

THE PRIEST'S CONSECRATION EXODUS 29:1-46

Once the clothing for the priests and the other garments for the High Priest were prepared for Aaron and his sons, a consecration ceremony was held in order to properly install them as priests in the Aaronic Priesthood. One commentator described the chapter this way: "This chapter describes the regulations for proper consecration/ordination of priests in Israel from the time of Moses onward (vv. 1-37), as well as the permanent daily consecration offering for the tabernacle (vv. 38-43). Properly consecrated/ordained priests serving at a properly consecrated house of God would help provide for the presence and blessing of God (vv. 44-46)."¹ Consecration was a ceremony required only for the priests; the other Levites serving in the Tabernacle did not need to be consecrated/ordained.

The sacrifices described in this chapter, with one exception, were not unique to the consecration ceremony. What was unique to the installation of the priests in this ceremony was the donning of the clothing made for the priests, the anointing with oil, and the sacrifice of a ram the blood of which was used to sanctify the priests.

Exodus 29:1-3 ¹"Now this is what you shall do to them to consecrate [קִדַּשׁ] them to minister [בָּקְרוּ] as priests to Me: take one young bull and two rams without blemish, ²and unleavened bread and unleavened cakes mixed with oil, and unleavened wafers spread with oil; you shall make them of fine wheat flour. ³"You

¹ Douglas K. Stuart, *The New American Commentary: An Exegetical and Theological Exposition of Holy Scripture: Exodus* (Nashville, TN: Broadman & Holman, 2006), 619.

shall put them in one basket, and present them in the basket along with the bull and the two rams.

Moses conducted this ceremony. He was serving as priest to the people throughout the Exodus saga to this point and he continued in that role here. Only after this ordination ceremony did Aaron and his sons assume their official duties as priests. The materials had to be gathered and set in place before the ceremony began. Once this initial ceremony was conducted, it was to be conducted in the same way for every subsequent consecration ceremony. The people, both those conducting the service and those being consecrated, would obviously change over time, but the service was to be performed the same way in perpetuity. The High Priest would preside over the consecration ceremony for the priests in the future.

In Leviticus chapter 9, which is set eight days after the consecration ceremony, Moses hands over the reins of the priesthood to Aaron. God validated the transaction when the glory of the Lord appeared before the people and fire came out from before the Lord and consumed the burnt offerings on the altar.

The animals used in the consecration ceremony had to be without blemish because they were a type of the substitutionary sacrifice of the God-man, the Messiah, who was actually, factually unblemished, hence, He was the perfect sacrifice in all ways. The bread and the cakes had to be unleavened because leaven represented sin and the Person to whom this pointed was the sinless One. The Israelites didn't understand all this, but we have the advantage of

progressive revelation to understand how these things work together to get us to the point in history where we are today.

The bull and the two rams were gathered by Moses from among the people. The priests who were to be consecrated did not provide the sacrifices out of their own pocket so to speak. This was in contrast with pagans who wanted to be priests who paid for their appointment to the office, or perhaps bribed their gods, with sacrifices they provided out of their own wealth. Israelite priests were born into the role God chose for their tribe out of all the tribes of Israel. This was another way the Israelites and their worship of Yahweh was set apart from all the pagans around them.

The Bible hints at this pagan practice and suggests God's way did, in fact set them apart from the pagans.

2 Chronicles 13:9 ⁹“Have you not driven out the priests of the LORD, the sons of Aaron and the Levites, and made for yourselves priests like the peoples of *other* lands? Whoever comes to consecrate himself with a young bull and seven rams, even he may become a priest of *what are* no gods.

Consecration, *קִדְּשׁ*, refers to being set apart and dedicated to serving Yahweh. By serving Yahweh, the priests were acting in a mediatorial capacity between Yahweh and the covenant community which served God's ultimate purposes for Israel and for history. Minister, *בָּקֵר*, means to serve as priest; the emphasis is on service. The Aaronic Priesthood was established to be a group of men, Israelites united by lineage through Aaron, to serve God and act as the mediators between Him and His created people, the Israelites, who, in turn were

supposed to be a “kingdom of priests and a holy nation” (Ex. 19:6) to the world so that Yahweh would become known beyond the information available to all people through the creation. Israel was meant to be a vehicle for special revelation. The priests also had practical functions within the covenant community the most important of which was to teach the Law to the people.

