

## Leviticus Bible Study #8

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

### Leviticus 6:8-30

**8** The LORD spoke to Moses, saying, **9** “Command Aaron and his sons, saying, This is the law of the burnt offering. The burnt offering shall be on the hearth on the altar all night until the morning, and the fire of the altar shall be kept burning on it. **10** And the priest shall put on his linen garment and put his linen undergarment on his body, and he shall take up the ashes to which the fire has reduced the burnt offering on the altar and put them beside the altar. **11** Then he shall take off his garments and put on other garments and carry the ashes outside the camp to a clean place. **12** The fire on the altar shall be kept burning on it; it shall not go out. The priest shall burn wood on it every morning, and he shall arrange the burnt offering on it and shall burn on it the fat of the peace offerings. **13** Fire shall be kept burning on the altar continually; it shall not go out.

**14** “And this is the law of the grain offering. The sons of Aaron shall offer it before the LORD in front of the altar. **15** And one shall take from it a handful of the fine flour of the grain offering and its oil and all the frankincense that is on the grain offering and burn this as its memorial portion on the altar, a pleasing aroma to the LORD. **16** And the rest of it Aaron and his sons shall eat. It shall be eaten unleavened in a holy place. In the court of the tent of meeting they shall eat it. **17** It shall not be baked with leaven. I have given it as their portion of my food offerings. It is a thing most holy, like the sin offering and the guilt offering. **18** Every male among the children of Aaron may eat of it, as decreed forever throughout your generations, from the LORD's food offerings. Whatever touches them shall become holy.”

**19** The LORD spoke to Moses, saying, **20** “This is the offering that Aaron and his sons shall offer to the LORD on the day when he is anointed: a tenth of an ephah of fine flour as a regular grain offering, half of it in the morning and half in the evening. **21** It shall be made with oil on a griddle. You shall bring it well mixed, in baked pieces like a grain offering, and offer it for a pleasing aroma to the LORD. **22** The priest from among Aaron's sons, who is anointed to succeed him, shall offer it to the LORD as decreed forever. The whole of it shall be burned. **23** Every grain offering of a priest shall be wholly burned. It shall not be eaten.”

**24** The LORD spoke to Moses, saying, **25** “Speak to Aaron and his sons, saying, This is the law of the sin offering. In the place where the burnt offering is killed shall the sin offering be killed before the LORD; it is most holy. **26** The priest who offers it for sin shall eat it. In a holy place it shall be eaten, in the court of the tent of meeting. **27** Whatever touches its flesh shall be holy, and when any of its blood is splashed on a garment, you shall wash that on which it was splashed in a holy place. **28** And the earthenware vessel in which it is boiled shall be broken. But if it is boiled in a bronze vessel, that shall be scoured and rinsed in water. **29** Every male among the priests may eat of it; it is most holy. **30** But no sin offering shall be eaten from which any blood is brought into the tent of meeting to make atonement in the Holy Place; it shall be burned up with fire.

### **Introduction**

The eighth verse of Leviticus 6 signals a shift in the book's focus. Whereas the first five chapters are dedicated to the Israelite masses, now the new priests (Aaron and his sons) are the main topic. While the sixth and seventh chapters present strict regulations concerning the offerings, they serve as a prelude to the climactic ordination for Moses's brother and nephews, followed up by the deaths of

Nadab and Abihu.<sup>1</sup> With these in mind, a kind of historical narrative is introduced into Leviticus. Instead of being mere regulations, the book also presents events that demonstrate the legitimacy and accountability of Israel's sacerdotal class.

### **Vs.8-13**

**8** The LORD spoke to Moses, saying, **9** “Command Aaron and his sons, saying, This is the law of the burnt offering. The burnt offering shall be on the hearth on the altar all night until the morning, and the fire of the altar shall be kept burning on it. **10** And the priest shall put on his linen garment and put his linen undergarment on his body, and he shall take up the ashes to which the fire has reduced the burnt offering on the altar and put them beside the altar. **11** Then he shall take off his garments and put on other garments and carry the ashes outside the camp to a clean place. **12** The fire on the altar shall be kept burning on it; it shall not go out. The priest shall burn wood on it every morning, and he shall arrange the burnt offering on it and shall burn on it the fat of the peace offerings. **13** Fire shall be kept burning on the altar continually; it shall not go out.

