

STUDIES IN THE USE OF
BLOOD IN THE OLD TESTAMENT

E. A. PARKER

ANDREWS UNIVERSITY
AVONDALE CAMPUS

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ANDREWS UNIVERSITY
SCHOOL OF GRADUATE STUDIES
AVONDALE CAMPUS

STUDIES IN THE USE OF
BLOOD IN THE OLD TESTAMENT

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Edmund A. Parker

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LITERATURE REVIEW

A number of studies have been published which examine the question of blood in the OT.¹ There is also debate as to whether blood symbolizes life, or whether it symbolizes death.²

L. Morris in 1952 argued that blood essentially signifies death.³ In the following year Lindsay Dewar replied that this position could be challenged.⁴ Again, Morris replied in 1955, still arguing for death as the major idea, but emphasized the view of sacrificial death.⁵ J.E. Steinmueller, in 1959, concluded that every kind of sacrificial blood contained some aspects of an expiatory or atoning element.⁶ D.J. McCarthy examined the Near Eastern

¹See R. Laird Harris, Gleason L. Archer, and Bruce K. Waltke, Theological Wordbook of the Old Testament. 2 vols. (Chicago: Moody Press, 1980), 1:190,191. (Hereafter abbreviated as TWOT)

²Ibid.

³L. Morris, "The Biblical Use of the Term 'Blood'," JTS n.s. 3(1952):216-227.

⁴L. Dewar, "Notes and Studies: The Biblical Use of the Term 'Blood'," JTS n.s. 4(1953):204-208.

⁵L. Morris, "Notes and Studies: The Biblical Use of the Term 'Blood'" JTS n.s. 6(1955):77-82

⁶J.E. Steinmueller, "Sacrificial Blood in the Bible," Biblica 40(1959):556-567.

parallels in the symbolism of blood and sacrifice.¹

Generally, most scholars have seen blood in the cultic setting as bringing purgation. However, a group of writers has seen some aspects of defilement associated with blood in the Old Testament. M.L. Andreasen, for example in 1947 stated, "The blood that was placed upon the horns of the altar was ... sin laden blood."² In 1953 the Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary series said, "The blood that he [the priest] placed on the horns was from an animal that bore sin, and hence was sin-laden blood."³ This has been claimed again in 1981 by Gerhard Hasel: "Nevertheless, we must point to two examples that implicitly affirm the blood's defiling function in the Israelite cultus. The ordinance of the red heifer in Num 19:1-10 is particularly instructive."⁴

"A more telling example comes from Lev 6:24-30 which involves 'the law of the sin offering' (v 25) that

¹D.J. McCarthy, "The Symbolism of Blood and Sacrifice," JBL 88(1969):166-176, and "Further Notes on the Symbolism of Blood and Sacrifice," JBL 92(1973):205-210.

²M.L. Andreasen, The Sanctuary Service, 2d. ed. (Washington, D.C.: Review and Herald, 1947) p. 144.

³F.D. Nichol, ed., Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary (Washington, D.C.: Review and Herald, 1953), 1:730.

⁴G.F. Hasel, "Studies in Biblical Atonement I: Sacrifice, Defilement/Cleansing and Sanctuary," p. 95. Arnold V. Wallenkampf and W. Richard Leshner eds. In The Sanctuary and the Atonement: Biblical, Historical, and Theological Studies, (Washington, D.C.: Review and Herald, 1981).

'shall be eaten in a holy place, in the court of the tent of meeting' (v 26). . . ."¹ A few pages later, he ties in Lev 10: 16-20 with Lev 6.²

Nevertheless, Hasel sees both cleansing and defilement implicit in the use of blood in the OT.

¹Ibid., p. 96

²Ibid., pp. 101ff.

CHAPTER II

BLOOD IN THE OLD TESTAMENT

I. Introduction

A. Etymology

In all Semitic languages the word for blood is basically the same. It is included in the category of biliteral nouns, which from a conceptual base belong to "the oldest linguistic stratum."¹ We cannot convincingly trace its etymology, neither has it produced any real derivatives. In various languages it occurs as Hebrew, dām; Akkadian, dāmu; Ugaritic, dm; Arabic and Ethiopic, dam; Aramaic, dam, 'admā', d^emā' (Mandaean z^emā'); and Phoenician 'dm(?), edom, 'edmā'.²

B. Frequency Distribution

Dām occurs in the OT approximately 360 times.³

¹B. Kedar-Kopfstein, "dam," Theological Dictionary of the Old Testament (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 1978), 3:235. (Hereafter abbreviated as TDOT).

²TDOT, 3:234.

³Brown, F.; Driver, S.R.; and Briggs, C.A. A Hebrew and English Lexicon of the Old Testament (Lafayette, Indiana: Associated Publishers, 1980), article dām, p. 196.

Arthur J. Ferch gives the distribution of dām as follows:

Its most frequent uses are in Lev (88 times), Eze (55 times), Ex (29 times), Dt (23 times), Pss (21 times), Num (15 times) and (15 times in) Is. It becomes immediately apparent that dām preponderates in the Pentateuch and Ezekiel.

While the use of blood to denote violent death is not limited to any part of the OT its use to denote sacrificial blood occurs most frequently in Lev (59 times) and Ex (19 times) with only about 25 similar references in all the rest of the OT. Morris offers a statistical analysis to its uses: for death with violence of some kind (203 examples); only seven uses in which life is connected with blood; eating meat with blood (17 examples); 103 references to sacrificial blood; and about 32 other uses including turning the Nile into blood, colour, metaphorical ideas etc. It is on this basis that Morris suggests that blood signified violent death to the reader of the OT.¹

II. Basic Meanings and Usage of Blood

A. Blood Equals Life, hence it is not to be eaten.

The Bible explicitly prohibits the eating of blood (e.g. Gen 9:3,4; Lev 17:10-14). It appears that in the earliest traditions both human and animal blood was inviolate.² In the Biblical narrative the slaughtering of animals for food appears after the flood account. Even so the eating of blood was completely restricted.³ The

¹Arthur J. Ferch, "The Meaning and Function of Blood," (Term paper, Andrews University, 1977), p. 5.

²A. David Grad, "Studies in Biblical Uses of the Word Dām," (Ph.D. dissertation, Brandeis University, 1976), p. 21.

³Grad, Ibid., (pp. 53-54) observes that: "Blood shed in sacrifices to YHWH cannot truly be considered as resulting from a killing and so, a violation of nepeš. This would include Abel's offering which was sacrificial. The permission granted man to kill for food in Gen 9 being Levitical is also sacrificial in nature. It is also of note that human executions which involved the shedding of blood

Encyclopaedia Judaica makes the following observation when speaking about the prohibition of eating blood:

That none of Israel's neighbours possesses this absolute and universally binding prohibition means that it cannot be a vestige of a primitive taboo,¹ but the result of a deliberate, reasoned enactment.

