

August 12, 2018 - Lev. 8:1 – 10:7 - Ordination of Aaron and sons; Nadab & Abihu
Torah reading: Leviticus 8:1 – 10:7 - Ordination of Aaron and sons; Nadab & Abihu

Psalm 77

Haftarah: 1 Samuel 2:28-36 + 3:20

The instructions for sacrifice that were given in Leviticus 4-7 are now put into practice. The Tabernacle, its furniture, its priests and ceremonies come to life and begin to function for the first time as a picture of Messiah.

Summary

- Chapter 8 - recounts the anointing of Aaron and his sons as priests.
- Chapter 9 - recounts the first sin offering, for Aaron and then for the people. Then the performance of the burnt and peace offerings. Moses and Aaron enter the Tabernacle, then come out and bless the people. Afterward, "fire came out from before the LORD" and consumed the burnt offering.
- Chapter 10:1-7 - relates the self-willed "strange fire" offered by Nadab and Abihu, the sons of Aaron, that ends in their death.

The Consecration of Aaron and his Sons - Leviticus 8:1-17

The consecration of Aaron and his sons had been delayed until the Tabernacle had been prepared, and the laws of the sacrifices given.

The ceremonies connected with the consecration were:

- (a) washing (Leviticus 8:6),
- (b) vesting (Leviticus 8:7-9; Leviticus 8:13),
- (c) anointing (Leviticus 8:10-12),
- (d) offering sacrifices, which were of three kinds;
 - (1) a Sin Offering (Leviticus 8:14-17),
 - (2) a Burnt Offering (Leviticus 8:18-21),
 - (3) the ram of consecration (Leviticus 8:22-32), which was treated as a Peace Offering, but with additional ritual appropriate to the special occasion. - *Cambridge Bible*

Leviticus 8:1-2 - "And the LORD spake unto Moses, saying, Take Aaron and his sons with him, and the garments, and the anointing oil, and a bullock for the sin offering, and two rams, and a basket of unleavened bread;"

"the garments" - see Exodus 28 for previous instructions about the priestly garments; the anointing oil (Exodus 30:23); Exodus 29:1-37 for the directions about this ordination.

Leviticus 8:3 - "And gather thou all the congregation together unto the door of the tabernacle of the congregation."

Aben Ezra (Abraham ben Meir Ibn Ezra - Spain, 1089 - 1167) says only the heads of the tribes and the elders of the people gathered, since the space is not large enough for the whole congregation.

But Rashi says it was a kind of miracle:

Rashi - This is one of the instances where a small [area] accommodated a large [number of people]. — [Lev. Rabbah 10:9]

Spiritually, all of Israel throughout history are gathered to witness and understand this ordination - including us.

Leviticus 8:6 - "And Moses brought Aaron and his sons, and washed them with water."

Compare the church as a nation of priests:

- **Hebrews 10:22** - "Let us draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience, and our bodies washed with pure water."

Leviticus 8:7 - "And he put upon him the coat, and girded him with the girdle, and clothed him with the robe, and put the ephod upon him, and he girded him with the curious girdle of the ephod, and bound it unto him therewith."

Garments

- **Psalms 132:9** - "Let Your priests be clothed with righteousness, And let Your godly ones sing for joy."

- **Revelation 19:8** - "It was given to her to clothe herself in fine linen, bright and clean; for the fine linen is the righteous acts of the saints."

- **Isaiah 59:17** - "He put on righteousness like a breastplate, And a helmet of salvation on His head; And He put on garments of vengeance for clothing And wrapped Himself with zeal as a mantle."

- **Isaiah 11:5** - "Also righteousness will be the belt about His loins, And faithfulness the belt about His waist."

Anointing Oil - Dedicated to God

Leviticus 8:12 - "And Moses took the anointing oil, and anointed the tabernacle and all that was therein, and sanctified them. And he sprinkled thereof upon the altar seven times, and anointed the altar and all his vessels, both the laver and his foot, to sanctify them. And he poured of the anointing oil upon Aaron's head, and anointed him, to sanctify him."

