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AN INVESTIGATION OF THE CONCEPTS
"GUILT" AND "'ASHAM"
IN THE OLD TESTAMENT

A Thesis
Presented to
the Faculty of
Asbury Theological Seminary

In Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for the Degree
Master Of Theology

by
James Vandaveer Heidinger

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CHAPTER I

THE PROBLEM AND DEFINITIONS OF TERMS USED

In the last decade the problem of an increasing and confusing sense of guilt among thousands of people has brought renewed interest in the study of guilt and its effects. Doctors and psychologists continue to investigate the devastating consequences of guilt, as they probe deeper into the area of psychosomatic disorders. The last word has not been spoken on the far-reaching effects of guilt on one's physical and emotional health. This interest is largely responsible for this investigation.

I. THE PROBLEM

Statement of the problem. The purpose of this study was (1) to make an investigation of the concept of guilt in the Old Testament, with an effort to comprehend more fully its nature and effects upon the individual Israelite; (2) to discover to what extent guilt was corporate as compared to individual in early Israel; (3) to relate what we know concerning guilt in the Old Testament to the guilt-offering, with an attempt to understand the significance of this offering more fully.

Importance of the study. One of the popular pre-suppositions that has been foundational in much Old Testa-

ment study is that early Israel must be understood as a unit, and as having a corporate personality. Yahweh was more concerned with Israel as a nation than He was with Israelites individually. There is truth in this concept, and yet it has tended to overlook the value and the importance of the individual and his role in the faith of Israel. Many scholars feel that the individual was not really discovered until the time of Jeremiah and Ezekiel. Julius Wellhausen and Robertson Smith are representative of this view, that Yahweh had very little interest in the individual, and that "over him the wheel of destiny remorselessly rolled; his part was resignation and not hope."¹ This view has its problems, though, and is being contested by more and more scholars. An attempt will be made to understand the nature of individual responsibility among the early Hebrew.

Also, in the Old Testament, guilt apparently had a corresponding, inherent, destructive force upon the individual. Similar manifestations are being seen today in contemporary society. The Christian Church today seriously needs a rediscovery of the Biblical concept of sin and guilt, and their consequences upon the individual, as well

¹ Julius Wellhausen, Prolegomena To The History of Israel, trans. by J. Sutherland Black (Edinburgh: A. & C. Black, 1885), p. 469.

as the community. If this can be done, the Church may be able to understand and minister to this growing problem more adequately.

Finally, a better understanding of the nature and effects of guilt may also bring a better understanding of the guilt-offering. This well-known cult term is used in Isaiah 53:10 in reference to the sacrificial work of the Suffering Servant.

II. LIMITATIONS AND DEFINITIONS OF TERMS USED

Limitations. This study has many limitations. First, it only deals with Old Testament writings and evidence, with perhaps occasional reference to significant New Testament passages. Secondly, the temptation has been great to digress into many other areas of the Old Testament sacrificial system; so very much has not been touched in this study. A complete study on the doctrine of Atonement and the theological significance of the blood has been impossible in the scope of this study, though these terms will be used and referred to periodically. Another limitation has come from the uncertainty of the date of much of the priestly legislation in Leviticus. Varying views and evidence have been examined and considered, yet one must use caution in being dogmatic about the dating of these materials. Finally, in relation

to the problem of guilt, this study has been limited to only two of the well-known cultic sacrifices of Israelite worship, the sin-offering and the guilt-offering.

Definitions. The primary word considered in this study was the Hebrew word אָשָׁם, which has been used henceforth in the transliterated form, 'asham'. The basic meaning of the verb is "to commit an offence," "to commit a trespass," or "to be guilty." The masculine noun form, also 'āshām', means "guilt, offence." The adjective, transliterated 'ashem', means "guilty."² 'Asham has also, in a derived form, come to mean "guilt-offering." This will be more fully discussed in a later chapter. The other word which has been used in a contrasting study to 'asham is hatta't, or חַטָּאת, as it is found in the Hebrew script.³ It comes from the root חָטָא, hata', which means "miss, go wrong, sin." Hatta't is the feminine noun form, with the derived meaning of "sin, sin-offering."⁴ A closer examination of these terms will come in a later chapter.

² Francis Brown, S. R. Driver, and C. A. Briggs, A Hebrew and English Lexicon of the Old Testament (Oxford: The Clarendon Press, 1907), p. 79.

³ Full diacritical marking will not be used in this study, but is given here for clarification. The verb 'asham is more fully written 'āsam and 'āšēm; the noun is 'āsām. The full form of hatta't is hattā't.

⁴ Brown, Driver, Briggs, op. cit., p. 308.

III. SOURCES AND METHOD OF PROCEDURE

Sources. Much use has been made of the numerous Old Testament theologies, including Heinisch, Von Rad, Koehler, Oehler, Vriezen, Payne, Eichrodt, and Jacob. The classic work in Old Testament sacrifice, by George B. Gray, has been valuable, though his is a dated work. Also, de Vaux, Yerkes, Morris and Rowley have made significant contributions to a fuller understanding of sin and sacrifice.

The writer feels an especial indebtedness toward several men, whose works have been most helpful and stimulating. First, Johannes Pedersen's⁵ two-volume work on the life and culture of Israel has captured a dynamic understanding of the Israelite and his way of life, and especially Hebrew psychology. His work has been of infinite value. Then, Leon Morris' article on 'Asham'⁶ has been a challenge and also a stimulation for further pursuit. Finally, R. J. Thompson's very thorough study, recently published, on sacrifice in early Israel outside the Levitical Law,⁷ has provided much keen insight regard-

⁵Johs. Pedersen, Israel (Copenhagen: Povl Branner, 1926), 2 Vols.

⁶Leon Morris, "'Asham," Evangelical Quarterly, XXX (October, 1958), 196-210.

⁷R. J. Thompson, Penitence and Sacrifice in Early Israel Outside the Levitical Law, (Leiden: Brill, 1963).

ing several problems. He also has included an exhaustive bibliography on the subject which has led to the discovery of more helpful resource materials. Such a brief expression of indebtedness does not fully express the appreciation one feels towards scholars who have spent a lifetime of study and investigation on problems vital to the understanding of Old Testament scripture.

Method of Procedure. This investigation has been carried on both analytically and inductively. A close examination of the work of other scholars has been a necessity, of course, to benefit from their insight and conclusions as well as their interpretation of Scripture. Also, an attempt has been made to determine from Scriptural evidence the biblical view of the problem at hand. A claim to total objectivity in this effort would be presumption, though an attempt in this direction has been made. A critical, inductive study of Leviticus 5 through 7 has been made in the search for the full significance of the 'asham and hatta't offerings.

The study will begin with an investigation of guilt, its nature and its relationship to punishment among the Israelites. The problem of the individual versus the corporate Israel will be considered, including the concept of retribution. Next, the personal effects of guilt on one's body and mind will be examined, with an attempt to

comprehend the full impact of sin upon the ancient Hebrew. Finally, the study will include a close examination of the 'asham offering, as to its significance, development, its relationship to the hatta't offering, and lastly, the relationship, if any, between guilt and the guilt-offering.

CHAPTER II

GUILT: ITS NATURE AND RELATION TO PUNISHMENT AND TO THE INDIVIDUAL

Much of the real significance of the concept of guilt in ancient Israel has been overlooked as a result of an over-balanced emphasis upon the corporate nature of the people Israel. Had the individual Israelite been lost in the masses with no personal responsibility and relationship with Yahweh, one would then expect to find no evidence of individual guilt, much less individual punishment. This chapter is concerned with the discovery of the individual in early Israel, with an attempt to determine the presence or absence of personal guilt and Yahweh's dealings with the individual, in the midst of His chosen people. An analysis of various viewpoints has been made and will be considered, along with relevant Scriptural evidence. First, we shall consider guilt as an extension of sin; next, guilt as it is related to the individual and the community; then, guilt as it is related to punishment; and finally, guilt as resulting from a breach of a covenant.

I. GUILT: AN EXTENSION OF SIN

Fundamental to one's understanding of guilt in the

is an awareness of its close relationship to sin, as the Hebrews conceived it. 'Asham is the major Old Testament Hebrew word for guilt. This noun form is a derivative of the verb form, 'asham, which means "offend, commit an offence, do a wrong."¹ The basic meaning of the word seems to be simply "to sin, to trespass." But, a natural extension of the meaning sees the verb signifying "to be characterized by trespass, to be guilty."² ('ashem). The word comes to include the idea of a state of guilt following upon the committing of an offence.³

An example of the derived usage is seen in I Chr. 21:3, where Joab asks, "Why then doth my lord require this thing? Why will he be a cause of trespass to Israel?"⁴ This is the Authorized Version; the difference is seen in the Revised Standard Version's translation: "Why should he bring guilt upon Israel?" They have made use of the word guilt rather than trespass. Jeremiah gives another example: "For Israel and Judah have not been forsaken by

¹Francis Brown, S. R. Driver, and C. A. Briggs, A Hebrew and English Lexicon of the Old Testament (Oxford: The Clarendon Press, 1907), p. 79.

²Leon Morris, "'Asham," Evangelical Quarterly, XXX (October, 1958), p. 197.

³Ibid.

⁴All Scripture references will be the RSV unless noted otherwise.

their God, the Lord of hosts; but the land of the Chaldeans is full of guilt against the Holy One of Israel."⁵ Again, the word trespass or sin could be used as well as guilt.

A similar development has taken place in the word "'awon," אָוֹן, which means "commit iniquity, do wrong." The derived meaning of the noun form mentioned previously is "iniquity, guilt."⁶ It has a similar combination of usages as 'asham. "Because he has despised the word of the Lord, and has broken his commandment, that person shall be utterly cut off; his iniquity shall be upon him."⁷ So, a very close bond between sin and guilt existed in the mind of the early Hebrew. To think of sin or iniquity was also to imply guilt or guiltiness, viewed as the natural state which followed the committing of an act of trespass.

II. GUILT: THE INDIVIDUAL AND THE COMMUNITY

The question that must now be considered, one which is vital to an understanding of sin and guilt in Israel, is that of the Biblical view of the relation of man to society in early Israel. Is man conceived as only a fragment of the community, his life being borne along with the

⁵Jeremiah 51:5.

⁶Brown, Driver, Briggs, op. cit., p. 730.

⁷Numbers 15:31.

fortune of the masses? Is he conceived of as an individual, responsible to God for his own life?

Many often assert that the corporate consciousness of Israel makes impossible a serious consideration of personal sin and individual responsibility. Robertson Smith is in agreement with Wellhausen and has written, "it was the community, and not the individual, that was sure of the permanent and unfailing help of its deity. It was a national not a personal providence that was taught by ancient religion."⁸ H. W. Robinson, leaning toward the same idea, writes, "Yahweh was the God of Israel, and only secondarily the God of the individual Israelite. Individual religion of course existed, but it was construed through the society to which the individual belonged . . . the relation . . . was mediated through the corporate personality of the nation."⁹

These views have caught one important aspect of the nature of the people Israel, but they have done so at the expense of a sound Biblical view of the individual. This other side of the coin is needed to balance the picture.

⁸W. Robertson Smith, The Religion of the Semites (New York: Meridian Books, 1956), p. 263.

⁹H. Wheeler Robinson, Religious Ideas of the Old Testament (London: G. Duckworth, 1956), p. 87.

The fact that the individual was a member of a community, and even of a family unit and of a nation did not eliminate private responsibility. Heinisch has keenly observed that in the Decalogue, the fourth and following commandments are personal obligations, while even the first three, which concern divine worship, affected the individual Israelite.¹⁰ George Ernest Wright makes the same point, saying, "In the covenant with the whole people, Yahweh's 'Thou Shalt' was addressed directly to each individual, singling him out of the mass and demanding of him an individual response not comprehended in the cultic activity of the group as a whole."¹¹

Those who view Israel as having only a corporate relationship with Yahweh usually claim that Jeremiah and Ezekiel discovered the individual. Before this, they feel, man was thought of primarily in terms of the society to which he belonged. Rowley claims this to be a "gross exaggeration."¹² He states clearly that there was individual piety and sin, and individual reward and punishment,

¹⁰Paul Heinisch, Theology of the Old Testament, trans. W. G. Heidt (St. Paul: The North Central Publishing Company, 1955), p. 260.

¹¹G. E. Wright, The Old Testament Against It's Environment (London: SCM Press, Ltd., 1950), p. 69.

¹²H. H. Rowley, "Individual and Community in the Old Testament," Theology Today, XII (January, 1956), p. 492.

long before the days of Jeremiah and Ezekiel.¹³ Wright is equally convinced that the popular notion that individualism did not emerge in Israel until the time of the prophets is not correct, and he claims it to be a judgment based upon an "inadequate comprehension of the data."¹⁴ Kaufmann contests this view even more strongly, calling it a "compound of errors."¹⁵

Only a brief survey through Old Testament Scriptures is necessary to show a dynamic teaching of individual importance and interaction between Yahweh and the Israelite. In a sinful world, Enoch walked with God until God took him.¹⁶ When the hearts of men turned toward sin and the imaginations of their hearts and minds were fully corrupt, and God sent the waters of the flood, Noah was saved from the general disaster.¹⁷ Abraham stands out as a towering figure of character, nobility and obedience, with whom God dealt in a very intimate way. Humble individuals like Hannah could bring their pleas to God and find them answered.¹⁸ Yahweh appeared and spoke to Moses in the

¹³Ibid.

