

## Day 48 Deut. 9.1 – 11.32

9.1ff Moses briefs the Israelites on what they will face across the river – there are people whom they cannot overcome in their own strength. It will be God, not their strength which will give them military victory against people over whom in the natural they could not hope to advance, let alone conquer and dispossess.

These peoples are stronger than the Israelites, so it will not be their own prowess which wins them the day. Rather, it is God Himself who is striking out in judgment through the incomers, much as Isaiah later prophesies Cyrus the Persian's invasion as the instrument of God in Isaiah 45.1

9.4ff Therefore Israel is not ever to boast that it is her strength and integrity which has overcome the Canaanites; rather the Lord has both judged the wickedness of these nations, and also fulfilled the promise made to Abraham, Isaac and Jacob through His action.

This may mitigate a little the revulsion we feel at what happened. Israel could not have achieved this without God's intervention, and the likelihood is that Israel would have been decimated had she not had God's help against the Canaanites.

9.6 They definitely don't deserve what God is giving them...

9.9 and Moses reminds them of their corruption of Ex.32 and the breaking of the first tablets of the law (v.17)...

9.22 And their rebellion at Kadesh Barnea, when they refused to go into the land.

9.29 But Moses reminds God that they are His children, they are all He's got!

10.1ff The story continues in Moses' retelling to the new generation, of the death of Aaron, (v6) and the priesthood of Levi (v.8)

10.12ff And now what is required and desired of Israel is their commitment, their love and that they follow their Deliverer.

10.16 The appearance of the idea of the 'foreskin of the heart' appears for the first time in Scripture. Circumcision was a physical action, but it seems that even those who had been circumcised physically (men only, it must be said) were not necessarily clean in heart. This is a theme Paul later picks up in Romans 2.29 – the true Jew is the one whose heart is cut clean of the old ways.

10.17 Moses here calls God for the first time, '*Elohey Elohim, Adonai Adonim*' (Heb אֱלֹהֵי אֱלֹהִים אֲדֹנָי אֲדֹנָיִם ) God of gods and Lord of lords, making Him the pre-eminent. In Egypt and now coming into Canaan, Israel would come across a number of idols. Here is the clear message – the Lord God is pre-eminent over everything that claims to be divine or has rule. He does not show favouritism, nor is He corruptible.

- 10.18 And here is the nature of God, also, to *do justice* (Heb עֲשֵׂה מִשְׁפָּט *'oseh mishpat*)  
The concept of *mishpat* as the right-wising of what is wrong, putting things the way they should be, is a feature of the Lord God (YHWH). This will mean caring for the widows and orphans, and the stranger in their midst, for they have known what it was to be foreigners in a hostile land.
- 10..22 They started off as seventy, now they are a galaxy!
- 11.1ff Moses speaks to them as the generation which has experienced the miraculous provision of God in the desert.
- 11.8 But now they are going into a land of milk and honey (Heb חָלָב וּדְבַשׁ *chalav u-d'vash*) not like Egypt, where they had to irrigate with foot pumps and hard work, but a land where there is rain in plenty and fruitfulness.
- 11.12 This is the Lord's own property, and He watches it. They are going to be stewards, leaseholders, not owners.
- 11.16 The condition for fruitfulness in the land is that the land's owner is honoured and recognized. (It's worth noting that the pagan fertility gods claimed to be in charge of the fruitfulness of the land also.)
- 11.18,19 A repetition of the instruction to bind the words of God on their hands and heads and to their doorposts.- see Deut.6.5
- 11.24 The promise made to Abraham that everywhere the sole of his foot was placed would be his inheritance is repeated here to Israel (see Gen 13.17)
- 11.26 The coming events at Ebal and Gerizim with attendant blessings and cursings are referred to – there will be terms and conditions on their dwelling in the land. (See Joshua 8.33)

### **Day 49 The Laws of Moses**

The next few days' readings are scattered around the books of Deuteronomy and Leviticus, in order to collate the various Laws under subject headings. We therefore read the passages and verses given when reading the notes attached.

The people of Israel are a *sacramental* nation; that is, their whole life is to be a lived out, incarnated expression of God's relationship to man. They are therefore a *sign* to the world, and the laws are there to direct and lead them in this divine calling.

Therefore, to take the Laws of Moses given here and to make them a legal code for any other purpose than in the context of the sacramental life of Israel is a fallacy of interpretation. The keeping of the Law as a means to gain divine approval is a misunderstanding of the Law's purpose. Rather, the Law is the intricate ritual of a priestly nation, painting the picture to the nations of who God is.

The whole life of Israel therefore derives from their weddedness to the Lord, YHWH. All that follows is for His delight and pleasure, and to defend their holy calling.

## **I. Religious and Ceremonial Laws**

Dt 5.5b-10 The Lord (YHWH) is supreme. Anything else that claims to be divine is not. Therefore, no images are to be made for the purpose of worship, because no image will ever replace Him.

### **A. Laws Against Idolatry and Paganism**

Ex.22.20, 23.13, Lev 26.1 , Dt 16.21,22 Prohibitions on the making of idols of any sort, metal, wood or stone.

