seat*). All have found defenders, and it is difficult to be sure which is correct.444

Accordingly, much debate has surrounded the precise theological meaning of *hilastērion*. Bailey notes that much 20th c. research on *hilastērion* was done primarily on its use in non-biblical sources. This led many scholars to advocate for the doctrine of propitiation or satisfaction to God. Nevertheless, those who focused their research on the LXX have preferred the meaning of expiation of sin over that of propitiation of God. Those who have studied the use of ἱλαστήριον in the LXX have concentrated their efforts on the verbal form *hilaskesthai* (ίλασκεσθαι), which has led to an underdeveloped sense for the substantive form. An additional linguistic interpretative difficulty resulted from the Pauline comparison of Jesus to the sin offering (Rom. 8:3), namely an animal victim sacrificed as a ḥaṭṭā‘. With that understanding, *hilastērion* could be incorrectly interpreted as a sacrificial victim for atonement (in the biblical sense), or a slaughtered votive offering to the pagan gods (in the secular context).445


Mindful of the great influence which the Torah had on Paul, Bailey offers another interesting point of reflection on *hilastērion*. He advances the argument that Exod. 15 offers much insight on the interpretation of Rom. 3:24-25,

Paul focuses on ‘the law and the prophets’ and then more particularly on the Song of Moses in Exodus 15. The combination of God’s righteousness and redemption in Exodus 15:13 (ὅδήγησας τῇ δικαιοσύνῃ σου τον λαόν σου τούτον, ὄν έλυτρώσο) closely parallels Romans 3:24 (δικαιώσεως and ἀπολύτρωσις). Furthermore, Exodus 15:17 promises that the exodus would lead to a new, ideal sanctuary established by God himself. God's open setting out of Jesus as the new ἧλαστήριον— the centre of the sanctuary and focus of both the revelation of God (Ex. 25:22; Lv. 16:2; Nu. 7:89) and atonement for sin (Leviticus 16)— fulfils this tradition.  

In Rom. 3:24-25, Paul firmly declares the connection between God’s righteousness, the redemption, Christ’s faithfulness, and the expiatory effect of Christ’s sacrificial blood. According to M. Gorman, this connection is unveiled as the ‘where’ and the ‘how’ of redemption. With great clarity, he remarks,

For Paul, Christ’s death is the manifestation (3:21) of God’s saving justice. It is God’s faithful and merciful gift (3:24, 25) as well as Christ’s faithful act, his obedience (3:22, 26, 5:1-19). This death accomplishes two things with respect to sin: forgiveness for sins (plural) and redemption from Sin (singular). According to 3:25, God “put forward” Christ as “a sacrifice of atonement,” (NRSV; NIV) referring to the Jewish system of sacrifices for sins, or as the “mercy seat (NET; cf. CEB) in the holy of holies (Lev 16:12-16). The emphasis is on grace, not punishment. Furthermore, this death was also an act of “redemption” (3:24) or liberation — the language of deliverance from bondage to Egypt or any other slave master (cf, 6:7). In other words, Christ’s death deals both with sins (the deeds) and with Sin (the power)—*just as Paul’s analysis of the human predicament in 1:18-3:20 requires.*

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God’s faithfulness to the covenant is expressed in the unmerited gift of justification through
the redemption which is effected in Christ. God chose Christ as his servant, whom he anointed,
and who became hilastērion. He is the seat of mercy, where expiation takes place. He is the
merciful and just Servant, who liberated us.

3. *en tō autō haimati – by/in his blood*

This discussion of sacrificial elements in Rom. 3:24-25 would be incomplete without
examining the phrase *autou haimati*. If the *where* of the redemption is hilastērion, i.e. the mercy
seat or the place of expiation, then the *how* is Christ’s blood. It is important to note the location
of this phrase in relation to the rest of 3:25.

“whom God set forth as an expiation, through faith, **by his blood,**
to prove his righteousness because of the forgiveness of sins previously committed.”

The term hilastērion is followed by the prepositional phrase “*dia pisteōs*” (through faith),
and this phrase in turn by another prepositional phrase “*en tō autō haimati*” (by/in his blood).
Dunn explains that *dia pisteōs* should be interpreted as a parenthetical phrase, but not as part of *en
tō autō haimati*. He remarks that “pistis” is not followed by “en” in any of the Pauline writings,
and therefore, in accord with other scholars, he considers that *pisteōs* is used to refer to God’s
covenantal faithfulness, as it was used in Rom. 1:17. Furthermore, M. Gorman notes that in as
much as Paul would use *pistis* to signify God’s faithfulness, he also would have used it to denote
Christ’s faithfulness and the believer’s response:

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448 Emphasis added:
“ὁ θεὸς ἔντεκνα ἄμαρτητος ἀνεξαρτήτως τοῦ ἀμαρτημάτων ἐν τῷ αὐτοῦ αἵματι
εἰς καθοδὴν τῷ θεολογοῦντος αὐτοῦ διὰ τὴν πάρεσιν τῶν προγεγομένων ἀμαρτημάτων”

449 Dunn, *Romans 1-8*, 172.
…there are two aspects of the interpretation of this passage that most translations miss. First, we should understand God’s righteousness/justice as God’s saving covenant faithfulness, or restorative justice. Second, we should render phrases normally translated “faith in Christ” as ‘the faith’ or ‘faithfulness of Christ’ (3:22, 26). Thus, the faithfulness of God, Christ, and those who respond are all named in this text.450

Insisting on the importance that Paul places on the faithful response of the believer, Dunn states, “Whereas the concomitant of the system of atonement for the devout Jew was faithful attention to the rules of the covenant (“works of the law”), Paul insists on a faith which is not tied into a continued practice of the cult but which can only be an acceptance of the decisive sacrifice already provided by God.”451 Fitzmyer emphasizes that the faith of the believer is expressed in the response to the challenge posed by the Good News.452 Expiation happens because of the faithfulness of God, is effected through the faithfulness of Christ, and will bear fruit in the lives of those who respond in faithfulness.

By placing “en tō autou haimati” in close proximity to hilastērion, Paul declares that Christ’s blood effects the atonement/purification which was foreshadowed by bringing the blood of the bull and the goat into the “mercy seat” (kappōret) during Yom Kippur. Nevertheless, Christ’s blood is the blood of a different sacrifice, a sacrifice offered through faithfulness and obedience. Luke Timothy Johnson articulates the uniqueness of Christ’s sacrifice:

God put forward Jesus as a sacrifice to establish unity between himself and humans (cf. Lev. 16:12-16) “by his blood” (3:25). The death of Jesus, however, was not a mechanical offering but the faithful death of a living human being: it was an act of obedience to God. This it was and “through faith” (3:25). Jesus in God’s Son, in

450 Gorman, Apostle of the Crucified Lord, 419-420.
451 Dunn, Romans 1-8, 172.
him the gift was at once given from God and received by humans. In the body language and freedom of a single human being, God has acted on behalf of all (3:22). Both God’s nature (righteousness) and God’s activity for humans (making others righteous, 3:26) are evidenced.453

The reference to Christ’s blood in 3:25 has a sacrificial dimension, although it refers to a new and different sacrifice. Paul establishes the newness of Christ’s sacrifice, in that it can heal the root of the problem of sin, unlike the cultic Levitical sacrifices. Christ’s sacrificial blood restores humanity to right relationship with God. Unlike the blood of animals which could only purify the sacred space and sacred vessels, Christ’s blood purges sin, heals our wounded nature, and restores communion with God.

B. Romans 5:9-11 – Christ’s Sacrifice Effects Justification and Reconciliation

“while we were enemies, we were reconciled to God through the death of his Son” (Rom. 5:10)

Romans 5 does not usually figure into a systematic investigation of scriptural texts which address sacrifice.454 I propose, however, that Rom. 5:9-11 is relevant to this investigation on the biblical theology of sacrifice. This pericope contributes to our understanding of Christ’s sacrifice insofar as it reveals justification and reconciliation as being effected through his self-offering.

5:9 How much more then, since we are now justified by his blood, will we be saved through him from the wrath. 10 Indeed, if, while we were enemies, we were reconciled to God through the death of his Son, how much more, once reconciled, will we be saved by his life. 11 Not only that, but we also boast of God through our LORD Jesus Christ, through whom we have now received reconciliation. (Rom. 5:9-11).455


454 Stanislas Lyonnet, Lepold Sabourin, and Robert Daly have done extensive research on the topic of sacrifice. They have looked at the development of a theology of Christian sacrifice, from Scriptural sources as well as from the Tradition. Whereas Hebrews, especially chapters 7-10, and various sources from the Pauline corpus have been studied, when the Letter to the Romans has been considered, the attention has focused primarily on chapters 3, 8, and 12.

455 5:9 πολλῷ οὖν μᾶλλον δικαιωθέντες νῦν ἐν τῷ ἁματί αὐτοῦ σωθησόμεθα δι’ αὐτοῦ ἀπὸ τῆς ὀργῆς. 10 ἐκ γὰρ ἐχθροὶ διόντες κατηλλάγημεν τῷ θεῷ διὰ τοῦ θανάτου τοῦ νιώτος αὐτοῦ, πολλῷ μᾶλλον καταλλαγέντες σωθησόμεθα
These three verses constitute a subunit of a larger pericope. Scholars agree that structurally, 5:9-11 belong to a larger unit, i.e. 5:1-11, which centers on justification, reconciliation, and peace through the sacrifice of Christ. Following the presentation of God’s righteousness revealed in Christ’s faithful and obedient sacrifice (Rom 3:21-31), Paul speaks about Abraham as an exemplar of faithfulness (Rom. 4:1-25). Then, he continues his exposition by proclaiming that justification and reconciliation have been received as a gift through the cross (Rom. 5:1-21).

I suggest that Rom. 5:9-11 has a chiastic pattern. Beginning with a statement in the present tense, Paul delivers a message that carries his audience through a time continuum which reveals different states in the relationship with God. It can be observed that Rom. 9-11, presents a chiastic structure where the axis or focal point is the death of Christ.

5:9a How much more therefore, since we are now justified [dikaiōthentes] by his blood, present
9b will we be saved [sōthēsometha] through him from the wrath. future

10a Indeed, if, while we were enemies, we were reconciled [katēllagēmen] to God through the death of his Son, past/aor ind.
10b how much more, once reconciled, will we be saved [sōthēsometha] by his life. future

11a Not only that, but we also boast [kauchōmenoi] of God through our LORD Jesus Christ,
11b through whom we have now received [(nyn)elabomen] reconciliation. present

ἐν τῇ ζωῇ αὐτοῦ. Ἡμῶν μένον δὲ, ἄλλα καὶ καυχώμενοι ἐν τῷ θεῷ διὰ τοῦ κυρίου ἡμῶν Ιησοῦ Χριστοῦ, δι’ αὐτοῦ νῦν τὴν καταλλαγὴν ἐλάβομεν.” (Rom. 5:9-11).

456 A similar structural analysis is presented by Dunn, Romans 1-8, 244-269; Gorman, Apostle of the Crucified Lord, 426-429. Also see Ernst Käsemann, Commentary on Romans, trans. Geoffrey W. Bromiley (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1994), 131-139. Additionally, these three scholars note a chiastic structure in the pericope 5:1-11 with the center in v. 6-8, where Paul presents the love of God revealed in Christ’s death.

457 The proposed pattern considers not so much the verb tenses, but primarily the time sense of the text. Since many of the Greek verbs in the subunit appear in the aorist verbal form, either as participles or in the indicative form. They do not correspond to a precise past or present –unless the aorist is in the indicative mood, when it represents a single occurrence of an action in the past.
These three verses weave a cause-effect relationship between the center verse (5:10a) and the outer verses. The sacrificial death of Christ, which occurred once in the past is effecting justification now (5:9a) and reconciliation now (5:11b) in the present and is also effecting salvation in the future (5:9b and 5:10b).

Justification ( dikaiosynē) refers to the restoration of right relationship with God and to God’s own righteousness, which makes restoration possible. The clause in 5:9a offers continuity of thought with the beginning of chapter five, “Therefore, since we have been justified by faith” (5:1) and with the last section of chapter eight, “…and those he called he also justified ( edikaiōsen); and those he justified ( edikaiōsen) he also glorified” (8:30) and “It is God who acquits/justifies ( dikaiōn)us” (Rom 8:33).

Paul uses the term “reconciliation” ( katallagē) to explain the restoration of right relationship, which creates a sense of peace. Reconciliation implies that there was a prior relationship which had to have been broken or wounded and Paul proclaims that Christ brings about this reconciliation. Καταλλαγή, and its cognates, occur three times in 5:9-11, two times in the verbal form in 5:10 and once in the substantive form in 5:11. The incarnate God has reconciled all to the Father and brought peace to humanity. Only God could offer this gift of righteousness and participation in God’s saving justice. See Rom.3:21-31; 5:1-11; Gal. 2:15-21; 2 Cor. 5:21”

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458 See Dunn, Romans 1-8, 257. He notes that adding the adverb of time ἀπὸ to verbs which occur in the aorist, and which are followed a verb in the future communicates a sense of the “eschatological now.”

459 Gorman, Apostle of the Crucified Lord, 134-135. Gorman states, “To be justified is to be restored to a right covenant relationship with the righteous/just God now, and in so doing to become part of the righteous/just people of God, in anticipation of acquittal on day of judgment and final salvation. Christ is the believers’ source of righteousness and participation in God’s saving justice. See Rom.3:21-31; 5:1-11; Gal. 2:15-21; 2 Cor. 5:21”

460 In Paul’s though, reconciliation and peace are connected. Gorman explains, “This benefit [reconciliation and peace] implies for Paul a prior condition of enmity between people and God that God has taken the initiative to repair. Christ is the believers’ mediator and their peace, their shalom. See Romans 5:1-11; 2 Corinthians 5:18-21.” Gorman, Apostle of the Crucified Lord, 135.
restoration. Johnson remarks that, “In Rom 5:1-11, the objective nature of the gift is stated: once made ‘righteous,’ humans are ‘reconciled with God’ (5:10-11; cf. 2 Cor. 5:16-21)”⁴⁶¹ Paul affirms that the reality of God’s love and gift is the cause for boasting (5:11), not any human ritual action.

