

Transfer of Sins and Physical Impurities to the Sanctuary in Leviticus—Part 1

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Introduction

Leviticus 16 states that the physical ritual impurities and sins of the Israelites were removed (*kipper*, Piel of the root *k-p-r*)¹ from the sanctuary once per year through special *ḥaṭṭā't* sacrifices (commonly translated “sin offerings”) on the Day of Atonement (vv. 16-20, 33).² This raises two interrelated, theologically significant (especially for Seventh-day Adventists), and heavily debated questions:

1. How did the physical impurities and sins (moral faults involving violations of divine commandments)³ get into the sanctuary so that they had to be removed from it? Theoretical possibilities are: (a) They automatically came to the sanctuary from a distance when they were incurred (impurities) or committed (sins), or (b) They were conveyed to the sanctuary by the mere presence of the sinner or person undergoing purification who brought a sacrifice there, or (c) They affected the sanctuary as a result of *ḥaṭṭā't* sacrifices throughout the year, that is, aside from the *ḥaṭṭā't* sacrifices that effected the initial one-time purification of

¹ Cf. *t-h-r* (Piel of *t-h-r*), “purify,” in v. 19.

² “Day of Atonement” is a common translation of *yôm (hak)kippūrīm* (Lev 23:27-28; 25:9), later known as Yom Kippur.

³ This order—physical impurities and sins—follows the order in which they are listed in Lev 16:16. But Leviticus prescribes remedies for sins (4:1-6:7 [5:26]; cf. 1:4) before it deals with physical impurities (chs. 12-15; cf. ch. 11). Therefore, the present article refers to the two kinds of negative abstract entities in either order.

the outer altar at its consecration (Exod 29:36-37; Lev 8:15) and the special Day of Atonement sacrifices that purged the sanctuary (Lev 16).⁴

2. What was the function of *ḥaṭṭā't* sacrifices throughout the year? Theoretical options are: (a) They purged the sanctuary, or (b) They removed impurities and sins from those who offered them, that is, the persons undergoing purification or the sinners, or (c) They both purged the sanctuary and removed impurities or sins from their offerers.

Interpreters of Leviticus have proposed four basic combinations of the alternative answers to these questions:⁵

⁴ A *ḥaṭṭā't* sacrifice that belonged to the festival complex of additional sacrifices on the Day of Atonement (Num 29:11) was not involved in cleansing the sanctuary.

⁵ These possibilities are represented in the range of scholarly views concerning the function of *ḥaṭṭā't* (חטאת) sacrifices throughout the year that James W. Watts succinctly summarizes in his *Leviticus 1-10*, Historical Commentary on the Old Testament (Leuven: Peeters, 2013), 307: “Does the חטאת expiate for sins (so Gray 1925, 59-60; Gane 2005, 106-43) or purify from defilement due to sinful and un sinful acts (so Milgrom), or both (so Levine 1974, 103; Kiuchi 1987, 65, 209 (sic 109?); Schenker 1994, 59-70; Schwartz 1995, 3-21; Gilders 2004, 30-32)? Or is it a ‘separation offering’ to put distance between the sinner and pollution (so Marx 1988; 2005, 184-85) or an ‘empowerment ritual’ to restore the status of person or altar (so Baumgarten 1996)? And is it the sanctuary that is purified (so Milgrom 254-56) or the worshipper (so Marx 1988; Gane 2005) or both (Kiuchi, Schwartz)?” Here Watts cites George Buchanan Gray, *Sacrifice in the Old Testament: Its Theory and Practice* (New York, NY: Ktav, 1971 [1st ed., 1925]); Roy Gane, *Cult and Character: Purification Offerings, Day of Atonement, and Theodicy* (Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 2005); Jacob Milgrom, *Leviticus 1-16: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary*, AB 3 (New York, NY: Doubleday, 1991); Baruch A. Levine, *In the Presence of the Lord: A Study of Cult and Some Cultic Terms in Ancient Israel*, Studies in Judaism in Late Antiquity 5 (Leiden: Brill, 1974); Nobuyoshi Kiuchi, *The Purification Offering in the Priestly Literature: Its Meaning and Function*, Journal for the Study of the Old Testament: Supplement Series 56 (Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1987); Adrian Schenker, “Interprétations récentes et dimensions spécifiques du sacrifice *ḥaṭṭā't*,” *Biblica* 75 (1994), 59-70; Baruch J. Schwartz, “The Bearing of Sin in the Priestly Literature,” in *Pomegranates and Golden Bells: Studies in Biblical, Jewish, and Near Eastern Ritual, Law, and Literature in Honor of Jacob Milgrom*, ed. David P. Wright, David N. Freedman, and Avi Hurvitz (Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 1995), 3-21; William K. Gilders, *Blood Ritual in the Hebrew Bible: Meaning and Power* (Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins, 2004); Alfred Marx, “Sacrifice pour les péchés ou rites de levée de sanction,” *Zeitschrift für die alttestamentliche Wissenschaft* 100 (1988), 183-98 (I would add Alfred Marx, “Sacrifice pour les péchés ou rite de passage? Quelques réflexions sur la fonction du *ḥaṭṭā't*,” *Revue Biblique* 96 [1989], 27-48); Alfred Marx, *Les systèmes sacrificiels de l'Ancien Testament: Formes et fonctions du culte sacrificiel à Yhwh*, Supplements to Vetus Testamentum 105 (Leiden: Brill, 2005); Albert I. Baumgarten, “*Hatta't* Sacrifices,” *Revue Biblique* 103 (1996): 337-42. It should be clarified that I (Gane 2005) have written that *ḥaṭṭā't* sacrifices not only expiated for sins, that is, removed their guilt from the repentant persons who

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First, 1a and 2a: Physical impurities and sins were automatically transmitted to the sanctuary from a distance (1a). All *ḥaṭṭā't* sacrifices throughout the year removed the impurities and relatively minor *ḥaṭṭā't* sins from parts of the sanctuary (2a), but major *peša'* sins (usually translated “transgressions”) could be removed from the sanctuary only on the Day of Atonement (see *peša'* removed by sacrifice only in Lev 16:16).⁶ If so, there was *one phase* of ritual removal for a particular impurity or sin: removal from the sanctuary, whether throughout the year or on the Day of Atonement.

Second, 1a and 2a and 2b: Physical impurities and sins were automatically transmitted to the sanctuary from a distance (1a). *Ḥaṭṭā't* sacrifices throughout the year removed the impurities and relatively minor sins both from the sanctuary and from those who offered them (2c), but major *peša'* sins were removed from the sanctuary only on the Day of Atonement.⁷ If so, a given sin or impurity was treated in *one phase* of ritual

offered them, but also purified residual physical ritual impurities (which were not sins) from the offerers who were undergoing purification (Gane, *Cult and Character*, 112-23).

⁶ Jacob Milgrom, “תפקיד קרבן החטאת,” *Tarbiz* 40 (1970): 1-8 (Hebrew); Jacob Milgrom, “Day of Atonement as Annual Day of Purgation in Temple Times,” *Encyclopaedia Judaica* (1971), 5:1384-86; Jacob Milgrom, “Israel’s Sanctuary: The Priestly ‘Picture of Dorian Gray,’” *Revue Biblique* 83 (1976): 390-99; Jacob Milgrom, “Atonement in the OT,” *Interpreter’s Dictionary of the Bible: Supplementary Volume*, ed. K. Crim (Nashville, TN, 1976), 78-80; and especially Milgrom, *Leviticus 1-16*, 254-61. Significant aspects of Milgrom’s interpretation were anticipated by the one-phase views of Johann C. K. von Hofmann, *Der Schriftbeweis: Ein Theologischer Versuch*, 2d ed. (Nördlingen, 1859), 2/1: 257-8; Johann H. Kurtz, *Sacrificial Worship of the Old Testament*, trans. J. Martin (Minneapolis, MN: Klock & Klock Christian Publishers, 1980; repr. of 1863), 141-42, 144; David Hoffmann, *Das Buch Leviticus* (Berlin: M. Poppelauer, 1905-6), 212-13, 436; Albion F. Ballenger, *Cast Out for the Cross of Christ* (Tropico, CA: A. F. Ballenger, 1909), 58-59, 61-62; cf. 63, 67-68, 71-74).

