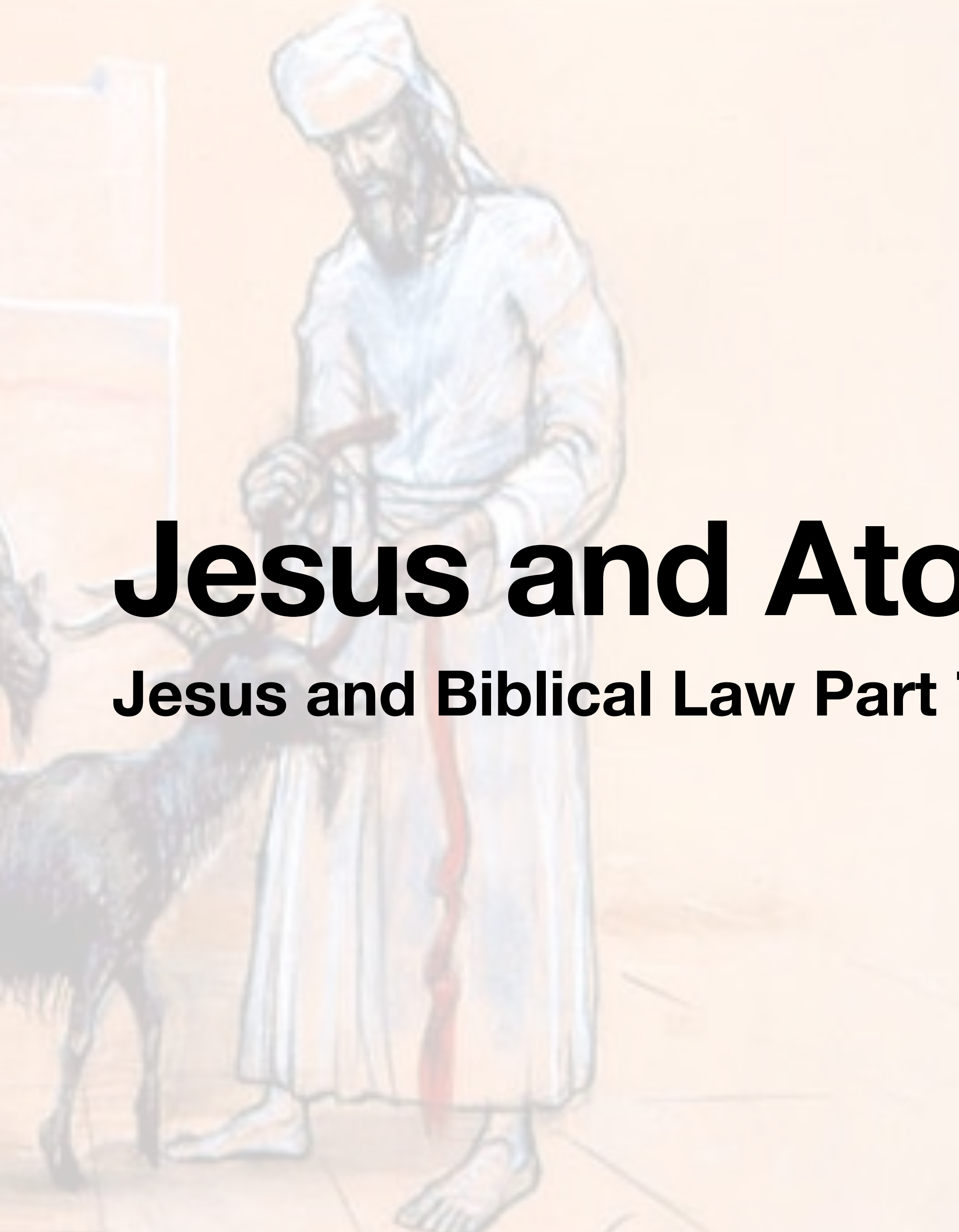


# Jesus and Atonement

Jesus and Biblical Law Part 7



# Recap

**The Last 2 Weeks**

# Recap of Offerings



- All Torah (biblical law) is instruction/coaching, including ritual laws
- Offerings are meal-gifts given to God that symbolize and enact communion, intimacy, and allow for close proximity
- The death is not ritualized as much as the presentation of the gift to God on his altar
- Wellbeing offerings memorialize significant events, allow for eating holy food, sharing a meal with God
- When Jesus is presented as a wellbeing offering by Paul or the Gospels, he is presented as the celebration feast (Eucharist) that memorializes the restoration of the covenant and communion with God

