# Sacrificial animals in the Bible as a prophecy

# (part one)

If you have ever read the Bible, you have certainly asked yourself why God asked people to sacrifice animals in the Old Testament.

Unlike the polytheistic nations who sacrificed animals and human beings to silence the wrath of some angry deity,

God who created the world revealed in the Bible that sacrifices have completely different symbolic meanings.

When people rebelled against God and became mortal, God wanted to show us in a symbolic manner the details of His plan to save human beings.

This way, through the multitude of different sacrifices, God symbolically showed – for example - repentance of sinners, cleansing of sin, sanctification, and also how He will execute the verdict on those who refused to repent.

The death of a sacrificial animal was meant to show the horror of the sin and its consequences.

Every sacrifice God had requested was a prophecy, symbolizing some specific part of God’s plan to save people from a sin.

So, if we were able to understand the proper symbolic meaning of sacrificial animals in the Bible, it would help us to better understand God’s plan of salvation.

To see this message, we need to look at how these symbols were used by the Bible writers inspired by God. We will allow the Bible to interpret itself, so can God show us what He meant when He used certain symbols.

The sacrificial animals were in all three genders: male, female, and neuter.

The female gender of a sacrifice symbolizes some religious or non-religious organization.

A pure, moral woman in the Bible symbolizes the people of God; while immoral woman symbolizes an ungodly organization or a group of people.

The same way sacrificial animals of the feminine gender symbolize a godly or ungodly organization depending on her characteristics.

The male gender of a sacrifice symbolizes a leader of the flock in all animal kinds, which means a leader of an organization, positive or negative.

The neutral gender indicates a special group within a particular organization.

For example, if we analyze the word "sheep" throughout the Bible, we can see that a sheep symbolizes God's people.

In this case, a ram would be a leader of the people of God, while for the Lamb, the Bible says it symbolizes Jesus Christ, or people who allowed God to sanctify them completely, and were given Christ-like character. We will list later Bible quotations to confirm these claims.

If we analyze throughout the Bible a cow or a heifer, another type of sacrificial animal, we will see a cow was used as a symbol of Babylon and Egypt, two theocratic nations, whose religion was not in agreement with God's moral principles. So, the cow symbolizes a religious organization, but the one who rejected God’s leadership and moral standards.

By the same principle, an ox, bull or bullock, would symbolize a leader of a religion that rejected God or could be a false prophet.

A calf or calves would be a special, elite group within this distorted religious organization.

In addition to sheep and cows, goats were also offered as sacrifices. He-goat is a symbol of Satan, and there is even a word „sair“ in the Hebrew language that could be translated both as a he-goat and as Satan. A he-goat is a leader of an ungodly organization.

In this case, she-goat would be a symbol of the organization of an ungodly people, atheist or spiritualist,

while the neutral gender of goats would be a special group of the wicked and ungodly.

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| **Male gender –> a leader**  **of religious organization** | **Female gender –>**  **religious organization** | **Neuter –>**  **a special group within a religious organization** |
| RAM =  a leader of God’s people | SHEEP =  God’s people | LAMB = Jesus Christ;  LAMBS = people with the character  similar to Christ’s |
| OX (BULL) = a leader of ungodly religious organization, the false prophet | COW (HEIFER) =  Ungodly religious organization (Babylon, Egypt) | CALVES (young bulls) = a special group within an ungodly religious organization, “mercenaries” |
| HE-GOAT = a leader of rebels against God (Satan, the beast from Revelation 19.20) | SHE-GOAT =  organization of rebels against God (a state, spiritualism) | KID, KIDDLING =  a special group of rebels against God |

So, when someone offers a **sheep** for a sacrifice, it shows his desire to be a part of God's people, or shows his faith in God that He will save his people.

If someone sacrifices a **cow**, it either means a confession that he departed from God, or shows his belief God will justly judge a religious organization that rejected God.

Offering a goat as a sacrifice, would either be a confession and remorse for personal ungodliness, or a belief God will justly condemn those who rebelled against it.

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|  | **Sheep** | **Cow** | **She-goat** |
| **A sacrifice represents the one who offer the sacrifice:** | "I want to be a part of God’s people" | "I admit I rejected God’s principles, even though I showed up as a religious person" | "I admit I was ungodly" |
| **A sacrifice represents our faith in God:** | "God will save his people" | "God will justly condemn false, hypocritical believers" | "God will justly judge the ungodly.“ |

Not only are different gender of an animal and different kinds offered as a sacrifice, but also types of sacrifice were different, and carried specific meaning and a message.

For example, burnt offerings symbolize someone’s reconciliation with God.

A peace offering was an expression of someone’s gratitude to God, for a fulfilled or to be fulfilled part of His plan for our salvation.

A sin-offering symbolizes the execution of God’s judgment over unrepentant sinners, or someone’s belief God will justly punish all those who refuse to repent and return to be obedient to God's principles.

A trespass offering symbolizes someone’s confession of a sin.

Meal offering represents the spiritual food of genuinely religious people, namely flour, wine, and oil, which are symbols of the body of Christ, the blood of Christ, and the Holy Spirit.

The lift-up offering represents someone’s sanctification, significant improvement of his spiritual state.

The **wave** offering symbolizes the resurrection.

The sweet savor offering represents God's approval and acceptance, and the burnt offering represents the complete destruction of sin.

For all these symbolic meanings of different offering types, we will see Bible texts as a support for these explanations.

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| **Type of offering** | **Meaning** |
| **Burnt** offering | **Reconciliation** with God |
| **Piece** offering | **Thanksgiving, gratitude** toward God |
| **Sin** offering | **Execution** of God’s judgment |
| **Trespass** offering | **Confession** of a sin |
| **Meal offering** | Spiritual “**food**” |
| **Lift-up** offering | **Sanctification**, significant spiritual improvement |
| **Wave** offering | **Resurrection** |
| **Sweet savour** offering | **Acceptance**, approval |
| An offering made by **fire** | **Destruction** of sin |

**Since when are the sacrifices offered and why?**

The question is, why did God ask people to kill animals as sacrifices?

Any death is horrible, no matter who dies. Slaughtering of animals is horrible.

By offering sacrifices, people should realize the terrible consequences of sin, because a sinner will die as a consequence of his transgression.

The purpose of sacrifices described in the Bible, was to motivate people not to sin, because God does not want us to die for eternity, as He does not want the sacrificed animal to die either.

By offering sacrifices, some people understood this, and allowed God to sanctify and change them; while others continued to sin and even continue to offer more and more sacrifices, thus showing their poor relationship to God.

For this reason, God said in the Bible that He was disgusted with the sacrifices these hypocrites offered. (Isaiah 1:13)

The first sacrifice was offered when Adam and Eve sinned, the Lord “make coats of skins, and clothed them” Genesis 3:21.

There is no explanation where those “coats of skins” came from, but we know in the perfect world before sin appeared, there was no death, even animals did not die.

According to the later sacrificial law, the animal was not slaughtered by a priest, but by a sinner who repented and offered a sacrifice (Leviticus 1: 5), to be moved to repentance.

It is therefore logical that Adam and Eve sacrificed the first lamb so that they would not die on the day they ate from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil (Genesis 2:17). In order to cover their sin, God dressed them in “coats of skins” of the first sacrifice.

By doing so, God explained to them the Messiah will come to die without a sin, like a lamb they slaughtered before Him.

Before they sinned, God warned them not to eat fruit from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, “for in the day that you eat of it you shall surely die.” Genesis 2:17 NKJV

Adam and Eve sinned, and the only reason why they did not immediately die, was because God had clothed them in the skin of the sacrificed lamb, and promised that a Savior would be born from the woman's offspring who would "crush the serpents head" (3.15) and release them from sin and death.

In the Bible, when God dresses a man in His clothes has become a symbol that God will give a sinner his righteousness, to anyone who repents.

So, the reason why **God established the sacrificial system**, is **because people have sinned**.

