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# Sin, Impurity, and Community in Leviticus 16

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Sin, Impurity, and Community in Leviticus 16

Kathelijne Steens

Submitted in Partial Fulfillment  
of the  
Prerequisite for Honors  
in Religion  
under the advisement of Edward Silver

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# I. Leviticus 16

The Book of Leviticus, situated in the middle of the Pentateuch, is a book concerned with summing up a great number of laws and rituals, said to have been given to Moses, primarily relevant to priests. It is then also (mostly) thought to be part of the Priestly source, mostly dated to the Exilic or Second Temple period, and as such likely concerned with either preservation or promotion of the function and information of the priests.

As law book, the Book of Leviticus contains a considerable amount of material pertaining to sin, covering a great variety of types of behaviour that incur sin, methods for atonement, punishments, and ritual context for sin offering. As such, it provides great opportunity to closely analyse how sin is described in these texts - its nature, its function, and the way it affected and interacted with Israelite society - for laws, whether religious or not, rarely exist in a vacuum. One of the most fascinating text with regard to sin is Leviticus 16, which describes in great detail the ritual of Yom Kippur, nowadays often referred to as the Day of Atonement, and still a day of great importance in Jewish religion. The ritual is concerned with ritually purging the Holy of Holies, where the Ark of the Covenant is kept, the sacrificial altar, and all of the Israelites, including the priests, of sin and impurity in order to renew their relationship with God. Sin and impurity are manipulated multiple times during this ritual, and as such, it may provide great information on what exactly it is, and how it functions.

A close translation and analysis of the most relevant and interesting points in this translation is needed to gain a thorough understanding of how Leviticus 16 engages with the topic of impurity and the community. Some areas of the translation that require more in-depth discussion to gain a clear understanding of the overall meaning of the chapter are discussed following the translations. These include key concepts such as *kipper* and *azazel*, of which the meaning is not entirely certain and which yet play a very significant part in the ritual, as well as a discussion of the structure and possible origins of the text, and the intended application of the ritual. The first is necessary to gain an understanding of what is going on in the text and to justify the translation provided. The structure and origins of the text, on the other hand, provide historical concepts, as well as explaining certain anomalies in style. Finally, the application of the ritual is key to understanding its intended purpose, and as such the role it may have played in the community.

## I.A Translation

1 וַיְדַבֵּר יְהוָה אֶל־מֹשֶׁה אַחֲרֵי מוֹת שְׁנֵי בְנֵי אַהֲרֹן  
בְּקִרְבָּתָם לִפְנֵי־יְהוָה וַיִּמָּתוּ: 2 וַיֹּאמֶר יְהוָה אֶל־מֹשֶׁה  
דַּבֵּר אֶל־אַהֲרֹן אָחִיךָ וְאַל־יָבֹא בְכָל־עֵת אֶל־הַקֹּדֶשׁ  
מִבַּיִת לַפָּרֹכֶת אֶל־פְּנֵי הַפְּסָפֶת אֲשֶׁר עַל־הָאֹרֶן וְלֹא  
יָמוּת כִּי בְעֵנָן אֶרְאֶה עַל־הַפְּסָפֶת: 3 בְּזֹאת יָבֹא אַהֲרֹן  
אֶל־הַקֹּדֶשׁ בְּפָר בֶּן־בָּקָר לְחַטָּאת וְאֵיל לְעֹלָה:

1 The Lord spoke to Moses following the death of two of the sons of Aaron<sup>1</sup>, who died when<sup>2</sup> they approached<sup>3</sup> before the Lord. 2 The Lord said to Moses: tell your brother Aaron that he is not to come<sup>4</sup> whenever he chooses<sup>5</sup> into the Shrine behind the veil<sup>6</sup> before the *kapporet*<sup>7</sup>, which is on the Ark, lest he die; for as the cloud I appear on the *kapporet*<sup>8</sup>. 3 In this way only<sup>9</sup> shall Aaron come into the Shrine: with a bull of the herd for a sin offering, and a ram for a burnt offering.

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<sup>1</sup> This is a reference to Lev 10. Although it is possible that the intention was to provide an example of the exact type of situation that might prompt the performance of the ritual that follows - suggesting that it was a rite performed in reaction to particular incidents, rather than (as part of) an annually scheduled holiday - it might also be more of an origin story, an explanation of the first time a situation occurred that prompted the need for ritual like this, tying a possibly newer rite in with the older stories around it, to emphasise its legitimacy. See section I.C for further discussion.

In either case, it connects the events of Lev 16 to those of Lev 10 temporally, suggesting they followed immediately upon the events of that chapter, and that Lev 16 was intended to be placed closer to Lev 10 in the book as well. This would also help explain the waw-consecutive opening of Lev 16, which something that would suggest a continuation from the previous chapter, rather than a ritual standing on its own. As such, Lev 11-15 might be set apart from Lev 16 as a later addition that was put between Lev 10 and 16 (Stackert NRSV 166), or the opening verses of Lev 16 might have been the later addition in an attempt to give the ritual a more solid grounding in tradition. That would raise the question of whether the chapter would not just have been moved or inserted right after Lev 10, however, and it seems more probable that it is the other chapters that are a later change.

<sup>2</sup> This introduces a clause explaining the circumstances of the particular death discussed. A more literal translation from Hebrew into English such as '*The Lord spoke to Moses following the death of two the sons of Aaron when they approached before the Lord and died*' would feel awkward in English due to second half sounding like it might be occurring simultaneously with the first part of the sentence. Although the first part of the sentence does imply that the second half already happened, there are more natural ways to convey this in English. Inserting "which occurred when...", would allow the rest of the sentence to stay the same and the original antecedent of the clause to be maintained, however, a relative clause starting with "who" combined with a slight change in word order, while changing the subject of the clause from their deaths to the sons themselves, would require less insertion, and sounds more natural in English. Furthermore, this construction shows more clearly the causality in the events, rather than just their order, thereby more fully capturing the use of the waw-consecutive.

<sup>3</sup> In an attempt to capture the unlawful nature of their approach, Milgrom chooses to use 'encroach' so as to not reveal what exactly made the approach unlawful as this will be explained in the next verse (Milgrom 1991, 1012). Levine, on the other hand, uses "drew too close", for a similar reason (Levine

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1989). This seems to imply that their fault was in their proximity, rather than their manner of approach. Considering that unlawfulness of approach is not reflected in the Hebrew at this point, it does not seem necessary to change the translation from its exact meaning. After all, the next verse will explain exactly what went wrong. By leaving 'approach', the parallel between their unlawful method of approaching, and the lawful one explained in the rest of the chapter is made more clear, as this way it is emphasised that it is the same action - just the manner is different. Using 'encroach', 'draw too close', or similar, changes the actual activity rather than just its execution.

<sup>4</sup> Although Milgrom argues that in this case, the imperative refers to a warning, rather than a prohibition (Milgrom 1991, 1012), לֹא in construction with an imperative may be used for durative commands as well as immediate ones (Lambdin 1973, 114). In this context, a durative prohibition of entering "whenever he chooses", not of entering in general, seems to be the intention. After all, the intention of the chapter seems to be to convey that the priest should *never* enter the Holy of Holies without an approved cause, and proper preparations.

<sup>5</sup> Literally 'at (just) any time'. The more literal translation emphasises the temporal aspect of the ritual, as would make sense if the intention were to emphasise that it is only on the annual day of Yom Kippur that the High Priest may do this, however, as is discussed in section I.D, the temporal part of the ritual was likely a later addition. The initial 'right time' for the ritual would have been dependent on circumstances, rather than date. The way to convey this closest to the Hebrew, "in just any situation", is rather clunky English. Levine translates the phrase as "at will" (Levine 1973, 100), but this removes the 'whenever' aspect entirely, which does not make sense as the High Priest is, in fact, allowed to perform the ritual and enter if he wants to, as long as the proper procedure is followed. Incorporating 'whenever' as Milgrom does (Milgrom 1991, 1012), emphasises that there are times when he may want to enter, and it is permitted, but not *all* the time.

<sup>6</sup> This unusual expression has doubled up on the description. The area behind the veil or curtains is usually named the Holy of Holies, while the word that is used to refer to that area here, אֲחֵרֵי הַקֹּדֶשׁ, is in P more often used to refer to the outer shrine rather than the inner. In order to emphasise the difference, shrine when referring to the inner shrine has been capitalised. Milgrom takes this unusual word choice as a sign that this part of the text does not belong to P (Milgrom 1991, 1013). He argues that the specification of 'behind the veil' is an additional clarification added for people not used to this uncommon expression.

<sup>7</sup> *kapporet* refers to the top or lid of the Ark. It is unclear what the exact meaning and origin of the word is, although its similarity to the word *kipper* - often translated as to atone, see section I.B on *kipper* - suggests the two might be related. It might be that the object received this name due to its importance in this ritual which is so concerned with kippur, and the forgiveness that follows. Hence the common translation that relates it to mercy (Milgrom 1991, 1014; Levine 1989, 100) is 'mercy seat'. As the relation between the two terms is still speculative, and furthermore, atonement and mercy are even more tangentially related, it seems more important to highlight it as the name of the particular object than to incorporate a possible etymology. Therefore it has been left untranslated.

<sup>8</sup> Interpretations are split on whether this refers to the cloud of incense that is used as a screen to protect the high priest from being in too close proximity to the deity, or the cloud in which the deity manifests. Milgrom argues for the former, pointing out that there is no prohibition against seeing God as the cloud manifestation, and arguing that this phrase was added later in to emphasise the importance of this screen as protection (Milgrom 1991, 1014-5). His evidence for this claim is rather weak, because, as Levine points out, in the current verse the presence of God is supposed to be extremely dangerous, while the cloud is present (Levine 1989, 101). If the cloud was referring to the screen instead, rather than (part of) the manifestation of God, and the screen's purpose is to protect, it would diminish either the danger of entering or the protective power of the screen. It makes more sense then for the cloud to be a part of God's manifestation. A regular part, in fact, as the use of the imperfect with regard to God's appearance suggests it is a habitual action. For further discussion see section I.D on *the presence of God*.

<sup>9</sup> The Hebrew includes an emphatic expression emphasising that this is the correct (and only) way to enter the Shrine (Levine 1989, 101), hence the insertion to translate this emphasis into English.

4 כְּתָנֶת־בֵּד קֹדֶשׁ יִלְבֹּשׁ וּמְכַנְסֵי־בֵד יִתְּנוּ עַל־בְּשָׂרוֹ  
 וּבְאַבְנֵט בֵּד יִחַגֵּר וּבְמִצְנַפֶּת בֵּד יִצְנַף בְּגֵדֵי־קֹדֶשׁ הֵם  
 וְרַחֲצֵן בַּמַּיִם אֶת־בְּשָׂרוֹ וּלְבָשֶׁם: 5 וּמֵאֵת עֵדֹת בְּנֵי  
 יִשְׂרָאֵל יִקַּח שְׁנַיִם־שְׂעִירֵי עִזִּים לְחַטָּאת וְאַיִל אֶחָד  
 לְעֹלָה: 6 וְהִקְרִיב אֶהְרֹן אֶת־פָּר הַחַטָּאת אֲשֶׁר־לָו  
 וּכְפָר בְּעֵדוֹ וּבְעֵד בֵּיתוֹ: 7 וְלָקַח אֶת־שְׁנֵי הַשְּׂעִירִים

4 He shall put on<sup>10</sup> a sacral linen<sup>11</sup> tunic, wear linen drawers against his skin, gird himself with a linen sash, and put on<sup>12</sup> a linen turban. They are sacral vestments; he shall bathe his body in water before he puts them on. 5 From the Israelite community he shall then take<sup>13</sup> two male goats<sup>14</sup> for a sin offering and one ram for a burnt offering.

6 Aaron shall present his own bull for the sin offering to *kipper*<sup>15</sup> for himself and for his household. 7 He shall take the

<sup>10</sup> The sequence of actions taken by Aaron to get dressed are all passive with the articles of clothing as the subject in the Hebrew text. Changing them to active verbs in the translation and making Aaron the subject of each avoids unintended wordiness, and works better for the less frequent use of passive in English.

<sup>11</sup> The significance of the High Priest's linen garb may be interpreted in several ways. Milgrom suggests that the linen either refers to the fact that the High Priest should be dressed like angels (Ezek 9:2-3, 11; 10:2; Dan 10:6) since entering the holy of holies bears similarity to entering the heavenly council, or that the intention is to humble the priest, either to avoid accusations from Satan about dressing up as a god, or to go through stripping himself of the signs of his status in order to deserve reinstatement. While Milgrom argues that the first is the most likely since there are still several differences between normal priest dress and what is described here - primarily the turban is what only high priests wear, and his sash is pure instead of mixed wool (Milgrom 1991, 1016) - arguably it might only have been the decorations that need to be removed, not every single thing that hints at the priest's status in order to humble the priest. It is also possible that being clothed in purely linen would suggest a higher level of purity. The separation of different materials and qualities is a recurring theme in Levitical purity laws, as Mary Douglas discusses in *Purity and Danger*. A garment made of purely the same material could, therefore, be argued to represent a higher level of purity, which would be of great importance, one might think, when entering an extremely holy space and the presence of God.

The act of the High Priest dressing in humbling garb also bears resemblance to the requirements for the king's dress in the Akitu festival. See section I.D on *the Akitu festival*.

<sup>12</sup> Literally 'wrap himself with', which in English is more commonly referred to as 'putting on'.

<sup>13</sup> Usually these goats are brought by people themselves, unless they were 'wanton, presumptuous sinners', according to Milgrom (Milgrom 1991, 1018). As such, it creates an interesting parallel with Babylonian Nashe Hymn, which bans people wilfully disobedient of ritual and moral requirements from fully participating in the new year's festival. See section I.D on *the Akitu festival*.

<sup>14</sup> According to Levine, usually bigger animals were involved in community sin offerings (Levine 1989, 101), and he states that it is unclear why both goats here are referred to as intended for a sin offering. As it has not yet been decided which goat will actually end up being used for the sin offering, the intention is to show their potential purpose, or to simply suggest that both are definitely still involved in the process of the sin offering to come.

<sup>15</sup> See section I.B on *kipper*.

והעמיד אתם לפני יהוה פתח אהל מועד: 8 ונתן  
 אהרן על-שני השעירים גורלות גורל אחד ליהוה  
 וגורל אחד לעזאזל: 9 והקריב אהרן את-השעיר  
 אשר עלה עליו הגורל ליהוה ועשהו חטאת: 10  
 והשעיר אשר עלה עליו הגורל לעזאזל יעמד-חי  
 לפני יהוה לכפר עליו לשלח אתו לעזאזל המדברת:  
 11 והקריב אהרן את-פר החטאת אשר-לו וכפר

two male goats and present<sup>16</sup> them before the Lord at the entrance of the Tent of Meeting, 8 and then Aaron shall place lots<sup>17</sup> upon the two goats, one lot for the Lord and one lot for *azazel*<sup>18</sup>. 9 Aaron shall bring forward the goat designated by the lot<sup>19</sup> of the Lord, to make a sin offering<sup>20</sup>; 10 while the goat designated by the lot of *azazel* shall be stationed alive<sup>21</sup> before the Lord to *kipper* by sending it off to *azazel*, to the wilderness.

