

The Levitical Sacrifices

As the Old Testament and Jewish tradition taught that the object of a sacrifice was its *substitution* for the offender, so Scripture, and the Jewish fathers also teach that the substitute to whom all these types pointed was none other than the Messiah. -Edersheim

I. Introduction

- A. Israel's priests, *emerging from exile*, didn't *invent* the... sacrifice — they **inherited ... and codified** it to express their renewed covenantal identity.
- B. We cannot talk about Leviticus without the larger context in which it resides, the entire Bible. And we cannot talk Bible without thinking about the covenant of God and our identity in it.
- C. N.T. Wright vs William Lane Craig of "The Righteousness of God."
- D. The Levitical Law was part of a covenant with God which God drew up.
 - 1. Leviticus 24:8 "an everlasting covenant"
 - 2. Leviticus 26:2 "You shall keep My Sabbaths and reverence My sanctuary: I *am* the LORD."
 - 3. Leviticus 18:19 "All the heave offerings of the holy things, which the children of Israel offer unto the LORD, have I given thee, and thy sons and thy daughters with thee, by a statute for ever: it *is* a covenant of salt for ever before the LORD unto thee and to thy seed with thee."

II. **The Day of Atonement** —one God, moral holiness, covenant identity, The Day of Atonement — was distinctly Israelite.

- A. "one God" -
 - 1. Exodus 20:3 "Thou shalt have no other gods before me."
 - 2. Christianity and Islam are monotheistic but come later. They derived their monotheism from Moses.
 - 3. Akhenaten—Heretic Pharaoh [1350–1334 B.C.] Professor Bob Brier, Long Island University, says, "Akhenaten instituted monotheism. He declared, "There is no god but

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Aten,” a stunning statement in a world of polytheistic religions.”

- B. “moral holiness” A.I. is not able to distinguish between these two words but we can. Lightfoot said of Paul’s letter to the Philippians,

.. THOUGH THE GOSPEL IS CAPABLE OF DOCTRINAL EXPOSITION, THOUGH IT IS EMINENTLY FERTILE IN MORAL RESULTS, YET ITS SUBSTANCE IS NEITHER A DOGMATIC SYSTEM NOR ETHICAL CODE, BUT A PERSON AND A LIFE.

- C. “covenant identity” Identifying with Christ is covenantal. Our identity also is centered in the New Covenant in Christ’s death and Resurrection.
1. Philippians 3 :20 “our citizenship is in heaven...”
 2. Ephesians 2:6 “raised *us* up together, and made *us* sit together in the heavenly *places* in Christ Jesus,”
 3. Galatians 2:20 “Christ lives in me; and the *life* which I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself for me.”
- D. An everlasting covenant. Each Covenant, with Adam, Noah, Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Moses, David, Us in Jesus, was a continuation and fulfillment or implementation ultimately of the previous one. So it is one covenant. The Old is swallowed up in the new. The New is the Old revealed.
1. With Adam it was the promise of crushing the serpent [Genesis 3:15] which was accomplished in Christ.
 2. Noah Genesis 9:16 the rainbow its token. And how is this covenant extended in the next or related to the previous?
 - a) It was an everlasting covenant with “all flesh” not just Noah. He would no longer punish mankind but provide forgiveness through Christ embracing that punishment instead.
 3. With the Patriarchs it was the promise of including all nations by Faith as Abraham’s descendants—you and me.
 - a) Romans 4:11 “And he received the sign of circumcision, a seal of the righteousness of the faith which *he had while*

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still uncircumcised, that he might be the father of all those who believe, though they are uncircumcised, that righteousness might be imputed to them also,”

4. With David it spoke of an eternal Kingdom
 - a) Isaiah 9:7 “Of the increase of *His* government and peace There will be no end, Upon the throne of David and over His kingdom, To order it and establish it with judgment and justice From that time forward, even forever. The zeal of the LORD of hosts will perform this.”
5. And with Moses,, the Law was a shadow of good things to come - through Christ. [Hebrews 10:1].
 - a) We do not study Leviticus because it's law. We study it because it's Christ!

