

# **The Naked Bible Podcast 2.0**

**Number 64**

**“Leviticus 1”**

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**With**

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## **Leviticus 1**

**Leviticus 1 focuses on one offering, the burnt offering. Our focus this episode is how an Israelite (not a modern Christian) would have processed the ritual and its meaning. The burnt offering was not about forgiveness of sin. Rather, it was designed to initiate contact with God—which was viewed as a dangerous thing.**

**TS:** Welcome to the Naked Bible Podcast, Episode 64, Leviticus 1. I'm your layman, Trey Stricklin, and he's the scholar, Dr. Michael Heiser. Hey Mike, how are you doing?

**MSH:** Very good Trey. Good to be back.

**TS:** Good, I'm excited to get started with this. I've got my knives sharpened, my fire burning.

**MSH:** I've gotten emails if I was kidding.

**TS:** What, about doing the show?

**MSH:** No, about doing Leviticus. For some it's going to be a tough pill to swallow. Oh well. My goal in doing Leviticus, I'm not going to go through every verse and talk about where they sliced and diced this or that. My goal in doing Leviticus is, hey, who does Leviticus for one thing. So it deserves some attention and secondly is there are things in here that I want to touch on that will sort of help us kind of have the Israelite in our head. How did they think about what they were doing? How did they think about what was happening, how they were engaging God, some of the bigger picture concepts we talked about in the introduction, you know, ideas of sacred space, the presence of God, and when we get into the sacrificial system, what do the sacrifices mean or not mean. Why are they talked about the way they're talked about, that sort of thing? So we're not going to do nitty-gritty verse by verse kind of thing. Just like with Acts, we're going to go through pick out things that are worth mentioning that will help give us some insight and make the book more readable frankly. So in terms of getting started here, I want to go through some preliminaries again before we jump into the first verse and this will sort of be preparatory. Now there are as you can imagine a number of theories about sacrifice that scholars have come up with. And a lot of these things, I'm just going to go through them real briefly, they're going to sound familiar because they're kind of self-evident if you've ever read through Leviticus or any other sacrificial material in the Old Testament. Chances are these things will have occurred to you and all of these different approaches, I say theories of offering and sacrifice but really they're just approaches, all these approaches capture some aspect of what's going on in the sacrificial system but they're not comprehensive. In other words, they all have something good to say, something good to contribute in the way we think about sacrifice. So the first one, for example, is something the scholars called gift theory, that is, Old Testament offering seemed to be gifts to the Lord. Now that might sound self-evident but since there are other views other ways to look at sacrifice. This is just one of several. This revolves around the notion that, hey, it sounds like when I read the sacrificial material that people are bringing sacrificial gifts to the Lord and they're made up of food items and it looks like they're sort of presented as food for God. So like what's up with that? Well, scholars like Dick Averbeck, who I will quote and allude to several times today and in another episodes I'm sure, but since his focus is ritual, have pointed out that in the Ancient Near East food offerings are at least sometimes conceived of as actually providing sustenance for the gods. Now the question is, well, is that how the biblical writer's thinking about things? In Mesopotamian text and rituals, there's this sort of care and