Lev.20.1-5 A particularly abhorrent practice of the worshippers of the idol Molech was the offering of children in fire sacrifices. Anyone involved in this torture of children will be stoned.

Deut. 14.1-2, Lev 19.27-28 Various pagan traditions of shaving the head, particularly with regard to periods of mourning, are to be taboo to Israel. They are not to look like the pagans.

Deut. 12.29 – 31, 13.6 – 18, 17.2-7

All of these laws are a prohibition on any kind of enticement to worship idols, and on copying the pagan ways of worshipping. This is a capital offence, not only in individual cases, but in a corporate situation, it could result in the annihilation of a whole community.(13.15)

Deut 12.1-15, 17-22, 26-28.

The high places and groves where pagan worship was most likely to happen were to be completely desecrated. Asherah was the female deity linked with Ba'al in the fertility cult. (She is also known elsewhere as Astarte.)Her poles are to be cut down wholesale.

When they come into the land, there will be a new order of worship instituted, in which God will designate a place for meeting with Him, and thence all must gather to worship. This will give a focus to the nation, in a way in which the tabernacle has also given in the desert.

Meat can be slaughtered away from the central place, but anything which is consecrated to the Lord has to be brought to the gathering place, where His Name has been placed.  
– The Lord's Name is synonymous with His presence, since where His Name is invoked, He is present.

## **Day 50 The Laws of Moses (cont'd)**

### **B Laws Against False Divination and Occult**

Deut.18.9-14 Any sense of participation in or identifying with the Canaanite religion is strictly forbidden to the Israelites. There were many different practices which could be called divination – the use of animal entrails, astrology, necromancy (contacting the dead), shamanism (entranced spell-making) – all of these were off-limits. Also anathema was the sacrifice of children through fire, a torturous and repulsive practice. (This is also echoed in Lev.19.26b, 19.31 and 20.6-8.)

Ex. 22.18, Lev.20.27 The penalty for sorcery or necromancy is death by stoning.

Deut.13.1-5. The Israelites are taught to evaluate the words of those calling themselves prophets and seers. Any prophetic enticement to forsake the worship of the Lord (YHWH) is to be met with death. The Lord is their Saviour, their Rescuer, and there are no circumstances under which they are to forsake Him.

Deut.18.15-22. Because of Israel's refusal to hear the Lord's own voice speaking at Horeb in Ex.20, the Lord now has to communicate with them through His prophets. Although Moses is speaking of one prophet, a whole line of them would arise under God's inspiration, culminating in the one who is the Word of God Himself, Jesus.

A prophet is simply tested by whether what he says happens. If it does not, the prophet is to be executed, and his word is to be disregarded.

In days of the Holy Spirit 's outpouring today, we should be very careful about what we claim to be prophecy, since God takes seriously the words spoken purporting to be in His Name. Far better to offer words tentatively, for others to evaluate, and come to a corporate sense of what God is saying.

### **C. Abusing God's Name**

Deut 5.11, Ex. 22.28a The name of the Lord is not spoken in Hebrew, so that it is not abused. Instead, the Hebrew words 'my Lord' or 'the Lord's name' are substituted every time a Jew reads the four letters of the Name in Hebrew.

Hebrew is a language whose written form abbreviates the spoken form. The vowels are often left unspecified, leaving the reader to insert them from memory.

Thus, when there was a danger of Hebrew dying out, and because the sacred text was too holy to change the spelling or introduce new letters, the Hebrew scribes came up with the scheme of 'pointing', adding dots and lines *around* the consonants to show the vowels. However, when it came to the divine name, to ensure no abuse of it, the Scribes gave the vowels of the word for 'my Lord' (Adonai) instead of the vowels for the actual name of God.

Thus, in Hebrew, the divine name is written with the four letters יהוה, (YHWH – notice no dots or lines around the letters here) while the vowel points come from אֲדֹנָי (Adonai) giving the printed form יְהוָה. This has been rendered into English, quite incorrectly from a Hebraist point of view, as *Jehovah*, a hybrid form of the letters of the divine Name confounded with vowels of *Adonai*.

These are the lengths the Israelites went to to avoid any abuse of God's name.

Lev. 24.10-16 & 23 In this case where 'the Name' (Heb. הַשֵּׁם *Ha-shem*) is used as a curse – the outcome is arrest of the offender and stoning by the community.

#### **D. Various Dedications**

Ex.22.29b – 30; Ex 34.19,20; Ex.22,29a;Ex 23.19a (mirrored in Ex.34.26a) ; Deut 15.19-23

The firstborn and the firstfruit belongs to God. They are to be presented before God as an offering, and redeemed in kind. (If a donkey cannot be paid for in redemption with a lamb, it is to be sacrificed.) The same is the case with the first ripe fruit of any crops.

The sacrifice of the first born of edible animals was to be eaten by their owners at the Central place of worship, unless they were deformed, in which case they were to be eaten at home.

#### **E. Tithe Laws.**

It has already been remarked that the giving of the tenth to God predates the Law by centuries, having been practiced by the patriarchs Abraham and Jacob in Genesis.

