
The Ram of Calvary

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INTRODUCTION

The ram is a powerful image which spans, in one form or another, the scope of Jewish-Christian, Salvation, history. The image remained a constant and foundational icon spanning the Testaments. It is a fitting symbol for a people who began as semi-nomadic shepherds and found their completion in one who presents Himself as the “good shepherd”. Throughout the Bible, a ram is often seen as a symbol of strength, sacrifice, and leadership. Rams are often used as sacrificial animals, symbolizing atonement and obedience to God. In the Old Testament, rams were commonly used in sacrificial offerings, signifying the giving of one's best to God. These sacrifices were seen as a demonstration of devotion and obedience to God. Rams were frequently offered as sacrifices to God, particularly burnt or sin offerings in ancient times. These sacrifices were seen as a way to seek forgiveness for sins and to reconcile with God. The strength and power of rams also made them a symbol of leadership and authority in the Biblical context. The ram's appearance in prophetic visions, such as Daniel's vision of the ram and the goat in the Book of Daniel, represents the rise and fall of powerful kingdoms.

In Christianity, the images associated with the ram shifts with Jesus. The significance of the ram is closely related to the sacrificial death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. In the book of Genesis, God provided a ram as a substitute for Isaac in Abraham's ultimate test of faith. Abraham's actions are often seen as an act of substitution which symbolized God's provision and foreshadowed Jesus' sacrificial death as the ultimate provision for the forgiveness of sins. The symbolism of a ram in Christianity embodies the concepts of sacrifice,

determination, and leadership, reflecting the qualities of Jesus Christ and the Christian faith

Classicists have long pointed out that the Ram has been revered as a sacred animal in many cultures. In ancient Egypt, the Ram was associated with the sun god Ra. Rams were also worshiped by the peoples of Mesopotamia and Syria. In India, the Ram is considered to be a symbol of good luck. The Ramayana, one of Hinduism's most sacred texts, tells the story of Rama, an avatar of Vishnu who defeats the demon king Ravana with the help of his wife Sita and his brother Lakshmana. Also in Jewish-Christian tradition, Moses is said to have struck down two Rams when he was commanded by God to do so.

Likewise, in Greek mythology, the ram has been depicted as a symbol of leadership and authority in spiritual realms. In Greek mythology, the ram was a sacrificial animal, most famously in the tale of the Golden Fleece. This association with sacrifice and divine power further emphasizes its significance as a symbol of authority. The epic poem *The Odyssey* by Homer features Odysseus slaying a giant Ram in order to escape from captivity. Throughout history, the ram has been depicted as a symbol of authority and leadership in various cultural contexts, from ancient Mesopotamia to Celtic mythology. In art and culture, the ram is often used to represent spiritual and symbolic power, appearing in religious iconography and as a motif in architecture and decorative arts.

Most classicists argue that the ram symbol has its historical origins in ancient Mesopotamia, where it was associated with the god Enki, who was often depicted with ram horns. In Egyptian mythology, the ram was linked to the god Amun, who was often depicted with a ram's head. The Roman and Greek mythologies also featured the ram in various stories and rituals, most famously in the Golden Fleece legend and the tale of the god Zeus transforming himself into a ram. The ram has multiple cultural significances, representing strength, courage,

and fertility in many societies. It is also associated with power, authority, and masculinity, often depicted as a sacred animal in religious rituals and ceremonies. The ram symbol is interpreted in various ways in different cultures and belief systems. Some see it as a representation of sacrifice and redemption, while others view it as a symbol of protection and prosperity. The ram has also been revered as a symbol of leadership and assertiveness and a metaphor for renewal and rebirth. Moreover, the ram is linked to fertility and masculinity due to its association with the god of fertility in various mythologies. Its role as a protector of the flock further underscores its symbolism of strength and guardianship. The ram's connection to determination is evident in its ability to climb steep and rugged terrain, symbolizing the importance of perseverance and drive in overcoming obstacles.

BIBLICAL REFERENCES

Significantly, the image of the ram appears in key places throughout the Torah. The ram usually signifies good relations between the people and YHWH.