¹⁴Wright, loc. cit.

¹⁵Yehezkel Kaufmann, The Religion of Israel, trans. Moshe Greenberg (London: George Allen & Unwin Ltd., 1961), p. 330.

¹⁶Genesis 5:24. ¹⁷Genesis 6. ¹⁸I Samuel 1.

burning bush;¹⁹ to Samuel as he kept watch by the ark;²⁰ to Amos as he worked at his humble vocation;²¹ to Isaiah in the midst of all the Temple activity.²² When David sinned with Bathsheba and against Uriah,²³ we must remember that Nathan went to David as an individual sinner to rebuke him in the name of Yahweh. Rowley notes that he did not wait until divine sanctions against the community involved society in the effect of David's sin, as had happened in the affair of Achan.²⁴

Kaufmann states that the idea of individual retribution for one's own deeds is a theme of the earliest sources. "Strictly individual requital is meted out to Noah and his generation. The individual members of Lot's family are requited variously in accord with their deserts: some are saved; Lot's wife is turned to salt . . . Lot's scoffing sons-in-law are destroyed . . ." ²⁵

The Old Testament evidence provides convincing witness that Yahweh was not a God who had regard to men only in the mass. The individual had to decide whether he wished to serve Yahweh or some alien god: the individual

¹⁹Exodus 3. ²⁰I Samuel 3. ²¹Amos 7:15.

²²Isaiah 6. ²³II Samuel 12.

²⁴Rowley, "Individual and Community in the Old Testament," op. cit., p. 493.

²⁵Kaufmann, loc. cit.

prayed, the individual brought sacrifice, the individual offered his first fruits, the individual made vows. In the penitential psalms the community often acknowledged collective guilt, but still more emphatically does the individual worshipper confess personal guilt.²⁶ (A closer examination of this evidence in the Psalms will be made in the following chapter.) Some have pointed out that in the sacrificial system, provision was made for daily sacrifices on behalf of the community, and for the annual Day of Atonement for the sins of the community during the preceding year. However, it should not be forgotten that in no period of Israel's history was sacrifice conceived of simply as a social rite. There were always individual offerings as well as corporate, and individual thanksgivings and petitions could always be brought before God.²⁷

Thus, Wright concludes that "In the earliest law of the covenant the individual is addressed together with the group, and life achieved its true meaning in the context of God's promise and demand, and of man's faith and obedience."²⁸

²⁶Heinisch, Theology of the Old Testament, loc. cit.

²⁷Rowley, "Individual and Community in the Old Testament," op. cit., p. 494.

²⁸Wright, The Old Testament Against It's Environment, loc. cit.

But, as the importance of the individual begins to crystalize, it would be well to see how this individual responsibility was kept in tension with a responsibility to society, for one is not complete without the other. No period in Israel's history shows an extreme collectivism or an extreme individualism.²⁹ Rather we see a combination of both. Every individual had his share of responsibility for the life of the community. He was not just a fragment of the corporate whole, but he was a responsible individual in relation to the community. Von Rad says concerning this involvement:

Sin was also a social category. Through ties of blood and common lot the individual was regarded as being so deeply embedded in the community that an offence on his part was not just a private matter affecting only himself and his own relationship to God. On the contrary, wherever there had been a grave offence against the divine law, what loomed largest was the incrimination which the community experienced in consequence at the hands of God, for because of the sin nothing less than the whole possibility of its cultic activity had become imperilled. The community had thus a vital interest in the restoration of order.³⁰

Thus, it is evident that no Israelite could actually be indifferent to whether his neighbor walked in God's way or not, neither did they feel that a man's religion was

²⁹Rowley, "Individual and Community in the Old Testament," op. cit., p. 491.

³⁰Gerhard Von Rad, Old Testament Theology, trans. D. M. G. Stalker (Edinburgh: Oliver and Boyd, 1962), p. 264.

solely his own affair. In the same way that a modern community today realizes that disease is not an exclusively individual concern, so in the Old Testament, sin, which consists of disharmony with the will of God, is not simply an individual concern.³¹ Israel believed that the life of every individual concerned the whole community, but nevertheless, the individual was seen as an individual.

There are a few striking illustrations in the Old Testament that show the solidarity of the community. The story of Achan is the stock example of this corporateness, and is often given an undue prominence in the study of Israelite thought. When Achan kept for personal use part of the enemy treasure which he had been commanded to destroy, the entire community suffered until he and his family had been completely destroyed.³² In a special sense, his sin involved his whole family, since to the Hebrew, the family was conceived of as an extension of the personality of its head. To the Israelite, extensions of the personality had reality. Thus, one's words, one's writings, his name, his property, and his offspring were

³¹Rowley, "Individual and Community in the Old Testament," op. cit., p. 509.

³²Ibid., p. 492.

all considered to be an extension of his person.³³ Following this pattern, an individual could be thought of as the representative of the community. Rowley feels that it is in this sense that we must understand the mission of the Suffering Servant of Isaiah. He stands both for the personified community as well as for "an individual who should perfectly represent it and fulfill in himself the mission of the community."³⁴

It seems clear, then, that the prophets did not introduce the concept of the individual. True, they stressed it strongly in their preaching. However, they were preaching to a generation who would not accept their own guilt, but rather, who chose to blame their fathers. To this mentality, the prophets stressed the aspect of individual responsibility. This was not something new, as has been seen, but was a part of God's dealings with men from the beginning.

III. GUILT: A BREACH OF THE COVENANT

The possibility of individual guilt among the Hebrews is seen more clearly if one is fully aware of what

³³Aubrey Johnson, The Vitality of the Individual In the Thought of Ancient Israel (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 1949), p. 89.

³⁴Rowley, "Individual and Community in the Old Testament," op. cit., p. 509.

constituted sin in the Old Testament. When God led Israel out of Egypt, He established a covenant with them through His servant Moses. It is in the context of this covenant that the terms sin or guilt must be understood. The source of morality for Israel was not necessarily a certain quality of living, or a particular standard, but was first, a command or demand of certain stipulations by Yahweh.³⁵ The moral norm to be observed by Israel was not an impersonal law, but was rather the character of Yahweh.³⁶ Abraham Buchler, Principal of Jews College, London, sees the covenant as having been synonymous with the voice of God.³⁷ This seems to be implied, he feels, when God said, "Now therefore, if you will obey my voice and keep my covenant,"³⁸ as if the obedience is the same as keeping the covenant. To the Hebrew, one must remember, that the Word of Yahweh was a very real extension of the will of Yahweh. To transgress or violate one of God's laws deliberately is an open defiance of His authority and of God Himself, as the Giver of the law.³⁹

³⁵Kaufmann, The Religion of Israel, op. cit., p. 316.

³⁶R. Dobbie, "Sacrifice and Morality In the Old Testament," Expository Times, LXX (July, 1959), p. 299.

³⁷A. Buchler, Studies in Sin and Atonement (London: Oxford University Press, 1928), p. 3.

³⁸Exodus 19:5. ³⁹Buchler, op. cit., p. 11.

For Israel, then, the covenant was the unifying and central factor in her life. When one says this, it must be remembered that the covenant is synonymous with the will of God and the voice of God. Righteousness, then, was the maintenance of that covenant, and sin was the transgressing of it, in acting outside its laws.

Pedersen states that the real "kernel of sin" is a breach of the covenant.⁴⁰ He says it is a breach to forget the brother-covenant, thus violating the claim of kindred. In the same way, sin is every kind of violation of marriage, i.e. the taking of another man's wife,⁴¹ as well as the committing of incest.⁴² In the former case one violates the covenant of another, and in the latter, one's own covenant. Again, the Sodomites were sinners because they violated the right of hospitality,⁴³ the covenant which strangers had with the town.⁴⁴ Thus, when we think of sin, the consideration is not so much with the external nature of an act. Koehler adds, ". . . the Old Testament knows no ideal, only relationship to God the Lord. According to the Old Testament that man is guiltless and perfect who is

⁴⁰Johannes Pedersen, Israel: Its Life and Culture, I-II (Copenhagen: Povl Branner, 1926), p. 415.

⁴¹Genesis 39:9; Deuteronomy 22:24.

⁴²Leviticus 20. ⁴³Genesis 13:13; 19:6.

⁴⁴Pedersen, loc. cit.

so in God's judgment. God is the norm of the ethical . . .⁴⁵ when seen in these terms, one can more easily grasp the very personal quality, and even the profound spiritual nature of sin.

Also, from this perspective says Eichrodt, ". . . both the tabuistic and the juridical-moralistic assessments of sin are overcome: from this standpoint, cultic offences can only be classified as sin, if they are regarded as a refusal of obedience or reverence."⁴⁶ Thus, the mechanical and impersonal overtones of violating a rigid code of ethics or moral standards disappears. Eichrodt goes on to say, "Furthermore, individual transgressions of the social or moral law are in this way removed from the realm of the external performance of legally stipulated obligations, and assessed as the expression of a moral or immoral will."⁴⁷ This contrasts greatly with any isolation of some particular sinful actions, which do not involve the true spiritual state as a whole. Rather, it sees sin and guilt as resulting in

⁴⁵Ludwig Koehler, Old Testament Theology, trans. A. S. Todd (London: Lutterworth Press, 1957), p. 168.

⁴⁶Walther Eichrodt, Theology of the Old Testament (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1961), trans. J. A. Baker, p. 375.

⁴⁷Ibid.

or as the actual act of a disturbing of a very personal divine-human relationship.

Sin is thus determined by one's compliance with or defiance of the stipulations of the covenant. He who fulfills the claims of a relationship, a covenant, is righteous; he who does not do it, sins with regard to the one with whom he has the relationship. So, says Pedersen, "'sinner', like 'righteous,' to a certain extent becomes a relative idea. The sinner is he who is wrong in his relation to another in so far as he has not given what the latter was entitled to."⁴⁸ This is not to say that one chooses to rebel against God, and this rebellion causes him to sin. Rebellion does not cause one to sin; sin does not cause one to rebel. Rather, in rebelling, men are actually sinning.⁴⁹ Man's refusal to comply with the stipulations of the covenant of Yahweh, is the real sin. Thus, a profound conception of sin as rebellion against God and a breach of the covenant came into being. This living relation of man with God in the covenant, then, focused attention on sin, repentance, and forgiveness in a

⁴⁸Pedersen, Israel: Its Life and Culture, op. cit., p. 418.

⁴⁹Frederic Greeves, The Meaning of Sin (London: The Epworth Press, 1956), p. 92.

manner and in a depth which was entirely unknown elsewhere.⁵⁰

Can one assert, then, that a personal sense of guilt was possible in the early Israelite? The witness of the Biblical sources indicates that it definitely existed. Also, the nature of Israel's relationship with Yahweh gives a positive witness. Yahweh spelled out clearly the requirements and duties of those within His covenant. When the demands of a relationship have been spelled out, immediately the possibility of violating them appears as well. Guilt was very much a possibility, for duty had been defined very specifically and individually as has been mentioned. From amphictyonic times, Israel was a people under law.⁵¹ God is the King, Buchler claims, not only of the whole of Israel, but of every individual Israelite. He continues, "In thus surrendering his desire and will consciously and deliberately to the will of God expressed in His difficult ordinances, the Jew by his act of self-restraint from transgressing any one of them, acknowledges

⁵⁰Wright, The Old Testament Against It's Environment, op. cit., p. 70.

⁵¹R. J. Thompson, Penitence and Sacrifice in Early Israel Outside the Levitical Law, (Leiden: Brill, 1963), p. 8.

for his own person the Kingship of God over him."⁵²

IV. GUILT: ITS RELATION TO PUNISHMENT

One more unique characteristic of guilt in the Old Testament must be considered, and that is its close relation to punishment. We have noticed that the word 'asham' in its extended meaning can be "to be guilty," but Morris observes even a further extension, that being "bear one's guilt," or "be punished."⁵³ Deeply rooted in the Hebrew consciousness was the conviction that sin must be punished, and thus to say "sin," was to say "punish." Morris notes that in several Hebrew words for sin a secondary sense of "punishment" developed, with the same word denoting the offence and the punishment for the offence. This is the case with the word 'asham."⁵⁴

This is clearly seen in Genesis: "Then they said to one another, 'In truth we are guilty concerning our brother, in that we saw the distress of his soul, when he besought us and we would not listen; therefore is this distress come upon us."⁵⁵ Here the last clause brings out

⁵²Buchler, Studies in Sin and Atonement, op. cit., p. 61.

⁵³Morris, "'Asham", op. cit., p. 200.

