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## 'ASHAM

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**D**R. MORRIS, Vice-Principal of Ridley College, Melbourne, is well known as the author of "The Apostolic Preaching of the Cross" and other works. This paper, read at a meeting of the Tyndale Fellowship of Australia, deals with the Hebrew root 'SH-M, from which is derived 'ASHAM, meaning "guilt" and "guilt-offering", and a number of other words significant for the biblical doctrine of sin and expiation.

**T**HE words from the root 'sh-m are found in profusion in Leviticus, and are scattered throughout most of the remainder of the Old Testament. The root is used in a technical sense of the guilt-offering, and also in a more general, non-technical sense. A number of considerations point to the latter as the primary use. Thus the technical sense is found 26 times in Leviticus, two times in Numbers, four times in Ezekiel and once in Isaiah<sup>1</sup>, while the non-technical sense is spread thinly but far, being found in most of the books of the Old Testament. Again, there seems no reason for thinking the verb to be a denominative. It is a primary word. But it is never used in the technical sense of offering a guilt-offering. If the guilt-offering were the primary idea it is difficult to see how the verb could derive meanings like "to sin", "to bear punishment" and the like, though the converse process is understandable. Thus we take the technical sense to be derivative and secondary.

The root occurs 103 times in all, there being 35 examples of the verb 'asham ('ashem), 46 of the noun 'asham, 19 of the noun 'ashmah, and three of the adjective 'ashem.

## I. THE VERB 'ASHAM

The basic meaning of the verb appears to be "to commit a sin"<sup>2</sup>, as we find for example in Hos. 4: 15, "Though thou, Israel, play the harlot yet let not Judah offend", or in Jer. 50: 7, "their adversaries said, We offend not (*ne'sham*), because they have sinned against the LORD". Some think "guilt" the basic meaning, as H. C. Thomson, who says: "the root is concerned with guilt, and in a general or moral sense rather than a ritual one".<sup>3</sup> But while

we may agree that the ritual sense is secondary it is not easy to believe that such a difficult idea as the abstract concept of guilt is primary, and in view of the fact that there are undoubted examples of the use of the verb in the sense of "sin", "trespass", it seems better to hold that this is the fundamental meaning of the verb. In addition to the examples cited this use seems to me to be found in Lev. 5: 19 (twice); Num. 5: 7; 2 Chr. 19: 10 (twice); Ezk. 22: 4; 25: 12 (twice); Hos. 13: 1, and probably Hab. 1: 11 (despite R.V., "be guilty" in most places). This gives a total of 12 examples of the verb in this sense, or a little over one-third of all the places where it is found.

A natural extension of meaning sees the verb signifying "to be characterized by trespass", "to be guilty". Thus in Lev. 5 we have certain offences which a man may commit unwittingly, but in each case "when he knoweth of it, then he shall be guilty" (vv. 3, 4). Again, when the Benjamites caught their wives at Shiloh, part of the retort of the elders of the congregation to the relatives of the damsels runs: "Neither did ye give them unto them; else would ye now be guilty" (Josh. 21: 22). This idea of a state of guilt following upon the committing of an offence seems to be found also in Lev. 4: 13, 22, 27; 5: 2, 5, 17; 6: 4 (5: 23); Num. 5: 6.

Akin to this is the thought of being held guilty, of which there are eight examples, as in the gnomic saying, "Slander not a servant unto his master, lest he curse thee, and thou be held guilty" (Pr. 30: 10), or the prayer, "Hold them guilty, O God" (Ps. 5: 11). The idea of being found guilty or being held guilty is also to be discerned in Ps. 34: 21 (22), 22 (23); Is. 24: 6; Jer. 2: 3; Hos. 10: 2; Zech. 11: 5.

Deeply rooted in the Hebrew consciousness was the conviction that sin must be punished, and thus to say "sin" was to say "punishment". In the case of more than one of the words for sin a secondary sense of "punishment" developed, the same word denoting the offence and the punishment for the offence. This is so in the case of the verb we are discussing and thus we may read, "Samaria shall bear her guilt (*te'sham*); for she hath rebelled against her God: they shall fall by the sword; their infants shall be dashed in pieces, and their women with child shall be ripped up" (Hos. 13: 16 (14: 1)). Here the idea of punishment is plain. Ezk. 6: 6 belongs here, for, although it is the altars that are said to be "made desolate", it is really the Lord's punishment of the idolators that is being described, as the following verse makes