The image of the ram first appears in Genesis 22:12-13; **He said, “Do not lay your hand on the boy or do anything to him, for now I know that you fear God, seeing you have not withheld your son, your only son, from me.” And Abraham lifted up his eyes and looked, and behold, behind him was a ram, caught in a thicket by his horns. And Abraham went and took the ram and offered it up as a burnt offering instead of his son.”**

The substituted ram was seen as the usual “victim for holocausts”. The account seems to be an expression of a theological notion, that of YHWH will provide, rather than a true etymology.¹

¹ E. Maly, “Genesis”, *Jerome Biblical Commentary*, 1:23.

According to Jewish tradition, Isaac is over thirty years old at that time, and therefore he was capable of rejecting Abraham. However, Isaac was submissive to his father's action, just as Jesus was submissive to God. In this way, Isaac can be seen as the precursor of Jesus. The ram represents redemption. Together, they foreshadow the sacrifice of Jesus. The early Church Father Origen, does say that the ram illustrates the spiritual exegesis of the Old Testament whereby the ram and Isaac are seen as figures or types of Jesus Christ. Other Christian writers point out Abraham saw a ram caught by the horns, the symbol of its authority, in a thicket and sacrificed it in place of Isaac. Likewise, in the execution scenes in the New Testament we see Jesus being made to wear a crown of thorns.

Continuing the substitutionary role of the ram was Exodus 29:15; **“Take one of the rams, and Aaron and his sons shall lay their hands on its head.”** Priests, as part of their consecration, could lay their hands on a ram as a sign of transferring the sins to the ram, this is their substitute. Then they would offer the ram as a sacrifice.² Some authors also connect the idea of substitutionary atone with Leviticus 8; He is to cast lots for the two goats—one lot for the LORD and the other for the scapegoat. Aaron shall bring the goat whose lot falls to the LORD and sacrifice it for a sin offering. But the goat chosen by lot as the scapegoat shall be presented alive before the LORD to be used for making atonement by sending it into the wilderness as a scapegoat.” Aaron shall bring the bull for his own sin offering to make atonement for himself and his household, and he is to slaughter the bull for his own sin offering. He is to take a censer full of burning coals from the altar before the LORD and two handfuls of finely ground fragrant incense and take them behind the curtain. He is to put the incense on the fire before the LORD, and the smoke of the incense will conceal the atonement cover above the tablets of the covenant law, so that he will not die. He is to take some of the bull’s blood and with his finger sprinkle it on the front of

² J. Huesman, “Exodus”, *Jerome Biblical Commentary*, 1:63.

the atonement cover; then he shall sprinkle some of it with his finger seven times before the atonement cover. He shall then slaughter the goat for the sin offering for the people and take its blood behind the curtain and do with it as he did with the bull's blood: He shall sprinkle it on the atonement cover and in front of it. In this way he will make atonement for the Most Holy Place because of the uncleanness and rebellion of the Israelites, whatever their sins have been. He is to do the same for the tent of meeting, which is among them in the midst of their uncleanness. No one is to be in the tent of meeting from the time Aaron goes in to make atonement in the Most Holy Place until he comes out, having made atonement for himself, his household and the whole community of Israel. Then he shall come out to the altar that is before the LORD and make atonement for it. He shall take some of the bull's blood and some of the goat's blood and put it on all the horns of the altar. He shall sprinkle some of the blood on it with his finger seven times to cleanse it and to consecrate it from the uncleanness of the Israelites. When Aaron has finished making atonement for the Most Holy Place, the tent of meeting and the altar, he shall bring forward the live goat. He is to lay both hands on the head of the live goat and confess over it all the wickedness and rebellion of the Israelites—all their sins—and put them on the goat's head. He shall send the goat away into the wilderness in the care of someone appointed for the task. The goat will carry on itself all their sins to a remote place; and the man shall release it in the wilderness.³

In Exodus 29:22; **“Also you shall take the fat of the ram, the fat tail, the fat that covers the entrails, the fatty lobe *attached to the liver*, the two kidneys and the fat on them, the right thigh (for it is a ram of consecration).**

³ The Hebrew term is *Azazel*, while it has an unclear etymology it seems to mean something on the order of “to remove completely”. It is the only occurrence of the term, which seems to be a specialized use.