feeding of the gods that goes on. A lot of that language does get drawn over into the Old Testament but is that the way we should be looking at some of these things. It's sort of a yes and no. Its true Israelites didn't have statues of God that they would lay offerings at or pour some libation at the feet at something like that. But you still have this language about the Lord's table and the Lord's food, that sort of thing. So there's little bit of this idea going on but not quite and certainly not in several specifics, what's going on in "pagan" religion. The God of Israel, according to the Old Testament, didn't need to eat. If you go to Psalm 50 for example, you would read where God says, 'If I were hungry, I would not tell you for the world and its fullness are mine. Do I eat the flesh of bulls or drink the blood of goats,' again, the rhetorical question is well, that's kind of silly. And God says, 'offer God a sacrifice of thanksgiving, perform your vows to the Most High,' again, the Psalmist chimes in there. So that's an example where the Psalmist specifically says look, there's no actual consumption going on here like some of our neighbors might think. But nevertheless, offerings are referred to as the Lord's food in certain passages, Leviticus 3:11, 3:16. Throughout the book of Leviticus, you're going to get this language here and there. You're going to get the idea that burning the offering "produces an aroma pleasing to the Lord." So you're really going to get some sort of anthropomorphic language but elsewhere in the Old Testament, you're going to get the denial that there's actually anything sort of literal going on here as far as consumption. So yeah and no, gift theory sort of kind of sort of a little bit of this but not so much of that is sort of the field that you get. Another example would be the Bread of the Presence. This people might find interesting and we'll hit this later on in Leviticus a little bit, but for the most part, this is something we get if we were going through Exodus talking about the tabernacle. The whole Bread of the Presence idea where the bread is continually placed on the gold table inside the holy place every Sabbath, and there's always a light on. There's this continually burning light in the holy place accord Exodus 27. This is really Exodus 25-27, and the incense is always being burned. Well, all of that was to create the impression that God was home, that the divine presence was always present inside the holy place as though God was physically living there. People knew that that wasn't the case. I mean, yes, God does get embodied in the angel who's leading them and so on so forth. But it's not like you can peek into the window of the tabernacle so to speak from a distance, a safe distance, and see God walking around in there like he's home. He's not kicking up and doing something or having a snack. But nevertheless, you have these trappings that are associated with the tabernacle to convey the idea that the presence of God is here in our camp. It's really here. He is really here. You don't need embodiment for that but you do need some sort of visual way to communicate the idea and this is what's going on. And so when they present offerings, yeah, they're gifts and they are spoken of as is food offerings and whatnot. But the Israelites know very well that we don't have an embodied deity in there munching on something after a sacrifice. So we can't overly literalize this. Another approach, another theory is communion theory. This is the idea where the point of the sacrificial system is communion with the Lord. Now in some sacrifices that very explicitly is the point of the sacrifice. But other sacrifices, it's not really the point. So communion theory, presence theory, whatever you want to call that, it's true. To some degree it's true and but it's not something that can really comprehensively explain or illuminate what the sacrificial system was all about. It's part of a whole and we can just leave it at that. Another approach is consecration theory. In some Old Testament passages, it seems the primary reason for bringing an offering was to consecrate someone or something to the Lord, to sanctify it, to give it sacred status, to make it holy, to take it out of sort of the common realm and put it into the sacred realm.

Leviticus 10:10 says you must distinguish between the holy and the common, that idea. Sometimes in ritual text sacrificial procedures that will be sort of evident. For instance, Exodus 24, the blood is splashed on the altar and on the people and specifically, the splashing of the blood on the people is to consecrate them, to dedicate them to a relationship with Yahweh. We get that. Leviticus 8 happens to the priest where they put blood on the right ear and the thumb and the big toe of Aaron and his sons and so on so forth. So yeah, sometimes sacrifice is about consecrating a person or an object, very true, but it doesn't comprehensively explain everything. Now, those are the three major approaches, and I bring them up because you should know that the sacrificial system means all of these things or includes all of these ideas. And at any given point, any one of them could be in play and it just helps to sort of know that, to kind of think about what's happening, and again, to try and think about what they are thinking about when they are doing a particular act. And we'll hit on all these things as we proceed. So let's jump into Leviticus 1, not going to read the whole chapter even though it's short. But let's just take a few verses here.

The LORD called Moses and spoke to him from the tent of meeting, saying, <sup>2</sup>“Speak to the people of Israel and say to them, When any one of you brings an offering to the LORD, you shall bring your offering of livestock from the herd or from the flock.

