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Giving Honor by Obedience

Leviticus 7:1-38

Intro: Our text continues with the Lord's instructions to the priests concerning the proper handling of the various sacrifices that will be brought to the tabernacle by the Israelites. Again, this is not just a rehashing of the offerings described in ch 1-5 but rather, this is further explanation as to the precise procedures the priests were to follow to ensure that the sacrifice was not only presented properly but presented and handled in a way that was acceptable to the Lord. Only sacrifices that were acceptable to the Lord would be effective in providing forgiveness and restoring fellowship. Since we're looking at the entire chapter today, let's dive right in and get started

1-7 – Traditionally known as the guilt offering because of the offense it's designed to address, contemporary scholars have taken to calling this the reparation/ restitution offering because of the steps required to make right the offense. Trespassing is the unlawful crossing of a boundary. God has established certain boundaries for humanity in general and for His people specifically and when those boundaries are crossed it is a sin of trespass. This offering was given to atone for certain trespasses related to the holy things of the Lord or offenses against fellow Israelites. This offering was effective in repairing a breach of faith committed against the covenant King. The previous passage (5:14 - 6:7) explained when to bring a restitution offering but our text explains how it was to be offered.

In many ways, the handling of this offering is much the same as that of the purification offering (6:24-30): this offering was also most holy (1); it was to be killed (slaughtered) in a *holy place* (north side of the altar of burnt offering: 2); it's meat was to be eaten by holy people (priests: 6a) in a holy place (tabernacle area: 6b). All this served to emphasize once again that most holy sacrifices were to be treated with the utmost respect, not only by the individual bringing it but also, more importantly, by the individual handling it. Finally, the priest was to offer all its fat...as an offering made by fire to the Lord (a food offering: 5).

The biggest difference between this offering and the purification offering was how the blood was distributed. For the blood of the purification offering, the priest was to put it on the horns of the altar to purify it (4:5-7) but for this offering, the priest was to take the blood and sprinkle (or throw) it all around the altar. The language of on the altar is similar to that of the ransom language found in 17:11; reminding us that the blood of this sacrifice was focused more on paying

a ransom for the trespass (20% value added) than it was for purification.

The majority of the rest of ch7 concerns the handling of the fellowship (or peace) offering. But, before the laws of this offering are explained, the text further explains how the various offering pieces will be distributed among the priests.

8-10 – First, concerning the burnt offering, we see that the officiating priest was to receive the hide of the sacrificial animal. Israelites used hides for leather goods and to make vessels or containers. Since priests didn't have large flocks from which to obtain hides for themselves, receiving the sacrifice's hide would have been a great help. **V9-10** addresses the distribution of grain offerings among the priests. A cooked grain offering, which had been made into bread (**9**), belonged primarily to the officiating priest, while an uncooked grain offering, which was still raw flour (**10**), belonged equally to all priests. The reason for this difference isn't given but it's reasonable to surmise that uncooked grain offerings may have been stored together and used by priests as needed, while cooked grain offerings, which would quickly dry out and become stale, were eaten by the officiating priest immediately.

While this passage continues the theme of handling the most holy offerings properly, it also introduces a new theme: that of providing for the practical needs of the priests. This provision freed the priests to focus on their duties of leading the Lord's people in proper (effective) worship and teaching them His laws. This principle of providing for the spiritual leaders of the Lord's people didn't end in the OT; it was continued in the NT too (**1 Cor 9:13-14; Gal 6:6**). The Lord's fully aware that if the needs of the shepherds are not met, they won't be able to care well for the sheep.

In the sacrificial system, God made special provisions for Aaron and his descendents because He wanted the entire tribe of Levi to make their living from the sacrificial system. When Israel enters the Promise Land, the land is divided up among 12 tribes but no land allotment is given to Levi. The tribe of Levi is given certain cities in which the priests are to live and establish homes (they all couldn't live in the tabernacle) and there was enough land allotted to them around those cities for a small garden or a small flock but this would have been supplemental at best. Their main source of income/ provision would have come from the offerings brought to the tabernacle by the individual Israelite.

