

Dr. Elaine Phillips, OT Lit. Lecture 13

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Preliminaries, Psalm 51, and Prayer

“Have mercy on me, O God, according to your unfailing love; according to your great compassion; blot out my transgressions. Wash away all my iniquity and cleanse me from my sin. For I know my transgressions, and my sin is always before me. Against you, you only, have I sinned and done what is evil in your sight, so that you are proved right when you speak and justified when you judge. Surely I’ve been a sinner since birth, sinful from the time my mother conceived me. Surely you desire truth in the inmost parts; you teach me wisdom in the inmost place. Cleanse me with hyssop, and I will be clean; wash me, and I will be whiter than snow. Let me hear joy and gladness; let the bones you have crushed rejoice. Hide your face from my sins and blot out all my iniquity.”

And then verses 10 through 12 are actually going to be the focus because we are going to sing that eventually.

“Create in me a pure heart, O God, and renew a steadfast spirit within me. Cast me not away from your presence or take your Holy Spirit from me. Restore to me the joy of your salvation and grant me a willing spirit, to sustain me.”

Review and Preview

[visual of diagram of Tabernacle] There are, by the way, various models of the tabernacle that have been constructed. Those of you from Southeastern Pennsylvania may have visited the one in Lancaster County. Here, you’ll notice a couple of things. Coming in through the entrance, here’s the altar, the laver, the wash basin, and then, of course, right up in here, is the entrance in to the Tent Proper. We’re going to say more about that later.

What are the categories of the Torah? Again, we are mindful of the fact that categories are just frameworks to help us think about this material. **Civil-social Torah** which we did last time - all those things that have to do with how we function in society. **Moral-ethical Torah** - those moral imperatives that are applicable across cultures and across time frames. **Ritual-Ceremonial Torah** with which we are dealing today.

Importance of Ritual and Symbols

That brings us to a discussion of ritual and symbol. And let me just say something from the get-go. I know that we're all coming from different contexts and different worship styles. Every one of us, if we are attending worship services regularly - as I would encourage us to do... every one of us is engaged in ritual. So don't sort of sit back and say, "Oh, well I don't go to an Anglican church or I don't go to a Roman Catholic Church or I don't go to an Episcopalian church or a Lutheran church. So I don't engage in ritual." There's ritual in every place you're worshipping. You walk over to chapel and there's ritual there. You stand up, and the praise band starts and praise band is singing for three songs, probably, usually it's three, right? Sometimes it's four, if they are short ones. The last verse is usually without the instruments. You know, quiet it down. That's ritual. There are forms that have been designed and they are just as ritualistic there as you have in any kind of liturgical church, because we need ritual. We need it to help guide our thoughts and move ourselves into a position where we worship.

And then, we want to explore the kinds of symbols that are being used. First Testament worship, the material we're going to talk about today, is full of symbolism and ritual, and it's got lessons embedded deeply in it and things that we can learn even though our particular rituals may change to a degree here and there. I'm going to say more about that in a moment.

Leviticus is an interesting book. I may have said this before, but when an Orthodox Jewish child begins to really study, and study what we call Bible, they don't start with the really fun parts like Exodus. They start with Leviticus. Isn't

that interesting? That's the book we sort of put off. The reason they start there is something we mentioned the other day. In Leviticus, we see an overarching emphasis on the holiness of God. "Do this, because I'm holy." "You be holy, because I'm holy." And then, everything with regard to sacrifices is teaching that very same lesson.

Now, sometimes we look at Leviticus and think, "Ah! How do I put all this together?" Well, maybe it helps us to break it down just a little bit. Chapters 1 through 10, about which we are going to speak today in much greater detail, talk about the sacrifices, and the ordination of the priesthood, It is talking specifically about the way to the Holy One - approaching God. Once you pick up with chapter 11, and actually go all the way through 27, it's talking about what some scholars call the "Way of Holiness." In other words, all of life is lived in the presence of God.

The thing we want to keep in mind is that, yes, we're well aware that God is present with us right here and now. He knows exactly what you're thinking. He's present with us no matter what, but there are times and spaces in First Testament, and likewise in our culture - there are times and spaces that are set apart for worship. So that the way to the Holy One is talking about approach to God in those contexts, because those contexts are designed to remind us of who he is in terms of his majesty and his transcendence and his utter holiness and his absolute abhorrence, absolute abhorrence, of sin. The latter we often forget.

