

Leviticus & Hebrews: The Necessity of the Cross

Lesson 2: Acceptance Through the Cross

Key Verse: "If his offering is a burnt offering from the herd, he shall offer a male without blemish. He shall bring it to the entrance of the tent of meeting, that he may be accepted before the LORD." ~Leviticus 1.3

Indifference¹: lack of interest, concern, and sympathy; apathy about/toward, oblivious to, nonchalance about, boredom with, unresponsiveness to, lack of enthusiasm about. Synonyms: detachment, aloofness, distance, coldness, passionless, callousness. Our study of God's legal commands this week reveal His attributes as *antonyms* to indifference: attentive, heedful, care of, consideration toward. Far from the law revealing God as cruel, He is revealed as **accessible**. Even more, His initiation of the law reveals His regard, care, safe keeping, and superintendence of His people. Every imperiled animal once used as a vicarious **substitution** of the worshipper exposed humanity's desperate need for a superior, permanent substitute.

Holy God, keep my mind open to learning about You through the technical nature of Your Law. Reveal to me the Love You have for me in the gruesome requirements of Your Law. Guard me from approaching Your word and instruction to Your people with repugnance, instead shifting my heart to understand the repugnance of my sin before my Holy God. May my act of worship unfold the eternal privilege of Your Majestic Presence through Your Son.

Leviticus 1.1-17 The LORD called Moses and spoke to him from the tent of meeting, saying, ² "Speak to the people of Israel and say to them, When any one of you brings an offering to the LORD, you shall bring your offering of livestock from the herd or from the flock.

³ "If his offering is a burnt offering from the herd, he shall offer a male without blemish. He shall bring it to the entrance of the tent of meeting, that he may be accepted before the LORD. ⁴ He shall lay his hand on the head of the burnt offering, and it shall be accepted for him to make atonement for him. ⁵ Then he shall kill the bull before the LORD, and Aaron's sons the priests shall bring the blood and throw the blood against the sides of the altar that is at the entrance of the tent of meeting. ⁶ Then he shall flay the burnt offering and cut it into pieces, ⁷ and the sons of Aaron the priest shall put fire on the altar and arrange wood on the fire. ⁸ And Aaron's sons the priests shall arrange the pieces, the head, and the fat, on the wood that is on the fire on the altar; ⁹ but its entrails and its legs he shall wash with water. And the priest shall burn all of it on the altar, as a burnt offering, a food offering with a pleasing aroma to the LORD.

¹⁰ "If his gift for a burnt offering is from the flock, from the sheep or goats, he shall bring a male without blemish, ¹¹ and he shall kill it on the north side of the altar before the LORD, and Aaron's sons the priests shall throw its blood against the sides of the altar. ¹² And he shall cut it into pieces, with its head and its fat, and the priest shall arrange them on the wood that is on the fire on the altar, ¹³ but the entrails and the legs he shall wash with water. And the priest shall offer all of it and burn it on the altar; it is a burnt offering, a food offering with a pleasing aroma to the LORD.

¹⁴ "If his offering to the LORD is a burnt offering of birds, then he shall bring his offering of turtledoves or pigeons. ¹⁵ And the priest shall bring it to the altar and wring off its head and burn it on the altar. Its blood shall be drained out on the side of the altar. ¹⁶ He shall remove its crop with its contents and cast it beside the altar on the east side, in the place for ashes. ¹⁷ He shall tear it open by its wings, but shall not sever it completely. And the priest shall burn it on the altar, on the wood that is on the fire. It is a burnt offering, a food offering with a pleasing aroma to the LORD.

Diamonds: In Lesson 1, we studied the result of sin's entry into God's creation (Questions 2 and 3). As a storyline, Leviticus begins to resolve the crisis created in Genesis 3. God's creation in Genesis 1 is a type of tabernacle while the Garden of Eden is a quintessential holy of holies, "the place with the most intimate fellowship and communion with YHWH God."²

Genesis 2.6, 10-14 provides geographical evidence that the Garden of Eden was elevated above other geographical features in God's creation, or on a mountain. The picture created by Genesis 2 is of a waterfall originating from God's mountain, whose mist rises while water flows downward, dividing into four rivers that water the whole earth.

Adam and Eve's dramatic and heart-crushing expulsion down from God's presence on His mountain created an existential question: How can we get back up to God's presence? How can we ascend His mountain, entering His presence? This existential question was passed down through the earliest generations of humanity because man could not fulfill the answer to this problematic question.

1. How do you see God answering early humanity's existential question beginning in Leviticus 1?

God initiates our theological education in the journey of ascending to His Presence with this first act of worship. To paraphrase revered American Rabbi, Jacob Milogrom, God's revelation of His theology is "embedded in [Levitical] rituals."³ Using both tactile and kinetic learning strategies, God reveals His desire for you to become a theologian!