clear. Joel 1: 18, "the flocks of sheep are made desolate", is similar. Probably we should understand Hos. 5: 15 in this sense also. The R.V. pictures Yahweh as saying, "I will go and return to my place, till they acknowledge their offence (*ye'shemu*), and seek my face: in their affliction they will seek me earnestly"—a translation which in essentials is that of A.V. But both are uneasy about the rendering of *ye'shemu* (cf. the margin of A.V. reading "be guilty", and that of R.V., "have borne their guilt").<sup>4</sup> In the context only this latter rendering seems adequate. Yahweh says that He will severely punish the people (v. 14), then that He will withdraw until the punishment has been borne and they seek His face. As the meaning "bear punishment" has been attested elsewhere ("acknowledge their offence" has not), and as it best fits the context, there seems no reason why we should look further.

Thus from the primary meaning "to sin", "to commit a trespass", we have a twofold development, the one line yielding "to be characterized by sin", "be guilty", and then "to be held guilty", "to be found guilty", and the other leading from the thought of sin to that of punishment. Sometimes the bearing of punishment seems to expiate the sin, and so the way is prepared for the great sacrifice of expiation which the noun *'asham* came to denote.

#### II. THE ADJECTIVE 'ASHEM

This word occurs three times only, Gen. 42: 21; 2 Sam. 14: 13; Ezra 10: 19, always apparently with the meaning "guilty", although in each case it is possible to understand the term as "having sinned". But there is not very much difference between the two. The Genesis passage reads, "We are verily guilty concerning our brother, in that we saw the distress of his soul, when he besought us, and we would not hear; therefore is this distress come upon us", where the last clause brings before us the thought of punishment for sin which never seems to be far away when words of this root are used.

#### III. THE NOUN 'ASHMAH

This noun is used in the characteristic sense of "sin", "trespass", for example in 2 Chr. 28: 13, where it is three times rendered "trespass" in R.V.: "Ye shall not bring in the captives hither: for ye purpose that which will bring upon us a trespass against the LORD, to add unto our sins and to our trespass: for our trespass is great, and there is fierce wrath against Israel". Here again punishment is in view of the "fierce wrath against Israel". Another unmistakable example of this use of the noun is in Amos 8: 14, "They that swear by the sin of Samaria", where the word refers

to the false god whose worship is Samaria's sin. Cf. also 2 Chr. 24: 18; 28: 10; 33: 23; Ezra 9: 6 (where *'ashmathenu* is parallel to *'awonothenu* (7, 13; 10: 10, 19; Ps. 69: 5 (6))). In some of these R.V. has the translation "guilt" or the like, but, while this is possible in some cases, it seems more likely that the meaning is "sin". This is possibly also the case in 1 Chr. 21: 3, where Joab asks: "Why doth my lord require this thing? Why will he be a cause of sin (guilt?) unto Israel?" The term occurs in the sense "guilt" in Lev. 4: 3; 22: 16; Ezra 9: 15, and in the similar senses "being found guilty" (Lev. 6: 5 (5: 24)), "be guilty" (Lev. 6: 7 (5: 26)).

In the case of *'ashmah*, then, as in the case of the verb *'asham*, there is the basic sense of "sin", "trespass", and arising from this the derived sense of "guilt" and the like.

#### IV. THE NOUN 'ASHAM

It is likely that *'asham*, like other words from this root, may at times denote the act of trespass,<sup>5</sup> as in Num. 5: 7, "he shall make restitution for his trespass (R.V. guilt) in full", and again twice in Num. 5: 8. So is it with Jer. 51: 5, where we read that neither Israel nor Judah will be forsaken of God "though their land is full of trespass (R.V., guilt) against the Holy One of Israel". In each case it is possible that the translation of R.V. is correct, but it seems better, in view of the significance of the words from this root generally, to understand the expression more simply as "trespass".

The idea of guilt is to be found expressed by *'asham*,<sup>6</sup> as in Gen. 26: 10, where Abimelech thinks that as a result of Isaac's deception, "one of the people might lightly have lien with thy wife, and then shouldest have brought guiltiness upon us". Possibly this is the case also in Ps. 68: 21 (22), "God shall smite through the head of his enemies, the hairy scalp of such an one as goeth on still in his guiltiness", though it is possible that "in his sinning" may be the sense of it. Pr. 14: 9 is difficult. A.V. renders, "Fools make a mock at sin", and R.V. alters the last word to "guilt". Either suits the context well, and so for that matter does "guilt-offering". It does not seem possible to determine with certainty which of these alternatives is the right one.