**MSH:** We'll just stop there. Those are first two verses. I ought to say something about the offering language that we get in our English translations. In Hebrew, it would be more accurate to translate this to present an offering, bring an offering, present an offering as opposed to a sacrifice, let's put it that way. Sacrifices and offerings are not necessarily the same thing even though in modern parlance, the way scholars talk about this and frankly the way I talk about it, the terms are often mixed. Technically, an offering about was sort of a gift and sacrificial language is going to be reserved in the Hebrew text to when an animal is slaughtered and then at least part of it is eaten in a communal meal. So sacrifices and offerings aren't necessarily the same thing even though an offering might involve a sacrifice. But the biblical text when it uses the language of sacrifice has a meal in mind. And that's going to become evident as we proceeded in some of these chapters. So you might, in your English translations, some of you might see offering there. Some of you might see the word sacrifice and you might know there might be a difference here. Why is there a difference, you might ask the question? Well, technically, there is. Strictly speaking from an Old Testament point of view, the Old Testament limits sacrifice language to animal offerings, animals that are part of the ritual, and even more specific than that, to instances where the animal is slaughtered and becomes part of a meal. But the offerings are much wider than animals. For instance, there's a grain offering. There are bloodless offerings and whatnot. So you might be wondering, well, do the terms mean something? Can they be distinguished? Technically yeah, but typically the way it gets talked about, people don't care really that much about being terribly precise. We'll be precise when we need to be as we go through. So back to chapter 1, let's go to verse 3.

<sup>3</sup>“If his offering is a burnt offering from the herd, he shall offer a male without blemish. He shall bring it to the entrance of the tent of meeting, that he may be accepted before the LORD.

**MSH:** This in a nutshell tells you what the whole burnt offering is about. So if his offering, let's just go through with the verse. The word there is *korban*. It's the noun form of *korav*, which is the verb form that is to present an offering. So again, this is some sort of gift idea, turns out to be an animal, a burnt offering from the herd. 'He shall offer a male without blemish. He shall bring it to the entrance to the tent of meeting.' You say, well, why is that important? The offer is allowed or at least is hoping to be accepted onto sacred space. So here I am. I'm Joe Israelite. I want to offer a burnt offering. We haven't talked about the specific purpose yet and I'm bringing my male without blemish from the herd to the entrance of the tent of meeting. And so I am standing on sacred territory. I can't go any further. I'm right on the cusp here of where the presence of God delineates his living space. And so I bring that and my hope is what? Is my hope that I'll be forgiven of a sin? No. Do I want to apologize for something I've done? No. My hope is that I will be accepted "before the Lord." So what does the burnt offering mean? The offer is seeking fellowship with God. I want to have a little time with God so I'm coming to his house. I'm bringing a gift, *korban*, a burnt offering, which is the Hebrew word *olah*. Again, *korban* is sort of the generic term for gift. *Olah* is a specific term for burnt offering. And I'm bringing it because I want God to not kill me. I want God to accept me as a visitor. I want to be safe in his presence so I'm bringing this gift. Now you can say, well, that sounds a little bit like a bribe. Well, if that helps you, okay. I personally wouldn't use that language but you're trying to visit God just for a little while and you have to approach him where he lives and you don't want anything bad to happen so you want him to accept you. It's a way of initiating a visit. It's a way of initiating a little time of fellowship and communion with God. It's like you get invited over to somebody's house to eat. My wife is very good at always bringing a little gift, the icebreaker, the little thing to present to the hosts, that sort of thing. We do this in the course of our lives in different ways but we bring a token of friendship, little offering, a little gift. And so the offerer brings his gift before God, the whole burnt offering, because he would like a little bit of God's time. If we read through the rest of the passage, we find out that there's no specific sin that needs to be forgiven. That's not even in the picture. What is in the picture is I am mortal and I'm imperfect and I don't think so but I might be impure in some way. I hope not but I want to spend a little time with God because I'm grateful for what he's done and to do that I need to go to his house and I hope nothing bad happens. I want him to accept me so that we can have this little time while I watch my offering get burned up and hopefully God enjoys that. That's the burnt offering. The sacrifice itself, you'll often see it translated whole burnt offering. Everything was consumed on the altar except for the hide. So no one including the priests and of course the offerer, no one is going to eat any of this. So that's why it's called an offering as opposed to a sacrifice in Levitical language. Sacrifice technically in biblical language is when the offer and the priests and in theory God have a meal together. There's something going on like that. The offerer might be included or not but the priest who typically is. But in this case everything goes to God except for the hide. Everything is burned up so that's why it's the whole burnt offering. It's a signal to God that this worshiper wants to spend a little time with him, maybe wants to offer a prayer, maybe wants the priest to pray for him. We don't really know but there's some reason to be there that isn't, oh, I did this is horrible thing over here and I need forgiveness. That is not

the purpose of the burnt offering. Now frequently the burnt offering was the first sacrifice in a ritual that included other sacrifices. You can see the logic. This is the kickstart or this is the signal to God that somebody's at the door and wants to spend a little time with God. Now other sacrifices might be needed because maybe the offerer does have something that needs to be taken care of. This is the one that initiates the communing event. That's what it's for, so Leviticus 1:4, we'll go back to the text. It says,

