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The Insufficiency of the Former Priestly Service

9: 6-7

The insufficiency of the former priestly service DIG: On what basis does God have fellowship with His children? What did the priest's daily work in the Holy Place picture with regard to Christ? What was the annual event in Isra'el that served as the greatest picture of Messiah? What priestly procedure was not typical of Yeshua? What did the two goats represent? When did the cohen hagadol enter the Most Holy Place? For what purpose? What happened if he entered with unconfessed sin? What is the significance of the high priest offering the sacrifice of blood for himself?

REFLECT: The mercy seat reminded the Israelites of the blood shed to cover their sins on Yom Kippur. What experiences or items in your life remind you of the mercy you were shown through Christ's blood?

The tabernacle was not accessible to the people: We must not get the idea that the Israelites assembled in **the Tabernacle** for worship. **The priests** were permitted into **the Tabernacle**, but not **the people** from the other tribes. Furthermore, though the priest ministered in **the Holy Place** day after day, only **the high priest** could enter **the Most Holy Place**, and that once a year. When **he** did, **he** had to offer a sacrifice for **his** own sins as well as for the sins of **the people**. In contrast to this, **the heavenly Tabernacle** ([to see link click Bn - The Superiority of the New Covenant](#)) is open to all **the people of God**, and at all times (see [Ch - Let Us Draw Near to God](#)).²¹⁹

The author starts with a general description of **the Holy Place**. The emphasis is on the continual, daily work of the Levitical priest who was to do the same thing every day. **With the Tabernacle so arranged** (see [Br - The Insufficiency of the Former Sanctuary](#)), **the priests** (Hebrew: *cohanim*) **enter the Holy Place all the time to perform their duties (9:6 CJB)**. These duties included attending to **the Lampstand** twice a day, adding oil, trimming the wicks, and making sure the flame continued to burn (**Exodus 27:20-22; Leviticus 24:1-4**), each week placing fresh loaves of bread on **the table of the bread of the Presence (Leviticus 24:5-9)**, and burning incense on **the Altar of Incense (Exodus 30:7-9)**, as did **Zechariah** (see the commentary on [The Life of Christ Ak - The Birth of](#)

John the Baptist Foretold). The emphasis here is upon the repetition. Every day, over and over again, the same thing took place. **The** Levitical **priest's** work was never finished. In this **they** picture **Jesus Christ**, who does not cease ministering on our behalf. **His** ministry is perpetual, continual, and unceasing. How wonderful that our **Lord** never stops **His priestly** work on our behalf.



But only the high priest (Hebrew: *cohen hagadol*) **enters the Most Holy Place, and he goes in only once a year, and he must always bring the blood** of a slaughtered animal as a reminder that death is the penalty for in, **which he offers both for himself and for the sins committed in ignorance by the people (9:7 CJB)**. The Greek word **for** is the transliteration of *huper*, a preposition that speaks of substitution. It means *for the sake of*, or *in behalf of*. It points to the substitutionary character of the atonement. For instance: **It is more to your advantage to have one man die for all the people than for the whole nation to perish (John 11:50 NET)**, or, **He gave His life to free us from every kind of sin (Titus 2:14 NLT)**. Here **the blood** is offered as a type pointing to the atonement.²²⁰

Nothing, however, illustrates **Messiah** so perfectly as the work of **the high priest in the Most Holy Place** on the Day of Atonement (see the commentary on **Exodus [Go](#) - The Day of Atonement**). Whenever an Israelite sinned, his communion with **YHVH** was broken. As a result, the sacrifices for **sin** were never finished and **the priest's** work was never done. However, in spite of the continual sacrificing, the many **sins committed in ignorance** would accumulate, for which no sacrifice had been made. The Day of Atonement was intended to make sacrifice for all those sins that had not yet been covered.

The Day of Atonement, Yom Kippur, was a great day for liberation of conscience. The Israelite knew that whatever sins may have been missed in the daily sacrifices would then be taken care of. The slate would be completely clean, at least symbolically for a while. Yom Kippur was a time of release and relief. The devout Jews longed for that Day. They could not

go into **the Most Holy Place** themselves, but **the high priest** would go in for them and they would be delivered.

As John MacArthur relates in his commentary on **Hebrews**, very early on Yom Kippur, the **high priest** cleansed **himself** ritually and put on **his** elaborate robes, with the breastplate (near **his** heart, signifying that **he** carried **the people** in **his** heart) and ephod (on the shoulder, signifying that **he** had power on their behalf) representing the twelve tribes. Then **he** began **his** daily sacrificing. Unlike **Messiah**, **he** had to sacrifice for **his** own sin. Very likely **he** would have already slaughtered twenty-two animals by the time **he** reached **the Most Holy Place**: for the daily burnt offering - **a lamb**; for the new moon burnt offering - **two young bulls, a ram, and seven male lambs**; for the Day of Atonement burnt offerings - **a young bull, a ram, and seven male lambs** (Numbers 28:11-15, 29:7-10) and for his own sin offering - **a young bull and a ram for the burnt offering** (Leviticus 16:3, also see the commentary on Exodus [Go](#) - The Day of Atonement).