Therefore, a detailed description of the sacrifices revealed through Moses, describes God's plan for the salvation of man, from the fall into sin until the destruction of sin for eternity.

Adam and Eve explained to all their descendants this prophecy of the Lamb sacrificed in Paradise, so other patriarchs also offered sacrifices as a symbol of accepting the Messiah's future sacrifice for our sins.

Cain and Abel continued to offer sacrifices (Genesis 4: 3-5; Hebrews 11:4);

Noah after the flood (Genesis 8:20),

as did the patriarchs Abraham (Genesis 22:7, 8)

and Jacob (Genesis 31:54).

When God told Pharaoh to release His people from bondage, He told the Israelites to ask Pharaoh to let them offer a sacrifice by going on a 3 day walk into the wilderness (Exodus 5:3) NKJV.

Remember that Jesus was resurrected after 3 days, and here slaves need to be released from the bondage after 3 days, because of the sacrifice.

This sacrifice for salvation or destruction, was a center of a conflict for liberation of God’s people (Exodus 8: 8,25-29; 10,25; 13,18; 12,27), and Pharaoh constantly refused to allow this sacrifice.

In the Bible, Egypt is a symbol of a kingdom of sin, and God’s people could leave the kingdom of sin only if they mark their doors with the blood of the sacrificed Passover lamb, and by eating it.

This way, they have shown they believe God will send the promised Savior, "the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world!” John 1:29 NKJV His future sacrifice will deliver from sin and death anyone who trusts God.

The sacrifice of Christ is more important than any other sacrifice. If it were not for Christ on the cross, all other sacrifices would not have made sense.

Notice that even non-Jews, such as Midianite Jethro, Moses' father-in-law, also offered sacrifices (Exodus 18:12). In doing so, they showed understanding and acceptance of God's plan for the salvation of men.

In the Bible, **sacrifices were offered even before God gave to Moses at Sinai a detailed revelation written for the reason not to be forgotten or changed by men**.

So, we can conclude that Biblical sacrifices began to be offered after the fall of Adam and Eve into sin, and they have symbolic meaning until the time God will remove sin from the universe.

**Detailed instructions on sacrifices**

God gave detailed and precise instructions on how to offer sacrifices, and He asked for absolute obedience.

Sacrifices had to be offered at a certain time, in a certain manner, and at a certain place - in the Sanctuary where was located the ark of the covenant, a symbol of the throne of God. (Numbers 28.2; Deuteronomy 12.5.6; 16,2.5

This means that a decision about someone’s salvation or condemnation can be made only before the throne of God, and not anywhere else.

To offer a sacrifice in a different place from the one God designated, would mean a person has no trust God and the symbolic message would be twisted, because no one else could provide our salvation.

God required people to build a Sanctuary on the Earth as a copy of His heavenly sanctuary. "And let them make me a sanctuary; that I may dwell among them. According to all that I shew thee, after the pattern of the tabernacle, and the pattern of all the instruments thereof, even so shall ye make it." (Exodus 25:8,9; 26:30 Hebrews 8:5; 10:1)

The symbolic rituals performed in the earthly Sanctuary, represented figuratively what is in reality happening before the throne of God, what God is doing to save us from sin.

By understanding the symbolism of sacrifices, religious people could understand in detail, what God was doing to save us.

God’s sacrificial regulations foreshadowed the things to come. It was a prophecy for future events.

Biblical sacrifices represent a symbolic illustration of choices people make for God or against Him, as well as about God's actions based on our choices.

Death did not exist in Paradise. People did not kill animals, neither they ate them. Everything was perfect, but sin changed everything.

Our sacrifices are not meant to please God, because killing of innocent animals can only make God feel sad even more.

God created the world to be ruled by the law of love. Man's disobedience to God, ruined the original harmony.

God did not want to let people die and disappear, because He loves all His creatures.

Through the dreadful death of the sacrificial animals, God wanted people to recognize the awful consequences of sin, and the only solution to death – to trust our Creator.

**By offering sacrifices, man could not save himself, but to understand how God promised to save us - the Messiah would sacrifice himself for us**.

Jesus confirmed the importance of the sacrifices.

For example, he told the healed leper to take an offering to a priest which God prescribed through Moses ("And Jesus said to him, “See that you tell no one; but go your way, **show yourself to the priest, and offer the gift** that Moses commanded, as a testimony to them.” Matthew 8:4; Leviticus 13.

Jesus also organized a Passover supper before his death. Matthew 26:17,18

Jesus also said it is more important what we do in real life than what we do through symbolic rituals.

A sacrifice is worthless if a man still has an argument with his brother. "Leave your offering there before the altar and go; first be reconciled to your brother, and then come and present your offering." Matthew 5:24;

Also, Jesus valued more the gift of a poor widow given out from a pure heart, than the gift rich people gave from their abundance. "For all these out of their abundance have put in offerings for God, but she out of her poverty put in all the livelihood that she had." Luke 21:4).

Throughout history, Satan was trying to distort the practice of offering sacrifices, just to hide the plan of salvation from men.

Some people decided to arbitrarily change God’s rules: they offered unhealthy instead of blameless animals,

they sacrificed outside the temple like prophet Balaam (Numbers 23,1-4), to false gods like king Solomon (1. Kings 16:4; Daniel 11:8; Judges 16:23).

Some people “took part in the offerings to the dead” (Psalm 106:28), they offered even human sacrifices (Psalm 106:37,38), or they offered sacrifices but still continue to live in sin as before (“The sacrifice of the wicked is an abomination; How much more when he brings it with wicked intent!” Proverbs 21:27).

God rejected king Saul because he did not wait for the prophet Samuel to offer the sacrifice, but instead did it himself, which twisted God’s original symbolic message. 1 Samuel 13: 8-14; 15: 22.23

Any deviation from God’s instruction how to offer a sacrifice, misrepresented God’s character.

So, the sons of the high priest Aaron took fire from a heathen altar, where people offered sacrifices to demons, and they wanted to use pagan fire to burn incense before God.

"And fire came out from the presence of the LORD and consumed them, and they died before the LORD." Leviticus 10:1-3 This was not an accidental error, but an open rebellion against God.

In the Bible, fire represents the means by which God promised to judge the ungodly and destroy sin.

By using fire from the altar of false gods, the sons of the high priests symbolically claimed that false gods were also entitled to judge, even though only God can be a judge.

God immediately killed rebellious priests to prevent the drastic changes in symbolic messages of the sacrificial system.

God considered as an unforgivable sin when the priests "were treating the LORD's offering with contempt." (1 Samuel 2:17)

For example, the sons of Eli the High Priest: "**This sin** of the young men **was very great in the LORD's sight**, for they were **treating the LORD's offering with contempt**.” (1. Samuel 2:17, NIV) “Why do you **scorn my sacrifice and offering** **that I prescribed** for my dwelling? Why do you honor your sons more than me by fattening yourselves on the choice parts of every offering made by my people Israel?’

“Therefore the Lord, the God of Israel, declares: ‘I promised that members of your family would minister before me forever.’ But now the Lord declares: ‘Far be it from me! Those who honor me I will honor, but **those who despise me will be disdained**.” (1. Samuel 2:29.30)

So, God showed us in an obvious way that He expects symbolic rituals He prescribed to be done to the smallest detail exactly as He said, because a changed message could not lead people toward salvation.

## Why all sacrifices do NOT symbolize Christ

Many sacrifices cannot be identified with Messiah on the cross, but they point toward other parts of God’s plan of salvation.

God has given at least 49 **different kinds of sacrifices**. Let us look at what is different:

- different animal **species** sacrificed (sheep, cows, goats, pigeons, doves);

- different **gender** of animals (male, female and neuter);

- different **number** of animals (1,2,3,7…);

- different **manner** of offering;

- different **grain offerings and drink offerings** presented with animals;

- different sacrifices for the holidays.

If all these sacrifices symbolize only Jesus Christ on the cross, God could request only one sacrifice - a lamb, which should be offered the same way every time.