⁵⁴Ibid., p. 197. ⁵⁵Genesis 42:21.

the idea of punishment for sin, and this idea is never far away when "sin" or "guilt" are mentioned. Another example is given in Chronicles: ". . . and said to them, 'You shall not bring the captives in here, for you propose to bring upon us guilt against the Lord in addition to our present sins and guilt. For our guilt is already great, and there is fierce wrath against Israel.'"⁵⁶ Again, closely paralleling sin and guilt comes the idea of punishment as "fierce wrath against Israel." One of the clearest examples is in Hosea: "Samaria shall bear her guilt, because she has rebelled against her God; they shall fall by the sword, their little ones shall be dashed in pieces, and their pregnant women ripped open."⁵⁷ Here punishment seems to be synonymous with the bearing of the guilt.

Von Rad goes so far as to say that ". . . there is absolutely nothing in the thought of the Old Testament which by and large corresponds to the separation which we make between sin and penalty."⁵⁸ He points out that semantically, both hatta'at and 'awon show a "remarkable ambivalence" which will only be fully understood in this dual concept; they can both stand for the very act of sin, or

⁵⁶II Chronicles 28:13. ⁵⁷Hosea 13:16.

⁵⁸Von Rad, Old Testament Theology, op. cit., p. 266.

for the consequences of sin, that is, for the penalty.⁵⁹ Abraham Heschel sees the same principle when he writes, "Crime and penalty are not two distinct and separable facts--they are one and the same, seen merely from different angles and on different sides."⁶⁰ Pedersen sees this thread running throughout the narratives of the Yahwist in Genesis, where obedience leads to blessing and disobedience to curse.⁶¹ The extreme example is, of course, man's eating of the forbidden fruit which resulted in his being driven out of Eden and much of life becoming cursed. During the monarchy, David is punished for his sin of numbering the people, and the punishment is a pestilence among his people.⁶² When Achan had confessed to appropriating the forbidden spoil he was stoned.⁶³ Uzzah died because he put forward his hand to the ark of God to take hold of it.⁶⁴ Azariah, who permitted the burning of incense in the high places, was smitten with leprosy until the day of his death.⁶⁵ Robinson calls this idea one that is "fundamental" to the prophetic religion, that suffering

⁵⁹Ibid.

⁶⁰Abraham Heschel, The Prophets (New York: Harper & Row, Publishers, 1955), p. 46.

⁶¹Pedersen, Israel, op. cit., p. 435.

⁶²II Samuel 24. ⁶³Joshua 7:1-25.

⁶⁴II Samuel 6:6ff. ⁶⁵II Kings 15:4.

is the just recompense and reward of sin. He adds, ". . . almost any chapter of the prophetic writings illustrates the application of this principle."⁶⁶ It seems to appear as a necessary accompaniment in the moral government of the world by Yahweh.

In Israel, then, punishment for sin seemed to be inescapable, unless something was offered to avert the guilt and the punishment. Sin and its consequences were hostile to life. According to the thought of ancient Israel, says Mowinckel, ". . . every sin bears within itself the seed of misfortune, a 'fruit', or 'guilt', which in time overtakes the culprit and (or) his family."⁶⁷ Yahweh's law of justice was that goodness and righteousness bore blessing within itself, and that wickedness and disobedience wrought curse, misery, misfortune, and punishment. The divine justice of Yahweh's moral government of the world demanded it. Heschel sees this as one of the reasons why the prophets could be so sure of coming judgment upon sinful Israel. His knowledge that this law was part of Yahweh's government of His world, and that it was unfaltering and utterly reliable. As the astronomer, familiar with the laws of

⁶⁶Robinson, Religious Ideas of the Old Testament, op. cit., p. 162.

⁶⁷S. Mowinckel, He That Cometh (Oxford: B. N. Blackwell, Ltd., 1956), p. 210.

the movements of the heavenly bodies can predict their arrangement, and as the chemist can predict with unfailing accuracy the reaction which will result from the mixing of certain chemicals, in the same way did the prophet know that God would inevitably bring destruction and punishment upon sinful, idolatrous Israel.⁶⁸ In Genesis God confronts man's disobedience with the question, "What is this that you have done?"⁶⁹ With Eve eating the fruit or Cain murdering his brother, the question is the same. God by His question summons man to responsibility. Punishment issues forth naturally and inevitably from the sovereignty of God; Koehler says, ". . . punishment is the making good of this violation."⁷⁰ He adds that no disobedience escapes God's awareness or His punishment. If the result is that Adam and Eve must quit Paradise and Cain his field, this is probably an indication of the "violent disturbance" of the relation between God and sinners.⁷¹

Two more items remain to be noted. First is the recognition that even the divine forgiveness often does not cancel all the effects of sin. This is very evident in the

⁶⁸Heschel, The Prophets, loc. cit.

⁶⁹Genesis 3:13; 4:10

⁷⁰Koehler, Old Testament Theology, op. cit., p. 210.

⁷¹Ibid.

life of the sinful man who has ruined his health by sinful excesses and does not have it suddenly restored by his repentance. Also, other persons who have been influenced by the one sinning may continue in sin despite repentance in the sinner's life. Rowley has observed regarding David's sin and repentance, ". . . his son Amnon followed in the way of his father's lust, and Absalom in that of his father's bloodguiltiness, without repenting."⁷² Numerous references illustrate God's justice demanding that He impose punishment upon repentant sinners, both as a punishment and as a warning not to yield or relapse again.⁷³ When the people Israel revolted against Yahweh, and He determined to destroy them, Moses expected that God would punish them. However, he did ask for the removal of the death sentence, and Yahweh heard his prayer. He did not annihilate His Chosen Nation, but they were forced to wander in the wilderness until all those who had sinned had died there.⁷⁴ Again, at Kadesh, Moses was disobedient to Yahweh's command. God forgave Moses of his disobedience, and favored him with His presence and leadership, but

⁷²H. H. Rowley, "The Meaning of Sacrifice In the Old Testament," Manchester Bulletin, XXXIII (1950), p. 101.

⁷³Heinisch, Theology of the Old Testament, op. cit., p. 268.

⁷⁴Numbers 14:18.

would not permit him to enter Canaan.⁷⁵ God forgave David of the sins of murder and adultery, but death came to the child of Bathsheba as punishment for the sin.⁷⁶ After David took the census, he was sorry and asked God's forgiveness, yet did not escape the punishment.⁷⁷ Finally, when Ahab humbled himself before the Lord following Elijah's rebuke in regard to the Naboth affair, his repentance was accepted, but the punishment for his sin was still to be reaped by his sons, it was not avoided.⁷⁸ This is enough to give something of the force of this relationship, that is, that sin inevitably seems to result in punishment. Even divine forgiveness did not dispense with the punishment.

One final idea that merits brief mention is the concept of the punishment being expiation in itself for sin. This will be considered more fully in a later chapter. Many of the examples of the sin-punishment pattern have made no mention of any expiatory sacrifice. In a real sense, the punishment, that is, the bearing of the guilt by the guilty party, seemed to be expiation in itself. This will be examined more closely in relation to the significance of the 'asham offering. It could be that this holds

⁷⁵Numbers 20:12. ⁷⁶II Samuel 12:18.

⁷⁷II Samuel 24. ⁷⁸I Kings 21:29.

real significance in one's full understanding of the guilt-offering.

Thus, it has been seen that sin and guilt were considered nearly synonymous in the Hebrew mind, with many of the words showing this extension in their development. There is strong scriptural evidence that such a thing as personal guilt did very much exist in early Israel; evidence of this is implied in the very nature of the Decalogue. Also, the fact that the covenant was a relationship not only with Israel, but with each Israelite, makes the probability of individual guilt more real. To give obedience to the covenant was to acknowledge the Lordship of Yahweh; this was true for the individual as well as corporate Israel. Finally, sin and disobedience have been seen to bring punishment inevitably following close in their wake. This is apparently one of the laws that is part of Yahweh's great plan of moral government and dealing with man.

The next chapter deals with an investigation of the effects or consequences of guilt upon the individual, his mind and body. This should not only make the existence of personal guilt more clear, but should reveal to the student something of the destructive force that was inherent in this guilt.

CHAPTER III

GUILT: ITS PERSONAL CONSEQUENCES

As the possibility of individual guilt and responsibility has been explored in the previous chapter, the study moves to a closer examination of the effects of guilt upon the individual. If such a thing as individual responsibility existed among Yahweh's covenant people, one would expect to find a corresponding sense of guilt or sorrow resulting from a breach or failure in this responsibility. First in this consideration will be the matter of Guilt as a weakness of the soul; secondly, guilt as a sickness of the soul. To begin, however, a word must be said about the idea of personal blame or answerableness.

Presupposing the destructive force of guilt upon the individual is the concept of personal blameworthiness. It is inherent in the very definition of the word. Basically, guilt arises from acts which a man imputes to himself as proceeding from his own will in the exercise of his freedom. If these acts are wrong and involve the violation of a standard or principle to be observed, he then recognizes himself to be the cause and feels that he is answerable for them. He takes the blame for them to

himself, and feels that he should be blamed by others as well.¹ Implied in this awareness are first, the individual's consciousness of his freedom of choice; secondly, a knowledge of moral distinctions; and thirdly, the awareness that he should have acted differently than he did. "The sense of guilt, therefore," says James Orr, "originates in a moral judgment of a condemnatory kind passed by the agent upon himself for acts which he knows to be wrong."² The implication here, that is so vital, is that sin is not a tragic and inevitable necessity. Sin is always a fruit of the will! Because an individual chooses to do good, he is answerable for his evil-doing. The important point at hand is that the ultimate causes of sin and punishment lie always in the will and act of man.³ It is exactly this sense of moral responsibility and answerableness that God desired to bring about when He asked, "Who told you that you were naked? Have you eaten of the tree of which I commanded you not to eat?"⁴ And again, when He asked Cain, "Where is Abel your brother?"⁵

¹James Orr, Sin As A Problem Of Today (New York: Eaton & Mains, no date), p. 255.

²Ibid., p. 252.

³Yehezkel Kaufmann, The Religion of Israel, trans. Moshe Greenberg (London: George Allen & Unwin Ltd., 1961), p. 329.

⁴Genesis 3:11b. ⁵Genesis 4:9.

So, the feeling of guilt is an element in the consciousness of every moral being who knows himself to be a wrong-doer or transgressor. The spontaneous and natural effects of despair, remorse, confusion and sorrow are very real and seemingly inevitable. They cannot be reasoned away logically, spoken away casually, or laughed away lightly. There is a reality there that must be dealt with. "All serious literature treats it as a terrible fact, and finds its weirdest interest in depicting the agonies of the guilt-afflicted conscience, and in tracking the nemesis (retribution) that surely awaits the transgressor."⁶

Personal answerableness and blameworthiness, then, are a real part of the guilt-afflicted mind and conscience. A closer look is needed now on the more specific effects of guilt upon one's life.

I. GUILT AND WEAKNESS OF THE SOUL

A very common term in Biblical terminology is the word "soul." It is a word that has a variety of meanings depending on the person using the word, and the period in which one lived. To speak of an element affecting the mind and heart and body of an Israelite involves the use of the

very familiar Hebrew word, nephesh, נֶפֶשׁ, which is often translated "soul." But, this word to the Hebrew meant a great deal more than it does in the narrow, Western usage of today. One must understand it in its broader sense to get the full impact of a weakening of the soul. Inclusive in the use of nephesh are the definitions "soul, life, person, living being, blood, self."⁷ Often it includes more than the animating principle of life, carrying the idea of bodily appetites, desires and passions.⁸ This popular word occurs 754 times in the Old Testament.⁹ Since the Hebrews made no division between body and soul as did later Greek thought, the word includes life in its totality, as a unit. Thus the soul or life principle was inseparably bound up with the physical and emotional. The Israelite made no neat distinction between the two.

For the Hebrew, when the soul was filled, it was happy. It was made full by joys and blessings. The nature of the soul was for it to be full, happy, strong, and vital.

⁷ Francis Brown, S. R. Driver, and C. A. Briggs, A Hebrew And English Lexicon of the Old Testament (Oxford: The Clarendon Press, 1907), p. 659.

⁸ Robert Girdlestone, Synonyms of The Old Testament (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1948), p. 58.

⁹ W. J. Cameron, "Soul," The New Bible Dictionary, J. D. Douglas (ed.), (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1948), p. 58.

The familiar term to "restore the soul" meant to make it full and strong. Life became something which the Israelite possessed in a higher or lower degree. Life and death were not considered two sharply contrasting spheres.¹⁰ When afflicted by illness or misfortune or whatever might check the soul, then the person had less life and more death. The slipping away of life marked the beginning of the process of death. Also, to be healed, or removed from the misfortune marked "life" again for the Hebrew.¹¹ Thus came the familiar cry of the prophets, "Seek good, and not evil, that you may live";¹² in other words, that you may come alive once again. Johnson writes, "Thus, the reference to life and 'to live' is not just to one's personal existence, but also in the sense of one's well being, which is usually understood and defined in terms of good health and material prosperity."¹³ He adds that this will give the student a greater appreciation for the wealth of meaning that is implied in the Israelite concept of Yahweh being the "Living God." It includes Yahweh's vital activ-

¹⁰Johannes Pedersen, Israel: Its Life and Culture, I-II (Copenhagen: Povel Branner, 1926), p. 153.

