

“An Atoning Aroma” (Lev. 1)

1. Continuation (1-2)

- a. Called (1) “This was the third time that Moses had been called by God. God had called Moses from a burning bush in a desert to commission him to lead Israel out of Egypt (Exod. 3:4). He had called him from the summit of Mount Sinai to announce his covenant with Israel (Exod. 19:3). Now God called him to reveal more fully how Israel should live, in the ordinariness and totality of their daily lives, in order to enjoy continuing fellowship with him.”¹ →
- b. Consecrated (1) Moses and all Israel was called out to be holy. In fact the theme of Leviticus is encapsulated in 19:2 hence the instruction of holy sacrifices →
- c. Contrasts (2)
 - i. Conviction vs Compulsion: Re: Covenant Context: The Covenant LORD (CL) had delivered Israel from bondage and called them out unto Himself and thus, unlike the Pagans, they enjoyed an identity in their Deliverer. Therefore, their sacrifices were from, not for, such provisions and blessings.
 - ii. Communion vs Consumption: The Pagans would offer desired food of the deities as if setting a table for their gods so that they could (ironically) have bread on their tables. But such was not (nor is) the case re: CL cf. Ps. 50:12-15, 23. “Early in the history of the ancient Near East the belief prevailed that the sacrifice was food for the worshiped god. This premise is imprinted on the architecture of the tabernacle, Israel’s earliest sanctuary. The outer shrine was God’s private dining room. The candelabrum (menorah) provided light; the incense altar, aroma; the bread loaves on the display table, the laden dining table.”² The Israelites would come to the table of the LORD where all was provided and thus volitionally offer their burnt offerings from gratitude and awe.
 - iii. Consecration vs Coercion: “Unto” the LORD.” Unlike the Pagan sacrifices which were designed to entice the reluctant hand of a deity to grant provision and favor, God’s prescribed offerings were meant to consecrate a called out people who were holy, clean and compassionate. “The word “sacrifice” comes from a Latin word meaning “to make sacred.” The quintessential act of sacrifice is the transference of property from the common to the sacred realm, so making it a gift for God.”³ The CL is concerned with the heart of worship and accepts not, the disingenuous offerings (Jer. 14:12; Mi. 6:6-8; Ho. 5:6; 8:13; Amo. 5:22).
 - iv. Consecration vs Carnality: Pagan sacrifices impetus = carnal provisions/pleasures. Israelite sacrifices impetus = forgiveness for sins, gratitude, and holiness – such of which was no concern of the Pagan gods.

2. Transaction (3, 10-17)

- a. Valuable: “of the herd” = highest economic value although provisions for the poorest not unlike tithing principle. In the first two of the three categories of burnt “ascending” offerings, they had to be both male only and unblemished. But even in lesser economically valued offerings, the motive mattered. See Mal. 1:6-14. Note: the respective burnt offerings of flocks and fowl lesser in economic value but result in the approval of God (vv. 13, 17).⁴

¹ Tidball, D. (2005). *The Message of Leviticus: Free to Be Holy* (A. Motyer & D. Tidball, Eds.; p. 36). Inter-Varsity Press.

² Milgrom, J. (2004). *A Continental Commentary: Leviticus: a book of ritual and ethics* (p. 17). Fortress Press.

³ Milgrom, J. (2004). *A Continental Commentary: Leviticus: a book of ritual and ethics* (p. 17). Fortress Press.

⁴ Chris Hall: I’ll offer no commentary on vv. 10-17 as the relevance is the same with provision for all economic statuses. Plus I want to get through the series in an acceptable time frame.