<sup>4</sup>He shall lay his hand on the head of the burnt offering, and it shall be accepted for him to make atonement for him.

**MSH:** You say, well Mike, I thought you just said that he didn't really have a sin that needed to be forgiven? Right away we're four verses into Leviticus and we have to talk about atonement language. You're used to me saying things that you don't hear church. Here's another one. Atonement language in your English translations, especially in Leviticus but in lots of other places, doesn't mean what you think it means. It's not necessarily about forgiveness. It has a broad range of semantic possibilities that the Hebrew term that's underneath this one is rendered atonement. So don't think that the offer has a specific sin to be forgiven because we're going to keep reading and find out that isn't the point.

<sup>4</sup>He shall lay his hand on the head of the burnt offering, and it shall be accepted for him to make atonement for him. <sup>5</sup>Then he shall kill the bull before the LORD, and Aaron's sons the priests shall bring the blood and throw the blood against the sides of the altar that is at the entrance of the tent of meeting.

**MSH:** Well now wait a minute. Guess what? The blood isn't applied to the offerer. In the sacrificial system of Leviticus, the blood is never applied to the offerer. Sometimes it gets applied to the priest but this whole notion that we have of sacrifice because we filter it through Jesus, how the blood of Jesus applied to us to take away our sins, that isn't what's going on in Leviticus. There's a disconnect there, and so we need to talk about some of the language here. Verse 6,

<sup>6</sup>Then he shall flay the burnt offering and cut it into pieces, <sup>7</sup>and the sons of Aaron the priest shall put fire on the altar and arrange wood on the fire. <sup>8</sup>And Aaron's sons the priests shall arrange the pieces, the head, and the fat, on the wood that is on the fire on the altar; <sup>9</sup>but its entrails and its legs he shall wash with water. And the priest shall burn all of it on the altar, as a burnt offering, a food offering with a pleasing aroma to the LORD.

**MSH:** And then from verse 10 on, I'm not going to really worry about that because it's, well, if he doesn't have a bull, if it's a sheep or goat or a bird or whatever, different kinds of things you can bring for the burnt offering. I want to stick here to the meaning of the burnt offering. So let's go back to verse 4, 'he shall lay his hand on the head of the burnt offering,' now that symbolic act we think typically sort of transfers something to the animal. That is not what they're thinking.

This symbolic act served to designate the animal as a sacrificial victim for the specific ritual. In other words, this animal before being brought to the tent of meeting was common. It was one of a bunch of animals, but now it's being designated, it's being consecrated for sacred use, designating this specific animal is now belonging to the Lord. It doesn't mean I'm transferring now through some mystical way my sins onto this animal. That isn't the point. We're going to see something closer to that in other places in Leviticus, but it's not the point right here. So the act should not be interpreted as indicating some sort of transferal of guilt or transferal of impurity to the animal. There's no guilt in view here. The offer is just bringing a gift to seek access. He's not asking for forgiveness. Now the next line says, 'it shall be accepted for him to make atonement for him,' and here's where get into atonement language. Now the context is the *olah*, if you read through the whole chapter and it's chapter 1 that's about this one sacrifice, you will not read anywhere in the chapter that there's any need for expiation of sin. That's one thing. If we look at Exodus 30 verse 12, we get an interesting parallel to this. I'm going to read you that verse. It says,

<sup>12</sup>“When you take the census of the people of Israel, then each shall give a ransom for his life to the LORD when you number them, that there be no plague among them when you number them.