It is probably that it was on the basis of cultic function that this was introduced. This has theological implications which touch upon the view of life being "in the blood." (See Lev 3:17; 7:26,27; 17:10,12,14). Ferch after examining the Gen 9, Lev 17 and Deut 12 texts that deal with life in the blood concluded:

The function of blood is only expressed in Lev 17: 11. Our text does not distinguish between the act of slaughter and that of blood manipulation assigning separate theological significance to them. Elsewhere non-bloody expiatory means are specified, though the blood rites seem to have been the most significant. It is for this reason that we would call Lev 17:11 a broad generalization which gives meaning to the cultic blood ritual. Blood is assigned an expiatory role. Whether we are to understand blood as life or blood as death is not further specified. Obviously the victim had been slaughtered before the manipulation with the (possibly still warm) blood on the altar could occur. God assigns expiatory significance to that which is solely his, to be used with the work of atonement.²

(those done by the sword as opposed to stoning or burning) are limited to instances of apostasy (Deut 13:16; Exod 32: 27) where the victims are considered herem; i.e., dedicated to YHWH much as a sacrifice (Lev 27:28-29). M. Greenberg, 'Crime and Punishment,' IDB, vol. 1, p. 741, notes that the 'sacrificial or purgative character is often explicit in the terminology' of such executions."

¹J. Milgrom, "Blood," Encyclopaedia Judaica (Jerusalem: Encyclopaedia Judaica, 1972) 4:1115.

²Ferch, p. 36.

B. Blood from a wound

An obvious way for blood to become visible was from a wound. A bleeding nose is referred to in Proverbs 30:33, while menstrual flow is described in Lev 15:19 (cf. also 1 Kgs 22:35; 21:19; 22:38; Ezek 32:6).

C. Dām as an object of "to shed"

While dām is used as the object of a number of words, we mention here shāphak (Gen 9:6; 37:22; Lev 17:4; Num 35:33; Deut 21:7; 1 Sam 25:31; 1 Kgs 18:28; 2 Kgs 21:16; 24:4; 1 Chr 22:8; Ezek 16:38; 22:4,6,9,12,27; 23:45; 33:25; 36:18).

D. Blood of Slain

It stands for the blood of those slain (Deut 32:42; 2 Sam 1:22; Num 23:24). Often it represents innocent blood, which means blood shed unjustly or cruelly. Here nāqī' (and nāqī) are used in various constructions with dām (e.g. Deut 21:8,9; 1 Sam 19:5; 2 Kgs 21:16; 24:4; Pss 94:21; 106:38).

E. Some Further Meanings

The problem of injustice and cruelty brings into focus the avenger of blood (gō'ēl haddām). Exacting of vengeance was stated in the clause, "require blood at the hand of." (See Num 35:19,21,24,25,27; Deut 19:6,12; Josh 20:3,5,9; 2 Sam 14:11; Gen 4:10,11; 2 Sam 3:28; 16:8; 2 Kgs 9:26; Isa 1:15; 9:5; 26:21; Ezek 16:6,9,36; Zech 9:7; 2 Chron 24:25; Ezek 33:6; Gen 9:5; 42:22; Ps 9:12; 2 Sam 4:11; Ezek 3:18,20; 33:8; Hos 1:4; Joel 3:21; Ezek 35:6; 1 Sam 26:20).

The word dām by usage and association came to have expanded meanings. It could mean both "life" and "death." A word of warning has been sounded about the "life" verses. "Dām is attested as a synonymn of "life" in only a few verses, and not indisputably even in these."¹ By far the greater preponderance of usage is with the concept of death.

Since, however, dām denotes above all a violent death (1K.2:9), by metonymy it can convey the idea of "war": "pestilence and blood (debher wadham) shall pass through you" (Ezk. 5:17; cf. the connection of -- debher with "war" and "sword," Ezk. 6:11; Jer. 22:8, etc.). The expression shaphakh dam; "shed blood" is synonymous with "destroy life, kill, murder" (Gen. 9:6; Ezk. 18:10; etc.), and hence also with "destroy nephest" (Prov. 1:18; Gen. 37:21,22; Ezk. 22:27). The literal meaning, "to pour out blood," is retained in Lev. 4:30, 34. To destroy a human life is the greatest evil, but the actual shedding of blood in murder imposes a special burden.²

The responsibility of avenging the blood of a murder victim was the work of the gō'ēl haddām (the avenger of blood).

The various uses of the word dām suggest a wide semantic range. It is closely connected with violence, idolatry, adultery, iniquity, evil, wrong, shame, dishonest gain, lies, deceit and treachery (Ezek 7:23; 22:3; 23:37, 45; Isa 59:3; 33:15; Mic 3:10, Hos 12:14; Ezek 22:13; Isa 59:3; Pss 5:6; 55:23). It is of interest and possibly of significance that most of the uses listed here come from the latter prophets. This type of usage has tended to extend the meaning of the word dām.

¹TDOT, 3:241.

²TDOT, 3:241-242.

...one must not overlook that the extensive use of the word dām was destined to lead to its erosion and devaluation. In many texts the precise meaning of the word is hard to decide.¹

III. Blood used with Specific Religious Significance

We will now examine the texts which specifically refer to blood in the cultic context.²

A. Passover

This was probably the greatest of all Jewish festivals. The Passover lamb was slain by each family. This was presumably at home, and the blood was sprinkled on the lintel and doorposts. It was a sign that the home would be spared when the first-born Egyptians were killed. Passover regulations were repeated and specified in the Levitical law of festivals at Sinai (Exod 12:1-28; Lev 23: 5-8). At a later date the Passover was celebrated only at the central sanctuary (Deut 16:2,5,6). Adult males were required to attend, but it seems that families could go voluntarily.³

¹TDOT, 3:244. We would have preferred another term to that of "erosion."

²We list the cultic references (in some texts the word dām occurs more than once): Exod 12:7,13,22,23; 23:18; 24:6,8; 29:12,16,20; 29:21; 30:10; 34:25; Lev 1:5,11,15; 3:2,8,13,17; 4:5,6,7,16,17,18,25,30,34; 5:9; 6:27,30; 7:2,14,26,27,33; 8:15,19,23,24,30; 9:9,12,18; 10:18; 14:6,14,17,25,28,51,52; 16:14,15,18,19,27; 17:6,11; Num 18:17; 19:4,5; Deut 12:16,23,27; 2 Kgs 16:13,15; 2 Chron 29:22,24; 30:16; Ps 16:4; Isa 1:11; 34:6,7; Ezek 39:17; 43:18,20; 44:7,15.