11 Aaron shall present his own bull for the sin offering to *kipper* for himself and

<sup>16</sup> This verb is usually used to describe the action of people being placed near the altar before purificatory rites on their behalf, in order to be judged by God with regard to whether they were deserving of purification (Levine 1989, 102). The goats are similar in this regard, presented for God to decide which of the two is deserving of performing which role in the purification of the people. This is interesting, as a significant part of the modern use of the term scapegoat seems to be the fact that the victim is not, in fact, deserving of their fate. This emphasises that God is judging these goats, and determines their fate.

<sup>17</sup> The use of *natan* in this verse is rather unique, according to Milgrom, who speculates it may be about their disposition rather than determination, as 'al' also suggests (Milgrom 1991, 1019). This fits well with the above reading of 'presented', hence the choice for 'placing' rather than 'casting' lots.

<sup>18</sup> The ל- prefix in ליהוה and לעזאזל signifies property, informing the audience who or what each lot belongs to, or is dedicated to. By construction, a parallel between God and Azazel is formed, which may suggest that both belong to a similar category of things. See section I.B on *azazel* for a more detailed discussion on the translation of *azazel*, and the importance of this parallel.

<sup>19</sup> Literally 'on which the lot belonging to the Lord was raised'. The lots, as mentioned above, are most likely literally placed on the goats, as the use of *natan* and *al* suggest. As such, the goat in question would have been designated and recognisable by that particular lot.

<sup>20</sup> Although it could be argued that the ultimate purpose of these offerings seems to be purgation of purification, and that as such, a term like purification offering as used by Milgrom (Milgrom 1991, 1022) is more suitable, it should be noted that the other offerings, such as the burnt offerings also serve the purpose of purgation in this chapter. In those cases their particular purpose needs to be clarified, and it, therefore, might be argued that since the offering in verse 9, and similar, do not need such clarification, purgation must be part of the terminology itself. To maintain clarity, however, and make it clear that not all offerings effecting purgation are included in the purification or purgation offerings, it has been translated as 'sin offering' nevertheless.

<sup>21</sup> The structure of the sentence sets up a contrast between the fates of the two goats. Like before, both goats are in a way presented to God, however, this time one will remain alive, and the other will be sacrificed. This sentence also further emphasises that despite having been designated by the lot of Azazel it is God whom he faces in order to effect purgation, and God who is primarily addressed by this ritual, as well as the only one actually there taking part in the ritual. The lot, and possibly destination of the goat may belong to Azazel, but in the process of purgation he does not play a major part.

בְּעֵדוֹ וּבְעֵד בֵּיתוֹ וְשַׁחַט אֶת־פֶּרֶן הַחֹטְאֹת אֲשֶׁר־לוֹ:  
**12** וְלָקַח מִלֵּא־הַמִּחְתָּה גִּחְלֵי־אֵשׁ מֵעַל הַמִּזְבֵּחַ מִלִּפְנֵי  
 יְהוָה וּמִלֵּא חֲפָנָיו קִטְרֹת סָמִים דָּקָה וְהָבִיא מִבַּיִת  
 לְפָרֹכֶת: **13** וַנָּתַן אֶת־הַקִּטְרֹת עַל־הָאֵשׁ לִפְנֵי יְהוָה  
 וְכִסָּה אֶת־הַקִּטְרֹת אֶת־הַכֹּפֶרֶת אֲשֶׁר עַל־הָעֵדוּת  
 וְלֹא יָמוּת: **14** וְלָקַח מִדָּם הַפָּר וְהִזָּה בְּאֶצְבָּעוֹ עַל־פְּנֵי  
 הַכֹּפֶרֶת קִדְמָה וְלִפְנֵי הַכֹּפֶרֶת יִזָּה שֶׁבַע־פְּעָמִים  
 מִן־הַדָּם בְּאֶצְבָּעוֹ:

for his household<sup>22</sup>, and he shall slaughter  
 his bull of the sin offering<sup>23</sup>. **12** He shall  
 take a panful<sup>24</sup> of fiery coals from the altar  
 before the Lord<sup>25</sup> and two handfuls<sup>26</sup> of  
 finely ground aromatic incense, and he shall  
 bring these behind the veil. **13** Then, he  
 shall put the incense on the fire before the  
 Lord so that the cloud of incense<sup>27</sup> may  
 cover the [Ark of the] Pact<sup>28</sup>, lest he die. **14**  
 He shall take some of the blood of the bull  
 and sprinkle it with his finger on<sup>29</sup> the  
*kapporet* on the east side; and in front of the  
*kapporet* he shall sprinkle some of the  
 blood with his finger seven times.

<sup>22</sup> The first half of this verse is exactly the same as the entirety of verse 6. Levine argues in favour of a change in translation of the verse in spite of this, as while the words are the same, their actual meaning is somewhat different: in verse 6, the bull is presented to God and judged for its suitability before being designated for its intended purpose - the sin offering of Aaron (Levine 1989, 104). In verse 11 on the other hand, the bull is slaughtered and prepared for the sacrifice in verse 25. While Levine's arguments for this difference in intended meaning are convincing, the repetitive nature of the phrase is lost, thereby losing a key-marker of the structure of the passage. For the repetition is clearly no accident - as Milgrom points out, the purposive *waw* before *kipper* which is justified in verse 6 in order to inform the audience of the other priest's inclusion in the purgation (Milgrom 1991, 1018-9), is repeated again in verse 11 as well, despite performing no clear function here. Furthermore, there is, in fact, a clear difference between verse 6 and 11, as verse 11 continues past the point of presentation. As such, it seems clear enough that a different instance is being discussed, and there is no need to remove the marker of repetitive resumption in order to improve the clarity of the phrases' meaning.

<sup>23</sup> As the bull has been officially judged by God and designated for the sin offering, he is from this point referred to using a construction that emphasises this designation (Levine 1989, 104).

<sup>24</sup> This is a unit of measurement, referring to the amount of coals required to fill a censer or 'fire-pans' for burning incense (Milrom 1991, 1024-5; Levine 1989, 104).

<sup>25</sup> The phrase 'altar before the Lord' is used both to refer to the incense altar, and the altar in the tabernacle court at times. The one referred to here is most likely the latter, as that is only that altar that had a perpetual fire (Milgrom 1991, 1025; Levine 1989, 104), and as such could provide coals that could be described as fiery or burning. The unusual double use of a preposition to signify 'before' complements the use of the more commonly occurring double preposition *מֵעַל* earlier in the phrase (Milgrom 1991, 1025).

<sup>26</sup> The handfuls function as a unit of measurement, similar to the 'panful'. Unlike with the panful and use of a pan, however, the incense was most likely not actually carried in the hands, as this would leave no hands free to carry the pan. The last part of verse 12 suggests both the incense and the coals were to be brought behind the veil simultaneously, so carrying each one by one would not be possible. According to rabbinic tradition, a ladle was used instead of the actual hands, which has precedent in, for example, Egyptian temples where a ladle shaped in the form of a hand was used (Milgrom 1991, 1025).

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<sup>27</sup> There is considerable debate about the exact order of the steps with regard to the lighting of the incense, the production of the cloud, and its nature. The way in which the cloud is produced is important as it would clarify the exact function of this cloud, which in turn also connects to the question of whether the cloud referred to in verse 13 is the same as the one mentioned in the second verse. Since the cloud in verse 2 is the manifestation of God's presence, this is not a question easily dismissed - if the cloud referred to is the cloud of incense, does this mean that God is not, in fact, always present on the Ark, or does the cloud merely transform his manifestation to make it possible for the High Priest to enter? The nature of God's presence is discussed in more detail in section I.D on *the presence of God*.

<sup>28</sup> Literally 'cover the Pact'. The pact referred to is the Covenant. Here, 'Pact', is most likely an ellipsis for the phrase "the Ark of the Pact" which is used more frequently in the Book of Exodus (Milgrom 1991, 1031; Levine, 104). In order to clarify that is not, in fact, the covenant or the tablets of the covenant directly that require coverage (as they would presumably be inside the ark, and as such covered by it already), the full phrase is included.

<sup>29</sup> Literally 'on the face (or surface) of'. Although the rabbinic interpretation of the phrase emphasises that it is not the intention for the blood to actually touch the Ark according to Milgrom, he suggests that since it would be too dark to ensure that the blood does or does not cover the Ark itself, the preposition used will be correct either way (Milgrom 1991, 1031-2). When the contact of the blood with the space and items to be purified is relevant for determining its efficacy, however, the exact places it touches should be relevant. This is solved by assuming that the Ark itself would not need purification, and that the blood coming in touch with any other part of the space would do to purify the space itself, or by considering the Ark as a part of the space to such an extent that it would be purified simultaneously as *pars pro toto*. If the former is the case, this would raise questions with regard to the infectious nature of sin and impurity, especially if one is to argue that part of the reason the ritual was performed was to avoid the space becoming too tainted and thereby driving away the presence of God. As such, the propositions used here and their interpretation are, in fact, not to be overlooked. The usage of the preposition 'al' both here and in verse 15, seems to suggest its usual translation of 'on' is, in fact, the intended meaning.

**15** וְשָׁחַט אֶת־שְׂעִיר הַחַטָּאת אֲשֶׁר לָעָם וְהָבִיא אֶת־דָּמּוֹ  
אֶל־מִבֵּית לַפְּרֹכֶת וַעֲשָׂה אֶת־דָּמוֹ כַּאֲשֶׁר עָשָׂה לְדָם הַפָּר  
וְהִזָּה אֹתוֹ עַל־הַכַּפֹּרֶת וְלִפְנֵי הַכַּפֹּרֶת: **16** וְכִפֶּר  
עַל־הַקֹּדֶשׁ מִטְּמֵאת בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל וּמִפְּשָׁעֵיהֶם  
לְכָל־חַטָּאתָם וְכֵן יַעֲשֶׂה לְאַהֲל מוֹעֵד הַשֹּׁכֵן אִתָּם בְּתוֹךְ  
טְמֵאתָם: **17** וְכָל־אָדָם לֹא־יִהְיֶה | בְּאַהֲל מוֹעֵד בְּבֹאוֹ  
לְכַפֵּר בְּקֹדֶשׁ עַד־צֵאתוֹ וְכִפֶּר בְּעֵדוֹ וּבְעֵד בֵּיתוֹ וּבְעֵד  
כָּל־קְהַל יִשְׂרָאֵל:

**15** He shall then slaughter the people's goat for the sin offering, bring its blood behind the veil, and do the same<sup>30</sup> with its blood as he did with the blood of the bull: he shall sprinkle it on the *kapporet* and before the *kapporet*. **16** Thus he shall *kipper* the Shrine of the impurity and transgressions of the Israelites, including any of their sins<sup>31</sup>, and he shall do the same for the Tent of Meeting, which abides with them in the midst of their impurity<sup>32</sup>. **17** No one shall be in the Tent of Meeting when he goes in to *kipper* in the Shrine, until he comes out. Thus<sup>33</sup> he shall *kipper* for himself, for his household, and for the entire congregation of Israel.

<sup>30</sup> Although Milgrom argues that this is referring to the treatment or the manipulation of the blood (Milgrom 1991, 1033), using a word such as 'manipulate' seems to suggest further treatment of the blood should be done by the priest than the Hebrew suggests. The treatment here is the act of sprinkling as was done with the blood of the bull in verse 14. The phrasing 'do the same as you did' conveys this in a more plain and concise manner, leaving little room for misunderstanding.

<sup>31</sup> The relationship between the impurities, transgressions, and sins is somewhat unclear in this verse. The ל- prefix in לְכָל adds an inclusive aspect - any, or whatever sins the Israelites may have, the Shrine shall be purged from them. Whether the sins are the cause of (some of) the impurities as Milgrom argues (Milgrom 1991, 1033), or if sinfulness is a form of impurity as according to Levine (Levine 1989, 105) cannot be clearly discerned from this verse. In relation to the repeated part of the verse in Lev 16:21, however, it is notable that it is only the impurities which are left out and replaced. This suggests that sin and impurity are at least not *entirely* the same thing. Sin in verse 21 is included in iniquities and transgressions, and, therefore, cannot be purely a form of impurity. This is not to say that sin may not *cause* impurity, but it cannot be the impurity itself.

<sup>32</sup> The Tent of Meeting apparently requires purification due to existing in proximity to the impurity of the Israelites. This explicitly emphasises the polluting quality of impurity, as well as the tent's connection to God, who abides among the Israelites so to say via this tent. Drawing attention to the fact that the Israelites are polluting the tent, may also be intended to emphasise that their pollution is affecting their connection to God.

<sup>33</sup> The waw here functions to conclude by pointing out the ultimate purpose of everything that has been outlined before it, similarly to verse 16, but now emphasising whose impurities, etc. have been purged, rather than what exactly.

18 וַיֵּצֵא אֶל־הַמִּזְבֵּחַ אֲשֶׁר לִפְנֵי־יְהוָה וַכֹּפֵר עָלָיו וְלָקַח  
מִדָּם הַפָּר וּמִדָּם הַשְּׂעִיר וַיִּתֵּן עַל־קַרְנוֹת הַמִּזְבֵּחַ סָבִיב:  
19 וְהִזָּה עָלָיו מִן־הַדָּם בְּאֶצְבָּעוֹ שֶׁבַע פְּעָמִים וְטָהַר  
וְקִדְּשׁוּ מִטְּמְאַת בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל: 20 וְכֻלָּהּ מִכֹּפֵר  
אֶת־הַקֹּדֶשׁ וְאֶת־אֹהֶל מוֹעֵד וְאֶת־הַמִּזְבֵּחַ וְהִקְרִיב  
אֶת־הַשְּׂעִיר הַחַי: 21 וְסָמַךְ אֶהָרֹן אֶת־שְׁתֵּי [יָדָיו כ] (יְדָיו ק)  
עַל רֹאשׁ הַשְּׂעִיר הַחַי וְהִתְוַדָּה עָלָיו  
אֶת־כָּל־עֲוֹנוֹת בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל וְאֶת־כָּל־פְּשָׁעֵיהֶם

18 Following this, he shall come out to the altar before the Lord<sup>34</sup>, and *kipper* upon it: he shall take some of the blood of the bull and of the goat and apply it on the horns around the altar; 19 then he shall sprinkle the blood on it with his finger seven times<sup>35</sup>. Thus he shall cleanse it from the impurity of the Israelites and consecrate it<sup>36</sup>.

20 When he has finished *kipper*-ing the Shrine, the Tent of Meeting, and the altar, he shall bring the live goat<sup>37</sup> forward. 21 Aaron shall lean both his hands<sup>38</sup> on the head of the live goat and confess<sup>39</sup> over it all the iniquities and transgressions of the

<sup>34</sup> As mentioned for verse 12, this expression can also be used to signify the sacrificial altar. As this is the altar that stands outside the tent, and the High Priest has to 'come out', this is most likely the intended meaning.

<sup>35</sup> Note that as opposed to the purification of the Holy of Holies, here only the altar is sprinkled with blood while the rest of the ritual stays the same. The difference between the two spaces most likely to justify this difference in practice, is the fact that the Holy of Holies is referred to as 'most sacred' by P, as is the sacrificial altar, while the space in which the altar stands is only referred to as 'sacred' (Milgrom 1991, 1036). This suggests that the level of sacredness of an object determines its need to be purified. As the level of sacredness seems largely determined by the objects proximity to and interaction with God, this suggests that the effect of impurity (or the need to remove it) is also affected by this proximity.

