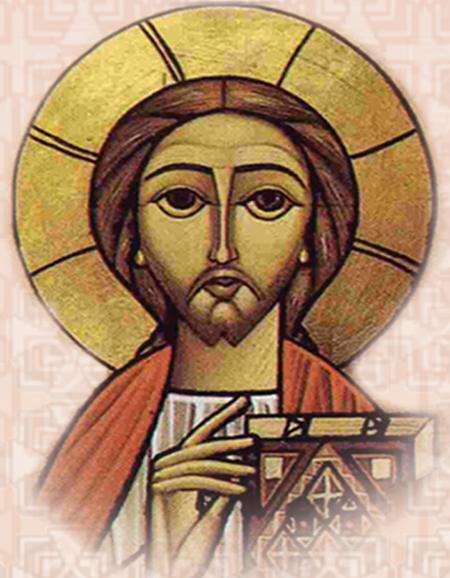


A Patristic Commentary



THE BOOK OF Leviticus

Fr. Tadros Y. Malaty

A COMMENTARY ON
THE BOOK OF LEVITICUS

By

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A PREFACE

BY THE AUTHOR

If man, in the book of Genesis has soon lost his relationship with God, and thereby has lost the secret of his life; There comes the book of Exodus to proclaim the salvation of man through his exit from the bondage of the devil – the true Pharaoh – to set forth toward the eternal Canaan, via the wilderness of this world. Then comes the book of Leviticus to proclaim the attachment of the Holy God to His people through the holy life, which we enjoy through the Lord Christ – the Sacrifice and the Priest at the same time. The book of Leviticus is therefore, the “**Book of Holiness**”, without which we cannot behold God, nor unite with Him. This holiness is a gift from God, granted to us through the unique sacrifice of the Lord Christ, introducing before it the blood of the animal sacrifices as a symbolic way to pave the way before it. This sacrifice was presented by the Lord, as well, being the Heavenly Priest, who also introduced the Levite priesthood, as a symbol, for the sake of understanding His priesthood.

Besides, this book has clearly shown the merging of the free gift of the holy life though the unique sacrifice, with the true spiritual strife, by our commitment to the law of sanctification.

May our Holy God grant us the understanding of the secrets of this book in our daily life, to be able to enter into the knowledge of His cross, and to receive the gift of holiness, striving spiritually for the sake of the enjoyment of the Holy God.

Hegomen Fr. Tadros Y. Malaty

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THE BOOK OF LEVITICUS

THE NAME OF THE BOOK:

The Jews called it in Hebrew 'And Wayyiqra', meaning in Arabic 'And called', using the first words in the book. Calling it the 'Book of Leviticus', was according to the Septuagint version 'Leueitikon'; probably on account of that it prominently revealed the role of the priests and the Levites in the rites of the sacrifices, the statutes of purification, the celebrations of feasts, and the for vows And that it proclaimed, as well, the dedication of Aaron and his sons as priests. Hence, in 'Mesnah', the Jews called it 'The law of the priests', 'The book of the priests', and 'The book of Offerings'.

If this book mostly shows the ministry and mediation of the priests and the Levites; Yet it is the book of the whole congregation; namely, the book of the church – priests and congregation. Hence, it often starts every statute by the words: "*Speak to the children of Israel*". It is a book that touches the life of the whole congregation, its salvation, and purification, to live holy in the Holy God. As to the priests and the Levites, they are just a divine tool to minister to this congregation, of which they are members. Yes, they are mediators and workers

in the name of God, but they work, not to their own account, but to the account of the congregation, other than that they are members in it.

THE AUTHOR OF THE BOOK:

Most probably, it is the prophet Moses who wrote this book. The expression: "*The Lord spoke to Moses, saying...*", came about thirty times; with a mention every now and then of the name of Aaron, with him (11: 1; 14: 33; 15: 1); Only once, God addressed Aaron alone (10: 8).

DATE AND PLACE OF WRITING THE BOOK:

The date and place of the introduction of those statutes, were precisely fixed as during the presence in Mount Sinai (7: 38; 25: 1; 26: 46; 27: 34), in the first month of the second year of the exodus of the people from the land of Egypt (Exodus 40: 16; Numbers 1: 1).

If the book of Exodus introduces the history of Israel until the setting of the tabernacle of meeting, the book of Leviticus came to consummate the work as a liturgical book that reveals the worship in that tabernacle through the priests and the Levites, melded with the holy life, as is befitting of a people who worship the Holy God.

And if the book of Exodus proclaims God 'The Wholly Holy', and 'The Awesome God', whom the people could not approach, even at the moments the statutes were delivered (Exodus 19: 21; 24: 2); the book of Leviticus came to proclaim the dwelling of God among His people (Leviticus 22: 32; 26: 12), to carry His feature of holiness in them. As, according to a scholar: [In the book of Leviticus, we do not find the Legislator, speak with the language of awe, nor write on stone tablets; but in it God appears as the Portion of Israel, who dwells among His people, to

instruct them how they should approach His presence, and dwell in a fellowship with Him].

And the way this book is distinguished from the book of Exodus; It is distinguished, as well, from the book of Deuteronomy, that concentrates on the law from the standpoint of its aim; The later presents a resume of the law for the general use of the public; whereas the book of Leviticus cares more for revealing the role of the priests.

FEATURES OF THE BOOK:

- 1- The goal of this book is to proclaim that the '**holiness**' is the distinctive line that distinguishes the people of God; For the worship a people present, and the behavior they practice, are committed to have the feature of 'holiness'. The goal of worship, in all its forms, and the goal of the divine commandment, is for all to enjoy the feature of holiness in the Lord. The key of the book, therefore, is shown in the verse: "*For I am the Lord your God. You shall therefore sanctify yourselves, and you shall be holy, for I am holy*" (11: 44); (See also 11: 45; 19: 2).

'**Holiness**' is presented to us, not as a group of commandments to keep, nor as practices to which we are committed to follow; But behind the commandment and the worship, there is the acceptance of the Holy God. Hence, in the whole book, the proclamation: "**standing before the Lord**" is repeated about 60 times. Here, we also perceive that the 'holiness' is not only refraining from uncleanness and sin, but, on its positive side, it is an encounter and a union with the Holy One.

- 2- While the epistle to the Hebrews is considered the best inspired interpretation of this book; revealing the true way to approach God through the 'grace'; The book of Leviticus, on the other hand, speaks about

approaching God through the 'law'. While the epistle to the Hebrews proclaims the sacrifice of the Lord Christ, which was offered one time, and remains working, granting life, and taking away the sins of the world; The sacrifices mentioned in the book of Leviticus, on the other hand, cannot take off the sin from the inner conscience and the heart; as they, themselves, turn into ashes, to be taken away from the altar. The epistle to the Hebrews gives to us a comparison between the Levite priesthood, and that of the Lord Christ, according to the order of Melchizedek (Hebrew 7).

- 3- The book of Leviticus is the gospel of sinners, expressed in the terms of the old covenant, strongly showing the ability of the blood of the sacrifice to present holiness, particularly on the great day of atonement (Leviticus 17).
- 4- While caring to sanctify His people for the sake of their eternal salvation, Yet God does not disregard their temporal needs. He cares for the safety of their possessions, their clothes; their houses (the statute of the purification of houses); their food and drinks (the allowed and the forbidden kinds of food); and for provoking the spirit of joy in them through the weekly, monthly, annual, and the Jubilee feasts and seasons. The book, therefore, does not separate between the eternal redemption, and God's care for man, even in what concern the least important of temporal things; without duplication, nor contradiction between two lives: the spiritual, and the temporal.
- 5- Through this book, we find the people represent one unit or one congregation; with one altar (1: 3; 8: 3; 17: 8, 9), and one mediator – the tribe of Levi; For God, in His dealing with humanity, intends for them to be one body for one Head, without individuality, nor an isolation of thought, or selfishness, even in their spiritual life.

THE SECTIONS OF THE BOOK:

This book bears two distinct and distinguished lines, yet integral at the same time; Namely, '**the sacrifice**', and '**the holy life**'. As there is no holy life out of the sacrifice, offered by the priest on the altar; Nor an acceptance of the sacrifice from the kind of people, who do not care much for having a holy life; and who persist upon their stubbornness against God. By that, the guide of the sacrifices melds with the statutes of purification. And lest someone may think of the holy life, as one of sadness, grumbling, or deprivation, the book ended with the feasts and VOWS.

1- The guide of the sacrifices	Chapters	1 - 7
2- The consecration of the priests		8 - 10
3- The guide of the statutes of purification		11 - 15
4- The great day of atonement		16
5- The altar, and the holiness of the blood		17
6- The statutes of consecration		18 - 22
7- The feasts and vows		23 - 27

THE FIRST SECTION

THE GUIDE OF THE SACRIFICES

THE SACRIFICES AND THE OFFERINGS:

1- The burnt offering	Chapter 1
2- The grain offering	2

- | | |
|--------------------------|----------------|
| 3- The peace offering | 3 |
| 4- The sin offering | 4; 5 (1 – 13) |
| 5- The trespass offering | 5: 16 to Ch. 6 |

THE SACRIFICES AND THE OFFERINGS

(Chapters 1 to 7)

The book of Leviticus is the book of life of the holy congregation by the Holy God; mainly set upon the sacrifice, offered by the priest; For no approaching God, nor an acceptance of worship, except through the reconciliation by the blood, offered by the priest in the name of the congregation. There is no entrance into the bosoms of the Holy Father, nor an eternal comfort, except by the blood of our Lord Jesus Christ, that cleanses us from all sins (1 John 1: 7); being the unique Sacrifice of the cross, and the Higher Priest, at the same time.

And as the sacrifice of the cross is unique in its kind and possibilities, and hence no one kind of sacrifices or offerings, could reveal it; the book of Leviticus presents to us five kinds of sacrifices and offerings, each of which proclaims a particular aspect or aspects of the cross. However, we can say that, because all those kinds, with their diverse lengthy and detailed rites, have failed to reveal all the secrets of the cross, the Old Testament presented to us many symbols, analogies, and events, along the generations, in an attempt to bring us forth into new depths of this exalted secret of the cross and the sacrifice.

The sacrifices and offerings mentioned here are:

- | | |
|--------------------------|--------------------------------|
| 1- The burnt offering: | Chapter 1. |
| 2- The grain offering | (Chapter 2) |
| 3- The peace offering | (Chapter 3) |
| 4- The sin offering | (Chapter 4, 5: 1 -13) |
| 5- The trespass offering | (Chapter 5: 14 – Chapter 6: 7) |

According to some scholars, Chapters 1 to 6: 7, represent a guide of the sacrifices, addressed to the worshipping congregation, together with the priests. As to the last part 6: 8; 7: 38), it represents a guide of the sacrifices and offerings, addressed to the priests..

ORDER AND BONDS BETWEEN SACRIFICCES:

The sacrifices and offerings came in an amazing order; starting by the burnt offering, and ending by the trespass offering – the order befitting in the sight of the Father, and not in that of man. For the believer, in his encounter with the cross, considers it first as a trespass offering, and a sin offering; seeing in it, the incarnate Word of God, carrying His passion and iniquities, to take away the wrath of the Father from himself (the believer). Through this view, he sees in the cross, a sacrifice of peace and thanksgiving, and presents his life in the crucified Jesus Christ, a life of thanksgiving, instead of his life of denial, that came into him through falling. He sees in the cross, as well, a grain offering, in which he enjoys the life of fellowship in the crucified Jesus Christ. And finally, he perceives the cross as a burnt offering, on account of that, in it he discovers the obedience of the only begotten Son to the Father, to death, even to that of the cross; to present, he (the man), as well, his life as a sacrifice of obedience, and a burnt offering to God in His Son. That is the order of the sacrifices and offerings, through our benefit as believers. Whereas the Father, on the other hand, smells in the cross the sweet fragrance of His beloved Son, as a burnt offering of perfect love; and finally, as a Carrier of our sins and iniquities, by which He pays the debt back, and bears the divine wrath. By this, we do not prefer one view to another, as both views are integral and utterly inseparable; but we try to show, that the cross more splendidly proclaims – in the sight of the Father – not taking our iniquities and sins away, as much as we, bearing of the nature of the crucified, to become ourselves a burnt offering of obedience and love; to become a persistent flame of fire, by bearing the obedience of the Son to the point of

death, even the death of the cross (Philippians 2: 8), and His limitless love. Hence the apostle says: *“Let this mind be in you which was also in Jesus Christ, who being in the form of God, did not consider it robbery to be equal with God, but made Himself of no reputation, taking the form of a servant, and coming in the likeness of men. And being found in appearance as a man, He humbled Himself and became obedient to the point of death, even the death of the cross”* (Philippians 2: 5-8).

In short we can say that God the Father smells the sweet fragrance of Christ in us through the cross in the following way:

- 1- A burnt offering of perfect love and obedience to Him in His Son (The burnt Offering)
- 2- A fellowship of life with Him in His only-begotten Son (The grain offering).
- 3- A life of inner peace and perpetual thanksgiving (The peace offering).
- 4- An enjoyment of the continuous cleansing of our general daily sins, and our unceasing weaknesses (The sin offering).
- 5- Salvation from every iniquity we commit, and returning to Him with repentance (The trespass offering).

THE BLOOD SACRIFICES AND THE GRAIN OFFERINGS:

As a general rule, sacrifices center around blood, representing the soul of the animal. It is as though, the soul of man, having been utterly corrupted, he was in need of an innocent soul to carry, on his behalf, the wages of his own iniquity, and to redeem him from death, after paying his debt. This work was nothing but a symbol of shedding the blood of the Lord Christ the Savior, who alone could redeem mankind, and pay its debt to the Father in full. The Jews believed in the idea of a soul redeeming another soul; Here we include some of the expressions of their interpreters:

- As the blood of every creature binds to its soul; blood is offered to redeem the soul of man; for a soul to replace another, and to atone for it (Rashy)
- A soul replaces another (Ben Ezra).
- A soul of an animal is offered on the altar to atone for that of man (Moses ben Nachman)..

Many Jews, however, expressed their feeling that the blood of animals could never fulfill the debt of man before God; Hence the hearts of men in the old covenant were always longingly looking forward to the coming of the Messiah as their true Savior.

For the blood sacrifices, three kinds of animals, and two kinds of birds, were used:

1- Bulls 2- Sheep 3- Goats 4-Turtle doves 5- Doves

Beside those blood sacrifices, there were grain offerings, like flour, cakes, and wine, as a drink offering, etc.; all of which were inseparable from the blood sacrifices; which is confirmed by that, those offerings differed in quantity according to the kind of sacrifice that goes with it (Numbers 15: 1-12; 28: 1-12; 29: 1 etc.).

THE SACRIFICES AND PRIESTHOOD:

The sacrificial work bonded with the priesthood. If man, after his fall, was in need of a sacrifice to redeem him, and to carry death on his behalf; there was also the need for a priest to intercede for that sacrifice before God on behalf of the sinner. The Lord Christ came to us, as the True Sacrifice, to present it by Himself, being the Highest Priest, who alone can intercede for the sinners by His blood before the Father; on whose right hand He sits, working to our account, and in our name. He also gave His church the right to offer His given body, not as a repetition, but

as an extension of the sacrifice in a secret way; He, as well, being the heavenly Highest Priest, granted His church the holy priesthood, being the One who works in His priests, hidden in them; those who work in His name, to His account, and with His possibilities, not with their own, however exalted they are.

In the old covenant, the people had their positive role in the sacrifice; According to some Rabbis, the people could offer the sacrifice, place their hands on it, confessing their sins or iniquities, or giving thanks to God. Besides, they were sometimes allowed to slaughter ,skin, cut, and wash its inside. Yet there were certain priestly tasks that they are not allowed to practice, like pouring and scattering the blood of the sacrifice on the altar, and kindling the fire on it.

THE GOAL OF THE DIVERSITY OF THE SACRIFICES:

According to St. John Chrysostom, despite the various kinds of sacrifices, none of them is offered with the intention of revenge against enemies; but they are all for the sake of the edification of man through the forgiveness of sins.

In the second century, when the Christians were persecuted for refusing to offer sacrifices to idols, the defense presented by the philosopher Athenagorus was: [It is befitting of us to offer a non-blood sacrifice – the ministry of our minds].

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CHAPTER 1

THE BURNT OFFERING

The guide of the sacrifices and offerings starts by the burnt offering with its three kinds: Whether it is of bulls, sheep, or birds, it reveals in its rites, the sacrifice of the divine Son in His complete obedience to His Heavenly Father, offering His whole life a burnt offering, a flaming love, a sweet aroma to the Lord; in the name, and to the account of the church.. Through this sacrifice, the heart of the believer is enflamed with his fire in Jesus Christ, longing through unity in the One crucified, to rise together with Him, up on the cross, as though on the altar of burnt offering, to receive the fire of the enflaming passion with pleasure, offering his whole life as a burnt offering to the Lord.

1- An introduction	1
2- A burnt offering of a bull	2 - 9
3- A burnt offering of a sheep	1- - 13
4- A burnt offering of a bird	14 - 17

(1) AN INTRODUCTION:

1- *“Now, the Lord called to Moses, and spoke to Him from the tabernacle of meeting, saying: ...”* (1)

At the beginning of his ministry, God called Moses to receive the shepherding work through the burning bush. And after the exodus He called him to receive the ten commandments on the Mount, where the congregation could not go, in the midst of lightening, thunder, and smoke ... by which God intended to confirm to us that we could not encounter Him, being a Consuming Fire, except through the commandments He offered to us. But in our weakness we were counted as breakers of those commandments, and we fell more deeply under the curse of the law. There was, therefore no reconciliation except through the sacrifice and the blood. That was the reason behind

calling Moses that time to the tabernacle of meeting, not in the midst of lightening, thunder, and terrifying darkness, but through the mercy seat, from between the two cherubim, which are on the ark of the testimony (Exodus 25: 22). It is as though, God in that time, presents to us the secret of the sacrifice of the cross, by which to encounter Him, as in the tabernacle of meeting, in quietness and tranquility, through the exalted divine love, where the Word of God comes down to us, carrying our nature, drawing us in Him, to enjoy the fellowship with the Father, with His Holy Spirit, in the worthiness of the precious blood.

2- The burnt offering was truly 'The sacrifice of dedication and ministry' (Sacrificium Latreuticum); which with time came to be an integral part of the morning and the evening service in the temple. Additional sacrifices were also offered during the feasts, as the Sabbaths, the new moon, etc.; after the service; representing the sacrifice offered by the people who enter into a covenant with God.

3- The burnt offering, for the Jews, had a special sanctity; it was the only sacrifice, not allowed for non-Israelis to offer.

(2) A BURNT OFFERING OF A BULL:

1- According to St. Augustine, [the expression "burnt offering" (or holocaust), is interpreted as being (utterly or wholly consumed by fire); as 'causis' means (burnt), and "holou' means (wholly).... There is more a 'burnt love', when the mind is enflamed with love, to set it forth to the other body members, to make man wholly burnt with the fire of divine love, presented as a burnt offering to God]. In other words, it means that man offers his whole inner life, as well as his apparent behavior, as a flaming sacrifice of love to God's account.

According to St. Augustine: [When the whole animal is placed on the altar, and is wholly consumed by fire, it is called 'a burnt offering'.....I wish we are wholly consumed by the divine fire]. And he also says: [As the sacrifice is called 'a burnt offering' when it is wholly consumed; ... Therefore, every burnt offering is truly a sacrifice; but not every sacrifice is a burnt offering].

Exhorting us to offer our life a burnt offering to the Lord, St. John Chrysostom says: [As man is more exalted than the herd, When you offer yourself a sacrifice, your sacrifice will be more exalted than theirs. ... There are other sacrifices, which are truly considered as burnt offerings: when the martyrs offer their souls and bodies as burnt offerings to the Lord; their sacrifices have sweet fragrance to God. You, as well, if you cannot offer your body a burnt offering by the material fire; yet you may offer it, burnt by another fire, as, for example, by the optional poverty ... Instead of spending the rest of your life in luxuries and pleasure; yet you may choose the bitter and tough life, of bringing your body to death; ... Would that not be a burnt offering?!... Bring the lusts of your body to death; crucify it, to receive the crown of martyrdom; which the martyrs get through the sword; but here, you get it by the mind, through the able will].

According to St. Gregory the Neziarzen: [Let us offer to God all our body members on earth (Colossians 3: 5); Let us dedicate them all; not a part of our body members, every now and then. Let us offer all our body members, to be counted as "*a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God, which is our reasonable service*" (Romans 12: 1); a whole sacrifice ... Let us offer it to God, to receive it wholly from Him].

2- For whose sake the offering is offered?

Having recognized the concept of the 'burnt offering', let us now talk about him for whose sake the burnt offering is offered. God says to

Moses: “*Speak to the children of Israel, and say to them: ‘When any one of you brings an offering to the Lord...’*” (2) Saying: “When any **man** of you...” (according to the Arabic language version); according to the scholar Origen, was not without significance. The book of Leviticus distinguishes between an offering for the sake of ‘a man’, and another for a ‘soul’ (4: 1), for the whole congregation (4: 13), for a ruler (4: 22), or for a priest ... etc. By putting the word ‘**man**’ at the top of the list (according to the Arabic language version), the divine inspiration proclaims that the burnt offering is offered by Christ, the ‘Man’, for the sake of mankind as a whole, .

If the burnt offering is the sacrifice of complete obedience offered by the divine Son to the Father; He offers it on behalf of all mankind, as though one man ... a sweet aroma to the Father.

3- The offering itself:

“If his offering is a burnt sacrifice of the herd (a bull), let him offer a male without blemish” (3)

Commenting on this sacrifice, the scholar Origen says: [What is “*the offering of a bull without blemish*”, other than the fattened calf, slaughtered by the father when his prodigal son returned, after losing all his livelihood?! He set a banquet in celebration (Luke 15: 23); As it is written: “*There is joy in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner who repents*” (Luke 15: 10). That son, who was lost, had no self righteousness to offer, for “*he wasted his possessions with prodigal living*” (Luke 15: 13), then that calf that, as though has come from heaven, yet came as a descendant of Abraham. Hence the law does not say “a burnt sacrifice of bull”, but says – according to the Septuagint version – “*a burnt sacrifice **of the herd***”; having come a descendant of the patriarchs (the herd).

Particularly designating that the burnt offering should be “a male”, according to the scholar Origen, does not mean, in the spiritual concept, that there is any preference of men over women; but refers to a spiritual preference of the mature and serious spiritual (manhood), to the soft and spoiled (womanhood). He often says that on the great day of the Lord, many women will be counted like strong men in the sight of the Lord, and many men, who lived their life in carnal pleasures, will be counted as women.

4- Who will offer it?

“He shall kill the bull before the Lord and the priests. Aaron’s sons shall bring the blood ...” (5)

In the old covenant, only the priests had the right to offer the sacrifices. Then the Lord Christ came in the new covenant, not according to the order of Aaron, but according to the order of Melchizedek, to present an exalted sacrifice of the cross ... In the epistle to the Hebrews, the apostle Paul clarified the difference between the Levite priesthood, and that of the Lord Christ, in two aspects in particular: The first is that the Levite priesthood, being characterized by weakness, the priests were in need to offer sacrifices for their own sake, before they offer sacrifices for that of the people; Whereas the Lord Christ, being Himself blameless, offers His sacrifice for the sake of the people. The second aspect is that the Levite priests offered blood sacrifices; Whereas the Lord Christ offered His own blood (Hebrew 9: 13). In this case, the Priest and the Sacrifice are One; hence His sacrifice is active, and a grantor of life. According to St. John Chrysostom: [A great difference indeed! He is the Ransom, the Priest, and the Sacrifice at the same time. Otherwise, there would be need to offer several sacrifices; and He would be crucified several times]. And according to St. Augustine: [You are the Priest; You are Sacrifice; and You are One who offers it].

Our Priest the Lord Christ is the One who offers the sacrifice. That is what the fathers of the church proclaimed. According to St. John Chrysostom: [We are not more than servants; But He, Himself is the One who gives the blessing; and who transform the offerings.]

This Highest Priest who works in His priests, offers us His one atoning sacrifice, without repetition; Although, offered in many places; yet it is just one body, and not several bodies; one sacrifice. It is our High Priest, who offered the sacrifice that purifies us; to make us, as well, able to offer what he offered, with no repetition ... It is not another sacrifice; but is perpetually the same sacrifice.

5- The rite of the offering:

a- *"... you shall bring it to the entrance of the tabernacle of meeting, for acceptance in your behalf before the Lord, as atonement for you" (4)*

Some interpret "*for acceptance*" to mean that the one who offers the sacrifice, offers it with his own free will; representing the sacrifice of the cross offered by the Lord Christ with His own free will as atonement on behalf of mankind. But it came more to proclaim the wish of the one who offers the sacrifice to enjoy the acceptance of the Lord; The sacrifice of the cross was offered for the pleasure of the Father, and for His acceptance of all believers uniting with the Crucified. Anyway to realize God's acceptance of man, he has to set forth with his offering to the entrance of the tabernacle of meeting; as according to the scholar Origen: [To set forth to the outside of the entrance, and not to the inside. Jesus was actually outside the entrance; "*He came to His own, and His own did not receive Him*" (John 1: 11). He did not enter into the (tent) of the Jewish nation, through which He came to the door to present His burnt offering, but suffered passion outside the camp (4: 12). When the Son of the Owner of the vineyard came, the wicked vine dressers took Him, brought Him out of the vineyard, and killed Him (Matthew

21: 38). That is, therefore, the offering that was “*at the entrance of the tabernacle of meeting, for acceptance in your behalf before the Lord*” (4). Is there anyone more acceptable before Him than Christ, “*who offered Himself without spot to God*” (Hebrew 9: 14)?!

The Lord Christ was slain on the cross outside the camp; for us to join Him; “*to go forth to Him outside the camp bearing His reproach*” (Hebrew 13: 13). As according to St. John Chrysostom: [If He was crucified outside as a debtor; we, therefore, should not be ashamed to be driven out].

b- “*Then he shall put his hand on the head of the burnt offering, and it will be accepted on his behalf to make atonement for him. He shall kill the bull before the Lord, and the priests, Aaron’s sons shall bring the blood, and sprinkle the blood all around on the altar that is by the door of the tabernacle of meeting*” (4, 5)

He puts his hand on the head of the burnt offering to become one with it; whether to confess God’s goodness toward him, when he offers a sacrifice of thanksgiving to God; or to confess of his sins and iniquities, as in the sin offering or the trespass offering; So that the sin would be transferred to the sacrifice, to atone for him, and to pay his debt back. We, as well, by putting our hands over the head of our Sacrifice – Jesus the Lord of glory -- we proclaim our unity with Him; as, according to the Holy Scripture: “*We are complete in Him*” (Colossians 2: 10); and, “*We are the members of His body, of His flesh and of His bones*” (Ephesians 5: 30); “*For he who is joined to the Lord is one spirit with Him*” (1 Corinthians 6: 17). We came to be one with Him; He offers His life a burnt offering of love in our name and to our account; and a sacrifice of atonement for our sins which He carried upon His

shoulders, according to the words of the prophet: “*Yet it pleased the Lord to bruise Him; He has put Him to grief, when you make His soul an offering for sin*” (Isaiah 53: 10).

Commenting on putting the hand on the head of the burnt offering, the scholar Origen says: [Being the head of the church, He has put in His body all the sins of mankind (Ephesians 1: 22, 23)]. And according to St. John Chrysostom: [How did he make Himself a Reconciler? By condescending to our status, carrying the punishment meant for us; and by submitting Himself to the chastisement which we deserve; Do you wish to know how He endured all that? Listen to the words of the apostle, saying: “*Christ has redeemed us from the curse of the law, having become a curse for us*” (Galatians 3: 13)]. On our behalf, He bowed down to carry the curse of the law that dwelt upon us because we broke the divine commandment; and to lift us up to His blessed statue

The Jewish rite of putting the hands on the head of the burnt offering, was only practiced by Israeli men; not by women, children, the blind, the deaf, nor the foreigners. He who offers the sacrifice, used to put his hand between the horns, with his face directed toward the west, where the Most Holy Place is, in order to feel the sanctity and awe of the work, which touches his relationship with the Lord Himself. It is not clear whether he used to put one or both hands together on the head of the burnt offering, but he had to press with his whole strength, as though he pushes all his sins on the sacrifice; while uttering the following confession (mostly in the sin- and trespass offerings): [I entreat You O God; For I have sinned, went astray, committing so and so... (here he names the sin he committed); but I hereby return with repentance. Let this be for my atonement].

He says: “*He shall kill the bull before the Lord*” (4); Although it is slaughtered outside the camp, yet it is done before the Lord; as a reference to the

sacrifice of the cross, that the Son presented in obedience to the Father; who, although was crucified outside the earthly Jerusalem, yet: *“Now appears in the presence of God for us”* (Hebrew 9: 24). He approaches, slain, while sitting on the right hand of God, interceding with His blood for our atonement; And as the apostle says: *“Since He ever lives to make intercessions for them”* (Hebrew 7: 25).

Through that unique atonement intercession, He opened before us a new way, through which we pass with and by Him; namely, the way of the cross, to enter into the bosom of His Father; As, according to St. John Chrysostom: [Having such a High Priest, let us follow His lead]. And according to St. Augustine: [Being our intercessor, He, not only gives us help in temptations, but is a role Model for us].

He says: *“The priests, Aaron’s sons shall bring the blood and sprinkle the blood all around on the altar that is by the door of the tabernacle of meeting”* (5)

The holy blood is the secret of the power of the sacrifice, by which we are cleansed of all sins (1 John 1: 7). And as said by St. Paul: *“For if the blood of bulls and goats, and the ashes of a heifer, sprinkling the unclean, sanctifies for the purifying of the flesh, how much more shall the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit, offered Himself without spot to God, purge your conscience from dead works to serve the living God?”* (Hebrew 9: 14); ...”
According to the law, almost everything are purged with blood, and without shedding of blood there is no remission” (Hebrew 9: 22); And according to the apostle St. Peter: *“Knowing that you were not redeemed with corruptible things, like silver or gold, from your aimless conduct received by tradition from your fathers, but with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot”* (1 Peter 1: 18, 19). And as it came in the book of revelation about the redeemed: *“they washed their robes and made them*

white in the blood of the lamb” (Revelation 7: 14); and “*they overcame the devil by that precious blood*” (Revelation 12: 11).

Through this precious blood we will have the conquest (Revelation 12: 11); For the cross is counted as conquest and glory; As according to St. John Chrysostom: [The Lord called it glory and honor, saying: “*The hour has come that the Son of Man should be glorified*” (John 12: 23).

As to scattering the blood all around; As we know, the circle, having neither beginning nor an end, refers to eternity. This blood, therefore acts in us eternally, set forth with us up to heaven itself, bring us into the bosom of the heavenly Father, to live beyond the limits of time, as though in the circle of eternity, to practice the heavenly life itself.

Let us quote some of the sayings of the fathers concerning the activity of the blood of the cross, and of the heavenly life:

- + Stretching His hands on the cross, He cast away “*the prince of the power of the air, the spirit who now works in the sons of disobedience*” (Ephesians 2: 2), preparing for us the way to heavens.
- + When His body was raised up high, the things in heaven appeared.

(Pope St. Athanasius)

- + It is a heavenly sacrifice, more than an earthly one.

(The scholar Origen)

- + Is the altar (of the new covenant) not heavenly, as well?! Nothing on it is carnal; but everything become spiritual. The sacrifice on it does not turn

into ashes and smoke; ... but turns into something splendid and exalted....
The church is heavenly; It is nothing but heaven!

- + If we are heavenly, and have come to have such a sacrifice; Let us fear; ... I wish we do not stay anymore on earth; as it is possible for him who so wishes to be. ... Counting whether you are on earth or not, is something that concerns your own condition according to your choice. ... As an example, it is said that God is in heaven, Why? It is not because He is limited to it!, Far from it!; Nor that He left the earth denied of His presence; But to proclaim His close relationship with His angels (the heavenly creatures). What does it mean that I am in heaven? if I see the Lord of heaven, and I, myself became heaven; For He says: *“My Father will love him, and We will come to him and make Our home with him”* (John 14: 23). Let our souls, therefore, become heaven!

(St. John Chrysostom)

c- Cutting the sacrifice into pieces, and **arranging** them on the altar:

“And he shall skin the burnt offering and cut it into pieces. The sons of Aaron, the priest shall put fire on the altar and lay the wood to order on the fire. Then the priests, Aaron’s sons shall lay the parts, the head, and the fat in order on the wood that is on the fire upon the altar. But he shall wash its entrails and its legs with water. And the priest shall burn all on the altar as a burnt sacrifice, an offering made by fire, a sweet aroma to the Lord” (6 – 9)

If the burnt offering reveals the complete obedience of the Son to the Father; hence, skinning, cutting, and washing it, even the entrails deep inside, proclaim that our Lord Jesus Christ has passed before the Father, who

found Him blameless, even deep inside; For about Him is said: "*He had done no violence, nor was any deceit in His mouth*" (Isaiah 53: 9); "*What evil has He done? I have found no reason for death in Him*" (Luke 23: 22); And He said about Himself: "*Which of you convicts me of sin?*" (John 8: 46). The Son presented His complete obedience, with no spot; by the fire of His divine love, toward the Father and mankind; a sweet aroma to the Father! ... Laying the wood in order on the altar, symbolizes the wood of the cross that carried the Fiery Word of God crucified according to the flesh. ... And laying the parts, the head, the fat, together with all the organs, in order on the wood, refer to that the cross of the Lord Christ, the Head of the church, carries the church as well, being His suffering body, to partake of His obedience and love toward the Father.

Presenting to us another interpretation, the scholar Origen believes that skinning the burnt offering; namely, taking the skin off the flesh, is a symbol of taking the letter away from the interpretation of the word of God, to reveal the inner spiritual interpretation deep inside. ...Cutting the parts and putting them in order on the altar, refer to setting forth from touching the hem of the garment of the Lord Christ (Matthew 9: 20), to enjoying washing His feet with our tears, and drying them with our hair (Luke 7: 44); Then to anointing His feet with oil; and finally to leaning on His chest, as the beloved St. John did; in order to comfort our minds, to become qualified to perceive His exalted divine secrets; and to be counted worthy of receiving His mother as our mother, as he enjoyed at the time of crucifixion. ...

In other words, according to the scholar Origen: [In the rite of the burnt offering, there is continuous growth of the spiritual life, and a consistent setting forth from drinking the milk of babes, (touching the hem of the garment), to enjoying the solid food of the mature (leaning on His chest).

Of his words concerning this: [I believe that the priest who skins the sacrifice, refers to him who takes away the letter from the interpretation of the word of God (2 Corinthians 3: 4). By exposing the inner organs, he will have the spiritual perception and the inner knowledge concerning the word. This is realized on the altar, in a high and sacred place, and not in a lowly place. For the divine secrets, mostly, are not exposed to those unqualified, who walk in the lowly and earthly things, and set forth from the earth to the earth; But is exposed to those who are counted as an altar to the Lord, to those who unceasingly kindle the divine fire, and unceasingly bring the covetousness of their bodies to death. On such persons, are put the bull of the burnt offering, and his members are cut to pieces. The conformity between the members will be like touching the hem of the garment of Christ, washing His feet with the tears, and drying them with the hair. Yet, what is far better is anointing His feet with oil; and what is still better is leaning on His chest (John 13: 25; 21: 20). ... What a progress! ... When everyone of us enjoys the spiritual perception according to his own stature, and to what suits him. Some enjoy the primitive things, and others progress more in the faith in Christ; And still others are counted as perfect in His knowledge and love.... That is cutting the bull into pieces].

I wish, through the burnt offering of love, we receive Christ Himself, to enjoy revealing the secrets of His word. In case we do not dare to lean on His chest, to bear all His secrets; let us anoint His feet with oil, to have a portion of some of His secrets. And in case we have no oil, let us wash them with our tears and dry them with our hair; Otherwise, let us at least touch the hem of His garment, to be healed of the flow of blood of literalism and the appearances.

d- Washing with water:

“But he shall wash its entrails and its legs with water“ (9)

If this sacrifice refers to the sacrifice of the Lord Christ, who presented His life a burnt offering to our account; it is, as well, our own sacrifice through our unity in Him. Hence, according to the scholar Origen, and to many fathers, washing the entrails with water, refers to the work of baptism; by which we have our inner nature cleansed through the blood of the sacrifice and the water, and renewed by crucifying the old man in us, and enjoying the new man.

In this sacrifice, blood melds with water, the cross with the water of baptism, to get the new man according the image of the Lord Christ. That is why blood and water flowed from the side of the Lord on the cross (John 19: 34). According to St. John Chrysostom: [That did not happen by chance, nor without a goal, but because by them, the church is set. By the water the one baptized is renewed, and by the blood and the body, he is nourished]. He also says: [The blood and the water both refer to the same thing; for baptism is Christ’s passion]. And he says: [When our head is plunged in the water of baptism, the old man in us is buried whole, as though in a low grave, Then the new man emerges instead. As it is easy for us to plunge with our heads, and come up again, It is easy for God to bury the old man in us, and replace him with the new one. By repeating it three times, we are taught that the power of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, is realized in all that.

e- Burning it completely:

“And the priest shall burn all on the altar as a burnt sacrifice, an offering made by fire, a sweet aroma to the Lord” (9)

The way water bonded with blood, as a sign of bonding baptism with the cross, water bonded, as well, with the fire, as a sign of the bondage of baptism with the holy Spirit – the Fire, who grants us the adoption to God the Father in the worthiness of the cross.

This fire that consumes the sacrifice is the fire of the Holy Spirit, by whom we offer the sacrifice of the Eucharist; namely, the sacrifice of the Lord Christ; not to consume the sacrifice, but to burn every evil in us, abiding us in the slain Christ. According to St. Ambrose, concerning this fire:[This fire was hidden during the days of captivity, when sin prevailed; then appeared again with the return of freedom]. It is as though, we did not enjoy that fire under captivity; but once we were set free from the captivity of sin by the cross, and enjoyed the spiritual freedom, the fire of the Holy Spirit kindled in us anew].

And according to St. John Chrysostom, concerning the activity of the Holy Spirit: [Let us lift our minds up toward heaven, Let us hold fast to this desire, clothed in the spiritual fire, and girdled with its flame; For whoever carry a flame would never fear anyone he may encounter, whether man, beast, or snares; Armed with the spiritual fire, no one could stand in his way, but all will retreat, on account of the unbearable heat of the fire that would scatter everything before it. We, therefore, should seek such a fire, giving glory to our Lord Jesus Christ, with His Father, and the Holy Spirit.

6- The activity of the burnt offering:

In the burnt offering, we see the Crucified, not as the Bearer of our sins, but as being the Son who obeyed the Father even to death; presenting His life given as a sweet aroma to the Lord (9).

7- The symbolic interpretation:

We end our talk about the burnt offering of bulls, by some quotations from the symbolic interpretation of it by the scholar Origen:

[You, as well, have a bull to offer. That wild bull is your body. If you intend to offer it to the Lord, keep it pure, and under submission; take it to the door of the tabernacle of meeting, there you can hear the readings from the Holy Books. ... Let your offering be a male; namely, let it be without any trace of being spoiled for lack of firmness... Put your hand on the burnt offering, and slay it before the Lord; Namely, set some measures of control on its chastity; Be like the one who said: "*I discipline my body and bring it into subjection, lest when I have preached to others, I myself should become disqualified*" (1 Corinthians 9: 27). Slay it before the Lord, and do not hesitate to bring your members to death (Colossians 3: 5)... Let there be in you, a priest and his sons; namely the spirit in you and its senses; for through them, there will be an understanding of the Lord, and a perception of the divine knowledge. ... Offer, therefore, your body to the Lord by submission, yet with spiritual understanding, according to the words of the apostle: "*a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God, which is your reasonable service*" (Romans 12: 1)... There are some who present their bodies as burnt offerings, yet as though without a priest; namely, with no fullness of knowledge ... Those will be ashamed, for they seek the human glory (in their submission), are defiled by the covetousness of greed, by committing the sin of envy or hatred, or are disturbed by the cruelty of anger. Those practice the submission of the body, Yet, offering it without a priest, namely, without understanding nor perception, they are counted like the foolish five virgins, who, although were truly submitting their bodies as virgins, yet they did not know how to put oil in their vessels; namely, the oil of love, peace, and the rest of the virtues. Hence they were denied entrance into the secret place of the groom (Matthew 25).... As for us, it is befitting , together with the submission of the body, to have a pure Spirit ; to be qualified to be like the slain Christ].

(3) A BURNT OFFERING OF A SHEEP:

In case man cannot afford to offer a whole bull, let him offer a sheep or a goat. Here, the rite of the burnt offering does not much differ from the rite already discussed, but almost the same, and with the same concepts.

(4) A BURNT OFFERING OF A BIRD:

Whoever cannot afford to offer a bull, a sheep, or a goat, let him offer two turtledoves, or young pigeons, which is within the capacity of the poor, who usually breed them in their houses.

God does not care for the material value of the offering, but He seeks the heart; Yet He wishes that we do not appear empty before Him. Let us then offer Him the little we have, even the two mites of the widow; For He seeks the fruit of the heart, and not the gift itself. As according to St. Paul, who carries the Spirit of His Lord: *“Not that I seek the gift, but I seek the fruit that abounds to your accounts”* (Philippians 4: 17).

Of the birds, God accepts only turtledoves and pigeons. For according to St. Clement of Alexandria: [The turtledoves refer to fear of sin; and the young pigeons to meekness, and to non-violence]. And according to the scholar Origen: [In certain kinds of turtledoves, the male pigeon binds itself to a single female, and approaches no other, even after its death; They, therefore, are a symbol of purity. The pigeons refer to the church – the good turtledove that bears the Holy Spirit of God, who appeared in the form of a pigeon at the epiphany of the Lord Christ. Referring also to the life of simplicity; that offering, therefore, is the offering of the church that, although may appear as poor in this world, and possess nothing more than turtledoves and pigeons, Yet she is rich with her purity and simplicity of heart through the work of the Holy Spirit in her.

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CHAPTER 2

THE GRAIN OFFERING

If the burnt offering presents the fragrance of the Crucified Christ in his perfect obedience to the Father, The grain offering, with all its kinds, reveals another side of the salvation work of Christ; namely, While the church presents the sacrifice of Christ to the father to seek acceptance, The Father, on His side, presents Him to the church as the secret of her life, and the subject of her satisfaction. The Father rejoices in the obedience of His only begotten Son; And the church rejoices in the slain incarnate Son of God, as the One who grants her the eternal life, and satisfies her life.

The food offerings were bound to the blood sacrifices, to confirm the need for the blood of the Redeemer for salvation.

A grain offering:

- | | |
|---|---------|
| 1- A grain offering of fine flour | 1 - 3 |
| 2- A grain offering baked in an oven | 4 |
| 3- A grain offering baked on a pan | 5 - 6 |
| 4- A grain offering baked in a covered pan | 7 - 10 |
| 5- A grain offering of the firstfruits green heads of grain | 14 – 16 |

1- A GRAIN OFFERING:

“When anyone offers a grain offering to the Lord, his offering shall be of fine flour. And he shall pour oil on it, and put frankincense in it” (1)

Commenting on the word “*anyone*”, that came as (soul) in the Greek language, the scholar Origen believes that the burnt offering is the sacrifice of the spiritual man, offered on the altar of the Lord, to be wholly consumed by the holy fire. Whereas the “*anyone*” or the (soul), written in the verse, refers to someone neither spiritual nor carnal, at the same time. While his heart is not absorbed by the spirituals, and his body is not inclined toward abominations; yet he is too preoccupied with the daily issues of life, to think of his eternity. That is the mental or natural man, about whom the apostle says: “*For the natural man does not receive the things of the Spirit of God for they are foolishness to him; nor can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned. But he who is spiritual judges all things*” (1 Corinthians 2: 14, 15). Such a man, when he offers grain offering or unleavened bread to the Lord; namely, offers his regular daily life, he needs the oil of the divine mercies to draw him away from the confusions of life.

The scholar Origen means to say that if you are unable to offer your whole life, dedicated to the Lord as a burnt offering, then offer your daily work holy to Him, as a grain offering or an unleavened bread, unceasingly crying out to God to pour into you the oil of His mercy, to keep the world from distracting you from your eternity.

Many fathers present another interpretation of the grain offering, seeing in it “the life of the Lord Christ” as a gift from the Father to us, in whom we would enjoy the fellowship with the Father, and His exalted peace; specially that the word (Corban) in Hebrew means (a grant, or (a gift). The Lord Christ is the Gift of the father to us, and His life in us is His free gift. The rite of the offering came to reveal this true concept, which could be shown in the following points, as shown in the verses 2 and 3::

“He shall bring it to Aaron’s sons, the priests, one of whom shall take from it his handful of fine flour and oil

with all the frankincense, and the priest shall burn it as a memorial on the altar, an offering made by fire, a sweet aroma to the Lord” (2)

“And the rest of the grain offering shall be Aaron’s and his sons’. It is a most holy offering of the offerings to the Lord made by fire” (3)

a- Man offers fine flour to the priests, Aaron’s sons, in the name of the Lord. The priest will take from it a handful, to offer together with oil and frankincense, then burn it, an offering made by fire, a great aroma to the Lord. (2), as an acknowledgment by the people of His goods (2). The rest of the grain offering shall be Aaron’s and his son’s. It is *“a most holy part of the offerings by fire to the Lord (3).*

If the fine flour refers to the Lord Christ *“The Bread of life”* (John 6: 35); The priest, taking from it a handful, to offer together with oil and frankincense, represents the church, that has nothing to offer to the Father on her side, except Him who has descended to us, and become One of us, namely, not a stranger from her. Finding in Him an offering to the Father, she bears Him to Him, to receive from Him His pleasure and gladness. *“The crucified Christ”* is the sacrifice and offering of the church, through whom she presents her worship of praises, supplications, prayers, metanoias, and fasting.... Without Him she cannot stretch her hands to worship. And while presenting such a unique offering, the church receives the Lord Christ Himself in her life as *“the Most Holy Place”*, takes communion of His body and blood, given as the secret of her life and spiritual satisfaction. Our Lord Jesus Christ, as a Mediator on our behalf by His blood, was sent by the Father to us to deliver His life in our name; And, at the same time, we receive Him in our life, a divine Gift that satisfies our depths.

b- If our Holy Christ has become bread to satisfy our souls; Pouring oil on Him (1) refers to His anointment with by Holy Spirit, eternally, as

“the Anointed” of the Lord who dedicated His work for our salvation, to carry out His role as the heavenly Highest Priest, who intercedes with His blood for us for the forgiveness of our sins.

The name “Christ” in the Arabic language is derived from the word (anointed), by a spiritual oil. The seen oil is a sign; Whereas the unseen oil is the inner secret.

+ The Lord was anointed for our sake, and was sent, to become Man, while remaining as God

(St. Augustine)

+ Christ was not anointed by oil but by the Spirit. The Holy Book presents to us some examples of those who were called “anointed”; but the main issue is the anointing with the Spirit, for the sake of which the oil was used as a symbol.

(St. John Chrysostom)

+ Aaron was called “ an anointed” because of the (anointment), a word which, when spiritually used, came to be appropriate to the name of the Lord, anointed by the Spirit through the Father; as according to the book of Acts: “*For truly against Your Holy Servant Jesus, whom You anointed ...*” (Acts 4: 27). And as for us, the body is anointed, but the benefit is spiritual, as it is the case in baptism itself, where the body is plunged in water, but the activity is spiritual, through the forgiveness of sins.

(The scholar Tertullian)

c- If our Holy Christ, presented to us as a heavenly Bread that satisfies the souls, was anointed by the Father for our salvation and satisfaction by His Holy Spirit, We, as well, through uniting with Him, we come to be like a grain offering to the Lord, to enjoy the worthiness of His blood by the holy anointment, the anointment of His Holy Spirit, who dwells in us, sanctifies us, and dedicates our heart and all our energies to the account of His heavenly kingdom, to be counted as the herd of Christ and His spiritual hosts, who bear His feature in us and on our foreheads; ... will not fear sin, nor the devil, whom God will destroy under our feet.

+ The sign with which you are marked now, indicates that you have become the herd of Christ.

(Father Theodor of Messisa)

+ The way soldiers are marked by a seal, so the believers are marked by the Holy Spirit.

(St. John Chrysostom)

Offering Himself on the cross a burnt offering of love and glory, the Lord Christ granted us the possibility of pouring that oil on us as a free gift presented to His church from the Father, having said to His disciples: *“When the Helper comes, whom I shall send to you from the Father, the Spirit of truth who proceeds from the Father, He will testify for Me”* (John 15: 26). This new oil granted by the Lord Christ to His bride from the Father, after His ascension, is her support in her sojourn on earth, by

whom sins are forgiven in the worthiness of the blood; and by whom the believers are strengthened in their spiritual strife against sin ... According to St. Ambrose: [For the church there is an oil by which she bandages the wounds of her children so as not to become worse. By this oil which the church receives in secret, 'Asher' cleansed his feet; as it is said: "*Asher is most blessed of sons, Let him be favored by his brothers, and let him dip his feet in oil*" (Deuteronomy 33: 24).. By it the church anoint the necks of her children to bear the yoke of Christ; by it she anoints the martyrs to purify them from the dirt of this world; and by this heavenly oil she anoints the catechumen, lest they collapse from the sufferings, fall under the anxiety, or harmed by the heat of this world. The Jewish Synagogue does not have such oil, for having no olive tree, and for not understanding why the dove that returned to the ark of Noah, carried an olive leaf (Genesis 8: 11);for that dove came down, afterward, and settled upon the Lord Christ when He was baptized, as testified by St. John in his gospel, saying: "*I saw the Spirit descending from heaven like a dove, and He remained upon Him*" (John 1: 32)...How could he see the dove, he who cannot see Him on whom the dove descended?!].

By this oil given to the church, the heart of the believer is softened to bear compassion and love instead of cruelty; and by such compassion his gifts and offering are well received. According to St. John Chrysostom, about him who does not walk by the Holy Spirit: [As a rock produces no oil, so cruelty produces no compassion. If giving has such hard roots, it would not be counted as giving]. And talking about the activity of this oil, without which our lamps would lose their value and splendor, he says: {Let us fill these lamps with oil to increase the splendor of its flames. For this oil bears great power, not only here, but by it the sacrifices, as well, will be more acceptable; as it is said: "*I desire mercy, and not sacrifice*" (Matthew 12: 7; Hosea 6: 6)}.

If the Holy Spirit is the spiritual oil by Whom the hardness of our hearts is softened, be filled with love, and our inner lamps would be lighted with the divine light, to make our offerings and sacrifices acceptable before God; The sinners, as well, have their own oil which they pour to deceive the simple, which bears the deceptive and flirting spirit of the devil; about which the psalmist says: "The oil of the wicked shall not anoint my head" (Psalm 141); and on which St. Augustine comments, saying: {My head will not grow by flirtation; for commendation out of place is counted as flirtation; it is the oil of the wicked ... Have oil in you, and do not seek the oil of the wicked}. In other words, let our lamps be filled with the oil of the Holy Spirit, whom we have got by the anointment of the Meron; and let us not desire the deceptive oil of evil!

d- In the offering, the priest offers (all) the frankincense (2). If he, together with his brethren the priests, receive the rest of flour and oil, yet he is committed to offer (all) the frankincense. For if the flour and the oil refer to our enjoyment of the body of the Lord, the Bread of life, and the anointment of the Holy Spirit; the frankincense refers to the prayer (Psalm 141: 2) and the worship, of which we should not keep for ourselves; for all worship should be presented to God alone through the altar.

e- Saying "*A most holy part of the offerings by fire to the Lord*" (3), means that its holiness is complete, not to be eaten except by the priest, not even by their wives, to be eaten in the tabernacle of meeting, while sanctified, not to be touched by anyone or anything not sanctified.

If the offering refers to the body of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Bread of life, It should not be eaten except by those who got the "general priesthood" through baptism; and only eaten by "males"; namely, by the serious and

unspoiled, while sanctified by the Lord, through repentance and confession, in the holy tabernacle; namely, through the holy church of God. (I already spoke about the difference between the general priesthood, shared by all believers; and that concerning “the sacrament of priesthood” to practice the holy sacraments of the church).

Calling the portions “holy part”, (and not “a most holy part” of the offering), it would be for the priests together with their families, and could be eaten outside the tabernacle of meeting; like the firstfruits of oil, wine, and their portions of the sacrifices of the feast of Passover, the peace offering, etc. (Leviticus 23: 20; Numbers 6: 20)

2- A GRAIN OFFERING BAKED IN AN OVEN:

“And if you bring as an offering a grain offering baked in the oven, it shall be unleavened cakes of fine flour mixed with oil, or unleavened wafers anointed with oil” 4)

The second kind of offerings is the unleavened cakes, whether baked in an oven, in the form of cakes of the fine flour mixed with oil, or unleavened wafers anointed with oil; on one condition that no leaven is used.

In the last offering, the oil is poured on the flour, as a reference to the holy anointment concerning the Lord Christ, who is eternally anointed by His Holy Spirit. Concerning us, In Him we also came to have the right of being anointed with the ‘Meron’, as members in His holy body, bearing His Spirit in us.

In the present offering, the oil is kneaded with the cakes, or anoint the wafers. Kneading with oil refers to the work of the Holy Spirit in the divine incarnation; having been said to the virgin St. Mary: *“The Holy Spirit will*

come upon you, and the power of the Highest will overshadow you” (Luke 1: 35). And anointing with oil refer to that He is anointed for our salvation ... As to entering into the oven, it refers to his enduring the fire of passion for our sake.

3- A GRAIN OFFERING BAKED ON A PAN:

“But if your offering is a grain offering baked in a pan, it shall be of fine flour, unleavened, mixed with oil” (5)

“You shall break it in pieces and pour oil on it, it is a grain offering” (6)

The third kind of offerings is also a cake, baked, not in an oven, but on a pan of iron or bronze. The offering was broken in pieces, and oil is poured on it..

4- A GRAIN OFFERING BAKED IN A COVERED PAN:

“And if your offering is a grain offering baked in a covered pan, it shall be made of fine flour with oil” (7)

This kind of offering baked in a covered pan, namely, in an earthen vessel, probably refers to the Lord Christ incarnated in the womb of the Virgin St. Mary, being the earthen vessel that was sanctified, so that in her, the incarnation of the Word of God is realized (the fine flour) by the Holy Spirit (the oil).

