



SESSION 2 - THE TORAH (Part 1)

GOAL OF CLASS

To understand how the Law of Moses points to Christ and how it is relevant to us today.

Session 2 - Goal

Understanding how the Torah (Law) functioned within the OT Covenant with Israel and what it foreshadowed. This session will focus on the laws about the worship of Israel.

Session 2 - Assignment Questions

- How does God's covenant relationship with us relate to the Laws that He gives to us today?
- From Exodus 40, what stands out to you at the end of the chapter?
- From Leviticus 4-7 & 16-17, if you lived in ancient Israel, how would these laws make you feel? How do you imagine the sight of all these things impacting you?

STOP & PRAY: Pray Psalm 119:18



CLASS ROADMAP

To get us started in this session, I'll briefly recap where we were in the last session, then describe where we are in today's session in God's big story of redemption, and let you know where we're going.

Where we went

In our first session, we took a broad overview of Genesis and Exodus. We looked at God's promises to the patriarchs, first given to Adam and continued through Abraham. That promise was that a seed would be given to deliver people from their sins and that God would make a nation for himself out of the offspring of Abraham. Then we looked at God's

covenant with His people, Israel, through Moses in Exodus. They were that nation that God made for Himself from Abraham. He did this by saving them from their bondage in Egypt and giving them His covenant that laid out His relationship with them.

So, we saw that even in the OT, God's relationship with His people was NOT legalistic. That is, the Laws He gave them were not how they earned a relationship with Him or how they became His people, but rather were given because they were His people already!

"The pattern established in the Mosaic covenant, which is redemption followed by obedience, functions as a type or pattern for New Testament believers. Believers have been redeemed through the work of Christ, and they respond to his saving mercy with grateful obedience. Such grateful obedience, under both the Mosaic covenant and the new covenant established by Jesus Christ, is not legalistic, for there is no idea that such obedience earns or merits salvation under either the old covenant or the new. The obedience of believers flows from faith and is a thankful response to God's saving work in Christ.

(Tom Schreiner, 40 Questions about Christians and Biblical Law, pg 26)

Where we are

At the end of Exodus - we have a problem: God is holy, Israel is not. How can they then enter a holy God's presence? They had erected the Tabernacle exactly as God instructed them, but in Exodus 40:34-35 we read:

"Then the cloud covered the tent of meeting, and the glory of the Lord filled the tabernacle. And **Moses was not able to enter the tent of meeting** because the cloud settled on it, and the glory of the Lord filled the tabernacle."

When we read this, we should be taken back! Israel just spent all that time and careful effort skillfully building this beautiful tent of meeting where their God who saved them from Egypt was to meet with them, and the mediator - Moses - cannot enter it! TRAGEDY! What are they to do? This situation sets up the context for the next book - Leviticus.

Leviticus deals with how God graciously provides a way for people to live in His presence. Note that in the very first verse it tells us that,

God speaks to Moses FROM the tent (cf. Lev. 1:1)

The Holy God is about to give His people what they need to enter His presence.

Where we're going

Today we're going to look at God's Law in His covenant with Israel as it pertains to how they were to worship Him. **It concerns how sinful Israel can approach and enter the presence of their Holy God.**

Israel's worship was primarily centred around the Tabernacle (and later the Temple). It involved priests, sacrifices, feasts and purity rituals. The majority of the instructions about the Tabernacle is found in the latter half of Exodus, and the majority of the instructions about the worship that happens in and around the tabernacle is found in Leviticus. These are the two major sections of scripture we'll be dealing with today.

There is way too much material to get into everything thoroughly today - so we will focus particularly at the Tabernacle and sacrifices, and do a broad overview of the feasts, purity rituals and priests.

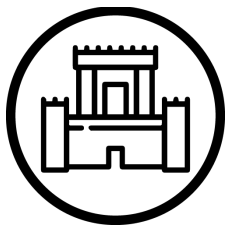
THE WORSHIP OF ISRAEL

In your assignments, you would have watched a Bible Project Video that summarized the message and structure of Leviticus. Today, we will look at one more video to help us summarize it, and then we'll dig into the laws concerning the five aspects of Israel's worship: the tabernacle, sacrifices, feasts, priests, and purity.



Video: The Book of Leviticus (6:30)