“The hierarchical structure of the priesthood provides the understanding of the spiritual service of the nation as a whole, which was called a ‘kingdom of priests’ (Exod. 19:5-6). In the broadest sense of the word *priest*, the nation was priest to the nations. But within the nation the chosen priests, the ‘clergy,’ were the servants of the Lord in the official sense. And finally, the high priest was the spiritual head of the nation and the representative of the priests. The hierarchical structure of people-priests-high priest informs the order and procedure of the sacrifices and purifications in Israel’s religious activities. This threefold division is reflected in the arrangement of the sanctuary: the courtyard for the people, the holy place (the tent) for the priests, and the most holy place (where the ark of the covenant was) for the high priest.”²

One of the rams and most of the bread and the cakes were going to be the consecration meal for the newly ordained priests.

Leviticus 8:3 revealed the fact the people were assembled in order to witness the ceremony. They needed to know the priesthood was ordained by God and established through Aaron. By the end of this ceremony it would be clearly

² Allen P. Ross, *Holiness to the Lord: A Guide to the Exposition of the Book of Leviticus* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 2002), 203.

revealed to the people it was God's will these men be His priests to the nation. Remember the rebellion of Korah? He thought he should be the priest; God killed him for that revolt against His will.

Leviticus 8:3–5 ³and assemble all the congregation at the doorway of the tent of meeting.” ⁴So Moses did just as the LORD commanded him. When the congregation was assembled at the doorway of the tent of meeting, ⁵Moses said to the congregation, “This is the thing which the LORD has commanded to do.”

The first act of consecration was the ritual, purifying washing Moses carried out on Aaron, and his sons: Nadab, Abihu, Eleazar, and Ithamar.

Exodus 29:4 ⁴“Then you shall bring Aaron and his sons to the doorway of the tent of meeting and wash [רָחַץ] them with water.

Wash, רָחַץ, means to wash off, to wash away, or to bathe. In this case, it is a symbolic, ceremonial cleansing without which one is unfit to minister to God. This washing is symbolic and ceremonial in nature; it had nothing to do with sanitation or maintaining one's hygiene. It is a ritual that symbolically removes the defilement that would disqualify one from appearing before the Lord. In Exodus 30:17-21, instructions were given for the laver which would stand in the courtyard before the sanctuary so the priests could cleanse themselves before entering the tent every time they entered it. This was necessary because men become defiled daily and need to be have that defilement removed. According to Leviticus, the laver was built and in use by this time, but for some reason in Exodus, the command to build it doesn't appear until after the ordination was revealed. Holiness and cleanliness are related concepts; therefore, appearing before the

Lord without cleansing would be an affront to God. It was such an affront to God that the failure to wash before ministering before God would result in death.

Exodus 30:19–21 19“Aaron and his sons shall wash their hands and their feet from it [the laver]; 20when they enter the tent of meeting, they shall wash with water, so that they will not die; or when they approach the altar to minister, by offering up in smoke a fire sacrifice to the LORD. 21“So they shall wash their hands and their feet, so that they will not die; and it shall be a perpetual statute for them, for Aaron and his descendants throughout their generations.”

After being washed, Aaron was dressed and anointed. The priest's clothing, especially the High Priest's clothing, was different and meant to glorify God. It set the priests apart from the people in appearance so there was no question who they were and whose authority they represented.

The anointing oil was either poured on Aaron's head before the turban was placed on him, or the turban was removed for the anointing of Aaron's head and replaced. The text indicates the latter.

Exodus 29:5–7 5“You shall take the garments, and put on Aaron the tunic and the robe of the ephod and the ephod and the breastpiece, and gird him with the skillfully woven band of the ephod; 6and you shall set the turban on his head and put the holy crown on the turban. 7“Then you shall take the anointing [מִשְׁחָה] oil and pour it on his head and anoint [מָשַׁח] him.

We do know the oil was poured on Aaron's head and not on his turban. Leviticus 21:10 suggests that the High Priest is the only priest who experienced the anointing with oil. Perhaps anointing the High Priest symbolically suggested the entire priesthood is under the anointing of that High Priest's leadership. In the Pentateuch, other uses of the words “anointed priest” suggest the High Priest

was the only priest who actually had oil poured on his head during his consecration ceremony.