“No grain offering which you bring to the Lord shall be made with leaven, for you shall burn no leaven nor any honey in any offering to the Lord made by fire” (11)

“And every offering of your grain offering you shall season with salt; you shall not allow the salt of the covenant of your God to be lacking from your grain offering. With all your offerings you shall offer salt” (13)

A condition in all those kinds of offerings, as long as they are burnt on the altar, was to use neither leaven nor honey, but to use salt, for the following reasons:

a- The leaven in the dough often refers to evil which affect the others, And as the Lord Christ is blameless, but carried our evils and sins;

That is why, in the sacrament of the Eucharist, the leavened bread that entered the fire, is used as a reference to that He carried our sins through the fire of His cross.

b- The “*honey*” is a symbol of the temporal pleasures. We shall not enjoy the fellowship with God in His slain Son, as long as we live in

the pleasures of this world with the spirit of looseness. Commenting on banning the offering of honey, St. Jerome says: [God has no pleasure in the sweet and delicious things, but seeks of man to be serious , working with reason; as it is befitting to eat the Passover “*with bitter herbs*” (Exodus 12: 8)].

c- Salt is used to keep food against corruption. Rejecting the leaven and the honey, and seeking the salt, God intends for our

offerings not to get corrupted on account of including leaven or honey; but to be kept against corruption by including salt. This refers to keeping our covenant with God uncorrupted. That is probably why people of the East used, when making a covenant, to eat bread and salt, as a reference to holding fast the covenant of love. And the believers are also likened to salt.

Speaking of scattering salt over every the offerings, St. Jerome says: [According to the counsel of the apostle, "*Let your speech always be with grace, seasoned with salt*" (Colossians 4: 6); And the Lord Himself says: "*If the salt loses its flavor; It is then good for nothing but to be thrown out*" (Matthew 5: 13)].

5- A GRAIN OFFERING OF THE FIRSTFRUITS GREEN HEADS OF GRAIN:

"If you offer a grain offering of your firstfruit to the Lord, you shall offer for the grain offering of your firstfruits green heads of grain roasted on the fire grain beaten from full heads. And you shall put oil on it, and lay frankincense on it. It is a grain offering" (14, 15)

The scholar Origen binds this offering to the day of the Pentecost; as, according to the law, the firstfruits were usually offered on that day (Exodus 23: 16; Deuteronomy 16: 9); saying: [On that day the Jews got the shadow (Hebrew 10: 1), while the truth was kept for us. For on the day of the Pentecost, after offering prayers, the Holy Dwelt upon the church of the apostles (Acts 2: 4). They were truly new offerings, as everything was new ... The apostle were enflamed with fire; with divided tongues of fire on each one of them (Acts 2: 3); divided in the middle to separate between the letter and the Spirit.... Here it is said "*roasted on fire*", namely very pure, for the presence of the Holy Spirit purifies from the defilements, by the forgiveness of sins. On that sacrifice, the oil of forgiveness is poured, and put on the fragrant frankincense, to become by it "*the fragrance of Christ*" (2 Corinthians 2: 15)].

At the end of our talk about the grain offering as a whole, we wish to confirm that a part of it was always offered on the altar to be burnt, mixed with the blood of

the sacrifices unceasingly offered; hence the offering would not be denied of the activity of the holy blood for the forgiveness of sins.

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man who enjoys the perfect peace of God in his inner life and inner relationship, being an abundance of peace and thanksgiving, through the Lord Christ Himself, the Grantor of peace.

The source of peace is the Lord Christ, by whose blood, He reconciled us with the Father, and brought back to us peace with the Father, with ourselves, and with our brethren, which we have lost because of sin. According to St. Augustine, the Lord Christ, is not only the source of peace, but He, Himself is our true peace. He says: [Peace is Christ, "*For He Himself is our peace, who has made both one, and has broken down the middle wall of division between us*" (Ephesians 2: 14). Christ, the Son of God is Peace, who came to gather together those who are His, and to separate between them and evil.

- b- As the peace offering is the most expressive of the inner joy and the life of thanksgiving, it was called 'the perfect sacrifice', optionally offered by the whole congregation or by any of its members, in certain joyful occasions, as a sacrifice of thanksgiving to God for His care and love. The Jewish families used to chose a day or several days in the year to offer it in its name (1 Samuel 20: 6). And this sacrifice is offered, as well, as a commitment , like the sacrifice that was offered in the consecration of priests (Exodus 29: 19-28; Leviticus 8: 22-32); and the sacrifice of peace offered on the day of the Pentecost (23: 19, 20).
- c- The sacrifice of the Eucharist is the sacrifice of peace and thanksgiving offered by the church of the new covenant, as the word 'Eucharist' in the Greek language means (thanksgiving). In the divine liturgy, when we enjoy the given body and blood of the Lord, we enjoy abiding in Him, to get the nature of inner thanksgiving; so that our thanksgiving would not be mere expressions through the praises and prayers, but an inner nature that touches our whole inner depths.

Our fathers the bishops, on entering any city, before going into any other place, are used to raise up the prayer of thanksgiving, as a sacrifice of peace for the sake of God's care for them on the way.

2- A PEACE OFFERING OF A BULL:

Looking carefully at the peace offering, we shall realize magnificent aspects of the sacrifice of Christ, beside those revealed by the burnt offering. Now, beside those mutual aspects which I have already interpreted in the first chapter, I shall here add the following other aspects:

- a- While in the burnt offering, the sacrifice has to be a blameless male; In the peace offering, a male or a female sacrifice could be offered; with one condition, to be blameless (1, 6). The reason for this, is that the burnt offering is completely offered as a burnt offering to the Lord on the altar, as a reference to the Lord Christ offering His life in its whole perfection as obedience to the Father; Whereas in the peace offering, even though it also refers to the sacrifice of the Lord Christ, the Grantor of reconciliation and peace, yet it represents, as well, a fellowship between God and men through the reconciliation and peace. Receiving a female sacrifice may probably refer to the entrance of the church as a bride to enjoy unity with Him, and His exalted peace. It is the sacrifice of the whole church that, rejoicing in the cross, she would offer her life as a sacrifice of thanksgiving to God.

- b- No one is allowed to eat any part of the burnt offering, but is completely burnt after being skinned, cut, and washed with water, and then placed on the altar, as a reference to that it is offered whole to the Father, who, alone, perceives the blameless inside of His Son. But here, man shares with the altar the enjoyment of the sacrifice, without hearing anything

about skinning, cutting, nor washing. It is the sacrifice of the true fellowship, a sweet aroma to God; and at the same time it is offered as a delicious feast to man, to say: "*You prepare a table before me, in the presence of my enemies*" (Psalm 23: 5); and as said by the prophet Isaiah: "*And in this mountain, the Lord of hosts will make for all people a feast of choice pieces*" (Isaiah 25: 6); And as said by the Lord Christ: "*See, I have prepared My dinner, My oxen and fatted cattle are killed, and all things are ready*" (Matthew 22: 1-4).

- c- Putting the hand on the head of the sacrifice is most probably for thanksgiving and joy; Man utters no words by which to confess his sins, but proclaims his thanksgiving for the goodness of God toward him. According to St. Augustine: [Confession has two integrated sides: Confession of our sins, and confession of God's goodness on us; God is glorified in us through our weakness, as well as in proclaiming His works with us. If concerning the disobedient, it was said: "*We played the flute for you, and you did not dance. We mourned to you, and you did not weep*" (Luke 7: 32); It is befitting of us through the cross, when we hear the flute of the gospel, to dance spiritually, rejoicing in the salvation works of God; and when we hear the mourning, to weep on our sins. By that, joy is mixed with hope, together with the grief of repentance, with no contradiction.

3- A PEACE OFFERING OF A LAMB:

It does not differ much from the peace offering of a bull in all its rites; except for adding the whole fat tail which is removed close to the last vertebra of the backbone, to be offered on the altar.

4- A PEACE OFFERING OF A GOAT:

It is almost the same in its rites to that of a bull.

Finally he ends his talk concerning the peace offering by confirming: “*This shall be a perpetual statute throughout your generations in all your dwellings, you shall eat neither fat nor blood*” (17). He does not mean here the fat that goes in between the flesh, but that which covers the entrails, and on the kidneys (4).

Banning eating the fat and the blood, could be explained as follows:

- a- As to the fat, health-wise, it is rich in cholesterol that may cause several illnesses, like high blood pressure, and obstruction of blood vessels.
- b- As to the blood, medical scholars confirm that certain illnesses and microbes may be got by drinking tinted blood.
- c- The Jewish law banned drinking blood on account of that it represents the soul; hence it is presented to God alone in the sacrifice for the sake of reconciliation; when the soul is presented instead of a soul. That is beside that, because drinking blood entails violence, there was fear that man would get used to the hardness of heart even toward his own brother. As according to St. John Chrysostom: [The reason of banning the drinking of blood is that it is dedicated to be offered to God alone in the sacrifice for the sake of reconciliation; and probable also because that would make them gradually fall into the sin of shedding human blood. How often did we hear someone threatens his adversary, saying: I shall kill you and drink your blood!

When the first Ecumenical Council convened in Jerusalem by the apostles and the disciples, It issued a decree demanding from the Gentile catechumen to refrain from eating strangled animals, and from blood (Acts 19: 20 – 29); And so came the apostolic laws to confirm that both the clerik or the laic should abstain from eating an animal with its blood

(Genesis 9: 4); which was strictly followed several centuries all over the world; then started to relax gradually with time, until it was forgotten, at least in the Western world.

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CHAPTER 4

THE SIN OFFERING

In the previous sacrifices and the offerings we saw a certain side of the cross; namely, that it is an object of *“pleasure to the Father”*; But in the sin and trespass offerings, we see the other dark side; where we do not hear that sweet tune, but we see in the cross, the incarnate Word carry our sins upon His shoulders to pay the price on our behalf; or in other words, we see Him carry the curse of the law, under which we, ourselves, have fallen; to accept, while being the beloved Son, to take our place, we who have come to be under the divine wrath, to lift us up and to support us. That is the dark tune of the sin and the trespass offerings.

The sin offering, came to be divided, not according to the kind of the offering, as it was in the previous sacrifices and offerings, but according to the position and social status of the sinner who offers it.

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1- AN INTRODUCTION TO THE SIN OFFERING:

a- To reveal the goal of this offering he says: *“If a person sins unintentionally against any of the commandments of the Lord in anything which ought not to be done, and does any of them”* (2). It is a sacrifice to be offered by those who fall out of weakness, or unintentionally, against any of the commandments of the Lord, but not intentionally, or out of stubbornness.

Commenting on the term “person”, the scholar Origen says that he calls the sinner here, ‘a person’, and not ‘a spirit’ or ‘man’. For by sin, man does not walk by the Spirit, to be called ‘a Spirit’, and he loses his image of God, according to which he was created, to be called ‘man’; But he is called ‘a person’, for walking like a natural being, as we have already seen in our interpretation of the second chapter.

Some may wonder what is the difference between ‘the sin offering’ and the ‘trespass offering’:

- According to some scholars, the sin offering represents an atonement for the one who offers it, rather than a sacrifice for a particular sin; even if it is offered for this purpose. The trespass offering, on the other hand, represents an atonement for a particular sin committed by the one who offers it. That is why we find the sin offering, and not the trespass offering, presented during feasts on behalf of the whole congregation, as a general and a collective atonement for the whole congregation.
- According to some scholars, the sin offering is presented by someone who commits a sin that does not warrant paying a material restitution for damage done to someone else. Whereas the trespass offering, on the other hand, is presented by someone who

commits a sin that warrants paying a material restitution for damage done; whether against the temple, or man.

- a- This offering is not optionally presented by the sinner or sinners, but by commitment for the sake of their sanctification. At the same time, it does not give pleasure to the Lord, but reveals the bitterness tasted by the Savior, who *“bore our sins in His own body on the tree on our behalf”* (1 Peter 2: 24); It is a symbol referring to the divine Lamb, who knew no sin, yet came to be a sin for our sake; who, therefore, cried out: *“My soul is extremely sorrowful , even to death”* (Matthew 26: 38; Mark 14: 34).

- b- Although all of us, humans, are fallen under weakness, but the sin offering reveals the seriousness of sin in the life of those in responsible positions, and the spiritual leaders, according to their specific roles: The priest who sins will cause an offense to his congregation; and the boss to his subordinates; Whereas for the commoner, his offense is of a lesser magnitude. The anointed priest (the high priest), therefore, has to offer a young bull without blemish; the laical ruler, offers a kid of the goats without blemish; whereas any of the common people, offers a female of the goats or lambs without blemish. ... Although all are in need of the blood of our Lord Jesus Christ to atone for his sins, yet the offense is different according to the status of the sinner.

2- THE SIN OFFERING FOR THE ANOINTED PRIEST:

He starts talking about the sin offering with that which is presented for the anointed priest; namely, the high priest, not as an honor to him more than to others, but to let the priest perceive his own weakness, and to make him feel that he, being more than the others, in need of the atonement for his sins, he should be compassionate on his weak brethren; To let him feel that he is not invulnerable, nor that he belongs to a rank, different from the other people, but that

he is the servant of all, and the one most of need. These issues were proclaimed by the apostle Paul, saying: *“This is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptance, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners, of whom I am chief”* (1 Timothy 1: 15); and says: *“For the law appoints as high priests men who have weakness”* (Hebrew 7: 28); so that, because of their weakness, they, more than the other people, would be able to present sacrifices. Do you see the extent of the ordinance of the divine wisdom, to set as priests, not those who do not sin, or else they would not be humans; ... That is why the high priest *“offers sacrifices, first for his own sins, and then for the people’s”* (Hebrew 7: 27)].

St. John Chrysostom told us much about his feeling of weakness, as a bishop, feeling the weakness of his people, and moaning together with them. And proclaiming, as well, the need of the priest to reconsider himself, on account of that the war against him is more intense. Of his words: [As far as the priest is concerned, his spirit has to be more pure than the sun itself ... being more prone to temptations that could defile him, if he is not self-denier, and continuously striving]. And according to the scholar Origen: [*“The law appoints as high priests men who have weakness”* (Hebrew 7: 28). See the divine wisdom! Hence, the high priest offers sacrifices, first for his own sins , then for the people’s” (Hebrew 7: 27)].

For the sin, unintentionally committed by the priest, he presents a young bull without blemish; takes of its blood to the sanctuary; dips his finger in the blood, and sprinkles some of it before the Lord, on the veil of the sanctuary, on the altar of incense; and pour the remaining blood of the bull at the base of the altar of the burnt offering. And after burning the fat on the altar of the burnt offering, he removes the bull’s hide, its flesh, head and legs, its entrails and offal, carry them all to be be burned in a clean place outside the camp (12). No one is to eat of its flesh.

In this rite, it is to be noticed:

a- The priest for whose sake this sacrifice is offered, puts his hand on the head of the bull, confessing his sins (Psalm 32: 5). ... For, if the priest

listens to the confessions of others, he, himself, is committed whatever his rank is, to practice confession, proclaiming that, together with his congregation, he walks along the way of perpetual repentance, of humiliation before God, and of confessing his sins.

b- The rite of the sin offering is centered around 'the blood'. And owing to the seriousness of the sin of the high priest, he brings forth the blood

of his sacrifice to the tabernacle of meeting, dips his finger in the blood, and sprinkles from it seven times before the Lord, namely, before the Ark of the Covenant, which represents the throne of God; on the veil, on the floor before the Ark, and on the horns of the golden altar of incense; Then the rest of the blood is to be poured below the altar of the bronze burnt offering, in the outer court of the tabernacle.

What is so elaborately done with the blood, is not without a goal; but, because if the high priest commits a sin -- he who intervenes before God on behalf of the people, through the Ark of the Covenant, through the veil, through the golden altar of incense, and the bronze altar of the burnt offering -- He, himself would be in need for someone to intercede on his behalf. Therefore, the blood, that symbolizes the blood of the Lord Christ, would intercedes, to sanctify the way for him. By the precious blood, to which the high priest holds fast, he could go through the veil, and set forth to the Ark of the Covenant, to enjoy the encounter with God, who transfigures on the cover of the Ark above the mercy seat. By the precious blood, he raises the prayers, on the golden altar; and by it, God would receive the sacrifices of his love on the bronze altar of the burnt offering. Hence, the high priest sprinkles the blood seven times, as a sign of the perfect sanctification, to be able to practice his priestly

work anew; and for God to receive his prayers, to listen to his supplications, and to smell his offerings a sweet aroma on behalf of the people.

On another aspect, the high priest who sinned, will hold fast to the blood, for the sake of sanctification inside the Most Holy place, in the sanctuary, and in the outer court. For, if the sin would corrupt man as a whole: spirit, soul, and body, by blood he would be sanctified in his depths, where His Spirit is (The Most Holy Place), in his soul (the sanctuary), and in his body (the outer court). By the blood, our sins would be forgiven, and our whole life would be sanctified.

Talking to us about the activity of this blood, St. Augustine says: [The Savior's blood was shed, and our debt became void. That is the blood shed for many for the forgiveness of sins]. While St. John Chrysostom says: [That blood (of the New Covenant] has been perpetually symbolized in the old, on the altar, and through the sacrifices presented by the righteous. That is the price of the world, by which the Lord Christ purchased the church for Himself, and by which He adorned it all. Those who partake of this blood would stand together with the angels, the archangels, and the higher hosts, would be clothed with the royal garment of Christ; and would have the weapon of the Spirit.... No I have not yet said it all! ... They will be clothed by the King Himself!). .

c- The hide and flesh were a portion usually given to the priests, but because this sacrifice, is an atonement for the sin of the high priest, everything in it had to be burned, even its hide (11), a sign of the Lord's hatred and rejection of sin.

3- THE SIN OFFERING FOR THE WHOLE CONGREGATION:

This sacrifice is offered for the sake of a collective sin unintentionally committed by the whole congregation. As the high priest should **be particulate** in his

behavior, so should the holy congregation be particulate on keeping their purity, and their spiritual beauty, against any sin.

The rite here is almost the same as in the sin offering for the sake of the high priest; on account of that what the high priest does, would touche the whole congregation; and what the whole congregation do, is the responsibility of the high priest.

In the previous kind of sacrifice, the anointed priest puts his hand on its head, confessing his sins. Here, however, the elders put their hands on behalf of the whole congregation, confessing their sins.... Not that the high priest is exonerated from the collective sins of the people, but it is rather to have the elders partake of his responsibility in the general ordinance of the spiritual issues of the people.

In this sacrifice, as well, the importance of bringing the blood forth to the tabernacle of the meeting, is clearly shown; in sprinkling it on the veil, the horns of the golden altar of incense, and in pouring the rest of it below the altar of the burnt offering.

4- THE SIN OFFERING FOR THE CIVIL RULER:

This sacrifice concerns the rulers of civil authority like kings, elders, and judges, whose sin is distinguished from those of the common people, on account of being responsible rulers. Any sin committed by one of them could cause an offense to many, even if unintentionally done.

The sacrifice in this case is a male kid of goats without blemish; and here, the blood is not brought forth into the sanctuary, as it is the case in that of the high priest, but is poured below the altar of the burnt offering, after sprinkling some of it on the horns of the altar. Although the sins of the rulers could be an offense to

the subordinates, yet the seriousness of their sins is not as heavy as that of the high priest, and does not touch the inner sanctuaries.

In the rite of this sacrifice, the hide and the flesh are not burned as it is the case in the sin offering of the high priest, but will be a portion of the priests. In a logic interpretation of this difference, the Jewish philosopher Filon of Alexandria says that eating the flesh of the sin offering by the priests, would give comfort to the one who offers it, that God has forgiven his sins, on account of that God would not allow His priests to partake of it, unless He has taken it away and forgiven it completely for the one atoned.

5- THE SIN OFFERNG FOR ONE OF THE COMMON PEOPLE:

The sacrifice for an unintentionally committed sin by any of the common people, is a kid of goats or a female of lambs without blemish. Designating a female in this case is on account of that it is cheaper and affordable by many.

Commenting on the expression "*of any of the common people of the land*" (27), the scholar Origen says, that we should distinguish between him who is of the common people of the land, and those about whom is said: "*Our citizenship is in heaven, from which we also eagerly wait for the Savior the Lord Jesus Christ*" (Philippians 3: 20); for those later souls do not unite with the land, but are completely in heaven; where they dwell "*where Christ is, sitting at the right hand of God*" (Colossians 3: 1); Although they desire to depart and be with Christ, which is far better; yet they are committed to remain in the body (Philippians 1: 24, 25).

In the rite of this sacrifice, the blood is not brought forth into the sanctuary, as it is in both the cases of the high priest and the congregation.

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CHAPTER 5

THE SIN OFFERING AND THE TRESPASS OFFERING

This chapter presents to us practical examples of the unintentional sins for which a sin offering is offered; Although, according to some scholars, this sacrifice, though offered for a particular sin, yet it is offered to take away all the sins of a person or persons, and not a particular sin, as it is the case in the trespass offering. It, as well, made clear the sins and iniquities on which a trespass offering is offered, after dealing with those who could not afford to offer a sin offering.

1- Examples of unintentional sins	1 - 4
2- The sin offering and the confession	5 - 6
3- The sin offering of those who could not afford it	7 - 13
4- The first kind of trespass offering	14 - 19

1- EXAMPLES OF UNINTENTIONAL SINS:

The divine inspiration gave us three examples of unintentional sins, for which a sin offering is offered:

a- He who suppresses a testimony (1):

In case a believer hears a person accused or a witnesses not telling the truth, while under oath; If he knows the truth, hides it, and does not tell it, either for feeling compassion on the accused or for bearing bad intention against him, "*he bears his guilt*" (1); namely, he would be counted as a partaker of the sin of the accused in the sight of God; and would be counted as responsible for any probable erroneous verdict, whether for, or against the accused. And if he is

sought to give testimony, and abstained for some reason or another; and because of his reluctance to testify, an unjust verdict was issued; he is committed to confess his sin, and offer a sin offering.

According to the scholar Origen: [Man's contention on a wrong doing committed by another, is counted as sin, even if he does not follow suit]. And he says: [It is befitting of us to know that he who happens to catch a neighbor in the act, hides the issue, and does not tell the truth nor testify to it, will bear the sin of the guilty whom he has covered up; and on him will come his same punishment. This does not apply to him who shows compassion on his neighbor, and admonishes him to exhort him to repentance; but it applies to him who disregards his neighbor's salvation, by covering up his evil.

In a symbolic interpretation, the scholar Origen believes that those who suppressed the testimony were the scribes and the Pharisees, who, being entrusted with the law of God, were aware of what was written concerning the Lord Christ, saying: "*The Lord has sworn, and will not relent, 'You are a priest forever, according to the order of Melchizedek'*" (Psalm 109 (110): 4).; Having suppressed that testimonial, and refrained from proclaiming their faith in the Savior Messiah, in whom the prophecies were fulfilled, they fell under the sin, having led Israel into their denial of the Lord Christ.

b- "***Whoever touches the carcass of an unclean animal***", whether wild, domestic or a reptile, if he disregards, or was unintentionally slothful to purify himself by washing his clothes (Leviticus 11: 24-38), he would be counted as guilty, and is committed to offer a sin offering. It also extends to unintentionally touching a leper, or someone with bodily discharges (Leviticus 14, 15), or touching the corpse of a dead man (Leviticus 21), then knew later about it, and did not purify himself, he would be committed to offer a sin offering.

On a health wise aspect, God probably intends, under the name of 'defiled' or 'unclean', to warn the people against touching anything that may cause illness or may transfers contagion..

Of a lengthy comment by the scholar Origen, on the issue of uncleanness that would dwell by touching an unclean animal or a dead man's corpse, we shall quote the following statements::

[Let us now see how the explanation and interpretation presented by the Jews may seem as unconvincing, unbefitting, and worthy to be rejected; to believe that he who touches the carcass of a dead animal, or the corpse of a dead man, would be counted as unclean, even if the dead corpse belongs to a prophet, a patriarch, even Abraham Himself?! ... Will he who touches the bones of the prophet Elisha that raised a man from the dead, be considered unclean?!

As far as we are concerned, let us define first what is meant by "unclean touching", and 'pure touching'... . According to the apostle: "*It is good for a man not to touch a woman*" (1 Corinthians 7: 1); ... About 'unclean touching' the Lord Christ said: "*Whoever looks at a woman to lust for her has already committed adultery with her in his heart*" (Matthew 5: 28); on account of that his heart was touched by the lust and became unclean. Looking at a woman to lust for her, gathering wealth with greed, or finding pleasure by any other means, are considered as 'unclean touching' with sin, for which you are committed to offer a sin offering.

Do you wish me to give you an example of someone who was previously unclean, then became pure by pure touching; let me mention the woman with a flow of blood who spent all her livelihood on physicians and could not be healed by any (Luke 8: 45, 46); she who might have reached that stage through the uncleanness of sin, and caused harm to her own body But through

touching, by faith, the border of the garment of the Lord Christ, she was instantly healed and became clean. When she touched the Lord Savior, He said *"Who touched Me?"... For I perceived power going out of Me"* ... Surely it was the power that healed that woman and made her pure; contrary to the evil power that came out of the sin, that made her, for such a long time, unclean and overcome with sickness.... The same interpretation would apply to touching the corpse of a dead man, or that of a clean or unclean animal. For whoever touches the body of man, may imply following his lead, being dead in his sins. To clarify the touching of those corpses, let us deal with each of them one by one:

As to touching the corpse of a dead man, let us hear what the apostle said to the Corinthians: *"I wrote to you in my epistle not to keep company with sexually immoral people. Yet I certainly did not mean with the sexually immoral people of this world, or with the covetous, or extortioners, or idolaters, since then you would need to go out of the world. But now I have written to you not to keep company with anyone named a brother, who is a fornicator, or covetous, or an idolater, or a reviler, or a drunkard, or an extortioner – not even to eat with such a person"* (1 Corinthians 5: 9-11). Beside what the apostle said concerning the widow: *"But she who lives in pleasure is dead while she lives"* (1 Timothy 5: 6). About such a person we may say that she is like a corpse of a dead man].

The scholar origin, concerning touching the corpse of a dead man, goes on to say: [In the church there are those who may be called "men of God", the way the prophet Elijah say about himself: *"If I am a man of God, , then let fire come down from heaven and consume you and your fifty men"* (2 Kings 1: 10); While those who forsake reason and understanding, are counted as animals; about whom the psalmist says: *"O Lord, You preserve man and beast"* (Psalm 36: 6). In case any of those people dies in sin, and becomes a corpse, , ... he who touches it, will be unclean.

That is concerning the domestic animals; as to the vicious wild animals, the scholar Origen believes that 'a dead lion' refers to getting attached to the devil, about whom the apostle Peter says: "*The devil walks about like a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour. Resist him, steadfast in faith*" (1 Peter 5: 8, 9); and 'the savage wolves' refer to the heretics, according to the words of the apostle, saying: "*For I know this, after my departure, savage wolves will come in among you, not sparing the flock*" (Acts 20: 29); those who follow their faulty views, will be as though have become unclean through touching a corpse of a dead wolf.

c- "***If a man slothfully swears in vain to do evil or to do good***" (4); ...then he did contrary to his vow; this could be counted as a sin that warrants a sin offering.

Some may wonder if someone swears to beat or to kill, then refrained from doing it, will this be counted as a sin that warrants offering a sin offering? ... The sin here will be, not in refraining from doing harm, but rather in hastening to swear.

The scholar Origen, presents to us a symbolic interpretation of double swearing to do both good and harm; he says that entering into a fellowship with God, the believer would be as though presents a vow to do good for the salvation of his spirit; and to do harm to his body lusts; being committed to discipline and to humiliate his flesh that lusts against his spirit (Galatians 5: 17); For by disciplining his body, he would say together with the apostle Paul: "*For when I am weak , then I am strong*" (2 Corinthians 12: 10).

According to the scholar Origen: [If we swear and promise to discipline this body which opposes and wrestles against the spirit, and did not fulfill our promise, we would be guilty of a sin; ... For we cannot do good to our spirit,

unless we apply pressure on our body; Let us listen to what the Lord Himself says: *"I am the One who bring forth life and death"*. What does the Lord "bring to death? Obviously the lusts of the body; And what does He bring to life? Obviously the Spirit. He also adds: *"I strike and heal"*. What does He strike? Obviously the body lusts; And what does He heal? Obviously the Spirit.. What is the goal of all this? To *"put to death in the flesh, and to make alive by the Spirit"* 1 Peter 3: 18], For fear that you would serve the law of God, not by the Spirit but by the body].

These are the three examples presented to us by the book of Leviticus concerning the sins which warrant a sin offering: {Refraining to testify the truth; touching the unclean; and not fulfilling a vow}. Yet with a condition that those sins are committed unintentionally, and not out of stubbornness. Rich in mercy, God intends to purify His children and people, even from sins that may seem as though of little importance; not out of being particular on the letter, but of seeking to sanctify us on the highest level; and intending to make man like the angels of God, living by the laws of heaven.

Being aware of our weaknesses, not intending to be hard on us, and wishing for us to be heavenly, God opened before us the way of holiness by His Holy Spirit, and presented to us the life of His Son, delivered on the cross as a price to sanctify us. In other words, being so particular, He does not intend just to issue commands, nor to humiliate and deprive us; But, as our Heavenly Father, He seeks our spiritual maturity and exaltation, to become worthy of hearing the divine voice, saying: *"I said you are gods, and all of you are the children of the Most High.* (Psalm 82: 6; John 10: 34).

2- THE SIN OFFERING AND THE CONFESSION:

"And it shall be, when he is guilty of any of these matters, that he shall confess that he has sinned in that thing;

and he shall bring to the Lord for his sin which he has sinned, a female from the flock, a lamb or a kid of the goats as a sin offering. So the priest shall make atonement for him concerning his sin” (5, 6)

Discovering his sin, even though unintentional, it is befitting of the believer to proclaim his longing for a holy, blameless life in the Lord; to present an inner repentance bound to two things: to confess that he has sinned (5), and to offer a sin offering (6). Confessing our sins would then meld with holding fast to the precious blood, the forgiver of sins.

The Jews practiced confession of their sins before the men of God and His priests. In the old covenant, like when Joshua the son of Nun sought from Achan the son of Carmi (Joshua 7: 19); ... What king Saul did before the prophet Samuel ((2 Samuel 12: 13, 14); ... And when the Jews came to John the Baptist confessing their sins (Mark 1: 5). In the New Covenant, the Lord gave His disciples the authority to absolve sins (Matthew 16: 19; 18: 17, 18; John 20: 21, 23); And in the book of Acts, it was said: “*And many who had believed came confessing and telling their deeds*” (Acts 19: 18).

The scholar Origen refers the importance of confession to that the devil provokes us to sin , and once we fall into it, he hastens to accuse us. If we, however, hasten to accuse ourselves, we would make his tricks in vain. He says: [We are committed to confess all our deeds, and to proclaim openly before the congregation, what we have done in the darkness (John 7: 4), and what lie hidden in our minds ... As the devil, our enemy and accuser, who provokes us to sin, accuses us, if we take the initiation in this life, to rebuke ourselves, we would overcome his craftiness. As said by the prophet: “*State your case, that you may be acquitted*” (Isaiah 43: 26 – the Septuagint version); by which he intends to make it clear, that you ought to go forth ahead of him who is always ready to accuse you; Speak up before he does; For if you so do, and present the sacrifice

of repentance, you would be as though, deliver your body to destruction, "*that the spirit may be saved in the day of the Lord Jesus*" (1 Corinthians 5: 5); to hear the voice saying, "*You have received the evil things in your life, and now you are comforted*" (Luke 16: 25); beside what the prophet David, by the divine inspiration proclaims: "*I acknowledge my sin to You; and my iniquity I have not hidden . I said, 'I will confess my transgressions to the Lord', and You forgave the iniquity of my sin*" (Psalm 32: 5). Now you may see that, confessing sin means the worthiness of being forgiven; and by initiating to accuse yourself, you overcome the devil's attempt to accuse you. Condemning ourselves is useful for our salvation; whereas if we wait until the devil accuses us, the condemnation will then turn into punishment.

Talking about repentance, and binding it to confession St. Ambrose says: [Do not refrain from practicing confession in the church that supplicates on your behalf to God, to win for yourself the help of the holy congregation. There is no point of being ashamed; for we are all sinners; but the humblest will be more commended; and he who feels that he is less, will be counted as righteous]. According to father Dorotheos: [Satan will be able to catch him who trusts in his own mind, and who feels comfortable only in his own will; but he would be helpless before him who does everything through counsel]. And according to St. Anthony: [I saw many monks, who, after long labor, faced failure of reason; on account of that they trusted only in their own knowledge; not listening to the commandment, saying: 'Ask your father to tell you; and your elders to counsel you'].

3- THE SIN OFFERING OF THOSE WHO COULD NOT AFFORD IT:

As the sacrifice of sin is compulsory on the rich as well as on the poor, the law was keen on making it according to the possibility of each. The value of the offering is not in its material price, nor in the offering itself, but in what it refers to, of a symbol of the free sacrifice of the Lord Christ, which He presented for all with no discrimination.

In case someone cannot afford a female lamb or goat, he can offer two turtledoves or two pigeons; about which we have already talked as a burnt offering (1: 14-17); and said that the turtledoves refer to the pure life, and the pigeons to the simple life. Choosing two birds, is because of the difficulty to separate the fat from the flesh to offer on the altar, and to give the priests their portion of the flesh; one of them, counted, therefore, instead of the fat, is offered on the altar, and the other is given to the priests as a portion instead of the flesh. The law was keen on giving the priests a portion from the poor, even a slain turtledove of little material value, not to be enjoyed by the priests, as much as to let them feel that they are priests and ministers of the rich, as well as of the poor, with no discrimination, so as not to be partial in their services. On another aspect, to keep the poor from feeling inferior when dealing with the priests. ... Even though the church provides him with all his spiritual and material needs, the poor is committed to present a little, even from what he has taken from the church, as a sign of his spiritual and material fellowship.

I wish we do not despise the two mites of the widow, and the two turtledoves of the poor; for God looks at the heart, and not at the gift. ... And I wish, if we are poor, not to feel ashamed to offer the little; on account of that God's hand stretches to take from the poor the gift of his love.

It is to be noticed that the bird which is burned as a sin offering is called "a burnt offering", not that it is as such, but because it is burned whole without separating the fat from the flesh.

Here, the great compassion of God toward man is clearly shown, in that He allows the poor who sinned, and cannot afford even two turtledoves or two pigeons, to bring a sin offering of one tenth of an ephah of fine flour. And in order to distinguish it from the grain offering mentioned in (chapter 2), He commanded not to put oil, nor any frankincense on it; on account of that such offering is not

offered to honor the Lord as a grain offering, but as an atonement on a sin. ... Yet, some may wonder, how could flour be offered as a sin offering, when *“without shedding of blood there is no remission”* (Hebrew 9: 22)? To answer this, we say that the priest shall take a handful of it as a memorial portion and burn it on the altar according to the offerings made by fire to the Lord; And the flour will then mix with the blood of the other sacrifices offered on the altar. Some believe that this offering refer to the sacrifice of the Eucharist, which, even though it does not bear blood in a material obvious touched way, yet the bread and the wine truly transform into the body and the blood of the Savior, delivered on the cross, as atonement on our sins.

4- THE FIRST KIND OF THE TRESPASS OFFERING:

As we said before, some distinguish between the sin offering and the trespass offering, by that the former is offered for the one offering it as a whole; whereas the later is offered on a particular sin he has committed. And some others distinguish between them by that the former is offered on the sins which cause no specific material harm; whereas the later is offered on sins which cause harm to the sanctuary or to the congregation. Hence, the holy inspiration divides the iniquity offerings into two kinds:

- a- Sacrifices offered on sins which cause harm to the divine sanctuaries
- b- Sacrifices offered on sins that cause harm to the brethren.

In this chapter he talks about the first kind; saying:

“If a person commits a trespass, and sins unintentionally in regard to the holy things of the Lord, then he shall bring to the Lord as his trespass offering a ram without blemish from the flocks with your valuation in shekels

of silver according to the shekel of the sanctuary, as a trespass offering And he shall make restitution for the harm he has done in regard to the holy thing, and shall add one fifth to it and give it to the priest. So the priest shall make atonement for him with the ram of the trespass offering, and it shall be forgiven him” (15, 16)

By the unintentional harm done against the holy things, are meant the slothfulness in offering the commitments toward the temple; like the firstfruit of the clean animals, the redemption for the firstfruit of man, the firstfruit of fruits, and the tithes ...etc. In the book of Malachi it is written: “*Will a man rob God? Yet you have robbed Me! But you say, ‘In what way have we robbed you?’; in tithes and offerings”* (Malachi 3: 8).. By saying ‘unintentional’ here, is meant forgetting or misunderstanding the law.

Here, man is committed to offer a sin offering; as there is no forgiveness of sin, even if it is unintentionally done, or because of misunderstanding the law, except by the holy blood which purifies of every sin. Yet, this atonement does not mean disregarding to mend the material harm done on others, even if the harmed party is the temple itself, which, although would never be materially harmed, on account of that God is the source of its satisfaction, but the goal of the law is to train man on paying back what he has unlawfully taken from others, whoever they are. Now, the magnitude of this harm was evaluated by the prophet Moses himself (15); and later by a priest (27: 8). And the valuation of the harm was done in shekels of silver, according to the shekel kept in the sanctuary, as the true and legal measure of the shekel.

If God, in His limitless love, forgives every sin we commit, Yet, for the sake of our spiritual edification, He seeks from us to pay back what we owe through our slothfulness, in addition to a chastisement penalty equal to-one fifth. But according to the scholar Origen, the person involved pays back the original

amount, plus an equal amount, plus one-fifth of it. If therefore, the harm done represents five shekels of silver, he is committed to pay back five plus five plus one more shekel.

Anyway, if the figure five, according to many fathers, like the scholar Origen, saints Diodorus the blind, Augustine, and Jerome, refers to the five senses of man, which should be dedicated only to the Lord, and wholly absorbed in His love, for us to join the five wise virgins (Matthew 25: 1), to receive the heavenly Groom with five lamps full of oil, lighted by the Holy Spirit; For the harm done by sinning against those divine statutes, the Lord does not seek from us to pay money or to present offerings, as much as to present our senses, in the unity of the Spirit, holy to the Lord; Namely, to give back to the Lord His right of possession on us, and in our depth, in order to live holy for Him inside, as well as in our outer behavior.

Now, concerning the “the shekel of the sanctuary”, considered as the measure for the restitution, It was a measure to weigh the precious things; or might be some kind of silver or gold coins, according to which all coins or other measurements were calibrated. There were more than one kind of shekel known to the Jews: the regular shekel, to measure the precious things like silver and gold and others (1 Samuel 17: 5); the “shekel of the sanctuary”, said to be double as much as the regular one, which was kept in the tabernacle of meeting or the temple, to be a calibrated model of the true shekel; and “the shekel of the king” (2 Samuel 14: 26), that probably referred to a specific measure kept with the king. The Hebrews used the shekel of silver as money, after the captivity in the time of the Meccabians; mentioned in the New Covenant as “silver” (Matthew 26: 15); And also “the gold shekel”, which was used as a weight, as well as a gold coin.

We go back now to the restitution to be offered by the sinner, with his repentance, and his return to the Lord. Moses (or the priest) valuate the amount of harm done to the temple, on the material aspect, by the “shekel of the sanctuary” of silver.

As silver refers to the word of God, "like silver tried in a furnace of earth, purified seven times" (Psalm 12)... The priest valuate our behavior, therefore, not according to his human wisdom, or his personal perception, but according to "the word of God"; the measure of our life, by which we shall present our accounts with God on the day of judgment. Being "the shekel of the sanctuary", namely, a true, unfeigned shekel.

According to the scholar Origen: {The shekel of the sanctuary" portrays our faith ... There are actually many who carry the name of Christ, yet they, in truth, have no Christ in them. Hence the apostle Paul says: "*For there must also be factions among you, that those who are approved may be recognized among you*" (1 Corinthians 11" 19)}.

We, therefore, purchase the 'lamb' to be offered as a sin offering, valuated by "the shekel of the sanctuary"; In other words, we encounter the Lord Christ, the true lamb of God through the true unfeigned holy faith. As according to the scholar Origen: [Surely, no one can have forgiveness of his sins, unless he has the straightforward, the tested, and holy faith; by which we can acquire the "lamb", who cleanses the sins of the believers. That is "the shekel of the sanctuary"; the tested faith, not mixed with deception and craftiness; namely with the hypocrisy of the heretics, by which we present a straightforward faith to be cleansed by "*the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot*" (1 Peter 1: 19).

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CHAPTER 6

THE TRESPASS OFFERING

AND THE STATUTES OF THE SACRIFICES AND OFFERINGS (Part 1)

In this chapter, the divine inspiration presents to us the second kind of the trespass offering; namely, the sacrifice, together with which one is committed to give a restitution to his brethren on whom he has caused a material harm (1 – 7). And it presents, as well, some aspects of the rites of the sacrifices and offerings, that are of more interest to the priests, rather than to the common people:

1- The second kind of the trespass offering	1 - 7
2- The statute of the burnt offering	8 - 13
3- The statute of the grain offering	14 - 23
4- The statute of the sin offering	24 – 30

1- THE SECOND KIND OF THE TRESPASS OFFERING”

After talking about the trespass offering that concerns him who betrayed the sanctities of the Lord; he comes now to talk about the trespass offering that concerns him *“who lied to his neighbor about what was delivered to him for safekeeping; or about a pledge or about a robbery, or if he has extorted from his neighbor. Or who has found what was lost, and lies concerning it and swears falsely (3), by which he robs his neighbor of his right”* (1).

What was delivered by someone to another for safekeeping, he keeps only for a certain time, after which he has to give it back. The pledge, the betrayal, or the extortion from a neighbor, they are of a broader meaning, entailing for example the commitment to take care of the affairs of someone else, like a guardian over a child underage, sick, or incompetent to act by himself by a court's order; which has to be done by complete honesty and faithfulness. The third is when someone happens to find what was lost, picks it up, hides it, lies and falsely swears concerning it; instead of returning it to its lawful possessor.

Commenting on such betrayals as something unbecoming of believers to think of, let alone to do, the scholar Origen says: [He who does such things would fall under the judgment for a major sin, which, I believe is far from the mind of a true believer, who *"has not so learned Christ"* (Ephesians 4: 20)... *"Knowing (according to the apostle), that the law is not made for a righteous person, but for the lawless and insubordinate, for the ungodly and for sinners, for the unholy and profane; ... and for any other thing that is contrary to sound doctrine"* (1 Timothy 1: 19, 20); I pray to God to keep His church from being treaded upon by such sins, but to let it be well instructed, and holy by the Spirit.

Now, if this commandment, in its literal meaning, should not even come on the mind of the true believer, to betray his neighbor in things concerning safekeeping, a pledge, robbery, exhortation, or lying and swearing falsely concerning something he found, hid, and did not return to its lawful possessor; ... What do these things mean according to the spiritual concept?

a- The first thing given to man for safekeeping, is his **'spirit'**, which is created according to God's image and likeness, delivered by God, to him to deliver back as it is without any distortion. As according to the scholar Origen: [You are committed to deliver it sound, perfect, and in the same condition you have got it: *"To be merciful, just as your Father also is merciful"* (Luke 6: 36); *"To be perfect, just as your Father in heaven is perfect"*

(Matthew 5: 48); and so on, in all other things. If you are godly saint, righteous, and pure in heart, things that are in God by nature, you have to follow lead, in order to deliver the holy spirit given to you for safekeeping, sound and perfect. Otherwise, if you walk in life contrary to this: If you are cruel, instead of being merciful; wicked instead of being godly; violent instead of being compassionate; if you sow dissension instead of peace; if you rob instead of generously giving; ... You would then be rejecting the image of God, to take upon yourself that of the devil; ... You would be denying the good thing God has given you for safekeeping; that which the apostle Paul has given to his disciple, saying: "*O Timothy! Guard what was committed to your trust*" (1 Timothy 6: 20).

The Lord Christ, seeking from you to guard what was committed to your trust, says: "*Render to Caesar the things that are Caesar's, and to God the things that are God's*" (Matthew 22: 21); And according to St. Augustine: [The way Caesar seeks his image on the coin, So God seeks His image in us].

b- What was committed to our trust from the church is the '**tradition**', which, in essence is the true faith in the Holy Trinity, practically translated through worshipping and walking in Jesus Christ; which we are committed to deliver faithfully to the next generation, not only through writing and preaching, but through our whole life of worship, and our daily behavior at home, at work, and in the street... to deliver it as a living tradition without any deviation. According to St. Gregory, bishop of Nyssa: [As a proof of our worship, it is enough to deliver that tradition which came to us from the fathers; being the inheritance consequently got from the apostles, through the saints who followed them; a tradition which includes our faith in the salvation, the work of the Holy Trinity in us, our enjoyment of the Holy Book with its two testaments, our practice of worship, and our behavior by the Spirit, etc.

c- According to the scholar Origen, Not betraying what was committed to our trust, implies keeping the life of fellowship with God in His Son

Jesus Christ, and our fellowship with the saints and the heavenly creatures in the Lord without deviation; saying: [Let us see now what we should understand by the word “fellowship”. Do you think there is any need to warn against betraying a partner in money or other business? How miserable will be, he who does such a thing! ... Yet for such weakness, the apostle warned, “*No one should take advantage and defraud his brother in this matter, because the Lord is the avenger of all such*” (1 Thessalonians 4: 6). ...

Now let us see what the fellowship means on the spiritual aspect, according to the words of the apostle: “*If there is any consolation in Christ, if any comfort of love, if any fellowship of the spirit, if any affection and mercy, fulfill my joy...*” (Philippians 2: 1, 2). See how the apostle understood the law of “fellowship”? ... Listen also to St. John proclaiming with the same spirit: “... *Truly our fellowship is with the Father and with His Son Jesus Christ*” (1 John 1: 3); and to St. Peter, saying: “*Through these you may be partakers of the divine nature*” (2 Peter 1: 2), meaning to have fellowship with Him. The apostle Paul says: “*What fellowship has righteousness with lawlessness? And what communion has light with darkness?*” (2 Corinthians 6: 14). If, therefore, there is no communion between light and darkness, and we came to have fellowship with the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, We, therefore are committed to watch, lest we would deny this holy divine fellowship; For if we do “*the works of darkness*” (Romans 13: 12), we would surely be denying the fellowship with the Light).

Our faithfulness in the fellowship, or in what was committed to our trust by God, commits us to walk in the light, and to reject the works of darkness; For by that, we would enjoy the fellowship, by the work of the Holy Spirit, the Grantor of fellowship with God in our Lord Jesus Christ. Such fellowship binds us to a fellowship with the saints as fellow children of light with us, and also

with the heavenly creatures. As according to the scholar Origen: [If we actually are in a fellowship with the Father and the Son, how could we not be in a fellowship with the saints, not only those on earth, but those in heaven as well?! For Christ, by His blood, *“has reconciled all things to Himself, whether things on earth or things in heaven”* (Colossians 1: 20), to unify heaven with earth. He made such a fellowship clear by saying that *“There will be more joy in heaven over one sinner who repents”* (Luke 15: 7); and when He said, promising us the kingdom of heaven: *“In the resurrection, they are like angels of God in heaven”* (Matthew 22: 30). Such a fellowship we would deny, if we separate ourselves from the heavenlies, by our wicked works and our evil feelings.

d- As to robbing the others, according to the scholar Origen: [There are ‘good thieves’, as well as ‘evil thieves’. The ‘good thieves’ are like those about whom the Savior said: *“Those who take the kingdom of heaven by force”* (Matthew 11: 12); And ‘the evil thieves’ are those about whom the prophet says: *“The plunder of the poor is in their houses”* (Isaiah 3: 14); And whom the apostle Paul mean by his firm proclamation, saying: *“Do not be deceived; Neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor homosexuals, nor sodomites, nor thieves; ... will inherit the kingdom of God”* (1 Corinthians 6: 9, 10). Robbery in the spiritual concept, is when man hides himself among the saints, robbing their spiritual views and their divine understanding, yet without renewing his own life; to be counted like someone who robs new wine and put it into old wineskins; by which the wineskin breaks, and the wine is spilled” (see Mathew 9: 17).

e- As to those who happen to find what was lost, hides it, lies and swears falsely concerning it, and refrains from returning it to its lawful possessor (3); That may refer to the heretics who take by force the souls of the simple, rob the church, and even rob God Himself of His

children. Those, in case they return from their vain heretic views, they are also committed to return the souls that went astray, and forsook the true faith because of them.

Getting back to the sacrifice to be offered by those who committed one of the mentioned sins, we notice the following:

a- The Lord, being the Lover of mankind, and cares for their salvation, counts any oppression, betrayal, denial, or robbery, committed against our brethren, as though committed personally against Him. He also counts any love, and compassion, given to them, as though given personally to Him. For, on the last day, He will say: *“Assuredly I say to you, inasmuch as you did it to one of the least of these My brethren, you did it to Me”* (Matthew 25: 40). And according to St. Jerome: [Every time you stretch your hand to give, remember Christ].

b- The sinner is required *“to restore what he has stolen, or the thing which he has deceitfully obtained, or what was delivered to him for safekeeping, or the lost thing he has found”* (4). Although by the sacrifice, the sin could be forgiven, yet it could not work in a heart holding fast to evil; restoration of what was stolen to whomever it belongs, is an appropriate proclamation of repentance, and of receiving the work of salvation of God in a practical way.

It is to be noticed that the law sought from the prophet Moses to evaluate the loss or the harm, Yet, not by the shekel of the sanctuary (5: 150, as it is the case with the sin directed toward the sanctuaries.

c- He shall restore its full value, *“add one-fifth more to it, and give it to whomever it belongs”* (5), to represent a restitution for the harm done by

the loss; On another aspect, it would be a kind of chastisement against the sinner, so as not to repeat what he has done.. On a third aspect, this one-fifth given to the one harmed, is counted as though given to God ...

d- *“He shall bring his trespass offering to the Lord, a ram without blemish from the flock”* (6) ... for there is no purification from iniquity

without the shedding of the Lamb of God; even with the restoration of double what was taken. According to the scholar Origen, the sinner purchases the bull or the lamb from the sellers; namely, from the prophets and apostles who brought forth the word of prophecy and preaching, for us to acquire by faith the precious blood of the Lord Christ, the Forgiver of sins; Those who exhort us to repent our sins, and to return to God, through receiving faith in the Savior of the world.

2- THE STATUTE OF THE BURNT OFFERING:

In the previous chapters, the words of the Lord to the prophet Moses were: *“Speak to the children of Israel, and say to them...”*; but here, *“The Lord spoke to Moses, saying: ‘Command Aaron and his sons, saying:...”* (8, 24). That led some scholar to believe that this part and the one following in chapters 6 and 7, are addressed to the priests and not to the people.

Now, presenting to the priests the statute of the burnt offering, He concentrated on the following important points:

a- *“The burnt offering shall be on the hearth upon the altar all night until morning, and the fire on the altar shall be kept burning on it”* (9).

What is this burnt offering that is to be put on the hearth on the altar, all night long until the morning, but our life we present by the fire of the Holy Spirit, a burnt offering of love all along the night of this world, with no lukewarm heart,

nor slothful spirit, until the morning of eternity shines with no darkness, when we encounter the Sun of Righteousness, face to face.

Speaking about this sacrifice which we unceasingly offer on the fire -- being priests of God by the general spiritual concept, which we get through the sacrament of baptism – the scholar Origen says:: [You have to have an unceasing fire on the altar. If you intend to be a priest of God, according to what is written: “*You shall be named the priests of God*” (Isaiah 61: 6); and “*You are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, a holy nation*” (1 Peter 2: 9); ... If you intend to practice your priesthood, do not ever forsake the fire of your altar, according to the command of the Lord in the gospel, saying: “*Let your waist be girded, and your lamps burning*” (Luke 12: 35); Let the fire of your faith, and the lamp of your knowledge be unceasingly lighted].

b- “*And the priest shall put on his linen garment, and his linen trousers he shall put on his body, and take up the ashes of the burnt offering which the fire has consumed on the altar, and he shall put them beside the altar*” (10). According to human reason, taking up the ashes would require putting old garments on; but according to the spiritual concept, taking up the ashes is actually an integral part of a holy task that touches the holiness of man through his reconciliation with the Holy God.

If the animal sacrifices leave behind them ashes for the priest to take up with awe and holiness to put beside the altar, then carry away to outside; the Lord Christ was risen from the dead, granting us His Holy non-corrupt body as the secret of life; to carry us forth from our own ashes to eternity. The Lord Christ, Himself, is the sacrifice, and the Grantor of life, to us -- ashes and dust.

c- Being committed to carry the ashes to outside the camp, the priest have to take off the garments of ministry, put on other ones instead; then

cast the ashes away in a clean holy place (4: 12), surrounded by a fence, to keep away any trespassers, and to protect the ashes against being blown away by the wind.... How amazing! Even the ashes of the sacrifice are holy, and should not be touched! ... It is a portrait sanctifying everything that has to do with the true Sacrifice, like the tomb of the Lord Christ, where the Grantor of life was laid; about which was written: "*His resting place shall be glorious*" (Isaiah 11: 10).

When we carry the sacrifice in us, we, the dust, become holy ... our souls, spirits, and bodies would be sanctified! We would become like the tomb of the Lord Christ, that was blessed by being laid in it.

d- "*A perpetual fire shall burn on the altar, it shall never go out*" (13). The priests are committed to keep the fire burning on the altar day and night. The fire which came from God after Aaron and his sons were anointed (9: 24) was kept burning by the Jews, and were put on three places on the altar of the burnt offering. According to the second book of the Maccabians, when the Jews were captivated to Babylon, they hid the holy fire in a well without water; and when Nehemiah and his companions were sent back to Jerusalem by the king of Persia, they did not find the fire in the well, but found water instead. They put the wood on the altar, laid the sacrifices, and poured water from the well over it, And once the sun appeared covered with cloud, a great fire ignited over the altar, and everyone glorified God. When the king of Persia knew about it, he gave a command to set a fence around the well, counting it as a holy place.

3- THE STATUTE OF THE GRAIN OFFERING:

In the second chapter, God addressed His talk concerning the grain offering, to all the children of Israel through the prophet Moses, which we have already

discussed in detail. Here, we shall concentrate on the role of the priest on several aspects:

a- *“He shall take from it his handful of the fine flour of the grain offering, with its oil, and all the frankincense which is on the grain offering, and shall burn it on the altar for a sweet aroma, as a memorial to the Lord”*

(15). In our previous study of certain books of the Old Testament, we saw that ‘the arm and the hand’ refer to (the incarnate Word of God), who came to consummate the salvation, as though by His hand ; and that ‘the finger of God’ refers to (His Holy Spirit). The hand of the priest, while holding the flour and the oil, probably refers to the Lord Christ, who held our nature in His hand, to make us in Him, an offering of love to God. We said, as well, that ‘the oil’ refers to (the Holy Spirit), by which the incarnation of the Word has been realized in the Virgin’s womb; the same Spirit granted to us for the sake of our sanctification, to be counted as an offering to please God.

b- *“And the remainder of flour and oil, Aaron and his sons shall eat, with unleavened bread, it shall be eaten in a holy place, in the court of the tabernacle of meeting they shall eat it; ... All the males among the children of Aaron shall eat it; ... Everyone who touches it shall be holy”* (16, 18).