1. The Tabernacle & Temple

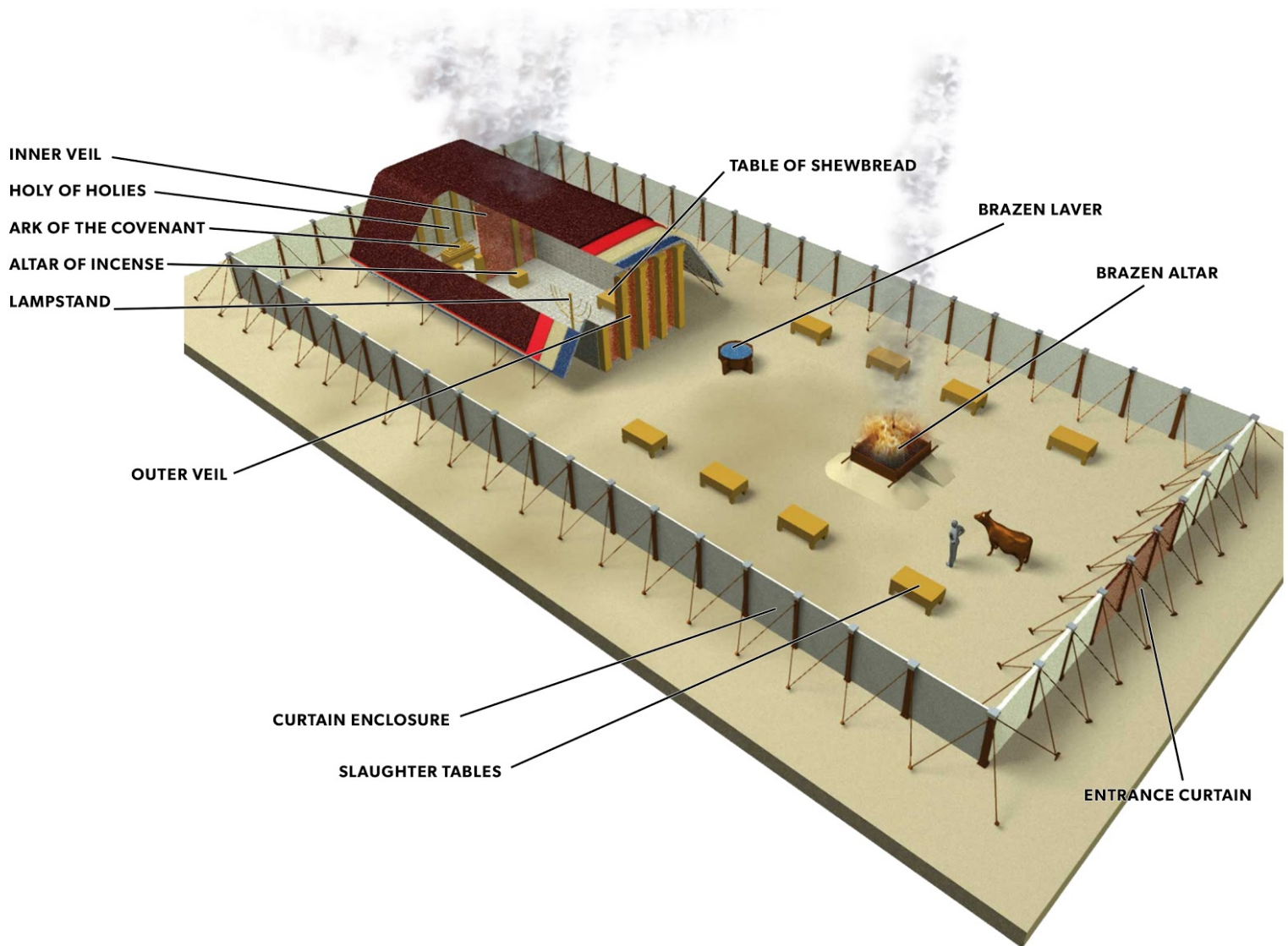


The Tabernacle is also called 'the tent of meeting'. In the wilderness wanderings, Israel worshipped at the Tabernacle - which was a sort of 'portable church' setup. When they finally entered and settled in the Promised Land, they were commanded to make a more permanent structure - the Temple. Much of the symbolism from the Tabernacle is carried over to the Temple later on. While we don't have time in this

class to go over the Temple thoroughly, by looking at the Tabernacle, we can then understand the later symbolism of the Temple.

The Israelites in the OT did not have to try to imagine the tabernacle - it was right in their faces! The people could watch the priests enter into the tabernacle, they had heard about what was there, they could watch the animals being sacrificed and smell the blood and hear the sounds of bleating animals. **The messages it was meant to convey to them came through loud and clear to them, but for us, they seem distant and muddled because of the gap in time, culture, language, and distance.**

However, while we're at a disadvantage because we can't see these symbols firsthand, we also have an advantage over them - we have the New Testament which gives us the substance to which they pointed.



Features of the Tabernacle

- **Curtain Enclosure** - a fence made of fine linen supported by pillars with bronze bases and hooks.
- **Slaughter tables** - where animal sacrifices were prepared.
- **Brazen Altar** - (5x5x3 cubits) where sacrifices would be burned.
- **Brazen Laver** - for ceremonial washings.
- **Outer Veil** - made of blue, purple and scarlet yarn that granted access into the tent.
- **Golden Lampstand** - a symbol of the tree of life with seven oil lamps.
- **Table of Showbread** - the bread of the presence was placed on this table.
- **Altar of Incense** - (1x1x2 cubits) used to burn incense for certain rituals.
- **Inner Veil** - separates the holy place from the holy of holies.

- **Ark of the Covenant** - (1.5x1.5x2.5 cubits) symbolizing the presence of God containing the tablets of the Law.
- **Holy of Holies** - 10x10x10 cubit room.
- **Holy place** - 10x10x20 cubit room.
- **Inner Court** - 100x50x5 cubits.