After finishing all these sacrifices, **he** took off the robes of glory and beauty and went and bathed **himself** again completely. **He** then put on a white linen garment, with no decoration or ornament at all, and performed the sacrifice of atonement.

Wearing **his** white linen, the **high priest** took coals off **the bronze altar** (see the commentary on Exodus [Fa](#) - Build an Altar of Acacia Wood Overlaid with Bronze), where the sacrifice was going to be made. Then **he** put them in a gold censer with incense and carried it into **the Most Holy Place**. Here again is a beautiful picture of **Messiah**, interceding for **His** own **people** before the presence of **YHVH**. Then the **high priest** went out and took a bull purchased with his own money, because it was to be offered for **his** own sin. After slaughtering the bull and offering the sacrifice, **he** had another priest assist **him** in catching the **blood** as it drained off. **He** swirled some of it in a small bowl and carried it into **the Most Holy Place**, and sprinkled it on the mercy seat. **The people** could hear the bells on **his** robe as moved about. When **he** hurried out, **the people** breathed a sigh of relief when they saw **him**. Had **he** entered **the Most Holy Place** ceremonially unclean, **he** would have been stuck dead.

When **he** came out, two goats were waiting for **him** by the bronze altar. In a small urn were two lots to determine which goat would be used for which purpose. One lot was marked for **ADONAI** and the other for Azazel, the scapegoat, which personified impurity. As each lot was drawn, it was tied to the horn of one of the goats. The goat designated for **Ha'Shem** was then killed on the bronze altar. Its **blood** was caught in the same way as the bull and was swirled in the bowl as it was carried into **the Most Holy Place**. This **blood** was also

sprinkled on the mercy seat, but this time for the sins of **the people**. Again **he** hurried out. Only on the basis of the **blood** of a goat would **YHVH** have fellowship with Isra'el, and only on the basis of the **blood** of **Yeshua Messiah** will **the LORD** have fellowship with us. **Christ's** blood on the mercy seat, is the place where **God** meets us.

Then the **high priest** placed his hands on the goat that remained, Azazel, the scapegoat, symbolically placing the sins of **the people** onto the goat's head. This goat was released into the desert to die, symbolically sending the sins of **the people** away for another year. **The rabbis teach that far from involving the recognition of Azazel as a deity, the sending of the goat was a symbolic idea that the people's sins and their evil consequences were to be sent back to the spirit of desolation and ruin, the source of all impurity.**

When the **high priest** was done with the sacrifice of atonement, **he** put the robes of glory and beauty back on, picturing still further the work of our **Lord**. In **His** high priestly prayer (see the commentary on **The Life of Christ Kx - The High Priestly Prayer**), anticipating what would happen after **His** crucifixion and resurrection, **Yeshua** said: **And now, Father, glorify Me in your presence with the glory I had with You before the world began (Yochanan 17:5).** It was if **He** was saying, "Give Me back **My** robes. I've done the job of atonement. **My** work of humility is finished."

Only one man, out of one family, out of one clan, out of one tribe, out of one nation, out of one race, out of all of humanity ever had access to **the Most Holy Place**. And, even then, this one man could enter on **only one day of the year** on Yom Kippur (see the commentary on **Exodus Go - The Day of Atonement**) because there was only one annual observance. **He** could not ever enter **the Most Holy Place** without **bringing blood**. That was **his** ticket, so to speak. The earthly **high priest**, who was making the offering in an earthly **Tabernacle**, needed the same protection of **blood** as did everyone else. The Greek word used here for **blood** is *aimatos*, which means *a basin of blood*. First, **the high priest** had to go into **the Most Holy Place** to offer **the blood** for **his** own **sins**. Only then, could **he** go in to offer **blood** for **the sins** of **the people committed in ignorance** (these requirements are seen in **Leviticus 16**). Although **the Most Holy Place** offering was **once a year**, there was still repetition, year in and year out. **The Holy Spirit is emphasizing that the former priestly service had very limited access to God: only the high priest could enter the Most Holy Place, only once a year, and only with blood.**²²¹

How wonderful that we now have twenty-four/seven access to **God**, for **Yeshua** paid the eternal sacrifice for our sins. **God's** opening the door of fellowship with **Him** to all who



choose to love and follow **Messiah** as **Lord**, is amazing! Though life gets busy, we need to make time for the most important relationship we will ever have-with our **Savior** and **Lord**. Let us make time for the joy that comes from spending time with the **God** who loves us with an extravagant love!