In previous addresses regarding sacrifices, the children of Israel are the ones receiving instruction about the sacrifices.<sup>2</sup> *Now* however specific instructions are given to Aaron and his sons for their duties, permissions, and restrictions regarding those same offerings. This begins with a recognition that the remains of the morning and evening offerings (which go on the burning wood before the food offering)<sup>3</sup> must remain on the fire until completely consumed. This serves two functions. First, the burning fat of the offerings increases the intensity of the flames, making other sacrifices more easily consumed and keeping the fire going. The fire at the altar was to never go out, as the priests spent all day sacrificing guilt offerings, thank offerings, and burnt offerings – potentially even at night, if there was an emergency to address. There was always at least one priest standing night watch.

The other reason for these regulations is for the maintained recognition of sacred space. The priests are required to put on their linen undergarments and garments even just to remove ash, for a previous statute declared that if they were to be inappropriately clothed they would die.<sup>4</sup> The continually burning altar hearth served as a visual reminder to them that God was present and that the ground on which they stood was holy. The priests were to treat the fire as though it were the very burning bush that spoke to Moses and informed him that he was standing on holy ground.<sup>5</sup> While this was written during Israel's sojourn and the Pillar of Fire was there every night, a priest taking the night watch would be careful to not stare toward the Angel of the Lord who dwelt there; God had informed the children of Israel “My Name is in Him,”<sup>6</sup> signifying that this Angel is actually God Himself – a Christophany. To stare too deeply would be to invite wrath, for God says “man shall not see Me and live.”<sup>7</sup> So instead, during the evenings he was called to meditate on the presence of the Lord in the company of the fire of the altar between sacrifices.

### **Vs.14-23**

**14** “And this is the law of the grain offering. The sons of Aaron shall offer it before the LORD in front of the altar. **15** And one shall take from it a handful of the fine flour of the grain offering and its oil and all the frankincense that is on the grain offering and burn this as its memorial portion on the altar, a pleasing aroma to the LORD. **16** And the rest of it Aaron and his sons shall eat. It shall be eaten unleavened in a holy place. In the court of the tent

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1 Leviticus 8, 9 and 10

2 Leviticus 1:1-2, 4:1-4

3 Leviticus 1:

4 Exodus 28:40-43

5 Exodus 3:5

6 Exodus 23:20-21

7 Exodus 33:20

of meeting they shall eat it. **17** It shall not be baked with leaven. I have given it as their portion of my food offerings. It is a thing most holy, like the sin offering and the guilt offering. **18** Every male among the children of Aaron may eat of it, as decreed forever throughout your generations, from the LORD's food offerings. Whatever touches them shall become holy.”

**19** The LORD spoke to Moses, saying, **20** “This is the offering that Aaron and his sons shall offer to the LORD on the day when he is anointed: a tenth of an ephah of fine flour as a regular grain offering, half of it in the morning and half in the evening. **21** It shall be made with oil on a griddle. You shall bring it well mixed, in baked pieces like a grain offering, and offer it for a pleasing aroma to the LORD. **22** The priest from among Aaron's sons, who is anointed to succeed him, shall offer it to the LORD as decreed forever. The whole of it shall be burned. **23** Every grain offering of a priest shall be wholly burned. It shall not be eaten.”