The dimensions/measurements of the tabernacle become less and less perfect as you move away from the inner room. The Holy of Holies is a perfect cube. The outer room deviates from perfection by multiplying one dimension by two. The courtyard is less perfect as all three dimensions are different yet still have simple ratios to each other - expressing a limited balance and perfection. Also, the materials used communicated similarly - with gold and other precious materials used in the inner spaces, and gradually transitioning to lesser valuable materials in the outer spaces.

Israel's holy space was meant to communicate God's perfection to them. **It said to them that as you moved further away from God - you moved further away from perfection.**

Note also that the tabernacle itself is a sort of replica of the law - God's word given to them on 2 tablets of stone containing the 10 commandments. Many of the measurements are factors of 2, 5 and 10. **God's word sets the pattern for His worship.**

The Contrast with ANE Temples

Tabernacles or temples were a common thing in the Ancient Near East, and all the surrounding pagan cultures around Israel would have had their own temples. In some ways, Israel's temple was similar. For example, each temple is set up like a reflection of the cosmos - moving from spaces representing earthly realities where people dwell, to spaces representing heavenly realities where deity dwells. However, in many ways, Israel's tabernacle and temple were different to make a certain point and distinction from the surrounding pagan worship.

For example, one feature of every temple in the ANE was the installation of the image of the god they worshipped - an idol that represented the god's rule and presence in the holy place of the temple. However, in Israel's tabernacle, over the Ark of the Covenant, which was God's footstool - there was no image. **Israel worshipped the 'invisible God'** (Ex. 33:20). Also, instead of pagan worship where the people serve and feed the god through sacrifices and rituals to appease the god to bribe them to give favour, **Israel's God came to serve and provide for His people out of His gracious favour to them.** Thus Israel worshipped the same God that Paul described as the God who is not served by human hands, "as though he needed anything, since he himself gives to all mankind life and breath and everything." (Acts 17:25)

We will continue to look at how these differences from the surrounding ANE cultures stood out in Israel's worship in the Tabernacle in the following sections.

The Tabernacle's Foreshadow

"The earthly tabernacle was a copy or a shadow of the true dwelling place of God in heaven (Hebrews 8:5; 9:24). It showed what God was like and what was needed to deal with sin. In this way, it symbolized what the Messiah was to do for our salvation."

(Vern Poythress, The Shadow of Christ in the Law of Moses, 10)

While the shadow was not itself the real thing, it pointed to the real thing in how it was like it and what it communicated about it. God's people in the OT looked ahead through these shadows, longing for something better which would be fulfilled in the promises of God to send the Messiah. We'll get to this Messiah more specifically later in this class, but for now, let's look at the shadows God gave to the people in the OT through the visual symbols and organization of the temple and the sacrifices.

In pictorial form, God was saying, as it were, "Look at My provisions for you. This is how I redeem you and bring you to My presence. But look again, and you will see that it is all an earthly symbol of something better. Do not rely on it as if it were the end. Trust Me to save you fully when I fully accomplish My plans."

(Vern Poythress, The Shadow of Christ in the Law of Moses, 11)

A. God is King

We saw in the previous session that God's covenant with His people had similarities to the suzerainty treaties of the Hittite Kings in their time which they would have been familiar with. So, in His covenant relationship to Israel - God was communicating that He was their King. In the latter half of Exodus, we have the instructions concerning and description of the Tabernacle.

The tabernacle (and later the temple) was set up as an earthly mirror of God's throne-room. Like the Kings of the Ancient Near East (ANE), God's throne room had symbols of His power and the extent of His jurisdiction. For example, we find symbols of creation - artistic representations of pomegranates, almonds, lights and trees symbolized the Creation over which God was King. Also, there were symbols of His rule over His people - the covenant documents themselves (the 10 commandments) which were placed inside the ark of the covenant (Ex. 25:21). There was the ark - which was the approximate shape of an ancient king's footstool and symbolized God's ruling presence. There were 'palace guards' as it were also - outside the Holy of Holies on the thick curtain were images of the mighty cherubim that guarded the access to God (Ex. 26:1 & 31).

"The tabernacle is a renewed version of the Garden of Eden. But curtains with cherubim on them still bar the way into God's presence, just as cherubim barred the way into the original Garden of Eden after the Fall (Gen. 3:24)" (Poythress, 19)

B. God Dwells with us

Pagan worship in the ANE believed that certain locations had special sacred status as portals for the gods to traverse from the spirit realm to this world. So, before a temple was built, the sacred space had to be identified by some oracle or omen. Contrast this to Israel.

Israel was living in tents. So, God tells them to build a tent for Him to join them in the wilderness. God is not limited to some special sacred space because the whole earth is His! This tent was somewhat like their tents, but also different. It was majestic and beautiful. God was telling them through the tent of meeting - the tabernacle - that he was majestic and beautiful, but also that he was not just far off in heaven, but came down among them. God's tent would be side-by-side with them! Unlike the pagan temples which were often built far off or high up on a mountain, this God dwelt with and among His people.