The complexity of the sacrificial system indicates that God intended to reveal through all these different details of His plan of salvation: redemption, intercession, conversion of sinners, sanctification, judgment for the unrepented, and more.

We will use Bible texts to explain the symbolic meaning of sacrifices in the Old Testament. We will see how people could understand the meaning of sacrifices, even before Jesus Christ.

## What do actually symbolize the sacrifices which do NOT represent Messiah?

There are sacrifices that **symbolize genuinely pious people**.

The apostle Paul says that people who believe in God should offer **themselves** as a sacrifice by living a godly life:

"Therefore I urge you, brothers, on account of God’s mercy, to **offer your bodies as living sacrifices**, holy and pleasing to God, which is your **spiritual** service of worship. Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind…" Romans 12: 1,2

In other words, the apostle Paul indicates that in the sacrificial system of the Old Testament, some sacrifices symbolize genuinely pious people who allow God to sanctify them completely.

The result of their sacrifice is a pious character: meekness, thanksgiving, prayer, obedience to God, and helping people.

A **broken spirit** can be a sacrifice: "The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit, A broken and a contrite heart— These, O God, You will not despise." Psalm 51.17 NIV

**Thanksgiving** is a sacrifice: "Sacrifice thank offerings to God, fulfill your vows to the Most High." Psalm 50:14 NIV "Therefore by Him let us continually **offer the sacrifice of praise to God**, that is, the **fruit of our lips**, giving thanks to His name." Hebrews 13:15

Singing **spiritual songs** is a sacrifice: "Let them sacrifice thank offerings and tell of his works with songs of joy." Psalm 107.22 (NIV) Therefore, saying thanks to God and praising Him by singing songs to His glory, is a fulfillment of the symbolism of some sacrificial offerings.

**Prayer** is also symbolized as a sacrifice: "Let my **prayer** be set before You as **incense**, The lifting up of my hands as the **evening sacrifice**." Psalm 141:2

Doing **justice and trusting the Lord** is also a sacrifice: "Offer the **sacrifices of righteousness**, and put your **trust in the LORD**." Psalm 4:5 "To do **righteousness and justice** is more acceptable to the LORD than sacrifice." Proverbs 21:3

As the prophet Samuel said, **obedience to God** is a sacrifice: “Has the LORD as great delight in burnt offerings and sacrifices, as in obeying the voice of the LORD? Behold, to obey is better than sacrifice, And to heed than the fat of rams." 1. Samuel 15:22

“Guard your steps when you **go to the house of God**. Go near to **listen** **rather than to offer the sacrifice** of fools, who do not know that they do wrong.“ Ecclesiastes 5:1

To **do good** is a fulfillment of sacrifice symbolism: “But to do good and to communicate forget not: for with such sacrifices God is well pleased.” Hebrews 13:16 KJV

The prophets warned the people of God if they only do symbolic rites, which only represent a figurative description of God’s plan of salvation, instead to practice life principles which are the fulfillment and deep meaning of these sacrifices.

God accepted only our **voluntary service**, without hidden motives, unfounded complaints and hidden thoughts: "I will **freely** sacrifice to You; I will praise Your name, O LORD, **for it is good**." Psalm 54: 6 “I desire **mercy** and not sacrifice.” Matthew 9:13

God did not accept when people thought they could pay off their salvation by offering sacrifices.

Biblical sacrifices have their deep meaning, but it is not a replacement for being merciful.

Jesus in His parables described sinners as enormously in debt, which by no means we can pay back.

For this reason, God called us to be merciful to people around us, the same way He is merciful to us.

"For I desired **mercy**, and not **sacrifice**; and **the knowledge of God** more than **burnt offerings**." Hosea 6:6

"With what shall I come before the Lord, and bow myself before the High God? Shall I come before Him with **burnt offerings**, With **calves** a year old? Will the Lord be pleased with thousands of **rams**, ten thousand rivers of **oil**? Shall I give my **firstborn** for my transgression, the **fruit** of my body for the sin of my soul?

He has shown you, O man, what is good; And what does the Lord require of you but **to do justly, to love mercy, and to walk humbly with your God**?” Micah 6:6-8

Jesus confirmed that all sacrifice offerings have less value in comparison to their fulfillment, which is **to love God and people around us**. "And to **love** Him *(God)* **with all the heart**, with all the **understanding**, with all the **soul**, and with all the **strength**, and to love one’s neighbor as oneself, is **more than all the whole burnt offerings and sacrifices**.” Mark 12:33

God allowed people **to** **offer a sacrifice for another person**. For example, Job offered sacrifices for his children, **in a sense of a prayer to God for them**:

“When a period of feasting had run its course, Job would make arrangements for them to be purified. Early in the morning he would sacrifice a burnt offering for each of them, thinking, "Perhaps my children have sinned and cursed God in their hearts." This was Job's regular custom." Job 1:5. NIV

Even **strangers, people of all other nations, could offer a sacrifice** as a proof that they had accepted God:

“And if a **stranger** dwells with you, or whoever is among you throughout your generations, and would **present an** **offering** made by fire, a sweet aroma to the LORD, just **as you do, so shall he do**. **One ordinance shall be for you** of the assembly and for the stranger who dwells with you, an ordinance **forever** throughout your generations; as you are, so shall the **stranger** be before the LORD." Numbers 15:14-15

This way God showed us that **the sacrificial system has meaning for all nations in the world, not only to Jews**, because reveals the way how God will save the faithful in all nations from sin.

## Sacrifices which do not represent Christ, but saved people

We saw already that there are sacrifices that symbolically do not represent Christ, but believers who accepted salvation.

For example, people from other nations when they allow God to change them: "To be a minister of Christ Jesus to the Gentiles. He gave me the priestly duty of proclaiming the gospel of God, so that **the Gentiles might become an offering acceptable to God**, sanctified by the Holy Spirit.” Romans 15:16

All nations, as well as Israelites, represent some offerings: "Then they shall bring **all your brethren for an offering to the LORD** out of all nations… **as the children of Israel bring an offering** in a clean vessel into the house of the LORD." Isaiah 66:20

Paul even says for himself that he is a sacrifice. "Yes, and if I am being poured out as a drink offering on the sacrifice and service of your faith, I am glad and rejoice with you all." Philippians 2:17 KJV

"For I am now ready to be offered, and the time of my departure is at hand." 2. Timothy 4:6 KJV

In Moses' time, people could understand that certain sacrifices represented pious people who had chosen to serve God. For example, Aaron offered the Levites to the Lord as an offering from the children of Israel.

"Aaron shall **offer** the **Levites** before the LORD **like a wave offering** from the children of Israel, that they may perform the work of the LORD." Numbers 8:11

The apostle Peter says that truly religious people represent a figural, symbolic offering, and they built themselves into a living temple made of people, instead of stones:

"You also, as living stones, are being built up as a spiritual house for a holy priesthood, to offer up **spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God** through Jesus Christ." 1. Peter 2:5

## Types of animals

Let us now take a look at Bible texts explaining what different types of sacrificial animals symbolize.

It should be noted that Biblical symbols often have positive and negative meanings.

For example, God uses one symbol in a positive sense, while Satan uses the same symbol to falsify God's plan of salvation and deceive people.

For example, Jesus is symbolically portrayed as a lion who wants to save God's people, while Satan is symbolically portrayed as a lion roaring and watching whom to devour.

***Sheep - God's people***

In the Bible, a sheep is a symbol of repentant sinners, assembled together as God’s people.

"So, we, **Your people** and **sheep** of Your pasture, will give You thanks forever." Psalm 79:13

"I have gone astray like a lost **sheep**." Psalm 119:176

"All we like **sheep** have gone astray." Isaiah 53: 6

Lord said: " “Indeed I Myself will search for My **sheep** and seek them out." Ezekiel 34:11

Zechariah's prophecy connected to the arrest of Messiah, describes a relationship between Jesus Christ and apostles as a shepherd and sheep: "Strike the **Shepherd**, And the **sheep** will be scattered;" Zechariah 13:7

This is exactly what happened: Jesus was arrested, and the apostles fled the scene as sheep without a shepherd (see Matthew 26:31; Mark 14:27).