Thus far we have considered seven of the passages where this word occurs, and the remaining thirty-nine are all concerned in one way or another with the technical expression which R.V. renders "guilt-offering". This must be held to be the characteristic use of the term, with the uses we have hitherto noticed as more

or less fortuitous relics of the more basic uses of the root. We have noticed that the verb *'asham* sometimes has the meaning "be punished", "bear one's guilt", and it would seem that it is along this line of expiation that the proper meaning of *'asham* is to be found. The *'asham* is that which takes away the trespass, and in the ritual of the cultus this is the guilt offering.

It is usually said that this offering was one made to atone for unwitting sins, and again, that mostly these sins were such matters as ritual defilement, things that we should hardly consider sins, while all more serious matters, "sins done with a high hand" (Num. 15: 3) were excluded from the scope of the sacrifices.<sup>7</sup> The passages where this root is used are most instructive in these matters.

First, with regard to unwitting sins. It is true that the *'asham* is prescribed on a number of occasions when the sin is specifically said to be unwitting, as in Lev. 4 and 5 and in the case of the Nazirite contracting accidental defilement (Num. 6: 12). Similarly in Gen. 26: 10 Abimelech speaks of guilt contracted unwittingly, but apart from these passages it is difficult to find an occasion when this root is used of unwitting sin. Often the very nature of the sin makes it certain that it was done with knowledge, as in cases of robbery, misappropriating what a man's neighbour deposited with him, false swearing in a bargain, oppression, swearing falsely (Lev. 6: 1 ff.) or unlawful intercourse with a slave-woman (Lev. 19: 20 f.). Sins referred to by the use of this root, but where an *'asham* is not explicitly prescribed, include idolatry (Ezk. 6: 6; Hos. 10: 2, specifically the worship of Baal, Hos. 13: 1), shedding blood (Ezk. 22: 4), taking vengeance (Ezk. 25: 12), rebellion against the Lord (Hos. 13: 16). Often the sin is spoken of in wide general terms as "When a man or woman shall commit any sin that men commit, to do a trespass against the LORD" (Num. 5: 6), or, "they have transgressed the laws, changed the ordinance, broken the everlasting covenant" (Is. 24: 6). In the light of such evidence it seems impossible to hold that the words of this root denote guilt that is unwitting exclusively, or even primarily.

The most that we can say is that there are some occasions when unwitting offences are mentioned and men's guilt is expressed by the use of one or other of the words from this root, or else that an *'asham* is prescribed as the means of expiation.

The same examples that we have adduced to show that the *'asham* was offered for sins other than unwitting show also that it was held to atone for sins more serious than merely ritual defilements. No one could hold that sins such as those mentioned in

the previous paragraph are only ritual breaches; they include some of the most serious of all sins. It must also be borne in mind that the Hebrews are most unlikely to have distinguished, as we do, between moral and ritual sins. All of life for them was sacred, and the transgression of a commandment of God was sinful whether that command had to do with ritual or ethics.<sup>8</sup> There is a difficulty in the exclusion of sins done with a high hand (Num. 15: 30) from the scope of the sacrificial system, all the more so in that it might be plausibly argued that the context in Num. 15 favours the view that all sins are being divided into two groups, those committed unwittingly, and those done with a high hand. But it seems impossible to hold that throughout the centuries men were content to operate the whole of the sacrificial system feeling that no atonement was being made for any really serious sin. Rather we should bear in mind the explanation of sinning with a high hand given in the passage where it occurs. There it is said that such a sinner "blasphemeth the LORD" (Num. 15: 30) he "hath despised the word of the LORD" (v. 31), from which we gather that the attitude of the sinner is important. It is the defiant, unrepentant sinner for whom there is not atonement,<sup>9</sup> and in view of the teaching in other parts of the Scriptures it would seem that if and when his attitude changes to one of repentance the whole situation is altered.

