



Shaqah

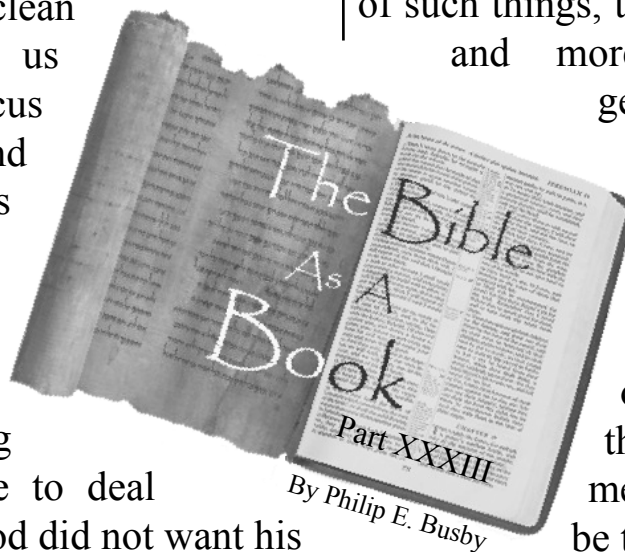
*“Beware lest any man spoil you through philosophy and vain deceit, after the tradition of men, after the rudiments of the world, and not after Christ.”
Colossians 2:8*

As we continue our overview of the book of Leviticus, we finished last time talking about all the stipulations concerning priests making determinations on the presence of leprosy in a person and clothing, as well as the ceremonies required to declare a person who has survived the disease clean again. This brought us through Leviticus chapter 14 verse 32, and we will start this segment with verse 33.

At this point, one might be asking why the priests have to deal with all this? Well, God did not want his chosen nation to have what is aptly described in many societies as witch doctors! If they were going to depend on someone for health and healing, it was going to be a person who was suppose to be as far away from the belief in false gods, spirits, and the like, as they could be. At the same time, it needed to be a person who knew how to get a hold of The One

True God, and allow His power to flow in those cases as God desired to act upon a situation. Also, by setting it up this way, God was creating a situation where, through a life of being in the position of observing such things and part of a lineage of family before them who had knowledge of such things, the priests would be more and more qualified, as each generation passed, to make determinations on unusual findings and health issues.

On top of this, God ordering these things into the hands of the priests meant it was God's intent to be there with them to protect and heal them from/of any of these things. Sadly, many of the priests did not truly serve God with their whole heart, and were not afforded this protection to the extent God would have wanted. However, knowing this was part of their responsibility should have been all the more incentive for priests to seek to stay clean and as close to God as they could!



Going back to the point about not having witch doctors or the like, means Israel's modern medicine would have grown more quickly without superstition getting in the way. With the field of medicine growing out of the priesthood, there would always be supervision by the priests of these issues, as well as the ethics of practicing medicine in general. This not only serves to make for a good medical system without corruption, but goes hand in hand with the fact, God did not originally design Israel to have a secular government.

Finishing up the stipulations about how leprosy or any disease that is in a similar category should be dealt with, we see the Law setting up, through the priests, what might be the first environmental health agency as well. These next laws would deal with the fact, when Israel got to the promised land they would take possession of and build more permanent living structures, instead of everyone living in tents. Houses and building in general, at the time, were made from very organic materials and, as such, would be susceptible to biological contamination. Many of the kinds of contamination these laws are meant to give guidance for the handling of, are actually something we still must deal with in structures made of "modern" materials today. God even takes responsibility for putting such plagues in a structure, because He is The One Who set up the world to encompass everything here in a state of natural cycles, meaning nothing is permanent here!

The wording makes it clear that if an

owner of a house thinks there is anything remotely like leprosy - meaning any contamination such as molds and the like are covered in this - in the wall(s) of a house, they were to go to the priest and tell him of their suspicion. Before the priest enters the house and possibly makes a determination of there being a problem, everything inside the house is to be moved out. If this was not done, everything in the house will be determined at risk if the house is determined to be, and these items will end up being disposed of as unclean. The other facts about what would be needed to potentially repair such a house also made this necessary, so any contamination did not end up on/in everything.

From there, the procedure for determination is a lot like it is for other things, and people. The priest enters the house to look at the possible contamination and see if it's in the material of the wall itself or just something innocuous on the surface. Other signs such as coloration and markings are considered as well. If he determines it might be a problem, the priest will order the house quarantined for seven days. On the seventh day, the priest will look again and see if the problem(s) seems to be spreading. If it has, an attempt to repair the house can be made. The section of the wall where the contamination is found is to be removed. The stones of that section are to be carried to an unclean place, which is a place people do not go. This, so nature can take its course in dealing with the

contamination. The plaster, which was commonly used to create the finished surface of the interior walls, was all to be scraped in order to rid the house of any contamination which might not yet be noticeably started throughout the house. The dust from this scraping would also be carried to an unclean place.

After this, the wall can be repaired with new material and the house replastered with fresh plaster. If after following these procedures it is noticed that contamination shows up again, the priest is to come look and determine again if what one is seeing really is a contamination. If it is, the house is considered not salvageable, because it's impossible to know from where or what is causing the contamination, and not worth the health risk. The house is then to be torn down, and all the materials it consists of carried away to an unclean place for disposal. There are also rules for those who may work on or be in any such house during this entire process of discovering, determination, attempt to repair, and/or demolition. Anyone who has even entered the house is considered unclean until sundown, and anyone who has slept or ate in such a house is to be unclean, and wash their cloths.

If a house has been repaired, and afterward the priest determines a house is safe, there is a ceremony for pronouncing the house clean again. For the sake of keeping the symbolism uniform and

understandable, this ceremony diverges very little from the one used for declaring a person clean who has survived leprosy. Again, two birds are used; and one is killed over a source of running water, using an earthen vessel to capture the blood. The cedar wood, hyssop, scarlet, and the other live bird would then be dipped in the blood; and in this ceremony they are dipped in the running water as well. This symbolizes that while a human truly overcomes the leprosy, a piece of the house had to be removed into nature for the plague to be swept away. Using these items, the house is to be sprinkled seven times with the blood and water to symbolize the completion of its cleansing. The remaining live bird is then set free into the open field as with the previous ceremony for a human.

With these stipulations, we end the laws concerning leprosy and how to handle infectious diseases of the like. The next laws deal with a person having any wound or opening of any kind which allows bodily fluids to drain out. This usually happens because the body is attempting to clean out some kind of infection; and these laws encourage any person who has such a condition to limit their contact, not just with other people, but with as few items as can be avoided. Basically, anything the person uses or touches, such as vessels, beds, things the person sits on like chairs, a saddle, blankets, etc., all become unclean. If the vessel is an earthen vessel, it is to be

destroyed. If it is of wood, and one would presume metal as well, it can and must be washed in water to be clean again. Any other person who touches any of these things the sick person has made unclean will also become unclean, at least until sundown. Touching or sitting on beds or chairs the person has made unclean, also requires the washing of one's clothes. This is true of anyone who carries anything the person has sat on, or is contacted by the person's bodily fluids, such as spit; or has touched the person's skin. The only way the sick person can contact another person without making them unclean is with their hands, and only if they wash them with water prior to the contact.