⁷ David Hoffmann, *Das Buch Leviticus* (Berlin: M. Poppelauer, 1905-6), 212-13, 436; cf. Johann H. Kurtz, *Sacrificial Worship of the Old Testament*, trans. J. Martin (Minneapolis, MN: Klock & Klock Christian Publishers, 1980; repr. of 1863), 141-42, 144. Recent interpretations that *ḥaṭṭā't* sacrifices throughout the year simultaneously removed sins from offerers and purged the sanctuary from pollution caused by those moral faults include, e.g., those of Schwartz, “The Bearing of Sin,” 19-21; Christian Eberhart, *Studien zur Bedeutung der Opfer im Alten Testament. Die Signifikanz von Blut- und Verbrennungsriten im kultischen Rahmen*, Wissenschaftliche Monographien zum Alten und Neuen Testament 94 (Neukirchen-Vluyn: Neukirchener Verlag, 2002), 242-43, 247-48; John Dennis, “The Function of the חטאת Sacrifice in the Priestly Literature: An Evaluation of the View of Jacob Milgrom,” *Ephemerides Theologicae Lovanienses* 78/1 (2002): esp. 117-26, 128-29; Jay Sklar, *Sin, Impurity, Sacrifice, Atonement: The Priestly Conceptions*, Hebrew Bible Monographs, 2 (Sheffield: Sheffield Phoenix, 2005), e.g., 87-88, 100, 184; Jay Sklar, “Review of Roy E. Gane, *Cult and Character: Purification Offerings, Day of*

removal: whether from the sanctuary and the offerer throughout the year or from the sanctuary on the Day of Atonement.

Third, 1b and 2c: Physical impurities and sins were conveyed to the sanctuary by the mere presence of persons undergoing purification and sinners who brought their *ḥaṭṭā*’t sacrifices there throughout the year (1b). Immediately following this contamination, the *ḥaṭṭā*’t sacrifices removed the impurities and sins both from the sanctuary and from the offerers (2c). The Day of Atonement rituals, including both the special *ḥaṭṭā*’t sacrifices and the ritual of Azazel’s goat, provided a second phase of more powerful atonement for sins.⁸ This interpretation sees *two phases* of ritual removal for a particular sin.

Fourth, 1c and 2b (here in reverse order): *Ḥaṭṭā*’t sacrifices throughout the year removed the physical impurities and sins from their offerers (2b). As a result, the impurities and sins affected the sanctuary (1c). If so, a given sin or impurity was ritually removed in *two phases*: first from the offerer and then from the sanctuary on the Day of Atonement.⁹ Among those who hold this view, there are differences regarding dynamics by which sacrifices resulted in transfer of sins and impurities to the sanctuary.

The present article in three parts will explore the following subtopics. Part 1 is below in this issue and Parts 2 and 3 will appear in subsequent issues of the *Journal of the Adventist Theological Society*.

Atonement, and Theodicy,” in *Review of Biblical Literature* [https://www.bookreviews.org/pdf/5068_6109.pdf] (2007), 5; Jay Sklar, *Leviticus*, Tyndale Old Testament Commentaries 3 (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2014), 111-13.

⁸ Kiuchi, *The Purification Offering*, 54, 59-62, 65-66, 156-59. Kiuchi also expresses the view that only sin, including a sin of violating an instruction regarding physical impurity, but not such an impurity itself, defiled the tabernacle (158).

⁹ Angel M. Rodriguez, *Substitution in the Hebrew Cultus*, Andrews University Seminary Doctoral Dissertation Series 3 (Berrien Springs, MI: Andrews University Press, 1979), 136; cf. 219, 305-307; Gerhard F. Hasel, “Studies in Biblical Atonement I: Continual Sacrifice, Defilement / / Cleansing and Sanctuary,” in *The Sanctuary and the Atonement: Biblical, Historical, and Theological Studies*, ed. Arnold V. Wallenkampf (Washington, D.C.: General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists, 1981), 93-107; Gerhard F. Hasel, “Studies in Biblical Atonement II: The Day of Atonement,” in *The Sanctuary and the Atonement*, 115-25; Alberto Treiyer, *The Day of Atonement and the Heavenly Judgment from the Pentateuch to Revelation* (Siloam Springs, AK: Creation Enterprises International, 1992), 147-212; Gane, *Cult and Character*, esp. 106-43, 167-81, 267-302.

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Part 1

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1 Background: Terms and Concepts

Comprehension of some basic ritual concepts and terms is prerequisite to valid analysis of the transfer of physical impurities and sins to and from the sanctuary and the function of *ḥaṭṭā't* sacrifices.

1. *Ritual functions are attached to activities by ritual authorities*, which in the case of the Israelite rituals, was the deity YHWH. Such functions are not inherent in the activities. Therefore, a given ritual activity can carry different functions in different contexts.¹⁰ For example, sprinkling blood seven times in an area of the tabernacle removed (*kipper*) impurities and sins from that area (Lev 16:14-16), but the same activity performed on the outer altar in the courtyard *as part of the same ritual* (re)consecrated (Piel of *q-d-š*) it (v. 19). Consequently, we cannot safely assume the function of a ritual activity in one context on the basis of its

¹⁰ Compare the fact that meanings are not inherent in language symbols, so such symbols can carry different meanings in different languages or in the same language. For example, a “gift” in English is a present, but “Gift” in German is poison. In English, “port” can be a harbor town, an opening, the left side of a ship, or a sweet wine from Portugal.

function in another context. Rather, we must rely on explicit indications and implicit clues regarding ritual functions in various contexts that are provided by the biblical text, which is our only source of information regarding the ancient Israelite ritual activities and their functions.¹¹

2. A “sacrifice” can be defined as an offering given to a deity in a ritualized manner.¹² The broadest Hebrew term for a “sacrifice” is *qorbān*, “offering/gift/sacrifice” (e.g., Lev 1:2-3, 10, 14; 2:1, 4-5, 7), which includes specific categories of sacrifices (e.g. 1:3; 2:1; 3:1; 4:32).¹³ The fact that an offering of grain could be a *qorbān*, “sacrifice” (2:1, 4-5, 7, 12-13; 5:11—as a *ḥattā’t* sacrifice) shows that killing was not a defining element of a sacrifice, although animals offered as sacrifices to YHWH in the Israelite ritual system were slaughtered as meat for Him (cf. Num 28:2—“my food for my food offerings”). The live goat belonging to Azazel (a proper name, commonly mistranslated “scapegoat”)¹⁴ on the Day of Atonement (Lev 16:10, 20-22) was not a sacrifice, not because it was not slaughtered, but because it was not offered to the deity. Even if a bird or animal was killed as part of a ritual process, the ritual was not a

¹¹ Gane, *Cult and Character*, 3-24, 273; cf. Roy E. Gane, *Ritual Dynamic Structure*, Gorgias Dissertations 14, Religion 2 (Piscataway, NJ: Gorgias Press, 2004), 2-10 (including citation of Frits Staal, *Rules Without Meaning: Ritual, Mantras and the Human Sciences* [New York, NY: Peter Lang, 1989], 127-29, 131, 134, 137, 140, 330).

¹² Roy E. Gane, “Sacrifice in the Old Testament,” *St. Andrews Encyclopaedia of Theology*, 2022, online at <https://www.saet.ac.uk/Christianity/SacrificeandtheOldTestament>.