One ram is butchered and burnt as a sin offering (Exodus 29:19-20). We see the image of the ram being integral in the consecration of the Priests. The consecration used the fatty delicacies of the ram and constituted a ‘wave’ offering. In this procedure, the Priest elevated the choice parts to the altar of the Lord. Then the parts were lowered to signify that the Priests for their sustenance.⁴ Considered a “peace offering”, the wave offering is seen as a sign of good relations between man and YHWH. The breast of the animal is waved before YHWH and the right thigh is “heaved” before YHWH and goes to the Priests. The rest of the animal was to be used for a sacrificial banquet. It is to be eaten in one day, the rest is to be burned.⁵

In Leviticus 9:4, **“and an ox and a ram for peace offerings, to sacrifice before the Lord, and a grain offering mixed with oil, for today the Lord will appear to you.”**

According to McKenzie, “the symbolism of the peace offering is the fellowship of the sacrificial banquet. The offerers present the banquet to the deity, who in turn accepts it and invites the worshipers to dine with Him. This signifies the most cordial and friendly relations. The occasion for a peace offering is almost always a joyous occasion.”⁶

In Leviticus 16:3, the establishment of the Day of Atonement”, we see a very close tie between the animal world and Jesus; the scapegoat. We read; **“This is how Aaron is to enter the Most Holy Place: He must first bring a young bull for a sin offering and a ram for a burnt offering.”** The term used is אֵילִם, which is understood as “ram”, usually without defect or blemish. This is part of the ritual of the Day of Atonement. A powerful parallel between this ritual and the Cross is that both, the ram and Jesus, were brought to their execution by the hand of the High Priest. The priest brought the animals before the

⁴ J. Huesman, “Exodus”. Jerome Biblical Commentary, 1:63.

⁵ J.L. McKenzie, *Dictionary of the Bible*, (Chicago: Bruce, 1965) 756.

⁶ *Ibid.*, 757.

Lord and cast lots between the two goats – one to be a sacrifice and the other to be the scapegoat. The first goat was slaughtered for the sins of the people and its blood used to cleanse the Most Holy Place, the tent of meeting and the altar (v. 20). After the cleansing, the live goat was brought to the high priest. Laying his hands on the scapegoat, the high priest was to “confess over it all the wickedness and rebellion of the Israelites – all their sins – and put them on the goat’s head. He shall send the goat away into the wilderness in the care of someone appointed for the task. The goat will carry on itself all their sins to a remote place; and the man shall release it in the wilderness” (vv. 21-22). Symbolically, the scapegoat took on the sins of the Israelites and removed them (v. 10). For Christians, this is a foreshadowing of Christ. While the origins of the burnt offering are obscure, it seems that such rituals were acts of “supreme adoration”. They were offered at times of crisis and exultation.⁷ Jesus is described as the lamb without blemish or spot (1 Pet. 1:19) who has redeemed us by his precious blood. Scholars agree that the burnt offering was a solemn and sacred act of worship involving the complete burning of an animal on an altar. It held layers of symbolism and meaning for the ancient Israelites, representing complete surrender to God. Scholars have pointed to several purposes of the burnt offering; including demonstrating obedience to God, seeking forgiveness for sins, expressing gratitude, and overall dedication to strengthening one’s relationship with the divine. Furthermore, the burnt offering was unique in that it required the entire animal to be consumed by fire on the altar, symbolizing complete surrender and dedication to God. Only certain animals could be used for burnt offerings, including bulls, sheep, goats, turtledoves, and pigeons. The animal had to be without blemish, representing the pure and spotless nature of the offering. Ultimately, the purpose of the burnt offering was to establish a deep and meaningful relationship between the worshiper and God. It was a way of acknowledging God’s sovereignty and power, expressing gratitude and devotion,

⁷ McKenzie, *Dictionary*, 756.

seeking forgiveness and atonement for sin, and drawing closer to Him. Through the burnt offering, ancient Israelites sought to strengthen their connection with God and to demonstrate their faith and commitment.

These texts illustrate that the ram is an acceptable sacrifice before the Lord. The ram becomes a foundational sacrificial image from these early passages. The context of these references shows the importance of the ram, as only the choicest animals were used for sacrifice. Although these texts were hardly written in the same era, these traditions of the Torah give the ram a powerful, original, sanction in worship. It elevates the place of the ram in the Covenant.