Now, having said that, I'm sure the majority of Israelites were more than happy to participate and contribute to the Levitical provision because they realized that they personally, and the nation collectively, would suffer greatly if the priests

were distracted from performing their spiritual duties because they were busy pursuing the fulfillment of their very necessary practical needs. We should also note that the Lord didn't expect the priests to live like kings! In fact, the Lord didn't even want Israel's kings to live like kings, at least not the pagan kings of the nations all around them.

In our modern NT era, the pendulum of providing for spiritual leaders seems to swing from one extreme to the other. It seems that there are some congregations that take "pride" in setting their leaders up in ivory towers as though it was a reflection of their own spirituality; which it isn't. When church leadership provides daily examples of fulfilling the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes and the pride of life and have the audacity to declare it a God's blessing upon them, you then understand how a congregation could take pride in their own overindulgence of their leaders. On the other hand, it's not the congregation's job to keep the leaders humble (poor). No, God's design of provision is as simple as it is effective. If a congregation has 10 families that are giving regularly and faithfully as the Spirit directs them to, then the spiritual leader could receive a livable wage that reflects the average living of the congregation. God doesn't expect every spiritual leader to live like kings – He expects them to live like priests!

11-18 - Here begins a long section addressing the fellowship (peace) offering. This is a holy offering (not most holy), so portions of it could be handled by individual Israelites. Because of this, the text alternates its attention from the priests in particular to the Israelites in general. But, in keeping with the theme of the chapter, it still addresses the proper handling distribution and disposal of various offering portions.

There were 3 types of fellowship offerings: thanksgiving (or praise); vow and voluntary (freewill). Each was different in terms of their purpose and when the meat of the offering could be eaten. **V12-15** addresses an offering brought as an expression of praise, usually to give thanks for a specific act that the Lord had done on the worshipper's behalf. The Hebrew word used here "toda" refers to acknowledging the Lord worshipfully for His deeds, an idea championed by the **Psalms** in **26:7** and **105:1**. When such praise was expressed by means of an offering, it was because the Lord had answered a specific prayer.

Worshippers would bring along various breads, some made with yeast (**13**) and others without (**12**). The mention of bread here is no surprise: the fellowship offering was a shared meal and it was common for ancient Israelites to eat bread with their meat. Now, v14 says that one of each of the breads was to go to the priest, implying that the rest was to go to the one offering the sacrifice.

Thus, both priest and worshipper would have bread to eat with the meat of this covenantal meal.

The bread given to the priests is described as a heave (or contribution) offering to the Lord. The use of the Hebrew term elsewhere describes various items given to the Lord by the Israelites to support the work of the tabernacle. These often included food items, which the Lord then gave to the priests and Levites to provide for them and their families. In this particular case, the bread was given to the priest who sprinkled (splashed) the blood, or the one who took the lead in making the sacrifice. This ensured that priests were freed from other tasks to focus on priestly duties.

As for the meat, the worshippers were to eat it on the same day it was offered (15); any remaining meat was to be burned up that same day, most likely to protect it from becoming ritually defiled. This requirement is more rigid than that of the other fellowship offerings, whose meat could be eaten on the 2nd day. This stricter requirement implies that defiling this meat would be an even greater offence, suggesting that the praise offering were the more sacred of the 3. Regardless, the worshippers were to follow this procedure exactly or their sacrifice didn't count and they would be subject to punishment. Like the meat of the most holy offerings, the meat of the holy offerings was to be treated with the proper respect.

Israelites sometimes offered fellowship offerings to fulfill a vow they had made. When they did this, they promised the Lord to carry out a certain task if or when He answered their prayer. This wasn't a way of buying the Lord's help (His help is not for sale; it's something He gives graciously to His people). Instead, such a promise underscored the seriousness of their prayer and ensured that they would give an appropriate expression of thanksgiving and praise when their prayer was answered. This vow would have been a statement of their faith in the Lord's goodness and a safeguard against their thankfulness vanishing too quickly. Significantly, a sacrificial vow was fulfilled publicly, so that worshippers could share the Lord's praises with their covenant brothers and sisters.