<sup>36</sup> After having been cleansed, the altar requires consecration - an act that is more commonly performed when initially dedicating a sacred place or object (Levine 1989, 106). This means that by becoming impure, the sacredness or relationship between the altar and God - which is established by consecration - has been harmed. Milgrom also argues that the blood referred to in verse 19 must furthermore be a mixture of the bull and goat blood, as the text does not suggest that the High Priest is to sprinkle each separately, which would mean that this time the blood is manipulated twice, once for purification and once for consecration (Milgrom 1991, 1037).

<sup>37</sup> This refers to the goat designated by the lot of Azazel. By referring to it as the live goat, the contrast, and thus connection, to the goat which was designated for God and sacrificed is further emphasised.

<sup>38</sup> For sacrifices, usually only one hand is used, and as such specifying that the High Priest must use both his hands, further emphasises that the Azazel rite is not, in fact, a sacrifice according to Milgrom (Milgrom 1991, 1041). More detailed discussion on this can be found in section I.B on *azazel*.

<sup>39</sup> The verb meaning confession, וְהִתְוַדָּה, means 'to reveal oneself' according to Levine (Levine 1989, 106). As such, it is associated strongly with exposure. Levine argues that this exposure makes the sins more vulnerable to removal, as it encourages detachment of a sort.

לְכַל־חַטָּאתָם וְנָתַן אֹתָם עַל־רֹאשׁ הַשְּׂעִיר וְשָׁלַח  
בְּיַד־אִישׁ עֵתִי הַמְּדַבֵּרָה: 22 וְנִשָּׂא הַשְּׂעִיר עָלָיו  
אֶת־כָּל־עֲוֹנוֹתָם אֶל־אֶרֶץ גְּזֵרָה וְשָׁלַח אֶת־הַשְּׂעִיר  
בְּמִדְבָּר:

Israelites, including all of their sins<sup>40</sup>, putting<sup>41</sup> them on the head of the goat. He shall then send it off into the wilderness<sup>42</sup> through a designated man<sup>43</sup>. **22** Thus the goat shall carry away upon itself<sup>44</sup> all of their iniquities to an inaccessible region<sup>45</sup> when it is set free<sup>46</sup> in the wilderness.

<sup>40</sup> This is the same wording used when referring to the purging of the Shrine in verse 16, except that עֲוֹנוֹת - iniquities - replaces impurities. This suggests one or both of two things. First, that impurity (by pollution) requires a different thing from sin and transgressions, and, therefore, cannot be quite the same thing as the other two. Secondly, that the purging of the Shrine is different from the purging of the people. The earlier part of the ritual was clearly intended to cleanse sacred objects and places from the pollution caused by sin and impurity received indirectly. The people would most likely stand closer to the source of impurity, but simultaneously do not exist in as close proximity of God and, therefore, may require a lesser degree of purity. These factors may all contribute to the reason why the sins, transgressions, and iniquities of the people need separate and different purging than what has been seen earlier in the chapter.

<sup>41</sup> Literally 'and puts'. Since no mention is made of any particular action to accompany putting the sins on the head of the goat, and the priest's hands are already on the head of the goat, it seems likely that rather than describing two entirely separate, consecutive events, confession is the means through which the sins are enabled to be placed on the head of the goat, their grip on the people loosened by exposure.

<sup>42</sup> Elsewhere in the Hebrew Bible, the wilderness or desert is described as a place where no people live (Job 38:26; Jer 22:6; 51:43), and which is infertile (Milgrom 1991, 1045). As such, by sending the goat to this, it may be implied that pollution from sin needs either people, fertility (to pollution), or proximity in order to spread.

<sup>43</sup> Literally 'a timely (or ready) man', although the exact meaning of that phrase is uncertain (Milgrom 1991, 1045; Levine 1989, 106). As it is at the least a man other than the High Priest, which is intended to perform this task, the word 'designated' has been used here.

<sup>44</sup> For further discussion on this wording and the effects on sin, see section II.B on *sin as weight*.

<sup>45</sup> Literally 'a cutoff land', here referring to the wilderness mentioned before. Milgrom interprets this as meaning a place from which the goat will not be able to return (Milgrom 1991, 1046), however, it might also imply isolation in the sense of other people being unable to reach the goat, and as such get contaminated by the sin. To be cut off from a community implies a lack of access from both sides. One place that could be described as this, and has been in Akkadian rituals according to Milgrom, is death. In fact, Milgrom points out that in Akkadian words for wilderness are also used to signify the underworld and the home of demons.

<sup>46</sup> The phrasing in this verse is unclear as to whether the goat is set free once the sins are carried off, by removing them, or while they are being carried off. If the former, the transfer of sins away from the people, rather than loading them onto the goat, is enough for removal. Levine argues that to be set free most likely just means driving the animal away (Levine 1989, 107), while according to Milgrom, it is less the performed action, and more the moment in time signified by it which is of relevance to the passage (Milgrom 1991, 1046). Without any such relevance, the phrase would be redundant, so there must be a difference between sending the goat away, and sending it as well as setting it free. Milgrom argues that 'in' the wilderness refers to the time that the priest can continue the ritual, and that this clause is the protasis of verse 23. This would be confirmed by the rabbinical reference to telling the high priest when the goat is in the wilderness.

23 וּבֹא אֶהְרֹן אֶל־אֹהֶל מוֹעֵד וּפָשַׁט אֶת־בְּגָדָי הַבְּדָד  
אֲשֶׁר לָבַשׁ בְּבֹאוֹ אֶל־הַקֹּדֶשׁ וְהִנִּיתֶם שָׁם: 24 וּרְחַץ  
אֶת־בְּשָׂרוֹ בַּמַּיִם בְּמָקוֹם קָדוֹשׁ וְלָבַשׁ אֶת־בְּגָדָיו וַיֵּצֵא  
וַעֲשֵׂה אֶת־עֹלֹתוֹ וְאֶת־עֹלֹת הָעָם וְכַפֵּר בְּעֵדוֹ וּבְעֵד הָעָם:  
25 וְאֵת חֶלֶב הַחֲטָאֹת יִקְטִיר הַמִּזְבֵּחַ: 26 וְהִמְשַׁלַּח  
אֶת־הַשֶּׁעִיר לְעִזְאֵזֶל יִכַּסּ בְּגָדָיו וְרָחַץ אֶת־בְּשָׂרוֹ בַּמַּיִם  
וְאֶחָר־יָכֹן יָבֹוא אֶל־הַמִּחֻנָּה: 27 וְאֵת פֶּר הַחֲטָאֹת וְאֵת

23 Aaron shall then go into the Tent of Meeting and take off the linen vestments that he put on when he entered the Shrine and leave them there.<sup>47</sup> 24 He shall bathe his body in water in a holy place and put on his vestments<sup>48</sup>. Then, he shall come out and sacrifice his burnt offering as well as the burnt offering of the people, *kipper* for himself and for the people<sup>49</sup>. 25 As for the fat of the sin offering<sup>50</sup>, he shall turn it into smoke on the altar.

26 The one who let go the goat to *azazel* shall wash his clothes and bathe his body in the water<sup>51</sup>; after that he may re-enter the camp<sup>52</sup>. 27 As for the bull for

<sup>47</sup> This statement as a whole is rather puzzling, as it implies that Aaron would be naked inside the Tent of Meeting, something which seems unlikely, and is, in fact, outright forbidden in Exodus 20:26 (Levine 1989, 107), as well as something that the priests of Qumran community of the Dead Sea Scrolls designated as something that causes impurity. Levine proposes to solve this by reading the verse as Aaron approaching the tent, rather than entering, so that he might undress and wash himself in an attached bathing space.

<sup>48</sup> Milgrom argues that these must be his ornate garments always worn when officiating at the altar (Milgrom 1991, 1049). While there is no clear reason to assume linen vestments were not worn other than the lack of specification for either the linen or sacral vestments, the fact that their material and exceptionality is so explicitly brought up in the earlier mentions, makes it unlikely that this new set of vestments without any such descriptions would be the same.

<sup>49</sup> Considering that the burnt offering is not generally used in relation to effecting purgation (Milgrom 1991, 1049; Levine 1989, 108), this statement most likely refers to the parts of the ritual that fulfilled that purpose that have come before.

<sup>50</sup> By placing the name of the offering, in contrast to the burnt offering being discussed before, in a prominent first place in the sentence, the difference between the two is emphasised. According to Milgrom, this is necessary because the sin offering has not been mentioned since verse 15 as well (Milgrom 1991, 1050).

<sup>51</sup> This may reflect a need to wash due to contamination from the sins carried by the goat. It should be noted that no other ritual besides the washing is required now, presumably because only the pollution needed removal, rather than the sins themselves, which were removed by the goat. If Schwartz's explanation that the sins are removed the moment they are transferred to the goat (see section II.B on *sin as weight*) is correct, the man should not have been contaminated rather than being carried away by it, however.

<sup>52</sup> It should be noted that usually when one has become contaminated by sin, waiting till evening for re-entrance is required as well. Its absence here may be read as a suggestion that the bathing serves a different purpose than removing impurity, as that of the priest who is also not rendered impure despite not waiting. Schwartz's interpretation would justify this, and change the purpose of the bathing to something like removal of residue due to proximity to deities, or divine spirits (both God and Azazel would count), or to move from less or more sanctified places into ones of a different degree of sanctity, in both of which cases it would serve to mark liminality.

שְׁעִיר הַחַטָּאת אֲשֶׁר הוּבָא אֶת־דָּמָם לְכַפֵּר בְּקֹדֶשׁ יוֹצֵיא  
אֶל־מִחוּץ לַמִּחֲנֶה וְשָׂרְפוּ בָאֵשׁ אֶת־עֲרֹתָם וְאֶת־בְּשָׂרָם  
וְאֶת־פְּרָשָׁם: **28** וְהִשְׂרַף אֹתָם יַכְבֵּס בְּגָדָיו וְרִחַץ  
אֶת־בְּשָׂרוֹ בַּמַּיִם וְאַחֲרֵי־כֵן יָבֹא אֶל־הַמִּחֲנֶה: **29** וְהִיְתָה  
לָכֶם לְחֻקֹּת עוֹלָם בְּחֹדֶשׁ הַשְּׁבִיעִי בְּעֶשְׂוֹר לַחֹדֶשׁ תַּעֲבֹדוּ  
אֶת־נַפְשֹׁתֵיכֶם וְכָל־מְלָאכָה לֹא תַעֲשׂוּ הָאֲזָרָח וְהַגֵּר הַגֵּר  
בְּתוֹכְכֶם: **30** כִּי־בַיּוֹם הַזֶּה יִכְפֹּר עֲלֵיכֶם לְטַהַר אֶתְכֶם

the sin-offering and the goat for the sin offering, whose blood was brought in<sup>53</sup> to *kipper* the Shrine, they shall be taken outside the camp; and their hides, flesh, and dung shall be burned<sup>54</sup> in the fire. **28** He who burned them shall wash his clothes and bathe his body in the water; after that he may re-enter the camp<sup>55</sup>.

**29** This shall be for you<sup>56</sup> a law for all time<sup>57</sup>: in the seventh month, on the tenth day of the month, you shall practice self-denial<sup>58</sup>, you shall do no manner of work<sup>59</sup>, neither the native-born nor the alien who resides among you. **30** For on this day

<sup>53</sup> The construction of this phrase places emphasis on the location of the blood, rather than just its purpose, which Levine argues is to stress the difference between this very important sin offering, and those performed outside the Shrine (Levine 1989, 108).

<sup>54</sup> Literally 'they shall burn', however, as it is unclear who performs this act in order to avoid further complicating sentence structure to accommodate this unclarity, the voice of the verb is changed.

<sup>55</sup> This is the same construction and a similar situation to verse 26. Here, however, it is harder to argue that a lack of contamination is to be blamed for the lack of waiting, as through *pars pro toto*, the carcasses would have become contaminated by the impurities the blood was used to purge. This is, in fact, most likely the reason they need burning outside the camp, as is the case in the Akitu festival (See section I.D on *the Akitu festival*). Milgrom suggests that as per the rabbinical tradition, it may be that the carcasses are unable to transmit impurity while inside sacred precincts (Milgrom 1991, 1053).

<sup>56</sup> The people are addressed directly - via Moses - rather than in third person, for the first time this chapter. It is a rather abrupt change of style, which emphasises the last verses' distinctiveness from the rest of the chapter. This may be due to them belonging to a different source, or a later redaction. For further discussion on the structure of the chapter, see section I.C.

<sup>57</sup> Although it is unclear in the phrasing whether this law refers to the chapter as a whole, the ritual mentioned before, or the section lined out afterwards, from context it seems most likely that the latter is the case, which thereby automatically includes the method for the ritual described before, but places emphasis on when exactly the ritual is to be used.

<sup>58</sup> This idiom most commonly refers at least to fasting (Levine 1989, 109), although denying other things like bathing and sexual intercourse as well was possibly included, considering the fact that *nepeš* is used to the self, or entire person in Leviticus 2:1, and 21:1, which would turn the meaning from 'afflict your appetite' to 'afflict yourself' or 'your entire being' (Milgrom 1991, 1054). Its root is associated with 'humbling', according to Milgrom, which is in line with other possibly humbling practices we see throughout the ritual, such as in the linen clothing of the priest and the confession of the people.

<sup>59</sup> While not being allowed to do work may be most strongly associated with the sabbath, this was, in fact, the case for festival days as well (Levine 1989, 109). There is however a difference in the exact phrasing used here and for sabbath, and that used for the festivals (Milgrom 1991, 1055), which emphasise prohibition of 'laborious work', rather than *all* work.

מִכֹּל חַטָּאתֵיכֶם לִפְנֵי יְהוָה תִּטְהָרוּ: **31** שַׁבַּת שַׁבְּתוֹן  
הִיא לָכֶם וְעִנִּיתֶם אֶת־נַפְשֵׁיכֶם חֲקַת עוֹלָם: **32** וְכִפֹּר  
הַכֹּהֵן אֲשֶׁר־יִמָּשַׁח אֹתוֹ וְאֲשֶׁר יִמְלֵא אֶת־יָדוֹ לְכַהֵן  
תַּחַת אָבִיו וְלִבֹּשׁ אֶת־בְּגָדֵי הַבַּד בְּגֵדֵי הַקֹּדֶשׁ: **33** וְכִפֹּר  
אֶת־מִקְדָּשׁ הַקֹּדֶשׁ וְאֶת־אֹהֶל מוֹעֵד וְאֶת־הַמִּזְבֵּחַ וְכִפֹּר  
וְעַל הַכֹּהֲנִים וְעַל־כָּל־עַם הַקֹּהֵל יִכָּפֵר: **34** וְהִיְתְּהִי־זֹאת  
לָכֶם לְחֻקַּת עוֹלָם לְכַפֵּר עַל־בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל מִכָּל־חַטָּאתָם  
אַחַת בַּשָּׁנָה וַיַּעַשׂ כַּאֲשֶׁר צִוָּה יְהוָה אֶת־מֹשֶׁה: פ

*kipper* will be done<sup>60</sup> for you<sup>61</sup> to cleanse you of all of your sins; you shall become pure before the Lord. **31** It shall be a sabbath of complete rest<sup>62</sup> for you, and you shall practice self-denial; it is a law for all time<sup>63</sup>. **32** The priest who has been anointed and ordained to serve in place of his father shall *kipper*<sup>64</sup>. He shall put on the linen vestments - the sacral vestments. **33** Then he shall *kipper* the holiest part of the sanctuary, and the Tent of Meeting and the altar he shall *kipper* as well. For the priests and for all of the people of the congregation, he shall *kipper*. **34** This shall be for you a law of all time: to *kipper* for the Israelites for all their sins, once a year.<sup>65</sup>

And he, Aaron, did as the Lord had commanded Moses<sup>66</sup>.