Finally, when considering “reconciliation” (katallagē) and “justification” (dikaiosynē) as the effects of Christ’s sacrifice, Paul does not make a clear distinction between both terms. Dunn and Gorman agree that for Paul, the two are equivalent terms and can be used interchangeably.⁴⁶² Both terms signify concepts related to restoration of covenantal relationship. This restoration is extended to all, including the Gentiles, who were not the initial recipients of the covenant. Since sin is universal, justification and reconciliation (gifts from God) are also universal.

C. Romans 12:1-2 – The Living Sacrifice of the Christian

“offer your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and pleasing to God” (Rom. 12:1)

Paul applies sacrificial language not only to the death of Christ, but also to the life of the Christian. Following his dramatic argument for the gift of justification and reconciliation effected in and through Christ (5:1-21), and for the call of the Christian to die to sin and live a new life in Christ and in the Spirit (6:1-8:39), Paul continues announcing that the Good News encompasses salvation for both Jew and Gentile alike (9:1-11:36). He then begins a new section of the Letter (12:1-15:33), where he urges the Christian to live a life that witnesses to the gift received.

⁴¹²:1 I urge you therefore, brothers, by the mercies of God, to offer your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and pleasing to God, your spiritual worship. ²Do not conform yourselves to this age but be transformed by the renewal of your mind, that you

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⁴⁶² Dunn, Romans 1-8, 259; Gorman, Apostle of the Crucified Lord, 426-427.
may discern what is the will of God, what is good and pleasing and perfect.” (Rom. 12:1-2)

This appeal has received much attention as an exhortation to ethical living. Our interest in discussing it rests in the sacrificial motif which colors the message. Having proclaimed redemption, justification, reconciliation, and peace, Paul asks the community for a sacrifice “which bears some ‘relation to the world’ (ta somata hymōn) as well as one which flows from the nature (logikēn) of those who offer the worship in light of the gospel.” In the Greek text, the appeal begins with the verb παρακαλῶ, immediately followed by the conjunction οὖν (oun). Hence, the “oun” (therefore) connects the following exhortation to Paul’s previous teaching. In other words, what Paul is about to say in this exhortation follows from that which he has already presented.

In light of what he has already proclaimed, Paul will now exhort the community into action.

“I urge” (parakalō) serves as the introduction of the parenesis. This is a standard literary form called “petition”. The petition is followed by the phrase “by the mercies (oiktirmōn) of God”. This phrase is crucial to the understanding of the rest of Rom. 12:1. Some linguistic details are helpful in mining the meaning of the phrase. First, the term used for “mercy” is not eleos,

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463 “Παρακαλῶ οὖν ὑμᾶς, ἀδελφοί, διὰ τῶν οἰκτιρμῶν τοῦ θεοῦ παραστήσαι τὰ σώματα ὑμῶν θυσίαν ἁγίαν εὐάρεστον τῷ θεῷ, τὴν λογικὴν λατρείαν ὑμῶν· καὶ μὴ συσχηματίσεσθε τῷ αἰώνι τούτῳ, ἀλλὰ μεταμορφοῦσθε τῇ ἀνακαινώσει τοῦ νοοῦ, εἰς τὸ δοκιμάζειν ὑμᾶς τί τὸ θέλημα τοῦ θεοῦ, τὸ ἁγαθὸν καὶ εὐάρεστον καὶ τέλειον” (Rom. 12:1-2).


465 Fitzmyer, Romans, 637-638.


Paul uses this hortatory phrase with the authority of one who is an apostle, of one who has a mission. This verbal form is used 20 times in the New Testament; 12 of those 20 times are occurrences in the authentic Pauline letters. In the letter to the Romans, he uses this term in 12:1 and again in 15:30-32 and 16:17, which are also parakalô periods.
which appears three times in Romans and seven more times in the rest of the Pauline corpus, but instead, the term is oiktirmos, only used here and in 2 Cor. 1:3. Moreover, the term is used in the genitive plural form, oiktirmōn, which would suggest the many merciful acts that God has done for his people. Some scholars propose that the key to understanding this important phrase is in the LXX, where the term appears over seventy times, also in the plural form, and it refers to the mighty works of God. Gupta suggests three categories of God’s merciful acts: his revelatory mercy, his forgiving mercy, and his rescuing mercy. Showing unity in his message, Paul has proclaimed elsewhere in Romans, that these mercies have been experienced by both Jews and Gentiles. Although he probably did not distinguish these three separate categories of God’s mercies, nevertheless, the concept of oiktirmōn tou Theou (mercies of God) is essential to the understanding of the “offering of a living sacrifice”.

The phrase “dia tōn oiktirmōn tou Theou” could serve as an adverbial phrase of the infinitive ‘to offer’. In other words, it is God’s mercies which make it possible to offer the living sacrifice. It seems clear that Paul considers God’s mercy as the pivotal point of sacrifice in the Christian life. His exhortation to the Christians is “to offer your bodies” (parastēsai ta sōmata hymōn). The term parastēsai is the aorist form of paristēmi, which can mean to stand-by, to bring

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468 Nijay K. Gupta, “What ‘Mercies of God’? Oiktirmos οἰκτιρμός in Romans 12:1 Against its Septuagintal Background,” Bulletin For Biblical Research 22, no. 1 (2012): 81-84. This article offers an outstanding presentation on the topic of οἰκτιρμός, which is beyond the scope of this work. Gupta cites specific uses of οἰκτιρμός and its cognates in the LXX which are representatives of οἰκτιρμῶν τοῦ θεοῦ. He offers Ex. 33:19 as a foundational example of God’s revelatory mercy, p. 83. He considers the Psalms, especially Ps. 50 as well as the penitential prayers of Dan. 9, Ez. 9, and Neh. 9 as exemplary of God’s forgiving mercy, p. 84. Finally, he holds the narrative found in Nehemiah as an illustration of God’s rescuing mercy, p. 84.

469 Fitzmyer, Romans, 639.
before, to place before, to present, or to offer. However, the meaning of offering is more than simply placing something at someone’s disposal. In Greek literature and in Biblical language, when the verb *paristēmi* is used with the object *thusia* it is a technical term which indicates offering something as a sacrifice. The use of *paristēmi* with a sacrificial connotation (i.e. a sacrificial life) is present elsewhere in Paul’s letters, “It is he whom we proclaim, admonishing everyone and teaching everyone with all wisdom, that we may present everyone perfect in Christ.” (Col. 1:28).

The sacrifice which Paul is exhorting the community to present is their “bodies” (*sōmata*). For Paul, “body” (*sóma*), is not simply the physical aspect of human nature. In Pauline thought, humans do not as much *have a body*, rather *they are body*; in other words, for Paul, *sóma* indicates the totality of the human person. Therefore, for Paul, *sóma* not only refers to the entire human being, but also to the capacity that each person has of relating to the world, of communicating with others and with God.

As Paul continues his exhortation, he calls the community to offer a “living sacrifice” (*thysian zōsan*) of their bodies. On many levels this is an unexpected appeal. On the one hand,

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470 “παρίστημι/παριστάνω [παρά, ἵστημι]” Danker, *Greek New Testament Lexicon* in BibleWorks 10: to present (sacrificial terminology in Rom. 12:1); to place beside; to make available Rom. 6:13, 16, 19; to bring into God’s presence, to bring someone into another’s presence (Luke 2:22, Acts 1:3, 9:41, 2 Cor. 11:2).

471 James D. G. Dunn, *Romans 9-16*, vol. 38B, *World Biblical Commentary*, eds. Bruce M. Metzger, John D. W. Watts, James W. Watts, Ralph P. Martin, Lynn Allan Losie (Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson Publishers, 1988), 709. Paul uses the term *παραστήσατο* in 2 Cor. 11:2 to describe his intentions to offer the community of Corinth as a bride to Christ. However, in Romans 6:13 and 6:19, Paul uses this same verb as an offering of ownership or slavery to sin. In the pseudo-Pauline letters (Eph. 5:25-27 and Col 1:28), the term is also used to indicate an offering of a sacrifice.


473 Emphasis added.

474 This totality of self is expressed in throughout the Pauline corpus (Rom. 6:12, 8:11, Phil. 3:21, etc.).
sacrifice has been equated with death, either the slaughter of animals or the death of Christ, so there is a seeming paradox in using sacrifice with the qualifier living. On the other hand, Paul is challenging the community to a new form of living and to a new way to offer sacrifice. What Paul is calling for is nothing less than a new way of living! This newness in sacrifice flows from his teachings in Rom. 6:2-11, where Paul explains that in baptism, Christians share in Christ’s death and in his resurrection. Thus, those who believe in Christ have the possibility of no longer being “bodies dead” in sin, but “living bodies” in the Spirit (Rom 8:10-11). These “living bodies” are to be the “living sacrifice” offered to God (Rom. 12:1).

In addition to “living”, Paul uses two more adjectives to describe the sacrifice: “holy” (hagios) and “pleasing” (euarestos). In the Greek text, the three adjectives are not separated, but rather follow the noun, literally: “offer your bodies as a sacrifice, living, holy, acceptable” (thysian zōsan hagian euareston tō Theō). Paul’s exhortation is calling the believers to offer a sacrifice of themselves, as “living, holy and pleasing to God”. Holy (hagios) and pleasing –(euarestos) are important terms to consider. Paul often mentions holiness as a fundamental reality of the expression of the indwelling of the Holy Spirit; this reality is at the same time individual and communal, since it is the sum of all individual realities. In 1 Cor. 3:16-17 and in 1 Cor. 6:19-20, he proclaims that the disciples are holy because their bodies are a temple of the Holy Spirit. If the indwelling of the Spirit renders them holy, then it is only fitting that the sacrifice they offer, i.e. themselves, would be holy.

Holiness begins as an internal quality and constitutes what makes a sacrifice pleasing to God. The notion that a sacrifice was not pleasing to God, if it were empty of an internal and

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475 θυσίαν ζωσαν ἁγιαν εὐάρεστον τῷ θεῷ
personal offering, is evident in the Old Testament. God is not pleased with mechanical exterior actions; he wants the heart of his people (Deut. 10:16; Hos. 6:6; Isa. 1:11-16; Jer. 6:20; Ps. 40:7; Ps 51:18-19; Matt. 9:13; Matt. 12:7). Elsewhere in this letter, Paul is exhorting the church in Rome to live holy lives and reminds them that living in this manner is pleasing to God (Rom 14:17-18).

The gift of God’s love, expressed as justification and reconciliation, allows the believers to offer their bodies as “sacrifice, living, holy, acceptable.” This sacrifice constitutes their “spiritual worship” (logikēn latreian). The term logikos is an adjective that only occurs twice in the New Testament (Rom. 12:1 and 1 Pet. 2:2) without any usage whatsoever in the LXX. Although many English translations render the term as “spiritual”, a more accurate translation would be “reasonable”. Dunn explains that it is used in Greek philosophical thought to communicate the meaning of something ‘rational’ or something that ‘belongs to reason’ as in something that is ‘reasonable.’ Therefore Paul is urging the community to a type of worship that is spiritual, not opposed to physical, but spiritual in the Hellenistic understanding which considers humans as rational, reflective creatures.

The use of the term “worship” (latreia) returns to the sacrificial motif, which is already present with “sacrifice acceptable to God” (thysian zōsan hagian euareston tō Theō). Latreia,

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476 Chapter 3 offers a detailed critique of sacrifice offered without holiness.
478 Below is the phrase “living sacrifice” in the context of the rest of the clause. Emphasis added.
479 Dunn, Romans 9-16, 711.
480 Byrne, S.J., Romans, 363.
translated in English as “worship” or “service”, only occurs five times in the New Testament.\textsuperscript{481} In the LXX, it appears nine times and of those, eight pertain to the cultic system.\textsuperscript{482} When Paul speaks of \textit{logikēn latreian}, he is at the same time recalling the prophetic critique of what constitutes acceptable sacrifice and reminding the community that sacrifice must be part of everyday life. However, Paul is not speaking of a worship completely void of any physical actions. Rather, he wants a worship void of actions which are unreasonable for someone who has been given new life in Christ. Paul is appealing for a worship that is reasonable for those who have been justified and reconciled by Christ’s sacrifice. The disciple and the community of disciples are invited to participate in Christ’s sacrifice by their sacrificial living.\textsuperscript{483}

\textbf{4.4. Sacrifice in the Letter to the Hebrews}

Unlike any other book in the New Testament, Hebrews offers profound insights concerning sacrifice. Yet, Hebrews has challenged many scholars and readers.\textsuperscript{484} The sophisticated vocabulary and style not present elsewhere in the New Testament have presented hermeneutical difficulties in many areas, including authorship. Additionally, its unique genre has resulted in different opinions: some have considered it to be a letter lacking the usual salutation, while others

\textsuperscript{481} The \textit{latreia} only occurs five times in the New Testament: once in John (16:2), twice in Romans (9:4 and 12:1), twice in Hebrews (9:1 and 9:6). In all these occurrences, it is has the meaning of ‘worship’ or ‘service’. However, the verb προσκυνέω and its cognates are used elsewhere in the New Testament with the meaning of worship.


\textsuperscript{483} Michael J. Gorman, \textit{Becoming the Gospel: Paul, Participation, and Mission} (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 2015), 32-33, 261, 288-289. Gorman finds a central theme in Romans: namely, theosis and participation. He considers that theosis is participation in the sacrifice of Christ, which reveals the life and nature of God.

have identified it as a sermon with an epistolary closing. Furthermore, as Healy explains its theology is unparalleled:

As a theologian, the author of Hebrew is remarkably original and bold. Whereas for other New Testament authors the primary biblical prototype for our salvation is the exodus (the source of key themes like redemption, ransom, deliverance from slavery into freedom, lamb of God), Hebrews views salvation from the perspective of the Jewish solemnity of Yom Kippur…Hebrews speaks of Jesus as the high priest (like Aaron) who offers sacrifice to God to expiate the sins of the people.