Deut. 18. 1- 8 The Levite priests have no land to work, since they are working with God in worship and sacrifice. Therefore, God gives them some of the sacrifices for their food.

Deut. 14.22-29. Each year, a tenth is set aside for the Lord; it is not wasted, but it is eaten by the people. The point here is that it is an offering to the Lord, however, so it has to be consumed at the place of gathering which God indicates. Therefore, if the tithe is so great that it cannot be taken physically, it is to be sold and converted into silver and God, and then that money is used to buy food at the worship centre, to eat the tithe with the Lord.

However, every third year, the Tithe is stored locally and given to the priesthood for their supplies, as well as being used to feed widows and orphans.

#### **F. On Entering the Land**

Deut. 26.1- 15 There is to be a special ceremony to be performed by each family when they enter the land at last, bringing the firstfruits to the worship centre, with a prayer which is something of a creedal statement for the Israelites, beginning *My father was a wandering Syrian...(v.5)*

There is a repeating then of the law concerning the presentation of the triennial tithe for the support of the Levites, widows and orphans.

It is interesting to note that in later times, when the spiritual life of the nation would be in crisis, that the Levites had then to go and work the land, and the worship of the Lord suffered. (See Nehemiah 13.11)

Lev. 19.23-25 There is an interesting proscription on eating from fruit trees for the first three years, because they are considered to be *uncircumcised* (v.23 Heb עֲרֵלִים *arelim*) Perhaps it was because their fruit was used in pagan festivals, celebrating the harvest. In year four, all the fruit of the trees is to be dedicated to the Lord, and only in year five may they enjoy the produce.

### **G. Sabbath Laws**

Deut. 5.12-15 (mirrored in Ex 23.12, 35.1,2 & Lev. 19.3b)

Because Israel belongs to the Lord, and the Lord is a God who rested, they too are to rest on the seventh day.

Ex. 31.16,17. The Sabbath is a token of covenant, therefore is to be cherished and observed, like a wedding ring on a bride's finger. The rhythm of the week includes a stop, even for the Lord.

Lev. 19.30, (echoed in 26.2) The Sabbath is linked to honour for the holy place.

Lev. 23.1-3 As well as a day of rest, the seventh day is a day of 'sacred convocation' (Heb. מִקְרָא קֹדֶשׁ *miqra'-qodesh*), , literally 'a calling' together before the Lord.

Ex. 34.21; 35.3; 31.12- 15 No work of any kind is allowed on the Sabbath, on pain of death. Even the setting of a fire is taboo.

Num. 15.32-36 One man who is found gathering wood on Sabbath is arrested and stoned for his disobedience.

We cannot understand in our individualistic age the rigour and even seeming cruelty of these sanctions against people. Yet for an individual to break God's law deliberately is a threat to the whole community. We have seen how God's holiness breaks out against the nation when one man sins. Therefore, this is a community affair, and the individual exercise of will is subject to the wellbeing of the whole community, in a nation which is a sign of God's presence and blessing.

### **Day 51 The Laws of Moses (cont'd)**

#### **H. The Feasts of Israel**

To emphasise the sense of people-hood that God has brought them into, as well as their dependence on Him for all their life, God calls the Israelites to convene three times a year together for celebrations before God. The feasts are also connected with stages in the agricultural year, so that they have a sense of thanksgiving attached to them to God for the provision of food.

For much more information on the Jewish Festivals, go to  
<http://www.hebrew4christians.com/Holidays/holidays.html>

Ex. 23.14-17; Deut 16.16,17

The Lord calls the people to mark three major feasts in the year. These are **pilgrim-festivals** (Heb רגלים *regalim* from the Hebrew word for foot, רגל *regel*) meaning the people must travel to the worship centre God will designate to celebrate these as a nation. For more on this see [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Shalosh\\_regalim](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Shalosh_regalim)

- **The Feast of Unleavened Bread** (Heb חג המצות *Chag ha-matzot*) a seven day feast which includes the eating of Passover, (Heb פסח *Pesach* from root meaning to pass over or to exempt.), coming in the middle of the first month of the Jewish year, Abib or Aviv (also called Nisan.). This is the anniversary of the exodus from Egypt.
- **The Feast of Harvest or Firstfruits,** (Heb חג הקציר *Chag ha-qatsir*) **also called Feast of Weeks.** (Heb חג השבועות *Chag ha-shavu'ot*) This occurs fifty days after Passover, on the sixth of Sivan, the third month, (hence the Greek title for it, Pentecost, from the Greek word for fifty). This is the presentation of the first of the crops to the Lord.
- **The Feast of Ingathering** (Heb חג האסף *Chag ha-asiph* from the Hebrew root word meaning to gather, collect.) **also called The Feast of Tabernacles** (Heb חג הסוכות *Chag ha-sukkot*) because for seven days the people lived in rough-built tents or booths to commemorate their meeting with God in the desert of Sinai.

