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“Leviticus 6-7”

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With

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Leviticus 6-7

These two chapters of Leviticus present the “law” for each of the sacrifices described in chapters 1–5. The earlier chapters emphasize the mechanics of the sacrifices (e.g., the preparation of sacrifices and their ingredients). Leviticus 6-7, on the other hand, focuses on the duties of the priesthood in regard to sacrificial offerings and how the priests participated in sacrificial meals. Analogies to the Lord’s Supper and the NT idea of the priesthood of the believer are discussed in the episode.

TS: Welcome to the Naked Bible Podcast, Episode 69, Leviticus 6-7. I'm your layman, Trey Stricklin, and he's the scholar, Dr. Michael Heiser. Hey Mike, how are you doing this week?

MSH: Very good, good to be back with you Trey.

TS: I'm still recovering from the last show.

MSH: Folks seem to like the interviews and we like doing them so I don't think that one is going to be any different. In the long run I think people will really find that fascinating, people who find it. It's been out for a while. They're going to find it later. I'm willing to bet that one is going to have a long life span.

TS: Absolutely. It's a subject matter that normally doesn't get any light on it so I'm glad we're doing it.

MSH: Yup, well, back to the hum-drum world of Leviticus I guess. I shouldn't say that because I got an email from someone who said quit apologizing for doing Leviticus.

TS: Yeah, really, I mean it is interesting and it's much-needed.

MSH: Whoever that is, you can consider me rebuked. So I'll try to remember that. Well, Leviticus 6-7 today, these two chapters are sort of going to be dipping back into the first five chapters in some respects. Again, obviously we've covered the offerings, the major offerings up to this point. The first five chapters are the whole burnt offering, which listeners will recall was a gift that was brought to God. I want to spend time with God so I bring God a gift. Peace offering we talked about, the grain offering, the "sin" offering, which per our discussion we really recommended referring to it as the decontamination offering. And then the guilt offering we talked about most recently and I think a better way of terming it or referring to it was the reparation or the restitution offering.

So Leviticus 6-7, you get these two chapters. They're going to sort of present not necessarily the procedural rules but they're going to present the "law" for each of these types of sacrifices. So what the first five chapters did was essentially emphasize kind of the mechanics, the ritual mechanics of it, the preparation of the sacrifices, their ingredients. Do this with this part and that with the other part, that sort of thing. These two chapters really focus on the role of the priesthood as those who officiate in the sanctuary and then detail things to do that attend or are a part of bringing the sacrificial offerings in order to prevent impurity gets. Another way you could say it, and I'm going to be tracking through Levine. For a good part of this I'll try to refer to him when I'm doing that.

But these two chapters will specify what to do with certain portions, especially what to allocate to the priest. We've had a little of that it before because the first five chapters mentioned in passing this is the part that goes for God. This is the part that is kept for the priest. But you get a little more of that in these two chapters. What's sort of unique to these two chapters, 6-7, is the little glimpse they give us of the system whereby the priests partook of sacred meals within the boundaries of the sanctuary. So except for the burnt offering, think of it this way, except for the burnt offering of chapter 1, Leviticus 1, and the grain offering that we're going to see a little

bit here in chapter 6 and then the decontamination offering from Leviticus 4, the “sin” offering, most sacrifices were actually meant to be eaten and typically by priests and on occasion by the people who brought them.

So Leviticus 6-7 gets into a little bit more about how to parse that. Who eats what, that kind of thing, which sounds kind of odd, sounds kind of boring, but think about it. Here you have a system of different sacrifices and we typically think, again, evangelicals, Christians, whatever, Christians of any variety, think of the sacrificial system has lots of blood and slaughter. And we filter it through the work of the cross and how all of this is about forgiveness of sins and these animals have to die and whatnot. And it feels like just this slaughtering waste of these animals, but it's actually not. Most of what is offered was consumed, eaten by someone, except for those exceptions that I just listed. So it's not just this wanton waste of animal life. You're going to be eating livestock anyway in the ancient world, but specifically to the sacrificial system, it has a lot to do with who is eating what, who's participating, who's not, what parts, that sort of thing.

So it's not just this total waste. And I think it's worth us thinking about this system, which was very careful to distinguish who gets to eat some of it and who doesn't, and who gets to eat what parts and all that sort of stuff, because some of it's for God, some is not, and then you have all these issues of impurity. I'm hoping this is question pops in their head, does this have any relationship to Communion, to the Lord's table? I think conceptually it does with one sort of important twist. Think about communion. You have bread and wine. Well, the bread, this is my body, the wine, this is my blood. And I think there is a correspondence there between grain offering, because that's what you make bread out of ultimately, and meat, for the offering, the flesh, and you have a sacred meal.