Jesus sent out 12 apostles to the Israelites, and figuratively called them “the lost sheep” because of their lack of trust in God: “But go rather to **the lost sheep of the house of Israel**.” Matthew 10:6

Look how Jesus described His second coming: "When the Son of man shall come in his glory… **all the nations** will be gathered before Him, and He will **separate** them one from another, as a **shepherd** divides his **sheep** from the **goats**." Matthew 25:31,32

On Judgment day, Jesus will as Shepherd, divide sheep from goats; sheep on God’s side to be saved, and goats to the other side to be lost because they rejected God. Notice that sheep are described as positive, and the goats as negative personalities.

Jesus said: “I lay down my life **for the** **sheep**.” John 10:15

If we pay close attention, Jesus did not say he will lay down his life for goats and cows, because they symbolize rebels against God, but for the sheep because they represent the people of God.

Jesus also said: "I have other **sheep**, which are not of this fold; I must bring them also, and they will hear My voice; and they will become one flock with one shepherd.” John 10:16,26

So, sheep trust Jesus’ voice, as God’s people should.

In Jesus’ parable, a sheep that “fall into a pit on the sabbath day” symbolically represent a sinner to whom God forgave sins and heal him. Matthew 12:11

In another parable, Jesus describes himself as a shepherd who leaves 99 safe sheep to find one, which symbolizes a pious person in spiritual crisis.

“If a man has a hundred sheep, and one of them goes astray, does he not leave the ninety-nine and go to the mountains to seek the one that is straying?” Matthew 18:12

Moses prayed to God to appoint a leader for his people, "so the LORD's people will not be like sheep without a shepherd." Numbers 27.17 NIV

Wherever we look in the Bible, a sheep is clearly a symbol of God’s people - believers who repented for their sins and seek help from God.

Even here, Satan made a counterfeit to deceive God’s people. Jesus warned us that Satan sends false prophets in sheep's clothing, but inwardly they are ferocious wolves (“Beware of false prophets, who come to you in sheep’s clothing, but inwardly they are ravenous wolves.” Matthew 7:15,16).

God chose the humblest domestic animal to represent the meek character God's people should have. All other domestic animals from large livestock can injure a human being except sheep.

**Wool** is a symbol of the spiritual gifts God gives to His people. Only sheep has wool, neither cow or goats have it.

Gedeon asked for a sign from God that He chose him to deliver God’ people from the oppressor. Judges 6.37-40

Gideon asked God for a miracle, so that in the morning "the dew would be only on the fleece and dry all over the land", which would be a sign that He would use Gedeon to save the Israelites.

When this really happened, Gedeon asked God to do the opposite the morning after.

Wool represented a special talent given by God to him. He was singled out by God to quench the spiritual thirst of God's people.

Also, Solomon said a virtuous woman uses her spiritual gifts, which he expressed symbolically as wool and flax, "She seeks **wool** and flax, and willingly works with her hands." Proverbs 31:13

Prophet Isaiah said that God will turn our sins to be white as wool, He will give us proper spiritual fruits. “Though your sins are … red like crimson, they shall be as **wool**. Isaiah 1:18

## RAM - a leader of God's people

The role of a ram is to lead a flock of sheep. Since we know that a flock of sheep symbolizes God’s people, then it is easy to conclude that a **ram should represent a leader of God’s people**.

During the consecration of God’s Tent of Meeting, **the leaders of the twelve tribes**, as leaders of God’s people, offered one ram each for a sacrifice. (Numbers 7:15-81) This ram symbolized their voluntary service to God.

A ram was also offered for **the consecration of the priest** for the ministry, because the priest was about to become the leader of God’s people. (Exodus 29:1,15,19)

By sacrificing a ram, the priests showed that they allow God to clean them from sin, and use them to teach His people.

Through his prophet, God said: "The Lord will judge between sheep and sheep, rams and goats." Ezekiel 34:17

God described the ram as a symbol of a positive person, while the goat was described as a negative person. In other words, by separating the "rams from the goats", God will separate the genuinely religious leaders from the ones who rejected Him.

A ram’s horn (shofar) was used when God wanted to invite his people to gather before Him for a feast, or to lead the whole camp toward the Promised Land, or to gather men to go to war. (Numbers 10:1-10)

By ram’s horn sound, God showed that He is the leader of His people, but also that He appointed leaders who had a role to convey His message to the people.

The sound of a single ram's horn was a signal to gather only leaders, while the sound of two ram's horns was a signal to gather everyone (Numbers 10:3,4).

When Isaac asked his father where is the lamb they need to sacrifice, Abraham said, "God will provide himself a lamb for a burnt offering." Genesis 22:8,13 (KJV)

This event prophetically foretold the coming of the Messiah who would be sacrificed as a lamb approximately 2000 years later.

However, God did not provide a lamb to Abraham, but the ram was caught by horns in the bush, instead of the expected lamb.

If a ram is a symbol of a leader of God’s people, this ram in the story showed Abraham as a leader of God’s people, who placed God’s goals above his own.

This ram was at the same time the type of the Messiah, because Jesus Christ was not only the sacrificial lamb, but also the ultimate leader of God's people.

The ram also points to the Heavenly Father who sacrificed his Son, to lead God's people to the Promised land.

On the Day of Atonement, in addition to a goat and bull offerings, it is a less known fact that the high priest sacrificed a ram as a burnt offering. (Leviticus 16:3)

This ram symbolizes the Messiah who, as the leader of God's people, will cleanse God's people from sins for which they repented.

Other sacrifices for the Day of Atonement have other meanings, and it will be explained in a video about the Day of Atonement.

Remember that all symbols can have a positive and a negative meaning.

For example, a ram symbolizes a leader of God’s people in a positive sense, but a negative meaning of a ram could be a leader of God’s people who rejected God’s leadership, or an imposter which Satan uses to lead God’s people not to obey God.

So everywhere in the Bible we can see the following principle:

**Feminine** gender symbolizes an **organization,**

**Masculine** gender symbolizes **a leader of the organization,**

**Neuter** symbolizes **a special group in the organization.**

For example, in the Bible, a woman in white is a symbol of God’s people, which means the organization, and a bridegroom is a symbol of Christ, the leader of the organization, while lambs symbolize a special group within God’s people.

## Lamb - Jesus Christ

It is clear in the Bible that the lamb symbolizes Jesus Christ.

We are redeemed “with the precious blood of Christ, as of a **lamb** without blemish and without spot." 1. Peter 1:19

When he saw Jesus, John the Baptist said, “Behold! The **Lamb** **of God** who takes away the sin of the world!” John 1:29,36

In the book of Revelation, Jesus is symbolically described as the **Lamb** slain from the foundation of the world. (Revelation 13:8; 5:6; 6:1)

In the Bible, there is the Lamb's (therefore Christ's) book of life, which is also God's book of life (Revelation 13:8 20:15).

God's people were freed from slavery in Egypt because the Passover lamb was sacrificed (Exodus 12:3).

Likewise, the sacrifice of Jesus Christ exactly on Passover, set God's people free from sin. Passover lamb was an inevitable requirement for salvation in both cases.

It was Passover time exactly at a time when Jesus, after his last supper, allowed to be arrested and sentenced to death.

