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The Asham Offering: The Ministry of Reconciliation

7: 1-10

The asham offering DIG: Why do you think God specifies the sprinkling of blood? And the offering of all the fat? What did the priests learn from dealing with blood-day-in-and-day out? What belongs to the priest? Why is that? What is the relationship between the blood in this passage and that in Hebrews 9:11-28? How does this blood foreshadow the Messiah?

REFLECT: What is the messianic significance of the asham offering? How did the crucifixion remind the apostles of the asham offering? The fat was the best of the sacrifice, how are you offering the best of what you give to God? The asham represents indemnity to be repaid to God. In the Messianic sense, Yeshua is our asham. How is He your asham offering?

The guilt offering from the perspective of the priests.

The ministry of reconciliation includes the ability to discern genuine repentance in people, to advise them how to make restitution, and to assure them of forgiveness. These are the concerns of the asham offering. It will soon be obvious that the kind of spiritual activity envisioned in this **sacrifice** is hard to develop in a congregation. **The asham offering** covered financial matters - defrauding **God** or other people - sins that were often unknown to others. People made this offering only if they were genuinely convinced in their hearts to make things right. This offering was thus one of the more significant offerings for the spiritual life; its performance was evidence of true repentance because the **guilty** person was moved to repay what had been taken, even though it cost him more than was taken. So, **the asham offering** focused on the process of reconciliation, and the communication of forgiveness.⁷¹

The priest needed to assure the worshiper of their restitution and forgiveness

(7:1-6): This is the mitzvah for the asham offering: it is especially holy (7:1). This **asham offering** is the only **offering** that stipulates restitution, either to the sanctuary or to any offended person. Thus, the offering satisfies not only the divine disapproval that some of the other offerings may deal with, but it also restores a measure of justice and equity in the

Israelite community. As a result, **ADONAI** viewed **it** as being **especially holy**.⁷²

They are to slaughter the asham offering in the place where they slaughter the burnt offering, and its blood is to be splashed against all sides of the altar (7:2).

One thing which certainly stands out from this parashah (see the commentary on **Deuteronomy**, [to see link click Af - Parashah](#)) is the frequent mention of **blood**. It is mentioned at least four times in this portion and one gets the impression that during the average day the typical **priest** saw a continuing flow of **blood**. There seems to be two main teachings regarding **blood**.

The first is that **blood** was not to be **eaten**, “**Whoever eats any blood will be cut off from his people**” (7:27). This was a very serious penalty indeed, with two different forms. Sometimes it refers to being exiled from the covenant community (18:26-29), while in other instances it refers to the death penalty (Exodus 31:14; Numbers 4:18-20). In either case, the sinner was removed from the covenant community and regarded as the enemy of **Ha’Shem**. Later in **Deuteronomy 12:13**, **God** explains why **He** didn’t want them to **eat blood**. At this point in the life of the community, they were merely to accept this prohibition by faith. After all, Moshe couldn’t explain everything at once, nor could the Israelites understand everything at once! That is what progressive revelation is all about.

The second teaching about **the blood** in this parashah undoubtedly helped the children of Isra’el understand a little bit why no **blood** at all was permitted to be **eaten**. Instead of drinking it like idolaters did, **the blood** was to be used for atonement and cleansing. But an accidental or misuse of **blood** rendered one *tamei* (or ritually unclean), instead of putting him in a *tahor* (ritually clean) status (see [Bk - Ritually Clean and Unclean Animals](#)).

Because of the continual flow of **blood** sacrifice, **the priests** were always handling **blood**. Sometimes **it** was carried into the Tabernacle (6:23). Sometimes **the blood** was sprinkled against the wall of the bronze altar (5:9). Sometimes (in the case of a bird) **it** was squeezed out toward the base of the bronze altar (5:10). Sometimes **the blood** was poured out at the base of the bronze altar (4:25). Other times **the priest** dipped **his** finger in **the blood** and rubbed it onto the horns of the bronze altar or sprinkled **it** toward the inner veil of the Most Holy Place. For **the priests** it was **blood, blood** and more **blood** all day long.

What are some of the things that **the priests** could have learned from all this exposure to **blood**? It would have taught them the horrors of idolatry, reminding them to keep away from the gods of the Gentile nations. Also, **the blood** would have reminded **the priests** of the intrinsic value of life, both animal and human. Continuing along these lines, **it** would have reminded them that sin was horrible. To atone for it costs an innocent victim his life,

represented by **the blood**. Thus, the continual flow of **blood** and use of **blood** on a daily basis was a constant reminder to **the priest** that sin was to be avoided, for it cost lives and separated people from **God**. But it would have also taught them that the gracious provision of atonement and cleansing from sin cost **the** lifeblood of an innocent victim.