The fact it is harvest also marks the end and beginning of the agricultural and civil year, (but not the liturgical year, which begins with Nisan in which the Passover is celebrated) and so this feast is set to begin on the 15<sup>th</sup> day of the seventh month, Tishri, in which the civil new year festival, Rosh HaShanah occurs on the 1st. This is around September or October of the Western calendar.

Ex 34.24 God promises them that while they are away on pilgrimage, He will protect their homes and land from enemies.

### 1. Passover and Feast of Unleavened Bread.

14 to 21 Aviv/Nisan (First month of liturgical calendar.)

Deut. 16.1-7 (mirrored in Ex 34.18)

Passover is celebrated in the month of Aviv when Israel was delivered from Egypt. A particular requirement of this feast is to clear the house of all yeast or fermented produce before the feast. In Jewish households today, this is still a closely followed tradition, and all old bread, beer and anything with yeast is expelled from the home.

The Passover is to be eaten in assembly at the place of worship. Since the destruction of the Temple in 70ad, Passover is now celebrated in the home.

Num.9.13 It is a sin for a man who does not have a reason to fail to observe Passover.

Num.9.14 Strangers may eat the Passover, but they have to follow the same rules as Israel.

Lev. 23.4-8 The Passover is eaten on the 14<sup>th</sup> of Aviv/Nisan, (the lamb having been selected on the 10<sup>th</sup> and kept for four days.) On the 15<sup>th</sup> the seven days of eating unleavened bread begins. Jewish unleavened bread, called *matzot* is sold in many British supermarkets, particularly around Passover.

Num.28.18-25 There is a holy assembly on the first day of *matzot* when offerings are made, and another on the seventh day. These are classed as Sabbaths.

## 2. Feast of Weeks/Firstfruits

6<sup>th</sup> of Sivan (third month.)

Deut.16.9-12 The feast is called weeks, because seven weeks (Heb שָׁבֻעוֹת *Shavuot*) are counted from the initial harvest around Passover time. This is also a pilgrim festival, requiring a gathering.

Lev.23.9-21 The feast is celebrated by the High Priest waving a sheaf of newly harvested grain before the Lord, with accompanying sacrifices, including the waving of two lambs as an offering before the Lord.

Num. 28.26-31 contain further instructions for the offerings connected with the feast of weeks.

This is the Festival that was being celebrated in Acts 2 on the day of Pentecost, which accounts for the numbers of Jews at Jerusalem that day.

## 3..Feast of Trumpets /Rosh HaShanah (New Year)/Day of Remembrance

1<sup>st</sup> Tishri (seventh month of the liturgical calendar, = Sept/Oct.)

This is an additional festival, which is not one of the three great feasts, but it is a special Sabbath and a gathering day. In Jewish tradition this feast has accrued greater significance than would be discerned from the Scriptures we have.

By tradition, it came to be associated with the creation of the world, and 1<sup>st</sup> Tishri was commemorated as the crowning of the Lord as Lord of all creation – for this reason a popular practice is to bake round *challah* loaves like crowns. The tradition seems to have arisen from the realization that in Hebrew, the words ‘Tishri 1<sup>st</sup>’ (Heb אַ בְּהַשְׁרִי) are an anagram of the Hebrew word for ‘In the beginning’ (Heb בְּרֵאשִׁית) in Genesis 1.1. Such are the mystical ways of the Rabbinical traditions!

Because of this, 1<sup>st</sup> Tishri is seen as the start of the civil year in the Israelite calendar, and therefore is New Year. It is also associated with the recording of good deeds in the book of Life. Thus the greeting for New Year in Hebrew is *le-Shanah tovah tiktevu* (Heb לְשָׁנָה טוֹבָה תִּכְתְּבוּ) ‘May you be written down for a good year!’

Numbers 29.1-6, Lev. 23.23-25

**Yom Teru'ah** (Heb. יוֹם תְּרוּעָה) – **Day of Sounding (Trumpets)**

The 1<sup>st</sup> Tishri is to be a Sabbath, and on this day, a loud noise is to be made, which is associated with the sounding of trumpets. The words trumpet is not used, however, and has come to be linked to the *shophar*, the ram's horn, blown on ceremonial occasions. Traditionally, a *teru'ah* on the shophar is nine staccato blasts, sounded as an alarm.

It is also called **Yom Zikhron** (Heb. יוֹם זִכְרוֹן), Day of Remembrance or memorial, because in the Leviticus passage, at 23.24, they are called to a *remembrance of a loud noise*.

The feast of Trumpets is accompanied by sacrifices laid out in the law.

This festival in the Jewish calendar marks the start of ten Days of Awe, (Heb. יָמֵי נִרְוָאִים ), a time of repentance and self-examination, leading up to the Day of Atonement or 'covering', *Yom Kippur* (Heb. יוֹם כִּפּוּר ) akin to Christian Lent leading up to Easter.

#### **4. Day of Atonement**

10<sup>th</sup> Tishri (seventh month, usually around October).

In many ways, although not one of the three *regalim*, the pilgrim feasts, this is the most sacred day of the Jewish calendar, since this is the one day in the year when the High Priest was allowed to enter the Holy of Holies, the section of the Tent of Meeting behind the separating veil, to sprinkle the blood of the sacrifice representing the sin of Israel, on the cover of the ark of the covenant to ask God for redemption for the nation.