<sup>60</sup> Literally 'he will *kipper*', but the voice of the verb is changed in translation to reflect the lack of a clear subject.

<sup>61</sup> This phrase emphasises the purging of the people, rather than the purging of the Shrine which seems more prominent in the rest of the chapter. It is also the phrase that refers most closely to the name Yom Kippur, usually translated as the Day of Atonement. As discussed before, however, it is purgation rather than atonement that is stressed.

<sup>62</sup> This reiterates the point discussed for verse 29, that the order for 'no manner of work' is more reminiscent of the sabbath than of the usual prohibition of labor on festival days.

<sup>63</sup> Verse 31 closely resembles verse 29, inverting the order of the prohibition of labor and the reiterations that this is a law to be kept for eternity. Milgrom points out that by doing so, a chiasm is created with verse 30 at the center (Milgrom 1991, 1057), thereby stressing its importance.

<sup>64</sup> For the first time, a High Priest other than Aaron is addressed, explaining exactly how this ritual will be performed for eternity. It also emphasises the position of priests as successors of Aaron. According to Milgrom, this may also suggest that this last part of the chapter tells how the ritual is to be performed after Aaron (as an annual festival), while Aaron got to perform it any time the level of impurity required it (Milgrom 1991, 1058). For further discussion of this, see section I.D.

<sup>65</sup> This phrasing suggests that indeed the part of the ritual that is perpetual is its annual performance in particular. Furthermore, this is the third time it has been stated that this law is for all time, suggesting that justifying its continuation was of great importance to the the author(s) or editor(s).

<sup>66</sup> The structure of this phrase is unusual. It seems out of place since Aaron could not have obeyed these commands about his successors himself. If the subject is Aaron, it would make more sense to have included this phrase at the end of the explanation of the ritual itself, before verse 29. Its placement however would make sense if either verse 29-34 was mostly an insertion (see section I.C), or if the subject is Moses rather than Aaron, who has now finished listening and will go down and tell Aaron.

## I.B Important concepts

### Meaning of *kipper*

There are two words that are plausible cognates with *kipper*: the Arabic *kafara* meaning ‘to cover’, and the Akkadian *kapparu* which can mean wiping on or off, or purifying. The use of *kapparu* seems closest to the way we see *kipper* used in the Hebrew Bible. Its meanings range from wiping or rubbing [a substance] on or off, to the cleaning (ritual or otherwise) and ‘magical purification’ of objects (*CAD*, K 178-9). For the first of these - rubbing on - a parallel usage of *kipper* can be found in, for example, Genesis 6:14 - וְכִפַּרְתָּ אֹתָהּ מִבֵּית וּמִחוּץ בַּכֹּפֶר - *and you will cover it with pitch, inside and out*. The ark is getting pitch rubbed on, which may be expressed more eloquently in English by using the word ‘cover’. This also matches the usage of the Arabic term *kafara*, and it is this usage that is most commonly referred to when interpreting *kipper* outside ritual context in the Hebrew Bible. Within texts regarding ritual, or cultic texts, the usage of *kipper* to mean ‘rub on’ seems limited. While one might argue that in Leviticus 16 for example, the ground, altar, etc. are being covered (minimally) with blood, by means of sprinkling as a part of *kipper*, the the word itself is not used to refer to these acts of sprinkling, only to refer to their purpose. As such, it might perhaps be argued that while an act of covering is involved in the act of the ‘wiping off’ of impurity, it is not directly referred to by the same term.

Aside from the more literal interpretation of the act of wiping, we can also find a figurative sense in some Akkadian sources. For example: *bikia sarrira mātkunu ugārkunu ka-pi-ra*, ‘perform a mourning ceremony, pray and purify your country and your field(s)’ (Tell Halaf No. 5:9 (NA

royal let.); *CAD*, K 179b). While theoretically the intention might be to literally wipe the land and fields, this seems incredibly unlikely, and it would make much more sense for this act of wiping to cleanse the land in a less literal sense. It would hardly be possible to wipe off dirt of an entire field, and in this context, the third meaning which associates *kapparu* with an act of ritual or magical cleansing and purification may be applicable. Such a meaning is also attested by phrases like *šarra tu-kap-pár arkišu takpirāti ebbēti šarra tu-kap-pár*, ‘you purify the king, afterward you perform on the king the holy purification rites’ (*BBR* No. 26 ii; *CAD*, K 179b). Similarly, the use of *kipper* in Leviticus 16:14-19 seems to refer to ritual removal of the (residue of) sin. As such, it seems clear that *kapparu* lines up more closely with the usage of *kipper* than *kafara* does, at least when it comes to ritual.

This use of *kapparu* to refer to a ritual purification, however, could on the one hand be a relatively unrelated meaning, or on the other, seems more likely to be directly connected to the more literal cleansing that *kapparu* can refer to. Considering the act of wiping off ‘sin’ or impurity of some sort parallel to the wiping off of dirt, would fit especially well with a more physical interpretation of the concepts of impurity and sin, and may suggest that these concepts had a less abstract meaning than the one used in contemporary interpretation, and were actually thought of as being or manifesting in some physical way as a residue or miasma.

While the connection between the act of wiping off and cleaning or cleansing in a more literal way is evident, it can be difficult to find terminology that allows for combining the physical act of wiping off or cleaning with the more abstract concept of purification. Furthermore, while it

there is no clear evidence that the act of wiping on or covering *need* be implied as well in texts regarding ritual, it is clear from other texts that the term does carry this meaning as well, which does not make it implausible that it was, in fact, associated with the same act. After all, while in the Hebrew the act of sprinkling blood, for example, is not explicitly referred to using *kipper*, it seems to be a regular part of the purification process. Combined with the knowledge that in Aramaic *kapparu* does, in fact, quite possibly also refer to the physical wiping against or on the buildings of a city being cleansed, etc. it seems strange to completely separate out the two meanings for the same word in the Hebrew text. In English, however, combining all these different meanings and connotations into one word may be near impossible.

Trying to insert the act of covering as a part of purification ritual, one might place emphasis on impurity being covered over - like a fresh layer of paint removing the imperfection of the previous one, so to say. However, this interpretation would suggest that impurity is not actually removed, but rendered impotent or unimportant so to say. It is, in that sense, perhaps closer to the act of forgiveness than to purification. This, however, means emphasising the meaning of covering rather than to rub off and purify, while it is the latter for which we have the stronger evidence in this context. As such, it would be de-emphasising that for which evidence is available at the cost of emphasising that which lacks in evidence - something that does not seem justifiable, therefore, making this an inadequate solution. Jacob Milgrom's usage of "purge", on the other hand, leaves aside the meaning of rubbing on or covering, and instead is concerned with connecting the abstract meaning of purification with the literal meaning of wiping off. This,

in the context of ritual texts, seems more suitable, if it turns out to be indeed impossible to contain all three meanings of *kipper* in one term.

One often used translation of *kipper* that attempts this last feat, is that of atonement. In contemporary English, this term is strongly associated with the idea of ‘reparation’ - an act to ‘repair’ or restore something that has previously been tainted, often with regard to the relationship between individuals, or with a deity of some sort. If one adheres to the interpretation that whether we are speaking of covering or removing sin, the act of *kipper* in ritual is associated with creating conditions that allow for restoration of the relationship between God and society, translating *kipper* with ‘to atone’ may be suitable. However, in order to justify this, the relationship between *kipper* and its effect on the relationship with God, or within society, would have to be proven first. Furthermore, atonement does not carry any associations related to the physical act of wiping off. Therefore, although it seems to successfully combine the two more abstract meanings of covering and cleansing, it leaves out any of the more literal connotations, despite there once again being more evidence for the latter than the former.

As such, it does not seem like it will be possible to find one term that will contain all of these meanings, therefore making it necessary to adapt translation based on context. Where the emphasis is on the physical act of wiping, especially outside of ritual, a translation with ‘to rub’ seems most suitable, while in the context of ritual, Milgrom’s ‘to purge’ works most effectively to maintain as much of the evidenced meaning of *kipper* as possible.

There is one particular feature of Milgrom's interpretation of *kipper* that still remains problematic, though. Milgrom states that the more abstract meaning of *kipper* is a later abstraction of the more early literal meaning (Milgrom 1991, 1083), thus adding a chronological dimension to its usage. However, in order to make this argument, Milgrom, for example, looks at most likely the oldest appearance of *kipper* known, in Genesis 32:21, and concludes that it shows the literal meaning, because it would be cognate to an Akkadian *figurative* expression, meaning to appease (Milgrom 1991, 1084) and, therefore, despite having a literal meaning, the word is translated in an abstract way, which would, in fact, be in line with the same abstract interpretation that according to Milgrom follows later. Why this usage is then not the actual abstract usage of the word is not made clear. Using these type of arguments, Milgrom's claim about the change of meaning of *kipper* over time seems weak to me. Therefore, while his translation remains the most suitable one, it seems unlikely that the usage of *kipper* in an abstract or literal way could be used as an argument for locating a text in time.

### Meaning of *azazel*

The etymology of the word *azazel* is uncertain, as is its exact meaning. There are three different meanings that the word may be plausibly argued to have: it may be either a term or name for the 'scapegoat', for the goat's location of destination, or for a deity or demon. Although none of the etymological evidence is decisive, of these meanings, the second is the least supported by evidence in etymology and other usage of the word known. Scholarly opinion seems divided on which of the first and last meaning is the most plausible, although the last meaning seems more generally supported. However, the extent to which such a meaning refers to a deity or demon, or

simply a literary figure of sorts of little religious consequence, and sacrifice or worship of them, is then still left to decide.

The first of the meanings commonly discussed - the scapegoat, or go-away goat, as Mary Douglas refers to it (Douglas 2003b, 128) - is primarily argued for based on the translation(s) seen in the Septuagint and Vulgate. The former refers to *azazel* as ἀποπομπή/παῖος and ἄφρεις, the goat which is dismissed or discharged - or which serves to carry away sin or impurity -, whereas the latter calls it the *caper emissarius* - the emissary goat. This could be supported by several etymologies, possibly developing from either \*לְאִלְעָזַר based on an Arabic root *gzl* meaning 'to remove' (Köhler et al. 1994, v, p.806b) which corresponds to, for example, the Septuagint translation where the removal of sin and impurity is stressed, or from \*זָזַלְעָזַר, as is suggested by the wording in the Vulgate and Symmachus (Köhler et al. 1994, v p.806b), reading *azazel* as זָזַלְעָזַר - the goat that goes away. The emphasis here is placed on the goat and its function, rather than its destination. While the text of Leviticus does seem concerned with name-giving or assigning each goat its purpose and afterward referring to it as so assigned, this translation does not explain the parallel between the goat assigned as such, and the goat assigned to God in verse 8, where it is the destination rather than the function of the goat that is emphasised.

Translating *azazel* as a reference to a location, the wilderness or a place in the desert to which the goat should go after being sent away, is based on a midrashic translation of זָזַלְעָזַר in verse 22 as a rough place or terrain (Milgrom 1991, 1020) rather than uninhabited or 'cutoff' land, which is supported if *azazel* comes from the Semitic 'zz root, cognate to the Arabic '*azazu*, meaning

'rough ground'. While this translation is a more plausible parallel to the other goat being sent to a particular destination, God, rather than just receiving a name, it is important to keep in mind that when that goat is referred to its destination is not necessarily a location, and unlike with the word *azazel*, there is no usage of grammatical devices to parallel *azazel*'s locative form in לַיְהוָה. It is, therefore, not the most perfect or convincing parallel, and furthermore, both Levine and Milgrom point out that the use of the ל- prefix in verse 8 clearly signifies property, making an interpretation of Azazel as a location much less probable (Milgrom 1991, 1020; Levine 1989, 102). Considering that there is no other usage of the word *azazel* in other places that supports a locative interpretation, there is little cause to choose this etymology over the one suggested above which only offered a somewhat weaker parallel construction.

While the third possible meaning of *azazel* - that of a demon, deity, or spirit - both offers a stronger parallel construction with לַיְהוָה and is a meaning found elsewhere in the biblical apocrypha, it is also often regarded as the most problematic meaning due to its possible implications with regard to monotheism. The etymology most closely connected to this meaning is the one mentioned above with regard to *azazel* as a location. Whereas in that case the 'strong' meaning of the Semitic 'zz root and its Arabic cognate is read as a description of the location, here it is its read as the first part of a term where the second half is אֵל, God or god, therefore making *azazel* a metathesis of 'fierce god'. connection to terms like Ἄξιξος, reading it as 'fierce god', impotent deity, or 'God's opponent' (Köhler et al. 1994, v, p.806b). Milgrom proceeds using this etymology to connect *azazel* to the Canaanite god Môt, here reduced to a demon (Milgrom 1991, 1021).

The interpretation of *azazel* as a deity of sorts is supported in several ways. First, it completes the parallel with God in a way that neither of the translations mentioned above can. Secondly, in apocryphal Book of Enoch, a figure with a very similar name, although there are some differences in spelling, is mentioned. This Azazel is a fallen angel, or demon. The similarity in name is not the only thing that connects this figure to *azazel* in Leviticus: in 1 Enoch 10:4-5 Raphael is commanded by God to bind the demon, and banish him by throwing him into an opening made in the desert or wilderness. The similarity to the acts performed on the goat for *azazel* in Leviticus 16 cannot be missed. Furthermore, Douglas argues that the desert is established as a place where one may expect demons to dwell, referring to the use of צַיִם in Isaiah 13:21 and 34:14 (Douglas 2003b, 126). It seems, however, that this term while describing desert dwellers of some sort, is more likely referring to wild animals or dangerous creatures of some sort, rather than demons specifically, and thus is not compelling evidence for either considering *azazel* a location for demons in the wilderness as the goat's destination the way Douglas, nor for reading *azazel* as a demon *an sich*, although it does add to the idea that the desert is a dangerous or less lawful and more chaotic place, which would make a good destination or location for either a goat laden with sin, or a demonic ruler.