**MSH:** You say, well, how in the world is that a sacrifice Mike? Let me read it one more time.

<sup>12</sup>“When you take the census of the people of Israel, then each shall give a ransom for his life

**MSH:** The word there is *kopher*. It's the same word back in Leviticus 1:4 for atonement. It's the verb *koper*, *kopher*, *koper*, it's the same consonants. Back to Exodus 30:12,

<sup>12</sup>“When you take the census of the people of Israel, then each shall give a ransom [**MSH: a kopher**] for his life to the LORD when you number them, that there be no plague among them when you number them.

**MSH:** In the context there, it's a census. It's not about cleaning up a lot of sin on a lot of people. So this idea of paying a ransom when they're counted, when they're rolled back in Exodus, that's something that I want to focus on. The point of the parallel is that back in Exodus 30:12, there's no expiation for sin going on. Instead, its protection from God's wrath to be considered acceptable back in Exodus 30:12 really refers to, we have a gift being given, in that case back in Exodus 30, it was money. It was a half shekel instead of a blood offering. But the payment was given in that passage for an Israelite to be acceptable to occupy sacred space. And the reason is given four verses later in Exodus 30, 'they're giving it for the service of the tent of meeting.' So there was need of precious metals, they're giving shekels here, to make parts of the tabernacle and accoutrements and that sort of thing. So it's a one-time situation. It's not an annual gift. The idea is look, if you're going to participate in this, in building this tabernacle, if you're going to obey God and meet the need for the building implements for this, then for you to be acceptable to work here, to occupy sacred space, both now and in the future after this thing is built, you



need to bring a half shekel. You need to contribute. If you don't, Exodus 30:12 says 'there's going to be a plague among you.' In other words, God's going to punish people who are not willingly participating in the construction and the use thereafter of the tabernacle. So the whole idea of the *kopher* here is protection from the wrath of God. And that is really more of what's going on back in Leviticus 1. Leviticus 1, the worshipper says I want to spend some time with God so I have to go to his house. And he goes to the door of the tent of meeting, brings the offering. Why? He wants to be accepted. He doesn't want anything bad to happen. He wants to initiate that relationship and you do that, you signal to God that you're there, that you want some of his time, and if you bring acceptable sacrifice, you'll get that time. You'll get your need, whatever it is, taken care of. Now what does it teach people? The burnt offering, the whole burnt offering, doesn't teach, didn't teach any Israelite about you committed a sin and here's what to do. What it taught Israelites was that proximity to God was dangerous. It was a fearful thing. Proximity to God was inherently dangerous for both the worshiper and the priests frankly, even if there's no particular offense committed to that point. If you do something the way you're not supposed to do it, and you knocked on God's door, "there's going to be hell to pay." There's just going to be a plague like back in Exodus 30. There's something bad that is going to happen. So God does it this way, insists on this to teach a very simple lesson. You're not me. You're not fit to occupy the space that I live on unless I accept you, unless I embrace you. Otherwise, what you're doing is really dangerous. It is a way to protect the worshiper from divine wrath. Now back to the whole atonement thing, I want to say a little bit more about this. And if you don't remember it, fine. If you're not taking notes, fine, because we're going to hit this in other passages. But again, when we see atonement in our English translation, we think there's a sin issue. What I'm saying is in this particular instance that is not the case, and in many particular instances that is not the case. Part of the problem is that there are half a dozen different Hebrew words with the same consonants KPR as the one that occurs in this passage. This is what's known as a homonym problem. Hebrew is like English. Hebrew has words that are spelled exactly the same way but that mean different things. So sometimes *kopher* means just a gift, a ransom, something that I exchange to protect me or work out some sort of arrangement so that I'm safe and something gets done. That's one of four nouns that are spelled the same way in Hebrew, *kopher*. If you actually look this up in lexicon, the one that occurs in Leviticus 1:4 is labeled *kopher* 4. It's the fourth one. So what I'm saying is for those of you who attempt some original language researching your Bible study, you can't assume and hopefully you have better tools than a Strong's concordance. If that's all you got, you need to move on. You to move on to something better because you need a resource, a lexicon, that's going to list out the homonyms for you because you can't assume that the Hebrew word you're looking at in a primitive tool like Strong's always is the same word where those three consonants occur. In many cases, it's not. It just isn't. Hebrew's like English. English has homonyms. So does Hebrew. And this word is one of them. So in some cases it's just not going to mean what you think it means and you can be easily misled in your translation. Now in a basic sense, the verb *kaphar* means to purge. We're going to hit other passages where the atonement language of your English translation is going to point to one of the verbs. Again, they're six different KPR words in Hebrew, four of them are nouns, two of them are verbs. Occasionally, we're going to hit a verb that does have something to do with taking care of an offense or sin. And when we hit those, I'll return to this discussion. I'll tell you which one it is. We'll talk about the meaning of the passages. But in many cases, when the verb is used, it means to purge. It comes from Acadian word *kuppuru*, which means to wipe clean. So