It comes at the end of the Days of Awe, which began with Rosh HaShanah, the Feast of Trumpets/New Year, and is associated today with repentance and forgiveness.

This feast is key for us to understand, because it foreshadows the sacrifice of Jesus Christ on the cross, and the understanding of His carrying sin in Himself for us. This concept of the transfer of sin was well known in Israel, which is why Jesus is called the 'lamb of God' who takes away the sin of the world.

It's worth noting too, that when Jesus died, the veil between the Holy Place and the Holy of Holies was torn in two, a sign of God's new accessibility in Jesus.

Lev.16. 1- 34, Lev.23.26-32, Num.29.7-11

Aaron, and the High Priests after him, are not allowed to come into God's presence when they feel like it, on pain of death.

This is the process the High Priest must go through to enter the Holy of Holies, on 10<sup>th</sup> Tishri, The Day of Atonement, the one day a year he brings the blood of sacrifice.

- a. After a bath, he puts on all the garments correctly. (16.4)
- b. He enters the courts of the Tent with a bull, a ram and two goats. (16.3,5)
- c. The bull is presented for his and his family's sins. (16.6)
- d. The two goats are brought to the Tent door and lots are cast (probably with the Urim and Thummim he carries) to see which goat will be sacrificed, and which will be sent alive into the wilderness as a symbol of sin being removed. This is the scapegoat, the 'goat of removal' (Heb אֲזַזֵּל *Aza'zel* – from two Hebrew words אֵז *az*, a goat and אָזַל *azal*, meaning to disappear, go away.) (16.7,8)
- e. The bullock is now slaughtered in sacrifice. (16.11)
- f. Carrying an incense-burner full of hot coals in one hand, and a handful of incense powder in the other, the High Priest enters the Holy of Holies for the first time, and puts the incense on the fire to create a cloud of fragrant smoke over the ark of the covenant. (This is to protect him from death!) (16.13)
- g. He then takes some of the bull's blood and sprinkles it with his finger onto the top of the ark's covering, then a further seven times with more blood, in front of the ark. This is for his own and his family's sin. (16.14)
- h. The goat chosen for sacrifice is now slaughtered, and its blood is brought into the Holy of Holies, behind the curtain, and the same process is done with it as with the bull's blood. This blood is for the sin of Israel. No one else is permitted to be in the Tent with him while this is happening. (16.15)
- i. He then goes out from behind the curtain, and sprinkles blood around the holy place, in front of the separating curtain. (16.16)
- j. He then comes out of the Tent, into the outer court and takes some of the blood of the bull, and some of the goat, and smears it on the four horns at the corners of the bronze altar of burnt offering, doing this seven times with each. (16.19)
- k. When all this is done, he takes the live scapegoat, the *Aza'zel* and lays both hands on its head, confessing all the sins of Israel over it, symbolically transferring them onto it. The goat is then taken by a designated man, other than the High Priest, into an uninhabited, desert place and released. (16.21,22)
- l. Going into the Tent again, the High Priest disrobes and bathes in water there, then dresses again. (16.24)
- m. The High Priest then offers on the altar the burnt offering for sin (the ram, and the fat of the sacrificed goat.) (16.24)
- n. What is left of the bull and the goat are taken outside the camp of Israel and burned up, including even any droppings made during the day. (16.27)
- o. Both the one who released the scapegoat in the desert and the one who burned the remains of the offerings wash their clothes and bathe before returning (16.26,28)

The Day of Atonement is a designated fast day, and a Sabbath. (Lev.23.26ff) Further offerings to be made on *Yom Kippur* are found in Num. 29.7-11.

## 5. The Feast of Tabernacles/ Ingathering.

15<sup>th</sup>-21<sup>st</sup> Tishri (Seventh month, around October.)

Just five days after the Day of Atonement, the third of the *regalim*, the Pilgrim Festivals occurs. This is the harvest festival, but also commemorates the wanderings of Israel in the wilderness.

Lev. 23.33 -36, 39-43; Num 29.12-38; Deut 16.13-15

This seven day feast starts five days after *Yom Kippur*, a celebration of the bringing in of the harvest. The first day is a Sabbath, when a convocation is called, as is the eighth day, when the closing assembly is held.

The Jews were to take four different things to celebrate the harvest and to wave before the Lord, each day for seven days. They are fruit, palm, poplar and willow, bound together and used to rejoice before the Lord.

In modern Jewish celebration of this feast, the four 'species' are now traditionally the lemon-like fruit, etrog, a palm frond called a *lulav*, branches of sweet-smelling myrtle (*hadass*) and willow branches (*aravah*) When these are bound together, they are called collectively the *lulav* (frond).

This time was also the time to build a *sukkah*, a hut with a roof of leaves, sometimes also called in English a 'booth'. This is to remind the people that they lived in huts, or tents when they came out of Israel. (Lev.23.42-43). Today, Jewish people still build huts, which they decorate with hanging decorations and popcorn rings, and sometimes fairy lights around the outside.