Presuming the cause of the drainage does not result in the person's death, when it heals, the person is to specifically wait another seven days before resuming normal activities as a person considered clean. They are then to wash their clothing, and bathe in running water. On the eighth day, they are to take to the temple two turtledoves or two young pigeons to offer as sacrifices. One bird will be offered for a sin offering to standardly cover the time the person was inhibited by their uncleanness from bringing such an offering, and the other is to be for a burnt offering to show the persons willingness, as part of God's chosen nation, to continue as one whose life is dedicated to the oracles of God.

Next we turn to specific male and female issues. When male reproductive organs produce their fluids, a male is to

wash his entire body in water and be unclean until sundown. Anything this fluid gets on, such as clothing, bedding, or the like, must also be washed in water and considered unclean until sundown. A woman the man was with will also need to bathe in water and be unclean until sundown. When a woman begins her monthly cycle of purging blood, she is to separate herself as unclean for a seven day period. Those who touch her will be unclean until sundown. Anything she uses to lay or sit on during her separation will be unclean. If anyone comes in contact with these items, they are to wash their clothes, bathe in water, and be unclean until sundown. If before her separation she has gotten fluid on her bed or anything she has sat on, any person who touches these things will be unclean until sundown. If a man has a physical relationship with her during this time period, he also is to go into a seven day period of being unclean, making items he comes in contact with unclean, much the same way as the woman.

If the woman's flow goes beyond the seven days, she is to remain in separation. If this is not something leading to her death, once the flow has stopped, a new set of seven days is to begin being counted with all the same stipulations applying. There can also be cases where, for some reason, a woman does not go into separation soon after realizing her flow has started. If either of these situations occur, after the seven days, be it her late started original seven or an extension, on the eighth day she is

Following the Biblical Stream:

By Philip E. Busby

Last time, we ended by talking about God's promise that the chosen nation He was going to bring through Abram would possess the land Abram had been called to sojourn in, and how that one nation, out of the many nations Abram would be the forefather of, would number as the dust of the ground. This brought us to Genesis chapter 13 verse 17 where God tells Abram to arise and walk the length and the breadth of this land, making his presence known in doing so, and learning it so future generations did not become isolated into one small family possession that might have future ramifications to the perceived rights of the chosen nation in this land!

Verse 18 tells us, at this point Abram packs up and moves to a new place where he had not made his presence known or as yet set any kind of landmark. This would be a plain associated with an Amorite named Mamre, in a place called Hebron, which at that time was more of a territory than just a city. Being a plain, this was a very nice area for Abram to set up camp. Its association with Mamre is that he is said to have grown good trees there, also making this a very pleasant place to live in the midst of a very arid climate. Here Abram would build another altar unto God, and this area and city known as Hebron, would only be rivaled by Bethel as the main place Abram considered a home and very sacred place in the land.

Hebron also became a very important place in the history of the chosen nation. As Israel comes into the land from Egypt, this area is said to be given to Caleb, who was one of only two spies along with Joshua who originally came back to say Israel should go up and possess the land right off. (Josh. 14:6-15) It is later specified as being a city of refuge, and one of the cities of the Levites. (Josh. 21:9-13) Hebron was used by David as the capital city of Judah during the brief strife over who would succeed Saul as the second king over all Israel, and then as the capital of the nation for seven and a half years before David defeated the Jebusites in the city of Salem (meaning peace), thus, known as Jerusalem, and moved the capital there. (II Sam. 5:1-10)

By moving from the north where Bethel was, to the south into Hebron, Abram truly was solidifying a claim on the hill country to the west of the Dead Sea and Jordan valley. By no small coincidence this stretch would also include Salem, and is why when Abram is later instructed to take his son to Moriah, he had no doubt as to the place God spoke of, its significance, nor trouble accessing it. (Gen. 22:1-19) It is as if Abram intentionally spread his household over this stretch in order to keep Salem within reach and protected, as it was the one place Abram knew The One True God was worshiped in this land!

This idea shows its practical

application as we begin the verses of chapter 14. One must appreciate that the idea of nations was an unfocused one at this time, so shortly after the Tower of Babel. However, it was solidly exemplified in places such as Egypt, which served as a model much of the world aspired to; and Abram was no doubt well acquainted with the concept of governmental power, having come from the Mesopotamian Valley where the heart of Nimrod's kingdom, with its Tower of Babel, had been. Thus, the fact I just pointed out above may indicate Abram suspected incursions might take place from outside forces such as Egypt, the power of which he showed he recognized in his recent encounter with them, fearing such a power's greed to consume all things of value. Then also from those of his original homeland, whom his father Terah knew and wanted to be a part of helping get Abram out of.

The great thing about the land of Canaan was, at the time, the lines there were very blurred as tribal rulership had overtaken the rulership role in lieu of the individual family structure, which is all God originally ordained, but only some of the people were striving to be more of a national structure. This is why we see here the use of the word "king." Keeping in mind this is the English word, this term, at this time, would be the very generic term for a ruler who may or may not rule over a specific territory, but most likely ruled over more than one tribal group; tribal groups being the structure that still consisted largely of just related families. Another difference is in that a king was

more like Nimrod at the tower and Pharaoh in Egypt, in that this was not, as a tribal ruler was, necessarily an elder of any specific family. Kings could be old or they could be young; and we see the domination in history of dynasties, which was/is the concept that the eldest son of a king would take over his rule upon the king's death, no matter the son's age.

We understand the idea of a king in our modern thought as clearly being the ruler over a particular territory, but in its infancy, as it was in Canaan at this time, the idea was more about allegiance of groups to a single ruler. In many ways, the concept really grows out of the understanding that together we are stronger. The problem people often do not see coming is the question of whether that gets used for defense or conquest. Who the ruler ends up being and what kinds of factors support his power have a lot to do with how the ruler ends up using that power. Getting back to what we need to understand our verses here, the beginnings of this type of government structure created a situation where it was easy to have multiple kings in one very small area, with the people they ruled over even living very overlapped with each other. In turn, this caused there to be more of a cooperation even between kings, especially to build an army and go out to conquer other places or defend a particular territory. Understanding these facts are what make the next story of Abram's life very interesting!

In verse 1 of chapter 14 we see a list of kings who together formed a

confederation of sorts, and made a southern incursion following the east side of the Jordan river. Their aim seemed to be the conquest of the east side of the Jordan, the Dead Sea, and into the valley at the south end of the Dead Sea. Laying aside the fact they seemed to stay to the east, this is not unlike pushes made over and over by the later empires in order to link their empire from Mesopotamia to the entrance of the African continent. There is some evidence that after the tower, some of the family of Shem migrated along the west side of what we call the Persian Gulf, and along the south shores of the Arabian peninsula. To some degree these incursions may have been interested in a similar thing as Europe's Columbus who wanted a more direct route to the orient, but ended up landing on the American continents, which Europeans, at the time, didn't know existed. Instead of water routes, these ancient kings of the east may have been seeking a land route they could control that would bring their power full circle from the Persian Gulf to the tip of the eastern fork of the Red Sea.