#### V. THE 'ASHAM AND COMPENSATION

An unusual feature of the *'asham* is that in some cases it is directed that restitution be made in the matter of monies misappropriated, and that an extra one-fifth be added thereto. Many students have seen in this the distinguishing mark of the *'asham*, regarding a fine as of the very essence of this type of offering. Thus G. F. Moore says that *'asham* "probably originally signified the mulct by which such an offence was punished, the application to the sacrifice is secondary".<sup>10</sup> G. Buchanan Gray goes further, saying "according to our theory the animal sacrifices known in English as the sin-offering and the guilt-offering are a relatively late development in Hebrew religion; what corresponded to them in earlier times were fines, a compensation for injury done".<sup>11</sup> In support of this position might be adduced such items as the reference in 2 Kings 12: 16 (17), to the *keseph 'asham* and *keseph hatta'oth* which "was not brought into the house of the LORD: it was the priest's". Then, too, there is the provision that the ram to be offered as an *'asham* must have a certain monetary value, and there is the incident in 2 Sam. 6 when the Philistines returned with the Ark an *'asham* of gold.

This evidence is, however, far from complete. Taking the last points first, the provision that the ram to be offered must have a certain value may mean no more than that care is being taken that a suitable animal be selected. The worshipper must not yield to the temptation to regard this as a routine matter, and offer any animal that came to hand. His offence was serious. His offering must not be cheap.

It is not at all clear that the offering of the golden mice and golden tumours by the Philistines was in the nature of a fine. There is no attempt to assess damages or to inflict an appropriate penalty. The Philistines were under the impression that they were suffering from the anger of an offended deity, and they made what they hoped was a suitable offering of propitiation. The significant feature is not the payment of a fine (for our records speak of no such thing), but the use of the term *'asham* in this undoubtedly early passage for an offering of a propitiatory, even expiatory, character.<sup>12</sup>

Those who maintain that 2 Kings 12: 16 refers to fines which later developed into sin and guilt-offerings are compelled to see in the *'asham* (also in the *hatta'ah*, but that is not our present concern) a late sacrifice. This is not at all certain. The book of Leviticus pictures it as going back to Mosaic times, and while this will not be accepted by most scholars it should not be overlooked. Ezekiel refers to it in a way which shows that in his day it was already well known, and that it had a long history behind it.<sup>13</sup>

As further information comes to hand about the cultus of other nations in and around Palestine of antiquity it becomes increasingly clear that Israelite sacrifice has to be understood against the background of many common customs and terms. When the Ugaritic texts were first discovered many expressions were identified with Old Testament ritual terms, and of the guilt-offering J. W. Jack went so far as to say that it "occurs under the same word as in the Old Testament, namely *asm*. . . . The ritual in both cases was probably the same".<sup>14</sup> With the passage of time many of the early identifications have been abandoned, but that the *'asham* is rightly read in certain Ugaritic tablets was maintained by T. H. Gaster in *Mélanges Dussaud* in 1939,<sup>15</sup> and by W. F. Albright in the third edition of his *Archaeology and the Religion of Israel* in 1953.<sup>16</sup> C. H. Gordon, in his glossary of Ugaritic in 1947, denied the identification, reading *atm*, which, he says, is a Hurrian word and "has nothing to do with Heb. *'asham* 'guilt-offering'." He does not give the meaning of *atm* in the glossary, but in his *Grammar* (8: 13)

he says it means " 'guilt sacrifice' ; cf. Heb. *'asham*".<sup>16a</sup>

In this field we can only watch for the conclusions of the experts, but all, even Gordon, seem to conclude that the guilt sacrifice was known to and practised by the Canaanites. While it is not necessary to assume that the Israelites derived their sacrifices from this people,<sup>16b</sup> it is incredible that they for centuries should have lacked a sacrifice which their religiously less advanced predecessors had used. Indeed, many have felt that the Ugaritic tablets, taken in conjunction with the use of the term by the Philistines, indicate that the *'asham* was very widely observed among the peoples of Palestine in our period.

The big difficulty in the way of accepting the early appearance of this sacrifice among the Israelites is the fact that it is not mentioned in the historical books of the Old Testament, other than in the passage in Kings which we are discussing. This may, however, be merely the consequence of our reading history written by laymen rather than priests. As G. Buchanan Gray says: "From the standpoint of the laity in reference to the disposal of the sacrificial victim, sacrifices, both first and last, fell into two and not into three classes ; sacrifices for the layman after the exile no less than before it consisted *either* of sacrifices of the flesh of which he partook, or of sacrifices of which he did not partake ; or otherwise stated, either of sacrifices which the giver brought to Yahweh and left entire at the altar to be disposed of as Yahweh might direct whether by being burnt entire on his altar or in the main consumed by his proxies the priests, or the sacrifices were animals which were brought entire to the altar and slain there, but of which after this ritual treatment the greater part was taken away again to be enjoyed by the giver and his friends."<sup>17</sup> Thus when the historians speak of "burnt offerings" they may well be including all sacrifices of the type "left entire at the altar", the *'asham* as well as other types.