But in the Old Testament, there were very strict rules about that and most of the time it was just really the priests, occasionally the people who were sort of connected to the sacrifice because they brought it. They brought it because they either wanted to commune with God or they had some problem, like need of restitution or they had committed either, in most cases unintentionally, they done something that rendered them ritually impure so they had to be decontaminated and all that. Occasionally, they got to participate, but most of the time the common person did not. Well look at the analogy. If there is indeed this sacrificial analogy between the Old Testament system and the work of Christ, the communion idea makes a lot of sense, even if it includes everyone. It includes all believers, not just priests, not just a priestly class or an elite class or anything like that.

Why, because in New Testament theology, all believers are priests, priesthood of the believer. You are God's temple. You are a holy priesthood. And it's egalitarian, it's everyone included. So if you're a Jew, put yourself in the context, if you're a Jewish person and your familiar with the ritual system either because you were taught or you saw parts of it in the second Temple around the New Testament times, you're familiar with the inner workings of this, and you know that participation in the meal sense is pretty much basically going to exclude you because you are not a priest. Well, when you have the Apostles coming along preaching and in Paul's case, writing about this stuff were it basically says we're all priests, we all get to partake of the sacred meal now because it commemorates the flesh, the Lord's body which was broken for you, and his death.

This is the cup of the New Testament, the new covenant here. This is my blood, so on and so forth. We all get to partake of that because we're all priests. We're all sort of on equal footing.

That would've been very striking to a Jew who's introduced by the apostles by apostolic preaching or by a letter from one of the apostles that we have in our New Testament to these ideas because before, they would've been quite restricted. Now they're not. So what we're going to read here in Leviticus 6-7, I'm actually just going to pick a few spots here, more or less talk with two chapters conceptually. But there will parts of this that just you can see are an interesting analogy.

Another part of it would be where in this system, the priests receive their portions in return. It's a payment, so in return for their services on behalf of the Israelite people. This is why they get to eat part of the sacrifices because this is like income to them. This is this is part of their sustenance. So what does that tell us? You have essentially instruction that illustrates the rule that priests had to be compensated. It's kind of interesting that the high priest in Leviticus 6:19-23 could not be compensated for sacrifices performed on his own behalf, just a little exception there. So he could only do it for services rendered to others but nevertheless, this is a payment. Now isn't it kind of interesting when Paul comes along, he's the guy writing a lot of this believer priest kind of thing. Paul comes along and does not insist on being supported by the congregations that he starts.

He says I could insist on the labors worthy of his hire. I could make a demand here and so on and so forth. But instead he goes out and he gets a job. He supports himself but this whole notion that he, as an apostle, is really not a priest because if he thought of himself as a priest in the terms of an elite distinct from the rest of the community of believers, this probably would've been a bigger deal. He would've made it sort of a right. He would've made the demand but he says no. I could do that, and the laborer is worthy of his hire, but not going to be a burden to you. So even though conceptually all believers are priests. The way Paul sort of reinforces that point is to deny that priests, the priesthood is something special by getting a job and not insisting on being sustained like the Old Testament priests were. And that is kind of interesting because I think that puts the whole idea of "having all things in common" from Acts chapter 2 in a different light as well because it sort of makes sense.

We don't do what we do. We're not forced to support this one person or this small group of people. We're not forced to do that. We're going to do it voluntarily but they're telling us that we should have all things in common. And that make sense if everybody's a priest. It's a mutual support. It's not the support of an elite class that's sort of a different breed of Christians, like the Levites, and not even all Levites were priests. But the priests and the Levites, they were marked off as being sort of a separate class of Israelite because they're the only ones to occupy sacred space and do this or that ritual or care for the vessels of the tabernacle and tear down, put it back up, all that sort of thing.

So they were in a special class but all of that sort of disappears and becomes this is mutual support kind of thing in the New Testament where everybody is sort of classified as a priest. So it is kind of interesting to look at some things in the New Testament through opposite of what was typically done, but through the lens of the Old Testament rather than looking at the Old Testament through the lens of the New. It's kind of interesting to do it in reverse and just see the contrast because if you're a Jew, you're going to be used to the system. You're going to be used to this thinking, well, there's us then the priests. We're not them and they're not us. They're different or special. They get closer to God than we do and they get to partake of this or that we don't. Again, that's not on the table when it comes to the New Testament church. We mutually support each other.