Indeed, Hebrews contains a rich theological message, particularly, concerning the understanding of sacrifice. The contributions of Hebrews regarding sacrifice can be summarized under two broad categories: first, the fulfillment of the Old Testament ritual sacrifices in the sacrifice of Christ; second the role of obedience in his sacrifice. These two categories are intrinsically connected: his sacrifice, unlike the rituals of the Old Testament, is offered in perfect obedience. Obedience denotes an attitude of willingness to hear others and to do their will. The Greek term ὑπακοή (obedience) is composed of the prefixed preposition ὑπο and the verb ἀκούω (to hear). It involves attentive hearing or listening, and particularly, hupakoē refers to obedience to God. It is the opposite of sin (hamartia), as in Rom. 6:6.

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486 Mary Healy, Hebrews, Catholic Commentary on Sacred Scripture (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2016), 25.
487 The author of Hebrews focuses on sacrifices in a unique way. Specifically, the Levitical sacrifices are concrete ways. The term thysia (sacrifice) occurs with highest concentration in Hebrews: of the twenty-nine occurrences of this term in the New Testament, fifteen are in Hebrews.
489 ὑπακοή,” Danker, Greek NT Lexicon in BibleWorks 10. The term has the connotation of a ‘state of being in compliance.’ It can mean the submission to a human master (Rom. 6:16a), or the submission to the divine will (Rom. 5:19; 6:16b; 15;18,16:19; 2 Cor. 7:15; 10:5f; 1 Pet. 1:2, 14, 22; Heb. 5:8.
Examples of obedience are seen throughout the Bible. In the Old Testament, obedience is central to a right relationship with God.\textsuperscript{491} In Genesis, Noah and Abraham are examples of obedient covenant mediators, whereas Adam is the earliest example of disobedience. Obedience is the condition upon which the Mosaic Covenant hinges, “Now, \textbf{if you obey me completely} and keep my covenant, you will be my treasured possession among all peoples, though all the earth is mine. You will be to me a kingdom of priests, a holy nation (Exod. 19:5-6).

Obedience in the New Testament focuses on the obedience of Jesus, and obedience to Jesus (e.g. John 15:12-14). The obedience of Jesus was a complete gift of self, in conformity to the will of the Father.\textsuperscript{492} It was an obedience of love, not an obedience of servile fear. In the Christological hymn of Philippians, Paul underscores the uniqueness of Christ’s obedience as an obedience of love and kenosis (Phil. 2:6-8). The author of the Letter to the Hebrews instructs on two important aspects concerning obedience: 1) obedience is learned\textsuperscript{493} and 2) obedience characterizes those who are faithful.\textsuperscript{494}

When referring to humans, it is not difficult to grasp that obedience is learned. However, when the concept is applied to Christ, it is most confounding. Heb. 5:8, “Son though he was, he

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\textsuperscript{491} The following are a few examples from the OT where \textit{obedience to God’s Laws} is addressed, [emphasis added]: Deut. 1:19 (“Then, in \textbf{obedience} to the command of the LORD, our God, we set out from Horeb and journeyed through the whole desert…”); Deut. 4:1 (“Now, Israel, \textbf{hear} the statutes and decrees which I am teaching you to observe, that you may live, and may enter in and take possession of the land which the LORD, the God of your fathers, is giving you.”); Jer. 11:10 (“They have returned to the crimes of their forefathers who refused \textbf{to obey} my words…the \textbf{covenant} which I had made with their fathers, the house of Israel and the house of Judah have broken”).

\textsuperscript{492} The following are a few examples of NT passages where \textit{Christ’s obedience} is revealed, [emphasis added]: John 5:30 (“I cannot do anything on my own; I judge as I hear, and my judgment just, because \textbf{I do not seek my own will but the will of the one who sent me”}); Phil. 2:8 (“Rather, he emptied himself, taking the form of a slave, coming in human likeness; and found human in appearance, he humbled himself, becoming \textbf{obedient} to death, even death on a cross”); Heb. 5:8 (“Son though he was, \textbf{he learned obedience} from what he suffered”).

\textsuperscript{493} Ceslas Spicq, O.P., “\epsilon\ι\sigma\alpha\kappa\omega\, \epsilon\pi\alpha\kappa\omega\o\, \omega\pi\alpha\kappa\omega\omega\, \omega\pi\alpha\kappa\omega\h\,” in \textit{Theological Lexicon of the New Testament}, trans. and ed. James D. Ernest (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishers, Inc., 1996), 1: 449-450.

\textsuperscript{494} Koester, \textit{Hebrews}, 290.
learned obedience from what he suffered,” is particularly challenging. How could Christ, the incarnate God not be obedient to the Father? Why would Christ, being God himself, need to learn obedience? Acknowledging the complexity of the text, Koester explains that,

The comment that Jesus “learned obedience” (5:8) is difficult theologically, since 4:15 indicates that he was consistently sinless. A way to approach this issue is to note that authentic obedience is practiced in particular situations. Although Jesus was never disobedient to God, he could not demonstrate obedience until he was placed in situations where the will of God was challenged and obedience was required. There was constancy in Jesus; unfailing obedience to God’s will, yet as Jesus encountered new situations, his faithfulness to God was challenged, and his obedience was shaped accordingly.495

Clearly in his divinity, there was nothing for Christ to learn. Nevertheless, in his humanity, he experienced the challenge of conforming to the Father’s will. Healy affirms that, “Yet in his human nature, frail like ours, he [Christ] experienced how difficult and costly it can be to obey God.”496 It is precisely this obedience, which was reflected throughout Christ’s life, that was so central to the uniqueness of Christ’s sacrificial life and death. Hebrews contrasts the sacrifices offered by the Levitical priests with the sacrifice of Christ (Heb. 9). It presents his sacrifice as fulfillment of the Levitical sacrifices and therefore as superior to them. Concerning this, Healy remarks: “Hebrews 9 shows, first, why those rites [the Old Testament rites] could never fully resolve the problem of sin (9:1-10). It then explains how Christ’s blood, in contrast, is totally efficacious (9:11-14).”497 The Levitical sacrifices offered by the high priest were ritual offerings of an animal or of grain, whereas Christ offers himself as the sacrifice. The ritual offerings of the Mosaic covenant had to be repeated year after year, whereas Christ’ sacrifice made an offering once for all (Heb. 10:1-10). Moreover, the offering of self is possible because of his obedience.

495 Koester, Hebrews, 299.
496 Healy, Hebrews, 110.
497 Ibid., 164.
The expositions on Christ’s sacrifice and the role of obedience in his offering of self-sacrifice, (as well as all the theological themes of Hebrews), are communicated with great rhetoric. Structurally, Hebrews alternates between doctrinal exposition and moral exhortation woven together with great skill. Johnson observes that, “Exposition and exhortation alternate throughout, building on each other with such force that the cumulative impact is persuasive and the conclusions undeniable.”

In Hebrews, as well as in the rest of the canon, preaching about God’s identity and his mighty works (doctrine) always precedes preaching about moral conduct (exhortation). Imitating the biblical pedagogical pattern, our discussion of selected passages from Hebrew will repeat this rhetorical structure of exposition followed by exhortation.

A. Hebrews 5:1-10 – Obedience and Christ’s Superior Priesthood

“Son though he was, he learned obedience from what he suffered; and when he was made perfect, he became the source of eternal salvation for all who obey him” (Heb. 5:8-9).

The ritual liturgy of Yom Kippur and the sacrifice of Christ as high priest are among the central motifs in Hebrews. In this context, Christ is compared to Aaron and to the sacrifices offered during the holy day of Yom Kippur. An initial presentation of Christ as high priest appears in 2:17, but the comparison to Aaron starts in Heb. 5, which opens with a description of the Levitical priesthood, and more concretely, a description of the high priest (his role in representing the people in the offering of sacrifice): “Every high priest is taken from among men and made their representative before God, to offer gifts and sacrifices for sins” (Heb. 5:1). With this reference to

500 Daly, *Sacrifice Unveiled, the True Meaning of Christian Sacrifice*, 61.
the role of the Aaronic high priest, begins the doctrinal exposition which declares Christ as the eternal and only high priest, in contrast former high priests.

The immediate preceding context to this exposition is an exhortation, in the form of a long reflection on Ps. 95, which occupies chapters three and four.\textsuperscript{501} The exhortation begins with a presentation of Christ as the faithful son, who is greater than the faithful servant Moses (3:1-6), and it is followed by a warning to the audience to respond in a manner different from the exodus generation (3:7-3:19). The warning consists of two parts: first, a recounting of Israel’s history, marked by many moments of disobedience (3:7-11), and second, an urging to the new community of believers to be faithful in considering their choices (3:12-19). In their present circumstances (their “today”), they have a choice (4:1-11): to be obedient. In choosing to live by the example of Christ’s obedience, they can avoid the consequences of past disobediences.

“Therefore, since it remains that some will enter into it [God’s rest], and those who formerly received the good news did not enter because of disobedience, he once more set a day, “today,” when long afterwards he spoke through David, as already quoted:

“Oh, that today you would hear his voice:
‘Harden not your hearts.’”

Now if Joshua had given them rest, he would not have spoken afterwards of another day. Therefore, a sabbath rest still remains for the people of God. And whoever enters into God’s rest, rests from his own works as God did from his. Therefore, let us strive to enter into that rest, so that no one may fall after the same example of disobedience (Heb. 4:6-11).

The lengthy exhortation, having expanded over two chapters, leads to the exposition in Heb. 5 of Christ as priest. Considering that the first recipients of Hebrews understood the priesthood in terms of the Levitical priesthood, it was necessary to present Christ as the fulfillment

\textsuperscript{501} Healy, Hebrews, 75.
of that priesthood. The exposition in Heb. 5 continues the presentation of Christ as the faithful high priest, which began in Heb. 2, where Christ, the eternal Son, was presented as one perfected through suffering (Heb. 2:10, 17-18).\textsuperscript{502} There is not an explicit reference to the Suffering Servant poem in Isa. 53 in Heb. 5; nevertheless, I submit that the author of Hebrews is making a connection between the Suffering Servant and Christ’s priestly actions. Only when Christ is understood as a priest, can his death be understood as a sacrificial act.

Hebrews emphasizes the link of obedience and sacrifice. The prophets of old had already communicated that obedience is better than sacrifice (1 Sam. 15:22), and now Hebrews presents the centrality of obedience to Christ’s sacrifice and his priesthood. As the fullness of God’s revelation, Christ is the fulfillment of what was only anticipated in the Aaronic priesthood. To begin the exposition, Heb. 5:1-6 presents four fundamental characteristics of the Levitical priesthood: 1) a priest is taken from among men; 2) a priest is called and appointed by God to serve in that capacity; 3) a priest represents the people before God; and 4) a priest mediates with God by offering sacrifices, specifically Hebrews is concerned with the sin offerings of the Day of Atonement.\textsuperscript{503} The role of the high priest as one who is appointed to offer sacrifices is present elsewhere in Hebrews, “Now every high priest is appointed to offer gifts and sacrifices; thus the necessity for this one also to have something to offer” (Heb. 8:3). This assertion affirms what was stated in 5:1 and continues to advance the presentation of Christ as the new high priest.

The exposition on Christ’s priesthood continues in Heb. 5:7-10, where the suffering endured by Christ is reckoned as the means through which Christ learned obedience. Learning

\textsuperscript{502} Koester, \textit{Hebrews}, 291.

\textsuperscript{503} Healy, \textit{Hebrews}, 102-103.
obedience perfects or completes Christ, since it was when his faithfulness was tested, that his obedience was practiced most perfectly.\textsuperscript{504} As with the Suffering Servant of Isaiah, the trials which Christ encountered in his suffering provided him with concrete opportunities to practice obedience. Regarding suffering and obedience, Healy remarks on the connection present in 5:8 and 2:10. She comments on the sophisticated linguistic style which articulates a profound theology:

The bold claim already made in 2:10 is reiterated: \textit{Son though he was, he learned obedience from what he suffered}. The statement is an elegant rhyme in Greek: he “learned” (\textit{emathen}) from what he “suffered” (\textit{epathen})…Obedience, like all virtue, comes to perfection only by being tested in difficult circumstances…His perfect obedience reversed the whole history of human rebellion, and thus he became the source (or “cause”) of eternal salvation for all who obey him.\textsuperscript{505}

Christ’s obedience is an obedience of love, and such it constitutes a pivotal element of sacrifice.

B. Hebrews 7:1-10:18 – Obedience to the Divine Will and Christ’s Superior Sacrifice

“Behold, I come to do your will…By this will, we have been consecrated through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all” (Heb. 10:9-10).

Continuing with the alternating pattern of doctrinal exposition and moral exhortation, Hebrews follows the exposition on the high priesthood of Christ with a lengthy exhortation (Heb. 5:11-6:20). He exhorts his audience in various ways: he challenges them to spiritual maturity (Heb. 5:11-14); he warns them about the perils of falling away from Christ’s teachings while encouraging them for their efforts (6:1-12); and then, he concludes this section by reminding them of the certainty of God’s promises (6:13-20). This exhortation is followed by the next expository section, where the theme of Christ’s priesthood is the focal point once again.

\textsuperscript{504} Koester, \textit{Hebrews}, 299.

\textsuperscript{505} See Healy, \textit{Hebrews}, 109-110. Emphasis present in Healy’s text.
The exposition which starts in Heb. 7, continues through Heb. 10:18, and presents many aspects of Christ’s superior priesthood: a declaration of Christ as a priest forever in the order of Melchizedek (7:1-10); a dawning of a new priesthood in Christ, with a new law and an irrevocable oath from God (7:11-28); a proclamation of Christ as priest of the true tabernacle and mediator of the new covenant (8:1-9:22); and a presentation of Christ’s sacrifice as God’s gift to deal with sin permanently and to sanctify all humanity (9:23-10:18). The passages concerning Christ’s sacrifice are of utmost interest to our discussion. Our attention now turns to the sacrificial references which are present throughout this exposition (7:27; 9:9, 12, 25-26; 10:1-4, 5-10, 11-12).