Each of the seven days offerings are to be made. (Num 29.12ff). That is, two rams and fourteen lambs are to be sacrificed to the Lord, with associated grain and oil offerings, plus a male goat for a sin offering. Also, on the first day thirteen bulls are sacrificed, decreasing by one on each day of the feast, down to seven on the seventh day of *Sukkot*.

This is to be a joyful feast, especially after the solemn days of Awe and the Day of Atonement. After all, this is the time of plenty, the time when God had again provided for them as a people. More on *Sukkot* can be read at [http://www.hebrew4christians.com/Holidays/Fall\\_Holidays/Sukkot/sukkot.html](http://www.hebrew4christians.com/Holidays/Fall_Holidays/Sukkot/sukkot.html)

*This is the feast spoken of in John 7.2, when Jesus' brothers were encouraging Him to 'go public.' He seemed not to want to go, although because it was an obligation on Jewish men, He went incognito. He managed to keep out of sight, which is why some people accused Him of deceit. If he was a 'good Jew' He should be at the feast, as commanded by God.*

*He appeared teaching 'in the middle of the feast', (John 7.14) after three or four days, which almost resulted in His arrest by the authorities.*

*Then, on the last day of Tabernacles, 'the great day of the feast' (John 7.37) when there was a libation (pouring out ceremony) of water, to commemorate the water from the rock, Jesus stood up and said 'If anyone is thirsty, let him come to me and drink.'*

Lev.23.37,38,44 (mirrored in Numbers 29.39-40)

The instructions on the feasts conclude with a reference to Moses' announcement of all these instructions to Israel.

The Festivals gave a rhythm to the national life of Israel. In their coming together, although they were tribes, they were joined in common commemoration of the goodness of God. There is something God is trying to teach them about the practice of stopping to celebrate or to rehearse or to repent together which reflects God's heart for rhythm and balance in life.

## **Day 52 The Laws of Moses (cont'd)**

### **I. Sacrifices and Offerings**

This is the first part of the laws concerning various offerings required of Israel outside of the great feasts.

We who are living in the light of the cross and empty tomb of Jesus may wonder why all this blood and death of animals was deemed necessary.

An analogy may help. All western people are familiar with electricity, and its benefits. It lights, heats, drives machines, gives power for a multitude of purposes. Yet it must be treated with great respect, and used with understanding. For example, water and electricity is a lethal mixture, as is electricity and metal. No one touches water or metal when electricity is present, unless they are insulated and only when it is necessary in emergency.

We go to great lengths to protect against electric shock; all electric devices have safety plugs, and electricity sub-stations are locked away and fenced off. Switches are kept out of bathrooms, and so on.

Taking this analogy, and applying it to the power of God, we have to remember that in the midst of Israel was dwelling the Creator of the universe, one they called 'a consuming fire'. He wanted to be as close to them as possible, to speak to them, to love and care for them. Yet His presence was dangerous to be around if sin or uncleanness were involved. This was seen in the outbreaks of God's power against those who sinned in the desert journeys.

The laws and sacrifices are therefore the safety regulations for a people living with the immense power of God in the centre of their nation. We perhaps have not taken account of this awesome power of God enough in understanding the nature of His dwelling among Israel.

With Christ's death we are afforded a new way of being close to God, insulated by His substitutionary death for us from the fearsome outbreak of God's power seen in Israel.

## 1. Burnt Offerings

Lev. 1.1 – 17; Lev. 6.8-13; Num 28.1-8; Lev. 17.8-9

In bringing an offering for sin as required by the law, whether bull, sheep or bird, the person presenting it would lay his hand on the head and transfer his guilt onto it, and then he would slaughter, skin and butcher it, while the priests presented the blood and prepared the altar. Then the priests would take the pieces and arrange them on the fire for the burning.

The courts of the Lord must have been a very bloody, very noisy and odorous place, with so much slaughtering going on.

There were also regulations for the disposal of the remains of the fire from the altar, as well as the maintenance of a constant fire in it. It was not to go out. (Lev. 6.13.)

The offerings were made as a pleasing aroma to the Lord. The smell of cooking food is always one as humans that pleases us, and it is also to be a sign of the shared table of God and man which the Tent represented. Wine was also offered along with the meat. (Num. 28.7)

There was a strict prohibition on any offering being made to the Lord other than at the Tent of meeting. (Lev. 17.8,9)

## 2. Cereal Offering

Lev. 2.1- 16; Lev. 6.14-23, Num. 15.1-21

Here are instructions for cereal offerings; part of it is to be given to the Lord, and part to the priests for their supply. (Lev. 2.3) The finest ingredients are used, and with no yeast. Honey is also forbidden from being used in offerings of cereals. However, honey and yeast are acceptable in firstfruit offerings. (Lev. 2.12)

**Salt** is to be added to all grain offerings, as a sign of covenant. This ancient seasoning, with antiseptic and preservative qualities was highly prized, and it expresses something of the bond between man and God. This is why it is called the *salt of your God's covenant* (Heb. מֶלַח בְּרִית אֱלֹהֵיךָ *melach berit Eloheykha*) (Lev. 2.13)

Grain for firstfruit offerings was to be crushed, not whole, releasing the inner fruitfulness and combined with incense. There was also an offering made when the crop was milled into meal. (Num. 15; 17ff)

Lev. 6.14-23 has instructions for the priests, who may eat most of the grain offering themselves, though without any yeast. There are also instructions for the offering when a new High Priest was anointed.