III. The Atonement in the Blood

- A. Christ atoned for our sins. [Romans 3:25]. I am not sure we, as believers, know what that means! We are not asked to comprehend it, only accept it, by faith, realizing that now a love relationship with Christ is our new life in Him.
- B. Rabbinic teaching maintains that whenever the blood touches the altar [having been sprinkled on the horns of the altar of burnt offering] the offerer is atoned for. The Atonement was made *first* in the shed blood being sprinkled or applied to the altar, then *after that* the offering was placed on the altar.
 1. Edersheim points out the *difference* in the Levitical sacrifice: “The common idea that the burning ... of the sacrifice pointed to its destruction and symbolized the wrath of God and the punishment due to sin does *not* seem to accord with the statement of Scripture.” The atonement was satisfied in the *shed blood* not the sacrifice.
 2. Dr. Edersheim went on to contend that “The term used [for the sacrifice] is not commonly employed for burning, but means more at ‘causing to smoke,’ and the rite symbolizes partly the surrender of the sacrifice, but chiefly it's acceptance on the part of God.”
 3. Leviticus 1:9 “...a burnt sacrifice, an offering made by fire, of a sweet savor unto the LORD”
 4. There is nothing punitive in this language but the sweetest fragrance to God of a Savior in total surrender to the Father's plan.
- C. Leviticus 16:27 “And the bullock *for* the sin offering, and the goat *for* the sin offering, whose blood was brought in to make atonement in the holy *place*.”
- D. What was required at Calvary was the shedding of the Savior's blood.

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1. *Hebrews 9:12, 22* "...by his own blood he entered in once into the holy place, having obtained eternal redemption *for us*. ... and without shedding of blood is no remission."
2. *Romans 3:25* "Christ was God appointed for an atonement through faith in His blood."
- E. The single exception was permitted when poor people could not afford even a pigeon or dove for sacrifice. Meal was allowed.
 1. *Leviticus 5:11-13* "But if he be not able to bring two turtledoves, or two young pigeons, then he that sinned shall bring for his offering the tenth part of an ephah of fine flour [almost 3 pounds] *for a sin offering [not a gift]*; he shall put no oil upon it, neither shall he put *any* frankincense thereon [it is not a joyous occasion] ... it *is* a sin offering. And the priest shall make an atonement for him as touching his sin that he hath sinned in one of these, and it shall be forgiven him...."

IV. Pagan Sacrifices

- A. What is most remarkable is that: we have in *Leviticus* details God gave Moses that are not found in the rituals of both tribal and national sacrificial systems. They lacked the ingenuity or imagination that might suggest a common origin. There is no evolutionary process here but a God who gave Moses a distinct and well-planned out system of sacrifices along with specific details because they shadowed Christ's death.
 1. *1 Corinthians 5:7*: "Christ our passover is sacrificed for us:"
 2. *John 1:29* "Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world."
 3. *Hebrews 10:1* "the law having a shadow of good things to come, *and* not the very image of the things, can never with those sacrifices which they offered year by year continually make the comers thereunto perfect."
- B. Pagan sacrifices were reciprocal because the person for whom the sacrifice was given, the suppliant, now expected, in return, something from the god to whom the sacrifice was given. Human sacrifice, as well, appears in myth, legend, sacred texts, and history. Scholarship calls this a contractual arrangement that obligated the deity.
 1. Artemus an Agamemnon

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**OUR RELATIONSHIP WITH CHRIST IS MUTUAL; NOT
RECIPROCAL; RELATIONAL, NOT TRANSACTIONAL;
COVENANTAL, NOT CONTRACTUAL; FREELY OFFERED, NOT
OBLIGATORY. GRACE NOT WORKS, PRAYER NOT DEALING**

C. Pagan Sacrifices were substitutionary in which the animal died in exchange for the supplicant's life to appease the ire or wrath of some god or gods.

1. Pagan gods required worship

- a) But in Exodus 25:2 God spoke of the supplicant giving "willingly with his heart" Levitical Sacrifices must be given willingly.
- b) Pagan gods contended jealously for human attention, not to confuse our God's "zeal" with a jealousy, that is hurtful and vengeful.
- c) In the language of Scripture zealous and jealous are the same word. The first is driven by love, the later, a selfish interest. The gods in a polytheistic system are always vying for supremacy and power and the servitude of the devotee. Our God seeks reconciliation and a relationship with us.
- d) In classical Greek it might carry the sense of *appeasing the anger of a deity*.
 - (1) We need to look closely at Jerome's word introduced into our Bible from the Latin: *propitiation*, the idea of a propitiatory offering or Christ as a penal substitution.
 - (2) But here, we note only that there is much, much, more to the Levitical system sacrifices and put together as one divine idea pointing to Christ we begin to see more of love than wrath in His death.