We don't make these kinds of demands. We all participate in the sacred meal because we were all priests. It's a totally different way of looking at things. By way of actually jumping into chapters 6-7, they break down pretty easily. For those who didn't listen to the last episode, not the interview but the one before, we actually got into chapter 6 a little bit because there's a difference in versification in the Hebrew Bible and the English Bible. So technically, where we'll actually start today is really in the English Bible Leviticus 6:8 but we'll just go back to the beginning to break this down. The first 16 verses of chapter 6 really deal with the burnt, the whole burnt offering and the meal offering, the grain offering, since they were part of the public cults so they're talked about first.

What we're going to find is that there's a series of what kind of groupings of the offerings in these two chapters that are to get commented in order and they're going to really proceed from the most sacred public offerings on into sacred offerings that are sort of private, private worship, private matters. So the first 16 verses start off with the public rituals, the *olah*, the burnt offering, the *menkhah*. These offerings are public because they often occur in conjunction with national events to mark special days or part of festivals the Sabbath, again, coming of the Sabbath, that sort of thing, which concerned everybody. So Leviticus 6 starts off talking about those. And then it transitions to the sin offering, the decontamination offering, and the guilt offering, what we're calling the reparation or the restitution offering, and those two really aren't regular features of what scholars call the public cult, the public sacrificial proceedings. Instead, they're sort of expiation sacrifices, expiation rituals usually performed by individual Israelites or on behalf of individual Israelites.

That makes sense because if you have to bring a *chatat*, the sin offering, it's because you personally did something that rendered you impure. If you have to make restitution, that's a personal matter, that becomes a personal situation, a personal sacrifice as opposed to something that involves the whole community. So in Leviticus 6-7, those are sort of divvied out. That's how they're literarily arranged, talk about the public ones, talk about the private ones. You get into further Leviticus 7, you have offerings that are sort of in other parts Leviticus called less sacred. These are sort of personal worship offerings. They're less sacred because of the way they do or don't involve the priesthood and if there public or not. And then that's just the way the chapter ends.

Parts of the sacrificial offerings that are shared by the priest, the last few verses of Leviticus 7, are sort of divvying up the portions that the priest gets. Chapter 6-7 are sort of an overview of who gets what, what's public, what's private, that kind of thing. So it's a rehearsal of what's going on in the first five chapters but just looking at it from a different angle. Now what I want to do is just drill down on a few points I think are sort of interesting in these two chapters. And the first thing that we'll hit, I'll just read here in Leviticus 6:8, the beginning of the of our whole section for this episode. It says,

⁸ The LORD spoke to Moses, saying, ⁹“Command Aaron and his sons, saying, This is the law of the burnt offering.

MSH: This is the first time we get the word law, *torah*, in Leviticus. And in these two chapters *torah* is going to occur seven times so we might want to ask ourselves why use this word here? Why didn't it show up earlier? What's the point? Well, Hebrew *torah* is a noun, obviously, that derives from the root in Hebrew *yarah*, which means to cast or to shoot. I think shoot's actually a

better way to think about it, like shooting an arrow for instance. Some dictionaries, those of you who are into Bible study and you actually use lexicons or theological word books, that sort of thing, some dictionaries will actually have two *yarahs*, homographs, one to shoot and the other one to show or indicate.

Now there are scholars who disagree about whether those are homographs or not. For our purposes, it doesn't really matter because if you think about it, to shoot, sort of to aim and shoot, the abstract idea of *yarah*, the verb and hence the name *torah*, is to show something, to shoot at something metaphorically, to aim at something, to direct attention toward, and that's actually what the verb *yarah* means in the, sorry for the Hebrew lapse here, but in the hiphil stem, which is the causative stem in Hebrew. It means to aim or direct toward and hence the noun, *torah*, which means instruction, to show the way, to be shown what to do and how to do something. And so the *torah*, the law here, we're going to read about in Leviticus 6-7 is really ultimately as we said a few minutes ago concerned with the priestly participation, the portions, what's done with them, that sort of thing. In verse 9 we keep reading, the rest that verse says,

This is the law of the burnt offering. The burnt offering shall be on the hearth on the altar all night until the morning, and the fire of the altar shall be kept burning on it.

MSH: So the fire here was not supposed to go out, and think about that. The burnt offering was the first sacrifice we talked about. It's sort of the initial one when it's used in combinations with others. It sort of breaks the ice so to speak. I want to spend time with the Lord or I have a matter that I need to take up with the Lord so the first thing we do is we bring a gift. The whole burnt offering was a gift going to God's house. We're going to bring a housewarming gift, that sort of thing. We talked about how that the principle is that even on your best day, even if you don't have an impurity issue that you have to get taken care of or a reparation issue that you got to get taken care of, even on your best day it's still a fearful thing.