Leviticus 21:10 ¹⁰The priest who is the highest among his brothers, on whose head the anointing oil has been poured and who has been consecrated to wear the garments, shall not uncover his head nor tear his clothes;

Anoint, *משח*, means to smear, to spread a liquid, to anoint. It pertains to a ritual or formal activity associated with inauguration and dedication by pouring oil on a person's head. In this case, it referred to pouring some oil on Aaron's head in order to dedicate him to service as the High Priest. This act didn't just indicate a new position of service, it set Aaron apart from other forms of service. His job was to be the High Priest and that was his only job. He was no longer an ordinary Israelite and could not function as an ordinary citizen of the nation. He could only function as God's minister carrying out God's purposes. That's why the High Priest could not do ordinary activities such as mourning his dead; he was anointed and set apart to do God's work—and only God's work.

Leviticus 8:12 ¹²Then he poured some of the anointing oil on Aaron's head and anointed him, to consecrate him.

Receiving an anointing from God not only set one apart for God's service, it imparted a special status. To be the Lord's anointed was special and doing something to an anointed one was thought to do something to God as well. That's why David refused to harm Saul even while Saul was trying to murder him; Saul was the Lord's anointed.

1 Samuel 24:6 ⁶So he said to his men, "Far be it from me because of the LORD that I should do this thing to my lord, the LORD's anointed, to stretch out my hand against him, since he is the LORD's anointed."

When God anointed people, literally or figuratively, it represented the enablement of the Spirit He was bestowing on them for power to serve Him. By a figurative anointing, I'm referring God's act of anointing a believer apart from actually pouring oil on his head.

1 Samuel 16:13 ¹³Then Samuel took the horn of oil and anointed him in the midst of his brothers; and the Spirit of the LORD came mightily upon David from that day forward....

Isaiah 61:1 ¹The Spirit of the Lord GOD is upon me, Because the LORD has anointed me To bring good news to the afflicted; He has sent me to bind up the brokenhearted, To proclaim liberty to captives And freedom to prisoners;

This is also true for born again believers. When we are baptized in the Spirit, we are anointed and set apart from the world for Him.

1 John 2:20, 27 ²⁰But you have an anointing from the Holy One, and you all know.... ²⁷As for you, the anointing which you received from Him abides in you, and you have no need for anyone to teach you; but as His anointing teaches you about all things, and is true and is not a lie, and just as it has taught you, you abide in Him.

Once Aaron was dressed and anointed with oil, his sons were dressed, but they were not anointed with oil. The Pentateuch does refer to anointing "Aaron and his sons," but in the ceremony itself, only Aaron was anointed. Aaron's anointing was literal and his son's anointing was figurative or, in the alternative, was covered by Aaron's anointing as the High Priest.

Exodus 29:8-9 ⁸"You shall bring his sons and put tunics on them. ⁹"You shall gird them with sashes, Aaron and his sons, and bind caps on them, and they

shall have the priesthood by a perpetual statute. So you shall ordain [טָ] Aaron and his sons.

Ordain, טָ, literally means hand, power, control, or possession. In this case, it is referring to installing men as priests of God. The word refers to power meaning the force and ability sufficient to accomplish a task as an extension of the hand as a body part which is essential in order to manipulate one's environment. It is the power or possession of controlling influence conceived of in terms of the hand. There seems to be a sense of an impartation of power from God to the priest as God's representative in the priesthood. Ordination sets a person apart for the purpose of exercising the divine enablement of power in a godly manner as God's representative.

Moses also anointed the Tabernacle and all its furnishings in the sanctuary and in the courtyard at the time He anointed Aaron.

Leviticus 8:10–12 ¹⁰Moses then took the anointing oil and anointed the tabernacle and all that was in it, and consecrated them. ¹¹He sprinkled some of it on the altar seven times and anointed the altar and all its utensils, and the basin and its stand, to consecrate them. ¹²Then he poured some of the anointing oil on Aaron's head and anointed him, to consecrate him.

By anointing and consecrating Aaron, the Tabernacle, and all its furnishings and functional objects used for the service of the Tabernacle in the presence of all the people, He was making a statement to those people. That statement was Aaron, the Aaronic Priesthood, and the Tabernacle were set apart, holy, and completely dedicated to God's service. This was a special

place with special God ordained men ministering in it that were completely set apart for God's purposes.