³See Siegfried H. Horn, ed., Seventh-day Adventist Bible Dictionary (Washington, D.C.: Review and Herald, rev. ed., 1979), s.v. "Passover."

B. Day of Atonement

This was in Jewish settings the most solemn day of the year (See Lev 23:27-32). Leviticus 16 outlines the Day of Atonement ritual. For the High Priest and his house a bull was offered for a sin offering (v. 6 ḥaṭṭā'th). The two goats were distinctive on this day, one for the Lord, and one for Azazel. The High Priest ministered both the blood of the bull and the goat, upon the mercy seat (v. 15). Atonement was made for the sins of the people (v. 16), and also for the altar, sanctuary and priests (v. 33).

C. Altar and Sanctuary

The most significant usage of blood in the Old Testament was in the cultic functions of the altar and sanctuary.

In the daily services blood was manipulated with the burnt offering ('ōlā, e.g. Lev 1:4,6; 4:7,10,18,24,25,29,30,33,34; 5:7,10; 6:9,10,12,25; 7:2,8,37; 8:18,28; 9:2,3,7,12,13,14,16,22,24; 10:19; 12:6,8; 14:13,19,20,22,31; 15:15,30; 16:3,5,24; 17:8; 22:18; 23:12,18,27 etc.); the sin offering (ḥaṭṭā'th, e.g. Exod 29:14,36; 30:10; Lev 4:3,8,20,21,24,25,29,32,33,34; 5:6,7,8,9,11; 6:17,25,30; 7:7,37; 8:2,14; 9:2,3,7,8,10,15,22; 10:16,17,19; 12:6,8; 14:13,19,22,31; 15:15,30; 16:3,5,6,9,11,15,25,27; 23:19 etc.); the guilt offering ('āšām, e.g. Lev 5:6,7,15,16,18,19; 6:6,17; 7:1,2,5,7; 14:12,13,14,21,24,25; 19:21,22 etc.); and for the šēlāmīm offering (Exod 20:24; 24:5; Lev 3:1,3,6; 4:10,26,31,35; 6:12;

7:11,20,21,37; 10:14; 17:5; Num 6:14,17,18 etc.).

There are two main words used to describe the manipulation of blood in the cultus. They are zāraq (e.g. Exod 24:8; 29:16,20; Lev 1:5,11; 3:2,8,13; 7:2,14; 8:19,24; 9:12,18; 17:16; Num 18:17; 2 Kgs 16:13,15; 2 Chr 30:16; 35:11; 29:22; Ezek 43:18); and nāzā (e.g. Lev 5:9; 14:7; 16:14,19).

D. The ‘ōlā sacrifice

The burnt offering was offered 1) every morning and evening (Exod 29:38-42; Num 28:3-8); 2) on the sabbath (Num 28:9,10); 3) at the new moon (Num 28:11-14); 4) at the feast of unleavened bread (daily, Num 28:17-25, and on the wave sheaf day, Lev 23:10-14); 5) feast of weeks (Lev 23:15-21, Num 28:26-31); 6) on new year's day (Num 29:1-6); 7) on the day of atonement (Lev 16; Num 29:7-11); 8) at the feast of tabernacles (daily Num 29:12-34, and on the eighth day, Num 29:35-38); and 9) as an accessory to the sin offering of the congregation (Num 15:22-26).

Sacrificial victims varied in number and in type. Lambs, rams, and bulls were used. The number of sacrificial victims varied from one (a bull), to twenty-nine (14 male lambs, 2 rams and 13 bulls).

In the special burnt offerings, besides the regular that we have listed above, it is offered as 1) accessory to the sin offering of the poor (Lev 5:7-10); 2) dedicatory at the consecration of the priests (Exod 29:15-18,35;

Lev 8:18-21), and the Levites (Num 8:5,8,10-12); 3) expiatory, for accidental violation of the Nazarite vow (Num 6:9-12); 4) votive, at the completion of Nazarite vow (Num 6:13-21) and voluntary (Lev 1:3,10; 5) cleansing, from a bodily issue (Lev 15:13-15,25-30), at childbirth (Lev 12:6-8), and from leprosy (Lev 14:1-32).

Again, sacrificial victims varied in each case. Any male from the flock, lambs, rams, bulls pigeons and turtledoves were included in the range. In each case the number of victims is one. In the 'ōlā the offering was "wholly burned, rather than partially burned and eaten by the worshippers and/or the priest."¹

The 'ōlā is first of all presented as a gift to Yahweh (Lev 1:2,10,14). The one who came to worship identified himself with the animal by placing his hand on the animal's head.

When we come to the act of killing the offering, it is not the priest who does it, but rather the one who brings it. Only in the case of birds were they slaughtered by the priest, possibly because of the small size and the small quantity of blood. The bull, sheep or goat was killed by the worshipper himself beside the altar (Lev 1:5,11,15). The priest then poured the blood against or upon the altar. The animal was skinned, cut up and the parts were washed by the participant, then the whole animal was conveyed to the

¹G. Lloyd Carr, "'ālā," TWOT, 2:667.

priest. Then the priest arranged it upon the altar where it was wholly burned up.

This offering was the most regular of the offerings. Another name for it is kālîl (whole-burnt offering or holocaust, Ps 51:19), because it was completely consumed by fire, with no part of the flesh available for human consumption. "The original gift-idea is more transparent in the burnt-offering than in any other sacrifice; ..." ¹

E. the ḥaṭṭā'th sacrifice

In the Biblical account the sin offering was offered at 1) new moons (Num 28:15); 2) feast of unleavened bread (Num 28:17-24); 3) feast of weeks (Lev 23:19, Num 28:26); 4) feast of tabernacles (Num 29:13-24, daily, and eighth day Num 29:35,38), 5) New Year's Day (Num 29:5); and Day of Atonement (Lev 16, Num 29:11). In each case the animal was a he-goat, and the number was either one or two. The special sin offering was offered 1) for consecration of priests and altar (Exod 29:14,35-37, Lev 8:2,14,17); 2) for consecration of Levites (Num 8:8-12; 3) for accidental violation of Nazarite vow (Num 6:9-11), and at the time of fulfilment of the Nazarite vow (Num 6:13-16); 4) for congregational sin (Lev 4:13-21); 5) for a priest's sin (Lev 4:3-12); 6) for a ruler's sin (Lev 4:22-26); 7) for a

¹C. R. North, "Sacrifice," in A Theological Wordbook of the Bible. ed. Alan Richardson (London: SCM Press, 1962), p. 206.

private individual's sin (Lev 4:27-35; Num 15:27,28, if poor Lev 5:7,11,12); and 8) for cleansing, after childbirth (Lev 12:6-8), after bodily issue (Lev 5:13-15,28-30) and from leprosy (Lev 14:10,19-22,30,31).