The ram, as illustrated in these Torah texts, is depicted during the high points of the Covenant: Abraham, the progenitor; the establishment of the Priesthood, the officials of the Covenant; full ritual sacrifice, which established the relations between YHWH and His People. Therefore, the ram becomes a symbol of the Yahwist Covenant and faith. The Covenant was the rallying point for the people. Such a rallying point is also manifested by the *shofar*, which was a clarion call for Israel. The shofar is an ancient musical horn typically made of a ram's horn, used for Jewish religious purposes.

The commandment to sound the shofar is found in Leviticus: **“In the seventh month, on the first day of the month, you shall observe complete rest, a sacred occasion commemorated with loud blasts”** (Lev. 23:24), and in Numbers: **“You shall observe it as a day when the horn is sounded”** (Num. 29:1).

Although it may have been the practice to sound the shofar on every new moon, the specific commandment applies only to the seventh new moon. Aside from cessation of work and the bringing of specific sacrifices, this is the only Biblical commandment connected with Rosh Hashanah.

According to the Talmud, a shofar may be made from the horn of any animal from the Bovidae family except that of a cow, although a ram is preferable. Bovidae horns are made of a layer of keratin (the same material as human toenails and fingernails) around a core of bone, with a layer of cartilage in between, which can be removed to leave the hollow keratin horn. An antler, on the other hand, is made of solid bone, so an antler cannot be used as a shofar because it cannot be hollowed out.

It seems that the majestic curve of the horn and the power that is exhibited by the ram allows the shepherds of Israel to ascribe so many positive qualities to the ram. McKenzie writes;

“The horn is a common OT figure for strength and dignity. When one’s horn is raised one has achieved success, victory, or vindication. To have one’s horn lowered in the dust or cut off is to be defeated or to suffer loss of dignity and esteem. To gain strength is to acquire horns or to have a horn sprout (Ezekiel 29:21, Psalm 12:17). Great strength is signified by a horn of iron or the horn of the wild ox. Hence God can be called “my horn, my strength” (2 Samuel 22:3)”. The same imagery is found in the Magnificat, the song of Mary, in 1:69.⁸

Overall, the shofar has two main areas of importance; war and worship. In war it was used for signaling and by the watchmen. It was also a call to repentance, which seems to invoke the preparations formerly used by the Holy Warriors of early Israel. The war trumpet, according to scholars, seemed to have been more precise in instructing the warriors. Therefore, it would appear that the shofar was an instrument which served as a general summons. In worship, the shofar was looked to on the

⁸ McKenzie, *Dictionary*, 370.

Day of Atonement, warnings and judgements, celebrations for victories and blessings, and for royal coronations.⁹

In some instances, the horn also signifies salvation and redemption. Throughout the Bible, God's people are often portrayed as being saved or lifted up by His mighty horn. In Psalm 148:14 we read; "**And he has raised up for his people a horn, the praise of all his faithful servants, of Israel, the people close to his heart.**" A hymn of praise – creatures of earth invited to praise God- related to song of three children, benedicta, (Daniel 3:52-90).¹⁰ This is, perhaps, the highest function of the Shofar, as it shows the universal properties and authorities ascribed to the shofar. It comes into its fullness as a rallying point, and symbol, for all Israel. It is a summons and as Murphy argues, an invitation from the Lord.

The image of the ram is also used in **Daniel 8:3**, and this time, not as a sacrifice. The ram appeared in Daniel's prophetic vision, symbolizing two kingdoms that later came together to take down Babylon. The vision of Daniel, which involved a ram, signified strength and power. The ram is often associated with courage, strength, and determination. As stated above, during Daniel's vision of the two communities that will bring down Babylon, he saw a ram. This is a major reason why people view rams as a symbol of strength. Some communities also view rams as symbols of abundance and fertility because of their ability to have many offspring. Some cultures also view the ram as a symbol of masculinity.

Ezekiel 34:17, this verse is a continuation of chapter 31 where God is rebuking the leaders of Israel for their mistreatment of

⁹ I, Jones, " *Music and Musical Instruments*", Anchor Bible Dictionary, 4:936.