Hebrews presents the sacrifices of the Old Testament as insufficient for forgiveness, despite the frequency with which they were offered. Contrasting this, Hebrews presents the good news of God’s love and faithfulness: “in Christ, God has dealt with sin once and for all—not by a divine decree that simply wipes it off the ledger, but by providing the all-sufficient sacrifice that atone for sin, purifies the human heart, and repairs the broken relationship between God and man.”

The sacrifices offered during Yom Kippur are the background for the contrast presented. These ritual sacrifices of the Old Testament are described as inferior:

This is a symbol of the present time, in which gifts and sacrifices are offered that cannot perfect (teleiōsai) the worshiper in conscience (Heb. 9:9). Since the law has only a shadow of the good things to come, and not the very image of them, it can never make perfect (teleiōsai) those who come to worship by the same sacrifices that they offer continually each year (Heb. 10:1). Every priest stands daily at his ministry, offering frequently those same sacrifices that can never take away (perielein) sins (Heb. 10:11).

506 Healy, Hebrews, 161.
It is only during *Yom Kippur* that the high priest would enter the Holy of Holies, carrying the blood of the sin offering sacrifices.\textsuperscript{507} The blood of the bull for Aaron’s *ḥaṭṭāʾ* (Lev 16:14) and the blood of one of the goats for the people’s *ḥaṭṭāʾ* (Lev. 16:15) was sprinkled on the mercy seat (*kappōret* / LXX, *hilastērion*) on that day. By this yearly blood sprinkling rite, the high priest “shall purge (*wā·kip·per*) the inner sanctuary of all the Israelites’ impurities and trespasses, including all their sins…” (Lev. 16:16a). The *ḥaṭṭāʾ* was offered also at other times, and the sacrificial blood was sprinkled on the altar of incense (Lev 4:7) or on the altar of the outer court (Lev 4:13, 4:25; 4:30; 4:34; 5:9). Nevertheless, the blood was carried into the Holy of Holies only once a year, on *Yom Kippur*. In this regard, Daly comments,

> There were many sins, as the rabbinic writings amply indicate, which were forgiven or “covered” only by this rite of Yom Kippur, for this was the great day of reconciliation between God and his people…Sometimes the author seems to have in mind not the sin offering of Yom Kippur but the ordinary sin offering which is offered regularly, as one of the feast day sacrifices, or occasionally, according to personal desires of any particular or private person. And when Heb. 10:11 speaks of every priest standing “daily at his service, offering repeatedly the same sacrifices,” the author may be thinking of the ‘ōlā *tāmîd* (the only bloody sacrifice sure to be offered every day), to which an atoning significance had accrued by NT times…\textsuperscript{508}

In contrast to the *ḥaṭṭāʾ* of the Mosaic law, Heb. 10 reveals that Christ’s sin offering is not offered daily. The following verses speak clearly of this:

> He has no need, as did the high priests, to offer sacrifice day after day, first for his own sins and then for those of the people; he did that once for all when he offered himself (Heb. 7:27).

> Not that he might offer himself repeatedly, as the high priest enters each year into the sanctuary with blood (*haimati*) that is not his own; if that were so, he would have had to suffer repeatedly from the foundation of the world. But now once for


\textsuperscript{508} Daly, *Christian Sacrifice: The Judaeo-Christian Background Before Origen*, 270.
all he has appeared at the end of the ages to take away sin by his sacrifice (*thysias autou*) (Heb. 9:25-26).

On the annual feast of *Yom Kippur*, the high priest performed the blood ritual with blood of animal victims which were incapable of self-gift. Christ, however, became self-gift from the moment of the Incarnation, lived as self-gift, died as self-gift, and when he ascended into heaven, he entered the heavenly sanctuary with his own blood to effect forgiveness and salvation for all: “he entered once for all into the sanctuary, not with the blood of goats and calves but with his own blood, thus obtaining eternal redemption” (9:25). Healy aptly states, “Christ brought [to the heavenly sanctuary] his own human blood, blood that is of infinite value because it was poured out in love by the incarnate Son.”

Christ’s self-sacrifice was offered only once, and it actually effected the forgiveness of sins—something which the *ḥattā’t* of old could not. Beckwith notes that repeating the sacrifices annually serves as a reminder of sin, but not as means to remove sin. Heb. 10:1-4 clearly indicates that the old ritual sacrifices cannot forgive sins:

Since the law has only a shadow of the good things to come, and not the very image of them, it can never make perfect those who come to worship by the same sacrifices that they offer continually each year. Otherwise, would not the sacrifices have ceased to be offered, since the worshipers, once cleansed, would no longer have had any consciousness of sins? **But in those sacrifices there is only a yearly remembrance of sins, for it is impossible that the blood of bulls and goats take away sins** (Heb. 10:1-4).

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509 The Levitical high priest’s entrance into the Holy of Holies on *Yom Kippur* is fulfilled in the messianic age with the ascension of Christ, the eternal high priest, into the heavenly sanctuary.


512 Emphasis added
The incarnate God, Jesus Christ, quotes Ps. 40 [Ps. 39], to communicate what was lacking in sacrifices offered merely in a ritualistic manner. This concern was previously addressed by many prophets throughout the history of Israel: from the early monarchy (1 Sam. 15:22); into the time of the divided kingdom (Amos 5:22-24, Isa. 1:10-17); the exile, and into the post exilic period (Isa. 66:3-4). In quoting Ps. 40, Christ reveals himself as the one who has come to do God’s will, and in so doing, presents himself as sacrifice (Heb. 10:5-7). Hebrews explains the significance of Ps. 40 in the understanding of Christ’s sacrifice (Heb. 10:5-9):

5 For this reason, when he came into the world, he said:

“Sacrifice and offering you did not desire,
but a body you prepared for me;
holocausts and sin offerings you took no delight in.
Then I said, ‘As is written of me in the scroll,
Behold, I come to do your will, O God.’”

8 First he says, “Sacrifices and offerings, holocausts and sin offerings, you neither desired nor delighted in.” These are offered according to the law. Then he says, “Behold, I come to do your will.” He takes away the first to establish the second (Heb. 10:5-9).

According to Koester, “Hebrews contrasts the ineffective sacrifices prescribed by the Law with the effective sacrifice made by Christ, so that when Christ carries out God’s will, his sacrifice displaces other sacrifices and the Law that prescribed them.”

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513 See chapter 2.
514 Koester, Hebrews, 439.
Healy notes the following A-B-A-B structure in the quoted verses of Psalm 40, and explains that in this pattern, “A [is] expressing what God does not desire and B [is] expressing what God does desire.”

A. Sacrifice and offering you did not desire,
B. but a body you prepared for me;
A. holocausts and sin offerings you took no delight in.
B. Behold, I come to do your will, O God

The main point of contrast, in Koester’s words, is, “…between the lack of accomplishment of God’s will under the Law and the completion of God’s will by Christ. Christ came to do God’s will through a blood sacrifice that had an internal dimension of obedience and an external dimension in the offering of his body through crucifixion.”

A complete offer of the self is the sacrifice with is pleasing to God.

In Christ, we learn the obedience that the Father deserves. Christ’s faithfulness, his fidelity of heart, is superior to any sin offering. Christ teaches us that our disposition must be one of humility, receptivity to the Father’s will, and obedience, as is echoed in Ps. 40:9: “I delight to do your will, my God …” To do the will of God (thelēma tou Theou) in the LXX can be most clearly understood as obedience to the Torah. God delights in his people doing his will because in so

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515 Ps. 40:8, so I said, “See; I come
with an inscribed scroll written upon me.
9 I delight to do your will, my God;
your law is in my inner being!”

516 Healy, Hebrews, 196.

517 Koester, Hebrews, 439.

doing, God’s divine purpose of our salvation will be accomplished. This is the meaning communicated in Ps. 40 and quoted in Heb. 10:7.

Furthermore, another important aspect concerning the God’s will in the Old Testament is the role of the servant of God. This theme is particularly developed in the prophets, more specifically in Deutero-Isaiah. The servant is one who not only does God’s will, but also one who is an instrument for its accomplishment:519

10 At the beginning I declare the outcome;
from of old, things not yet done.
I say that my plan (‘āṣāṭî / LXX, boulē) shall stand,
I accomplish my every desire.
11 I summon from the east a bird of prey,
from a distant land, one to carry out my plan (‘āṣāṭî / LXX, bebouleumai)
Yes, I have spoken, I will accomplish it;
I have planned it, and I will do it (Isa. 46:10-11).520

11 So shall my word be
that goes forth from my mouth;
It shall not return to me empty,
but shall do what pleases me, (ḥāpāṣṭî / LXX, ēthelēsa)521
achieving the end for which I sent it (Isa. 55:11)

In the New Testament, God’s will primarily indicates God’s will to save.522 Throughout the New Testament, Christ does the Father’s will. He is the one sent by God the Father to carry

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520 Emphasis added.

521 Emphasis added. ἥθελησα [some English translations read shall do my will]


The only time where will of God denotes a different meaning is Rev 4:11, “Worthy are you, LORD our God, to receive glory and honor and power, for you created all things; because of your will they came to be and were created.” In this passage the Divine Will refers to His will to create.
out the divine will. Christ bears and effects the will of the Father: that nothing shall be lost, but raised up (saved) in the last day (John 6:39). Christ, because of His perfect openness and disposition to the God’s will leads all humanity to salvation; “The will is thus described as consummated future salvation.” There is an intimate connection between the Son’s obedience and doing the Father’s will (cf. John 8:29; 10:17-18).

In the final hours before the crucifixion, Christ’s obedience to the divine will was tested. Out of love, he freely accepted to be obedient, “My Father, if it is not possible that this cup pass without my drinking it, your will be done!” (Mark 14:36, cf. Matt. 26:42). Regarding this Christ’s complete surrender, Healy remarks,

God’s will was fulfilled by Jesus’ laying down his life on the cross, an offering of infinitely greater value than animal sacrifices because it was given freely in love…The reason Jesus’ sacrifice has power to sanctify is that he offered no mere substitute for himself, his own human life wholly given over in love. His sacrifice therefore transforms human nature from within; it heals the self-will, pride, rebellion, and unbelief that have deeply wounded human nature ever since the fall.

Christ came to the world to reveal the Father’s love and to his will, and throughout his life his words and actions exemplified obedience (John 4:34; 5:30; 6:38). The ultimate act of obedience was the surrender of his life as a sacrifice of healing, redemption, love, and fulfillment of the new covenant. In his self-offering, Christ teaches that obedience from the heart involves self-sacrifice, self-donation, self-offering.

523 Ibid., 56.
524 Healy, Hebrews, 199.
C. Hebrews 13:10-16 – Sacrifice in the Life of the Christian

Our discussion in the two preceding sections focused on the doctrinal expositions of the Christ’s priesthood and his sacrifice. As previously stated, expositions and exhortations alternate throughout Hebrews. Nevertheless, given the scope of this work, a thorough discussion of Hebrews is not possible, and thus, we have considered only brief summaries of the exhortations preached between the expositions pertaining to sacrifice. After the lengthy exposition on the superiority of Christ’s priesthood and his sacrifice (7:1-10:18), an equally lengthy moral exhortation follows (10:19-13:19). In this final exhortation, the preacher of Hebrews demonstrates great rhetorical skill as he exhorts his audience, in various ways, to a mature response to the covenant. The author urges the believers to follow the example of Jesus, to be steadfast, to avoid sin, to offer acceptable worship, in other words, to live lives of sacrifice (12:1-13:17).

In an early section of the exhortation, in the midst of a warning against abandoning the faith (10:26-31), the author of Hebrews cautions the believer who neglects the truth received and prefers to sin. If that occurs, there would not be a sin offering which could effect change: “If we sin deliberately after receiving knowledge of the truth, there no longer remains sacrifice for sins but a fearful prospect of judgment and a flaming fire that is going to consume the adversaries” (10:26-27). In other words, if the believer does not participate in the sacrificial life and death of Christ, and chooses to sin, Christ’s sacrifice would not bear fruit in the believer. On this matter,

525 This last hortatory speech consists of smaller exhortations: a call to persevere with confidence in Christ’s redemptive sacrifice (10:19-25); a warning against abandoning the faith (10:26-31); a call to endure in the midst of struggle and suffering (10:32-39); a call to follow the example of faith given by great witnesses of the Old Testament (11:1-40); an urging to follow the example of faithfulness of Jesus Christ, the greatest witness of obedient faith (12:1-11); a call to strive for peace, holiness, and to worship in a manner pleasing to God (12:12-29); a call to continue to practice love of neighbor (13:1-6); a call to keep away from strange teachings and to imitate Christ in offering pleasing sacrifices (13:7-16); a call to obey leaders (13:17); and lastly an appeal for prayer (13:18-19).
Koester observes that Hebrews is affirming the forgiveness effected by Christ’s sacrifice, thereby fulfilling the Levitical sacrifices. Nevertheless, he argues, that a life of sin, a life without sacrifice would reject this truth and thus leave the believer void of a right relationship with God.526

In another section of the final exhortation, the author urges his audience to listen to God’s voice and to have an attitude of thanksgiving (12:25-29). This gratefulness needs to be expressed by living a holy life, as a pleasing sacrifice (12:28). This life is only possible because Christ’s atoning sacrifice gave us freedom from slavery to sin.527 In response to this unmerited gift, the only fitting attitude is a heart filled with gratitude. This attitude, F. F. Bruce affirms, is itself a sacrifice: “…the words and actions that flow from a grateful heart are the sacrifices in which God takes delight.” 528

Lastly, the closing chapter has sacrificial language, encouraging the audience “to go outside the camp”, like Christ who offered sacrifice outside the gate. With this language, the author recalls the sacrificial animals that are burned outside the camp (Heb. 13:11-14), and presents one final exhortation, calling the Christian to live a sacrificial life through Christ: “Through him [then] let us continually offer God a sacrifice of praise, that is, the fruit of lips that confess his name. Do not neglect to do good and to share what you have; God is pleased by sacrifices of that kind” (Heb. 13:15-16).