They likely originally avoided the west side of the Jordan because they didn't desire or know just how much they might draw the attention of Pharaoh at that point. What is fascinating about this group of kings, and in my opinion makes this one of the most overlooked stories in the Bible, is the fact, this group of kings, in many ways, represents a spectrum of the beginning line of the future succeeding world empires, which the Bible shows us were very

important to how the world has unfolded overall! One can debate over and over as to exactly who these kings were, but their names seem to make it quite clear they were all connected to the rising governmental powers that were developing in the area more directly part of and surrounding Nimrod's original kingdom, which was centered in the Mesopotamian Valley. Again, this also means they were from the area and family Abram had been called out of.

The list of kings begins with Amraphel, who is said to be the king of Shinar. Some believe this may have been the now famous Hammurabi of Babylon, but that's not a hard fact. Laying that aside, Shinar is very familiar in the Genesis story as it refers to the lower parts of the Mesopotamian Valley, the plain of which is where Noah's family had come to settle after the flood. (Gen. 10:32-11:1) This connects us directly with the Babylonians, one way or another. Next is Arioch, king of Ellasar. Larsa is the name of a city which also existed in this lower part of the valley, very close to Ur of the Chaldees. Arioch is said to be the king of Ellasar, which could easily have a dash making it, El-Lasar. "El" is a common way of referencing God, or a god for pagans, and Lasar can linguistically morph very easily in the languages to move the "r," thus, Larsa. Archaeological discoveries have shown Arioch is a basic morphing into English from Eri-Aku, king of Larsa. The name containing "Aku," the Semitic moon god, in much the same way names of Pharaohs

could contain “Ra,” the Egyptian sun god. Thus, Eri-Aku or Arioch, basically means “servant of the moon god.”

Then there is the man who seemed to be, at the time, the lead king, Chedorlaomer, king of Elam. The region of Elam clearly takes us just outside the Mesopotamian Valley to the east of the Tigris River. This gives direct connection to the later Persians. Now, last, but certainly not least, is Tidal, king of nations. His name appears to mean “veneration,” which is a good name for a king respected by several different groups of people. The spelling in original Hebrew connects him to the northern part of the valley and possibly a great deal of the bridging region, which is the main path between Mesopotamia and both the west as well as dropping back south into Canaan and beyond. In many ways, this king, considering the name he bore, may represent the rising beast that became the Assyrian empire. He was a king who maybe, at the time, was not as powerful as some of his companions, but one whose name easily suggests was an accepted ruler spanning many tribal groups, making his territory the largest and most diversified.

In any case, the point here is that the very fact these four kings were in league together with the purpose of subjecting to their authority, land and people far outside their immediate regions, shows they had very much the attitude that would bring about empires. I have talked on more than one occasion about the fact God used Israel to quell Egypt from being the re-arisal of the beast started at the Tower of Babel, as

they very well may have rose to be a great world empire had Pharaoh not given God the opportunity to devastate the region by refusing to let Israel go. However, here is an earlier story than that, where kings who come from the people responsible for the eventual re-arisal of that beast are driven out and set back by centuries from accomplishing it, by God using Israel's forefather, the righteous man Abram, whom God had brought from among these very People!

These four kings originally came down to the east side of the Jordan and the Dead Sea at a time that possibly predates Abram leaving Haran by just a bit, and five kings of the region rose up against them to defend the region. These five were Bera and Birsha, kings of the ill-famed cities of Sodom and Gomorrah. Shinab and Shemeber, from the lesser known Admah and Zeboiim. Along with the king of Bela, which is a title used by the king of the city Zoar. There is much debate about exactly where each of these cities were, but the Bible's story makes it clear they were down in the area of what we know today as the Dead Sea. It's possible the king of Zoar is listed as holding more of a title instead of a proper name, because Bela actually referred not so much to a city, but a significant portion of the valley directly adjacent to the south end of the Dead Sea. It has been speculated, in no small part due to the wording here of verse 3, that what we consider the end of the Dead Sea, south of the horse head shaped peninsula that crops out from its east bank, was not under water until Sodom and Gomorrah were destroyed. It is even very possible what

What About God's Chosen People?

Part VII

From Living Springs' Questions and Answers

"Is it true that the Jews are God's chosen people? I have a Christian friend who says the Jews were not God's chosen people."

We ended our last segment by talking about how the time of the captivity of Judah in Babylon, when Jerusalem and the temple lay in ruin, really birthed Judaism as a religion, maybe not on such an official level, but in the fact Jews had to figure out what following God's Law without the temple would mean. We started a conversation about two major points concerning this issue, the first of which is the fact there were those of the northern kingdom carried away to different places many years before the southern kingdom of Judah was carried away to Babylon. These people faced the same problem of being without the temple. However, unlike those from the South who had the Law right up to their captivity, the northern kingdom had, for many years, already been corrupted by false religious practices designed by their own kings, which were meant to replace the true Laws of God. What this brought us to is the fact those carried to Babylon came from a far less disadvantaged position in knowing and maintaining the Law than those from the North.

In talking about how those from the northern kingdom did not have the Law so readily available to them, due to the fact there were not printing presses and the like,

we should also consider the fact, even as Judah fell, this was true, and just how many copies of the Law went with them is impossible to know. However, in considering what an overall disadvantage this was in maintaining not just the Jews as God's chosen nation, but the Laws themselves, again we should remember God intended the remnant He literally left on the land during the Babylonian captivity to stay - on the land! If they had, their biggest jobs during the absence of the temple and its ceremony could have been twofold. First, they could have taken up the job of ensuring a pure Hebrew writing of the Law was maintained. Second, they could have kept track of the yearly cycle the feasts were framed in, which was dependent on the harvest cycle of the land of Israel itself. Even a third advantage is seen in this, which is the availability of food and preparation for the weather conditions. Those of the next generations born outside Israel would not be use to the climate in Israel upon returning from the much different climate in Babylon. Instructions from those who had maintained a presence in the land would have been of great value!

While all of this shows us God had a better plan for preserving His nation than was taken advantage of, none of it means those coming back from the captivity were not actually of God's chosen nation. All this brings us to that second overall point I talked about making when discussing the

beginning of Judaism as a religion coming at this time, and that point is the fact many will make the argument the Law the Jews hold is corrupted by the pagan practices of Babylon, if not all out based on them. In discussing this point, I would first like to say there is growing archaeological evidence that the kingdom of David and Solomon existed. There is also plenty of evidence Israel, as a nation, existed, and they had a set of laws which were different from those generally used in other lands. However, again I turn to the simple point, many people show us the Jews are God's chosen nation by the very fact that, to this day, they hate the Jewish people because of what they represent!