The meaning of the money payments in 2 Kings 12: 16 is not easy to discern. It is just as easy to assume that at this period an earlier sacrifice was commuted for a money payment as that a money payment was on the way to becoming a sacrifice.<sup>18</sup> This would be all the more possible since this particular sacrifice was often associated with a payment, and it would not be difficult for some to put the emphasis on the payment rather than on the sacrifice itself. Certain parts of the sin and guilt-offerings were recognized in the Levitical law as the prerogative of the priests (Lev. 7: 7 f.), and it is not beyond the bounds of possibility that in the

time of Jehoshaphat the priests had succeeded in having some of their perquisites delivered in hard cash (cf. Num. 18: 15).<sup>19</sup>

Again, in Num. 5: 8 we read of a case where restitution is due, but cannot be paid for lack of a kinsman to receive it. It is then to be paid to the priest, and 2 Kings 12 might well refer to money received in such a way. There are yet other possibilities, for example, the suggestion that worshippers who came from far did not drive an animal all the way, but turned it into money before leaving home and came bringing this.

From this discussion two points emerge. There is some evidence that the *'asham* is very old, making the assumption that 2 Kings 12 gives us the origin of the sacrifice very precarious, to say the least. Then we have seen that the meaning of the passage is far from clear, and there are several possibilities which are compatible with the *'asham's* being in existence before it. In our present state of ignorance it is impossible to assert dogmatically that here we have the origin of the guilt offering.<sup>21</sup>

#### VI. THE *'ASHAM* SEPARATE FROM THE COMPENSATION

If we look closely at the passages where the trespass offering is linked with the money payment it does seem as though the mulct and the sacrifice are separable. Thus in Lev. 5: 14 ff. the procedure is that restitution plus one-fifth is first made and then the priest makes atonement with the ram. Notice the order in which these are done, and the fact that atonement is connected with the ram only, and not also with the restitution. This is made even clearer in the section beginning Lev. 6: 1 (5: 20). Here the offence is against the neighbour and it is provided that the restitution plus one-fifth be made before there is any mention of the *'asham*. It is only after the restitution has been made that we read "he shall bring his guilt offering unto the LORD" (v. 6). Once again atonement is connected solely with the priestly sacrificial action, and not with the restitution at all.<sup>22</sup>

Then we should notice passages wherein there is an *'asham* without restitution, or restitution without an *'asham*. Under the former head comes Lev. 5: 17 ff. It may be that in this case it was not possible to compute the restitution. But whatever the reason the fact is clear enough. There is no restitution, but there is a ram offered as an *'asham*.

As an example of the opposite case compare Lev. 22: 14 ff. Here a man unwittingly eats of the holy thing. He is to add a fifth part to it and "give unto the priest the holy thing". But there is no mention of an animal sacrifice. In Num. 5: 5-7 there is a

direction that restitution be made to a man who has been wronged. In view of the provision for a sacrifice when there is no kinsman (v. 8) it may be rash to assert that none is to be offered here, but at least we can say that none is mentioned. Again restitution is considered quite apart from sacrifice.

It must also be borne in mind that sometimes this offering is prescribed where restitution is not possible, e.g., in the cleansing of the leper or the offering of the defiled Nazirite.

From all this it would seem that the *'asham* and the monetary compensation do not stand in the relationship that is commonly assumed. While the connection should not be lost sight of, it should not be exaggerated nor misinterpreted. The *'asham* was a very important sacrifice. It availed for a number of very serious sins like robbery and perjury, and for some of them it was possible to compute a material compensation. When this was so the compensation must be made before the atonement could be effected.<sup>23</sup> But it is important to notice that it is always the sacrifice that is said to make the atonement, never the payment of money.

The emphasis on money is probably due, not so much to the essential character of the offering, as to the way it operated in practice. Its most frequent use must have been for cases of dishonesty of one sort and another where restitution with the added fifth would be required. In the nature of the case it would not have been so much in demand for offences like adultery with a bondmaid, the defilement of a Nazirite through sudden death occurring in his immediate vicinity, or the cleansing of a leper. Nevertheless these may be just as instructive when we seek the real meaning of the *'asham*.