The arguments for *azazel* as a deity or demon Azazel, rather than either a location of a name for the goat, seem the most thoroughly supported both in textual context within Leviticus 16, as well as in the apocryphal material. It is, however, not an entirely unproblematic translation for theological reasons, as it may be argued to suggest that the priestly source is not as inherently

monotheistic as it is often read. Furthermore, it would most definitely be somewhat unusual to see such an almost casual reference to a different deity or demon in a Priestly text. Mary Douglas points out that the interpretation of the function of the goat and the ritual in Leviticus 16 in general, has been heavily influenced by previous research that connected it to Greek rituals utilising a human scapegoat of sorts in a manner that seems more closely aligned to the usage of the term scapegoat in modern English, involving a connotation of persecution and punishment (Douglas 2003b, 121-2). Having such an interpretation in mind might make one more inclined to read the destination of the goat as something bad, such as a demon lord ruling over a hell-like place in the desert, despite the fact that Leviticus 16 does not seem to actively encourage a negative understanding of the goat's destination after it is sent away. Trying to set that possible bias aside, Douglas argues that *azazel* is unlikely to be referring to a deity or demon, as this would be "completely out of character for the book of Leviticus" (Douglas 2003b, 127), and the arguments in favour of this reading are too dependent on late sources, such as the Book of Enoch and documents from Qumran, which could have already been influenced by the aspects of Greek culture that transformed the role of the scapegoat.

The former of these claims will be discussed in more detail below, but with regard to the latter, Douglas primarily has a problem with the implication of a lack of sources from the estimated period of origin of the P source while using references to material from later (apocryphal) writing. This, she argues, necessitates either a very late date of redaction, or a continuous tradition, and as such, the anthropological approach would favour rejecting this translation, and instead opt for the first one discussed: that *azazel* is a designation of the goat as the 'go-away

goat' (Douglas 2003b, 128). While the lack of other references to Azazel, if indeed a demon or deity that was an accepted part of ritual and belief, is indeed strange, there is nothing that suggests that it cannot have been a very minor part of Israelite religion, rarely referred to but not non-existent, of which the prominence or acceptance at all, changed over time and between people. There does not seem to be cause to suggest that it is more probable for the sources from Qumran to reflect an effort to take the existing term to designate a very particular goat, and change its reading significantly to turn *azazel* into a prominent demonic figure, or to make up a new word that bears similarity to *azazel* by accident, than it is for them to have similarly taken a minor reference to an old deity or demon and change it significantly. By no means need the Azazel of Leviticus 16 be the exact same Azazel of the Book of Enoch, but to deny all connection seems as forced. Furthermore, the potential etymological connection between *azazel* and the Canaanite god Môt, in fact, does connect this interpretation to older customs and sources. Although it is not impossible that this was created on purpose later as well, if the rest of the etymology is considered compelling enough, it seems more improbable that a later people would have purposely made a reference to a Canaanite deity that was not previously there, than for it to be a trace of older customs.

The translation of *azazel* as a reference to a deity, demon, or spirit of sorts is seen as problematic for reasons besides the sources of evidence as well, the most prominent one being that it may suggest that the Israelites were not strictly monotheistic. While Leviticus 16 could be interpreted as describing a sacrificing to a power other than God, however, this is not absolutely required. Milgrom, for example, argues that the reference here is used to diminish the demon,

rather than encourage worship, as demonstrated according to him both through the deliberate metathesis of the name which would conceal the demonic nature of the god, and by the treatment of the goat as described in the chapter.

The Priestly source nowhere explicitly argues against the existence of other gods, although for the most part it is solely concerned with the worship of Yahweh. The suggestion that *azazel* may be referring to a different deity or demon is, therefore, not quite as 'out of character' as Mary Douglas, for example, implies (Douglas 2003b, 127). While it is most definitely not common for P material to refer to the existence of other demons or deities, the only explicit admonitions seem to be in regard to *worshipping* them or their idols, as in Lev 17:7. If *azazel* were to be read as referring to another deity or demon then, the only thing that would explicitly need to be proven in order to keep Lev 16 from becoming too much of an outlier in the P sources, is that sending the goat to them is not a case of sacrifice or worship, as Milgrom does by pointing out that while 'Azazel' may be referred to, he does not play any kind of active part in the ritual (Milgrom 1991, 1021). Furthermore, the goat, according to Milgrom, is not treated as a sacrifice in either the actions performed on it, nor the effect they have.

That the goat may not need to be seen as a form of sacrifice may be supported by the lack of designation as sacrifice or offering of any sort of the birds in Leviticus 14. This chapter describes a ritual for returning someone cleansed from skin disease from a state of impurity to purity, and actions are performed on a dove which bear great similarity to those for the 'scapegoat' in Leviticus 16. The ritual involves a pair of birds, of which one is chosen to be killed, the other to

be let go (Lev 14:4-5). The blood of the killed bird is sprinkled seven times onto the person who is at that point still in a state of impurity, despite being healed already (Lev 14:7), which parallels the way in which the blood from the offered bull and goat is used in Leviticus 16:14-19 to cleanse the different parts of the tabernacle and sanctuary. Neither bird is referred to as any kind of offering or sacrifice in this instance. In contrast, in Leviticus 16 the goat for God does get explicitly sacrificed as a sin offering. Furthermore, in Leviticus 13 the live bird is released into the (open) field or cultivated land, rather than the desert or wilderness. Regardless of these differences, the fact that neither of the let go animals are referred to as any type of sacrifice combined with Milgrom's arguments with regard to the lack of sacrificial treatment of the goat, make a compelling case to not regard the goat as a form of worship.

At the same time, Milgrom strongly suggests that 'Azazel' is a purposely reduced version of a deity or demon, stripped from their powers, and possibly little more than a reference as part of a figure of speech, rather than reflecting a part of current and actively believed in force (Milgrom 1991, 1021). While this would somewhat justify the lack of other references in Priestly material to somewhat 'acceptable' deities or demons aside from Yahweh, and make it seem even less out of place in the text, it is not the most compelling argument. For example, Milgrom argues that the metathesising of the name is intended to conceal or reduce the status of Azazel. Looking at the etymology of this term when reading it in the way Milgrom does, however, the actual meaning of the name remains unchanged and powerful in a way. Why keep referring to this demon or deity as a 'fierce god' if the intention is to reduce their power? In other places in the Hebrew Bible, including Priestly texts, wordplay occurs to diminish power or even ridicule

figures and to consider this metathesis of a rather flattering description an attempt at reducing Azazel seems a stretch.

The argument that it may merely be a figure of speech is more convincing, yet if the text was actively trying to discourage belief in and worship of other deities or powers over the worship of God, it seems unlikely that this would not have been avoided. This explanation would make more sense if, in fact, the source was so unconcerned with convincing their audience's engagement with these other powers, either because it was not happening, or because it was but was not regarded as a problem in need of addressing. Considering that warning against the worship of demons does occur in the Book of Leviticus, it seems more likely that the text reflects a henotheistic society, rather than one so convincingly monotheistic that there were no concerns about allusions to other deities getting interpreted incorrectly.

Overall, *azazel* seems most likely to be a reference to another, likely minor, deity or demon or sorts, which may possibly still have been believed in at the time, or may not. Regardless, the ritual does not seem to include or condone worship to this Azazel, keeping it in line with the laws outlined in the rest of the Book of Leviticus, nor does it actively try to diminish or attack the power or prominence of this deity. Its passive and minor role for ritual in Leviticus, whether as an actively believed in minor spirit, demon, or deity, or as a trace of older beliefs now merely a figure of speech, is firmly enough established that there does not seem to have been a recognised need to avoid potential confusion of the audience by including a reference to it in the

ritual. This may suggest that, in fact, the Priestly source reflects a more henotheistic than monotheistic society, but it is not a necessity.

## I.C Structure

There are several ways in which this text can be broken up by topic discussed. Levine for example, uses five different sections to discuss the text, moving from preparations for purification (verse 3-10), to the actual purification (verse 11-19), the dispatch of the scapegoat (verse 20-22), the rites following that (verse 23-28), and the designation of an annual atonement day (verse 29-34). Milgrom on the other hand, splits the text into nine different sections (Milgrom 1991, 1059-61): an introduction (verse 1), the materials required for the ritual (verse 2-5), the preliminaries (verse 6-10), the procedure of purging the sanctuary (verse 11-19), the procedure of purging the people (verse 20-22), the sacrifices at the altar (verse 23-25), the purification of the assistants (verse 26-28), the appendix describing Israel's self-purgation (verse 29-34a), and the execution (verse 34b). Within these nine sections, Milgrom has divided things further into a later added introductory sentence (verse 1), originally independent source material on an emergency ritual (verse 2-28), and a later added appendix (verse 28-34). This division thematically, if in rather small sections, seems suitable for the text. However, Milgrom assigns his three section division (introduction, ritual, and appendix) to different sources, dating from different times. Most importantly, he argues that we can see an interaction between H and P here. The Holiness code is typically considered an originally independent source, which later got incorporated into P, with P as the redactor. Milgrom, however, argues that P is, in fact, considerably older than H, and that H is the redactor of P. In Leviticus 16, this would be visible

in the redaction regarding the nature of the ritual. The text describing the procedures of the ritual - verse 2 through 28 - is assigned to a source even older than P by Milgrom, showing signs of redaction by P as well, and the appendix especially is assigned to H. As it is in this appendix that it is explicitly stated that the ritual should only be performed once a year, Milgrom argues that this was previously not the case, and that, in fact, it was intended as an emergency rite, like all scapegoat rites known in the ancient Near East (Milgrom 1991, 1061), which was only later turned into a part of the rituals for the New Year. There are, however, some arguments against this interpretation, which will be discussed further in section 2. Note that while Milgrom has significantly more sections, they tend to be in the same sections as Levine used, simply broken up somewhat further, with the exception of the first three verses. That the text from verse 28 onward seems to reflect a change of gears is shown in this too.

With the larger structure of the text in mind, the smaller details contributing arguments for these separations can be discussed. The chapter opens, for example, with a use of the waw consecutive, suggesting it would be connected to the previous chapter - chapter 15. However, within this same verse, there is a reference to events that occur in chapter 10, which may suggest that the connection with chapter 15 is not as strong as the opening implies. This may serve as evidence for editing of an earlier text. The reference to chapter 10 furthermore serves two different functions: it places the chapter in a temporal framework as well as in the context of the narrative. Both Milgrom and Levine argue that referring to the death of the two sons provides information about the relevance of the upcoming rituals - when and why they are important (Milgrom 1991, 1011; Levine 1989, 99), which will be discussed in more detail in the second

section.

Whereas the opening of verse one is quite typical for the start of a chapter connected to previous chapters, the first words of the second verse *also* seem to fit this pattern. At the very least, they are not common for the structure of a second verse, which, Milgrom argues, should have been more along the lines of "And the Lord said to him", as occurs in Exod 7:26, 8:16, 9:13, Lev 1:2, 15:2, and 17:2, if the second verse really were intended from the start to be the second verse in the chapter (Milgrom 1991, 1012). Instead, he argues, this opening reflects that at some point in time, verse 2 was the beginning of this piece of text, and verse 1 was only added on later, in order to tie an independently existing ritual (verse 2-28) into the narrative following chapter 10.

Not only transitions between separate parts of the text provide evidence for some form of redaction - the expressions used and any seemingly unnecessary explanation for them might suggest that the audience the text was redacted for, used slightly different language than the audience a text was originally produced for. In verse 2 for example, the Holy of Holies is referred to as the Shrine behind the curtain, and the use of the term Shrine remains constant for most of the chapter. The Holy of Holies is the more usual term for the area behind the curtain, while the word for Shrine - which means the exact same thing as the Holy of Holies here - is in P more commonly used to describe the outer shrine and not the inner. As such, to include the second half of this description seems unnecessary, unless it was added to clear up the terminology for an audience unused to this use of the word "Shrine". This, Milgrom argues, is as a sign that this part of the text does not belong to P (Milgrom 1991, 1013), but rather to an older

independent source, which was edited later by P in order to be easier to understand for the audience. Similar distinctive use of language not commonly seen in P is found in, for example, the word used for transgressions (verse 16, 22) - wanton, brazen sins as Milgrom defines them (Milgrom 1991, 1063), and the Tent of Meeting (verse 16, 17, 20, 23), both of which - like the term here translated as Shrine - are used in a way that is unusual for Priestly material. This seems to be some of Milgrom's strongest evidence for assigning the text of the ritual to a source other than P or H, and similarly, the use of, for example, *ger* in verse 29, and slightly different terminology for the Holy of Holies imply that the chance is large that this verse and those connected to it belong to H.

Whether verse 1 was a later addition or not, it seems from the text that it was at least written with verse 2 in mind - or verse 2 with verse 1 in mind. This can be detected, for example, in the way the author or editor tied the incident referred to in first verse to the ritual in verse 2-28. A parallel is set up between the safe and unsafe, or lawful and unlawful way of approaching the presence of the Lord. The connection to chapter 10 could be read as providing an example of how not to proceed, and the potential consequences of doing so, thereby hammering home the message given in the second verse - unless the High Priest acts according to the ritual that will be outlined following in the text, death is awaiting him as well. In order to maintain this parallel, this translation uses, for example, "approached" to describe the action of the sons who died, rather than "encroached" as Milgrom does (Milgrom 1991, 1012). While the Hebrew word does not necessarily include the negative connotation given it by Milgrom, Milgrom chose to use it precisely to create that contrast between the negative and the positive way of approaching. By

translating the word in such a negative way though, it may be argued that the parallel is actually weakened. It de-emphasises that what the sons did was, in fact, a perhaps more 'normal' way of approaching - the method that would be assumed correct if one did not know better - and that one does not just have to approach rather than encroach, but that this approach is bound to special requirements.

## I.D Emergency ritual or annual festival

The two primary interpretations of this text reflect two very different understandings of the type of ritual involved. Milgrom argues that the ritual as outlined in verse 2-28 was not, in fact, intended to describe an annual festival, but rather, that it was originally intended to be a ritual to be used in emergency situations when the entire sanctuary needed to be cleansed. With this argument in mind, the meaning of chapter 16's connection with chapter 10 also changes - rather than just providing the correct manner and time for entering the Shrine, as only allowed during Yom Kippur, it is now describing the type of situation in which the ritual is necessary: extreme defilement of the sanctuary. This would have been caused both by the sons' incorrect actions while alive, and by the presence of their bodies after death. As such, a special and thorough cleansing would have been an immediate necessity, if one considers the possibility of the deity withdrawing his presence if the Temple and especially the Shrine gets overly defiled. Providing an emergency protocol, rather than an annual atonement or cleansing ritual, could, therefore, be argued to make sense in this context (Milgrom 1991, 1011).

One of the phrases where the different possible translations of the text depending on one's

understanding of the purpose of the ritual that is being outlined, are especially clear, is in verse 2. The phrase translated here as *whenever he chooses* literally means "at (just) any time" in Hebrew. Its interpretation, however, depends on whether emphasis is placed on the aspect of time as a particular moment on the calendar, or as referring to a particular situation. The former fits better with the understanding of Yom Kippur as an annual festival, whereas the second seems to generally fit better with Milgrom's interpretation of its use as an emergency ritual. Levine slightly side-steps this ambiguity, by translating the phrase as "at will" (Levine 1989, 100). Using this translation entirely removes the time aspect, instead emphasising that it is not just up to the High Priest when the ritual takes place, but that it is tied to a particular moment - something that could fit for either the festival or the emergency ritual interpretation. Milgrom's inclusion of "whenever" into the phrase, however, seems more suitable in this case, as it seems more in line with the idea that the High Priest still may be choosing or desiring to perform the ritual when necessary (Milgrom 1991, 1012). This desire is not an obstacle to his entering, it is the context, ritual, and/or time-bound conditions that are relevant for whether or not approaching the Lord is safe.