Koester remarks that the epistolary ending fits exceedingly well with the theme of sacrifice, which is developed at length in the body of Hebrews. In his opinion, the focus of the conclusion

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526 Koester, Hebrews, 456.
527 Healy, Hebrews, 279.
is worship, which is pleasing and acceptable to God only when it is expressed in right relationship with neighbor. He explains,

The author repeats that offerings of praise and sharing one’s possessions are sacrifices pleasing to God (euarestitai, 13:15-16), and his benediction asks God to equip the listeners to do what is pleasing (euareston, 13:21). If the central part of Hebrews argued that Christ’s death was a sacrifice for others, the peroration urges those who receive the benefits of Christ’s sacrifice to offer their own sacrifices of praise and service as a response. When read as an explication of worship or service, these exhortations form a coherent part of the speech and a compelling conclusion to the treatment of priesthood and sacrifice. 529

Koester offers an analysis of the movement in the conclusion, which is most helpful is discerning the centrality of sacrifice to the closing section of Hebrews, as well as the meaning of sacrifice as a way of living. The following schematic of movement is proposed by Koester. 530

<table>
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<tr>
<th>B Priestly Sacrifice</th>
<th>13:10-11</th>
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<td>13:12</td>
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<tr>
<td>Christians follow</td>
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A Service to God 12:28-29
Serving others 13:1-6
Attention to leaders 13:7-9

C Sacrifice to God 13:15
Serving others 13:16
Attention to leaders 13:17-19

The themes of obedience and the desire to do God’s will are intimately connected to the presentation of sacrifice in Hebrews. The superiority of the sacrifice, of the priesthood, and of the New Covenant are very explicit in Hebrews, and therefore, are discussed most often. However, the superiority of the obedience should not be underestimated. The themes of superior sacrifice, superior priesthood, and superior New Covenant are more explicit, yet, the principle upon which these themes rest is in the obedience of Christ. His priesthood and his sacrifice flow from an

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529 Koester, Hebrews, 555.
530 Ibid.
obedience of love. Christ teaches that self-sacrifice, self-donation, self-offering is only possible with an obedient heart.

4.5. Conclusions

This chapter has examined several passages from the New Testament to present the biblical theology of sacrifice revealed in them. These passages represented different genres in the New Testament, but not were exhaustive. The discussion focused on selected texts from the Gospel account to Mark, the Letter to the Romans, and the Letter to the Hebrews. Sacrificial themes and sacrificial language from the Old Testament, which were discussed in chapters two and three, have been foundational for this chapter and were revisited in order to discern elements of continuity and discontinuity revealed in the New Testament.

When speaking of the sacrifice of Christ, the default position for many, has been to focus on Christ’s death. While this is undeniably proper, exclusive focus on his sacrificial death can overlook other important aspects of Jesus’ sacrifice. Some of the passages examined here also bear witness to Jesus’ life as a sacrifice. Particularly, two passages from Mark (1:11; 1:40-44) offered an opportunity to reflect on the life of Christ through a sacrificial lens. His baptism as the inaugural point of his public ministry, was our point of departure. At that moment, the Father reveals that he is pleased (eudokēsa) in Christ (Mark 1:11). This short verse recalls sacrificial language from the Old Testament and not only marks the beginning of Christ’s public ministry, but also it marks the beginning of his public witness to a life which embodies sacrifice. His identity and his mission are defined in sacrificial terms. The language in the text connects Jesus to the

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531 The following is a concise summary of the five types of sacrifices which were prescribed under the Mosaic law and constituted the Levitical sacrificial cult. There were five different sacrifices: four were slaughtering sacrifices: the whole burnt offering (‘ōlā), the peace offering (šēlāmîm), the purification/sin offering (ḥaṭṭā‘î), and the reparation/guilt offering (‘āśām). Additionally, there was one unbloody sacrifice, the grain offering (minḥâ).
Isaac, the “beloved son” (huios mou ho agapētos) of the Pentateuch (Gen. 22:1-6) as well the Isaiah servant with whom God is “pleased” (eudokēsa) (Isa. 42:1). At his baptism, then, Jesus is identified as one who will be whole-burnt offering (‘ōlā) (cf. Gen. 22:2), and also reparation offering (‘āšām) as a suffering servant (cf. Isa. 42:1, 53:10).

Likewise, the passage that narrates the cleansing of the leper (Mark 1:40-44) has sacrificial overtones. It would appear to be simply a miracle narrative without any connection to sacrifice. In the absence of death, blood, or incense burning, this narrative is still revelatory of sacrifice. Again, recalling Old Testament themes, the verb katharizó is associated with the sin/purification (hattâ‘i) sacrifices, particularly as they were offered to purify the sacred space and make atonement for the defilement caused by sin. The offering of these sacrifices allowed for restoration of communion with God. By cleansing the leper, Christ does what cultic sacrifice were ordained to do. Even before Christ died on the cross, his words and actions cleansed and restored; they were already effecting that which would have required the sacrifice of an animal.

The other two passages from Mark are more commonly associated with sacrifice. The dialogue with James and John following the third Passion prediction (Mark 10:35-45) provided reflection on the term “ransom” (lytron). This passage drew on the Old Testament understanding of ransom as deliverance and thus connected Jesus to the suffering servant of Isaiah 53. Already in Isaiah, the servant is presented as someone who would be willing to be a guilt offering (‘āšām) for others (Isa. 53:10). It was noted that although death of the servant is anticipated, one cannot overlook that it is possible to be a deliverer—a ransom—before death.

Finally, the passage on the institution of the Last Supper (Mark 14:22-25) provides several sacrificial themes—blood, covenant, and Passover—, some of which might not be as readily
discerned. Of these three, perhaps the most obvious sacrifice motif is revealed in the language of “blood of the covenant” (Mark 14:24). Yet, the emphasis is generally placed on the first part of the phrase, namely the blood. The blood ritual was constituent of all the slaughtering sacrifices: the whole burnt offering (‘ōlā), the peace offering (šēlāmîm), the purification/sin offering (ḥaṭṭāʾt), and the reparation/guilt offering (‘āšām). Blood is, therefore, an element which immediately is associated with sacrifice. Since the blood ritual is readily recognized as constituent of the two expiatory/atoning sacrifices (ḥaṭṭāʾt and ‘āšām), blood is commonly associated with atonement. Consequently, the other two slaughtering sacrifices (‘ōlā and šēlāmîm) are overlooked.

In contrast with the emphasis placed on “blood”, which appears at the beginning of the phrase “blood of the covenant”, the last part of the phrase, namely “covenant”, is often stated as an appendage to blood, without much reflection on its meaning. Covenants do not require atoning sacrifices, rather, they were ratified with a sacrificial ritual. In the case of the Mosaic covenant, whole burnt (‘ōlā) and peace offerings (šēlāmîm), were the sacrifices (Exod. 24:5) of the ratification ceremony (Exod. 24:1-8). Christ blood ratifies the covenant in a new way, thus making it a new covenant. The ratification ritual no longer involves sprinkling of the sacrificial blood of animals, but rather, drinking of the blood of the new sacrifice, and in so doing a participation in the new sacrifice. Christ gave new meaning to a former sacrificial ritual.

Lastly, the celebration of the Passover gives the context for this meal. The annual memorial celebration recalled the deliverance form Egypt, the ransom, and it also called specifically for ritual sacrifices of whole burnt offering (‘ōlā), grain offering (minḥā), and purification/sin offering (ḥaṭṭāʾt) (Num. 28:16-25). During the Passover celebration, the flesh of the sacrificed animal is consumed, which is only possible with the peace offering (šēlāmîm).
Passages from the Letter to the Romans presented Old Testament sacrificial themes with a greater focus on the effects produced by the sacrifice. Paul’s message of good news emphasizes God’s faithfulness and righteousness (Rom. 1:16-17). He presents his argument for the universality of sin with its consequent universal need for salvation (Rom 1:18-3:20), for God’s righteousness revealed in Christ’s sacrifice (Rom. 3:21-31), for the effects of his sacrifice (Rom. 5:1-7:6), and for the new life to which the believers are invited (Rom 7:7-8:39). The discussion of these passages looked back on Old Testament themes associated with sacrifice: expiation, redemption, mercy seat, blood. Redemption and expiation are effected in and through Jesus’ blood (Rom. 3:24-25). Using the allusion of the “where” and the “how” of the redemption, M. Gorman explained that Christ is both, the “where” and the “how”. Christ is the “mercy seat” (hilastērion / kappōret), the “where” redemption takes place. He is also the “how”. Redemption and expiation are effected in and through his “blood” and his “faithfulness”. The sacrificial death of Christ is revealed as a sacrifice of redemption and expiation which brings about justification, reconciliation, and peace (Rom. 5:9-11). Christ’s sacrificial offering reveals of God’s love, expiates, reconciles, brings peace. Furthermore, it invites the Christian to live a life which conforms to Christ life of sacrifice (Rom. 12:1-2).

Lastly, the Letter to the Hebrews provided reflection on the themes of obedience and faithfulness of Christ. These are attributes which constitute the essence of Christ’s superior sacrifice. Hebrews alternates doctrinal exposition with moral exhortation to communicate a central

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532 Levitical sacrifices had different effects. This is a concise summary of the meaning or effects of the sacrifices:
- the whole burnt offering—‘ōlā — total surrender
- the grain offering—minhā — gift, total surrender offering for the poor
- the peace offering—šēlāmīm — peace/communion, votive, or free will
- the purification/sin offering—ḥattā'ī — purification for unwitting sin without restitution / restorative
- the reparation/guilt offering—‘āšām — purification for unwitting with restitution / restorative

None of these sacrifices would be pleasing to the LORD, unless there was an interior disposition of obedience.
message of Christ’s superior priesthood and sacrifice. Hebrews focuses largely of the inferiority of the Levitical sacrifices insofar as forgiveness of sin was not possible. It offers a unique perspective, by emphasizing the rituals of Yom Kippur and comparing those sacrifices to the one sacrifice of Christ, which he offered only once and for all. With his blood, Christ not only cleansed and purified the sanctuary, he also he forgave sins (Heb. 7:1-10:18). With the sacrificial offerings of Yom Kippur as the reference point, Christ is presented as the superior high priest (Heb. 5:1-10) and superior sin/purification offering (Heb. 7:1-10:18). Christ’s obedience and desire to do God’s will fulfills the Levitical priesthood and its sacrifices (Heb. 10:5-10). The superior sacrifice, superior priesthood, and superior covenant have been discussed at length by scholars, but the theme of obedience has received less attention.

Sacrifice permeates Christ’s life. The Father used sacrificial language at the onset of his public ministry, thereby declaring his public ministry as sacrifice. At the baptism, the Father was pleased in Christ. This is the same language used when God is pleased with sacrifices offered with love, obedience, and concern for the marginalized. During his ministry on earth, Christ healed and cleansed, thus restoring to the community those who were isolated. His words and actions effected the restoration which was only temporary with the hattā’t and the ’āšām offerings.

Christ lived his life revealing the faithfulness of God, in total surrender to the Father, as whole burnt offering (’ūlā). Furthermore, he lived out what is better than any sacrifice, namely knowledge of God and fidelity to the covenant (Hos. 6:6). And as his time on earth drew near to his death, he shared table fellowship with his disciples one last time. During that meal, in the context of the Passover celebration, he partook of the peace offering (šēlāmîm), a sacrifice which celebrates communion and covenant ratification. At that time, he ratified the covenant in a new way, thereby establishing a new covenant, which was be sealed with his blood on the cross.
The language of covenant recalls the covenant made with Moses, when God chose Israel as his treasured possession and called them to be a kingdom of priests, and a holy nation (Exod. 19:4-6). Christ, in his obedience and holiness reveals the true meaning of priesthood and the true meaning of sacrifice, namely offering an offering of self. He is the sacrifice par excellence, the model of holiness, and the model of obedience, on which the Mosaic Covenant rested.

Because we have been redeemed, justified and reconciled, we are invited to be part of the new covenant, which he instituted in and through his sacrifice. We are invited to share in Christ’s life and live as a living sacrifice. Gorman provides keen insight to this appeal,

The image of “living sacrifice” suggests an alternative to the temple sacrifices, a sacrifice that Jews and Gentiles can both perform, and perform together as God’s temple (cf. 1 Cor. 3:16). It is their spiritual, rational, or reasonable (the term *logikos* can mean any of these) worship. This worship does not occur in specific places or at specific times; it is, rather, the liturgy of life. Building on Rom. Chapter 6, Paul says believers are constantly in a paradoxical state of dying yet living (cf. Gal. 2:19-20).533

In this chapter, attention was given not only to those texts which refer to Christ’s death as a sacrifice, but also to other texts which point to the reality of his life as sacrificial. During his earthly life, he revealed the righteousness of God. He went around all of Galilee, teaching in their synagogues, proclaiming the gospel of the kingdom, and curing every disease and illness among the people (Matt. 4:23). He came not to be served, but to serve (Mark 10:45; Matt. 20:28). Throughout his life of service, he was gift, he was sacrifice.

Christ lived as sacrifice and he died as sacrifice. He invites to do the same as we participate in his life and his death. He invites us to be sacrifice of restoration and sacrifice of communion. Our participation in his sacrifice is formative and is the path to becoming the priestly people we

have been called to be. The next and final chapter will review key concepts which have been discussed and present reflections on the spirituality of sacrifice.
CHAPTER 5 – BECOMING A PRIESTLY PEOPLE: 
LITURGICAL SACRIFICE AS SPIRITUAL FORMATION

5.1. Introduction

At the beginning of this work, I remarked on the great difficulty in approaching the concept of sacrifice. There is ambiguity in understanding its meaning and its relevance. Much critique has been directed against it, especially in recent years. Yet, because of the centrality of sacrifice in Christianity, it is imperative that we continue to explore ways to discuss it, and more importantly, ways to embrace it in our daily lives. Kevin Seasoltz reminds us of the importance of ongoing engagement with this subject, particularly, from the scriptural perspective,

First of all, the word “sacrifice” must be used with care, for it carries both biblical and historical overtones which are not only often offensive to contemporary people but which are subject to misunderstanding and consequent divisiveness and alienation. When it is used, it must be accompanied by a carefully structured catechesis and an illuminating hermeneutic. Such catechesis must attend to the legitimate concerns of feminist theologians and also appeal to the ideals of a self-giving life which seem to be deeply ingrained in human persons but which are often smothered by a self-centered culture which tends to idolize success, consumerism, and competiveness.  