that's significant because of things that we'll run into in Leviticus and other places in the Old Testament. For instance, the verb is used a lot with respect to the tabernacle and the altar, to purge the tabernacle, to purge the altar. What I hope you're seeing is that when this atonement language that you are familiar with, if you've ever read the Leviticus or, God forbid, you ever heard a sermon on Leviticus, and you'd been told that this refers to cleansing the offer of sin, be very careful. Look at what the direct object is, and in many cases in English translations, it will completely obscure it for you. Try to use an interlinear, reverse interlinear like at Logos is a great idea here. But in many cases, the blood the offering will be used to purge the tabernacle, purge the sacred space, to purge the altar, to purge this or that vessel. It's never applying to the human, to the human offerer. It's to make sure that sacred space is not rendered impure by a common human being who is not sanctified as a priest to occupy. A lot of sacrificial system is about preparing sacred space for your visit or preparing sacred space that God deems it fit to spend time there. It's really not about what goes on with the offerer's sin. A lot of bad sins you could commit in the Old Testament, there were no offerings for. You get the death penalty, or at least you were supposed to. There's no real direct evidence in the Scriptures that the death penalty offenses were ever carried out. But that was the solution, removal. Other solutions to other sins were remuneration. You stole that guy's cow. You take it back and you add one. It has nothing to do with a sacrifice. The sacrificial system, somehow, we have oriented it to us, and I guess probably because of the way we think about Jesus. But the sacrificial system for an Israelite wasn't about us, wasn't about the offerer so much as protecting the offerer from God, from the divine presence because that's just, we can't handle that, or purging sacred space of any impurities so that God could meet the priests there, or God can meet the offerer there. We've inverted the system in a lot of ways in our thinking. And as we go to the sacrifices, you'll see differences that are going to be quite contrary to what you're used to hearing about this but that are important. So even if you didn't sin, whole burnt offering in Leviticus 1, even if you don't have a sin on you, as far as you know you've had a good day, you had a good week, whatever it is, if you didn't sin God has to be approached with caution because you are not him. If you are not doing procedurally what he has asked you to do, what he has commanded you to do, you're going to be in trouble. It is a fearful thing to be in the presence of God for an Old Testament Israelite. It is not trivialized. It is not something to take lightly. It's dangerous, so you initiate a relationship with the gift. Now just think about this in terms of application, and we'll wrap up with this. In what I just described, would you want to live under that? I wouldn't. If I have to be so conscious of what I'm doing just to go meet with God, even through a priest, that I could get hurt or could launch a plague or I can wind up dead or somebody else it would cost them their life, that's just crazy. That's frightening. Now think about that and you think about what the New Testament says about how God can now be approached. How are we supposed to approach God now? Boldly, okay, Hebrews 4, Hebrews 4:16, 'let us then with confidence draw near to the throne of grace that we may receive mercy and find grace to help in time of need.' In other words, I don't have to go up to the door and meekly knock and boy, I hope this gift is good enough or else I could die. We don't have to think of things that way. Think about what the New Testament says if you're a Jew. Think about what a New Testament Jew in the first century, who knows what the sacrificial system was about even though they didn't have a temple for awhile. Now they have Herod's Temple and so they have some cognizance of what's going on here about how people talked about Jesus when they're used to this fearful type of system, and they can read examples in the Torah of people dying when they do things wrong. I mean you look at