The Paradoxical Nature of Sacrifice

The material that you read for today about the sanctuary, about the priesthood, about the sacrifices – it all has a huge paradox built into it. First of all, what's a paradox? Let's get that on the table. Someone define paradox for me. Yes, two things that on the surface don't appear to go together at all. They're being put together, but they sort of fight with each other a little bit. We are forced to think about how they both fit. Well what's the paradox in terms of the worship scene in the First Testament? Think of what you've read about sanctuary and then

what you've read about sacrifice. Let's see if we can unpack the paradox a little bit. What's the sanctuary made of? All the wealth that they took out of Egypt. The sanctuary is beautiful. It represents something about God's sublime and transcendent nature and there is an awe and a majesty in that sanctuary. Now, what happens when you kill an animal? There's blood and gore all over the place. You know, we don't see much of this unless you've grown up on a farm and you've seen chickens killed. It's a mess, and juxtaposed in this one place is God's majestic beauty represented in what's there and also the gore and the mess and the horror and the pain. Of course a key in this is that sin causes that death. We are going to say more about that in a moment, but we're supposed to see that horror when we see the sacrifices taking place. Know the paradox and then realize that it's God himself who takes on that mess and that horror and that pain and that anguish.

The Symbolism in Sacrifices

What we're studying today has all sorts of symbolism embedded in it, and if nothing else I hope you get a tiny, tiny, re-appreciation of things that we often just sort of let roll off our tongue. "Jesus died for my sins." That's very true, but understand what it means. The Israelites had in their worship system an education, and that education was designed to help them see something about God and about themselves. I'll just say one more thing, and then I really promise I'll get off my soapbox. Anybody read Annie Dillard? She's written a book entitled *Teaching a Stone to Talk* in which she talks about worship, and she says something like this:

"If we had ANY idea of whose presence we were coming into on Sunday mornings, we would go there with helmets, flak jackets, and we'd be strapped into our pews." But instead we sort of slouch in and chit chat - maybe drink a cup of coffee. We've become way too familiar. God, yes, is our closest, closest friend, but He is also God.

The central feature of the whole worship business was the sacrifice. Two words that just aren't used very often are important. Probably in some circles they

are not really correct because they talk about shedding blood, and they talk about wrath of God and sometimes folks don't like to hear that stuff. Leviticus 17:11 basically says, "The life of a creature is in its blood," and when you shed the blood of a creature, that sacrificial victim is basically taking the place of my life, my life that's been forfeited because of my sin. You can go back and read that verse, and then see Hebrews 9:22 which says, "Without the shedding of blood there's no forgiveness of sins."

First, propitiation is a word you want to know. It means appeasing God's wrath with the shedding of blood. Again you know, we in our western culture think "Oh, why even talk about shedding blood? What an awful thing to think about." We've forgotten that truly, as Paul says, "The wages of sin is death," and so when that animal dies it's taking my place as I have deserved death.

Expiation is a related term, not exactly the same. In fact there's debate in theological circles about whether or not to use one as opposed to the other. I think they're both exceedingly important. Expiation refers to the cancelling of sin; because of this blood that has been shed, the sin has been cancelled. So in one case it's referring to appeasing the wrath of God specifically, and the other is a cancellation of my sin, of your sins.

Perhaps we need to come back and get a sense of what's involved in sacrifice. We see, graphically illustrated, what a mess sin causes. Even though we try and white wash it, sin causes a mess, and these sacrifices illustrated that horrifying mess. Now, in order to make the sacrificial process work, you did need not only the sanctuary, about which we're going to speak further in a moment, but also the priesthood in terms of serving as mediators between us as sinful human beings, and God in his transcendent holiness.

All this becomes part of a huge symbolic picture. I've tried to intimate this already; what did we learn about ourselves, while we're daily creating messes, basically, as sinners? What did we learn about God? Well, we certainly learned that he's set apart in his utter holiness and yet, as we're going to see, he

condescends to dwell in our midst. That's the beauty of all this, but more on that in a moment.

Continuities and Changes between First Testament and New Testament

Given what I've said, how do we contrast and compare these two aspects? What concepts remain the same? What things are still true today for you and me as New Testament believers that were true when these words were revealed to the Israelites, through Moses, at Sinai? [student response] Yes, we need a priest; a high priest and Jesus is our High Priest. We need a mediator, we still need a mediator. We also need sacrificial blood being shed. Hebrews 9:22 says, "Without the shedding of blood there is no forgiveness of sins."

What does Hebrews 12:28 and 29 say? Let me read it for you. This is now after the resurrection and the church has been formed. Let's listen carefully now to what the author of Hebrews has to say: "Since we are receiving a kingdom that cannot be shaken, let us be thankful, and so worship God with fear and awe for our God is a consuming fire." This is a New Testament statement. "Our God is a consuming fire;" let's worship him with fear and awe. So still we need to have an appropriate fear of God when we come into his presence. I'm not in any way mitigating the beauty of fellowship with God through Christ and the joy that it brings, but that comes best when we understand who God is and do have a healthy fear of him. Perhaps we can nurture that a little bit.