2. Pagan sacrifices represented a cultural structure employed through ritual to teach and support social compliance and obedience to law.

- a) Karl Marx called religion "the opium of the people."
- b) Religion can give a society or group of people a separate identity for which they might be willing to die to defend and maintain.
- c) Professor McClymond explained, "in which priority is given to issues of practice, observance, and law, and notions of tradition-identity are delineated primarily in terms of ethnic and cultural categories that reflect the *non-missionary character* of these traditions."
- (1) The "good-news" of Jesus' death is a missionary proclamation, a life changing message and not a means to culturally integrate

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or unite a people or to define their moral behavior or control them.

3. A primary use of the sacrifice in paganism is for discerning the will of the gods through divinations—strictly forbidden by the Lord in our Old Testament.
 - a) Deuteronomy 18:10-11: “There shall not be found among you *any one* that makes his son or his daughter to pass through the fire, *or* that uses divination, *or* an observer of times, or an enchanter, or a witch, Or a charmer, or a consulter with familiar spirits, or a wizard, or a necromancer.”
 - b) The High priest was given the Urim and the Thumim, I submit that these also symbolized Christ’s mediation since the ‘U’ is the first letter and the ‘T’ the last in the Hebrew alphabet: the Alpha and the Omega.
 - c) 1 Timothy 2:5 For *there is* one God, and one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus.
 - d) We have the Spirit to guide us, Romans 8:14: “For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God.”

CHRISTIANITY IS THE ONLY “RELIGION” WITH A DOCTRINE THAT SPECIFIES ATONEMENT IN THE SAVIOR’S BLOOD, AN END TO SIN, RECONCILIATION WITH GOD, AND THE NEW COVENANT WRITTEN NOW ON THE HEART AND NOT IN RITUALIZED PRACTICES.

SO WHEN JESUS CONFIRMS THAT A HEART-FELT BELIEF IN HIS DEATH AND RESURRECTION IS THE ONLY PATH TO GOD AND ETERNAL LIFE [JOHN 14:6] IT IS NOT AN ISOLATED THOUGHT BUT A TRUTH PROCLAIMED WITH EVERY LEVITICAL SACRIFICE.

V. Levitical offerings

- A. Exodus 25:9 According to all that I shew thee, *after* the pattern
- B. One sacrifice requires a male offering and another a female offering.
- C. Some offerings must be completely sacrifices whole and others became food for either the officiating priest, his family or the offerer and his family.
- D. There are separate offerings for trespassing and sinning,
 1. The sin offering for to address our sinfulness [sinful nature] in general [the person] whereas
 2. The trespass offering addressed the sin or a specific trespass itself.

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- a) The sinner says, I am a sinner whereas the trespasser says “I have sinned.”
- 3. The offering specified in Isaiah 53:11 is the *trespass* offering [an offering for sin] and the lamb in verse 7 [a lamb before her shearers] is female.
- 4. Both only atone in the case of real repentance!
 - a) Hebrews 10:3 “a remembrance of sins”
- E. For private and public offerings,
- F. For different occasions.