After Aaron was anointed and he and his sons were dressed in the appropriate priestly garments, a bull was offered on their behalf as a sin offering.

Exodus 29:10–14 ¹⁰“Then you shall bring the bull before the tent of meeting, and Aaron and his sons shall lay their hands on the head of the bull. ¹¹“You shall slaughter the bull before the LORD at the doorway of the tent of meeting. ¹²“You shall take some of the blood of the bull and put *it* on the horns of the altar with your finger; and you shall pour out all the blood at the base of the altar. ¹³“You shall take all the fat that covers the entrails and the lobe of the liver, and the two kidneys and the fat that is on them, and offer them up in smoke on the altar. ¹⁴“But the flesh of the bull and its hide and its refuse, you shall burn with fire outside the camp; it is a sin offering.

The sin offering, also known as a guilt offering, was completely burnt; it was not eaten because it represented a substitutionary death for sins for which there was no possible payment the person presenting the offering could tender. It was not the basis for a fellowship meal; that would come with the death of the second ram which affected reconciliation with God. The sin offering was the price paid for the sin debt and as such it was not itself suitable for a fellowship meal. Aaron and his sons laid their hands on the bull which clearly represented the doctrine of substitutionary sacrifice. The sin of the men was transferred to the bull who suffered the penalty God demands for sin. Ultimately, this type of sacrifice is the type of the substitutionary, sacrificial antitype in Christ Jesus' sacrifice on the cross. The sinless sacrifice of Christ was the only remedy for mankind's sin problem; mankind cannot pay for its sin because mankind is already sentenced to death by means of sin. There could be no consecration or setting apart for

God without the penalty for sin being propitiated before God. People cannot be reconciled to God apart from the shedding of blood. Because I believe Aaron and his sons were believers in the Old Testament sense prior to this consecration ceremony, this sin offering was not an offering for justification salvation, but it was an offering for the restoration of fellowship broken by personal sin and for right standing with God in the family of God in order to undergo the consecration ceremony while in that right relationship with Yahweh. Even though saved, they needed to have personal sins forgiven in order to be restored to that right relationship with God.

Leviticus 17:11 ¹¹'For the life of the flesh is in the blood, and I have given it to you on the altar to make atonement for your souls; for it is the blood by reason of the life that makes atonement.'

Hebrews 9:22 ²²And according to the Law, *one may* almost say, all things are cleansed with blood, and without shedding of blood there is no forgiveness.

The blood of the bull also purified the altar. This was the first time the altar was put to use; therefore, it had to be cleansed and set apart for God.

Leviticus 8:15 ¹⁵Next Moses slaughtered *it* and took the blood and with his finger put *some of it* around on the horns of the altar, and purified the altar. Then he poured out *the rest of the blood* at the base of the altar and consecrated it, to make atonement for it.

The bull was killed in the outer court of the Tabernacle in front of the entry to the sanctuary which was "before the Lord." When the text says the animal was to be killed "at the doorway of the tent of meeting," whether that means right in front of the screen, in line with the screen, or simply in the outer court is not clear. In terms of entering the sanctuary, it would be difficult to maintain

cleanliness if animals are continually slaughtered right in the doorway of the sanctuary. In this case, the text suggests the animal did, in fact, die right in front of the screen. In Leviticus 4, where the sin offering is fully explained, the sin offerings of the anointed priest were to be slain in the doorway to the sanctuary (v. 4). The sin offering for the congregation was slain before the "tent of meeting" (vv. 14, 16). When the leader sinned, his sin offering was slain "in the place where they slay the burnt offering" (v. 24), and when a "common" person brought a sin offering, it too was slain "at the place of the burnt offering" (v. 29, 33). This suggests there was a place in the outer court where the animals were normally killed for sacrifice which was not in front of the screen to the sanctuary. Perhaps when the High Priest needed to offer a sin offering the place of slaughter was right in front of the sanctuary. What we do know is somewhere in front of the sanctuary but within the outer court in proximity to the altar, the sacrificial animals were slain.

The blood was used to cleanse the horns at the corner of the altar and the base of the altar. Some of the fat around a few of the internal organs was burnt on the altar as the offering to Yahweh, but the rest of the animal was burned outside the camp.

The next sacrifice, a ram, was also a substitutionary sacrifice for Aaron and his sons, but it was a burnt offering. This offering was entirely offered up to God on the altar. It was a continual offering intended to show the Israelites they

needed continual forgiveness, restoration, and consecration as the nation set apart for God.

