

NUMBERS

Lesson 31 - Chapters 28 and 29

Last week we began this two-chapter unit of Numbers 28 and 29 that I entitled the "Calendar of Public Sacrifices". These two chapters are ones that, like the long and complex biblical genealogical and tribal listings, can make our eyes droop and our heads bob as we try to stay awake and focused on what they say. But I would suggest that our disinterested and bored reaction is because we see the subject matter as irrelevant to us, meant only for an ancient time, or perhaps practically incomprehensible to our 21st century WESTERN minds. I emphasize the word "western" because sacrifices and rituals in the service of gods are hardly a thing of bygone eras; they are current and still happen in the bulk of the world amongst most other religions than Judeo-Christian.

The Bible makes sacrifice the center, the focal point, and the heart of proper worship practices. The Church (rightly) makes Yeshua's sacrifice the Believers' focal point of worship; yet when it comes to the subject of our OWN participation in sacrifice and ritual our eyes glaze over and we really don't even know what those words mean. Certainly I'm not suggesting that we should reinstitute animal sacrifice (although the later chapters of Ezekiel make it clear that with the new Temple and the return of Messiah this will happen); however, I am suggesting that we cannot possibly even begin to grasp the boundless depth of meaning contained within God's ordained, Torah-based, authorized sacrificial system unless we acknowledge it as valid and good and worth understanding.

A modern Hebrew commentator, W.G. Plaut, said this about the subject of ritual biblical sacrifice: ***"What do moderns consider "primitive" about such rituals? Doubtless, pre-biblical origins of sacrifice go back to beliefs that the gods desired food for their consumption. But the Torah itself no longer gives any warrant for the continuation of such beliefs, and Psalm 50 expressly disavows them. Most likely it is the public nature of the ancient slaughtering process that is repellent to current tastes. We prefer to hide the procedure behind the walls of abattoirs where the animals are killed in a fashion no less bloody, but without making it necessary for the consumer to witness the life and death cycle, which goes into his pleasurable nourishment. Moreover, even when we share with others in the eating process, we do not generally experience any of the genuinely worthy emotions, which were usually engendered by the sacrifices of old. In the root meaning of the English word, we do not "sacrifice" (that is, we do not render holy) anything when we eat. This does not mean that our age ought to be ready for any reconsideration of cultic sacrifice. It does suggest that when seen in its own context the biblical order of animal offerings was a genuine form of worship that cannot be quickly dismissed with prejudicial contemporary judgments."***

Some time ago Rabbi Baruch, our dear brother and teacher from Israel, told us that it is his opinion that when the Temple in Jerusalem is rebuilt (which it will be), and when the animal sacrifices begin once again (which they will), that unlike the fairly universal belief among gentile Christians that these ritual sacrifices will be viewed by Yehoveh as a slap-in-the-face, probably these sacrifices will be a commemoration of what Yeshua has done. Further, that Christians need not consider these renewed sacrifices as a replacement of the Savior's atoning blood anymore than our celebration of Passover is a replacement for His death. For us to sip a teaspoon of wine or grape juice and swallow a tiny morsel of unleavened bread and think that through this we have gained a thorough **understanding** of His unmatched sacrifice (a sacrifice that was prefigured in detail by the Levitical sacrificial system) is a grand and naive miscalculation on our part. And only our diligent study of Torah, led by the wisdom of the Holy Spirit, is going to remedy that for us.

Last time I enumerated and created a chart for you that summed up the 4 general types of sacrifices: the '**Olah**, the **Hatta'at**, the '**Asham** and the **Shelamim**. We're not going to re-read all of chapter 28 (but we will re-read some of it) so I am going to try to frame for you a little easier means for our modern generation to comprehend the underlying meaning and structure of the Levitical sacrifices and biblical feasts in general.