## The presence of God

A large part of Milgrom's argument for an emergency ritual depends on his argument that the purging of the Shrine is necessary in order to enable the presence of God. It is, therefore, important to discuss the information provided in this text about the form that God's presence takes, and its importance for the community. Such information can be found from the instructions given about interacting with the presence of the Lord, as well as its description, and

the justification provided for these measures. In the second verse for example, information can be deduced from the way in which Aaron is told that he should not enter the Shrine just whenever he chooses. The use of לָאָה followed by an imperfect, is used to convey immediate, specific commands (Lambdin 1973, 114), rather than durative ones. In this context, this seems sensible, as the rest of the chapter includes a description of how to safely do the very thing that is being warned against. Warned, and not prohibited, as Milgrom points (Milgrom 1991, 1012). This could be read as suggesting that there is something inherent about the High Priest entering the Shrine in any context other than the one described in the rest of this chapter, that kills him, rather than the fact that he would be doing something forbidden by entering.

Other relevant information can be found especially in analysing the meaning of the cloud mentioned in verse 2, which may either refer to the cloud of incense that is used as a screen to protect the high priest from being in too close proximity to the deity, or to the cloud in which the deity manifests. Milgrom argues for the former, pointing out that there is no prohibition against seeing God as the cloud manifestation, and that the Israelites do so in any case at other points, such as when the cloud descends upon the Tent of Meeting, etc. The phrase here, which is accompanied by an abrupt change to first person standing in stark contrast to the rest of the text, was added later to emphasise the importance of the screen as protection according to Milgrom (Milgrom 1991, 1014-5). This argument is strengthened on the base of the description of the process of lighting incense and making sure the Ark is covered by the cloud before the priest can enter the Shrine, in verse 12 and 13. When the cloud is once again spoken of in verse 13, it is when the High Priest is about to enter the Shrine, taking along a specified amount and kind of

incense. The possible purposes of the cloud are discussed in detail by Milgrom, who argues that its purpose cannot be to propitiate God as in this case, there would be no need to "cover" the Ark with the smoke, suggesting that it may not be seen, and that the smoke plays an important role in taking care of this (Milgrom 1991, 1029). Similarly, the interpretation that there was no need for the smoke to function as a screen because of either the darkness of the Shrine, or the thought that the high priest *was*, in fact, allowed to see the Ark, is dismissed by Milgrom on the grounds that there is no explanation of the need to cover the Ark in this case, leading to the conclusion that providing some sort of screen was, in fact, an important part of the smoke or cloud's function.

Levine, on the other hand, argues that it makes little sense for the cloud described in verse 2 to be referring to the smoke screen, considering that this screen serves as a protection, it makes little sense to be referred to here when God's presence - despite the cloud also being there - is supposed to be very dangerous (Levine 1989, 101). This raises the question of whether the answer might lie in both sides of the argument. If God does, in fact, manifest in a cloud of sorts in the Shrine - though in a somewhat different form than that of the fire cloud, such that this cloud is still impossible to be looked at - but the cloud that comes with the incense obscures this from view more effectively, such that it is safe to enter, a compromise might be found. This does not, however, seem a particularly strong interpretation, as it leaves one to wonder why and how the cloud should differ from the fire cloud.

Aside from the qualities of the cloud, there is another part of God's presence that this text is concerned with, according to Milgrom. Part of Milgrom's argument that verse 2-28, in fact,

reflects an independent emergency ritual is based on the premise that excessive defilement of the Shrine would lead to God retracting His presence and abandoning the Israelites.

## The Akitu Festival

Evidence for one reading over the other may be found in looking at the smaller details, but also by comparing the event described here to New Year festivals in the ancient Near East that we have more information on, such as the Akitu festival. One of the most interesting features of this festival is not just similarities in the procedures for cleansing the temple - although there are many to be found, which will be discussed in more detail later - but in the renewal of the high priest or king's position between society and the divine. The king is required to humble himself to the point of openly crying in order to protect the prosperity for the next year, and wearing humble linen clothing. Leviticus 16 too offers various requirements for dressing the high priest, about which the text is very specific - everything must be made out of linen.

Milgrom offers three possible explanations for the requirement that the high priest is dressed entirely in linen as mentioned in verse 4. First, he suggests that the linen might refer to the manner in which angels dress (Ezek 9:2-3, 11; 10:2; Dan 10:6) as entering the Holy of Holies is similar to entering the heavenly council. This, Milgrom argues, is, in fact, the most likely explanation out of the three. The other two explanations - that he must dress in this way to humble himself and avoid accusations from Satan about dressing up as a God, or that he must strip himself of all the signs of his high priest status to deserve reinstatement - both require that the high priest's linen wear actually is considerably more humble, or more like that of normal

priests. There are, however, a number of differences, such as the turban and the pure instead of mixed wool sash, that would set the high priest apart from all the other priests even on this occasion (Milgrom 1991, 1016). As such, although it might be argued that decorations are still removed, the high priest does not seem to truly dress like he has lost his status in any way. The similarities with the Akitu festival are not easily overlooked, however, and in that light, the possibility that the linen is, in fact, intended to convey some level of humility, increases, as does the likelihood that even if the ritual did not entirely originate as a New Year's festival, its details and celebration are somewhat connected to it at least, and not only as a later change.

## I.E Conclusion

Having discussed some of the most important material describing the characteristics of sin and impurity in Leviticus 16, this leaves the question of how exactly sin and impurity are depicted in this chapter, in order to connect the traits to the effect they have on the community in particular. From the reading of Leviticus 16, an image of sin and the defilement related to it emerged as something that is contagious, and can spread beyond the individual committing the sin, as demonstrated by the need to purge the altar and Holy of Holies for sins that were not likely committed there, or anywhere near it. These sins very specifically related to knowingly rebelling against religious and moral laws - which in turn are also the type of laws that hold a community together. The contagious factor could be used for social control, as it would discourage association with those known to have sinned, thereby forcing them into social isolation. Furthermore, since the whole community is being held responsible for their sins as a community, this enforces both the idea of unity, and that if some of them sin badly enough and those sins do

not, in fact, get confessed, etc. ,this could have negative consequences for the entire community, which in turn might encourage people to enforce their social rules more strenuously amongst each other as well.

Milgrom suggests that a significant part of the urgency of the ritual is due to the fear that God may retract his presence from the community, hurting them all. As such, whether an annual occurrence, or an event that takes place whenever a gross sin has committed to the extent that such extensive purgation is necessary, the ritual may serve to some extent to re-establish the society's commitment to following these moral and religious laws, as a community, and the importance of doing so. It could, therefore, very well be used as a social device to control the behaviour of lower or different social classes by the elite, as Douglas suggests. It should be noted, however, that the high priest, in fact, needs to sacrifice a larger and more precious animal, as well as dressing humbly - this hardly seems a display of power by the elite.

## II. Theology and Anthropology on sin and impurity

Trying to understand how impurity and sin fit inside the social and theological structures that rule the functioning and thinking of a society, is important for comprehending the consequences that a particular interpretation of sin or impurity may carry for our understanding of the society we assign this interpretation to. Neither the text of Leviticus 16 nor the interpretation of sin by the Priestly source, exists in a vacuum. It is, therefore, necessary to carefully consider the kind of social and theological framework that may be in place. In order to do so, I will consider different ways in which sin and impurity have been discussed in both theological and anthropological scholarship.

First, I will look at four different ways of modelling impurity as a system reflecting and affecting the social situation on which a society is based. Their function and characteristics will be discussed for each, in an effort to better understand different ways of approaching sin as a phenomenon that is both shaped by and used to shape a society. After an evaluation of these different models, I will look at the kind of language and metaphors used to describe sin in the Hebrew Bible, and consider how this fits in or contrasts with these models.

## II.A Models of Impurity Systems

### Douglas

One of the most influential and well-known discussions of impurity as a social model is Mary Douglas' *Purity and Danger*. Douglas models impurity as a system of rules or laws, reflecting things that are in conflict with-, or problematic for the usual boundaries and values of a society (Douglas 2003a, 141). In this, she argues, impurity is much like dirt: matter out of place, an offence to order (Douglas 2003a, 2). It is not inherently or morally wrong, and can sometimes not be avoided. By emphasising what is out of place in a particular context, Douglas argues that a system of boundaries can be derived. This, according to Douglas, should be a single system, that all impurity fits into (Douglas 2003a, 102).

In accordance with Durkheim's view on the function of religion in society as outlined in his 1921 work, *The Elementary Forms of the Religious Life*, this system has a particular social function: to create a sense of solidarity by asserting group values and beliefs through ritual (Douglas 2003a, 102). In the case of impurity, this happens by establishing a system where acting or existing in opposition to those values and beliefs has particular social consequences - systems like this "provide institutions for manipulating [the social system]" (Douglas 2003a, 114) according to Douglas - as is seen in the case of the Hebrew Bible where impurity leads to exclusion, either permanent or impermanent, from particular religious or social situations.

Douglas argues that a system such as this is especially typical for hierarchical societies, which establish and maintain their social hierarchy by means of it. Laws are skewed to put particular members of society in a position where behaviour that they cannot avoid causes a lower social status. For example, 'symptoms' of womanhood, such as menstruation and pregnancy, are said to cause impurity, despite their necessity for society, thereby forcing women into a regular state of lower social status.

There are two of the standout features of this system relevant to our discussion: firstly, social status is dependant on impurity, and secondly, forms of social isolation from (particular parts of) society, or rituals that mark one a member of that society, are framed either as a punishment or as a natural consequence for coming into contact with a source of impurity. This social isolation can be partially justified by arguing that impurity, like dirt, clings to an individual, and affects those who come into contact with them - it is contagious. Even further, Douglas describes impurity as a miasma, a type of smell or vapour that is released when the particular type of boundary crossing happens that is at the root of sin according to her. This vapour then clings to individuals that get in touch with it and can spread from one person to another, but also from a person to an object, affecting especially the temple - cultic locations and objects - which, when contaminated, may be unable to be used for their intended function. As such, the type of impurity that contaminates in this manner can be argued to require isolation in order to avoid further spreading.

Lastly, it is important to note that Douglas looks at impurity as a symbolic system (Douglas 2003a, 23)- impurity is a symbol for societal difficulties, and therefore, while Douglas also touches on the more physical aspect (such as the idea of contamination), impurity is primarily seen as a metaphor. For Douglas, an impurity is caused by someone being in the wrong, according to some other, larger system. This person's behaviour poses a danger to their society and/or societal structure, and impurity symbolises this danger.

## Smith

The models proposed by Douglas and Jonathan Smith lie relatively close together. Smith's model of impurity is in many ways similar to that of Douglas, but the primary difference lies in the fact that rather than emphasising hierarchy between different layers or parts of the system as Douglas does, Smith looks at the entire body of rules and laws as a mapping out of several separate systems - each with their own rules, and not necessarily subordinate to each other.

Furthermore, the systems as Smith describes them in the last chapter of *Map is not territory*, allow for a different function than the one that Douglas emphasises: whereas Douglas primarily looks at social hierarchy and values that are relevant for maintaining or establishing a particular social system, Smith emphasises the ability of an individual to make sense of their place in the world. While this may include their place in the social hierarchy, Smith is more concerned with the way a particular area - be it separated by social, ritual, or physical boundaries - interacts with an individual's need to make sense of their own importance and function within that area. This model looks at things from the perspective of that individual, rather than emphasising the

purpose of those who may be manipulating the social system by encouraging individuals to look at things in a certain way. This is a major shift in perspective from Douglas' model.

There is a strong emphasis on context in Smith's model of impurity. Things are impure because they are displaced, or interacting with an individual in the wrong context (Smith 1993, 292). Viewing things in this way emphasises the lack of some inherent wrong, or 'dirty' quality to the things that cause impurity; something may be right in one context, yet be out of place in another, and thereby create a form of dissonance that can be referred to as impurity (Smith 1993, 293). One system gets contaminated so to say, by certain characteristics of a different system, and an individual who works in both of these systems has to be aware of their boundaries and has to respect them, to avoid or deal with this contamination. While Douglas too takes care to point out that dirt is relative, she seems to see it all as part of the same system, and in Smith's description, there is not nearly as strong a sense of *danger*, as in Douglas' discussion either.

## Neusner

Jacob Neusner draws on models similar or identical to those of Douglas and Smith for different communities, but unlike in the previously discussed cases, Neusner argues that these systems are making use of two systems in general, a separate and a pre-existing one, of attitudes and social taboos with regards to moral and religious behaviour. The origins and purpose of these systems, Neusner argues, cannot be discerned (Neusner 1973, 17). This carries the implication that unlike what Douglas and Smith seem to argue, these laws by themselves need not be inherently

concerned with the boundaries of a particular social system. It is important to note, however, that Neusner does not seem to argue against this notion either, but he cautions against viewing the qualities discouraged by a particular purity system, as inherently containing information about the values of said system (Neusner 1973, 20).

With regards to making use of this overarching and somewhat undefined or undefinable system, Neusner focusses on an organisation that emphasises how these sources of impurity are related to cultic ritual space. Pre-existing values and laws are turned into metaphors, serving a new purpose - a purpose which acts similar to that of the models provided by Smith and Douglas.

Although Neusner does not seem willing to really define a purpose of the first system, he describes it overall as a way of providing the individual with a method to understand and express the need for particular social behaviours, especially relating to 'sexual fornication, idolatry, and evil doings' (Neusner 1973, 20). This may seem similar to the purpose of individual systems as outlined in Smith's model, however, this time, the system with this particular purpose has not (yet) been 'mapped out' so to say.

On the other hand, a system that *has* been mapped out can serve several different purposes, according to Neusner. The initial Priestly use, he describes as primarily concerned with emphasising that cultic life is oriented towards the temple (Neusner 1973, 16). With this system in mind, others then define and differentiate themselves in relation to this system, by adapting the purity laws of their own, for example shifting the orientation away from the temple, and

towards other spheres of life that make more sense for the particular sect (Neusner 1973, 17). All of the above seem to fit in a way into a model very similar to what Douglas proposes, where there is a certain hierarchy within a society, cult, or sect, that is enforced by means of purity laws.

Some of the characteristics that Neusner assigns to the overarching system differ quite strongly from those we have seen before. Most importantly, impurity here is not yet, or no longer, a metaphor. Sin *produces* impurity, it is not *like* impurity, and the impurity it produces has possibly very physical consequences (Neusner 1973, 23). In this system, impurity is also not related to the cult, participation in the cult, or any such thing. It can be far less neatly defined than in a metaphorical context, encompassing more vague concepts, rather than well-defined actions. The focus lies on daily lives, in the home, the street, etc. rather than in cultic space.

Furthermore, it seems implied that this system could very well be concerned with things that are considered inherently wrong, depending on the theological interpretation of sin. The fact that these sinful behaviours apparently lend themselves well enough to remain relevant and accepted across space and time according to Neusner - for he discusses uses of it ranging from prior to the Second Temple period to for example Rabbinic Judaism and Christianity as much as a millennium later - seems to agree with this interpretation. This stands in sharp contrast with Smith's model in particular, which is centred around the idea that the cause of impurity depends heavily on context and is not necessarily concerned with an absolute kind of right and wrong.