Exodus 29:15–18 15“*You shall also take the one ram, and Aaron and his sons shall lay their hands on the head of the ram; 16and you shall slaughter the ram and shall take its blood and sprinkle it around on the altar. 17“Then you shall cut the ram into its pieces, and wash its entrails and its legs, and put *them* with its pieces and its head. 18“You shall offer up in smoke the whole ram on the altar; it is a burnt offering to the LORD: it is a soothing [גִּיחֹהֶ] aroma, an offering by fire to the LORD.*

The laying on of hands symbolized the transference of sin from the men to the animal who was then slain. Its blood was sprinkled on the altar to finish cleansing it. The blood of the bull only cleansed the horns of the altar and its base; the blood of the ram was sprinkled on the rest of the altar. The ram was cleaned by washing it with water and burnt in total on the altar as an offering to Yahweh. The first two offerings represented the forgiveness of sin and the acceptance of God of the newly consecrated priests.

Soothing, גִּיחֹהֶ, carries the primary meaning of appeasement; it refers to that which brings reconciliation, peace, and relationship, between two parties. This relates to the concept of restoring and maintaining fellowship which is the purpose of the burnt offering. The implication is the sacrifice is acceptable to the Lord and fellowship is restored.

The next ram was slain and its blood was used to sanctify the priests. The meat became part of the fellowship meal. The blood from the bull and the first ram cleansed the altar and sanctified the process; the blood from the second ram cleansed and sanctified the persons who were being installed as priests.

Exodus 29:19–21 ¹⁹“Then you shall take the other ram, and Aaron and his sons shall lay their hands on the head of the ram. ²⁰“You shall slaughter the ram, and take some of its blood and put *it* on the lobe of Aaron’s right ear and on the lobes of his sons’ right ears and on the thumbs of their right hands and on the big toes of their right feet, and sprinkle the *rest of the* blood around on the altar. ²¹“Then you shall take some of the blood that is on the altar and some of the anointing oil, and sprinkle *it* on Aaron and on his garments and on his sons and on his sons’ garments with him; so he and his garments shall be consecrated, as well as his sons and his sons’ garments with him.

Once again, the substitutionary nature of the sacrifice of the second ram was made evident through the laying on of hands. The sins of the men were transferred to the innocent sacrificial victim who was to die in their place. This ram was called the ram of ordination.

The blood of this ram was used to ordain the new priests and their garments were consecrated by means of blood and oil. The blood and oil mixed together represented purity for service and the forgiveness of sins. This signified their acceptance by God to be sanctified, empowered, and set apart in His service.

Blood was smeared on their right ears, right hands, and right big toes. “The application of blood to these parts covered what they heard, what they handled, where they went; it meant that in all their activities they were supposed to be set apart by the blood. Being a priest involved total sanctification of life—a holy lifestyle. This is confirmed by the sprinkling of oil and blood. There was no separation between sacred and secular; the priest was never off duty.”³ Davis

³ Allen P. Ross, *Holiness to the Lord: A Guide to the Exposition of the Book of Leviticus* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 2002), 213.

explained it this way: "This act implied the complete dedication of life and ability to the service of God. Symbolically the blood put on the right ear sanctified that organ to hear the word of God; that which was put on the right hand set the hands apart in their performance of mediatorial work. The right foot spoke of the sanctified walk of the life of the priest as an example to others."⁴ Since the blood was applied from top to bottom of the body, the sense of fully covering the body was implied in this action. Everything about these men, the High Priest in particular, was supposed to be wholly and continually set apart for God.

This ram along with the cakes of bread and wafers became part of a wave offering which is also known as the peace or the heave offering. This was an offering presented to God part of which was eaten by the priest which represented acceptance by God of the offering and part was eaten by the person making the offering. The point was God was the host and He was having fellowship with the offeror because sins had been atoned for thereby restoring fellowship with God. This placed the offeror in right relationship with God which relationship could not be enjoyed. Meals were signs of warm hospitality and occasions for fellowship between friends.