Num 15.1ff Each animal offering has a corresponding grain and oil offering, and some also are brought with wine offerings.

The same rules apply for the stranger as well as for the Jew. (Num 15.14)

## Day 53 The Laws of Moses (cont'd)

### Fellowship-Peace and Sin Offerings

Here are presented two different types of offering; the peace or fellowship offering, called in Hebrew *shelem* (Heb שְׁלֵמָה from the same root as the word *shalom*, i.e. *shalam* meaning to fulfil or to make whole.) and the sin offering, in Hebrew *chatt'ah* (Heb. חַטָּאת ) from the same root word as the word for sin.

The main difference between them is that the fellowship offering is an offering of fulfillment of a vow or a freewill thanksgiving, the sin offering is a ransom for particular sins committed against God.

### 3. Fellowship-Peace Offerings

Lev. 3.1-17; Lev.7.11-36, Lev.7.1-17

The fellowship-peace offering is seen as a meal with God, shared also with the priests. It has to be eaten within a certain time-scale at the place where God is worshipped. Some of the animal is burned as God's portion, particularly the fat, kidneys and liver, and the breast and right thigh is reserved for the priests. The rest can be eaten within the day if it is a thanksgiving, which is presented with associated grain offerings, or may be eaten over two days if it is an offering in fulfillment of a vow, or a voluntary offering to the Lord.

There is also an issue of ritual cleanness to be able to eat the offering. No-one ritually unclean may eat a sacrifice, and no meat that has touched anything unclean may be offered.

The offerings brought to the Lord have to be brought to the Tent, and may be offered nowhere else. This is to counter the practices which were arising of offerings made to pagan idols (Lev.17.7)

### 4. (Unintentional) Sin Offerings

Lev.4.1 – 5.13; Lev.6.24-30; Num. 15.29 -31.

The regulations for sin offerings are in place for *unintentional* sins at four levels; those of the priest, those of the whole people together, those of leaders of the people, and those of individuals other than those covered.

The Hebrew word for unintentional is *Bish-gagah* (Heb בִּישְׁגָגָה from root שָׁגַג *Shagag*) meaning to err or sin inadvertently.

For the priest and the whole people, a bull is brought as a sacrifice, when the sin is uncovered. Hands are laid on its head, transferring the guilt onto it, and it is slaughtered, its blood presented in the Tent of meeting, and poured at the base of the altar, its fat and some of its entrails burned, and the rest of it taken outside the camp to be burned on a wood fire. None of these offerings is to be eaten by the priests.

For leaders and individuals, the offering is a female goat, again with hands laid on to impute guilt to it, its blood presented and its fat burned on the altar. A lamb may also be presented. The same applies to foreigners living in their community as well as to Israel. (Num.15.29)

In Lev.5.1ff We find the kind of sins that require these offerings

- Failing to aid the course of justice for an accused person
- Touching unclean things
- Taking an oath without thinking

Lev.5.7ff recognises that some are more able to make these sacrifices than others.

Because God is a God whose heart is toward the poor, there is provision to bring two ring-doves or two young pigeons. If the person cannot even afford the bird offerings, they are permitted to bring a tenth of an ephah (about 200grams) of flour to be burned on the altar.

These offerings can be eaten by the priest who offers them. (Lev 6.24-30) as long as they are regarded as the Lord's property and dealt with properly.

Lastly, we note the condition that these sin offerings are only for unintentional sins; if the sinner sins defiantly, these offerings cannot be acceptable (Num 15.30, 31)

## **Day 54 The Laws of Moses (cont'd)**

### **Guilt Offerings and Special Offerings**

The offerings covered in these readings are, firstly, for failures or betrayals of God, and for fraud or betrayal of a neighbour. Then there is a last section on miscellaneous situations where offerings need to be made. We end by looking at the regulations for the oil and bread of the presence used in the Tent, and with the ancient words of blessing given to Aaron and the High Priests to bless Israel and all those included in the people of the LORD.

### **5. Guilt Offerings**

Lev. 5.14 – 19; Lev.6.1-7; Lev. 7.1-10 then 37-38.

Guilt offerings, called in Hebrew *asham* (Heb אָשָׁם from root word meaning to be guilty) are to do with different types of failure or sin.

- a betrayal (Heb מַעֲלָה *ma'al*) of God's holiness, through violation of a regulation concerning the holy things of the Lord, omitting to do what is required. In this case, as well as the guilt offering, the value of the ram has to have 20% extra added. (Lev.6.5)
- An unwitting, sinful action which incurs guilt on the violator.
- A fraud or theft, or cheating or lying about property entrusted to someone to look after incurs guilt. As with the first case, 20% is to be added as a penalty and returned to the one cheated or defrauded. (Lev.6.5)

The guilt offering to be made is a prize ram, worth at least one shekel of silver (about 11.5 grams) . The blood is to be shed at the altar, the fat burned, and then it may be eaten by a priest in a holy place. They can also keep the skin of the offering, and eat any grain offerings associated.