# Recap of Purity and Impurity



- Ritual purity instructions represent the difference between the mortal world vs. sacred space
- Ritual purity is not morally wrong (representations of mortality, significance of sacred space)
- Moral impurity refers to defiant sin (murder, economic oppression, sex crimes, idolatry)

# Recap of Purity and Impurity

Purity Kind	Cause by	Affects
Ritual	Signs of mortality (skin disease, sex, bodily fluids associated with reproduction, contact with carcasses and corpses, accidental or minor sins)	Body, people and objects physically contacted (contagious), sacred space
Moral	Murder, economic oppression, sex crimes, idolatry	Body, sacred space, land

Ritually Impure	Purified by	Morally Impure	Made Right by
Body/Objects	Ritual water washing, time	Body/Objects	Cut-off (exile), divine forgiveness
Sacred Space/Holy Objects	Blood manipulation (purification offering)	Sacred Space/Holy Objects	Tote-goat
		Land	Cut-off (exile)

# Atonement and Atoning Offerings



# Defining “Atonement”

- כִּפָּר (khofar) — (a) to make peace by repayment, (b) **to purge or purify**
- Process in reference to ritual impurity
- Ritual washing + time → offering to purify sacred space
- English: atonement = at+one+ment
- ~~Atonement = Forgiveness/Justice~~



# Atoning Offerings

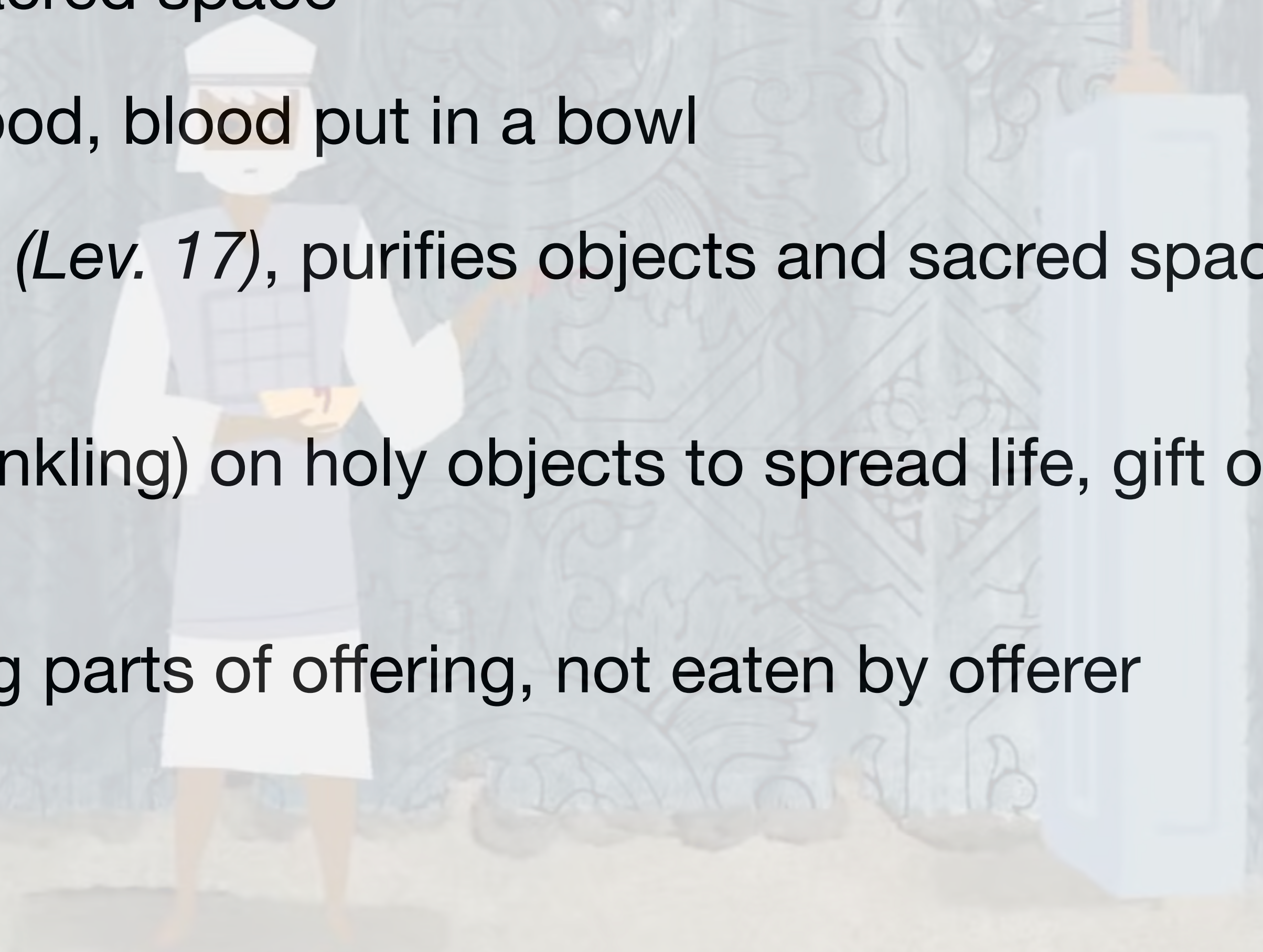
- “Sin” offering
- “Guilt” offering
- Technically not “sacrifices,” but “offerings,” since not eaten by the offerer