The sacrificial animals for this offering included lambs, goats, bulls, pigeons and turtledoves. In all cases one animal was used, except in the case of the consecration of the priests and altar when there were seven.

Here we will look at some of the blood manipulation (quotations from RSV):

hattā'th for the sin of the priest (Lev 4:5-7)

And the anointed priest shall take some of the blood of the bull and bring it to the tent of meeting; and the priest shall dip his finger in the blood and sprinkle part of the blood seven times before the Lord in front of the veil of the sanctuary. And the priest shall put some of the blood on the horns of the altar of fragrant incense before the Lord which is in the tent of meeting, and the rest of the blood of the bull he shall pour out at the base of the altar of burnt offering which is at the door of the tent of the meeting.¹

hattā'th for the sin of a ruler (Lev 4:25)

Then the priest shall take some of the blood of the sin offering with his finger and put it on the horns of the altar of burnt offering, and pour out the rest of its blood at the base of the altar of burnt offering.²

hattā'th and 'ōlā for a poor common person (Lev 5:7-10)

¹See also very similar statement for congregational sin in Lev 4:16-18.

²See also very similar statment for a common person in Lev 4:30,34.

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. He shall bring them to the priest, who shall offer first the one for the sin offering: he shall wring its head from its neck, but shall not sever it, and he shall sprinkle some of the blood of the sin offering on the side of the altar; it is a sin offering. Then he shall offer the second for a burnt offering according to the ordinance; and the priest shall make atonement for him for the sin which he has committed, and he shall be forgiven.

F. The ʾāšām sacrifice

The guilt (or trespass) offering was 1) for accidental violation of Nazarite vow (Num 6:9,12); 2) for perjury, robbery, fraud (Lev 6:2-7); 3) for deception, a rash oath, or uncleanness (Lev 5); 4) for ignorant sacrilege (Lev 5:15,16); 5) for the violation of a betrothed slave (Lev 19:20-22); and 6) for cleansing from leprosy (Lev 14:12-18). The range of sacrificial animals includes lambs, rams and goats. The number in each case is one.

For the individual, Lev 6:6,7 states:

And he shall bring to the priest his guilt offering to the Lord, a ram without blemish out of the flock, valued by you at the price for a guilt offering; and the priest shall make atonement for him before the Lord, and he shall be forgiven for any of the things which one may do and thereby become guilty.

North comments:

On the other hand, it should be noted that nothing is said about the matter being referred to the law-courts; the offering was intended to put matters right as between parties who settled their dispute amicably, without resort to litigation. The general principle governing the guilt-offering was that the offender had to repay what he had withheld, plus one-fifth of its value, and in addition offer a ram as a sacrifice. It may be noted that in the passage relating to the Suffering

Servant (Isa 53:10), 'when thou shalt make his soul an offering for sin', the Heb. word is asham ('guilt-offering', see RV margin).¹

G. The šēlāmîm offering

The šēlāmîm occurs approximately 90 times in the OT, and in all cases but one it is in the plural form.² The ritual of offering the šēlāmîm is similar to the 'ōlâ, with some exceptions as to what is burned on the altar. (See Lev 3.)

There is a sharing of the rest of the victim by the worshipper and the priest. According to Lev 7:12-17 and 22:18-30 there is a šēlāmîm of 1) praise, 2) voluntary offering, and 3) special vows.

It has been suggested that the šēlāmîm signifies:³

- 1) The šelem is related to šālôm, and hence signifies the blessing of wholeness and prosperity.
- 2) It has been identified as a "communion sacrifice," in which there is a sharing of the sacrificial animal and there is fellowship.
- 3) Often the šēlāmîm are seen as occurring last in the offering process, and hence this has prompted thought of completion (or conclusion) sacrifice.

¹North, pp.207,208.

²TWOT, 2:931

³TWOT, 2:932

H. Sprinkling of Blood¹

When a general view is taken of the sprinkling of blood, we see that there is a range of contexts besides that of the altar (where it is applied with the finger to the horns of the altars of burnt offering and incense). It is thrown on the people, sprinkled on the priests, sprinkled toward the tent of meeting, brought within the tent itself and ministered in both apartments of the tabernacle. It can also be applied to the tip of the right ear and poured out at the base of the altar. (See Num 19:4; Lev 4:5,6,16,17; 16:14,15; Exod 24:8; 29:21; Lev 8:30; Exod 29:12; Lev 4:7,18, 25,30,34; 8:15; 9:9; 16:18; Ezek 43:20; Exod 29:20; Lev 8:23, 24.)

I. The Blood of the Covenant

Exodus 24:5ff is a unique occasion in the Biblical data when in a covenantal setting we find the people of Israel sprinkled with blood.

The people's assent to the covenant is formally sealed by a special sacrifice, and by the covenant meal eaten by their representatives in the presence of God. The blood sprinkled on the people and on the altar unites the two parties to the agreement. In effect, each is swearing to keep it on pain of death.²

It is suggested that:

It is improbable that Moses sprinkled the blood on each

¹We have not limited ourselves to the technical terms for sprinkling and pouring in this section.

²David Alexander and Pat Alexander, eds., The Lion Handbook to the Bible (Sydney: Anzea Publishers, 1973, p. 165,

individual of that vast multitude; he must have done so upon the leaders as their representatives.¹

J. Yahweh as the avenger of blood

Yahweh's task is to be an avenger of blood who does not forget those who cry in affliction. He is the righteous judge. In 2 Kgs 9:7 Elisha speaks of Yahweh as avenging the blood of his servants the prophets slain by Jezebel.

IV. Conclusion

In this chapter we have clearly seen that blood has a wide range of applications. However, we could generally summarize the usages under three headings, 1) homicide, 2) cultic, and 3) incidental usage.

¹Francis D. Nichol, ed. Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary, 7 Vols. (Washington, D.C.: Review and Herald, 1953-57), 1:631-632.

CHAPTER III

THE CLEANSING EFFICACY OF BLOOD

Introduction

It is most important to recognize the cleansing nature of blood in the OT cultic system. However, we need to be aware of the fact that it becomes very difficult at times to define the boundary between cultic and non-cultic.