READ NUMBERS CHAPTER 28:9 - end

Chapter 28, verse 1, begins by stating in the strongest possible language that the rituals and sacrifices and feasts that the Lord has ordained are not only to be followed they're to be accomplished with precision and fully in the manner, time, and quantities He has prescribed. There are few options and when there are options it almost always has to do with making allowances for the poor who might not be able to afford one of the more expensive animals as a sacrifice. It is the norm for the modern and relaxed Church to make allowance for the poor or the debt-ridden to give NOTHING as an offering of tithes to the Lord; but in the pattern of the sacrificial system the Lord prescribes that ALL must offer-up, even if it is (at times) necessarily small.

Thus as we find Israel standing on the threshold of centuries of promise, as they camp east of the Jordan River and impatient to enter the Promised Land, their first and most important duty is to set-up this Calendar of public worship to the God of Israel. And this is in order to set up both lines of communication and communion between them and Yehoveh.

In these two chapters we receive a long list of occasions on which sacrifices are to be made, and along with it the kind and number of sacrifices. Sacrifices are to be made daily and on Shabbat (the Sabbath), and in addition there are 30 days in each year that are marked for special ritual sacrifices.

In looking at this chart I've prepared for you, you can see a number of distinctive features concerning these occasions of sacrifice. Jacob Milgrom has done a wonderful job summing-up these distinctions so I'll just quote him rather than trying to improve upon them:

1. The offerings are cumulative; that is, the offerings for the Sabbaths and festivals are IN

- ADDITION to the daily offerings; and the offerings for Rosh Hashanah, the New Year, are IN ADDITION to the daily and New Moon offerings. Hence should the New Year fall on a Sabbath there would be offered all of the following: a) the daily offering PLUS, b) the Sabbath offering PLUS, c) the New Moon offering PLUS, d) the New Year offering.
2. The organizing principle of the calendar is according to descending order of frequency: daily, then Sabbath, and then New Moon. Then the sacrifices for festivals follow in calendar order, BEGINNING with Passover.
 3. All the sacrificial animals mentioned are male animals: bulls, rams, and lambs as burnt offerings ('Olah offerings) and goats as purification offerings (Hata'at offerings).
 4. The sacrificial order is prescriptive not descriptive. In actual practice, the purification offering would be sacrificed BEFORE the additional burnt offering.
 5. The number 7 and it's multiples (14 being two times 7) are very prominent in the number of animals offered.
 6. In addition to the frequency of the number 7 in what is laid out in Numbers 28 and 29, there are other occurrences of the number 7: the seven biblical festivals, the seven-day Unleavened Bread and Sukkot festivals, the preponderance of festivals that occur in the 7th month, the 7 festival days (in addition to Sabbath) on which all work is prohibited. Even more we have the bulls required for Sukkot add up to 70 (7 times 10), the number of lambs on Sukkot is 7 times 7 times 2, the number of Rams is 14 (7 times 2), and the number of required goats is 7.

The every day offering has always been called, in Hebrew, **tamid**. The animals were provided by the Priesthood and sacrificed and offered-up by the priests as a burnt offering. The daily offering was performed on the great Bronze Altar at the Tabernacle and later the Temple every morning and every evening without fail, and consisted of a lamb plus a grain offering (called a **Minchah**) and a libation offering of wine. The Israelites considered the **tamid** as crucial to their very existence; they believed that as long as the **tamid** was observed the walls of Jerusalem would stand and that the Lord would protect them.

Let me remind you of something that can get confusing: the most common term for a sacrifice is a "burnt-offering"; but we really need to revise that. The problem is that a lot of rather sloppy scholarship has translated the very specific '**Olah** sacrifice as "burnt offering", but the reality is that there were several kinds of sacrifices, each with its own divine purpose and own name, even though EVERY sacrifice gets burned up on the altar. Thus it is overly simplistic to label every sacrifice as the burnt offering. The daily sacrifice, the **tamid**, consists of the '**Olah** (the typically misnamed burnt offering) and the **Minchah** (the grain offering).