Inside the tabernacle was the bread of the presence. In the ANE, sharing a special meal together was an act of friendship. The host undertook the task to serve and protect his guests as they enjoyed the meal. Thus, **God invited Israel to share a meal with Him and enjoy His protection.**

The altar of incense was used to burn sweet-smelling fragrance which would fill the whole tabernacle. This was to image the lavish hospitality of their Host. Life in the ANE was often accompanied by not-so-pleasant smells associated with hard labour and raising animals. So, hosts used incense to make a pleasant atmosphere for their guests on special occasions. The smoke of the incense also represented the pleasing scent that rose to heaven from Israel's worship - God smells and is pleased. This imagery is picked up again in Revelation 5:8 & 8:3 where the prayers of believers rise to God like incense - this is what our prayers are like to God.

C. God's inaccessibility and holiness

Though God's tent was among them, the laws about the tabernacle also communicated another side to the character of God - that He is holy and inaccessible to sinful people.

There was the altar, several coverings on the tabernacle, and two sets of curtains inside which barred the way into God's presence. Additionally, it communicated a separation between holy and unholy things. In addition to the curtains and veils to separate these spaces, the tabernacle itself didn't even touch the earth, but rather was rested on sockets or bases made of silver so that no part of its sides touches the courtyard. **It emphasized the separation of a Holy God and sinful people.**

On top of that, no one except the High Priest could enter the inner room called the Holy of Holies, and even he could only do it once a year in a special ceremony called the Day of Atonement (which we will come back to later). Death is the punishment for transgressors who violated God's holiness by approaching (see Exodus 19:12-13, 21-25). Even the priests might die if they did not rightly honour the Lord (cf. Num. 10:1-2; Lev. 22:9; 16:2; Exo. 30:21) - especially as they approach the inner rooms of the tabernacle. Even while the high priest was inside the Holy of Holies on the Day of Atonement, he must take care not to even see

the atonement cover while he performs his actions (cf. Lev. 16:13)! It was so dangerous a task, that later on, tradition tells us that they tied a red rope with a bell to the high priest's ankle as he entered, just in case the Lord struck him dead for entering unworthily so that they could drag him back out. Whether or not this tradition is true, we see that the laws concerning approaching the tabernacle communicated clearly to Israel God's inaccessibility to sinful people.

D. God's Salvation

As the priest went through the sequence of actions to enter the holy place, he would go through the symbols that represented the history of Israel's salvation by God from Egypt. First, they are delivered from bondage in Egypt by the sacrifice of the passover lamb - symbolized in the altar. Then, they pass through the Red sea, symbolized by the laver. Then they enjoy manna in the wilderness symbolized by the bread of the presence. Then they came to Mount Sinai where they encountered God's presence and heard His word to them - symbolized by the whole tabernacle and Holy of Holies.

Furthermore, there was one entrance to the courtyard, and likewise, **only one way into the tabernacle signifying that there is only one way into the presence of the Lord - the way that God Himself has provided.** This truth is picked up and reiterated again in the New Testament with Jesus declaring himself to be the greater tabernacle and temple - and he says of himself, "I am the way..." and in Acts 4:12, that salvation is found in no other name.

The tabernacle was a visual and experiential parable to the Israelites, reminding them of God's salvation. Likewise, in the NT, we have visual and experiential parables to remind us of God's gracious salvation of us in baptism and the Lord's Supper!

There is much more symbolism of the Tabernacle we could get into, but there is not enough time here. For that, I'll refer you to a resource at the end of this session that you can check out for a more in-depth look at these things.

2. Sacrifices



You would have seen in your readings from Leviticus that there were many different types of sacrifices in the OT law - and we're just scratching the surface! The word sacrifice comes up about 263 times in the OT alone. This theme of sacrifices in the OT law is a very important one for us to understand. We talked about how the tabernacle was a visual and experiential parable to God's people - likewise also, sacrifices were a part of this parable. Nancy Guthrie says,

"Sacrifice in the Bible, however, is the bloody reality of a bellowing animal being butchered on an altar. Imagine the sensory overload of this experience—the violent resistance of the animal, the spurting of blood, the feel of pulling the animal apart,

the smell of its burning flesh and bones. Imagine the emotional and spiritual impact of offering this sacrifice, knowing that it was your sin that made this death necessary. And imagine the frustration in knowing that you'll be back tomorrow or next week because you will sin again."

You may be asking yourself - why do we need to study these gruesome sacrifices if we no longer have to offer sacrifices today? **We should do so because they help us to understand how the work of Christ saves us from our sin since each sacrifice points to a different aspect of Christ's sacrifice of himself.**

Also, if we know the context of the other pagan nations of the ANE, we would realize that Israel's sacrifices stood out in that there are **NO commands for human sacrifice** like that of Molech and other pagan gods. The sacrificial system for Israel was a gracious gift of God to show them His provision for dealing with their sins.

Atonement

Before we continue, we must stop to understand a very important word: atonement. In order to understand the concept of sacrifices, we must understand the concept of atonement.