Before proceeding to a discussion of the cleansing function of blood in the cult, some important concepts from outside the cultic system (strictly speaking) will be noticed. Gen 9:6 has the injunction: "Whoever sheds the blood of man, by man shall his blood be shed; for God made man in his own image." In Num 35:33, "You shall not thus pollute the land in which you live; for blood pollutes the land, and no expiation (kpr) can be made for the land, for the blood that was shed in it, except by the blood of him who shed it." Here is a most interesting factor, for the blood of murder pollutes, but the implication of the verse is that blood of the murderer shed in retaliation brings expiation.¹

This is significant, for there is blood both defiling

¹N.H. Snaith, ed., Leviticus and Numbers. The Century Bible (London: Nelson, 1967), p. 345.

and expiating, and clearly in a non-cultic setting, yet it can still speak of the concept of kpr. It is evident that there is no sacrifice in the OT for murder, but here a death in retaliation does what a sacrifice normally does, effects kpr.

There are several options which need to be considered. Either the term kpr is 1) cultic, 2) non-cultic, or 3) neither specifically cultic or non-cultic. Possibly it could be all three, depending upon the circumstances of the context.¹

¹We are not here researching the meaning of kpr, but we will define our understanding of the term, as this may, or may not, colour our later exegesis. We understand kpr to be a terminus technicus, having lost its etymological characteristics, and meaning "that which effectively deals with the sin problem." We subscribe to the dangers of root fallacy as pointed out by James Barr in Semantics of Biblical Language (London: Oxford, 1961), and Brian Daines, "Some Observations Concerning Comments on Biblical Words in Sermons," EvQ 51 (Oct-Dec 1979):208-213. In TWOT (1:452-454) the authors appear to have used four separate roots for the radicals k-p-r. Root 1 for kōper (ransom), kippūr (atonement), kāppōret (mercy seat). Root 2 for kāpar (cover over with pitch), kōper (pitch). Root 3 for kēpār (young lion), kōper (name of a plant), kāpār (village), kōper (village). Root 4 for kēpōr (bowl), kēpōr (hoarfrost). Debate continues on this vital word, specifically its etymological root and consequent meanings. Milgrom notes the suggested Arabic and Akkadian roots, IDB Sup 78: cf. also Joseph A. Fitzmeyer, "The Aramaic Language and the Study of the New Testament," JBL 99 (Mar 1980):17,18. Dennis J. McCarthy has pointed out that the attitude of the Hebrews towards blood is unique, JBL 92 (Jun 1973):210. The term kpr is on occasion rendered as "to forgive." (See Deut 21:8 RSV, KJV; Ps 78:38 KJV, RSV, JER; Jer 18:23 KJV, RSV, JER). In the LXX we find kpr rendered (along with its derivatives) as ἐξιλάσκομαι, ἐξιλασμός, ἱλαστήριον and λύτρον (Exod 30:15; Lev 1:4; 23:27; Num 5:8; Lev 16:2; Exod 21:30; 30:12).

From the occidental viewpoint Num 35:33 seems to present a logical inconsistency. If there is, it does not appear to trouble the OT writer in any way.

"The Blood Shall Cleanse"

Lev 14 deals with cases of leprosy, a wide ranging problem in the OT, and well beyond the modern definition of the term "leprosy." V. 6 records the ritual of the living bird, where a live bird was dipped in the blood of a killed bird. This was done over running water. After this blood was sprinkled seven times upon the person who was to be cleansed from leprosy, the priest pronounced the leper clean and let the live bird go into the open field (v.7). In vv. 10-20 various ritual requirements involving sacrificial offerings are listed. The 18th, 19th and 20th verses speak of atonement and cleansing. These verses (10-20) utilize the words 'āšām (v. 14), ḥaṭṭā'th (v. 19), and 'ōlā (v. 20). Atonement is mentioned a number of times in the chapter (vv. 18,19,20,21,29,31 & 53). It becomes clear that there is a close association of ideas between cleansing and atonement. In the same chapter we have the concept of cleansing mentioned repeatedly (vv. 1,4,7,8,9,11,14,17,18,19,20,23,25, 29,31,32,48,49,52,53, & 57).

Lev 16 details cleansing on the occasion of the Day of Atonement. In vv. 15-19 it states that sprinkled blood makes atonement for uncleanness, transgressions and sins. Cleansing and atonement are linked together clearly in v. 30

where it says, "atonement (shall) be made for you, to cleanse you; from all your sins you shall be clean before the Lord."

In other references to blood in cultic context we do not find the term "clean" used in Lev, but we do have the term "atonement." (See e.g. Lev 1:4; 7:7; 17:11; cf. Exod 30:10). Further, the word "atonement" is linked with "forgiveness" in the early section of Lev (e.g. Lev 4:20,26, 31,35; 5:7-9,13,16,18; 6:7).

Outside of the immediate cultic context of the sanctuary (as mentioned in Exod, Lev and Num) there are some interesting usages. Ezek 45:18-20 links together the concepts of cleansing, atonement and blood, while in Ps 51:2 the request for cleansing, is cleansing from sin. With Jer 33:8 there is a parallel usage of cleansing and forgiveness from sin.

In the most recently published essay on blood Hasel observes, "It must never be overlooked that the Bible does not provide an explicit explanation of the meaning of sacrifice, as such."¹ The Biblical conception of God is seen as his starting point from which he develops his view of sacrifice: "it seems evident that the meaning of sacrifice is determined ultimately and comprehensively by the biblical conception of God."² "Sacrifice serves the double function

¹Hasel, p. 89.

²Ibid.

of cleansing and removing contamination. It cleanses the sacrificer and carries the contamination to the place of sacrifice, the sanctuary in the Israelite cultus."¹

Hasel further notes: "The immensely positive conception of blood in the Israelite ritual does not need to be much elaborated. ... No wonder, then, that blood plays a central role in the OT sacrificial ritual for purification/cleansing and sanctification/consecration (Ex 29:19-21; Lev 8:22-30). ... In the sacrificial ritual of the OT, blood always had a cleansing function upon the person or objects defiled by sin."² Again he notes blood has, a "purifying power upon the sacrificer."³

Yet Hasel contends that blood in the OT is equivocal. Besides noting the cleansing function he suggests:

"Nevertheless, we must point to two examples that implicitly affirm the blood's defiling function in the Israelite cultus. The ordinance of the red heifer in Num 19:1-10 is particularly instructive. ..."⁴

"A more telling example comes from Lev 6:24-30 which involves 'the law of the sin offering' (v. 25) that 'shall be eaten in a holy place, in the court of the tent of meeting' (v. 26). ..."⁵

It is to this question that we will now address
ourselves.

¹Ibid., p. 91.

²Ibid., p. 94.

³Ibid.

⁴Ibid., p.95.

⁵Ibid.