¹³ *Dictionary of Classical Hebrew* (hereafter *DCH*), ed. David J. A. Clines, 9 vols. (Sheffield: Sheffield Phoenix Press, 1993-2014), 7:316. Heinz-Josef Fabry, “*qorbān*,” *Theological Dictionary of the Old Testament* (hereafter *TDOT*), ed. G. Johannes Botterweck, Helmer Ringgren, and Heinz-Josef Fabry; trans. John T. Willis et al.; 16 vols. (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1974-2016), 13:155-56; cf. Christian A. Eberhart, “Sacrifice? Holy Smokes! Reflections on Cult Terminology for Understanding Sacrifice in the Hebrew Bible,” in *Ritual and Metaphor: Sacrifice in the Bible*, ed. Christian A. Eberhart, Resources for Biblical Study 68 (Atlanta, GA: Society of Biblical Literature, 2011), 22-29 on *qorbān* and other key terms for sacrifice. The noun *qorbān* is derived from the root *q-r-b*, of which the Qal verb in a ritual context refers to a priest “approaching” the altar to offer a sacrifice there (Exod 40:32; Lev 9:7-8; 21:17-18) and the Hiphil means “bring near/offer/present,” as when an offerer brings an animal or grain item to the sanctuary and a priest offers it to the Lord on the altar (e.g. Lev 1:2-3, 5, 10, 13-15; 2:1, 4, 8). See *DCH* 7:304-305, 308-11; Roy E. Gane and Jacob Milgrom, “*qārah*,” *TDOT* 13:138, 141-43.

¹⁴ If “Azazel” meant scapegoat (from “escapegoat,” i.e., the goat that departs/gets away), Lev 16:10 would express nonsense because here the goat is sent to Azazel. Is the goat sent to the scapegoat?! On “Azazel,” see Roy Gane, *Leviticus, Numbers*, NIV Application Commentary (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2004), 288-89.

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sacrifice if the offering material (the slain creature) was not offered to the deity, as in cases of nonsacrificial elimination rituals (Lev 14:4-7, 49-53; Deut 21:1-9).¹⁵

3. The verb *kipper* (Piel of *k-p-r*) is the main term for removal of impurities and sins by *ḥaṭṭā't* sacrifices, both throughout the year and on the Day of Atonement. This verb is commonly translated “make atonement,” which refers to relational reconciliation/reintegration, with “at-one-ment” originally meaning “unity.”¹⁶ It is true that *kipper* denotes part of a process of reconciliation with God that was carried out by ritual activities officiated by priests at the Israelite sanctuary. However, a process of reconciliation for a person who had committed a sin was completed by forgiveness granted by the Lord Himself, as in Lev 4:31, which ESV renders: “And the priest shall make atonement for him, and he shall be forgiven.”¹⁷ CEB expresses the same idea by translating this verse (with gender-neutral language): “In this way, the priest will make reconciliation for them, and they will be forgiven.” Such translations make it sound as though the ritual actions performed by the priest completed the atonement/reconciliation, but they did not because reconciliation also included divine forgiveness.

A more accurate basic translation of *kipper* is “effect removal”¹⁸ because the ritual actions symbolically removed a problem that interfered with the divine-human relationship.¹⁹ If the problem was a sin, *kipper* was prerequisite to forgiveness by God (Lev 4:20, 26, 31, 35; 5:10, 13). However, if the problem was a physical ritual impurity signifying a state

¹⁵ The apparent death of one or more animals for God to provide clothing of skin for Adam and Eve (Gen 3:21) was not a sacrifice because Adam and Eve did not offer the animal(s) to God. The first sacrifices recorded in the Bible are those of Cain and Abel (Gen 4:3-4). Abram's covenant ritual did not involve offering the creatures to God (Gen 15:9-11, 17-18), so it was not a sacrifice.

¹⁶ See Watts, *Leviticus 1-10*, 345.

¹⁷ Literally, “it will be forgiven [Niphal of *s-l-h*] to/for him,” with the Niphal passive implying God as the agent. On the “divine passive,” see Christian Macholz, “Das ‘Passivum divinum,’ seine Anfänge im Alten Testament und der ‘Hofstil,’” *Zeitschrift für die neutestamentliche Wissenschaft und die Kunde der älteren Kirche* 81 (1990): 247-53. Note that subsequent biblical quotations in this article are from the ESV unless otherwise indicated.

¹⁸ Gilders, *Blood Ritual*, 29. Watts proposes another translation: “‘Mitigate, mitigation’ describes the alleviation of negative consequences produced by various kinds of problems. . . By presenting offerings, priests ‘mitigate’ sins and pollutions so that people can be forgiven and become clean. ‘Mitigate’ also carries overtones that suggest a partial solution to a problem that may require more and other responses” (*Leviticus 1-10*, 345).

¹⁹ Cf. Gane, *Cult and Character*, 193-94.

of sinfulness that was out of harmony with divine holiness, the *kipper* activities themselves completed the process of purification so that the offerer became “pure/clean” (12:7-8; 14:19, 31; 15:15, 30).

4. *Physical ritual impurities were symptomatic of the birth-to-death state of sinfulness involving mortality*²⁰ that comes from sinful action (Gen 3; cf. Rom 6:23a). Such an impurity, which could be caused by a genital flow (Lev 12, 15), skin disease (Lev 13-14), or a corpse (Num 19),²¹ was not a sin,²² that is, a moral fault constituted by violation of a prohibitive or performative divine commandment (as described in Lev 4:2, 13, 22, 27; Num 15:22-23; cf. Lev 5:17; Jas 4:17). The Bible never refers to a physical impurity as a *ḥaṭṭā’t*, “sin.” Accordingly, persons who were ritually freed from physical impurities received only physical purification (Lev 12:7-8, etc.), not forgiveness, which they did not need.²³ However, failure to follow a rule concerning physical impurity was a sin because it broke a divine command (e.g., Lev 5:2-3, 6).

5. *Translation of the ḥaṭṭā’t sacrifice as “sin offering” is problematic.* This traditional translation, which goes back to the Septuagint, is based on the facts that the word *ḥaṭṭā’t* as a kind of sacrifice looks identical to the word for “sin,” which is also *ḥaṭṭā’t* (e.g., Lev 4:3, 14, 23, 28), and *ḥaṭṭā’t* sacrifices could affect removal (*kipper*) for sins (Lev 4:1-5:13). However, scholars have recognized that the rendering “sin offering” is inadequate and misleading for several reasons,²⁴ including the following. First, the

²⁰ Hyam Maccoby, *Ritual and Morality: The Ritual Purity System and its Place in Judaism* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), 31-32, 48-50, 60, 207-8.

²¹ See these three categories in Num 5:2.

²² Contra Sklar, *Leviticus*, 53. Here Sklar refers to Num 6:9-12, but in this case the unintentional sin of the Nazirite is to break his vow that he/she would not incur corpse impurity; the impurity itself is not the sin. Cf. Yitzhaq Feder, who suggests that *ḥaṭṭā’t* sacrifices addressed suspected sins that were divinely punished by bodily impurities (*Blood Expiation in Hittite and Biblical Ritual: Origins, Context, and Meaning*, Writings from the Ancient World Supplement Series 2 [Atlanta, GA: Society of Biblical Literature, 2011], 107-8). But Feder’s theory would imply, for example, that every birth, which made the mother ritually impure so that she was required to offer a *ḥaṭṭā’t* sacrifice for the completion of her purification (Lev 12:6-8), resulted from divine punishment for some kind of suspected sin. This real or apparent contradiction of the divine blessing to “be fruitful and multiply” (Gen 1:28; 9:1, 7) would raise a serious question of theodicy (justification of God’s character).

²³ Cf., e.g., Milgrom, *Leviticus 1-16*, 256, 760-61.

²⁴ Milgrom, *Leviticus 1-16*, 253-54; cf. Levine, *In the Presence of the Lord*, 101-2; Gordon J. Wenham, *The Book of Leviticus*, New International Commentary on the Old Testament (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1979), 88-89; John E. Hartley, *Leviticus*, Word Biblical Commentary 4 (Dallas, TX: Word Books, 1992), 55.