There should be trepidation. There should be caution about approaching God's space, about going to God's house, that sort of thing. Well here in verse 9, the daily burnt offering and they would do one the morning and another one in the evening. You can read about that in Exodus 29:38 and so on, numbers 28. This is what it's talking about here in Leviticus 6 that in the morning we do one. In the evening we do one and you never supposed to let the fire on the altar of burnt offering go out. And so why, what's the point? Well, you always want there to be, try to think abstractly here, you always want to be, you don't want the housewarming gift, the effect of that, to sort go away.

You want there to be a good relationship between you and God. We don't want to let this fire go out because we're conscious of needing a good relationship with the Lord at all times, morning and evening, 24/7, that sort of thing. And so it was designed to be a reminder of bringing that gift to God's house, initiating contact with him and having him accept that contact, accept the presence of human beings in his presence. And so the fire was supposed to be kept burning just a signal for that, to always be conscious of that. In verse 10, it says,

¹⁰ And the priest shall put on his linen garment and put his linen undergarment on his body, and he shall take up the ashes to which the fire has reduced the burnt offering on the altar and put them beside the altar.

MSH: So we have this sort of odd reference in the midst of this because while the fire is still burning, you got ash, you got to take care of that issue. We're not going to get into the rules and regulations for that. But here we have this comment in verse 10 that I thought was kind of interesting. The priest is putting on this linen garment and his linen undergarment on his body. What is that about? Well, it actually harkens back to something in Exodus 28, Exodus 28:42 says,

⁴² You shall make for them linen undergarments to cover their naked flesh. They shall reach from the hips to the thighs;

MSH: So there is actually a rule about wearing undergarments so that you're not exposed. Who's going to run around lifting the priest's robes? That actually wasn't the point because of the way the altar was made. If you go back even further in Exodus, that was Exodus 28:42. You go back even further in Exodus to Exodus 20 when the instructions for the altar are talked about, you read this. In verses 25 to 26,

²⁵ If you make me an altar of stone, you shall not build it of hewn stones, for if you wield your tool on it you profane it. ²⁶ And you shall not go up by steps to my altar, that your nakedness be not exposed on it.'

MSH: Now we know from later times in Israelite history there were steps that were part of the altar complex and so this was actually a rule, a law that you don't want to go up because if people are sort of gathered around, not only will you or your naked flesh "be exposed", which is one of the reasons they give them an undergarments but also because people will see that and there's some sense of indecency there just on the surface. It's actually a little more involved than that because one the contrasts to that in ancient near Eastern religion, and we know this from ancient near Eastern art, is that a lot of pagan rituals, pagan sacrifices in their temple complexes, actually show priests officiating, doing their thing, in the nude and so there are a lot of scholars that think that part of the reasoning, other than to sort of regular decency, that kind of thing.

Part of the reason why this is a concern in Exodus and Leviticus is this contrast, we're not going to do this like the pagans do. So we're not going to do anything that would smack of "ritual nudity", and we're going to see this later on. We've seen hints of it already about making it very clear that we don't have any sort of fleshly sexual relationship with the priesthood between the people who are bringing offerings and the priests and what goes on in the temple complex. And a big part of that reasoning is what did go on in other temple complexes, especially when you get to things like the whole sacred marriage ritual where certain temple complexes in pagan religions would, for lack of a better term, either designate or employ, designates probably a better word, priests or priestesses to engage in sexual acts in the temple complex, typically sexual intercourse, because of the belief that okay, this is how the gods bring fertility the crops and this is how the gods do this or that.

And so we're going to mime what they do so that our crops will grow and that sort of thing. All that kind of associations sort of driven out of the Israelite cult and even to the point now where the priests have to wear undergarments so that nobody sees there the body parts. So

you have a decency issue there and you also have this contrast to what paganism is doing. Why should we care about our body parts below our waist, our genitals or something like that? Well, in the ancient world ritual nudity and this kind of thing was associated with life. This is how you get living things, through sexual copulation, and abstractly, the gods would cohabit and then you get rain and all these kinds of beliefs. But it was associated with life and ultimately death and rebirth, these cycles.

