



Leviticus - Chapter Nine

III Leviticus 8:1-10:20 - The Establishment of the Priesthood (continues)

Summary of Chapter Nine

This chapter prescribes and describes the first tabernacle service after the ordination of Aaron and his sons. The requirement of various offerings assumes that both the priests and the people are sinful. The Lord manifests himself by miraculously burning the animals on the altar, thus indicating that he has accepted both the priests and the people. This chapter functions as a sequel to the Sinai event; just as God came down to deliver his covenant to his people, so now he descends upon his altar to dwell intimately with them.

III.b Leviticus 9:1-24 - Aaron's Priesthood Inaugurated

See the chapter summary above.

¹ On the eighth day Moses summoned Aaron and his sons and the elders of Israel. ² He said to Aaron, 'Take a bull calf for a sin-offering and a ram for a burnt-offering, without blemish, and offer them before the Lord. ³ And say to the people of Israel, "Take a male goat for a sin-offering; a calf and a lamb, yearlings without blemish, for a burnt-offering; ⁴ and an ox and a ram for an offering of well-being to sacrifice before the Lord; and a grain-offering mixed with oil. For today the Lord will appear to you.'"

Leviticus 9:1-4

On the eighth day. After the seven days of the ordination service are concluded, then begins the inauguration of the daily sacrifices in the tabernacle. The first services conducted by Aaron as high priest are described in this chapter, which

marks a new beginning for the people of Israel. The prophet foresaw this as also happening when the Lord returns: <<*For seven days shall they make atonement for the altar and cleanse it, and so consecrate it. When these days are over, then from the eighth day onwards the priests shall offer upon the altar your burnt-offerings and your offerings of well-being; and I will accept you, says the Lord God*>> (Ezekiel 43:26-27).

Take a bull calf for a sin-offering. As part of the consecration ceremony, Aaron and his sons lived for an entire week at the tabernacle of meeting. Yet they still had sin to atone for during that week. The consecration ceremony did not make Aaron and his sons perfect. During the seven days of just sitting in the tabernacle he added more sin to his account that had to be cleared. Through the repetition of sacrifice, God also wanted to show that as useful as the animal sacrifices were, they were not complete and could not make an end of sins. Only the perfect sacrifice of the Messiah could do that: <<*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. Otherwise, would they not have ceased being offered, since the worshippers, cleansed once for all, would no longer have any consciousness of sin? But in these sacrifices there is a reminder of sin year after year. For it is impossible for the blood of bulls and goats to take away sins. Consequently, when Christ came into the world, he said, ‘Sacrifices and offerings you have not desired, but a body you have prepared for me; in burnt-offerings and sin-offerings you have taken no pleasure. Then I said, “See, God, I have come to do your will, O God” (in the scroll of the book it is written of me)’*>> (Hebrews 10:1-7).

And a ram for a burnt-offering. Even though Aaron just spent the prior week in special dedication to the Lord, there was still more to give. Although this was an important experience of dedication, the idea of consecration had to be ongoing in the life of Aaron and all of God’s priests.

⁵ They brought what Moses commanded to the front of the tent of meeting; and the whole congregation drew near and stood before the Lord. ⁶ And Moses said, ‘This is the thing that the Lord commanded you to do, so that the glory of the Lord may appear to you.’

Leviticus 9:5-6

This is the thing that the Lord commanded you to do, so that the glory of the Lord may appear to you. Everything Aaron did in the last week prepared him for this moment. This was the end goal of the week of separation and consecration to the Lord. The purpose of this service is for the glory of the Lord to be manifested both to the people and to the priests.

Introduction to Leviticus 9:7-21

The atonement of the priests comes first (vv.7-14), and then that of the people (vv.15-21). As in other ceremonies, the atonement process moves from removing sinfulness (by the sin-offering), to underscoring their petitions, praises, or both (by the burnt-offering), and finally to communion (by the offering of well-being).

⁷ Then Moses said to Aaron, ‘Draw near to the altar and sacrifice your sin-offering and your burnt-offering, and make atonement for yourself and for the people; and sacrifice the offering of the people, and make atonement for them; as the Lord has commanded.’

Leviticus 9:7

Draw near to the altar and sacrifice your sin-offering and your burnt-offering, and make atonement for yourself and for the people. Aaron had to first deal with his own sin, and then he could truly function as a priest, ready to serve others. Aaron was to undertake this process on the Day of Atonement also: <<*Aaron shall offer the bull as a sin-offering for himself, and shall make atonement for himself and for his house*>> (Leviticus 16:6).

Make atonement for them; as the Lord has commanded. Aaron’s priesthood existed for the glory of God and for the benefit of the people, not for his own personal benefit. The office of high priest was one of great authority, but of even greater responsibility: <<*Every high priest chosen from among mortals is put in charge of things pertaining to God on their behalf, to offer gifts and sacrifices for sins*>> (Hebrews 5:1).

