

**The Attackers: Ritual before the Cross: Hebrew Has No Word of “Soul”; “Blood of Christ” Is a Metonymy for the Yom Kippur Animal Sacrifice: the Literal Blood of the Goat “Covers” the Mercy Seat for Annual Atonement, Lev 16:30; Pre-cross Saints Souls Retained in Paradise; the Spiritual Death of Christ, Matt 27:45; Jesus Committed His Spirit to the Father, Ps 31:5; Luke 23:46**

9. The Hebrew word *nephesh* presents problems for English translators since the Hebrew contains no specific word for soul. This commentary by W. E. Vine gives a thorough analysis of how this dilemma is managed:

The noun [נֶפֶשׁ] (*nephesh*) refers to the essence of life, the act of breathing. However, from that concrete concept, a number of more abstract meanings were developed. The noun appears in its first occurrence in Genesis 1:20: “the moving creature that hath life,” and in its second occurrence in Genesis 2:7: “living soul.”

However, in over 400 later occurrences it is translated “soul.” While this serves to make sense in most passages, it is an unfortunate mistranslation of the term. The real difficulty of the term is seen in the inability of almost all English translations to find a consistent equivalent or even a small group of high-frequency equivalents for the term. The KJV alone uses over 28 different English terms for this one Hebrew word. The problem with the English term “soul” is that no actual equivalent of the term or the idea behind it is represented in the Hebrew language. The Hebrew system of thought does not include the combination or opposition of the terms “body” and “soul,” which are really Greek and Latin in origin. The Hebrew contrasts two other concepts which are not found in the Greek and Latin tradition: “the inner self” and “the outer appearance” or, as viewed in a different context, “what one is to oneself” as opposed to “what one appears to be to one’s observers.” The inner person is *nephesh*, while the outer person, or reputation, is *shēm* [שֵׁם], most commonly translated “name.”

In narrative or historical passages of the Old Testament, *nephesh* can be translated as “life” or “self,” as in Leviticus 17:11: “For the life [*nephesh*] of the flesh is in the blood: and I have given it to you upon the altar to make an atonement for [yourselves]...” Needless to say, the reading “soul” is meaningless in such a text.<sup>1</sup>

10. Context must guide the expositor as to which of the three words to choose: (1) “breath”: נְשָׁמָה (*neshamah*)<sup>2</sup> in Genesis 2:7a, (2) “life”: נֶפֶשׁ (*nephesh*) in Leviticus 17:11, and (3) “soul”: *nephesh* in Genesis 2:7b.
11. The conclusion that the blood of the animal is symbolic of the spiritual death of Jesus on the cross is confirmed by Walter Bauer:

αἷμα [*haima*] 1. Literally a. of human blood; b. of the blood of animals. 2. figuratively a. as the seat of life (Leviticus 17:11); b. blood and life as an expiatory sacrifice: Especially of the blood of Jesus as a means of expiation.<sup>3</sup>

12. Further confirmation is provided by Johannes Behm:

<sup>1</sup> W. E. Vine, Merrill F. Unger, and William White, Jr., “Nelson’s Expository Dictionary of the Old Testament,” in *An Expository Dictionary of Biblical Words* (Nashville: Thomas Nelson Publishers, 1984), 388.

<sup>2</sup> “A feminine noun meaning breath, wind, spirit. Its meaning is parallel to *nephesh*. It refers to the breath of God (Genesis 2:7)” (Warren Baker and Eugene Carpenter, “נְשָׁמָה *neshamah*,” in *The Complete Word Study Dictionary: Old Testament* [Chattanooga, TN: AMG Publishers, 2003], 758).

<sup>3</sup> Walter Bauer, “αἷμα,” in *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature*, rev. ed. F. Wilbur Gingrich and Frederick W. Danker, trans. William F. Arndt and F. Wilbur Gingrich (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1979), 22–23.