¹⁰ R. Murphy, "Daniel", Jerome Biblical Commentary, 6 vols 1:601.

The **Prayer of Azariah and Song of the Three Holy Children**, abbreviated *Pr Azar*,¹ is a passage which appears after [Daniel](#) 3:23 in some translations of the [Bible](#), including the ancient Greek [Septuagint](#) translation. The passage is accepted by some [Christian denominations](#) as [canonical](#).

the people. The scriptures use terms like “sheep,” “rams,” and “goats” as a metaphor for the different classes of people, and God promises to judge between them and hold each one accountable for their actions.

Jesus, through the centuries, has been associated with various images of special animals. Perhaps, the most famous image is the “lion of Judah” (Revelation 5:5). Jacob’s blessing to his sons begins this association, by extolling the ruling tribe as Judah and its leadership. The lion and lioness to depict strength and dominion. This passage unmistakably identifies Jesus Christ as the “Lion of the tribe of Judah; ” **Judah, your brothers will praise you; your hand will be on the neck of your enemies; your father’s sons will bow down to you. You are a lion’s cub, Judah; you return from the prey, my son. Like a lion that crouches and lies down, like a lioness—who dares to rouse him? The scepter will not depart from Judah, nor the ruler’s staff from between his feet until he to whom it belongs shall come and the obedience of the nations shall be his.”**

These words forge a connection between the Old Testament blessing of Judah and the person and work of Jesus Christ. The Lion of Judah is depicted as triumphant, alluding to Christ's victorious act of redemption through His death and resurrection. From a conservative biblical standpoint, the title "Lion of Judah" holds profound theological significance. Portraying Jesus as a lion highlights His power, majesty, and ultimate authority over all creation. It emphasizes His role as the King and the fulfillment of Old Testament prophecies regarding the coming Messiah from the lineage of David, who hailed from the tribe of Judah.

Adding to the power of this metaphor is that YHWH is compared to a lion in the way he roars against Israel and tears the enemies-known for boldness and ferocity. According to McKenzie, “the roar of the lion was a familiar and terrifying

sound in ancient Palestine. It preyed on flocks and herds, but it would attack a man.¹¹ Many other texts of the Bible reflect the regard in which this beast was held. Throughout the Bible Israel's enemies were described using the images of the power, speed, and ferocity of the lion. The lion is a "symbol of might" in Scripture.¹² The symbol of the leonine king of Judah is solidified by Proverbs 30: 29-31. Three beasts are mentioned that are seen to have been "stately of stride". The rooster and he-goat are mentioned for their contentious nature. However, the lion is the first beast mentioned and given the most detailed description. Some scholars have commented that the reference to "stride" connotes forthrightness and "the honesty of their behavior and their success". The lion depicts an "excellence [that] lies in their pride and confidence". The phrase "retreats from nothing" signifies "fearlessness". The lion represents the "unvanquished hero".¹³ The figure of the king is the climax of the text and the focus of the description. He is depicted as force that cannot be resisted. Such an image occurs again in Proverbs 20: 2 and 8. This powerful king is embodied in the person of King David, the unvanquished hero of Judah. King David completes the leonine traditions up to the monarchy and will be the foundation for the messianic line. In the person of David, we are now able to see the embodiment of leonine Judahite king. No longer is the image a foreshadowing of the power and ferocity of the lion cub, which is the tribe of Judah in Genesis 49. No longer are the lion and the hero paralleling each other, as in the Samson account. Now David sits on the Judahite throne, in Jerusalem, as the full grown and fearsome lion; the archetypical "lion of Judah". However, his authority still relies on YHWH, the original lion of Israel, who defends and admonishes the people. The Davidic Kingship was always to be charismatic (1 Samuel 16:13) and, therefore, established on the

¹¹ McKenzie, *Dictionary*, 513.

¹² Zondervan Encyclopedia of the Bible, Tenney, Tenney, ed. (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2009). 58..

¹³ J. Roskoski, "Lions of Judah", *AJBT* 15(18) 5/4/14. 7.

power and Spirit of YHWH.¹⁴ The similarities between the attributes of the lion and the ram are powerful and plain to see.