God told Moses to offer two lambs each day, one in the morning and the other in the evening, which coincided with the time of Christ's crucifixion in the morning at 9 AM, and the time of Christ's death in the evening at 3 PM. Exodus 29:38

On a Sabbath day, besides two lambs for a daily sacrifice, God ask Israelites to offer two more lambs, because the seventh day God dedicated for the spiritual growth of his people, blessed and sanctified it. Numbers 28:9 Genesis 2:1-3

At the Feast of First fruits, when they wave the sheaf as a symbol of Christ’s resurrection, God commanded “you must sacrifice as a burnt offering to the Lord a lamb a year old without defect.” Leviticus 23:12 NIV

Prophet Isaiah described Messiah sacrificed as a lamb: "He was led as a lamb to the slaughter, and as a sheep before its shearers is silent." Isaiah 53:7

The prophet describes Jesus at the same time as a lamb and as a sheep, because at the same time he was both the Messiah (Lamb) and a part of God’s people (sheep).

A lamb is an animal even more meek and harmless than a sheep, therefore an appropriate symbol of Jesus Christ.

Very often people say that the blood of the lamb priest used to bring inside the Holy Place, in order to cleanse our sins.

However, **the blood of the lamb was never brought into the Tabernacle before God in any form**, as a burnt offering, thanksgiving, or any other offering. God never commanded such a thing.

That means people have the wrong preconceptions about the process of cleansing of Sanctuary, because to some people it seems logical.

However, the process of Sanctuary cleansing is different. Blood of animals other than the lamb was brought into the holy place, while the blood of the lamb was poured out on the sacrificial altar in front of the Sanctuary.

**Lambs – plural - a special group within God's people**

In the Bible besides when only one lamb was offered, there are situations when more than one lamb needed to be sacrificed. For example, for the feast of Tabernacles. (Numbers 29:12-32)

Given the lamb is a symbol of the Messiah, it is obvious that plural - lambs – cannot also represent Christ.

Lambs actually symbolize the people who have allowed God to sanctify them completely, so they have a character similar to Christ's..

**The Lambs are a special group of people within God’s people, who are going to resist any temptation as Noah, Daniel, Joseph, Enoch and Christ did**.

For example, 144,000 from Revelation 7:1-8 and 14:1-5 "These are the ones who follow the Lamb wherever He goes… And in their mouth was found no deceit, for they are without fault before the throne of God.”

After the resurrection, Jesus said to Peter, "do you love Me more than these? …Feed my **lambs**!" John 21:15

However, when He asked the same question for the second and third time, Jesus said to him, “Tend My **sheep**” and "Feed my **sheep**." Apostle Peter was to convey the words of Christ to the people of God and to the most spiritual among them.

Jesus sends 70 disciples “as lambs among wolves” (Luke 10:3) That means Christ’s disciples were the most devoted among God's people.

Isaiah prophesied that God “will feed His flock like a shepherd; He will gather the **lambs** with His arm, and carry them in His bosom..." Isaiah 40:11 It appears that lambs are under special God’s protection, because of their great dedication and faithfulness to God.

The prophet Hosea described Israel's current state as rebellious, so God could not treat them as a pious **lamb**: "Since Israel is stubborn like a **stubborn heifer**, can the LORD now pasture them like a **lamb** in a large field?” Hosea 4:16

King David is well known as a type of Messiah, and Jesus was even called "the son of David." Before David became a king, he was a shepherd - just like Jesus presented himself symbolically as a shepherd.

Before defeating Goliath, David recounts how he tended his father's sheep, “when a lion or a bear came and took a lamb out of the flock, I went out after it and struck it, and delivered the lamb from its mouth.” 1.Samuel 17.34; 16.11 At the end, David killed the beast.

This image has very strong allusion to Satan “roaring like a lion” (1 Peter 5:8) and to Revelation 13:2, where he will use a beast with legs of a bear and a jaw of a lion. This beast will attack God's people, while God will protect and defend his people who are "without blemish" (Revelation 14.5), as David defended his lambs.

As Satan falsifies any other symbol and gives a negative aspect of it, he is doing the same with the symbolic meaning of lambs. The second beast in Revelation 13 “had two horns like a **lamb** and spoke like a dragon”. Revelation 13:11

Note that the beast is not a lamb, but only had horns “like a lamb”. The Beast will imitate Christ, but God’s people will be protected from this deception.

Look at what wise Solomon said, "**The lambs will provide your clothing**." Proverbs 27:26

Just as God clothed Adam and Eve after the fall into the skin of the most likely sacrificial lamb to show them how He will deliver them from sin and death, in a similar way Solomon said that God will cover anyone who trusts Him with the garment of Christ's justice.

## Cow / heifer as religious organization estranged from God

Throughout the Bible, a cow was mentioned in a negative context, so it represents people who do not respect God in a way He asked us to do it. A heifer is a young cow.

Prophet Jeremiah described pagan Egypt symbolically as a **heifer** that makes a noise like a **serpent**: “Egypt is a very pretty **heifer**, but destruction comes… Also, her mercenaries are in her midst like fat **bulls**… Her noise shall go like a **serpent**…" Jeremiah 46,20-22

Pharaoh and Egypt in the Bible were not described as atheists. They were religious, but instead of honoring God who created the Earth, they worshiped demons who declared themselves as gods.

Therefore, the cow or **heifer symbolizes a religious organization falling away from God**.

Babylon is also a pagan state described as a heifer. God calls his people to flee from Babylon, because the Chaldeans in Babylon "have *grown fat like* a **heifer** *threshing grain*, and you bellow like bulls…” Jeremiah 50:8-11

Then God said Babylonians will be killed in a way it associates them with sacrificed bulls and heifers, as the execution of judicial death sentence: “Slay all her bullocks; let them go down to the slaughter: woe unto them! for their day is come, the time of their visitation.” Jeremiah 50:27 KJV

The sword that kills them is a symbol of the word of God, because God in the Bible (the word of God) described judgment against ungodly people.

Babylon is on trial as a confusion of beliefs, values and principles. This way God told us that Babylon/heifer represents a religious, but ungodly organization, that rejected God’s moral principles.

Similar symbolism is found when Samson rebukes the ungodly, pagan Philistines for the deceit: "If you had not plowed with my heifer, you would not have solved my riddle!" Judges 14:18

This heifer in reality was a gentile woman, a Philistine, who betrayed Samson. In the Bible, a pious woman is a symbol of God's people, while an immoral woman symbolizes a religiously corrupted nation.

In another event, another pagan nation – the Philistines, returned the ark of the covenant to the Israelites by harnessing two cows into a chariot, and the Israelites sacrificed these two cows as a burnt offering. 1.Samuel 6:7,10,14

In this event, cows appropriately represent the Philistines and Israel, both nations that rejected God at that moment in history.

The negative symbolism of a cow was also confirmed by the prophet Amos, who described symbolically cows committing injustice: "Hear this word, you ***cows*** of Bashan… who *oppress the poor, who crush the needy*..." Amos 4:1

The prophet Hosea also called Israel a heifer when they persistently deviated from His principles: “For Israel slideth back as a backsliding heifer: now the LORD will feed them as a lamb in a large place.” Hosea 4:16

Israel was persistent in sin, and the Lord said they had the potential to become a lamb, to be similar in character to Jesus.

So, for the heifer, which symbolically represents a religious organization that rejected God, there is hope for salvation if they repent.

## Ox or a bull - a leader of a religious organization deviated from God

Since the feminine gender of both sheep and cows symbolizes an organization, then we expect the masculine gender should in both cases symbolize a leader of the organization.

An ox or a bull represents a leader of a religious organization that rejected God’s leadership.

As a confirmation, we can see that God himself symbolically called religious leaders of Israel, who rejected the Messiah and sent Him to death, “bulls of Bashan” in Psalm 22.

"My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me? ... Many bulls have surrounded Me; strong bulls of Bashan have encircled Me." Psalm 22: 1-12

The “strong bulls” which surrounded Jesus were priests and Pharisees, which means religious leaders of Israel who rejected God and the Messiah.

This Psalm is a prophetic description of the Messiah’s suffering on the cross, and a conspiracy of religious leaders who decided to condemn the Messiah to death, at the peak of their rebellion against God.

Jesus quoted this psalm at the cross to show how the prophecy was fulfilled.

