



Exodus - Chapter Twenty Nine

II. Exodus 19:1-40:38 - The Covenant at Sinai (continues)

II.d Exodus 25:1-31:17 - Instructions for the tabernacle (continues)

Summary of Chapter Twenty Nine

The ordination of Aaron and his sons as priests, and indeed for all their descendants that would follow after them, was to be a seven day process, with meticulous details provided for the procedures to be followed.

As well as the sacrificial offerings for the ordination, the chapter also lists the daily offerings that are to be made. In exchange, God promised to dwell with his people to be their God.

II.d.x Exodus 29:1-37 - The Ordination of the Priests

Aaron and his sons are to be consecrated to serve the Lord as priests in a manner that reflects some of the regular service they will perform as priests on behalf of the people, refer to Leviticus 1:1-7:38, including: preparation (vv.1-9), a sin-offering (vv.10-14), two burnt-offerings – one for the Lord (vv.15-18) and one for ordination (vv.19-28), followed by instructions for the practice and perpetuation of ordaining Aaron's sons as priests (vv.29-37). These instructions will not be carried out until after the tabernacle is built; refer to Leviticus 8:1-9:24.

^{1a} Now this is what you shall do to them to consecrate them, so that they may serve me as priests.

Exodus 29:1a

Now this is what you shall do. These are only the instructions for the ceremony, which was actually carried out in Leviticus Chapter 8.

To consecrate them, so that they may serve me as priests. The purpose of the ceremony was to consecrate them. That is, to set the priests aside for God's purpose.

^{1b} Take one young bull and two rams without blemish, ² and unleavened bread, unleavened cakes mixed with oil, and unleavened wafers spread with oil. You shall make them of choice wheat flour. ³ You shall put them in one basket and bring them in the basket, and bring the bull and the two rams.

Exodus 29:1b-3

Take one young bull and two rams without blemish. The ceremony for consecration required animals intended for sacrifice. Consecration could not happen without shedding sacrificial blood. The animals and food that are to be offered in the consecration of Aaron and his sons (vv.10-28) are a preview of the instructions for offerings prescribed in Leviticus 1:1-7:38.

Unleavened bread, unleavened cakes mixed with oil. The ceremony for consecration required bread for fellowship with God. Consecration could not happen without true fellowship with God.

⁴ You shall bring Aaron and his sons to the entrance of the tent of meeting, and wash them with water.

Exodus 29:4

This was not a ceremony for just anyone in Israel. There were special consecration ceremonies available to anyone, such as the Nazirite vow in Numbers Chapter 6. However, the ceremony described here and carried out in Leviticus Chapter 8 was for priests, for Aaron and his sons.

You shall bring Aaron and his sons to the entrance of the tent of meeting. This process of consecration did not take place inside the tabernacle. It happened outside, at the entrance of the tent of meeting. It was conducted in the public space so that others could witness it.

And wash them with water. The process of consecration began with cleansing. All priestly ministries began with cleansing, and a cleansing that was received. Aaron and his sons did not wash themselves; they received a washing. This was humbling, because it took place publicly at the door of the tabernacle of meeting. Believers cannot be cleansed from their sin without being humbled first. This great cleansing was a one-time thing. From then on they just needed to cleanse their hands and their feet. Jesus demonstrated both a humbling of his disciples and his own humility when he washed their feet; refer to John 13:1-11.

Like these ancient priests, every Christian is washed by the work of God's Word (Ephesians 5:26), and by the regenerating work of the Holy Spirit: *<<he saved us, not because of any works of righteousness that we had done, but according to his mercy, through the water of rebirth and renewal by the Holy Spirit>>* (Titus 3:5). This cleansing work was accomplished by the death of Jesus for those who would accept him: *<<To him who loves us and freed us from our sins by his blood>>* (Revelation 1:5b) and is appropriated by faith.

⁵ Then you shall take the vestments, and put on Aaron the tunic and the robe of the ephod, and the ephod, and the breastpiece, and gird him with the decorated band of the ephod; ⁶ and you shall set the turban on his head, and put the holy diadem on the turban. ⁷ You shall take the anointing-oil, and pour it on his head and anoint him. ⁸ Then you shall bring his sons, and put tunics on them, ⁹ and you shall gird them with sashes and tie head-dresses on them; and the priesthood shall be theirs by a perpetual ordinance. You shall then ordain Aaron and his sons.