On the other hand, there is a stark, and contrasting, juxtaposition of the “Lion of Judah” with the “lamb” in Revelation 5:5 which completes the contrast of violent and gentle imagery. Yet, it combines the powerful imagery of the lion with the image of the lamb in a way that is reminiscent of Isaiah 11, the Peaceful Kingdom. The opposite images do not exclude each other, they complement each other. The scene depicted is a vision of “divine sovereignty” embodied in the Lion of Judah “who will reign on earth [and is] symbolic of earthly sovereignty”. Herein is further fulfillment of the words in Genesis 49:9. The lion is the most frequently mentioned animal in the Bible, it was an “emblem of strength, majesty, courage, and menace. . . It also was a symbol of intellectual excellence”. Heroes, Kings, and God Himself were described with the image of the lion. This is the “root of Jesse”, as foretold in Isaiah 11:1, and completion of the line of David. This is Jesus the Christ culminating the leonine traditions. No longer is it the cub, representing Judah, or the young lion paralleling Samson, or the fully grown lions slain by David. In each case the image of the lion is embodied in the heroic image, possibly, as a secondary aspect of the text. However, Jesus merges the image of the lion with the human embodiment and is the Lion of Judah. Moreover, Jesus is now fully identified with YHWH, the lion of Israel in the Old Testament. To Jesus is attributed all earthly and Divine sovereignty.¹⁵ [lions of Judah 10]

On the other end of the feline spectrum, from the lion, is an obscure connection between Jesus, Mary, and the Tabby cat. One way to approach this concept is by examining the qualities that Jesus is known for and how they could be represented by animals. For instance, Jesus is often described as loving,

¹⁴ Ibid. 8

¹⁵ Cf. J. Roskoski, “Lions of Judah”, AJBT (15 (18). 5/04/14.

compassionate, and protective of his followers. Similarly, cats are known for their affection towards their owners and their ability to hunt and defend themselves. This could explain why some people see cats as a symbol of these same qualities that Jesus possessed.

Another explanation for the cat/Jesus connection comes from early Christian art and literature. In some depictions, Jesus is shown holding a cat or with a cat at his feet. This could represent his dominion over all creatures, including those that were considered impure or unclean by Jewish tradition (such as cats). Perhaps, the most popular legend tells us as the baby Jesus shivered in the manger on the night He was born, a small tabby cat jumped into the humble crib to warm Him with its fur. Mary touched the little tabby cat to thank it for its gift of love and warmth, bestowing her initial “M” on its forehead. From that day on, every tabby cat bears the Madonna’s initial.

another animal that holds a special place in Christian tradition is the dove. In the New Testament, after Jesus is baptized by John the Baptist, the Holy Spirit descends on him “like a dove.” This event is seen as a symbol of Jesus’ divine nature and his mission on earth. The dove represents peace and purity, which are values that Jesus embodied and encouraged his followers to embrace. It’s no surprise that this beautiful bird has become a symbol of hope and faith for many people around the world.

Through the centuries many traditions, based on the Bible, have associated animals with Jesus. The fish symbol has been an integral part of Christian culture since its early days. Despite being used as a secret symbol by early Christians to identify themselves during times of persecution, it remains a powerful representation of abundance and salvation today.

Therefore, it is not demeaning or trivializing to connect Jesus with animals. According to John 1:3, all things were created through Jesus. It stands to reason that all which were created

through Him should share in His attributes. The qualities and properties of the world of animals reflects the wide spectrum of virtues and qualities exhibited by Jesus.

CONCLUSION

Perhaps, the animal that reflects and captures the majesty and authority, given to Jesus by Christians, might well be the ram. The ram is an image that ties together the two Covenants of the Bible in a way few images have done. While agricultural and warrior images abound in the pages of Scripture, the ram, with its majestic properties, often stands authoritatively in the background. It appears when needed and gives a strong generation for key moments throughout Salvation History.

From Abraham to the Cross, the ram seems to be a vital component in the completion of God's will, proximate or distant. In Genesis, the ram allowed the immediate sacrifice to take place and prefigured the sacrifice of Christ which established the New Covenant. Jesus was the Lamb of God, whose actions fulfilled Scripture and set the perduring effects of the Cross. The ram was the lynchpin in both contexts. Overall, the power and authority of the ram goes beyond the majesty of its curved horns. It derives from the effects of its manifestations and behaviors.