¹¹Ibid. ¹²Amos 5:14a.

¹³Aubrey Johnson, The Vitality of the Individual In the Thought of Ancient Israel (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 1949), p. 96.

ity as the "Giver of Life."¹⁴

In contrast to the full soul which is happy and strong, there is the empty soul which is miserable and in anguish. This person has poured out his soul, his nephesh, that is to say, he has emptied it of its strength and fullness. Often, the soul that is stricken becomes bitter in its misery and sorrow, and in its emptiness will lack courage and energy.¹⁵ Thus he would cry out because of the sorrow of his heart: ". . . behold, my servants shall sing for gladness of heart, but you shall cry out for pain of heart, and shall wail for anguish of spirit."¹⁶ The familiar Hebrew word often used in regard to the empty soul is shaw', שׁוֹן, denoting "emptiness, vanity, or nothingness."¹⁷ The main emphasis seems to be on powerlessness and delusion. The Psalmist speaks of the man ". . . who has clean hands and a pure heart, who does not lift up his soul to what is false,"¹⁸ and again, the man ". . . whose mouth speaks lies, and whose right hand is a right hand of falsehood."¹⁹ Falsehood in these verses implies

¹⁴Ibid., p. 97.

¹⁵Pedersen, op. cit., p. 149.

¹⁶Isaiah 65:14.

¹⁷Brown, Driver, Briggs, A Hebrew and English Lexicon of the Old Testament, op. cit., p. 996.

¹⁸Psalms 24:4. ¹⁹Psalms 144:8.

"emptiness, and nothingness." So, falsehood is that which is without basis in the totality of the soul; it is that which is without root and inner substance. The soul that is full or healthy does not know this emptiness, this shaw'. But unhappiness and misfortune bring emptiness, that is, the chaotic and the rootless, and the soul feels no joy of life.

Already, one can begin to see the dilemma confronting the sinner. For the Israelite, the good and just and right are the normal action and the strongest factors in life. They pay their dividends reliably. Sin, then, is a negative factor, and one which preys upon the positive forces of life. The sinner counteracts the positive forces, that is, the laws, which uphold the community and which have their roots in God. The law was the rule of the behavior of the healthy and strong. To violate it was to violate the will of God, since the Law was seen as synonymous with His will. Thus, to sin, as we have seen earlier, was to be in direct opposition to God Himself, for He was at the soul of every Israelitic covenant.²⁰ There seemed to be an inner, psychological law in operation between Yahweh and His people, Pedersen observes, which radiates strength, health, and blessing to the

²⁰Pedersen, Israel, op. cit., p. 432.

obedient. He continues, ". . . he (Yahweh) acts in the soul of the righteous with His strength, and immediately withdraws from the unrighteous; he hates the sinful, which is at war with His essence. The psychological law agrees with His essence, because it rests in Him."²¹

Therefore, the soul of the sinner who transgresses the laws of the community is a soul that lacks firmness and strength; it is characterized by weakness. The sinner has no firm center of action; his nephesh is not a pure, firm, and united organism, but is full of inner strife. It lacks the strength and peace of Yahweh and thus staggers about aimlessly, with falsehood its primary feature.²² Isaiah vividly describes this person: "But the wicked are like the tossing sea; for it cannot rest, and its waters toss up mire and dirt. There is no peace, says my God, for the wicked."²³

The prophets repeatedly were able to bring out the appalling power and extent of sin in such a way that men should have been convinced of the utter seriousness of it. They preached on the clouding of the capacity for moral knowledge; of the crippling effect on the will which always arises from sin; and of its corrosive effects in

²¹Ibid., p. 433. ²²Ibid., p. 411.

²³Isaiah 57:20.

general on the human personality.²⁴

The Israelites knew that a sinner may flourish and show vigor and health for a while, but that his strength would remain only for a while. There was apparently something unnatural in the strength of the sinner. It was a strength that did not spring from normal sources, but which was acquired by some crooked means. Witchcraft was probably one of the means by which the sinner sought strength outside the normal paths.²⁵ But the Hebrew knew that this strength was only temporary. The sinner could have no real strength, because he was not rooted in the forces of the blessings of life.

II. GUILT: AS SICKNESS OF THE SOUL

Perhaps the most common terminology for sin and the corresponding guilt is the concept of sickness. The sickness metaphor to designate sin was, in fact, all the more suggestive due to the fact that sickness in its proper sense was always considered by the average Israelite to be a direct result of sin.²⁶ W. M. Mackay, in his work, The

²⁴Eichrodt, Theology of the Old Testament, loc. cit.

²⁵Pedersen, Israel, op. cit., p. 431.

²⁶E. Jacob, Theology of the Old Testament, trans. A. W. Heathcote and P. J. Allcock (New York: Harper, 1958), p. 295.

Disease And Remedy of Sin, writes about his personal reaction to William James' great work, Varieties of Religious Experience. He had felt that Professor James had over-emphasized the concept of the "sin-sick soul." This led him to a personal search through the Scriptures in an attempt to see what they would reveal concerning this emphasis. In his own words, he writes, "In studying this I was astonished to find how large a place medical categories fill in its descriptions of the malady of sin."²⁷ It is seen throughout Scripture as something foul, something malignant, repulsive, which causes disturbance, misery, and death.²⁸ Isaiah's picture is vivid: "Why will you still be smitten, that you continue to rebel? The whole head is sick, and the whole heart faint. From the sole of the foot even to the head, there is no soundness in it, but bruises and sores and bleeding wounds;"²⁹ Jeremiah's words are equally as familiar: "Is there no balm in Gilead? Is there no physician there? Why then has the health of the daughter of my people not been restored?"³⁰ Examples could be multiplied.

²⁷W. M. Mackay, The Disease And Remedy of Sin (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1918), p. 3.

²⁸Orr, Sin As A Problem of Today, op. cit., p. 258.

²⁹Isaiah 1:5,6.

³⁰Jeremiah 8:22.

Writing about the accuracy of this analogy, H. W. Robinson says, "Suffering is linked to evil in the spiritual sphere much as in the physical, where disease brings suffering. Moral evil may be represented as a disease of personality which inevitably and intrinsically hampers or destroys life whether in the individual or in the society."³¹ The pain from the disease of sin has as much of a reality as the pain from physical disease. A real punishment is an inherent part of the immanent action of God in the laws He has established in the worlds of nature and mind. This punishment and pain exists as a form of God's judgment.³² It often takes the form of mental anguish and discord which later moves on to affect the body. Cain's cry of anguish seems to contain this mental punishment: "My punishment is greater than I can bear."³³ Von Rad asks, "Does he mean the guilt of his deed or its penalty?"³⁴ He goes on to note that there is really no difference, as the two are so closely related. "Jahweh

³¹H. W. Robinson, Suffering Human and Divine (London: Student Christian Movement Press, 1940), p. 87.

³²Orr, op. cit., p. 272.

³³Genesis 4:13a.

³⁴Gerhard Von Rad, Old Testament Theology, trans. D. M. G. Stalker (Edinburgh: Oliver and Boyd, 1962), p. 264.

had made him see the consequence of his act, and Cain regards this whole thing, the complex evil reaching from his act to his fate, as too heavy."³⁵ Here the pain from the disease of sin has a definite reality. James Orr sees it as perhaps the worst part of God's judgment upon sin:

The first and often the least bearable part of the punishment of sin is internal,-in the case of greater offences in the miseries of conscience, the pangs of regret, the horror, shame and self-loathing, that make the guilt-laden soul a hell,-but always in the moral and spiritual degradation, discord, and bondage that sin inevitably brings with it.³⁶

But, the most dynamic examples of "soul-sickness" and mental pain and anguish come from the Psalter, which represents the burning heart of personal experience.

Psalm 32 gives a brief portrait of this malady: "When I declared not my sin, my body wasted away through my groaning all day long. For day and night thy hand was heavy upon me; my strength was dried up as by the heat of summer."³⁷ With vivid realism the Psalmist describes the personal deterioration and wretchedness he experienced when he refused to acknowledge his sin, thus his guilt, before Yahweh. Obviously, the awareness of his own accountability or answerableness was part of the burden

³⁵Ibid.

³⁶Orr, Sin As A Problem of Today, loc. cit.

³⁷Psalm 32:3-4.

that pressed down upon him. Weiser has captured something of the scope of the torment that the writer, whom Jewish tradition sees as David, must have experienced:

Though the psalmist kept silence, there was no peace in his heart. His soul is eaten up with worry and consumed by a burning heat. The voice of his bad conscience does not allow him that peace of mind which he seeks to enforce by holding his tongue; he cannot help crying out aloud as he is daily tormented by fear in which he discerns the hand of God that presses heavily upon him, the hand of God from which he would rather flee. Sudden terror causing his 'tongue to dry up', and hot flushes as if he were feverish, a depression that paralyses him and robs him of his vitality and of the power of making decisions, so that he believes himself to be withering away—these are the physical effects of the inner battle which the man who refuses to acknowledge his sin fights against God,³⁸

Mental anguish becomes so painful and unbearable here that the one suffering had to express his pain by groaning throughout the whole day. His total being was in a state of great upheaval as a result of an inward and unconfessed sense of guilt.

A look at one more of the penitential Psalms will suffice in this matter of suffering. Probably none is more candid than Psalm 38:

O Lord, rebuke me not in thy anger, nor chasten me in thy wrath! For thy arrows have sunk into me, and thy hand has come down on me. There is no soundness in my flesh because of thy indignation; there is no health in my bones because of my sin.

³⁸Artur Weiser, The Psalms (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1962), p. 284.

For my iniquities have gone over my head; they weigh like a burden too heavy for me. My wounds grow foul and fester because of my foolishness, I am utterly bowed down and prostrate; all the day I go about mourning. For my loins are filled with burning, and there is no soundness in my flesh. I am utterly spent and crushed; I groan because of the tumult of my heart. Lord, all my longing is known to thee, my sighing is not hidden from thee. My heart throbs, my strength fails me; and the light of my eyes-it also has gone from me. My friends and companions stand aloof from my plague, and my kinsmen stand afar off.³⁹

Above all, the Psalmist is keenly aware of his iniquity and his guilt. He said, "For my iniquities have gone over my head;"⁴⁰ and "For I confess my guilt, I am grieved at my sin."⁴¹ Both Psalms are classic examples of the soul that is in the process of being dissolved, and which is powerless, lacking the vitality and power to stand upright. In both, the miserable one is unquestionably ill and implores Yahweh to heal him, thus "restoring his soul." His whole body is sore and tormented with pain, and he cries and calls aloud for help with hot tears falling upon his bed. The arrows of the Lord have brought a "poison" which has penetrated his body, and there is nowhere any sense of wholeness, health, or peace.

Now, to the Hebrew, for one's life or soul to be in

³⁹Psalm 38:1-11.

⁴⁰Psalm 38:4a.

⁴¹Psalm 38:18.

this condition marked for him the beginning of death. In this sense, death was very closely related to sin, as it had been in the garden. The prophets frequently declared that there was in sin itself a power which inevitably would destroy the sinner.⁴² The Old Testament had a distinctive or unique way of looking at death, a religious view. Death was something at variance with the "innermost essence of human personality."⁴³ Often, God punished with physical death, and other times the community, according to His command, would cut off the wicked from among His people. In either case, death denoted the destruction of an existence by a particular judgment from God.

Thus, a two-fold meaning of death developed as a result of sin. Most scholars agree that physical death was introduced to man as a direct result of the fall, and that it was God's original plan that man be truly immortal. Suffering and death is the punishment that God has inflicted because of sin. The third chapter of Genesis makes this clear. "Death," says Vriesen, "does not exist arbitrarily in this world, as the Babylonian Gilgamesh epic would have it, where the gods have kept life for themselves and

⁴²Hermann Schultz, Old Testament Theology, trans. J. A. Paterson (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1898), p. 309.

⁴³Ibid., p. 313.

have prepared death for man."⁴⁴ No! Rather, death has come as a direct result of man's sin. The intimate connection between sin and death is clear in Genesis, where the shortening of the length of life is primary: "Then the Lord said, 'My spirit shall not abide in man for ever, for he is flesh, but his days shall be a hundred and twenty years."⁴⁵ In his erring and sinning, man is flesh, mortal and fleeting. Oehler adds, "According to this passage, the divine spirit of life which supports man is enfeebled by sin, and thus man's vital strength is destroyed;"⁴⁶ So, the decreasing life span of man in the early period was obviously due to the "progressive effects of sin."⁴⁷ The punishment or the "wages" of sin is, in reality, death.

This death also can have the connection of something else than just the loss of physical life. In fact, it often finds usage in places where men had bodily life, but were classed as "dead." What must be assumed is that

⁴⁴T. C. Vriezen, An Outline Of Old Testament Theology (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1958), p. 157.

⁴⁵Genesis 6:3.

