



A YEAR
with
GOD
Daily Devotional

DAY 44



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DAY FORTY-FOUR

Leviticus 1 - 4

The Language of the Altar

Most people slow down when they reach Leviticus. The laws, the offerings, the measurements, the rituals -it can feel like stepping from a river into sand. But if you read Leviticus knowing what it is, it becomes one of the most tender books in the Bible.

Leviticus is God teaching a recently freed slave nation how to live with Him in their midst. They have never had a God who camped with them before. They do not know what to do with holiness. They do not understand the gap between who He is and who they are. And so He teaches them -through a system of offerings -how to draw near without being consumed. Not because He is harsh, but because He is holy. And holiness requires a bridge.

The sacrificial system is not God being demanding. It is God being merciful. He could have said: you are not clean enough to approach me. Instead He said: here is the way to approach me. Here is the bridge I am providing. The whole system is grace dressed in blood and smoke.

The burnt offering in chapter 1 is total. The whole animal. Nothing kept back. The person making the offering lays their hand on the

animal's head -a gesture of identification, of transference. This animal is standing in my place. What should happen to me is happening to it. The priest slaughters it. The blood is sprinkled. The body is cut and washed and arranged on the altar and burned entirely.

A pleasing aroma to the Lord. That phrase appears again and again in Leviticus. The sacrifice is pleasing. Not because God enjoys the smell of burning flesh. But because what the burning represents is pleasing: a person acknowledging their need, bringing the cost, not holding back, giving all. The total surrender is what is fragrant.

Paul will write that the New Testament equivalent of the burnt offering is presenting your body as a living sacrifice, holy and pleasing to God. Not death on an altar but total, conscious, daily surrender. The fragrance is the same. The completeness is the same. The only difference is that you walk away from the altar and keep giving.

The grain offering in chapter 2 is different in texture but the same in spirit. Fine flour. Oil. Frankincense. Salt -always salt, the symbol of covenant, of preservation, of things that do not corrupt. No leaven, which represents corruption. No honey, which ferments. What you bring to God must be the real thing, uncorrupted, pure. The best of what you have grown and ground and prepared.

-Salt in every offering. Covenant in every meal. God's relationship with His people is preserved by what binds rather than corrupted by what ferments. What covenants are you protecting with salt?

The peace offering in chapter 3 is the one with a meal. Part is burned on the altar. Part goes to the priests. Part goes to the person who brought the offering -they eat it with their family and neighbours. A meal shared between God, the priests, and the people. Fellowship around a table where the sacrifice has already been made. It is the oldest picture of the communion table -the peace between God and His people expressed in shared food.

The peace offering tells us something about what the cross produces. Not just forgiveness. Feast. Not just the removal of guilt. Communion. The goal of the sacrifice was never just that the debt be cleared. It was that the table could be set. The cross is a peace offering -and the invitation on the other side of it is always: come and eat.

Chapter 4 introduces the sin offering -and here the system shows its most remarkable feature. The sin offering is for unintentional sin. Not the deliberate rebellion. Not the premeditated betrayal. The accidental wrong. The thing you did without realising it violated something sacred. God provides a way back even from that.

And the procedure changes depending on who sinned. A priest sins -a young bull. The whole community sins -a young bull. A leader

sins -a male goat. An ordinary person sins -a female goat, or if they cannot afford it, two doves, or if they cannot afford that, fine flour. God scales the system to what the person has. He does not require the same from the poor person as from the priest. The access to forgiveness is not restricted by wealth.

God has always scaled His requirements to what people can bring. He does not demand more than is possible. He meets people where they are, with what they have, and He makes a way. The man who could only bring flour was not less forgiven than the man who brought a bull. The access was the same. The mercy was the same. Bring what you have.

The priest takes the blood of the sin offering and puts some on the horns of the altar. Atones for the community. The priest confesses over it. And the people are forgiven.

This is the grammar of Leviticus. Bring the cost. Identify with the sacrifice. Let the blood speak. Receive the forgiveness. Rejoin the community. It is repeated with variations through thirty-seven chapters. And every repetition is saying the same thing in a slightly different key: I have made a way. Come near. You do not have to stay at a distance. I have made a way.

Hebrews says that the blood of bulls and goats cannot actually take away sin. The sacrificial system was always a shadow -pointing toward the One sacrifice that

would do what all the others pictured. When Jesus said “It is finished,” the entire sacrificial system said: yes. That is what we were saying all along. We were saying it in the language of altars and blood and smoke. He said it in the language of a cross. Speak this over yourself today:

God made a way.

The sacrifice has been made. The blood has been applied.

I do not stay at a distance.

I bring what I have and I come near.

TOMORROW -Day 45 Leviticus 5-7

The offerings continue -and one of them is for guilt that you didn't know you had. God provides atonement for the sin you hadn't even discovered yet. Come back tomorrow.

Day 44 of 365



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