A voluntary (freewill) fellowship offering was different in that it wasn't brought because of a vow. This word is used elsewhere to describe offerings of precious materials that Israelites gave voluntarily for the building of the tabernacle or to describe fellowship or burnt offerings that Israelites presented voluntarily as a general expression of thanksgiving and praise to the Lord for His character and loving deeds on behalf of them or the nation.

Praise and thanksgiving are the natural result of a healthy walk with the Lord. It

shows that you recognize His gracious and undeserved goodness towards you. It is a miserable believer who thinks only of themselves, who fails to see God's goodness revealed and expressed in their lives and thus, refuse to offer Him the praise He is worthy of and properly due. This failure is reflected in a lack of associating with God's people, refusal to participate in worship or cheerful giving to the Lord's work. It's a poor believer indeed, who fails to walk this closely with their Lord.

The meat of the vow and voluntary offerings could be eaten on the 2nd day but must be burned on the 3rd day. Again, this was to protect it from ritual defilement, which was more likely to happen the longer it was left around. Of course, as with the others, if this regulation wasn't followed, the Lord would **not** accept the worshipper or their offering: which means He would not look on them with favor (1:3). The text explains that the meat will be impure (abomination) on the 3rd day; meaning it's out of bounds for eating. Those who did eat it would bear their punishment for iniquity (18).

19-21 – This passage identifies 2 more instances when fellowship offering meat must not be eaten. The 1st is when the meat itself touches something ritually impure (or ceremonially unclean). If this were to happen, the meat would be automatically defiled and as such, no longer suitable for its intended purpose; so it all must be burned. The 2nd is when the worshippers are prohibited from eating the meat because they are impure. This impurity could come from various activities, health conditions or from coming in contact with something that is impure.

Those who knowingly ate sacrificial meat while impure faced a serious penalty: being cut off from his people. This punishment could come in 2 forms: sometimes it referred to being exiled from the covenant community, while in other instances it refers to premature death. Either way, the sinner was removed from the covenant community and considered the Lord's enemy. This penalty could be carried out by the Israelite community or directly by the Lord. The end result of this is that Israelites could never take comfort in any secret sin: even if they ate the sacrificial meat while impure and hid this from their fellow countrymen; the Lord Himself would be sure to bring about the appropriate penalty. This is yet another warning to treat holy meat with proper respect.

It isn't that God demands perfection from His children but when a believer today tries to receive spiritual things while knowingly and deliberately living an unclean life, this is strong evidence that there is some separation in regard to their fellowship with God. **1 John 1:6** says, "If we say that we have fellowship with Him, and walk in darkness, we lie and do not practice the truth." If we try to

appease our conscience by telling ourselves that this is merely John's warning to the lost, let me remind you that John's letter was written exclusively to believers.

22-27 - Since Israelites were able to eat fellowship offering meat, this next section reminds them of 2 parts of the animal that they must never eat: the fat and the blood. As we saw in **3:16**, the people were prohibited from eating the fat because it was considered to be the very best part of the meat and as such, it must be given to the One at the meal Who is most worthy of honor and that would always and only be the Lord. To take the fat for oneself would be to dishonor Him. V24 allows 1 qualification: if the animal dies naturally or is killed by another animal, the fat can be used for any other purpose (lighting, polish) but it still can't be eaten. Those who did were cut off from the people.

Also, they were prohibited from eating blood; meaning, eating meat that was raw and still had the blood in it. Just as the fat represented the goodness and abundance of the animal and, thus, belonged to God; so the blood represents the life of the animal and the life belongs to God as well. This section's strong prohibitions represent 2 truths about the Lord: He's the one most deserving of honor – so the fat belongs to Him; and He's sovereign over all life – so the blood must go to Him. Believers acknowledge these same truths today by presenting our bodies as living sacrifices to the Lord (**Rom 12:1**). By so doing, and doing everyday, we are giving Him our best and acknowledging that our very lives belong to Him.

28-36 – Since Israelites could eat portions of their fellowship offerings, they only needed to bring part of it to present to the Lord. Aside from the fat and the blood, these arts included the breast (a wave offering) and the right thigh (a heave/ contribution offering). The contribution offerings often consisted of food gifts which Israelites brought to the Lord, who in turn gave them to the priests or Levites and their families. In this case, the right thigh was given to the officiating priest and his family.