"Seven times" - means fully, completely sanctified.

Recall **Exodus 30:32** - "Upon man's flesh shall it not be poured, neither shall ye make any other like it, after the composition of it: it is holy, and it shall be holy unto you."

"man" = the natural man in his worldly pursuits. When someone was anointed, in effect that person died to his own concerns and was fully given over to the demands of his office, whether high priest or possibly the king. The same happens when the Spirit of God comes upon a believer - we are part of a royal priesthood.

Special Ceremony for Consecration

Leviticus 8:22-23 - "And he brought the other ram, the ram of consecration: and Aaron and his sons laid their hands upon the head of the ram. And he slew it; and Moses took of the blood of it, and put it upon the tip of Aaron's right ear, and upon the thumb of his right hand, and upon the great toe of his right foot."

"consecration" = *millu'* - filling or fullness, used of the placing of a gem in its setting. The same word is used for setting the onyx stones in the high priest's ephod and breastplate. The completion of the ordination.

Normally blood was daubed on the horns of the altar - whether of the Brazen Altar or the Incense Altar. Here, the blood is daubed on the persons.

- Blood on the right earlobe - indicating he was to "shema" - "hear under" and understand God's direction.
- Blood on the right thumb - indicating he was to execute and carry out God's directions and commands
- Blood on the right big toe - indicating he was to walk in God's way and follow the path of righteousness.

Rashi - This filled and perfected the priests in their priesthood.

After the completion of this offering of the ram for consecration, there was a further sprinkling of oil and blood on their garments:

Leviticus 8:30 - "And Moses took of the anointing oil, and of the blood which was upon the altar, and sprinkled it upon Aaron, and upon his garments, and upon his sons, and upon his sons' garments with him; and sanctified Aaron, and his garments, and his sons, and his sons' garments with him."

"the blood which was upon the altar" - The blood was caught in a basin on or by the Brazen Altar, having been received into it when the ram was slain.

Aben Ezra - The blood and oil was sprinkled *under* the garments of Aaron, and *on* his garments, as if they were sprinkled within and without.

This shows both the justification of the priests of the Lord by the blood of Christ, and the sanctification of them by the Spirit, and that both their persons and their actions stand in need of cleansing by them both. All should be holy in a ceremonial sense, and devoted

to holy uses and services. - *Gill's Exposition*

- **Psalm 45:7-8** - - "You have loved righteousness and hated wickedness; therefore God, your God, has placed you above your companions by anointing you with the oil of joy. All your garments are fragrant with myrrh and aloes and cassia; from palaces of ivory the harps make you glad."

Leviticus 8:33, 35 - "And ye shall not go out of the door of the tabernacle of the congregation in seven days, until the days of your consecration be at an end: for seven days shall he consecrate you. ... Therefore shall ye abide at the door of the tabernacle of the congregation day and night seven days, and keep the charge of the LORD, that ye die not: for so I am commanded."

Aben Ezra and other were puzzled where the priests should "ease nature" during this time, since the place was holy; but the orders are not to be considered as so strict that they might not go in and out, though they were not to stay long, or to attend to any other business; and it was always necessary there should be some upon the spot, keeping the Lord's charge in their turns; and it was always requisite that they should also sleep alternately; for it cannot be thought that they should be all this time without rest, any more than without food. - *Gill's Exposition*

The consecration described could have occurred at the beginning or at the end of these seven days.

Christ as our High Priest

"In these types we see our great High Priest, even Christ Jesus, solemnly appointed, anointed, and invested with his sacred office, by his own blood, and the influences of his Holy Spirit." - *Matthew Henry's Commentary*

A major difference in Christ's appointment as our High Priest after the order of Melchisedek rather than Aaron is that God accompanied it with an "oath."

Hebrews 7:21-22 - "For those priests were made without an oath; but this with an oath by him that said unto him, 'The Lord sware and will not repent, Thou art a priest for ever after the order of Melchisedek' By so much was Jesus made a surety of a better testament."
(quoting Psalm 110:4)

Levitical priests received their office by regular descent from Aaron, and when they arrived at a suitable age they began their duties.