Exodus 29:5-9

Then you shall take the vestments, and put on Aaron the tunic. After being cleansed, the priest had to be clothed, but not in his own clothes. He had to put on garments designed and given by God. Like these ancient priests, every believer is clothed in Jesus Christ and in his righteousness: *<<If you conquer, you will be clothed like them in white robes, and I will not blot your name out of the book of life; I will confess your name before my Father and before his angels>>* (Revelation 3:5). These are clothes that are given freely by Jesus, but received and worn by faith.

You shall take the anointing-oil, and pour it on his head and anoint him. Priests must be anointed. The oil, a picture of the Holy Spirit, was poured over their heads, indicating that it was given in great measure, not in small measure: *<<It is like the precious oil on the head, running down upon the beard, on the beard of Aaron, running down over the collar of his robes>>* (Psalm 133:2). Like these ancient priests, every believer has an anointing that they may receive and walk in by faith: *<<But you have been anointed by the Holy One, and all of you have knowledge>>* (1 John 2:20). The anointing oil will be used to anoint the tabernacle and all of its pieces as well as Aaron and his sons, as seen in 30:22-33.

¹⁰ You shall bring the bull in front of the tent of meeting. Aaron and his sons shall lay their hands on the head of the bull, ¹¹ and you shall slaughter the bull before the Lord, at the entrance of the tent of meeting, ¹² and shall take some of the blood of the bull and put it on

the horns of the altar with your finger, and all the rest of the blood you shall pour out at the base of the altar. ¹³ You shall take all the fat that covers the entrails, and the appendage of the liver, and the two kidneys with the fat that is on them, and turn them into smoke on the altar. ¹⁴ But the flesh of the bull, and its skin, and its dung, you shall burn with fire outside the camp; it is a sin-offering.

Exodus 29:10-14

Aaron and his sons shall lay their hands on the head of the bull. The bull is to be offered as a sin-offering, which is described as having the function of purifying the altar and making atonement for it (v.36); refer also to Leviticus 4:1-12. The washing at the door of the tabernacle was only one aspect of the symbolic cleansing from sin. There had to be the punishment of the guilty, and this happened. As Aaron and his sons put their hands on the head of the bull, they symbolically transferred their sin to the bull. Like these ancient priests, every believer can only be consecrated to God through sacrifice. Their consecration should be greater, because it was made through a far greater sacrifice - the sacrifice of God's own Son.

Take some of the blood of the bull and put it on the horns of the altar with your finger. The altar was sanctified with the blood of the sin-offering, and the best of the animal was burnt before the Lord, the rest was destroyed outside the camp. The sin-offering said, "We have failed to give our best to God. This animal now gives its best to atone for our failure, and we decide to live now giving our best, even as this animal who dies in our place." The idea behind the ancient Hebrew word for altar is essentially, 'killing-place.' The ancient altar, a place of death, was made holy and was consecrated to God. Like that ancient altar, the altar of the New Covenant, the Cross, is transformed from a place to death to a place set apart to bring life.

¹⁵ Then you shall take one of the rams, and Aaron and his sons shall lay their hands on the head of the ram, ¹⁶ and you shall slaughter the ram, and shall take its blood and dash it against all sides of the altar. ¹⁷ Then you shall cut the ram into its parts, and wash its entrails and its legs, and put them with its parts and its head, ¹⁸ and turn the whole ram into smoke on the altar; it is a burnt-offering to the Lord; it is a pleasing odour, an offering by fire to the Lord.

Exodus 29:15-18

Aaron and his sons shall lay their hands on the head of the ram, and you shall slaughter the ram. The first of the two rams is to be offered as a burnt-offering,

which is the same offering later described in Leviticus as atoning for the sin of the one who offers it; refer to Leviticus 1:3-9. As the sin-offering before it, the burnt-offering also symbolically received the sins of the priests and they laid their hands on the head of the animal and confessed their sin.

Turn the whole ram into smoke on the altar. The ram was completely burnt before the Lord, with its blood sprinkled on the altar. The burnt-offering said, “We have failed to give our all to God. This animal now gives its all to atone for our failure, and we decide to live now giving our all, even as this animal who dies in our place.” Again, it was Jesus who became the final sacrifice for all sinners who accept his act of mercy and grace.

