

VIII. Sacred Acts: Other Sacrifices

July 23, 2017 Chapters 8 & 9

Purpose: To understand the purposes and meanings of the main types of sacrifices in the Old Testament.

Key Verse: ²²And Samuel said, “Has the Lord as great delight in burnt offerings and sacrifices, as in obeying the voice of the Lord? Behold, **to obey is better than sacrifice, and to listen than the fat of rams** (1 Sam. 15:22).

A. The *Minhah* Offering (Grain Offering)

1. The Description of the *Minhah* Offering (Lev. 2; 6:14-23)
 - a) The *minhah* is often called the “grain offering” because that was what was offered
 - b) Not a sacrifice; no shedding of blood; no atonement language
 - c) The emphasis is on giving a gift
 - d) The *minhah* was never offered alone
 - (1) Humans needed atonement before approaching God with a gift
 - (2) *Minhah* was always offered with the ‘*olah* (Lev. 9:4, 17; 14:10, 20-21, etc.)
 - (3) *Minhah* accompanied the morning and evening ritual ‘*olah* (Num. 28:3-8)

2. The Meaning of *Minhah*

Longman: *Minhah* is nowhere used of grain apart from this offering. By itself the word means ‘gift’ or ‘tribute.’... The *minhah* was the gift of vassals to their overlord (cp. Jdg. 3:17-18)... The *minhah* was tribute paid to the King, demonstrating the offerers’ vassal status. We may thus understand the *minhah* in the book of Leviticus as a tribute offering. Nevertheless, we must also be aware of a broader use of *minhah* even in the context of sacrifice. Not only does the word in some context mean tribute with no reference to ritual, but sometimes the word means sacrifices in general, and in those contexts the word may even refer to a blood sacrifice.... Even Abel’s bloody sacrifice is called a *minhah* (Gen. 4:4) (p. 86).

Poythress: The grain offering is eaten by the priests, not by the worshiper (Lev. 6:14-18). Since no death of an animal and no shedding of blood is involved, the principal idea suggested is that of giving back to God a portion of what one has produced through God’s strength and blessing. This idea is confirmed by the fact that when the priests offer a grain offering on their own behalf rather than on the behalf of someone else, the entire offering is to be burned (Lev. 6:23). Thus the offering is never eaten by those who give it, but is presented to God.

3. The Procedure of the *Minhah* Offering (two options raw grain or baked bread)
 - a) Two options: raw grain or baked bread
 - b) Raw Grain (Lev. 2:1-3)
 - (1) Along with olive oil and incense
 - (2) Priest took a portion of grain, mixed it with olive oil and incense

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- c) Baked Bread (Lev. 2:4-10)
 - (1) Wafer, loaf; cooked in pan or griddle
 - (2) Composed of fine flour, olive oil
- d) Every *Minhah* Offering
 - (1) A portion was burned on the altar with an aroma that was “very pleasing to the LORD” (Lev. 2:2)
 - (2) The larger part of the grain went to the priests who used it for food

Longman: The largest part of the sacrifice went to the priests. They were God’s servants, and so a gift to the priests was, in a sense, a gift to God. They did eat their portion, and they used it to sustain their families. It did serve as food (p. 89).

- (3) Could not contain yeast or honey (Lev. 2:11)

Longman: Students of Leviticus are generally agreed that yeast and fruit honey (the type specified here) were prohibited because they both ferment on burning. The priestly code in Leviticus is consistent in saying that priests should avoid death and decay, and fermentation is a type of decay (p. 87).

- (4) Must include salt (Lev. 2:13)

Longman: Two other passages in the Old Testament associate covenant and salt. In Numbers 18:19, in the context of establishing Aaron’s family as the priestly family, God promises to sustain them by means of the offerings of Israel. It is a covenant promise, and He says that it is a “covenant of salt between the LORD and you and your descendants.” Then in 2 Chronicles 13:5, in reference to the Davidic covenant (2 Sam. 7; 1 Chr. 17), Abijah says, “Don’t you realize that the LORD, the God of Israel, made a covenant of salt with David, giving him and his descendants the throne of Israel forever?” It is with the word “forever” that I believe we get the significance of the addition of salt to the *minhah*. The *minhah* was a gift from the covenant vassal to the covenant King. The salt represented the covenant and in particular was a memorial to the eternity of the covenant. Salt, after all, does not burn. It doesn’t turn into gas; it survives fire intact. Nothing harms salt, just as nothing harms the covenant (pp. 88-89).

- (5) The grain offered was a gift to God

Longman: So far we have seen how the ‘*olah*’ emphasized the atonement nature of sacrifice, while the *minhah* highlighted that an offering was a gift. As we turn to the third sacrifice in Leviticus, the *shelamim*, we learn of the third characteristic, fellowship (p. 89).