We suggest that Jesus is the true "ram of calvary". He went to the Cross as the subservient lamb of God but emerged from the tomb as the ram of calvary. As now the High Priest, Jesus assumed the role of power and leadership. He exerted authority over sin and death. He also took dominion over His flock. Naturalists agree that the ram possess a natural instinct to protect their flock from harm. Like the ram, He watches over the group diligently, ensuring the safety and well-being of each member. This nurturing quality makes them excellent leaders who prioritize the needs of others, qualities taught by Jesus. The Ram's natural instinct to protect its herd. The Ram is often

seen leading the flock. The ram is the most important member of the flock. If there is a ram in the flock, he usually leads. Like a shepherd leading their flock, the ram symbolizes strength and fearlessness. Rams possess a natural instinct to protect their flock from harm. They watch over their group diligently, ensuring the safety and well-being of each member. This nurturing quality makes them excellent leaders.

Perhaps, more importantly that which links the ram closest to Jesus is renewal. The ram is seen as a symbol of new beginnings. The ram will shed its old horns each year and grow a new set. These leadership and renewal traits of the ram make him an ideal symbol for new beginnings and leading the flock towards success. In Revelation 21:5, "Behold, I am making all things new." By His ministry, Cross, and Resurrection Jesus embodied this renewal. When He came forth from the tomb He assumed the role of the true ram, with all its properties of protection, authority, and leadership. With the Cross and Resurrection, the "Good Shepherd" becomes the Lamb of God, and with this triumphant return He becomes the full "Ram of Calvary". He unifies the flock, as does the animal. Jesus hints at this unification in John 10:16; **"And other sheep I have which are not of this fold; them also I must bring, and they will hear My voice; and there will be one flock and one shepherd."** He assumes a universal authority and leadership when He defeats sin and death. Calvary makes him the universal ram; the "ram of calvary".

With the Cross a powerful transition occurred. Jesus, the "good shepherd" went to His death on the Cross, as a lamb, in silence and meekness. He died, according to Roman Law, but emerged from the tomb in triumph over sin and death, illustrating His authority over all forces in the world, even sin and death. The lamb grew into the ram of calvary.

The ram is a fitting image for Jesus. Sheep represent tenderness, docility, and gentleness. Jesus offers connotations

of comfort and restfulness as well. While Jesus offers these qualities, He also embodies some of the distinctive qualities of the ram. Naturalists agree that the dominant ram is the leader of the herd, rams are often associated with leadership and guidance. Some even see the powerful curling horns of the ram as crown-like and representative of the ram's sovereignty. Such a description seems fitting for Christ Jesus. At calvary and the tomb Jesus assumes the sovereignty that is attributed to the ram. Jesus leads His flock fearlessly and watches over His flock ensuring the well-being of all. Jesus cares for each member of the flock. This is echoed by Jesus when He said, **"My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me"**. (John 10:27-28). It expresses personal intimacy between the shepherd and his sheep. The ram, in the wild, exhibits this intimacy and protection of his flock. Jesus calls his own sheep by name. That the shepherd calls the sheep by name, shows that the shepherd has a personal connection with the sheep. The shepherd leads them, providing direction and leadership – without *driving* the sheep. He leads as part of the flock, albeit the dominant figure. Jesus, like the ram, embodies "servant leadership". Servant leadership is a leadership philosophy in which the goal of the leader is to serve. The roots of the concept can be seen in Biblical texts. For instance, the Bible contains the following teaching of Jesus Christ: **"And Jesus called them to him and said to them, "You know that those who are considered rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them, and their great ones exercise authority over them. But it shall not be so among you. But whoever would be great among you must be your servant, and whoever would be first among you must be slave of all. For even the Son of Man came not to be served but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many."** (Mark 10:42-45).