Now there is no getting around it that virtually all bible era cultures sacrificed to gods and as part of that system they sacrificed food to the gods. In the minds and purposes of these mystery religion cultures the primary aim of the food was to FEED those gods. Thus they typically offered THREE daily sacrifices (essentially breakfast, lunch, and dinner). This was NOT the Hebrew view. In fact it was a nearly opposite view because the Israelite purpose was to offer up animals and grains (food) not as sustenance for their god Yehoveh, but as an acknowledgement that He provides THEM with this food.

Now in verse 7 we get an interesting instruction concerning the kind of libation offering to Yehoveh. Too often, probably due to the modern understanding of how seriously destructive addiction to alcohol can be to the user and to the family, the Church denies that wine (which contains alcohol) was prescribed by the Lord for these sacred rituals. So biblical wine is typically said to be merely grape juice. That is simply not true. **Yayin** is the standard Hebrew word for wine; wine just as we think of wine. **Yayin** was a relatively low-alcohol wine, used not only for some ritual but also for every day drinking particularly with meals. However there was a stronger drink called **shekhar**, and it was usually used in order to get tipsy or flat out drunk but there actually was some God-authorized ritual use of **shekhar**. In fact the Hebrew word **shekhar** is often (correctly) translated in our bibles as "strong drink". It could have been any number of alcoholic drink concoctions in which the alcohol level was significantly HIGHER than **Yayin** (table wine). Sometimes the **shekhar** was a strong beer or ale made from grains. The biblical term "old wine" refers to fermented grapes; wine that has been left to ferment beyond typical (therefore it was older than regular wine) and so has more alcohol in it. Old wine is **shekhar**.

As I just mentioned to you, the libation offering that is to accompany the twice-daily tamid is here specified as **shekhar**, not only wine but also STRONG wine. I know it was wine and not beer because nowhere in the Law is anything but grapes used as the source for this type of fermented libation offering, due to the needed symbolism of joy.

Another interesting fact of wine drinking is that it is often said that priests were not to drink **Yayin** (table wine) immediately before they began their official time of Temple duty. In fact they were NOT prohibited from drinking table wine, they were prohibited from drinking **shekhar**, stronger intoxicating drink, during those time periods. Those Hebrew laymen who have taken the vow of a Nazarite may NOT drink **Yayin** OR **shekhar**. So for a Nazarite it's more a matter of being entirely prohibited from partaking of alcoholic beverage than it is of only drinking wine.

In verse 9 the Sabbath day sacrificial offering is specified: two yearling rams together with the grain sacrifice. This is in addition to the daily **tamid**, and in addition to any other occasion that might have fallen on this particular **Shabbat**.

In verse 11 begins the occasion of the New Moon, which for the Israelites marked the end of one month and the beginning of the next. It was an important monthly festival celebrated by all the families of Israel, and its importance can be seen by the large number of sacrificial rams that were offered: 7. This equaled the same number as the most important of the biblical festivals. The libation offering is wine, regular wine: **Yayin**.

This would be a good time to point out something that I think has great significance. As Rabbi Baruch and I have both lectured on, along with the advent of the coming new Temple in Jerusalem will be renewed sacrificial worship. The sacrificial protocol for the renewed system is called out primarily in the book Ezekiel and is generally acknowledged by Hebrews and Christians as an end-times and millennial kingdom time frame. Therefore the question that is usually asked is this: is the renewed sacrificing that is not too far into our future a good thing or a bad thing, in view of the fact that the Ezekiel system begins just before the return of Messiah, and apparently continues on into His new kingdom, the one Christians call the Millennial

Kingdom? We've already covered that to some degree and I generally agree with Rabbi Baruch that it seems likely that this renewed sacrificial system is going to be viewed by God as a good and required thing. Now one issue we'll find with Ezekiel's future sacrificial protocol is that it is somewhat modified from the one we find in the Torah, as one might reasonably expect since the one we're being instructed on in Torah is pre-Christ, while the one we're being instructed on in Ezekiel is not only after Yeshua's death and resurrection but occurs at His return. So circumstances are wildly different particularly in the spiritual side of things.

