

February 20

Exodus, Deuteronomy, Numbers, Leviticus

Law of Moses continued...

- H. The Special Feast: Three Feasts appointed
 - a. Feast of Unleavened Bread – eat unleavened bread for 7 days
 - i. For in that month you came out of Egypt
 - b. Feast of Harvest with the first fruits of the crops you sow in your field
 - c. Feast of Ingathering – at the end of the year, when you gather in your crops from the field.

- 1. Passover and Feast of Unleavened Bread, 1st month, 14th – 21st days (March-April)
 - a. Passover memorializes the freeing of the Israelites from their Egyptian bondage...
 - b. Passover signifies...Ex 34.18, Deut 16.1-7
 - i. Application to guests, observing unleavened bread, offerings (see p. 230 in Daily Bible)

- 2. Feast of Weeks (Harvest or Firstfruits) 3rd month, 6th day (May-June)
 - a. Takes place seven weeks following the Feast of Unleavened Bread, on the fiftieth day. Eventually called Pentecost. Falls at time of wheat harvest, even though agricultural, it foreshadows various spiritual 'firstfruits' in which believers in God will be 'harvested.'
 - i. Time for feast, wave offering, offerings from Leviticus 23 (7 male lambs, 1 young bull and 2 rams. Offerings from Numbers 28)

- 3. Feast of Trumpets 7th month, 1st day (September-October)
 - a. In association with the institution of the Sabbath. Modernly called Rosh Hashanah
 - b. Similar sacrifices as Feast of Weeks (7 male lambs, 1 ram, 1 young bull) but not the same.

- 4. Day of Atonement 7th month, 10th day (September – October)
 - a. To be done before the Feast of Tabernacles (or Booths). Started when Aaron was high priest. Modernly called Yom Kippur. Only day upon which Israelites are commanded to fast.
 - b. Great significance of this lies in the confession of sins and sending out of the scapegoat for atonement.
 - i. Priest in HOLY place before a HOLY GOD – Lev 16.1-5
 - ii. Two goats
 - iii. Sin offering for priest – so that he will not die Lev 16.13
 - iv. Sin offering for people
 - v. Blood of bull and goat
 - vi. Confession over scapegoat Lev 16.18-19
 - c. Purification following rite
 - d. Day to be annual this day is to cleanse you. Then you will be clean from all your sins.

- i. It is a Sabbath of rest. Lev 16.29-31
 - ii. It is a day of fasting
- 5. Feast of Tabernacles (Booths or Ingathering) 7th month, 15th-21st (Sept-Oct)
 - a. Solemn reminder of Israel's wondering in the wilderness in punishment for its sin of disbelief
 - i. Seven day feast, taking of branches, dwelling in booths, offerings for feast
 - 1. first day, second day, third, fourth day, fifth day, sixth day, seventh day, eighth day
 - b. feast to be joyful

Three times a year all the men are to appear before the Sovereign Lord. These are 'pilgrim' events; each year all male Israelites will be required to travel to the designated place of worship to offer the required sacrifices.

Today you read Numbers 28 and 29. These chapters can quite easily be summed up in two words: sacrifices and feasts. The sin offering and the guilt offerings were mandatory. They had to be brought and were for the purpose of making atonement for sin. The sin offering and guilt offering then were directed toward God but they were intended to do something for the person bringing the sacrifice. They were for the purpose of cleansing the individual from the defilement they had brought upon themselves by committing the sins they had done. Bringing the offerings involved confessing your sins.

In the case of the guilt offering, there was also the issue of restitution. The guilt offering required you to pay back all that you had taken and add to it 20% more. If there was more than one offering brought, if the sin or guilt offerings were among them, they would be brought first, because before you can worship God, you first must confess your sin.

The other offerings - the burnt offering, the fellowship offering and the grain offering - were voluntary, and that means that they were directed toward God with no view toward accomplishing something for the person who brought them - they were truly acts of worship. The burnt offering was intended to signal the complete consecration of the one bringing the offering. The grain offerings did not involve blood - only grain - a portion of which was burned upon the altar. The fellowship offerings involved the worshipper and his family in a festive celebration, which followed the sacrifice. Fellowship with one another before the Lord was the key idea here.

Now the focus upon is the frequency of these rituals. They are to be offered twice per day simply in order to please God. The daily offerings, the Sabbath offering and the monthly offerings are burnt offerings. Why is this important? Because the primary purpose of these regularly prescribed offerings is worship and the message conveyed over and over again is that God desires the worship of His people. Today many people come to church in order to have their needs met. However, it is a healthy reminder that God's idea is that when we come to church, it is primarily for the purpose of worshipping Him. Our sacrifices today are prayers and hymns and praises

that are a fragrance to God. Next Sunday when you come to church, remember the purpose of the sacrifices, and let that thought drive you to worship.