This list of offerings is brought to a close (Lev.7.37,38)

## 6. Other Offerings

Num 28.9 – 15 then Deut. 21.1-9

- **Sabbath Offerings** A regular offering of lambs, drink and grain made each Sabbath.
- **New Moon Offerings** Each new moon, on the first of the month, two bulls, a ram and seven lambs are offered, with associated grain and wine offerings.
- **Offering for Undetected Murder** Where a human life has been taken, but no murderer is found, the elders and judges of the nearest town take a cow down into a river valley and break its neck, in the presence of priests, and declare that they have no knowledge of how the person came to be killed. This will release them from the guilt of murder.

## 7. Other Rules for Offerings

Lev. 22.17- 30, Ex. 23.18 (mirrored in Ex. 34.25)

In all cases where an offering is required, the animal must be flawless physically. However, only in the case of a freewill offering, deformed animals may be offered.

The offerings are not to be taken from foreigners, they have to be native species, and are to be eaten on the same day they are offered, unless exceptions are granted.

In Lev.22.25, there is an interesting description of offerings as ‘your God’s food’ (Heb אֶלֶּהֵיכֶם לֶחֶם *lechem Eloheykhem*) . They see all this sacrifice as a meal for and with God, in which priests and people often also participate. There is something powerful about this concept of God and man eating together, and God being given only the best for His pleasure.

There are restrictions on the age of animals which can be sacrificed; for reasons of humaneness, baby animals are not to be offered until eight days old, and not on the same day as their parent animals. (Lev.22.26-28)

Lastly, blood and yeast are never to be offered together to the Lord. (Ex. 23.18)

## J. Other Rituals

Lev.24.1 – 9, Num. 6.22-27

Regulations are given for clear olive oil to be provided by the people for the Tent lamps to be continually burning. (v1-4)

Each Sabbath, twelve loaves of bread baked specially are placed on the table of presence-bread (Ex.25.30) with some incense, which represent the fellowship of the tribes of Israel with God. This bread is eaten by the priests, as a sign of the covenant. (Lev.24.8) Again, eating with God is a worship practice enshrined in the law.

Regarding the English term, ‘Showbread’ or the old Authorised ‘shewbread’ the actual Hebrew term for this is *bread of the presence-face* ( Heb פָּנִים לֶחֶם *lechem panim*) The word *panim* in Hebrew is the same word used for *presence* and *face*, in that no one is considered to be present unless their face is evident. Thus the bread on the table in the Tent is seen as the sign of God being present to and with the people of Israel in His eternal covenant.

For believers in Jesus Christ, this contributes a further layer of rich meaning to our celebration of Jesus’ death and resurrection in the bread and wine of the Eucharist. (communion). For us, the bread of communion is the bread of His presence-face.

### The Aaronic Blessing/ Birkat Kohanim

Numbers 6.22-27

This wonderful, widely-known and ancient blessing is given personally by the Lord to Moses for Aaron’s use as the formula for invoking His touch and His kiss upon the people of the Lord. Today it is one of the most often-used blessings among both Jews and Christians. In Hebrew it is known as *Birkat kohanim*



(Heb בִּרְכַת כֹּהֲנִים ), the Blessing by the priests.

Often when it is spoken, the speaker will make a sign with his hands as depicted in this image.

The hands are held in the shape of the Hebrew letter *Shin*

(Heb. שׁ) which stands for *Shaddai*, the Most High God,

while the blessing is pronounced, a sign of the source of this wonderful pronouncement. This is called the *Kohane* (Hebrew, meaning *Priestly*.)

Here is the blessing in Hebrew, transliterated into the Latin alphabet, with the literal English. (The Hebrew is read from right to left.)

יְבָרֶכְךָ יְהוָה וַיִּשְׁמְרֶךָ

*Yevarekh'kha Adonai ve-yishmerekha*

May He bless you the Lord and may He keep you

יָאֵר יְהוָה פָּנָיו אֵלֶיךָ וַיַּחַנְּכָךָ

*Ya'er Adonai Panav elekha vi-chunnekka*

May He illumine the Lord His presence- face upon you and favour you

יִשָּׂא יְהוָה פָּנָיו אֵלֶיךָ

*Yissa' Adonai panav elekha*

May he lift the Lord his presence-face upon you

וַיַּשֵּׂם לְךָ שְׁלוֹם

*Ve-yasem lekha Shalom*

And may He place to you Peace.

Two videos may be of interest; one is of a Yemenite Jewish priestly family saying the blessing, word by word repeated. This family claims to trace its ancestry back to Aaron himself. You can see the video (accessed 24/02/2010) at <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=LO-kCmoFz8>

And at the Western Wall, Jerusalem, at Passover 2008, again sung word by word, repeated back .  
<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=71fqdXzgHv0>