This shift in details of some elements of the sacrificial system is something we've already seen in Torah. While in the Wilderness items like wine and oxen and grain would be difficult to come by (especially in large volume); however once Israel has entered the Land of Canaan and settled there these things will be readily available. Therefore God has set down pre-conquest sacrificial requirements in Exodus (and to some degree in Leviticus) while Numbers tends to deal mostly with the time **after** Israel has conquered Canaan.

One of the striking differences between the future Ezekiel system and the Torah system of Moses' era is that while the priesthood is to supply the daily **tamid** (morning and evening burnt offerings) in the Torah version of sacrificial protocol, it is the worshippers who are to provide the **tamid** in the Ezekiel version. And while in verse 15 of Numbers 28 we see that there is to be a **Hatta'at**, a purification offering, to go along with the New Moon celebration as well as with all other special occasion sacrifices (except on Sabbath), we find that the **Hatta'at** is not present at all in Ezekiel's future sacrificial procedures for these occasions.

We're not going to go into all the differences between the sacrificial system in Torah versus the system in Ezekiel because that is a very deep endeavor that could lock us up for weeks. However when you see these differences one can speculate that there is **significance** in those differences. Some scholars simply say that the differences are but error and inconsistency. But I think it has to do with the far LESSER significance of the priesthood in Ezekiel (during the end-times, 1000 year kingdom times) and the much greater and central significance of the priesthood in Torah. I think it also has to do with the fact that since the advent of Messiah no additional atonement apart from His blood is needed NOR is even possible. In the Torah system of sacrifice it was the chief job of the priests to sacrifice as a means of obtaining atonement for Israel. So while the priests' role in Torah and right on up to Yeshua's death and resurrection was the indispensable rituals needed for atonement of the people's sins, the Ezekiel style of priesthood is probably more of an ongoing service of **commemoration** of what God has done, particularly as references Jesus Christ's sacrifice to bring Salvation.

Let's move on, but let me say that this last little bit about the differences between Ezekiel and Torah as pertains to sacrificing is my opinion and I do NOT hold it up to you as indisputable fact.

Next up in verse 16 are the Passover and Unleavened Bread sacrificial offerings. This matter of Passover and the Feast of Unleavened Bread can be quite confusing especially for a gentile, because it seems that they run together. That they became fused and inseparable was NOT how it was prescribed early in the Torah and only became so out of practicality and Tradition a few years later.

Passover began as ONE-day festival event. Matzah, or The Feast of Unleavened Bread, is to begin the day AFTER Passover and is a continuous 7-day festival. Since Pesach (Passover) was eventually (by the time of Deuteronomy) fused with Matzah, it is often spoken of today as the 8-day Festival of Passover, or alternately, the 8 day Festival of Matzah. Passover and Feast of Unleavened Bread have become interchangeable terms though it is technically and biblically inaccurate.

In the original ordinances of Passover and separately the Feast of Unleavened Bread, Passover was to occur on the 14th of the month of Nisan, and the 7 days of Matzah were to begin on the 15th of Nisan and end on the 21st of Nisan.

Originally Passover was a kind of private family observance; the Passover lamb (or better, Ram) was to be killed, butchered and eaten by individual families at their own homes (it was not necessary for a priest to officiate any part of the ritual). In fact recall that one of the requirements of the Passover is that the Ram is roasted **over a fire** as the ONLY approved method of cooking it. Why over a fire? Probably because it was simulating a burnt offering on the Altar; but while most Temple Altar offerings were completely burned up with fire, this private in-home Passover Ram sacrifice was **cooked** with fire and to meant as food for the Israelites. Notice I said PRIVATE home observance as regards the Passover; what we having been studying in chapter 28 and soon 29, are PUBLIC sacrifices; sacrifices that occurred at the Temple and **are** officiated over by the priests. On the other hand the Feast of Matza, as we see here in Numbers, is to have official PUBLIC sacrificial status performed at the Temple by priests. So this meant people had to make a journey, a pilgrimage, to Jerusalem (or in earlier times to the location of the Tabernacle) in order to comply.