The ascension offering "may have represented the core, and perhaps even summation, of the entire sacrificial system...The ascension offering was unique in that the entire animal (apart from its skin), rather than just a portion of its meat and fat, was consumed on the altar's fire and transformed into a pleasing aroma, conveying the idea of full consecration."⁴ The ascension ritual involved 6 rites⁵:

1. The presentation rite: "...an Israelite's public worship at the tabernacle would begin by presenting for the officiating priest's inspection the animal to be sacrificed."
2. The hand-leaning rite: dubbed the *sēmikâ* rite; "...the worshipper lays his hand on the animal's head, pressing down upon it heavily...The result of this gesture, therefore, is that the animal now stands as the vicarious substitute for the worshipper, with the specific end of...presenting the Israelite before God, reconciled and accepted."
3. The slaughter rite: "...the Israelite himself would ritually slaughter the animal by cutting its throat...The inescapable consequence of the worshipper's own sinfulness is death – there can be no atonement apart from death...the worshipper himself is 'dying' through the animal's death, accepting its judgment and being delivered through it...God must be approached through death."
4. The blood-manipulation rite: "The slaughtering technique...ensured the maximal drainage of blood from the animal's body. Precisely here, in collecting and manipulating the blood, the priest's labor would begin in earnest, dashing, tossing, scattering, sprinkling, daubing, or pouring out the blood...While the slaughter rite signifies death to self, it is critical to understand the blood rite in relation to [the worshipper's] own life...the blood therefore symbolically conveys the offering up of one's (blameless) life to God."
5. The burning rite: "The burning rite transforms the animal's flesh into a 'pleasing aroma', transporting it to God's heavenly abode as the smoke *ascends* from the altar."
6. The communion rite: "Upon ascending into the heavenly abode of God, the Israelite enjoys the hospitality of the house of God...In the Bible, God Himself is seen to be the model for what it means to be a host. When brought into YHWH's house, through the way He has opened, the worshipper is treated as a son [or daughter] and prince."

2. What is God teaching you about His nature through the rites of this first sacrificial offering, or worship?

For a moment, join an Israelite family in preparing for the hope of ascending into God's Holy Presence: The animal you could afford to raise was bred specifically for his unblemished potential. Every day you fed, watered, sheltered, and protected his parents until he was born. Even his birth was guarded against the cruel vulnerability of a newborn animal before its host of predators. Every time you heard something unusual outside of your tent, you leaped into

¹ Google docs in application dictionary

² Morales, pg.51

³ Morales, p.126 footnote referencing Milogrom (1991:42)

⁴ Morales, p.123

⁵ Morales, pgs.125, 127-130, 133, 137-138

action, prepared to slay anything threatening this very special livestock. Every time your family and friends passed by this animal they wondered aloud why it is penned separately from all the others. Your answer is always, "This one is for the LORD."

Finally, after a few weeks, or a few months (depending on the species of livestock), this highly protected animal is delivered to the priest. The priest's inspection of your livestock offering is as charged as the eye of a Houston Livestock Show and Rodeo judge. And just as rodeo livestock is critically judged for something of life-changing importance, scholarship money, so too is the priest's examination of the offering you are bringing before a Holy God.

"One should not overlook the pastoral opportunities at this point of presentation. A priest might notice, for example, the slightest indication of disease in the eye of an otherwise healthy-looking animal, but that would nevertheless render the animal dead within months. Was the worshipper seeking to approach God without cost, under the delusion that God could not search the heart? Or had the worshipper been careless in choosing the animal, so as to overlook its inevitable death (a scenario manifesting no less spiritual indolence)? Neither would it take much creativity to imagine the sorts of bribes a priest might entertain to turn a blind eye to unfit animals, nor the abuse a faithful priest might endure in being zealous for God's honor amidst a corrupt and wayward generation. In the post-exilic era, after the temple had been rebuilt, YHWH rebuked the priesthood for offering defiled food on His altar, and admonished the people for failing to reverence Him in worship: see Malachi 1.6-8. One's approach to God is the surest dissection and deepest revelation of the heart."⁶

3. Remembering that this sacrifice is also an act of worship, how do you see worship revealed in the ascension offering?

The ascension offering is the most costly of all the Levitical sacrifices. Its significance is elevated because of its use twice in Genesis: first by Noah after the resolution of the floods (Genesis 8), and secondly by Abraham whom God told to offer up his son, Isaac, as an ascension offering (Genesis 22).

4. Why do you think the ascension offering is the most costly of the Levitical sacrifices? Which rite(s) of the ascension offering help you understand the costliness of the ascension offering?

Deity: Accessible~ (Leviticus 1.3, 10, 14) defined as capable of being reached; easy to speak to or deal with; capable of being used or seen; capable of being understood or appreciated: capable of being influenced.

We studied the intimacy of God's relationship with Adam and Eve while living with Him in the Garden of Eden (Lesson 1). Knowing that His sinful people, and His now sin-marred creation, would never be able to commune with Him, God pursued accessibility with His people, first through the covenants He made with the patriarchs and the Hebrew people.

God created accessibility to Himself through the law of sacrificial offerings. Such offerings, or acts of worship, atoned (redeemed) the sins of the worshipper so that His priests could intercede before God on His people's behalf. The

⁶ Morales, p.126

diversity of species God allows to be presented to the priest reveals His accessibility to every social class, occupation, and economic circumstance. We find the same truth in Jesus' accessibility to every social class, occupation, and economic circumstance. This is what made Jesus so controversial, as well as so sought after.