Sheep are social animals and the flock is protected by the dominant rams. Jesus formed the flock around himself, but He protects His flock. Herein Jesus shows the juxtaposition of power and caring; key attributes of the powerful ram. Like the ram, the shepherd protects his flock from predators and

thieves. We see the protection in the words of David in 1 Samuel 17:34-36; **“But David said to Saul, “Your servant was tending his father’s sheep. When a lion or a bear came and took a sheep from the flock, I went out after it and attacked it, and I rescued *the sheep* from its mouth; and when it rose up against me, I grabbed *it* by its mane and struck it and killed it. Your servant has killed both the lion and the bear; and this uncircumcised Philistine will be like one of them, since he has defied the armies of the living God.”** Herein we see how violent the life of a shepherd can be in protecting his sheep.¹⁶ Therefore there is an internal consistency between the ram and the tools of the shepherd.

If we extend the metaphor between the ram and Jesus, we must focus on the majestic horns. Many authors have made connections between the curved horns of the ram and the crown of thorns which Jesus was forced to wear. Jesus wore the thorns on the way to calvary. From the tomb, Jesus donned the majestic curved horns which symbolized His new dimension of authority. Now, He can ascend to the right hand of God and lead His flock to the Kingdom.(Acts 7:55, Hebrews 12:2, and others).

The majestic horns of the ram, the crown of the ram of calvary, provides the rallying point for the flock. They are the symbol of protection and authority. Naturalists agree that sheep are flocking animals and find protection in the flock. The flock follows the dominant ram. The ram is part of the flock and protects it. In a real way, the ram leads the flock as would a shepherd. Therefore, a strong connection can be made to David. As the books of Samuel records and his psalms reflect, David was the progenitor shepherd of the messianic line, reaffirming Jesus as the son of David. Therefore, Jesus and the ram are linked through David. David was the penultimate ram,

¹⁶ The staff and the rod were both defensive and offensive weapons. The staff is a symbol of the protection of YHWH. The rod was the symbol of authority, guidance and protection.

and shepherd, who although was part of the flock of YHWH was also its chosen shepherd. He wore the crown of Israel and was her dominant leader as King. David was the **first ram of Judah**. His crown was the sign of the approval of YHWH, the blessing of YHWH, and the symbol of the forerunner of Jesus. Christians are the flock of Jesus. Jesus is the leader which gathers all flocks to Him (John 10:16). His authority is undeniable as calvary authenticates it. Jesus can be seen as our brother, part of the flock (Hebrews 2:11, Romans 8:29). Like the ram, Jesus has a complex role. Like the ram, Jesus is the role model. He leads to way for His brothers, as is written in Romans 8:29; **“For those he foreknew he also predestined to be conformed to the image of his Son, so that he might be the firstborn among many brothers.”** Paul’s language stresses the “divine interiority” of the process of salvation. Christians are to reproduce in themselves an image of Christ through a share in the risen Christ. This is aimed toward the final destination of glory for all men, all who will put their faith in Christ.¹⁷ As such, this mirrors the flock.

Furthermore, Paul saw a direct connection between the resurrection of Jesus and the sufficiency of his death to atone for our sins. When Jesus rose again on the third day, it was the public announcement that God was fully satisfied with the sacrificial death of his Son. In his resurrection, Jesus was vindicated (1 Timothy 3:16). But in his vindication, we are vindicated too. That’s why Paul says in Romans 4 that Jesus “was delivered up for our trespasses and raised for our justification” (Romans 4:25).

We've been given new spiritual life according to Ephesians 2: 6; **“And God raised us up with Christ and seated us with him in the heavenly realms in Christ Jesus.”** In Colossians 3, we're told since you have been raised with Christ, set your hearts and minds on things above. So, we're to have the

¹⁷J. Fitzmyer, “The Letter to the Romans”. Jerome Biblical Commentary, 2:317.

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perspective of people who have been spiritually given life. And more than that, we're to have actions as those who have new spiritual life. We're to clothe ourselves now in this risen life that we've been given in Jesus. As those who are raised in Christ, we are to live as risen people. This is the final destination to which the flock moves under the authority of the ram of calvary, Christ Jesus.

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I gratefully acknowledge the inspiration for this article, given to me by the silver coin, "The Ram of Calvary". It is a strikingly beautiful piece, with magnificent workmanship. It is offered by SD Bullion, a leader in numismatics. I offer my thanks to them. Reference used by permission.