Now because the two feasts became fused into one people brought their Paschal lambs with them to the Temple to be slaughtered by a priest since they had to be there for the Feast of Matza anyway. They kind of killed two birds with one stone. It's also not unlike the idea that Christians (gentiles) for hundreds of years have usually preferred to marry in a church. There is utterly NO Bible command that this happens but in our way of thinking it kind of adds a more solemn and spiritual element to the wedding to have it in a church building. It was the same idea with the Passover lamb: it's not required that it is killed under the supervision of a priest, but it seemed to lend some extra sanctity to the occasion by doing so. As a result public ovens for roasting the lambs were eventually placed all over Jerusalem to enable those who brought their lambs there, to roast them and eat them after they were ritually killed at the Temple (again, not a Torah requirement but only a nicety).

Notice also that the importance of the Feast of Unleavened Bread is underscored by requiring the same amount of extra sacrifices on each of the 7 days of Matza.

In verse 26 the sacrificial requirements for the Feast of Weeks are laid down. This occasion is today called **Shavuot** among the Hebrews or Pentecost (a Greek word) among the Christians. This feast comes 7 weeks plus 1 day (50 days) after the Feast of Matza. As all these festivals are agricultural based, **Shavuot** was celebrated at the conclusion of the barley harvest, which was also the **beginning** of the wheat harvest. It was a summer festival that was also a public festival, meaning it required a journey to the Temple, meaning that there were sacrifices that

had to be officiated over by priests. Interestingly this is another of those instances where the requirement to make a pilgrimage to the Temple is omitted from the Ezekiel protocol of sacrifice for the end-times and Millennial Kingdom periods probably because of the decreased role and purpose of priests for that age and the reality that Messiah is present on earth.

And just as with on New Moon festivals and each day of the Feast of Matza, the same number of sacrifices was required for **Shavuot**.

Let's move on to Numbers chapter 29.

READ NUMBERS CHAPTER 29 all

OK. We're only going to hit the highlights of this chapter because all the details about the various kinds of sacrifices we've already covered in depth back in Leviticus. I'm going to assume you already know most of this, and if you don't you can go back and study the Leviticus CDs.

This chapter continues the holy calendar of public sacrifices, but now we move into the sacred 7th month of the year. Basically we have 3 sacred feasts in the 1st month of the year, 3 sacred feasts in the 7th month of the year, and 1 in between the 1st and 7th month.

And in verse 1 of chapter 29 the Lord instructs that the 1st day of the 7 month is to be a special occasion; one where the horn is sounded. In Hebrew it says it is a day of **Yom Teruah** (a day of blowing horns). Therefore it has come to be known as the Feast of Trumpets.

Part of the key to understanding what this special occasion signifies is embedded in the significance of the number "7". Think about how a week operates: the 1st day of the week obviously begins each and every week and is nothing special (no special observances assigned to this day), but the 7th day is very special because it's the Sabbath day, an especially holy day according to the Lord. Well the 7th month is like the Sabbath month. Not that the 7th month is an entire month of rest but it IS the 7th cycle of the moon since the beginning of the religious calendar year; it is the 7th month since the beginning of months and as such is an especially holy month. So it is right along God's established pattern that the 7th of anything holds special significance.

This first day of the 7th month is also called Rosh Hashanah meaning the head of the year; it's Jewish New Year. But since it's also the 1st day of a new month (or new moon), it also holds additional significance.

The most ancient Babylonian calendars indicate that the 7th month of the year is generally the 1st month of the agricultural year; and even more the 50-year Jubilee year that God has ordained is to commence on Rosh Hashanah.

Because this is an especially holy day it has its own dedicated series of sacrifices, which are added to the normal New Moon sacrifices.