In order to make this existing system fit with the kind of mapped systems specific to a certain society, the taboos, etc., are turned into metaphors for what a particular group of people finds to be especially dangerous or immoral. This is visible in justification (though it need not be) and in consequences for the breaking of certain laws, which are primarily concerned with the cult or other social structure. Think for example of not being allowed to participate in particular cultic rituals, or to enter religious spaces as consequences.

## Klawans

Lastly, Jonathan Klawans is concerned with a model that contains features from all of the aforementioned models, yet does not quite match any of them. His model is focussed on two separate realms or states of being. The characteristics of these realms are much like Smith's: they are each tied to a particular view of a way in which an individual relates to the world around them, and society. What makes something impure depends on its context, much like for Smith. The first of these two realms is referred to as the ritual realm, whereas the other is concerned with morality. The splitting of realms shares similarities with the two different kinds of systems Neusner points out - the ritual matching up with that of the cult, while the moral is concerned with a set of rules that seem to stay constant, even if their justification has changed. Klawans, however, has both coexisting at the same time, whereas Neusner seems to be mostly concerned with each as the only or primary way of considering impurity by a particular community.

Furthermore, although they are similar, these definitions are not quite the same. Klawans separates out the realms initially by particular characteristics of the kind of impurity they cause

(Klawans 2000, 22). The realm of ritual covers that which incurs impermanent punishment: caused by interaction with what seem to be largely natural and unavoidable sources of impurity that cannot be avoided. It is highly contagious and affects the objects and locations associated with the cult, or with society: the (slightly) more artificial part of things that give the individual its function in time and space. On the other hand, the realm of the moral mostly is concerned with that which incurs a longer lasting, and often permanent, kind of consequence. It requires some form of punishment or forgiveness to restore the balance, and when this is not possible, the default consequence seems to be exile or isolation of some sort. While this type of impurity is not contagious the way ritual impurity is, Klawans argues that by performing immoral acts, a force of sorts is released that may affect not only the individual, but a larger group of people, or society as a whole, and especially also the natural world around them. This is the type of impurity that defiles the earth, and it is strongly associated with sin, whereas sinful behaviour is rarely or never the cause of ritual impurity according to Klawans (Klawans 2000, 23).

While the separation of the two systems is such that it is possible for someone to be in a state of ritual impurity without having done anything 'wrong' with regard to the moral realm, and similarly, immoral acts need not affect ritual status, Klawans does still see both of those systems as part of one overarching system. This is where his model differs from those of Neusner and Smith and matches more closely with that of Douglas. The exact characteristics and function of this overarching system remain unclear though - although it may be assumed that the answer, much as for the rest of the model, is a mixture of the functions of Douglas', Smith's, and Neusner's models: partially a system setup to affect and order the social and cultic sphere, but

also one that draws on moral and social rules not necessarily drawn up originally for the particular social situations applicable to this society, and which creates a moral order not as strongly related to social or cultic status, permitting the individual to define themselves and their existence in relation to different contexts.

## Evaluation

While I think that each of the mentioned models has merit to some extent, I find myself leaning towards a solution such as Klawans', where the useful aspects of several models get incorporated. Douglas makes a strong case for the manipulation of the social system through a system of impurity laws. Especially considering the fact that, as Neusner points out, many rules and taboos last beyond a particular cultic setting, it seems fair to assume that such a system was not brought together at random. However, I think Douglas may be pushing slightly too far with respect to this, and I do not think that her evidence for the sole or primary function and feature of a symbol system - such as the system of impurity laws being entirely meant for the manipulation of social strata and oppression particular members of society - is nearly as strong as that for the existence of a symbol system, and its purpose of enforcing some form of order on society by providing people with a social and religious context for their life and work.

By incorporating multiple systems within the system, combining Douglas and Smith's models, there is more room for nuance and different types of order within the same system. Both Neusner and Klawans provide evidence for the need of that. I think that Neusner's evaluation of the difference in function of a same or similar set of impurity laws in different communities and at

different times, provides some interesting thought on the use of definition and differentiation between different communities and sects that are in a way still part of a same or similar social and cultic context. Furthermore, I think the approach of mapping out how these shifts take place not only from location to location but also within the same community over time, is useful and relevant for trying to understand how these systems relate to their social contexts. By doing so, Neusner opens the door to the idea of a system in which not every single rule needs to have an inherent purpose associated with that particular system - as it need not have been designed for the particular system we see it functioning in - which allows for more nuance, and cautions against ascribing meaning, or a need for meaning and explanation of every single rule. While I think that Neusner is still too set on trying to cover the structure of the system in one community as one system, with one primary function, much in the way that Douglas is, the implications of his ideas are very important to keep in mind.

Klawans, on the other hand, barely seems to account for the function of the system described at all, and this opposite extreme carries with it the risk of categorising rules just because they happen to share a certain similarity. While a valuable exercise that may allow new larger structures to become more visible, doing so does not give enough credit to those in control of the system, or its very strong social function. Nevertheless, out of the four models described, I think Klawans comes the closest to a nuanced view that still provides some larger structure.

## II.B Nature of Impurity and Sin

While the above discussion is geared towards understanding the significance of sin and impurity in a societal context, I will now turn towards some of the discussion of the metaphorical and theological interpretation. For this, the emphasis lies on the metaphorical language described to discuss sin, as the language used to describe a concept can prove quite revealing for the way in which we picture and interact with such a concept, whether in practice it was used purely in a metaphorical sense, or taken more literal. I will first consider Gary Anderson's discussion of sin as weight, and later as debt, and the historical transition between these two interpretations, before turning towards David Lambert's reading of sin as a limiting force or boundary between God and society. For each of these three interpretations, in turn, I will consider the general concept outlined, the way in which it relates to textual evidence, and its implications for our understanding of sin and impurity.

### Anderson

In his discussion of the interpretation of the nature of sin in the Bible, Gary Anderson separates out two different images used to describe sin and its relation to impurity. Firstly, he discusses the 'old testament' interpretation of sin as a weight, that may be born as a punishment, or removed through forgiveness and/or bearing away. Secondly, and primarily, Anderson turns his focus to the understanding of sin as a form of debt that is paid off with physical punishment or cancelled by the grace and agreement of the one the debt is owed to. Each of these images is associated

with a particular community or social and religious context, as described by particular Biblical texts.

### **Sin as weight**

Looking at the language used in the Hebrew Bible, Anderson points out that of the words used in relation to some form of sin, "to bear a sin" (נָשָׂא) is significantly more common than any other expression (Anderson 2009, 16-7). This expression invokes the image of a burden or load - it is a very physical, concrete kind of image, compared to the more abstract concept of debt for example - and it is primarily associated with the idea of weight.

Based on the use and the assigned meaning of the expression, Anderson points out that there are two primary meanings used: to handle or bear a punishment, or to be forgiven (Anderson 2009, 17). These meanings may initially seem contradictory, but Anderson refers to Baruch Schwartz' analysis of the expression (Schwartz 1995, 12-14), in which the relation between these two meanings is discussed in depth. Schwartz points out that although it may be less obvious in English, in this language too there are two different meanings that can be assigned to the image of bearing or carrying a weight: to have it 'on one's shoulders' so to say, and carry it around, allowing it to weigh you down, or to carry the weight away. The first is the image that corresponds to that of a punishment or result of sin, something that physically or metaphorically presses on an individual and makes things harder for them. It is also the meaning most likely to be associated with 'bearing'. On the other hand, Schwartz points out that weight can be 'carried off', to be lifted off one individual, and be carried or borne away. This, according to him, is the physical image invoked in the places where the expression is often translated as 'forgiveness'.

While Anderson primarily bases his arguments about the existence of this understanding on the prevalence of the expression "to bear a sin" (נָשָׂא) in the Hebrew Bible, just the existence of the expression is not necessarily evidence of an interpretation - after all, it may be that associations are being made that are more the result of Anderson's cultural and language background than some inherent quality in the text. For this reason, Anderson discusses three particular uses of the expression in the Hebrew Bible to demonstrate its relationship to the concept of weight.

The first texts discussed are Isaiah 1 and 5. In these, people carrying sin is compared to the way in which beasts of burden such as donkeys carry their load. The image invoked by this comparison is one of weight carried along as the individual, or the animal, moves. It is not left behind, nor shaken off, it is their job to bear it until such a moment that someone *else* decides to remove it.

Secondly, Anderson also discusses the similar reference to a beast of burden in Leviticus 16, however, rather than the individual bearing sin being equivalent to the animal, it is now the animal that carries away the weight, much as it does with its usual load after it has been transferred. It is implied thereby that the load that is transferred from the individual is similar to the animal's usual (physical) burden, and provides an image for the concept of bearing away sin as the method for removing it which is translated as forgiveness. Based on these first two images, one could argue that it suggests a very physical interpretation of sin as if it is a genuinely physical substance that might be handled and moved around.

Lastly, Anderson also discusses a text that does not invoke any image related to animals as previously, but rather the idea of the body being affected by a heavyweight. In Ezekiel 4, the effects of a punishment are described as that which would be felt by the body if it were placed on its side, with a heavyweight pressing it down. Once again, the image evoked is rather physical, and it thereby also equates suffering due to sin to physical punishment.

Understanding sin like this may raise a number of questions with regard to its nature and relation to impurity. Considering that the image itself is very physical and concrete in nature, does this mean that sin and/or impurity is thought of as possessing an actual physical quality that clings to individuals and contaminates a community? Or is it primarily intended as a particularly vivid metaphor for what happens emotionally due to guilt - often regarded as a (by)product of sin? Is the weight the sin itself, or is it the physical manifestation of impurity or guilt - which may refer either to the quality of *being* guilty or of the emotional state of *feeling* guilty? And if this weight can be transferred so as to be lifted off one individual, does that mean that it will then rest on the person who lifted it off, and can it be destroyed, or only moved away? These are only some of the questions that come to mind when considering the implication of thinking of sin as weight, and while Anderson touches on some of them, he provides no strong arguments for any answers in particular.

### **Sin as debt**

According to Anderson, the expressions used in the Biblical material suggest that during the Second Temple period, a shift happened in the use of language and images to describe sin and

impurity. Phrases that in older sources are clearly meant to invoke a very literal and physical image of weight, start to show up translated into Aramaic as 'assuming debt' instead (Anderson 2009, 28). This shift, Anderson argues, was likely due to the pre-existing language for this in Aramaic, and once that language started to become more common, the Hebrew equivalent phrases started to change in meaning to adapt to this different way of talking about sin and impurity.

The image of debt referred to here is the idea that when a sin is committed, much like if you had cheated or breached a contract, the one who did the wrong owes some type of restoration and retribution to another entity. In the case of sin, it is most commonly God who is described as the creditor, 'taking payment' from those who wronged him. Likewise, the meaning of forgiveness has shifted, according to Anderson, from the lifting off and bearing away of the burdens of one's sin, to the cancellation of bonds of indebtedness. This, like the aforementioned shifts in language, shows up in a number of different texts which Anderson draws on for evidence.

Firstly, Anderson points out that in both vocabulary and syntax, many Hebrew texts dated to the Second Temple period reflect Aramaic influences (Anderson 2009, 27). Secondly, he states that from the Second Temple period onwards, the description of sin as debt becomes significantly more prominent. For the early stages of this change, he seems to primarily draw on evidence from Aramaic Targums, rabbinic commentaries, Matthew's Gospel, and the Damascus covenant. Most of these texts referred to as evidence for the influence of Aramaic, are commonly dated more towards the end of the Second Temple period, or later. Although I agree with Anderson

that they demonstrate that by the time of their creation, a shift in perspective had taken place in Aramaic, I would not consider them particularly strong evidence that the shift in Hebrew terminology was necessarily *due* to the influence of Aramaic. However, whether the origin of the shift in imagery lay primarily in language which then caused a change in theology, or in more theological foundations, is not necessarily of much importance for the discussion of the concept *an sich*.

With that in mind, I will now focus on some of the parts of Anderson's evidence which best seem to demonstrate this shift in the description of sin. In his comparison of the Hebrew text and the Targums for Leviticus 5:1 and 24:15, phrases that in Hebrew mean 'to bear the weight of sin', as discussed in section II.B on *sin as weight*, are roughly translated with an Aramaic idiom meaning 'to assume a debt'. Similarly, in Genesis 50:17 and Exodus 10:17, the bearing away of 'the burden' of sin, is translated as the remitting of the debt of a sin (Anderson 2009, 28). As such, it is shown that in direct translation, or at least in order for that translation to be sensible to the audience in Aramaic, a change in imagery was considered necessary. This might be either due to a change in the kind of theological imagery already in use at the time that was being promoted, or it might reflect merely an equivalent expression in a different language which had the same literal meaning but evoked a different image.

That this is not merely a change in language, but also in theology is perhaps better described by the way Rabbinic commentaries discuss passages in which the bearing or removal of sin plays a significant part. For example, Anderson points out that in the *Mekhilta deRabbi Ishmael*, God is

described as a creditor, someone who 'takes payment' of a debt, in a passage discussing Exodus 14:21. The debt, in this case, is owned by 'those bent on destroying Israel', or more specifically, those that followed the Israelites in trying to cross the sea, and payment takes the form of death - a physical punishment (Anderson 2009, 30). The cause of the debt is left open here, although presumably, it would be defying God's command to let the Israelites go, which could be considered a sin indeed. Thereby, this interpretation shows the idea of approaching sin (or disobedience to God at least) as causing a kind of debt which is repaid through receiving (physical) punishment of some sort.

One of the primary consequences of this understanding of sin is that it puts God in the position of the creditor. While Anderson voices the concern that this may make God seem like "a small-minded accountant whose relationship to Israel is somewhat vindictive" (Anderson 2009, 54), he argues that considering the evil that sin brings into the world, it would make sense that some consequence is required to restore the balance, and even goes as far as to argue that the understanding of God as a consistent and fair accountant at least, is comforting, especially in the context of exile for example. Knowing that punishment will be finite, and therefore that suffering will end at some point, should be a cause of relief according to Anderson.

It should also, according to Anderson, not be seen as a lack of justice that God seems to punish the Israelites more than the peoples around them. Instead, he argues that by regularly punishing them a heaping up of sin is avoided, and thereby God makes sure the scale of actions and consequences never tips so far that he would have to destroy the people of Israel, something he

does not bother doing for those people he cares less about (Anderson, 90). However, considering that Anderson also argues that God by no means has to act within the constraints of justice (Anderson 2009, 96) - which by itself begs the question of whether that means he is still a just god - this seems unnecessary. If God is able and willing to mess with this system of credits and debits (Anderson, 99), as Anderson suggests, why should he have to punish the Israelites as much as he does?

At this point, Anderson's arguments seem to become more and more about filling up the holes in an attempt to avoid any inconsistencies between the different descriptions of God and making quite large leaps in reasoning to reach his desired outcome. While he certainly makes some fair and interesting points while pointing out different ways of understanding debt, I think he stretches his arguments about the connections between them too far, especially once explaining the relationships between God, Adam and Eve, and the death of Christ, in the form of debt.