As was stated in the first chapter, the purpose of the present work was not to resolve all misconceptions or misinterpretations of sacrifice. Rather, by using a canonical interpretive approach in examining selected passages of the Old and New Testament, I sought to identify certain underappreciated aspects of sacrifice. I hold that these aspects provide a more organic understanding of liturgical sacrifice and therefore constitute an important foundation in the spiritual formation of a disciple as someone with priestly character. In this final chapter, I present a summary of key concepts discussed in the previous chapters and then I focus on the spirituality

of sacrifice, from the perspective of three reflections: a sermon by St. Peter Chrysologus, Eucharistic Prayer III, and a prayer by St. Thérèse of Lisieux.

5.2. Sacrifice in the Biblical Tradition

The analysis of the Old Testament sacrificial system offered important points which inform the understanding of sacrifice in the New Testament, as it pertains to the life and death of Christ as well as to the life of the Christian. If we are to interpret the New Testament sacrificial imagery well, it is essential that key concepts from the Old Testament passages be understood. They can be summarized as follows:

A. In the Pentateuch

Any discussion of sacrifice in the biblical tradition needs to be set within the horizon of the Mosaic covenant. The prescriptions regarding sacrificial rituals were given by God to Moses after the covenant was established. The offering of sacrifices would become the means to express aspects about the covenantal relationship: whereas atoning sacrifices were prescribed when the relationship had been wounded by sin, communion sacrifices were a way to celebrate the covenant.

1. Language

Different terms were used to refer to sacrifice. At times, general terms (which could be applied to different sacrifices) were used: zebah, especially when speaking of bloody animal sacrifices or qārban, particularly when referring to an oblation brought to the altar. At other times, more specific terms were used to indicate the kinds of sacrifices prescribed and offered under Levitical law: whole burnt offering (‘ōlā), peace offering (šēlāmîm), purification/sin offering (ḥaṭṭā‘ī), reparation/guilt offering (‘āšām), or grain/cereal offering (minḥā). At the core of all these sacrifices
there is an underlying element of *gift*. Therefore, it seems fitting to expand our linguistic imagination so that when we speak of sacrifice, we can also use the terms “offering” and “gift”.

2. *The What?*

Animals from the herd or the flock were the common elements offered as the bloody animal sacrifices. However, allowances were made for the poor, so that even when they could not afford one of the prescribed animals, they could offer birds, or even grain. Additionally, the cereal offering (*minhā*) consisted of grain, wine, salt, incense, and oil, all of which were offered without a drop of blood being shed. With all and through all types of sacrifices, there is a common denominator worthy of mention. That which is being offered has a certain value or worth to the one bringing the offering. Ritual sacrifice provides the template for the gift of self. In other words, sacrifice is ritualized self-gift.


The intentions for offering the sacrifice or the anticipated effects of the sacrifice are many. Sacrifices can be offered as a free gift of love, as a votive offering, as a sign of communion, as a sign of total surrender, as purification, as atonement, or as reparation. The specific intentions can be grouped into two broader categories. The two reasons/intentions for offering sacrifice can be summarized as restoration or celebration of communion with God. Therefore, the underlying common factor is communion. Communion returns us to the motif of covenant. Sacrifices are offered to restore or to celebrate the covenantal relationship.

In summary, the Pentateuch reveals that sacrifice, although expressed in a variety of ways and by different terms, is a ritualized action for the gift of self, offered out of love, to restore or to celebrate the covenantal communion with God.
B. In the Prophetic Literature

The prophets were called by God to remind people of the importance of the covenant. They accompanied the people during joyous, difficult, and even uncertain times, from the beginning of the monarchy, to the division of the kingdom, to the fall of the northern territory, to the Babylonian exile, and finally to the return from exile. All the while, the prophets were a constant reminder for God’s people of their covenantal call to be “a kingdom of priests, a holy nation” (Exod. 19:6).

The prophetic call included a commission to instruct the people and to remind them about the Torah. The sacrificial system developed within the establishment of the Mosaic covenant, and the prophets were tasked with awakening a consciousness that the covenantal relationship holds a place of primacy vis-à-vis the ritual offering of sacrifices, which is secondary, lest the sacrifices become pro forma rituals.

The Torah revealed many instructions about the mechanics of the ritual, what to offer, how and when to make the offering, why it should be offered, but there were no explicit instructions concerning the disposition of heart or the interiority of the one making the sacrifice. What was implicit in the Pentateuch was made explicit in the Prophetic literature. The prophets communicated that a sacrifice offered in mechanical manner was not acceptable to God. The ritualized action, which truly stands for the gift of self, provided the opportunity to restore or to celebrate the covenantal communion with God. The ritual sacrifices were acceptable to God only when they are accompanied by two characteristics. First, the person offering sacrifice must be invested in having a right relationship with God. This is expressed by listening to God’s voice, obeying God’s word, knowing God, and having a contrite spirit. Second (and related to the first), the person bringing the sacrifice must be invested in having a right relationship with neighbor.
This, in turn, is expressed by ethical conduct and observance of Torah instructions for righteous living.

The prophets were not in principle opposed to cultic practices. Rather, they critiqued the empty ritual of offering sacrifice when it was disconnected from right relationship with God and neighbor. A correct observance of the mechanics of sacrifice is useless unless the one offering the sacrifice is willing to become total self-gift, and offer himself or herself as a gift of reparation, as a gift of thanksgiving, or as a gift for communion. Seasoltz comments on the prophetic contribution to the understanding of sacrifice:

They stressed that what God required of the people was that they live sacrificial lives devoted to the righting of social and political evils in society. Hence the emphasis shifted away from the ritual slaughter of animals toward the inner sacrifice of broken and contrite hearts and the moral qualities of obedience, repentance, and self-offering… Spiritualization implies an emphasis on the inner, spiritual, or ethical dispositions of those who offer sacrifice, but it does not imply a neglect or denial of the material or external aspects of the offering.535

Although the centrality of the interiority of sacrifice is a theme developed in many prophets (i.e. Samuel, Amos, Hosea, Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, and Malachi), it is probably most clearly expressed in Isaiah, particularly in Deutero-Isaiah. It is here that a new image for sacrifice emerges, that of a Servant who becomes sacrifice (Isa. 53:7-11). Several sacrificial symbols, from the Torah, coalesce in the Servant. The imagery of a lamb being taken to the slaughter (Isa.53:7) suggests that the Servant is offered as total surrender (ʾōlâ), or as thanksgiving or free will (šēlāmîm), or e as reparation (ʾāšām)–for ritual impurity– (Isa. 53:10b).536 Additionally, the lamb

535 Seasoltz, God’s Gift Giving, 56.
536 In Hebrew, the term used to refer to the Servant’s self-sacrifice is א ש מ. In the LXX, ἀφοινομένης (sin offering). However, the most common translation of the LXX for アフオイノメンής is πλημμελεῖται. In the English translations, the term sin offering is used in the RSV and NRSV, while the term reparation offering is used in the NABRE. A lamb is only sacrificed as reparation (ʾāšām) in the case of ritual impurity (Lev. 14:10-14 for a leper who had been cleansed and Num. 6:11b-12 for a Nazarite who had defiled himself). In all other cases, a ram is offered as reparation (ʾāšām) (Lev. 5:15, 18, 6:6 [5:25]).
recalls the image of the Paschal lamb, offered at the first Passover (Exod. 12:3-10, 21-22) and at every memorial annual celebration thereafter. During the memorial feast of Passover, a lamb is sacrificed as whole burnt offering (‘ōlā) (Lev. 23:12; Num. 28:19) and another one as the peace offering (šēlāmîm), whose flesh is shared and eaten by the people (Deut. 16:2-7). Isaiah declares that in the offering of the various ritual sacrifices, the Servant, with a humble and contrite spirit, actually becomes sacrifice.

The prophets taught that sacrifice was more than the exterior mechanics of making an animal offering or a grain offering with the salt of the covenant. Sacrifice has an interior dimension. It begins in the heart of the one offering sacrifice. Second Isaiah captures this concept well in the figure of the Servant. Sacrifice is about being a Servant. The Servant knows God, is obedient and just, and willingly offers his life as total self-gift for the sake of others. The Servant becomes sacrifice and in his offering of the self, the Servant gives an example to others how to be sacrifice, in other words, the Servant shows the meaning of being “a kingdom of priests” in the full covenantal sense.

C. In the New Testament

As we continued the discussion of sacrifice in the canon, I suggest that the Servant as sacrificial motif serves as the bridge between the presentation of sacrifice in Old and New Testaments. It is Christ who is the fulfillment and embodiment of the sacrificial servant. Like Isaiah’s Suffering Servant, Christ is willing to be reparation (‘āšām) offering for others and he justifies them by his knowledge of God.537 Furthermore, as was noted above, the lamb of Fourth Servant Song recalls metaphors not only of a lamb offered as a sacrifice of total surrender (‘ōlā),

or as an offering of thanksgiving or free will (šēlāmîm), or even as reparation (ʾāšām) for ritual impurity, but also of the lamb offered as the Passover sacrifice.

The discussion on the New Testament passages presented an underappreciated aspect of Christ’s sacrifice. Almost universally, it is accepted that his death is the manifestation of his perfect sacrifice. Nevertheless, our discussion also presented passages which reveal that Christ’s life was lived as an acceptable sacrifice. At his baptism, he is identified as the “beloved Son” with whom the Father is “well pleased.” This declaration recalls sacrificial language from the “beloved son”, Isaac, whom Abraham was prepared to offer as a whole burnt offering, as well as language from the Servant of Deutero-Isaiah. During his public ministry, many of his miracles consisted of cleansing and purifying (katharismos) those who found themselves excluded from the community, thus recalling the image of a sin/purification (ḥaṭṭāʾi) sacrifice.

Christ’s life as sacrificial has received less attention than his death. However, without understanding his entire life as sacrifice, beginning with the Incarnation, continuing with his public ministry and into the time of his passion, his sacrificial death cannot be understood in its entirety. Christ died as a victim, however not all victims are sacrifices. A sacrificial victim is one who accepts willingly to be a sacrifice. Christ makes the gift of his life in perfect freedom and thus his life is sacrificial.

538 Countless of examples of victims who are not sacrifice are seen in our daily lives — victims of illnesses, victims of war, victims of acts of terrorism, victims of rape, victims of domestic abuse, and so many other victims of circumstances. Perhaps the most poignant example of non-sacrificial victims are the millions of Jewish men, women, and children who were murdered during World War II. In April 1951, the Israeli Knesset established Yom Ha Shoah as a national day of remembrance.* In choosing shoah, instead of holocaust, as the term for the day of remembrance, the Parliament emphasized the catastrophic, not sacrificial nature of the deaths. The victims of the Nazi regime did not offer their lives as a total surrender, they were executed.

Christ’s life and death were *sacrifice*. Both embodied the different kinds of Levitical sacrifices and effected the intention behind those sacrifices, namely restoration or celebration of covenantal communion. Christ is the “mercy seat” (*hilastērion*) (Rom. 3:25) where the purification through the blood ritual was received, and at the same time he is the mercy seat from where mercy is dispensed. As M. Gorman noted, Christ is the locus and the means of purification, he is the *where* and the *how* of the redemption. Redemption and expiation are effected in and through his *blood*.

Christ’s blood, however, is not only a metaphor for a *sacrifice of atonement*. Often underappreciated is the image of *covenant* which is also associated with *sacrificial blood*. Recalling the discussion in Chapter four, although covenants were ratified with ritual sacrifices, atoning sacrifices were not required. In the case of the Mosaic covenant, the ratification ceremony included whole burnt offerings and peace offerings (Exod. 24:5). On the connection between the offering of sacrifice and the making of a covenant, Whittle remarks:

Beginning with Noah (Gen. 8:20), the establishment of a covenant is introduced by sacrificial ritual, as attested to, three times, in the Abraham narrative. The Peace Offering was first presented at the covenant ratification in the Sinai narrative (Exodus 24:5) where “burnt offerings and sacrificed oxen as offerings of peace” precede the pronouncement by those gathered that “all that the Lord has spoken we will do and we will be obedient.” The idea of sacrifice and accompanying oath is a feature of Israel's covenant-making and renewals.

I do not wish to deny the atonement dimension of Christ’s sacrifice, but instead, I wish to focus on the underdeveloped dimension of *covenant*. The work of contemporary scholars, Kevin Vanhoozer and Michael Gorman, has been extremely helpful in providing further insight on the

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covenantal dimension of atonement and sacrifice. With great insight, Vanhoozer connects Christ’s death to the covenant:

Jesus’ reincorporation of earlier themes and events in the theo-drama encourages us to his death [sacrifice] as the definitive covenant ratification: the definitive covenant word; the definitive covenant cleansing with blood. As the elders in Exodus 24 ate and drank after the ratification of the covenant was made in blood, so Jesus’ disciples eat and drink the Lord’s Supper.541

M. Gorman explains that apart from the work of a few scholars, the obvious has not been stated. He proposes a “not so new model” of atonement, namely the new covenant model.542 Rather than focusing on models of atonement, Gorman’s work contributes to the narrative of Christ’s sacrifice as inseparable from the covenantal motif, and particularly, what this covenant means for humanity. M. Gorman considers that terms like redemption, satisfaction, substitution, and justification deal with what he calls the penultimate meaning of Christ’s sacrificial death, whereas the covenant, in its newness, is concerned with the ultimate meaning of Christ’s sacrifice.543

Christ’s sacrificial blood ratifies the covenant in a new way. The ratification ritual no longer consists in sprinkling of the sacrificial blood of animals, but rather in drinking of the blood of the new sacrifice, and in so doing a participation in the new sacrifice. “The life of the flesh is in the blood” (Lev. 17:11), and his blood gives new life. Through his blood, we receive his life.