This hatred is based on the Jews religious beliefs and practices being uncommon. Everyone is, of course, entitled to their own opinion; but it is simply illogical to argue even a majority of the Laws the Jews hold were actually derived from Babylonian practices! If this had been true, the Jews would be revered by the world as the world still reveres the empires. Maybe even as one of its last greatest surviving, thriving, living history cultures! Some historians have referred to the string of empires that started with the Assyrians and ended with Rome as a "Golden Cord" of empires, which was broken when Rome fell. Just as Revelation prophesied, the world continues to go about in wonder of what these empires represent, not hate them. (Rev. 13, 17)

By looking at the best historically recorded empires out of these, we can see not only does the world today love what they represented but how similar they really are,

because all false religion is built on the same basic humanistic practices, and they were able to borrow from and build on top of each other. This truth is in sharp contrast to the Laws of God which the Jews hold, and that's why they are hated by so many in this world. In looking at this golden cord of empires, we see how easily they religiously integrated one to the other, even one after the other, clearly borrowing from the one(s) before them. Nowhere is this clearer than with the Romans and Greeks. While the Romans came in with their own set of religious practices, they greatly revered what the Greeks had accomplished in organizing their religion. The Romans likely borrowed from the Greeks even before the Romans came to be the world power. This then is why we historically see Roman religion is so similar to Greek that you can set up a pantheon of, at least, all the major gods of both empires, with the Greek god of something on one hand, and the Roman god of that same thing on the other. The parallels are uncanny to say the least, and we could go into an entire study of this between the two peoples. In truth, with a little more effort, this can also be done going back through the entire golden cord. Just because the earlier empires' gods were not as neatly sown together as Greek mythology lays theirs out, doesn't mean there aren't direct parallels!

One of the oddest but probably most telling facts on this subject of emulation and similarity one with the other, is the fact the Greeks really rose to be an empire because a man named Alexander, who we now call "The Great," and his family were angered by the Medes and Persians empire for their incursions and attempt to expand their influence across Asia Minor and into the

West, which until then had not been greatly harassed by the previous empires of the world. The West was considered more of a wild frontier, if you will. However, as the Greeks “developed,” they took great offense at an eastern empire thinking it could simply move in and tell them who the king of the world was. Alexander's anger took the reigns of an army that left a trail of blood from Greece to Egypt and on to Mesopotamia, where he gained control of the entire empire of the Medes and Persians, thus founding the Greek empire. At the same time, when Alexander got to the capital city of Babylon, it is said he was greatly impressed with its grandeur. All anger aside, he did not return to his beloved home of Greece, and even ended up dying in Babylon.

When looking at how the Medes and Persians came to power, we see the truth of their quick takeover in the book of Daniel. History records the Babylonians ignored all the warning signs - they were about to fall. However, the simple truth is, in one night Babylon fell to the Medes and Persians attack. Again, we see they did not totally transfer the seat of power from Babylon, and began to run the empire much as if nothing had changed. The Medes being satisfied with what the empire already culturally and religiously consisted of, did not even commit the normal acts of killing and transferring people away from their homes in order to shake things up and solidify their power. This is why men like Daniel easily went from serving in the Babylonian court to simply interacting with the Medes and Persians. They did not come in with great violence, but revered Babylon, its people,

many of its laws, and even multiple religions among the empire, which had been suppressed. This truth plays a factor in why it was this empire that freed the Jews, even ordered the return of those willing to go back and rebuild the temple in Jerusalem. At the same time, we see in the story of this period, those who hated the Jews reminded the king of Jerusalem's history, and the Jews were the culture that ended up being inhibited from accomplishing the task of reestablishing their way of life, even in their ancestral land! (Ezra 4)

During the golden cord, the only time there was true transfer from the grandeur of Babylon was at the start and at the end. Nineveh was the capital of the Assyrians, but that being true, we should remember Nineveh was simply one of the cities pointed out in Genesis as being built by Nimrod, whose kingdom was founded in Babel. (Gen. 10:8-12) The transfer from Assyrian to Babylonian empire was not without its bloodshed, but at the same time very political at its core. It was as if the transfer was more of a political shift between two of the places the beginning of empirical ideas started, which was with the Tower of Babel! The power shifting away from Babylon at the end of the cord is mainly due to the fact, when Alexander the Great died, his empire was divided into four parts, three of which survived as separate enough entities to fight greatly with each other for many decades. For a time, this took the emphasis off there even being a seat of power for the “empire,” and Babylon lost some of its greatness in that regard. When the dust settled in the end of all this, the Greeks found themselves out of power and

the Romans then ruled from their own version of Babylon, the city of Rome.

The fact Babylon as a city remained for so long as the symbol of great power and empire is why in the Revelation to John, Rome is not used in the illustrations, but Babylon. This in spite of the fact Rome was, by the time of John's vision, the imperial capital. Today, we may look at Rome rather than Babylon as this symbol from the past, but that's because, as a city, Babylon was eventually lost in the sands of time. However, the ancient grandeur of things such as its hanging gardens and general beauty is talked about nonetheless, based just on what the history books proclaim about it!

Another interesting fact, when considering how much the world loves what the golden cord of empires represented, is at the fall of Rome. Again, an empire had pushed too far and angered people who decided fighting back was a good idea for them, especially since these people wanted more land for their growing families. This is why we talk about the barbarians of the North in many historical accounts, which ironically were maintained and written by descendants of these "barbarians." As these barbarians were eventually responsible for taking down the last great empire of the golden cord, they ransacked Rome itself and the empire in general, but they eventually found what they took great pleasure in pillaging was, in fact, very interesting to them! It was so interesting they eventually attempted to restart the empire and all it was. The problem ended up being, there was too much in-fighting among them to settle on just who should be the king of the world.

Thus, instead, we ended up with several nation states who fought for centuries with each other, not one of them ever being able to gain the true upper hand.

This led to much of what some are very upset about today, as these nation states eventually spread their wings not so much over each other, but in an attempt to build empires by colonization and conquest of other parts of the world. Continuing to fight among themselves, they ended up in our modern era starting what history describes as two "World Wars." The first of which was characterized as the war to end all wars, but turned out to be only the beginning of a much longer bloodier conflict, which simply had a lapse in-between. The true fires of the second half of this great conflict was sparked mostly because a man named Hitler decided the question of reunifying the Roman empire, and power in general over the world, needed to be settled; and he believed he was the man to be that king of the world! The fact Hitler also made a centerpiece of his efforts the greatest attempt to ever be pursued in destroying the Jewish people, brings us full circle back to my point about how the Jewish ways and Laws were not derived from pagan practices of Babylon or they would not be hated so much by this world!

The truth is, Israel began in Egypt, and had it not been for their efforts there, Egypt would not be all that it had been. If God had not taken the opportunity to devastate Egypt (and transfer most of its remaining wealth to the Israelite slaves who had built much of its grandeur at that time), due to Pharaoh's refusal to simply let God's people go, Egypt surely would have rose as

the first world empire following the Tower of Babel, instead of Assyria. In this action, we see God using His nation to do much as He did by confounding man's language at the tower. God staved off man's attempt to establish a one world government. Israel also left Egypt, not as lowly slaves but with advanced skills by working for, with, and in this advancement driven society. Israel learned and helped develop advancements in, building, writing, and a whole array of things. So too, at the time of the Babylonian empire, God once again gave His people the opportunity to pickup on and develop the most advanced achievements in these kinds of areas, but claiming the interaction God's people had as responsible for their Laws and ways is no more true than it was coming out of Egypt!