B. The *Shelamim* Offering (Peace or Fellowship Offering)

1. The Description of the *Shelamim* Offering (Lev. 3; 7:11-36)
 - a) The *shelamim* forms a triad with the ‘*olah*’ and *minhah* offerings and were often offered at the same time
 - (1) Atonement (‘*olah*’)
 - (2) Gift (*minhah*)
 - (3) Fellowship (*shelamim*)
 - b) *Shelamim* is related to *shalom*, which means “peace” or “wholeness”

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- c) “Peace Offering” is often used to describe the *shelamim*

Longman: We need to be reminded of the covenantal context and how this world is related to *shalom*. *Shalom*, after all, refers to the conditions that results from being in covenant with God. Sin disrupts *shalom*, and so *shelamim* describes the condition that results once that breach has been resolved. As we will see, the sacrifice was a joyous celebration, a kind of religious part, where priests and worshipers enjoyed a sumptuous meal in the presence of God (p. 90).

Poythress: In the fellowship offering, the worshiper himself is allowed to eat most of the parts of the animal that has been offered (Lev. 7:15-18). To an Israelite this procedure would signify that the worshiper enjoys a meal in the presence of God and with the special blessing of God. Fellowship with God and enjoyment of God’s blessings would seem to be the principal emphasis.

2. The Procedure of the *Shelamim* Offering

- a) Different animals could be sacrifices, such as a bull, sheep, or goat
- b) The preparation was very similar to the *’olah*, suggesting that atonement was also part of the *shelamim* offering
 - (1) The worshiper laid hands on the animal, identifying with it before killing it
 - (2) The blood was thrown by the priests onto the sides of the altar, representing the presence of God
 - (3) Parts of the animal were burned (differing from the *’olah*, where the whole animal was burned)

Longman: In the *shelamim*, only the following parts were burned and given to the Lord: “the fat around the internal organs, the two kidneys with the fat around them near the loins, and the lobe of the liver, which is to be removed from the kidneys” (Lev. 3:3-4, 9-10, 14-15). This prohibition, paralleling the prohibition of eating the blood of the sacrifice, is climaxed by the warning, “Remember, all the fat belongs to the LORD” (Lev. 3:16). The fat was the choice part of the animal and was thus given to God. It is theologically significant that the fat of the *shelamim* was placed on top of the *’olah*. Atonement precedes fellowship (p. 91).

- c) The rest of the animal was to be eaten by the priests (Lev. 7:28-38) and worshipers (Lev. 7:11-21) – the *shelamim* was a religious celebration with food, a banquet in the presence of the Lord
- d) Three types of *shelamim* (Lev. 7:11-21)
 - (1) Thanksgiving: to give thanks, perhaps for answered prayer
 - (2) Vow: accompanied a vow to the Lord
 - (3) Freewill: the worshiper was moved of his own free will to make an offering

C. The *Hattat* Offering (Purification or Sin Offering)

Longman: The *hattat* and the *asham* sacrifices are treated separately from the first three. We have seen how the first three form a natural unit with an emphasis on atonement (*’olah*), gift (*minhah*), and fellowship (*shelamim*).... Close examination of all five offerings ... reveals that the first three sacrifices were in an important sense voluntary, while the analysis below will show

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that the *hattat* and *asham* offerings were mandated by certain conditions. For that reason, in the first three sacrifices the focus was on procedure, while in the last two it was on the occasions that call for the offerings (p. 93).

Poythress: The sin offering is presented to make atonement for sin (Lev. 4:35). The emphasis here is clearly on the necessity of punishment in payment for sin. The punishment is borne by the animal instead of the worshiper. The guilt offering of Leviticus 5 seems to be a variation of the sin offering, and thus has a similar emphasis (p. 47).

1. The Meaning of *Hattat*

- a) *Hattat* related to *hata'*, which means “miss” or “sin”
- b) *Hattat* has to do with the breaking of the law; meant to remove the effects of sin
- c) *Hattat* was a way of restoring relationship with God
- d) Ritual Uncleanness: some of the conditions that required a *hattat* offering did not involve morality but rather ritual uncleanness
 - (1) Discharge of semen (Lev. 15:13-15)
 - (2) End of a menstrual period (Lev. 15:28-30)

Longman: Blood and semen were holy substances associated with life, as well as the sacrificial system and the Abrahamic promise respectively, and therefore were protected by taboos. The menstrual cycle and the emission of semen were not here associated with unethical actions and therefore were not themselves sinful. Since the *hattat* was associated with more than just sinful actions, some have argued that *hattat* might be better understood as a purification offering rather than a sin offering. This offering purified the worshiper and the place of worship of uncleanness (p. 94).