another verse, Ephesians 3:12. Paul says, 'in whom we have boldness and access with confidence through our faith in him,' when you want to approach God. That is not how your typical Jew looked at this. And so Jesus comes along and a Jew hears the message of the cross, the message of this was your Messiah, died for you to forgive your sins and so on so forth. And now you can approach God individually and boldly. That was news. That was dramatically different than the way they were thinking about their faith in their religion. Another thought is we don't have to bring a gift for access to God. Think about that. If you're a Jew, you're thinking, okay, I'm going to this weird new year gathering of these Christ followers, like what happens when I get there? Do I need to bring a gift? Do I need to bring an offering? What do I need to do so that God doesn't strike me down? That is just gone. There was no need to bring a gift for access to God. That gift was already given for you. It is a voluntary offering of Jesus, of the Messiah himself, completely inverts and does away with this whole need to essentially bribe God for access, to make sure God won't do anything bad to me. And it's really unfortunate that a lot of people still think about God this way. A lot of Christians think about God this way. It's just utterly anachronistic to think about God this way. One last thought. If we're in Christ, we don't occupy sacred space so to speak. We are sacred space and that actually is the fundamental theological rationale for subduing the flesh and living a godly way. You are sacred space. For instance, it's Paul's rationale for why you shouldn't commit fornication, why you shouldn't eat meat that was taken directly from rituals. Okay if it's from the marketplace but you don't associate yourself with the ritual of the meat at Corinth. Why, because then you enter into fellowship with devils and you can't have fellowship with God and fellowship with beings who are less than God and hostile to God. You can't do it because you are sacred space. 'Know ye not,' Paul says, 'that you are the temple of the living God.' You have the Spirit, the very presence of God that was in the Old Testament indwelling in you. It would be easy for me to launch into a of a bit of a mini tirade here about how we do church. How we do church is so focused on us that honestly for somebody like me who, I try to shut it off periodically but there are places I've gone, churches I've gone into that is so focused on the person, on the felt needs or whatever it is, that it's just kind of sickening because we have lost any sense, I'm not saying we need to go back and treat our churches like the tabernacle and we had to be careful where we walk and all that kind of stuff because we are sacred space. What I'm saying is we have lost any sense of our gathering as being a sacred gather. It's noisy. It's lots of running around. It's frankly some crazy stuff. I could tell you stories. It's hard to believe sometimes what happens in church. And we have lost just about all sensibility to anything like this. Again, I'm not suggesting that hey, the solution to this is let's go build a tabernacle and act like we're in the Old Testament. That isn't the point. The point is it would be nice to remember that the way I behave matters because I am sacred space and when Christians gather together, yeah, Paul said individually we are the temple of the living God. He also said in Corinthians that you, plural, you, collectively, are the temple of the living God. What we're doing here should in some way convey some seriousness, some thoughtfulness to the presence of God. How do we behave differently here than any other place, because if we behave differently here, that helps us at least remember the presence of God. I mean very simple things like this. I'm grateful when I see it. This is why again this is sort of a freebie. In my experience people who have left what we might call evangelicalism have gone into like Eastern Orthodox, Eastern orthodoxy, or even back to Catholicism or something like that, is that they get drawn in by liturgy because what happens in the service means something. It requires thoughtfulness. There's symbology that takes the mind of the person in the room, in the church,

takes their mind and directs it to specific theological imagery or thoughts or ideas as opposed to a sporting event. That's just what the appeal is. And trust me, I understand that but I have had a number of people say that's what did it for them. And even though they might have a disagreement theologically here or there, I wanted a visit to church to be different from any other place and different in a specific way. So you take this back to Leviticus 1. Their problem was a little different. It was a little bit away to the extreme. But as we read through Old Testament ritual, don't wrinkle your nose up at it. Don't be repulsed by it. Yeah I'm glad we don't have lots of blood on the altar and all that kind of stuff, too, but don't be repulsed by it. Look at it the way they're looking at it and think about it the way they're thinking about it, and the lessons it was designed to reinforce, even if you don't have a sin on you, God should still be approached with caution. This is not a normal place. This is not a normal event. It's something that should be considered sacred as opposed to common as opposed to profane, which is what profane means, common, ordinary. This shouldn't be ordinary. It shouldn't be like everything else is during the week. It should be different. Even if we accomplish that much in our worship, I think it would be a good thing, and I think Leviticus 1 here, the idea of bringing an offering just so you can even start to enjoy or experience the presence of God in some way without getting hurt is really a good lesson.