Referring to our enjoyment of the unity with the Lord Christ through His given body, it should be eaten, not by the spoiled, feminine-like men, nor by those spiritually under-developed. It is to be enjoyed only by the spiritual who walk like men of God, in maturity and seriousness.

Commenting on this phrase, the scholar Origen says: [Christ, our Passover (1 Corinthians 5: 7) is the only perfect sacrifice, according to whose image all the other sacrifices were offered. Whoever touches the body of Christ will be sanctified, will be healed of his infirmities; as it happened to the woman with the flow of blood, who, perceiving the holiness of the body of Christ, she approached and touched it].

St. John Chrysostom, perceiving the activity of this holy sacrifice, called it: “the sacrament of the Eucharist”, “a divine sacrament”, “an awesome divine banquet”, and “an unutterable sacrament”.

Eating it in a holy place, in the court of the tabernacle of meeting, refers to our enjoyment of the heavenly life through this sacrifice, as expressed by St. John Chrysostom, saying: [It is as though man is taken up to heaven itself, where he stands beside the throne of glory, flies together with the seraphim, and sings the holy praise].

It is amazing to know that the priest, while enjoying a portion of this offering, of the flour and oil, he is committed on his part, to offer to the Lord, a morning offering and an evening one. According to Josephus, the Jewish Historian, and most of the Jewish scholars, the high priest, on account of his high position, used to offer it on a daily basis, whereas the regular priest offers it only once, on the day he is anointed].

The wisdom behind this offering by the priests, is to let them, on one aspect, perceive that, although they, in the name of the Lord, enjoy several portions of the people’s offering, yet, being themselves an integral part of the people, they are committed, as well, to offer offerings. And on another aspect, the priest, while receiving, is committed to give ... to give his heart, as well as his effort, and what his hand possesses, to God, and to his spiritual children; as said by the prophet Paul about himself: *“I will very gladly spend and be spent for your souls”* (2 Corinthians 12: 15)..

What is the morning offering that the priest is committed to offer, but the law of the Lord, received by the church of the old covenant, as though in the morning of the spiritual life, offered on the fire of the Holy Spirit, who takes the letter away, and emits the sweet fragrance of the Spirit. The evening offering, on the other hand, is the offering of the gospel by the Lord Christ, who delivered His

life as a ransom on behalf of mankind in the fullness of time, as though at the evening of our life on earth. On the same altar, therefore, we receive the law, spiritually melded to the preaching of the gospel.

As confirmed by the law, the offering of the priest has to be completely burned, and not to be eaten (23); for it is befitting of him to deliver his whole life a burnt offering to the Lord. ... Even while delivering his whole life to others, he is delivering it to God alone.

4- THE STATUTE OF THE SIN OFFERING:

The most prominent points of the sin offering are:

a- *"It is most holy" (25), "The priest who offers it for sin shall eat it. In a holy place it shall be eaten, in the court of the tabernacle of meeting"*

(26); "Everyone who touches it must be holy" (27). Namely it is to be eaten only by him who is ready; And on another aspect, he who touches it is counted as the Lord's possession.

b- The most important thing in this offering is the holiness of the blood. *"When its blood is sprinkled on any garment, you shall wash that on which it was sprinkled, in a holy place. But the earthen vessel in which it is boiled shall be broken. And if it is boiled in a bronze pot, it shall be both scoured and rinsed in water" (28);* on account of that the bronze does not absorb the blood.

According to St. John Chrysostom:

[This blood makes the image of our King apparent on us; brings forth on us an unutterable beauty; and does not allow our exaltation to be taken away, but waters it and makes it more pronounced. ... This blood, if taken with worthiness, would drive demons away from us, and invite

angels. ... Once the blood of the Lord appears, the demons escape, and the angels gather up. ... This shed blood purifies the whole world. ... This blood will show up the secret and the most holy place ... This blood sanctifies the golden altar . This blood sanctifies the priests.... This blood is the salvation of our souls ... By it the soul is cleansed, beautified, and kindled; ... By it our understanding is kindled like fire; and our souls glitter more than gold].



CHAPTER 7

THE STATUTES OF THE SACRIFICES AND OFFERINGS (Part 2)

Having addressed His talk to Aaron and his sons about the sacrifices and the offerings, he consummates his talk in this chapter.

- | | |
|---|---------|
| 1- The statute of the trespass offering | 1 -- 10 |
| 2- The statute of the peace offering | 11 - 34 |
| 3- A conclusion | 35 – 38 |

1- THE STATUTE OF THE TRESPASS OFFERING:

Having already addressed his talk to the children of Israel concerning the trespass offering (5: 16 -- chapter 6), we saw how it is very close to the sin offering. Now, addressing his talk to the priests, he presents to them directions pertaining to this offering, also very close to those of the sin offering ... What we mention here is therefore counted as a consummation of the talk about the sin offering.

1- He already said that “*In the place where the burnt offering is killed, the sin offering shall be killed before the Lord. It is most holy*” (6:

25). Here, as well, He says: “*In the place where they killed the burnt offering, they shall kill the trespass offering; It is most holy*” (7: 1). Why does He confirm that in the place where the burnt offering is killed, the sin offering, and the trespass offering, are also killed?

a- If the burnt offering is “*a sweet aroma to the Lord*” (1: 9, 17, 19); whereas the sin and the trespass offerings, both carry another concept, as they represent the Lord Christ bearing the sins and the curse of the law on our

behalf; Yet the two concepts are actually integral and united. If you kill the first offering in a certain place, and kill the sin and the trespass offering in another place; there would be discrimination between the offerings, and they would lose their unity and integrity ... We would split the cross into separate and isolated aspects. While killing them in one place, would proclaim the one sacrifice of the cross, in which we enjoy the burnt offering, as well as the sin and the trespass offerings. In the cross we enjoy the pleasure of the Father, who receives the perfect obedience of the Son even to death; And in it we enjoy, as well, the forgiveness of sins, and taking away the curse of the law.

- b- Killing the sacrifices of the sin and the trespass offerings, together with that of the burnt offering, in one place, would give hope to the sinners, to offer their sacrifices with trust in God, compassionate on the sinners, who sets for them a place to receive their sacrifice, so as not to make them escape from His face, and wander lost on the earth, the way Cain did. Hence, according to the scholar Origen: [See the greatness of the forgiveness and mercies of the Lord; as in the same location the burnt offering is offered to the Lord alone, He commands, as well, for the sin and trespass offerings to be offered; in order for the repentant sinners to understand to return to God (1 Thessalonians 1: 9); to stand in a holy place, where they partake of what concerns the Lord ... ; and not to retreat from before His place as Cain did, confused and disturbed (Genesis 4: 16, 14). By that he gave confirmation for the sinner to stand before the Lord, and not to escape before His face, nor to go astray from Him because of his sin, but to offer a sacrifice before the Lord, that which is offered for the sinners, being "a most holy"

2- In the sin offering, it was said: "*The priest who offers it for sin shall it*" (6: 26); And in the trespass offering, it was said: "*Every male among the priests may eat it. It shall be eaten in a holy place. It is most holy. The trespass offering is like the sin offering; there is one law for them both; the*

priest who makes atonement with it shall have it" (6, 7). Letting the priest who makes atonement with either the sin or the trespass offerings, eat it, as we have already seen, refers to that God has received both; For God would never allow for His priests to partake of those sacrifices, unless He has already wiped the sin out completely. As according to the Jewish Filon, By eating from the sacrifice, the priest gives assurance to the one who offered it that God has forgiven his sin

If according to the scholar Origen; the priest who makes atonement with the sacrifice refers the Lord Christ who presents His blood an atonement for our sins.... How then, will He eat the sacrifice? ... He says:
[The Lord Christ is the sacrifice offered on the sins of the world; And, at the same time, He Himself is the Priest who offers it; which the apostle explains by saying: "*He offered Himself to the Father*" (Hebrew 9: 14). He therefore, is the Priest who eats and lifts up the sins of the world; as it is written: "*You are a priest forever, according to the order of Melchizedek*" (Psalm 110: 4). ... My Savior and God, therefore, eats the sins of the world! How does He eat them? ... Listen to what the Holy Book says: "*Your God is a consuming fire*" (Deuteronomy 4: 24)... Now, what does God, the consuming fire eat? ... It would be an utter foolishness to think that God eats wood and straw ... He is rather the fire that consumes the sins of the world; destroys, scatter, and purifies us from them; as it is written: "*I will thoroughly purge away your dross, and take away all your alloy*" (Isaiah 1: 25). That is how sin is eaten by Him who has offered the sin offering; For He bore our sins, and, being a consuming fire, He destroyed them. ... Let us now, as an example, mention what is contradictory, and say that death swallows those who persist on their sins; "*Death shall feed on them*" (Psalm 49: 14). While the Savior says in the gospel: "*I came to send fire on the earth, and how I wish it were already kindled*" (Luke 12: 49). How I wish heaven would let my earth kindle with the divine fire, so as not to bear thorns and thistles (See Genesis 3: 18).

3- The priest eats both the sin and the trespass offerings "*in a holy place*" (6). If the Lord Christ, by His divine fire, consumes, eats, and scatters our sins through His unique sacrifice; His priests, being His children, who bear the fellowship of working together with Him, will not cease to bring the soul of every sinner into the circle of the cross, so as to burn his sins. By that, the priests, as well, would be counted as though they eat the sin and the trespass offerings. As to the location where they eat them, it is "a holy place"; which is the church of God.

If the earth was cursed because of the sin (Genesis 3: 7); Yet, through the cross, the curse was taken away from the earth, to have in it a holy place where we may eat the sanctities; namely, the church of God; hence He says: "*In a holy place, it shall be eaten,, in the court of the tabernacle of meeting*" (6: 26).

4- The skin was given to the priest who makes the atonement; ... And according to some Jews, this skin reminds us of the garments of skin made by the Lord to clothe Adam and Eve, as an act of mercy on them after their disobedience (Genesis 3: 21); or as a reward for Adam for the sake of his priestly task; as they see in Adam, as well as in any head of a family, a priest of the Lord who offers sacrifices on behalf of his family

5- The priest enjoys a portion of three kinds of offerings; as it is said: "*And every grain offering that is baked in the oven, and all that is prepared in the covered pan, or in a pan, shall be the priest's who offers it*" (9). According to the scholar Origen, these offerings given to the priest are the Word of God granted to His priests, to perceive by its literal, behavioral, and spiritual meaning; namely, the three kinds of interpretations.

We, as priests, are committed to encounter with the Word of God, to receive it through literal, behavioral, and spiritual concepts; to live it in our life, to eat it

and be satisfied with it, then present it to our brethren as a spiritual holy food. According to the scholar Origen, It is difficult for the priest to offer the word of God to his congregation, unless it is **baked in the oven**; namely by the fire of the Holy Spirit, who kindles our hearts like an oven . As to the offering **baked in the covered pan**, it is the word of God, offered by a deep inner mind; Whereas that **baked on a pan**; is the word of God, revealed after taking the letter away from it. These three kinds of offerings, refer therefore to the divine word enjoyed by the priests as food for their souls, then given to the people through the oven of their hearts, kindled by the Holy Spirit; as a deep word, after taking the veil of the letter away from it.

6- To the priests as well, *“every grain offering mixed with oil, or dry shall belong to all the sons of Aaron, to one as much as the other”* (10).

The offering **mixed with oil** is the grain offering (chapter 2); Whereas **the dry one** (without oil) is that which goes with the sin offering, offered for the forgiveness of sin, without oil (Psalm 44: 8), and without sweet fragrance.

If the priest refers to the Lord Christ, the greatest High Priest, He receives the joyful grain offering, mixed with the oil with His sweet fragrance; and receives, as well, the tears and repentance of the sinners, without the oil of joy; Namely, He rejoices in our joyful praise, as well as in our tears.

2- THE STATUTE OF THE PEACE OFFERING:

We have already dealt with the divine command to the children of Israel concerning this sacrifice (Chapter 3). Here, though, He concentrates on the aspects concerning the priests. In this sacrifice, we notice:

(1) This being the only sacrifice in which the one who offers it shares it (with others), and has a portion of it. The law elaborately designated the

portion of the Lord, of the priest, and that of the one who offers it. The law distinguished between three kinds of peace offerings: a peace offering **for thanksgiving**; and a peace offering **for a vow**, and a peace offering for a **freewill offering** ...The first kind (the peace offering for **thanksgiving**), shall be eaten completely on the same day it is offered, nothing of it will be left until the morning (15). Whereas the second and the third, shall also be eaten on the same day it is offered, leftovers may be eaten the next day; but anything that remain for a third day, will be burned with fire (16). The reason for this, on one aspect, is not to eat corrupted flesh; and on another aspect to let the one who offers it make haste to eat it together with his friends, the poor and the needy in particular, so that all will rejoice together by this sacrifice. ... It probably also refers to the resurrection of the Lord Christ on the third day.

The **vow and the freewill** offerings are optional sacrifices that the law commits no one to offer. **The vow** is an optional pledge for something that man asks the Lord to give him; Whereas **the freewill offering** is most probably presented by man as a thanksgiving to God for some success or profit he has got. The vow is with a condition, whereas the freewill offering is not, but is voluntary. In case the animal vowed dies, lost, or got a blemish, the one who vowed is committed to present its price instead. But if that happens to the freewill offering, there will be no such commitment, on account of that the pledge concerns a particular animal. (22: 17-25).

(2) Together with the peace offering, a food offering is presented, that includes:

a- Unleavened cake mixed with oil, unleavened wafers anointed with oil, or cakes of finely blended flour mixed with oil (12).

b- Leavened cakes to be eaten together with the meat; nothing of it is to be put on the altar, on account of that it is leavened.

(3) We can say that **the peace offering for thanksgiving** includes three kinds: **the sacrifice, the grain offering, and the leavened cakes.**

Those three kinds probably refer to the commitment to present the life of thanksgiving through work, words, and mind. Namely, we should not give thank to God by our tongue, while we deny Him with our heart, or mind; Or by works and actions that are not in harmony with our words. Our whole life, outside and inside should be sung by the harp of the Spirit, to present an integral sacrifice of thanksgiving that brings forth pleasure to the heart of God

(4) Commenting on that, in the sacrifice of thanksgiving, the priest shall eat his portion and leave nothing of it to the next morning; as a reference

to his commitment to enjoy the Word of God, new with every morning: the scholar origin says: [The flesh of the sacrifices given to the priests, are the Words of God which they teach in the church. When they give a sermon to the people, they do not utter old literal words, but, with the grace of God, they utter words perpetually renewed as spiritual words]. In other words, the priest, spiritually kindled, although he present the unchangeable Word of God, yet it is counted as new every morning. The secret of its renewal is in the fiery heart of the priest, that kindles the hearts of his listeners, and reveals to them the secrets of God with a spiritual taste, that will never grow old. The scholar Origen says: [When the Lord gave the bread to His disciples, He said to them: "*Take, eat*" (Matthew 26: 26); and did not command them to leave some of it to the next day. This same secret meaning could be perceived in His instruction to them, saying: "*Take nothing for the journey, neither staffs nor bag nor bread nor money, and do not have two tunics apiece*" (Luke 9: 3); in order to present perpetually fresh food, the Word of God in you. The old Gibeonites became slaves – woodcutters and water carriers (Joshua 9: 21-23), on account of that they came to the Israelites carrying dry and moldy bread; although the spiritual law seeks the use of fresh and new bread all the time].

(5) As to the sacrifice concerning **the vow or freewill**; it could be eaten on the first and the second day they are offered, but anything remaining of it the third day will be burned by fire (17); it shall be an abomination to eat it (18).

According to the scholar Origen, the two days could be understood as the two testaments of the Holy Book, in which we are allowed to search and meditate in the words of the Lord.

(6) The sacrifice of peace cares that the one who partake of it should enjoy pure life, with no abomination nor defilement in him. It warned against three things:

a- The flesh of the sacrifice of the peace offering that touches any unclean thing shall not be eaten (19); but should be burned by fire.

b- The person who eats the flesh of the sacrifice of the peace offering that belongs to the Lord, while unclean, shall be cut off from his people (20).

c- The person who touches any abominable unclean thing, and eats the flesh of the sacrifice of the peace offering that belongs to the Lord, shall be cut off from his people (21).

If the flesh refers to the Word and teachings of the Lord, We can say that the first warning refers to that man should refrain to listen to the Word of God as interpreted by the heretics, who corrupt its sanctity; The second warning refers to that man himself cannot enjoy the holiness of the word of God, unless he, and his works are purified by the precious blood; And third warning refers to the impact of the evil friendships on us; that would deny us the enjoyment of the depth of the divine Word, and the taste of its sanctity. In other words, in order to enjoy the perfection of the activity of the Word of God in us, we are committed not to receive it through the heretic interpretation; nor through a

corrupt way of life in us; nor while in fellowship with wicked people who may corrupt the work of the Word in us.

I wish we receive the living and active Word of God from the Holy Church; by a pure mind, a holy heart, and in a spiritual and holy atmosphere – By that we can enjoy the gladness of the sacrifice of peace.

(7) The breast may be waved as **a wave offering** before the Lord. And the priest shall burn the fat on the altar, but the breast shall be given to

Aaron and his sons. Also the right thigh you shall give to the priest as **a heave offering** from the sacrifices of your peace offerings. ... What does this mean? .. The priest shall put the fat on the hand of the one, or on the hands of those who offer the sacrifice; puts the breast on the fat; puts his hands underneath the hands of those who offer the sacrifice, lifts them up, moves them upwards toward the four directions; then repeats the same thing with the right thigh. This refers to that the priest has offered the sacrifice to God, and offered thanksgiving to Him who fills the whole universe from East to West, and from North to South; Then he receives the breast and the right thigh of the sacrifice from the hands of God.... He delivers his (breast) to the Lord, to receive it again with a heart renewed in the Lord; ... And he delivers to Him his right hand to receive it again a spiritual hand that works to the account of the Lord.

By such rite of "*waving the breast and the right thigh*" the priest proclaims that he receives the work of God in his inner life (the breast), and in his apparent behavior (the right thigh); to have his whole life dedicated to the account of the Lord.

4- A CONCLUSION:

He concludes his talk, by confirming the bond between the sacrifice and the priesthood; and proclaiming that this law “*that God commanded to Moses*” ... should be elaborately followed for the sake of its holiness.



THE SECOND SECTION

THE CONSECRATION OF AARON AND HIS SONS

(CHAPTERS 8 to 10)

- | | |
|---|------------|
| 1- THE RITUAL OF CONSECRATION | Chapter 8 |
| 2- PRACTICING THE PRIESTHOOD WORK | Chapter 9 |
| 3- THE PRIESTHOOD WORK AND THE FOREIGN FIRE: | Chapter 10 |

CHAPTERS 8 to 10

THE CONSECRATION OF AARON AND HIS SONS

In the book of Exodus (Chapters 25 to 30), the prophet Moses enjoyed the divine command to him to set the tabernacle of meeting, to furnish it, to make the priestly attires, and to consecrate the priests. Chapters 35 to 40 came to proclaim the execution of the divine command concerning the setting of the tabernacle, and the divine acceptance of it; but the talk about the consecration of the priests was postponed to follow that about the sacrifices and offerings in the book of Leviticus (Chapter 1 to 7); to bind the sacrifices to the priesthood, and the priesthood to the sacrifices; For there is no sacrifice without a priest; and no priesthood outside the sacrifice.

If the priesthood of Aaron and his sons bears a symbol and a shadow of the priesthood of the Lord Christ, which is not set according to the order of Levi, but on that of Melchizedek (Hebrew 7); Yet, anointing Aaron and his sons reveals in a symbolic way the role of the priesthood of the Lord Christ.

These chapters reveal as well, the concept of the life of consecration to the account of the Highest Priest, our Lord Jesus Christ, as we are being anointed to our true Christ. This general consecration, to which every Christian, in the water of baptism, pledged to be only committed to the Lord, and to give Him his whole heart; to become thereby, a priest to Him, not with the concept of the priesthood got by the sacrament of priesthood, to practice the holy sacramental work; but the general priesthood, through which, every believer will have the right to stretch his hands to offer to God the sacrifices of thanksgiving, praise, prayers, and supplications. ... That is what St. John Chrysostom, who enjoyed the Sacrament of Priesthood, made clear, and wrote in his six books about "The Priesthood", the most magnificent works written by the fathers in this concern. About the general priesthood, he wrote:

[You, as well, have become, in the font of baptism, a king, a priest, and a prophet. You have become a king with authority to destroy the works of evil, and to kill your sins; ... You have become a priest to offer your life to God, as though slaying your body and soul to him; as it is written: "*If we die with Him, we shall also live with Him*" (2 Timothy 2: 11); ... And you have become a prophet, to know what will happen in the future, being inspired by God, sealed with the anointment of the Spirit].



CHAPTER 8

THE RITUAL OF CONSECRATION

The rite of consecration is set upon an important principle; namely, **“The sanctification by the blood of the Sacrifice”**; together with the consecration for the divine work by the Holy Spirit.

1- The preparation for the ritual of consecration	1 -- 5
2- Washing with water	6
3- Putting on the tunic of priesthood	7 - 9
4- Anointment with the oil	10 - 13
5- The sanctification by the Sacrifice	14 - 32
6- The consecration	33 – 36

1- THE PREPARATION FOR THE RITE OF CONSECRATION:

“And the Lord spoke to Moses, saying: ‘Take Aaron and his sons with him, and the garment, the anointing oil, a bull as the sin offering, two rams, and a basket of unleavened bread; and gather all the congregation together at the door of the tabernacle of meeting.

So Moses did as the Lord commanded him. And the assembly was gathered together at the door of the tabernacle of meeting. And Moses said to the congregation: ‘This is what the Lord commanded to be done’ (1 – 5

With great elaboration, Moses set everything to consummate the rite of consecration, particularly confirming two very important things:

(1) If he has set Aaron and his sons, brought them forth; has set the priestly tunics, the anointing oil, the animals to be slaughtered, the cakes for the grain offering; and has gathered together the whole congregation at the door of the tabernacle of meeting; All what he did was according to the commands of God; as the repeated praise of this chapter was: "*That is what the Lord commanded to be done*" (5); or: "*As the Lord had commanded Moses*" (4. 13, 17, 21, 29, 36, etc.).

It was not the right of the prophet Moses, the first leader of the people, to choose the priests, nor to set the rite of consecrating them, except according to God's plan and ordinance; to proclaim, that what was realized by the coming of the Lord Christ has been an eternal plan by the Father Himself; according to the words of the Lord: "*For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life*" (John 3: 16); And, "*And this is eternal life, that they may know You, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom You have sent;that I came forth from You, and they have believed that You sent Me*" (John 17: 3, 8). This act of sending the Son does not lessen His own positive role; as according to the apostle: "*As Christ also has loved us, and given Himself for us, an offering and a sacrifice to God, for a sweet smelling aroma; ... Just as Christ also loved the church and gave Himself for it*" (Ephesians 5: 2, 25). The Father has ordained it; as a positive role; and not as claimed by some Gnostics, that the Lord Christ is the Lover of mankind, while the Father, God of the Old Testament was cruel and violent. Both the Father and the Son have done their positive roles for our salvation; and their wills utterly conformed, being One in Deity, essence, and will.

If it was the Father who sent His Son, who bears the same will of the Father, without any contradiction; ... As far as the ordination of the priests is concerned – whatever their rank is – we are committed to deliver the matter into the hands of God, to choose by Himself, and to call whomever He wishes, to work His good will in them. That is why the Lord Christ counsels us to “*Pray the Lord of the harvest to send out laborers into His harvest*” (Matthew 9: 38). By this spirit, the church, in the holy Liturgy of the Eucharist, supplicates, saying: And those who define the word of truth, grant them to Your church to shepherd your herd in peace}.

It is the duty of every member of the church – a priest or any member of the congregation – to pray and to supplicate, with fasts and metanoias, to God to choose shepherds according to His own heart.

(2) If the priest is the choice of God, and the rite of his ordination is by such an elaborate divine ordinance; God, proclaiming that the priest is ordained for the sake of the congregation, commanded the prophet Moses to gather all the congregation together at the door of the tabernacle of meeting. In other words, the church is not just the priests, but is the congregation as a whole, including the priests as ministers to the people, working to the account of the kingdom of God; and to the account of the holy congregation, and not of their own account. That was what St. John Chrysostom proclaimed in many of his writings, confirming that the priest is a priest only for the sake of the people.

By this spirit, the church laws and the writings of the fathers confirm the commitment of the people, not only to pray for the sake of the choice of the priest, but to have a positive role in this choice by the Spirit of God. That is why in the consecration of the father Patriarch: it is proclaimed: [By the work of the Holy Spirit, with a good heart, and the consent of all the congregation...]. And in the consecration of the bishop, the laws of the apostles insist on that {The whole people, together with the priests and the deacons should gather

together}; And in the 'Apolides laws' it came: [The bishop is chosen from among the people; ... And on the day of His consecration, all the priests and the people say: 'We have chosen him].

According to some scholars, the word 'assembly' here, meaning 'the church' or 'Ecclesia', came for the first time in the Holy Book. As though the church meet for the first time at the anointment, to proclaim her presence through her Highest Priest, our Lord Jesus Christ, anointed as her Head; as the body will never exist except through its union with the Head.

2- WASHING WITH WATER:

Before putting the tunics of priesthood on Aaron and his children, the prophet Moses washed them with water (6), to confirm to them two important issues in their priestly life: the first is that the Holy God works in His holy priests, washed of every weakness; and the second, is that the priest – whatever is his rank – is a man under weakness, who needs to be washed first to be able to wash the feet of the others. That is what St. John Chrysostom confirmed to himself and to his brethren the priests, proclaiming the commitment of the priest to care for his own salvation to be able to care for that of his spiritual children; saying: [My words are of more benefit for my life than they are for those who listen to me].

And according to the scholar Origen: [The washing of the priests before putting on their priesthood attires refers to the importance of an overall washing in the water of baptism to be clothed with the Lord Christ; then of the need for continuous washing from evil, through isolation from it, to be always worthy of being clothed with the Lord Jesus Christ]. Of his words: [In truth, we cannot be clothed unless we first wash "*Wash yourselves, Make yourselves clean; Put away the evil of your doings*" Isaiah 1: 16]. If we do not first wash ourselves, we cannot be clothed with the Lord Jesus Christ, according to the words of the apostle: "*Put on the Lord Jesus Christ and make no provision for the flesh to fulfill*

its lusts” (Romans 13: 14). Let Moses wash you up, and let him clothe you by himself. How can Moses wash us up? ... In the holy book, Moses represents the law; as is also said in the gospel: “*They have Moses and the prophets, let them hear them*” (Luke 16: 29). The law of the Lord, then, will wash you up, and will dissolve your defilement, if you listen to it. ... You who intend to enjoy the holy baptism, and to gain the grace of the Spirit, you are committed to get purified by the law, namely, to hear the Word of the Lord, and to take away from yourselves your natural transgressions, and to appease your wild nature; so that, once you get humility and meekness, you would be worthy of enjoying the grace of the Holy Spirit... The Lord says through the prophets: “*Where is the place of My rest?!*” (Isaiah 66: 1)... “*On the one will I look; on him who is poor, and of a contrite spirit, and who trembles at My word*” (Isaiah 66: 2). Unless you are meek and humble, and receive the words of God with trembling, the grace of the Holy Spirit would not dwell in you; for the Holy Spirit goes away from the hypocrite and proud soul].

Commenting on the inner washing, St. John Chrysostom says: [Praying with unwashed hands is of no much importance, but to pray with unwashed mind is the most horrible evil. Listen to what the prophet Jeremiah said to the Jews who were too preoccupied with the outer defilement: “*O Jerusalem, wash your heart of wickedness, that you may be saved; How long shall your evil thoughts lodge within you?*”(Jeremiah 4: 14). I wish we also wash ourselves , not with mire, but with clean water; by giving alms, and not by greed. “*Let us turn away from evil and do good*” (1 Peter 3: 11)..

3- PUTTING ON THE TUNIC OF PIESTHOOD:

Having washed Aaron and his sons, Moses put on them their tunic of priesthood, to let them appear before God, not clothed with fig leaves like the first Adam, nor with garments of skin taken from dead animals (Genesis 3), that proclaim their need to be covered; but they were clothed with the Lord Christ Himself, and hid

in Him, being the Highest Priest who works in His priests. According to St. John Chrysostom: [The Lord Himself is the One who works, who proceeds all; We carry out the role of servants, but He Himself is the One who blesses and transform the offerings].

What we say about the priests being clothed with the Lord Christ, to practice their priesthood work, we also say concerning every believer practicing his daily life of worship; as without Him our worship is not received. According to the scholar Origen; [Comparing the tragedy in which the first man dwelt, through sinning, to that of holiness and faith. It is said that God made garments of skin taken from dead animals; which conform with the sinner; being a symbol of death caused by sin, and of his fall and of the perdition of his body. But, being washed and purified by the law, Moses will clothe you with another kinds of tunics, *“that your nakedness may not be exposed”* (Exodus 20: 26); so *“that mortality may be swallowed up by life”* (2 Corinthians 5: 4)].

“He put the tunic on him (on Aaron), girded him with the sash, clothed him with the robe, and put the ephod on him; and he girded him with the intricately woven band of the ephod, and with it tied the ephod on him. Then he put the breastplate on him, and he put the Urim and the Thummim in the breastplate. And he put the turban on his head. Also on the turban, on its front, he put the golden plate, the holy crown, as the Lord had commanded Moses” (7-9). Having already spoken about those clothes, and the symbols they carry, in our interpretation of the book of Exodus; I shall only quote here certain comments said by the scholar Origen in his sermons on the book of Leviticus.

(1) The priest puts on two tunics – he probably means the tunic and the robe – as, in the old covenant, the law was to be practiced ‘literally’, together with ‘spiritual understanding’. Whereas, in the new covenant, the priests were forbidden by the Lord to put on two tunics (Luke 3: 11); on account of that it is not befitting of them to receive the letter, but to walk by the

Spirit. Hence, when the apostles held the first council in Jerusalem, they decided not to burden the Gentiles who entered into faith, with the letter of the law; and provided them only with the tunic of Spirit (acts 15).

(2) The priest then girds himself with the sash, and with the band of the ephod; a reference to his commitment to be conservative in talk, as well

as in work; to preach by his mouth, as well as by his work, through a virtuous life and the purity of the body.

(3) On his breastplate he puts the 'Urim; and the 'Thummim', as a reference to his commitment to have 'wisdom', together with 'understanding';

namely 'truth' and 'knowledge'. [Beside having wisdom, the priest needs to have knowledge, in order to be able to answer anyone who asks him about the cause for faith and truth].

(4) The turban or the crown: "*And he put the turban on his head. Also on the turban, on its front, he put the golden plate, the holy crown, as the*

Lord has commanded Moses" (9), on which the name of the Lord is engraved (Exodus 28: 36); for He is the Head, and the adornment of all the members. [The fullness of the knowledge of God is what adorns your head].

4- ANOINTMENT WITH OIL:

In the second chapter, speaking about the grain offering, we saw that the oil refers to the anointment; and that the anointment enjoyed by Aaron and his sons was a symbol of the Lord Christ, who was not anointed by oil, but by his Holy Spirit, being the Highest Priest, who presents His life a burnt offering of love for our sins.

Aaron and his sons were anointed to have the right to offer sacrifices for their own sake, as well as for that of the people; and to raise prayers and

supplications. The Word of God, on the other hand, incarnated for our sake, as our representative, and the highest Priest, who intercedes with His blood before the Father, praying for us; and dwelling in us; by Him we pray and worship; and He receives these prayers. ... According to St. Augustine: [He prays for us, and in us, as we pray to Him; ... He prays for our sake, being our Priest; ... And prays in us, being our Head; ... And we pray to Him, being our God].

5- THE SANCTIFICATION BY THE SACRIFICE:

The Lord Christ, the Priest according to the order of Melchizedek, offered His own life a sacrifice on the cross for the sake of mankind; without the need to offer a sacrifice on Himself, being the living Son of God without blame. ... Aaron and his sons, on the other hand, could not practice the priesthood work, unless they become sanctified through the sacrifice; to have their life, senses, and talents sanctified to the account of the kingdom of God. That is why, on the day of their consecration, the following sacrifices were offered:

The calf of sin, on which head Aaron and his sons put their hands, to make it carry their sins and weaknesses (14); the ram of the burnt offering (18); and the ram of consecration, some of its blood was put by Moses on the tip of Aaron's right ear, on the thumb of his right hand, and on the big toe of his right foot; And did the same thing for Aaron's sons... to consecrate their spiritual ears (the right), to hear the voice of the Lord with understanding and wisdom, according to the words of the Lord: "*He who has an ear, let him hear*";... to consecrate their spiritual hands to work without slothfulness in the field of the Lord; ... and to consecrate their spiritual feet to set forth with the people along the way of the Lord toward the heavenlies.

"Then he took one an unleavened cake, a cake of bread anointed with oil, and one wafer, and put them on the fat, and on the right thigh; and put all of these in Aaron's hands and in his son's hands, and waved them as a wave offering before the Lord; Then Moses took them from their hands and burned them on the altar

on the burnt offering. And Moses took the breast and waved it as a wave offering before the Lord” (26-29).

We have already talked about those sacrifices and offerings, and the spiritual theological concepts, concerning waving them before the Lord. Some believe that the mentioned offering were put on Aaron’s and his sons’ hands, the Moses put his hands underneath their hands, and with his hands he waved their hands before the Lord, by lifting them up high, then moving them toward all the four directions, as a reference to the testimony to God, who is everywhere, as the Grantor and the Giver of gifts to man.

6- THE CONSECRATION:

In essence, ordaining them as priests for the Lord means to consecrate their whole inner life and apparent behavior to the account of the Lord.. Hence Moses said to them: *“Therefore, you shall abide at the door of the tabernacle of meeting day and night for seven days, and keep the charge of the Lord, so that you may not die, for so I have been commanded” (35).* Meaning, to find no comfort nor place out of the temple of the Lord; to spend all the days of their life ministering to the Lord, and not to be preoccupied with any material needs for themselves nor for the ministry; on account of that the Lord, Himself, is their portion and their inheritance; and they are His portion, He rejoices in their dwelling in His house, and satisfies them with abundance.

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CHAPTER 9

PRACTICING THE WORK OF PRIESTHOOD

Aaron and his sons abided seven days at the door of the tabernacle of meeting. And on the eighth day following their anointment they started, by the Lord's command, to offer burnt offerings, peace offerings, grain offerings, etc. Then God appeared to them, His glory was proclaimed to all the people; and fire came out from before the Lord and consumed the burnt offering and the fat on the altar. When all the people saw it, they shouted and fell on their faces (24)

1- The start of the work of priesthood on the eighth day	1
2- A divine command to offer sacrifices	2 - 7
3- Offering the sacrifices and the offerings	8 - 21
4- Blessing the people	22 - 23
5- The appearance of the divine glory	23
6- The divine fire	24
7- The shouting of the people	24

1- THE START OF THE WORK OF PRIESTHOOD ON THE EIGHTH DAY:

After the consummation of the rite of consecration of Aaron and his sons as priests, they did not start right away to practice the priesthood work, but abided at the door of the tabernacle of meeting day and night for seven days. On the eighth day they started practicing that task for their own sake, and for that of the people. Waiting until the eighth day, was a symbol of the new eternal life, namely the risen life in Jesus Christ; on account of that the eighth day is the first day of the new week -- The Lord was risen at the dawn of Sunday, namely at the dawn of the eighth day. ...

The priest cannot practice his priesthood work except by the Lord Christ, risen from the dead. Then he can set forth to work with the strength of resurrection. According to St. Augustine: [The day of the Lord is the eternal eighth day, sanctified by the resurrection of Christ, referring to the eternal rest of the body and the soul]. By the same thought we find that the celebration of the feast of the tabernacles happens on the eighth day (23: 36), when we take off the tent (tabernacle) of our body of dust, to enjoy the eternal building not made by hands (2 Corinthians 5: 1), by the power of the resurrection of the Lord Christ On the eighth as well, the sacrifices for the purification of those with body discharge were offered (Leviticus 15: 24, 29); and for the leprous (14: 10) – when man, by the resurrection of the Lord, gets the new creation in Jesus Christ (2 Corinthians 5: 14); so that there would be in us no defilement of the discharge of evil, or of the leprosy of sin.

2- A DIVINE COMMAND TO OFFER SACRIFICES:

In the first seven days, Moses offered sacrifices for the sake of Aaron and his sons; But on the eighth day, after the consummation of the rites of their consecration, and they came to the eighth day, as though into the resurrection of the Lord, they became committed to offer sacrifices and offerings for their own sake, and for that of the people

According to some Jewish scholars, the calf they offered as a sin offering (2), has been an atonement for the golden calf that was made by Aaron for the people (Exodus 22: 20); Anyway, Aaron and his sons were committed to offer a calf as a sin offering, and a ram as a burnt offering (2); at the expense of Aaron's and his sons' own money, and not at that of the tabernacle, nor of the people; to let them feel their need to atone on their own sins, the known to them and the unknown; together with their commitment to offer their life a burnt offering of love, perfect to God. We already spoke about those two offerings in chapters 1 and 4.

These two line of thoughts are perpetually confirmed by God to His priests: the feeling of their own weakness together with their other brethren, and their commitment of offering their whole life a burnt offering of love to God in the service of their brethren.

Having offered those two offerings, they, again offered for the people, a sin offering, a burnt offering, a peace offering, then a grain offering of fine flour mixed with oil (3 and 4). This order came to be appropriate to the needs of the people. The priest starts with seeking the forgiveness of sins through the sin offering; then proclaims his longing that God would receive the life of the whole people as a burnt offering for His pleasure. By so doing, the priest proclaims his thanksgiving to God through the peace offering, and his acceptance of fellowship with the delivered Lord Christ, through the grain offering of fine flour mixed with oil. ... He starts by seeking the mercy in the worthiness of the blood, and ends by receiving the life of Christ, delivered as a divine gift, lived by the church through her unity with her crucified Head.

3- OFFERING THE SACRIFICES AND OFFERINGS:

With such elaborate rites, Aaron and his sons consummated what the Lord commanded them to do, of offering sacrifices and offerings for their own sake, and for that of the whole people. ... We have already studied the spiritual concepts of those sacrifices and their rites in the first seven chapters of this book.

4- BLESSING THE PEOPLE:

Aaron blessed the people twice: the first time, it is said: "*Then Aaron lifted his hands toward the people, blessed them, and came down from offering the sin offering, the burnt offering, and the sin offering*" (22)

Concerning this blessing, we notice that Aaron lifted his hands up toward the people, probably proclaiming the authority of priesthood granted to him by God. Lifting the hands up probably refers to the appearance of the Lord Christ, symbolized by the hand. The blessing offered by the priest is nothing but the blessing we got in Jesus Christ, who blessed our nature in Him. ... The blessing was realized after offering the sacrifices; as it was not possible for mankind to receive the blessing of the Lord in them, except in the worthiness of the precious blood. Through the altar, the priest gathers together with the people, to offer the blessing, not his own, but that of the Lord, delivered for our sake.

The text of the blessing is most probably that offered by the Lord Himself to Moses; saying: *"The Lord bless you and keep you. The Lord make His face shine upon you, and be gracious to you. The Lord lift up His countenance upon you. And give you peace"* (Numbers 6: 22-26).

The second blessing was when Moses and Aaron entered together into the tabernacle of meeting, then came out, and blessed the people (23). In the first time he confirmed that the blessing will dwell through the holy sacrifice; But here, he confirms that the blessing is realized through two things: The first is **the gathering together of Aaron and Moses**, a reference to that of the priesthood with the prophetic work; namely, the worship with the spiritual evangelic understanding; No separation between our Aaron and our Moses; and no isolation of the priesthood work from the evangelic work.... The second is **entering together into the tabernacle**, a reference to getting our blessing through the holy church; as the priest is a member in the holy church, who received the Holy Spirit as a gift from her heavenly Groom. Concerning this St. Cyprian says: [There is no salvation outside the church].

Through these two blessings, we can say in short:

a- The blessing is the gift of the slain Christ through His priests.

b- The blessing is the gift of the Lord Christ through the church by the Holy Spirit, granted to her.

c- There is no separation between the blessing we get through the priestly work (Aaron), and the enjoyment of the Word of God (the prophet Moses).

5- THE APPEARANCE OF THE DIVINE GLORY:

Having received the blessing on the hands of Aaron (and Moses), through the holy sacrifice, inside the church, the Holy Book says: "*The glory of the Lord appeared to all the people*" (23)

We do not know the way by which the glory of the Lord appeared: Was it in the form of a dense cloud surrounding the people of God? ... Or was it in the form of a pillar of fire? ... Or was it through any other specific appearance toward the divine sanctuaries?! ... What we know when we enjoy the divine blessing, is the transfiguration of God by His glory in our depths, in a way, touched by our souls, and felt by our hearts.

The apostle says: "*God is manifested in the flesh; ... seen by angels*" (1 Timothy 3: 16). Receiving the blessing of the Lord, we come to be like angels, in whom God appears with His glory.

6- THE DIVINE FIRE:

"And fire came out from before the Lord and consumed the burnt offering and the fat on the altar" (24)

If sin is like a fire that consumes the soul, According to St. Augustine: [This fire would not be overcome, except by the fire of the Holy Spirit, who consumes evil, and kindles the soul with the holy life. ... Fire is therefore replaced by fire.

As the people were blessed, and to them the glory of God appeared, a fire came out from before God to proclaim that God has received their sacrifices, His pleasure with them, and, at the same time, it proclaimed God's glory and awe.

7- THE SHOUTING OF THE PEOPLE:

Having witnessed the glory of God, and having seen the fire come out from before God, that consumed the burnt offering, the people shouted and fell on their faces (24). That shout came as a natural reaction of the inner joy that filled their inner being; as a fruit of their gaining the blessing of the Lord, of their enjoyment of the divine glory, and of witnessing the holy fire. ... I wish our praise, as well, would not only be by uttering words of thanksgiving and praise to God by our mouths, but as a fruit of the exultation of our soul, the purity of our heart, and its gladness by gaining the true blessing, the transfiguration of the glory of God in us, and the fiery Spirit kindling in our depths; so that the tongue would utter what the inner man carries of true joy.

The people shouted and fell on their faces, proclaiming their perfect worship and submission before the Lord their God. Our joy in the Lord and our exultation are the true motives to our worship to Him, and our perfect submission to His will.

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CHAPTER 10

THE WORK OF PRIESTHOOD AND THE PROFANE FIRE

The eighth day after the consecration of Aaron and his sons, was exultant for all the people, for in it the glory of God appeared, fire came out from before the Lord to proclaim His pleasure and the acceptance of their sacrifice; and the people shouted and fell on their faces with an inner glorious joy. But two of Aaron's sons turned that joy and gladness into grief and bitterness, when, allegedly in a condition of drunkenness, they offered profane fire before the Lord, which He had not commanded them; and fire came out from the Lord and devoured them, and they died before the Lord; ... something that brought terror to all.

1- The profane fire	1
2- The prompt divine chastisement	2 - 3
3- The priest and the natural human sentiments	4 - 7
4- The priest and drinking wine	8 - 11
5- The priest and eating his portions of the sacrifices	12 – 20

1- THE PROFANE FIRE:

By the consecration of Aaron and his sons, and offering the sacrifice, the glory of God appeared to the people after gaining the blessing; All became as though in paradise, filled with gladness and shouting, on account of that man has returned anew to a friendship with God. But, the way disobedience has once corrupted the gladness of our first parents, so it did when two of Aaron's sons: Nadab and Elihu, brought forth grief and sadness over the whole people by offering profane fire before the Lord, which He had not commanded them; allegedly while in a condition of drunkenness; as the divine command promptly came from the Lord to forbid the priests from drinking wine or intoxicating drink in the tabernacle (8, 9).

Commenting on that event, St. Erinaos says: [Offering a profane fire on the altar of God; when they bring forth profane teachings, the heretics will certainly end up being devoured by a fire from heaven, the way it happened to Nadab and Elihu]. And according to the scholar Origen: [The way those who offered a profane fire before the Lord died. You too, when you are overcome by anger, or burned by lust, will come to be a victim of a shameful covetousness; on account of that such kinds of fire are all defilement, and whoever kindle them will most certainly have the same portion of Nadab and Elihu]. And according to St. Augustine: [The evil lust is like fire. ... Will fire consume the garment, while that of adultery will not consume the soul?!].

2- THE PROMPT DIVINE CHASTIZEMENT:

So fire went out from the Lord and devoured them, and they died before the Lord. Then Moses said to Aaron: 'This is the what the Lord spoke, saying: By those who come near Me, I must be regarded as holy; and before all the people I must be glorified'" (2, 3)

Surely, it was not easy on Aaron to see his sons consumed with fire before all.... But God allowed that firm lesson to happen at the beginning of the priestly work to demonstrate its seriousness and responsibility.. If the priest stands as an intercessor for his own sake and that of the people, through the holy sacrifice, he should practice the holy life, befitting of him, Otherwise he would face such a firm and public chastisements, more than all the people. The Lord says: *"By those who come near Me, I must be regarded as holy, and before all the people I must be glorified"*. Yes it was a bitter lesson, for all to perceive that God's love for His priests, and His listening to their voice, does not mean to be partial toward them. But the nearer they are to Him, they are rather committed to be holy, so that the Holy God would proclaim Himself in them.

Meditating in his responsibility before God to give an account, not only of his own sins, but of those of the people as well, St. John Chrysostom wrote down about the bitterness of his soul, saying: [What a cruel punishment could man expect, when he has to give an account, not just of his own sins, but rather to bear a more serious danger on account of sins committed by others?!

If we tremble to think about of our own judgment on the evils we have committed, being sure that we cannot escape from the fire that awaits us in the world to come; How much more pain would we go through, when we have to answer for sins committed by others?!

3- THE PRIEST AND THE NATURAL HUMAN SENTIMENTS:

Although Aaron and his other two sons were undoubtedly affected by seeing what happened to: Nadab and Elihu, Yet the divine commandment came to lift them up above the natural sentiments, saying: *“Do not uncover your heads nor tear your clothes lest you die, and wrath come upon all the people. But let your brethren, the whole house of Israel bewail the burning which the Lord has kindled. You shall not get out of the door of the tabernacle of meeting, lest you die, for the anointing oil of the Lord is upon you”* (6, 7)... Although bearing, as fathers and brothers, human sentiments, yet, being priests of the Lord, they are commanded, not to suppress or destroy those natural sentiments, but to lift them up to a higher level, to present them, not only to relatives according the blood, but to live as ministers to God to the whole congregation as brethren and children

Aaron and his sons were committed to stay in the tabernacle of meeting to minister to God. As to their commitments, even to bury Nadab and Abihu, there were others to fulfill. That is what the Lord Christ said to the young man whom He called for ministry: *“Let the dead bury their own dead, but you go and preach the kingdom of God”* (Luke 9: 60).

Commenting on that event, St. Jerome says: [It was said to them: *“Do not tear your clothes”* (6), namely, do not grieve like the heathens, lest you die; For to us sin is death. And in the same book of Leviticus we find a certain text which, although may seem cruel, yet is necessary for faith; which forbids the high priest to come near the dead bodies of his father, mother, brothers, or even his children (21: 10-12); lest any grief would probably distract his soul from being preoccupied with offering the sacrifice to God, when it has to be wholly dedicated to minister to the divine sacraments. We learn the same lesson from the gospel, seeing how the Lord forbade His disciple to go bid farewell from his household, and even to bury his dead father (Luke 9: 59, 62).

4- THE PRIEST AND DRINKING WINE:

To Aaron the divine command came: *“Do not drink wine or intoxicating drink, you, nor your sons with you, when you go into the tabernacle of meeting, lest you die. It shall be a statute forever throughout your generations, that you may distinguish between holy and unholy, and between clean and unclean ; and that you may teach the children of Israel all the statutes which the Lord has spoken to them by the hand of Moses”* (9, 10). ... According to the divine commandment, drinking wine was not forbidden as a material, being sometimes used as medicine, but it was forbidden as an intoxicating drink that might make the priest lose his reason and balance, his ability to distinguish between the clean and unclean, and to teach the people the divine statutes. And as said by St. Jerome: [So that God may keep their minds safe from the idiocy of intoxication, and make them understand how to practice their duties in ministering to God].

According to St. Jerome, this commandment is a kind of practicing fast; seeking from us to flee, even from the smell of wine; saying: [I wish you would never get to smell its odor, lest you hear the words of the philosopher, saying: [Instead of giving me a kiss, you gave me the taste of wine]]. Together with the old law, the apostle Paul (1 Timothy 3: 3), condemns the priests who drink wine.

The scholar Origen presents to us two interpretations of this commandment: one literal, and the other symbolic. In his **literal interpretation** he says: [God intends from those to whom He is their portion (Numbers 18: 20), to be well-balanced, particularly when they stand before the altar to pray to God, and are sanctified by His presence. Such commandment which preserves their strength, the apostle confirms in the law of the new covenant (1 Timothy 5: 22); saying that it is befitting of the priests *“not to be given to wine; but be sober-minded and self-controlled”* (Titus 1: 8, 7), If reason is the father of all virtues, intoxication with wine is the mother of all transgressions; which the apostle clearly demonstrated by saying: *“Do not be drunk with wine, in which is dissipation”* (Ephesians 5: 18); showing that dissipation is the firstfruit of wine].

In a **symbolic interpretation** of this commandment, addressed to Aaron and his sons, the scholar Origen says: [While Aaron refers to our Lord, being: "*The High Priest of the good things to come*" (Hebrew 9: 11); Aaron's sons refer to the apostles, to whom the Lord said: "*Little children, I shall be with you a little while longer*" (John 13: 33). What the law commanded Aaron and his sons not to drink wine or intoxicating drink when they come close to the temple (9), may apply, as well, to the true Priest, our Lord Jesus Christ, and to His children the priests, our apostles.

Let us assume that Aaron and his priests were drinking wine before they approach the altar; but once they do and enter into the tabernacle of meeting, they refrain from it.... Now, let us see how our Lord and Savior, the true High Priest, together with His disciples, the true priests drank wine (spiritually) before they approached the altar; but once they do approach it, they refrained.

The Savior came to the world to deliver Himself for our sins (Galatians 1: 4). Before giving it up, He was as though drinking wine, as it is written about Him: "*He is a gluttonous Man and a winebibber, a friend of tax collectors and sinners*" (Matthew 11: 19). But, once the time came for the crucifixion, to approach the altar to give His body up as a ransom, He took the chalice, blessed it, and gave it to His disciples, saying: "*Take and drink*"; as though He says to them: 'Drink, you who have not yet approached the altar; But, as far as I am concerned, having already approached it, "*I say to you, I will not drink of this fruit of the vine from now on until the day when I drink it new with you in My Father's kingdom*" (Matthew 26: 29).

What does He mean by saying, "*I will not drink of this fruit of the vine from now on until the day when I drink it new with you in My Father's kingdom*"? We may say that this promise was given to the saints to enjoy the new wine, being said: "*My cup runs over*" (Psalm 23: 5); and, "*Behold, My servants shall drink, but you shall be thirsty*" (Isaiah 65: 13). Such wine, mentioned in the Holy Book, refers to the joy and exultation of the soul;

By understanding the holy drunkenness through the promise to be exultant; we may perceive the significance of our Savior's refrain from drinking wine until the day He drink it new with His saints in His Father's kingdom (Matthew 26: 29); Meaning, that my Savior will go on crying on my sins,

and will not be able to taste joy as long as I persist on my disobedience. ... Why? Because He is the Intercessor (the Advocate) on my behalf before the Father; as, according to His intimate friend John the evangelist: *"If anyone sins, we have an Advocate with the father, Jesus Christ the Righteous; And He Himself is the propitiation for our sins"* (1 John 2: 1, 2). How, being an intercessor for my sins, could He drink of the wine of joy, while I make Him sad with my sins?!... How then, could He, who approaches the temple as propitiation for me, the sinner, how could He rejoice, when the sadness of my sins unceasingly goes up to Him?! ... He will continue to be sad as long as we are persistent on our sins; ... If His apostle says: *"I shall mourn for many who have sinned before and have not repented of the uncleanness, fornication, and licentiousness, which they have practiced"* (2 Corinthians 12: 21); How about Him, who, because of His love for us, *"emptied Himself"* (Philippians 2: 7)?!; He who, while equal to the Father *"did not seek what is His own"* (1 Corinthians 13: 5), but what is good for us, and emptied Himself for our sake?! ... Will He, after seeking what is good for us, cease now to search for us, and to think about what is good for us?! ... Will He not grieve on our sins, and weep on our losses and wounds?! ... He who lamented over Jerusalem, saying: *"O Jerusalem, Jerusalem; ... How often I wanted to gather your children together, as a hen gathers her chicks under her wings, but you were not willing"* (Matthew 23: 37)?! He who bore our wounds, and who, for our sake, suffered,; Will He, the Physician of our souls and bodies, now disregard the inflammation of our wounds, about which the prophet says: *"My wounds are foul and festering, because of my foolishness"* (Psalm 38: 5)?! ... That is why He, now, *"appears in the presence of God for us"* (Hebrew 9: 24); He stands before the temple to present to God a ransom as atonement for our sake. Approaching the temple, He says: *"I will not drink of this fruit of the vine from now on until I drink it new with you in My Father's kingdom"* (Matthew 26: 29). ... He is waiting for us to change, to follow His lead, and to carry His features; to rejoice together with us, and to drink with us the wine (the spiritual joy) in the kingdom of the Father. ... Being *"Merciful and Gracious"* (Psalm 103: 8); with a greater emotion than that of His apostle, He weep together with those who weep, longing to rejoice together with those who rejoice; He mourns more than His apostle over those who have sinned before and did not repent yet (2 Corinthians 12: 21). It is not befitting of us to think that Paul would be grieved and mourn over the evildoers, while our Lord ceases to weep when He approaches The Father before the altar, to present Himself a ransom as propitiation for us. ...

We say that, while approaching the temple, He refrains from drinking the wine of joy, grieving over our sins ... His joy would be postponed by our slothfulness in our life.

How long will He wait?! ... Until "*He finishes His work*" (John 17: 4)... And when will He finish His work?! ... When He makes out of me, the least of all, and the most evil of sinners, perfect! His work will be counted as unfinished, as long as I am still imperfect; ... as long as I am still not subject to the Father (1 Corinthians 15: 28); Because of me, He, Himself, will be counted as not subject to the Father; and His work as not yet finished].