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verbal form corresponding to the noun *ḥaṭṭā't* when the verb indicates the function of a ritual is not the Qal of *ḥ-t-* 'sin,' but the Piel, "purify," as in purification of an altar (Lev 8:15), a house (14:49, 52), or a person (Num 19:19)—purifying function of the "water of *ḥaṭṭā't*" in 8:7).²⁵ Second, *ḥaṭṭā't* sacrifices remedied not only sins, which were violations of divine commandments, but also physical ritual impurities (Lev 12:6-8; 14:19, 31; 15:15, 30; Num 19:9, 19), which were not sins, but were symptomatic of the human state of sinfulness (see above).²⁶ Third, all expiatory sacrifices (burnt, purification, and reparation offerings) remedied sin and guilt, so the usual renderings "sin offering" for the *ḥaṭṭā't* sacrifice and "guilt offering" for the *'āšām* sacrifice (Lev 5:14-26 [Eng. 6:7]) are confusing and misleading, conveying the mistaken impression that the *ḥaṭṭā't* sacrifice removed all sins and the *'āšām* sacrifice expiated for all kinds of guilt.

Because the *ḥaṭṭā't* sacrifice effected removal/purification both from sins and from physical ritual impurities, I avoid the confusion caused by the rendering "sin offering" by adopting the fairly recent scholarly convention of translating it as "purification offering."²⁷ I also accept the translation of the *'āšām* sacrifice as "reparation offering" because this kind of sacrifice was involved in compensation/restitution (cf. *'āšām* in Lev 5:15, 25 [Heb. 6:6]; Num 5:7-8).²⁸ From this point on, the remainder of the present article will use these translations: purification offering for the *ḥaṭṭā't* sacrifice and reparation offering for the *'āšām* sacrifice.

6. *Purification and reparation offerings were separate categories of sacrifice.* The purification offering (*ḥaṭṭā't*) did not include the reparation

²⁵ Feder's alternative interpretation of the Piel of *ḥ-t-* 'and *ḥaṭṭā't*, which defends the translation of *ḥaṭṭā't* as "sin offering," assumes diachronic development: that the Piel of *ḥ-t-* 'is a denominative from the noun *ḥaṭṭā't*, "sin offering," which "originally denoted the actions associated with the *חַטָּאת* offering, but later developed a general sense 'to perform a purification rite'" (*Blood Expiation*, 104; cf. 103, 105-8).

²⁶ Richard E. Averbeck points out that according to Luke 2:22-24, Mary brought the standard *ḥaṭṭā't* sacrifice for her physical ritual purification after giving birth to Jesus (cf. Lev 12:8). This rules out the idea that such a sacrifice "was necessarily offered for moral sin, since Mary certainly did not sin in giving birth to the Lord Jesus Christ" ("*ḥaṭṭā't*," *New International Dictionary of Old Testament Theology and Exegesis*, ed. Willem A. Van Gemeren, 5 vols. [Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1997], 2:100-101).

²⁷ E.g., Milgrom, *Leviticus 1-16*, 253-254; Wenham, *The Book of Leviticus*, 88-89; Hartley, *Leviticus*, 55; CEB. Averbeck cautions that this translation should not be taken to mean that this kind of sacrifice only dealt with (amoral) physical ritual impurity ("*ḥaṭṭā't*," 2:95).

²⁸ E.g., Milgrom, *Leviticus 1-16*, 339-45; Wenham, *The Book of Leviticus*, 104-5; Hartley, *Leviticus*, 76-80; CEB renders it "compensation offering."

offering (‘*āšām*) as a subcategory.²⁹ These two kinds of sacrifices appear separately in the list of sacrifices in Lev 7:37 and required different blood manipulations: daubing blood on the horns of an altar in a purification offering (4:7, 18, 25, 30, 34; also sprinkling seven times in vv. 6, 17), but tossing blood on the sides of the outer altar in a reparation offering (7:2). The two sacrifices remedied distinct kinds of evils: Purification offerings dealt with minor violations of divine commandments (4:1-5:13) and with physical ritual impurities (e.g., 12:6-8), but reparation offerings expiated unintentional sins of sacrilege involving misuse of holy things (5:14-16), unidentified violations of divine commandments (vv. 17-19; which could include sins of sacrilege), and an intentional sin of sacrilege by misusing the divine name in an oath to defraud another human being (vv. 20-26 [Eng. 6:1-7]).³⁰

Leviticus 5:1-13 prescribes the purification offering, labelled as such in verses 6-9, 11-12, as a “compensation” (‘*āšām*; vv. 6-7; ESV, CEB),³¹ using the term ‘*āšām* in its general sense. This unit does not concern the reparation offering, which in the next unit (5:14-26 [Eng. 6:7]) is indicated by the technical usage of ‘*āšām* as the label for a kind of sacrifice (5:15-16, 18-19, 25 [Eng. 6:6]).³² The argument that “because the same language of ‘*asham* is used throughout Leviticus 5:6-6:7, it should be translated as ‘guilt offering’ or ‘trespass offering’ throughout this section”³³ is an instance of innerbiblical eisegesis that James Barr has termed “illegitimate totality transfer”: “The error that arises, when the ‘meaning’ of a word

²⁹ Contra Richard M. Davidson, *A Song for the Sanctuary: Experiencing God’s Presence in Shadow and Reality* (Silver Spring, MD: Biblical Research Institute, 2022), 242, 286, 298-99 (and others cited here). The author of Leviticus was quite capable of indicating that one kind of ritual was a subcategory of another, as in the Hebrew construct expression *zebah šālāmīm* (Lev 3:1, 6; cf. Exod 29:28; Lev 7:18, etc.) referring to a *šālāmīm*, “well-being offering,” that belongs to the larger *zebah* category of sacrifices from which offerers were to eat, which also includes the Passover *zebah* (Exod 12:27; 34:25). Furthermore, the *tôdâ*, “thanksgiving” *zebah* (Lev 7:12; 22:29) is a subcategory of the *zebah šālāmīm*, as indicated by the expression *zebah tôdat šālāmāyw*, “his thanksgiving *zebah* sacrifice of well-being” (7:13, 15). But an analogous combination of the terms *ḥaṭṭā’t* and ‘*āšām* is nowhere to be found.

³⁰ Cf. Milgrom, *Leviticus 1-16*, 337-38, 365-66.

³¹ Here in vv. 6-7, NJPS, NRSV, and NIV 2011 render “penalty” and NET Bible renders “penalty for guilt.” NASB 1995 incorrectly renders “guilt offering,” confusing the use of ‘*āšām* here with that which appears in the next unit (5:14-26 [Eng. 6:7]). NKJV is also confused, translating “trespass offering” in 5:6 and “trespass” in v. 7.

³² The ‘*āšām*, “reparation offering,” serves as an ‘*āšām*, “compensation,” in 5:15, 25 (Eng. 6:6); 19:21.

³³ Davidson, *A Song for the Sanctuary*, 298.

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(understood as the total series of relations in which it is used in the literature) is read into a particular case as its sense and implication there, may be called ‘illegitimate totality transfer.’”³⁴

7. *The burnt offering was the original and primary expiatory sacrifice.*³⁵ Purification and reparation offerings did not come close to remedying all expiable sins. Purification offerings only expiated/removed culpabilities for minor sins that (1) were unintentional violations of divine commands (Lev 4; Num 15:22-29), (2) consisted of (intentional) failure to identify oneself as a witness regarding someone else’s crime after hearing “a public curse against one who fails to testify” (Lev 5:1 NET Bible), or (3) involved forgetfulness (“it is hidden from him”) to undergo ritual purification or fulfill an oath in a timely manner (vv. 2-4). Additionally, purification offerings expiated physical ritual impurities, which were not sinful actions (Lev 12, 14-15; Num 19). Reparation offerings only addressed unintentional or intentional sins of sacrilege and unidentified sins (see above). Therefore, purification and reparation offerings together did not remedy most kinds of non-defiant intentional sins.