Exodus 29:22–25 ²²"You shall also take the fat from the ram and the fat tail, and the fat that covers the entrails and the lobe of the liver, and the two kidneys and the fat that is on them and the right thigh (for it is a ram of ordination), ²³and one cake of bread and one cake of bread *mixed with* oil and one wafer from the basket of unleavened bread which is *set* before the LORD; ²⁴and you shall put all these in the hands of Aaron and in the hands of his sons, and shall

⁴ John J. Davis, *Moses and the Gods of Egypt: Studies in Exodus*, 2nd ed. (Winona Lakes, IN: BMH Books, 1986), 289.

wave them as a wave offering before the LORD. ²⁵“You shall take them from their hands, and offer them up in smoke on the altar on the burnt offering for a soothing aroma before the LORD; it is an offering by fire to the LORD.

Parts of the ram along with one cake of bread, one cake of bread mixed with oil, and one water were used as a wave offering by Aaron and his sons and then burnt on the altar as God's portion of the sacrificial meal.

Leviticus 8:27 ²⁷He then put all *these* on the hands of Aaron and on the hands of his sons and presented them as a wave offering before the LORD.

The rest of the meat was for the priest and for the one providing the wave offering.

Exodus 29:26–28 ²⁶“Then you shall take the breast of Aaron's ram of ordination, and wave it as a wave offering before the LORD; and it shall be your portion. ²⁷“You shall consecrate the breast of the wave offering and the thigh of the heave offering which was waved and which was offered from the ram of ordination, from the one which was for Aaron and from the one which was for his sons. ²⁸“It shall be for Aaron and his sons as *their* portion forever from the sons of Israel, for it is a heave offering; and it shall be a heave offering from the sons of Israel from the sacrifices of their peace offerings, even their heave offering to the LORD.

In this ceremony, Moses was in the role of priest and Aaron and his sons were in the role of the ones making the offering. Moses kept the breast, the priest portion, and the rest went to Aaron and his sons.

Leviticus 8:29 ²⁹Moses also took the breast and presented it for a wave offering before the LORD; it was Moses' portion of the ram of ordination, just as the LORD had commanded Moses.

The point is then made that the High Priest's garments would go to the one succeeding him. They didn't necessarily make new garments for the new High Priest. It certainly would have been necessary to make new garments as

time passed and things wore out, but the new High Priest was to wear the garments of his predecessor which was a statement of the continuity of the office.

Exodus 29:29–30 ²⁹“The holy garments of Aaron shall be for his sons after him, that in them they may be anointed and ordained. ³⁰“For seven days the one of his sons who is priest in his stead shall put them on when he enters the tent of meeting to minister in the holy place.

Wearing the High Priest's garments daily for seven days may have been one way of getting the people to accept or at least embrace the idea of the new High Priest. After the seven days, he would don the garments of the High Priest as needed according to the demands of his office.

Moses was given instructions for the consumption of the ram of ordination and the bread used in the ordination ceremony.

Exodus 29:31–34 ³¹“You shall take the ram of ordination and boil its flesh in a holy place. ³²“Aaron and his sons shall eat the flesh of the ram and the bread that is in the basket, at the doorway of the tent of meeting. ³³“Thus they shall eat those things by which atonement was made at their ordination *and* consecration; but a layman shall not eat *them*, because they are holy. ³⁴“If any of the flesh of ordination or any of the bread remains until morning, then you shall burn the remainder with fire; it shall not be eaten, because it is holy.

This food was to be prepared and eaten within the confines of the Tabernacle, “a holy place.” They were not to be shared with any Israelite lay person; consumption was restricted to the priests and, presumably, to the priests who had just undergone the ordination ceremony. Anything left over the next morning was to be burned.

The entire ordination process took seven days. Seven is widely considered to represent perfection and seven days for the ordination service represents the

process of consecrating and ordaining Israel's priests that is a perfect and complete process. There is a concept here that the priests have left one life behind to enter into a new life of service totally dedicated to God.

Exodus 29:35–37 ³⁵“Thus you shall do to Aaron and to his sons, according to all that I have commanded you; you shall ordain them through seven days. ³⁶“Each day you shall offer a bull as a sin offering for atonement, and you shall purify the altar when you make atonement for it, and you shall anoint it to consecrate it. ³⁷“For seven days you shall make atonement for the altar and consecrate it; then the altar shall be most holy, *and* whatever touches the altar shall be holy.