The scholar Origen consummates his talk about the commitment of Aaron and his sons, the priests, to refrain from drinking wine when they are about to approach the altar. Having talked about the Lord Christ to whom Aaron was a symbol, he now talks about the apostles and the disciples, to whom Aaron's sons are symbols. He says: [We should not forget that it is not only Aaron who refrains from drinking wine when he enters into the sanctuary, but his sons also do. The apostles, as well, have not yet got their joy, but they wait until we get a portion together with them in their joy. The saints will not get the reward they deserve on their departure from here, but our slothfulness will make them wait; they will not have the fullness of joy, as long as they grieve on our sins and weep for our sake.... To provide you with a good testimony of what I am saying, and not to let you doubt it; After numbering the saints who were counted as righteous, the apostle adds: "*All those, having obtained a good testimony through faith, did not receive the promise; God having provided something better for us, that they should not be made perfect apart from us*" (Hebrew 11: 39, 40)..... Abraham, therefore is still waiting to enjoy the state of perfection; so are Isaac and Jacob, and all the other prophets, they are waiting to get the eternal happiness together with us;... There will be one body that resurrects on the day of judgment].

If you are a saint, although you will have joy on the day of your departure; Yet your joy will be consummated when no member lacks from the body; you will have to wait for your brethren, the way your brethren who preceded you waited for you.

5- THE PRIEST AND EATING HIS PORTION OF THE SACRIFICE:

It so seems that grief filled the hearts of Aaron and his sons on what happened to Nadab and Elihu; or they probably have been in such terror and trembling, to be able to eat their portions of the sacrifice; Hence Moses encouraged them to forsake their grief and to eat their portions of the grain and peace offerings; reminding them of the divine commandment concerning eating their portions with a specific rite. Inquiring about the goat of the sin offering, and there it was burned up against the rite, which should be eaten by the priests, as a sign of God's acceptance of the sacrifice, Moses got angry with the sons of Aaron , but not with Aaron himself, probably on account of his position as the high priest ... But, on behalf of his sons, Aaron presented the excuse that they could not bring themselves to eat on the same day that the tragedy happened; and he probably, as well, said that while their hearts were grieved for feeling that what Nadab and Abihu have done was a shame for them; How would it be befitting of them to eat with hearts so heavy with the reproach of sin?! ... Hearing the excuse of Aaron, Moses "was content" (20),

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THE THIRD SECTION

A GUIDE TO THE STATUTES OF PURIFICATION

(Chapters 11 to 15)

Food permitted and forbidden	Chapter 11
The purification of a woman after childbirth	12

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If the Holy God accepts us to Him as a holy people through the sacrifice (Chapters 1 to 70, offered by the priest (Chapters 8 to 10), this holy life in the Lord has its own statute and rite to which every member of the congregation is committed. This statute was given to the Jewish people -- primitive in their spiritual and social life -- in a material way that touches their food (Chapter 11), their bodily birth (Chapter 12), the safety and cleanness of their bodies and clothes (Chapter 13, 14, 15), ... things that we have to understand on the spiritual, and not the literal level, to live it according to an evangelic concept, to have it touch our inner depths.

CHAPTER 11

FOOD PERMITTED AND FORBIDDEN

In His fatherhood and care for mankind, God presented to men of the old covenant the statutes of food – permitted and forbidden. That statute came to bear spiritual concepts that touch our inner life. Hence He ended it by saying: *“For I am the Lord your God. You shall therefore sanctify yourselves, and you shall be holy, for I am holy”* (44); repeating the word saying: *“For I am the Lord who brings you up out of the land of Egypt, to be your God. You shall therefore be holy, for I am holy”* (45). ... Namely, that this law is not just for food and drinks, but for the enjoyment of the holy life in the holy Lord.

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1- THE ANIMALS, PERMITTED AND FORBIDDEN:

*“These are the animals which you may eat among all the beasts that are on earth:
Among the beasts, whatever
divides the hoof, having cloven hooves and chewing the cud – that you may eat”*
(2,3)

God commanded man not to eat of beasts except whatever divides the hoof, and chew cud at the same time. That was the statute of animals – permitted and forbidden in the old covenant; which, according to many fathers, bears symbols that touch the life of the believer, and his relationship to God:

(1) Concerning “chewing the cud”, according to many fathers, like father Barnabas, St. Clement of Alexandria, St. Erinaos, St. Jerome, and

others, chewing the cud refers to the perpetual meditation in the word of God, day and night. About chewing the cud, according to father Barnabas, It is as though Moses says to us: ‘Attach yourselves to those who fear the Lord, who meditate in His teachings with humble hearts, talk about, and keep His will; and in their joyful meditation they always quote the words of God’.

And according to the scholar Origen, chewing the food, already eaten, refers to setting forth from the literal to the spiritual meaning of the divine word, and to soar up in understanding it, from the lowly seen things to the higher unseen things.

(2) According to St. Jerome, the cloven-hoofed animals refer to the believer who meditates in the word of God in both the Old and the

New Testaments, and (chew their cuds) together. The Jews, having rejected the New Testament, are counted as having non-cloven hoofs, namely unclean. Similarly, some Gnostics who reject the Old Testament, are so counted. But the man of the church who he believes in the two testaments together, and deeply meditates in them, is counted as cloven-hoofed and a curd-chewer. What is buried in the letter (as though in his stomach), he retains to re-chew through the Spirit].

(3) St. Clement of Alexandria, confirming what is said by St. Erinaos, that the cloven-hoofed animal refers to him who knows how to walk by the

truth in this world, and the world to come; says: [The spiritual man has the word of God in his mouth, chews the spiritual cud, and by the

righteousness, his hoof is truly cloven, as he sanctifies us in this life, and motivates us toward the eternal life].

(4) St. Erinaos also says: [The cloven-hoofed animals refer, as well, to the believers with abiding faith in the Father and the Son together; who

do not deny the divinity of the Father, nor that of the Son. Whereas the whole hoofed animals refer to the heretics who deny the divinity of the

Son.

(5) If the hooves, as well as the nails, represent dead parts of the body, the cloven hoof refers to cleaving what is dead in us, namely to the

crucifixion of the body lusts. If chewing the cud refers to the enjoyment by the soul of the Word of God, as the secret of her inner life, the cloven hoof refers to the crucifixion of the body lusts; as though the two tasks are integral: the life of the Spirit together with bringing the evil covetousness of the body to death.

(6) According to the scholar Origen: [An animal is not considered clean, unless the two conditions are realized together; namely, we should not

eat those animals that seem clean on one aspect and unclean on another. Those who chew the cud, but do not have the cloven hoof, are as unclean as those who have the cloven hoof, and do not chew the cud; And according to the scholar Origen, the same could be said concerning some of those philosophers and heretics who show fear from the judgment, and walk with reverence and caution, yet they do not meditate in the Word of God, nor have the true faith.

The statute presents to us examples of the unclean animals we are forbidden to eat, like the camel, the rock hyrax, and the hare (4, 5, 6), as cud-chewing, but are not cloven-hoofed; and the swine, which though divides the hoof, having cloven hooves, yet does not chew the cud.

We are familiar with all these animals, except for the 'coney' or the 'rock badger', a little animal like a rabbit, yellowish-black in color; although its fur may take on the color of the land on which it lives, as a kind of camouflage; It lives among the rocks (Psalm 104: 18; Proverbs 30: 26), but does not dig holes to live in ... Owing to its outer appearance, and because it moves its lower jaw as though chewing cud, it was wrongly mistaken for a cud-chewer; has no cloven hoof, but front feet, each with four sharp-clawed toes, and hind feet, each with three sharp claws. It lives in small groups, led by one that resides over a high place, to act as a watching guard to give an alarm in case of danger; rarely seen except in the early morning or late in the night, when they come out to hunt for their food. They live in the Arab peninsula, in North Palestine, and in the

region of the Dead Sea. Their scientific name is 'Procaira syriaca'. The 'rock badger' is counted as an unclean animal on account of its lack of a cloven hoof; and known for its hateful and violent nature.

The swine symbolizes uncleanness and greed. According to St. Clement of Alexandria: [As an unclean animal, the swine symbolizes much talk (owing to its continuous noise); and because of its greed, its lustful fornication; as well as being fond of living in the mire, it is only bred to be slaughtered for its flesh]. And according to St. Erinaos: [It is as though Moses says: Do not attach yourselves to those who forget the Lord when they are prosperous, and remember Him only in the time of need; like the swines that disregard their master while eating, and unceasingly scream until they are given food].

The Phoenicians, the Ethiopians, and the Egyptians, consider the swine is an unclean animal. Although the ancient Egyptians used to eat it as a sacrifice during the feast of the god of the moon and Osiris; yet if anyone touches a swine, he was committed to get washed; a shepherd of swines was not allowed in the temple, and it was difficult for him to find a girl to marry, except one of his own profession. Shepherding swines was considered by the Jews to be the lowest and most despised profession, only taken by the needy (Luke 15: 15); Using swine as sacrifices, and eating their flesh referred to heathen sexual abomination (Isaiah 65: 4; 66: 17). In the era of Antichus the fourth, the Jews were ordered to eat the flesh of swine, as a way of forcing them to deny their faith, and to follow that of their occupiers. That is why the Maccabians refrained from eat it as a sign of their faithfulness to their faith.

In the days of the Lord Christ, some people took up the profession of breeding swine, not to eat its flesh themselves, but to sell to the Greeks and the Romans; and were therefore commonly despised for loving profit at the expense of their own purity. The Lord Christ gave the shepherds of swine at the country of the Gergesenes a lesson, when He allowed the demons to go out of the two demon-possessed men and enter into the herds of swine, that the whole herd of swine ran violently down the steep place into the sea, and perished in the water (Matthew 8: 32). And speaking of the fruit of going astray, He gave a parable of a prodigal son who, having lost everything, he had to work as a shepherd of swine, and to share the pods that the swine ate

(Luke 15: 15, 16); And intending to portray the horror of him who disregards what is holy, He said: *“Do not cast your pearls before swine, lest they trample them under their feet, and turn and tear you in pieces”* (Matthew 7: 6). And portraying the swine as a worthless being, the Holy Book says: *“As a ring of gold in a swine’s snout, so is a lovely woman who lacks discretion”* (Proverbs 11: 22).

2- THE AQUATIC ANIMALS:

The clean land animals are featured as cloven-hoofed, and cud-chewers, a reference to the holy life in the Lord, set on the unceasing meditation in the Word of God, in both the Old and the New Testaments, to live a holy life on earth, as well as in eternity; Or in other words, to be sanctified here, to have our hearts in heavens, anticipating the perfect eternal reward. ... The clean aquatic animals proclaim man’s need for the different means of grace, of prayers, metanoias, and the enjoyment of the holy sacraments, in order to practice the practical life of faith in the Lord.

To be considered as clean, the aquatic animals have to have fins that helps them to swim, and scales that protect them in the habitat in which they exist. What are these fins, but the means of grace that support the believer to swim in the waters of this world, by the work of the Spirit of God dwelling in him, without being swept away by the torrential currents; and what are these scales but these means that protect him in the Lord against any evil opposition.

3- THE BIRDS:

If the clean land animals refer to our bond with the Word of God, and to the living faith in us; and reveal the need for the means of grace the birds proclaim the need for the practical behavior, particularly toward our brethren. Our study of the divine Word would therefore, meld with our worship, and our behavior, in a tight unity.

How could the clean birds reveal the practical behavior in dealings with our brethren? ... The statutes proclaimed a list of the hated unclean birds, most of which are featured by snatching, falling down upon, and feeding on dead carcasses; ... In other words the statutes warn us

against viciousness, robbery, oppression, and greed, ... etc. in our relationship with our brethren. According to St. Clement of Alexandria: [The eagle refers to robbery, the hawk to oppression, and the raven to greed].

Speaking about the unclean birds, the scholar Origen says: [Like the birds that feed on dead carcasses, are those who anticipate the death of their brethren, and exchange covenants with deception and craftiness. And like the snatcher birds, are those who, apparently teach, read, and search in the heavenly issues, and the divine care; yet, at the same time, they walk their life, contrary to the divine law, with oppression and robbery of their neighbors. By their knowledge and words, they seem like being in heaven; while, by their wicked behavior, they consummate the works of the body; to be worthy of being likened to eagles and vultures, that fall down from up high upon the dead carcasses ... Some others, even though they do not snatch, but are fond of the darkness, like owls and fisher owl (17), "*For everyone practicing evil hates the light, and does not come to the light, lest his deeds be exposed*" (John 3: 20)].

And according to father Barnabas: [By (the unclean birds) he means to warn us to have no fellowship with those who do not know how to earn their living by labor and perspiration, but by robbery and devouring others; those who may seem innocent, when they are truly not; those who lie in wait for their victims to fall down upon them to tear up their flesh; to be like those birds that do the same with their preys].

Beside this general account on the unclean birds, I should like to give a concise comment about some of them individually:

The eagle: It is one of the most fierce birds of prey; allegorically called the king of birds, on account of its power, large size, sharp sight, and swift flying (Deuteronomy 28: 49; Job 9: 26; 39: 30; Proverbs 23: 5; 30: 17-19; Isaiah 40: 31; Ezekiel 17: 3; Habakkuk 1: 8). Because eagles are well known for their exalted care of its young, hovering over them until the little one can fly on their own (Exodus 19: 4; Deuteronomy 32: 11; Psalm 103: 5); intending to proclaim His love and care for His people, God says: "*As an eagle stirs up its nest, hovers over its young, spreading out its wings, taking them up, carrying them on its wings; So the Lord alone led them, and there was*

no foreign god with Him" (Deuteronomy 32: 11, 12). And the believer was likened to an eagle with its renewed youth (Psalm 103: 5); and its relatively long life.

Intending to chastise His people, God warned them that *"He will bring a nation against them from afar, from the end of the earth, as swift as the eagle flies, a nation whose language you will not understand; a nation of fierce countenance which does not respect the elderly, nor show favor to the young"* (Deuteronomy 28: 49, 50). ... About the Chaldeans it was said, *"They fly as the eagle that hastens to eat"* (Habakkuk 1: 8); And to the arrogant Edom:: *"Though you make your nest as high as the eagle, I will bring you down from there;, says the Lord"* (Jeremiah 49: 16); And, *"Though you exalt yourself as high as the eagle, and though you set your nest among the stars, from there I will bring you down', says the Lord"* (Obadiah 4).

Thus the eagle, therefore symbolizes the care of God, who carries His people as though on the eagle's wings. Yet, it symbolizes, as well, the violence and swiftness to snatch; hence the nations by whom God chastised His people, were likened to eagles.

The Cherubim carries a face like an eagle (Ezekiel 10: 14; Revelation 4: 7). And in the Christian art, the eagle symbolizes the Evangelist St. John; and refers to the Divinity soaring up high; as well as to the resurrection. Referring at the same time to the devastating power, the Persians used the eagle as the symbol of their old empire; hence the prophet Isaiah described them as *"A bird of prey from the East"* (Isaiah 46: 11); and It became a symbol of the ancient Roman army; and recently of the American army, and several of other nations.

The secret of considering it as an unclean bird in the Mosaic law, is its violence in snatching prey.

The vulture: ossifrage, and in Latin ossifraga; meaning (the bone breaker); and in Hebrew perez, for it finds pleasure in breaking bones. It used to carry the huge tortoises up high, then cast it down on the rocks to be broken to pieces, to be able to feed on its scattered flesh and marrow. It is also called (the bearded bird) 'gypaetus barbatus', on account of having black feathers underneath its chin. It can reach about three feet and a half in length, with its wings

stretching to about nine feet. It is a rare kind of bird, found on the rocky mountains around the Dead Sea and in Sinai.

The buzzard: osprey; a bird of prey, looks like the eagle, called the (fish-eating eagle) on account of living on the beaches and feeding on fish, although also on carcasses. Because it is known for its swift flying, sharp sight, and strength, an Arabic proverb says: “as mighty as the buzzard of the air”. In Hebrew it is called ‘ozniyyah’, and in the Septuagint version it is called “haliaetus’ or ‘pandion haliaetus”.

The kite: an unclean bird of prey like the eagle, although much smaller in size; darker in color; it can stand still in the air to watch its prey from high above. There are many kinds of kites, abundant in Palestine.

The falcon: Known for its high pitched cries. And because of its sharp sight; it is said: “*That path no bird knows, nor has the falcon’s eye seen it*” (Job 28: 7)

There are several kinds of falcons (Deuteronomy 14: 13) of which are:

- a- The black falcon “milvus migrans (ater)’; a well known bird as a summer visitor, which appear in Marsh in Palestine; feed on carcasses; and makes its nest out of multicolored bits and pieces.
- b- The yellow-billed falcon or ‘milvus aegypticus
- c- The red falcon or “milvus milvus”; gregarious in winter; feed on locusts.

The raven: known for snatching and robbery (Proverb 30: 17); greedy, feeds on anything it finds, even carcasses and trash; That is probably why when it was sent out of the Ark to explore the land, it did not return to find comfort in Noah’s bosom like what the dove did (Genesis 8: 7). Fond of picking out the eyes of its prey (Proverb 30: 17). And when God intended to proclaim the extent of His care of His prophet Elijah, He sent him a raven with bread and meat twice a day (1 Kings 17: 2-7); turning the tool of snatching, robbery, and greed, into a tool by which to sustain His prophet.

The ostrich: of the largest of birds, with a height up to the top of its head of two and a half meters; and a weight up to 75 kilograms; known for its foolishness and cruelty (Lamentation 4: 3), probably on account of that it does not make a nest to lay its eggs like the other birds, but lays them in the open air, to trample on them itself, or to be eaten by other animals. Some people claim that, when it sees the hunters, it buries its head in the sand, assuming that by so doing, it would not be seen. It usually lives in the barren wilderness, in Africa, West Asia, and the Syrian desert. It is known for its great running speed; and its high-pitch wailing and mourning screams (Micah 1: 8: Job 30: 29).

The short-eared owl (the night hawk): According to some, it is a kind of owl, a snatcher, or the bird known as sissy, but, more probably it is the male ostrich, of larger size, and more beauty than the female.

The uckoos, 'shahaph' in Hebrew, 'laros' in the Septuagint version, and 'larus' in the Volgata; of which there are many kinds, sometimes called the (sea raven), (Norris) or (sea-gull); an aquatic bird that feed upon fish and insects. Abundant on the beaches and lakes of Palestine.

The hawk: A bird of prey of the 'Shaheen' kind, of which (*accipiter nisus*); is abundant in Lebanon, and the Galilee hill in summer, and in Judea and Arabia in winter; And (*falco tinnunculus*), abundant in Palestine all the year round. With wide breast and long neck, known for swift flying, not enduring thirst, and for its greed; claimed to feed upon birds of its own kind, even its spouse or parents. used to be considered as holy by the ancient Egyptians; who counted killing it a major crime, even if unintentionally done.

The little owl: (*athene saharae* 'persica'); a bird of prey, with broad head and wide eyes. Considered by many Eastern as a bad omen, on account of its ugly face, its sad noise, and because it lives among the ruins; to call someone who is ugly or halfwit as 'owlish'. Although many others in Australia, and among the Arabs, on the contrary, see it as a good omen. It hides in its nest by day, and comes out by night to hunt rats, insects, and birds in their nests, and feed on their eggs.

The fisher awl: (Cormorant – phalacrocorax carbo); an aquatic bird that swim, dive in water, and feed on fish; very abundant on the Mediterranean coasts of Palestine and the Sea of Galilee.

The great awl or screech awl; claimed to be as large as a goose, gray in color with black spots on its cheeks. with long legs, and short tail; Like the awl it cries out often at night, hence is considered as bad omen by some; although is said to be favored by kings, on account of its very orderly way of flying in a raw headed by a leader or a guide, which could be replaced in case it gets tired. And they sleep in groups in a circle with a guard on watch in its center; to be replaced as well by another at the end of its watch. It mostly lives in dirty places (Isaiah 34: 11), in caves and ruins; abundant in the region of Patra and Beersheba..

In the Septuagint version its name came as (ibis), and in the Terjom as (awl); and some claim it to be a kind of hawk or of the Egyptian awl known as (bubu ascalaphus)

The swan (tinshemeth in Hebrew), and (porphyron) in the Septuagint version. According to some it is (the water chicken), an aquatic bird that feed on fish, frogs, little birds, insects, and snakes. White in color and has wings with black tips; and one of its kind is black. It is also called (the crop) because of its large crop.

The pelican: (koath in Hebrew); sometimes called a diver, or a hawk; looks like a swan, though smaller in size, loves water as well; lives in the wilderness (Psalm 102: 6), and among the ruins (Isaiah 34: 11; Zephaniah 2: 14).

There are two kinds of pelican: the white pelican (*Pelecanus onocrotalos*), and the Dalmatian (*pelecanus crispus*); the former more social than the later, which are mostly seen alone. Its toes are connected with a web that helps it in its aquatic habitat. Its neck and beak are long, the lower beak split, and out of it comes down a large crop in which it stores the fish it catches, to throw to its young to eat; hence called by some (the vomiter). In winter it is abundant on lake (Holla), and on the Sea of Tiberias.

The carrion vulture: (gier eagle); According to some, it is no doubt the Egyptian vulture or 'Pharaoh's chicken' neophron pernopterus). Generally white with black-tipped wings; although its young are brown in color. It is close in shape to the eagle; two feet long, a swift flier; lives among

the ruins, and feeds on insects and carcasses. It is a migratory bird, flies in summer from South France, through Southern Europe and North Africa as far as West India.

The stork: It loves its chicks; has its home in the fir trees (Psalm 104: 17); a migratory bird (Jeremiah 8: 7); of which there are two kinds: the white ((*ciconia alba*), and the black (*ciconia nigra*). The former spend the winter in middle and south Africa; then depart in the spring, in great numbers, to Europe, Palestine, and north Syria; four feet high; with long neck, red legs, and black-tipped wings. It feeds on frogs, snails, and insects, and on trash if it finds nothing of the former. Considered in several countries as a holy bird, it is forbidden by law to hunt it; and having no fear of man, it dares to enter houses. The black kind is abundant in Palestine, particularly in the valley of the Dead Sea. In Arabic it is called (Loklok) on account of that it makes such a sound by its beaks.

The heron (or parrot): a kind of birds called (*ardeidae*), (*Gralltores*), usually large in size, with long beak, and naked long legs; slow in its flight, feed on fish and reptiles; abundant in the region of 'Holla' lake; in the company of the cattle on the pastures around the lake. The general kind of heron (*ardea cinera*) is abundant in the region of the River Jordan and its lakes, and on the coast of Palestine; together with the scarlet heron (*ardea purea*), and other kinds of aquatic birds like the pelicans.

The hoopoe (*hodhod* in Arabic; *dukiphath* in Hebrew), and "*vanellus cristatus*" in Latin); a "*charadriidae*"; a little beautiful bird, black-striped; with long strong beak; known for its crown or fan of feathers above its head. A friendly bird of the farmer, on account of that it feeds upon the harmful insects and worms. A migratory bird, found in middle and south Europe. in Asia, north and middle Africa; and appear in Palestine in March; and at the onset of winter it migrates to Egypt.

The bat: a Mammal, although counted among the birds on account of that it flies by wings, although different from those of birds. Its body is covered with hair; walks on its feet like a rat; with no beak but has teeth in its mouth; Because its poor eye sight in the bright light, it hides during the day; and because it sees well in the dim light, it flies at the onset of the night to hunt

for flying insects and mosquitoes, to eat them while flying. Although it does not see in the pitch darkness, it manages to avoid objects in its way; for the fact that it emits sound pulses that are reflected back from the objects; a principle on which Radar was invented.

Bats dwell among the deserted dirty ruins and caves (Isaiah 2: 20); claimed to be long living; mentioned the last of the list by the Holy Book on account of that it is not a bird but a mammal.

4- THE FLYING INSECTS:

Generally speaking, insects are inedible, except for four kinds: the locusts, the destroying locusts, the cricket, and the grasshopper (22), all of which are allowed to be eaten. *“But all other flying insects which have four feet shall be an abomination to man”* (23). ... However it is allowed to eat *“the flying insects that creeps on all fours, those which have jointed legs above their feet with which to leap on the earth”* (21); referring to that the hind legs are longer than the forelegs; and have three joints: one corresponds to the thigh, one corresponds to the leg, and the third corresponds to the foot, in land animals.

After warning against eating the unclean flying insects, He warns against particular cases of uncleanness:

(1) Whoever touches the carcass of any dead unclean animal, shall be unclean until the evening; namely until the end of the day and the

beginning of a new one. He is not allowed to enter into the house of the Lord, to mix with clean people, to eat from the sacrifices, nor to touch any holy thing until evening, when he has to wash his clothes (24, 25). Under the same law will be he, who touches the carcass of any beast which divides the foot, but is not cloven-footed, or does not chew the cud” (26)

(2) Whoever touches the carcass of *“whatever goes on its paws”* like the dog, the cat, the rat, the monkey, etc. (27, 28).

(3) Whoever touches any of the following 8 kinds that creep on the earth (29, 30), like:

- a- The **weasel**, counted by some as a kind of rats, which dwell in holes in the fields, and sometimes in the houses. A strong enemy against the rats which he devours, beside other small animals and carcasses; may harm little kids while sleeping; and snatch glittering things like coins and hide them in its holes.
- b- The **mouse**: dwell in the houses and fields, feed upon the crop, and carry plagues(1 Samuel 6: 4, 5); was eaten by the Israelites in a heathen rite, regardless of the law (Isaiah 66: 17); and used by Arabs as an example of robbery, saying: 'more robber than a mouse'.
- c- The **tortoise**: a land reptile close to the crocodile in shape; dwells in the wilderness, about two feet long, with a multi-joined tail, that it is said; 'more complex than the tail of a tortoise'; capable of changing color according to the habitat where it is found; fond of eating the eggs of the crocodile.
- d- The **lizard**: a name given to several kinds of reptiles; the most beautiful of which are the green ones found in the forests and agricultural lands. One of its kinds are common in Egypt called 'Bors', on account of that its skin is covered with spots like a leper; climb walls and rocks.
- e- The **ferret**, gecks: a kind of wall lizard, similar in shape to the 'Bors', with white spots on its back, and with suckers on its palms by which it can climb walls and ceilings by a sucking action. The kind abundant in the houses of Palestine is called "hemidactylus turcicus", as well as "pyrdactylus syriacus".
- f- The **chameleon**: a kind of lizard very similar in shape to the lizard; with very spacious lungs, that turn semi-transparent when fully extended; can change color according to the habitat in which it lives; eyes protruding out of the head; independent from one another, each of which can be directed toward a different direction; a long tail that helps it to climb trees; feeds on insects it catches by its long tongue, covered by a sticky material to which the insects are stuck.

g- The **snail**: a kind of lizard, called 'Chalcides sepsoides', found in the desert and sand dunes, close in shape to the chameleon, harmless.

h- The **mole**: see what is mentioned in the chameleon.

(4) Concerning the eight kinds previously mentioned, beside the fact that their dead carcasses are unclean to touch, there is fear that they may

carry a contagious disease, the law, therefore, came firm concerning:

a- *"Anything on which any of them falls, whether it is any item of wood or clothing or skin or sack (fabric made of the hide of goat as*

sackcloth); ... it is put in water, and it shall be unclean until evening" (32).

b- *"Any earthen vessel in which any of them falls, you shall break, and whatever is in it shall be unclean"* (33). (For fear that the microbes

could infiltrate through its meshes).

c- If it falls upon liquid food like water or oil, it shall not be eaten.

d- If it falls in an oven or furnace, it shall be broken down and rebuilt.

e- If it falls into a spring or a cistern; no permanent uncleanness will happen; It would be enough to throw some of its water away (36).

f- If it falls on any dry planting seed which is to be sown, it remains clean; but if the seeds are wet, it shall not be used (37, 38).

(5) *"If any clean beast which you eat dies of itself, without being slain, its carcass shall be unclean, he who unintentionally eats of its carcass*

shall wash his clothes, and be unclean until evening" (40). But if it is intentionally done, he who eats of it shall be cut off the people

(Deuteronomy 14: 21); and he who carries the carcass shall be unclean until evening.

5- THE REPTILES:

The reptiles that creep on their bellies on the earth like the snakes, or that crawl on four, which were not included among those allowed to eat (29, 30); beside all that have more than four feet, are considered unclean.

6- A CONCLUSION:

At the end, to present the goal of giving this statute, He says: *“For I am the Lord your God. You shall therefore sanctify yourselves, and you shall be holy, for I am holy. Neither you shall defile yourselves with any creeping things that creeps on the earth. For I am the Lord who brings you up out of the land of Egypt, to be your God. You shall therefore be holy, for I am holy”* (44, 45).

It is as though He intends to confirm that He did not provide them with such a detailed statute to deprive them of enjoying anything or of any kind of food; but being holy, He wants them to be holy as well, spirit and body. Having brought them up from the bondage of Pharaoh, they should not defile themselves with the things that creep on the earth, but should sanctify themselves to soar high toward the heavenly issues.

Now, if the Mosaic law, have provided the Jewish people with statutes concerning the allowed and the forbidden kinds of food, whether of beasts, birds, fish, flying insects, or reptiles; In the New Covenant, as St. Peter the apostle went up on the housetop to pray, *“he saw heaven opened and an object like a great sheet bound at the four corners, descending to him and let down to the earth. In it were all kinds of four-footed animals of the earth, wild beasts, creeping things, and birds of the air. And a voice came to him, ‘Rise Peter, kill and eat’”*. The voice was repeated three times, to hear the divine voice adding: *“What God has cleansed, you must not call profane”* (Acts 10: 11-13). ... According to the scholar Origen, the repetition of the divine voice three times, refers to the enjoyment of the resurrected life that we came to have in Christ Jesus, risen from the dead on the third day. That resurrected life we enjoy through the water of baptism in which we are buried and baptized in the name of the Holy Trinity, to carry the new nature, without blemish nor defilement; according to the words of the apostle, saying: *“If anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; old things have passed away; behold, all things have become new”* (2 Corinthians 5: 17).

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CHAPTER 12

THE RITUAL AFTER CHILDBIRTH

Having entered with His people into a covenant, God gave them His holy house – the tabernacle of meeting or the temple – a holy place where the people gather together in the time of feasts, to proclaim their joy in the Holy God, dwelling among them; and where anyone who falls into sin or uncleanness, would take refuge to find in it a fountain of purity for himself.

After speaking about the allowed and the forbidden kinds of food, He presented the statutes of purification, starting by the rites after childbirth. Although children are a divine gift, but, because the life of man has been corrupted by sin through the first disobedience, there was therefore need to purify the woman who gives birth; as there is need to purify whoever touches the dead. It is as though man, having been connected to uncleanness in his birth, as well as in his death, is in need of the new birth, and of death with the crucified Lord to live holy for Him.

- 1- The uncleanness of the woman after childbirth 1 -- 5
- 2- The ritual of purification 6 – 8

1- THE UNCLEANNESS OF THE WOMAN WHO GIVES BIRTH:

According to the Mosaic law, the woman was counted unclean for seven days after giving birth to a male child, until the child is circumcised on the eighth day; and is counted as such for two weeks after giving birth to a female child, “*as in the days of her customary impurity*” (2); so called because of what goes together with the childbirth of labor and suffering.... She had to continue in the blood of her purification 33 days if she gives birth to a male child, and 66 days if she gives birth to a female child. When the days of her purification are complete, whether for a son or a daughter she shall bring to the priest a burnt offering, and a sin offering after 40 days if she gives birth to a son, or after 80 days if she gives birth to a daughter; to atone for the woman who gave birth.

Why was the woman who gives birth counted as unclean according to the Mosaic law?

(1) For she discharges blood after she gives birth; and according to the law “*any man or woman has a discharge from his body, his discharge*

is unclean” (15); not on account of that the blood, in itself, is unclean, but for man to cease doing any work, and take care of his health until he is completely cured. According to the scholar origin, in this law, as it is in the law of the leper, God appears to His people as a Physician who cares for their healing, providing them with the necessary medication, not of herbs as the physicians used to do at the time, but with deep spiritual understanding of His divine words as a cure to their souls; saying: [Jesus, the Heavenly Physician comes to the congregation, namely to the church, to find several people laid down sick: He sees a woman who became unclean through childbirth; a leper cast outside the camp because of the uncleanness of his leprosy, seeking healing and purification. Being the Physician Word of God, Jesus provides a cure to the sick, not of herbs, but of the strong meaning of His words. ... Yes indeed, we are used to look with slothfulness at the cure in the holy books and in the fields, not perceiving the activity of these texts, as though they are without value or benefit; But few are those who, knowing Christ as the Physician of the souls; gather from these books, read in the church, as well as from the fields and mountains, the herbs of salvation; and perceive the meaning of the words; so that their lukewarm souls would be healed by the inner juice of these great herbs]..

(2) God has created man, and blessed him with the gift to be fruitful, multiply, and fill the earth (Genesis 1: 28); But man, by his disobedience, fell

under punishment, and childbirth came to be accompanied with labor and pain, despite the fact of being a blessing from the Lord. That statute proclaiming the uncleanness of the woman who gives birth, probably came to draw the attention of those celebrating the newly born with joy, to the sin that crawled into us from our parents and grandparents; Hence the psalmist cries out, saying: “*Behold, I was brought forth in iniquity; and in sin my mother conceived me*” (Psalm 51: 5); And as Eliphaz the Temanite said to the righteous ‘Job’: “*What is the man, that he could be pure? And he who is born of a woman, that he could be righteous?*” (Job 15: 24); And as the apostle Paul clearly said: “*Therefore, just as through one*

man sin entered into the world, and death through sin, and thus death spread to all men, because all sinned" (Romans 5: 12); And also said, "*By nature we were the children of wrath*" (Ephesians 2: 3).

(3) By that statute, God probably intended to confirm that the woman would not be counted pure until she offer a blood sacrifice, as a symbol of

the need for the blood of the Lord Christ that purifies of every sin (1 John 1: 7); so that every newly born would enjoy belonging to the holy congregation in the Lord; the new Israel.

(4) Intending to proclaim the holiness of His people, God commanded them to keep away from everything that may corrupt the purity of the soul

and the body, so that the outer purification would be a mirror that reflects a true and sound image of the inner purity.

Going back to the woman who gives birth to a male child; she will stay 40 days to complete the days of her purification; 7 days counted as unclean until the child is circumcised in the eighth day; then continue in the blood of her purification for 33 days.

We have already discussed the circumcision of the male child in the eighth day in our interpretation of the book of Genesis (Chapter 17). For some peoples, circumcision is known for purification purpose.

According to the scholar Origen, the Greek text in the Septuagint version states that: [If the woman gets seed in her womb, and gave birth...], to distinguish between a woman who gives birth through the human seed, and the Virgin St. Mary who conceived without human seed. The former would have to carry the burden of the law; whereas the Virgin came as an exception; conceived without human seed, and gave birth to Him, who consented to bow under the law, to redeem those who are under the law; according to the words of the apostle: "*When the fullness of the time had come, God sent forth His Son, born of a woman, born under the law, to redeem those who were under the law, that we might receive the adoption as sons*" (Galatians 4: 4, 5).

It is not improper to call the Virgin St. Mary “a woman”; on account of the fact that, the way every male, when he becomes mature, is called “a man”, even if he is unmarried; every female would be counted as “a woman” when she reaches the age of maturity, even if she is unmarried; as when the servant of Abraham said to him: “*Perhaps the woman may not be willing to follow me to this land, must I then take your son back to the land from which you came?*” (Genesis 24: 5). By ‘woman’ here he meant the virgin girl.

Presenting to us an extreme commentary on this statute, the scholar Origen says that, proclaiming the uncleanness of the child born, whether male or female; it would not, therefore, be befitting of the saints to celebrate the day of their birth, but rather to curse it, saying: [We find no one among the saints celebrates the day of his birth, nor that of his son or daughter; but it is the sinners who do such a thing. In the old covenant the Pharaoh of Egypt celebrated the day of his birth (Genesis 40: 20); and in the new covenant Herod did the same (Mark 6: 21); and in both cases blood was shed. In the former case the head of the chief baker was cut off; and in the later case, the head of St. John the Baptist was cut off. The saints, on the other hand, filled with the Holy Spirit, curse the day of their birth. Jeremiah, a great prophet who was sanctified in his mother’s womb, and was consecrated a prophet to the nations (Jeremiah 1: 5) proclaimed: “*Cursed be the day in which I was born! Let the day not be blessed in which my mother bore me! Let the man be cursed who brought news to my father, saying, ‘a male child has been born to you’; making him very glad. And let that man be like the cities which the Lord overthrew, and did not relent* (Jeremiah 20: 14-16).... We should not accept such an extreme view by the scholar Origen, revealing his bitterness toward the body, when the Lord Christ has borne our body, and blessed our nature in Him. As to quoting that the Christians in his time did not celebrate the day of their birth, it could be referred to their joy in the day of their baptism, considering it as a new spiritual birth.

Getting back to the statute of the purification of the woman who gives birth, in the first period after birth (7 or 14 days), the woman is counted as unclean; whereas in the second period (33 or 66 days) she is counted as “*continuing in the blood of her purification*); during which, although whoever touches or serves her will not become unclean; yet she is not allowed to go into the house of the Lord..

Commenting on the first seven days after birth, during which the woman is counted as unclean, the scholar Origen says: [she stays separated from everything pure, until the 7 days, “*as in her customary impurity*”, have passed. On the eighth day, the male newly born will be circumcised, and she becomes purified... In that week we see a symbol of the present life; as in one week the world was created. It is as though, as long as we are in the body, we could not be completely pure, until the eighth day; namely until the day of the time to come].

We may say that the soul will be like a woman in her first week after birth; as long as she is bound to the world, she is unclean; But once she sets forth to the eighth day, namely to the eschatological attitude, and enjoys the heavenly life, she would be counted as clean, even while still in the world. It is as though the eighth day is not a time we anticipate, but is a life we live, or a heavenly state we are go through.

Some of us may wonder why is the period after birth is doubled in case of the female newly born?

(1) In our earlier study, we often saw the male to refer to the soul, and the female to refer to the body. If the soul together with the body are in

need of spiritual purification (in the water of baptism), the body, needs a double effort after baptism; on account of the fact that it carries a burden that should be controlled and disciplined..

(2) This distinction does not imply a preference of the male over the female; on account of that the sacrifice offered for the male child is the

same as that offered for the female. And as the apostle says, “*the male and the female are one in Christ Jesus*” (Galatians 3: 28; Colossians 3: 11). The difference in the period may probably bears a bad feeling toward the seduction by the devil of our early mother Eve.

2- THE RITUAL OF PURIFICATION:

“When the days of her purification are fulfilled (40 days for the son or 80 days for the daughter), she shall bring to the priest a lamb of the first year as a burnt offering, and a young pigeon or a turtledove as a sin offering; And if she is not able to bring a lamb, then she may bring two turtledoves or two young pigeons – one as burnt offering, and the other as a sin offering” (6 – 8)

In this offering, it is to be noticed:

- (1) It is not enough for her to complete the days of her purification to be counted as clean; for time is unable to wipe the sin out, or to take away the uncleanness; but there is a perpetual need for the blood to purify of every sin.
- (2) The two offerings mix together:: the burnt offering, the subject of pleasure to the Lord, with the sin offering... As though in our purification by the precious blood, the joy and gladness mix with the forgiveness of sin.
- (3) The burnt offering of joy is offered by everyone according to his or her possibilities. It could be a lamb of the first year, or a bird. But the sin offering is the same for the rich and the poor; to make it easy for all to offer it.

It is amazing that St. Mary in bearing the Lord Christ -- the rich who made Himself poor to make us rich (2 Corinthians 8: 9), presented the offering of the poor; by which, together with practicing the rite, she proclaimed her submission to the law, although she did not conceive through a human seed, but bore the Most Holy in her womb ... bore Him, who through His own free will, submitted to the law, to redeem those who are under the law; Hence she did not refrain from fulfilling the law, but consummated it (Luke 2: 24).

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CHAPTER 13

THE STATUTE CONCERNING LEPROSY

If God, caring for the health of the woman who gives birth, commands her to stay a period of time under care; By the statute of Leprosy, God cares for His people for fear that this serious illness would probably spread among them; ... He cares even for their clothes, lest the moth would spread from one garment to another.

- 1- The illness of leprosy
- 2- When there is on the skin a swelling, a scab, or a bright spot
1 -- 8
- 3- When leprosy is chronic in the skin
9 -- 17
- 4- When there is a boil on the skin, and it is healed
18 -- 23
- 5- When there is a burn on the skin like fire
24 -- 28
- 6- When there is a sore on the head or the chin
29 -- 37
- 7- When there are bright spots on the skin (the vitiligo)
38 -- 39
- 8- When man's hair fall from his head
40 -- 44
- 9- The verdict against the leper
45 -- 46
- 10- The statute concerning leprous garments
47 -- 59

1- THE DISEASE OF LEPROSY:

In the modern medicine, leprosy is a serious dermal disease that sometimes may reach to the extent of the dissolution of some of the body extremities and the distortion of body shape; beside being serious as a swift contagious disease. What came in the old covenant under the name of 'leprosy', might probably not mean a specific disease, but rather all what could cause contagion, not only between humans, but even between garments and between furniture.

Man may see in the verdict against the leper in the Mosaic law, as too cruel; isolating him away from the congregation, and counting him as unclean until he is healed. ... But, even in the modern societies, despite the exalted progress in medicine in the present century, those with dermal diseases are isolated in hospitals or medical facilities away from where the people dwell; and even the physicians who treat them, tend to fear for their own safety.

For the Jews, leprosy was connected to sin, because of the seriousness of the disease concerning the distortion of man's body, and the swiftness of contagiousness ; Hence God used it in special situations for chastisement, as He did to Miriam the sister of Moses when she talked against her brother (Numbers 12: 10); What happened with Gehazi whose heart led him to go after Naaman the Syrian to seek gold and silver from him, and to lie to his master the prophet Elisha (2 kings 5); And what happened with king Uzziah for his action against priesthood (2 Chronicles 26: 16-21)

Like it is in the case of sin, the Jews and the rest of nations, had no possibility of salvation from leprosy by themselves; but all felt the need for a divine intervention to deal with it. Hence being healed from it was counted as purification from uncleanness, or from sin; as it was said about Naaman the Syrian when he was healed from it in the water of the River Jordan (2 kings 5: 10-14); and when the Lord Christ Himself said: "*The lepers are cleansed*"

(Matthew 11: 5); And when a leper appealed to Him saying: “*Lord, if you are willing, You can make me clean*”, and He answered him, saying: “I am willing, be cleansed” (Matthew 8: 1-3).

Now, let us talk about the leprosy, and about some of the symptoms that appear on man’s body and his garments:

2- WHEN THERE IS ON THE SKIN A SWELLING, A SCAB, OR A BRIGHT SPOT:

Most probably, by ‘a scab’ is meant a red spot with a cuticle on the skin; and by ‘the bright spot’, a spot different in color on his skin. And lest those symptoms could be just a regular simple dermal disease, it was distinguished between two cases:

The first case, “*If the hair on the sore has turned white, and the sore appears to be deeper than the skin of his body, it is a leprous sore; then the priest shall look at him, and pronounce him unclean*” (3)”, and isolate him away from the congregation.

The second case, “*If the bright spot is white on the skin of the body, and does not appear to be deeper than the skin, and its hair has not turned white, then the priest shall isolate the one who has the sore seven days; and the priest shall look at him on the seventh day, and indeed appear to be as it was, and the sore has not spread on the skin, then the priest shall isolate him another seven days. Then the priest shall look at him again on the seventh day, and indeed if the sore has darkened, and the sore has not spread on the skin; then the priest shall pronounce him clean; it is only a scab, and he shall wash his clothes and be clean*”, as a reference to our need to be washed of even the likeness of sin.

In a symbolic interpretation of this case, the scholar Origen says:

{A wound, even after it is healed, leaves a trace on the body, called 'a swelling', Now, crossing over from the shadow of the law to the truth; a soul wounded by sin, even after it is healed, a 'swelling' will remain on it as a trace, to be seen, not only by the Lord, but also by those who are given the grace to distinguish the maladies of the soul, and to distinguish between the souls that are completely healed of all painful wounds, from those that still carry traces of them].

There are some people who carry a swelling on their bodies that reveal having a serious spiritual disease that is difficult to cure; according to the prophet Isaiah, saying: *"From the sole of the foot even to the head, there is no soundness in it, but wounds and bruises and putrefying sores. They have not been closed or bound up, or soothed with ointment"* (Isaiah 1: 6); and according to the prophet Jeremiah, saying: *"For thus says the Lord: 'Your affliction is incurable; your wound is severe. There is no one to plead your cause, that you may be bound up; you have no healing medicines. All your lovers have forgotten you; they do not seek you; for I have wounded you with the wound of an enemy, with the chastisement of a cruel one. For the multitude of your iniquities, because your sins have increased. Why do you cry about your affliction? Your sorrow is incurable, because of the multitude of your iniquities, because your sins have increased, I have done these things to you'"* (Jeremiah 30: 12-15). Yet, even if God reveals the extent of bitterness to which the soul has reached because of having such an incurable disease; Christ, who is sinless came to carry our sins and to receive our wounds in Himself, providing us with the cure by His precious blood. If we, because of our sin have been afflicted with a spiritual leprosy; have been counted as unclean; and were driven out of the camp, He, Himself, was driven out of the camp carrying the cross of our reproach. That is why, after revealing on the mouth of the prophet Jeremiah, the wounds that afflicted us, He instantly added: *"I will restore health to you, and heal you of your wounds', says the Lord"* (Jeremiah 30: 17); And again He says: *"Behold, I will heal them and bring to them the abundance of peace and truth; and I will cause the captives of Judah and the captives of Israel to return"* (Jeremiah 33: 6, 7).

We may notice in the statute of the leper, in general, that the priest is committed to be very particulate before pronouncing his verdict; to take his time so as not to cause harm to anybody. It is befitting of every priest and everyone in the position of responsibility not to hasten to make decisions, but to do it with the spirit of wisdom and prudence, yet without slothfulness at the expense of the truth.

And we may also notice the repetition of the words “*deeper than*” (3, 4, 20, 21, 25, 26, etc.), concerning the sore in the skin of the one with the disease. According to the scholar Origen: [Every iniquity of the soul is actually in a lower in level than all virtues]. In other words, A thermometer of the spiritual life that reveals the strike of sin, is that it brings the soul down to the dust, makes it low, and like the dust in thoughts and longings; whereas the true virtue in Christ Jesus would lift the soul up high to heaven to truly say: “*For our citizenship is in heaven*” (Philippians 3: 20).

3- WHEN LEPROSY IS CHRONIC IN THE SKIN:

In the previous case, it was necessary to isolate the one who has the sore to investigate the extent of his disease, but in the present case there is no need for this, as the patient obviously and positively carries the disease; for he has a white swelling with white hairs; and there is a spot of raw (healthy-colored) flesh in the swelling (10); namely, the normal color of the skin appears in the midst of the white spots. The priest shall not isolate the patient, but will instantly pronounce him as unclean (11).

But if the skin on the whole body, from his head to his feet, is white, he will not be pronounced as unclean but clean. This is to distinguish between a leper and who has some normal non-leprous skin disease. The former has white spots that turn the hair inside it white; but the later, even if the skin on his whole body is white without including a spot of raw flesh in the swellings, the patient is not a leper.

What does this law spiritually mean?

The one who positively and obviously carries the symptoms of the disease; whom the priest pronounces as unclean, refers to the sinner who, daringly and publicly commits sin; he would be counted as a leper, and would be driven out of the camp. Yet not to remain forever as such, but to let him perceive his true position concerning faith, and feel the need for the physician, who anticipates his call to heal him and to bring him back into the holy camp after purifying him.

That patient who carries on parts of his body obvious symptoms of the disease, together with spots of raw (healthy-colored) flesh; refers to him who “falters between two opinions”; who delivers himself to the sin to work freely in him with its full authority; but, at the same time, he attempts to calm down his conscience by some formalities of worship or giving; and would accordingly lose his goal of having the purity of heart.

As to the second man who has his whole body, from his head to his feet, covered with white spots, yet without any spot of raw (healthy-colored) flesh; would refer, according to some, to him who, realizing his true position as a sinner, felt that his nature has become completely corrupt. By such confession, and by returning to God with repentance, he would find our Lord Jesus Christ, the Highest Priest, waiting for to cure him, put him on His shoulders, and not cast him out of the camp.

According to the scholar Origen, the one who is completely covered with white spots, from head to feet, may be likened to someone who is afflicted with a mental disease that deprives him of every ability to think and behave rationally. Such a person is not counted responsible for any sin he may commit. But in case any spot of raw (healthy-colored) flesh appear on him; namely, if he is healed of his mental disease and becomes normal; in case he commits something wrong,

we should give him counsel about repentance to help him get rid of his uncleanness.

4- WHEN THERE IS A BOIL ON THE SKIN, AND IT IS HEALED:

This is similar to the first case where some traces of healed wounds remain on the body as swellings, scabs, or white spots. It will be shown to the priest; if it appears deeper than the skin, and its hair turned white, he shall pronounce him unclean; it is a leprous sore which has broken out of the boil. But it is not deeper than the skin, and there are no white hair in it, and has faded, the priest shall isolate him seven days, then pronounce him clean (23)

According to the scholar Origen, the boils that inflict the soul are the defiled desires that make the soul lose its spiritual health. In case they go away, it is necessary to search the soul, lest some traces of them may be still hidden inside without treatment, and would eventually return to the soul.

5- WHEN THERE IS A BURN ON THE SKIN LIKE FIRE:

According to the scholar Origen: [Beware, lest the soul is inflicted by burns caused by the fiery darts of the wicked one (Ephesians 6: 16); or it may be burnt by your having the fire of human carnal love in your bosom. What is more serious is to have the fire of the desire of human glory; or of anger].

6- WHEN THERE IS A SORE ON THE HEAD OR ON THE CHIN:

This refers to some kind of dermal disease that may cause the fall of hair off the head to turn man bald..

As the Lord Christ is the Head of the church (1 Corinthians 11: 3), what inflicts us here concerns our faith in the Lord Christ. While what inflicts man on his beard;

according to the scholar Origen, concerns what the priest who, falling into a sin of youth, may cause him to lose the dignity of priesthood, symbolized by the beard.

As to a woman inflicted on the head; if "*the head of woman is man*" (1 Corinthians 11: 3); this would concern her relationship with her man. According to the scholar Origen, it concerns the corrupt teachings related to the marital life, like those of Valentinus, Mercion, and others, who see marriage as uncleanness.

7- WHEN THERE ARE BRIGHT SPOTS ON THE SKIN: (Vitiligo):

Then the priest take a look at him, and pronounce him clean, on account of that it is a regular dermal disease, and not leprosy.

8- WHEN MAN'S HAIR FALL FROM HIS HEAD:

The law distinguishes between the natural cases of baldness and the dermal contagious diseases that inflict the head. If hair fall from the whole head, man is bald; and if it fall only from the forehead. He is partly bald on the forehead, but both cases are natural; he is clean. But if there is on the bald head or bald forehead reddish-white sores, it is leprosy breaking out; and the priest shall surely pronounce him unclean.

9- THE VERDICT AGAINST THE LEPER:

Seeing leprosy as a symbol and a fruit of sin, the verdict against the leper whose uncleanness is proclaimed came cruel; depriving him of the taste of life, and isolating him completely from the holy congregation; it includes:

a- **Tearing off his clothes:** The leper's clothes shall be torn off (Women are exempted from this and the next item for obvious reasons). The

reason behind tearing the clothes off is that there are many who attempt to hide their disease under expensive and beautiful clothes. St. John Chrysostom warns us against hypocrisy, being the adorned garment put on by the sick soul, that keep it from treating the inner disease; And according to the scholar Origen: [He whose is inflicted by a disease, namely by a hidden evil, is committed to tear his clothes off, so as not to cover up the shame of his sin; and he, with accumulated sins, should not cover up his reproach by a veil of words or excuses; so as not to be *“like whitewashed tombs which indeed appear beautiful outwardly, but inside are filled with dead man’s bones and all uncleanness”* (Matthew 23: 27).

Because the garment refers to the body; God did not allow the soldiers to tear the garment of the Lord Christ, but they cast a lot on it; so as to let the church – His body – remain un-torn; Tearing the clothes of the leper declares the result of sin, and refers to the cause of division and dissensions in the church, the body of Christ. Every sin secretly committed by man, even if he assumes that it does no harm to others, actually tears up the garment of Christ; as it tears the soul of the sinner off his true membership in the holy body, in case he persists on his evil.

b- **Baring his head.** If the torn garment proclaims the crime committed by the sinner against the church, tearing her and causing dissensions; the bared head proclaims the crime he commits against the Lord Christ – the Head of man (1 Corinthians 11: 3). If our repentance, our spiritual growth, and our life with God glorify our Christ; every sin we commit would cause a blasphemy against His name because of us.

Commenting on the bare head, the scholar Origen says: [Even if the fault is in the head; namely, if what we commit is an insult to God, or it touches faith in Him, we should not hide it, but expose it to all, so that, through the intercession,

supplication, and counsel of all members of the congregation, he would confess and be forgiven.

c- **Covering his moustache:** While seeking the exposure of the sick body by tearing the clothes and baring the head, it seeks, as well, covering the moustache, namely the mouth; For the soul inflicted by the leprosy of sin, is committed to listen to the commandment, rather than to teach others, even if it is of a priest, whom the psalmist rebukes, saying: "*What right have you to declare My statutes, or take My covenant in your mouth?!*" (Psalm 50: 16). About that the scholar Origen says: [The sinner has to shut his mouth up; for "*who teaches another, do you not teach yourself?*"(Romans 2: 21). That is why He commands covering the mouth, the speaker of evil].

We are warned by our fathers against ministering by the mouth and not by work; as it is befitting of us to speak to others by our life in the Lord and our fellowship with Him; and not to utter nice words without work.

d- **Letting him dwell alone outside the camp; and cry "unclean, unclean (45)** Jewish Rabbis see the lepers as though dead, and have no right to live among the holy congregation; their habitation would be outside the camp of Israel. According to the Telmud, in the later periods, since the days of Joshua, cities were surrounded by walls as a sign of their holiness. Driving the lepers outside the wall was a sign of their death and deprivation of the fellowship in the holy life. In case they attempt to force their way inside the walls, they would be condemned to 40 stripes; for defiling the city; Or, under certain circumstances they are allowed to enter into the synagogue before the rest of the worshippers, and to leave it after them.

Commenting on the dwelling of the leper outside the camp, the scholar Origen says: [Every defilement causes man to be cast out of the congregation of the righteous; to be exiled and isolated away from the place of the saints].

As to crying: “*Unclean, unclean*”; it refers to his inner and outer defilement; namely to that of the soul and body together.

10-THE STATUTE CONCERNING LEPROUS GARMENTS:

God proclaimed His care for His people, even concerning their clothes that may be corrupted by a plague. The priest shall isolate the garment for seven days; after which, If the plague has spread in it, either in the wrap or in the woof, the plague considered like an active leprosy; and the garment shall be burned with fire (52). But in case he sees that it did not spread, he repeats it after having it washed, then leaves it for another period of seven days, to make sure.