And so in pagan religions, you'll often have either rituals done in the nude or you'll have to sexual acts performed with some sort of magical intent, like I mentioned a few moments ago, that the priest and priestesses would mime what they were thinking the gods were doing to cause things to grow or to cause the cycles of life and death and rebirth to continue. So when you're doing things here to imitate what you think the gods are doing and sort of to produce the desired effect, that's one of the definitions really of magic, sympathetic magic to be more specific. And the Israelite sacrificial system sort of has these built-in prohibitions or obstacles, might be a better way to say it, to having people think in those terms about what's happening in the tabernacle or the temple complex, what's happening with the sacrificial system. It has nothing to do in with that sort of behavior, that sort of thing.

So there is just things like that that really are very clear contrastive elements if you were familiar with the way certain other pagan religions sort of do their sacrifices, at least some of them. I thought that was a point of interest. Let's go down to verse 13 where we have here another reference to a fire shall be kept burning on the altar continually. We have the connection here with other offerings. The idea's the same thing, the perpetual fire in the altar, especially now we have it associated in verse 12 with the peace offerings, which is this communion between me and God kind of thing that we talked about earlier. Here the fire and the altar that is supposed to be kept burning indicates that the people were attended on God at all times in the sanctuary. We want to maintain this relationship that expresses a continual devotion, those sorts of ideas. So they were very conscious of the visual symbolic value of certain acts, in this case not having the fire go out, to message theology, very conscious of that. Let's go down to verse 18. We just want to keep moving through the chapter here. We have here,

“I have given it as their portion of my food offerings. It is a thing most holy, like the sin offering and the guilt offering. ¹⁸ Every male among the children of Aaron may eat of it, as decreed forever throughout your generations, from the LORD's food offerings. Whatever touches them shall become holy.”

MSH: Now I actually think, and here's the reason I bring this up, I think this is actually, in this translation, it creates the impression of whoever touches one of these offerings is all of the sudden become holy. We've talked before about the concept of holiness doesn't necessarily mean a moral quality. But it's a state of sanctity, a state of ritual purity. And Levine says, let me just quote Levine here. I think his little section here, this is kind of interesting and I agree with him. I think what he says makes sense here. He says,

‘We ought to translate this instead of saying whatever touches them shall become holy,’ Levine says, ‘rather anyone who is to touch these must be holy or in a holy state.’

MSH: And the issue is the Hebrew word, the verb here, *yiq-dāš*. For those of you who know Hebrew, this is an imperfect form, imperfect conjugation, and the imperfects have a bit of a flexibility to them. It can denote an event ongoing. It can denote an event that hasn't happened yet, shall be something. It can also denote something that must occur, must be. You could translate an imperfect conjugation form in a variety of ways and Levine is saying, look, it makes more sense to say that whoever touches these must be in a holy state, must be holy. Here's his explanation. He says,

‘Similar statements pertaining to the sanctity of the altar occurred Exodus 29-30, specifically Exodus 29:37 and Exodus 30:29. The problem of interpretation concerns the verb *yiq-dāš*. Does it mean will become holy as a result of contact with a sanctified substance or object or does it mean must be in a holy state before being allowed to come into contact with the sacred substance or object? So that's the issue. Several scholars, he says, most notably Minachem Herron, have argued for the former. Herron has formulated a theory of contagious Holiness according to which the sanctity of holy objects and substances is communicated or conducted to all that come into contact with them.

MSH: Now Levine is going to disagree with that, and I'm on Levine's side of this. He says,

‘Although the verb *qadosh* itself often connotes resulting holiness, it is more likely that here it refers to what must occur prior to contact with the sacred. Our verse simply means that only consecrated persons, only persons who are in a state of holiness, may have contact with sacrificial materials, a notion that reinforces the opening of the verse which says only Aaronic priests may partake of the sacrifices. Similarly in Exodus 29:37 and 30:29, the sense is that only consecrated persons may have contact with the altar. In fact, there are indications that holiness was not regarded as contagious at all, unlike impurity, which was thought to be highly contagious or highly communicable. This contrast is brought out clearly in Haggai 2:11-13. **[MSH: I'll read part of that]**

¹¹ “Thus says the LORD of hosts: Ask the priests about the law: ¹² ‘If someone carries holy meat in the fold of his garment and touches with his fold bread or stew or wine or oil or any kind of food, does it become holy?’” The priests answered and said, “No.” ¹³ Then Haggai said, “If someone who is unclean by contact with a dead body touches any of these, does it become unclean?” The priests answered and said, “It does become unclean.”

MSH: So Haggai 2 actually makes the point that Levine is arguing for. Look, there's no such thing as contagious Holiness while there is such a thing as contagious impurity. So it's best to read Leviticus 6:18 as saying whatever touches stuff that's associated with the sacrifice or the altar must already be holy, must be sanctified. So I wanted to address that because the ESV and

other translations typically render this as though the priest could sort of touch something and become holy by it.