541 Kevin J. Vanhoozer, The Drama of Doctrine: A Canonical Linguistic Approach to Christian Doctrine (Louisville, KY: John Knox Press, 2005), 392. Vanhoozer understands the Gospel as the greatest drama, words and actions, to have ever been staged.


543 Ibid. Gorman refers to the work of the following scholars in connection with the new covenant model:
The newness of the covenant is multilayered: there is newness in the sacrificial blood, and there is newness in the participatory dimension. With precision and clarity, M. Gorman explains that Christ’s sacrifice ratified a covenant which invited God’s people to participation and transformation,

Christ’s death effected the new covenant, meaning specifically the creation of a covenant community of forgiven and reconciled disciples, inhabited and empowered by the Spirit to embody a new–covenant spirituality of cruciform loyalty to God and love for others, thereby peaceably participating in the life of God and in God’s forgiving, reconciling, and covenanting mission to the world.544

The spirituality of sacrifice is in fact a new-covenant spirituality which has clear expression during the liturgical sacrifice.

5.3. Liturgical Sacrifice – The Spirituality of Sacrifice

The Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy reminds us that participation in the liturgy is expected by its nature. Furthermore, the participation should be full, conscious, and active (SC §14).545 Such participation is inextricably connected to a holistic understanding of sacrifice. When we recognize that “sacrifice is at the heart of worship”546, we can appreciate the importance of understanding sacrifice correctly.

544 Ibid., 75.
545 Sacrosanctum Concilium, §14. Mother Church earnestly desires that all the faithful should be led to that fully conscious, and active participation in liturgical celebrations which is demanded by the very nature of the liturgy. Such participation by the Christian people as "a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a redeemed people (1 Pet. 2:9; cf. 2:4-5), is their right and duty by reason of their baptism. In the restoration and promotion of the sacred liturgy, this full and active participation by all the people is the aim to be considered before all else; for it is the primary and indispensable source from which the faithful are to derive the true Christian spirit; and therefore pastors of souls must zealously strive to achieve it, by means of the necessary instruction, in all their pastoral work.
An inadequate appreciation of sacrifice and the sacrificial work of the Trinity will diminish the quality of our participation in the liturgy. The ambivalence of sacrifice—resulting from an inadequate conceptualization of its meaning—has made it difficult to appreciate and appropriate the sacrificial dimension of the Liturgy, with the same interest given to its other dimensions: thanksgiving, memorial, and meal. Theologians and pastors have struggled to articulate a Eucharistic theology that forms the faithful to deepen the understanding of the sacrificial dimension of the Liturgy. Among those is Edward Kilmartin. Of great importance are his contributions in formulating a Eucharistic theology that returns to the sources of the Apostolic Fathers and a clear presentation of the work of the Trinity in the liturgy.547

Sacrifice in its essence is gift and it constitutes a relational reality. In his book *The Spirit of the Liturgy*, Pope Benedict (then Cardinal Ratzinger) explains this relational reality of sacrifice using the paradigm of *exitus* and *reditus*. The *exitus-reditus* paradigm is fundamental to the understanding the relational dimension of liturgical sacrifice, particularly in the context of the cosmic nature of worship. *Exitus* refers to God’s free actions of love, while *reditus* refers to humanity’s response to God’s actions. In creation, God freely gives of himself as *exodus*. Our free return to him, our free worship is our free gift of ourselves back to him or the *reditus*. When sin entered the world, this exchange was ruptured. Humanity did not desire to give itself back as gift to God, and even when the desire was present, humans could not repair the relationship on their own. Only a redeemer, who could make a gift of self, a sacrifice, could heal the relationship. Eloquent, Ratzinger explains:

If “sacrifice” in its essence is simply returning to love and therefore divinization, worship now has a new aspect” the healing of wounded freedom, atonement,

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purification, deliverance from estrangement. The essence of worship, of sacrifice—the process of assimilation, of growth in love, and thus the way into freedom—remains unchanged. But now it assumes the aspect of healing, the loving transformation of broken freedom, of painful expiation…God-Man carries the creature home to God. And so the reditus becomes possible [again]…But now sacrifice take the form of the Cross of Christ, of the love that in dying makes a gift of itself. Such sacrifice has nothing to do with destruction. It is an act of new creation, the restoration of creation to its true identity. All worship is now a participation in this “Pasch” of Christ, in his “passing over” from divine to human, from death to life, to the unity of God and man.548

Participation in God’s work is what liturgy is about. God’s work is always present in the Liturgy; however, our participation in his work is limited or diminished when we do not appreciate the reality of sacrifice in God’s work or the meaning of our participation in Christ’s sacrifice. Kilmartin provides significant insight concerning our participation in liturgical sacrifice:

In the average Catholic synthesis, the liturgical sacrificial act of Christ and that of the Church is limited to the moment of the conversion of the gifts of the Church which is identified with the moment of the recitation of the words of Christ contained in the narrative of institution…In view of the fact that the members of the assembly are also the acting subjects of the Eucharistic Prayer, this average Catholic theology of Eucharistic sacrifice logically implies a defective interpretation of the relationship between the Christian assembly and the presiding minister.549

The lay faithful in the assembly are invited to a full, conscious, active participation in the entire Liturgy, not just during the recitation of the words of institution, not just at the proclamation of the Gospel, but during the entire liturgical celebration. Therefore, I present three examples of the spirituality of liturgical sacrifice which correspond to different moments of the Liturgy: the first one is a sermon, and as such it invites our participation during the Liturgy of the Word; the second one is a reflection on one of the Eucharistic prayers, which corresponds to our participation during

548 Ratzinger, The Spirit of the Liturgy, 33-34.

the prayers of the Liturgy of the Eucharist; the third one is a prayer which was offered after receiving communion, which invites to continue our participation as we prepare to receive the dismissal, or perhaps after the dismissal during our time of quiet prayer after Mass.

A. St. Peter Chrysologus’ Sermon

“These of us is called to be both a sacrifice to God and his priest” (Sermon 108)

St. Peter Chrysologus was bishop of Ravenna, Italy in the 5th century. He was named Doctor of the Church by Pope Benedict XIII in 1729. Although he is known as a gifted preacher, he has received little attention in patrology. The sermon presented here is a reflection on Rom. 12:1 and is prayed in the Liturgy of the Hours on the Tuesday of the 4th week of Easter.

*Each of us is called to be both a sacrifice to God and his priest* 551

*St. Peter Chrysologus*

*I appeal to you by the mercy of God.* This appeal is made by Paul, or rather, it is made by God through Paul, because of God’s desire to be loved rather than feared, to be a father rather than a Lord. God appeals to us in his mercy to avoid having to punish us in his severity.

Listen to the Lord’s appeal: In me, I want you to see your own body, your members, your heart, your bones, your blood. You may fear what is divine, but why not love what is human? You may run away from me as the Lord, but why not run to me as your father? Perhaps you are filled with shame for causing my bitter passion. Do not be afraid. This cross inflicts a mortal injury, not on me, but on death. These nails no longer pain me, but only deepen your love for me. I do not cry out because of these wounds, but through them I draw you into my heart. My body was stretched on the cross as a symbol, not of how much I suffered, but of my all-embracing love. I count it no loss to shed my blood: it is the price I have paid for your ransom. Come, then, return to me and


551 Peter Chrysologus, “Sermon 108: Each One of Us is Called to be Both a Sacrifice to God and His Priest,” *PL 52*, 499-500. Prayed as the second reading for the Office of Readings for Tuesday in the 4th week of Easter.
learn to know me as your father, who repays good for evil, love for injury, and boundless charity for piercing wounds.

Listen now to what the Apostle urges us to do. *I appeal to you*, he says, *to present your bodies as a living sacrifice.* By this exhortation of his, Paul has raised all men to priestly status.

How marvelous is the priesthood of the Christian, for he is both the victim that is offered on his own behalf, and the priest who makes the offering. He does not need to go beyond himself to seek what he is to immolate to God: with himself and in himself he brings the sacrifice he is to offer God for himself. The victim remains and the priest remains, always one and the same. Immolated, the victim still lives: the priest who immolates cannot kill. Truly it is an amazing sacrifice in which a body is offered without being slain and blood is offered without being shed.

The Apostle says: *I appeal to you by the mercy of God to present your bodies as a living sacrifice.* Brethren, this sacrifice follows the pattern of Christ’s sacrifice by which he gave his body as a living immolation for the life of the world. He really made his body a living sacrifice, because, though slain, he continues to live. In such a victim death receives its ransom, but the victim remains alive. Death itself suffers the punishment. This is why death for the martyrs is actually a birth, and their end a beginning. Their execution is the door to life, and those who were thought to have been blotted out from the earth shine brilliantly in heaven.

Paul says: *I appeal to you by the mercy of God to present your bodies as a sacrifice, living and holy.* The prophet said the same thing: *Sacrifice and offering you did not desire, but you have prepared a body for me.* Each of us is called to be both a sacrifice to God and his priest. Do not forfeit what divine authority confers on you. Put on the garment of holiness, gird yourself with the belt of chastity. Let Christ be your helmet, let the cross on your forehead be your unfailing protection. Your breastplate should be the knowledge of God that he himself has given you. Keep burning continually the sweet smelling incense of prayer. Take up the sword of the Spirit. Let your heart be an altar. Then, with full confidence in God, present your body for sacrifice. God desires not death, but faith; God thirsts not for blood, but for self-surrender; God is appeased not by slaughter, but by the offering of your free will.
Reflection

Chrysologus focuses this sermon on the first part of Rom. 12:1 (“I urge you therefore, brothers, by the mercies of God, to offer your bodies as a living sacrifice…’). The sermon can be divided in two sections: in the first section, he reflects on the “mercies of God”, and in the second, he shifts his attention to the meaning of “present your bodies as a living sacrifice.”

The first section is shorter. In it, Chrysologus preaches on “I urge you, by the mercies of God” and emphasizes that the appeal is made by God himself, through Paul. Chrysologus delivers this section as a first-person monologue, where God is the speaker, who is addressing the listener in familial terms. Through this brief God-speech, the “mercies of God” are described. God wants to be known as a loving father, not as a tyrant lord. The speaker transitions seamlessly from the Father to Christ, who tells the listener not to feel shame for the Passion. Christ speaks about his sacrifice on the cross as the victory over death and gives assurance that the nails do not cause him pain but rather deepen his love. Tenderly, Christ continues comforting the listener by saying that his body stretched on the cross should not be known as a symbol of suffering, but rather of love that surrounds every member, every bone of the listener’s body. Chrysologus uses sacrificial language when he presents Christ declaring that his blood was the “ransom” price. The term “ransom” recalls images of deliverance and redemption of slaves, found in Exodus and Leviticus (Exod. 21:30, 30:12; Lev. 25:24, 26, 51, 52), as well as images of the LORD as the Holy Redeemer of Israel in Deutero-Isaiah (Isa. 41:14, 43:14, 44:24), and it also recalls the Jesus saying in Mark (Mark 10:45, cf. Matt. 20:28). This section of the sermon closes by returning to the opening pattern, where the Father is the speaker. The Father extends a loving invitation to the listener to return home, to the Father’s love.
In the second section of the sermon, Chrysologus turns his attention to the “offering of the bodies as a living sacrifice”. He introduces this section with an imperative, “Listen now to what the Apostle urges us to do.” In this manner, Chrysologus’ sermon shifts from the first-person God-monologue to a third-person account of what Paul is saying. Images of the Mosaic covenant (Exod. 19:4-6) are evoked with the declaration that Paul “has raised all men to priestly status.” Chrysologus explains that the priesthood of the Christian is patterned after Christ’s priesthood, and as such, it encompasses offering sacrifice and being victim at the same time. He returns to the sacrificial language of ransom and presents the paradox that although the sacrificial victim is slain, yet he is alive. In this manner, he invites the listener to consider sacrifice, not simply as a loss, but rather as a transformation. He declares again that the call of the Christian is to be priest as well as sacrifice, and exhorts his audience to righteous living. The sermon concludes with vivid sacrificial motifs: the burning of sweet smelling incense, an altar, blood, self-surrender.

Insightfully, Chrysologus’ sermon invites us to reflect on the meaning of sacrifice as total self-gift, patterned after the sacrifice of Christ. This sermon, prayed in the Liturgy of the Hours of the Easter season, exhorts us to connect sacrifice with the joy of Easter.
B. **Eucharistic Prayer III**

In what follows, I offer a reflection on the sacrificial motifs of Eucharistic Prayer III and the language that signals our participation. Included below are the sections following the *Sanctus*

1. **Thanksgiving**

   You are indeed Holy, O Lord,  
   and all you have created  
   rightly gives you praise,  
   for *through your Son our Lord Jesus Christ,*  
   *by the power and working of the Holy Spirit,*  
   you give life to all things and make them holy,  
   and you never cease to gather a people to yourself,  
   *so that from the rising of the sun to its setting*  
   *a pure sacrifice may be offered to your name.*

The first point of reflection is the Trinitarian language. We note that the three persons of the Trinity are addressed throughout the prayer. This emphasizes the role of the Trinity in the sacrificial exchange and it invites us to acknowledge that the participation in the sacrifice is a participation in the life of the Trinity. The section immediately after the *Sanctus* directs prayers of thanksgiving and praise to the Father, through the Son and by the power of the Spirit.

The thanksgiving section of Eucharistic Prayer III concludes with a reference to Mal. 1:11,

   From the rising of the sun to its setting,  
   my name is great among the nations;  
   Incense offerings are made to my name everywhere,  
   and a pure offering;  
   For my name is great among the nations,  
   says the Lord of hosts.