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CHAPTER 14

THE RITUALS FOR CLEANSING THE HEALED LEPERS

If leprosy refers to defilement and sin, the law for cleansing the healed leper came very particulate in examining the leper, or the one suspected to be. The priest should not hasten to issue his verdict, so as not to harm anyone. In case someone is healed from leprosy, it would need a long rite, elaborate and firm procedures until the priest is sure of his purification. to allow him back into the camp. Sin, though may seem as no big deal, yet it denies man his fellowship in the holy congregation; and his return would need a great price, which was paid by the only begotten Son to His Father on the cross. According to St. Justin: [Leprosy should be understood as a symbol of sin; and the slain sacrifices as symbols of the One who was slain for our sake].

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1- THE RITUAL OF PURIFICATION ON THE FIRST DAY:

We may summarize the ritual of purification on the first day as such:

a- “He shall be brought to the priest” (2).

It is not said: ‘He shall come to the priest’, but “*He shall be brought to the priest*” (2). The leper who is healed cannot directly come to the priest, at any

time he chooses to come, but a relative or a friend will have to tell the priest about him; ... which refers to the role of the church in bringing every soul forth to our Lord the Highest Priest Jesus Christ. If our relationship with the Father in His Son, who brings us forth into His bosom, and let us enjoy the fellowship of His heavenly glories; This only begotten Son is the Christ of the church, Her Head, and Her Groom, whom we know in a deep personal relationship, through our perception of our membership of the church – His holy body. We cannot recognize Christ as individuals, isolated from the holy congregation, but as members of the congregation, with which we react, even while in our secret place; and the congregation works in us and introduces us to her Groom, the Savior of the world.

The leper who is to enjoy the rite of purification, when he is brought forth to the priest, refers to the paralytic whom the church carries to the Lord Christ; represented by the four men -- the bishop, the priest, the deacon, and the congregation -- to the Savior. We hear the gospel say: "*Jesus, seeing their faith, said to the paralytic: 'Son, be of good cheer, your sins are forgiven you'*" (Matthew 9: 2). He enjoys the forgiveness of sins, and the absolution from the bonds of paralysis, or the purification from leprosy, as a personal gift presented by the One who loves him, through His church that carries him by her prayers, and presents him to Him by love. St. Cyprian says: [He who stays out of the church is out of Christ]. And also says: [He who does not have the church as his mother, will not have God as his Father].

b- "And the priest shall go out from the camp to him" (3)

Although the church, by love and faith, carries the leper to her heavenly Priest to have the forgiveness from his sins, yet the sinner will not come forth into the camp, but the priest will have to come out to carry him into it. In other words, if we, by love, wish for every soul to enter into a spiritual membership of the church, namely into the new life that became ours in the Lord on a heavenly level, yet this task is actually the true role of our Lord Jesus Himself,

He who sets forth to the soul to raise her from her death through the water of baptism by His Holy Spirit, as a holy member in His body. According to the scholar Origen: [The leper, being unable to enter into the camp on his own, He who can come out of the camp, will come out to him, proclaiming: "*I came forth from the Father, and have come into the world*" (John 16: 28)].

c- "Then the priest shall command to take for him who is to be cleansed two living and clean birds, cedar wood, scarlet, and hyssop" (4).

To proclaim the purification of the leper, they will present for his sake, two living and clean birds, a piece of cedar wood about a foot and a half long, of medium thickness, a piece of woolen fabric, dyed scarlet, and a bunch of hyssop. The two birds here probably play a role similar to that played by the two kids of goats on the great day of atonement (Leviticus Chapter 16), one of which is slain, and the other released living to the wilderness; as a reference to the Lord Christ, who, on the one aspect has been slain on the cross for our sins; and on another aspect has set forth to the wilderness of our life, risen from the dead, to raise up together with Him, and to bring us forth into the bosoms of His heavenly Father. So it is in the purification of the leper, one of the birds is slain in an earthen vessel over running water (5), as a reference to the slaying of the Lord Christ, who carried our manhood as an earthen vessel; presenting to us in it His precious blood and the water, both of which flowed from His side to purify us. As to the other living bird, dropped in the blood of the bird that was killed over the running water (6), then let loose in the open field (7), it refers to the Lord Christ, risen from the dead, carrying for us His holy blood to atone for us.

According to St. Justin the martyr, concerning those two birds: [He was likened to a bird, for He is up in heaven. Dropping the living bird in the blood of the one killed, then letting it loose; refers to that the Word of the living God

was crucified and died in the temple (of His body), as though suffering; although God never suffers].

d- The cedar wood:

If the leprosy of sin corrupts man and completely destroys his life; Presenting the cedar wood which is never infected by bugs, refers to our union with the Lord Christ by the wood of His cross, that eternally takes away our corruption, and protects us against evil; but we would come to be in the sight of God, like a tree planted on the running waters of the Holy Spirit, whose leaves would never scatter. According to the scholar Origen: [Without the wood of the cross, we would never be purified from the leprosy of sin. We resort to the wood of the Savior, about which the apostle says: "*Having disarmed principalities and powers, He made a public spectacle of them, triumphing over them in it*" (Colossians 2: 15)]. And according to St. John Chrysostom: [The cross renewed, drove vanity away, and brought the truth back; turned the earth into heaven, and men into angels. By it, demons are no more terrifying, but despised and of no value. By it, death became death no more, but sleeping. He who warred against us is now under our feet].

e- The scarlet and the hyssop:

According to the scholar Origen: [The scarlet refers to the holy blood that flowed out of His side by the spear (John 19: 34) ... the Helper to salvation; as it came in the Holy Book about Tamar: "*When the time for her delivery came, there were twins in her womb. While she was in labor, one put out a hand, and the midwife took and bound on his hand a crimson thread, saying: 'This one came out first'*" (Genesis 38: 28). And when Rahab the harlot received the two spies, and took from them a promise of salvation, they said to her: "*Bind this line of scarlet cord in the window through which you let us down*". (Joshua 2: 18)].

In a symbolic interpretation of the scarlet, the scholar Origen says: [Beside its color that refers to the blood, it is used to dye fabrics to a new color; as a reference to the fire that carries two features; it gives light, and it burns. So came the Lord Christ "*to send fire on the earth*" (Luke 12: 49); by which He also "*gives light to every man who comes into the world*" (John 1: 9), and to kindle our hearts with fire, when He opens the books before us.

We have already spoken of the scarlet and the hyssop in more than one occasion; of which we may mention here what St. John Chrysostom said concerning cleansing and washing us by the spiritual, and not the material scarlet and the hyssop: [Those have been washed, not by scarlet wool nor by hyssop. Why? Because the washing here is not a bodily, but a spiritual washing. The blood was spiritual. How? Because it flowed, not from the bodies of irrational animals, but from a body prepared by the Holy Spirit; Sprinkling with blood, not by Moses, but by Christ through the word said: "*This is the blood of the new covenant for the forgiveness of sins*". This word, instead of the hyssop, was dropped into the blood and washed us all. There, the cleansing of the body was external, on account of that the purification was carnal; While here, the cleansing is spiritual that enters into the soul and washes it... There, the cleansing was only on the surface; followed by washing off the traces of blood; whereas concerning the soul, it is different; for the blood mingles with its being to make it active and pure, and to bring it forth to the unapproachable beauty itself].

In a commentary on the hyssop, St. Augustine says: {Hyssop, as we know, though a humble herb, yet it is used for healing. Being said that its roots cling to the rock, it symbolizes the purification of the heart. .. By the root of your love, cling to your Rock (the Lord Christ); and be humble like your Lord, to be glorified in your glorified Lord. You will be sprinkled with hyssop when you are cleansed by the humility of Christ. Do not despise that herb, but remember its medicinal effect in cleansing the lungs swollen by pride; as it is said about Saul

of Tarsus who was breathing threats and murder from his sick lungs against the disciples of the Lord on his way to Damascus to bring them bound to Jerusalem (Acts 9: 1}).

I wish that we have the roots of the hyssop that cling to the rock, so that not to be overcome by the enemy, in spite of our weakness as a poor and humble herb. I wish we would be sprinkled with the hyssop, and use it to purify our lungs from every pride and haughtiness; bearing in us the humility of our Lord Jesus Christ; to be glorified also with Him..

f- *“And the priest shall command that one of the birds be killed in an earthen vessel over running water”* (5)

The Lord Christ has borne our nature to dwell among us, presenting His blood an atonement for our sins. He is like the bird killed in an

earthen vessel; namely, dies for us by the body, and flows on us like running water.

The running water is the water taken from a running stream, or from a non-stagnant spring. This water binds with the blood as a sacrament for purification. As according to the scholar Origen: [Purification is done as a sacrament by water and blood that flowed out of the side of the Savior (John 19: 34); as also confirmed by St. John in his first epistle, saying that purification is done by water, blood, and the Spirit (1 John 5: 6-8)]

g- *“And he shall sprinkle it seven times on him who is to be cleansed from leprosy, and shall pronounce him clean. And shall let the living bird loose in the open field”* (7)

If we are purified by the blood and water, they are to be sprinkled seven times on the sinner to be purified; namely, to remain enjoying their

work his whole life (the figure 7 refers to the seven days of the week, and hence to the whole life); Purification setting forth in the waters of

baptism will unceasingly endure the whole life..

According to St. Jerome: [once you come to the priest he will tear your clothes completely off you; and what looked sound while covered will prove to be (leprous) when exposed. The priest will let you recognize your sins and see your (leprosy), and will bring you back to the congregation of God through the blood and water -- through the blood, namely through the passion of Christ; and through the water, namely through baptism. Being inflicted with the (leprosy) of corruption, you will not be cured except by the blood of Christ through baptism. And being cured, the words will apply to you, saying: "*Purge me with hyssop, and I shall be clean. Wash me, and I shall be whiter than snow*" (Psalm 51: 7). Symbolically, you are still in the land of Egypt up till now, as long as you have not come to the blood and water; hence you will not be saved! Do you wish to be saved from the angel of perdition in Egypt? Take some hyssop, drop them in blood and sprinkle on the two door posts for when the angel see the blood on your forehead, he will not touch you].

h- Washing his clothes:

The leper shall take off his torn clothes (13: 45), before he encounters the priest; and having sprinkled blood and water on him seven times, there will be no need for him to change his clothes, but it is enough to have them washed. We replace our old man only once in the waters of baptism; and once we take him off, we will only need to wash the garment with the tears of repentance. As the Lord Christ said to St. Peter when He intended to wash his hands and his head: "*He who is bathed needs only to wash his feet, but is completely clean*" (John 13: 10)

If the clothes refer to the body with all its feelings, emotions, and longings, God does not wish to destroy the body, nor to cancel its feelings and possibilities; but seeks to wash and sanctify them to the account of His kingdom. The body is not an enemy of the believer as long as it is submitted to

the Spirit of the Lord, but will be a tool of righteousness that works to the account of God *“a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God, which is your reasonable service”* (Romans 12: 1)

According to the law, the leper to be purified, has to wash his clothes and wash his body in water (9). According to the scholar Origen: [He is actually committed to take away from his clothes, as well as from his body, every uncleanness and defilement; so as nothing of the leprosy which he had would remain on him].

i- Shaving all his hair:

The scholar Origen distinguishes between the hair of the sinner and that of the righteous. The hair of the sinner refer to the dead works that emerge from the evil covetousness of his body; being hair without spirit nor blood; hence, in his purification, it is befitting of him to have it shaved as a proclamation of forsaking everything of his evil past, of thoughts, words, and works, which are all dead sins. The righteous on the other hand, bears the spiritual wisdom as hair growing from his body, which is sanctified. Hence, for a Nazirite, no razor shall come upon his head (1 Samuel 1: 11; Numbers 6: 5); so that about him it will be said: *“His leaves shall not wither, and whatever he does shall prosper”* (Psalm 1: 3); and as the Lord Christ said to His disciples: *“The very hair of your head are all numbered”* (Matthew 10: 30); Namely, being righteous and saints, their works, words, and thoughts, are all kept before the Lord. On the contrary, concerning the sinners, all their works, words, and thoughts, should be forsaken. That is what is meant by shaving all the hair of the body to be purified..

J- *“He shall come into the camp, and shall stay outside his tent seven days”* (8)

After fulfilling all the previous rites of being purified by the blood and water, washing his clothes, shaving his hair, and washing his body, he shall be

allowed to come into the camp, but shall have to stay outside his tent seven days. If the tent refers to his body (2 Corinthians 5: 4, 5); Enjoying salvation, getting washed by the blood of our Lord Jesus Christ, and taking off all our evil works, words, and thoughts, as hair we shave; Yet, while coming into the camp, namely being counted as members in the body of Christ, the holy church and the camp of God, we have to stay outside our tent, namely we have to live above the requirements of the flesh. We have to stay all the days of our life feeling as sojourners even from our own body; so that when the eighth day comes, namely the great day of the Lord, we would enjoy entering into a spiritual heavenly body befitting to the new life. As according to the apostle Paul: *"It is sown a natural body, it is raised a spiritual body; And as we have borne the image of the man of dust, we shall also bear the image of the heavenly Man"* (1 Corinthians 15: 44, 49).

2- THE RITUAL OF PURIFICATION ON THE SEVENTH DAY:

"But on the seventh day he shall shave all the hair of his head, and his beard, and his eyebrows; all his hair he shall shave off. He shall wash his clothes and wash his body in water, and he shall be clean" (9)

On the first day of his purification he has already done all that, Why then has he to do it again?

a- What he has done on the first day probably refer to what the believer enjoys at the beginning of his membership in the church, when he

entered into the water of baptism, got the sonhood to God, and came to be pure in God's sight. Now what is to happen on the seventh day, refer to his need to renew the work of baptism, not to repeat it, but through a perpetual repentance, as long as he still is in the body, submitted to the time. Man shall remain all his life until the seventh day, namely up to its end, striving without

ceasing to renew the covenant he set with God in the waters of baptism by the Holy Spirit. In the sight of the church, baptism is a beginning of a life, and not an end; and a beginning of strife by the Lord, and not an end for it. According to St. Gregory of Nyssa: [He who received the washing of renewal is like a new recruit to the army, given a place among the soldiers; yet he, still, has not proven his worthiness of being a soldier]. And according to St. Mark the hermit: [Although the holy baptism is a complete work, and grants us perfection, yet it would never give it to someone who is slothful in keeping the commandments].; And to according to St. Jacob El-Serougi: [O you who have been baptized in the holy water, having become come brethren of the only begotten Son; Beware not to insult Him by the works of your bodies; Do not mix with a harlot, instead of with Him; Purify your souls from all transgressions, to be worthy of mixing with His Father].

b- The rite practiced on the seventh day probably refers to taking all what is temporal all the days of our sojourn up to our last breath; namely up to the seventh day; So that once the eighth day arrives, namely the great day of the Lord, or our entrance into paradise, no trace of anything temporal, earthly, or carnal, would remain in us, but everything new.

c- According to the scholar Origen, shaving the head is a symbol of taking away every thought in us which are contrary to the faith of the church, concerning her Head – Jesus Christ. So that no thought, foreign to the divine church teaching, would be in us. As to shaving the beard, it refers to the renewal of youth, and the return to its life, for the believer to live by the Holy Spirit in an unceasing spiritual renewal, and in youth, never to grow old. As to shaving the eyebrows, it refers to taking away the spirit of pride, and imitating the humility and meekness of the Lord Christ, so as not to have the haughty eyebrow.

3- THE RITUAL OF PURIFICATION ON THE EIGHTH DAY:

“And on the eighth day he shall take two male lambs without blemish, one ewe lamb of the first year without blemish, three-tenth of an ephah of fine flour mixed with oil as a grain offering, and one log of oil” (10)

If the eighth day is the consummation of the ritual of purification; On it the newly born was circumcised; and on it, namely, on the first day of the week, the Lord Christ was risen from the dead, granting us His righteousness.

We notice here, that it was the first time for the cleansed leper to do some work by himself, as *“he shall (take) two male lambs...”*, and shall give his sacrifices to the priests; while in the previous days, someone else did it for him. It is as though, as the believer, through the spiritual purification, enjoys the membership in the church, he is committed to begin the positive work for his edification, through his enjoyment of the resurrection of the Lord Jesus, and the new resurrected life (on the eighth day).

The sacrifices and the offerings are five:

a- One male lamb without blemish, as a **“trespass offering”**, to atone for his sins
– This is the beginning: To confess, and to have faith in the Crucified -- the Forgiver of our trespasses.

b- One ewe lamb of the first year without blemish, as a **“sin offering”**. Choosing it female refers to ‘giving birth’; It is not enough for man to believe in the possibility of the forgiveness of his sins, but he is committed to believe in God, the Grantor of the fruit. Offering an ewe lamb here, according to the scholar Origen means that the soul gives birth to good works, and be rich in the fruits of righteousness.

c- Another male lamb without blemish, to be offered by the priest as a “**burnt offering**”, an object of pleasure to the Father. Enjoying the cross, the believer, will see, not only the forgiveness of his trespasses and sins, but will also unite with the Crucified, to offer his life a burnt offering to God. In the “trespass offering” and the “sin offering”, he proclaims his rejection of the trespass and sin, and his longing for the good work; Whereas in the “burnt offering”, he proclaims his commitment to practice virtue in the Lord; namely he sets forth with love to the positive aspect.

Concerning the poor, he will only offer one lamb as a “trespass offering”, and two turtledoves or two young pigeons, as a “sin offering” and a “burnt offering”.(21, 22).

d- Three-tenth of an ephah of fine flour mixed with oil as a “**grain offering**”.

According to the scholar Origen: [It is not possible to get cleansed outside the Trinity]. If we have seen that in the “grain offering” a reference to the Person of the Lord Christ, being the offering of the church to the Father, and, at the same time, a grant of the Father to the church, granting her the life of His Son as a gift to enjoy, by His body and blood given as the secret of her abidance in Him, and her enjoyment of the eternal life; The figure 3 refers to receiving the faith in the Holy Trinity, whom we recognize through our perception of the secret of the incarnation and the crucifixion of the Word. As to mixing it with oil; No one can receive the secret of the Trinity, nor can say that Christ is Lord, except by the oil of the Holy Spirit.

The figure 3 probably also refers to the resurrection together with Christ; For, being purified, we offer the “grain offering” through the resurrection of the Lord; to receive, as well, the Lord risen from the dead, as a source of true spiritual satisfaction.

e- One log of oil to anoint the one to be cleansed and to pour it on him; as our purification will be realized through the sacrifice of the cross by

the work of the Holy Spirit, by whom we were anointed in the sacrament of the 'Meron'.

The 'log' is a measure for fluids equivalent to about 1/3 liter. As to the oil it is of pure olive oil.

As the one to be cleansed presents those sacrifices and offerings to the priest, the later will do the following:

1- Both the priest and the one to be cleansed stand before the Lord at the tabernacle of meeting; the Lord Christ, the Highest Priest, being the door through which we enter into the tabernacle of meeting; namely by whom we enjoy the membership in the church – His holy body. According to the Jewish Rabbis, the priest stands to the inside of the door, while the one to be cleansed stands to the outside.

2- Two priests used to partake of this rite. As the one to be cleansed puts his hands on the head of the "trespass offering", then slays it.

One of the two priests receive its blood in a vessel, takes it to the altar, and sprinkles it on its side; Whereas the other priest receives the blood in his hand, stands before the one to be cleansed, put it on the tip of his right ear, on the thumb of his right hand, and on the big toe of his right foot (14). According to the scholar Origen: [The later cleansing includes the purification of the sense of hearing; of the right hand to have our works pure and without blame; and of the right foot, to let it walk toward the good works, and not to follow the sins of the youth].

I wish, as we approach our greatest High Priest, we would see Him stretch His holy hand to anoint all our senses and body members by His Holy Spirit through the secret of the holy 'Meron'; so that we would perpetually have the sanctified ear that listens to His voice, and respond to His commandment; the sanctified hand, lifted up as an evening sacrifice, and working to the account

of His kingdom; and the straightforward foot that sets forth toward heaven with no hindrance, there, to settle down.

According to Rabbi 'Judas', the priest sprinkles on three places at the same time: the ear, the thumb of the right hand, and on the big toe of the right foot (14). And in case the leper has lost one of these members, he would not be cleansed.

3- *“And the priest shall take some of the log of oil and pour it into the palm of his left hand; then the priest shall dip his right finger in the oil that is in his left hand, and shall sprinkle some of the oil with his finger seven times before the Lord.. And of the rest of the oil in his hand, the priest shall put some on the tip of the right ear of him who is to be cleansed, on the thumb of his right hand, and on the big toe of his right foot, on the blood of the trespass offering, namely on the same places he sprinkled the blood. The rest of the oil that in the priest’s hand, he shall put on the head of him who is to be cleansed. So the priest shall make atonement for him before the Lord”* (15-18).

This oil refers to the Holy Spirit granted by the Lord Christ to His church from His Father, to pour on her children to sanctify them; hence called by the scholar Origen: “The gift of the Holy Spirit”. It is not enough for the believer to be cleansed from the sin by the blood and water, but he is committed to be filled with the Holy Spirit, through which the believer would be privileged by having the “*best robe*” and the “*ring of sonhood*”; and enjoy the reconciliation with the Father, and abide in sonhood to Him.

4- *“The priest shall offer the sin offering and make atonement for him who is to be cleansed from his uncleanness. Afterwards he shall kill the burnt offering...”* (19)

By that the leper is cleansed through “the blood, the water, and the Spirit”, according to the words of the apostle, saying: “*There are three*

who bear witness on earth: 'the Spirit, the water, and the blood'; and these three agree as one" (1 John 5: 8).

4- THE RITUAL OF CLEANSING FOR THE POOR:

The same rite is elaborately done for the poor in the same way it was done for the rich, to carry the same concepts; on account of that the cleansing of the soul in the sight of God is not different, whether it is the soul of a poor or of a rich. But the poor will offer sacrifices and offerings that he could afford; namely: one male lamb as a trespass offering; two turtledoves or two young pigeons as sin and burnt offerings; one tenth of an ephah of fine flour mixed with oil; and a log of oil.

God shall receive these humble offerings, and will grant the poor the same gift He granted the rich, without discrimination; on account of that God seeks the heart and the inner fruit, rather than the gift itself.

5- THE STATUTE CONCERNING LEPROUS HOUSES:

God gave the Jews the statute concerning the (leprosy) of houses, when they were still in the wilderness dwelling in tents, proclaiming his care even for their houses where they have not yet dwelt. When God commanded us not to worry about the morrow, He proclaimed that it is He who will worry about it.

Here, in this statute, the priest takes up the role of an architect, during a primitive time concerning the Jews, to make sure of the safety of their houses. In case someone notices traces of humidity on the walls of his house, that turn reddish or greenish; or become deeper than the wall itself, that indicate deterioration, he will call the priest who will perform the following:

a- The priest shall command that they empty the house before he goes in to look at the plague (36).

b- He shall look at the signs of the plague, then shall go out of the house; and shut it down for the duration of seven days.

c- He shall come again on the seventh day and look. If he notices that the plague has spread on the walls of the house, he shall command to

take away the stones with the plague, and cast them into an unclean place outside the city; and shall command to scrap the house inside, all around, and to pour the dust they scrape off out in an unclean place outside the city.

d- They shall put other stones in the place of those taken away, and plaster the inside of the house with new mortar. And if the plague comes

back and breaks out in the house again, he shall command to break down the house, its stones, its timber, and all its plaster, and to carry them outside to an unclean place outside the city.

e- In case the plague has not spread in the house, the priest shall pronounce the house clean, because the plague is healed; and he shall take

to cleanse the house, two birds, cedar wood, scarlet, and hyssop; as was the case of cleansing the leper.

In this rite it is to be noticed that the priest does not hasten in his decisions; lest someone would lose his house; except after confirming the seriousness of the situation... probably a symbol of God's longsuffering toward us, His dwelling place. He will not hasten to condemn us to perditopn, but will give us the chance to repent; the same way the vinedresser interceded for the sake of the barren fig tree, dig around it and fertilize it; hoping it will bear fruit, so as not to be cut down (Luke 13: 6-9).

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CHAPTER 15

THE STATUTE CONCERNING BODILY DISCHARGES

This statute deals with someone with bodily discharges, whether a man or a woman; For man it is by the emission of his seminal fluid , whether naturally or because he is inflicted with a venereal disease; And for woman, it is by discharging blood, whether through her customary impurity, or because of a disease. The law distinguishes between the natural and the medical cases.

- 1- An introduction
- 2- The medical cases for man 1 - 15
- 3- The natural case for man 16 - 18
- 4- The natural case for woman 19 - 24
- 5- The medical cases for woman 25 – 33

1- AN INTRODUCTION:

If the statute cared for offering bodily cleansing concerning the discharge that comes out of man, or the blood that flows from a woman during her customary impurity, or as a medical condition, it is befitting of us to make the following points clear:

(1) If the statute called the discharge of semen from a man; and the flow of blood from a woman, during her customary impurity, or as a medical condition 'uncleanness' (1) ... What the statute meant, is for man to care for his bodily hygiene, for the sake of the soundness of his health, and that of those around him. The way we saw God's concern, in the old covenant, for

everything that concern his children, whether their food, clothes, or house; He is more concerned for their health.

(2) The statute distinguished between what happen naturally to man or woman, and what happen as a result of medical conditions. Concerning

the former case, it requires no trespass sacrifices nor sin offerings; but only washing his or her clothes and bed covers; Whereas,

concerning the later case, being a case that requires medical treatment; hence the statute commands offering sacrifices for atonement.

(3)The discharge coming out of a man or a woman, bears a symbol of the uncontrolled soul, fallen under unclean lusts; hence the matter

requires an encounter with the Holy Lord, who, when touched by the woman with a flow of blood, He did not despise her; on account of that He, Himself, would never be affected by any defilement or uncleanness; the flow of blood stopped, and the woman was healed on the spot through her faith in Him.

2- THE MEDICAL CASES FOR MAN:

a- The statute starts by man inflicted by a venereal disease, that results in the continuous emission of seminal fluid, and inflammation

thereafter.... Here, the statute warns against touching his body, sharing his bed, sitting on his seats, riding on his saddle, even his spit; ... Otherwise he would be counted as unclean until evening; and would be committed to wash his clothes, and bathe in water.

This precaution is meant to be against contagion with venereal diseases, which, as we well know, being very contagious, can be transferred through touching the sick, his clothes, or the tools he uses. As to staying unclean until evening, or until the start of a new day; it means that he who gets in touch with sin, and gets defiled by evil, will not be sanctified all along his whole life, as

long as he is bound to defilement, until he starts with the Lord on a new day, in which he forsakes the past, and sets forth toward a better life. As to washing his clothes and bathing his body with water, this mean his need for the outer cleansing of his clothes, as well as for the inner cleansing of his body hidden in the clothes.

As long as we are in this world, living in this body, and staying in touch with sin, it is befitting of us to perpetually wash our clothes and bodies by the tears of repentance, to live in the outer purity, as well in the inner depths.

b- It is not only concerning touching the body of the sick, but his bed, his seat, the saddle on the beasts which he rides; beside his spit, are all considered unclean The earthen vessel he uses should be broken, and the wooden one should be washed with water. ... That is how sin does to us; it defiles our inner life, and our behavior; so that our sleeping, sitting, walking, and the vessels in which we eat and drink, will all be unclean.

The pure man, even in his sleep will say: *"I sleep, but my heart is awake"* (Song 5: 2); Even if he sleeps with his body, yet, he stays awake with his heart and mind, so that the evil one would not be able to touch him with defilement. Whereas the sinner, even if he is bodily awake, yet he would be defiled by his inner bed, through his union with evil, and his bond with defilement.

What we say about the bed of the wicked or about his sleep, we also say about his seat possessions, and behavior. If the bed refers to the spiritual slothfulness of the wicked, and his hidden union with the evil one, in a matrimony-like union; The seat on which he sits refers to the love of authority, and of the enjoyment of the best places of the banquets. In case the wicked gets a prominent position, even if it is a religious one, his position will not intercede for him, but would rather condemn him. Sitting on the seats of responsibility and teaching, will expose him to a greater judgment. Concerning

this, St. John Chrysostom says: [It would be stupid of me to put on the priesthood the responsibility of the evils of the priests. For the rational man would never blame the sword in the hand of a criminal, the wine concerning the drunkard, or the power concerning the oppressor; but would put the blame on the abuse of the gifts given to them by God].

As to counting the spit as an unclean, it refers to the defiled teachings of the heretics, from which we should flee away, as though from a defiled spit, and get washed from their thoughts that destroy faith. Concerning this St. John Chrysostom says: [While rejecting their heretic doctrines; we should have mercy on the persons themselves, and pray for their salvation].

The saddles put on the beasts he rides, refer to what concern the energies and feelings of his body; which are counted as unclean because of his inner evil.

If the vessel in which he eats or drinks, is earthen, it should be broken; and if wooden, it should be washed with water to be clean. Breaking the earthen vessel refers to the necessity of putting the carnal covetousness to death; while washing the wooden one, refers to sanctifying the body with all its energies, emotions, and feelings. If we should put ourselves to death on our earthen, namely, our dust thoughts, it is not to destroy the body, but to sanctify it to the account of the kingdom of the Lord. According to the apostle Paul: "*Do not let sin reign in your mortal bodies, that you should obey it in its lusts. And do not present your members as instruments of unrighteousness to sin*" (Romans 6: 12, 13). We should, therefore, break everything earthen (dust) in us; and wash everything wooden, to be of help to the soul in her spiritual strife.

In short, we can say that he who is afflicted with such a disease, refers to the sinner who loses his life, and defiles his body, with all his feelings, emotions, and energies; to come to be a burden on those around him; those who see in his bed, seat, food, and drink, defilement, from which they should flee away.

He would be like 'Jonah' who, fleeing from his ministry, and from the face of the Lord, brought harm over all those around him; when, because of him, the sea was disturbed, the waves swelled, and the seamen lost their provisions and peace!... On the contrary, we may see Joseph the righteous, being with God, how he came to be a blessing, even to the household of his master; in the prison; to the whole land of Egypt; how he saved the life of his father and brothers, and how he was glorified in this world, as well as in the life of eternity.

c- *"When he is cleansed of his discharge, then he shall count for himself seven days for his cleansing, wash his clothes, and bathe his body, then he shall be clean. On the eighth day he shall take for himself two turtledoves or two young pigeons, and come before the Lord, to the door of the tabernacle of meeting, and give them to the priest. Then the priest shall offer them, the one as a sin offering, and the other as a burnt offering. So the priest shall make atonement for him before the Lord because of his discharge"* (13-15)..

About that cleansing rite, which we have already dealt with in the previous chapters, we shall only refer to its main lines, which are:

a- The need to wash the body, as well as the clothes with running water from a stream or a non-stagnant spring, refers to our need for inner

and outer sanctification, and for washing in the waters of baptism, to get the renewal of our nature by the Holy Spirit.

b- As long as we are still in the first seven days, we cannot offer the sacrifice, but shall wait for the eighth day. In other words, as long as we

still live submitted to time (the seven days), we cannot enjoy the sacrifice of our Lord Jesus Christ. But when the Holy Spirit lifts us up to the eighth day, namely to the life resurrected in the Lord, we will enjoy the heavenly

sacrifice, and enjoy entering into the presence of the Lord, and the dwelling in His heavenly house.

c- If man enjoys the cleansing as a personal gift given to him by our Lord, yet he gets it through his membership in the church; as it is said:

“He shall come before the Lord, to the door of the tabernacle of meeting”

(14). For what he gets of cleansing or sanctification, will bring

joy to the whole congregation, being one of its members, his sufferings are their sufferings, and his joy is their joy.

d- The priest shall offer on his behalf a sin offering and a burnt offering together ... For his cleansing from his discharge he would enjoy the

forgiveness of his sins through the sin offering, but he should, as well, through offering a burnt offering, present his life a sacrifice of

obedience, and a burnt offering to the Father in Jesus Christ. In other words, if the sin offering represents the negative aspect, namely,

taking his evil away; the burnt offering represents the positive aspect, namely practicing the righteousness. According to St. John

Chrysostom; [Virtue includes two aspects: forsaking evil, and doing good.

Retreat from evil is not enough to reach virtue; it is the middle of the way leading to it. But there is still a need for a great effort].

3- THE NATURAL CASE FOR MAN:

After dealing with the medical cases for man, he now talks about two natural cases for him:

a- The natural emission of semen; namely, “some occurrence in the night”

(Deuteronomy 23: 10), It does not require offering sacrifices; he has

only to wash all his body with water, and be unclean until evening (16, 17).

The church counts the “occurrence in the night” as breaking the fast;

that keeps one from having the holy communion on that day.

b- To the matrimonial intercourse; the same rule applies like the one who has a natural emission of semen; namely, the two of them have to wash their bodies with water, and be counted as unclean until evening. They are also banned on that day from entering into the house of the Lord, nor touching the holy things.

4- THE NATURAL CASE FOR WOMAN:

By the discharge here he means the customary monthly impurity period, during which she would be counted unclean for seven days, and is banned from having any matrimonial intercourse, for two reasons: the first to give her the chance for some rest from her period; and the second, to sanctify the matrimonial relationship, not to be done according to an uncontrolled lust; particularly that the woman, during that period, does not conceive, hence any intercourse, then, would be for the goal of having children.

5- THE MEDICAL CASE FOR WOMAN:

He means the continuous flow of blood; in which case she is counted as unclean; to let her perceive the seriousness of her case, and care for finding a cure.

In case she is healed, she stays under investigation for seven days, then, on the eighth day, presents the same sacrifice and offerings like the man in his medical case.

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THE FOURTH SECTION

THE GREAT DAY OF ATONEMENT

(Chapter 16)

If some peoples have recognized, through tradition, the sacrifices of blood, which they received from Noah and his three sons; yet they have distorted their concepts and goals. But the Jewish people were unique for having such a rite of “the great day of atonement”, never followed by any other people.

That day had its particular importance for the Jews, and had a unique rite, that presents to us magnificent concepts concerning the sacrifice of the Lord Christ, and its atoning work; as revealed to us by the apostle Paul in the ninth chapter of his epistle to the Hebrews.

Before attempting to interpret the sixteenth chapter of the book of Leviticus concerning that unique day, I should like to introduce some remarks about its importance, goal, preparations for it, and its rites.

Its importance to the Jews:

For the importance and reputation of that day to the Jews, the scholars of the Telmud called it “The Day” (Hebrew 7: 27), and “The Fast” (Acts 27: 9); as it is in no need for recognition. The Jews could have looked at it the way we look at “The Great Friday”, being the great day of atonement; in which we see our greatest High Priest intercedes by His precious blood for the whole world, to bring His believers among them to the heaven of heavens, to have a place in the bosom of His heavenly Father. Or it may represent to us the day of “The Theophany”, in which the Lord Christ brought us forth to enjoy the open heaven,

through our union with the Father in His Son, buried in the waters of baptism, and risen from the dead; and to enjoy the sonhood by His Holy Spirit.

The importance of that day is also revealed by calling it “The Sabbath of Sabbaths”, or “The Sabbath of Rest”; as though in it the perfect rest is realized, being “The Feast of Feasts’. This is shown by being bound with the “Feast of the Tabernacles”, counted as the end of the religious Jewish year, in which the Jews rejoice in their harvest, and give God thanks to God on the fifteenth day of the Sabbathical month, namely their seventh and last month. That later day was preceded by “The Great Day of Atonement” on the tenth day of that month; when the perfect reconciliation between God and His people is proclaimed, when the whole congregation are sanctified to be prepared for the perfect joy, and be able to present a thanksgiving sacrifice to God on the Feast of the Tabernacles. ... Now, if we know that the “Feast of the Tabernacles” became later on, a symbol of bringing the Gentiles to the membership of the holy church; the “Great Day of Atonement” (the day of the cross) would, therefore, be the way by which that great work was consummated. And it is befitting of us to remember that the year of the ‘Jubilee’, the year of the perfect liberation, “was always proclaimed to us on “the Great day of Atonement”.

Celebrating that day on the tenth of the Sabbathical month, refers to perfection (the figure 10), by which the sanctification of the Sabbathical month, namely, the holy month, is realized.

Because of the importance of that day, the seventy elders of the Sanhedrim used to train the new high priest on its rites, to make him remember everything concerning it by heart.

We shall see through the unique rites practiced by the high priest himself, through continuous and unceasing cleansing, together with an all day long fasting by the whole congregation, how that day was revealed in the life of the old

Jewish people; and what it carried to us, Christians, of prophetic spiritual symbols, that touch our relationship with God, and our eternal salvation.

Its goal:

The word 'atonement' in Hebrew (Kepudit), means (covering up); For on that day, sins are forgiven, and man is covered up by the blood. The high priest atones for himself, for the priests, and for the whole congregation, and even for the tabernacle and all its contents -- a general and a collective atonement -- for all what the congregation as a whole, or its members individually, have fallen into, all the year long. The statute ends that day by saying: *"And the priest who is anointed and consecrated to minister as priest in his father's place; Shall make atonement for the holy sanctuary, for the tabernacle of meeting, and for the altar, for the priests, and for all the people of the congregation. This shall be an everlasting statute for you, to make atonement for the children of Israel, for all their sins, once a year"* (32-34).

Preparations for the Great Day of Atonement:

The high priest alone used to minister on that day in an elaborate rite after a long preparation, helped by more than 500 priests. The high priest used to spend the seven days preceding the great day of atonement, secluded in an inner chamber inside the temple outside his own home. At the time of the temple of Solomon, the seventy elders of the Sanhedrim used to accompany him, to read to him the commands of the Lord concerning that day, again and again until he knows them by heart, and practice them... And on the eve of that day, to remain awake all the night long, lest he would probably have a dream or something that might defile his body, all the elders used to stay with him, lest he might sleep or slander.

And as the high priest had to minister alone in the Most High Place, the elders of the Sanhedrim used to say to him: [Swear to us by Him whose name dwells in this house, not to change or alter anything that we told you].

The rituals of the Great Day of Atonement:

The high priest used to carry out four services:

a- The morning or perpetual daily service all along the year, usually done by the priests; Yet on that day, the high priest perform it himself.

At midnight, as a distinction of that day from any other, a lot is cast for the priests to take away all the ashes from over the altar, lest the sacrifices of the great day of atonement would be offered on old ashes;. Then they take the high priest to wash his body five times, and to wash his hands and feet ten times; not in a regular basin, but in a golden one, dedicated for that particular purpose. And in case he is an old man, they used to pour hot water in the basin, or to put hot iron bars in the water for the same purpose.

Then the high priest puts on the holy garments, which are “*for glory and beauty*” (Exodus 28), enters the sanctuary, amends the lamps, and raise the incense; then he will offer the perpetual burnt offering, a lamb of the first year, together with a grain offering $\frac{1}{10}$ of an ephah of fine flour mixed with $\frac{1}{4}$ of a hin of pressed oil, and $\frac{1}{4}$ of a hin of wine (Exodus 29: 38-42); which was doubled if the day was a Sabbath (Numbers 28: 9, 10).

b- The service of the great day of atonement, the details of which came in the present chapter, which we shall discuss in our interpretation.

c- Additional sacrifices are offered on that day (Numbers 29: 7-11), by the high priest, which are: “a bull, a ram, seven lambs of

the first year; a grain offering of 3/10 of an ephah of fine flour mixed with oil, on the bull, 2/10, on the ram, 1/10 on each lamb, and ½ hin of wine, on the bull, 1/3 hin on the ram, and ¼ hin on each lamb”; And he will offer another sin offering of a kid of goats.

d- The perpetual evening service, similar to the morning service, done by the high priest dressed in his superb garments.

The Lord Christ and the atonement:

Bearing our body, the Word of God came to live among us in our world, as though for one year, which he ends by the great day of atonement; in which He atones for our sins, and brings us forth into the bosom of His Father, interceding for us as the heavenly High Priest, not through the blood of bulls and kids of goats, but through His own precious blood.

According to the scholar Origen: [Meditate in how the true Priest is the Lord Jesus Christ (Hebrew 4: 14), bearing the body, as though spending one whole year among His people; saying: *“The Spirit of the Lord God is upon Me; because the Lord has anointed Me to preach good tidings to the poor; He has sent Me to heal the brokenhearted; to proclaim liberty to the captives, and the opening of the prison to those who are bound; to proclaim the acceptable year of the Lord”* (Isaiah 61: 1, 2). In that year, on the day of atonement, He entered once into the Most High Place (Exodus 30: 10); when He consummated His mission, and ascended to heaven (Hebrew 4: 14) to sit on the right hand of the Father, to the account of the human race, to intercede for all his believers. On this atonement to the account of the human race, the apostle John says: *“My little children, these things I write to you, that you not sin. And if anyone sins, we have an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the Righteous; And He Himself is the propitiation for our sins”* (1 John 1, 2). An the apostle Paul comments on this atonement by

saying about Christ: *“Whom God set forth to be a propitiation by His blood, through faith, to demonstrate His righteousness”* (Romans 2: 25).

As that day extends until sunset; namely until the end of the world, we stand before the door waiting for our Priest who delayed inside the Most Holy Place; namely before the Father (1 John2: 1, 2), interceding for the sins of those anticipating Him (Hebrew 9: 28). Yet He does not intercede for all; ... He does not intercede for those who belong to the goat that was sent into the wilderness (Leviticus 16: 9, 10); but only for those who belong to the Lord, who anticipate His return before the door; who would not leave the temple, worshipping day and night by fasting and supplications (Luke 2: 37).

When you come to the church on the day of the feast, well-dressed, yet not to listen attentively to the divine voice, nor keep His commandments, Do you think you belong to the Lord?!... Pay attention to my words; ... I wish you strive, not only to listen to the voice of God in the church, but to practice, as well, according to the words of God, in your homes, and to meditate in the law of God day and night (Psalm 1: 2) ... This would be true anticipation before the door for the Priest who delayed inside the Most Holy Place; by which we would be counted as belonging to the Lord].

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THE FIFTH SECTION

THE ALTAR AND THE SACRIFICES

(Chapter 17)

CHAPTER 17

THE ALTAR AND THE SACRIFICES

In the previous chapter, as the law proclaimed the role of the holy sacrifice in sanctifying Aaron, the high priest, to go through the veil, and enjoy approaching the ark of the covenant, to intercede for himself and the whole people; God intends to proclaim the importance of the sacrifice, and its bonding with the holy altar, and the holiness of the blood; for fear of any probable confusion among the people.

1- The altar and the sacrifices

1 -

9

2- Forbidding eating the blood

10 -

12

3- The blood of a hunted animal or bird

13 -

14

4- Forbidding eating what died naturally, or was torn by a wild beast

15 -

16

1- THE ALTAR AND THE SACRIFICES:

“Whatever man of the house of Israel kills an ox, lamb, or goat in the camp; or who kills it outside the camp, and does not bring it to the door of the tabernacle of meeting, to offer an offering to the Lord before the tabernacle of the Lord,, bloodguilt shall be imputed to that man. He has shed blood; and that man shall be cut off among the people, to the end that the children of Israel may bring their sacrifices which they offer in the open field, that they may bring them to the Lord at the door of the tabernacle of meeting to the priest, and offer them as peace offering to the Lord” (3-5)

What does this statute mean? Does it forbid the children of Israel to slay clean animals to eat, out of the tabernacle of meeting; and does it commit them to offer all their sacrifices as peace offerings to the Lord? (6)

There are two views in this concern:

(1) This statute was literally interpreted for the children of Israel while being in the wilderness, where God Himself cared for their food, drinks, and all their needs, and sent to them the Manna from heaven; and where God did not allow them to slay, even the clean animals, except

through the sacrifices offered to the Lord. That was probably a confirmation that the Lord sustained them in an exalted way while being in the wilderness. For fear of slaying for the idols, God put that condition of offering the clean animals in the name of the Lord at the door of the tabernacle of meeting, for the Lord to have His portion in them. Probably having the portrait of the Egyptian sacrifices in mind, God intended to wipe it out of the minds of the children of Israel, during the forty years of their wandering in the wilderness.

But, after they reached the land of Canaan, and the distribution of the land among the tribes, having started to feed on the produce of the promised land, God allowed them to slay the clean animals, and to eat their flesh (Deuteronomy 12: 20-22), with one condition of bringing their sacrifices to the Lord (other than the sacrifices intended for eating), and their offerings, and their firstfruit to the house of the Lord (Deuteronomy 12: 11-19, 26, 27).

(2) By what is mentioned in this chapter, He means the act of slaying, not for eating, but to offer as sacrifices to the Lord; intending to confirm that no sacrifice for worship would be offered outside the circle of the tabernacle or the temple; namely away from the holy altar of the Lord. This statute is intended to be followed by the believers, lest they would probably divert to sacrificing for the idols, or to partake of the heathen worships.

God has previously allowed for some men of God to set altars to Him, and to offer sacrifices for the sake of particular exceptional divine purposes, as what Joshua did on Mount Ebal (Joshua 8: 20); Gideon, who broke down the temple, and the pillar of Baal, and built an altar for the Lord through a divine command (Judges 6: 27-28); The prophet Samuel, when he offered a sacrifice in Mizpah (1 Samuel 7: 5-11); The prophet David at the threshing floor of Arauna the Jebusite (2 Samuel 24: 18-25); And the prophet Elijah, when he opposed the priests of Baal (1 Kings 18: 19-40). Those cases and the like were not regular daily

practices, but were under particular circumstances allowed by the Lord to His men, to set altars to glorify Him, to oppose the heathen worship, or to lift up His wrath over His people in exceptional circumstances.

In the new covenant, we enjoy a divine altar, on which no animal sacrifices are offered, nor blood of bulls or goats is sprinkled; but which we see a heavenly altar, on which the Father, by His Holy Spirit, offers the body and the blood of His only begotten Son, delivered to sanctify us. According to St. Augustine: [There is an unseen altar, high up, to which the wicked cannot approach; ... Through God's sanctuary, His tabernacle, and His church, go to His altar in the heights].

Talking about how awesome the altar of the church of the new covenant is, St. John Chrysostom says: [Awesome indeed are the sacraments of the church! Awesome indeed is the altar! Out of Paradise came material rivers forth; but from this table emerges a fountain that gives forth spiritual rivers; no fruitless trees are planted on their banks, but trees that reach up to heaven, and always bear non-corruptible fruits. In case you are struck by heat, come to this fountain to cool off your burns, quench your thirst, and have comfort from the burns caused by the fiery darts, and not by the sun. They emerge, and have their source from up high, and from heaven they draw their water. Abundant are the rivers which come from this fountain, sent by the Comforter; the Intercessor Son, who holds no ax to open the way before us, but opens up our minds. Such fountain is light that gives the rays of truth, beside which stand the heavenly hosts to watch the beauty of its rivers; being more able to perceive the power of the things put upon it, and its unapproachable splendor. Whoever partakes of this blood, will stand side by side with the angels, the archangels, and the heavenly hosts, clothed in the royal garment of Christ, ... No, he will be clothed with the King Himself; and will have the weapons of the Spirit.

Again he says: [I beseech you, ... Look! ... It is a royal banquet prepared for us! Served by the angels, and attended by the King Himself; ... Will you still stand slothfully?!

2- FORBIDDING EATING THE BLOOD:

Having forbidden the Jews to offer any sacrifice, outside the circle of the divine rite, lest they might divert to heathen worship; Binding His whole people – priests and congregation – to the altar, to have them all gather together in the Lord, through the sacrifice; Again He confirms forbidding eating the blood, not only for the Israelites, but also for the strangers who sojourn among them. We have already spoken about the wisdom of forbidding eating the blood in our interpretation of the third chapter.

3- THE BLOOD OF A HUNTED ANIMAL OR BIRD:

He allowed for the Israelites and the strangers who sojourn among them, in case they hunt an animal or a bird, to eat it if it is clean; Yet concerning its blood, He says: *“pour out its blood and cover it with dust”* (13). The wisdom behind covering the blood with dust, is to remind man that these animals which were created of dust (Genesis 1: 24) will return to it. While man, having borne a breath of life through the divine breath, it is befitting of him not to attach himself anymore to dust, lest he would returns to dust, but to attach himself to the Heavenly God, to set forth eternally to heaven.

In covering the blood with dust, there is also probably a reverence to every being, even if it is an animal or a bird, the flesh of which he eats; It is not befitting of him to trample on its blood with his feet, but to cover it with dust, as though burying it. This kind of thought grants man a tendency toward compassion, even toward animals, to keep him from being violent and arrogant.

By presenting this statute of covering the blood, God probably intends to keep man from using blood in unclean and defiled heathen procedures, like pouring it to idols.

4- FORBIDDING EATING WHAT DIED NATURALLY, OR WHAT WAS TORN BY A WILD BEAST:

“And every person who eats what died naturally, or what was torn by beasts, whether he is a native of your own country or a stranger, he shall both wash his clothes and bathe in water, and be unclean until evening; then he shall be clean. And if he does not wash or bathe his body, then he shall bear his guilt” (15, 16)

The law forbade eating what died naturally or through being strangled; namely what was not slain, as well as what was torn by beasts. He who intentionally does that will be scourged, or cut off from the people of God. ... But here, the law is intended for him who unintentionally eats such things. Once he knows, he has to wash his clothes, bathe, and remain unclean until evening, will not enter into the sanctuaries, nor touch them until evening.

The reason behind forbidding them to eat what died naturally, or what was torn by beasts; beside health reasons, for fear that the animal probably died by a contagious disease, or was attacked by spitting in it some poison like that of a serpent, or its teeth bore some kind of microbes. The second reason is that, intentionally eating what is not slain, involves a kind of unbefitting greed; and in both cases, the blood might have been kept in the flesh; Finally, the prey might have been devoured by an unclean beast, and consequently turned unclean for man to eat.

In the time of the apostles, the church issued a decree exhorting the believers to
“*abstain from things polluted by idols, from things strangled, and from blood*”
(Acts 15: 20).

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THE SIXTH SECTION

THE STATUTES OF SANCTIFICATION

(Chapters 18 – 22)

Sanctification statutes concerning the people:

- a- The bodily relationships
Chapter 18
- b- The general relationships
Chapter 19
- c- The idols and adultery
Chapter 20

Sanctification statutes concerning the priests:

Chapter 21

Sanctification statutes concerning the sanctity of the sanctuaries:

Chapter 22

The book of Leviticus shows how serious sin is, its bitter results on man's life, of the separation of his soul from God, the Source of its life. It presents to us the diverse sacrifices that reveal different aspects of the cross, as a way by which man would return to God, the source of his life and sanctification. And as the believers are committed to respond to the work of the sacrifice in their daily life, on all its aspects, God presented the practical statutes that touch their food, drink, clothes, houses, and health (Chapters 11 to 15). Now, He presents the practical statutes that concern their relationships, whether with God, with the brethren,

with the irrational nature, or the behavior toward the divine sanctities. Those statutes deal with the sanctification of the people of God, of the priests, and that of the divine sanctities.

- a- Statutes that concern the sanctification of the people Chapters 18
- 20
- b- Statutes that concern the sanctification of the priests Chapter 21
- c- Statutes that concern the sanctification of the sanctities
Chapter 22

CHAPTER 18

THE SANCTIFICATION AND THE FAMILIAL RELATIONSHIPS

He started His talk here by the statutes of sanctification, in particular those of forbidden marriages, not as commands by which the congregation are committed by force to follow, but as a way by which they would enjoy the holy life, that was not enjoyed by the other nations; and so that the congregation would be qualified to be counted as the people of the Holy God. And finally, so as not to defile the land by evil, to make it drive them out of it.

2- The forbidden marriages	6 - 18
3- The carnal perversions	19 - 23
4- The consequences of ungodly abominations	24 – 30

1- AN INTRODUCTION:

Starting by “the forbidden matrimony”, Lest they might think that those statutes are deprivation or refrain, He proclaims their goal by saying: *“I am the Lord your God; According to the doings of the land of Egypt, where you dwelt, you shall not do; and according to the doings of the land of Canaan, where I am bringing you, you shall not do; nor shall you walk in their ordinances. You shall observe My judgments and keep My ordinances, to walk in them. I am the Lord your God. You shall therefore keep My statutes and My judgments, which if a man does, he shall live by them; I am the Lord”* (2-5).

In this introduction, it is to be noticed:

(1) He starts and ends it; *and* in its middle, as well, by saying: *“I am the Lord your God”*; and repeats this expression when he mentions the

statutes themselves. It is as though He intends to say: I am the Lord your God; I am the beginning, I am the end; and I am the way. The statutes I present to you are not deprivation, nor refrain from doing things, but they are rather to acquire Me; your Satisfier! ... God is the Goal of the commandment; We receive His commandment and statute, to discover and acquire Him as the secret of our life.

(2) In this introduction He made it clear that by those statutes He intends to separate them for Himself. Having set them free of the land of bondage, and having granted them the land of Canaan as an inheritance, it is not befitting of them to walk according to the ways of those who enslaved them, nor according to those whose land they acquired. It is befitting of the

people of God, and of every member in them, to have his spiritual statute that distinguish him from the lovers of the world.

(3) According to St. Clement of Alexandria, "Egypt" in this phrase refers to the love of the world, while "the people of Canaan" refer to deception, against both of which the divine commandment warn us.

(4) Commenting on the phrase, saying: "*You shall therefore keep My statutes and judgments, which if a man does he shall live by them*", St.

John Chrysostom says: There is no other way by which man would be righteous, except by keeping the whole divine law. Yet, as it is actually impossible for anyone to do that; and the Jews have failed to enjoy such righteousness, there was therefore a need for Him who keeps the law, while not breaking any of its commandments; namely, a need for our Lord Jesus Christ, He who bowed under the law, to consummate it by His own will, setting us free from the curse that dwelt upon us through breaking its commandments. Hence, the apostle St. Peter said: "*To whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life*" (John 6: 68).

2- THE FORBIDDEN MARRIAGES:

After the introduction, He paraded the forbidden marriages, banning approaching the bodies of relatives, and uncovering their nakedness, namely refraining from uniting with them in matrimonial relationship. The forbidden marriages were proclaimed as follows:

a- Marrying the **father** or the **mother** (7); so as not to fall into what Lot's daughters have done (Genesis 19: 30-38); by which they brought forth into the world Moab and Ammon, setting two nations opposing God

b- Marrying the **father's wife** (8), whether during his father's life or after his death. The soul of Jacob was embittered when he heard that

Reuben, his firstborn, slept with his concubine Belhah (Genesis 35: 22); and defiled his father's bed; because of which he has lost his firstborn status (Genesis 48: 22). Absalom committed the same fault when he rebelled against his father David, set himself a king, and slept with his father's concubines (2 Samuel 16: 22).

c- Marrying one's **sister** (9)

d- Marrying one's **granddaughter** (10)

e- Marrying **the daughter of his father's wife** (11); if she is borne by his father... Namely, the daughter of his father's wife, even if she is borne neither by his father nor by his mother, she is counted as though borne by his father, because her mother's bond to him as a wife. In other words, it is not allowed to marry the daughter of the father's wife, even if she is borne by another father, on account of that she is counted as his father's daughter, through the union of her mother to him.

f- Marrying **the father's sister** or **the mother's sister** (12, 13)

g- Marrying **the wife of the father's brother** (14)

h- Marrying **the daughter-in-law** (15)

i- Marrying **the brother's wife** (16)

j- Marrying **a woman and her daughter**, nor **a woman and her son's daughter**, or **her daughter's daughter** (17)

k- Marrying **a woman as a rival to her sister**, while the other is alive (18);

Namely, marrying a woman after divorcing her sister; nor **marrying two sisters together**, as Jacob did when he married Leah and Rachel (before the law).