So, we can see that an **ox** in the Bible also represents **a leader of a religious organization**, but the one which **departed from God’s will**.

Jesus told the parable about a king who killed oxen for his son’s wedding (Matthew 22.4). Invited people in the parable symbolize religious leaders who rejected God’s invitation and His Son, which these bulls represent in the story.

Also, God asked Gedeon to demolish his father’s Baal’s altar, to “build an altar to the Lord your God”, and specifically told him to sacrifice his father’s bull as a burnt sacrifice (Judges 6:26).

Gedeon “feared his father’s household and the men of the city” – in other words, he feared the leaders of the people who built the altar to false gods,

By destroying this pagan altar, he condemned the sin of their leaders for worshiping a false god instead of Creator of the world.

Israel who rejected God was described as “a bullock unaccustomed to the yoke” “an untrained bull.” Jeremiah 31:18

At the moment when the tribe of Ephraim rejected God’s principles, the prophet rebuke them and compare them to an ox.

So, an ox again represents religious leaders who disobeyed God, but in the further text, there is still a chance for repentance.

In a well-known Bible event when Uzzah suffered, the oxen stumbled and pulled the chariot aside with the ark of the covenant. “Uzzah reached out and took hold of the ark of God… therefore God struck him down, and he died” (2 Samuel 6:6,7)

God explicitly forbade anyone to touch the ark of the covenant except the priests who went through the cleansing process first. God is holy and He does not need a sinner to help him.

The symbolic message was that even when oxen or unfaithful leaders attack God’s throne, God has His plan, which Uzzah unfortunately disrupted.

God wanted people to see the symbolic message, how the religious leaders would in the future try to bring down the throne of God, and how God will intervene.

Even though Uzzah had a good intention, he did the opposite of what God commanded. Disobedience to God has serious consequences.

Our job is not to help God to judge and rule, but to refer people to God who can save us from sin and death.

Another prominent example of the symbolism of an ox or a bullock is when the prophet Elijah challenged the false prophets of Baal on mount Carmel to sacrifice one ox each. (1 Kings 18.22-25)

God needed to confirm who the true prophet was by burning with fire from heaven the ox sacrificed by his true prophet.

God burned Elijah's sacrifice, the ox, by fire from heaven, which symbolically showed that Baal's priests were religious leaders who rejected God's leadership, and were sentenced to death for it.

The symbolism of the burnt ox on Carmel was immediately fulfilled. By God’s instruction, the prophet Elijah executed the death sentence upon ungodly leaders of a fallen religious organization, over 450 prophets of Baal and 400 prophets of Asherah.

God said to Moses, “You shall not muzzle an ox while it treads out the grain." Deuteronomy 25:4 The apostle Paul quoted this text, and then interpreted the ox as a symbol of religious leaders who are sinning and needs to be rebuked:

“Do not receive an accusation against an **elder** except from two or three witnesses. Those who are *sinning rebuke* in the presence of all, that the rest also may fear.” (1 Timothy 5:18-20)

For the apostle Paul, “not muzzle an ox while it treads out the grain”, means not to allow people to disrupt the work of a religious leader by rumors, but only if there are indeed witnesses to his sin.

Jesus gave a similar principle related to religious leaders who only talk about ethical principles, but are not willing to live that way: “Therefore whatever they tell you to observe, that observe and do, but do not do according to their works; for they say, and do not do.” Matthew 23:3

So, the Bible is very consistent in describing an ox or a bull as a leader of a religious organization that has fallen away from God.

## CALVES - A special group of people in a religious organization that has fallen away from God

Just as lambs are a group of prominent individuals among God's people, so are calves - a special group within a religious organization that has fallen away from God.

The prophet Jeremiah says that pagan Egypt has hired an elite group of people for their own interests, which he symbolically describes as calves. Note also that Egypt hiss as a serpent, indicating that they are God's adversaries as well as Satan:

“Egypt is a beautiful heifer… even **the mercenaries among her are like fattened calves**… Egypt will hiss like a fleeing serpent.” Jeremiah 46,20-22

So, here calves are a special group in a religious organization, paid to do some special task.

Notice the difference in this text: while lambs are described as a symbol of people who voluntarily follow the Messiah wherever Jesus goes, calves are paid to do evil things for the sake of religious leaders who rejected God’s principles.

Also, prophet Jeremiah described the downfall of Babylon and his elite troops symbolically as sacrificial calves or young bulls:

“I laid a snare for you, O **Babylon**, and you were caught before you knew it. You were found and captured because **you challenged the LORD**. … Kill all her ***young bulls***; let them go down to the slaughter. Woe to them, for their day has come—the time of their punishment.” Jeremiah 50:24-27

Again, we can see the language of the sacrificial system used to describe the judgment on the wicked executed by God.

These young bulls or calves did not repent for their rebellion against God, and God condemned them to death.

Note also that after the deliverance of the Israelites from slavery in Egypt, the people asked Aaron to make them gods. After the deliverance of the Israelites from slavery in Egypt, the people asked Aaron: “Make us gods who will go before us.” Exodus 32:23

They gave gold to Aaron, “and he fashioned it with an engraving tool, and made a molded calf.” Exodus 32:4

Although it looks like Aaron used a mold to shape the calf, when Aaron explains to Moses what happened, he says, "and I **cast it into the fire, and this calf came out**.” Exodus 32:24 According to the text, it seems that Aaron suggests that it was not his choice for the idol to be in the shape of a calf.

The shape of the calf fits perfectly into the symbolic meaning of sacrifices, because it indicates a special group of rebellious, falsely religious people who tried to lead the people to reject God.

If Aaron, as a leader, asked the people to reject God, it would be logical for the idol to be shaped like an ox, as a leader of false religion.

Not even the whole nation of Israel agrees to idolatry, so the idol was not shaped like a cow, which is a symbol of a religious organization.

Only a part of the people wanted to worship an idol, so a calf came out of the fire, as a symbol of a special group in a religious organization which rejected God.

So, **the calf is a special group of people in a religious organization that has rejected God's principles**.

In addition to sacrifices that symbolize people who present themselves as pious but live contrary to God's principles, there are also sacrifices representing people who are open rebels against God, and are represented symbolically as she-goat, he-goat and kids.

**Sacrifices which do not represent Jesus ​​Christ,**

**but unrepented, ungodly people:**

Let us review examples in the Bible where the sacrifices offered obviously represent people who openly rebel against God.

Prophet Ezekiel describes a sacrifice that obviously represents the execution of God's judgment on ungodly people of Gog, mentioned in John’s Revelation, who rejected God:

“Speak to every sort of bird and to every beast of the field: “Assemble yourselves and come; Gather together from all sides to My **sacrificial meal** which I am **sacrificing** for you, a **great sacrificial meal** ... You shall eat the flesh of the **mighty**, drink the blood of the **princes of the earth**… says the Lord God.” Ezekiel 39.17-20

Almost identical apocalyptic suffering of ungodly people described by the apostle John, and stated it would happen before the second coming of Christ. The angel calls all the birds:

“…saying to all the fowls that fly in the midst of heaven, Come and gather together for **the supper of the great God**, that you may eat **the flesh of kings**, the flesh of **captains**, the flesh of **mighty men**… and the flesh of **all people**, free and slave, both small and great.” Revelation 19.17-18

This represents the death sentence on ungodly people, after which their leaders - the apocalyptic beast and the false prophet were also executed.

Prophet Jeremiah also describes a sacrifice which represents death sentence as a punishment for ungodly people:

“For this is the day of the Lord God of hosts, a **day of vengeance, that He may avenge Himself on His adversaries**. The sword shall devour; It shall be satiated and made drunk with their blood; For the Lord God of hosts has a sacrifice...” Jeremiah 46:10

The third great prophet, Isaiah, also describes a sacrifice by which God executes judicial decision, to revenge for the ungodliness of those who rejected him, on the day of the Lord's vengeance, which is the day of the second coming of Christ.