This emphasizes God’s desire for an offering of the self, with purity of heart, from people everywhere, from the rising of the sun –in the East– to its setting –in the West–.

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552 The text for Eucharistic Prayer III comes from the *Roman Missal*, 3rd ed., 2011. Emphasis added to terms or phrases with sacrificial motifs.
2. *Epiclesis*

Therefore, O Lord, we humbly implore you:

*by the same Spirit graciously make holy
these gifts we have brought to you* for consecration,

that *they may become the Body and + Blood
of your Son our Lord Jesus Christ*

at whose command we celebrate these mysteries.

During the epiclesis, we are invoking the Holy Spirit and asking that he might sanctify our offerings. The offerings are not simply the bread and the wine. Rather the bread and the wine are brought forth and they symbolically gather together the living bodies of the entire assembly. In asking the Spirit to consecrate these gifts, to set them apart so that they might become the body and blood of Christ, we are asking that we too become the body and blood of Christ. We are asking to be part of the sacrifice of the Son, who loves, and who freely gives of himself as he freely responds to the gift of the Father.

3. *Institution Narrative*

For on the night he was betrayed
he himself took bread,
and giving you thanks he said the blessing,
broke the bread and gave it to his disciples, saying:

**TAKE THIS, ALL OF YOU, AND EAT OF IT,**
**FOR THIS IS MY BODY,**
**WHICH WILL BE GIVEN UP FOR YOU.**

In a similar way, when supper was ended,
he took the chalice,
and, giving you thanks, he said the blessing,
and gave the chalice to his disciples, saying:

**TAKE THIS, ALL OF YOU, AND DRINK FROM IT,**
**FOR THIS IS THE CHALICE OF MY BLOOD,**
**THE BLOOD OF THE NEW AND ETERNAL COVENANT;**
**WHICH WILL BE POURED OUT FOR YOU AND FOR MANY**
**FOR THE FORGIVENESS OF SINS.**

DO THIS IN MEMORY OF ME.
The words of institution recall for us the institution narrative from Mark 14:22-25 discussed in chapter four. With these words, we are reminded of the sacrifice of ratification of the covenant, not the covenant ratified with blood of bulls, but the covenant ratified in a new way, with the blood of Christ. His blood not only seals the covenant but also forgives sins. Christ is asking us to partake of the sacrifice, like those who partook of the lamb of the first Passover and those who offered peace offerings (šēlāmîm). However, since he is asking us to partake of the blood also, we are also invited to participate as agents of reconciliation. We are reminded of the petition in the Lord’s prayer “forgive our trespasses as we forgive those who trespass against us” (Matt. 6:12). We unite our offering to Christ’s, and in so doing, we too are ratifying the covenant and we are extending reconciliation. We are participating in his sacrifice and becoming peace offering (šēlāmîm), purification/sin offering (ḥattāʾ), and covenant offering. We are accepting our personal invitation to be part of the kingdom of priests and of the holy nation established by God at the time of Moses.

4. Anamnesis

Therefore, O Lord, we celebrate the memorial of the saving Passion of your Son, his wondrous Resurrection and Ascension into heaven, and as we look forward to his second coming, we offer you in thanksgiving this holy and living sacrifice.

The anamnesis is an integral part of the memorial ritual of Passover (Exod. 13:8-10). The concept of remembrance is of unique importance in the Old Testament, and it continues to be so in the time after Christ in the New Testament and consequently for our Liturgy. It is not simply thinking about the past, but rather recalling and making present a past salvific event, with hope for
the future. We are invited to make present the loving sacrifice of the Father in sending the Son, as well as the Son’s response, in the power of the Spirit.

In recalling the Paschal Mystery, we not only recall the saving and reconciling love poured out in the passion and death, but also the renewing and liberating love poured out in the resurrection, and lastly the self-gift of the ascension as the risen Christ, fully human and fully divine, ascends to heaven, and restoring the communion between God and humanity. In making present the past saving events we are offering thanks for the past, the present, and the future.

5. Offering

Look, we pray, upon the oblation of your Church
and, recognizing the sacrificial Victim by whose death
you willed to reconcile us to yourself,
grant that we, who are nourished
by the Body and Blood of your Son
and filled with his Holy Spirit,
may become one body, one spirit in Christ.

The language of the offering section brings us to reflect on the reconciliation effected by Christ’s sacrifice and on the offering of the Church, which when filled with the Spirit may be the offering of one body, one spirit. This section recalls for us Paul’s exhortation in Rom. 12:1. The words of this section of the prayer at once speak of restoration and communion, both intentions anticipated by the Levitical ritual sacrifices.

6. Intercessions

May he make of us
an eternal offering to you,
so that we may obtain an inheritance with your elect,
especially with the most blessed Virgin Mary, Mother of God,
with blessed Joseph, her Spouse,
with your blessed Apostles and glorious Martyrs
(with Saint N.: the Saint of the day or Patron Saint)
and with all the Saints,
on whose constant intercession in your presence
we rely for unfailing help.

May this *Sacrifice of our reconciliation*,
we pray, O Lord,
*advance the peace and salvation of all the world*.
Be pleased to confirm in faith and charity
your pilgrim Church on earth,
with your servant N. our Pope and N. our Bishop,
the Order of Bishops, all the clergy,
and the entire people you have gained for your own.

Listen graciously to the prayers of this family,
whom you have summoned before you:
in your compassion, O merciful Father,
gather to yourself all your children
scattered throughout the world.

† To our departed brothers and sisters
and to all who were pleasing to you
at their passing from this life,
give kind admittance to your kingdom.
There we hope to enjoy for ever the fullness of your glory
through Christ our Lord,
through whom you bestow on the world all that is good. †

The sacrificial language continues in the last section of the prayer as we ask to be an eternal
offering. We are partaking in the one sacrifice of Christ, during the very moment of the Liturgy,
and at the same time asking that we may live a life of sacrifice always, now, and in the life to
come. As the prayer concludes we return to the reason for this sacrifice. We ask that the sacrifice
of reconciliation might bring peace, the *shalom* of the covenant, and salvation, in other words we
are asking for communion with the triune God.

This brief reflection on Eucharistic Prayer III illustrates the centrality of sacrifice to the
celebration of the liturgy and to our participation. It is vitally important to note that the sacrifice
of Christ in which we partake at every liturgy is efficacious regardless of the holiness of the presiding minister or the participating faithful. It is efficacious because it is the work of Christ himself; in other words, the sacrifice of the Mass acts *ex opere operato*. To deny this would be Donatism. Nevertheless, the fruitfulness of Christ’s sacrifice in the life of the believer does depend on the disposition of the believer, *ex opere operantis*.

C. St. Thérèse's of Lisieux’ Prayer

“Offering of myself as a Victim of Holocaust to God's Merciful Love”

Thérèse of Lisieux died when she was only 24 years old. Even though she never left the Carmelite convent, she is the patron of missionaries. This young woman, who had an eagerness to share the Good News was named Doctor of the Church by Pope John Paul II in 1997.

The is prayer was composed by St. Thérèse of Lisieux on June 9 of 1895, after having participated in the Liturgy for the Solemnity of the Most Holy Trinity. During Mass, she had felt a great desire to be offered as a whole burnt offering (‘ōlā), and after receiving permission from her Superior, Thérèse wrote the prayer. From that day on, she prayed it as an Act of Offering after receiving Communion.

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553 Donatism was a heresy of early Christianity which began in North Africa in the early 4th c. when Donatus taught that the efficacy of the sacraments depended on the holiness of the priest. Donatism persisted until the early 5th c. See Mike Aquilina, *The Fathers of the Church*, 3rd ed. (Huntington, IN: Our Sunday Visitor, 2013), 44-45. See also Peter Stravinskas, ed. *Catholic Encyclopedia* (Huntington, IN: Our Sunday Visitor, 1991), 324.

O My God! Most Blessed Trinity, I desire to Love You and make you Loved, to work for the glory of Holy Church by saving souls on earth and liberating those suffering in purgatory. I desire to accomplish Your will perfectly and to reach the degree of glory You have prepared for me in Your Kingdom. I desire, in a word, to be saint, but I feel my helplessness and I beg You, O my God! to be Yourself my Sanctity!

Since You loved me so much as to give me Your only Son as my Savior and my Spouse, the infinite treasures of His merits are mine. I offer them to You with gladness, begging You to look upon me only in the Face of Jesus and in His heart burning with Love.

I offer You, too, all the merits of the saints (in heaven and on earth), their acts of Love, and those of the holy angels. Finally, I offer You, O Blessed Trinity! the Love and merits of the Blessed Virgin, my Dear Mother. It is to her I abandon my offering, begging her to present it to You. Her Divine Son, my Beloved Spouse, told us in the says of His mortal life: "Whatsoever you ask the Father in my name he will give it to you!" I am certain, then, that You will grant my desires; I know, O my God! that the more You want to give, the more You make us desire. I feel in my heart immense desires and it is with confidence I ask You to come and take possession of my soul. Ah! I cannot receive Holy Communion as often as I desire, but, Lord, are You not all-powerful? Remain in me as in a tabernacle and never separate Yourself from Your little victim.

I want to console You for the ingratitude of the wicked, and I beg of you to take away my freedom to displease You. If through weakness I sometimes fall, may Your Divine Glance cleanse my soul immediately, consuming all my imperfections like the fire that transforms everything into itself.

I thank You, O my God! for all the graces You have granted me, especially the grace of making me pass through the crucible of suffering. It is with joy I shall contemplate You on the Last Day carrying the scepter of Your Cross. Since You deigned to give me a share in this very precious

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Cross, I hope in heaven to resemble You and to see shining in my glorified body the sacred stigmata of Your Passion.

After earth's Exile, I hope to go and enjoy You in the Fatherland, but I do not want to lay up merits for heaven. I want to work for Your Love Alone with the one purpose of pleasing You, consoling Your Sacred Heart, and saving souls who will love You eternally.

In the evening of this life, I shall appear before You with empty hands, for I do not ask You, Lord, to count my works. All our justice is stained in Your eyes. I wish, then, to be clothed in Your own Justice and to receive from Your Love the eternal possession of Yourself. I want no other Throne, no other Crown but You, my Beloved!

Time is nothing in Your eyes, and a single day is like a thousand years. You can, then, in one instant prepare me to appear before You.

In order to live in one single act of perfect Love, I OFFER MYSELF AS A VICTIM OF HOLOCAUST TO YOUR MERCIFUL LOVE, Asking You to consume me incessantly, allowing the waves of infinite tenderness shut up within You to overflow into my soul, and that thus I may become a martyr of Your Love, O my God!

May this martyrdom, after having prepared me to appear before You, finally cause me to die and may my soul take its flight without any delay into the eternal embrace of Your Merciful Love.

I want, O my Beloved, at each beat of my heart to renew this offering to You an infinite number of times, until the shadows having disappeared I may be able to tell You of my Love in an Eternal Face to Face!

Marie, Françoise, Thérèse of the Child Jesus and the Holy Face, unworthy Carmelite religious.

This 9th day of June, 1895
Feast of the Most Holy Trinity

**Reflection**

Thérèse’s Act of Oblation represents the prayer of someone who had internalized the meaning of sacrifice. While the prayer does not represent an exegetical exposition or a commentary on any given scriptural text, it does, however, communicate her knowledge of sacrificial themes.
revealed in scripture as well as her capacity for theological understanding. Her desire ultimately is to offer herself as a whole burnt offering, in other words to surrender completely to God. Nevertheless, that is not how the prayer begins. Step by step, she articulates her desire to be sacrifice and only near the end of the prayer, she expresses the fullness of her desire.

She begins the prayer by expressing the desire to love the Triune God and to do his will. Her desire echoes the message of Hos. 6:6 and of Heb. 10:7, 9. She recognizes God’s love and faithfulness in the gift of the Son, as her savior; Rom. 3:24-25 would have revealed these truths to her. Aware of her weakness, she asks to be cleansed, like the leper in Mark 1:40-44.

She thanks God for her suffering and for sharing in the Christ’s cross. It is as though the life of the Suffering Servant was her own (Isa. 53). Her deep desire is offer herself as a holocaust (‘ōlâ), not as a single act, but as a continuous offering with every heartbeat. Thérèse wants to live as a continuous holocaust; she wants to be a tamid.

5.4. Conclusions

Considering that much ink has been spilled on the topic of sacrifice, this present work might have seemed redundant. Nevertheless, the approach I chose to use was unique. The present work has articulated a biblical theology of liturgical sacrifice beginning with a scriptural canonical approach to the concept of sacrifice and concluding with a presentation of sacrifice in a present day liturgical context. In so doing, it has brought attention to three underappreciated, perhaps even neglected, dimensions of sacrifice: first, the relationship between the external actions of the ritual and the internal dynamic of spirituality and morality; second, the reality that sacrifice refers not only to death, but to a way of living; and third, atonement and reconciliation are note the only
reasons to offer sacrifice. These dimensions of sacrifice are essential in understanding the covenantal election of God’s people to be holy and priestly.

The covenant is the overarching context for the discussion of sacrifice in the present work. Our presentation of the biblical theology of sacrifice began in the Old Testament with the establishment of the Mosaic covenant, continued in the New Testament with the institution of a New Covenant in and through Christ, and concludes in a present day liturgical setting also with a covenantal relationship. I have proposed that the best approach for understanding sacrifice is that of self-gift.

The ambivalence of sacrifice –resulting from an inadequate conceptualization of its meaning– has made it difficult to appreciate and appropriate the sacrificial dimension of the Liturgy, with the same interest given to its other dimensions of thanksgiving, memorial, and meal. Continued efforts to articulate a Eucharistic and a pastoral theology that encourage the participation of all the faithful have been the concern of lay and ordained theologians, especially in the decades following the Second Vatican Council. I have discussed that the liturgical sacrifice is a ritualized action, however, with the correct understanding of the meaning of sacrifice, the ritual can guide the spiritual formation of the worshipers in the image and likeness of Christ and therefore, it can lead worshipers towards a participation in the life of the Trinity.
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