¹⁹ You shall take the other ram; and Aaron and his sons shall lay their hands on the head of the ram, ²⁰ and you shall slaughter the ram, and take some of its blood and put it on the lobe of Aaron’s right ear and on the lobes of the right ears of his sons, and on the thumbs of their right hands, and on the big toes of their right feet, and dash the rest of the blood against all sides of the altar. ²¹ Then you shall take some of the blood that is on the altar, and some of the anointing-oil, and sprinkle it on Aaron and his vestments and on his sons and his sons’ vestments with him; then he and his vestments shall be holy, as well as his sons and his sons’ vestments.

Exodus 29:19-21

You shall take the other ram; and Aaron and his sons shall lay their hands on the head of the ram. Atonement for sin was performed with the sin-offering and the burnt-offering. Yet in their consecration, the priests still had to identify with the sacrificial victim. Their identification with the sacrifice went beyond atonement. The other ram is offered as a ram of ordination, which differs in at least two respects from the burnt-offering. First, some of the blood is placed on Aaron and his sons before it is thrown against the altar as well as then being sprinkled on their clothes along with anointing oil in order to consecrate both the priests and their garments. Second, rather than burning the whole ram on the altar, certain parts are offered to the Lord together with bread and the breast is eaten by the priests.

Since **Aaron** and **his sons** were dressed in their priestly garments, the blood is placed on the **ears**, **thumbs**, and **big toes**, the exposed parts representing the whole. The specification of the **right** member of each of these body parts is probably connected to the way that the right hand is considered the place of honour; refer to Genesis 48:17-19. As in 24:6-8, putting the blood on the priests

and on the altar serves to link them closely to God. It may also be seen as purifying them from their sin.

Then you shall take some of the blood that is on the altar, and some of the anointing-oil, and sprinkle it on Aaron and his vestments. The blood alone was not enough. God wanted blood mixed with oil, and to have the mixture sprinkled on the priests. There was to be a combination of both the sacrifice and the Spirit, as represented by the anointing oil.

²² You shall also take the fat of the ram, the fat-tail, the fat that covers the entrails, the appendage of the liver, the two kidneys with the fat that is on them, and the right thigh (for it is a ram of ordination), ²³ and one loaf of bread, one cake of bread made with oil, and one wafer, out of the basket of unleavened bread that is before the Lord; ²⁴ and you shall place all these on the palms of Aaron and on the palms of his sons, and raise them as an elevation-offering before the Lord. ²⁵ Then you shall take them from their hands, and turn them into smoke on the altar on top of the burnt-offering of pleasing odour before the Lord; it is an offering by fire to the Lord. ²⁶ You shall take the breast of the ram of Aaron's ordination and raise it as an elevation-offering before the Lord; and it shall be your portion. ²⁷ You shall consecrate the breast that was raised as an elevation-offering and the thigh that was raised as an elevation-offering from the ram of ordination, from that which belonged to Aaron and his sons. ²⁸ These things shall be a perpetual ordinance for Aaron and his sons from the Israelites, for this is an offering; and it shall be an offering by the Israelites from their sacrifice of offerings of well-being, their offering to the Lord.

Exodus 29:22-28

You shall also take the fat of the ram. The second ram used in the consecration ceremony, the ram whose blood was applied to the ear, hand, and foot of the priest, was used as an elevation-offering and as well-being offerings. An elevation-offering is often referred to as a wave-offering in many translations.

Raise them as an elevation-offering before the Lord; turn them into smoke on the altar on top of the burnt-offering. Part of this second ram, the best parts, was put together with the bread, cake, and the wafer and was first waved before God in an act of presentation. Then these portions were burnt on the altar as an act of complete devotion.

It shall be your portion. The remaining meat portions of this ram were given to Aaron and the other priests, after those portions were presented to God as an elevation-offering. It was then cooked and eaten by the priests during the days of their consecration ceremony. The second ram, after the ram presented as a burnt-offering, had its life applied to the consecrated priests. First its life was applied with the application of blood to the ear, hand, and foot of the priest. Then, through a ritual meal, its life was applied by the priest taking the ram into himself.

In this way, eating is a good picture of a healthy, continuing relationship with Jesus:

- Eating is personal. No one can eat for another, and no one can have a relationship with Jesus on another's behalf.
- Eating is inward. It does no good to be around food or to rub food on the outside of the body; it must be taken in. Believers must take Jesus unto themselves inwardly, not merely in an external way.
- Eating is active. Some medicines are received passively; they are injected under the skin and go to work. Such medicines could even be received while one sleeps but no one can eat while asleep. Believers must actively take Jesus unto themselves.
- Eating arises out of a sense of need and produces a sense of satisfaction. Believers will have a healthy relationship with Jesus when they sense their need for him and receive the satisfaction the relationship brings.