e) Inadvertent Sin

- (1) Both *hattat* and *asham* sacrifices were specifically for *shegagah*, sins committed “in error” or “by accident”) – lack of premeditation
- (2) In contrast, sins committed *beyad ramah*, “with a high hand” (Num. 15:30)—in other words, blatant, premeditated acts—could not be covered by *hattat* or *asham* sacrifices
- (3) But many sins are committed consciously and not inadvertently
- (4) The key is repentance

Longman: On the basis of rabbinic discussions of Leviticus 5:20-26 and Numbers 5:6-8, Jacob Milgrom persuasively argues that “repentance of the sinner, through his remorse and confession, reduces his intentional sin to inadvertence, thereby rendering it eligible for sacrificial expiation.” Repentance is the key to help us understand the difference between an inadvertent sin and a high-handed sin.

2. The Procedure of the *Hattat* Offering (Lev. 4)

Longman: The *hattat* had a basic procedure that varied depending on who was offering it. ... here, the principle seems that the more important the individual or the group, the more serious the infraction, and therefore the more expensive the necessary offering (p. 96).

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a) The High Priest

Longman: The high priest was the most important individual in terms of the institutional worship of the Old Testament. As such, the *hattat* offered in response to his sin was the most expensive and intricate, particular when it came to the manipulation of blood.... Blood represents life, and shed blood represents forfeited life (p. 97).

- (1) Required to offer a bull – most expensive sacrifice
 - (2) Laying on of hands for identification – the animal becomes a substitute
 - (3) The priest on duty manipulates the blood, not the high priest
 - (4) Three ritual actions with the blood
 - (a) Sprinkled blood from his finger onto the innermost curtain of the tabernacle (which the high priest passed through annually)
 - (b) Dabbed blood on the horns of the incense altar
 - (c) Poured out the remainder of the blood at the base of the sacrificial altar
 - (5) The fat was removed and burned, similar to the *shelamim* offering
 - (6) The rest of the sacrifice was carried out to a ceremonially clean location outside the camp where it was burned
- b) The community as a whole
- (1) Principle is that corporate sin creates a larger harm toward the community than an individual sin
 - (2) The procedure was basically the same as for the high priest
- c) Leader other than the high priest
- (1) Male goat instead of a bull
 - (2) Blood did not go into the sanctuary proper, but dabbed on horns and poured at the base of the altar
- d) Individuals who were neither priests nor leaders
- (1) Female goat (Lev 4:28) or female sheep (Lev 4:32)
 - (2) Blood and fat treated in the same way as the leaders
 - (3) Could substitute a bird or even grain (Lev. 5:11-13)

Longman: God is merciful to the poor as well as toward the rich. Mere possessions do not help or hinder one's relationship to God (p. 99).

D. The *Asham* Offering (Guilt or Reparation Offering)

1. The Meaning of *Asham*

- a) Similar to *hattat* (difficult to distinguish)
- b) Strong emphasis on atonement, along with *hattat* and '*olah*
- c) The '*olah* was for general sin, while *hattat* and *asham* were for specific sins
- d) There is some overlap between the sins covered by the *hattat* and *asham*

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- e) *Asham* is often translated “guilt offering” but could be called “reparation offering”
 - f) The *asham* offering demanded a reparation, a payment over and above the loss incurred by the transgression
2. The Procedure of the *Asham* Offering (Lev. 7)
- a) A ram was offered
 - b) The ram was slaughtered at the sacrificial altar
 - c) The drained blood was sprinkled against the sides of the altar
 - d) The fat was burned
 - e) The meat was eaten by the priests and males of the priestly families
 - f) Above and beyond the sacrifice, there was also a reparation, a payment for the harm done in the sin – the principal plus 20%

Longman: The *hattat* and the *asham* offerings complete our look at the five major sacrifices described in Leviticus 1-7. There are other important sacrifices mentioned in other parts of Scripture. For example, the Passover sacrifice ... commemorated the time God killed the firstborn of the Egyptians but passed by the firstborn of Israel (see Ex. 12:1-5). Nonetheless, with our exposition of the five sacrifices highlighted in Leviticus, we have the basis on which to go now to the New Testament. There we learn the wonderful truth that Jesus Christ fulfills the entire sacrificial system.

E. Selected Questions for Further Reflection

1. How is the *minhah* sacrifice connected to the covenant?
2. We see that the priest was permitted to use some of the *minhah* as a kind of payment. Is there any connection with the offering taken in churches today?
3. What kind of peace (*shalom*) did the *shelamim* sacrifice celebrate?
4. What sets the *hattat* and *asham* sacrifices off from the *olah*, *minhah*, and *shelamim* sacrifices?
5. What is the relationship between repentance and sacrifice? Does this tell us anything about repentance today?

Next Week: Read Longman chapter 10