Next, you need to see that, from a certain point of view, the giving of all of these instructions regarding the frequency of the sacrifices would have been a reassuring thing to Joshua and the people of Israel. I did a little arithmetic. Every year, the priests were going to have to sacrifice a minimum of 113 bulls, 32 rams, 1086 lambs and offer more than a ton of flour and a thousand bottles of oil and wine. And that doesn't account for any individual sin and guilt offerings or voluntary grain and fellowship offerings. Why would this be reassuring? It is because, if God expected all these offerings, then He must be planning a very prosperous future for them.

The instructions for sacrifices continue as God tells Joshua which sacrifices should be offered (and when) during each of the feasts. While the primary focus here continues to be on the offerings, the passage shows us once again the major feasts for the nation of Israel. Passover begins the year on the 14th day of the first month. It lasts seven days; 50 days later comes the Feast of Weeks, to celebrate the blessing of the Lord in bringing in the harvest. In the seventh month comes a whirlwind of activity. It starts with the Feast of Trumpets, which presents Israel before the Lord for His favor. That leads to the Day of Atonement - Yom Kippur - the holiest day of the year, when the high priest entered the Holy of Holies to sprinkle blood upon the Mercy Seat to atone for the sins of both the priests and the people for another year. That occurs on the tenth day of the seventh month. Five days later the Feast of Tabernacles (or Booths) begins. It commemorates the journey from Egypt. It lasts one week and ends with the sacred assembly, which closes the cycle of feasts.

Leviticus 16 Only the High Priest could appear before the presence of the Lord in the Most Holy Place, one time per year on the tenth day of the seventh month - Yom Kippur. The purpose of the visit was very well-defined. He was to offer sacrifices - a sin offering and then a burnt offering, first for himself and his family and then for the entire nation of Israel, to atone for all of their sins in the previous year.

Did you notice that on this special day Aaron was to wear different clothes than usual? They were simpler clothes than the elaborate and ornate attire that the High Priest usually wore. In fact, from Exodus 39 it appears that these clothes were "plainer than the attire of the ordinary priests" the thinking is "that elaborate garments might have detracted from the somberness of the occasion" (ibid.).

The order of events on that day went like this: Aaron would prepare himself by bathing and putting on the special garments reserved for the occasion. Next, he would sacrifice a bull as a sin offering for his own sins and for those of his own family. Then the first of the two goats, one selected by lot, was also slaughtered and placed before the Lord as a sin offering for the people of Israel. Like the bull before it, Aaron would sprinkle its blood first upon the cover of the Ark - the Atonement Cover, or Mercy Seat - and then sprinkle its blood seven times in front of the Ark. Burning coals and incense brought by Aaron into the Most Holy Place provided a

thick covering of smoke over the Ark of God. No one else could be present inside the Tabernacle except for Aaron during the whole ceremony.

Next, the second goat, called the scapegoat was brought. Now, outside the Tabernacle and in public, Aaron laid both hands on the scapegoat and he publically confessed "all of the wickedness and rebellion of the Israelites - all their sins." And he put them on the goat's head. A man appointed for the task then took that scapegoat into the wilderness and released him in the desert. The symbolism was clear enough. The sin of Israel had been laid on the goat and removed from the presence of God and of His people.

Then Aaron took off those special clothes, bathed again and dressed in his normal priestly garb. Following that, two rams were sacrificed as burnt offerings, one for Aaron and one for the people. Another man appointed for this task would then take the remains of the two rams outside the camp and burn them completely. Both he and the man who released the scapegoat had to bathe themselves and wash their clothes before they could return to the camp.

We serve a Holy God; the Israelites were assured that the blood of the sin offering removed their uncleanness, and the uncleanness of all the material things used in their approach to God

In the New Testament, Paul, reflecting on man's need for cleansing for sin, uses several expressions in his letter to the Romans that reflect the uniqueness of the sin offering of the Day of Atonement. He asserts that God sent 'His own Son in the likeness of man to be a sin offering' (8:3) and that Christ 'was delivered over to death for our sin' (4:25). To the Corinthians he pointed out that God gave Jesus 'who knew no sin to be sin for us' (2 Corinthians 5:21) perhaps, as an illusion to the Day of Atonement ritual of the sins of Israel being laid symbolically upon the live goat..."

"The blood of Christ provided access to God, even as the blood sprinkled by the High Priest provided access to God in the Tabernacle.

We don't have sacrifices today – but we do need to be regularly reminded of the holiness of God.