

Leviticus 8:1-9

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Chapters 8 and 9 describe the ritual ceremony for ordinations and consecrations. In Exodus 29, Moses is commanded to consecrate Aaron and his sons to the service of the Lord. Now that the Tabernacle has been erected, it is time to perform the ritual. As the brother of Aaron, Moses is also in the tribe of Levi and thus a priest. For a brief moment, Moses is 'higher' than Aaron as he consecrates him to the High Priesthood. Moses gathers the 'entire assembly' of Israel to the entrance of the tent of meeting. Jewish commentaries note that this refers to the heads of the community as it would be a physical impossibility to host over one million people in such a small space. 'All' doesn't mean all in biblical Hebrew. The actual consecration was an elaborate week-long event that purified the Tabernacle, the Altar, the people and the clothing and vestments of the people, through the ritual agents like water, anointing oil and sacrificial blood. The end result of this week-long ritual will be the presence of the Lord and the fire from Heaven in Leviticus 9:24. Moses begins to explain to the elders that 'This is what the Lord commands'. We should note that the entire ceremony was God's plan, not the invention of Moses. What then can we learn from what the Lord is revealing through this event.

Our discussion about the various elements of the consecration service raised many questions that perhaps never had answers, to begin with. Most consecrations begin with a washing. Interestingly, Aaron and his sons receive the washing from Moses. They do not wash themselves; they receive it. This washing was a one-time thing; from then on they would only wash their feet and hands before service. There is a slight allusion to Jesus washing His disciples during the Passover. The text then focused on the clothing of Aaron and his sons. The vestments of those serving God were also consecrated. Humans have the same holiness as objects. Anything attached to the name of God is holy. We asked ourselves what should a modern-day pastor or shepherd wear as they serve the Lord, particularly in times of public worship. While the answer is cultural, traditional and periodical that is subject to the fashion of the day, the answer should at the very least be connected to holiness.

One of the more interesting articles of clothing are the Urim and Thummim in the breastplate of the High Priest. These appear to be coloured stones fitted into the breastplate that allowed communication with Almighty God. These are not magical objects but communication devices. Why? God already talks to people, as do angelic messengers. So why the introduction of this new method of seeking divine wisdom? Numbers 12:5-8 notes that God does not talk to everyone the same. Moses spoke to the Lord 'face to face', but this was not true of the rest of Israel. Whatever reason we give for the Urim and Thummim, the point is that there is communication between God and His people. God is not silent nor aloof. He is present and He is involved in the affairs of His creation. This also might indicate that the Lord speaks to people in different ways, and we should not be discouraged or disappointed when the method that God chooses to communicate to us is different from someone else.

Anointing oil and sacrificial blood are used to make atonement for the altar as well as the priests. The oil is used to anoint the Tabernacle, Altar and the High Priest Aaron but not initially his sons; that part of the process came at the end. Hierarchy is not foreign to the Bible.

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Interestingly, Moses placed blood on the ear, hands and feet of the priests. We discussed this symbolically to mean to listen or hear from God, to serve and obey God and to walk with God. The question arose: why do inanimate objects need to be atoned for? Perhaps atonement and forgiveness are two different things. Early references in Leviticus seem to state that atonement comes prior to forgiveness but does not state that it is a prerequisite. Articles that are holy, set apart for the service of the Lord and attached to His name, are required 'atonement' but not 'forgiveness', atonement coming through sacred oil and sacrificial blood. The last act of worship is the consuming of the sacrifice, including unleavened bread, in the presence of God at the entrance of the Tent of Meeting. While the Lord does not need to consume food for sustenance, He does delight in being present and sharing fellowship around a table. Part of the character of the Lord is to share in our experiences. This was uniquely done in the person of the Messiah, Jesus of Nazareth.