Now, why did the law forbid marrying those bodily-related women?

a- To keep the sanctity of the family life; on account of that many families used to live together under the same roof; in which case one should

look with sanctity toward his close relatives, that they are his flesh and blood ... Feeling that he is not allowed to marry any of them, he will deal with them with pure brotherly or sonhood love, far from any carnal thought.

b- Health-wise, according to heredity scientists, intermarriage among relatives, like cousins and nieces, may expose their seed to more hereditary defects, than marriage of non-relatives.

c- According to St. John Chrysostom, marriage implies entering into strong bonds of love, so that man, counting his wife's relatives as his own, he will not marry any of them. According to the same line of thought, according to St. Basil the great, man cannot marry his wife's sister, even after her death; on account of that, being one with his wife, he will not be allowed to marry her mother, her daughter, or her sister, having become like his mother, daughter, and sister.

d- Forbidden such marriages, will help widen the circle of family bondages; namely, when the children marry of different families, diverse families would bond together.

3- THE CARNAL PERVERSIONS:

After forbidding marriages among close relatives, the law warned against bodily perversions that were wide spread among some heathen peoples, like:

a- *"You shall not approach a woman to uncover her nakedness as long as she is in her customary impurity"* (19). The law forbids sexual relationship between husband and wife during her customary impurity, or if she has a flow of blood; Otherwise, both of them shall be cut off from their people (20: 18); ... but in case that was unintentionally done, man shall be unclean seven days.

This ban is based on the fact that, psychologically, and health-wise, the wife is usually not prepared for sexual relationship. On a spiritual aspect, as it came

in the laws of the apostles: [That, being done, not for the purpose of producing children, but for the sake of pleasure; it is, therefore befitting of him who loves God, not to do it].

b- To keep away from adultery (20). *“Man who commits adultery with his neighbor’s wife, the adulterer and the adulteress, shall surely be put to death”* (20: 10; Deuteronomy 22: 22).

c- To keep away from delivering children as human sacrifices, as it was done to Molech, god of the Ammonites (21)

d- To keep away from sexual perversion, like homosexuality between man and man (22), or between woman and woman; or mating with animals (23)

4- THE CONSEQUENCES OF UNGODLY ABOMINATIONS:

If, in the introduction, God proclaimed His longing for His people to live in holiness, to have the features that befit their God, and which separate them from the heathen nations around them; Now, at the end of this statute, God reveals the negative aspect, namely, the fruit of sin, in particular of the bodily abominations:

a- *“The land vomit you out when you defile it”* (28). If God created the land for man’s sake; Once man, the master of the land becomes corrupt, he will corrupt the land as well, and it will vomit him out of it.

In the old, when Adam and Eve sinned, the land fell under curse, to produce thorns and thistles (Genesis 3: 17). And when Cain killed his brother Abel, it was said: *“The land will no longer yield to you its strength”* (Genesis 4: 12). And the apostle says: *“For we know that the*

whole creation groans and labors with birth pangs together until now” (Romans 8: 22).. And now, as we return sanctified to the Lord in His blood, creation will bless and glorify Him.

b- If the land or the creation, not enduring the corruption of man, will vomit him out; the holy Church of God, not enduring whoever persists on his wickedness, will separate him, and drive him out of membership in the Holy Body: *“Whoever commits any of these abominations, the persons who commit them shall be cut off from among their people” (29)*. In the old covenant, the cutting off was mostly done by stoning to death; but in the new covenant, it is done by the deprivation of fellowship, according to the words of the apostle concerning him who has done evil with his father’s wife: *“For indeed as absent in body, but present in spirit, have already judged, as though I were present, concerning him who has done this deed. In the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, ... deliver such a one to Satan for the destruction of the flesh, that his spirit may be saved in the day of the Lord Jesus” (1 Corinthians 5: 3, 4)*. By driving him out of the fellowship of life, he delivers him to Satan; not out of hatred, but with hope that once his life is embittered, he may return with repentance, to hear the words of the apostle, concerning the same man, saying: *“You ought rather to forgive him and comfort him, lest perhaps such a one be swallowed up with too much sorrow” (2 Corinthians 2: 7)*.

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CHAPTER 19

THE HOLINESS AND DEALINGS

Having spoken about the forbidden marriages, and the abominable bodily relationships, He speaks here about translating the holy life, practically, through our relationship with God, parents, and brethren, even with our behavior toward beasts and plants.

- 1- Statutes concerning our relationship with the Holy God
1 - 2
- 2- Statutes concerning revering the parents
3
- 3- Statutes concerning keeping the Sabbath, and rejecting idol-worship
3 - 8
- 4- Statutes concerning the harvest
9 - 10
- 5- Statutes concerning our relationship with the brethren
11 - 18
- 6- Statutes concerning the animals and agriculture
19
- 7- The statute concerning committing sin with a concubine
20 - 22
- 8- The statute concerning the firstfruit of trees
23 - 25
- 9- General statutes
26 - 27

1- STATUTES CONCERNING OUR RELATIONSHIP WITH THE HOLY GOD:

“And the Lord spoke to Moses, saying, ‘Speak to all the congregation of the children of Israel, and say to them, You shall be holy, for I the Lord your God am holy’” (1, 2)

God is the secret of our holiness; Entering with Him into a fellowship, by abiding in the Holy Son, through His Holy Spirit dwelling in us, we carry His features in us, to be counted as holy. Holiness is not only keeping away from evil, and not even just practicing virtuous works; but it is to receive the Holy God, and to enjoy Him, to carry His features as a gift from Him. Holiness is a gift from the Holy God to His children; saying: *“For their sakes I sanctify Myself, that they also may be sanctified by the truth”* (John 17: 19)

Perceiving this holiness as a divine gift that we enjoy through our enjoyment of the Holy One Himself, particularly in the water of baptism, St. Augustine says: [By the righteousness You grant me, I shall be righteous. Let my righteousness be Your righteousness, for You grant it to me]. ; And he says: [He who has got the grace of holiness, of baptism, and of the forgiveness of sins (1 Corinthians 6: 11), will say to his God: I am holy because You sanctify me; not because holiness is from me, but because I received it, not because I deserve it, but because You granted it to me]. And, [If all the believers who get baptized become clothed in Him, according to the words of the apostle: *“For as many of you that were baptized into Christ, have put on Christ”* (Galatians 3: 27). If they have become members of His body, and still say that they are not saints, they are doing wrong to the Head, of whom they are His members. ... Now see where you are, and who your Head is, to have honor]. And more clearly he says: [The holiness of the Christian is realized by Christ Himself; He is the power of holiness ... hence holiness is consummated in the water of baptism, where he glitters].

Presenting to us another concept of the sanctification, the scholar Origen believes that it means consecrating man in his wholeness to the account of the kingdom of God, even the temporal things would be sanctified by consecrating them to the Lord; giving as examples, the firstfruit consecrated to the Lord, are delivered to Him; and the priestly garments, the holy vessels, and the tools of the temple or the tabernacle, are consecrated, namely, would not be used except for the service of the Lord... So it is for the holy man, who, with all his energies, possibilities, and all the breaths of his life, will be consecrated to the account of the kingdom of Light.. He says: [If we understand in what sense will the animal (the sacrifice), the holy tools and garments be consecrated, we shall, by good logic, be able to understand man as a saint. ...In truth, we are committed to consecrate ourselves to the Lord, and not be preoccupied by any temporal work, according to the words of the apostle: "*No one engaged in warfare entangles himself with the affairs of this life, that he may please him who enlisted him as a soldiers*" (2 Timothy 2: 4)...Let us then keep away from those who live a carnal way of life, and who hold fast to the temporal things; ... Let us separate ourselves from them; as it is said: "*Set your minds on things above, not on things on the earth*" (Colossians 3: 2); For by that we shall be counted as saints We should "*withdraw from every brother who walks disorderly and not according to the tradition which he received from us (from the apostle)*" (2 Thessalonian 3: 6); ... and according to the prophet Isaiah: "*Depart! Depart!, Go out from there, Touch no unclean thing, Go out from the midst of her, Be clean, You who bear the vessels of the Lord*" (Isaiah 52: 11; Revelation 18: 4). ... Keep away from the earthly things;... Forsake the covetousness of the world, "*For all that is in the world – the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life – is not of the Father, but is of the world*" (1 John 2: 16). ... Forsake all that and consecrate yourself to the Lord; ... By "depart", he does not mean to leave the place, but rather to leave the works; to change the way of life. For the word "holy" in Greek (hagios), means soaring above the earthly things. He who consecrates himself to the Lord, soars above the earth and the world; and can say, while still on earth: "*We have a city in heaven*".]

2- STATUTES CONCERNING REVERING THE PARENTS:

The commandment “*Everyone of you shall revere his mother and his father*” (3), came directly after, “*You shall be holy, for I the Lord your God am Holy*” 92). The first sign of holiness will appear in our practical life through our relationship with our father and mother, which represent the fatherhood of God, and the motherhood of the church.

The commandment of revering the parents occupies a prominent place among the ten commandments (Exodus 20: 12), as well as in several other places; and as the apostle says: “*It is the first commandment with promise*” (Ephesians 6: 2).

In the fifth commandment, the father came before the mother; but here, the mother comes first; to proclaim the equality between the father and the mother, and the non-partiality to one at the expense of the other, but that their reverence should be the same in the sight of their children.

3- STATUTES CONCERNING KEEPING THE SABBATH, AND REJECTING IDOL-WORSHIP:

The Lord cared for keeping the Sabbath as a divine commandment (Exodus 20: 8), as a covenant between God and His people; and as a sign of God’s comfort in His people, and the people’s comfort in their God alone. Hence the Sabbath was considered as a weekly feast with its special rite; on which we shall talk in our interpretation of chapter 23, if God wills.

The Lord warned them against caring for the idols (4), making them, or sacrificing to them.... This commandment is addressed to us, not to set for ourselves idols to worship; whether they are our bellies, honor, riches, or bodily lusts! ... I wish

nothing would occupy our heart except the Lord; toward whom we look, and to whom we long and worship.

He also commanded them, saying, *“If you offer a sacrifice of peace; ... it shall be eaten the same day you offer it, and on the next day; and if anything remains until the third day, it shall be burned in the fire”* (6). As we already said, this refers to receiving the Lord, risen from the dead on the third day. Anything remaining of the sacrifice may cause it to corrupt; and as it refers to Jesus Christ risen from the dead; His body

4- STATUTES CONCERNING THE HARVEST:

“When you reap the harvest of your land, you shall not wholly reap the corners of your fields, nor shall you gather every grape of your vineyard; you shall leave them for the poor and the stranger” (9). This commandment touches the life of the believer himself; Bearing in his heart a wide space for his needy brethren and the strangers, he would present to them of his harvest, without embarrassing them. By giving instructions to the reapers to leave the corners of his fields, and not to gather what fall down during transport, the poor and the needy, entering into the field, would find what they can pluck without feeling embarrassment; as what Ruth the Moabite did.

This commandment, not only exhorts us to give the poor and the needy, but rather more not to touch their self respect, nor wound their feelings; We should give them love from the heart, before giving them food or clothing; for Solomon the Sage says: *“He who mocks the poor, reproaches his Maker”* (Proverb 17: 5)

With the same spirit, He says: *“nor shall you gather every grape of your vineyard”* (10); namely, you shall not bare it from all its fruits, but you shall leave some portion for the poor and the stranger; and you shall leave for them, as well, what fall down naturally from the trees, or during reaping or transport.

5- STATUTES CONCERNING OUR RELATIONSHIP WITH THE BRETHREN:

After talking about our relationship with God Himself, with our parents, with the needy and the strangers, here He presents to us statutes concerning our relationship with the brethren, the most prominent items of which are:

a- “*You shall not steal*” (11; Exodus 20: 15). The true believer, not only refrains from stealing what belong to others, but longs to give of

what is his to others, according to the words of the apostle: “*Let him who stole, steal no longer, but rather let him labor, working with his hands what is good, that he may have something to give him who has need*” (Ephesians 4: 28); by which he would bear the Spirit of His Lord, who labors to give satisfaction to every needy, and comfort to every disturbed soul.

b- “*nor lie to one another*” (11); about which St. John Klimacos says: [Lying destroys love; and the false vow is a denial of God]. The child knows nothing about lying, so is the soul that does no evil].

c- “*nor deal falsely to one another*” (11).By that he means betrayal in every way, and not opening the heart wide with love toward the others;

the way Cain did to his brother Abel (Genesis 4: 8); Joseph’s brothers to him (Genesis 27); and Judas to his Lord Christ (Matthew 26: 47). As according to St. John El-Dargi: [If you must hate, hate the demons; If you must have animosity, let it be against the evil lust of your body]. And, [A hermit full of hatred is like a serpent in its hole, that has deadly venom inside it].

d- “*You shall not swear by My name falsely; nor shall you profane the name of your God*” (12) According to St. John Chrysostom

[Jerusalem, the city of God, that embraced the temple, and the ark of the covenant, and enjoyed the prophets and the promises of God, perished because of false swearing. The commandments of God came to forbid taking the name of the Lord in vain (Exodus 20: 7). Although the people were allowed to swear by the name of God in the old covenant, as a sign of cherishing their God, and to keep them from swearing by the idols, yet it strongly provoked them not to do it in vain: And as the Lord Christ came, He utterly forbade it, saying: *“Let your ‘Yes’ be ‘Yes’, and your ‘No’ ‘No’, for whatever is more than these is from the evil one”* (Matthew 5: 37).

e- *“You shall not defraud your neighbor, nor rob him, The wages of him who is hired shall not remain with you all night until*

morning” (13). The law, warning us against defrauding or robbing our neighbors, presents something that could happen unintentionally, like keeping the wages of a hired hand to the next day; when he and his family may be in bad need of it the same day. It therefore would imply, not just robbing something that belong to others, but even delaying giving it to him would be considered as oppression, robbing and stealing! He clearly says: *“You shall not oppress a hired servant who is poor and needy, whether one of your brethren or one of the aliens who is in your hands within your gates. Each day you shall give him his wages, and not let the sun get down on it, for he is poor and set his heart on , lest he cries out against you to the Lord, and it will be sin to you”* (Deuteronomy 24: 14, 15). And our teacher St. James the apostle says: *“Indeed the wages of the laborers who mowed your fields, which you kept back by fraud cry out, and the cries of the reapers have reached the ears of the Lord of Sabaoth”* (James 5: 4).

f- *“You shall not curse the deaf, nor put a stumbling block before the blind, but shall fear your God: I am the Lord”* (14). Here he

presents another kind of oppression set upon making use of the weakness of others instead of supporting them; to curse the deaf who does not hear to

defend himself; and to put a stumbling block before the blind instead of helping him out of his fall; all of which God considers as being directed personally to Him; for, by saying: “Fear your God”, it implies that He is the Father of the poor, the needy and the handicapped; By “the deaf” we curse, he probably means, whom we revile behind his back, and does not hear it; and by “the blind” before whom we put a stumbling block, he probably means the one spiritually weak, whom we judge and destroy, instead of supporting him with the spirit of hope.

St. Macarius the Great, warning us against cursing the deaf, and seeking from us to keep away from the word of backbiting, says: [Keep your tongues from saying any evil against your brethren; for he who so does, will provoke God who dwells in him to anger. Whatever you do to your brother, you do it to the Lord]. And St. Jerome says: [If you hear someone revile another, flee of him the way you do from a venomous serpent; to make him ashamed of himself, so as not to do it again].

Concerning refraining from putting a stumbling block before the blind, St. John Chrysostom says: [It is befitting of us to put soothing oil on the wounds of the weak, and not something inflammable that would increase their suffering].

g- “You shall do no injustice in judgment. You shall not be partial to the poor, nor honor the person of the mighty; but in

righteousness you shall judge your neighbor” (15). It is befitting of us to judge with justice and with no oppression; for poverty shall not intercede for the poor, to be partial to him; nor riches shall support the mighty to honor him.

h- “You shall not go about as a talebearer among your people, nor shall you take a stand against the life of your neighbor. I am the

Lord” (16). By being a talebearer he means to speak evil against others before their friends, families, or bosses; as according to the

prophet Jeremiah: *“They have taught their tongue to speak lies, and weary themselves to commit iniquity”* (Jeremiah 9: 5). As to taking a stand against the life of your neighbor, it means not to be a cause for his perdition, or for his destruction physically or mentally, through a false testimony, or refraining from coming to his defense... etc. Saying: *“I am the Lord”*, it is as though He says: ‘If you do so and destroy the life of your neighbor; I am the Lord, who defends the honor of the oppressed, and the life of those destroyed’.

i- *“You shall not hate your brother in your heart. You shall surely rebuke your neighbor, and not bear sin because of him”* (17).

If your brother wrongs you, you shall not hate him in your heart, but *“go and tell him his fault between you and him alone”* (Matthew 18: 15-17), and warn him. For you may have misunderstood him, or heard a baseless evil claim about him from somebody; and he, himself, might have acted through misunderstanding ... Give yourself a chance not to bear hate in your heart, and give your neighbor a chance to defend himself, or to repent. We have already dealt with this topic in our interpretation of the gospel of St. Matthew (Chapter 18).

As to saying: *“and not bear sin because of him”*, it means that, if you hate your neighbor, even if he has sinned against you, By such hatred you corrupt your heart, and bear sin inside you. Hence, St. Augustine sees in the words said by the apostle: *“Whoever hates his brother is a murderer of a soul”* (1 John 3: 15); that by anger, one murders his own inner soul; Saying: [In case you find in your houses scorpions and serpents, will you not do your best to get rid of them to live in peace? Now, you are angry; and anger takes root in your hearts, and grows in them like scorpions and serpents, and yet you do nothing to purify your hearts - - the dwelling place of God].

According to St. John Cassian, by saying “*You shall not hate your brother in your heart*”, the law intends to uproot evil, before the inner anger and hate would turn into a desire to take vengeance, or to bear grudge (18); he says: [Why would we talk about the evangelic and apostolic commandments, if even the old law, which is thought not to be firm enough, warns us against anger, saying: *You shall not hate your brother in your heart*” ... Behold, you see how the commandment come against evil, not only in executing it, but to uproot hatred while still in the heart].

J- “*You shall not take vengeance, nor bear any grudge against the children of your people, but you shall love your neighbor as*

***yourself: I am the Lord*”** (18). God does not endure hatred, particularly if it turns into grudge ... According to the scholar Tertullian: [The Creator put no limits to forgiveness, but commands you to bear no hatred against your neighbor, with no limits; ... He commands you to give, not only to him who asks you, but even to him who does not. ... He commands you, not only to forgive any transgression against yourself, but even to forget it].

Finally, the cure of all that is to “***love your neighbor as yourself; I am the Lord***”. Namely, the way the believer, truly loves himself, and longs for its salvation and eternal glory, he will rejoice in the salvation of his brother, and, seeing him as a member together with him in the Body, whose Head is the Lord Himself, he will have a wide heart toward him. According to St. Augustine: [To love himself, it is befitting of man to “*love God with all his heart, with all his soul, and with all his might*” (Deuteronomy 6: 5); ... to have all his thoughts, and his whole life, absorbed in God, the Grantor of life; and his inner streams unceasingly flow with love; ... By loving his neighbor as himself, he would wish for his brother to love God, as well, with all his heart, all his soul, and all his might. By that, even in his love for his brother, man would direct his

love for God, and for his brother, to the channel of the inexhaustible love of God.

Commenting on those statutes of not having grudge, St. Augustine says: [It should not be understood as a commandment addressed to a righteous man, but rather as a voice of comfort addressed to a weak man].

6- STATUTES CONCERNING THE ANIMALS AND AGRICULTURE:

He starts all those statutes by saying: “***You shall keep My statutes***” (19), to confirm that those statutes, whether concerning the relationship of the believer with his parents, the neighbor, the poor, or even the animals and agriculture; are all “*the statutes of God*”, which we should keep for the sake of our relationship and unity with Him; ... We should love the statute on account of that it is the statute of our beloved God, which He presents to embrace us by love to Himself.

“You shall not let your livestock breed with another kind. You shall not sow your field with mixed seed; nor shall a garment of mixed linen and wool come upon you” (19)

a- According to some, the statute came to forbid interbreeding, so that man would not think that he is creating new races, and would claim divinity for himself. It is amazing how God made any new race that results from a procedure of interbreeding, barren, and non-productive; as is the case of the mule, a fruit of interbreeding between a horse and a donkey.

Although the Jews used the mule as a beast of burden, which they purchased from the surrounding nations, yet they did not do the procedure of interbreeding to get it; except if it unintentionally happens.

What is this barren and unproductive animal, the fruit of interbreeding between two different races, but the body, corrupted by man through the controversial lusts and pleasures; for it to bear division and controversy between the thoughts of pleasure, and pride; and to bear no befitting spiritual fruit, that would bring pleasure to God. The body of the true believer, on the other hand, bears an inner harmony within itself, and with the soul, being submitted to the Holy Spirit of God, by his body, as well as by his soul. According to St. Augustine: [The Holy Spirit is the Spirit of unity, whereas that of the evil one is the spirit of divisions and dissensions. Whoever walks by the Spirit of God will bear the Spirit of unity; whereas he who walks by the spirit of the evil one, would bear the spirit of divisions and dissensions, not only against his brethren, but even within himself, between his own body and soul.

b- God forbade sowing a field with mixed seed; probably on account of that it makes reaping the harvest difficult or even impossible. And according to some, mixing the seed may cause a decrease in production.

Anyway, that field planted with two kinds, is not the church of God which embraces only one kind – the saintly children of God. And it is not the heart of the true believer that embraces light and not darkness.

The field that embraces two kinds of seeds, is the wavering heart, which mixes between light and darkness, does not walk by the spirit of discernment, but falters between the two ways. Whereas the heart of the true believer, is simple, has one single goal; to walk in the light, and reject the darkness; receives the truth, and will not endure vanity!

c- According to some, mixing two kinds of threads in the same fabric, like linen and wool (22: 11) causes dermal inflammation and allergy.

Anyway, the church of Christ is His garment of one fabric, the fabric of the one indivisible spirit, and mind.

In short we can say that the non-interbred animal, refers to the holy body in the Lord, spiritually fruitful, and in harmony with the holy soul; The field with one kind of seed refers to the church of God, that walks in the light and not in the darkness, and has the spirit of discernment; And the garment with one kind of fabric refers to the oneness of spirit and mind.

7- THE STATUTE CONCERNING COMMITTING SIN WITH A CONCUBINE:

“Whoever lies carnally with a woman who is betrothed as a concubine to another man, and who has not at all been redeemed nor given her freedom, for this there shall be scourging, but they shall not be put to death, because she was not free. And he shall bring his trespass offering to the Lord” (20, 21)

Whoever commits sin with a concubine who is betrothed to another man, but has not been redeemed, both will fall under chastisement, which is mostly scourging. The adulterer will have to offer a trespass offering, but the concubine, who possess nothing, will be exempted from offering a sacrifice. Anyway, blood has to be offered for purification. But in case the betrothed concubine was set free before falling, she together with her partner will be stoned to death.

The relative ease with which the slaves and the concubines were treated, was probably because God dealt with the old people as spiritually beginners, still under the influence of the nations around them. But now, as the believers have matured, there is no discernment between the slave and the free; they are both one in the Lord (Galatians 3: 28).

THE STATUTE CONCERNING THE FIRSTFRUIT OF TREES:

“When you come into the land (the promised land), and have planted all kinds of trees for food, then you shall count their fruit as uncircumcised. Three years it shall be as uncircumcised to you. It shall not be eaten. But on the fourth year all its fruit shall be holy, a praise to the Lord. And in the fifth year you may eat its fruit, that it may yield to you its increase. I am the Lord your God” (23-25)

The fruit in the first three years should be left to fall down, lest they would absorb the juice, and the tree will be handicapped. Otherwise it will grow normally, and on the fourth year, the crop will so plenty, to be offered as firstfruit to the Lord. Then the tree will be sanctified, and remain the rest of its life for the one who planted it.

Commenting on this statute, St. John Chrysostom says:[Beloved brethren, we do not present the firstfruit when they are poor and weak, but when they are befittingly rich and strong. During the first three years, the fruit are weak and not ripe; but on the fourth year, no one should take of the rich, strong, and ripe fruit before the Lord. So you see that the early fruit could not be called firstfruit, but those fit to be offered to the Lord are so called]. By this view, according to St. John Chrysostom, the first Adam, the fruit of the first year, was weak because of sin, and, accordingly, not counted as firstfruit; But the second Adam, our Lord Jesus Christ, is the befitting fruit, the true Firstfruit, smelled as sweet fragrance by the Father.

We can say that man in the first year in paradise, could not offer firstfruit to God, And in his second year, after being driven out of paradise, when he was under the natural law, he failed, as well; And in his third year, as he came to be under the Mosaic law, God did not find one who could be a blameless firstfruit. But in

the fourth year, in the era of grace, there was the Lord Christ, the true Firstfruit, presented by humanity from her tree to the Father, because of whom the whole tree was sanctified. That was the fruit of the fourth year by which we were sanctified along all eras.

9- GENERAL STATUTES:

This chapter ends by some general statutes that touch the holiness of the people of God; most of which came to warn against faults and kinds of behavior into which the surrounding heathen peoples have fallen, of which are:

a- “*You shall not eat anything with the blood*” (26). According to the Jewish scholars, this statute provokes the following:

-- Not to eat the flesh of an animal with its blood; and not to eat blood itself.

-- Not to eat the flesh of an animal directly after slaying it, but to wait a while until all its blood is drained.

-- Not to eat the flesh of the sacrifices, except after its blood is offered on the altar for atonement.

--The judges should not eat flesh on the same day they condemn someone to death.

-- Not to eat with greed, which is counted by the Jewish teachers like eating blood.

b- “*Nor shall you practice divination or soothsaying*” (26). These were two kinds of magic practiced to know the future (Genesis 44: 5, 15),

. Soothsaying, on the other hand, was using birds in such practices.

c- *You shall not shave around the sides of your head, nor shall you disfigure the edges of your beard*” (27) God wished for His own

people not to adopt any of the customs of the heathen peoples, like shaving the hair on their heads around, leaving a bald patch in its middle;

and cutting the edges of the beard, and leaving its lower part intact; all for the sake of bringing pleasure to their gods;

Those two practices referred to the dedication to a specific heathen gods. But concerning the Nazirites, dedicated to the true living God, no razor was to touch their heads or beards. Leaving the hair of the head to grow refers to the church, gathering around the Lord Christ, her Head, without whom the hair loses its beauty and value. Every soul, isolated from her Christ, will be like the hair fallen from their source, only worthy to be cast into the trash can. Leaving the hair of the beard to grow, refers to the reverence of priesthood; The Christian, entering into the waters of baptism, will become a spiritual priest, in the general concept, who should keep the hair of his spiritual beard; namely his behavior, as is befitting to a son and a priest of God.

d- “*You shall not make any cutting in your flesh for the dead*” (28). As a show of extreme grief for the dead, the heathens used to paint

their faces black or blue (a custom that was, until recently, followed in Upper Egypt), and to tear off their clothes, or sometimes cut their flesh; some kinds of behavior that reveal a loss of hope, and non-attachment to heaven; about which the apostle warns, saying: *“I do not want you to be ignorant, brethren, concerning those who have fallen asleep, lest you sorrow as others who have no hope. For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so God will bring with Him those who sleep in Jesus”* (1 Thessalonian 4: 13, 14).

The children of God who see the Lord risen from the dead, will not cut their flesh as a show of sorrow for those who have fallen asleep, but will say together with the psalmist: *“I shall go to him, but he shall not return to me”* (2 Samuel 12: 23); longing to set forth to be with Christ, risen from the dead.

e- “Nor tattoo any marks on you. I am the Lord” (28). The ancient peoples used to tattoo the images of their gods on their bodies, as a

show of love toward them, and to seek their blessing. And nowadays in the Western countries, we see many, tattoo on their chests or arms images of nude women, fierce beasts, or demons, etc. ... How disgraceful! Instead of presenting his body as a tool of righteousness to the account of God, man delivers it, even for the sake of adornment, to carnal stirring, and to unclean spirits.

f- “Do not prostitute your daughter, to cause her to be a harlot, lest the land become full of wickedness” (29).In the old, men used to

deliver their daughters to adultery, either for material profit, or as a work of worship to their heathen gods, as nazirites for abomination and

uncleanness to the account of the heathen temples.... Who is that daughter whom you defile, other than the soul that deflects from her goal,

and runs after the pleasures of the body, to fill our land (our body) with iniquity?!

g- “You shall keep My Sabbaths and reverence My sanctuaries. I am the Lord” (30). Warning them against the heathen practices, God

also reminds them to keep the Sabbath, not through just practicing its rite, which we shall discuss in chapter 22; nor through refraining to

work on that day,, but through keeping themselves away from the abominations and defilements of the heathen nations, and through sanctifying their inner life; hence He says: “*and reverence My sanctuaries*”.

By keeping the Sabbath, and revering God’s sanctuaries, He probably meant keeping the purity of their bodies, the way Jacob commanded his sons, as he was preparing to set the house of the Lord in Bethel (Genesis 25: 2, 3). ... Contrary to the practices of many heathens, who used to find in worship a chance to practice abomination and defilement.

I wish we keep the day of the Lord, and His inner sanctuary, through our behavior, as is befitting to the children of the Holy God.

h- “Give no regard to mediums and familiar spirits, do not seek after them, to be defiled by them. I am the Lord your God” (31)

Having forbidden them to practice divination and soothsaying (26), namely the works of magic, intended to know the future, exhorting them to trust in the Lord their God, who controls the future of their life; Now He warns them against adopting the customs of the heathens, who resort to mediums, like the spirit of divination that was driven out by the apostle Paul (Acts 16: 16-18); ... so that God Himself would become their Helper, who cares for every detail of their life.

i- “You shall rise before the gray headed, and honor the presence of an old man, and fear your God. I am the Lord” (32). Here, he

binds between honoring the gray headed (the old man), and the fear of God. For any reverence you give to the old, for the sake of the commandment, will be through our union with the Lord, and presenting it to the Lord Himself. It was the custom among the Jews, that the young does not sit in the presence of an old man, unless the later allows him to do.

J- “And if a stranger sojourns with you in your land, you shall not mistreat him” (33). The stranger in most cases was added to the

fatherless and the widow in the commandment (Deuteronomy 10: 18); on account of that the stranger often feels as though fatherless with no one to defend him.... Hence it is befitting of the believer not to oppress a stranger, but to have compassion on him, and to support him; remembering that he himself has been a stranger in a foreign land, in need of God's support and compassion.

k- “You shall not do injustice in judgment, in measurement of length, weight, or volume”. He ends the statutes here by the commitment

not to do injustice in judgment, and not to practice deception nor oppression, to let everyone have his due.

The true measurement probably refers to the spirit of inner discernment; to render to Caesar the things that are Caesar’s, and to God the things that are God’s. To give the body its right to live, yet without evil pleasures; and to the soul her right to bear the image of her Creator and His likeness, to find comfort in His bosoms, together with the body.

According to St. Theonas, to use the good and non-deceptive measurements, implies not to measure for ourselves with the balance of ease, and for others with the balance of cruelty and violence, saying: [We should have in our hearts no oppressive balances, nor have in our consciences double balances; Namely, we should not burden those to whom we preach the word of the Lord, with statutes too strict even for us to endure; while giving to ourselves more freedom and ease.... For if we do, the Lord will reproach us, according to the words of Solomon the Sage: “*Diverse weights and diverse measures; they are both alike, as abominations to the Lord*” (Proverbs 20: 1o)].

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CHAPTER 20

THE IDOLS AND ADULTERY

In the two previous chapters, as the divine inspiration presented to us the statute of sanctification, proclaiming its goal to be the attachment with the holy God, repeating the phrase "*I am the Lord your God*" at the end of almost every commandment, seeking from us to be holy for Him, so as to have His features working in us, to separate us from the heathens; ... Now, He presents firm punishments against those who commit evil, particularly those who seek after the mediums and familiar spirits, and those who commit adultery. The reason behind this firmness is, on one aspect, to reveal the activity of evil within the soul; and from another aspect, to purify the holy congregation from the corrupt leaven, so as not to corrupt the whole dough.

If those punishments came to suit men of the old covenant, they, at the same time, should terrify us -- men of the new covenant -- on account of that they reveal to us the ugliness of sin, and our commitment to flee from it.

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| 1- An introduction to punishments by the church. | |
| 2- Punishment on the heathen worship practices | 1 -- 8 |
| 3- Punishment on cursing parents | 9 |
| 4- Punishment on adultery | 10 -- 21 |
| 5- Confirming the commitment to the divine commandment | 22 – 27 |

1- AN INTRODUCTION TO PUNISHMENTS BY THE CHURCH:

The punishments in the old covenant were cruel, on account of that God was dealing with hard-necked people, primitive in their knowledge of God. Out of His love for them, God used firmness, not to avenge, but to put fear in all, when they see the fall of some, under the cruel rod of chastisement. What God allowed of

chastisements or punishments, were a sign of His care for His people, and His desire for their salvation and sanctification. That is beside what those chastisements revealed of the activity of sin in the heart and the inner life. Stoning the adulterer reveals what came upon his inner heart of true perdition and eternal death. If we feel pain to see someone stoned to death, it would be befitting of us to burn for the sake of the perdition of his soul. ... In the new covenant on the other hand, if the church, now, does not use the cruel bodily punishments in dealing with her children, who are on a level of maturity, Yet it is her right to apply other kinds of chastisements to draw the fallen toward repentance; the way the apostle Paul did with the young man who committed evil with his father's wife (1 Corinthians 5) – having cast him out of the church, until he presented a true repentance; after which the apostle hastened to write to the church to receive him back, lest he would be swallowed up by too much sorrow (2 Corinthians 6, 7).

On another aspect, in the new covenant, the church left the civil and criminal laws to the state, to be put and practiced by men of law, according to what suit the era and the country. As Christianity came to grant the thought and maturity, yet left the practice and execution of the law to the professionals in the community.

2- PUNISHMENT ON HEATHEN WORSHIP PRACTICES:

“Whoever of the children of Israel, or of the strangers who sojourn in Israel, who give any of his descendants (as a human sacrifice) to Molech, he shall surely be put to death” (2). “And if the people of the land should in any way hide their eyes from the man, then, the Lord Himself shall set His face against that man, and against his family, and will cut him off from his people, ” (3),

Such a verdict also applies to whoever seeks the help of mediums and familiar spirits. He will be counted as an adulterer, having forsaken the groom of his soul, and sought another groom (6).

The verdict of stoning came against man in the following cases: Who gives any of his descendents as human sacrifices to Molech (2); Who commits adultery with his mother (11); his father's wife (12); his daughter-in-law (12); with a betrothed virgin (22, 23, 24); with another man, or mates with a beast (15); Who resorts to mediums or familiar spirits (27); Who curses one of his parents (9); Who falsely claims prophecy; Who blasphemes (24: 10 -16); Who breaks the Sabbath (Deuteronomy 20: 32-36); Who provokes others to worship idols (Deuteronomy 13: 6-11); or practices it, himself (Deuteronomy 17: 2-5), etc.

Before being stoned, the one condemned, had to confess his sins, to proclaim the justification of the verdict, and to seek mercy from God. Stoning was done in one of two ways: the first : the one condemned to be stoned was paraded in the city, on one aspect to let any one who has reservation on the verdict, come forward with it; and on another aspect, to make him be an example to others. With his hands tied, he would be pushed by the first witness from a high place downward, then a huge rock would be put by the second witness on his chest; and in case he is still alive, he would be stoned to death. The second way was to be stoned directly by the congregation, after giving him wine mixed with bitterness to appease his suffering.

3- PUNISHMENT ON CURSING THE PARENTS:

“For everyone who curses his father or his mother shall surely be put to death, his blood shall be upon him” (9). Commenting on this statute, the scholar Origen says: [The titles ‘father’ or ‘mother’ means a great deal. According to the spirit, and to what we are taught by the prophetic and apostolic proclamations, God is your Father, and the heavenly Jerusalem is your mother (Galatians 4: 26;

Hebrew 12: 22). In his psalm, Moses says: "*Is He (God) not your Father who brought you? Has He not made you and established you?*" (Deuteronomy 32: 6); And about the heavenly Jerusalem, the apostle says: "*She is the mother of us all*" (Galatians 4: 26). Your first Father is God who gave birth to your Spirit; saying: "*I have nourished and brought up children*" (Isaiah 1: 2); and the apostle Paul says: "*Shall we not readily be in subjection to the Father of spirits and live?*" (Hebrew 12: 9). Your second father is your physical one who gave birth to you.... The title 'father', being holy and revered, whoever curses a father or a mother was put to death.... If you, therefore, curse your physical father; your curse would be directed to the Father of spirits (Hebrew 12: 9); And if you revile your physical mother, it would be directed to the heavenly Jerusalem. Whoever curses a father or a mother would be doing it to the Lord of glory.

Again he says: [If that is the verdict against him who curses his physical family; how much more would it be against him who blaspheme God, and disregard that He is the Creator of the world?!; or against him who curses the heavenly Jerusalem, the mother of us all (Galatians 4: 26)?!].... Some may wonder, if the law of the old covenant has condemned him who curses a mother or a father to be stoned to death, Does refraining from issuing such a verdict means that the law of the new covenant is more forgiving?! To this, the scholar Origen responds by saying: [According to the apostle Paul: "*Of how much worse punishment, do you suppose, will he be thought worthy who has trampled the Son of God under foot?!*" (Hebrew 10: 29)... Do not ever think that the gospel has made it easier, for opening the door of forgiveness! For, if the old covenant has condemned him who curses his physical father or mother to be stoned to death; the new covenant has counted that against the blood of the Son of God Himself!].

The fathers of the church confirm the commitment of the believer to obey his parents, yet "*in the Lord*". According to St. Cyril of Jerusalem: [When our feelings toward our physical parents contradict with our relationship with the heavenly Father, we are committed to do according to the words of the Lord Himself,

saying: *“He who loves father or mother more than Me, is not worthy of Me”* (Matthew 10: 37). But, if they do not, we shall be counted as deniers of their favor, if we despise their good deeds toward us, and accordingly, we would be worthy of the condemnation: *“He who curses father or mother, let him be put to death”* (Exodus 21: 7; Matthew 15: 4)].

4- PUNISHMENT ON ADULTERY:

He talked about the punishment on adultery in general, then mentioned certain shameful cases:

a- The verdict came to put both the adulterer and the adulteress to death by stoning, if the later is married (10); which also applies if she is betrothed, and committed adultery through her own free will (Deuteronomy 22: 23, 24). Whereas, if she is not betrothed, the adulterer is committed to pay a penalty, and to marry the girl.

If someone marries a woman and her mother, whether while they are both living, or after one of them died, and he took the other: *“If a man marries a woman and her mother, it is wickedness. They shall be burned with fire, both he and they, that there may be no wickedness among you”* (14). The same verdict applies to the daughter of a priest who falls into adultery; and to him who does it with his own daughter, granddaughter, the daughter or granddaughter of his wife; or with the mother of his father- or mother-in-law; ... burning with fire is mostly carried out after stoning. For, if stoning reveals how sin turned man into a senseless stone; Or as though the adulterer, by his stone-like heart, stones himself by himself; burning him with fire refers to the horror of his evil, igniting his feelings by fire that brought his soul to perdition.

Concerning him who commits adultery with his uncle's wife, and applies, as well, to him who does it with his brother's wife (12), it says: *“They shall die*

childless" (20); Namely, that God will either bring barrenness on them; by the death of their descendants, or that those descendants would be counted as illegitimate children who do not have the right of the legitimate ones.

b- This statute show how much God hates abomination, even applying it against the blameless beast against which evil is committed (16),

so as to leave no trace of the sin.; or to proclaim that sin is corruptive even to the irrational creation.

c- When man commits evil with a woman, he is insulting her man; if he, for example does it with his father's wife, "*he has uncovered his father's*

nakedness" (11). In case that woman wickedly consented to partake of the evil, she is defiled, and at the same time did wrong to her husband, with whom she has become one body.

5- CONFIRMATION OF THE COMMITMENT TO THE DIVINE COMMANDMENT:

He ends his talk with a confirmation of the commitment to the divine commandment, lest the land would cast us away, the way it did to the Canaanites because of their wickedness; And in order that we would carry a specific feature and a testimonial to the truth to the Holy One working in us. Of more importance is what the Lord says: "*so you shall be holy to Me, for I the Lord am holy*" (26). Intending for us to bear His features, to partake of His glory, as His holy children; He confirmed it by saying: "*You shall be holy to Me*".

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CHAPTER 21

STATUTES CONCERNING THE HOLINESS OF THE PRIESTS

Having presented statutes concerning the life of the congregation as a whole – people and priests – he now presents statutes concerning the priests in particular, to practice the holy life befitting of them as the priests of the Holy Lord (6), who presents offerings to Him (6, 8), and as spiritual leaders (28). For the more his responsibilities are, man is committed to a more particulate life.

1- The priests and the circumstances of death	1 - 6
2- The priests and marriage	7 - 8
3- The fall of a priest's daughter into sin	9
4- Statutes concerning the high priest	10 - 15
5- The priests and the congenital defects	16 – 24

1- THE PRIESTS AND THE CIRCUNSTANCES OF DEATH:

It is befitting of the priest who received the fatherhood in Jesus Christ, to soar above the personal human emotions; to consider all the congregation as his children, brothers, and beloved, with no discrimination. As according to St. John Chrysoston: [The priest as a steward of God, is committed to care for the rest of the people, being a father of the whole world]. Through such general concept of fatherhood, the law of the old covenant sought from him, even to refrain from feeling sorrow for the death of any of his relatives, or to “**defile himself for the dead among his people**” (1); with the exception of the father, mother, brother, and unmarried sister (2, 3).

The Lord of glory Himself, presenting this statute with an evangelic sense, said: *“Let the dead bury their own dead”* (Matthew 8: 22; Luke 9: 60); as it is befitting of the minister of God not to get confused with such familial duties, for the sake of ministering to the whole congregation. According to the scholar Tertullian: [Dedicating himself to God, it is befitting of the nazirite, and of him who has got the task of priesthood, to be inspired only by preaching the kingdom of God].

According to the Mosaic law, the priest should not touch the dead of even his relatives, with the exception of those we mentioned; And in his sorrow even for those, it is befitting of him not to practice the heathen customs, forbidden even for the people of God, like shaving the hair of the head, the edges of the beard, and wounding the body. If those practices are not befitting for the congregation to do, how much more would they be concerning the priest who offers the offerings of the Lord and serve the sanctuaries?!

2- THE PRIESTS AND MARRIAGE:

According to the Mosaic law, the priest should not be married to an adulteress, even if she repents, nor to a divorced woman ..., he and his wife, being role models for the congregation, have to be blameless in the sight of God and people,. As to the high priest, he should not be married even to a widow, but to a virgin, on account of that he refers to the Lord Christ, the greatest High Priest, who acquired the church -- a chaste virgin for Himself (2 Corinthians 11: 2).

3- THE FALL OF A PRIEST’S DAUGHTER INTO SIN:

“The daughter of any priest, if she profanes herself by playing the harlot, she profanes her father, she shall be burned with fire” (9).

Receiving so many divine graces, the priest, together with his wife and children, should be blameless. Any sin committed by one of them, would be condemned by a verdict more cruel than for any body else. As according to St. Cyril of

Alexandria: [In case of the priest's family, the punishment will be harsher; on account of that *"For everyone to whom much is given, from him much will be required"* (Luke 12: 48)].

4- STATUTES CONCERNING THE HIGH PRIEST:

"The high priest among his brethren" as he is so called here (10), on account of that he symbolizes the Lord Christ our greatest High Priest, will submit to statutes special for him, among which are:

a- "On whose head the anointing oil was poured, and who is consecrated to wear the garments, shall not uncover his head, nor tear

his clothes" (10); He is not allowed to uncover his head that was anointed by the holy ointment; for the anointed head refers to the Lord Christ (Leviticus 2). Having received the Lord Christ in us, we should hide Him in our depths, saying together with the bride of the Song: *"When I found the one I love, I held him and would not let him go, until I had brought him to the house of my mother, and into the chamber of her who conceived me"* (Songs 3: 4); She is the paradise that bore in her, Christ the Tree of Life, and the fountain, filled with the living water; the inexhaustible fountain, for the Lord of glory is inside it!

Let our Groom be in us, as though in a closed-up paradise, a closed-up fountain, and a sealed spring ... Let us rejoice in Him, unite with Him, and partake of His inner glories.

Not tearing the clothes; is on account of that the garment refers to the church by which the Lord Christ is clothed. Let it be one church without dissension; for her Groom is One.

b- “Nor shall he go near any dead body, nor defile himself for his father or his mother” (11). Being a symbol of the Lord Christ, the

Grantor of life, he would not partake of death; for if he touches a dead body, death would not endure his touch and would flee away.

Having carried in himself the Lord Christ, who has no fellowship with death nor with the pit, the apostle Paul daringly says: *“O death, where is your sting? O Hades, where is your victory? The sting of death is sin, and the strength of sin is the law; but thanks be to God who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ”* (1 Corinthians 15: 55, 56).

c- “Nor shall he go out of the sanctuary, nor profane the sanctuary of his God, for the consecration of the anointing oil of his God is

upon him” (12). Namely, while he is ministering in the Lord’s sanctuary, he is not allowed to come out of the tabernacle of meeting, nor stop

his work, for whatever reason there is, even if his closest relative dies; For leaving his ministry would be counted as an insult to that holy task, and a despise of the glory with which the holy anointment adorned his head.

Commenting on this statute, St. Jerome says: [Surely, as we believe in Christ, we carry Him in us, and because of the oil of anointment we received, we are committed not to leave the altar, namely, not to forsake our Christian task, and go out, to get involved in the works of the nations of unbelievers; but to stay perpetually inside, as ministers obedient to the will of the Lord].

And according to St. John Chrysostom: [In this statute there is a living portrait of the believer’s heart, which became a sanctuary and a dwelling place for the Lord (Romans 6: 16); in which no human work should be practiced, but only what is divine. Hence, any word that comes out of his mouth, would be considered as coming out of the mouth of God; no profanity, nor rejoicing in fun. In other words, having been justified by our Lord Jesus Christ, we have to

become a dwelling place for the Highest Priest, who would never forsake us; for being His sanctuary; and our behavior would be His, in and by us].

With the same meaning, father Nestor says: [This means that the Lord Christ, having promised to abide in our hearts forever, says: *“I will dwell in them, and will walk among them”* (2 Corinthians 6: 16).

c- *“He shall take a wife in her virginity”* (13) from among his people (14).

According to some interpreters, the high priest was committed to

be the husband of one wife, a virgin he takes from among his people, as according to the apostle: *“a church of the firstborn who are*

registered in heaven” (Hebrew 12: 23). From among his people and not a foreigner; having become in the waters of baptism the body of

Christ, no strangers to Him, but members of His body; and He granted His Holy Spirit dwelling in us.

5- THE PRIESTS AND CONGENITAL DEFECTS (BLEMISHES):

“And the Lord spoke to Moses, saying, Speak to Aaron, saying: No man of your descendants in succeeding generations, who has any defect,. . . a man blind or lame, who has a mutilated face, or any limb too long, a man who has a broken foot or broken hand, or a hunchback or a dwarf, or a man who has a defect in his eye, or an itching disease or scab, or crushed testicles; No man . . . who has a defect, shall come near to offer the offerings made by fire to the Lord, to offer the bread of his God. He may eat the bread of his God, both the most holy and the holy; only he shall not go near the veil or approach the altar; . . . lest he profanes My sanctuaries; for I the Lord sanctify them” (16 – 23).

That is why, when the sons of priests reach the legal age to receive the priestly work, they would be examined by the elders of the Sanhedrim, who separate

those without defect for the proper priestly task; while assigning those with defects to do the simple priestly tasks like kindling the fire, etc.

In the new covenant the apostle Paul made a condition for the bishop to be “blameless” (1 Timothy 3: 2); and to have a good testimony among those who are outside (1 Timothy 3: 7). Pope Gregory the Great, sees in this statute before us, a symbolic spiritual concept of the conditions of choosing the priest. The following are some quotations of his talk about “Shepherding”:

[The “**blind**” is he who does not recognize the light of heavenly meditation; For he who is submerged in the darkness of this world, cannot perceive the Light to come, on account of that he does not long for it; does not know how to walk, or where to head. Hence Hanna the prophetess said: “*He (God) will guard the feet of His saints; but the wicked shall be silent in darkness*” (1 Samuel 2: 9).

The “**lame**” is he, who although he knows the way, yet he cannot walk steady in it, because of his sick soul. And because he cannot rise with his wicked habits up to the level of virtues; he does not have the ability to walk according to his own free will; Hence the apostle Paul says: “*Therefore, strengthen the hands which hang down, and the feeble knees. And make straight paths for your feet, so that what is lame may not be dislocated, but rather be healed*” (Hebrew 12: 12, 13).

He “**who has a mutilated face**”, is he who, because of not having the sound sense of smell, is unable to discern between the sweet fragrance and the corrupt stench; to discern between the virtue and iniquity. Hence, commending the bride church, it is said: “*Your nose is like the tower of Lebanon*” (Songs 7: 4). As the holy church can recognize the diverse causes of the temptations directed toward her; and can know ahead – from her tower – the evil battles that are to come.

“Having a limb too long”, refers to the busybodies who are perpetually preoccupied with asking too many questions; Having an exaggerated confidence in themselves, they will never admit their foolishness..

“A man who has a broken foot or a broken hand”, refers to him who cannot ever walk in the way of God, and is utterly denied a portion in the good deeds. In this he differs from the “lame” who can – although with difficulty – partake of the good works.

“The hunchback” refers to those who, bowed under the heavy burden of the worldly worries, cannot raise their eyes up high, but concentrate them on the lowly things at their footsteps; And if they hear good news concerning the heavenly dwelling place of the Father, they, under the burden of their evil habits, cannot raise up the face of their hearts, nor their minds, bound by the worldly worries on earth. Such people, the psalmist David describes as: *“Bowed down greatly, and go mourning all the day long”* (Psalm 38: 6); And rejecting their iniquities, the incarnate Lord says: *“And the ones that fell among the thorns are those who, when they have heard (the word of God), go out and are choked with cares, riches, and pleasures of life, and bring no fruit to maturity”* (Luke 8: 14).

“The one who has a defect in his eyes” refers to him who, although naturally enlightened by the knowledge of truth, yet his eyes are darkened by carnal works. Although the iris is sound, yet the eyelids are so swollen with discharge, and so withered by the dense flow of tears, to impair the power of sight. For him, despite his natural ability to discern between the good and the evil, yet he distorted and weakened his insight by his corrupt carnal way of life; To such a man, the angel says: *“I counsel youto anoint your eyes with eye salve, that you may see”* (Revelation 3: 18); to strengthen the eyes of his by the medication of good works, to be able to distinguish the brightness of the true light.

But in case he has a white cloud on his eyes; he would be denied distinguishing the true light, because of his blindness caused by claiming wisdom and goodness. It is obvious that when man admits that he is fool and wicked, by the power of his mind, he can perceive the extent of the brightness of his inner light; But, referring to himself the shining of wisdom and goodness, he denies it the exalted light of understanding. Through the pride of his self glory, it would be impossible for him to perceive the brightness of the divine light. About such people it is said: *“Professing to be wise, they became fools”* (Romans 1: 22).

“Having an itching disease” refers to him who, being under the influence of wickedness, his inner heat comes out on the surface of his skin; a condition that truly represents fornication; When the seduction of the heart is translated into actual deeds, we may say that the inner heat is surfaced like eczema on the skin. Because lust will actually prevail, if not reigned by the mind, the apostle Paul strongly cared for purifying it, as though it is like an eczema on the skin; saying: *“No temptation has overtaken you except such as is common to man”* (1 Corinthians 10: 13). By this he intends to make it clear that, being human, we have to suffer the temptations of the mind; but in case it prevails on us, and settles down in our hearts, it would then be from the devil.

“The scab”, refers to him whose mind is corrupted by greed; which if not controlled, it would prevail on his entire life. Like scab, that causes no pain, nor annoys its bearer, yet distorts his beauty; so is greed that may fill its victim with pleasure, yet defiles him. Putting before the mind things to strive to acquire, it stirs in him hatred and animosity. Causing no pain, is on account of that it promises to give the sick soul an abundance of things as a vain price for sin. But distorting the beauty of members, is because it distorts the beauty of virtue; namely, if iniquities fill the soul of man, the whole body would be corrupted; hence the apostle Paul truly says: *“The love of money is a root of all kinds of evil”* (1 Timothy 6: 10).

As to the one “***with crushed testicles***”, although he cannot actually perform uncleanness, yet he may come under the yoke of perpetual thinking about it; and his heart would keep pondering fornication, without any blame on the part of his conscience. He would let his mind go astray in things that stir his lust; and hence, would bear in his heart a filthy burden, that his soul cannot get rid of; and, at the same time, bowing under the heavy burden of his hidden shameful thoughts, he has no power to raise himself up to train himself on the good deeds.

Therefore, those who have any of these blemishes, should refrain from approaching to offer the bread of the Lord; on account of that, man cannot atone for the transgressions of others, when he, himself, is reigned by his personal shortcomings].

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CHAPTER 22

STATUTES CONCERNING THE HOLINESS OF THE SANCTUARIES

Certain statutes were presented concerning the sanctification of the people of God; And certain statutes were presented to commit the priests to adopt a holy life befitting to their ministry for the sake of the sanctification of the people. Finally He talks here about the holy sacrifice through which the people are sanctified, being a symbol of the slain Lord Christ, the Grantor of holiness.