What's changed? Well since we're still in Hebrews let me read you just a couple more passages that are fairly important. Hebrews 7:24 and following, "Because Jesus lives forever he has the permanent priesthood." This happens to be the end of chapter 7, where the author of Hebrews has drawn on that Melchizedek theme that we talked about when we talked about Genesis 14. "Therefore (verse 25) He is able to save completely those who come to God through him because he always lives to intercede for them." Jesus is our great High Priest. Let me keep reading: "Such a high priest meets our need, one who is holy and blameless and pure and set apart from sinners, exalted above the

heavens"-- unlike other high priests and this is the change. We still need a high priest, but Jesus is dramatically different. Unlike other high priests, he does not need to offer sacrifices day after day, first for his own sins and then for the sins of the people. He sacrificed for our sins once for all when he offered himself. So, very clearly we've got an indication of all this coming to fruition in Christ. Then one more passage that is also eminently worth reading. Chapter 10 verse 10, "We have been made holy through the sacrifice of the body of Jesus Christ once for all." And then verse 12, "When this high priest, Jesus, had offered for all time one sacrifice for sins, he sat down at the right hand of God." So the picture we're supposed to be getting here includes profound, profound truths that carry over from First Testament. The need for a sacrifice, the need for a mediator, the holiness of God, and the fact that Jesus has done all of that at one point in time.

Importance of Literary Structure – Exodus 25 through Leviticus

With that in mind, let's talk about sanctuary. By the way, I read two passages that talk about Jesus interceding for our sins. That's why it's important to say and mean - not just as a little tag on - but to pray in the name of Jesus, because he is interceding. It means something when we're imploring God and offering our thanks to him in Jesus' name. Jesus is our intercessor; therefore it has profound theological importance to pray in His Name.

Notice all the space that's given to sanctuary. Exodus chapter 25 right on through 40, is a lot of stuff about the sanctuary punctuated by three chapters on the golden calf incident. Notice all the space given over to this place. Notice also what we've got about placement. After the giving of the Ten Commandments, after that whole body of Torah that we have, particularly in chapters 21 through 23, after the ratification of the covenant ceremony where Moses and the elders of Israel and Nadab and Abihu go up to the mountain and eat with God, it says they have a feast celebrating the covenant. After that, then we have the instructions for the sanctuary. Starting with Chapter 25, it's getting the place ready; now that the

covenant is made it's getting the place ready. Then starting with Leviticus we've got the sacrifices that are going to take place, in that place.

The Golden Calf Incident

The chapters on the golden calf are among the most tragic, probably after the Garden of Eden. Let me just mention a couple of reasons as to why this is true. Moses was up on the mountain, receiving instructions with regard to the place where God was going to dwell in their midst. The fellowship would be beautiful. Moses was receiving instructions about Aaron and what Aaron was going to do and what Aaron would wear, and at that point in time, what was Aaron doing? He was down at the foot of the mountain, being swayed the popular unrest. He was fashioning a golden calf. And what did he say when Moses challenged him with it? It's a little bit of an interesting twisting of truth. Yes, the calf just sort of "came out after we put all this stuff into the fire," so Aaron was prevaricating. He was not telling the truth. Now there is a whole discussion in terms of what this golden calf was and what it represented.

Some people say, "Oh well, they're just going back to their gods of Egypt because one of the many deities of Egypt had bovine fashion to it." However, probably what is going on is that Aaron thinks (because he says so, "Here is the God who has brought you out of Egypt")... Aaron thinks he is presenting to them a representation of God, as he is making this calf for him. He wasn't supposed to do that and it's the worst sense of idolatry. Aaron had very successfully broken the first three commandments, just like that. And that means the covenant was broken. When Moses came down the mountain, he broke the tablets of the covenant in symbolic representation of that.

What is fascinating about the placement here is that after that incident, what did God do? He said basically, "get on with it and build the Tabernacle. I'm going to dwell in your place, in your presence anyway." That came as a result of remarkable intercession on the part of Moses. As you read Moses' prayer, particularly in chapters 33 and the beginning of 34, Moses interceded in an

unbelievable way on behalf of his people. God did indeed determine to dwell in their midst. That's why so much space is given over to this - instructions, broken covenant, and yet, God's intent to dwell in their midst indicated by five more chapters on the actual fashioning of the sanctuary.