The fact that only defiant (“high-handed”) intentional sins were explicitly barred from sacrificial expiation (Num 15:30-31) implies that all non-defiant sins should have been expiable. Which sacrifice expiated intentional non-defiant sins that were outside the scope of purification and reparation offerings? The logical answer is the burnt offering, the primary multi-functional patriarchal sacrifice (e.g., Gen 8:20; 22:2-3, 6-8, 13) that could expiate (esp. Job 1:5; 42:8-9) and continued to expiate when the Israelite sanctuary was established (Lev 1:4; 16:24; cf. paired with purification offerings in 5:10; 9:7; 12:8; 14:20, 31; 15:15, 30; Num 15:24-25).

The specialized purification and reparation offerings were added when the sanctuary system was initiated in order to deal with physical ritual impurities and sins that could affect the sanctuary or the domain of holy things associated with it.³⁶ Physical impurities and sins that could

³⁴ James Barr, *The Semantics of Biblical Language* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1961; repr. London: SCM, 1983), 218; cf. 222.

³⁵ “The burnt offering was the commonest of all the OT sacrifices. Its main function was to atone for man’s sin by propitiating God’s wrath” (Wenham, *The Book of Leviticus*, 63; cf. 57-59). “. . . the burnt offering was the principal atoning sacrifice in ancient Israel. It was the sacrifice that reconciled the sinner with his creator. It was the most frequent sacrifice and also the most costly” (95).

³⁶ Cf. Milgrom, *Leviticus 1-16*, 175-77. In the canonical order of the Bible, the first biblical mention of a purification offering is in Exod 29:14 in the instructions for

contaminate the sanctuary were remedied by purification offerings. In order to remove such impurities and sins, purification offerings had the unique ability to transfer these negative abstract entities (or evils) from one person, animal, thing, or place to another. Sins involving sacrilegious misuse of the Lord's holy things were expiated by reparation offerings.

Purification and reparation offerings were always mandatory when people committed certain kinds of sins. In Lev 1, however, burnt offerings are presented as voluntary in the sense that the offerer decides when to bring the sacrifice. On this basis, it has been argued that the burnt offering did not have the function of remedying a particular sin; rather, it atoned for general human sinfulness.³⁷ However, while it is true that all offerers of all sacrifices were faulty human beings,³⁸ there is no real evidence for ritual removal of general human sinfulness by animal sacrifices, except for removal of physical ritual impurities by means of purification offerings.³⁹

consecrating the Israelite priests and the altar at the sanctuary, as recognized by Averbeck, “*ḥaṭṭā’t*,” 2:93 and M. L. Andreasen, *The Sanctuary Service*, 2nd ed. (Washington, D.C.: Review and Herald, 1947), 130, who adds: “There are those who believe that they were in existence and use before, but there is no record of this until the time of Moses.” The word *ḥaṭṭā’t* in Gen 4:7 means “sin,” not “sin offering” (contra the suggestion of Joaquim Azevedo, “At the Door of Paradise: A Contextual Interpretation of Gen 4:7,” *Biblische Notizen* 100 [1999]: 45-59).

³⁷ Davidson, *A Song for the Sanctuary*, 230, citing J. H. Kurtz, *Offerings, Sacrifices, and Worship in the Old Testament*, trans. James Martin (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1998), 352 and Slaviša Janković, “A Re-Examination of Pentateuchal Hamartiology and Atonement as a Hermeneutical Framework for Interpreting the Laying on of Hands” (PhD diss., Andrews University, 2020; <https://digitalcommons.andrews.edu/dissertations/1739/>), 408-11.

³⁸ Cf. Lev 16:16b: “. . . the tent of meeting, which dwells with them in the midst of their uncleanness.”

³⁹ Contra Janković, “A Re-Examination of Pentateuchal Hamartiology,” 503, 505, 542, 702. It is true that General Human Sinfulness (GHS), as Janković terms it, always implicitly plays a major role in the approach of a fallen human being to God, and this would be especially true in close proximity to the divine presence at the sanctuary, particularly for the priests (e.g., 495-96). Indeed, “if the human being, defined as such, wants to approach God, some sort of mediation is needed, even if no particular sin is committed by the human party” (414). In this sense, every sacrifice of an inherently sinful human being must deal in some way with GHS (630-31). However, there is no real evidence that symbolic transfer of GHS from an offerer was specifically represented by any sacrificial activity. The Hebrew terms for evils removed from offerers throughout the year (and from the sanctuary on the Day of Atonement; Lev 16:16, 19) do not include a term for GHS. Kiuchi has interpreted the inaugural purification offerings for the priests and the people in Lev 9, where no specific sins are mentioned, as dealing with “not particular sins but rather general sinfulness or uncleanness, assumed in the encounter of man—whether he is a priest or not—with God on any special occasion” (*The Purification Offering*, 46). Then Kiuchi

The fact that the timing of a burnt offering is not specified in Lev 1 does not mean that it could not expiate particular sins. Rather, it is because the burnt offering could have a variety of functions, including to fulfill a vow or as a freewill offering (Num 15:3, 8) or to expiate a particular sin when the offerer knew that he/she needed that (as in Job 42:7-9, but not in Ps 51:18 [Eng. v. 16]) only because a burnt offering would be insufficient expiation in this particular case). In fact, the timing of burnt offerings was mandatory in a number of cases when they were paired with purification offerings to remedy specific sins (Lev 5:7-10; Num 15:22-26) or physical ritual impurities (Lev 12:6-8; 14:19-20, 22, 30-31; 15:15, 30).

2 Movement of Physical Ritual Impurities and Sins to the Sanctuary

2.1 From a distance?

Leviticus 20:3 and Num 19:13, 20 indicate that Israelites or non-Israelite residents/immigrants (cf. Lev 20:2; Num 19:10) who committed the extreme sins of Molech worship (Lev 20) or willful neglect to undergo purification from corpse impurity (Num 19) defiled (Piel of *t-m-*) the sanctuary, that is, by committing these sins. This kind of illegitimate defilement of the sanctuary from the locations where the sins were committed, that is, at a distance from the sanctuary that could be anywhere in the land of Israel (Lev 20:2, 4—“the people of the land”; cf. vv. 22-24; Num 19:10—“a perpetual statute”), is only attested in these two passages. In both cases, the perpetrators of the egregious sins are condemned to the terminal divine punishment of “cutting off” (*k-r-t*), from which they cannot be freed by expiatory sacrifices (cf. Num 15:30-31, contrasted with vv. 22-29).

There is no textual support for the way in which Jacob Milgrom generalizes from the exceptional cases of Lev 20 and Num 19, in which

has suggested that purification offerings on other festive occasions, such as those in Lev 23:19; Num 7, 28-29, which similarly do not refer to any specific sin or physical impurity, could also expiate general sinfulness or impurity (58-59). However, it was with reference to the purification offering of the people in Lev 9:15 that Moses expressed the general rule that the priests were to bear the culpability (*’āwōn*) of the offerer(s) (10:16-17). Such consequential liability results from sins (e.g., Lev 5:1, 17; 7:18; 17:16; 19:8; 20:17, 19), not from general human sinfulness. So, the one-time inaugural purification offering in 9:15, and presumably also corporate sacrifices at regular intervals on other special sacred occasions (e.g., Num 28:15, 22; 29:5, 11, 16, 19, 22, etc.), must have dealt on a national level with sins that the people had committed, although the text does not specify these. Such corporate expiation for the health of the covenant relationship between the Lord and Israel as a nation did not replace the requirement for individuals to bring their own purification offerings for sins.

no sacrificial expiation was available to the sinners, to cases of sins or physical impurities that were remediable by purification offerings.⁴⁰ Remediable sins and impurities are never said to defile (Piel of *t-m-*) the sanctuary. Numbers 5:2-3 shows that the most serious kinds of physical impurities inside the Israelite camp—skin disease (so-called “leprosy”), genital discharges, and impurity from corpses (14:19, 31; 15:15, 30; Num 19:9, 11-12, 17-19)⁴¹—could defile (Piel of *t-m-*) the camp, which constituted the immediate environment of God’s dwelling-place at the sanctuary. However, these impurities would not defile the camp, let alone the sanctuary (cf. Lev 15:31), if the infected individuals were put outside of it (Num 5:2-3). Therefore, the dynamic of defiling the sanctuary from an unlimited distance within the land of Israel is clearly ruled out in cases of physical impurities.