# Purification Offerings

- “Sin” Offering OR Purification/Purgation/Decontamination Offering (תאֲטִיף)
- To sin (qal) — אֲטִיף
- To purify/decontaminate (piel) — אֲטִיף
- Purpose is decontamination of sacred space

# Purification Offerings

- Ritual impurity affects sacred space
- Offering is drained of blood, blood put in a bowl
- Blood represents the life (*Lev. 17*), purifies objects and sacred space from impurity (mortality)
- Blood manipulation (sprinkling) on holy objects to spread life, gift of life back to God
- Priests can eat remaining parts of offering, not eaten by offerer

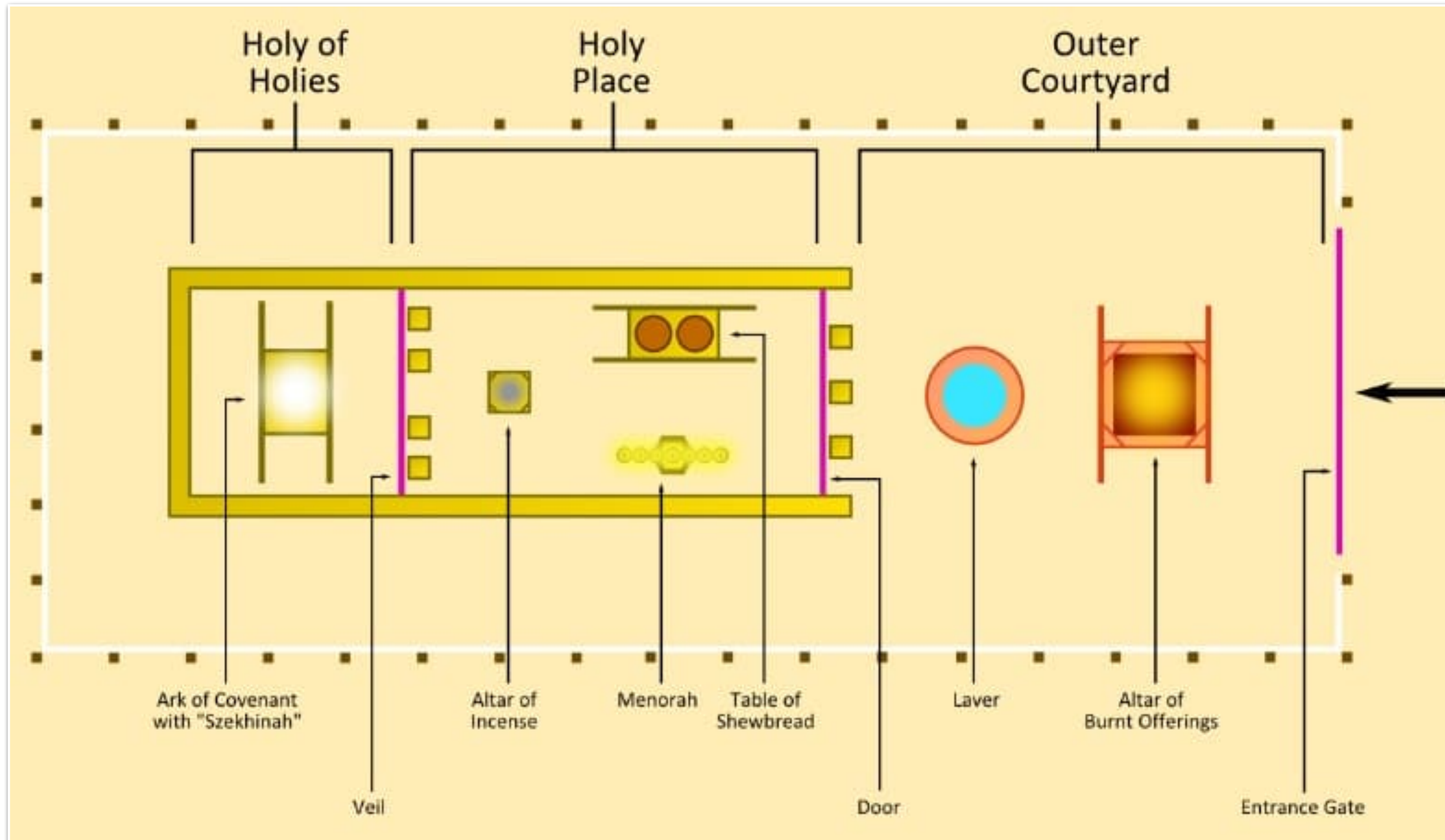


# Purification Offerings

- Usually use bulls or goats
- If cannot afford, one can use doves
- If cannot afford, one can use flour
  
- KEY: Not wrong to cause impurity to sacred space, only wrong to leave it there

# Purification Offerings

## Levels of Decontamination



# Reparation Offering

- “Guilt” Offering ( $\square\psi\lambda$ )
- Purification offering involved in making reparations
- Misappropriation of holy objects, minor infractions against others
- Repayment of original damage + 1/5th