⁸ Aaron drew near to the altar, and slaughtered the calf of the sin-offering, which was for himself. ⁹ The sons of Aaron presented the blood to him, and he dipped his finger in the blood and put it on the horns of the altar; and the rest of the blood he poured out at the base of the altar. ¹⁰ But the fat, the kidneys, and the appendage of the liver from the sin-offering he turned into smoke on the altar, as the Lord commanded Moses; ¹¹ and the flesh and the skin he burned with fire outside the camp. ¹² Then he slaughtered the burnt-offering. Aaron’s sons brought him the blood, and he dashed it against all sides of the altar. ¹³ And they brought him the burnt-offering piece by piece, and the head, which he turned into smoke on the altar. ¹⁴ He washed the entrails and the legs and, with the burnt-offering, turned them into smoke on the altar.

Leviticus 9:8-14

Aaron drew near to the altar, and slaughtered the calf of the sin-offering, which was for himself. This was a display of honesty and humility before the people. Aaron, before offering a sacrifice of atonement for the people, publicly offered one for himself, identifying himself with the people. This sacrifice told the nation, ‘I am a sinner who needs atonement also.’

¹⁵ Next he presented the people’s offering. He took the goat of the sin-offering that was for the people, and slaughtered it, and presented it as a sin-offering like the first one. ¹⁶ He presented the burnt-offering, and sacrificed it according to regulation. ¹⁷ He presented the grain-offering, and, taking a handful of it, he turned it into smoke on the altar, in addition to the burnt-offering of the morning. ¹⁸ He slaughtered the ox and the ram as a sacrifice of well-being for the people. Aaron’s sons brought him the blood, which he dashed against all sides of the altar, ¹⁹ and the fat of the ox and of the ram – the broad tail, the fat that covers the entrails, the two kidneys and the fat on them, and the appendage of the liver. ²⁰ They first laid the fat on the breasts, and the fat was turned into smoke on the altar; ²¹ and the breasts and the right thigh Aaron raised as an elevation-offering before the Lord, as Moses had commanded.

Leviticus 9:15-21

Next he presented the people’s offering. Having first sought atonement for himself, the high priest would now be deemed as fit to ask the Lord to cleanse the nation from its guilt and sin.

²² Aaron lifted his hands towards the people and blessed them; and he came down after sacrificing the sin-offering, the burnt-offering, and the offering of well-being. ²³ 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. ²⁴ 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.

Leviticus 9:22-24

Moses and Aaron together enter the tent of meeting. Moses is ‘passing the torch’ to Aaron; the priests will now mediate between the Lord and the people.

Then came out and blessed the people. Aaron's heart was turned towards the people. He longed to bless them, and so he lifted his hand toward the people and blessed them. His washing, sanctification, justification, consecration, waiting with and for the Lord, his identification with the people, and humility each made him desire a blessing for the people - more than for himself. This image is reflected in the actions of other great leaders, such as Jacob: <<*So he blessed them that day, saying, 'By you Israel will invoke blessings, saying, "God make you like Ephraim and like Manasseh."*>> So he put Ephraim ahead of Manasseh>> (Genesis 48:20), Moses: <<*When Moses saw that they had done all the work just as the Lord had commanded, he blessed them*>> (Exodus 39:43), and Jesus: <<*Then he led them out as far as Bethany, and, lifting up his hands, he blessed them*>> (Luke 24:50).

The glory of the Lord appeared to all the people. Fire came out from the Lord. God proved his presence by sending the fire. The priests were there, the offering was there, the Tabernacle was there, and the nation was there, but it was all incomplete without the fire from God.

The Bible provides seven examples of where God showed acceptance of a sacrifice with fire from heaven:

- Abel (Genesis 4:4)
- Aaron (Leviticus 9:24)
- Gideon (Judges 6:21)
- Manoah (Judges 13:19-23)
- David (1 Chronicles 21:28)
- Solomon (2 Chronicles 7:1)
- Elijah (1 Kings 18:38).

Fire was often associated with God's presence and work. Deuteronomy 4:24 states: <<*For the Lord your God is a devouring fire, a jealous God*>>. John the Baptist promised Jesus would come with a baptism with the Holy Spirit and with fire (Matthew 3:11). The Holy Spirit manifested his presence on the day of Pentecost by tongues as of fire (Acts 2:3). Jesus said: <<*I came to bring fire to the earth, and how I wish it were already kindled!*>> (Luke 12:49).

Although this consecration ceremony has a spiritual application for Christians, they obviously are not literally consecrated to the priesthood through this ceremony. Yet their priesthood is real and after the pattern of the priesthood of Jesus, who never went through such a ceremony. The priesthood of Jesus is based on an oath, as in: << *but this one became a priest with an oath, because of the one who said to him, 'The Lord has sworn and will not change his mind, "You are a priest for ever"'*>> – accordingly Jesus has also become the *guarantee of a better covenant*>> (Hebrews 7:21-22). Christians are also made priests not by a ceremony, but by the oath, the promise of God, just like Jesus.