CHAPTER IV

SOME EXEGETICAL OBSERVATIONS

Hasel asks the question, "Does blood also have a defiling function? We have already stated that in the OT blood is equivocal."¹ After making reference to Num 19:1-10 he poses the question, "Is this an indication that the person dealing with the substance impregnated with blood or the priest who sprinkled blood became defiled?"² For Lev 6:24-30 the observation is made: "It is not stated that the blood defiles or makes unclean, but the explicit mention of ritual washing in a holy place seems to point in that direction."³

Lev 10:17 evokes the statement, "The question remains, 'How is the sin, borne in figure by the priest, brought into the sanctuary? How is the process of transference going on?'"⁴

These are the questions that we will look at as we examine the textual data.

Numbers 19

The ritual purification required with the preparation of the ashes of the red heifer (the water of

¹Hasel, p. 94.

²Ibid., p. 96.

³Ibid.

⁴Ibid., p. 104.

cleansing) both by the priest who sprinkled the blood (vv. 3-7), the man who burnt the heifer (v. 8), and (v. 10), the one who gathered the ashes raises some questions of interest. It is evident that one cannot make a strong case about the defilement as it concerns the priest, for he is paralleled by the other two men. Blood is not involved directly with the latter two, and they are defiled until evening. The priest was defiled, but we cannot argue that it was the blood per se that brought the defilement, for there was no blood in the other two cases. It is possible to put forward the view that there was defilement because they were handling "death" and they were working on behalf of those who had been defiled by death. Num 19 has been described as, "one of the most important of the ceremonial purifications prescribed in the Old Testament."¹

There is a strange anomaly here in the ashes of the heifer. It brought defilement to the one who gathered them (v. 10), but it brought cleansing to him who needed such (vv. 17-21). However, we must not overlook the fact that the one who ministered the water of purification is also in need of cleansing, he must wait till the evening (vv. 21, 22). In virtually every verse, from verse 7 to verse 22, there are clear expressions concerning the concept of cleansing or defilement. The list of words shows that the

¹F.F. Bruce, The New London Commentary on the New Testament, The Epistle to the Hebrews (London: Marshall, Morgan & Scott, 1964), p. 115.

major thrust of the chapter is in the realm of ceremonial defilement and purgation. In fact the present chapter has no intimate connection with either what precedes or what follows.¹

Various positions have been taken with regard to this ceremonial rite of Num 19. Is the ritual sacrificial or not? According to G.B. Gray, "it is certain that the Jewish ritual is not the ritual of sacrifice; the red cow was not sacrificed on Yahweh's altar, nor was it in any other way ever presented or offered to Yahweh; it is not therefore a sin-offering, but it is a means for the removal of sin; it is not an expiatory offering, but it is an expiatory object ..."² Kenneth E. Jones observes,

It is hard to say why all the people who take active part in the ceremony are thereby rendered unclean for the rest of the day. At least we can see that this emphasizes the powerfulness of the rite."³

John Sturdy states,

The ritual is without parallel in Israel, and is something of a mystery. It is not a sacrifice: it is not done in the temple, and the cow itself is not given

¹George Buchanan Gray, A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on Numbers, International Critical Commentary (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark 1903), p. 241. See also Martin Noth, Numbers (London: SCM Press, 1968) p. 139.

²George Buchanan Gray, Sacrifice in the Old Testament (New York: KTAV Pub., 1971), pp. 59, 60.

³Kenneth E. Jones, The Book of Numbers (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Baker Book House, 1972) p. 57.

to God, but totally burnt, and used to provide the ashes in the water."¹

Noth agrees that "the slaughter of this heifer is not part of a sacrificial action."²

However, J. Milgrom says, "It is proposed that the key to unlock the paradox of the Red Cow is that it is a ḥaṭṭā't sacrifice, as stated unambiguously by the text:

..."³ N.H. Snaith sees it as a sin offering in general, but not in the narrower sense of Lev 4.⁴ He suggests that it was "actually ... a burnt sin-offering'."⁵

Verse 9 raises a problem (in the Hebrew text it reads ḥaṭṭā'th). The LXX renders in this case, ἁγιασμοῦ ἑορτῆς. The NIV reads, "it is for purification of sin," the RSV, "for the removal of sin," and the NEB, "For the cow is a sin-offering." How are we to understand this? There are some further alternatives that we will need to consider:

- 1) It is a late gloss inserted and hence changes the meaning of the passage.
- 2) The Hebrew word, has a broader meaning than we

¹John Sturdy, Numbers (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1976) p. 134.

²Noth, p. 140.

³J. Milgrom, "The Paradox of the Red Cow (Num. XIX)," Vetus Testamentum 31 (1981), pp. 62-72.

⁴Snaith, p. 273.

⁵Ibid.

sometimes allow, and here it does not refer to the sin-offering in a technical sense.

- 3) This is a case of loose usage, and indicates a certain over-lap between the ceremonial and the non-ceremonial aspects of life.
- 4) Or, do we have to conclude that it is meaningless in its context?

We have no substantial evidence that reveals the term as a gloss. Neither is there evidence here that it is meaningless in the context. It is necessary that we determine what it means in the context as it now stands.

It would be foolish to say that the ceremonial terms that we have in Num 19:7-22 are to be interpreted by the word hattā'th, rather, this word must fit in with the great preponderance of usage both before and after v. 9, with regard to the concept of ceremonial purgation and defilement. Vv. 12 and 13 (as well as 19) must be understood against this wider background. The LXX has not opted in the direction of a thorough-going sin offering.

We should not fall into the trap of saying that a word must have a certain lexical meaning apart from context. We also need to bear in mind that Num 19 is an isolated case. While it is not a thorough-going sacrifice, the fact that blood is sprinkled towards the tabernacle appears to designate it as a sacrificial type of action.¹

¹Gray, Sacrifice, p. 31.

This passage of Num 19 does not prove that the person dealing with the substance impregnated with blood or the priest who sprinkled the blood were defiled via the blood.

Leviticus 6 and 10

If we are to make observations on Lev 6 and 10 we will need to observe the data of Lev 4. There is clearly a development as we move through the chapters, particularly with regard to the sin offering. Lev 4 indicates that in the case of a priest, or the whole community blood was manipulated in the Holy Place, while in the case of an individual or leader it was not. Apparently from the information of chapters 6 and 10 parts of these sacrifices were to be eaten by the priest. Verses 24-30 of Lev 6 clearly state that the offering should be eaten (v. 24), but then v. 30 says that if the blood is taken into the sanctuary it should not be eaten.