5. Read Matthew 11.28. Write down the first 3 words Jesus says:

6. According to Matthew 11.28, what does Jesus exchange for the burdensome nature of religious rituals, striving to provide for yourself (and others), and the pursuit of God's favor while in this world?

"The point in saying that Jesus is lowly is that He is *accessible*. For all His resplendent glory and dazzling holiness, His supreme uniqueness and otherness, no one in human history has ever been more approachable than Jesus Christ. No prerequisites. No hoops to jump through... The minimum bar to be enfolded into the embrace of Jesus is simply: open yourself up to Him."⁷

7. Using several translations, recount how Jesus characterizes Himself in Matthew 11.28-30:

God is now accessible in the most intimate way possible, by His Spirit living within every believer. Whenever you pray, He hears you (Luke 11.13; John 14.26; Ephesians 2.18-22; Hebrews 4.16).

Doctrine: Substitution~ (Leviticus 1.4) "The work of Christ was a work of substitutionary sacrifice, in which the Savior bore the penalty of sin in the place of sinners (1 Peter 2.24); it is a work of propitiation, in which God's wrath against sin is fully satisfied and exhausted in the person of our substitute (Romans 3.25); it is a work of reconciliation, in which the alienation between man and God is overcome and peace is made (Colossians 1.20, 22); it is a work of redemption, in which those enslaved to sin are ransomed by the price of the Lamb's precious blood (1 Peter 1.18-19); and it is a work of conquest, in which sin, death, and Satan are defeated by the power of a victorious Savior (Hebrews 2.14-15)."⁸

However, the hand-leaning rite, or *sēmikâ* rite, in the Levitical instruction of chapter 1 does not involve the transfer of sin. The transfer of sin is specifically reserved for the exiled scapegoat on the Day of Atonement. The *sēmikâ* rite is performed in other ceremonies such as appointing successors and consecrating the Levites in which there is no transfer of sin (Numbers 8.10; 27.18, 23; Deuteronomy 34.9). "More importantly, once Israel's sins are symbolically transferred to the scapegoat, it is *not* sent into God's Presence in the holy of holies, but rather away from His face, outside of the camp of Israel and into the wilderness as a place of chaos and death."⁹ In contrast, the animal used for the ascension offering enters inside God's presence on behalf of the worshipper.

Portions of Levitical instructions become self-evident, or assumed, in an effort to keep the integrity and intention of the offerings in focus. This pattern is first seen in the instruction of the *sēmikâ* rite on the herd offering (V 4). The instruction to likewise lay a hand on the sheep, goat or a bird offering is assumed based on the first practice for the herd offering. Unlike the rite on the Day of Atonement, "...the sacrificial animal is still regarded as blameless and holy after the hand-leaning gesture... The blameless animal is not merely a substitute for the worshipper, but rather a *vicarious substitute*. The Israelite's *sēmikâ* gesture, leaning his hand heavily upon the animal's head, is 'a dramatic declaration that he is this animal, that it is taking his place in the ritual'. Unable to ascend God's holy mountain of himself, the Israelite will ascend *through* his blameless substitute – the *sēmikâ* rite establishes this necessary identification".¹⁰

⁷ Ortlund, p. 20

⁸ MacArthur, p. 519

⁹ Morales, p.128

¹⁰ Morales, p.129

8. How does the doctrine of substitution reveal the necessity of God's law?

9. How does the ascension offering reveal His Love for you, *and* for all His people?

Your Scripture-Soaked Prayer: As you studied this week, what verse(s) lit up like a neon sign as you read them? What passage or thought remains in the forefront of your mind? Write it out here, using it to pray. Even if it seems like the verse cannot be used as a prayer, try it. After all, God is accessible!

MacArthur, J. & Mayhue, R., *Biblical Doctrine*, A Systematic Summary of Bible Truth (Wheaton, Illinois: Crossway, 2017)
Mathews, Kenneth A., *Leviticus: Holy God, Holy People*, Preaching the Word (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2009) pgs.17-34
Morales, L. Michael, *Who Shall Ascend the Mountain of the Lord?*, (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2015) pgs.15-143
Sklar, Jay, *Leviticus*, Tyndale Old Testament Commentaries (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2014) pgs. 85-95

Lecture Outline:

Aim: A holy God demands our costly consecration to Him.

- I. The Selection (Leviticus 1.1-4, 10, 14) **TR1:** A holy God demands our whole-hearted obedience to Him as Lord of our lives.
 - a. How complete or incomplete is your obedience to God?
 - b. Who or what keeps you from whole-heartedly obeying God's commands?
 - c. Who or what do you consider more precious than the LORD God Almighty?
- II. The Sacrifice (Leviticus 1.5-9, 11-13, 15-17) **TR2:** A holy God demands the costly crucifixion of the desires of our flesh.
 - a. Which desires of your flesh need to be crucified?
 - b. Beginning today, what will you do differently to live completely surrendered or consecrated to God?