It shall be an offering by the Israelites from their sacrifice of offerings of well-being, their offering to the Lord. The instructions of vv.27-28 look forward to the sacrifices that the people will bring and indicate that in peace-offerings the breast and the right thigh are consecrated to the priest; refer also to Leviticus 7:29-36.

²⁹ The sacred vestments of Aaron shall be passed on to his sons after him; they shall be anointed in them and ordained in them. ³⁰ The son who is priest in his place shall wear them for seven days, when he comes into the tent of meeting to minister in the holy place. ³¹ You shall take the ram of ordination, and boil its flesh in a holy place; ³² and Aaron and his sons shall eat the flesh of the ram and the bread that is in the basket, at the entrance of the tent of meeting. ³³ They themselves shall eat the food by which atonement is made, to ordain and consecrate them, but no one else shall eat of them, because they are holy. ³⁴ If any of the flesh for the ordination, or of the bread, remains until the morning, then you shall burn the remainder with fire; it shall not be eaten, because it is holy. ³⁵ Thus you shall do to Aaron and to his sons, just as I have commanded you; over seven days you

shall ordain them. ³⁶ Also every day you shall offer a bull as a sin-offering for atonement. Also you shall offer a sin-offering for the altar, when you make atonement for it, and shall anoint it, to consecrate it. ³⁷ For seven days you shall make atonement for the altar, and consecrate it, and the altar shall be most holy; whatever touches the altar shall become holy.

Exodus 29:29-37

The son who is priest in his place shall wear them for seven days. With the coming generations, new descendants of Aaron would qualify for the priesthood and would be consecrated the same way. For Aaron and his descendants the consecration process took seven days.

This section instructs the priests that their portion of the ram of ordination (vv.26-28) has to be treated as holy in terms of where it is cooked and eaten, who is able to eat it, and for how long it may be kept.

They themselves shall eat the food by which atonement is made. For seven days they lived at the tabernacle and ate the ram of the consecration and the bread of consecration. The consecration ceremony was not quick and easy. It took time, reflection, and a constant awareness of sacrifice and atonement. Refer also to Leviticus 8:33-36.

No one else shall eat of them, because they are holy. Few people today are direct descendants of Aaron, but all Christians have the right to receive and enjoy this priestly consecration and relationship based not only on the clear declaration of the NT: <<*like living stones, let yourselves be built into a spiritual house, to be a holy priesthood, to offer spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ*>> (1 Peter 2:5), <<*But you are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, God's own people, in order that you may proclaim the mighty acts of him who called you out of darkness into his marvellous light*>> (1 Peter 2:9), but also upon principles of the Old Covenant. Leviticus 22:11 says: <<*but if a priest acquires anyone by purchase, the person may eat of them; and those that are born in his house may eat of his food*>>. Since Jesus, the true and final High Priest, has purchased believers with his own life, they may eat of the priestly portion. And since they are born again as children of God, born into his household, the family of the High Priest, they also may eat his food and enjoy the priestly privileges of Jesus, the High Priest.

Also every day you shall offer a bull as a sin-offering for atonement. Every day there was another large animal to sacrifice and use its blood for atonement. This daily ritual, for seven days in a row, reminded Aaron and the priests that any animal sacrifice could not take away sin, only providing a temporary covering.

This fact is perhaps best illustrated by: <<*Since the law has only a shadow of the good things to come and not the true form of these realities, it can never, by the same sacrifices that are continually offered year after year, make perfect those who approach. 2 Otherwise, would they not have ceased being offered, since the worshippers, cleansed once for all, would no longer have any consciousness of sin? 3 But in these sacrifices there is a reminder of sin year after year*>> (Hebrews 10:1-3).

II.d.xi Exodus 29:38-46 - The Daily Offerings

This section includes instructions for the morning and twilight sacrifice of a burnt-offering, which was to be the regular service of the priests (vv.38-42a). It closes with the reminder that, in all that has been prescribed for the tabernacle and its service, it is the Lord who meets with, dwells among, and sanctifies his people (vv.42b-46). In their repetition of first-person statements, e.g. I will meet, these verses echo the Lord's reminder to Moses after the first request before Pharaoh; refer to 6:1-9.