When it comes to seeing some of what certain people would describe as Babylonian influence in the Jew's, what you're actually seeing is, again, the things they gained as well as helped develop while in Babylon. It helps to keep in mind that Daniel was high in both the Babylonian as well as the Medes and Persians empires because he showed himself, as Joseph had in Egypt, to be the wisest of the wise across the entire known world, and he was not the only Jew known for this. Thus, one can not say the "influence," which is talked about when looking at the Jews post-Babylon, is purely Babylonian. If one studies history well, you find God's chosen people are where many advancements came and still come from. Today as we look at the nation of Israel, we see a clear example of how much a world leader the Jews are in technology of all kinds. Being gathered back to their land, in spite of the external pressure desiring to

destroy them, they are becoming the greatest example since the days of Solomon of being the center of world achievements in medicine, agriculture, defense, and technology in general. Yet many in the world still desire to wipe them from the map, because the ways of God they still represent is a threat to what man wants to do, which is have a world without God!

This shows us a true golden cord through history! The Egyptians, for all the advanced society they were before many other societies in the world, are simply that - known for their past. The great Assyrians and Babylonians are mostly only known from writings and what we've dug up out of the dirt that time has covered since their achievements were left behind long ago. The Medes and Persians, the Greeks, and the Romans have passed from empires to nations among many nations. The barbarians who destroyed the great Roman empire were never able to put it back together again. For all our reverence of these past cultures, their time has come and gone, but for all the hatred of God's chosen nation, they not only have survived the tumult of history, but thrive like no others in a world truly going downhill as we speak!

No, there is simply no way to make a legitimate argument based on the facts at hand, that what the Jews are or became after the Babylonian captivity is some corrupt branch of something picked up or made up during the captivity in Babylon, and not the true people God told Abraham He would bless those who blessed them and curse those who cursed them! (Gen. 12:1-3) The truth is, the people who had become known as those of Judah, and as such - "Jews,"

returning from Babylon, represent the genuine article of being God's chosen nation and the holders of the same oracles of God that they had before going there! This is why the story of the books of Ezra and Nehemiah line up with all I just pointed out. The time period beginning with the Medes' takeover of the Babylonian empire does start some of the most complex parts of history for God's nation, but being at the chronological end of the Hebrew Bible - which many of us know as the Old Testament - brings us right up to, and overlaps with, history men have kept very well for themselves. Thus, this history is available to us today through other sources, and one does not need to believe God's Word to accept it.

With that, if what we know as the Bible, specifically the Old Testament, was simply put together by those in or from Babylon as a way to give the Jewish people the appearance of a history that did not actually exist, it was done by someone(s) who masterfully knew historical facts and who could wind it all together into a very believable tale, that while many may say, "You can't prove it's true!" there's enough historical evidence to at least know without doubt it's, at the very least, possible! One must then ask the better question of, why? Why would a people who were not the Israelites want to take up the mantle of such a persecuted people? If the Law was all made-up, why did they make something up that would cause them to be such a persecuted people? Last but not least, if they did not intend and/or know it would bring this kind of response, why did they not drop it when it became apparent it would make them a persecuted people? Asking these

questions certainly should prove to any reasonable observer of the story, it would be nothing short of insane for any of this to have been made-up, especially during, and for the continued holding of, through the parts of history that come next!

King Cyrus of the Medes would send a group of Jews back to the land to begin the process of rebuilding the specific city which holds the key importance to God's plan, when it comes to there being a particular spot on the planet where God's work would be accomplished. The temple of God would eventually be rebuilt and Jerusalem as well, but under great pressure from those who tried to convince the government this city was known only as one which represented rebellion against human government! It is true, Jerusalem was known as a city that did not fall easily, but this because it did not fall unless God allowed it. This truth just shows forth the things of God against a world that tries to reject Him. Again, we see God working through His chosen nation to continually maintain the knowledge of God on this earth, and prepare for the day God knew it would be right to send The Messiah to and through this nation to accomplish the work of His first coming, and again at The Messiah's Second Coming. The truth is, God had a plan for His chosen nation that could not and would not be derailed by anything. For this reason, the nation was established; and for this reason, they will be maintained. This, in spite of the fact they, as a people, came to be known by the name which designates only one tribe. The point is, the people remain distinct, and this would continue even after the events following their return.

The return shows us God was truly able to continue to use His nation for what He had prophesied them to fulfill. In this portion of history there would not be a group who escaped from captivity and fought their way back to the land to attempt to rebuild Jerusalem and its temple. Now that would be a story told by someone creating a history! No, the story would be that God had used His people so greatly to affect the world empires they had eventually been brought into captivity by, that there would come a king of one of these empires who desired to see the nation and temple reestablished on the earth.

To be clear on the time line, we must go back and understand some of the events we talked about, happening during the “captivity,” actually overlap with the time of the first Jews making a return to rebuild Jerusalem and the temple. Events such as the story of Esther, came during this overlap. That being true, Cyrus, the king of the empire of the Medes and Persians, did not just give permission for a handful of Jews to return to their land, he sent out a call, “Thus saith Cyrus king of Persia, The LORD God of heaven hath given me all the kingdoms of the earth; and he hath charged me to build him an house at Jerusalem, which is in Judah. Who is there among you of all his people? his God be with him, and let him go up to Jerusalem, which is in Judah, and build the house of the LORD God of Israel, (he is the God,) which is in Jerusalem.” Ezra 1:2-3 Cyrus, fulfilling the words of Isaiah some 175 years before, decided, possibly on the basis someone such as Daniel had pointed out the prophecy to him, he was to send those of God's nation back to reestablish the temple. (Isa. 44:21-

45:4) The call was for whomever there was among God's nation to go. While the door to return to Jerusalem did not remain freely open to all Jews from then on, it was certainly opened wide at this time!

In spite of this open door, we see not everyone chose to go back, or possibly even knew such an opportunity was open. That being said, we must be careful not to judge, because while there were no doubt many who did not go because they did not want to leave the luxuries of the empire to make a long trip back to a devastated homeland where life would be hard and the work very laborious, there were those such as Daniel whom it must have been in God's will to stay, continuing to be that demonstrative people next door, as we talked about before. We must also give credit to the fact many who were part of those originally carried into captivity by Babylon were dead or very old by this time! Many would simply have never made the journey, especially without God's miraculous intervention. To be clear, this is not to say there were not those of the original captives who did make it, only, again, that it is not for us to judge.

