

## Leviticus 7

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Having instructed the Levites in the altar service and care of the eternal flame, Moses then reiterates the instructions for the sacrifices and offerings. Many of these instructions had already appeared in Chapter 5 although there are a few additional pieces of information.

Throughout this chapter, holiness is everywhere. The ritual is described as holy, the tabernacle where the ritual occurs is holy, the priest, the offering, and the worshipper are all described as being in a state of holiness. This should remind us that everything attached to the Name of God, including the very Name itself, is holy. Too often our secular world has influenced the Church and we have forgotten the holiness of God. Yet we know that we are called to be a holy people before the Lord. Interestingly, fat, as well as blood, seem to be important to the Lord as part of the worship of God. Let's remember that, at their essence, the rituals being performed in the Tabernacle and later the Temple, are part of worship and need to be seen in that context.

Literally, the Hebrew text reads that it is the priest, not the sacrifice, that makes atonement. Atonement is also not the same thing as forgiveness. In the order of the ritual, atonement occurs before forgiveness. In the New Covenant, clearly laid out in the Epistle to the Hebrews, Jesus acts as both priest and sacrifice.

In the ancient world, priests ate the food that was offered to the deities. The service of the Tabernacle was no different. The *Cohenim* and *Leviim* received a portion of the offering. They also received the skins of the animals as a form of payment to provide for their families. Paul in, a similar vein, instructs us to provide for our own shepherds and pastors. It should be noted that not all offerings were of animals. The majority of the Israelites would only be able to afford a grain offering, which was accepted in place of an animal. Grain obviously does not contain blood and begs us to reexamine our preconceived ideas concerning the ritual worship in the Temple.

We discussed the nature of the peace offerings -- זֶבַח הַשְּׁלָמִים -- which are in the plural form. Peace offerings were from both the herd and/or the grain. The poor also had the opportunity to bring a peace offering before the Lord. Why was the offering written in plural form? When one brings a peace offering, he or she affects the world in several ways. Peace goes between man to man and also between man to God. Peace is also established between earth and heaven. Jewish tradition holds that since the destruction of the Temple, chaos has ruled the world. Jesus instructs us in Matthew that we should make peace between our neighbour before we attempt to make peace between us and God. God values human relationships as very important. Woe to the church who only wants a relationship with God without a relationship to the people God came to save. Interestingly, the peace offering could be consumed by the worshipper up to three days following the sacrifice.

Freewill offerings are also described in this chapter. Throughout history, people have dedicated their talents, works of art, buildings, money grants, and endowments, and much more to the work of God and to the establishment of His kingdom. Throughout Leviticus, which is a calling, the worship of God (while demanded) is first and foremost to come from the heart of the worshipper. He or she partakes of the holiness of God in which worship includes eating and rejoicing in the presence of the Lord.