**TS:** Mike, I'm curious. How much of pagan rituals stem from here? Is there any connection to offerings to the lower g gods?

**MSH:** When you get into some of the specific terminology, and again, last week if you remember, we talked about the need in pagan religion to interact with intermediaries. The main gods, the high gods, were sort of just out of the picture. I mean they can be sacrificed to and venerated but as far as your day-to-day "spiritual" needs, there was this whole intermediate world that you had to interact with. So there is a sense in all the systems, go back to the approaches to sacrifice, that we are offering gifts, in other words, there is some cajoling or sort of establishing a relationship that's important. We can't assume, we can't reason, and we can't be presumptive about how we approach sacred space, whether it's an Israelite religion or some other religion, because the gods have picked this place to inhabit. They have decided to settle in this statue or on this ground to do with what gods do. And so we can't presume, we can't be flippant about what we do in these areas lest the gods be angry. So there is this sense of otherness that is reflected in sacrificial systems elsewhere. The whole bringing a gift, treating it as food, that sort of thing, that the communion idea is probably a little less in pagan theory because there it's more barter. It goes into the logic of idolatry. One of the reasons you built an idol and you performed a ritual to open the mouth to make it alive, what you were thinking is that the deity is now going to come down here and inhabit it and be localized so that not only has it chosen to be in this place, but now you know it's here and you can essentially do lots of nice things for it so it does nice things for you. It's more of a barter mentality as opposed to, the Old Testament, yeah, we have a tabernacle. We have a holy place and God is at home and that kind of thing. But God can come and go as he wants. God is not isolated to this place. God has specifically said you're not going to make anything an idol because, a, I'm not going to be beckoned. I'm the one choosing to be here or not. You're not going to build this thing and beckon me here. I just don't respond that way. I can do for you. I can bless you or punish you no matter what is going on here. I'm giving you a means to know that I'm here and to approach me

but the terms of our relationship are laid out in this covenant that I have made with you and only with you. It's not based on, hey, did I like last week's meal better than this week's or the amount of what you bring. What God wants, just like we read in Psalm 50, come to him with thanksgiving, come to him with gratitude, come to him with a pure heart, this whole circumcision of the heart thing. It's much more internal than sort of a barter mentality. But the logic of it, there's going to be overlaps there and the terminology overlaps too.

**TS:** Yeah, that's interesting that it's a pleasing aroma to the Lord. It's a fascinating concept to think.

**MSH:** Right. People would imagine, especially if it's a meal, you still getting the burnt offering because even if though it wasn't technically a sacrifice because there's no meal, the imagination or the imagery was that God is there because it's his house. God is there and he's enjoying the scent of the meat being burned. He likes it. It's also why incense was used. Incense was used so that the place didn't stink of carcasses and internal organs and poop and all this other stuff. This is a mess when you're dealing with animals and animal remains and whatnot. Incense was used to make it pleasant for everyone concerned, and again, it was imagined that this is what God wanted too, because it was pleasing us as opposed to this offensive odor over here. So there was that and also because incense wasn't used in other places. So when you got near sacred space, it smelled different. It let you know, it was another sensory way of letting you know that I'm leaving the common and I'm approaching the uncommon, the sacred area.

**TS:** Is there anything to the actual location of the altar as far as like they had to kill it on the north side and they had to throw the blood against the sides of the altar?

**MSH:** There is a little something to that. What I mean by that is there's maybe some significance to that in other passages. So my answer at this point would be we'll wait until we get there. There is something to be said in a few occasions about orientation, let's just put it that way. But it doesn't show up in a lot of places.