The point to our question in this series is that we see how those who came to be known as Jews, both those on the land and those still dispersed, truly are of the bloodline of God's chosen nation. Because the Jews had figured out how to continue to be Jewish, in other words - hold on to the ways God had instructed them even while lacking the ceremony of the temple, there were those ready and willing to return and see the temple rebuilt, for “Then rose up the chief of the fathers of Judah and Benjamin, and the priests, and the Levites, with all

them whose spirit God had raised, to go up to build the house of the LORD which is in Jerusalem. And all they that were about them strengthened their hands with vessels of silver, with gold, with goods, and with beasts, and with precious things, beside all that was willingly offered.” Ezra 1:5-6
Cyrus would also dig into the storehouse of the kings of Babylon and return to these Jews the vessels that had been originally carried away from the temple in Jerusalem, some of which the use of, not long before this, had brought the handwriting on the wall for the last king of the Babylonians! (Dan. 5)

Cyrus appointed as governor of Judah, a man named Zerubbabel, who according to I Chronicles chapter 3 and confirmed by Haggai 1:1 was a direct descendant of Jehoiachin (Jeconiah) the king of Judah, who attempted a surrender to Babylon after rebelling against it, and ended up being carried away, along with much of Jerusalem. Zerubbabel would lead the first assembly of Jews numbering 42,360, besides servants, to Jerusalem in one large group. While this group would primarily identify with the tribes of Judah and Benjamin who had, as tribes, made up the southern kingdom, there were other tribes still involved, not the least to mention were those of Levi. This means priests also returned. The priesthood would be specifically reestablished by Jeshua, along with those of his family; and being of the house of Aaron, Jeshua was appropriately the man to serve as High Priest. All this shows the king sent a good assembly of the Jews to the land of Israel, with not just his

blessing to rebuild the temple, but the order to do so along with much of what was needed to see it accomplished.

These would come and begin setting up their lives in the cities of Judah where they had originally been, all of which needed much refurbishing. However, in the seventh month of the year of their return, they would gather to Jerusalem, which was still very much nothing but a pile of rubble. The first act they would take up was not the laying of the temple's foundation, but Jeshua as High Priest, along with his family, and Zerubbabel of the house of David, along with his family, would set up the altar in the place where it belonged. This was quite possibly on the very spot of the altar King David had built after buying the threshingfloor of Araunah, (II Sam. 24:18-25) and their father Abraham had built to offer Isaac as God commanded in Genesis 22. No doubt it was, at the very least, near the spot King Solomon had placed the altar when building the temple which the Babylonians had destroyed. They would do this in order to begin again the offerings and sacrifices prescribed in the Law of Moses, in spite of their fear of the surrounding people, who they knew would be against their reestablishing a presence in the land, specifically the city of Jerusalem, and the temple itself!

Until next time, may we each continually choose to be the people God wants us to be!

***Questions submitted to the Institute,
answered by Philip E. Busby.***

FBS continued from pg. 8

was known at the time as the Salt Sea was much narrower from east to west, and simply an extremely low area that the Jordan flowed into. Because it took some doing for the water to rise and go on to the south, many minerals still collected in this body of water in spite of the fact it did have an outlet at the time.

This outlet would have been the Jordan river, or a river by another name, that ran all the way from the south end of what verse 3 calls the Salt Sea to the east fork of the Red Sea, before the destruction of the two cities. The massive destruction of the cities may have made the area even more of an extremely deep crater that filled with water and made - what we call - the Dead Sea. This crater made the area so deep overall, the water from the Jordan from then on evaporated before it could fill to a height needed to allow a river to flow south out of it. All this could mean the location of Sodom and Gomorrah was actually twin cities sitting on either side of the mouth of the originally south flowing river out of the Salt Sea's south end, and what lay between them and Zoar was the Vale of Siddim, or that they were somewhere on up the west banks of the Salt Sea, all of which is under water today and has been for a very long time now!

This kind of configuration would also explain quite a bit about how Lot ended up living in Sodom after being said to have moved into the lush valley of the Jordan. As well as the later account of the battle where the kings of Sodom and Gomorrah attempted to flee. The cities of

Admah and Zeboiim were likely located in the valley further to the south of Zoar, and as all these kings fled the vale, the kings of Sodom and Gomorrah were the ones fleeing back north in a direction that made them drive through the slime pits where the other regional kings did not have to. The eastern kings had already come from the north, and may have been more apt to pursue after the kings going in a direction they were more familiar with and already in control of.

However this took place, the facts of verses 1 through 3 are that five regional kings came together to fight with the four invading eastern kings, and apparently did not have success. This led to them coming to some kind of truce, which placed all five kings' territory and people under the rulership of the four invading kings, whose chief administrator seems to have been Chedorlaomer. This lasted for twelve years, and then the kings of the Dead Sea area decided to rebel; which in the days before modern war equipment was a typical thing that happened, because people knew the ruling power would have to want them under their thumb enough to make the long trek back to do something about it. (This is why the later Romans built roads as fast as they could.) Because of the time lag involved in such an effort, the rebellion seems to have been without consequence for about a year. However, this also seemed to spur the five eastern kings to not just return in order to resubdue the original group, but mount a campaign far more ambitious than the first. Holding on to the Dead Sea area for twelve years without conflict with Pharaoh, likely gave

them confidence that a wider net could be thrown over the region, and they would strive to complete that circle we talked about above, to hold an area that would begin to look like the later Assyrian and Babylonian empires.

They would again go down the east side of the Jordan and Dead Sea, creating a path to the valuable copper mines of the area to the south of the Dead Sea, which would later be known as “The Kings Highway.” They would first subdue the Rephaims, a group residing in a place just a bit north but very close to being straight east, if one travels that direction from the Sea of Chinnereth, better known to Bible students as the Sea of Galilee. Next, they would strike the people living just south of there in a place no doubt named Ham after the son of Noah, whose descendants had migrated this direction after the Tower of Babel and went on into Egypt. Moving on south, to more of the area east of the northern end of the Dead Sea, the kings would roll over the Emims. Apparently meeting little resistance, they moved quickly to the area southeast of the Dead Sea and took the land of the Horites, which ran from Mt. Seir, later known to be held by Esau's descendants, all the way to El-paran, which is basically the seaport on the Red Sea later known as Eziongeber, where Solomon built ships to bring goods up from Africa and elsewhere. (I Kin. 9:26-28)

Embolden by their success, they turned northwest and overtook the area belonging to both the Amalekites and Amorites at the extreme south end of

Canaan and the border lands of the wilderness in the Sinai Peninsula. This was the same wilderness Israel later wandered through for forty years because they were afraid of some of the very people these kings are said to have subdued! (Num. 13:21-14:39) This all but surrounded the five kings of the Dead Sea area, and they chose to go out and battle with the eastern kings in the valley to the south of the sea, once again. Needless to say, this battle did not go well; and as the kings of Sodom and Gomorrah attempted to flee, they were caught in the slime pits of the region and not able to defend their cities.