Hasel, as we have already pointed out, sees a possibility for defilement by blood in this passage of Lev 6 because the ritual washing in a holy place seems to point that way. As we observe these verses we find that not only did the garment that was defiled need washing (v. 27), but also an earthen vessel in which the sacrifice was boiled had to be broken (v. 28), and a bronze vessel had to be scoured clean and washed in water (v. 28). It was not just the blood that caused problems, because the flesh which was now

"devoid" of blood still caused similar difficulties. All male priests were able to eat from this sacrifice (v. 29).

To argue that blood in Lev 6 is a transfer medium for defilement, is really to argue too much. This text does not prove that blood transfers defilement. Wenham says,

Since it is blood that purifies the altar and other sacred objects, it must not be spilled on other objects. If it is, it must be washed off. If that is impossible, the thing must be destroyed (v. 21 [28]). This is another illustration of the principle of not confusing the holy and the common.¹

N.H. Snaith commenting on Lev 6:24-30 says,

The truly important element of this rite was to get rid of sin, represented by the animal, whether actually or symbolically contained. If the priest was not involved in the sin he ate the flesh, being a sort of sin-eater.²

This view however, does not prove that blood was a transfer agent for defilement in the cultic system.

The pattern of Leviticus does not appear to be that of a dissertation written from first verse to last. Leviticus handles new problems as they arise, and hence new material is added, developing the ideas and the concepts of cultic worship. Again, it is not written with the precision of a modern legal document.

It is clear from a comparison of Lev 4:6,17,25,30; 6:30 and 10:17,18 that either the sin offering (blood) was to be sprinkled before the veil, or it was to be eaten.

¹Gordon J. Wenham, The Book of Leviticus (Grand Rapids Michigan: Eerdmans, 1979) p. 122.

²N.H. Snaith, p. 56.

The reason for the eating¹ is apparently expressed in the 17th verse of Lev 10: "since it is a thing most holy and has been given to you that you may bear the iniquity of the congregation (w^e'ōthāh nāthan lākem lāsē'th 'eth-'awōn hā'edā), to make atonement for them before the Lord (l^ekappēr 'alēhem lipnê YHWH)."

J.R. Porter comments on Lev 10:16-20:

Unfortunately, what really is meant by the existing narrative is not wholly clear. Perhaps the underlying problem is this: how should the goat of the sin-offering be treated on special occasions such as the installation of priests on the Day of Atonement (cp. the comment on 9:3), when it was a community offering, but otherwise an individual offering? Moses appears to hold that it should always be regarded as an individual offering: in this case, it should have been eaten by the priests, because the blood is not brought within the sacred precincts (cp. 4:22-6; 6:30). Aaron may be saying that it should be regarded as a community sin-offering, in which case some of the blood was brought into the Tent of the Presence (cp. 4:16-18), and so the animal could not be eaten by the priests. The obscure statement in verse 19 may originally have meant that the high priest, on these special occasions, acted as the community's representative and therefore shared in their sin offering: so he could not himself eat it.²

The same verb and noun which occur in Lev 10:17

(nāsā' and 'awōn) are found in Lev 16:22 when speaking of the Azazel goat. What does "to bear iniquity" mean? Does

¹See R.K. Harrison, Leviticus: an Introduction and Commentary (Downers Grove, Illinois: Inter-Varsity Press, 1980), p. 119 where he says, "What was not stated in that passage was the reason underlying the eating of the offering by the priests, namely that they might bear the iniquity of the congregation by atoning for it." Here he compares Lev 6:26 with Lev 10:17.

²J.R. Porter, Leviticus (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1976) p. 81.

it mean to bear defilement through the transfer of iniquity, or does it mean to bear iniquity in the sense of effecting forgiveness, or could it be a combination of both? Does it mean to bear in the sense of transfer to another object, person or thing, or does it mean to bear in the sense of carrying it away? It would seem that "bearing" could mean either carrying sin or guilt or iniquity by representation or substitution, or it could be the bearing away in forgiveness or cleansing. Lev 16:22 would have to mean something other than forgiveness, because there was no blood of atonement shed in that case. (Unless one paralleled the two goats of Lev 16 with the two birds of Lev 14).

The locution nāsā' 'awōn/peša'/'hattā'th is used in a number of ways. Thus, predominately 1) in the sense of bearing of one's own iniquity. In the OT we find on quite a number of occasions the clause, "he shall bear his iniquity," etc. (See e.g. Lev 5:1,17; 7:18; Num 5:31; 14:34; Lev 17:16; 24:15; Ezek 44:10,12,13; Lev 19:8; 20:17,19,20). Observe the complaint of Cain, where his predicament is more than he can bear (Gen 4:13). Less frequently 2) in the sense of taking away of sin, such as pardon, forgiveness, etc. The removal of iniquity and transgression. This is listed as one of the attributes of God (e.g. Exod 34:7; Num 14:18; Mic 7:18). Often this category of "bearing" is referred to in prayers of intercession. (See Gen 50:17; Exod 10:17; 32:32; Num 14:19; 1 Sam 25:28; 15:25; Josh 24:19).

Psalm 32:1,5 focus on this concept. On a few occasions 3) as suggested by Walter C. Kaiser the view of substitution is expressed in such verses as Lev 10:17; 16:22; Isa 53, particularly verses 4 and 11.¹ Depending upon one's viewpoint, Isaiah 53 could be helpful in structuring a pattern of theological understanding, with regard to the cultic system. Because this usage depends upon a given theological construct, we will not further elaborate it here, but recognize the fact that given the understanding that Isaiah 53 speaks of the suffering servant, the passage could be quite helpful in elucidating Lev 10:17 and study of cultic happenings.

Let us now consider Lev 10:17 in the light of the above information with regard to nāsā'/'awōn. The text under consideration reads, "'Why have you not eaten the sin offering (ḥattā'th) in the place of the sanctuary, since it is a thing most holy and has been given to you that you may bear the iniquity of the congregation (w^e'othāh nāthan lākem lāsē'th 'eth-'awōn hā'edā), to make atonement for them before the Lord (l^ekappēr 'alēhem lipnē YHWH)?'"

What does this verse mean? What are we to understand the "bearing of iniquity" to mean? It would have to basically refer to the data above, in either one or more of the three senses outlined (i.e. bear one's own guilt, or have it borne in substitution, or alternatively it just means "forgiveness.")

¹TWOT, 2:601.