On other occasions, the person who receives the office swears to uphold its duties; here, He who conferred the priesthood swore. This is like the covenant with Abraham in the Horror of Great Darkness, in which he was put in a deep sleep as God Himself concluded both parts of the covenant (**Genesis 15**).

The law which made the Levitical priesthood, showed that the priests were frail, dying creatures, not able to save their own lives, much less could they save the souls of those who came to them. But the High Priest of our profession holds his office by the power of endless life in himself. - *Matthew Henry's Commentary*

He "ever lives" to make intercession for us (**Hebrews 7:25**).

An example of God making an oath, in which his everlasting existence is mentioned:

- **Deuteronomy 32:39-41** - "See now that I, even I, am he, and there is no god with me: I kill, and I make alive; I wound, and I heal: neither is there any that can deliver out of my hand. For I lift up my hand to heaven, and say, I live for ever. If I whet my glittering sword, and mine hand take hold on judgment; I will render vengeance to mine enemies, and will reward them that hate me."

The Father swore unto his Son the Lord Messiah, lifting his hand, and saying: I live for ever, **Deuteronomy 32:40**, when he ascended and sat down on the right hand of the Majesty in the heavens, solemnly by this oath ratifying and confirming him in this office; and that he would not repent, i.e. change, or alter, or retract what he swore to him, there being no need of any other, He so effectually performing the work of it, that all that God bestows upon his by him, are gifts not to be repented of - even eternal life and salvation. - *Matthew Poole's Commentary*

Leviticus 9 - Aaron and his sons carry out all the required sacrifices for the first time

Leviticus 9:6 - "And Moses said, This is the thing which the LORD commanded that ye should do: and the glory of the LORD shall appear unto you."

The command was to the whole congregation, but the activity involved only Aaron and his sons.

The Midrash on this passage explains that "What the High Priest would perform in the temple, they should perform in the temple of their hearts, wherein was a dwelling place for the glory of the Lord, as it is written: "And I shall dwell in the midst of them."

Thus, the Sifra of the verse explains what Moses actually told the people at this time:

"Eradicate the evil inclination from your heart and be all of you inspired by the same awe and be of one mind to serve the Omnipotent. Just as He in One, unique in the world, so should your service be uniquely directed to Him alone, as it is said (**Deuteronomy 11:16**): "Ye shall circumcise the foreskin of your heart." Wherefore? "For the Lord your God is God of gods, and Lord of lords." Do ye thus, then "the glory of the Lord will appear unto you."

This in fact is a perfect description of what study of these sacrifices and offerings should

accomplish in us, if Jesus “opens our understanding, that we might understand the scriptures.” (**Luke 24:45**)

The Blessing

Leviticus 9:22 - "And Aaron lifted up his hand toward the people, and blessed them, and came down from offering of the sin offering, and the burnt offering, and peace offerings."

R. Judah says (Misn. Sotah, c. 7. sect. 6.), the high priest lift up his hands above the plate, as it is said in Leviticus 9:22 ; the modern Jews describe it thus: they lift up their hands to their shoulders, and they lift up the right hand somewhat higher than the left; then they stretch out their hands, and part their fingers, and frame them so as to make five airs; between two fingers and two fingers one air, and between the forefinger and the thumb, and between the two thumbs; they spread out their hands so, that the middle (or palm) of the hand may be towards the earth, and the back part of it towards heaven: Aaron lifted his hands upwards, signifying from whence he implored the blessing, and towards the people on whom he desired it might descend; in this was a type of Christ, who, after he had offered himself a sacrifice for the sins of his people, when he was risen from the dead and about to ascend to heaven, blessed his disciples, **Luke 24:50**; in Christ the saints are blessed with all spiritual blessings; by him they are procured for them, through his blood, sacrifice, and satisfaction; and he ever lives to make intercession for the application of them to them, see **Ephesians 1:3**. - *Gill's Exposition*

The New Testament Counterpoint - Jesus at His Ascension

Aaron "came down from offering of the sin offering" blesses the people, fire from the Lord consumes the sacrifice on the altar and the people worship.