What the eastern kings had accomplished was amazing, and this battle with the five kings of the Dead Sea area showed they apparently met little resistance in their conquest of all this territory, for it had not depleted their army, resources, or resolve to envelop this entire land. By the later information about them ending up at Dan, one is inclined to conclude they now confidently march up the west side of the Dead Sea and Jordan river, taking with them all the people and possessions of Sodom and Gomorrah. This move was also no doubt one of surveying the land, all of which I'm sure they now believed to be theirs for the taking; but they had made one fatal mistake. In taking prisoners from Sodom and Gomorrah, they had taken captive Abram's nephew Lot. An escaping Amorite, related to families in cooperation with Abram in the hill country, came to Abram and told him the news of what had happened. Without fear of this army, who had just conquered some

of the strongest people of the region, Abram mounts an army consisting almost entirely of just men born in his household, numbering three hundred eighteen men, and pursued the invaders. This does speak volumes as to how large Abram's possessions had become, but surely his army was well out numbered by the kings from the east!

He would catch up with the victorious eastern kings at Dan, which is a fair distance north of the Sea of Chinnereth. This is the Dan referred to in the often used reference of, "From Dan to Beersheba." describing the north south borders of the later nation of Israel. Abram, with only the physical element of surprise on his side (for these kings surely had such confidence that no one in the land could stand against them), would divide his force in two. Closing in from two sides during the night, Abram and his men would begin a slaughter of the eastern kings, who would flee toward their homeland. They would not quite make it back to their territory, at least in one piece, as Abram would pursue and destroy them all the way to a place very near the later Syrian capital of Damascus. There he would reclaim all the spoils these kings had taken from the land, including the captive people, Lot being among them.

This was nothing short of a miracle from God, and it set the kings of the east back so badly there is little activity of incursions into this area by them again until the rise of the Assyrians centuries later! Upon Abram's return, the king of Sodom came up to meet him at the valley

just to the east of Salem near the north end of the Dead Sea. It was also here that Melchizedek, the priest of The One True God and considered the king of Salem, came out to Abram as well, bringing food to celebrate and commemorate Abram's miraculous victory. There Melchizedek would pray God's blessing upon Abram, and give credit for the victory to The One True God Who created everything, and certainly deserved the credit! Melchizedek, being of no specified family line and yet a priest of God, was affirmed to be truly a very special servant of God as he was recognized by Abram. Abram, being given the covenant from God that his family line would be God's chosen nation and one day own all the land Abram had just defended, took of everything he had gained in the campaign to recover Lot and gave a tenth of it to Melchizedek.

This would show the standard those with true faith came to understand about giving a tenth of one's increase to God, which would later become part of the Law God gave to Israel; and Melchizedek would be referred to in the New Testament as a typology of Christ! Melchizedek had been ordained as the priest of God, not because of any covenant or promise of God we are told about being made with Noah, Abram, or others. He is priest simply because he was a man chosen by God for the position. This truth should be coupled with the fact Abram was also selected as the father of God's chosen nation, not being part of an earlier covenant or promise of God. (Ps. 110, Rom. 4:8-13, Heb. 5:1-10, 7:1-28) The point is that God is not restrained by the Law of Moses in who He

chooses for His service or for salvation. In truth, the Law God gave to Israel was derived by the actions of those who served God before any formal or written Law was ever established! This shows us that to serve God is not about the following of ordinances, but the seeking of God and His righteousness, which the Law was intended to demonstrate, not get in the way of. (Matt. 6:33) Abel, Noah, Job, Melchizedek, Abram, and all true servants of God were so because they desire to be so; and as with Abraham, we are told that our relationship (faith) with God is counted unto these in place of the righteousness we all lack. Meaning God chooses us, and that is what true salvation is about! To people such as this it really means something to hear God say, as He did to Abram, "...Fear not, Abram: I am thy shield, and thy exceeding great reward." Genesis 15:1

During this meeting, the king of Sodom tells Abram he can have all that Abram had recovered. The only thing the king requested was that the captive people be allowed to return to their cities. However, Abram knew it was his responsibility, and even something his father Terah had helped him achieve, to ensure all that he owned could only be credited as being granted him by The One True God! Abram was to remain a separate group in the land. God not wanting him to be absorbed into Egypt is why Abram was cast out from there. Abram wanting only God to receive the credit for this great victory is why he really only took men of his own house to go after these kings, in the first place. After all this, Abram was

certainly not going to allow the spoils of being a conquering hero given credit for his great wealth, and he was not going to give the chance to a king to make any claim of being responsible!

Abram would make the declaration right there, in front of all the witnesses at this meeting, that he would not take so much as a thread of cloth or a latch for a shoe out of what he had brought back, because he wanted to slam the door on the king's ability to, at anytime, brag he had something to do with why Abram was rich! This also has the other aspect to it, which is that Abram did not want the king to ever be able to accuse any of the king's later failures on the idea Abram went after the kings who looted the cities, maybe even adding the idea it was before the king himself could, and ended up bankrupting him by keeping everything. Abram wanted it to be clear he was even absorbing the cost of this endeavor for all intents and purposes. The only things diminished from what he was able to recover was food items eaten by the men on the way back, which were perishable items, in any case; and because what the king of Sodom was offering was nothing, if even, what custom dictated, Abram felt it only right the three Amorite brothers who had went along with him take what would be their fair percentage according to custom.

Until next time, Shalom!

to bring to the temple two turtledoves or two young pigeons to offer as sacrifices. Again, one bird will be offered for a sin offering to standardly cover the time she was inhibited from bringing such an offering, and the other is for a burnt offering to show her willingness, as part of God's chosen nation, to continue as one whose life is dedicated to the oracles of God.

This set of stipulations ends with the explanation that these laws are truly about Israel separating themselves from the temple and its ceremony while going through these types of events in their lives. This is another way in which the Law demonstrates, through physical example, how the things of this world and life are not what living for God are about. If natural bodily functions, some of which we can do little to nothing about, are illustrative of not being enough separated from this world to serve the purposes of God, how much more should we view our decisions to involve ourselves in actions outside the way God created us to live, as being against God?

Next, God moves to the fact, only once a year is even the High Priest able to enter the Holy of Holies, which is inside the tabernacle/temple, beyond the veil. This, because there upon the Ark of the Covenant's Mercy Seat is where God's direct presence was to reside. This warning is given after two of the sons of Aaron died because they did not follow proper procedure in generally

approaching The Lord. This was a most appropriate time to point this out, because not only had they seen what can happen when even a priest does not do things right, but this also would erase any arrogance or thought in anyone's mind about how, at the very least, the High Priest should be allowed full access to all parts of the tabernacle. Coming before the direct presence of God is a serious thing, and the Mercy Seat, on the top of the Ark of the Covenant, was called that because it was God's mercy which allowed Him to even reside in this close a proximity to any humans!