The early Christian representation of the blood of Christ as sacrificial blood is simply the metaphorical garment clothing the thought of the self-offering, the obedience to God, which Christ demonstrated in the crucifixion. The history of belief in the atoning and purifying power of blood, especially among the Israelites and Greeks, does not help us to understand the ideas which the New Testament links with the blood of Christ, since the latter is simply a pregnant verbal symbol for the saving work of Christ.<sup>4</sup>

13. These excerpts document the true meaning of the blood of Christ. In the Old Testament, the literal blood of the sacrificial animal served as proof that the ritual was carried out by the Levitical high priest.
14. When he entered the holy of holies on the Day of Atonement (*Yom Kippur*) and sprinkled the animal's blood on the mercy seat of the ark of the covenant, it covered the sins of the people for the previous year.
15. The goat offered as a sin offering for Yahweh was approached by the high priest who placed his hand on the goat's head, symbolically identifying him with the sins of the people.
16. He was tied to the altar where his throat was slit and its blood collected in a golden bowl. The high priest took the bowl into the Temple, past the veil, and into the holy of holies which contained the ark of the covenant whose covering was the mercy seat.
17. He dipped his hand into the bowl and "carefully sprinkled the blood before the ark of the covenant. He sprinkled it once upwards and then seven times downwards as though he were cracking a whip. All the while he counted aloud to prevent any errors."<sup>5</sup>
18. If he reemerged from the Tabernacle or Temple it signified that he had obtained national pardon:

**Leviticus 16: 30** - "It is on this day that atonement shall be made for you to cleanse you; you will be clean from all your sins before the Lord."

**v. 34** - "Now you shall have this as a permanent statute, to make atonement for the sons of Israel for all their sins once every year."

19. The word that is translated "atonement" in English translations of the Bible is **כָּפַר** (*kaphar*): "to cover, to forgive, to reconcile."
20. But for the Jews this "reconciliation" only "covered" sins committed over the past year. Thus the ritual had to be repeated every year.
21. These sins were yet to be judged in Messiah and, until they were, they could not be forgiven.
22. If the sins of the believers in the Old Testament were neither judged nor forgiven, then the souls and spirits of none of them were allowed into heaven in the presence of perfect God.

<sup>4</sup> Johannes Behm, "ἀἵμα," in *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*, ed. Gerhard Kittel, trans. and ed. Geoffrey W. Bromiley (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1964), 1:175.

<sup>5</sup> Kevin Howard and Marvin Rosenthal, *The Feasts of the Lord* (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 1997), 124.

23. This is why the Paradise compartment of Hades was necessary. Once the sins of the world were imputed to Jesus on the cross and judged, followed by His death, burial, and resurrection, then Old Testament saints qualified to enter into heaven.
24. The phrase “the blood of Christ,” is metaphorical for the sacrificial, spiritual death of Christ which occurred during the three hours of judgment on the cross.

**Matthew 27:45** - Now from the sixth hour [ **12:00 P.M.** ] darkness fell upon all the land until the ninth hour [ **3:00 P.M.** ].

**v. 46** - About the ninth hour Jesus cried out with a loud voice, saying, “*Ēlĭ, Ēlĭ, lamá sabachthán?*” that is, “My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me?”

25. While being identified with human sins, fellowship was broken between Jesus and the Father. When the suffering was nearing completion the Lord uttered these words to signify that He was being judged in our place.
26. Notice that He made this comment while still alive. He did not die physically for our sins but rather He died spiritually for them.
27. This was also the case when the Lord made His final statement from the cross. It is reported in part in Matthew 27:50 and partially quoted in Luke 23:46, but the complete quote is found in:

**Psalm 31:5** - Into Your hands I commit My spirit; You have delivered Me, O Jehovah, God of doctrine.

28. Jesus was not killed by the Jews or the Romans. He gave up his life voluntarily having completed His mission of being judged for the sins of the world.
29. Post resurrection, the ritual of *Yom Kippur* was retired. Jesus was the reality that the sacrificial animals portrayed.
30. His successful sacrifice on the cross removed atonement’s “covering” as a viable ritual and constituted the establishment of two important doctrines for the benefit of everyone who ever has or will ever place his faith in Jesus Christ: **(1)** propitiation and **(2)** reconciliation.