Only very serious moral faults—sexual immorality, Molech worship, and murder—which were inexpiable by sacrifice, are said to defile (Piel of *t-m-*) the land of Israel (Lev 18:28; cf. vv. 6-27; Num 35:33-34).⁴² This implies that the lesser sins expiable by sacrifices would not defile the land, which comprised the larger environment of the Lord’s sanctuary/temple, and therefore, these sins would not defile the sanctuary either.

Defiling the sanctuary from a distance and receiving expiation through a purification offering, prerequisite to divine forgiveness, were mutually exclusive. This rules out the one-stage theory that the purpose of purification offerings that provided expiation for the benefit of sinners throughout the year was to purge parts of the sanctuary from expiable *ḥaṭṭā’t* sins or physical impurities that had already reached it from a distance. If that one-stage theory were true, the biblical text would somehow indicate that purification offerings throughout the year purged the sanctuary, but such evidence is completely lacking.

Leviticus 20:3 and Num 19:13, 20 belong to laws that indicate relevant circumstances to which penalties apply. These texts do not say that the

⁴⁰ Milgrom, *Leviticus 1-16*, 257-58.

⁴¹ Individuals having skin disease or genital discharges were eligible for ritual purification only when symptoms of diseased conditions abated, showing that they were healed (Lev 14:3; 15:13, 28). The list of impure conditions requiring the persons who had incurred them to be put out of the camp, according to Num 5:2, does not include a woman who has just given birth (Lev 12), who is forbidden to come into the sanctuary (v. 4), i.e., its courtyard, and must offer a purification offering with a burnt offering to complete her purification (vv. 6-8).

⁴² Leaving the corpse of an executed criminal hanging on a tree overnight would also defile the land (Deut 21:23).

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sinners defile the sanctuary by physically entering the sacred precincts after committing their sins.⁴³ The texts would specify such physical presence at the sanctuary if that were a factor, as in the Lev 12:4 restrictions on a woman undergoing purification after giving birth.⁴⁴

⁴³ Contra rabbinic tradition on Num 19:13: *Tosefta Shebu'ot* 1:8 and Rashi on Num 19:13, defended by Maccoby, *Ritual and Morality*, 167, 170, 172-4, and accepted by Angel M. Rodriguez, "Transfer of Sin in Leviticus," in *The Seventy Weeks, Leviticus, and the Nature of Prophecy*, ed. Frank B. Holbrook, Daniel and Revelation Committee Series 3 (Washington, D.C.: Biblical Research Institute, 1986), 174. Jacob Milgrom has responded to Maccoby in "Impurity is Miasma: A Response to Hyam Maccoby," *Journal of Biblical Literature* 119 (2000): 729-31; Jacob Milgrom, *Leviticus 23-27: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary*, Anchor Bible 3B (New York: Doubleday, 2001), 2458-63. Janković, argues against automatic defilement of the sanctuary from a distance in Lev 20:3 and Num 19:13, 20 partly by adding to the correct datum that in these verses, the Piel of *ṭ-m-*, "make impure/defile," is factitive, indicating a resulting state of impurity/defilement that is caused by the action of the verb on something or someone. Based on analysis of instances of the Piel of *ṭ-m-* in the Pentateuch, Janković adds regarding the verb in the Piel stem (of which the lexical Qal form is *ṭāmē'* נָטַם): "First, נָטַם always depends on the other verb/s mentioned or assumed in the given or surrounding texts to achieve the condition it conveys. These verbs are verbs of touching, carrying, sitting, eating, etc., in order to show the manner by which an entity contracts נָטַם status. Second, building on the first finding, contracting the state of נָטַם always includes some sort of contact between the entities transmitting and contracting impurity or a defiling process takes place if both the source and recipient of impurity are inside the same, enclosed space" ("A Re-Examination of Pentateuchal Hamartiology," 586, cf. 571, 577-85, 606-8, 613, 615). However, just because direct contact or close proximity is indicated in other contexts where the Piel of *ṭ-m-* appears does not mean that the need for such physical contact or proximity is inherent in the meaning of the word, as shown by Ezek 43:7-8, according to which the Israelites have defiled (Piel of *ṭ-m-*) God's "holy name" (inaccessible to physical contact) by their spiritual infidelity to Him and abominable practices (in various places). In Lev 20:3 and Num 19:13, 20, the action and lack of action, respectively, indicating the manner by which the sanctuary contracts impure status are Molech worship and neglect to undergo purification from corpse impurity, which occur at a distance from the sanctuary but are connected to it because these sins are committed by members of God's community (presumably in His land). Reading direct contact or proximity into these verses, where such factors are neither expressed nor implied, on the basis of usage in other contexts is an instance of "illegitimate totality transfer."

⁴⁴ "She shall not touch anything holy, nor come into the sanctuary, until the days of her purifying are completed." If she were to enter the sanctuary courtyard, she would commit the sin of violating the divine command that protects the sanctuary against defilement from her physical ritual impurity. But by observing the prohibition, she would heed the warning in Lev 15:31 against violations of divine commands regarding impurities that would defile the sanctuary in any way.

Rather, the sanctuary is simply defiled, we could say “automatically,” by the serious sins when they are committed.⁴⁵

Some interpreters maintain that in Leviticus 20:3, God inflicts “cutting off” on a person who escapes stoning (cf. v. 2) when he enters the sanctuary undetected by human beings.⁴⁶ They support this conclusion by adopting a misreading of the structure of the legislation in 20:2-5, according to which verse 2 is the basic law: A Molech worshiper is apprehended by Israelites and stoned to death. Then verses 3 and 4-5 present separate situations in two subcases in which (1) a Molech worshiper is not caught by Israelites and subsequently visits the sanctuary (assuming an ellipsis that is not in the text), defiling it, so God Himself punishes the offender with “cutting off” (Hiphil of *k-r-t*; v. 3), and (2) the people know what the Molech worshiper has done but do not stone him, in which case God Himself punishes both him and them with “cutting off” (vv. 4-5).

However, verse 3 continues the main case in verse 2 to extend the terminal punishment required in an apodictic (unconditional) capital crime law (third person formulation stipulating capital punishment), as shown by the fact that verse 3 simply begins: “And I will set My face against that man” (NJPS). The antecedent of “that man” is the same Molech worshiper as in verse 2, who is stoned to death because the Israelites apprehend him, implying that he could not have succeeded in entering the sanctuary precincts.

Verse 3 is not a subcase that gives a casuistically formulated (conditional) exception.⁴⁷ If it were, it would begin with a protasis (if/when

⁴⁵ In Lev 20:3 and Num 19:13, 20, defiling the sanctuary results from the same sin that incurs the penalty of “cutting off” (especially clear in Num 19:20). Defilement of the sanctuary from anywhere in the land by these serious moral faults could be another instance of defilement within a defined area/space, whether it is defilement of persons in a tent where there is a corpse (Num 19:14), defilement of the holy camp in which God dwells (Num 5:3), or defilement of the holy land in which God dwells (Num 35:34). As Treiye (‘‘The Day of Atonement,’’ 224) has acknowledged, ‘‘A causal relationship between contaminated land and the illegal contamination of the sanctuary cannot be denied (cf. Num 35:33-34; Lev 20:3, 22; etc.).’’ But Treiye maintains that the only remedy for illegal contamination of the sanctuary was the death of the sinner (198-99, 204-10), as if that somehow purged the sanctuary.