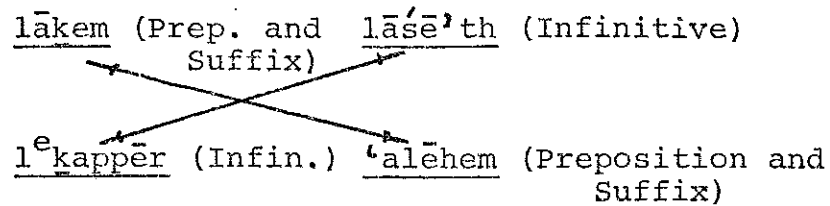
The expression "it has been given to you" begins with the word w^eōthāh, which has a 3rd singular feminine suffix. It must refer back to the feminine noun hattā'th. We may deduce that the emphasis in this part of the sentence is upon the "sin offering," and not upon the priest. "It was given to you for the purpose of bearing iniquity" would point in the direction of saying that the sacrifice was given to the priests for that very reason - to bear iniquity. It is clear that in this case the bearing of iniquity is not one's own (because it was for the sin of the congregation), hence it is either the bearing of iniquity in the sense of substitution or in the sense of forgiveness that is meant.

Maybe the two infinitive constructs of the verse (lāse'th and l^ekappēr), help to explain the meaning. The question needs to be asked as to their relationship to each other. Are they in 1) apposition ("to bear iniquity" being explained by "to atone"), or 2) consecutive usage ("to bear iniquity" being distinct from "to atone").

It is clear that the infinitive constructs are purpose clauses and that they should be read, "It has been given to you for the purpose of bearing the iniquity of the congregation, for the purpose of atoning for them before Yahweh." The expressions "to you" (lākem) and "for them" ('alēhem) may shed some light on the thrust of the verse. The sacrifice is given to the priest for "bearing iniquity," and the effecting of atonement is "for them," the congregation. This may militate against the idea of

apposition, and make the clauses therefore consecutive.

There is a chiasmic structure here with the pattern being:



The question remains whether Lev 10:17's usage of "to bear iniquity" means to bear in the sense of substitution, or only in the sense of forgiveness. Possibly such verses as Exod 28:38; Num 18:1,23,32; Isa 53:4,11 could help here. It would appear that one's view of substitution in the OT become the determining factor. From the evidence of the text it could go either way. The Hebrew text precludes us being dogmatic in either direction.

Several modern translations interpret the passage to mean:

NEB: "It was given to you to take away the guilt of the community by making expiation for them before the Lord."

NIV: "it was given to you to take away the guilt of the community by making atonement for them before the Lord."

JER: "given to you to take away the fault of the community, by performing the rite of atonement over it before Yahweh."

Smith and Goodspeed: "and was given to you to bear the iniquity of the community, that atonement might

be made for them before the Lord."

Yet others have left the work of interpretation to the reader:

KJV: "and God hath given it to you to bear the iniquity of the congregation, to make atonement for them before the Lord."

RSV: "and has been given to you that you may bear the iniquity of the congregation, to make atonement for them before the Lord."

The LXX also interprets the Hebrew of Lev 10:17. It reads, "ἵνα ἀφέλητε τὴν ἁμαρτίαν τῆς συναγωγῆς" ("that you might take away the sin of the congregation"). Joachim Jeremias, alluding to the LXX comments on v. 17, "The eating of the priest counts as an expiatory, cultic act."¹

Johannes Herrmann, says of the verse (commenting on the sin offering aspect), "to take away guilt and to make atonement for your sin before Yahweh."²

Some aspects here are vague. One thing however is clear, the ultimate purpose is to effect atonement.

N.H. Snaith who prefers to follow the margin of the Revised Version, with the idea of "take away, bear away" says:

The purpose, ... was to take away sin and get rid of it, either by consuming it within the Holy Place or,

¹TDNT, 1:186, n. 8.

²TDNT, 3:307.

wherever a priest was involved, by destroying it outside the camp.¹

In this search for understanding one is reminded of the timely warning of Eichrodt:

Any attempt to discover the religious ideas underlying the sacrificial worship of Israel must always bear in mind two things. First, the Old Testament nowhere gives us a direct exposition of the meaning of this worship; it is possible to arrive at various conclusions a posteriori, but never with more than a certain degree of probability. The certainty with which judgments are at times expressed on this point and on the subject of the whole pattern of development of the idea of sacrifice is usually in inverse proportion to what the available evidence will bear. Secondly, the gaps in the Old Testament tradition cannot simply be filled in from the comparative study of religion, on the tacit assumption that everything must have happened in Israel exactly as it did everywhere else -- even indeed, that the ideas of sacrifice which can be shown to have existed elsewhere must also, wherever possible,² be discovered in toto in the Israelite cultus.

Unfortunately a description of the cultic system depends merely on hints found in the biblical text. To dismiss Hasel's claim that blood can defile in the cultic system because of the small amount of testimony that can be gathered is not valid in itself. We must test each piece of evidence brought forward, and evaluate each individually. (Again, we would emphasize that Hasel sees blood as cleansing as well as defiling in the cultic system).

How do we see the evidence for defilement via the blood in the cultic service produced by Hasel? Numbers 19

¹N.H. Snaith, p. 80.

²Walther Eichrodt, Theology of the Old Testament, 2 vols. (London: SCM Press, 1961, 1967), 1:141.

and Leviticus 6 do not appear to prove his case. Leviticus 10:17 may support the notion that blood has a defiling function in the cult if there is a transference of sin in the priestly ritual. We wish we understood more fully the intention of some expressions in Lev 10:17. Similarly, several other issues not dealt with in this paper need to be discussed to aid in clarifying the issue of defilement of blood in the cult.

In conclusion we would draw attention again to the fact that cleansing, forgiveness and atonement are the major functions of blood in the cultic service.

CONCLUSION

We have observed the importance of blood in the OT particularly as it applies to the cultic function. In our study we observed that cleansing, forgiveness and atonement are the major thrust of blood usage and manipulation in the sacrificial system. The suggestion that blood also defiles on the basis of sprinkled garments and impregnated substances as mentioned in Num 19 and Lev 6 does not seem to be supported by the evidence. While the major thrust of Lev 10: 17 is that of effecting atonement, it is not clear to us what the full intentions of some of the expressions of the verse are.

If the case for the defilement transfer via blood in the cultic system is to be pursued further, we suggest the following areas for future research:

- 1) Where are the boundaries to be drawn between cult and non-cult? It may be possible to describe something as non-cultic, but it is much more difficult to say where cult begins or ends.
- 2) How are we to define clean and unclean? These terms are very wide ranging. What is the frame of reference from which we need to understand them? Is it the problem of the invasion of the profane into a holy society, or is it rather the question of the numinous

presence of Yahweh that is constantly in danger of being made common?

- 3) What happens on the day of atonement? How does the question of cleansing effect the sanctuary, the people as a corporate body, and the individual?
- 4) To what level is there substitution in the OT?
- 5) When did defilement reach the sanctuary? Was it at the time of the act of sin, or was it at the time of cultic manipulation, or was it both?

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