Was it any wonder, then, that **Yeshua** told **His apostles**: **This is what I meant when I was still with you and told you that everything written about Me in the Torah of Moshe, the Prophets and the Psalms had to be fulfilled (Luke 24:44)**. When **they** had the red image of scourging and the crucifixion fresh in **their** minds, **they** would have understood in a very vivid way how the teachings of **Moshe** concerning **the blood sacrifices** could have spoken volumes about the sacrificial **blood** atonement of **Yeshua**.⁷³

After the animal was cut up, **the priest** took **all its fat - the fat tail, the fat covering the inner organs, the two kidneys, the fat on them near the flanks, and the covering of the liver, which he will remove with the kidneys** and placed **them** on the bronze altar. **The fat** was considered the best portion and was offered back to **Him**. **The priest will make them go up in smoke on the altar as an offering made by fire to ADONAI; it is an asham offering**. The rest of the animal served as food for **the priests**. **Every male from a family of priest may eat it; it is to be eaten in the Tabernacle courtyard; it is especially holy (7:3-6)**.

As with **the purification offering** (see [Aq - The Chatta't Offering](#)), **the priests** in the case of **the asham offering** had to encourage the people to make such a **sacrifice** and then participate in their offering by directing the worship and **eating the sacrifice** as a sign that **ADONAI** had received **it**. It would have been difficult for **the priests** to discern whether **the sacrifice** was brought with the proper attitude: but in the case of **the asham offering** it would have been highly unlikely for someone to make such a costly reimbursement if unrepentant or insincere. What **the priest** received indicated what **God** received - provided that this was a faithful **priest** acting conscientiously on what was right.

The idea behind **the guilt offering** (see [Am - The Guilt Offering](#)) was the same as that of **the chatta't offering**, for this too was a **purification offering**; only here, the type of sin covered by the offering involved reparation, and that made its application more specific. One could think about the point of the teaching in terms of a pastor or Messianic rabbi encouraging repayment or reparation of a wrong that was committed, or at least requiring that it be done as part of reconciliation.

The priest received their portion from the worshiper (when they were convinced of their sincerity (7:7-10): The asham offering is like the chatta't offering; the same

mitzvah governs them - it will belong to the priest who uses it to make atonement.

It is not surprising that **the priests** received benefits from **their** ministry. **They** also receive benefits when confessing **worshippers** brought **their chatta't offerings**. Not only did **they eat** the meat, but **they** also received the skins. **The priest who offers someone's burnt offering will possess the hide of the burnt offering which he has offered (7:7-8)**. In addition to providing clothing for the families of **the priests**, no doubt a lively trade could have been sustained from **the skins** taken from **the sacrifices**. **ADONAI** took care of those who ministered through the giving of righteous believers (**First Corinthians 9:7-14**); **the servants of God** then directed the use of what was given. The entire system was designed both for the spiritual satisfaction of **the worshiper** and the practical needs of **the priest** in service.⁷⁴

Every grain offering baked in the oven, cooked in a pot or fried on a griddle will belong to the priest who offers it. But every grain offering which is mixed with olive oil or is dry will belong to all the sons of Aaron equally (7:9-10). The reason for this is not given. However, we do know that **they** received portions that belonged to **ADONAI**. **The priests themselves** belonged to **God** in a special way and so **they** could **eat** the food that **God** received as **an offering**. This provision of food allowed **the priests** to focus on **their** duties of leading **the LORD's** people in worship and teaching them **His** mitzvot. This principle of providing for **God's** people is continued in the B'rit Chadashah as well (**Galatians 6:6**). **YHVH** is fully aware that if the needs of **the shepherds** are not met, **they** will not be able to take care of **their** sheep.⁷⁵

The Messianic significance: **The asham offering** symbolizes restitution for damages and was offered in concert with the payment of restitution. The implication is that an offense toward another person is also an offense against **ADONAI**. When we cheat or damage or misuse someone else or their property it is as if we have cheated, damaged and misused **God**. Therefore, when we settle accounts, we must repay the victim, and we must repay **God**. The reparation made to **God** is **the asham, the guilt offering**.



This is very similar to **the Master's** teaching on bringing korbanot. **If you are offering your gift at the Temple altar and you remember there that your brother has something against you, leave your gift where it is by the altar, and go, reconcile with your brother. Then come back and offer your gift (Matthew 5:23-24).** The **asham** represents indemnity to be repaid to **God**. In the Messianic sense, **Yeshua** is our asham. Though it is upon us to make things right with our fellow man, we are completely unable to repay **God** the debt we owe **Him** for our sin, intentional or unintentional. There are not enough goats or rams to ever repay **Him** what we owe **Him**. **Yeshua** is our korban **asham**. That which we owe to **God** is **paid in full** through **His sacrifice** (see the commentary on **The Life of Christ [Lv](#) - Jesus' Second Three Hours on the Cross: The Wrath of God**).⁷⁶

*Dear Heavenly **Father**, **You** are such a wonderful and loving **Father**. Though we could never repay you for the debt we owe to **You** for **Yeshua's** taking our place as our sin **sacrifice (John 1:29)**, we offer up to **You** our love from a deep heart of thanks with overflowing gratitude. We rejoice in pleasing **You** by all we do and think, by our thoughts, our giving, and our attitudes. We count it a privilege to suffer for **You**, knowing that our suffering, though it may be great to us, is so small compared with all **You** suffered to bring us to glory (**Philippians 2:5-11**). We love and praise **You!** In **Yeshua's** holy name and power of **His** resurrection. Amen*