⁴⁶Gustav F. Oehler, Theology of the Old Testament (New York: Funk & Wagnalls, Publishers, 1883), p. 167.

⁴⁷J. Barton Payne, The Theology of the Older Testament (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1962), p. 212.

what did take place was the beginning of death, at least, that had been threatened as a result of sin. Obviously, Adam did not lose his physical life in the very day he ate the forbidden fruit. On the contrary, he lived many years afterwards. However, there is a sense in which death did begin.⁴⁸ Adam is suddenly described as no longer free and desirous to meet with God, rather, he fears His presence and flees from Him with a guilty shame. This type of death is just as real, and the Hebrew viewed it as the beginning of physical death. Candlish says of this kind of death:

He still possessed animal life, for his organism was in correspondence with the physical environment, air, light, heat, food, etc.; but his soul was no longer in correspondence with the spiritual environment, God; he had become dead to God. In this state he had lost some of the highest and most precious powers of his soul, those of adoration, faith, prayer, and the like. Death, therefore, in this point of view, is a negative evil, the loss of certain powers and faculties which should belong to man as God designed him to be.⁴⁹

Thus, the person visited in such a way "bears his sin," with sin, punishment, and disease being manifestations of the same idea. "Our transgressions and our sins are upon us, and we waste away because of them; how then can we live?"⁵⁰ The one bearing sin bears a poison within

⁴⁸James S. Candlish, The Biblical Doctrine of Sin (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, no date), p. 52.

⁴⁹Candlish, loc. cit. ⁵⁰Ezekiel 33:10b.

himself, that consumes his vitality and strength like a malignant infection or a dangerous disease.

Closely related to the concept of sin as sickness is the idea of the curse. This dissolution of the soul of the sinner is often merely the manifestation of the curse working itself out. God pronounced curses in the days of the early Hebrew, but this concept also includes the person who is suffering "the consequences of sin" by the judgment of God.⁵¹ Many of the characteristics seen above illustrate the condition of the man who is cursed because of his sin. Pedersen comments regarding the cursed: "The cursed is the man for whom everything fails. The paralysis is in him, whatever he puts his hand to. Illness, drought, crop failure, defeat is the result. He is so dissolved and confused in his soul that he staggers on blindly."⁵²

For the more serious sins, the soul was usually exterminated from the community, because the covenant had been broken. The person was seen as a diseased member, which no longer cooperated with the totality of the organism. Also, the one charged with the curse was capable of spreading it. It usually spread first to his family, but

⁵¹J. A. Motyer, "Curse," The New Bible Dictionary

⁵²Pedersen, Israel, op. cit., p. 437.

then to all with whom he gets into touch, for individuals interact with one another. Because of this, the cursed man becomes a curse for his surroundings.⁵³ The safest thing for the community then, was the complete removal of the cursed in order to protect the blessing and health of the community. Even when the wicked person was killed, his corpse could not be left to hang too long, for they viewed the curse as still in it, and it could have defiled the land. "And if a man has committed a crime punishable by death and he is put to death, and you hang him on a tree, his body shall not remain all night upon the tree, but you shall bury him the same day, for a hanged man is accursed by God;"⁵⁴ The implications to related New Testament concepts becomes obvious. The extermination of the cursed was not so much retaliation, as it was simply the manner in which the Israelite community liberated itself from elements which were threatening her growth.

We have seen that guilt involves the sense of blameworthiness or answerableness on the part of the guilty, an awareness which is difficult for one to bear. A weakness and dissolution of the soul or nephesh accompanied the guiltiness. The effect was crippling to the early

⁵³Ibid., p. 443.

⁵⁴Deuteronomy 21:22.

Israelite! Like a malignant disease, the guilt of sin spread throughout the individual, with a contaminating, infecting, disintegrating power. The Hebrews viewed the guilt-stricken soul as having begun to die. A breakdown of the strength and vitality of the individual began when one became guilty. This weakening of the physical and emotional constitution may explain or throw some light on the introduction of disease into the world: It would not seem that the sources of sickness and disease came into existence following the fall; but, rather, the impact of guilt upon the guilty ones weakened them, making them susceptible to disease which they had hitherto been strong enough to resist.

One is left with the awareness that in the Old Testament, sin was not to be taken lightly. It's results were devastating, especially to the individual, and even to the community. Punishment was always the result of transgression, and often the mental and emotional suffering and torment came as the most intense and unbearable part of God's judgment and punishment. Other implications will be noted later as we consider the significance of the 'asham sacrifice.

The investigation now shall turn from guilt to the guilt-offering, that is, the 'asham, with an attempt to discover as much of the full significance of this

particular offering as possible. Frequent reference may be made to some of the concepts of guilt and their implications on a fuller understanding of the guilt-offering.

CHAPTER IV

THE GUILT-OFFERING: IT'S DEVELOPMENT AND SIGNIFICANCE

There has been much discussion and theorizing in regard to the guilt-offering. In many Old Testament passages, it seems to be identical to the sin-offering, that is, the hatta't. In this chapter we shall look closely at the 'asham, that is, the guilt-offering, in an effort to learn it's distinctiveness as an expiatory sacrifice. An answer will be sought to the question as to why a specific sacrifice, called the 'asham, arose.

Much has been said of the late development of the 'asham and the hatta't offerings. For this reason, we will first consider the development of these offerings with an attempt to date the time and place of their use. Next will come a comparative look at both the 'asham and the hatta't offerings, with special emphasis on the differences of the two. Finally, the matter of the full significance of the 'asham will be considered. In an effort to note the differences of the two sacrifices, a more critical study of Leviticus 4-7 has been made. Careful textual study as well as comparison with the Septuagint has provided insight toward a fuller understanding of the two.

I. THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE GUILT-OFFERING

According to recent critical theory, the sacrifices we know as the sin- and guilt-offerings are a relatively late development in Hebrew religion. Wellhausen felt these offerings to have originated not long before Ezekiel, as they appear first according to his chronology, in the writings of this prophet.¹ This would date them during the 7th Century, and he felt that they were previously fines and that the offerings became substitutes.² Since Wellhausen, many critics go even further to say that these sacrifices would not have been known before the Exile.³ George B. Gray, in his classic work on sacrifice, says that what corresponds to these sacrifices in early times were fines, that is, a compensation for injury done.⁴ This view is not without difficulty, however.

It is true that these two offerings or kinds of sacrifice take up an important place in the plan of religious restoration which is given in the last chapters of

¹Gustav F. Oehler, Theology of the Old Testament (New York: Funk & Wagnalls, Publishers, 1883), p. 304.

²Ibid.

³Roland De Vaux, Studies In Old Testament Sacrifice (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 1964), p. 102.

⁴George Buchanan Gray, Sacrifice In The Old Testament (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1925), p. 37.

Ezekiel. From these passages, many have concluded that these expiatory sacrifices were an institution of the exilic period. For several reasons this does not seem to be true. First, it would be very strange, to say the least, that a new form of cult should have been invented during the Exile, a time in which no external cult was practised.⁵ Secondly, the writer gives no detail in regard to their ritual, which would point to the probability that this ritual was already known.⁶ De Vaux points out that this is particularly true of the 'asham', which is referred to several times without any mention of specific detail. He adds, "This is not the way in which an innovation is introduced . . . These uncertainties are better explained if the ritual is taking up again some ancient elements whose precise significance are no longer known."⁷ Gray, though holding that the two are of late origin, readily agrees that the passages in Ezekiel give "not the slightest indication that sin-offerings and guilt-offerings were something new and additional to the ancient peace-offerings and burnt-offerings; we may surmise that they were known at least some time prior to the fall of Jerusalem."⁸

⁵De Vaux, op. cit., p. 103.

⁶Ibid. ⁷Ibid. ⁸Gray, op. cit., p. 65.

There is a second difficulty to the later view for these sacrifices. Some scholars claim that the last legislative text before the Exile, which they say is Deuteronomy, mentions both the holocaust and the sacrifice of communion, but that it says nothing of any expiatory sacrifices, i.e. sin- or guilt-offerings. Thus, they draw the conclusion that these expiatory sacrifices were instituted later. But, in reality, Deuteronomy contains very little sacrificial law at all, and only occasionally mentions the holocaust and communion sacrifices.⁹ Also, there is another body of legislation which, according to current critical theory, represents the religion of the Temple at Jerusalem at the end of the monarchy much better than Deuteronomy, and that is the Holiness Code.¹⁰ It is not what one would call a sacrificial code. However, it does provide an explicit text concerning an expiatory sacrifice, as well as prescribing an 'asham sacrifice for a particular case. The following verse makes clear the expiatory effect of the sacrifice: "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."¹¹ Then several chapters later the

⁹De Vaux, Studies In Old Testament Sacrifice, op. cit., p. 104.

¹⁰Ibid. ¹¹Leviticus 17:11.

'asham is mentioned specifically:

If a man lies carnally with a woman who is a slave, betrothed to another man and not yet ransomed or given her freedom, an inquiry shall be held. They shall not be put to death, because she was not free; but he shall bring a guilt offering for himself to the Lord, to the door of the tent of meeting, a ram for a guilt offering. And the priest shall make atonement for him with the ram of the guilt offering before the Lord for his sin which he has committed; and the sin which he has committed shall be forgiven him.¹²

In regard to the date of the previous passage of Scripture, even many of the scholars who hold to a late date for the Priestly Code are recognizing that much of the material in the Holiness Code is of ancient origin.¹³ The very mention of the "tent of meeting" in relation to the guilt-offering could be significant. This familiar term is used to depict the sanctuary in which God dwelt among the Israelites as early as in their desert wanderings. It was used, however, long after their entry into Canaan, but this gives us even more possibility of a usage of this sacrifice which is as old as the nation of Israel, herself.

A third difficulty arises in a late dating for the sin- and guilt-offerings. In II Kings mention is made of them, in a passage which is commonly recognized as derived

¹²Leviticus 19:20-22.

¹³John Bright, A History Of Israel (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1959), p. 330.

from a pre-exilic source:

Then Jehoiada the priest took a chest, and bored a hole in the lid of it, and set it beside the altar on the right side as one entered the house of the Lord; and the priests who guarded the threshold put in it all the money that was brought into the house of the Lord. And whenever they saw that there was much money in the chest, the king's secretary and the high priest came up and they counted and tied up in bags the money that was found in the house of the Lord . . . The money from the guilt-offerings and the money from the sin-offerings was not brought into the house of the Lord; it belonged to the priests.¹⁴

This passage of Scripture is part of the story that tells of the restoration of the Temple in the days of Jehoash at the end of the ninth century (ca. 816-800). Money for the purpose of restoration was collected in a money-box which had been placed beside the altar. When the box was full (had become heavy), it was opened and the contents paid to the workmen who were working at the restoration. But certain of the money was not put into the money-box nor used for the repair of the Temple, but rather, retained by the priests. These monies are termed 'asham and hatta't, or literally, "silver of guilt" and "silver of sin."¹⁵ The English text, as we have seen, refers to them as "money from the guilt-offerings" and

¹⁴II Kings 12:9, 10, 16.

¹⁵Gray, Sacrifice In The Old Testament, op. cit., p. 62.

"money from the sin-offerings."

There are several possibilities of interpretation from this passage. The first possibility is that these monies were used to purchase victims to be burnt on the altar as sin- and guilt-offerings.¹⁶ Those who hold the late development theory see the fine or money payment as later developing into an offering, or a sacrifice by that name. But, as De Vaux points out, in the development of worship, ". . . it is not a monetary fine which is replaced by a sacrificed victim, it is the reverse process which is normal."¹⁷ We would more likely expect to see a certain sacrifice change into the easier and more convenient fine or monetary offering. Leon Morris agrees with this position. He notes that certain parts of the sin and guilt-offering were recognized in the Levitical law as the prerogative of the priests,¹⁸ and that possibly in the times of Jehoshaphat, the priests had succeeded in getting some of their "perquisites delivered in hard cash."¹⁹ Another possibility is that perhaps the worship-

¹⁶Ibid.

¹⁷De Vaux, Studies in Old Testament Sacrifice, op. cit., p. 105.

¹⁸Leviticus 7:7.

¹⁹Leon Morris, "'Asham,'" Evangelical Quarterly, XXX (October, 1958), p. 204.

pers who came a long way chose not to drive an animal all the way, but had it changed into money.²⁰

Gray observes that this passage makes no mention of sacrificial victims, but rather to money payments for offences.²¹ He also recognizes that this does not prove that the offering was unknown at that time. In the P Code, the restitution or fine was accompanied by the guilt-offering. So, another possibility may be that in the time of Jehoshaphat the "money of guilt" corresponded to the restitution mentioned in the Levitical Code. Of course, this ought to be expected and a correlation ought to be here if the Levitical code is assumed to be pre-exilic. Most scholars, however, refuse to make that concession. So, rather than taking the place of the sacrifice, the fines that went to the priest could have been the restitution which often accompanied the sacrifice. This view is supported from Numbers:

Say to the people of Israel, When a man or woman commits any of the sins that men commit by breaking faith with the Lord, and that person is guilty, he shall confess his sin which he has committed; and he shall make full restitution for his wrong, adding a fifth to it, and giving it to him to whom he did the wrong. But if the man has no kinsman to whom restitution may be made

²⁰Ibid.