Christ completes the offering of Himself as the sin offering (and fulfilling all the offerings), is Resurrected and gathers his disciples and then blesses them. The disciples worship Him as He ascends - "and the glory of the LORD appeared unto all the people" (as in **Leviticus 9:23**). **Acts 1:9** - "he was taken up; and a cloud received him out of their sight." A cloud similar to the cloud of the Shekinah glory?

Later, on Pentecost, the tongues of fire descend to “consume” the disciples as living sacrifices (see below).

Leviticus 9:22-23 - "And Aaron lifted up his hand toward the people, and blessed them, and came down from offering of the sin offering, and the burnt offering, and peace offerings. And Moses and Aaron went into the tabernacle of the congregation, and came out, and blessed the people: and the glory of the LORD appeared unto all the people."

Luke 24:44-52 - "And he said unto them, These are the words which I spake unto you, while I was yet with you, that all things must be fulfilled, which were written in the law of Moses, and in the prophets, and in the psalms, concerning me. Then opened he their

understanding, that they might understand the scriptures, And said unto them, Thus it is written, and thus it behoved Christ to suffer, and to rise from the dead the third day: And that repentance and remission of sins should be preached in his name among all nations, beginning at Jerusalem. And ye are witnesses of these things. And, behold, I send the promise of my Father upon you: but tarry ye in the city of Jerusalem, until ye be endued with power from on high. And he led them out as far as to Bethany, and he lifted up his hands, and blessed them. And it came to pass, while he blessed them, he was parted from them, and carried up into heaven. And they worshipped him, and returned to Jerusalem with great joy."

(*Trivia*- Star Trek famously imitated the priestly hand gesture of blessing with Spock's Vulcan greeting)

Fire from the Lord - Acceptance & Grace

The most surprising event in the chapter is this:

Leviticus 9:24 - "And there came a fire out from before the LORD, and consumed upon the altar the burnt offering and the fat: which when all the people saw, they shouted, and fell on their faces."

Fire - either from heaven, or from the Holy of Holies. This was a token of acceptance; in like manner as it descended on the sacrifice of Abel, as is thought, **Genesis 4:4** and on the sacrifices offered at the dedication of the temple, **2 Chronicles 7:1** and on the burnt sacrifice of Elijah, **1 Kings 18:38** testifying the divine approbation and acceptance of them.

Not to mention a similar instance for Gideon - **Judges 6:21** - "Then the angel of the LORD put forth the end of the staff that was in his hand, and touched the flesh and the unleavened cakes; and there rose up fire out of the rock, and consumed the flesh and the unleavened cakes. Then the angel of the LORD departed out of his sight."

This was a sign not only of the acceptance of the offerings and of the establishment of Aaron's authority, but of God's actual residence in that chosen dwelling-place.

- **1 Chronicles 21:26** - "And David built there an altar unto the LORD, and offered burnt offerings and peace offerings, and called upon the LORD; and he answered him from heaven by fire upon the altar of burnt offering."

- **2 Chronicles 27:3** - "When all the sons of Israel saw how the fire came down, and the glory of the Lord shone upon the house, they bowed themselves with their faces to the ground upon the pavement, and worshipped and praised the Lord, saying, For he is good, for his mercy endureth for ever"

They Fell on their Faces

Prostration or falling on your face "as dead" to worship was something commoners

would do in the ancient world in the presence of a king. It indicated that their lives were subject to the King's mercy and that they were in submission to that fact.

- **Genesis 17:3** - "And Abram fell on his face: and God talked with him..."

When the wise men found the child Jesus, they "fell to the ground and worshiped Him." (**Matthew 2:11**)

- **Revelation 7:11** - "And all the angels were standing around the throne and around the elders and the four living creatures; and they fell on their faces before the throne and worshiped God"

- **Revelation 1:17** - "And when I saw him, I fell at his feet as dead. ..."