Lambert

### **Sin as a barrier**

In *How Repentance Became Biblical*, David Lambert argues that sin in the Hebrew Bible has the quality of drastically changing the way in which God and society are able to interact. It does so by providing a barrier between God and society (Lambert 2016, 25), which keeps God from accessing his mercy (Lambert 2016, 24), infuriating him, and making for example prayer or mourning futile. Lambert does not argue that this is a consistent view throughout the entirety of the Hebrew Bible, for example pointing out the point at which the language used to talk about sin

and its removal changes to allow for second chances (Lambert 2016, 86). Furthermore, Lambert argues that this is the effect of sin due to the way it disturbs the usual balance with justice (Lambert 2016, 25). His suggestion that sin has substantial negative consequences for God himself, limiting him, upsetting him, etc. is quite different from the qualities of sin that have been discussed previously.

While Lambert draws on a wide range of texts to support his statements, they do for the most part seem to be exilic or post-exilic, and those that will be discussed here as illustrations of the relationship between Lambert's arguments and the texts, are relatively late. First, Lambert draws on Jeremiah 14:10-12 and Jonah 1:4-16 to illustrate the kind of disturbance sin is described to cause between God and society (Lambert 2016, 25). God is said to refuse to listen to the outcries of the people or accept their sacrifices, which are generally central to the interaction between the people and their deity. Furthermore, in the story of Jonah lots are drawn once the sailors are aware of the fact that something is wrong. Attempting to appeal to God is not deemed effective, in a way that according to Lambert suggests that prayers and appeals must not have seemed very realistic options for the people. Without access to their usual forms of communication, this means that there must be some other way for the people to restore their relationship.

Furthermore, not only can God not be reached through prayer and appeals, but he, according to Lambert, also is restricted by sin. His access to communication, just like for the people, is not working the way it should, and since communication is for example necessary to access mercy, God when faced with serious sins, is unable to help and release them. Interestingly, Lambert

makes a similar argument to Anderson's about (one of) the function(s) of the agreement between God and the people, suggesting that it is not necessarily to prompt people to actively avoid sinning. Lambert, like Anderson, argues rather that it provides a form of structure and boundaries, and promotes a specific kind of relationship between God and his people within these boundaries. He supports this view by considering Jubilees 1:22 and 4Q216 I, 12-17, a text from the Dead Sea scrolls (Lambert 2016, 132). In 4Q216 I, 12-17, it is emphasised that God is justified in what he does, but especially, that awareness and knowledge of what one is doing wrong is of importance here (Lambert 2016, 132). Furthermore, it is pointed out that this should be a source of comfort for society, since God promises to be steadfast in his treatment, regardless of how it may seem at times. This part especially is quite similar to the one posed by Anderson.

As mentioned, Lambert brings up the fact that having knowledge of, or rather, acknowledging and understanding a sin, is a prerequisite for the sin's removal (Lambert 2016, 133). This, he argues, is not necessarily because it will prompt people to sin less, or actively change their ways, but it serves as a tool in being readied or capable of transformation, thereby bridging the gap between the human who sins and may seem unworthy of being forgiven, and God, as the person admits their sins, so that the ball is in the deity's court, so to say. This 'objectifying' of sin through confession, as Lambert describes it, is not new at the time that it appears in Biblical texts either. Referring to a Mesopotamian source that dates most likely more than a millennium prior to the Biblical sources that have been referred to so far, Lambert argues that it would be incorrect to think of confessional prayer as a later development, as is often done (Lambert 2016, 62).

That is not to say, however, that Lambert argues that the view of sin and repentance has stayed entirely constant. Naming Ezekiel 18:5-20 as an example, he points out a shift in perspective where the text indicates that sins from the forefathers are no longer carried over, and God has started giving second chances. This is a significant development in Lambert's interpretation of these concepts, as here, forgiveness becomes relevant, rather than just appeasement (Lambert 2016, 86).

One of the consequences of Lambert's argument that highlights something that Anderson, for example, has not touched upon much, is the importance of the removal of the object of sin, in the process of averting punishment (Lambert 2016, 24). This is an aspect of the restoration process that is not strongly emphasised by either the interpretation of sin as debt or as weight. To remove the object of sin does little to repay God, or to otherwise cleanse the one who has sinned, instead focussing on first removing the cause of the imbalance, or the cause God's ire, before one sets about repairing the damage done. This brings attention to a particular quality of sin that is perhaps overlooked by Anderson: its contagiousness. The fact that certain objects or acts can put a community in such a position that those around it, both people and objects, are affected by it, until this barrier between God and the community is so large that God cannot access his mercy, as Lambert describes it, is a reason to give removal of objects and people a primary position in how to deal with sin, and thereby, explains why so many laws and regulations seem to call for some form of banishment or separation from the community as a consequence of sin. Here, banishment is not necessarily a punishment, but rather a necessary effect.

## Evaluation

In both Lambert and Anderson's approaches, a wide range of documents is taken in consideration in order to compare and contrast different interpretations originating in different times and places, allowing for the drawing up of some kind of genealogy, where the development of certain interpretations and changes in interpretations of certain concepts are brought to the foreground. This approach depends largely on connecting different texts from different periods, and in both works, some of the connections made are stronger than others. However, it was especially in Anderson's writing that there seemed to be a very strong drive towards promoting certain theological statements as potentially Biblical by connecting them to older texts through leaps of interpretation, to the extent that criticism on the strength of his connections seemed to be significantly reduced in the second part of his book.

Despite this, both make some strong and interesting claims about qualities of sin shown through the metaphorical use of language relating to it. I think the change in use of language relating to weight, to that relating to debt that Anderson works with, is quite interesting, as is the suggestion of Lambert that the language used reflects an image of a deity who is somehow impaired by sin - incapable rather than unwilling to listen and forgive.

This forms an interesting contrast with Anderson's struggle to argue against what he himself says may be seen as a rather vindictive and punishing God when he is depicted as the creditor. It is important to note though, that the use of the debt metaphor also puts a lot of power in God's

hands - which Lambert argues is indeed a large part of the reason that confession of sin is so important. It means that once that debt and/or sin is acknowledged, it is now God who decides the price, and the responsibility for relief from suffering due to sin is also moved to the deity. The question about responsibility for suffering is thereby put in the spotlight, as well as the idea of sin and the approach to sin as a coping mechanism of sorts, to deal with punishment or suffering that one is unable to change. This stands in contrast to the type of institutionalised mechanism to maintain a certain power structure in society that was discussed in the first half of this paper.

### III. Impurity, sin, and society in Leviticus 16

Having considered the way in which the nature of sin and impurity, and the larger model they may fit in reflect and affect the way in which a society functions, as well as some of the ways in which the language used may highlight particularly powerful qualities of (systems of) sin in relation to the communities that use them, it is time to turn to the way in which the language and depiction of sin and impurity in Leviticus 16 fit with these models and theories. From the text of Leviticus 16, five particular qualities of sin and its treatment may be discerned: it *is* not impurity but it likely causes it, sin clings to people and objects, it is contagious, spreading of impurity due to sin is solved by permanent separation of it, and lastly, removal of both impurity and sin requires a High Priest.

The first quality, as discussed for verse 16 in section I.A, is made clear by the difference in listing the things the shrine and Israelites are being purged of. Sin is listed as 'included' twice, once in a list that does include impurities (v 16), and once in a list that does not (v 21). As such, it is most likely included in the term 'transgressions' which is the part of the list that remains the same between each. That sin does possibly cause impurity is implied by the fact that abiding among impurities is given as the reason why the Tent of Meeting needs purging in the first place (v 16), and it would make sense for the second half of this purgation ritual - the purging of the people from amongst other, sin - to be related to that, most likely in the sense that it removes the source of the impurity, so as to avoid new contamination of the Tent of Meeting due to the same sins after it has been purged.

The fact that sin attaches itself to both people and objects is shown by the manner in which it is removed. In the case of the inner shrine, direct physical contact between the blood which the impurities and sin attach themselves to and the objects being purged is required. The blood is sprinkled *on* the Ark, on the floor, and on the altar (vv 14 -15, 18). The purging happens by the detachment of the sin from one thing, due to attachment to another. It is transferred. This is even more clear in the transfer of sins from the people to the scapegoat in verse 21. There are two things required for the transfer: what is translated here as 'confession' and the leaning of the High Priest's hands onto the goat's head. As explained in section I.A, the Hebrew term for confession has the connotation of opening up, bringing into the open these sins, essentially drawing them out and creating a degree of separation from them. Following this, by leaning on the goat, the now more vulnerable and loosened sins are transferred, and the goat is made to bear them. Regardless of the exact interpretation of 'bearing', it is undeniable that sin here is assigned a quality of being able to be detached from the people, and attached to the goat in some way, no matter how temporarily.

This purposeful transfer, however, is clearly not the only way in which sin and impurity can spread. They do not remain neatly attached to their original source, for if that were the case, the sacrificial altar, Ark, and Holy of Holies themselves would need to have accumulated sin and impurity due to actions performed directly by or on them. If they had not, they would not require purging, which is most definitely the intention of the ritual, as verse 16 states. It is highly unlikely to be the case that some action was performed directly in contact with the Holy of

Holies or Ark, as Yom Kippur is simultaneously described as the *only* instance in which the High Priest may enter this space at all (v 2). Although the sacrificial altar could possibly directly be made impure through incorrect sacrifice and disobedience of God, this still does not explain the need to purge the Holy of Holies and the Ark, unless a contagious quality is at work.

The fourth quality mentioned is about the way in which sin may be dealt with: permanent separation. The clearest example of this is the scapegoat. Regardless of how one decides to interpret *azazel*, the wilderness or desert it is sent to is explicitly referred to as an infertile or *inaccessible* region (v 22). Whether this is as 'permanent' as death or not, the intention seems to be to permanently separate the goat and the sins it bears from the Israelite community, which would make sense if access means continued contamination. Furthermore, the carcasses of the goat and bull whose blood is used for the purging of the Shrine, and which have thus via that blood 'soaked up' the impurities and sins so to say, need to be burned, not in a ritual manner (v 27), thereby permanently removing all contaminated parts of them that people might otherwise have gotten in contact with. There is one last way in which the (permanent) separation from an impure or sinful environment may be depicted as the best way to deal with it in Leviticus 16. God's presence is residing in the Holy of Holies (see section I.D on *the presence of God*, and v 2), and while the text of Leviticus 16 itself does not explicitly state that impurity may cause this presence to be retracted, the proximity of the impurity (due to sin) to God's presence is clearly a source of concern (v 16). Milgrom makes a convincing argument regarding the fact that this concern would stem from the possibility of God's presence (permanently) leaving. This would

separate the Israelites from God, and God from their pollution in a way very similar to the separation between the Israelites and the scapegoat.

Lastly, the text confirms the need for a High Priest in order to purge both sanctuary and people of sin and impurity. The High Priest plays a key role in every single part of the ritual, and it is confirmed both by verse 2 and verse 32 that Aaron and the High Priests that will come after him shall be the ones performing *kipper*. As such, the High Priest is made indispensable if the Israelites want to avoid accumulating large amounts of impurity over time, and very likely, if they want to maintain their relationship with God.

These qualities of sin may now shed some light on exactly what the system of impurity and sin looks like in Leviticus 16, and how it stands in relation to the community. For example, the fact that sin and impurity are contagious justifies the use of separation as a consequence for dealing with them, which in turn makes them a useful social tool. However, there is a big difference between temporary and permanent exclusion from the community. While the former may be used to regulate societal status, the way Douglas describes, permanent exclusion from a community if it concerned the people is an enormous sanction, both for the community because it shrinks rather than gaining a more useful member through social regulation, and for the individual. The permanence in the exclusion implied to be required for sin in particular in Leviticus 16 then seems problematic if one were to argue that it is intended to create a hierarchy and regulate the society. If however, as Klawans shows, impurity due to ritual or unavoidable transgression of rules tends to attract temporary or short-term sanctions, while moral impurity

attracts more long-term or permanent sanctions, it would make sense to group sin under these moral impurities. Laws regarding transgressions that cause ritual impurity then *would* be able to function as the societal tool that Douglas describes, while sin and moral impurity would more likely be part of a different system, serving a different function.

Milgrom's interpretation of the effect of (moral) impurity on the presence of God, combined with Neusner's approach to the system of purity might be able to offer a possible function. After all, it would make sense that the particular laws used to create a certain hierarchy and structure in a society would be highly dependent on their context in time and space and therefore somewhat particular to individual communities. If moral impurity, caused by sin, is then argued to endanger the presence of God, it suggests that it must protect the community from something very big. Something that would be worth losing community members over. The function of morals in a society seems to be to make *any* society function together. More morally oriented laws such as not murdering each other, not stealing, or giving false oaths, tend to function to keep a(ny) society, and justice system, from losing its use and falling apart. Which may be part of why Neusner found that the moral dimension of the system remained much more steady over time, as they are more potentially universally applicable. To keep the Israelites functional as a community might be a high enough stake to justify sanctions such as permanent exclusion, as you are removing the danger to a community before they can drive the entirety of the community apart, as would presumably the loss of God's presence.

However, this anxiety of losing God's presence and the community then falling apart - which need not inherently be enforced with the creation of a political hierarchy in mind at all - is used in Leviticus 16 to put the priests, especially the High Priest, in an undeniable position of prominence. The way Leviticus 16 describes it, the High Priest would be the only hope the Israelites have to purge themselves and the sanctuary of sin and impurity. Regardless of the rules enforced by the ritual impurity laws then, it is the *moral* impurity coming from sin which adds the urgency, which in turn makes the role of the High Priest so important. Suddenly, the High Priest is the only one who can re-establish and maintain that relationship with God and keep the community from falling apart. As such, the two systems of Neusner overlap and are interwoven. Although one might question to what extent the Israelites further removed from the priests also placed them at the center of their thinking, for the source of Leviticus 16 at least, this is most certainly the case. The fact that High Priest essentially fulfils the same part as the *king* in the Mesopotamian Akitu festival (section I.D on *the Akitu Festival*), only confirms that it is very much the intention to give him a role of great prominence and importance to the community.

## Conclusion

To conclude, sin and impurity as described in Leviticus 16 suggest that there are two systems at work here, which can be roughly divided along the lines of Klawans' separation between ritual and moral impurity, where ritual impurity functions most likely in a way more similar to that described by Douglas, and by Neusner's community-specific aspect of the system, while moral impurity is (partially) caused by sin, and functions much like the more lasting moral side of Neusner's system. This moral side functions to keep societies in general functional, rather than

the structure and hierarchy of one individual society as Douglas describes, and is connected in Leviticus 16 to the community's understanding of the need to keep God present and maintain their relationship with him. Although this moral dimension overlaps with, and is incorporated into the more community-specific hierarchy's ritual impurity structure, as is shown in Leviticus 16 by the way in which the described qualities of sin and impurity require heavy involvement of a High Priest in order to save the community from disaster and maintain their relationship to God, it does not *always* have to work that way. What is referred to as 'moral' law and its function may be highly dependent on the background of the one classifying laws, for example, such as someone from a society in which these are regarded as moral and a necessity for society - in part due to influence of these very laws and the Hebrew Bible in their own community.

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