²¹Gray, Sacrifice In The Old Testament, loc. cit.

for the wrong, the restitution for wrong shall go to the Lord for the priest, in addition to the ram of atonement with which atonement is made for him.²²

Here the restitution is mentioned as going to the priest when there is no kin to be the recipient, and also the ram of atonement is mentioned. So, it could well be that what the priests received from the account in II Kings was the restitution that accompanied the sin- and guilt-offerings in the Temple. Whatever the significance, in this particular text, the 'asham and the hatta't are certainly terms of cult language, and familiar terms, as well, to the worshipping Israelite.²³

A fourth difficulty in the late dating for these offerings is found in the familiar narrative from I Samuel about the return of the ark from the Philistines, when plagues and disease came upon them as a result of its capture:

The ark of the Lord was in the country of the Philistines seven months. And the Philistines called for the priests and the diviners and said, "What shall we do with the ark of the Lord? Tell us with what we shall send it to its place." They said, "If you send away the ark of the God of Israel, do not send it empty, but by all means return him a guilt-offering. Then you will be healed, and it will be known to you why his hand does not

²²Numbers 5:6-8.

²³De Vaux, Studies in Old Testament Sacrifice, op. cit., p. 104.

turn away from you." And they said, "What is the guilt offering that we shall return to him?" They answered, "Five golden tumors and five golden mice, according to the number of the lords of the Philistines; for the same plague was upon all of you and upon your lords."²⁴

In this account of the return of the ark by the Philistine captors, the priests tell them to be sure and not send the ark back without a sacrifice. They are to be sure to send an 'asham' back with the ark. Thus, in this passage of Scripture which is generally considered pre-exilic with definitely old material, there is still to be found the 'asham'. In this instance, the 'asham' consisted of five golden tumors and five golden mice. These were sent back on a new cart drawn by two milk cows. Gray observes that it appears that when they came to Yahweh's country, the 'asham' was received by or on behalf of Yahweh, and the cows pulling the cart were slain and offered up to Yahweh as a burnt-offering.²⁵ When the Philistines saw that the cows had been offered up as sacrifices, they returned home.

In this narrative the sacrifice of the two cows is called a burnt-offering, not a sin- or guilt-offering. However, the sacrifice mentioned may well have been a

²⁴I Samuel 6:1-4.

²⁵Gray, Sacrifice In The Old Testament, op. cit., p. 63.

guilt-offering for all practical purposes, since the historical books were written perhaps by laymen and not by men with special interest in priestly matters.²⁶ So, in the story of the return of the ark by the Philistines, we might see the early use of the 'asham offering as it accompanied the fine or restitution.

A fifth and last difficulty in a late date for the 'asham sacrifice, but one which is not as strong as the preceding ones, is the matter of the evidence of a similar offering in extra-Israelite literature. When the Ugaritic texts were first found, many expressions were identified as identical with Old Testament ritual terms. J. W. Jack went so far as to say that a word identical to 'asham occurs, with a ritual in ancient Ugarit that was perhaps similar to Israel's.²⁷ Over time, many of the hasty identifications have been abandoned. However, the fact that the 'asham is rightly read in certain Ugaritic tablets was held by T. H. Gaster in Melanges Dussaud, in 1939, and by W. F. Albright in the 3rd edition of his Archaeology and the Religion of Israel.²⁸ Albright wrote that the Hebrew sacrificial term, 'asham, ". . . occurs with exactly the right consonants to represent the two sibilants

²⁶Morris, "'Asham," op. cit., p. 204.

²⁷Ibid., p. 202. ²⁸Ibid.

(one standing for "s" in Arabic, the other for "th") and in suitable context in the Ugaritic sacrificial rituals which were first discovered and deciphered."²⁹ Albright feels that there is "no reasonable doubt" that they have been correctly identified.³⁰

On the other hand, C. H. Gordon, in his glossary of Ugaritic in 1947, saw the word as "atm," which he felt was a Hurrian word and was not related to the Hebrew guilt-offering. However, in his grammar (8:13) he says it means "guilt sacrifice,"; and then compares it with the Hebrew 'Asham.³¹ So, the evidence from the Ugaritic tablets is not overwhelming, but there is a very similar word in the Ugaritic sacrificial system that some scholars feel is the equivalent to the Hebrew 'asham. If this were the case, we would have every right to believe that this particular sacrifice was known and practiced by ancient Israel.

Though the pre-exilic materials give no elaborate data on the sin- and guilt-offerings, this does not lessen the force of the original point, namely, that in Ezekiel,

²⁹William F. Albright, Archaeology And The Religion of Israel (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins Press, 1953), p. 61.

³⁰Ibid.

³¹John Gray, "Cultic Affinities Between Israel and Ras Shamra," Zeitschrift für die Alttestamentliche Wissenschaft, LXII (1949-50), p. 210.

the writer seems to assume the existence of and familiarity with these two offerings. They most certainly were not invented during the exile. There seems to be sufficient evidence to recognize them as integral parts of the ancient cult, with a possibility of being a part of Israel's worship system from her origin.

II. A COMPARISON OF THE SIN- AND GUILT-OFFERINGS

One of the difficult distinctions to make is the differentiation between the sin- and guilt-offerings. Part of the confusion comes from a faulty interpretation of Leviticus 5, which is discussed later. This faulty interpretation has led many to believe that the writer made no distinction between the two, but used them interchangeably, since they seem to be interchanged in that particular chapter. Nonetheless, speculation has abounded over their significance and distinction. Some have felt the sin-offering was for sins of commission, while the guilt-offering was for sins of omission; or, that the sin-offering was to avert punishment, while the trespass offering was to appease the conscience; or that the sin-offering dealt with those sins that had come to the knowledge of others, while the guilt-offering with sins the transgressor himself was conscious

of, without being convicted by others.³²

Yerkes, in his work on sacrifice, claims that in both Hebrew and Arabic the root of 'asham implies responsibility for an act or condition which violates a standard or condition. So, his distinction of the two is that the hatta't puts the emphasis on the act or the offence itself; while in the 'asham, the emphasis is upon responsibility for the act.³³

On the other hand, Oehler feels that the difference is that for the sin-offering, it was offered for all sins unknown and unatoned for during a certain period.³⁴ He adds that the reason the sin-offerings were combined with illustrations for uncleanness, is that sexual conditions, leprosy, and death were regarded as connected with the natural sinfulness of man.³⁵ In contrast to this, the guilt-offering always refers to certain concrete cases, and never to sins in general committed during a whole period of time. He also concludes that the 'asham was not used on festal occasions.³⁶

³²Oehler, Theology of the Old Testament, op. cit., p. 301.

³³Royden K. Yerkes, Sacrifice In Greek And Roman Religious and Early Judaism (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1952), p. 171.

³⁴Oehler, op. cit., p. 303.

³⁵Ibid. ³⁶Ibid.

Koehler feels that the two words actually cover the same ground, so that one could have taken the place of the other. Thus, he feels that the types mentioned have really lost their essential character or difference.³⁷ De Vaux's conclusion of the problem is that the last redactors of the P Code had no clear idea of the difference between two terms which had originally been synonymous or they confused two terms whose precise meaning they did not understand.³⁸ However, the reason for this confusion is found in Leviticus 5, where some scholars feel that a definite distinction is made. A closer examination of several verses help clear the problem.

The material in Leviticus 5:1-13 is accepted without question as a segment dealing with the sin-offering, the hatta't. Now, the reason for the confusion and loss of identity of the two is that in verse 6, a phrase says, ". . . and he shall bring his guilt offering to the Lord for the sin which he has committed." The guilt-offering is again mentioned in verse 7, and consequently, many have felt this to be an interchange of usage between the sin-offering, the hatta't, with which the particular segment

³⁷Ludwig Koehler, Old Testament Theology, trans A. S. Todd (London: Lutterworth Press, 1957), p. 189.

³⁸De Vaux, Studies In Old Testament Sacrifice, op. cit., p. 102.

of Scripture deals, and the 'asham, which shows up conspicuously several times within the same segment. The real problem, however, seems to be found in the texts, which show some variation and confusion at these points.

In verse 5, we have: "When a man is guilty (from root 'asham) in any of these, he shall confess the sin he has committed"; however, the first clause in this verse which contains the verb 'asham, is not found in the Septuagint, says Snaith. Furthermore, although the Samaritan version contains the first clause, the verb used is hatta't, not 'asham.³⁹

Then, we have in verse 6, "and he shall bring his guilt offering to the Lord for the sin which he has committed, a female from the flock, a lamb or a goat, for a sin offering; and the priest shall make atonement for him and his sin." Again, the guilt-offering appears in the sin-offering section. But the phrase used here is the same as the one in Leviticus 5:15, which is in the guilt-offering section. For the former, the LXX has

, meaning "concerning the things wherein he has transgressed." For the latter, (5:15) the LXX has

, meaning "of his transgression."⁴⁰ It is

³⁹N. H. Snaith, "The Sin-Offering and the Guilt-offering," Vetus Testamentum, XV (January, 1965), p. 74.

⁴⁰Ibid.

safe to conclude from the evidence that the guilt-offering which is found in this verse, inappropriately, is really a poor or an inaccurate translation of confusing Hebrew derivatives.

Martin Noth is in general agreement with Snaith's observation, and writes in his commentary:

In v. 6 we note the first appearance of the word 'asham, really meaning 'guilt,' but here bearing the sense of 'atonement for guilt,' 'penance.' It is not here a sacrificial term for 'guilt offering,' for the sacrifices in 5:1-13 are always expressly characterized as 'sin offerings' (hatta't).⁴¹

Then, in verse 7 of chapter five we read, "But if he cannot afford a lamb, then he shall bring, as his guilt offering to the Lord for the sin which he has committed, two turtledoves or two young pigeons, one for a sin offering and the other for a burnt offering." The Hebrew has here 'ashamo, which the RSV translates "his guilt offering." However, the LXX has 'amartias autou, as if it were reading 'al-hatta'to in the Hebrew. Thus, a better translation than "guilt-offering" would be "sin-offering" since both hatta't and amartia are both used for "sin" and "sin-offering."⁴²

⁴¹Martin Noth, Leviticus: A Commentary, trans. J. E. Anderson (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1965), p. 45.

⁴²Snaith, "The Sin-Offering,"

So, the main difficulties that have caused so much confusion about these two sacrifices are found in Leviticus 5, verses 5, 6, and 7. The verb 'ashem in verses 2, 3, 4, 5, means "be guilty" and the noun 'asham in verse 6 means "guilt." In none of these passages is a reference made to a guilt-offering. Thus, we can confidently deny the view that these two sacrifices are actually one and the same and are used interchangeably in Leviticus.

There are also other reasons to hold to a distinct differentiation between the 'asham and the hatta't sacrifices. In his excellent study of these two sacrifices, N. H. Snaith has pointed out five important differences between the ritual of the sin-offering and that of the guilt-offering. The writer is indebted to Dr. Snaith for his significant study, recently done, and these five points shall be listed here, though condensed from the fuller treatment given by Dr. Snaith.⁴³

Firstly. In the sin-offering, the individual placed his hand on the head of the sin-offering, symbolizing the transference of his sin to it so that it becomes the sin. Perhaps this is part of the reason the word hatta't is used both for "sin" and "sin-offering." If no priest was in-

⁴³Snaith, "The Sin-Offering," op. cit., p. 75.

involved, the priests ate the sacrifice within the holy place. But when a priest was involved, it was destroyed by fire outside the camp. But the guilt-offering was not handled like this. No hands were laid on it. It did not become "the sin" nor did it bear away the sin in the way the sin-offering did.

Secondly. The blood of the sin-offering was used in de-sinning rites.⁴⁴ Again, it varied according to the involvement of a priest. If a priest was involved, the blood was sprinkled 7 times on the front of the veil of the sanctuary, as well as on the horns of the incense altar within.⁴⁵ If there was no priest involved, then some blood was smeared on the horns of the altar of burnt-offering outside the veil.⁴⁶ However, in the guilt-offering ceremony, the blood-sprinkling rite was not a normal part. (The blood rite was used with the cleansing of the leper.)

Thirdly. For the sin-offering, the blood that was left after the de-sinning rite was thrown down at the foot of the altar of burnt-offering. In the Second Temple this meant pouring out the blood below the red line which was

⁴⁴Leviticus 4:5-7, 16-18, 25, 30.

