

HEBREWS 9:24-28
IN RELATION TO THE BOOK OF LEVITICUS

The Epistle to the Hebrews, chapter 9, alludes to the Israelite high priests and their duties within the holy places of their tabernacle, which are described in the Book of Leviticus. In doing so, Hebrews employs several Greek verbs and nouns found in the Greek version of Leviticus. This brief overview suggests that the “sins of ignorance” in Leviticus, chapter 4, and elsewhere provide an interpretive backdrop to Hebrews 9. The chart below notes several Greek linguistic parallels between the two books.

Book of Leviticus	Epistle to the Hebrews
4:5 the anointed [χριστος, <i>christos</i>] priest	9:24 Christ [Χριστος, <i>Christos</i>]
5 into the tent of witness	24 has entered ... into holy places
6 before the LORD	24 in the presence of God
17 some of the blood	14 how much more will the blood of Christ
29-34 the sin offering [τῆς ἀμαρτίας, ‘the sin’](*)	26 to put away sin [τῆς ἀμαρτίας](*)
32 he shall bring [προσφέρω, ‘offer up’]	28 having been offered [προσφέρω] once
31 on the altar [σωτήριον, ‘salvation’]	28 to save [σωτηρία] those who are waiting
31 the priest shall burn [ἀναφέρω, ‘bear’] it(**)	28 to bear [ἀναφέρω] the sins of many(**)
33 kill it for a sin offering	27 it is appointed for man to die once
9:4 the LORD will appear [ὄραω, ‘will be seen’]	28 Christ ... will appear [ὄραω]
9:5 the congregation drew near and stood	28 those who are eagerly waiting for him

(*) The Hebrew Bible employs the same single word (חַטָּאת, *khattat*) for both sin and sin offering. The Greek Septuagint follows this pattern by employing the same word (ἁμαρτία, *hamartia*) for both sin and sin offering. Thus, in Hebrew 9:24-28, it remains legitimate to take ‘sin’ to mean ‘sin offering’. In that case, one might ask if ‘to take away sins’ means to eliminate sin offerings, and if the phrase ‘bear sins’ means to bear sin offerings.

(**) The Septuagint version of Isaiah 43:12b reads, “He bore the sins of many, and because of their sins he was given over,” employing the same Greek words, as does Hebrews 9:28, for ‘bear’ (ἀναφέρω, *anapherô*), for ‘sins’ (ἁμαρτία, *hamartia*), and for ‘many’ (πολύς, *polus*).