⁴⁶ E.g., Rodriguez, ‘‘Transfer of Sin,’’ 174-75; Janković, ‘‘A Re-Examination of Pentateuchal Hamartiology,’’ 600, 604-6, 614-15; cf. 127. For references to earlier interpreters who held this view, see 600 nn. 123-125.

⁴⁷ See Exod 21:12-14 for a law in which a main case formulated as a capital crime law (v. 12) is followed by a casuistic exception (v. 13).

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someone does a certain thing) describing an alternative situation related to and dependent on the situation indicated in the main case in verse 2, which is: “Anyone among the Israelites, or among the strangers residing in Israel, who gives any of his offspring to Molech” (NJPS). Rather, verse 3 just continues the consequence of the main case that begins in verse 2: “shall be put to death; the people of the land shall pelt him with stones. And I will set My face against that man and will cut him off from among his people. . .” (NJPS).⁴⁸

Therefore, verse 3 refers to punishment on the same man in the same situation as in verse 2, which is administered by God Himself, in addition to death by stoning. There are two kinds of punishment here. So at least in this case, the divine penalty of “cutting off” is not premature death, but goes beyond such death to deny the culprit an afterlife.⁴⁹ Verse 4 also refers to “that man,” i.e., the Molech worshiper in the circumstantial description at the beginning of verse 2, but the situation differs in that the humanly administered execution specified in the rest of verse 2 (“shall be put to death; the people of the land shall pelt him with stones”) is not carried out. Verses 4-5 are a subcase that presents an exception in casuistic format, in which verse 4 is the protasis, introduced by “if” (*’im*): “And if the people of the land should shut their eyes to that man when he gives of his offspring to Molech, and should not put him to death” (NJPS).

Verse 5 states the corresponding apodosis (expressing the consequence: the person shall be subject to this result): “I Myself will set My face against that man and his kin, and will cut off from among their people both him and all who follow him in going astray after Molech (NJPS).” The Molech worshiper deserves to be stoned by the people (punishment 1), but if they are disloyal to God in failing to carry out their duty, God can still inflict the divinely administered punishment of “cutting off” (punishment 2), which the people also will receive.

If the “cutting off” punishment for the offenses specified in Lev 20 and Num 19 were for defiling the sanctuary when the sinner physically

⁴⁸ For explanation of such legal formulations in biblical legislation, see Roy E. Gane, *Old Testament Law for Christians: Original Context and Enduring Application* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2017), 85-92.

⁴⁹ On the punishment of “cutting off,” which can involve denying the sinner a legacy among his people because he loses a line of descendants, see Donald J. Wold, “The Meaning of the Biblical Penalty *Kareth*” (Ph.D. dissertation, University of California, Berkeley, 1978), 251-5; Donald J. Wold, *Destiny of the Defiant*, *Forschungen zum Alten Testament* 2. Reihe 161 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2025); Milgrom, *Leviticus 1-16*, 457-60; Schwartz, “The Bearing of Sin,” 13.

enters its courtyard, this would add nothing to the punishment of a Molech worshiper, who already would receive this punishment simply for performing the idolatrous ritual (Lev 18:21, 29).⁵⁰ But if someone willfully neglected purification from corpse contamination, they could avoid the penalty of “cutting off” by simply staying away from the sanctuary so that they would not defile it by their physical presence. However, this theory misses the force of the law, which is to warn Israelites against the sin of neglecting purification itself.

There is no question that corpse-contaminated persons who entered the sanctuary courtyard would defile the sanctuary by their physical impurity. This is one kind of case that would come under Lev 15:31: “Thus you shall keep the people of Israel separate from their uncleanness, lest they die in their uncleanness by defiling my tabernacle that is in their midst.”⁵¹ But in Lev 20:3 and at least primarily in Num 19:13, 20, the defilement that affects the sanctuary is from the moral impurity of violating God’s law, which in each instance would be a sin.

There is no indication that Molech worship (Lev 20) caused physical impurity; it was a sin, along with sexual offenses that would cause moral defilement of the land (Lev 18, esp. vv. 21, 28). Corpse impurity (Num 19) was physical ritual in nature, but incurring it was not a sin. In fact, burying one’s parents would be required to fulfill the commandment to “Honor your father and your mother” (Exod 20:12). A grievous sin would occur, however, if a person with corpse impurity failed to undergo the specified simple and inexpensive purification procedure (Num 19:13, 20) that included receiving the sprinkling of water mixed with ashes of the red cow purification offering (vv. 9, 12, 17-19). Even if failure to stop the physical ritual impurity through the ritual remedy would allow such impurity to defile the sanctuary, this effect could only occur with the deliberate sin of neglect.⁵²

It is true that Ezek 23:39 reports: “For when they had slaughtered their children in sacrifice to their idols, on the same day they came into my sanctuary to profane it.” This prophetic denunciation describes over-the-

⁵⁰ “They were punished by *karet* regardless” (Davidson, *A Song for the Sanctuary*, 284 n. 16).

⁵¹ Cf. Wenham, *The Book of Leviticus*, 221; Rodriguez, “Transfer of Sin,” 173.

⁵² “Decontamination from corpse impurity that includes applying the ‘water of lustration’ is the only ritual cleansing that clearly prevents defilement of the sanctuary *from a distance* . . . Such defilement of the sanctuary occurred *only* if sprinkling the ash water was *not* performed, in which case illegally prolonged impurity was compounded by wanton moral fault” (Gane, *Leviticus, Numbers*, 664; italics original).

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top arrogantly rebellious behavior: Not only did wicked individuals violate God's law by sacrificing their children, which alone would have defiled the sanctuary, according to Lev 20:3; they then came to YHWH's temple on the very same day! But it would be hermeneutically illegitimate to eisegete this aggravating factor of flagrant physical presence at the sanctuary, described by a prophet as a historical circumstance, into pentateuchal law at Lev 20:3.⁵³

We can conclude that defilement of the sanctuary by egregious sins in Lev 20:3 and Num 19:13, 20 simply happened—automatically—when the sins occurred, not only if/when the sinners would physically enter the sacred precincts.⁵⁴ This can explain how sins of *peša'*, “rebellion,” affected the sanctuary, from which they had to be removed on the Day of Atonement (Lev 16:16; cf. Dan 8:12-14 in antitype), even though *peša'* sins were never expiated from their offerers by sacrifices throughout the year. Neither did *peša'* sinners receive any benefit from the ritual cleansing of the sanctuary on the Day of Atonement: Moral purification for the people resulting from purgation of the sanctuary, which is promised in Lev 16:30, is only from *ḥaṭṭā't* sins, not from *peša'* sins (cf. v. 34). In this sense, the sinners had no part in the Day of Atonement, even though their sins had to be removed from the sanctuary.⁵⁵

⁵³ As does Rodriguez, “Transfer of Sin,” 175; Angel M. Rodriguez, “Leviticus,” in *Andrews Bible Commentary*, ed. Angel M. Rodriguez (Berrien Springs, MI: Andrews University Press, 2020), 271.

⁵⁴ Contra Davidson, *A Song for the Sanctuary*, 284, citing Janković, “A Re-Examination of Pentateuchal Hamartiology,” 561-615, to whose argument regarding the factitive Piel of *ṭ-m-* I have responded above. Davidson also cites Janković's contention that the infinitives construct of the Piel of *ṭ-m-* in Lev 15:31 and 20:3 is temporal—“when they defile my tabernacle”—rather than instrumental—“by defiling my tabernacle” (Janković, “A Re-Examination of Pentateuchal Hamartiology,” 589-94). However, the fact that Molech worship itself defiles the sanctuary is clear in Lev 20:3—*lāma'an ṭammē'*, “in order to defile” (cf. *DCH* 4:553)—and Num 19:20—*ki. . . ṭimmē'*, “because. . . he has defiled,” with the perfect of the Piel of *ṭ-m-*, rather than the infinitive (cf. perfect in v. 13).