“The sword of the Lord is filled with blood, it is made overflowing with fatness, with the blood of lambs and goats, with the fat of the kidneys of rams. For **the Lord has a sacrifice** in Bozrah, and a great slaughter in the land of Edom. The wild oxen shall come down with them, and the young bulls with the mighty bulls… For it is **the day of the Lord’s vengeance**, the year of recompense for the cause of Zion.” Isaiah 34:6-8

Obviously, these sacrifices had no function to describe salvation, but to predict destruction of those who remained in a state of rebellion against God, despite all the possibilities for repentance.

The judgment day God also calls the day of sacrifice, when He will judge those who rejected God's righteousness: “And it shall be, **in the day of the Lord’s sacrifice**, that I will punish the princes and the king’s children, and all such as are clothed with foreign apparel.” Zephaniah 1:8

So, **some sacrifices show the punishment executed over those who have openly chosen sin and rejected God**.

The most vivid symbolic description of the execution of God’s judgment on the Day of Atonement was given by Solomon: "The wicked shall be a ransom for the righteous, and the unfaithful for the upright.” Proverbs 21:18

The ransom for the righteous was paid by the Messiah on the cross, but according to the wise Solomon, God's plan of salvation was completed only when the guilt for all sins was transferred to those who did not repent for sin, and when judgment is executed on Satan as the originator of sin.

Thus, all sacrifices symbolically represent some part of God's plan of salvation.

The culmination of the fulfillment of the symbols of the Old Testament sacrifices will occur when Jesus comes again to fulfill the symbolic meaning of sacrifices which represent the permanent decision of men - for or against God.

The sacrificial system was established by God as prophecies to describe the history of the world from the fall into sin to the destruction of sin.

## He-goat - leader of God's opponents

We have seen that God's people were represented in the Bible by the symbols of ram, sheep and lambs,

while the religious people who rejected God were represented by the symbols of ox, cow and calves.

The third category of sacrifices represent people who openly oppose God, and they were symbolically represented by he-goat, she-goat and goatlings.

In the Bible, goats are regularly described as a symbol of negative personalities, God's opponents. Let's look at examples.

In a parable of His second coming, Jesus says He will separate the sheep from the goats before He execute the judgment.

"All the nations will be gathered before Him, and He will separate them one from another, as a shepherd divides his sheep from the goats." Matthew 25:32

The whole context indicates that the sheep are on God's side and the goats are on the other.

Jesus took this picture from the prophet Ezekiel, who says the same thing: "Thus says the Lord GOD: “Behold, I shall judge …between rams and goats." Ezekiel 34:17

In other words, God will separate the pious leaders of the people from the ungodly leaders. He-goats are leaders who know God exists, but openly oppose Him.

So, goat symbolize people who do not pretend to be religious as ox, cow and calves do, but they lead people to openly oppose God.

To be sure he-goat is a negative symbol, we can see when Jacob deceived his father, he covered his hands and neck with “the skins of the kids of the goats”, in order to look a hairy man as Esau. Genesis 27:16 It was not an act of false piety, but an open deception.

Also, Joseph’s eleven brothers dipped his tunic in blood of “kid of the goats”, to deceive their father. Genesis 37:31 Goat’s skin or blood in both cases was a mean by which they deceived a pious person.

Even Satan, as an open adversary of God, was portrayed on the Day of Atonement as a goat - taken to the wilderness, just as Satan will be bound in a desolated Earth for 1,000 years when Jesus comes again. (Leviticus 16:20-22; Revelation 20:1-3)

Before Satan was bound for 1000 years on a desolate Earth, a death sentence was executed on the two most ungodly forces, symbolically described as a false prophet and a beast (ungodly worldwide political-religious authority).

Also, on the Day of Atonement, before the goat was taken to the desert, another goat and a bull were sacrificed.

Many other parallels between the Day of Atonement and the judgment executed at the time of Christ's second coming, indicate that the bull represents a false prophet (leader of false religion), and that the goat represents the beast (secular coalition of states ruling the world before Christ's second coming). They are both God’s opponents.

For the Day of Atonement, Christ is represented by a ram offered as a burnt offering. Christ here is the leader of God's people. (A more detailed explanation will be given in the video about the Day of Atonement.)

Note that for the Passover, God gave us as a possibility a lamb or a goatling to be offered. “You may take it from the sheep or from the goats.” Exodus 12:5

The Israelites generally offered a lamb, but the question is why God gave us both possibilities.

This way God showed us two inseparable parts of the plan of salvation:

1) the lamb is a Messiah - Christ who died for our sins, and

2) the goat is Satan on whom the guilt for all sins of the world will be transferred, on God’s judgment day.

A similar message about the judgment executed first on the Messiah, and then at the end on the originator of sin - Lucifer, can be seen when Jesus was compared to a serpent that Moses raised on the rod for the purpose of healing those who almost died from the snake venom.

Also, the red heifer should be a negative symbol in the entire Bible, and also any dead body is declared unclean. However, the ashes of the red heifer are said to cleanse people because it also points toward the Messiah who took upon himself the sins of God's people, and at the God’s judgment, Satan will be proclaimed guilty of leading God's people to sin.

These two aspects of the plan of salvation are seen in many symbolic images, even in the sacrificial system.

Jesus as the Lamb took upon Himself the sins of repentant people and our death sentence. Then all sins are kept in the Heavenly Sanctuary until the apocalyptic Day of Atonement, when they will be transferred to the goat for Azazel – to Satan, who will be be announced guilty for all sins in the world.

Sacrificed goat needed to be without blemish, because Lucifer was created perfect, and he had no justifiable reason to rebel against God. Leviticus 4.23

The next negative symbolic description of a goat, we can find when Samson “tore the **lion** apart as one would have torn apart a young **goat.**” Judges 14:6

We know that the apostle Peter symbolically describes “the Devil walks about **like a roaring lion**, seeking whom he may devour” (1 Peter 5:8).

Since in the Bible Satan was symbolized both by a goat and a lion, Samson's event of tearing apart the lion like a kid of goat sound very appropriate for ungodly force defeated by God’s deliverer.

Biblical symbols are the same throughout Scripture. The wisdom with which the Bible was inspired can only be from God, because there is no man who can write such a book, ingenious on so many different levels.

The prophet Zechariah says that God will punish the goats: "My anger is kindled against the shepherds, and **I will punish the goats**" Zechariah 10:3 KJV

This text describes leaders of God's people who began to sin the same way as the leaders of ungodly people, symbolically described as goats - to lead a rebellion against God.

In the sanctuary, God commanded Moses to build the curtains over the tent, made of sackcloth, that is, goatskin.

Symbolically, the goatskin represents ungodliness which separate people from the God’s throne - the ark of the covenant, but at the same time it is a prophecy that God will judge the rebels. Exodus 26:7

Sometimes it is difficult to understand the wise king Solomon, if we do not understand the figurative message of the text: "The lambs will provide your clothing, and the **goats the price of a field**" (Proverbs 27:26).

The lambs for clothing are an allusion to Adam and Eve, whom after they sinned, God clothed in animal skin, most likely of the first sacrificed lamb to cover their sin: “Also for Adam and his wife the Lord God made tunics of skin, and clothed them.” Genesis 3:21

But, what did Solomon mean when he said " the goats are the price of a field"?

In the Bible, a field is a symbol of the promised land, the Paradise people lost by falling into sin.

In order to get back the promised land - Paradise, it is necessary for the goats/leaders of rebellion against God - to pay the price, which means judgment to be executed on them.

This is why the apostle Paul says, "it is not possible that the blood of bulls and goats could take away sins." Hebrews 10: 4

Paul does not say that the blood of the lamb cannot cleanse us from sin, because the lamb is a symbol of Jesus Christ.

Paul says that the blood of a goat and a bull cannot take away sins, because they are not a symbol of Messiah's sacrifice, but a symbol of the leaders of rebels and religious leaders who rejected God.

