

LEVITICUS

Sacrifices and Offerings

These slaves freed from Egyptian bondage were still in southern Arabia near Mt Sinai being instructed in God's ways, learning to depend upon Him while being organized into a nation. During this time specific instructions were given regarding sacrifices and offerings as their worship to God. There were burnt offerings, sacrifice of animals for sins and peace offerings of thanksgiving and praise.

The instructions were very specific and involved active participation by the one making the offering; e.g.:

- a) his animal sacrifice was to be without blemish,
- b) he brings it to the entrance of meeting,
- c) he lays his hands on the head on the offering for it to be accepted as an atonement offering and
- d) he kills it.

Aaron's sons are to; a) throw blood on the sides of the altar, b) flay the offering, c) place it on the altar, and d) arrange wood for the fire. There are also specific offerings and sacrifices for the atonement of unintentional sins of the priests, the congregation as the whole, and the common man. Other acts, failure to act, or failure to promote justice by not testifying, require specific sacrifices for atonement.

Any deviation from what was specified was not acceptable. However, the one making the offering had a choice as to the animal selected; e.g., livestock, sheep, goat, or bird. But it was to be without blemish, not weak or sickly. (Leviticus 1 – 7)

Key Points from Sacrifices and Offerings

- Offerings to God under the Covenant made by God through Moses were personal for the offeror and his family.
- He actively participated in his worship until the priest completed the offering.
- When Christ came and offered His body without the stain of sin, He also gave specific instructions. Man is to offer himself to God to have the stain of sin removed by burial into Christ's cleansing blood – immersion also referred to as baptism - and resurrected by God from their burial and then placed in Christ's Body. (Romans 6)

Old Covenant Priest

After giving specific instructions for sacrifices and offerings, God gave instructions about priests' purification, their garments, the ephod, breastplate, Urim, Thummim, and turban. The formula for making incense was given by Moses for burning on the altar of incense. Coals from the fire of the altar were put into censers with incense and then taken inside the veil before God's presence.

“Now Nadab and Abihu, the sons of Aaron, each took his censer and put fire in it and laid incense on it and offered unauthorized fire [fire not from the altar of incense] before the Lord, which he had not commanded them. And fire came out from before the Lord and consumed them, and they died before the Lord.” (Leviticus 10:1-2) God had specified.

In the Covenant given by God through Moses priests served by offering sacrifices for atonement for His people. In the Covenant given by Christ, He offered himself as the sacrifice and His people are priests to serve Him. (Leviticus 10:8-10)

Key Points from Old Covenant Priest

- Sin has consequences and man is in need of forgiveness.
- Under the Law of Moses sin offering and burnt offering sacrifices were animals brought by the people, place their hands on it, kill it, and give to the priest.
- Under the covenant brought by The Son of God, Christ was and is the only atoning sacrifice, sin offering, for the people.

Health, Cleanliness and Purification

The attention of the Children of Israel is now directed to living together as God's children. Again, God gives specific instructions about food they can or cannot eat, cleansing after childbirth, and treating of people with diseases, especially leprosy. These regulations were to keep a new nation of people healthy while learning to be free from taskmasters and foreign rulers.

Since Noah knew about clean and unclean animals (Gen 7:1-10), this distinction was part of an ancient tradition that antedated the Mosaic Law. Whether a creature was "clean" or "unclean" had nothing to do with the quality of the beast; it all depended on what God said about the animal. When He gave these laws, no doubt the Lord had the health of His people in mind (Deuteronomy 7:15; Exodus 15:26), but the main purpose of the dietary code was to remind the Israelites that they belonged to God and were obligated to keep themselves separated from everything that would defile them. "Be holy, for I am holy." (The Bible Exposition Commentary) In Christ's new covenant, the clean people have had their sins washed away by the blood of Christ. The unclean are people still stained with sin.

Key Points from Health, Cleanliness and Purification

- Rules for sacrifices, purifications, and healthy living are specified.
- To many of the Israelites, these rules may have been unreasonable. But they were God's commanded and not following them resulted in being put outside the camp - ceasing to be included as His people.
- Today many people consider commands given by Christ unreasonable. But they are Christ's commands and by not following them one is left out of the eternal presence of God.

Day of Atonement

Requirements were given for the annual Day of Atonement. Failure to comply resulted in death. These commands were strict to impress holiness before God. They included the cleansing, a ceremonial washing, and the ritual attire of the priest before entering the place of God's presence, the Most Holy Place with His Mercy Seat. God must be highly respected, honored, and praised by man's actions.

Annually specific offerings and sacrifices were made for the priest and for the people. One significant offering was not a blood sacrifice, the priest laid his hands on a goat transferring the sins of the people to the goat which was taken far outside the camp and released carrying their sins into the wilderness. (Leviticus 16) Sins were not forgiven but transferred – delayed until Christ offered the perfect sacrifice, His own body to God.

Key Points from the Day of Atonement

- Their sins were not forgiven but Placed on a goat to be carried away.
- Once a year the High Priest was to make an atoning sacrifice for his and the sins of the people and enter into the Most Holy Place in the presence of God with the blood of the atoning sacrifice.
- Forgiveness would occur much later by the perfect sacrifice of the sinless Son of God, Jesus Christ. He took. His blood sacrifice cleansed those faithful under the Old Covenant and will cleanse everyone who hears his message of reconciliation, understands it, puts his trust in Him, and obeys.