Atonement is:

"...the act by which God and man are brought together in personal relationship. The term is derived from Anglo-Saxon words meaning "making at one," hence "at-one-ment." It presupposes a separation or alienation that needs to be overcome if human beings are to know God and have fellowship with him."
(Baker Encyclopedia of the Bible, p.231)

Sin separates unholy people (us) from a Holy God. Thus, there needs to be some way to heal the separation - to atone for the sin.

"The biblical concept of atonement cannot be understood except in the context of the wrath of God against sin."
(Holman Illustrated Bible Dictionary, p.139)

Why is there separation between God and man? Because God is good and just. Because He is good and just, He must be wrathful against sin which distorts His goodness and perverts His justice. It is a right reaction for Him to be wrathful against that which maligns His goodness and justice because He is a Good Judge. So, how can a Holy God and sinful humanity be reconciled without compromising God's holiness and goodness, yet showing mercy and grace? Atonement is the only solution. **Only atonement fulfills God's just and holy requirements while also allowing Him to show mercy and grace to sinners.**

Thus, atonement was Penal, Sacrificial and Substitutionary.

- **Penal** - meaning it dealt with the penalty of sin.
- **Sacrificial** - meaning it involved the sacrifice of something.

- **Substitutionary** - meaning it was an innocent substitute taking the place of the guilty.

Types of Sacrifices

You can divide up the OT sacrifices into 2 categories, based on what they were meant to communicate:

- **Grain & Fellowship/Peace Offerings**- these were a way of saying "thank you!" to God.
- **Burnt, Purification & Restitution Offerings**- these were a way of saying "I'm sorry" to God.

You can also divide them into 2 categories of voluntary and mandatory sacrifices:

- **Voluntary** - Burnt, grain and peace offerings
- **Mandatory** - Sin & trespass offerings

Let's briefly look at each one.

A. Burnt Offering (Leviticus 1)

This was the most important sacrifice. It was offered once every morning and once every evening at most of Israel's festivals. It was a voluntary act of worship expressing devotion to God and used for atonement for unintentional sins.

It consisted of a bull, a bird or a ram without blemish. The meat, bones and organs of the animal were totally burnt up as unto the Lord. The hides/skins of the animals were given to the Levites to use or sell to support themselves.

The experience was meant to make an impression on the worshipper as he offered his sacrifice:

He shall lay his hand on the head of the burnt offering, and it shall be accepted for him to make atonement for him. 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. (Lev. 1:4-5)

First, he identifies himself with the animal by laying his hands on its head so that he knew that when the animal dies, it died for his sins. Neither the offerer nor the priests ate any of the meat of this sacrifice - unlike the other sacrifices, this one was wholly made to the Lord and fully burnt up. The total destruction of the sacrifice in the place of the worshipper showed him - that should have been you.

PURPOSE: This communicated that atonement was being made solely to God and the destruction that sin requires.

B. Grain Offering (Leviticus 2)

"Along with the burnt offering, offered twice each day, was the grain offering of fine flour, oil, frankincense, and salt, which expressed gratitude to God and served as a way of asking the Lord to remember the offerer with favor (Leviticus 2)."
(Nancy Guthrie)

The grain offering was accompanied by a drink offering of wine which was poured on the fire of the altar (cf. Num. 15:4-5). The priests were given some of this offering, but it had to be eaten within the tabernacle court. The worshipper didn't eat of this offering. The idea was to give back to God a portion of what He has provided to you.

PURPOSE: to express thanks for God's provision and unmerited favour/grace to the person making the sacrifice.

C. Fellowship or Peace Offering (Leviticus 3)

This was more than just a sacrifice - it was a festive meal. The bull, sheep or goat was shared by the Lord, the priests and the one making the sacrifice (cf. Lev. 3). The worshipper was even allowed to bring family and friends along to spend a couple days enjoying the feast in the presence of God at the tabernacle. Part of the peace offering given to the priests was called the "wave offering" because it was waved or lifted over the altar during the ceremony in celebration of the sacrifice that provided atonement.

In this offering, something unusual was done with the blood:

The priest shall dip his finger in the blood and sprinkle part of the blood seven times before the Lord in front of the veil of the sanctuary. And the priest shall put some of the blood on the horns of the altar of fragrant incense before the Lord that is in the tent of meeting, and all the rest of the blood of the bull he shall pour out at the base of the altar of burnt offering that is at the entrance of the tent of meeting. (Lev. 4:6-7)

This illustrated to the people that it was the blood that atoned for Israel's sin - it cleansed the tabernacle, the priests, the people and land from the defilement of sin. There was blood everywhere the worshipper looked - on the veil, on the altar, poured out - sin's effects were everywhere, and thus the blood of atonement had to cover everything.

Leviticus 17:11 says,

"For the life of the flesh is in the blood, and I have given it for you on the altar to make atonement for your souls, for it is the blood that makes atonement by the life."

Thus, all this visual imagery of blood told the Israelites in a vivid way that the price of sin required their life - "the wages of sin is death" (cf. Rom. 6:23) - but God provided a substitute to die in their place, that they might live.

