

A Summary of Israel's Annual Sacrifices and Offerings

Numbers 28-29

Numbers 28:1-8 - *"Now the LORD spoke to Moses, saying, ² 'Command the children of Israel, and say to them, 'My offering, My food for My offerings made by fire as a sweet aroma to Me, you shall be careful to offer to Me at their appointed time.'³ 'And you shall say to them, 'This is the offering made by fire which you shall offer to the LORD: two male lambs in their first year without blemish, day by day, as a regular burnt offering. ⁴ The one lamb you shall offer in the morning, the other lamb you shall offer in the evening, ⁵ and one-tenth of an ephah of fine flour as a grain offering mixed with one-fourth of a hin of pressed oil. ⁶ It is a regular burnt offering that was ordained at Mount Sinai for a sweet aroma, an offering made by fire to the LORD. ⁷ And its drink offering shall be one-fourth of a hin for each lamb; in a holy place you shall pour out the drink to the LORD as an offering. ⁸ The other lamb you shall offer in the evening; as the morning grain offering and its drink offering, you shall offer it as an offering made by fire, a sweet aroma to the LORD.*

⁹ *'And on the Sabbath day two lambs in their first year, without blemish, and two-tenths of an ephah of fine flour as a grain offering, mixed with oil, with its drink offering— ¹⁰ this is the burnt offering for every Sabbath, besides the regular burnt offering with its drink offering.'*

Background Notes

The narrative of the book of Numbers is interrupted in chapters 28 and 29. These chapters are a summary of all the offerings and sacrifices that the Lord required of the people for their religious observances daily, weekly, monthly and annually during the religious calendar year. Much of this information had been given earlier in Israel's history, but this summary was repeated because the new generation of Israel was about to enter the Land of Promise.

The Promised Land was **God's Land** and people of Israel were **God's covenant people**. The basis for their covenant relationship with the Lord and their continued fellowship with Him was not to be forgotten when they traveled in the wilderness, and it was not to be forgotten when they settled and lived in the Promised Land. These sacrifices were to be a continual reminder of the debt of gratitude that they owed to the Lord, who had redeemed them out of bondage in Egypt and had maintained fellowship with them in the wilderness, in spite of their many sins and failures.

The required **daily** offerings are covered in Numbers 28:1-8. Every day, in the morning and in the evening, a lamb was sacrificed as a burnt offering before the Lord. These offerings were known as the daily "morning sacrifice" and "evening sacrifice." In 1 Kings 18, Elijah offered the sacrifice at Mount Carmel "at the time of the evening sacrifice" -- at the time the evening burnt offering was being sacrificed at the Temple in Jerusalem. Our Lord, God's perfect Lamb, died for our sin at the time of the evening sacrifice (Luke 23 44-46).

In Numbers 28 9-10 the **weekly** Sabbath offerings are given: “... *two lambs in their first year, without blemish, and two-tenths of an ephah of fine flour as a grain offering, mixed with oil, with its drink offering...*” In verses 11-15 the **monthly** offerings are given. All these sacrifices included grain offerings and drink offerings (libations) that were offered along with the animal sacrifices.

From Numbers 28:16 through all of chapter 29, the sacrifices associated with Israel’s **yearly** religious festivals are given:

- **Passover** (Numbers 28:16). “*On the fourteenth day of the first month is the Passover of the Lord.*”

- **The Feast of Unleavened Bread** (Numbers 28:17-25) lasted for seven days. “*And on the fifteenth day of this month is the feast; unleavened bread shall be eaten for seven days. ¹⁸ On the first day you shall have a holy convocation. You shall do no customary work. ¹⁹ And you shall present an offering made by fire as a burnt offering to the Lord...*”

The “Feast of Weeks” (Numbers 28:26-31). “*...bring a new grain offering to the LORD at your Feast of Weeks... You shall present a burnt offering as a sweet aroma to the LORD: two young bulls, one ram, and seven lambs in their first year, with their grain offering of fine flour mixed with oil... to make atonement for you. Be sure they are without blemish. You shall present them with their drink offerings, besides the regular burnt offering with its grain offering.*”

- **The Feast of Trumpets** (Numbers 29:1-6). It is known today as *Rosh Hashanah*, the New Year for Jewish religious calendar. “*And in the seventh month, on the first day of the month, you shall have a holy convocation. You shall do no customary work. It is a day of blowing the trumpets. You shall offer a burnt offering as a sweet aroma to the Lord...*”

- **The Day of Atonement** or *Yom Kippur* (Numbers 29:7-11): “*On the tenth day of this seventh month you shall have a holy convocation. You shall afflict your souls; you shall not do any work. You shall present a burnt offering to the LORD as a sweet aroma: one young bull, one ram, and seven lambs in their first year. Be sure they are without blemish. Their grain offering shall be of fine flour mixed with oil: three-tenths of an ephah for the bull, two-tenths for the one ram, and one-tenth for each of the seven lambs; also one kid of the goats as a sin offering, besides the sin offering for atonement, the regular burnt offering with its grain offering, and their drink offerings.*”

- **The feast of Tabernacles** or *Sukkot* (Numbers 29:12-38). In this weeklong feast, a number of sacrifices were to be brought to the Lord for eight straight days. “*On the fifteenth day of the seventh month you shall have a holy convocation. You shall do no customary work, and you shall keep a feast to the Lord seven days. You shall present a burnt offering, an offering made by fire as a sweet aroma to the Lord... These you shall present to the LORD at your appointed feasts (besides your vowed offerings and your freewill offerings) as your burnt offerings and your grain offerings, as your drink offerings and your peace offerings.*”

“So Moses told the children of Israel everything, just as the LORD commanded Moses.” (29:39-40). All the sacrifices that the Lord required from the people of Israel throughout the year were in addition to the individual offerings that the children of Israel were to bring before the Lord for their personal thanksgiving, or as atonement for their own personal sins.