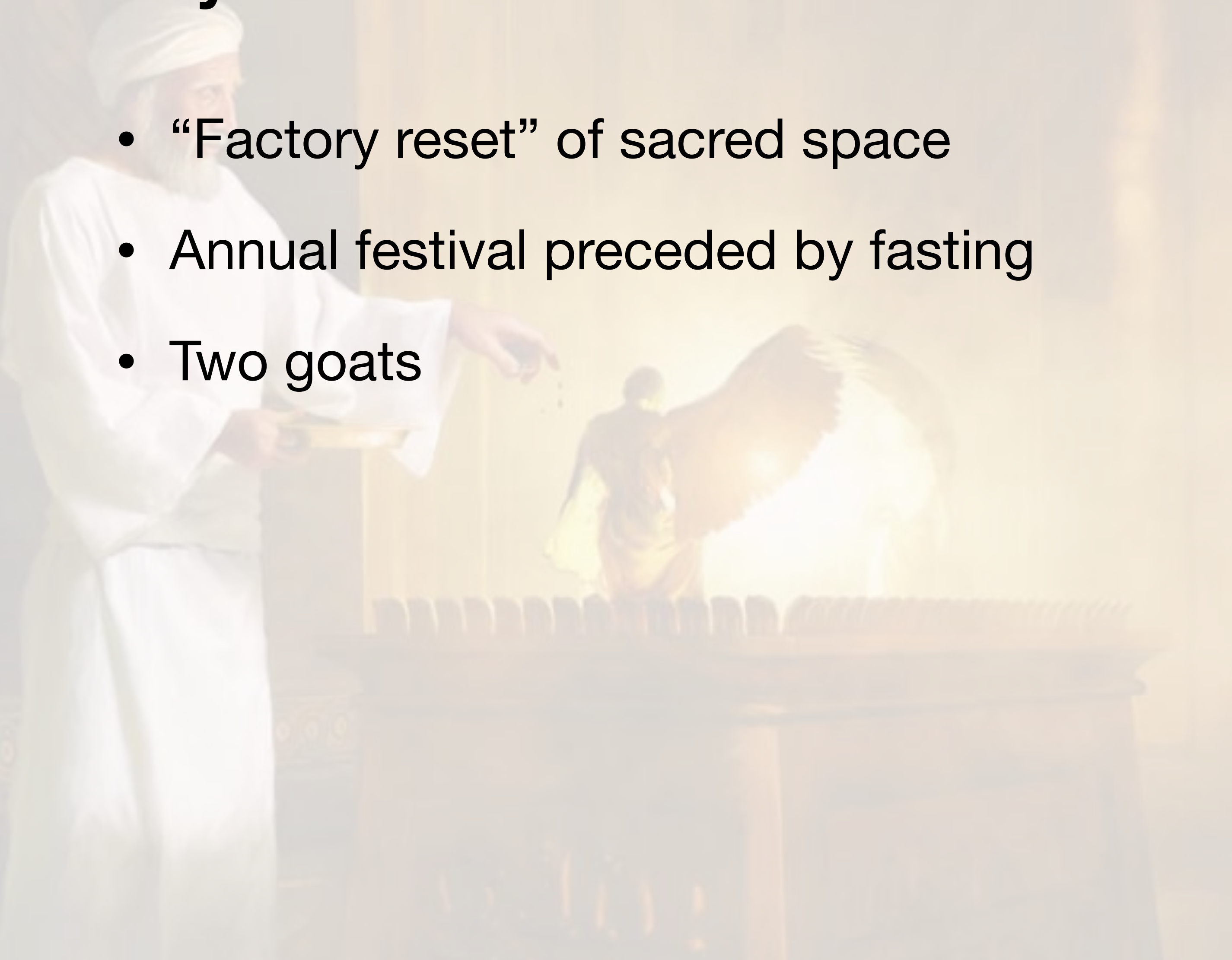
# The Limits of Purification

- Passover Lamb about covenant inauguration
- Purification (atoning) offerings about covenant maintenance
- Decontaminating sacred space allows for proximity with God in a world of death
- Leviticus is all relational, these offerings seen as gifts, not inconveniences, expressing gratitude and forming communal imagination
- KEY: The death of the animal that causes decontamination, but the gift and the presentation of life to God through blood manipulation
- Not about moral impurity or major sins (only covenant curses/exile, divine forgiveness)