#### VII. THE SIGNIFICANCE OF THE *'ASHAM*

We have seen that in the case of the verb from this root one of the lines of development runs from the basic meaning of "to sin", to commit a trespass, to that of punishment, "to bear the penalty", and so expiate the trespass. May it not be that this is the idea in the trespass offering? It is the means whereby the penalty is borne, the animal taking the place of the sinner.

We see this process at work in Lev. 19: 20 ff. Here we have the case of adultery with a slave-girl betrothed but not redeemed, and it is said, "they shall be punished". Had she not been a slave this penalty would have been death (Deut. 22: 23 ff.). But as it is, this penalty is not enforced. Instead the man brings a ram for an *'asham*, which looks uncommonly like the animal bearing the penalty that otherwise would have been inflicted on the man.

Then there is the Nazirite who has been defiled by accidental contact with a dead body (Num. 6: 9-12). He had been separated unto the Lord, and stringent regulations provide for the observance of this separation. In particular he is forbidden to become unclean even in the event of the death of his closest relatives. It is clear that defilement is regarded as very heinous, and when it takes place requires an *'asham* for its expiation. The *'asham* is not part of the rite when the Nazirite has fulfilled his days. Then he would offer burnt, sin, and peace offerings, but not an *'asham*. It is to put him right when he has forfeited his standing before Yahweh. While, in the absence of exact information, we are not able to speak with assurance, it at least looks very possible that this defilement in one set apart for Yahweh was the kind of breach of holiness that would be punishable by death, but that the *'asham*, is the bearing of penalty that we have seen associated with this root.

It may be that the same kind of reasoning is to be found behind the provision that the cleansed leper must offer an *'asham* and only later a burnt offering, a sin offering and a meal offering (Lev. 14: 10-20). Discussing this rite H. C. Thomson asks, "What is the meaning of the double atonement, first with the *'asham*, then with the other offerings?" and he proceeds, "Can it be that originally the *'asham* was a life given for the life of the leper, which was, as it were, forfeit but is now brought back from the grave, almost redeemed? This substitution being carried out by the sacrifice of the ram, then the leper as once more a member of the community carries out the usual offerings, the atonement here perhaps being connected with the idea of leprosy as a punishment for sin?"<sup>24</sup> The double atonement is puzzling, but some such approach as that of Thomson seems required. If the leper is first brought out of a state of death (both ceremonial and social) by his *'asham*, and then proceeds to offer the sacrifices made by normal men, the whole becomes meaningful.<sup>25</sup>

The *'asham* was the offering prescribed in the case of theft, and it is accordingly worth noting that while Ex. 22: 4 prescribes a double restoration for theft (fourfold or fivefold restoration in some cases, Ex. 22: 1), there are places where the death penalty was recognized. Thus Jacob accepts this penalty when talking with Laban (Gen. 31: 32), and so do his sons in their dealings with Joseph's steward (Gen. 44: 9). David gave sentence of death for this crime (2 Sam. 12: 5). Even Ex. 22 regards it as no crime if the thief is killed during his breaking in (v. 2). Nearly all nations of antiquity regarded theft as punishable by death. Thus

it may well be that in the case of the *'asham* for theft it was recognized that a serious crime had been committed, and one meriting the severest of penalties. But the animal died and the worshipper went free.

The provision of the *'asham* for false swearing points in the same direction. Pr. 19: 9 gives death as the penalty for false witness. Again, from Lev. 19: 12 it appears that the false oath is a profanation of the Name of the Lord, which was one of the most heinous of all sins. There are many passages which associate death with the profanation of the divine holiness; e.g., Num. 4: 15, 20; 18: 32; 2 Sam. 6: 7, etc.

Then we should notice Is. 53: 10, where the Servant is spoken of as an *'asham*. There are many difficulties in the interpretation of this chapter as a whole, and of this verse in particular, but it seems beyond dispute that the Servant is regarded as a substitute for the people: "Surely he hath borne our griefs, and carried our sorrows . . . he was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities: the chastisement of our peace was upon him and with his stripes we are healed . . . the LORD hath laid on him the iniquity of us all". If the *'asham* is the bearing of penalty vicariously,<sup>26</sup> then it is natural that it should be used of the ministry of the Servant, but if not, then what is its relevance?

There are some very puzzling things about this sacrifice, and the last word is far from having been written as yet. But we contend that in the past exegetes have tended to concentrate too much on the money aspect and to overlook those substitutionary and expiatory aspects which may well be more fundamental. Our contention is that it is in these aspects that the essential meaning of this offering is to be found.