Doctrinal Points

1. The Old Testament sacrifices showed the necessity of “shed blood” for salvation.

Why all these sacrifices? If you add up the required annual sacrifices, the number is something like 113 bulls, 36 rams, and 1094 lambs! Besides this, more than a ton of flour was offered in the associated grain offerings, and more than a thousand containers of oil and wine for the associated drink offerings. And remember -- these were just the **annual** required sacrifices for the nation. In addition, there were all the individual offerings!

So again, the question: why all these sacrifices? Answer: all these many sacrifices showed that **God takes sin very seriously**. They also reminded the people that **the penalty of sin is death**. In the moral universe that God has created, sin is not swept under the rug and overlooked. Sin can only be forgiven if the penalty for sin is paid -- and the penalty of sin is **death**. So the Old Testament sacrifices showed the **necessity of “shed blood” for salvation**.

These animal sacrifices could not take sin away permanently; they provided only a temporary covering for sin. However, these sacrifices all pointed forward to the one great Sacrifice that was to come in the future, the sacrifice that would take away sin forever – the sacrifice of the **Lamb of God**, our Lord Jesus Christ.

Hebrews 10:11-12 says, *“And every priest stands ministering daily and offering repeatedly the same sacrifices, which can never take away sins. But this Man, after He had offered one sacrifice for sins forever, sat down at the right hand of God...”*

Have you ever watched the death of a sacrificed lamb? It’s a moving experience. So even though the Old Testament sacrifices didn’t pay the penalty for sin, they provided a graphic illustration the seriousness of sin. They emphasized that a **great cost** was involved for salvation, because the penalty of sin is **death**. The Old Testament sacrifices showed the necessity of “shed blood” for salvation.

2. The Old Testament sacrifices showed the necessity of “shed blood” for fellowship.

“Shed blood” was necessary for God to have fellowship with His chosen people, and for His people to have fellowship with one another. The key to successful and happy living in the Land of Promise was continual fellowship with God, and continual fellowship between God and His people was only possible if the nation and the people brought these required sacrifices for sin. A perfect and holy God can’t have fellowship with sinful people, and God cannot and will not sweep sin under the rug. Sin must be dealt with!

The Old Testament sacrifices temporarily covered human sin until the Lord Jesus Christ, the perfect Lamb of God, permanently dealt with sin by dying on the cross for sin. Now we not only can have salvation, but we can have fellowship with God because the sin barrier has been removed. The Old Testament showed the necessity of “shed blood” for fellowship.

In Numbers 28:2, notice the emphasis on the words “**My**” and “**Me**” – “*Command the children of Israel, and say to them, ‘My offering, My food for My offerings made by fire as a sweet aroma to Me, you shall be careful to offer to Me at their appointed time.’*”

Most of the sacrifices in Numbers 28 and 29 were burnt offerings. Burnt offerings were totally consumed on the altar, and the complete sacrifice was a “sweet savor” or “soothing aroma” to God. The words “sweet savor” or “soothing aroma” are used seven times in these two chapters, emphasizing that God would be pleased to accept the sacrifices. All of these sacrifices looked forward to the coming Lamb of God who would go willingly and voluntarily to the cross, and offer Himself up as the sinless sacrifice – the perfect sacrifice would be pleasing to the heart of God.

The sacrifice of the Son of God not only saves us from the penalty of sin, but it enables us, as believers, to share in the fellowship between the Father and Son. In 1 John 1:3 we read, “*That which we have seen and heard we declare to you, that you also may have fellowship with us; and truly our fellowship is with the Father and with His Son Jesus Christ.*” This fellowship is possible only because the Lord Jesus Christ gave His life up as the perfect sacrifice before God. The Old Testament sacrifices showed the necessity of “shed blood” for fellowship.

Practical Application

Do you have a time of worship every day?

Do you have a time of worship every day? Or do you worship the Lord only on Sunday? It’s true that obedience to the Lord and service for the Lord are, in themselves, acts of worship -- but do you also take time each day to truly thank the Lord for what He has done for you?

In Israel, the morning and evening sacrifices were made **every day**. It was a **continual** burnt offering! Even when the other weekly, monthly, and yearly sacrifices were made, the daily offerings were made. Several times we read in these chapters that the other offerings were made **in addition to** the “*continual burnt offering.*” The lesson and application are obvious. As Israel worshiped the Lord every day with a continual burnt offering, so we should make it a point to worship the Lord each and every day.

Do you have a time of worship every day?