Vow, thanksgiving and freewill offerings fall within the category of peace or fellowship offerings.

PURPOSE: to show the worshipper the joy of restored fellowship with God through His provision for atonement.

D. Sin or Guilt Offering (Leviticus 4)

This is sometimes seen as an atonement for unintentional sin (cf. Lev. 4:2-3 & 20) or as a guilt offering, removing the consequences for a lack of perfection (cf. Lev. 4:13-14 & 22-23). It contained elements of a Burnt offering, and elements of a peace offering. However, unlike the peace offering, the meal was not shared by the one offering the sacrifice.

PURPOSE: not only to atone for sins, but also to purify oneself for re-entering God's presence.

E. Trespass or Restitution Offering (Leviticus 5)

This offering required something beyond sacrifice - it required restitution to be made. The guilty sinner had to confess their sin publicly, offer the blood sacrifice, and also make full restitution of what was defrauded plus an additional twenty percent (cf. Lev. 5:16-17).

PURPOSE: it showed that true repentance cost something dear to the sinner.

Good News



Remember that the Israelites had seen the consuming nature of God on Mount Sinai. We saw the warnings in Exodus 19 & 20 about the people not approaching the holy mountain lest they be put to death.

“Now the appearance of the glory of the Lord was like a devouring fire on the top of the mountain in the sight of the people of Israel.” (Exodus 24:17)

Imagine being faced with the reality of THAT GOD dwelling in the midst of sinful people! How could they possibly survive if they scarcely could even approach Mount Sinai without fear of being consumed - how could they now that God was to dwell in the middle of their camp?

The sacrifices provided the answer to which God's people were to look:

“Imagine the expense of taking the best animal in your herd down to the temple in Jerusalem just to be burnt up. That was the animal that would have produced the best offspring, and it wasn't easy to give up. Imagine the time burden, especially if you didn't live in Jerusalem. You would have to travel and find a place to stay. Imagine the emotional or spiritual burden as you made this trek, knowing that you would have to identify and confess your sin to the priest in offering your sacrifice. But also imagine the burden rolling away. When you slit that animal's throat and watched it burn, and the priest declared your sin forgiven, imagine the sense of

relief you felt. You would think, It should be me. I am the one who deserves to die. But this innocent animal has become my substitute. This animal has died so I can live. This was good news." (Nancy Guthrie)

Repeated vs Once-for-all

This was the foreshadow of Christ that the people of the OT looked to for salvation. Just like us, they were not saved by their own works - but by looking to God's gracious provision of a substitutionary sacrifice to take their place.

If you're bored by all the repetitious descriptions in Leviticus 1-9 of how each animal sacrifice was supposed to be done, then - in a way - that's good! It goes on and on because it was meant to show that the process never suffices. Animals could never be an adequate substitute for humans. They were inadequate because the substitute was inadequate and they were repeated because even the unblemished animal was not sufficient atonement for sin. The years and years of repeated sacrifices was supposed to make the Israelites yearn for something to put an end to all this death. **It was supposed to make them long for God's final provision of a substitute - Christ Jesus - like a sheep who dies and like a high priest who presents the sacrifice. This final provision was described for them in Isaiah 53 as the Suffering Servant of the Lord.**

There are some theological systems which believe that one day God will restore the Jerusalem Temple and sacrifices will once again be offered. But this is a terrible idea and belief since it would be going backwards to the insufficient signs and symbols which pointed to Christ! God's intended way of salvation for all people has always been through His Son, Jesus Christ. Sacrifices have been done away because the once-for-all sacrifice has come. Now we are to bring sacrifices of prayer and worship (Heb. 13:15).



Video: Sacrifice & Atonement (6:00)

SIDE NOTE: Speaking in reference to bringing acceptable offerings, God says,

"So you shall keep my commandments and do them: I am the Lord. And you shall not profane my holy name, that I may be sanctified among the people of Israel. I am the Lord who sanctifies you, who brought you out of the land of Egypt to be your God: I am the Lord." (Leviticus 22:31-33)

Note that it connects bringing an unworthy offering to the Lord with the third commandment - profaning His Name. Bringing an acceptable sacrifice to God is the way God is sanctified (or shown as holy) among His people and how He sanctifies His people. Have you ever thought of this in regards to us today? Our sacrifice we bring is a sacrifice of

praise, worship, service, and prayer - but if we offer those in an unworthy manner, we profane God's Holy Name - we don't bring an offering that is worthy of the worth of God.

3. Feasts



The feasts tell the story of who Israel was, who God was to them and where He was taking them. They are also helpful to us in reminding us of God's salvation - past and future. The feasts often began and ended with a "Sabbath rest," and the Jews were commanded to not do any customary work on those days. Both the normal weekly Sabbath and the special Sabbaths that were to be observed as part of the Jewish feasts point us to the ultimate Sabbath rest, which is found only in Jesus Christ.

There were 7 major feasts that Israel was to observe:

1. Passover — Leviticus 23:4-8

Reminds them of redemption from slavery in Egypt. It was the time when the Passover Lamb was offered as an atonement to cover them from death (see Exodus 12). The Lord's Supper was a passover meal.