The tabernacle was set up for the first time; the priests anointed; and the death of Aaron's sons came, during the ceremonies on the first day of the first month of the second year of Israel's freedom from Egypt. This can be appropriately called Biblical New Year; and with these initial ceremonies, the priests and congregation were anointed and dedicated to and for the purpose of the service of God. The following laws about entering the Holy of Holies would be the yearly event basically accomplishing this same thing again and again. (Heb. 9:17-28) The first dedication gave them, and put in place, all the elements for observing the Passover for the second time; but for the first time in the ceremonial way, it was to be used for remembering the original Passover and continuing to prophesy of The Messiah fulfilling it in truth. However, this yearly rededication, called the Day of Atonement, would not take place in the

first month in preparation for the start of the seven yearly feasts given in the Law, but in the seventh month on the tenth day. This would make it the sixth feast out of the seven, and more of a preparation for the very last feast of the year. Placing it on the tenth day would put it in the exact position of the seventh month, as the day in the first month the lamb was to be brought into the house in preparation for the original Passover in Egypt. (Ex. 12:1-10)

Its purpose was one of great humility, as it was to ceremonially cleanse the tabernacle, and later temple, of the fact it resided in the midst of sinful men, in spite of the fact those people were God's chosen nation! On this day, only the High Priest was to enter the tabernacle until the ceremony of rededicating and cleansing was completed. The High Priest was to bring for himself a young bullock for a sin offering, and a ram for a burnt offering. He would also bring two young goats for a sin offering, and another ram for a burnt offering, that were provided by and for the congregation. The High Priest is to prepare for this ceremony by washing his flesh and putting on only the linen attire of a regular priest, not all the garments of the High Priest.

Then the High Priest was to kill the bullock sin offering that was for himself and collecting the blood. He then would go into the holy place, and taking a censer to collect coals off the altar of incense, he was to put incense on these coals to

produce a heavy smoke. Carrying this censer and the blood from the sin offering, he would go past the veil entering the Holy of Holies. The smoke represented the prayers of the people, and was a way to obscure the priest's view of the direct presence of God, which he would now be standing in front of without the veil's protection in-between. There, the priest was to use the blood to sprinkle seven times so it would fall on the Mercy Seat itself and down the front of the Ark.

The priest would then go back outside the tabernacle and present the congregation's two goats unto God. This is a unique offering, as both goats are truly one sacrifice. Because of this, the priest casts lots in order to make a random choice as to which goat would be killed as a sin offering, and which one would be used as the living part of the sin offering - called a scapegoat. Once this was determined, he would kill the goat chosen out of the two for this part of the sin offering of the congregation. With the goat's collected blood, he would re-enter the tabernacle and, once more, go beyond the veil, doing the same with this blood as he did with the bullock's. This would accomplish the ceremonial cleansing for himself, his family, and the congregation as a whole, in a deeper way than any regular sacrifices offered for the priests or congregation throughout the year where the blood was sprinkled before The Lord, but only outside the veil.

Upon leaving the Holy of Holies, by

coming back to the outside of the veil into the holy place, he was to accomplish the cleansing of the tabernacle itself. Because the altar of incense was where the prayers of the people were represented as coming before God, there would be a focus on cleansing it. To do this, the priest would take blood from his bullock and place it on the horns of this altar, which were at its four corners. He would do the same with the blood from the congregation's goat. He would then back up, and using his fingers, sprinkle this altar seven times with the blood of the bullock and the goat. (Ex. 30:1-10) This would complete the cleansing of the tabernacle, and the priest would go back outside to perform the second half of the congregation's sin offering.

For this, the priest would take the live goat, and putting both his hands on its head, the priest would begin to confess all the iniquities, transgressions, and sins of Israel as a people. This is similar to putting the hand on the head of a sacrifice that is to be killed, but instead of killing this goat, he is to be turned over to a man who is physically well able to take the goat far out into a part of the country which is truly natural and uninhabited by men. Depending on population growth, this could be a long journey; as this needs to be a place where the goat can be left free to live its life without the likelihood of it coming back or rejoining a domestic herd. Both the sin offering goats for the congregation as a whole are to represent what any one animal could never represent. Just as a sacrifice for sin uses

the death of an animal to symbolize the understanding that the wages of our sin is our death, because it's not really representative if the person themselves was killed, these two goats represent the work of The Messiah, which was/is impossible for any other human to do, representative or not. Thus, two animals were needed. One goat would die in representation that The Messiah would give His life. However, being a man without sin, His death is not to die for His sins but for ours! Because He is sinless, death would have no victory over The Messiah, and He would rise again. Death was only a means for The Messiah to carry our sins away, never to be seen again. This part is what the scapegoat represents!

After completing all these steps of the sin offerings, the High Priest would reenter the tabernacle, and removing the common priestly linen garments, there wash his flesh with water. This was not really related to him as an imperfect man being unclean, but the stipulations about the blood and sacrifices themselves making anything they touch holy. (Lev. 6:24-30) Also, the High Priest was not The Messiah, but the representation of The Messiah's position between man and God. The Messiah would humbly come and live as a man to take on our sins, but He would not be overcome by them. The Messiah would destroy sin, and in victory rise from the grave; His body not being left in the grave to turn to dust as ours will be, but transformed into a new body which could never be killed again. Sharing this power with those who desire Him is how

all true believers will be saved from the physical death none of us can escape! In representation of The Messiah's transformation, the priest would wash his flesh, put on the full garments of the High Priest, and emerge from the tabernacle completing the symbolism of The Messiah's true work!

The priest would then move to the next part of the ceremony, which is to, once again, affirm the giving and dedication of his life and the lives of the chosen nation unto the service of God. This would be done with the appropriate offering meant to represent such a thing, and that is a burnt offering. The High Priest would go to the altar of burnt offering, and in the normally prescribed way, first offer the ram which he had brought for a burnt offering for himself and his family as the servants of the temple itself. Then he would offer the ram that had been provided by and for the burnt offering for the congregation as a whole. Because the Day of Atonement prophesies of Judgment Day when Jesus will step in to save all those who are written in the Book of Life, in order to take them to the place He prepared for Him and them to be together forever (which the seventh feast prophesies about), the priest would then finish the process of the sin offerings. For this, he would burn the fat of the sin offerings whose blood had been taken beyond the veil, because the fat is the portion of a sin offering to be burned on the altar in representation of those parts of us which

are not flesh, returning to God!

To be clear on the fact the rest of the sin offerings' remains are to be dealt with in the usual manner a sin offering for a priest or the congregation is, the words specify they were to be taken outside the camp and burned. The person who handles this task is to wash his clothing and his flesh in water, and then he may return to the camp. For the person who goes out to let the scapegoat loose into the wild, he too is to wash his clothes and his flesh in water, and then he may return to the camp.

This Day of Atonement on the tenth day of the seventh month is also to be observed as a Sabbath day. No person of Israel or anyone who lives with them is to do any work on this day. The wording about afflicting one's soul also designates this day as a day of fasting. (Lev. 23:26-32, Ezra 8:21) It is to be a very solemn day, taking the time to reflect on how one has lived their life before God, and seeking His righteousness in their life to be what He created us to be! Also, this was not something to be done just as Israel was traveling through to the promised land, but throughout the generations of Israel without ceasing. It is not just for Aaron to carry out this ceremony, but the responsibility of every person of every future generation who would ever hold the office of High Priest!

Let's stay in God's Word!