VI. Their meaning

- A. And there are 7 basic reasons for the Levitical offerings, none of which are in common with any reason for pagan or tribal sacrifices.
- B. **The Burnt Offering:** Adoration or love for God. The sacrifice of devotion and service [Leviticus 6:8-13; Romans 12:1],
 - 1. The entire offering was burnt on the Altar: “it shall not be eaten. [Leviticus 6:23]. The fire must never go out. [Leviticus 6:12]
 - 2. Always preceded by the sin-offering first and followed by the peace offering.
 - a) Exodus 32:6 offered burnt offerings, and brought peace offerings
 - b) Leviticus 5:9-10 And he shall sprinkle of the blood of the sin offering upon the side of the altar;... it is a sin offering. And he shall offer the second for a burnt offering, .. and the priest shall make an atonement for him for his sin which he hath sinned, and it shall be forgiven him.
 - c) Leviticus 6:12 And the fire upon the altar shall be burning in it; it shall not be put out: and the priest shall burn wood on it every morning, and lay the burnt offering in order upon it; and he shall burn thereon the fat of the peace offerings.
 - d) Leviticus 9:3-4 And unto the children of Israel thou shalt speak, saying, Take ye a kid of the goats for a sin offering; and a calf and a lamb, *both* of the first year, without blemish, for a burnt offering; Also a bullock and a ram for peace offerings, to sacrifice before the LORD; and a meat offering mingled with oil: for to day the LORD will appear unto you.
 - e) Leviticus 9:22 And Aaron lifted up his hand toward the people, and blessed them, and came down from offering of the sin offering, and the burnt offering, and peace offerings.
 - f) Leviticus 14:19 And the priest shall offer the sin offering, and make an atonement for him that is to be cleansed from his uncleanness [leprosy] and afterward he shall kill the burnt offering:

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3. An ascending offering known for its aroma [smoke] and not the burning. Exodus 24:5 “for a sweet savor [a soothing, restful aroma] before the LORD”
4. The only offering non-Israelites [Gentiles] were allowed to bring brought with or without the Peace offering. [All was consumed on the altar]
 - a) Leviticus 17:8 Whatsoever man *there be* of the house of Israel, or of the strangers which sojourn among you, that offers a burnt offering,
5. Always a male animal and only given voluntarily—not required.
 - a) Leviticus 1:3 f his offering *be* a burnt sacrifice of the herd, let him offer a male without blemish: he shall offer it of his own voluntary will at the door of the tabernacle of the congregation before the LORD.
6. Always salted with salt: Leviticus 2:13 with all thine offerings thou shalt offer salt.

C. **The Sin Offering:** Desire for reconciliation with God [Leviticus 5:1-13],

1. Both Trespass and Sin offerings are for sins done in ignorance and *not* presumptuously, brazenly and knowingly [not the same as with intent]. For a sin done knowingly there is no atonement but “a certain fearful looking for of judgment and fiery indignation, which shall devour the adversaries.” [Hebrews 10:27]. Sins committed:
 - a) through want of knowledge
 - b) unintentionally
 - c) through weakness
 - d) at the time not realizing guilt.
2. The blood was sprinkled and not thrown as with the Burnt, Trespass, and Peace offerings.
3. Leviticus 10:17 “the sin offering in the holy place, seeing it *is* most holy, and *God* hath given it you to bear the iniquity of the congregation, to make atonement for them before the LORD”
4. The Sin offering was offered on festive occasions for the whole congregation. This was never the case with the Trespass offering [Compare Numbers 28 & 29].
5. The sin offering was never a ram.
 - a) “He [Jesus] is the goat when He bears our sins; He is the ram when He restores what Adam lost.” — Origen, Hom.
 - b) Leviticus. 6.3-6 “And he shall bring his trespass offering unto the LORD, a ram without blemish out of the flock, with thy estimation, for a trespass offering, unto the priest:”