The lamb that represents the Messiah received a death sentence instead of us, but at the end God's judgment will be executed on the goat – Satan, as the originator of sin.

## She-goat, an organization of God’s opponents

If we apply the previously discovered logic that the female gender in the Bible represents an organization, then the she-goat symbolizes **ungodly people, open opponents of God, united in some kind of organization**.

Using the same logic, when we see that the she-goat is offered as a burnt offering (Leviticus 1:10), it indicates that God offers salvation to his greatest enemies, that is, to cleanse them from sin.

But if she-goat is not a burnt offering but a sin offering, then it symbolically represents ungodly people who refused mercy, and judgment will be executed on them. Numbers 15:27

The blood of some sin offerings was brought into the tabernacle, sprinkled in front of the veil in the sanctuary, and on the horns of the altar of fragrant incense (Leviticus 4:6,7,16-18), while the blood of the lamb was never brought into the sanctuary, but only sprinkled on the sacrificial altar (Leviticus 1:5,11).

Also, if she-goat is a peace offering (Leviticus 3:12), then it represents our gratitude to God for saving us from ungodly life, and because He will end the rebellion of ungodly organization at the second coming of Christ.

When God made a covenant with Abraham, He told him to offer 3 years old heifer, goat, and a ram, as well as a turtledove and a dove (Genesis 15:9).

All three species of large animals were sacrificed, because God offers a covenant to all: to hypocritically religious people, to ungodly people, and to sincerely religious people, while we were still his enemies.

This is the only case when God asked 3 years old animals to be sacrificed. Some say the reason could be that throughout history, God has offered the same way of salvation to people during 3 historical periods, using 3 different approaches:

-before the Flood and a short period after the Flood via patriarchs;

-after Abraham he used the promised people of Israel to proclaim the truths about salvation;

and in the era after the coming of the Messiah he sent disciples to preach all over the world.

At the end of the third era, we expect the second coming of Jesus, when he will forever separate sheep from goats and cows, which means He will separate sincerely pious people from those who have rejected God.

Either we will present our “bodies as a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God, which is (y)our reasonable service” (Romans 12:1) so God can cleanse us from sin; or man will continue to commit sin, and will become a sacrifice over which God will execute His judgment.

We see that biblical symbols are the same throughout the Bible. The wisdom with which the Bible is inspired also indicates it could come only from God, because man could not invent of such an ingenious book.

**Dressing sackcloth (goatskin)**

Sackcloth is a rough fabric made of goatskin. Some people put on a sackcloth at the moment of their great tribulation, to show before God that they repented for their sins.

Speaking of the heroes of faith, the apostle Paul point out their sincere repentance and calling others to repent, "They wandered about in sheepskins and goatskins." Hebrews 11:37

John the Baptist "was clothed in camel’s hair, with a leather belt around his waist;" (Matthew 3:4) - because his mission was to call people to repentance.

Since he-goat or she-goat is a symbol of ungodly people, wearing a **goat skin** is a symbol of **acknowledging one's sinfulness, ungodliness**, as well as **man's desire to return to God**.

On the other hand, wearing **sheepskin** means expressing **a desire to be a part of God's people**.

## Doves or pigeons - the influence of the Spirit of God

The Spirit of God descended like a dove on Christ, to guide Him through life, in order to fulfill the mission for which he came. "…the Spirit of God descending like a dove and alighting upon Him." Matthew 3:16

This shows that the dove symbolically represents the God's Spirit influence on a person.

In the sacrificial system, poor people, who could not afford to sacrifice large cattle, were to offer a dove or a pigeon as a sacrifice (Leviticus 1:14; 5: 7; 14:22; 15:14, 29; Numbers 6:10).

By doing so, they publicly showed they wanted the Spirit of God to lead them, to turn away from earlier sinful life, and to allow the Spirit of God to sanctify and transform them.

Even Joseph and Mary at the presentation of Jesus in the temple brought “to offer a sacrifice according to what is said in the law of the Lord, “A pair of turtledoves or two young pigeons.” (Luke 2:24).

So, the Holy Spirit really led Jesus to accomplish the first part of the plan of salvation, to offer Himself as the sacrifice for redemption of our sins.

**Counterfeit sacrifices**

Because the sacrificial system indicated the salvation that God would accomplish for those who believed in him, for the same reason Satan began to falsify the sacrificial system from the beginning.

Pagan nations offered different sacrifices, with different motives, and their message misrepresented the character of God and His plan of salvation.

God gave a clear warning, "He who sacrifices to any god, except to the Lord only, he shall be utterly destroyed." Exodus 22:20

However, under the influence of pagan nations, the Israelites offered sacrifices even to the devils, which means to the demons. (Deuteronomy 32:17; Leviticus 17:7) They also offered sacrifices to the golden calf (Exodus 32: 6,7).

Pagan sacrifices were the essentially the opposite from the one’s God established: instead of showing trust that God will accomplish the plan of salvation, people offered sacrifices to Satan and demons in a form of ethically perverted rituals.

Unfortunately, because of these counterfeits, many people throughout history did not understand what God meant by the sacrificial system.

By understanding of the meaning of the God’s original, people should not be deceived by counterfeits.

Some people see in the sacrifices only empty rituals, and they reject the idea that the sacrifices from the Old Testament have any message for a modern man.

Other people would give the wrong meaning to sacrifices in the future. A series of counterfeits of the sacrificial system, will especially deceive many people before the second coming of Christ.

When “the veil of the temple was torn in two from top to bottom” at the time of Christ’s death, God showed that He left the Most Holy Place on the Earth, and allowed the earthly temple to be destroyed because of: Israel's disobedience, distortions of symbolic rites in the temple, and because Messiah is about to start real service in the heavenly temple.

Resurrected Jesus after 40 days ascended to heaven, where He fulfils symbols of the sacrificial system, as our high priest in the heavenly sanctuary.

We need every day to look at our high priest in Heavenly sanctuary, to accept his intercession for us, in order to forgive our sins and sanctify us.

The prophecies of the sacrificial system of the Old Testament, God fulfils in the actual events of the New Testament.

Instead of offering sacrifices, today is enough to study sacrifices and understand these prophecies.

We need to follow by faith our high priest, to see what He is doing for us before the throne of God.

However, there are initiatives among religious people to build a new temple in Jerusalem, as well as to renew the offering of literal sacrifices, which shows a deep misunderstanding of God's plan of salvation and the meaning of the sacrifices.

Returning to symbolic rites would divert the view of people from Christ's service in the Heavenly sanctuary to symbolic rituals that have no purpose to save us, but only to indicate how God will save us.

For previous temples, God commanded and gave detailed instructions on how to do it, but for this one He did not.

The symbolic service made sense after Jesus began actually to fulfill the symbols, but now performing symbolic rituals would only serve to divert people's attention from the original - the daily service of our high priest in heaven.

It is very likely, when Satan imitates the second coming of Christ, that he will ask people to build this temple and to offer sacrifices there.

Jesus said, “My kingdom is not of this world” (John 18:36), while the false messiah as the prince or "the ruler of this world"(John 12:31) will create "the kingdom of this world".

This will contribute the fulfillment of prophet Daniel’s prophecy, that the ungodly power at the time of the end will devalue in the eyes of the people the true ministry of the anointed high priest Jesus in the heavenly sanctuary: "…and by him the daily sacrifices were taken away, and the place of His sanctuary was cast down.“ Daniel 8:11

We need to study the sacrificial system, to better understand what God is doing for us today, what we need to do, and how to be protected from the deception.

As long as there is sin in the universe, there will be the importance of the meaning of symbolic sacrifices, until everything prophesied through it is fulfilled (Hebrews 10: 2).

Christ's sacrifice is the center of the plan of salvation, but there are other sacrifices that describe in more detail God's plan of salvation and His judgment.

God said: "Gather My saints together to Me, those who have made a covenant with Me by sacrifice." Psalm 50:5

At his second coming, God will gather the saints who made a covenant with him on the sacrifice of the Messiah.