To "reckon yourselves as dead" is to worship and submit to the revealed presence of Christ as King. It's all connected.

Leviticus 10:1-7 - The 'Strange Fire' Offered by Nadab and Abihu

The spiritual ecstasy at the Lord's acceptance by fire is short-lived because of what happens next.

This incident shows the opposite of what it means to "*shema*" - to "hear under." Instead of submission, Nadab and Abihu (Aaron's two eldest sons) elevated their own ideas of worship above what God had commanded.

Fire to burn the incense in the Holy Place was supposed to come from the coals of the Brazen Altar. Blood from the sacrifices were daubed on the horns and spilled at the base of the altar. The fire of the altar was therefore sanctified.

The fire Nadab and Abihu entered the Tabernacle with was of their own making and not kindled from the coals of the Brazen Altar, which had been touched by the blood of sacrifice.

The Targum of Jonathan says their coals were collected from under the trivets, skillets, or pots, such as the flesh of the peace offerings were cooked in. In addition, only one priest, Aaron, (representing Christ in type) should go in to offer incense, not two priests together.

To enter the Holy Place without the protection of a type of Christ's blood resulted in a display of a type of destruction of the wicked in the Last Day.

Incense is a picture of human thoughts and prayers. Without being touched and transformed by the blood of Christ's sacrifice, our thoughts and even our prayers become an abomination to God. If they are covered by the blood, and pass through the prism of the Cross, they are accepted as a sweet savor of Christ.

Aaron's sacrifices - with blood and consumed by fire from the Lord - are in contrast to Nadab and Abihu's bloodless offering of incense, rejected by fire from the Lord. Compare this to **Genesis 4:3-5** and Abel's offering, a sacrifice from his flock, was "respected" by God - possibly with fire from heaven consuming it. Cain's bloodless offering was rejected.

What is this tragedy a picture of?

-- **Romans 10:2** - "they have a zeal for God, but not according to knowledge."

-- Human ideas of religion, spirituality and reverence - like Cain's bloodless offering that was the fruit of his efforts - are worthless and impotent without pointing to the blood of Christ.

-- Religious duties, prayer or praise without real submission; to dismiss what God says while feigning love for Him.

-- Acts of religious giving out of selfish motives or an attempt to gain merit are abominable to Him.

-- Nothing man brings of his own - whether efforts, ideas, inventions, devices or schemes - can enter into God's presence to be sanctified by Him.

Isaiah 50:11 - "Behold, all ye that kindle a fire, that compass yourselves about with sparks: walk in the light of your fire, and in the sparks that ye have kindled. This shall ye have of mine hand; ye shall lie down in sorrow."

The Wine of Self Seeking

Because of the admonition later in **Leviticus 10:9** not to drink strong wine when performing priestly duties, some rabbis assume that as excess of wine led to the sin of Nadab and Abihu .

Rashi - For this reason Scripture showed love to Aaron by directing the divine utterance to him alone, thus, "Do not drink wine that will lead to intoxication."

Drunkenness (and gluttony) in later scriptures became a symbol of the confusion and muddled spiritual thinking of those deceived by their own self-seeking:

- **Isaiah 28:7** - "But they also have erred through wine, and through strong drink are out of the way; the priest and the prophet have erred through strong drink, they are swallowed up of wine, they are out of the way through strong drink; they err in vision, they stumble in judgment."

The means of punishment for Nadab and Abihu was identical to the way in which they had sinned - fire.

Aaron's Response

Leviticus 10:3 - "And Aaron was silent"

The dominant reading in Jewish tradition is that Aaron was silent and did not mourn, accepting the Lord's rendering of justice and even finding some consolation in Moses' words.[Babylonian Talmud, Zevahim 115b] This interpretation takes the root *d-m-m* here to have a similar meaning to *herag`i va-dommi* (Jeremiah 47:6), "Rest and be still."