That isn't actually what's going on here. It doesn't make sense when compared with other Scripture. Only people who were in a state of ritual purity, "holiness" could touch these things. Think about it. We're talking about food offerings. Who today gets to touch the food offering? We all do because we're all priests. Put yourself in the context. If you're a first century Jew, you're getting exposed to Christianity, apostolic teaching, and along comes Paul or somebody else. Peter used the language as well that we're all priests. We're a community of priests, the priesthood of the believer. It was just something totally new to them because there were these two classes and frankly, if I can be so bold here and I'm not saying this is a moral evil or something like that, but there are a lot of churches today, a lot of denominations who maintain firmly a distinction between clergy and laity.

And one of the ways they do it is who gets to handle the sacred meal stuff or even positionally, think about maybe a certain church that you've been in where the priest is separated from the congregation by a rail or some other piece of furniture or something like that, that they're actually set off or cut off or kind of, I don't want to use the word quarantined because that's a little bit silly here and has the wrong connotation. But you get the idea. They're separated from the laity just in terms of the way the church itself is laid out, having this is distinction between clergy and laity, where if you were in the first century and you're reading Peter's comments and Paul's comments about participating in the sacred meal and being a believer priest and the presence of God isn't something that you can't tread on, it's in you. These ideas were quite contrastive to what they had grown up with as Jews and frankly even Gentiles, because Gentile systems of sacrifice are also to have this real strict distinction between priests and laity, priest and congregation, those who are sanctified and those who are not, or who sort of needs some sort of special permission, some special sanctification to approach sacred space.

Those distinctions are demolished in New Testament theology. I'm not saying that churches that still do this, they're committing some sort of moral evil because in a neutral way, in a neutral setting, the thought could be, I can't think the thoughts of any particular priest or minister in any particular denomination, but the thought is to teach the congregation that there's a distinction between holy ground and unholy ground and when we're talking about "the elements", the Lord's supper, that that's special, that something that's has a sacred field, a sacred property to it. I'm not endorsing the language. I'm just trying to communicate what the idea is. But that isn't something where we just let our kids run around after the service because we want to teach people that this is holy stuff.

This is a holy act. There's holiness and there's space that something that isn't used to perform sacred rituals or to do sacred things, like preaching. I've been in some non-liturgical churches, Baptist churches for instance, where they were very strict or very insistent on not of having kids after the service or something like that just running up where the pulpit is because that's where the preaching happens. That's where the pastor does his thing. That's where we baptize people behind there in the baptism. So that's not just normal space in this building we call our church. It's something special. So they wanted to teach these ideas. So I think denominations who have this sort of mental distinguishing or even more than that, even physical distinguishing, trying to teach their coronation to not treat that space up there where the preaching happens as normative, as just everyday, as common.

I could look at that and say that's a worthwhile lesson to teach that, and I don't think it's anything sinister so I don't want anyone to get the wrong impression here. But what I am saying is when you have the first century church, they don't have fancy buildings. They don't have temples. They met house to house. Nobody's building an altar in a house and saying don't let your kids walkover to that part. They're not doing that. These distinctions in the apostolic church, the church of the first century, we're just not there. There was commonality because we were all believer priests and we all get to partake of the Lord's table, the sacred meal, and the logic that led to it. We all have access to God. We all are on equal footing because of the blood of Christ because it sanctifies us. It makes us fit to occupy sacred space by definition, and we are sacred space because the Spirit of God, the same Spirit that inhabited and dwelled in the tabernacle and temple lives in us.

And so these trappings of modern church didn't have a place in the initial church. Now we can talk about, it's really a subject for a whole other podcast, maybe even a different podcast, somebody else's podcast. But this whole way that we approach doing church today to a first century convert, somebody who's just glad to find another believer, and hey, can I hole up here for a few days because our opponents just trashed my house or something like that or under persecution in Rome. They can't be so public about it in certain contexts in the early church and they don't have these things. What we do would've been quite foreign to them, potentially even offensive. It depends on how they were thinking about it and really how they're presented, how they would've been presented.

But I'm just hoping you get that distinction, that there's this logic that sort of goes with all things in common, participating in the sacred meal, that when we look at Leviticus, when we have Leviticus in our head, we can see some of the theological messaging and really the power of it in the New Testament era when these sort of ecclesiastical walls are torn down. There are lots of historical reasons why church is done the way it's done now. We don't need to go into that just to make the point that this is something really worth thinking about, something that a first Century Christian, especially if they had a strong Jewish background, but even Gentiles, would've just noticed right away. Let's go down to another thing here. Chapter 6 we're still in. Let's go down to verse 26, just a little snippet here. I'll go back to verse 24 where it starts the section.