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|---|------------|
| 1- Preparations to partake of the holy sacrifice | 1 - 9 |
| 2- Designation of those who have the right to partake of it | 10 -
16 |
| 3- Designation of the sacrifice itself before offering it | 17 - 28 |
| 4- Eating the thanksgiving sacrifice on the same day | 29 – 33 |

1- PREPARATION TO PARTAKE OF THE HOLY SACRIFICE:

In these statutes proclaiming the holiness of the sacrifice, God warns the priests against eating their portion of it without preparation; saying to Moses: “**Speak to Aaron and his sons, to deal carefully with the holy things of the children of Israel, and that they do not profane My holy name in those things they sanctify to Me; I am the Lord” (2)**. As though He says to the high priest and the priests, that what they enjoy of portions in the sacrifices is not a gift to satisfy their bellies or lusts, but rather a holy task they are committed to perform with a spiritual mind and special preparation; that they are committed not to profane His holy name by eating from the sacrifice without preparation. By saying “*I am the*

Lord”, He means that He is jealous on His name and holy things against the slothful priests.

If God in His love, chose from men those He made priests, who are privileged to get a portion of the sacrifice, counted as a portion for the Lord Himself; it is befitting of them as stewards of God, to pay His love back with holiness and awe, and not with slothfulness and disregard. As to the preparation by which the priests of the old covenant were committed, to enjoy their portion in the holy sacrifice, it is: that the priest should not be a leper or has a discharge (Chapter 15), nor touch anything made unclean by a dead corpse (Chapter 21), nor touch an unclean animal, nor approached his wife ... If the priest was defiled by any of those, he will remain unclean all the day long, will be denied practicing his priestly task, and enjoying his portion of the holy sacrifice, until evening, unless he washes his body with water (6).

As the sacrifice offered on the altar came to be God’s portion, allowing the priests to partake of it refers to the fellowship, and the consummation of the reconciliation between God and man. As this fellowship or reconciliation is realized between the holy God and the man who becomes holy by, and in Him, the church committed her priest not to partake slothfully of the communion of the holy sacrifice; but to prepare for it spiritually and physically; through cleansing himself by tears of repentance, and confessing his sins with contrition, before approaching the altar of God with awe to receive the holy Sacrament.

According to St. John Chrysostom: [Many believers, in great ignorance and slothfulness, approach to have communion in the holy Sacraments during the feasts, loaded with sins, and with unprepared souls; not perceiving that the holy communion is not limited by a feast, but by the pure conscience and the blameless life].

2- DESIGNATION OF THOSE WHO HAVE THE RIGHT TO PARTAKE OF IT:

It will be enjoyed by the priest, the one born in his house, and whom he buys with his money; No stranger shall eat from it; namely, any Hebrew who is not a descendant of Aaron; a foreigner; a slave whose ear has been pierced, until the year of the Jubilee (Exodus 21: 6); a guest sojourning in his house, a hired hand; or the priest's daughter who married someone not a descendant of Aaron, unless she is widowed or divorced, and returned to her father's house.

This statute, to which men of the old covenant were submitted, is the Word of God, that would never become void in spirit, but would endure as a constitution of the church; as the Lord Christ presents His holy sacrifice to be received by both the priest who enjoyed the Sacrament of Priesthood, to practice the holy sacraments; or by him who has got the general priesthood in the water of baptism. He presents it to *"the one born in the house"*, namely, to him who has got the new birth in the water of baptism by the Holy Spirit; and to him who was "purchased with silver", namely whom God acquired by *"His Word, like silver purified seven times"* (Psalm 12: 6).

The church warns us against presenting the sacrifice to *"a stranger"*, namely to someone who sojourned from God, and rejected the fellowship with Him as a son; ... to someone whose ear is pierced, to live as a slave, who does not seek the spiritual freedom; to the guest, ... or to the hired hand.. For God seeks from us to live with Him on the level of perpetual fellowship, to live with, and in Him; not to encounter Him a temporary guests, nor as hired hands who seek a wage; but as children who seek their Father, Himself. As to the daughter married to a stranger, she is the soul who, after receiving the new birth, got back to attach herself to a stranger; namely to another god, that might be the lust of the belly, the pleasures of the body, the love of money, or seeking a temporal honor.... How miserable is such a soul, who denies herself by herself, the enjoyment of

the holy sacraments, through an evil union; I wish she divorces the sin, I wish she is widowed from her man (the evil), to return to her father's house anew; to find that he prepared for her the holy banquet, to rejoice in her, and she in Him.

3- DESIGNATION OF THE SACRIFICE ITSELF BEFORE OFFERING IT:

In our study of Chapters 1 to 7, we saw how the believer is committed to offer the sacrifice without blemish... Here He warns us against offering *"the blind or broken or maimed, or have an ulcer or eczema or scabs, or has any limb too long or too short, what is bruised or crushed or torn or cut"* (22-24). Needless to say that God does not seek in the sacrifice, abundance, but quality; on account of that it represent the Lord Christ, Himself, who is without blemish; who, alone, is capable of bringing us back to His Father, to take any blemish away from us, granting us the holy life in Him.

"When a bull or a sheep or a goat is born, it shall be seven days with its mother; and from the eighth day and thereafter it shall be accepted as an offering made by fire to the Lord" (27). The wisdom behind that is probably because, many animals grieve bitterly if their suckling is taken away from her in the first days after birth, which shows how God is compassionate even upon the animal mother, not to cause her grief through offering a sacrifice to Him. And as the Jews believed that the suckling animal is not fit for eating during its first week after being born, What is not fit for man, would not be fit to offer to the Lord. ... Finally leaving the suckling seven days, to be slain on the eighth day onward, refers to sanctifying it by through a Sabbath.

"Whether it is a cow or ewe, do not kill both her and her young on the same day" (28)... The wisdom behind that is to make His people compassionate to animals; as it came in the proverbs: *"A righteous man regards the life of his animal"* (Proverb 12: 10). And He probably intends to exhort them to care for the blood relationships, even concerning offering animal sacrifices to Him.

4- EATING THE THANKSGIVING SACRIFICE ON THE SAME DAY:

We have already studied this topic in our interpretation of the seventh chapter of this book (Leviticus 7: 15)

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THE SEVENTH SECTION

THE FEASTS AND THE VOWS

(Chapters 23 to 27)

The holy assemblies	Chapter 23
The inner joy	Chapter 24
The statutes concerning the inner freedom	Chapter 25
The blessings and the curses	Chapter 26
The firstfruits and the vows	Chapter 27

If the book of Leviticus started by a guide to the sacrifices and offerings, to proclaim the way of reconciliation with God through the holy sacrifice; Consecrated Aaron and his sons for that sacrificial task; Then proceeded to parade the divine statutes concerning the purification, to let the congregation live holy to the Holy Lord, and to let everyone of its members, as much as possible, live holy to the Lord;... Lest those statutes would probably be seen as a burden on their souls, He ended the book by talking about the holy feasts and the vows, calling humanity to a joyful life.

The word “feast” in Hebrew, bears the meaning of ‘joy’ or ‘gladness’; as though the feasts, in essence, are a return to the early paradisiacal life, to the garden of Eden; as the word ‘Eden’ means (gladness).

The feasts for the Jews were called “holy assemblies”, as the congregation used to gather together to celebrate them with the joy of heart in a joyful assembly around the Holy God. Those assemblies included weekly feasts (the Sabbaths); monthly feasts (the Crescents); yearly feasts; seven-years anniversaries; and the Jubilee every fifty years. It is as though God intends for them to spend their life in an unceasing feast.

We have already studied those feasts in our interpretation of the book of Exodus; “the Sabbath” (Exodus 20: 8-11); “the Passover and the unleavened bread” (Exodus 12, 13); “the Pentecost and the tabernacles” (Exodus 23: 16); And in the book of Numbers He presented to us the rite of sacrifices and offerings offered in every feast (Numbers 28, 29). I beseech the Lord not to repeat myself, but to refer to the locations for reference in these two books.

The System of the Jewish feasts and fasting:

- (1) Setting the system of the **feasts** upon sanctifying every '**seventh**' of time, on all levels.
- a- The **Sabbath** as the seventh of days (Exodus 20: 8-11).
 - b- The **Pentecost** (the fiftieth) following seven weeks of the religious year (Exodus 23: 26).
 - c- The **seventh month**, the holiest month of the year; celebrated, not like any other head of the months, nor like a new crescent (Numbers 10:11); But it was with a special celebration, called the feast of "**shouting**" or the feast of "**the trumpets**" (Leviticus 23: 23-24); And that month also included three important feasts: **the great day of atonement** (Leviticus 16), the feast of the **tabernacles** (Leviticus 23); the **eighth day** of the feast of the tabernacles.
 - d- Sanctifying every **seventh year** as a "**Sabbatical year**" (Exodus 23: 10, 11; Leviticus 25: 1-7).
 - e- Sanctifying the **fiftieth year**, namely, **the Jubilee**; the year following seven Sabbatical years (Leviticus 25: 8-22).

- (2) Other feasts appeared that concern important Jewish occasions, like the feast of "**Forim**" (or the lot), set by queen Esther with Mordecai;
- And the "**feast of the dedication of the temple**", or "**the feast of the renewal**", set in the days of Judah the Maccabian.

- (3) Concerning the **fasts**; beside the **individual fast** , practiced by every member of the holy congregation, on any day, except on the days of feasts; there were the general weekly fasting on **every Monday and Thursday**, between the Passover and the Pentecost; and between the feast of the Tabernacles and the feast of the Renewal. As on Thursday, Moses ascended Mount Sinai; and on Monday, he descended carrying the two tablets of the law, the second time.

The Jewish concepts of the feasts:

The feasts for the Jews were around two or three central orbits : The first **starts by the sacrifice of the Passover until the fiftieth day**; dedicated to the meditation in **the call to Israel**, and in **their life in the wilderness** before their enjoyment of the promised land. The second is the **seventh month**, that refers to the **possession of the promised land** through the exalted grace

of God. If the first period reveals the love of God, who calls us to His kingdom by His grace, and supports us in our strife to come out of bondage, setting forth spiritually toward the higher Jerusalem; He starts the way with us, and accompanies us in the wilderness of this world; The second period represents our enjoyment of the deposit of the Spirit, and our entrance into His joyful kingdom by His rich grace. On another aspect we can say that the first period represents the church of the old covenant, which started by the exodus through the symbols and the prophecies; And the second period represents the church of the new covenant, which enjoyed through the Messiah, crucified and risen from the dead.

Beside these two central orbits, appears **the great day of atonement** celebrated on the seventh month, to carry a special nature; although, according to some, it represents a link between the two previous central orbits. Anyway, its importance is shown by being called in the Holy Book **“The Rest of Sabbaths”** or **“The Sabbath of the Sabbaths”** (Leviticus 16: 31; 23: 32); For it reveals the work of redemption by the cross, and our setting forth to the eternal rest, **“The Sabbath of Sabbaths”**.

The Jews have two expressions of their feasts: ‘chag’, and ‘moed’: The first means **(assembly)**, and the second derived from the Hebrew word meaning **(to rejoice)**. The first proclaims that the feast is an assembly of all the people together around God, who brings joy to the hearts; and the second reveals the goal of the feast as rejoicing in the Lord. The second expression was used in particular for the three feasts: the Passover, the Pentecost, and the Tabernacles, in which all males are committed to appear as representatives of the whole congregation, before the Lord in the temple; with the exception of the slaves, the deaf, the mute, the lame, the sick, and those unable to ascend the mountain on which God’s house is established because of old age; and the unclean. In this there is a beautiful symbol of the true eternal feast, when the church appears before the Lord, being spiritually, ‘males’, namely, solid and not soft, and with no one among them a slave of the sin, nor has lost one of his spiritual senses, spiritually handicapped, or unclean. ... but all of them should be perfect in the sight of God.

The Rabbis gave those important feasts three Hebrew names that mean: **‘The presence’**, **‘The appearance in Jerusalem’**, and **‘The festive offerings of the worshippers’**. These nomenclatures reveal the Jewish concepts of the feasts, being (Presence before the Lord), (All, with one spirit set forth to Jerusalem), and (All appear with offerings with joyful and exultant hearts).

Those concepts of the feasts were experienced by the true men of God, although distorted by many through holding fast to the letter and not to the spirit, and by being preoccupied with the formalities rather than the essence.

We, Christians, having inherited that spiritual heritage, take off the Jewish letter of the law, to receive our gospel as an unceasing feast, as joyful good news that bears the spiritual concepts of the feasts, in **a collective presence before the Lord through the cross**, and the **appearance of the higher Jerusalem**, and **presenting spiritual offerings that bring pleasure to the heart of God**. The church of the new covenant celebrates the feasts on an exalted spiritual level, not through sacrifices of blood and deadly letter, but through her union with the Lord Christ "The true Feast".

The Jewish holy feasts and assemblies in the days of the Lord Christ

(1) The month of **Nissan** (the last days of March and the first days of April):

- 1- The head of the month (the new crescent)
- 14- The preparation for the Passover and the Passover sacrifice.
- 15- The first day of the feast of unleavened bread
- 16- Waving the first ripe crop
- 21- The end of the Passover

(2) The month of Iyar (Zio);

- 1- The head of the month (the new crescent)
- 15- The small or second Passover
- 18- The thirty-third day of presenting the first mature head grain, on the second day of the Passover; namely, the fifteenth of the month of Nissan.

(3) The month of Hozeiran (Sivan)

- 1- The head of the month (the new crescent)
- 6- The Pentecost (the fiftieth day), or the feast of the weeks (after 7 weeks from the beginning of the Passover, or the fiftieth day from it; On the same day they used to celebrate the memorial of Moses receiving the law on Mount Sinai.

(4) The month of Tammuz:

- 1 The head of the month (the new crescent)

17- Fasting, as a memorial of Nebuchadnezzar seizing Jerusalem, on the ninth day, and of Titus seizing it on the seventeenth day (if the seventeenth day came a Sabbath, the fasting will be the next day).

(5) The month of Av:

- 1- The head of the month (the new crescent)
- 9- Fasting; as a memorial of the desolation of Jerusalem.

(6) The month of Elul:

- 1- The head of the month (the new crescent)

(7) The month of Tishri, or the first Tishrin or Lethanim (the first month of the civil year)

- 1, 2- The feast of the new year (the feast of the shouting or of the trumpets)
- 3- Fasting as a memorial of killing Gedaliah
- 10- The great fasting or the great day of atonement
- 15- The feast of the tabernacles
- 21- The end of the feast of the tabernacles
- 22- The eighth day of the feast of the tabernacles.

(8) The month of Cheshvan (the second Tishrin, or Bol)

- 1- The head of the month (the new crescent)

(9) The month of Kislev (the first Canon)

- 1- The head of the month (the new crescent)
- 2- The feast of the dedication of the temple, or the feast of the candles, or the feast of the renewal; lasts eight days as a memorial of the renewal of the temple following the conquest by Judah the Maccabian,

(10) The month of Tevet (the second Canon)

- 1- The head of the month (the new crescent)
- 10- Fasting as a memorial of the siege of Jerusalem

(11) The month of Shevat;

- 1- The head of the month (the new crescent)

(12) The month of Azar;

- 1- The head of the month (the new crescent)

13- The fasting of Esther (if it came on a Sabbath, fasting will be on the Thursday preceding it).

14- The feast of Forim (the lot) set by Esther.

15- The Forim

Remarks:

(1) As the moon year is only 345 days, 8 hours, 48 minutes, and 38 seconds, the moon year is 14 days less than the Roman year; Hence the

Jews introduced a thirteenth month every three years, which they called 'Fiathar', or (the second Azar), to make the moon year and the sun

year nearly equal. The Jewish moon month is 29 days, 12 hours, 44 minutes, and 33 1/3 second.

(2) According to some, the present names of the Jewish months (or some of them) go back to a Chaldean or Persian origin; on account of that

it only appeared after the return from captivity in Babylon; and of that the Jewish months before captivity had no names, but were designated by numbers.

The following are the civil months and the analogous holy months, and their reference in the Holy Book:

<u>The civil month</u>	<u>The holy month</u>	<u>Name</u>
<u>Reference</u>		
7 Nehemiah 2: 1; Exodus 13	1	Abib (meaning a blossom)
8 1 kings 6: 1	2	Ziv (Meaning beauty)
9 Esther 8: 9	3	Sivan
10	4	Tammuz
11	5	Av
12 Nehemiah 6: 15	6	Elul
1 1 kings 8: 2	7	Ethanim (meaning flooding rivers)

2	8	Bul (meaning rain)
1 kings 6: 38		
3	9	Kislev
Nehemiah 1: 1; Zechariah 7: 1		
4	10	Tevet
Esther 2: 16		
5	11	Shevat
Zechariah 1: 7		
6	12	Nissan (Azar)
Esther 3: 7		

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CHAPTER 23

THE JEWISH HOLY ASSEMBLIES

The holy feasts used to represent living and main parts of the Jewish worship; through which the people gather together in holy assemblies to remember the continuous works of God with them; And God proclaims His rejoice in them, wishing for them the true rest and the unceasing eternal joy. Those feasts represented a (thermometer) that revealed the mutual relationship between God and His people: In case the people deflected, God rejected their feasts, and even hated them (Isaiah 1: 14); And when they return to Him with repentance, God counted them His own feasts and joy, and poured in them the abundance of His love.

1- The Sabbath	1 -- 3
2- The Passover and the feast of unleavened bread	4 -- 8
3- The feasts of firstfruits	9 -- 14
4- The Feast of the Pentecost	15 -- 22
5- The feast of shouting (or of the trumpets)	23 -- 25
6- The great day of atonement	26 -- 32
7- The feast of the tabernacles	33 -- 44

1- THE SABBATH:

As keeping the Sabbath has been an important divine commandment by which the people were committed; hence the verdict came very harsh against the first one to break it, gathering sticks, stoning him to death (Numbers 15: 32-36)... We often dealt with this commandment, for all the books of the old covenant spoke about it in one way or another. But what we want to confirm here is that the commandment of keeping the Sabbath, was not a heavy one under which the believers fall, nor a burden under which they bow in formalities and literacy; but the Sabbath has been a joyful feast, a divine gift to His people.

Indeed the Holy Book introduced the commandment of the Sabbath through several aspects; but concentrated on it as being a joyful feast and rest in the holy Lord. On the apparent side, the Sabbath has been a day of doing no work, even to gather the manna, the divine gift (exodus 16: 21-30); whoever works in it would be subjected to the divine wrath. The Sabbath came bearing spiritual and social thought, presented as rest for the strangers, to the hired hands, to the slaves, and even to the animals in the field; In it the people remember that, having sojourned before in Egypt under bondage, they should, therefore, be compassionate on the creatures of God (Exodus 23: 12; Deuteronomy 5: 12-15). It also came bearing an eschatological thought, being a symbol of the ultimate rest to come (Jeremiah 17: 21-27; Hebrew 4).

Finally, the Sabbath is not a chance for slothfulness and laziness, but a chance to worship the holy God, for all to enjoy the fellowship of the divine life (Leviticus 23: 3; Numbers 28: 9, 10). It is, as the book of Leviticus tells us, an encounter with God through the holy worship and the sacrifice, not to honor God by our worship, but what is greater, is to enjoy the work of God in us, granting us fellowship with Him to enter by Him into His holiness.

Sanctifying the Sabbath, therefore, in its essence, is an enjoyment of rest; for the word 'Sabbath' in Hebrew means (rest); its secret is our union with our holy Lord Jesus Christ, to enjoy by Him the holy new life. The prophet Isaiah called it 'The pleasure', 'the sanctuary of Jehovah', and 'the revered'. And the book of psalm presented to us a praise special to the Sabbath, a praise of joy, and thanksgiving to God (Psalm 12).

The Sabbath is the feast to enjoy rest in the heavenly Lord; In it we remember the rest of God on the seventh day (Genesis 2: 3), as a symbol of the eternal day of the Lord, according to St. Augustine, saying: [We rest and see; We see and love; We love and praise; that will be at the end without end]. It is the feast of rest, not from the bondage of Pharaoh (Deuteronomy 2: 15), but from the bondage of evil; according to St. Clement of Alexandria, [We shall abide to the spiritual Sabbath until the coming of the Savior; having rest from sin]. It is a joyful feast, we enjoy here as a deposit of the heavenly life, as a feast of unceasing praise]. And according to St. Jerome,

commenting on the psalm of the Sabbath (psalm 92): [There would be no Sabbath unless preceded by six days of work, to have rest on the seventh day. We cannot praise God except in the Sabbath day (Psalm 92), being preoccupied with the works of the world; namely, as long as, in the six days, we cannot sing to the Lord ... In the Sabbath, namely in the day of the Lord, no one can do a lowly work, namely be preoccupied with the works of the world; but be committed to do what concerns the Sabbath. In the Sabbath the priest works in the temple of the Lord, while nobody else is allowed, even to gather sticks, for the one who was found gathering sticks in the wilderness was stoned to death (Numbers 15: 32-36). In the Sabbath it is not allowed to kindle a fire, nor to do any work ... It is befitting for us, therefore, to praise in the Sabbath, as we forsake the works of this world].

The Jews used to see the Sabbath as a symbol of the holiness of God, and of keeping His covenant. Yet, instead of enjoying it as a feast joyful to the heart, they turned its awe into empty debates concerning the kinds of works, not allowed on the Sabbath day; to the extent that we find that the Jewish school of thought of Shimej, seeks the rest in the Sabbath, not only for man and beasts in the field, but even for the lifeless things as well; namely, it is not allowed for man to start a work on Friday, for its activity to continue on Saturday; even when man himself stop working on Saturday. As an example, it is not allowed to put linen in the sun on Friday to dry during Saturday; nor put wool in the dye on Friday, to absorb it along Saturday. This kind of thought, although rejected by the school of Halil, yet it reveals the literality of the Jews in understanding the concept of the Sabbath. They went so far with it to the extent that they refrained from defending their country if they are attacked on a Sabbath, until it passes on; something that was rejected by the Maccabians, who gave themselves the right to defend themselves and their country even in the day of the Lord. That is why, when the Lord Christ came, he revealed the honor of the Sabbath as a joyful feast, by doing works of healing in it, to proclaim that the Sabbath is freedom from weakness and sin (Luke 6: 9); and a day of divine work (John 5: 19, 20). He revealed Himself as the Lord of the Sabbath (Matthew 12: 1-6), introducing the statute of the Sabbath in a new concept, which the Jews could not perceive. The Lord chose to be buried on the Sabbath, and to resurrect on the dawn of Sunday; in order to bury the old literality of thought, setting Sunday for us, a new Sabbath, in which many enjoyed the appearance of the Lord, risen from the dead (John 20: 11-18; Luke 24-34); In it, the church enjoyed the dwelling of the Holy Spirit upon her, as her true birthday; And in it, the early church started to assemble for the weekly worship, as the true day of the Lord (Acts 20: 7).

Finally, our true Sabbath is our Lord Jesus Christ, He is our feast and rest; in Him we celebrate the union with the holy Father; and in it we have the comfort of sonhood to God, the dwelling of His Holy Spirit in us, and our enjoyment of the membership in the body of Christ. It is comfort for

the Father, when He finds us in Jesus Christ, His children, justified by the blood of His cross, and rest for us in Him.

And to recognize the Sabbath as a joyful feast by our union in the holy Lord Christ, we shall introduce the rite of the Sabbath for the Jews in the following short points:

(1) The Jews used to look with joy at the Sabbath, and to anticipate it as an adorned bride who anticipates her Groom.

Fasting and grief were not only utterly forbidden in it, but the Jews used to enjoy in it the kinds of clothing and food befitting for a joyful feast. In it, it was allowed to have the food of the Passover; and in it the priests used to practice their work in the temple, and kindle the fire; ... etc. It was as though they were encountering, not a day of physical rest, but the Lord Christ Himself through the symbol, adorn themselves for Him, and rejoice without fasting nor grief; on account of that the Groom was with them; and used to practice the divine works especially in the temple; As by the Lord Christ our life sets forth to practice the exalted divine works.

(2) The Sabbath starts from the sunset of Friday, and continues until the sunset of Saturday; The time of sunset differed, not only according to

the difference of the season of the year, but also according to the geographic location of the place; those in the lowland start it before the highland; It was the time the birds set forth back to their nests at the end of the day.

The Sabbath starts at sunset of Friday, called 'the Sabbath eve', or 'the preparation' (Mark 15: 42; John 19: 31). We, as well, enjoy the Sabbath here in this world, as though on an eve, enjoy our Sabbath -- the Lord Christ, as though in a mirror through faith; so that on the coming of the Sabbath morning, namely, His ultimate coming, we would enjoy Him in an eternal Sabbath through actually seeing Him... In the joyful Sabbath eve, we anticipate with strong longing the true morning of the eternal Sabbath.

(3) The priests of the new shift of work in the new week, arrive to Jerusalem on Friday afternoon, to prepare to celebrate the Sabbath in the

temple, together with the priests whose shift comes to an end. That celebration was proclaimed by three blows of the horns of the priests,

to tell everyone to stop work, to light the lamp of the Sabbath, and to put on the clothes of the feast.

In this work, there is a symbolic portrait of men of the new covenant (the priests coming for the new week's service), to encounter men of the old covenant, to receive from them the holy books, the prophecies, the covenants, and every spiritual inheritance. The priests blowing horns three times, refers to the horns of the symbols and the prophecies that proclaimed the dwelling of the new Sabbath, namely, the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, so that everyone would stop the works of the body, to be kindled with the fire of the Holy Spirit, and to put on the Lord Christ Himself as a joyful garment of the feast.

(4) Again the priests blow the horns three times to proclaim the actual start of the Sabbath, when the newly arriving priests start cleaning the altar of the burnt offering from the traces of blood; and the departing priest deliver the keys of the temple and the holy vessels, and everything else into their hands.

If the previous horns refer to the voice of the fathers, the prophets, and the law, that prepared for the Sabbath; the following horns are a proclamation of the preaching of the gospel. For men of the old covenant were committed to deliver everything they have got to men of the new covenant, who cleanse the altar from the literality and the blood of animals, to receive the unique sacrifice of Christ.

(5) The heads of the families cast a lot to know the role of everyone of them in the ministry during the days of the week ... It is as though the spiritual feast is the setting forth of spiritual work in the temple, and not slothfulness and laziness.

(6) The first task done by the priests is to renew the showbread that was prepared on Friday. If Friday is a feast, it is to be prepared on Thursday afternoon. It is the task for the priests of the new covenant; to present the body of our Lord Jesus Christ, as heavenly bread of life, prepared by the Lord Himself on Friday, when He was hanged on the cross, delivering Himself for our sake, on the afternoon of the Covenant Thursday.

(7) The coming and the departing priests gather together. The departing priests offer the morning sacrifice; and the new ones offer the evening sacrifice. This system is probably a symbol of the unity of work between men of the old and the new covenants; when all of them gather

together in Jesus Christ; the One Sabbath; the former through the symbol, and the later through the actual fact.

(8) The daily worship is practiced, with certain additional burnt offerings, food, and drink; on account of that it is a day of an encounter with the holy God through the sacrifice, satisfaction (food), and spiritual joy (wine).

(9) When pouring the regular drink, the Levites sing the praise of the Sabbath (Psalm 92) on three stages; and the priests come close together, blow the horns, then the people start worshipping. It is a day of joy for the whole church; all partake, either of the praise, of blowing the horns, or of worship. The priests join the people in the joyful worship and the gladness of heart.

(10) At the end of the additional sacrifice of the Sabbath, and its drinks, the Levites sing the psalm of Moses (Deuteronomy 32) in six stages (1-6; 7-12; 13-18;; 19-28; 29-39; 40, etc.); interrupted by blows with the horns by the priests, together with the people partaking of the worship.

It is to be noticed that, in case the Sabbath comes on the monthly feast, namely, the head of the month, the praise of the Sabbath is sung instead of that of the head of the month. And in case it is a feast, the praise of the Sabbath likewise will have the priority on that of the feast.

(11) Finally the celebration of the Sabbath ends by singing the praise of Moses (Exodus 15), to proclaim that the Sabbath is a Passover from the bondage of Pharaoh (the devil), and a spiritual victory over his soldiers, to set forth through the wilderness to the promised land, namely, to the Higher Jerusalem.

2- THE PASSOVER AND THE FEAST OF UNLEAVENED BREAD:

Both are two distinct feasts; the Passover is celebrated on the fourteenth day of Nissan, as the first annual feast to start the year. Whereas the feast of unleavened bread starts by the fifteenth day of Nissan, and continues for seven days, namely to the twenty-first of the month. Yet, because of their proximity, they later became one feast in the Holy Book; put by the Historian Josephus as 'The eight days feast'.

In our study of the books of Exodus and Numbers, we talked about the concepts of the Passover and the unleavened bread; and we quoted some sayings of the fathers concerning them; and dealt, as well, with their rites.

Here, we add that the feast of the unleavened bread was called “the bread of grief”, as it symbolized the bitterness lived by the people in the bondage of Pharaoh. Then the grief turned into joy and gladness, and became one of the most joyful feasts. And after refraining from eating the leaven referring to their haste to come out of Egypt (Exodus 12: 33, 39; Deuteronomy 16: 3), it became a sign of forsaking the old life, and the enjoyment of the new (Isaiah 52: 11 12), that does not bond with the leaven of the past.

3- THE FEAST OF FIRSTFRUITS:

The feast of firstfruits bonded, on one aspect, with the feasts of Passover and unleavened bread; and on another aspect with the feast of the Pentecost; being celebrated through the days of the unleavened bread; while the Pentecost comes seven weeks after it (5), namely on the fiftieth day of it.

This feast is considered the first agricultural feast, practiced by the people after their entry into the promised land; celebrated with an extremely joyful rite; with the goal of giving thanks to God, the Grantor of goods, on one aspect, and to offer a sheaf of the firstfruits, by which the whole harvest is blessed. In that feast, offering a sheaf of the firstfruits to sanctify the whole harvest, is a proclamation of the sanctification of the believing humanity through the only begotten Firstborn Jesus Christ, in whom we are justified by the Father, and counted as saints.

This feast is practiced in a joyful popular way: On the day before the feast of Passover, three elders of the Sanhedrim come out after sunset to reap the harvest of barley in the fields surrounding Jerusalem, in the midst of the joyful and exultant shouts of the people. Each of them carries a sickle and a basket. Then he asks several questions, repeating each question three times, and the people answer “Yes” after each question. Those questions are: Is this the basket?! Is this the sickle?! Is it the Sabbath?! Shall I reap?! ... Finally he reaps and put in the basket to carry to the temple.

The book says: “*He shall wave the sheaf before the Lord, to be accepted on your behalf; on the day after the Sabbath the priest shall wave it*” (11). The priest shall wave the sheaf of barley before the Lord to accept His people, to crown the agricultural year with blessing, and to pour His grace on them. The waving as we previously said, is lifting the offering on the hands of the priest

up high, waving it toward the four directions, as though offering it to God who exist everywhere; then waving it again to become the portion of the priests, as though receiving it from Him. According to some, the priest waves the sheaf with its heads of grain after dipping it in oil, then kindle from it a handful on the altar together with incense; and the rest of it will be for the priests. While according to others, the waving is done after striking the heads of grain with a stick to separate the grains from it, to be fried on fire after mixing a part of it with oil. The most acceptable view, though, is that the waving is done after parching the grains, grinding them, then sieving the flour through 13 sieves, to be given to the priest to take a handful of the fine flour after mixing it with oil, and wave it before the Lord.

Anyway, the sheaf represents the Person of the Lord Christ who delivers His life an offering of joy to the Father, on the fire of the cross; for the whole harvest to be blessed in Him; for the believers to enjoy His sweet fragrance; and the fellowship in His nature.

This task is carried out on the “day next to the Sabbath”. According to the Sadducees, the waving is actually carried out on Sunday, following the Sabbath in the days of the unleavened bread; But the more probable view is that the waving is carried out on the 16 of Nissan, whatever its day of the week; as the 15 of Nissan is counted as a Sabbath for the Lord and a holy assembly (Exodus 12: 16), being the first day of the unleavened bread, according to the view of the Pharisees, and confirmed by the Historian Josephus, and Philon the Jew of Alexandria.

The sacrifices and offerings are:

- a- The perpetual daily morning and evening burnt offerings, together with their offerings and drinks (Numbers 28: 1-8).
- b- Beside the daily offerings, the offerings of the seven days of unleavened bread are offered (Numbers 28: 19-22).
- c- This day is distinguished by waving the sheaf of barley, and offering a handful of it by the priest.
- d- As a burnt offering, a male lamb of the first year without blemish (12)
- e- A grain offering of two tenth of an ephah of fine flour mixed with oil, and its drink offering shall be of wine, one-fourth of a hin.

He ends his talk about the feast of firstfruits by saying: “*You shall eat neither bread nor parched grain nor fresh grain until the same day that you have brought an offering to your God; it shall be a statute forever throughout your generations in all your dwellings*” (14). No one was allowed to eat of the new harvest in any way, whether in the form of bread, parched grain, nor fresh grain, until a sheaf of grain is waved, for God to be the First; and so that no hand would stretch to the

harvest before it is sanctified through offering the sheaf of firstfruits. Once the sheaf is waved, the new harvest would be allowed to go to the markets, and to be eaten.

Finally, the feast of firstfruits bonded with the feasts of Passover and the unleavened bread... If the Passover refers to the death of the Lord Christ, to save us from our old man, namely from the leaven of corruption that crawled into us; the feast of the firstfruit that follows the Passover, and goes through the unleavened bread, refers to the resurrection of the Lord Christ and His ascension; being "the Firstfruit of the dead", He who went through the way of death to grant us in Him the resurrection, and to lift us by Him to the bosom of His Father, to live in heavens. He is the Firstborn over all creation (Colossians 1: 15); through whom we enjoyed the firstbirth, to become a church of firstborns; and in us spiritually, the words of the Father was fulfilled: "*Israel My firstborn*" (Exodus 4: 22); and as said by the apostle James: "*Of His own will He brought us forth by the word of truth, that we might be a kind of firstfruits of His creation*" (James 1: 18).

4- THE FEAST OF THE PENTECOST:

The feast of the Pentecost is bound to that of the Passover and the firstfruit; being celebrated after seven weeks of the feast of the firstfruit, hence is also called "**the feast of the weeks**:" (Exodus 34: 22; Deuteronomy 16: 10); Being an agricultural feast like that of the firstfruit, as it comes at the end of the harvest season, it is called "**The feast of Harvest**" (Exodus 23: 16). And It is also called **the Pentecost** (50 in Greek), as in it the Holy Spirit came down on the church assembled in the high room (Acts 2: 1; 20: 16).

If according to some Jews the Passover and the feast of the unleavened bread meld together as one integral feast, they also believe that the feast of the unleavened bread extends as an unceasing joy until the end of the Pentecost. ... If the Pentecost is the feast of the dwelling of the Holy Spirit on the church; the goal of the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ is to send His Holy Spirit on His church to grant her the reconciliation through the blood, and the fellowship with the Holy Trinity, and to grant her the features of her crucified Groom; The cross actually brings us into the pentecostal life, to let the Holy Spirit work in us by the power of the cross of our Lord Christ in us.

The Jews in the old days used to bind between the feasts; In the **Passover** they see the liberation from the bondage of Pharaoh; ... In the feast of the **unleavened bread** they see the ridding from the leaven of Egypt (the love of the world); In the feast of **firstfruits** they see the beginning of the new life through the sanctification of the new sheaf; and in the **Pentecost** they see a complete enjoyment of the goods of the promised land; according to the words of the Psalmist: "*Those who sow in tears shall reap in joy*" (Psalm 126: 5). We as well, bind between

these feasts: In the **Passover** we see the unique sacrifice of the Lord Christ and his death to liberate us from the bondage of the true Pharaoh, namely the devil; And in the feast of the **unleavened bread** we see the taking off the old man with his corrupt leaven; and in the feast of **firstfruits** we see the enjoyment of the new man through the unity with God in His firstborn Son; while in the **Pentecost**, this would be realized by the Holy Spirit who let us enjoy Christ the Firstborn through the life of fellowship setting forth in the water of baptism. In other words, through the feast of the **Pentecost**, namely (the feast of the dwelling of the Holy Spirit on the church), all those feasts together would be realized in us, so that the Passover of Christ would be fulfilled in our life by His Holy Spirit, and we would enjoy the power of His resurrection and ascending with Him to His heavens.

The goal of this feast is to give thanks to God on the occasion of the feast of the harvest of wheat, through a collective joyful rite, in which all proclaim their rejoice in God the Beneficent, remembering the words of Solomon the Sage, saying: "*Honor the Lord with your possessions, and with the firstfruits of all your increase; so your barns will be filled with plenty, and your vats will overflow with new wine*" (Proverbs 3: 9).

Moreover, the Jews used to see in that feast a memorial of receiving the law in Sinai. Believing that the prophet Moses received it on that day; they used to prepare for it by confessing their sins, cleansing themselves for purification; and often spending the night of the feast praising and worshipping.

As to the rite of celebrating this feast and its offerings; its most prominent feature is making two loaves of fine flour (the wheat ground in the temple and sieved through 12 sieves, then kneaded with leaven, and made into two loaves, each of two tenths of an ephah of flour (17), one day before the feast; and if it was a Sabbath, they are made the day before. These two loaves are waved before the Lord, and are eaten by the priests. They are not burned on the altar for they contain leaven. One of them is given to the high priest, and the other he distribute it among the rest of the priests.

It is to be noticed that these two loaves contain leaven; Although they are given a special holiness, yet they represent the Jewish people, who are in need of a sacrifice to atone for their transgressions (the leaven).

Those two loaves may refer to the earthly bread and the heavenly bread. It is as though in the feast of the Pentecost, the church seeks to have the Holy Spirit work in her to sanctify her temporal life (the earthly bread), and her heavenly life of worship. They may also refer to the two

churches of the old and the new covenant, being blessed by the work of the Holy Spirit in them. And may prefer, as well, to the congregations of the Gentiles and the Jews.

As the figure 2 refers to love, it is as though the work of the Holy Spirit on the day of the Pentecost is to pour the spirit of love and fellowship, for us to have the heart, fiery in its love for God and men.

Beside this rite, **the following sacrifices and offerings were offered:**

- a- The perpetual morning and evening burnt offerings with their grain offerings and drink offerings
- b- A burnt offering of a bull, two rams, and seven lambs of the first year, with their grain offerings and drink offerings.
- c- A sin offering of one kid of goats.
- d- A peace offering of two male lambs of the first year.
- e- Additional offerings of the feast (Numbers 28: 26-31); of two young bulls, one ram, and seven lambs in their first year, with their grain offerings and drink offerings; and a sin offering of a kid goat or two.
- f- Free will offerings offered by the people according to what they afford, to feed the Levites, the strangers, and the poor (Deuteronomy 16: 9-12).

In the midst of the public joy, He exhorts them, not only to present offerings for the strangers and the poor to enjoy, but confirms to them not to forget them during the act of reaping the harvest, saying: *"When you reap the harvest of your land, you shall not wholly reap the corners of your field when you reap, nor shall you gather any gleaning from your harvest. You shall leave them for the poor and for the stranger. I am the Lord your God"* (22).

Now we can say that the Jewish feast of the Pentecost has been consummated by the Christian Pentecost, namely, by the dwelling of the Holy Spirit on the church. As the figure 50 is the sum of the addition of seven weeks to the feast of firstfruits; if the figure 7 refers to perfection, perfection is fulfilled by the dwelling of the Holy Spirit, who takes from what is Christ's -- the firstborn -- and gives us. According to many Jews, the feast of the Pentecost is a proclamation, and a renewal of the divine covenant or promise given to Noah; and of that given Abraham (Genesis 15); as it was said: [On that day, we set a covenant with Abraham, as we set it with Noah in the first month; and Abraham renewed the feast and made it an eternal statute]. That was how the Jews saw this feast, as a feast of the renewal of the covenant with God, and the entry of new members into the covenant with Him. That is why, when the disciples of the Lord Christ gathered together in the

high room of Zion, to celebrate the feast of the Pentecost, the Jews around them were, as well, celebrating the renewal of the covenant with God, remembering what happened with their fathers, when God delivered His covenant and law to the prophet Moses, with what accompanied that of *“thunder, lightening, the sound of trumpets, and smoke, that everyone trembled and stood afar off”* (Exodus 20: 18). ... On that day, the Holy Spirit dwelt upon the disciples, and there were as well, the sound of thunderstorm, everyone trembled; and there was a renewal of the divine covenant through the Holy Spirit who is capable of renewing the hearts and minds; and of writing the law and the covenant in the hearts of the believers (Jeremiah 31: 31-33) ... On that day, the church came to have the divine fiery Spirit who changes the inner nature, and grants the spirit of sonhood, to receive a new covenant.

5- THE FEAST OF SHOUTING (OR THE FEAST OF THE TRUMPETS):

It is the feast of the new civil year, as well as the head of the seventh religious year; it is, therefore, the feast of the sanctification of the months (the seventh month). The most prominent feature of this feast is that the Jews used to celebrate it by (shouting), and by blowing the trumpets, hence it is called (the feast of the trumpets), and also called (**the birthday of the world**).

The goal of this feast is:

- a- The beginning of the new year (feast of the head of the year).
- b- The sanctification of the whole world, as the seventh month (religiously) being the firstborn of the months, in which the greatest feast is celebrated.
- c- According to some, this feast is a preparation of the people to celebrate the feast of atonement in the middle of the month, with the full moon.
- d- A memorial of the giving of the law, accompanied with thunder and lightening.

This feast, as it is the case with other Jewish feasts, was not despised, but was sanctified by the church of the new covenant, albeit through a new spiritual concept. If the trumpets and the shouting bore two main and integral meanings, namely, the destruction of the kingdom of evil, and the setting of the kingdom of God; hence we hear about the destruction of the walls of Jericho of evil (Joshua 6: 5-21) through the blowing of the trumpets; ... About the proclamation of the kingdom of God, and about honoring the ark of the covenant through shouting and blowing the trumpets (1 kings 17: 20; 4: 5-8; 2 kings 6: 15); ... And the psalms came to refer to the liturgical shouts that accompany the throne of God (Psalm 46: 1-7; 80: 2-4). It is therefore, as

though the feast of shouting was not a rite to indicate the head of the year, namely to indicate the time, but, in its essence, it was a proclamation of the kingdom of God, and a confirmation of His dominion on the time. ... In the new covenant we hear about the rite of shouting and blowing the trumpets, not to proclaim the beginning of a temporal year, but to proclaim the beginning of eternity, namely the year without end; Hence the apostle Paul speaks to us about the trumpets that call the elected to this endless year (1 Thessalonian 4: 16; 5: 12).

By this the Jewish feast appears as a main element in setting the Christian Eschatology.... It is, as well, our spiritual feast, in which, by the sound of trumpets, the walls of Jericho of evil are destroyed, to proclaim the kingdom of Christ in us; to start in us a year without end; namely an endless eternity.

The sacrifices and offerings of this feast are:

- a- The perpetual morning and evening burnt offerings, with their grain offerings and drink offerings (Numbers 28: 1-8).
- b- The offerings of the head of the month (the crescent), a burnt offering of a bull, a ram, and 7 lambs of one year, with their grain offerings and drink offerings; And a sin offering of a kid of goats (Numbers 28).
- c- A burnt offering of a bull, a ram, and 7 lambs of one year, with their grain offerings and drink offerings (offerings of the feast).
- d- A sin offering of one kid of goats, special for the feast.

The rite of this day starts by offering the daily burnt offering; then the offerings of the new month, followed by the offerings of the feast, when the priests blow the horn trumpets, the Levites play on musical instruments, and the people sing the psalms, including psalm 81. Then the priest blesses the people by the holy blessing, saying: "*The Lord bless you and keep you; The Lord make His face shine upon you, and be gracious to you; The Lord lift up His countenance upon you, and give you peace*" (Numbers 6: 24-26). It is to be noticed that here, the name God "Jehovah" is mentioned three times; as the people enjoy the Holy Trinity; They were enjoying the blessing of God while lying with their faces on the ground.

After getting the divine blessing, the people – in the days of the temple – used to go to the synagogues to hear certain texts from the Holy Book (Genesis 21: 1; Number 39: 1-6; 1 Samuel 1: 1. 10; Genesis 22: 1-24; Jeremiah 31: 2-20); Then they used to sing the psalms before going back to their homes.

Then in the evening, the people go back to the temple to watch the daily evening burnt offering; to seek the forgiveness of the sins they have committed during the past year; and to seek the blessing of the Lord in the new year; then congratulate one another for the new year.

6- THE GREAT DAY OF ATONEMENT:

We have already talked about it in our interpretation of chapter 16.

7- THE FEAST OF THE TABERNACLES:

This is the last of feasts and seasons designated in the law; and by it, the agricultural year comes to an end. It was called “the Feast of the Tabernacles” on account of that they used during it to dwell in booths made of the branches of trees (42); and also called “**Feast of the Harvest**” (Exodus 23: 16; 34: 22), as in it they finish reaping the harvest of grapes and olives.

The goal of celebrating this feast is to give thanks to God at the end of the agricultural year; And at the same time this feast bears a memorial of their sojourning in the wilderness where they lived in tents; and to glorify God who brought them forth into the promised land.

The main features of this feast are the **extreme joy** with which they celebrate it; and its unique rite of **dwelling in tabernacles**:

(1) Its feature of extreme joy, expressed in the great number of sacrifices and gifts from the rich for everyone to rejoice (Deuteronomy 16: 14);

and as it come directly after reaping the harvest, all used to offer from what God has granted them, so as not to appear empty-handed

before the Lord. According to the Historian Josephus, [he who has not seen the joys of the feast of tabernacles will never know what joy is].

(2) Living in booths for seven days, to be followed by **the eighth day**, counted as a separate feast by itself with its special rite and sacrifices;

during which the people do not stay in the tabernacles, but head to Jerusalem one day before it; and some of them even used to go to Jerusalem before the tenth day of the month to celebrate the feast of atonement, then stay there until the feast of tabernacles; and start to set the tabernacles directly after finishing the rites of the feast of the atonement. The “Meshnah” set the measurements of the tabernacles, and gave exemption of living in them to the sick and their companions. And in case of heavy rain, the people were allowed to leave them.

Through living in the tabernacles, while enjoying the goods, and rejoicing in the new harvest (Deuteronomy 16: 13-16), the people used to remember God's work with them, having brought them out of the land of Egypt, then let them dwell in tabernacles or tents, until their arrival to the promised land (Leviticus 23: 41-43). If this feast, therefore, is a joyful agricultural feast, it is, as well, the feast of sojourning for the sake of settling down in the eternal tabernacles.

This feast was fulfilled in the new covenant, in a more perfect and a deeper way, when the Lord Christ transfigured on Mount Tabor before three of His disciples; when, seeing that the true harvest was fulfilled, when the Lord Christ appeared in His splendor, accompanied by His men Moses and Elijah, beside the three disciples; the apostle Peter, longing for a perpetual feast of tabernacles, asked the Lord to set three tabernacles, one for the Lord, one for Moses, and a third for Elijah, so that the disciples would celebrate that feast forever (Matthew 17: 5) ... But the Lord Christ brought forth a heavenly tabernacle "*a bright cloud that covered them*"; to draw the hearts of the disciples to the eschatological feast, when the Lord will come on the clouds, not to set for them earthly tabernacles, but to bring them forth into the bosom of the Father ... The Lord called the eternal life "the eternal tabernacles".

(3) This feast was characterized by its **unique rite**; distinguished by two integral procedures, namely **pouring the water and the lighting**.

Concerning **pouring the water**, according to the 'Talmud', starting from the first day and for as long as seven days, at dawn, two great processions used to proceed; one to gather branches of olive trees, palm trees, and other trees; and the second procession heads to the pool of Siloam, with a priest carrying a golden pitch to fill it with water from the pool. Accompanying the two processions were groups of singers, to come back at the same time to the temple amid shouts and songs, where the morning burnt offering is offered; and the bearers of the tree branches set a beautiful tabernacle over the altar; while the priests receive the priest, the bearer of the golden pitch by blowing the trumpets three times. That priest ascends the stairs of the altar, together with another priest bearing another golden pitch of wine; they both pour the drinking offering of water and wine in two golden plates set on the altar with holes in them; and the drink will flow down to underneath the altar. ... During the days of the feast, the people used to pitch water from the pool of Siloam with joy, as a memorial of the water that came out of the rock on the hand of the prophet Moses, from which their fathers drank, remembering the words of the prophet Isaiah, saying: "*Ho! Everyone who thirsts, come to the waters; And you have no money, Come buy and eat; Yes, come buy wine and milk without money and without price*"; "*Therefore with joy You will draw water from the wells of salvation*" (Isaiah 55: 1; 12: 3).

The Sadducees believing in pouring only wine and not water, at about the year 15 BC, when Alexander Baniyas as the high priest from the Sadducees, poured the water on the ground far from the altar, the Pharisees revolted against him with the intention to kill him; and there was a battle between the Pharisees and the Sadducees in which the Pharisees prevailed, and more than 6000 persons were killed.

Anyway, while the water and wine were poured on the altar, the music of the temple was played, and the Halil psalms (Psalms 113-118) were sung. And whenever they came to the sections saying: *“Give thanks to the Lord, for He is good”; “Save now, I pray, O Lord”; “You are my God, and I will praise You; You are my God I will exalt you”* (Psalm 118: 1, 25, 28), the worshippers used to wave the tree branches toward the altar.

To show how this feast was bound to water, in the second day of the feast, called ‘the minor celebration’, evening joyful celebrations were made, called “the joy of the streams of water”; a name clearly interpreted in the ‘Telmud’; to refer to the pouring of the Holy Spirit, according to the words said in the psalm: *“With joy You will draw water from the wells of salvation”* (Isaiah 12: 3)].

That rite of pouring water on the altar, and drinking it from the pool of Siloam, melding with the rite of waving the tree branches with exultation and singing, was bound to another rite, namely “the lighting”; as in that feast four high minarets were lighted, each about 50 yards high, and on the top of each were four big golden lamps, and with their flaxes made out of the old clothes of the priests. Their lights were apparent from all sides of the city; and the people used to light lamps in the streets, to turn the city into a festival of joyful lights; and to adorn their houses with flowers. The light was so bound with joy, that the priests used to sing and dance while being on the fifteenth stair of the temple.

Binding the water with light in that feast, according to the Jewish tradition, refer to the pillar of cloud (water), and the pillar of fire (light) appeared for the first time on the fifteenth of Tishrin -- the first day of the feast. On that same day the prophet Moses came down from the mountain to proclaim the setting of the tabernacle of meeting; On it, as well, the temple of Solomon was dedicated; and the Shakinah descended (1 Kings 8; 2 Chronicles 7).

That feast characterized by binding the water with light has been more fulfilled in the new covenant; when the believers celebrate it through their enjoyment of the Messianic life, and entering into eternity. The Messianic era, in truth, is actually that of the flow of living water over

our wilderness, to turn it into a true paradise; as according to the book of Isaiah: *"I will open rivers in desolate heights, and fountains in the midst of the valleys. I will make the wilderness a pool of water, and the dry land springs of water. I will plant in the wilderness the cedar and the acacia tree; the myrtle and the oil tree. I will set in the desert the cypress tree and the pine, and the box tree together. That they may see and know and consider and understand together, that the hand of the Lord has done this, and the holy One of Israel has created it"* (Isaiah 41: 18-20); And the prophet Ezekiel saw in the new temple, the living water flowing from under the threshold of the temple toward the east; and all kinds of trees will be watered by these rivers (Ezekiel 47). And when the prophet Zechariah prophesied about the day of the crucifixion of the Lord Christ, he said: *"In that day it shall be that living water shall flow from Jerusalem"* (Zechariah 14: 8); ... And once the Lord Christ came, He did not proclaim that He is the subject of this feast, but that He is the feast itself. The feast turned into a Person whom we enjoy, be satisfied, and enlightened; according to the words of the holy gospel: *"On the last day, that great day of the feast, Jesus stood and cried out, saying: 'If anyone thirsts, let him come to Me and drink. He who believes in Me, as the Scripture has said, out of his heart will flow rivers of living water'"* (John 7: 37-38). By that the Lord Christ proclaimed Himself as the rite of the feast, in which they drink, not like their fathers did from the rock that followed them, nor from the pool of Siloam, but from within them, fountains of living water will flow. That is also what the Lord Christ confirmed to the Samaritan woman, saying: *"Whoever drinks from this water will thirst again; but whoever drinks from the water that I shall give him will never thirst. But the water that I shall give him will become in him a fountain of water springing up into everlasting life"* (John 4: 13, 14). Whoever drinks from the water of the Jewish rite will thirst again; But once the Source came, His Holy Spirit produced in us fountains of living water springing up to everlasting life; namely, capable, not only to satisfy our thirst, but to renew our nature, to set forth to a heavenly eternal life. That is *"the pure river of the water of life, clear as crystal, proceeding from the throne of God and of the Lamb"*, seen by St. John in the book of Revelation 22: 11.

What we say about the water, we repeat concerning the light, as the Lord Christ confirmed: *"I am the light of the world"* (John 8: 12). And the way He creates in us a fountain of living water; He, as the true Feast, will turn us into the fellowship of life together with Him, for us to become, as well, *"the light of the world"* (Matthew 5: 14).

Beside those two integral rites: "the pouring of water and the Light"; Seeing the crowd going in a procession around the altar, waving the branches of trees, we see the Lord Christ -- "the Priest and the Sacrifice at the same time" -- as the multitudes, on palm Sunday, came out waving branches of olive trees and palm trees, and spreading them on the ground before Him

(Matthew 21: 48) ... That is our joyful Feast, the Grantor of conquest! To whom we wave the branches of faith, as a sign of our acceptance of His kingdom in us; for Him to grant us new palm branches in His eternal kingdom, a sign of our conquest by Him, and our reigning together with Him (Revelation 7: 9).

As to the rite of the feast, it starts on the evening of the fourteenth day, when the Priests blow the trumpets to proclaim the advent of the feast; clean the altar of the burnt offering; And exactly at midnight they open the gates to let the multitudes come in to partake of the great celebrations of the feast.

Beside the previously mentioned rites, **the following sacrifices and offerings are offered** (Numbers 29: 12-19):

- a- The perpetual morning and evening burnt offerings, together with their grain offerings and drink offerings.
- b- The burnt offering of the feast, starting by 13 young bulls, then with every day it decreases by one bull, to add up to 70 bulls; beside 2 rams, and 14 lambs in their first year, every day, together with their offerings.
- c- A kid of goats as a sin offering for the feast.
- d- Beside what the people would offer of their vowed peace offerings and freewill offerings, as their burnt offerings, grain offerings, drink offerings, and peace offerings.

While coming out of the altar at the end of every daily service, the people used to sing, saying: "How beautiful are you O altar!"; or "We thank you, O Lord Jehovah; and we thank you, O altar!".

As to **the eighth day**, which is, as we already said, has been an independent feast, called "**the retreat**", all stop work and only worship ... In that day, they do not dwell in tabernacles, nor wave tree branches. **The sacrifices and offerings of that day, are:**

- a- The perpetual morning and evening burnt offerings, together with their grain offerings and drink offerings.
- b- A burnt offering of a bull, a ram, seven lambs, together with their grain offerings and drink offerings
- c- A kid of goats as a sin offering
- d- What the people offer of vowed offerings and freewill offerings (Numbers 29: 35-39).