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#### NOTES

<sup>1</sup> Possibly we should add to these the four references in 1 Sam. 6 to the offering of golden mice and tumours by the Philistines, and that in 2 Kings 12: 16 (17) to "the money for the guilt-offerings".

<sup>2</sup> So B.D.B., who give the meaning as "offend, be guilty". S. H. Kellogg thinks that the word for "guilt-offering" "always has reference to the invasion of the rights of others" (*Leviticus [Expos. Bib.]*, p. 155). I am indebted to Mr. J. A. Thompson for the point that the same is to be noted in the cognate languages. Thus, e.g., *'athima*, the Arabic verb which

corresponds to 'asham, means "to commit a sin or crime". Examples could be multiplied.

<sup>3</sup> *Trans. Glasg. Univ. Oriental Soc.*, xiv, p.21. Similarly R. K. Yerkes, "the root of 'asham connotes responsibility for an act or condition which violates some standard" (*Sacrifice*, p. 171).

<sup>4</sup> N. H. Snaith thinks "the natural meaning of this particular piece is that the prophet expects that the punishment itself will be sufficient. Perhaps the idea is that when the penalty involved in the sin is paid, then the slate is clean and a new start can be made" (*Mercy and Sacrifice*, pp. 58 f.). He translates the verb here: "they have paid the price". H. Wheeler Robinson accepts the rendering of R.V. mg. (*Two Hebrew Prophets*, p. 54).

<sup>5</sup> Cf. Koehler and Baumgartner: "1. Verschuldung, offence, guilt".

<sup>6</sup> "Sin implies guilt ('asham)" (Pedersen, *Israel*, I-II, p. 420).

<sup>7</sup> For example, H. Wheeler Robinson, "We must remember, also, in any endeavour to understand what sacrifice means for the Jewish religion, that no definite provision at all is made for what we should call sin in the full sense—i.e., deliberate and voluntary rebellion against God's law. With this the sacrificial system does not deal. . . . For sin in the full sense there is but one issue according to the Levitical theory: 'The soul that doeth aught with an high hand, whether he be homeborn or a stranger, the same blasphemeth Yahweh; and that soul shall be cut off from among his people'" (*The Religious Ideas of the Old Testament*, p. 145).

<sup>8</sup> Cf. A. C. Welch: "That law insisted on the ethical character of the divine commands, and contains the classic pronouncement in Judaism on the duty of love towards one's neighbours; but the regulations which bear on ceremonial impurity are more numerous and detailed, and no effort has been made to reconcile the two or to indicate their relative importance. They are simply set down alongside each other, as though they were of equal significance" (*Post-Exilic Judaism*, p. 302). So also W. D. Davies, "It is however, extremely doubtful whether we are to draw such a rigid distinction between what we should call moral offences and those dealt with by the sacrificial system; to do so is to over-simplify a complex issue" (*Paul and Rabbinic Judaism*, p. 254).

<sup>9</sup> Cf. H. H. Rowley: "It is clear that sinning with a high hand meant something more than consciously sinning, sinning as the expression of the settled purpose of the heart, as distinct from lapsing into sin" (*The Unity of the Bible*, p. 45).

<sup>10</sup> *Enc. Bib.*, col. 4304.

<sup>11</sup> *Sacrifice in the Old Testament*, p. 37. It is not without interest in this connection that in later times the Rabbis often regarded the 'asham as being something in the nature of a fine, the value of the animal being regarded as evidence. But Büchler says: "In the view of the teachers the atoning effect of the guilt-offering did not depend on its greatness or its price" (*Studies in Sin and Atonement*, p. 412). Pedersen regards the 'asham as the "characteristic expression" of that view which sees in sacrifice an "atonement by fine" (*Israel*, III-IV, p. 363).

<sup>12</sup> While we cannot accept C. H. Patterson's suggestion that this is a case of "the use of sympathetic magic" (*The Philosophy of the Old Testament*, p. 92), his words show that the idea of a fine is far from obvious.

<sup>13</sup> "The 'Asham and Hatta'th are not new institutions which Ezekiel is trying to introduce into the future ritual but something well known and

practised in the Jerusalem Temple before his day" (R. Brinker, *The Influence of Sanctuaries in Early Israel*, p. 133). Brinker proceeds to adduce other evidence for the antiquity of these two sacrifices.

<sup>14</sup> *The Ras Shamra Tablets*, p. 30. Oesterley notices this passage, but doubts the similarity of the rituals, *Sacrifices in Ancient Israel*, p. 76.