²⁴ The LORD spoke to Moses, saying, ²⁵ "Speak to Aaron and his sons, saying, This is the law of the sin offering. In the place where the burnt offering is killed shall the sin offering be killed before the LORD; it is most holy. ²⁶ The priest who offers it for sin shall eat it. In a holy place it shall be eaten, in the court of the tent of meeting. ²⁷ Whatever touches its flesh shall be holy, and when any of its blood is splashed on a garment, you shall wash that on which it was splashed in a holy place. ²⁸ And the earthenware vessel in which it is boiled shall be broken. But if it is boiled in a bronze vessel, that shall be scoured and rinsed in water.

MSH: You say what in the world is going on here. Well, to quote Levine again, he says,

"Should any sacrificial blood stain a garment, that garment must be laundered because it would be improper if any blood of the sacrifice was not used for its only legitimate purpose."

MSH: You can't just have the blood of the sacrifice out there willy-nilly on other stuff because the blood of the sacrifice was there for a specific application. It was to be used very specifically for a particular thing and to have any of it not used for that thing or that procedure was bad. We can't do that. That's an improper use of the sacrifice. So Levine continues,

“The blood of the sin offering was to be placed on the horns of the altar and the rest poured down on its side as ordained in Leviticus 4:25.”

MSH: That's what you do with the blood. If any of it gets on the garment, that has to be washed on sacred space, we just read the verses, because you can't allow the blood of the offering to be put to any other use and you can't just let it go out on non-sacred space. It's a way of enforcing this idea of the difference between the sacred and profane. Now what about the breaking up the earthenware? Well that's because earthenware, think about it, was to be destroyed and the metal, if you boiled it in a metal container then that just had to be washed. The earthenware is more porous, in fact, it's quite porous.

And so the earthenware, a piece of pottery made with clay, would absorb particles of the flesh and the blood that had been boiled. It had been used for boiling. So you can't have the risk of having any part of the flesh or the blood go somewhere else or be put to a different use. And you can't really get it out of earthenware so you have to destroy it. If you're using a bronze vessel or something like that, hey, that you can just wash. Do it on sacred space but that you can wash and rinse with water, but the earthenware stuff, if that's what you're using, you just have to destroy it. It's this idea teaching by physical object lesson that the blood of the sacrifice is for this place only and it's for this use only, that sort of thing. Now in chapter 7, just a couple of things there I want to mention real briefly. In Chapter 7:11, we hit some language that's a bit new. It says,

¹¹ “And this is the law of the sacrifice of peace offerings that one may offer to the LORD. ¹² If he offers it for a thanksgiving, then he shall offer with the thanksgiving sacrifice unleavened loaves mixed with oil, unleavened wafers smeared with oil, and loaves of fine flour well mixed with oil.

MSH: I wanted to comment on just some of the Thanksgiving language. So we have the *zobach todah*, thanksgiving sacrifice or thanksgiving offering. Technically in the immediate context or at least in the context of the first few chapters of Leviticus, this would refer to a sacrifice specifically discussed in Chapter 3, namely a sheep or goat, either male or female. Nevertheless though, this ritual that involves the grain offerings, and you can't do it with leaven material as well, this ritual as mentioned here in Chapter 6 really is marking the peace offering here as something you would do to express gratitude to God. And often times in the Old Testament, interestingly enough, you will see offerings classified or labeled as thanksgiving offerings when they are, sort of when you're on the other side of escaping from some danger or some misfortune. Amos 4:5 is a verse that Levine brings up in his discussion. This is kind of interesting. He says,

“Amos 4:5 [MSH: which I'll quote here, ‘offer a sacrifice of thanksgiving of that which is leavened, and proclaim freewill offerings, publish them; for so you love to do, O people of Israel! declares the Lord GOD.’]

MSH: So it's a negative comment but Amos is pointing to this notion of people doing what they're doing to sort of avoid danger or avoid misfortune. And they're doing it not necessarily correctly but it sort of is symptomatic of, hey, we better do this stuff so we can avoid the bad stuff that's going to happen. Well, look whose book it is. It's Amos. Amos ministered just before what, the destruction of the northern kingdom. So it's kind of an interesting verse because here you have people doing a certain thing not in the right way or with the right heart attitude, but like the prophets running around here saying we're going to get killed.