We end our talk about the feast of tabernacles with what came in the book of Deuteronomy, that in that feast every Sabbathical year (the seventh year) (Deuteronomy 31: 9-13), the law is read before all the people of Israel,



CHAPTER 24

THE INNER JOY

Having spoken of the holy feasts and the joyful assemblies, He intended to proclaim the secret of the true inner joy through the care for the golden lampstand, to enjoy the light; and the weekly bread, to enjoy the satisfaction. Whereas the secret of the loss of joy is by blaspheming the name of God, and by doing wrong to others.

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| 1- The lampstand and the pure oil | 1 -- 4 |
| 2- The table and the showbread | 5 -- 9 |
| 3- The blasphemy by the son of 'Shelomith' | 10 -- 16 |
| 4- Different statutes | 17 – 23 |

1- THE LAMPSTAND AND THE PURE OIL:

It is not strange to talk about the lampstand and the pure oil directly after talking about the feasts and the seasons; For if God intends to grant His people the perpetual joy, the secret of this joy is their being enlightened by the oil of the Holy Spirit in them; who prepares the soul as a virgin to receive the Groom (Matthew 25: 1 – 10).

“Command the children of Israel that they bring pure oil of pressed olives for the light,

to make the lamps burn continually. Outside the veil of testimony, in the tabernacle

of meeting, Aaron shall be in charge of it from evening until morning before the Lord

continually. It shall be a statute forever in your generations. He shall be in charge of

the lamps on the pure gold lampstand before the Lord continually” (2-4)

The Lord commanded the people to bring pure oil of pressed olives; and commanded Aaron and his sons to care for the seven lamps of the golden lampstand from evening until morning before the Lord, to watch them lest they are put off. According to Historians, all the lamps were lighted during the night; and only three of them were lighted during the day.

In our interpretation of the book of Exodus, we saw how the lampstand was not intended only to give light, but it bore spiritual concepts that touch our relationships with the Holy Trinity, the true light; ... How that the church of the new covenant cared for having the light even during the day inside the church, as a spiritual rite that touches the life of believers; And how the priest blesses the congregation with the cross carrying lighted candles, as a sign of God's work in their inner life.

Commenting on the rite of lighting the lamps of the lampstand from evening until morning in the sanctuary, father Methodius says: [They were commanded to have for themselves a weak light from evening until morning, on account of that their light seemed to represent the prophetic word ... It was necessary to light them until the day comes; saying, "*to be in charge of it until the morning*"; namely until the coming of Christ; As once the Sun of purity and righteousness shines, there will be need for another light].

And according to the scholar Origen: [Before the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ -- the Sun that did not rise over the children of Israel, -- they used the light of lamps; having had the words of the law and the prophetic words as a lamp, so shut-in within narrow walls, that its light did not shine over the whole earth. The divine knowledge was confined in Judah alone, according to the words of the prophet David: "*In Judah God is known*" (Psalm 76: 1). But once the Sun of righteousness -- our Lord and Savior -- shone (Malachi 4: 2; 3: 20), once he was born, the light of the divine knowledge spread over the whole world. In short, the words of the law, and the prophetic sayings were lighted lamp that shone only within the sanctuary, but could not set forth outside to shine with beauty and splendor.

The words of the law and the prophecies were the lamp; a fact taught to us by the Lord Himself concerning John the Baptist (as a representative of the old covenant with its law and prophets), saying: "*He was a burning and shining lamp; and you were willing for a time to rejoice in his light*" (John 5: 35); By that shining lamp -- John the Baptist -- the law and prophecies were consummated. As long as the people had oil to bring for the lamps, the lamps continued to give light; but when they sinned, and had no more oil of mercy, nor of good works and purity, the light was quenched because of its need for oil.

But what should we say, concerning us? ... It is befitting of the Christian to care to have more oil, as without it, according to the Lord, the virgins are called "foolish", for carrying no oil in their vessels, hence their lamps were put out, and they were denied the entrance into the spiritual secret place; and when they knocked at the door, having no oil, the Groom gave the command not to open the door before them (Matthew 25).

I remember what I previously said concerning psalm 119: 105, saying: "*Your word is a lamp to my feet, and a light to my path*"; to clarify, as much as I could, the difference between the lamp and the light. The lamp is assigned to the feet, being a lower member of the body; whereas the light is assigned to the paths, which are called somewhere else "the heavenly ways". ... According to the secret interpretation, the lamp of the law is assigned to those who are in the world (men of the old covenant); whereas the eternal light is assigned to the paths of the age to come]

And according to St. Augustine: [the oil refers to "love", without which the virgins will not be admitted into the wedding, nor to encounter the Groom in His heavenly secret place]. And according to the scholar Origen, [Do not you see that he who puts off the light of love, puts off the lamp?! That he who loves his neighbor (1 John 4: 21) will abide in the light of love, and can say with confidence: "*I am like a green olive tree in the house of God*" (Psalm 52: 8); and, "*Your children like olive plants all around your table*" (Psalm 128: 3).

2- THE TABLE AND THE SHOWBREAD:

We have previously talked about the table and the rite of the showbread in our interpretation of the book of Exodus (chapter 25). On it, the bread are put in two rows, each row includes 6 breads over one another; with bent golden plates put between the breads to allow air to pass to keep the bread from corruption; a golden vessel with pure frankincense is put over each row of bread, for the Lord to acknowledge their offerings, and to receive them a sweet aroma; "*You shall put pure frankincense on each row, that it may be on the bread for a memorial, an offering made by fire to the Lord*" (7).

If the bread refers to the church, with which her head Christ melded; the frankincense refers to her perpetual work, namely, the unceasing prayers and praise.

According to the scholar Origen, in the holy table, there is an image of the banquet of the Eucharist presented to us by the Lord of glory; saying: [Let us go back to that bread descending from heaven, granting life (John 6: 33), the bread of atonement, presented by the Lord, as an atonement by faith by His blood to show His righteousness (Romans 3: 25). Let us see that memorial about which the Lord spoke, saying: "*This do in remembrance of Me*" (1 Corinthians 11: 25);. Let us elaborately remember the sacraments of the church, to perceive how "*the statutes of the law bore a shadow of the things to come*" (Hebrew 10: 1).

This bread is the food of the holy men to be eaten in a holy place (9). It is the food of those who became “a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, a holy nation” (1 Peter 2: 9), which they eat while well prepared by a holy life. As according to the scholar Origen: [The holy place here is not a location, but refers to “the pure soul”].

3- THE BLASPHEMY OF THE SON OF SHELOMITH:

After revealing the secret of the joy of the soul in the lighted oil of the lampstand, and her satisfaction by the holy showbread; he talked to us about the secret of the bitterness of the soul, and her loss of peace, and even of her life, through an episode of a controversy between the son of Shelomith, an Israeli woman, from an Egyptian father, and an Israeli man; when the former blasphemed God. The prophet Moses did not hasten to give a verdict on his own, but put him in custody, and, and sought the counsel of the Lord. Here, the statute came to proclaim that whoever blaspheme against God, whether he is a true Israeli or a proselyte will be stoned to death outside the camp; and so they did to the son of Shelomith.

In a symbolic concept of that episode, the scholar Origen saw in the son of Shelomith, an Israeli woman, from an Egyptian father, a reference to the heretics, who belong to the church as a their mother, but through their heresy, they receive Pharaoh as their father. By their deflection, while losing their sonhood to God; they refer themselves to the church to enter into controversies with her children; and blaspheme against God by their corrupted faith. According to the letter, they may appear to belong to the church, yet they are outside her; and God is not their Father; hence the son of Shelomith was driven to outside the camp.

Whoever blaspheme God by his behavior, denies himself the true fellowship of the church: [Whoever depart from the way of righteousness, and from the law of the Lord, ... is driven out from the congregation of the saints and from their rows]; And, [Whoever depart from the truth, departs from the fear of the Lord, from faith, and from love; by which he will be driven out of the camp of the church, even with no verdict by the bishop to be driven out... for he may be in the church in the body, but in truth he is outside her].

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CHAPTER 25

STATUTES OF INNER LIBERTY

God proclaimed His goal toward man through bringing him forth into continuous holy feasts and assemblies, to receive God Himself as Feast for him, a Fountain of his joy and liberation. In the last chapter He talked to us about joy and satisfaction; Now He talks to us about the inner liberty through certain statutes that touch the poor, the slaves, the fields, and the houses.

1- The statute of the seventh year	1 -- 7
2- The statute of the year of the Jubilee	8 -- 22
3- The statutes of selling the land	23 -- 28
4- The statutes of selling houses	29 -- 33
5- The statutes of loans between brethren	35 -- 38
6- The statute of the Hebrew slave	39 -- 43
7- The statute of the foreign slave	44 -- 46
8- The statute of the Hebrew enslaved by a foreigner	47 -- 55

1- THE STATUTE OF THE SEVENTH YEAR:

Caring for us to keep the Sabbath, to sanctify the rest of the week; By the same line of thought God cared for us to keep the Sabbath of the years, namely, the Sabbatical year, or the seventh year. In that year it is not allowed to sow nor to harvest the land, even the fruitful trees; except within the limits of paying the tax, and of what concern the offerings, like the sheaf of waiving, the two bread offerings, and the showbread. It is also allowed to plow the land to prepare it for sowing; to hunt, to trade, to raise bees, etc.

The goal of the Sabbatical year is:

(1) On the aspect of agriculture, in which neither the Jews nor their fathers had a past experience; on account of that they lived in Egypt for so

long as shepherds of sheep; watching the Egyptians from afar sowing their land once and sometimes more than once every year, because of the high fertility of the land thanks to the rich silt brought over by the River Nile; Whereas the land of Palestine, on the other hand, not being as fertile, need to be left to rest every now and then, to regain its strength, so as not to be exhausted.

(2) On a human and social aspect, the Sabbatical year is the year of general fellowship, during which the poor, and the stranger, without being

embarrassed, could enter into any field, to collect what is left over after the harvest of the previous years, and to pluck whatever he likes of the fruits on the trees ...It is as though, the land during the seventh year becomes a common property for all to pluck, yet not to store, nor to transform to other products like wine ... etc.; even by the owner of the land. This fellowship was not confined to humans, but extended to animals, even to wild ones, to enjoy their portion of the land produce without hindrance.

On another aspect, that year was meant to give rest to everyone; not just for man and his household, but to the slave, hired hands, strangers, and even to animals, as well.

According to some, that year was a year of liberation, during which slaves are liberated of bondage; although, according to others, liberation of slaves was done on the seventh year of purchasing the slave, not necessarily during the general Sabbatical year.

(3) On a spiritual aspect, it is time for rest from the daily work to get preoccupied with the spiritual work. In that year, chapters of the law are read in the feast of Tabernacles (Deuteronomy 31: 10-13), to make it like a treasure for the whole year ... This reading was conducted according to a beautiful rite, in which the head of the synagogue delivers the Torah to the high priest, who, in turn, delivers it to the king, to stand in awe and read the law on the people. After the reading, the high priest blesses the people, seeking from God for the sake of the law, the ministry, the confession, the enjoyment of the forgiveness of sins, and for the sake of Jerusalem, the temple, the people, and the holy priesthood.

The Sabbatical year was considered as a practical lesson to believe that God is capable to bless their possibilities, satisfy their needs; and that the secret of the blessing is not in the hard work, as much as it is in God's favor.

2- THE STATUTE OF THE YEAR OF THE JUBILEE:

The way man sanctifies the seventh day in order to have the rest of the week blessed by the Lord; ... the seventh month to bless the rest of the months, ... and the seventh year to bless the rest of the years; He sanctifies, as well, the fiftieth year that comes as a Sabbath for every unit of seven years -- the Sabbath of the weeks of the years; Hence that feast "the Jubilee" is the perfection of the previous system, put by the Lord for His people.

The word "Jubilee" is derived from a Greek origin, meaning (horn); as it was declared through blowing the horn on the tenth day of the seventh month; starting by the feast of atonement.

That feast was called "The year of liberty" (Ezekiel 46: 17); As in it the slaves gain their liberty; the land sold or pawned, return to their owners; and the creditors forgive their debtors ... Hence that feast that comes every fifty years, was considered the most magnificent and happiest to the souls of the people.

The rite of that feast was:

(1) *"You shall consecrate the fiftieth year, and proclaim liberty throughout all the land to all its inhabitants. It shall be a Jubilee for you, and*

each of you shall return to his possession, and each of you shall return to his family" (10).

That was the most prominent part of this rite, namely, the liberation of the land, by which every man gets his land back, and every family gets its possessions of houses or fields back, whether sold or pawned; and the goal for this was:

a- For all to have the sense of sojourn (23). If someone has got so rich to purchase by his money, or to pawn, the portion of others, he would

forsake it by his own free will, before all would forsake everything against theirs. The year of the Jubilee probably a shadow of the eternal life, in which there is neither rich nor poor, but everyone rejoices in his portion, without desire to take that of others.

b- A confirmation that the land is the Lord's possession (23), which He gave to us to use, yet, not at the expense of our poor brethren; to

whom we give back a portion, not as a gift from us, on account of that it is not ours in the first place.

c- That every tribe, and every family, would keep its portion of the land, which has been given to them on the hand of the prophet Moses and

that of Joshua the son of Nun.

(2) He provided them with an important principle of dealing: *"If you sell anything to your neighbor, or buy from your neighbor's hand, you shall*

not oppress one another" (14). Everyone is committed not to abuse the principle of the Jubilee by selling his land before the time, with the deceptive intention of getting it back in the fiftieth

year, but the price of purchase would be estimated according to the period remaining till the Jubilee, so that no one would oppress the other.. At the same time, it is not befitting of the buyer to abuse the need of the seller, and pay him a price too low; but to estimate the price according to the benefit he will gain during the remaining time until the feast of the Jubilee; So that the dealing would not be intended to reach the highest profit from the other party, but would be rather based upon the fear of the Lord, saying: "*Therefore you shall not oppress one another, but you shall fear your God; For I am the Lord your God*" (17). It is as though any oppression against our brethren, is counted as an insult against the Lord Himself, who defends those oppressed.

(3) The year of the Jubilee, as a Sabbatical year, is "a year of rest", being said, "*The fiftieth year shall be a Jubilee to you, in it you shall*

neither sow nor reap what grows of its own accord, nor gather the grapes of your untended vine" (11). That is set upon a basis of faith, that they are sustained by the blessing of God, rather than by their own labor; being said, "*I will command my blessing on you in the sixth year, and it will bring forth produce enough for three years*" (21); to be enough for the seventh and the eighth year, until its crop appears at the beginning of the ninth year.

If God request from us to work, yet in it, we trust upon the blessing of God Himself, the Grantor of goods.

3- THE STATUTES OF SELLING THE LAND:

As Moses and Joshua distributed the land to be possessed by the tribes, every tribe and family were committed, as far as possible, to keep its land, as a sign of their love, not for the promised land, as much as it is for the new land, namely, "the higher Canaan". That was strongly shown in the episode of 'Nabot the Jezreelite' who, facing the threat of death, did not sell the land of his fathers to the king despite his promises to him.

But in case someone poor had to sell his land; he or his kinsman-redeemer can redeem the land (25); like what 'Boaz' did when he redeemed the land of 'Abimalech' and married "Ruth" his son's wife, to grant the deceased a son to enjoy the inheritance of his grandfather.

Man or his kinsman-redeemer can redeem the land at any time by paying its price, that decreases with the passing years because of being used by its purchaser ... And in case he or his kinsman-redeemer could not redeem it, the Jubilee will come, and the land will get back to its owner for free.

If we have lost our eternal inheritance because of sin, for the sake of an earthly or carnal desire, as what Esau did when he sold his firstborn rights for a meal of lentils; Neither we, nor our first kinsman-redeemer, namely, the law, could redeem it; but we have lost everything, until the year of the Jubilee came – the fiftieth year – when the Lord sent His Holy Spirit on the feast of the Pentecost; and it became our right to get our spiritual land back, after the Lord Christ redeemed it with His precious blood.

In our previous study, we saw that the figure 50 refers to 'liberty', which we get by the Holy Spirit, who lifts up our souls, hearts, thoughts, and all our senses, as though by the two wings of a pigeon, to soar toward the heavenlies, free from the bonds, seduction, and traps of the world! For our days to turn into a continuous Jubilee, in which we enjoy the fiery Holy Spirit, unceasingly kindled; He who found rest in us in the Sacrament of 'Meron'; granted us the liberty in Jesus Christ, abiding us in Him, not to have a land of inheritance, but to have a place in the bosom of the Father.

What is this land or field, that was sold, yet redeemed, but the church of God, sold by the Jewish leaders, to the account of their pride and temporal satisfaction; But, in the fullness of time, the Lord Christ, the true Kinsman-Redeemer, came to redeem it by His precious blood (Revelation 5: 9).

4- THE STATUTES OF SELLING HOUSES:

The divine inspiration presents to us statutes concerning the selling or pawning houses, and the way to redeem them, providing us through the letter, with deep spiritual concepts that touch the liberty of our inner souls. The statutes distinguished four cases:

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| a- The houses in a walled city | 29, 30 |
| b- The houses in villages | 31 |
| c- The houses of the Levites in the cities of their possession | 32, 33 |
| d- The fields of the common-land in the cities of the Levites. | 34 |

a- The houses in a walled city:

If a man sells a house in a walled city, then he, his kinsman-redeemer, or his heir in case he died, may redeem it within a whole year after it is sold; to give the chance to the seller who had to sell it because of some hard times, to get it back and settle down in it with his family. Otherwise, if the house is not redeemed within a year from being sold, it shall belong

permanently to him who has bought it, throughout his generations. It shall not be released in the year of the Jubilee; on account of that the seller, his kinsman-redeemer, or his heirs, have lost that chance; and on that the buyer has an equal right to settle down with his family. The reason why the houses within walled cities are not released in the year of the Jubilee, was that these houses were not given to the people through a lot like the land, but they built them according to their free will.

b- The houses in villages:.

As to houses built in cities not surrounded by walls, namely in villages, they could be redeemed within a whole year after they are sold; But if the seller, his kinsman-redeemer, or his heirs, could not redeem it, it will remain in the possession of the buyer until the year of the Jubilee, to give it back to its owner, or to his heirs in case he died. The wisdom behind this, is that such houses are actually counted as integral parts of, and could not be separated from the fields or pasture lands. Therefore, in order for every tribe to keep its possessions, the lands together with the houses built on them, would be released in the year of the Jubilee.

c- The houses of the Levites in the cities of their possession:

According to the divine inspiration, If a man purchases a house from the Levites, that house might be released anytime, not just within a whole year after it is sold; for the houses in the cities of the Levites are their perpetual possession among the children of Israel" (33). And in case one of his brethren Levites redeems it, the house will remain in his possession until the year of the Jubilee, then he would give it back to its owner.

d- The fields of the common lands in the cities of the Levites:

The cities of the Levites were surrounded by common land 1000 yards wide, all around the limits of the city, on the four directions. Those in turn are surrounded by fields, 2000 yards wide on every direction. The common lands were designated to build on them folds for their sheep and beasts of labor; Whereas the fields were designated for agriculture, yet not for the sake of trade. The Levites were not allowed to sell any of their common land or their fields, for it is their perpetual possession.

The spiritual concept of selling and redeeming the houses:

Commenting on the statute concerning God's care even for the ox which should not be muzzled while it treads out the grain (Deuteronomy 25: 4), the apostle Paul says: "*Is it oxen God is concerned about? Or does He say it altogether for our sakes? For our sakes, no doubt, this is written, that he who plows should plow in hope, and he who threshes in hope should be partaker of his hope*" (1 Corinthians 9: 9, 10). With the same spirit he also says: "Is it houses and fields God is concerned about? Or they are written for our sake, being, ourselves, the holy house and field of God?!"

According to the scholar Origen: [Let us hasten to apply the statutes of houses upon ourselves; For if we follow the law of Christ, what would be the significance of such statutes concerning houses as far as we are concerned, if we would not be allowed to possess land nor houses in a city; not to possess more than one tunic (Mark 6: 9), nor to gather an abundance of wealth; being written: "*Having food and clothes, with these we shall be content*" (1 Timothy 6: 9)... We should therefore, meditate in the statutes concerning houses in walled-or un-walled cities.

In the Holy Book, the word "house" is used with a secret concept. Commending Jacob, it was said: "*Jacob was a quiet man living in tents*" (Genesis 25: 27); While about the two midwives, it was written: "*Because the midwives feared God, he gave them houses*" (Exodus 1: 21)... What is that house?... What is that building about which the apostle Paul say more clearly: "*For we know that if our earthly house, this tent, is destroyed, we have a building from God, a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens*" (2 Corinthians 5: 1)?!. ...It is the house that no one can build unless he has the fear of God; unless he bears the simplicity of spirit and the purity of heart. But if it happens, as it usually does, that he, who builds a heavenly house by his good works, good behavior, and straightforward faith, falls into sin, he would be as though transferred his works to someone else....But "*If he himself becomes able to redeem it*" (26); How much will he pay to redeem it? ... It will be by a dense flow of tears of repentance, and by a consistent practice of good works. In that year, understood to be the one described by the Lord Christ as an "*acceptable time*" (Isaiah 49: 8; 2 Corinthians 6: 2), in which it is allowed for those who confess their sins to get the forgiveness and to enjoy salvation].

What does he mean by the houses in "walled cities"? They probably refer to those about whom the apostle Paul says: "*Our citizenship is in heaven*" (Philippians 3: 20). As the heavenly Jerusalem is surrounded by a wall (Revelation 21: 14), let him who has reached the heavenly life, and tasted the deposit of the eternal glory, be aware, lest he would sell his house by sin, particularly that which touches his faith. And in case he did fall, let him hasten lest the year of his life pass, and he would eternally lose his house, and would not be able to redeem it.

As to the owner of a house in a village not surrounded by walls, it refers, according to the scholar Origen, to those who walk with the purity of heart, and are subjected to continuous (passing by) sins; and are, therefore, in need of a persistent, unceasing repentance, lest they would lose their eternal inheritance.

As to the houses or fields of the priests and the Levites; according to the scholar Origen, the priest represents the soul consecrated to the Lord, and the Levite represents him who is unceasingly in the presence of the Lord, and at the service of His will. The priest represents the perfection of faith and understanding; and the Levite represents the perfection of works. Such holy souls through the living and working faith, in case they are subjected to some shortcoming, they will enjoy forgiveness and redemption; their inner houses will be perpetually redeemed, and their fields will never be touched. And in case their houses are taken away from them, it would be temporarily, and would be redeemed at any time and return to them; and, according to the scholar Origen: [The possessions of the saints and their houses will never be lost, nor taken away from them; For how could it be taken away from the priests, the house "*built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets; Jesus Christ Himself being the chief cornerstone*"?... But if it so happen that the priest sells his house to a lowly and a mean buyer, namely to the devil, ... God forbids! He would hasten to redeem himself and covers it, as long as there is yet time to cover, and a position of repentance. ... Let us then fervently seek, not to fail to enjoy "*the everlasting habitations*" (Luke 16: 9), by our Lord Jesus Christ, Glory and honor to Him forever, Amen].

5- THE STATUTES OF LOANS BETWEEN BRETHREN:

The way God cared for our inner freedom, as expressed through the statutes of the Sabbatical year (1 – 7); and the statutes of the Jubilee (8-22); particularly, the redemption of the land and houses (23-33); He cares as well, for us to bear His features, and desire the freedom of others. If man is a debtor to another, and fails, due to poverty, to pay back his debt with its interests (35); whether he is a Jew, a stranger, or a proselyte you are committed to have compassion on him, to take no usury or interest from him.

It is forbidden by the Mosaic law to take usury, namely, interest; either in the form of money, or to take it in the form of crops or presents, if the debt was given to someone in need. But, it would be different if it was given to a rich man to use to add profits to his profits; hence the Holy Book made it clear by adding: "he fails due to poverty to pay back his debt" (35).

6- THE STATUTE OF THE HEBREW SLAVE:

We previously talked about the statute of the Hebrew slave and his liberation after six years; and in case he refuses to be set free, his ear would be pierced at the gate, and, through his own free will, he would remain a slave until the year of the Jubilee. And we saw how this slave refers to the Lord Christ, who, being the Lord of all, chose to become a slave, and proclaimed His consent, not through having His ear pierced, but by His wounds, to liberate us in Him, and to let us enjoy the sonhood to God.

7- THE STATUTE OF THE FOREIGN SLAVE:

If God had compassion upon His own people, and sought from the believers, as much as possible, to liberate their brethren from bondage; Why then, did He allow them to enslave the foreign peoples?!

(1) God did not command bondage, but allowed His people to do it within specific limits, and under specific situations; namely, to chastise

those fallen in evil, so as to perceive their own bitter bondage to sin, and their inner humiliation to the devil. Hence it is said: "*Cursed be Canaan, lowest of slaves shall he be to his brothers*" (Genesis 9: 25).

(2) According to this concept, the believer, bearing the spiritual authority to enslave his own body with his whole energy and possibilities; he

hears the divine promise, saying: "*He who overcomes, and keeps My works until the end, to him I will give power over the nations*" (Revelation 2: 26). If the fall of the nations under bondage, reveals their bondage to sin, the authority of the believer in the old covenant, referred to his spiritual authority, not on others, but on himself.

8- THE STATUTE OF THE HEBREW ENSLAVED BY A FOREIGNER:

In case a foreigner becomes so rich to buy a poor Hebrew; If the later could redeem himself let him do it, Otherwise, It would be befitting of his brother, uncle, cousin, or anyone who is near of kin, to redeem him from bondage. The amazing thing in this statute is that He seeks from him who redeem his Hebrew brother of bondage, not to oppress the foreigner who bought him, but to pay him his due price, reckoned according to the number of years remaining for him as a slave until the years of the Jubilee. If God exhorts them to redeem their brethren from humiliation, yet, not at the expense of the foreigners.

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CHAPTER 26

THE BLESSINGS AND CURSES

The goal of this book is the enjoyment of the holy life by the Holy God. This chapter comes like the end of the book, to reveal the blessings that dwell upon those who receive God's work in obedience to His commandments; as well as the curses that dwell upon those who reject the divine commandment, and do not receive the holy life; as a natural fruit of sin and disobedience.

1- Worshipping the Holy God	1 -- 2
2- The blessings of obedience to the Holy God	3 - 17
3- The curses of disobedience to the Holy God	18 – 39
4- Receiving the repentant sinners	40 – 46

1- WORSHIPPING THE HOLY GOD:

Seeking from them to be bound to Him, God commands them not to make idols for themselves, neither a carved image, nor a sacred pillar, or to set up an engraved stone in their land, before which to bow down, the way the heathen do.

The sign of their bond to Him is: "*You shall keep My Sabbaths and reverence My sanctuaries; I am the Lord*" (2). This commandment with its two items: keeping the Sabbaths, namely consecrating it to the Lord, and behaving with awe in His sanctuary or house, are the signs of our love for the Lord, and our bond with Him. Keeping the Sabbath means consecrating the time to the account of the Lord; and revering the sanctuary means consecrating the place; As though the believer consecrates the whole time of his life, and every place, perpetually to the Lord. We should keep the Sabbath, so that God may lift us up by His Holy Spirit, beyond the time; namely, set us forth to His eternity; And we should, as well, revere His earthly sanctuary to enjoy His heavenly sanctuaries. By that we live for the Lord forever, on a heavenly level.

2- THE BLESSINGS OF OBEDIENCE TO THE HOLY GOD:

Calling on us to worship God and no one else, proclaiming our acceptance of His kingdom, through consecrating His Sabbath forever, and our reverence to His heavenly sanctuary, He reveals to us the following blessings of this encounter with God, specifically through the obedience of His commandments and statutes, responding to the Holy One, through our submission to His holy law:

(1) ***“If you walk in My statutes and keep My commandments, and perform them, then I will give you rain in its season”*** (2, 3). Rain in

its literal form is God’s gift for all; as *“He sends rain on the just and on the unjust”* (Matthew 5: 45), not as a reward, only to those who walk in His statutes. However, according to the spiritual concept, in our interpretation of several books of the prophets, we saw rain as one of the main features of the Messianic era; being the gift of the Holy Spirit, given in abundance to the church on the day of the Pentecost, for the Christian to live abiding in Christ by the Holy Spirit; who sends rain to turn their barren hearts into a fruitful garden and a heavenly paradise that bring joy to the heart of the Groom.

According to the scholar Origen, rain refers to the enjoyment of the divine words through spiritual perception, to revive our souls; saying: [In the book of Deuteronomy, God says on the mouth of His prophet Moses: *“Give ear, O heavens, and I will speak; and hear, O earth, the words of my mouth. Let my teaching drop as the rain; my speech distill as the dew”* (Deuteronomy 32: 1, 2)... Listen to Ezekiel say that Opening His mouth, God will cause showers of blessing to come down on earth {Ezekiel 34: 26}; ... And to the apostle Paul, say: *“For the earth which drinks in the rain that often comes upon it, and bears herbs useful for those by whom it is cultivated, receives blessing from God. But if it bears thorns and briars, it is rejected and near to being cursed, whose end is to be burned”* (Hebrew 6: 7, 8). Namely, that this earth will get the blessing of the Lord, when it drinks the rain and produces the fruit; And curses will dwell upon it from the Lord, when, being deprived of the rain, bears thorns and briars. ... Therefore, if our earth – namely our heart – receives the rain of teaching the law, that perpetually fall on it; and if it bears the fruit of works, it will enjoy the blessings; But if it has no spiritual works , it will bear instead thorns and briars, namely the worries and desires of this world, *“it will be near to perdition, whose end is to be burned”*].

Let us, therefore, receive the word of the Lord as heavenly rain to water our inner earth, to make it produce an increase of fruit; and to turn our depths into a joyful paradise. Such rain *“will fall in its season”*, not that sometimes it will be given, and in other times it will not; but this rain will be given to the believers according to their possibilities and readiness; Some of them will receive it light, and others will receive it as torrent flood. The word of God is sometimes given as *“milk to babes”* (1 Corinthians 3: 2), and other times, *“they are abundantly satisfied with the fullness of Your house”* (Psalm 36: 8). Saying *“in its season”* probably refers to the rich flow of the gift of the Holy Spirit which dwelt upon the church as dense rain after the crucifixion, resurrection, and ascension of the Lord Christ.

(2) ***"The land shall yield its produce"*** (4). What is this land that shall yield its produce, but the body of dust that is sanctified by the rain of the

Holy Spirit, who takes away its barrenness, and turns it into a fruitful spiritual paradise?! ...

But our body of dust, which for such a long time, lived fruitless, until the time came for it to be taken up by the Word of God through His incarnation, to produce an exalted fruit that brought pleasure to the heart of the Father?! ... Hence, in his liturgy, St. Gregory the Theologian says: [You have blessed my nature in You].

According to some, this land that yielded its produce, is St. Mary, who, being "land" as we are, produced the greatest of fruits, namely, our Lord Jesus Christ, through His incarnation in her womb.

(3) ***"And the trees of the field shall yield their fruit"*** (4). The prophet Ezekiel, describing the new temple, says: *"There was water flowing from*

under the threshold of the temple toward the east; ... to form a great river, and along its banks were very many trees on one side and the

other" (Ezekiel 47). And the Psalmist likens the believer to "a tree planted by the rivers of water that brings forth its fruit in its season"

(Psalm 1: 3).

According to the scholar Origen: [Inside us there are trees, either good or bad (Matthew 7: 18). The righteous would not have trees that bear bad fruit, but trees that yield good fruit. ... Do you want me to tell you the names of the trees inside our souls? There are no apple trees nor vines, but there is a tree called 'righteousness', and others called 'alertness', 'strength', and 'moderation'. ... Inside us there are many trees, planted by the Lord, Himself, in His paradise; ... In truth, there are trees of 'godliness', 'wisdom', 'teaching', 'knowledge of good and evil', and above all, there is 'the tree of life' (Genesis 2: 9)].

(4) ***"Your threshing shall last till the time of vintage, and the vintage shall last till the time of sowing; You shall eat your bread to the***

full" (5). He means to say that, because of the abundance of the crop, the season of threshing the grains will last till the time of plucking the fruit from the trees; and this in turn will last till the time of reaping the harvest.... It is as though the believer's life will turn into an endless abundance; he will spend his whole life gathering new fruits every day, and enjoying an unceasing harvest. Hence it is said: *"The poor shall eat and be satisfied"* (Psalm 22: 26). About that, the scholar Origen says: [We shall have no void in our life... *"For he who sows to the Spirit will of the Spirit reap everlasting life"* (Galatians 6: 8)]. He also says: [I do not

understand the saying: "*You shall eat your bread to the full*" (5), to mean a physical blessing, as though he who keeps the law of the Lord will enjoy the regular bread to the full; for even the atheist and the criminals eat it, not only to the full but also with lust! ... But let us look at Him who says: "*I am the living bread who came down from heaven. If anyone eats from this bread, he will live forever*" (John 6: 51). ... Meditating in that, He who so utters is "*the Word*" (John 1: 1), who satisfies the souls. we can understand "the bread from the Lord" to concern the blessing... Here, Solomon presents to us a like proclamations in his proverbs, saying "*The righteous eats to the satisfying of his soul; but the stomach of the wicked shall be in want*" (Proverb 13: 25).... The righteous eats the bread of life, perpetually and unceasingly, to the satisfying of his soul by the heavenly food, which is the word of the Father and His wisdom].

(5) "***You shall dwell in your land safely***" (5). In the debates of St. John Cassian, it came that a father monk was asked: How could the divine

promise that whoever forsakes houses or lands for the sake of the Lord will be rewarded in this world a hundred fold, when we find the monks who so did possess nothing?! His answer was: [The monk forsook a household to find all men his brethren;... he forsook land to find all the land of the world within his hands].

As a contemporary example we find it in the father monk 'Abdel-Messih the Ethiopian', how he forsook much to find, even in the temporal things greater than what he has forsaken; ... how he used to lie anywhere in the wilderness without closed doors, and even the serpents, the scorpions, and the wild beasts could not dare to approach to harm him; When many of us have houses with secured doors, and yet their hearts are never in peace, and they always feel threatened, and terrified.

Commenting on that divine promise, the scholar Origen says: [The oppressor could never be in peace, but in continuous disturbance; "*tossed to and fro, and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the trickery of men, in the cunning craftiness by which they lie in wait to deceive*" (Ephesians 4: 14); Whereas the righteous, keeping the law of the Lord, "*dwells in his land safely*", having the solid faith, saying to the Lord: "*Revive me according to Your word*" (Psalm 119: 25); Plant me deep to dwell in the land founded in faith (Colossians 1: 23; Ephesians 3: 17); for his house is not built on the sand (Matthew 7: 26, 24)].

The Lord consummates His promise, saying: "***I will give peace in the land, and you shall lie down, and none will make you afraid***" (6).

The peace that dwells in the land of our inner heart: "*The peace of God which surpasses all understanding*" (Philippians 4: 7). Our land, that was a stage of continuous disturbance, anxiety, and bitterness, having been sanctified by our Lord Jesus Christ, and having enjoyed

the work of His Holy Spirit, it became a temple of God, so full of the exalted peace of God; that not even the devil with all his angels could terrify (Revelation 12: 7); to say together with the Psalmist: "*You shall not be afraid of the terror by night; nor of the arrow that flies by day*" (Psalm 91: 5); and, "*The Lord is my light and my salvation, Whom shall I fear? The Lord is the strength of my life; Of whom shall I be afraid?!*" (Psalm 27: 1); and, "*Though an army should encamp against me, My heart shall not fear*" (Psalm 27: 3).

Through such an exalted peace, we can lie down and sleep, even in the midst of afflictions; the way the apostle Peter did, when he was awakened by the angel in prison, to bring him out passing through the outer gate ... By that we can understand the divine promise that "He gives His beloved sleep" (Psalm 127: 2).

(6) "**I will rid the land of evil beasts**" (6). If our doors became open wide before any evil beast, ... If our inner life became a dwelling place for

every wickedness and defilement, ... If our city became without walls, and through it the beasts of the wilderness crawl with no hindrance;

Our Lord Jesus Christ came to rid our land, which is His land, of the evil beasts, to dwell in it Himself.

According to the scholar Origen: [The spiritual evil beasts are those called by the apostle: "*The spiritual hosts of wickedness in the heavenly places*" (Ephesians 6: 12). About these beasts, the Holy Book says: "*The serpent was more crafty than any other wild animal on earth*" (Genesis 3: 1). And: "*Your adversary the devil walks about like a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour. Resist him, steadfast in the faith*" (1 Peter 5: 8, 9)... If you wish to know about other evil beasts, the prophet Isaiah saw them in a vision as "*Through a land of trouble and anguish, from which come the lioness and lion, the viper and the fiery flying serpent. They will carry their riches on the back of young donkeys; and their treasures on the humps of camels, to a people who shall not benefit them*" Isaiah 30: 6]. ... How could this happen with the physical beasts of the wilderness?! ...How could the lioness, the lion, the viper and the fiery flying serpent, carry their riches on the backs of a donkey or a camel?! ... It is obvious then, that the prophet, full of the Holy Spirit, means the aggressive power of the fiercest of devils; He intends to say that the devils carry their riches, which are their deceptions to the souls, through the foolishness (the donkey), and the defilement (the camel). And in order not to be delivered to those beasts, the soul that has the fear of God, is committed to say: "*Oh, do not deliver the life of Your turtledove to the wild beasts*" (Psalm 74: 19).

(7) **"The sword will not go through your land"** (6). Commenting on this verse the scholar Origen says: [Many are the swords that go through our land, if we do not keep the law of the Lord, and walk according to His commandments. Let everyone of us enter into his own soul, to meditate within himself, lest our land, namely, our body, be stirred up by the spirit of adultery, or disturbed by the spirit of anger, by the movement of meanness, or by the arrow of lust and evil pleasures.; ... things known by the apostle, who says: "*casting down arguments, and every high thing that exalts itself against the knowledge of God*" (2 Corinthians 10: 5); ... Lest we submit to that sword, and to those wars, but to pray to the Lord to keep our land in peace].

(8) **"You will chase your enemies"** (7). According to the scholar Origen: [What are those enemies other than the devil and his angels?!, the evil spirits and the unclean demons (Luke 4: 33)?! If we keep the divine commandments, God will crush the devil; and the enemies would fall dead underneath our feet].

"Five of you shall chase a hundred, and a hundred of you shall put ten thousands to flight. Your enemies shall fall by the sword before you" (8). Who are those "five" who shall chase a hundred, but the holy senses that carry the power to defeat the crowd of evil and sin?! And who are those "hundred" who shall put ten thousands to flight, but the multitude of our holy thoughts, and of our energies, blessed by the Lord; chasing ten thousands of evil spirits?!

Man, therefore, can hold the word of God as a double-edged sword, by which he can bring the sin down; and can corrupt the tricks of the devils; to trample the enemy underneath his feet.

(9) **"I will look on you favorably, and make you fruitful, multiply you, and confirm My covenant with you"** (9). It will not stop at destroying our enemy, however huge are his weapons, and however violent is his attitude, but we shall also become stronger and more numerous; as it is said about the work of God even on our dry bones: "*They lived and stood upon their feet, an exceedingly great army*" (Ezekiel 37: 10) – "*Then you shall know that I, the Lord, had spoken it and performed it', says the Lord*" (Ezekiel 37: 14),

As to the secret of the spiritual power, It is "*I will look on you favorably*" ... The Look by the Lord is enough to grant a multitude of fruit; like

the ray of the sun that, when it shines on the field, it gives an increase to the harvest; while if it does not, it will produce no harvest.

He Looks on us, not to judge us, but to “*confirm His covenant with us*” (9); saying: “***and confirm My covenant with you; You shall eat the old harvest, and clear out the old because of the new***” (9, 10). According to the scholar Origen: [How could we clear the old, to make place for the new?! By clearing out the letter of the law (the old), to keep it according to the spirit (the new)... We can say that before the coming of the Heavenly One, before He was born, we were all of the earth, made of dust, and have the earthly image (1 Corinthians 15: 47); Now, with the coming of the new man, created according to God (Ephesians 4: 22); we cleared off the old, by taking off the old man and putting on the new (Ephesians 4: 22), who, according to the inner man, is renewed day by day (2 Corinthians 4: 16).

(10) God ends His talk about the blessings of obedience of His commandment, by the greatest of promises, namely, “His dwelling among His

people, and inside His believers”; saying: “***I shall set My tabernacle among you, and My soul shall not abhor you. I will walk among you and be your God, and you shall be My people***” (11). And, on the eve of His passion, the Lord clearly says: “*If anyone loves Me, he will keep My word, and My Father will love him, and We will come to him and make Our home with him*” (John 14: 23) ... The heavenly Jerusalem was called: “*The tabernacle of God with men*”; “*He will dwell with them, and they shall be His people, and God Himself will be with them and be their God*” (Revelation 21: 3). This is the eternal gift; that God dwells among us, receives us as heavenly people for Himself, and be God who transfigure in us.

By dwelling in us, God will take away from us our inner void, which no one can fill except God Himself; on account of that the soul created according to the image of her Creator, would never be satisfied except by the Original Himself. According to St. Erinaos, man could be either full or void. He who receive God dwelling in him would be full; whereas he, who has no knowledge of the heavenly Father, nor of the Holy Spirit, or has not got in him, Christ the Life, he would be void..

And according to St. Augustine: [What does he mean, saying by the prophet: “*I shall be your God, and you shall be My people*”, but that I shall be their satisfaction, everything that they reverently seek: life, health, food, prosperity, glory, honor, peace, and every goodness?! Which is interpreted by the apostle saying: “*God will be all in all*” (1 Corinthians 15: 28); He will be the ultimate goal of our longings to no end].

3- THE CURSES OF DISOBEDIENCE TO THE HOLY GOD:

After presenting the positive aspect, proclaiming God's gifts to him who keeps His commandments, He starts now to present the negative aspect, as the natural fruit of rejecting His commandment; counting it as "breaking His covenant" (15), and a rejection of His Person. Those bitter fruits are:

(1) **"I will even appoint terror over you, wasting disease and fever, which shall consume the eyes and cause sorrow of heart"** (16).

God will forsake him who rejects Him, to make him fall in bitterness, and live with no inner peace, physical health, or insight! ... God may allow for those apparent things, so that man would understand that what happens to him is the fruit of his disobedience; and that the chastisement would come on him as a thermometer proclaiming his inner corruption, to make him say: *"My spirit is broken ; My days are extinguished"* (Job 17: 1).

(2) **"And you shall sow your seed in vain, for your enemies shall eat it"** (16)..They work, not to the account of the Lord, but sow their own

seed; which will not be blessed by the Lord, but be eaten by the enemies.

(3) **"I shall set My face against you, and you shall be defeated by your enemies. Those who hate you shall reign over you, and you**

shall flee when no one pursues you" (17). Once man loses his inner peace, and his fellowship with God, he will be weak before the spiritual enemies, even if they are worth nothing much; as according to Solomon the Sage: *"The wicked flee when no one pursues"* (Proverb 28: 1).The secret of the weakness and defeat is not in the might of the enemy, as much as it is in the inner collapse of man.

(4) In case we do not respond to all that by repentance, God will double His chastisements; saying: **"I will break the pride of your power. I**

will make your heavens like iron, and your earth like bronze; and your strength shall be spent in vain; for your land shall not yield its produce, nor shall the trees of the land yield their fruit" (19, 20). God starts His chastisement by diseases and through enemies; and in case we do not respond, He doubles the plagues through humiliation, by breaking down our pride. Man would stand humble, when he finds nature itself against him, when heavens becomes like iron, and gives no rain; and the earth like bronze, not fit for plantation. In case he lifts his eyes up toward heaven, hoping that it would respond to him, he will find it solid as

iron; and if he looks down to the earth, he will find everything around him like bronze with no sympathy toward him.

If heaven refer to the human soul, and the earth to the body, When man does not listen to the divine commandment, nor responds to the word of God, he will promptly get his due reward; his soul will become like iron, and his body like bronze, not submitting to him, nor responding to his inner voice.

(5) ***“I will also send wild beasts among you, which shall rob you of your children, destroy your livestock, and make you few in***

number, and your highways will be desolate” (22). ... When the people spoke against God in the wilderness, He sent fiery serpents among them, and they bit the people (Numbers 21: 5, 6). When little children mocked the prophet Elisha, God allowed two bears to kill 42 of them. And when the king of Assyria sent heathen people to dwell in the land of Canaan, after taking the children of Israel into captivity, God sent wild beasts to devour them (2 kings 17: 24, 26).

What are these beasts that come against us but the sins which God keeps away from us, as long as we abide in His presence, respond to His voice. But if we give Him the back instead of the face, He will let the wild beasts rob us of our children, namely, our inner fruits, and destroy our livestock; namely, corrupt our body.

(6) ***“I will bring a sword against you; ... And I will send a pestilence among you”*** (25).

Namely, chastisement through the sword of the

enemy, and allowing for a pestilence, so as to make the wicked too weak to stand before the enemy.

(7) ***“I will cut off your supply of bread; ten women shall bake your bread in one oven, and they shall bring back to you your bread***

by weight, and you shall eat and not be satisfied” (26). Breaking off their supply of bread; refers to cutting off the bread of life, the divine word; that their souls would live in famine, and would find no rod to lean upon. The sign of that famine would be that every woman, instead of having her own oven to bake her bread, ten women would use a single oven, on account of having no bread enough, nor fuel enough for using more than one oven. The second sign of a famine is to make the bread by weight, on account of having only few of it, and of their lack of blessing. The famine would reach its climax when the hands of the parents would stretch to eat the flesh of their own children, as it did happen in the days of Jehoram the son of Ahab,

king of Israel, when two women agreed to eat together the son of each every other day (2 kings 6: 24-30); And also in the days the king of Babylon put Jerusalem under siege, when it was said: "*The hands of the compassionate women have cooked their own children, they became food for them in the destruction of the daughter of my people*" (Lamentation of 4: 10); And it happened again when the Roman commander Titus put Jerusalem under siege.

Once we give our backs to the divine commandment, we are struck by an inner famine that would make us lose the necessary sustenance; to stretch to our own children, namely to our inner fruits, to eat them and die.

(8) "***I will destroy your high places, cut down your incense altars, and cast your carcasses on the lifeless forms of your idols; and***

My soul shall abhor you" (30). Rejecting the divine commandment, the people worshipped the idols on the high places, and set forms to worship the sun; ... God, in His jealousy, would destroy the strange idols in which those who rejected His commandment, trusted; proclaiming that the ultimate end of rejecting His commandment will be the destruction of the idols they made by their own hands, their sure death, and casting their rotting carcasses on the lifeless forms of their idols; hence He says: "*My soul shall abhor you*".

(9) Through rejecting the commandment of God, "***I will lay your cities waste, and bring your sanctuaries to desolation***", in which no one

will find refuge. Even the land on which you dwell, will cast you off, scatter you among the nations to become persecuted. In their evil, having not committed themselves to the Sabbatical year, to give rest to the land, Behold, the land cast them off.

They are cast off to live in a foreign land with the spirit of humiliation; flee when no one pursues them, other than their inner evil.

4- RECEIVING THE REPENTANT SINNERS:

After proclaiming the extent of bitterness of man because of his disobedience to God, He again confirms that the only way for man to enjoy the blessing instead of the curse, will be his return to God by repentance; For then, God will remember His promise; proclaiming that, even while they were in their darkest moments, God did not intend for their utter perdition, but for their chastisement.

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CHAPTER 27

THE VOWS AND THE FIRSTLINGS

If the book of Leviticus is the book of consecration and reconciliation between the Holy God and His people through the sacrifice offered by the priest; And God proclaimed His goal to bring man forth into an unceasing joy through the diverse and continuous feasts; He ends the book by proclaiming the statute of vows, firstlings, and tithes; proclaiming that the love between God and man is mutual; by which man pays the exalted love of God, back with vowing his life and dedicating it to God, and with vowing his beasts, houses, and fields, with his own free will.

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1- THE STATUTE OF THE VOWS:

There are two conditions for a vow to be authentic: the first is that the vower has to be mature, under no guardianship by anyone. If the vower is a slave, he would be released of his vow in case his master disapproved, and proclaimed his objection against his vow once he heard about it. The same applies to a wife, if her husband objects; or a girl in her father's house ... The second condition is that the object of the vow has to be holy and not unclean, otherwise he has to pay a ransom on it. As an example, no unclean animal will be offered to the house of the Lord; Nor a vow will be offered from the price of a sin; as when a woman fulfills her vow from the price of her adultery.

Who is this utterly free Nazirite, who presents a holy vow that brings pleasure to the heart of the Father, other than the incarnate Word of God, who delivered His own life a burnt offering of obedience, smelled as sweet fragrance by His Good Father. We, as well, in order to present our vow, have to hide ourselves in the divine Nazirite, as members of His body, so that His sweet fragrance would come out of us, to bring pleasure to the heart of the father.

a- A vow to consecrate a person:

“When a man consecrates by a vow certain person to the Lord” (1), like when Hannah made a vow to consecrate her son Samuel to the Lord (1 Samuel 1: 11). The one who made the vow, or his kinsman-redeemer, may pay a certain ransom to redeem the vow, which is to be valued in the following way:

-- The valuation is to be done by the prophet Moses himself (2), then it later became the right of a priest.

-- The valuation is to be done according to the Shekel of the sanctuary; namely the shekel kept in the temple; in the following way:

For a male from 20 years old up to 60 years old, the valuation shall be 50 shekels of silver.

For a female of the same age, it shall be 30 shekels.

For a male (from 5 to 20 years old), it shall be 20 shekels

For a female of the same age, it shall be 10 shekels

For a male (from one month to 5 years), it shall be 5 shekels

For a female of the same age, it shall be 3 shekels.

-- In case of a poor person, the priest shall set a value according to the ability of the vower (8).

b- A vow to consecrate a beast:

“If it is a beast such as men may bring as an offering to the Lord, all such that any man gives to the Lord shall be holy. He shall not substitute it or exchange it, good for bad or bad for good; and if he at all exchange beast for beast, then both it and the one exchanged for it shall be holy. If it is an unclean beast which they do not offer to the Lord, then he shall present the beast before the priest, and the priest shall set a value for it, whether it is good or bad; ... but if he wants at all to redeem it, then he must add one-fifth to your valuation” (9-12).

In this statute concerning the sanctification of beasts, God intends to confirm two principles: The first is not to substitute or exchange the clean beast; on account of that He seeks the clean man with no exchange; He loves him for his own sake. The second principle is that He will have nothing unclean in His sanctuary. In other words, if God loves us, and seeks us by our names as His children, yet he will have no unclean persons in His bosom.

c- A vow to consecrate a house:

"If a man sanctifies his house to be holy to the Lord, then the priest shall set a value for it, whether it is good or bad. ... If he who sanctifies it wants to redeem his house, then he shall add one-fifth of the money of your valuation to it" (14, 15), and it will be put in the treasury of the house of the Lord.

d- A vow to consecrate a field:

In case of sanctifying a field (16-25), there will be distinction between the field that became man's possession of man inheritance, and the one he purchased. Concerning the one got through inheritance, that will go to its owner in the year of the Jubilee, if he ever wishes to redeem it, the priest shall reckon to him the money due according to the years that remain till the year of the Jubilee, and it shall be deducted from your valuation, and he must add one-fifth of the money of your valuation to it. And in case its owner does not care to redeem the field, it shall not be redeemed anymore, and shall not return to him, even in the year of the Jubilee, but shall be holy to the Lord as a devoted field, it shall be the possession of the priest. And if a man sanctifies to the Lord a field he has bought; in case he ever wishes to redeem it, the priest shall reckon its worth up to the year of the Jubilee without adding one-fifth, because on the year of the Jubilee it will return to its original owner, namely to the one who sold it.

We may look at the statutes concerning the vows, as statutes that touch our life and our relationship with God, in the following way: Vowing a certain person to the Lord refers to the consecration of the inner heart, redeemed by our Lord Jesus, not by shekels of silver or gold, but by His precious blood. ... Vowing beasts refer to the consecration of the body to become holy to the Lord, and a tool that works to the account of His kingdom. ... As to vowing houses, it refers to offer our whole life as a dwelling place for the Lord. And vowing fruitful fields, refers to the consecration of our energies and our daily works.

2- THE STATUTE OF THE FIRSTLINGS:

The previous talk concerned the optional vows; As to the firstlings, they are holy to the Lord, which we are committed to present to the Lord without vowing to consecrate them. If it is a clean beast, it is to be separated to the Lord, and never to be exchanged; Whereas if it is unclean, it shall be either sold, and its price put in the treasury of the temple, or redeemed by its owner, by paying its worth plus one-fifth.

The clean Firstborn (Firstling) is our Lord Jesus Christ, whom the Father received as a sacrifice of love. Outside of Him, we would have no place in the house of the Lord, but would be counted as unclean and driven out of the divine sanctuaries.

3- THE STATUTE OF A PERSON OR A THING DOOMED TO DESTRUCTION:

It so seem that a person or a thing doomed to destruction, are not to be used nor dealt with. The person doomed to destruction is a dangerous one who has corrupted his life by idol-worship, and by the abominations connected with it. Hence the law gave the command to have him killed. It may seem cruel; yet, if we bring that time to our remembrance, when some of the nations around Israel used to offer their firstborn children as human sacrifices to the idols; together with practicing adultery and abominations as integral parts of their worship, we shall perceive why God doomed those people to destruction, lest the leaven which should be holy, gets corrupted.

The beasts and fields of that category, were only used by the priests in the service of the house of the Lord. As to the gold or silver, they were put in the treasury of the house of the Lord.

4- THE STATUTE OF THE TITHES:

The people used to offer one-tenth of their crops, whether grains or fruits, holy to the Lord. And in case a person wishes to keep the one-tenth, he had to pay its price plus one-fifth. Concerning the beasts, the tithes were offered in the following way: The mothers were separated aside, then the young ones were made to pass through a narrow gate, wide enough for one at a time. While passing through, someone lifts up a stick to count nine, the tenth will be holy to the Lord, and a sign will be put on it to designate it. By such a way, their owner will have nothing to do with the choice, and will have no right to substitute one beast for another, even if his intention was to offer what is better; And in case he does, he will have to offer both beasts to the Lord.

Talking about the tithes, Fr. Theonas says: [When we offer God the tithes, we are still going downwards toward the earthly things, under the burden of the law; unable to rise up to the high level of the gospel, which, if someone does according to it, he will be rewarded , not only with the blessings of the present life, but with the blessings to come, as well; according to the words said by the Lord to His disciples: "*Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven*" (Matthew 5: 3); And, "*Everyone who has left houses or brothers or sisters or father or mother or*

wife or children or lands, for My name's sake, shall receive a hundredfold, and inherit everlasting life" (Matthew 19: 29).

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