⁴⁵Leviticus 4:7, 18. ⁴⁶Leviticus 4:25, 30.

around the sides of the altar, about midway down. However, the blood from the guilt-offering was thrown "on the altar round about."⁴⁷ In fact, says Snaith, this is what was done with the blood of all the sacrifices with the exception of the sin-offering. His explanation for this is that the blood is taboo for man, according to God's command. He calls it "taboo-holy" and that it must go to God. Thus, the blood of most sacrificed beasts in general was "taboo-holy-good," and it went on the altar above the red line. But the blood of the sin-offering was considered to be sin-blood, which he calls "taboo-holy-bad." It had to go to God, but it could not be placed on the altar because it was "taboo-holy-bad," or "sin," and so it was thrown away at the bottom of the altar, below the red line. The difference was that the blood of the guilt-offering was not sin-blood, but was "taboo-holy-good." So, it could be thrown on the altar above the red line.⁴⁸

Fourthly. The guilt-offering was slaughtered where the burnt-offering was slaughtered, that is, "before the Lord,"⁴⁹ and "on the north side of the altar."⁵⁰ The place of slaughtering for the sin-offering depended on the

⁴⁷Leviticus 7:2.

⁴⁸Snaith, "The Sin-Offering," op. cit., p. 76.

⁴⁹Leviticus 1:5. ⁵⁰Leviticus 1:11.

involvement of the priests. If they were involved, then the animal was slaughtered 'at the door of the tent of meeting before the Lord.'⁵¹ But, if the priests were not involved, then the animal was slaughtered at the same place the burnt-offering was slaughtered.⁵² So, the guilt-offering, the burnt-offering, and the lay sin-offering were all slaughtered within the holy place, and none of the flesh of the sin-offering ever went inside the holy place. So, for one type of sin-offering involving the priest, the animal was killed outside the holy place and the flesh destroyed outside the camp. The other type of sin-offering, in which no priests were involved, the animal was brought inside the holy place and killed, and eaten by the priests.⁵³

Fifthly. The last difference between the two sacrifices involves the animals used in them. (There is an interesting gradation involved in chapters 4 and 5, notes R. J. Thompson. The bull is used for the high priest and congregation, a he-goat for a ruler, a she-goat or lamb for the common man, a turtle-dove or pigeons

⁵¹Leviticus 4:4, 15.

⁵²Leviticus 4:24, 29, 33.

⁵³Snaith, "The Sin-Offering," op. cit., p. 77.

for the poor, and flour for the very poor.)⁵⁴ This gradation was for the sin-offering. The 'asham, however, was fixed. The animal was invariably a ram.⁵⁵ In the case of the leper and nazarite, a young ram was allowed instead of a full-grown ram. This reduced the value of the sacrifice somewhat when the offence was not totally the man's fault.⁵⁶ It was only the male sheep, the two-year old ram, the very animal that was not included among the sin-offering victims, which was used for the guilt-offering. Why the male sheep was chosen for the guilt-offering cannot be exactly determined. Oehler states that it was general in ancient times to use rams and other male animals for fines.⁵⁷ Of course, in the sin-offering, a substitute could be admitted on account of the poverty of the worshipper. However, in the guilt-offering, the victim was always the same.⁵⁸

So, existing evidence seems more than adequate to affirm a definite distinction between the sin- and guilt-offerings, especially when the rituals for the two are

⁵⁴R. J. Thompson, "Sacrifice and Offering," The New Bible Dictionary, J. O. Douglas, Ed., (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmanns Publishing Co., 1962), p. 1221.

⁵⁵Leviticus 5:15, 18.

⁵⁶Oehler, Theology of the Old Testament, op. cit., p. 305.

⁵⁷Ibid. ⁵⁸Ibid.

examined, and when the textual confusion of Leviticus 5 is cleared up.

III. THE SIGNIFICANCE OF THE GUILT-OFFERING

It is important to remember that for both the sin- and guilt-offerings, these terms when they are used of the special offerings, are being used in a derived sense. Behind hatta't and 'asham are sin and trespass, respectively. The fundamental meaning of 'asham as "trespass, offend, invade the rights of another," is scarcely used in the Hebrew in this sense, but usually is found in its intermediate meaning, that is, the guilt incurred by trespass.⁵⁹ This passage from Genesis is a good example of this usage: "Abimelech said, "What is this you have done to us? One of the people might easily have lain with your wife, and you would have brought guilt upon us."⁶⁰ As has been mentioned, the word 'asham as a noun meant "the offence," then "the means of repairing this offence," and finally "the sacrifice of reparation."⁶¹ Three different aspects merit consideration in a quest for the full significance

⁵⁹Gray, Sacrifice In the Old Testament, op. cit., p. 57.

⁶⁰Genesis 26:10.

⁶¹De Vaux, Studies in Old Testament Sacrifice, op. cit., p. 98.

of the 'asham. First, the 'asham as compensation; secondly, the 'asham as a substitution for death; thirdly, the 'asham as expiatory punishment.

A. Compensation. Three important passages of scripture to guide one's understanding of this sacrifice are Leviticus 5:14-16; Leviticus 6:1-6; and Numbers 5:5-10. In the first of these references, the requirement is that whoever has defrauded in the holy things, that is, things pertaining to the priestly revenues, shall bring a ram, according to the estimation of the priest, to the Lord, and at the same time make amends for his fraud by the addition of a fifth of the value of the money involved in the fraud. In the second passage (Leviticus 6:1-6), the provision is that whoever has committed any breach of trust, who has defrauded or in any way taken advantage of his neighbor, who has stolen, or who has appropriated something which he found, this person shall make amends by restoration, with the addition of a fifth; that one shall also bring a ram, according to the priestly estimation, for a guilt-offering. The third passage (Numbers 5:5-10), is similar to the second except more brief, and it emphatically insists on confession. It also makes provision for the case in which there is no kinsman to receive the

restitution, in which case, the money went to the priest.⁶²

Oehler notes that one thing common to all three passages is that the guilt-offering presupposes a ma'al, that is, an act of defrauding. It falls chiefly in the area of a neighbor's rights in the matter of property, but also, according to the views of Mosaism, they are infractions of God's rights in respect to law. Thus, besides material reparation, increased by a fine of one-fifth of the value, the transgressor had also to make satisfaction to God by means of the guilt-offering.⁶³ The case in Leviticus 19:20-22 concerning unchastity with the slave of another is an example of the infraction of the property rights of another, calling for the guilt-offering.

Regarding the matter of compensation, Gray viewed the guilt-offering as a payment for sin taking the form of an offering. When the payment was duly made, the sin of the trespass was discharged, and the sinner acquitted and thus, out of debt in respect to his sin.⁶⁴

In this connection, it should be noted that the 'asham was specifically offered in cases where God or man

⁶²Oehler, Theology of the Old Testament, op. cit., p. 302.

⁶³Ibid.

⁶⁴Gray, Sacrifice in the Old Testament, op. cit., p. 58.

had been wronged in such a way as to make possible an assessment of the wrong done in terms of money. So, the procedure was first, to give the full value of what one had taken or withheld, plus adding a fifth of that value; then, secondly, that person had to offer an animal at the altar as a guilt-offering. Gray observes that in this case the 'asham' could be viewed in some measure as part of the payment for the offence, since both restitution of the goods due, together with the fine and offering, are made to God. Also, the provision requires that the 'asham' be a ram of the value of shekels made by the priest.⁶⁵

It was stated earlier that Gray felt the guilt-offering to be a late innovation into the Hebrew cult, having been in earlier times simply a fine, or compensation alone for injury done. Leon Morris, however, sees the guilt-offering in existence when the Philistines returned the ark, and even claims that the book of Leviticus portrays it as going back to Mosaic times. He realizes this will not be accepted readily by most contemporary scholars, but insists that this internal evidence must not be overlooked.⁶⁶

⁶⁵Ibid.

⁶⁶Morris, "'Asham," op. cit., p. 202.

One more item deserves mention, and that regarding the matter of atonement. In the burnt-offering and peace-offering, the offerer came as a worshipper to give something pleasant to Yahweh, representing himself. However, in the sin- and guilt-offering, the offerer came as a convicted sinner, to receive in his offering, which perhaps represented himself, the judgment due to his sin and trespass.⁶⁷ Most scholars seem to accept the element of atonement as being involved. Morris notes, however, that in the passage in Leviticus 5, restitution plus one fifth is first made, then the priest made the atonement with the ram.⁶⁸ The atonement was connected with the ram, not with the restitution. Again, in Leviticus 6:6, it was only after the restitution had been made that we read, ". . . he shall bring his guilt offering unto the Lord." So, it seems that it was necessary for the restitution or compensation to be made before the atonement could be effected. Nevertheless, it was always the sacrifice that atoned, never the money.⁶⁹

⁶⁷Andrew J. Jukes, The Law Of The Offerings In Leviticus (London: J. Nisbet and Company, 1880), p. 133.

⁶⁸Morris, "Asham," op. cit., p. 206.

⁶⁹Ibid.

B. Substitution. Another consideration which deserves brief mention is the matter of the 'asham' as a possible substitution for death. Morris has observed that in Leviticus 14:10-20, the cleansed leper must offer an 'asham'. In speculating about this particular offering being used, he says, "Maybe it was a life given for the life of the leper."⁷⁰ Here Morris allows for the possibility that leprosy was connected with punishment for sin. If so, then there is a possibility that the 'asham' was a life given for the life of the leper. It could be the means whereby the penalty is borne, with the animal taking the place of the sinner.⁷¹ This ritual might become more meaningful if one views the leper as first brought out of his state of death, that is, both ceremonially and socially, by his 'asham', and then proceeding to offer the sacrifices made by normal men.

Also, in support of this concept is the fact that the 'asham' was used in the case of theft. In the days of early Israel, nearly all nations regarded theft and robbery as punishable by death. There is evidence of this in the scriptural accounts of early Israel.⁷² So, it could well be that in the case of the 'asham' for theft it

⁷⁰Morris, "'Asham," *op. cit.*, p. 206.

⁷¹*Ibid.*, p. 205. ⁷²*Ibid.*, p. 206.

was a recognition that a serious crime had been committed, one that merited the severest of penalties. But for this crime, an animal died and the worshipper went free.⁷³

At this point it is necessary to mention the matter of "witting" and "unwitting" sins. The careful reader would have to admit that the term "unwittingly" occurs frequently in the passages which have been examined in this study. Many scholars have claimed that this term must always refer to undeliberate sins, and that there were only sacrifices for unwitting or undeliberate sins. This is a difficult view to hold. It is very improbable that "unwitting sins" mean sins committed in ignorance in every case.⁷⁴ Leviticus 6:1-6 poses a real problem if the 'asham is valid only for sins of ignorance, or sins totally undeliberate. In these verses, there is mentioned false dealing with a neighbor in the matter of a deposit, also robbery or oppression, and the wrongful retention of something that was lost. Also, in Leviticus 19:20-22, where the offence is one of unchastity, the 'asham is prescribed. Now, in none of these passages mentioned does it seem likely that the sinner would be ignorant of his sin at the time of his committing it. Quite the contrary, he

⁷³Ibid.

⁷⁴Rowley, "Sacrifice," op. cit., p. 96.

most likely was very much aware of what he was doing.

This was one of the conclusions made by Snaith as a result of his comparative study. He insists, "We have been wrong in saying that the levitical code makes no provision for dealing with deliberate sin, though there were offences for which a man could be cut off (perhaps by the death penalty) from his people."⁷⁵ He feels that most of the trouble has come from the word "unwitting," which he is also aware cannot mean "undeliberate" in Leviticus 6. He concludes: "The 'asham is not for unwitting offences; it is for offences that cause damage and loss, whether deliberate or unwitting."⁷⁶

It might be easier to understand what is meant by the term by accepting Oehler's observation that it means more than mere inadvertence. He says that it extends to errors or sins of infirmity, of rashness, or what we might call levity.⁷⁷ At any rate, its opposite, he feels, is the sin "with an uplifted hand." This refers to the sin which is committed defiantly, with strong deliberation, the wilful transgression of the Divine commandments. For

⁷⁵Snaith, "The Sin-Offering," op. cit., p. 78.

⁷⁶Ibid.

⁷⁷Oehler, Theology of the Old Testament, op. cit., p. 300.

the latter, there is no legal provision for sacrifice, for that person is cut off from the people.⁷⁸ But to have a proper view of the sin- and guilt-offering, one must recognize their validity for serious sins, and sins that were committed knowingly.

C. Expiatory Punishment. Perhaps the most significant aspect of the 'asham sacrifice is found in the area of sacrifice and expiation. It has been seen earlier in the investigation how very clear the Hebrews were about the connection of sin and suffering. One must remember that sin, in the Hebrew mind, demanded misfortune as its punishment. Misfortune was the righteous reaction against sin. Pedersen says, "To every sin must correspond a suitable amount of punishment: the two balance each other."⁷⁹ So, he goes on to note that the way is prepared for the idea that punishment is payment for the offence; that is, when the sin has been paid for by punishment, it disappears, and the sinner is a sinner no more. This is one of the observations that Morris made from his study. He realized that whenever the root 'asham was used for "sin" or "guilt," the idea of "punishment" was never far behind. He also

⁷⁸Ibid.