⁵⁵ Gane, *Cult and Character*, 144-162, 296. Cf. Ellen G. White in *The Great Controversy Between Christ and Satan: The Conflict of the Ages in the Christian Dispensation* (Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press, 1888), 480: “In the typical service only those who had come before God with confession and repentance, and whose sins, through the blood of the sin offering, were transferred to the sanctuary, had a part in the service of the Day of Atonement. So, in the great day of final atonement and investigative judgment the only cases considered are those of the professed people of God. The judgment of the wicked is a distinct and separate work, and takes place at a later period.” This should be read in light of the preceding sentence, which refers to Christ as our High Priest entering the holy of holies “to perform the work of investigative judgment and to make an atonement for all who are shown to be entitled to its benefits.” So, when White says that “the only

2.2 *By the presence of the offerer at the sanctuary?*

Nobuyoshi Kiuchi rejects Milgrom's theory that physical ritual impurities defiled the sanctuary from a distance when they were incurred. Rather, he proposes:

We rather assume that uncleanness is envisaged in the sancta when an unclean person stands before the Lord, i.e., at the entrance of the Tent, and that when the priest purifies the sancta, the unclean person becomes clean concurrently. Thus the *hattat* blood indeed purifies the sancta but not the sancta that have been defiled for a lengthy period.⁵⁶

Kiuchi also suggests that "it is highly plausible that the *hattat* in Lev 4:1–5:13 deals with uncleanness as well as guilt."⁵⁷ Leviticus 4:1-5:13 prescribes purification offerings for sins, not physical ritual impurities, but here Kiuchi implies that uncleanness would also be envisaged in the sancta of the sanctuary when a sinner would come there to offer a sacrifice.

However, evidence is lacking for the two components of Kiuchi's hypothesis: (1) that a person undergoing purification from a physical ritual impurity who legitimately brought a sacrificial remedy to the sanctuary

cases considered are those of the professed people of God," which is the antitype of "only those who had come before God. . . had a part in the service of the Day of Atonement," she means that only those who have been faithful among the professed people of God have a part in that they are considered for receiving the benefit. But this does not mean that all whose cases are considered on the Day of Atonement are saved. It is a real judgment between the loyal and the disloyal (Lev 16:30; 23:29-30; cf. Dan 7-9) among the professed/nominal people of God, which includes those who have apostatized, including the religious "little horn" in Dan 7-8 (cf. William H. Shea, *Selected Studies on Prophetic Interpretation*, Daniel and Revelation Committee Series 1, ed. Frank H. Holbrook [Silver Spring, MD: Biblical Research Institute, 1992], 145). The *peša* 'sin of the "little horn" (Dan 8:12), which is inexpiable for the benefit of the wrongdoer, must be removed from the heavenly sanctuary when it is justified (Dan 8:13-14), just as similarly inexpiable *peša* 'sins had to be removed from the earthly sanctuary on the Day of Atonement. This purgation is necessary because these serious sins are committed by professed people of God and therefore, they affect His reputation, which is vindicated through the judgment that condemns disloyal people while it vindicates the loyal.

⁵⁶ Kiuchi, *The Purification Offering*, 61. Kiuchi (61) does see exceptional possibilities of long-term pollution of the sancta in Lev 15:31 and 16:16, 19. Later, Kiuchi states: "In the *hattat* ritual in Lev 12–15 the physical uncleanness, if it is severe, is not assumed to defile the tabernacle as long as the rules are observed (Lev 15:31)" (158). That is, only a sin with regard to physical impurity, not such impurity itself, would defile the tabernacle. This statement appears to contradict his earlier idea that "uncleanness is envisaged in the sancta when an unclean person stands before the Lord" (61).

⁵⁷ Kiuchi, *The Purification Offering*, 66.

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contaminated things that were sacred simply by entering the sanctuary courtyard, and (2) that purification offerings throughout the year purified the sancta. The second of these points is discussed above and in a later part of this article, so here we will focus on the first point.

Persons with severe impurities were to stay outside the Israelite camp lest they “defile their camp, in the midst of which I dwell” (Num 5:3). This was to prevent the incursion of contamination into the sanctuary through its environment. It is implied that the camp, and therefore the sanctuary, would not be defiled if the quarantine instruction was observed.

Similarly, a woman who is undergoing purification after childbirth must not enter the sanctuary precincts “until the days of her purifying are completed” (Lev 12:4). The obvious reason is that she would contaminate the sanctuary, but only for a period of time (cf. v. 5). After that, she is not only permitted, but required to come to the sanctuary to offer sacrifices (vv. 6-8). Again, it is implied that the sanctuary would not be affected if the command were obeyed. It is true that completion of the sacrifices results in the final stage of removing residual impurity from her so that “she shall be clean” (Qal of *t-h-r*; vv. 7-8).⁵⁸ But it does not follow from this that her mere presence at the sanctuary contaminates the sancta.

Further support for the idea that individuals did not contaminate sancta when they brought sacrifices to the sanctuary for the final stage of purification from physical ritual impurity is found in Lev 14. A person who had been afflicted with an impure skin disease, but whose symptoms had abated, underwent an elaborate process of purification in stages, culminating in sacrifices (vv. 10-20; cf. vv. 21-32). Upon completion of each stage, the person becomes “clean/pure” (verbs from the root *t-h-r*) to a degree and progressively gains access to privileges of normal life.⁵⁹ Thus, after an elimination ritual with two birds (vv. 4-7), washing clothes, shaving hair, and bathing, such a person “shall be clean. And after that he may come into the camp, but live outside his tent seven days” (v. 8). This indicates that he (or she) is pure enough to enter the camp without defiling it. After more shaving and ablutions on the seventh day, “he shall be clean” (v. 9). Then on the eighth day, the individual is to take ritual materials, including animals, to the sanctuary (v. 10). “And the priest who cleanses

⁵⁸ Kiuchi, *The Purification Offering*, 60.

⁵⁹ As Kiuchi recognizes, “The leper is clean enough at each stage of the ritual, so that it is inadequate to compare one stage of the ritual with another in terms of the degree of cleanness” (*The Purification Offering*, 157; cf. 60).

him shall set the man who is to be cleansed and these things before the LORD, at the entrance of the tent of meeting” (v. 11).

According to Kiuchi, the person would contaminate the sancta at this point, but the notice in verse 9 that “he is clean” means that he is pure enough to come to the sanctuary without defiling it, just as the same verb (Qal of *t-h-r*) in verse 8 signifies that he is pure enough to enter the camp. This verb also appears in Lev 15:13, 28 to express a stage of physical ritual purity (after seven days and ablutions, which can be assumed in v. 28) that is necessary before a person who has had a severe impurity from a genital discharge is permitted to come to the sanctuary in order to offer required sacrifices as the final stage of purification (vv. 14-15, 29-30).

Kiuchi is right that in such cases, persons come to the sanctuary because they need the final stage of purification,⁶⁰ but this does not mean that the weakened, residual impurity that they carry remains strong enough to defile the sanctuary by their mere presence there. Nevertheless, we will find that such trace amounts of impurity leave some contamination at the sanctuary through the ritual process of a purification offering that accomplishes the final stage of removing impurity from a person.

If physically impure persons did not contaminate the sanctuary by their mere presence, there is even less reason to think that a sinner who brought a sacrifice for an expiable sin could defile the sanctuary in this way because such sinners were never put out of the camp or forbidden to come to the sanctuary.

The next section of the present article (in Part 2) continues discussion of how physical ritual impurities and sins moved to the Israelite sanctuary. It will consider the possibility that purification offerings could result in transfer of physical impurities and sins to the sanctuary.

⁶⁰ Kiuchi, *The Purification Offering*, 60-61; contra James A. Greenberg, *A New Look at Atonement in Leviticus: The Meaning and Purpose of Kipper Revisited*,” *Bulletin for Biblical Research Supplement* 23 (University Park, PA: Eisenbrauns, 2019), 76, 105.

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