³⁸ Now this is what you shall offer on the altar: two lambs a year old regularly each day. ³⁹ One lamb you shall offer in the morning, and the other lamb you shall offer in the evening; ⁴⁰ and with the first lamb one-tenth of a measure of choice flour mixed with one-fourth of a hin of beaten oil, and one-fourth of a hin of wine for a drink-offering. ⁴¹ And the other lamb you shall offer in the evening, and shall offer with it a grain-offering and its drink-offering, as in the morning, for a pleasing odour, an offering by fire to the Lord.

Exodus 29:38-41

Two lambs a year old regularly each day. After the ceremony of consecration the priests continued with daily sacrifices, one in the morning and the other at twilight. Every day was given to God, beginning and ending by sacrifices of atonement and consecration.

One-fourth of a hin of wine for a drink-offering. This was wine given to God as a sacrifice, poured out before him as a demonstration of completely emptying one's self to God. The Apostle Paul used the terminology of the drink-offering to express his complete devotion to God, and his eventual martyrdom: <<*But even if I am being poured out as a libation over the sacrifice and the offering of your faith, I am glad and rejoice with all of you – and in the same way you also must be glad and rejoice with me*>> (Philippians 2:17-18).

A pleasing odour, an offering by fire to the Lord. These burnt-offerings, which were completely consumed by fire, pleased God and ‘smelled good’ to him. God is honoured and glorified by a believer’s complete surrender to him.

⁴² It shall be a regular burnt-offering throughout your generations at the entrance of the tent of meeting before the Lord, where I will meet you, to speak to you there. ⁴³ I will meet the Israelites there, and it shall be sanctified by my glory; ⁴⁴ I will consecrate the tent of meeting and the altar; Aaron also and his sons I will consecrate, to serve me as priests. ⁴⁵ I will dwell among the Israelites, and I will be their God. ⁴⁶ And they shall know that I am the Lord their God, who brought them out of the land of Egypt that I might dwell among them; I am the Lord their God.

Exodus 29:42-46

It shall be a regular burnt-offering throughout your generations. Kept for times of captivity and national apostasy, these daily sacrifices continued in Israel up through the time of the NT. Luke Chapter 1 describes Zechariah, the father of John the Baptist, ministering at a morning sacrifice, which developed into what might be called ‘morning devotions’ for ancient Israel.

I will meet you. God wanted consecrated priests and a worshipping nation, and not because he simply wanted a ‘well-trained work-force.’ God wanted consecrated priests and daily sacrifice so he could meet with and speak to his people. This is the great reason for consecration, for a sense of full surrender to God. It is not primarily so believers can be better workers for God, but so that they can enjoy deeper and more meaningful relationship with him. If this is of little interest to them, they will never be properly motivated to true consecration.

It shall be sanctified by my glory. It was the presence of God that truly sanctified and consecrated the tabernacle and the priests. It was not primarily because of what the priests did. What the priests did in consecration was remove the barriers to the radiant glory of God.

I will consecrate. God made it clear who performs the work of consecration. Christians are often tempted to think that they sanctify themselves because they are so immersed in the sanctifying process and because it draws so much out of them. Yet God does the work. What they do is remove barriers and spend time with their focus on him alone.

To serve me as priests. Aaron and his sons had a ministry to the people of Israel, but their first ministry was to the Lord. They might be successful in ministering to the people, but if they failed in their ministry to the Lord, their ministry failed.

And they shall know that I am the Lord their God. God promised to show his glory through consecrated priests. When Moses and Aaron performed this ceremony of consecration, Leviticus 9:23-24 reveals the result: *<<Moses and Aaron entered the tent of meeting, and then came out and blessed the people; and the glory of the Lord appeared to all the people. Fire came out from the Lord and consumed the burnt-offering and the fat on the altar; and when all the people saw it, they shouted and fell on their faces>>*. There is a price to pay for being fully surrendered to God. The ceremony of consecration was long, bloody, and it took persistence to complete. Yet the reward was far greater than the cost for the glory of the Lord was revealed not only to the consecrated priests, but to the people in general.

I will dwell among the Israelites, and I will be their God. God again stressed the idea of relationship in the process of consecration. This worship-filled relationship with God is both the instrument and the fruit of consecration.

And they shall know that I am the Lord their God, who brought them out of the land of Egypt that I might dwell among them. God reminds them of the primary purpose why he chose them through Abraham to be his people and why he had rescued them from Egyptian slavery.