On the other hand, some people read this as indicating that Aaron was silent because of the shock he had suffered, which was accompanied by deep depression. [NEB translation: "Aaron was dumbfounded."] Support for such a reading can be brought from the verse, "Terror and dread descend upon them; through the might of Your arm they are still [Heb. *yidmu*] as stone" (**Exodus 15:16**). Silence is known in anthropological research to be a response to loss.

The Hebrew root *d-m-m* is similar to the Accadian root *damāmu*, meaning to sigh or mourn, and on findings from Ebla that also support the root *d-m-m* having the meaning of mourning.

Probably Aaron began to react as might be expected of a person in his situation. He sighed mournfully and was about to observe the traditional mourning practices over the death of his sons, when God interrupted him.

In next week's reading, we'll see that even though Aaron and his sons had been commanded to choke back their mourning and continue officiating the sacred rites - "business as usual" as it were - it appears they found a way to express the great shock they had suffered: refusing to participate in the ritual eating of the sacrificial meat as a meal offering. Aaron burned the offering entirely, turning it into a burnt offering. When Moses reproved him for doing so, Aaron tied what he had done with the tragedy he had suffered, without calling it by name: "such things have befallen me" (**Leviticus 10:19**). These words lend expression to his acute hardship.

See "Aaron's Response to the Death of His Two Sons"

- <https://buff.ly/2MHthNi>

Leviticus 10:4-7 - The Aftermath

Leviticus 10:5 - "So they went near, and carried them in their coats out of the camp; as Moses had said."

Rashi - "carry your kinsmen [from within the Sanctuary], etc.": As a person would say to his fellow [when someone had died at a wedding feast], "Remove the deceased from before the bride so as not to disturb the joyous occasion." [Here, too, Mishael and Elzaphan were to remove the dead "from inside the sanctuary," so as not to disturb the

serenity of the investitures of the Sanctuary.]

i.e. a funeral procession always gives way to the wedding procession.

The garments were those of Nadab and Abihu.

Rashi - "This teaches us that their garments had not been burnt, but [only] their souls. Two thread-like [sparks] of fire entered their nostrils [thereby destroying their souls along with all their internal organs, but leaving their external body structures intact. See Be'er Basadeh]. — [Torath Kohanim 10:25]"

Leviticus 10:6 - "And Moses said unto Aaron, and unto Eleazar and unto Ithamar, his sons, Uncover not your heads, neither rend your clothes; lest ye die, and lest wrath come upon all the people: but let your brethren, the whole house of Israel, bewail the burning which the LORD hath kindled."

Priests were not to mourn - tear their clothes, cut their flesh, shave their hair, or let it grow wild - for the dead except for their own family (**Leviticus 21:1-5**).

The High Priest was not allowed even that (**Leviticus 21:10-12**). Nor could a Nazarite (**Numbers 6:6-7**)

So, Aaron could not even mourn his sons' death. All Israel would mourn instead.

Compare Christ's radical call to discipleship:

- **Matthew 8:21-22** - "And another of his disciples said unto him, Lord, suffer me first to go and bury my father. But Jesus said unto him, Follow me; and let the dead bury their dead."

Again, a funeral procession always gives way to the wedding procession. While the Bridegroom is present, his disciples do not fast.

As a nation of priests, we don't deny our natural relationships, but we cede them to God, for instance, honoring our mother and father by seeing their needs as human beings rather than strictly through their familial roles. Nothing should distract us from our first allegiance, our first love which is Christ. The man probably meant "Can I go bury my father before I have to decide whether to follow you or not?" (Remember that in Mark 7:11-12, Jesus accuses the pious Pharisees of not honoring their parents by declaring their financial resources as "corban" or dedicated by a vow to the Temple treasury, and so could not be used to help their own mother or father).

- **Matthew 9:14-17** - "Can the friends of the bridegroom mourn as long as the bridegroom is with them? But the days will come when the bridegroom will be taken away from them, and then they will fast."

How? The fast from self:

- **Isaiah 58:6** - "Is not this the fast that I have chosen? to loose the bands of wickedness, to undo the heavy burdens, and to let the oppressed go free, and that ye break every yoke?" (read the whole chapter)