

why we need a priest

the threefold mashiach and the final purification

part 1: the core problem - what death and repentance cannot solve

the foundational torah principle: individual responsibility

the bedrock of divine justice is established in the torah and echoed by the prophets: **"the being who sins shall die. the son shall not bear the crookedness of the father, nor the father bear the crookedness of the son. the righteousness of the righteous is upon himself, and the wrongness of the wrong is upon himself."** (yehezqël / ezeziel 18:20).

this is not a new law but the application of the eternal principle declared in the garden: **"but do not eat of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, for in the day that you eat of it you shall certainly die."** (bərēshith / genesis 2:17).

the implication is absolute and sobering: for intentional, high-handed rebellion (*chet b'mezid* - sin committed "with a high hand"), there is no substitute. the physical death of the sinner is the required, complete, and final payment. the debt of wilful rebellion is settled by the life of the rebel.

the inescapable question:

if physical death fully pays for my intentional rebellion, and returning to obedience (*teshuvah*) is my personal responsibility, why does the torah establish an entire priesthood and a complex system of sacrifices? what critical purpose do they serve that death and repentance alone cannot fulfill?

the answer, found in the torah's own distinctions, is stunning.

part 2: the twofold path - rebellion vs. defilement

the torah is not vague. it legislates two entirely different paths for two fundamentally different types of transgression.

1. intentional, defiant sin (b'mezid): the sin of rebellion

this is wilful, knowing rebellion against the authority of יהוה. the torah's prescription is absolute:

bəmidbar (numbers) 15:30-31: *"but the being who does whatever defiantly, whether he is native or a stranger, he reviles יהוה, and that being shall be cut off from among his people. because he has despised the word of יהוה, and has broken his command, that being shall certainly be cut off; his crookedness is upon him."*

- the penalty: *karet* - to be "cut off." this is a divine death sentence.
- the payment: the life of the sinner. no animal sacrifice is ever prescribed for this.
- the outcome: death atones for the debt of rebellion. full stop.

2. unintentional sin (bishgagah): the state of defilement

this encompasses sins of error, neglect, ignorance, and weakness. it includes the myriad impurities contracted simply by living in a fallen world. the torah makes extensive provision for these:

wayyiqra (leviticus) 4:2-3, 13, 22, 27: "speak to the children of yisra'el, saying, 'when a being sins by mistake... he shall bring to יהוה a young bull without blemish as a sin offering...'"

this is elaborated for the entire congregation, a ruler, and a common individual.

- the provision: a system of grace, administered by a priest.
- the purpose: the offering does *not* replace a death penalty. it addresses a completely different problem: the state of defilement and impurity caused by error. it is about *purification*, not penalty payment.

conclusion #1: the sacrificial system, by the torah's own explicit definition, was not instituted for intentional sin. its primary purpose was for purification from unintentional sins and impurities. death handles rebellion; the priest handles defilement.

part 3: the priesthood - from heavenly eternal to earthly temporary

the office of priest is older than the torah itself. its origin is celestial, not levitical.

a. the eternal heavenly order: malki-tzedek

the first priest mentioned in scripture is not a levite. he is malki-tzedek, king of shalem, "priest of el elyon" (genesis 14:18). his priesthood is defined by:

1. righteousness (the very meaning of "tzedek").
2. direct divine appointment, not human ancestry or genealogy.
he appears without recorded beginning or end, establishing the pattern of an eternal, heavenly priesthood (cf. psalm 110:4).

b. the temporary earthly shadow: aaron

the levitical/aaronic priesthood was established *after* the catastrophic failure of the golden calf (exodus 32). it was a temporary, conditional system:

- based entirely on physical lineage (exodus 28:1, 40:12-15).
- a concession to deal with sin in the camp.
- explicitly called a "copy" and "shadow of the heavenly" pattern shown to mosheh on the mountain (exodus 25:40, hebrews 8:5).

conclusion #2: יהוה's original and eternal plan is a priesthood of the malki-tzedek order, based on righteousness and direct divine calling. the aaronic priesthood was a temporary, earthly substitute, a shadow pointing to a greater reality.

part 4: the unresolved crisis - the defilement of a lifetime

this is the crux of the revelation. if my physical death pays the wage for my intentional sins (*b'mezid*), what becomes of my unintentional sins (*bishgagah*)?

- the sins of error i never knew i committed?
- the unknown impurities i contracted?