2. Unleavened Bread — Leviticus 23:6

Immediately followed Passover and reminded them of the time when they ate no bread in hastily preparing for their Exodus from slavery. Later, yeast is associated with evil (cf. 1 Cor. 5:6-8; Gal. 5:9) - so signifying removal of evil & sin.

3. First Fruits — Leviticus 23:10

Took place at the beginning of the harvest season on the 'third day' of Passover and expressed gratitude and dependence on God for provision. Reminds us of Christ being the 'firstfruit' of resurrection (cf. 1 Cor. 15:20) - being raised to life on the third day.

4. Feast of Weeks or Pentecost — Leviticus 23:16

50 days after the feast of First Fruits, (Pentecost - from Greek meaning 'fiftieth') it focused on gratitude for God sending the harvest. In the NT, Pentecost signals the sending of the Holy Spirit 50 days after Jesus' resurrection and we see then the harvest beginning with 3000 souls (cf. Acts 2) and continuing even until today.

These spring feasts remind us of God's work of salvation. In between them is a period of time without feasts - which signifies the age we live in today - the church age. The following feasts in the Fall signify what is to come.

5. Feast of Trumpets — Leviticus 23:24

This was a day of trumpet blast (cf. Num. 29:1) to commemorate the end of the agricultural and festival year and entering of a sacred season and was a solemn day

of rest. In the NT, this feast is associated with the Second Coming of Christ (cf. 1 Thes. 4:16), and the eternal rest we will enter into then.

6. Day of Atonement — Leviticus 16, 23:26-32

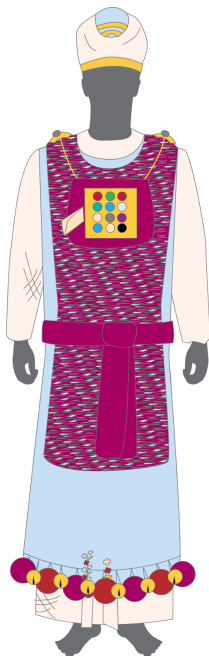
10 days after the Feast of Trumpets, this was the one day the high priest could enter the Holy of Holies to make atonement for Israel's sins. There was to be a reckoning of the sins of the people (on the Day of Atonement). We will look at and discuss this feast in our breakout session.

7. Feast of Tabernacles or Booths — Leviticus 23:34

5 days after the Day of Atonement, for seven days, the Israelites were to present offerings to God and live in tents or booths to remind them of their time in the wilderness when God 'tabernacled' with them. This feast was to be a week long celebration where God commanded them to "rejoice before the Lord"! (cf. Lev. 23:40-41) For us, God indeed 'tabernacles' with us through Christ (cf. John 1:14) and one day He will fully and eternally live amongst us again in the New Jerusalem (cf. Rev. 21:9-27).

The feasts ordered the yearly cycle of Israel's life with constant reminders of God's salvation, both what He had done and what He is going to do. Far from being a loathsome load to the Israelites, these Feasts were joyous celebrations to rejoice in God's salvation!

4. Priests



Because of Israel's sinfulness, they could not approach God directly - they needed a mediator. **This was the role of the priests - they were mediators between God and people.** Their priestly garments mirrored the materials of the tabernacle - and the priest was a sort of vertical replica of the tabernacle with a headband that reads "Holy to the Lord" corresponding to the Most Holy Place. They present the sins of the people to God for cleansing, and convey God's blessing to the people (cf. Num. 6:23-27). The priests were to carefully obey everything the Lord commanded and be set apart for this work.

It is the same with us today. We cannot, in our sinfulness, approach God. We need a Mediator. One who will perfectly fulfill God's commands and act on our behalf to atone for our sins. This is who Jesus is to us (cf. Heb. 7:26-28) - and we will see more about Jesus's priestly function in later sessions.

In the OT, we learn what the priest was supposed to do and be for the people. However, we also see their inadequacy. For example, Aaron himself was the one who made the Golden Calf and led Israel into idolatry (Exo. 32), and two of his sons are put to death by God for offering unauthorized fire on the altar (Lev. 10).

Over the years, Israel would have experienced that the priests die and must be succeeded by others in endless repetition. Furthermore, in Exodus 19:6, Israel was to be a kingdom of priests and a holy nation - something Peter picks up in the NT for us in 1 Peter 2:9. Yet they were unable to be that. **So, Israel should have longed for what their imperfect experience of priests pointed to.**

READ & DISCUSS - Leviticus 10

Let's take 15 minutes to take a look at the story of Nadab and Abihu and discuss it. The story is set in contrast to the story in chapter 9 of God accepting Aaron's sacrifice. So, spend some time looking at the differences between the two stories and reflecting on what we've talked about with regards to priests.

