

## Leviticus Bible Study #11

For lay leaders and deacons to conduct after the Sunday service, or during a midweek Bible study session.

### Leviticus 9:1-24

**1** On the eighth day Moses called Aaron and his sons and the elders of Israel, **2** and he said to Aaron, “Take for yourself a bull calf for a sin offering and a ram for a burnt offering, both without blemish, and offer them before the LORD. **3** And say to the people of Israel, ‘Take a male goat for a sin offering, and a calf and a lamb, both a year old without blemish, for a burnt offering, **4** and an ox and a ram for peace offerings, to sacrifice before the LORD, and a grain offering mixed with oil, for today the LORD will appear to you.’” **5** And they brought what Moses commanded in front of the tent of meeting, and all the congregation drew near and stood before the LORD. **6** And Moses said, “This is the thing that the LORD commanded you to do, that the glory of the LORD may appear to you.” **7** Then Moses said to Aaron, “Draw near to the altar and offer your sin offering and your burnt offering and make atonement for yourself and for the people, and bring the offering of the people and make atonement for them, as the LORD has commanded.”

**8** So Aaron drew near to the altar and killed the calf of the sin offering, which was for himself. **9** And the sons of Aaron presented the blood to him, and he dipped his finger in the blood and put it on the horns of the altar and poured out the blood at the base of the altar. **10** But the fat and the kidneys and the long lobe of the liver from the sin offering he burned on the altar, as the LORD commanded Moses. **11** The flesh and the skin he burned up with fire outside the camp.

**12** Then he killed the burnt offering, and Aaron's sons handed him the blood, and he threw it against the sides of the altar. **13** And they handed the burnt offering to him, piece by piece, and the head, and he burned them on the altar. **14** And he washed the entrails and the legs and burned them with the burnt offering on the altar.

**15** Then he presented the people's offering and took the goat of the sin offering that was for the people and killed it and offered it as a sin offering, like the first one. **16** And he presented the burnt offering and offered it according to the rule. **17** And he presented the grain offering, took a handful of it, and burned it on the altar, besides the burnt offering of the morning.

**18** Then he killed the ox and the ram, the sacrifice of peace offerings for the people. And Aaron's sons handed him the blood, and he threw it against the sides of the altar. **19** But the fat pieces of the ox and of the ram, the fat tail and that which covers the entrails and the kidneys and the long lobe of the liver — **20** they put the fat pieces on the breasts, and he burned the fat pieces on the altar, **21** but the breasts and the right thigh Aaron waved for a wave offering before the LORD, as Moses commanded.

**22** Then Aaron lifted up his hands toward the people and blessed them, and he came down from offering the sin offering and the burnt offering and the peace offerings. **23** And Moses and Aaron went into the tent of meeting, and when they came out they blessed the people, and the glory of the LORD appeared to all the people. **24** And fire came out from before the LORD and consumed the burnt offering and the pieces of fat on the altar, and when all the people saw it, they shouted and fell on their faces.

### **Introduction**

In the eighth chapter of Leviticus, Moses begins the process of consecrating Aaron and his sons. This begins with an entry ceremony with plenty of sacrifices, and continues for seven days with an intensive residency at the tent of meeting. For seven long days, all the priests can do is perform sacrifices, pray, and sleep. At the end of this process, it is time for them to demonstrate their new skills by making proper sacrifices with the assembly of Israel as their audience. If God accepts their offering,

then their ordination is legitimate and Israel must submit to their spiritual leadership; if not, then they shall die. The ninth chapter details the fateful day in which they were found acceptable to the Lord.

### **Vs.1-6**

**1** On the eighth day Moses called Aaron and his sons and the elders of Israel, **2** and he said to Aaron, “Take for yourself a bull calf for a sin offering and a ram for a burnt offering, both without blemish, and offer them before the LORD. **3** And say to the people of Israel, ‘Take a male goat for a sin offering, and a calf and a lamb, both a year old without blemish, for a burnt offering, **4** and an ox and a ram for peace offerings, to sacrifice before the LORD, and a grain offering mixed with oil, for today the LORD will appear to you.’” **5** And they brought what Moses commanded in front of the tent of meeting, and all the congregation drew near and stood before the LORD. **6** And Moses said, “This is the thing that the LORD commanded you to do, that the glory of the LORD may appear to you.” **7** Then Moses said to Aaron, “Draw near to the altar and offer your sin offering and your burnt offering and make atonement for yourself and for the people, and bring the offering of the people and make atonement for them, as the LORD has commanded.”

Seven offerings are made: one bull calf, one ram, one goat, one calf, one lamb, one ox, and another ram – with an additional grain offering to go with the latter two sacrifices. These are all used in their order for two sin offerings, three burnt offerings, and two peace offerings. The bull calf and the male goat are sin offerings for the priests and the assembly respectively. The first burnt offering is likely the morning offering here, while the remaining two are for the priests and the assembly each. The peace offering at the end declares that the priests have fulfilled their ordination requirements, while the Israelites are fulfilling the command to follow their lead. The principle of *Shalam*, or peacemaking/fulfillment, is being observed in real time with these offerings. By making these sacrifices, the priests declare that they are now qualified to perform their vocations, while the offerings of the Israelites in turn proclaim acceptance. When the glory of the Lord appears at the end of this chapter, it is a sign that He accepts their efforts and fulfilling His commandments in this matter, both the priests and the laity. Sacred space is now established.