⁷⁹Johannes Pedersen, Israel: Its Life and Culture, I-II (Copenhagen: Povl Branner, 1926), p. 415.

noticed that oftentimes, the bearing of the punishment seemed to expiate the sin. This, he felt, prepared the way for the development of the great 'asham sacrifice of expiation, which was derived from the verb.⁸⁰

The prophet Hosea equalled Amos in his stern condemnation of sin, and also exhibited certainty of full and unavoidable punishment for it. For instance, "I will return again to my place, until they acknowledge their guilt and seek my face, and in their distress they seek me, saying, "Come, let us return to the Lord."⁸¹ Here the prophet speaks of impending distress coming upon Judah. Yahweh does not seem to be actively pleading for a new attitude on the part of His people, nor was He doing anything to bring them back. Yahweh's attitude seemed to be that the punishment, itself, would be sufficient. Through their suffering, the penalty would be paid, and Israel would return to Yahweh with a clean slate to make a new start.⁸²

A similar idea is seen in Isaiah, "Speak tenderly to Jerusalem, and cry to her that her warfare is ended, that her iniquity is pardoned, that she has received from the

⁸⁰ Morris, "Asham," op. cit., p. 198.

⁸¹ Hosea 5:15-6:1.

Lord's hand double for all her sins."⁸³ Here again is the idea that the punishment of exile is sufficient payment for God's people. When the penalty of their sin has been paid for, they are no longer sinners in God's sight. Pedersen adds that, "It is this consideration which causes the prophets of the exile to proclaim that the exile must be approaching its end, because the debt is paid, Israel having received a double measure of punishment in proportion to its sins."⁸⁴

So, this principle cannot be overstated. The idea of sin bringing punishment in its train, a penalty which must of necessity be paid, is one deeply ingrained in the Hebrew mind. When the penalty has been paid, the sinner is cleared and all is well. But, it seemed as if God had laid down in His world that all sin must be paid for.

As a point of observation, this principle may have bearing on what Christ claimed concerning His self-sacrifice. The idea is often voiced, even in theological circles, that the crucifixion and death of Jesus of Nazareth was not in God's original plan. This view says that there was a possibility that had the Jewish leaders received Christ as Messiah, He could have at that time set

⁸³Isaiah 40:2.

⁸⁴Pedersen, Israel, op. cit., p. 437.

up the Kingdom of David. However, because of the sinfulness of men's hearts, this primary plan had to be scrapped and a secondary plan adopted. This view is hardly substantiated biblically. Jesus Himself said, "O foolish men, and slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have spoken! Was it not necessary that the Christ should suffer these things and enter into his glory?"⁸⁵ Again, the Master said in a post-resurrection appearance, "Thus it is written, that the Christ should suffer and on the third day rise from the dead;"⁸⁶ Again, when Jesus began to prepare His disciples for His coming death, the account says, "From that time Jesus began to show his disciples that he must go to Jerusalem and suffer many things from the elders and chief priests and scribes, and be killed, and on the third day be raised."⁸⁷ Just after Simon Peter's great confession, Jesus said, "The Son of man must suffer many things, and be rejected by the elders and chief priests and scribes, and be killed, and on the third day be raised."⁸⁸ Again, on another occasion, when speaking of the end of time, "For as the lightning flashes and lights up the sky from one side to the other, so will the Son of man be in his day. But first he must suffer many things,

⁸⁵Luke 24:26.

⁸⁶Luke 24:46.

⁸⁷Matthew 16:21.

⁸⁸Luke 9:22.

and be rejected by this generation."⁸⁹ So, from the biblical account, no hint is given of any other possibility for Christ save that He suffer at the hands of men. He even had to prevent the crowds from making Him their king on several occasions.

However, in support of the Scriptural evidence is the entire Old Testament concept of sin and its relationship to punishment which has been examined. Sin wrought punishment, as has been pointed out. Even when there was repentance and forgiveness, there was usually still a punishment or some type of suffering involved. The two went hand in hand. Therefore, if a Savior, if a Messiah, were going to in any way deal with the problem of sin, this one must suffer or be punished in accord with the universal principle of moral government that God had established for the world. This suffering of Christ was not just a result of fate, or chance, or due to the whims of men. The very fact of sin necessitated punishment, as a very real part of God's moral order. The biblical account of Christ sees the aspect of suffering as constituting His very vocation, as the very reason for His coming into the world. Had Christ not died, a drastic inadequacy would be in existence today in regard to soteri-

⁸⁹Luke 17:25.

ology, it seems. Something had to be done to meet the irrevocable demands inherent in sin. Thus, were Christ to be a Savior in any sense of the word, it was necessary, it was expedient, that He suffer. In the words of R. S. Wallace, "A new vicarious meaning and purpose is now seen in such unique suffering in which One can suffer in the place of, and as the inclusive representative of, all."⁹⁰

The element of a vicarious, expiatory sacrifice appears to be the meaning of the Servant passage in Isaiah 53:10, as well; a consideration of this passage will conclude the investigation. The very familiar passage reads, "Yet it was the will of the Lord to bruise him; he has put him to grief; when he makes himself an offering for sin, he shall see his offspring, he shall prolong his days; the will of the Lord shall prosper in his hand;" In this passage, the writer has chosen the word 'asham for the "offering" that the Servant was to make of Himself. There was to be some kind of potency in His suffering. It was a suffering to effect something in or on behalf of others, and not for Himself. His death was not the consequence of His own sin, but it was in some way, for others.⁹¹

⁹⁰R. S. Wallace, "Suffering," Douglas, loc. cit.

⁹¹Rowley, The Meaning of Sacrifice, op. cit., p. 105.

The question which shall be considered is why the writer used the 'asham sacrifice, and just what was the potency or effect of this offering.

It was noted earlier in the study that there was a distinction or element of uniqueness to the guilt-offering, this being the aspect of restitution or recompense. Delitzsch agrees saying that the idea of compensatory payment is peculiar to the 'asham, as well as the concept of "satisfaction" required by the justice of God as a result of the penalty or punishment attached to guilt. Thus, the guilt-offering was a recompense for an injury rendered to God, that is, a compensatory payment or amends, a satisfaction in a disciplinary sense.⁹²

The element of the infraction of the rights of another is significant in the guilt-offering, and possibly in the matter at hand. It was noted earlier that for Israel, sin was not so much an ethical consideration, but rather a breach of the covenant with Yahweh. Cheyne says, "The people of Israel was theoretically 'holy,' i.e., dedicated to God, but in fact was altogether unholy. It had therefore fallen under the Divine displeasure, and its life was legally forfeited. But . . . Jehovah sent

⁹²Franz Delitzsch, Biblical Commentary on the Prophecies of Isaiah (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1892), II, 306, 307.

the Servant, who offered his own life as a restitution in kind, and a 'satisfaction' for the broken covenant of holiness."⁹³ In his study on the covenant in Deuteronomy, Meredith Kline makes note of the blessing-curse motif which was found in all ancient covenants. These agreements included the Preamble, Historical prologue, stipulations, Curses and Blessings, and Succession Arrangements.⁹⁴ Kline points out that when the Covenant with Yahweh was violated by sin, "It was the right and duty of the forsaken Lord himself, the One to whom and by whom Israel swore the covenant oath, to avenge the oath."⁹⁵ Thus, the matter to be handled with Yahweh was not always His wrath and fury necessarily, but His pledge and obligation to the covenant agreement. He had pledged His word, and His word was part of the Covenant, which, in a sense, He was bound to keep. So, as sin offended or acted as a breach in Yahweh's covenant, and even to Yahweh Himself, it necessitated compensation or satisfaction to restore that relationship.

Finally, it must be noted that the sacrifice of suffering had some kind of potency, something definitely

⁹³T. K. Cheyne, The Prophecies of Isaiah (London: Kegan Paul, Trench, & Co., 1886), II, 51.

⁹⁴Meredith G. Kline, Treaty of the Great King (William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1963), p. 28.

⁹⁵Ibid., p. 126.

was effected in or on behalf of others. It would be well to note that in the case of the 'asham offering, the effect was never for the entire community, but only for the individuals who had become aware of their guilt, and were penitent. However, the effect of the Suffering Servant's sacrifice was to be far wider than any previous sacrifices of the ritual.

At this point, observes Rowley, one can see something of the fluidity of what is known as "corporate personality." As was seen earlier, the Hebrew could conceive of an individual's family as being an extension of himself, and even of an individual representing, in a sense, his entire nation.⁹⁶ So, there is no difficulty in viewing the Servant as first, an individual, but also, as representing the entire community. Mowinckel observes, in regard to the total community that there was an ancient belief that an offence could be atoned for by vicarious payment of compensation such as Job used to perform for sins which his children might have committed. In this way, the one who makes atonement becomes the "redeemer" or go'el of his kinsmen.⁹⁷ He adds,

According to the ancient mode of thought, the

⁹⁶Rowley, The Meaning of Sacrifice, op. cit., p. 106.

⁹⁷S. Mowinckel, He That Cometh (Oxford: B. H. Blackwell, Ltd., 1956), p. 210.

family, the tribe, or the people is a unity; and thus the decisive factor in atonement for an offence is not that the culprit should himself pay the penalty but that the community to which he belongs should.⁹⁸

Thus, the Servant gave His life as an offering for sin, an 'asham. The expiation was effected by the bearing of a punishment and even by the laying down of one's life. It was, says Vriezen, "a personal mediatorial act with an expiatory effect because sin is expiated by the punishment of an innocent man; the punishment is suffered by a substitute and thus effects expiation."⁹⁹ There was potency in the sacrifice to cleanse and expiate.

⁹⁸Ibid.

⁹⁹T. C. Vriezen, An Outline of Old Testament Theology (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1958), p. 298.

CHAPTER V

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

This investigation has involved a brief but close look at the concept of "guilt" in the Old Testament. This has included its nature and effects upon the individual as well as its relation to the guilt-offering.

One of the significant items for one's understanding of these concepts, is the awareness that the Israelite viewed the terms "sin" and "guilt" as being synonymous and interchangeable. Nor was this guilt a vague corporate guilt, but a very real and personal guilt. It has become increasingly clear that the emphasis on the unity and corporateness of early Israel has caused the loss of the importance of individual worth and responsibility. However, evidence strongly indicates that there existed in early Israel individual piety and sin, individual reward and punishment. God was interested in individuals as well as His chosen people as a whole. Never does God deal with man solely in mass.

Another factor that made possible the reality of individual guilt was that when a Hebrew sinned, this was not primarily the violation of an impersonal,

ethical standard; rather, it marked a breach in the covenant relationship with Yahweh. Thus, sin must be understood in terms of relationship, either a compliance with or a defiance of the stipulations of the covenant set down by Yahweh. When the Hebrew chose to obey the Law, he was really acknowledging the kingship of Yahweh over him.

One of the significant ideas resulting from the study of the word 'asham, was the realization of the close relationship that exists in the Old Testament between sin and punishment. This concept probably cannot be overstated. It is fundamental to Old Testament thought. Punishment and suffering are the just recompense and reward of sin. God's law seems to be that righteousness bears blessing within itself and likewise, that wickedness and disobedience bring curse, misery, misfortune, and unhappiness.

A very real part of guilt was the element of blameworthiness for the Hebrew. This included the awareness that one had erred, and that he is answerable for it and should be blamed for it. The presence or absence of guilt actually marked the difference between the full, strong, healthy soul, in contrast to the weak, sick, and empty soul.

There has been much discussion concerning the date of the sin- and guilt-offerings. However, there seems to be strong evidence that both were pre-exilic. The particular mention of and 'asham for a certain sin as recorded in the Holiness Code, as well as the mention of the 'asham in both Kings and Samuel make possible the existence of the guilt-offering from as early as the Monarchy, or even before. There is also some evidence that a similar offering existed in the sacrificial system of some of Israel's neighbors.

It is clear that one of the significant elements of the 'asham was it's use in cases where there had been a breach of covenant, or an infraction of the rights of another. In these cases, the payment of the fine was necessary. Here, also, could be part of the significance of Christ pouring out His soul as our 'asham, in that there had been a universal breach of the covenant with Yahweh, the relationship had been broken, and compensation was needed for it's restoration.

Also, the element of substitution could have been a factor, as was mentioned. Most important, however, was the idea of expiatory punishment.

It has been noted that sin inevitably brought punishment and suffering. At times, the punishment seemed to serve as the payment for the sin. The bearing

of the punishment was actually the expiation for the sin. This concept, then, prepares the way for the coming of the Great 'Asham, whose sacrifice would have greater scope than any levitical sacrifice could ever have had.

Thus, because of the very nature of sin and its consequences, and in light of both the Old and New Testament perspective, it was necessary that Christ suffer. If He were to be the Saviour of the world, and deal adequately with the sin problem, then it was necessary that He suffer and die to bring this about. As an individual, a Jew, representing Israel as a nation, Christ could by His death as a personal, mediatorial act, effect expiation for the sin of the world.

One might speculate as to the purpose of the fine imposed along with the guilt-offering. There is room here for further investigation, beyond the possibilities of this investigation, to examine more closely the need of a guilty person to pay a fine, or to suffer some kind of punishment, along with the restoration of the various relationships that had been breached. There is strong evidence of man's need psychologically, for this type of fine or payment. Such an investigation, however, must wait for a more opportune time, or for another curious and eager student.

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