The stipulation here and in the subsequent verses maintains the “permanent Passover” that the priests lived out. Surrounded by the blood of animals which turns away the wrath of God, these men ate their unleavened bread and the roasted meat of sacrifices in haste.<sup>89</sup> While the previous dicta concerning grain offerings included giving some of the grain offering to Aaron and his sons,<sup>10</sup> here a restriction is placed on the manner and location of eating. The priests must only eat of the grain offering *in the court of the Tent of Meeting*. The cited reason is that the grain offering, like the sin and guilt offerings, are “most holy:” this is to say, they are made to be separate, sacred things that must remain on sacred space. The priest eating it does so under the auspices that in a sense he continues the offering by eating as well. These were holy men on holy grounds, enacting and living in a holy moment wherein deliverance was granted to the children of Israel, living out the Passover day by day; their eating perpetuated the remembrance of God's salvation, thus pointing *forward* every day to Christ our true Paschal Lamb and the Eucharist foreshadowed by these sacrifices. When Christ speaks of Himself as the Bread of Life,<sup>11</sup> He stood as the fulfillment of every grain offering the Aaronic priesthood ever made.

God also begins to introduce the upcoming ordination ceremony by speaking of Aaron's family grain offerings during the service. They are instructed to make a grain offering just as anyone else in Israel would,<sup>12</sup> but without personal benefit to themselves; they may not eat of it during the day-long ceremony. The twenty-second verse establishes this practice in perpetuity, so long as there is an Aaronic priesthood serving the Lord at the Tabernacle. Notably, the newly minted priest has a grain offering as the first sacrifice he ever performs, as it takes place in the morning: it is a perfect first step into the rigors of the priesthood. Having never butchered an animal sacrifice in such a particular way before, a new priest would not be trusted with that being his first act – a simple grain offering is the perfect first step for his ministry.

### **Vs.24-30**

**24** The LORD spoke to Moses, saying, **25** “Speak to Aaron and his sons, saying, This is the law of the sin offering. In the place where the burnt offering is killed shall the sin offering be killed before the LORD; it is most holy. **26** The priest who offers it for sin shall eat it. In a holy place it shall be eaten, in the court of the tent of meeting. **27** Whatever touches its flesh shall be holy, and when any of its blood is splashed on a garment, you shall wash that on which it was splashed in a holy place. **28** And the earthenware vessel in which it is boiled shall be broken. But if it is boiled in a bronze vessel, that shall be scoured and rinsed in water. **29** Every male among the priests may eat of it; it is most holy. **30** But no sin offering shall be eaten from which any blood is brought into the tent of meeting to make atonement in the Holy Place; it shall be burned up with fire.

Here we might be confused as to why the priests are permitted here to eat from some of the sin

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8 Exodus 12:7-13

9 Of course, the priests would have to eat in haste on account of their busy sacrificial schedule.

10 Leviticus 3:10

11 John 6:35

12 Leviticus 2:5

offerings. After all, the public instructions given to the Israelites included explicit directions for which part of the animal is burnt on the altar and which part is burnt outside of the camp:<sup>13</sup> by following these directions, there ought not be any meat left for the priests to eat! In the case of mass atonement offerings and leadership this is absolutely the case. But for other sin offerings, namely those enumerated in the previous chapter, there is no requirement to sprinkle blood in the Tent of Meeting: thus, while there is still a requirement to move the body of the animal outside the camp and burn it, while the sacrifice is being conducted the priests are at liberty to boil or roast<sup>14</sup> some of the meat and eat it (the earthen or bronze vessels for cooking keeps the meat from being mixed with the sacrifice).

The meat that the priests eat stays in the court for the duration of the sacrifice and may not be eaten outside of the Tabernacle area. This is because it, like the grain offering, is part of the sacrifice. St. Paul explains that those who eat from the sacrifices are “participants” in the altar: this is to say, they are connected to the sacrifice itself even while eating from it. The Apostle connects this priestly participation in the offering to the Eucharist, wherein the Christian participates in Christ by eating His Body and drinking His Blood.<sup>15</sup> Herein lay the meaning of their sacrificial diet and Passover lifestyle in the first place; they are modeling the Sacramental life of the Christian, who benefits from the universal priesthood by regularly partaking in Communion. The key difference being, in the New Covenant there is no need for any further sacrifices, for Christ's was sufficient for all – thank God!

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13 Leviticus 4, esp. vs. 8-12,

14 The word translated “boil” is the same word for typical roasting.

<https://biblehub.com/hebrew/1310.htm>

15 1 Corinthians 10:16-22