- Why was Aaron's offering accepted? (see 9:1-7)
 - What purpose did Aaron's offering serve?
 - Why was the offering of Nadab and Abihu not accepted? (see. 10:1-3)
 - How would you have reacted or felt if you were there to witness it?
 - What lesson(s) do we learn from these stories about our worship of God?
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5. Purity



If you remember from the first session, one of the themes of God's creation was divine order. The purity laws express God's order. Speaking of Israel and the purity laws, Vern Poythress says:

"They signify and foreshadow the way in which God cleanses sin. They show that a renewed or recreated people are characterized by renewed behaviour, behaviour conforming to God's order and separating them from sin. A close look at the classification of things into categories of holy, clean, and unclean shows a pattern of this order... death is associated with sin and disorder. Hence, things associated with death or producing disorder are also unclean."
(Poythress, 81)

Clean & Unclean

Something to note about the states of being clean and unclean was that they were temporary. Being ceremonially unclean was not such a huge deal since it was only a temporary state which would pass after some time and perhaps some washings or other rituals. What was important was what it symbolized to the Israelites: **that we cannot stroll into a Holy God's presence haphazardly. His people must be set apart (holy) from all other people in every area of life.**

In the OT, salvation had not come in its final form of Christ's sacrifice on the Cross. So, the OT shadows did not actually cleanse from the curse of sin but pointed forward to what would.

"Hence, it was appropriate that the need for cleansing the heart be expressed in external ways through food distinctions. It was appropriate also that these distinctions be related to separation from the curse of Genesis 3."

(Vern Poythress)

While we know that the NT shows us that the purity laws are no longer in effect - as Jesus declared all foods to be clean (Mark 7:19) and Paul confirms this (Col. 2:20-23; 1 Tim. 4:3-5), they still have symbolic value for us. For example, Paul tells us not to compromise with unbelief or join ourselves to unbelievers in 2 Corinthians 6:14-17. So, God still wants His people to be set apart for Him - distinct from the surrounding culture.

The purity laws show us that God's holiness affects all areas of life: separation from evil and things associated with sin and death, care for the poor, sexual integrity, social justice, etc.

Day of Atonement - the center of the book

Many books of the Bible have what is called a 'chiastic' structure - meaning that the first and last sections match each other, and the second and second to last sections match, and the third, and so on until you arrive at the centre of the book which is the central and most important section. Leviticus is laid out like this. At the centre point of the book we find the passage on the Day of Atonement. This is the most important section of Leviticus.

READ & DISCUSS - Leviticus 16

We'll spend 15 minutes in our groups discussing Leviticus 16 and the Day of Atonement. You should have already read this chapter in your assignment for this week, so spend some time discussing observations.

- What stands out to you about this ceremony apart from the others?
- What are some strange things you noticed in the text?
- How do you think the Israelites would have felt during this ceremony?
- Why is the Day of Atonement important for us today?

TAKEAWAYS

- High priest enters the Holy of Holies to make atonement on behalf of the people.

- 2 goats - one is killed, the other is the 'scapegoat'. These represent the 2 aspects of Atonement: propitiation - where wrath is appeased, and expiation - where guilt is sent away.
 - 7 time sprinkling of blood signifying complete covering of sin
 - Imputation of sins
 - Done once a year - symbolizing the once-for-all sacrifice to come
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FINAL COMMENTS

In the section about the blessings for obedience to God's covenant with Israel, we read:

"I will make my dwelling among you, and my soul shall not abhor you. And I will walk among you and will be your God, and you shall be my people. I am the Lord your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt, that you should not be their slaves. And I have broken the bars of your yoke and made you walk erect." (Leviticus 26:11-13)

Note that God's dwelling with His people in the tabernacle was meant to be a sort of restoration of Eden - where God 'walks among His people'.

Near the end of Leviticus though, we read that God tells the people that they will break His covenant and be unfaithful, and He will judge them by sending into captivity of their enemies. However, **He promises to be faithful even though they are unfaithful:**

Yet for all that, when they are in the land of their enemies, I will not spurn them, neither will I abhor them so as to destroy them utterly and break my covenant with them, for I am the Lord their God. But I will for their sake remember the covenant with their forefathers, whom I brought out of the land of Egypt in the sight of the nations, that I might be their God: I am the Lord." (Lev. 26:44-45)

At the beginning of the book of Numbers - God speaks to Moses from /IN the tent. The book of Leviticus worked! Now God's people have access into His presence - and that is the story we're going to look at more in next week's session...

ASSIGNMENTS FOR SESSION 3

READ

For next week's session, please read:

- Numbers 11, 14 & 16

- Deuteronomy 9-11

WATCH

- [The Book of Numbers](#)
- [The Temple](#)
- [NCC Q15: Since no one can keep the law, what is its purpose?](#)

ASK

For next week's session, ask yourself this question and write down your answer for us to discuss:

- What are some similarities you noticed in the stories of the people's rebellions in Numbers 11, 14, & 16?
- How would it have felt to be Moses in these situations?
- What do you notice about this retelling of the story of Exodus in Deuteronomy 9-11? What repeated words, phrases or themes stand out to you?

Recommended Resource

[The Lamb of God: Seeing Jesus in Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, and Deuteronomy](#) by Nancy Guthrie