10 days later, on the 10th day of the 7th month, verse 7 speaks of yet another sacred occasion; another God-ordained Biblical Feast. This one is perhaps the most sober and yet still joyous feast of the 7 feasts: **Yom Kippur**, the Day of Atonement. This is the one day per year that the High Priest was permitted by Yehoveh to enter the Holy of Holies in the Sanctuary. And, the purpose of that entry was to bring blood to sprinkle on the Mercy Seat, the lid of the Ark of the Covenant, and on other areas of the Temple to cleanse it and purify it from the defilement God's dwelling place has suffered from a year's worth of human contact. The celebration is confined to the Temple itself and performed ONLY by the High Priest. The ordinary Hebrews do NOT go to the Temple on this day.

For several days leading up to **Yom Kippur** much fasting and praying and contemplating their sins before Yehoveh have gone on; but upon **Yom Kippur** atonement is attained, the people are forgiven, and they can move forward into the new year without their sins hanging over their heads.

This is a time of self-denial; no food, no drink, no gain from working, not even any sexual activity. The 10 days that connect the 1st day of the 7th month, **Rosh Hashanah**, Jewish New Year, and the 10th day of the 7th month, **Yom Kippur**, are called the High Holy Days. And still, with both of these deeply moving and important feast days in the 7th month, there is yet another feast coming quickly: the granddaddy of all feasts.

It is this feast that is spoken of beginning in verse 12: the Feast of **Sukkot**, also known as the Feast of Tabernacles or the Feast of Booths. This is the 3rd and last of the pilgrimage Feasts whereby a male, of the age of accountability, must go to the Temple to celebrate and sacrifice. This agriculturally based feast marked the end of the agricultural year when the final bits of the field harvest were gathered before waiting for planting and then rain to start the cycle all over again.

The amount and kind of sacrifices required for this feast tell us just how important it is: five times as many bulls and two times as many lambs and rams are offered for sacrifice during this 8 days of Sukkot than in the days of the Feast of Matza. On the surface this festival is about giving thanks to the Lord for sustaining them for the previous year; but underneath it all this is about the final ingathering **not** of grain, but of all those who have given their hearts to Yeshua and their trust to God Almighty. The Pilgrims who came to America recognized this and modeled our Thanksgiving holiday after it. Yes our Thanksgiving is a religious holiday through and through, but one would never know it anymore, would we?

Although we say that **Sukkot** is an 8 day festival technically it's really only seven; it is 7 days of the Feast of Tabernacles immediately followed by a an extra Sabbath Day and it is also a day of congregating and fellowship in religious ceremony.

This Feast has a very unique schedule of ritual sacrifice: it begins on the first day by offering 13 bulls (the most expensive of all the animals) and then over a period of 7 days the sacrifice is reduced by one bull each day. So on the 1st day of **Sukkot** 13 bulls are sacrificed, on the 2nd day 12 bulls are sacrificed and by the 7th day of Sukkot 7 bulls are sacrificed. All the quantities of other sacrificial animals and grains and wine remain static throughout.

Why 13 bulls? Usually when we have sacrifices on behalf of all Israel the number is 12. It is my opinion that the 13 signifies the 12 tribes of Israel PLUS the tribe of Levi, the priestly tribe. Remember the tribe of Levi was separated away from Israel by the Lord for special service to Him and was NOT to be counted as among Israel. But here we have a reuniting of Levi with Israel, something that is probably going to occur in the Millennial Kingdom.

And, of course, when you add up the number of bulls sacrificed over the entire 7 day period, it comes to 70: seven times ten. There's that number 7 again. The Rabbis say that the 70 represent all the nations of the world. Isn't that fascinating? The Rabbinical Tradition says the grandest of all the feasts; the final of all the feasts, has a significant element of it that involves the world in general and not just Hebrews.

From a prophetic standpoint, the Feast of Tabernacles represents that time of final ingathering of Believers at the end of days. It is that time when the Lord gathers all who are His, and destroys the remainder, and it is the entry into the 1000-year reign of Messiah that we typically call the Millennial Kingdom. Understanding the Lord's ordained sacrifices and His ordained biblical feasts, and all that has happened and is about to happen in the near future is going to make a lot more sense to us.

Next week, we'll begin Numbers chapter 30.