# The “Day of Purification”

## Day of Atonement

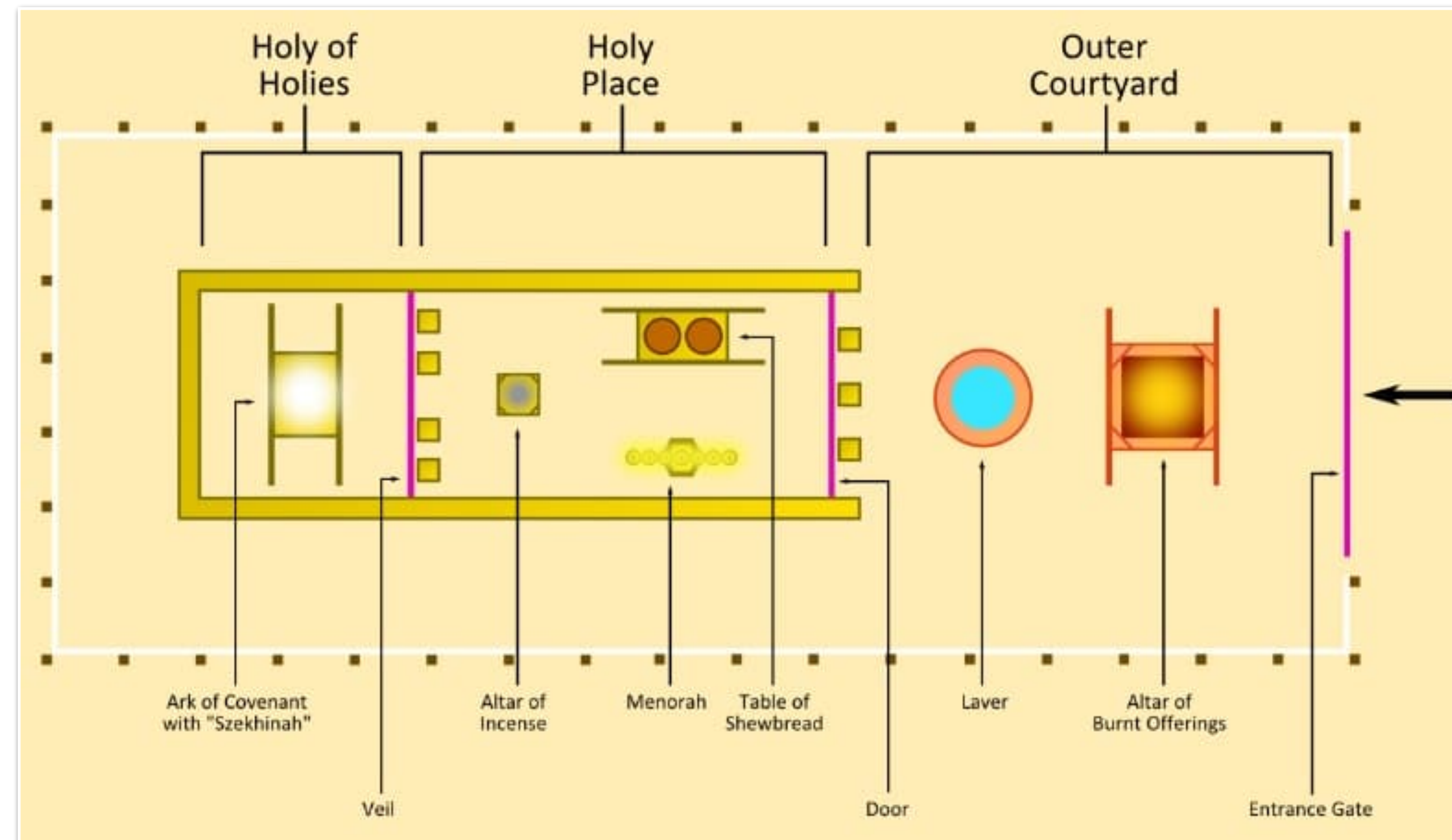
- “Factory reset” of sacred space
- Annual festival preceded by fasting
- Two goats



# The “Day of Purification”

## First Goat

- Purification offering in the Holy of Holies



# The “Day of Purification”

## Second Goat

- “Scapegoat” or Tote-Goat
- NOT an offering or sacrifice
- Dustpan for moral impurity and any remaining ritual impurity
- Double hand-press
- Sent to Azazel in the desert



# The Prophets and Atonement

- Addressing kings of Israel and Judah, predicting fall of Samaria, Jerusalem, and the temple
- Express limitations of purification offerings
- Once sacred space is gone, no purpose for purification offerings, predict national exile, undergoing curses, forgiveness and water washing for moral purification of the people