<sup>15</sup> Vol. ii, p. 578.

<sup>16</sup> He says, "The Hebrew sacrificial terms *shelem*, 'offering', and 'asham, 'trespass offering', occur with exactly the right consonants to represent the two sibilants (one standing for *s* in Arabic, and the other for *th*) and in suitable context in the Ugaritic sacrificial rituals which were first discovered and deciphered. There can, accordingly, be no reasonable doubt that they have been correctly identified" (p. 61). He thinks *kalil*, "whole burnt offering", and *ishsheh*, "offering", have been prematurely identified with similar words in Ugaritic.

<sup>16a</sup> The references are omitted in the 1955 edition, perhaps because he regards the word as Hurrian (in the introduction to the *Glossary* he says he is omitting Hurrian words).

<sup>16b</sup> Cf. H. H. Rowley: "While it is probable that much of Israelite sacrifice was modelled on Canaanite, we have no evidence that for Israel sacrifice began after their entry into the land of Canaan" (*op. cit.*, pp. 31 f.).

<sup>17</sup> *Op. cit.*, pp. 65 f.

<sup>18</sup> That changes did take place through the years in the manner of offering, and of the priests' securing of their portion, is clear from the unusual procedure mentioned in 1 Sam. 2: 13 ff.

<sup>19</sup> A Rabbinic interpretation (ascribed, however to Jehoiada the High Priest) understands 2 Kings 12: 16 as referring to the case when there is a surplus of money over and above that needed for a sacrifice to which it was assigned. Burnt offerings are to be bought with it, "the flesh for God and the hide for the priests" and thus the Scripture is fulfilled (*Shek.* 6: 6, Danby's translation).

<sup>20</sup> W. R. Harper thinks that "while compensation was given to the priests (cf. 2 Kings 12: 16), it was not counted as an offering to Yahweh" (I.C.C. on Hos. 4: 8). Lods speaks of this money as "fines", but proceeds to note the possibilities that it may have been to provide sacrifices for Yahweh, or as sacrificial dues, or as penalties imposed in addition to sacrifices (*The Prophets and the Rise of Judaism*, p. 260).

<sup>21</sup> Although G. Buchanan Gray thinks the guilt-offering to have arisen out of fines he recognizes the indefiniteness of this passage. "The passage does not refer to sin-offerings but at the same time it by no means proves that such were unknown at the time. It was germane to the story to refer to money; it was not germane to the story to refer to sacrifices. Later in the Priestly Code the guilt offering accompanied restitution; it may be that in the time of Jehoash the money of guilt, corresponding to the restitution of later law and practice, was accompanied by sacrifice. It may be; the story in Kings leaves the question open neither proving, nor disproving, the custom of bringing a sacrifice when making a material recompense for a ritual offence" (*op. cit.*, p. 62).

<sup>22</sup> For the later practice cf. the saying of R. Eleazar b. R. Sadok, "The authorities instituted the great relief (for the robber) that, when the expenses involved in taking the article after the (absent) owner transcended the value of the property (to be restored), the robber might deposit the

equivalent of the article in money and its additional fifth in the court of justice and might bring his guilt offering and obtain atonement" (Büchler, *op. cit.*, p. 387). Here compensation and atonement are clearly two different things.

<sup>23</sup> Cf. the saying of R. Eleazar, "Sins between thee and God He forgives thee, but sins between thee and thy fellow-man He forgives not to thee until thou hast conciliated thy neighbour" (Büchler, *op. cit.*, p. 351). Büchler cites much more to the same effect from the Rabbis.

<sup>24</sup> *Op cit.*, p. 24.

<sup>25</sup> Leprosy is the punishment for sin in Num. 12: 10; 2 Kings 5: 27; 2 Ch. 26: 19-21. Büchler cites a Baraitha, "leprosy comes only for evil speech and for pride" (*op. cit.*, p. 421).

<sup>26</sup> It is interesting to see the way the *'asham* appears to the Jewish writer, Büchler: "So the sinner whom his wrong deed had separated from his God, gradually drew nearer to Him by his confession in court, by his restitution and by the conciliation of the injured neighbour. And when he brought his guilt-offering to the Temple, and confessed his sin over the sacrifice in repentance and humility, and watched in contrition the sprinkling of its blood as a substitute for his own, his sin was atoned for, God was conciliated and granted him forgiveness: the peace between God and the cleansed sinner was restored" (*op. cit.*, p. 453).