D. **The Trespass Offering:** The Need for forgiveness of a specific sin [Leviticus 5:14-19; Isaiah 53:10].

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1. Always offered by an individual and never offered for the entire congregation nor the priesthood. It is offered for a single sin to make restitution.
2. The only time this offering is *not* a ram is when the vow of a Nazarene was broken: Numbers 6:12
3. Every wrong against another is a wrong done against the Lord [Psalm 51:4 “Against thee, thee only, have I sinned,”].
4. Edersheim noted: “The offering for certain trespasses covered five distinct cases, which had all this in common, that they represented a wrong for which a special ransom was to be given.”
 - a) The animal was always a male, usually a ram, symbolizing the offerer’s decisiveness and intent to confess their sin and seek to be restored to fellowship with God.
 - b) A ram:
 - (1) Leviticus 5:15 “a trespass ... through ignorance, in the holy things of the LORD...”
 - (2) Leviticus 6:2 “If a soul commit a trespass against the LORD, and lie unto his neighbor ... or has deceived his neighbor....”
 - (3) Leviticus 19:20 “whoever lies carnally with a woman, that *is* betrothed to [another]...”
 - c) A male lamb
 - (1) Leviticus 14:12: Offered upon being pronounced clean of leprosy.
 - (2) Numbers 6:12 when a Nazarite touches a dead body.
 - d) There could be no substitutes.
5. The Trespass offerings represents the ransom for a special wrong, the Sin offering symbolized general redemption.
 - a) Public sins offerings [made for the congregation] were always male animals, whereas private sin offerings offered by a single person were always female—except in the case of the high-priest or a ruler [Leviticus 4:3 & 22].
 - b) *Varying* sin offerings as opposed to fixed.
 - (1) for lepers [Leviticus 14:21].
 - (2) In childbirth Luke 2:24; Leviticus 12:2].
 - (3) In witnessing, to conceal what they know [Leviticus 5:2].
 - (4) For bearing false witness
 - (5) Unwittingly eaten what was consecrated for the Lord or the priests only or entering the Temple ceremonially unclean.
 - c) Neither oil or frankincense were brought with a sin offering. There is nothing “joyous” about it. Edersheim reminds us “it represented a terrible necessity, for which God, in his wondrous grace, had made provision.”
 - d) There were different sin-offerings:

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- (1) The bullock offered on the Day of Atonement for the entire congregation was the highest kind of sin-offering [Leviticus 4:13-14].
- (2) A kid [male] of the goats was offered at festivals and New Moons and also if a ruler sinned [Leviticus 4:23; 16:5; Numbers 28:15; 29:5].
- (3) The female goat for individual sin offerings [Leviticus 4:28; 5:6].
- (4) A Ewe lamb for the Nazarite or leper [Numbers 6:14].
- (5) Turtle-doves and pigeons offered at certain purifications [Leviticus 12:6; 15:14, 29; Numbers 6:10].
- (6) In extreme poverty, only for the sin offering, a meal offering substituted [Leviticus 5:11-13].

E. **The Peace Offering:** Thanksgiving to God [Leviticus 7:11-12; Revelation 3:20; Psalm 51:17],

1. A public peace offering, as on the Day of Pentecost, was “most holy” In 1 Kings 8:63 120,000 sheep were offered.
2. Private peace offerings were given as thanksgiving or were vowed but always voluntary—not required. Leviticus 6:12, 16 “the sacrifice of thanksgiving ... offering *be* a vow, or a voluntary offering”
3. Edersheim calls this “a free gift of a loving heart” Exodus 25:2; 35: 29 “every man that giveth it willingly with his heart ... a willing offering unto the LORD, every man and woman, whose heart made them willing....”

F. **The Meal Offering:**A Desire for Fellowship with God

1. [Leviticus 2:11-13 “No meal offering, which ye shall bring unto the LORD, shall be made with leaven: ... every oblation of thy meal offering shalt thou season with salt; neither shalt thou suffer the salt of the covenant of thy God to be lacking from thy meat offering:”
2. Accompanying the Burnt and Peace offerings but never the Sin or Trespass offerings.
3. Private meal offering:
 - a) Each morning and evening offered by the High-priest [Leviticus 6:20 “the offering of Aaron and of his sons,”].
 - b) At the consecration of a priest. [Leviticus 6:20].
 - c) Offered in place of a lamb for the sin offering when the offerer was too poor to afford a blood sacrifice. [Leviticus 5:11-12 “he be not able to bring two turtledoves, or two young pigeons,”]

G. **The Drink Offering:** Devotion to God- Always accompanied the Meal offering.

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1. Exodus 29:41 And the other lamb thou shalt offer at even, and shalt do thereto according to the meat offering of the morning, and according to the drink offering thereof, for a sweet savor, an offering made by fire unto the LORD.
2. Numbers 15:5, 7 "...wine for a libation, a fourth of the hin [a quart] thou dost prepare for the burnt-offering ... a sweet fragrance to Jehovah"
3. Philippians 2:17 I am poured forth upon the sacrifice and service of your faith, I rejoice and joy with you all

H. **The Incense Offering:** A Desire for Communion with God and prayer
[Exodus 3:1-10; Revelation 5:8]