- the shortcomings and weaknesses that accrued over a lifetime?

the torah's system required a priest to deal with these *before* the individual could be declared clean and permitted to re-enter the camp, the place of elohiym's dwelling. the sin offering (*chatat*) was about purification from defilement (leviticus 4, 5; numbers 19).

the stunning, inescapable question:

if the earthly, shadowy system required a priest to atone for unintentional sins so a yashar'elite could remain in the earthly camp, how much more would the heavenly system require a far greater priest to atone for a *lifetime* of unintentional defilement so a soul can enter the true, heavenly camp?

this is not about payment for rebellion (death handles that). this is exclusively about purification from defilement so that a soul, having paid its mortal penalty, can be clean enough to stand in the presence of a set-apart elohiym.

without this purification, the soul, though having paid for its rebellion, remains defiled and cannot enter. this is the true "second death"- eternal separation due to unresolved defilement.

part 5: the threefold mashiach - the complete solution at the door

the problem is clear: we need an eternal, heavenly priest. but the torah and prophets reveal that the solution is even greater: a mashiach (anointed one) who converges all three anointed offices.

the hebrew concept of mashiach:

the word מָשִׁיחַ (mashiach) means "anointed one." in yashar'el, three offices were anointed with sacred oil:

1. prophets (*navi'im*): to speak elohiym's words (1 kings 19:16; isaiah 61:1).
2. priests (*kohanim*): to mediate and purify (exodus 28:41; leviticus 4:3).
3. kings (*malakhim*): to rule and judge (1 samuel 16:13; psalm 18:50).

these roles were separate. but the tanakh points to a future figure who would uniquely converge all three into one person:

- the prophet like mosheh: (deuteronomy 18:15-19)
- the priest like malki-tzedek: (psalm 110:4)
- the king from david's line: (isaiah 9:6-7; jeremiah 23:5-6)

the threefold mashiach at the heavenly door:

this convergence is the essential requirement for solving the complete problem of sin.

- as the prophet: he alone perfectly reveals the father's heart and the full standard of righteousness. he calls us to true *teshuvah* and exposes the unintentional sins we could not see ourselves. he is the ultimate word of elohiym.
- as the king: he has the authority to judge, to rule, and to enforce the covenant. his victory over sin and death (binding the "strong man") conquers the powers that hold humanity captive. his reign ensures the eternal application of his work.

- as the priest: this is the core of his present ministry. as the high priest of the heavenly tabernacle from the order of malki-tzedek, he applies the final purification for our unintentional defilement. his own perfect, righteous life, the life of a sinless, obedient human, is the offering, his own life/blood witness that secured his office to be that high-priest to us. he is both the offeror and the offering. becoming that priest he could take the strongman captive (unrighteous blood/life's from abel to cain – bound with the long chain (isa 49:24-26; matt 12:28-29 (also found in mark 3:27 and luke 11:21-22); luke 10:17-19; Col 2:13-15; heb 2:14-15; rev 20:1-3) and after judgement they were casted back to earth (lake of brimstone and fire) because it's not the blood of the righteous that cleanse the sins in one day against the earth but the blood of the unrighteous (num 35:33-34; ps 58:10; prov 21:18).

when he said, "no one comes to the father except through me" (john 14:6), he was speaking as the heavenly priest at the door. to approach the set-apart elohiym, one must go through the door of the heavenly tabernacle. and standing at that door is the mashiach himself, fulfilling all three roles:

1. as prophet, he declares you clean based on his word.
2. as priest, he applies the purification based on his sacrifice.
3. as king, he welcomes you into his eternal kingdom.

part 6: the mind-blowing conclusion & the final answer

the inescapable jewish problem:

modern judaism has a profound problem. it is not a lack of repentance (*teshuvah*). the problem is a catastrophic lack of a functioning, biblically mandated priesthood.

- since 70 ce, there has been no altar.
- there has been no sacrifice.
- there is no priest to administer the atonement for *unintentional defilement* commanded in the torah.

therefore, even after a lifetime of repentance and a physical death that pays for rebellion, every soul stands at the heavenly door, defiled by a lifetime of unknown errors, with no priest to declare it clean. the system is incomplete. the problem of defilement remains entirely unsolved by earthly means.

the stunning revelation:

יהוה never intended the temporary aaronic system to be the final answer. he always planned to send his own anointed one, the mashiach, to be the complete and final solution to the problem judaism cannot solve: the final purification from the defilement of unintentional sin.

he is not just a priest; he is ha'mashiach, the anointed one:

- the prophet who guides us into all truth.
- the king who conquers our enemies of sin and death.
- the priest who eternally purifies us from all defilement at the heavenly door.

this is why the graves were opened after his sacrifice (matthew 27:52-53). the king had won the victory. the prophet had spoken the word of life. the priest had entered the heavenly set-apart place to begin his eternal ministry of purification.

no one needs to wait in a state of defilement anymore. the priest is now eternally at the door.

this is the heart of the transition from the temporary shadow to the eternal reality. the need for a priest is eternal. the question is not *if* we need one, but *who* that priest is. the torah itself demands it, and the mashiach alone fulfils it.