It's interesting that the phrase we see in v**5**, **25** and **39**, "an offering made by fire to the Lord" is indicative of a food offering that is brought to the Lord. Now, we should understand that a food offering made to a god was common practice in the ancient Near East; in fact, it's a practice that continues unabated by those who worship false gods and idols. But there's a vast difference between those food offerings and the food offerings brought to the Lord by the ancient Israelites. The people who practiced pagan sacrifices in those days believed that their sacrifices literally fed the gods. Their gods were hungry and the people fed them with sacrificial food and if they didn't, the gods would become angry. Is

that what's happening here in our text?

No; not at all. Many times and in many ways the Bible conveys the idea that we need God. However, nowhere does the Bible ever even imply that God needs or lacks something. If God had any need, how could we as mere humans, His creation, possibly be capable of meeting the needs of the almighty Creator of the universe? The idea's ridiculous!

Pagan gods aren't real. People make pagan gods in their own image – they eat and drink and have needs. The one true God has no needs. He commanded sacrificial offerings not because He needs anything from us but because we need the sacrifice to take the penalty for our sin so we will be allowed to come into His presence to be reconciled to Him. God doesn't command us to support Him. He provides for us so that we might, in turn, provide for His work.

37-38 – These last 2 verses summarize the text we've been studying from **6:8** to **7:37**. These commands were given to Moses on top of Mount Sinai. They're given because the Lord, as covenant King, was giving covenant laws to His covenant people so that they could be faithful members of His covenant kingdom. In the case of our text in particular (**6:8-7:37**), He used these laws to teach His people of their continual dependence on His favor and grace, the high regard they must have for His holiness and the priority they must put on ensuring that His worship continues. If the Israelites learned these lessons well, they would be able to fulfill their covenant mission of being a kingdom of priests and a holy nation to all the earth; the same mission the Lord still calls His covenant children to fulfill. (**I Pt 2:9**).

As detailed as these offerings are, one might be tempted to try to find favor with God through them today but that is no longer necessary or even possible because Jesus is the fulfillment of all the sacrifices God commanded in the Book of Leviticus. In fact, the ultimate purpose of all these sacrifices was simply to prepare people for the eventual coming of Jesus – God the Son and humanity's Savior.

The whole burnt offering was to be completely consumed on the altar; all of it was burned, nothing remained. Jesus also gave all of Himself as a sacrifice, as **Phil 2** implies that He emptied Himself even to death on a cross. The grain offering signified thanksgiving and dedication to God. Jesus regularly expressed thanks to the Father and was completely dedicated to God and His will. The fellowship offering expressed peace with God. Jesus had and still has perfect fellowship with God the Father. Jesus also made peace with God possible for us as **Col 1:20** says He has made peace through the blood of His cross.

The purification offering was to make atonement for sin. God judges sin and His penalty for sin is death. The sin offering satisfied the wrath of God against sin. Jesus was our sin offering when He died on the cross for our sins. The NT word for satisfying God's wrath against sin is "propitiation" and [1 Jn 4:10](#) says, "In this is love, not that we loved God, but that He loved us and sent His Son to be the propitiation for our sins." The restitution offering was for the guilt of sin and involved making restitution for wrongs done, paying back debts owed because of sin. Christ's death on the cross also fulfilled the restitution offering as [Col 2:13-14](#) says that God "has forgiven you all trespasses, having wiped out the handwriting of requirements that was against us, which was contrary to us. And He has taken it out of the way, having nailed it to the cross." Jesus paid our debt of sin on the cross.

Jesus wasn't just the next step in God's plan of salvation for mankind. He was always God's plan and He is the final, once-for-all sacrifice for sin. When Jesus was on the cross, every sin of every person was placed on Him. God never meant for the old covenant sacrificial system to be permanent; it existed to prepare for and explain the eventual sacrifice of Jesus. The cross is where the almighty God of the universe set aside His commands regarding the sacrifice of animals and grain and He Himself became the sacrifice for our sin. The perfect sacrifice, the ultimate sacrifice, the only sacrifice needed. 😊