We're going to get taken into exile and all this stuff, so let's just do these offerings and take care of business here. That isn't the way it's going to work. It's just kind of an interesting reference that they thought the use of this offering, performance of this offering warded off danger. But typically the thanksgiving offering is something you would do when God did deliver you after the fact, not to sort of use it as some kind of weird talisman to keep bad things from happening, some kind of superstitious kind of thing. Verse 30, last thing here that we'll mention specifically here in Leviticus 6-7, we'll just take it from verse 28.

²⁸ The LORD spoke to Moses, saying, ²⁹ “Speak to the people of Israel, saying, Whoever offers the sacrifice of his peace offerings to the LORD shall bring his offering to the LORD from the sacrifice of his peace offerings. ³⁰ His own hands shall bring the LORD's food offerings. He shall bring the fat with the breast, that the breast may be waved as a wave offering before the LORD. ³¹ The priest shall burn the fat on the altar, but the breast shall be for Aaron and his sons.

MSH: I bring this up because here we have another new term, the wave offering. The Hebrews is *tenuphah*, which is from the verb, *hanaph* to lift or to raise. Basically, this was a gesture that was used to sort of show God what you were going to offer, to show God the offering sort of with the implication that when he sees it, he will accept it. It's kind of interesting because now we have this added gesture. Does that mean that God couldn't see what they were doing? No, again, this is a human gesture, part of the ritual that you are presenting something to God and so it's not a statement of God's lack of omniscience.

It's just something you would do so people could see that you are exposing what you're doing to God and he's going to accept it. Now I also mention this because the order of this procedure that we just read has some significance. The priest is entitled to what part of it? The breast, mentioned in verse 30 and he's also going to get the right thigh but only after God's share of the offering. The fatty portions had been burned on the altar. Remember in previous sacrifices we talked about God getting his portion first. Well, in 1 Samuel 2, this is what the sons of Eli were doing to violate the sacrificial system. In 1 Samuel 2:15 and 17 we read,

¹⁵ Moreover, before the fat was burned, the priest's servant would come and say to the man who was sacrificing, “Give meat for the priest to roast,

for he will not accept boiled meat from you but only raw.”¹⁶ And if the man said to him, “Let them burn the fat first, and then take as much as you wish,” he would say, “No, you must give it now, and if not, I will take it by force.”¹⁷ Thus the sin of the young men was very great in the sight of the LORD, for the men treated the offering of the LORD with contempt.

MSH: So the sons of Eli, the priest of Shiloh, were not obeying the law that we just read and lots of other things, too. They were taking their portions of the sacrifices from the cooking pots even before the altar sacrifice had been performed by the priest. They were clearly violating Leviticus and so they're taking what they want first before God gets what is due to him, so they're violating the specific procedure. We're kind of familiar with the story of Eli's sons and how wicked they were, but I just thought I would mention this because it does sort of dovetail with what they were doing, the specific thing that God was angry at them for is actually mentioned procedurally in this chapter, in this place.

So that's what I wanted to hit on in Leviticus 6-7. I think for us, the big take away here is going back to how certain New Testament language would have been perceived by early Christians, especially early Jewish Christians, but I'm including even the Gentiles in here because they had the strong distinction between priests and laity, clergy and laity. And all that kind of thinking, you're in the fledgling beginning church in Jerusalem. You don't have buildings. You're meeting from house to house. You're predominately, we went to the book of Acts here in the Naked Bible a while back. It begins in a Jewish context and here you have the apostles saying look, we're going to partake of the sacred meal, all of us, to remember the Lord and his sacrifice.

In the night he was betrayed, Lord said take, eat. This is my body broken for you. This is the blood of the covenant. This wine is my blood, the blood of the covenant. These are elements of a sacred meal and it's not just the priests who are partaking in this. It's everybody because we are all priests. We are now a priesthood of believers because the Spirit of God dwells in us. These ideas and the theological ideas from which they were derived about how the sacrifice of Jesus made everyone, initially Jewish but then also Gentile, which was shocking, fit for sacred space, fit to be a priest of YHWH, fit to partake of the sacred meal. It would've just shocked them and I think it was a powerful statement of God's attitude toward his people. It's really moving away from sort of a national entity, now catch my wording here, a national entity back to a family. And the imagery was important and the theology that was attached to it was certainly important.

TS: Alright, well, good deal. Mike, isn't chapter 7 kind of the last of the rules and instructions of it?

MSH: yeah, we're going to get into it in Chapter 8 and Chapter 9. You're going to get sort of the sanctifying of those who would be priests, the procedures that were done to them to make them fit to start off, to start the ball rolling, that sort of thing. And then we're going to get into lots of different laws where we're going to get distinctions between ritual purity and moral purity, that sort of thing.