# **Decontamination of Sacred Space (Atonement) in the NT**

# Jesus Followed Ritual Purity Instructions (Recap)

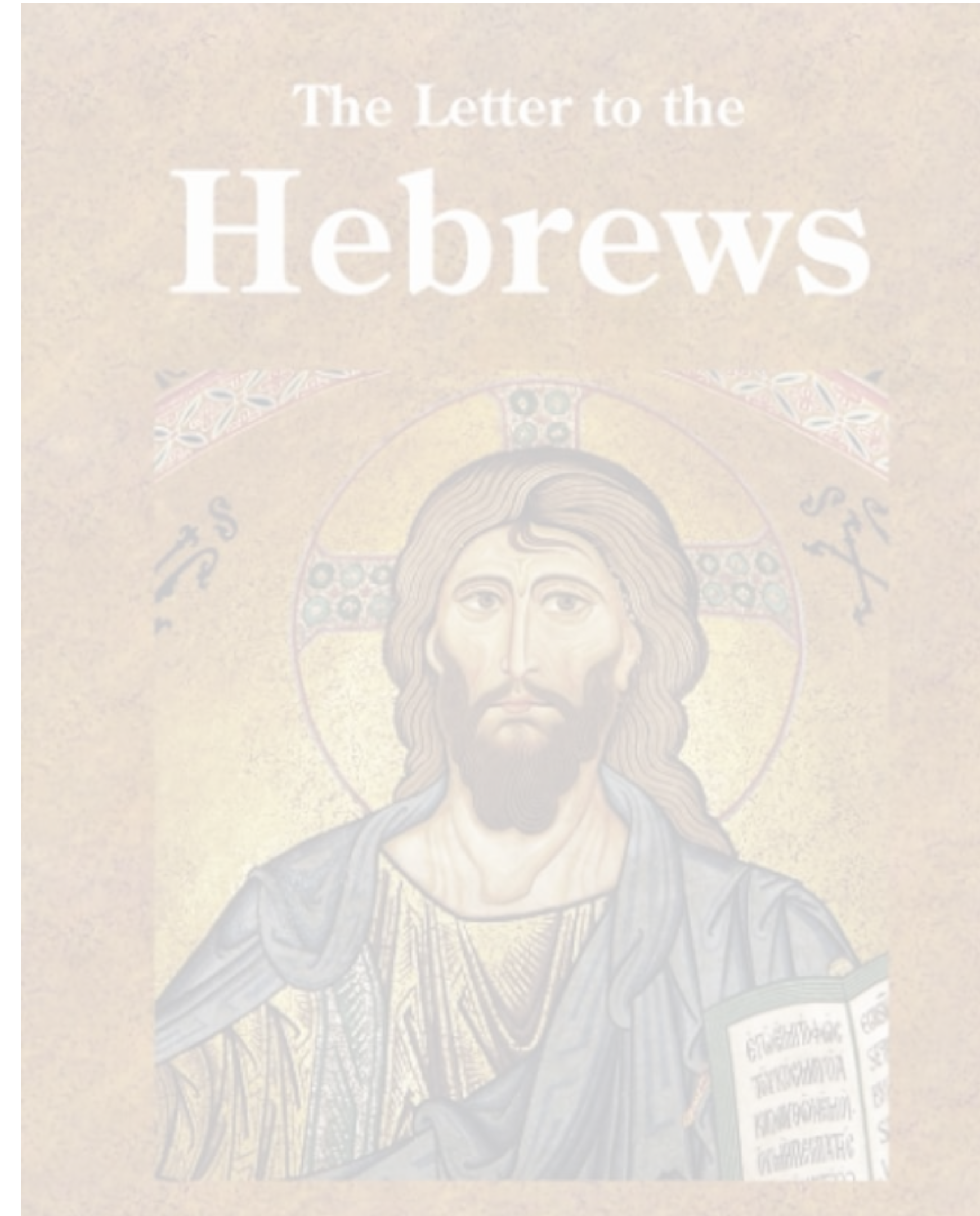
- Jesus would have performed purification offerings
- Mary performed purification offering for Jesus (Luke 2)
- Jesus instructed others to perform purification offerings before entering the Temple