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- b. Volitional: “free will” offering not out of compulsion.
 - c. Venue: “door of the Tabernacle.” Exodus devoted the latter half of its material to the instructions re: building, furnishing, conducting worship in the Tabernacle. It was the only prescribed venue where man was able to meet with God – and such was through the priesthood, sacrifices, furnishings, ceremonies, etc. related to the Tabernacle. Hence at the door of such was before the LORD. Same is true today in the Word who “tabernacled” among men (Jn. 1:14)! Jesus (The Door cf. Jn. 10:7) made the single transaction of the perfect fragrant offering to God for us with His blood cf. Eph. 5:2.
3. Presentation (4)
- a. Hand to Head: Transference of death to the animal (Heb. 9:22). Re: animal death: even animal life is precious to God and thus its blood is to be put on the altar and holy objects rather than discarded as waste.
 - b. Purchased & Purified: “The verb *to make atonement (kipper)* has been much discussed. In general, it communicates two ideas: ransoming and purifying.”⁵ The prescribed sacrifices atoned for sin i.e. they demonstrated faith in the One who had ransomed them and consecrated them for His own. Today, our faith is properly placed in the only One who became our perfect sacrifice and ransomed us back to God. See Mk. 10:45; 1 Pet. 1:18-19; Heb. 7:27.
4. Participation (5-9)
- a. The Offeror: “The offerer [sic] had most of the work to do. It was his job to slaughter the animal (5) in such a way that the blood could be drained out; to skin it (6), the hide was then given to the priest, (7-8); to chop the carcass into pieces (6); and to wash those parts of the animal which were dirty (9), *i.e.* covered with mud or excrement, so that the priest would not be defiled in handling the carcass. The priest had the task of taking the blood and throwing it against the sides of the altar. As is explained later in Leviticus, this was to offer the life of the animal to God himself, for the blood represented its life, a life now given up in death (17:10–12). Finally, the priest took the pieces of the animal from the hands of the worshipper as he chopped it up, and arranged them on the altar, where the worshipper and his family watched them burn until all was consumed.”⁶
 - b. The Priests: Because of the violation of sin, God requires a mediation of priesthood which must be consecrated to represent man for offerings to God for atonement. The Holiest High Priest and perpetual Mediator is Jesus Messiah (1 Tim. 2:5-6).
 - c. God:
 - i. You might ask how God “participated” rather than observed and approved. One could end this message with point #5 being “Satisfaction.” And such would not be inappropriate. However, God was not only a participant in the single act of earnest atonement for the sins of humanity – He was the High Priest who mediated it, He was the very sacrifice whose precious blood cleanses from all sins, and He is the One who is well pleased with the said work of His Son. He is the Author and Finisher of our faith (Heb. 12:2).
 - ii. Gordon Wenham wrote †††: In NT theology Jesus takes the role of Isaac while God the Father takes the role of Abraham. Such thinking underlies such well-known passages as John 3:16, “For God so loved the world that he gave his only-begotten

⁵ Sklar, J. (2013). *Leviticus: An Introduction and Commentary* (D. G. Firth, Ed.; Vol. 3, p. 90). Inter-Varsity Press.

⁶ Wright, C. J. H. (1994). *Leviticus*. In D. A. Carson, R. T. France, J. A. Motyer, & G. J. Wenham (Eds.), *New Bible commentary: 21st century edition* (4th ed., p. 125). Inter-Varsity Press.

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- Son,” and Rom. 8:32, “He who did not spare his own Son but gave him up for us all, will he not also give us all things with him?”⁷
- iii. “God will provide Himself a burnt offering” (Gen. 22:8)! The picture of the ultimate burnt offering is seen long before the Levitical order and even before Israel’s existence. Read Gen. 22:1-8, 16 cf. Isa. 42:1; Matt. 3:17 and Jn. 1:29.
 - iv. Eph. 5:2 An Atoning Aroma.
- d. Us (**Optional or Further Consideration**): In the NT, we see the only acceptable sacrifice is in Christ (as seen above). Thus our sacrifices of acceptable worship also fulfill the typology of the OT burnt offerings. Wenham added to his quote above †††: “The NT uses the image of the burnt offering in a quite different way as well. Christian service, in church and in the community, is compared to sacrifice: “Through him let us continually offer up a sacrifice of praise to God... Do not neglect to do good and to share what you have, for such sacrifices are pleasing to God” (Heb. 13:15–16; cf. Phil. 4:18; 1 Pet. 2:5).”⁸

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I’m rarely amazed at the contemporary relevance of the Old Testament (OT) as “the more things change, the more they stay the same.” As a newer Christian I loved the New Testament (NT) more than the OT because Jesus is revealed therein, and also the great theology articulated by Paul the Apostle of Christ. The NT book of *Hebrews* has long been one of my favorite books in Scripture and it is more OT than any of the other NT books. For some time now (15-20 yrs.) the OT has been more of a love for me in that having understood more and more about the person and work of Messiah – I see His beautiful face in each page of the OT. And His work and person can clearly be seen in the burnt offering in Leviticus chapter one. In fact, the NT authors unmistakably linked His sacrifice to such. And without it, we could have no relationship with God and the forgiveness of our sins.

⁷ Wenham, G. J. (1979). *The Book of Leviticus* (p. 64). Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co.

⁸ Wenham, G. J. (1979). *The Book of Leviticus* (pp. 64–65). Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co.