A sin offering was made each day and the blood was used to consecrate the altar each day. The text reads, “and whatever touches the altar shall be holy.” It makes more sense to understand this as a command to keep any unholy thing from touching the altar that has been consecrated and set apart for the exclusive use of a holy God. Stuart, an acknowledged Hebrew scholar, says it should be “rendered gerundively, that is ‘whatever touches it must be holy.’ This is a *prescription* rather than a *description*, a requirement that unholy things not be brought into contact with the consecrated altar so as to deconstruct it and require it to be consecrated all over again.”⁵

The instructions given Moses then moved beyond the ordination ceremony to the daily duties of the priests ministering in the Tabernacle.

Exodus 29:38–42 ³⁸“Now this is what you shall offer on the altar: two one year old lambs [לְאֵיִם] each day, continuously. ³⁹“The one lamb you shall offer in the morning and the other lamb you shall offer at twilight; ⁴⁰and there *shall be* one-tenth of an *ephah* of fine flour mixed with one-fourth of a hin of beaten oil, and

⁵ Douglas K. Stuart, *The New American Commentary: An Exegetical and Theological Exposition of Holy Scripture: Exodus* (Nashville, TN: Broadman & Holman, 2006), 629 (emphasis in the original).

one-fourth of a hin of wine for a drink offering with one lamb. ⁴¹“The other lamb you shall offer at twilight, and shall offer with it the same grain offering and the same drink offering as in the morning, for a soothing aroma, an offering by fire to the LORD. ⁴²“It shall be a continual burnt offering throughout your generations at the doorway of the tent of meeting before the LORD...

These burnt offerings were offerings for sin. The people as a nation needed twice daily, priestly, intermediary representation before God for restoring and maintaining fellowship with God. Lamb, *כֶּבֶד*, is misleading; it should be translated “ram.” A lamb implies a young sheep or goat, male or female, but this word refers to a young male. Female lambs were needed for reproductive purposes and were probably not routinely sacrificed.

These offerings were spaced about what we would call twelve hours apart. This represents the sense of a twenty-four hour coverage of the nation or a covering of the nation in terms of forgiveness of sins and maintenance of fellowship with God.

God would be present in the Tabernacle to meet with His priests there which is also a picture of fellowship between God and the nation.

Exodus 29:42–44 ⁴² ...where I will meet with you, to speak to you there. ⁴³“I will meet there with the sons of Israel, and it shall be consecrated by My glory. ⁴⁴“I will consecrate the tent of meeting and the altar; I will also consecrate Aaron and his sons to minister as priests to Me.

God was present with Israel in this holy place, the Tabernacle. His glory consecrated that place, that is, Yahweh’s presence there set it apart from all other places on earth. This was something special no other nation and people on earth experienced; God residing among them in a place specifically de-

signed and designated by Him to be His home. His presence also consecrated the system of worship He commanded them to follow and special mention was made of the consecrated Aaronic Priesthood. The Tabernacle, the system of worship, and the nation were all created and designed to showcase the glory of God.

Exodus 29:45–46 ⁴⁵“I will dwell among the sons of Israel and will be their God. ⁴⁶“They shall know that I am the LORD their God who brought them out of the land of Egypt, that I might dwell among them; I am the LORD their God.

God specifically identified Himself here as the God of Israel. All these declarations and mighty works were for the purpose of authenticating the one true God in the mind of Israel. The pull of paganism was strong on those people and God did amazing things in His effort to turn their hearts to Him. We know they were a stiff-necked and stubborn people, and it took some serious judgment at the hands of a ruthless people, the Babylonians, to get the paganism out of them. They still had other problems, but national paganism wasn't one of them.

If Israel would only worship God the way He intended them to worship Him, they alone among all the people of the world would know the one true God of the universe was the God of Israel.

As if to punctuate the institution of this system of worship, God ended day eight with a miraculous display of power. In Leviticus 9, another day of sacrifices involving Aaron and the people of Israel were commanded to inaugurate the regular sacrificial system. At the end of that day, something special took place.

Leviticus 9:22–24 ²²Then Aaron lifted up his hands toward the people and blessed them, and he stepped down after making the sin offering and the burnt offering and the peace offerings. ²³Moses and Aaron went into the tent of meeting. When they came out and blessed the people, the glory of the LORD appeared to all the people. ²⁴Then fire came out from before the LORD and consumed the burnt offering and the portions of fat on the altar; and when all the people saw *it*, they shouted and fell on their faces.