### **Vs.8-21**

**8** So Aaron drew near to the altar and killed the calf of the sin offering, which was for himself. **9** And the sons of Aaron presented the blood to him, and he dipped his finger in the blood and put it on the horns of the altar and poured out the blood at the base of the altar. **10** But the fat and the kidneys and the long lobe of the liver from the sin offering he burned on the altar, as the LORD commanded Moses. **11** The flesh and the skin he burned up with fire outside the camp.

**12** Then he killed the burnt offering, and Aaron's sons handed him the blood, and he threw it against the sides of the altar. **13** And they handed the burnt offering to him, piece by piece, and the head, and he burned them on the altar. **14** And he washed the entrails and the legs and burned them with the burnt offering on the altar.

**15** Then he presented the people's offering and took the goat of the sin offering that was for the people and killed it and offered it as a sin offering, like the first one. **16** And he presented the burnt offering and offered it according to the rule. **17** And he presented the grain offering, took a handful of it, and burned it on the altar, besides the burnt offering of the morning.

**18** Then he killed the ox and the ram, the sacrifice of peace offerings for the people. And Aaron's sons handed him the blood, and he threw it against the sides of the altar. **19** But the fat pieces of the ox and of the ram, the fat tail and that which covers the entrails and the kidneys and the long lobe of the liver— **20** they put the fat pieces on the breasts, and he burned the fat pieces on the altar, **21** but the breasts and the right thigh Aaron waved for a wave offering before the LORD, as Moses commanded.

When the process of consecration began, Moses was the one making all of the offerings. Aaron and his sons were not permitted yet. Now, after having spent their week long residency doing nothing but working on their vocation, they now possess the full rights and responsibilities of making offerings

that will mark all members of the Aaronic priesthood. As no mistakes were made and nor is there any dialogue during the sacrifices, the text conveys a kind of confidence that has been instilled in the new priests. Their consecration and residency have forged their expertise to the point where they capably and handily conduct the sacrifices which please our Lord. Unfortunately, as we will see in the next chapter, for two of Aaron's sons this confidence turned into a deadly arrogance.

### **Vs.22-24**

**22** Then Aaron lifted up his hands toward the people and blessed them, and he came down from offering the sin offering and the burnt offering and the peace offerings. **23** And Moses and Aaron went into the tent of meeting, and when they came out they blessed the people, and the glory of the LORD appeared to all the people. **24** And fire came out from before the LORD and consumed the burnt offering and the pieces of fat on the altar, and when all the people saw it, they shouted and fell on their faces.

After delivering a benediction, Moses and Aaron presumably have to back away from the altar when the glory of the Lord appears. No description of this glory appears; the word **קְבוֹד**<sup>12</sup> is translated as “glory” but is bereft of imagery. Thankfully, both earlier and later on in Scripture, similar occurrences fill in the details for us. When King Solomon finishes the Jerusalem Temple and consecrates it by bringing the Ark of the Covenant into the new Most Holy Place, God shows His approval in the same fashion. The Chronicler states that “the house, the house of the Lord, was filled with a cloud, so that the priests could not stand to minister because of the cloud, for the glory of the Lord filled the house of God.”<sup>3</sup> That the priests could not perform their functions tells us that this was no mere fog rolling in, and nor was it smoke since the Temple was not damaged; the cloud of God's Glory is distinct from any gaseous substance that humanity is used to. From the writings prior to Leviticus, we see that it was almost certainly luminous as well: when Moses was summoned to Sinai to receive the tablets of the Law it was said to be “like a devouring fire” – yet not without a cloud in that instance either.<sup>4</sup>

The appearance was spontaneous. While the pillar of smoke and fire was there amid the people as it had been,<sup>5</sup> Moses states clearly in the sixth verse that this “Eighth Day ceremony” of ordination was so “that the glory of the LORD may appear to you.” This means that God appeared by the tent of meeting to consume the offering by “fire from the Lord,” while at the same time the Angel of the Lord (who is God)<sup>6</sup> is in the midst of the assembly. Thus in this moment, when God showed approval of Aaron and his sons in their service, two Persons of the Trinity act as witnesses. The Holy Spirit, who dwelt with the believers, is present in the “background” as well.

For this reason, these three verses serve as the climactic center of Leviticus, the central point of a chiasmic structure. The same presence of God, both in the glory cloud and with Christ in the pillar of fire, was there when the children of Israel first heard the Law at Mt. Sinai; the completion of Aaron and his sons' ordination signals that the sacred relationship between God and Israel has been fully restored by the institution of the regular sacrifices. Sacred space was finally established for the foreseeable future.

A similar moment happened after the erection of the Tabernacle towards the end of the Exodus,<sup>7</sup> but this was the sole previous sacrifice to have happened before the institution of the Aaronic priesthood. There, God demonstrated His approval of the Tabernacle itself by accepting

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1 Transliterated “Kabowd,” Strong's #3519

2 <https://biblehub.com/hebrew/3519.htm>

3 2 Chronicles 5:13b-14

4 Exodus 24:16-18

5 Exodus 13:21, Numbers 14:14

6 Exodus 14:19, 23:20-21

7 Exodus 40:1-38

the single burnt offering the prophet made that day. Between that singular sacrifice and the ordination of Aaron and his sons, none were made – leaving the children of Israel with a feeling of spiritual uncertainty regarding whether the Covenant had truly been reinstated after the golden calf incident. Here, with the approval of the priesthood and the promise of future sacrifices to be made, they could look with confidence toward the Tabernacle and know that our Lord was still in relationship with them.