# Purification Offerings in Acts

- Paul performed an purification offering in Acts 21 (after Jesus)
- Purification offerings decontaminated sacred space, would have ended in 70 AD with the fall of the Second Temple

# Is Jesus Compared to an Atoning Offering

- In 2 books in the NT
- Hebrews (elaborates)
- 1 John
  
- Atonement does not have to do with substitutionary death or forgiveness of sins, but decontamination of sacred space by a presentation of life (blood or flour) to God in that space



# Hebrews' Heavenly Tabernacle

## Context

- Hebrews' logic and midrash is difficult to follow
- Addressed from a messianic Jew to a community of messianic Jews that follow Jesus as king
- Most Hebrews scholars believe it was written immediately prior or after the destruction of the Jerusalem temple
- The author wants to communicate complex theology (solid food) to the community

# Hebrews' Heavenly Tabernacle

## Jesus as the Heavenly High Priest

- Jesus is depicted as a heavenly high priest (not a Levitical high priest)
- The heavenly tabernacle is presented as a reality where Jesus currently intercedes
- Reassurance that because Jesus exists in an immortal body post-resurrection, he will not leave sacred space, die, or contract ritual impurity anymore
- Represents humanity in a human body in God's heavenly sacred space

# Hebrews' Heavenly Tabernacle

## Jesus as the Purification Offering

- Hebrews portrays Jesus's *ascension* and *intercession before God* also analogously to a purification offering
- His eternal life is presented as a gift to God, decontaminating heaven, allowing for constant union to God
- Hebrews and Paul talks about God in his people and his people in heaven hear and now because of Jesus's continual representative presentation before God, linking God and humanity
- *Hebrews 10* "Offering blood of goats and bulls does not take away sin (only going through and out covenant curses through divine forgiveness does this), rather they reminded the community of their sin and mortality, which has been transcended in the restoration."

# Hebrews' Heavenly Tabernacle

## Implications (It Is Not Finished?)

- Atonement (decontamination allowing for communion, *covenant maintenance*) is ongoing
- From Jesus's ascension to Jesus's return is depicted like one long heavenly Day of Atonement/Purification
- Jesus's death and resurrection are not seen as "atoning," in its original sense, it's seen as bringing about the restoration and reconciling covenant relationship, atonement (maintaining that covenant), occurs through ascension and intercession
- Whenever Jesus's death is called atoning, it has to do with his heavenly intercession and ascension

# Hebrews' Heavenly Tabernacle

## Implications (It Is Not Finished?)

- Death and Resurrection depicted as the Exodus
- Jesus's Return depicted as entering the promised land
- The time in between depicted as wandering the wilderness and the Day of Atonement

# Atonement

## Is the Word More Confusing than Helpful

- Theological atonement vs. Biblical atonement
- Two distinct topics, leading to much interdisciplinary confusion
- Miscommunication leading to division



# Recommended Reading

- ***Lamb of the Free: Recovering the Varied Sacrificial Understandings of Jesus's Death*** by **Andrew Rillera**
- ***Who Shall Ascend the Mountain of the Lord?: A Biblical Theology of the Book of Leviticus*** by **L. Michael Morales**
- ***Rethinking Atonement: New Perspectives on Jesus's Death, Resurrection, and Ascension*** by **David Moffit**
- ***Atonement and the Logic of Resurrection in the Epistle to the Hebrews*** by **David Moffit**
- ***Leviticus: A Book of Ritual and Ethics*** by **Jacob Milgrom**

# Reading for Next Time

- Acts 10
- Acts 15
- Ephesians 2
- Colossians 2:6-23
- 1 Corinthians 7:17-24
- Romans 9-11

# Discussion Questions

- What do you usually think of when you hear the word “atonement”?
- How does it change your view of sacrifices that Jesus’s death and meal are compared to a Wellbeing Offering and his ascension is compared to a Purification offering?
- How are these instructions that are no longer achievable due to the fall of the temple still instructive for God’s community today? How does it form communal imagination?
- What does it look like practically to (as Paul and the author of Hebrews put it) become sacred space and living sacrifices/offerings presented to God?