By the way, you know we could spend a whole hour on the golden calf, let me say one more thing: the reason that a lot of scholars are going to the direction of saying that Aaron is actually making something that he thinks is God, not an Egyptian idol of some kind, is because of the description of the cherubim. We are going to see them again as we start talking some of the things that are part of the sanctuary decorations. There were also cherubim that were set at the Garden of Eden as guards. When you look at Ezekiel Chapters 1 and 10, they have, and this is putting into human words something that is coming from the celestial spheres, but they have a face of an ox, don't they? And feet like calf's feet. So something about bearing the presence of God, holding it up (because the cherubim are underneath that expanse and then above that is the throne of God)... something about that is represented in words, at least, as having a calf-like structure for lack of a better word.

In the Ancient Near East, throne rooms of major kings of major empires were guarded by these great big stone, winged creatures. And the root word for those creatures is related to cherubim.

Terms Referring to the Sanctuary

When we're reading about this in the text, there are some Hebrew words that are helpful to understand. This place is called a *mikdash*, which does indeed mean sanctuary, because it means to be set apart. A Hebrew word, *kodesh*, means "holy." We have bird and wildlife sanctuaries. They're places that are set apart sanctuaries.

The second word is actually indicative of another aspect of this. Because it comes from a Hebrew word which means "to dwell." The Hebrew word for neighbor is related to this word, *shakan*. This is a *mishkan*. So it is the dwelling

place of God, who's chosen to be a neighbor to us. And then finally, tent of meeting the *Ohel moed*; this is where God met with Moses, and then later on Aaron. Moses actually had some special privileges in regard to meeting with God.

Purposes of the Sanctuary

What I've just said in terms of the words themselves gives us some pretty strong hands-on purposes. What happened after Eden was a complete separation in that wonderful harmonious relationship where God walked with Adam and Eve in the garden of Eden. After sinning, they were driven out and the cherubim were placed there. With the sanctuary, we have the beginnings of what it's going to be like when we're back together in the presence of God, when the epic of Eden has worked all the way out to its final culmination. The sanctuary is a step towards that. God has chosen in His mercy to dwell in the presence of his people. That's a remarkable choice and even in spite of the golden calf, the idolatry and all that implies in terms of broken covenant, nevertheless, God is doing this.

It's also, and this is probably one of the most important things, this is to get the people ready for the incarnation. What does "Emmanuel" mean? "God with us." And Isaiah chapter 7, says, "You shall call his name, Emmanuel," and then "Emmanuel" comes through four more times in Isaiah chapter eight - God with us. Then we have in the birth of Jesus, the incarnation. John 1:14 is a dramatic statement. Starting with John 1:1 - "In the beginning was the Word and the word was with God and the word was God." So we know something about the inextricable binding together of Word and God in that context. What does 1:14 say? "And the word became flesh" - that's shocking enough for a Jewish audience--the Word became flesh. But then what does it say? "...and dwelt among us." And the Greek word means "tented" among us. Don't think for a moment that John's reading audience wouldn't have that whole background to understand that we've got God's presence (previously in the tabernacle) now in the Word Incarnate, tenting among us. The word very definitely was chosen there

on purpose. And then it talks about the manifestations of his glory as well. John refers back to God's manifesting himself in the tabernacle context.

It prefigures the heavenly dwelling. What is showing up in this whole system of Torah and particularly now with our ritual Torah is giving us a picture in a very small way of what's going to be when we have heaven restored (Hebrews 10). Finally (with thanks to Gordon Hugenburger, senior pastor of Park Street Church), "If you look at the tabernacle, which becomes the temple later on, it really is, in some ways, a picture of our way back to Eden." Even as a worshipper makes his or her way, through the curtains to the altar, the priest takes the blood, sprinkles it on the altar, all of that is part of coming back to the tree of life, the source of life.

Structure of the Tabernacle

Let's talk about the structure and then we'll look at yet another diagram. Frames were made of acacia wood. Acacia wood is what grows out in the Sinai area; that's the common tree out there. In fact it's probably about the only real tree and it's not big which is why their frames are not very big either. Just one quick note from a geographical perspective. Acacia trees have remarkably deep roots because you get at the max four inches of rain per year in the Sinai peninsula and yet these trees survive. They send roots way, way down so even though there's not a lot of rain they can survive. So they're a tough tree. The frames were made out of acacia wood.

Then the curtains around about it again were symbols. God's dwelling is going to be set apart. Yes, it's surrounded by the tribes. Yes, he's dwelling in their midst. And yet it's set apart and the curtains symbolize that. There is also, within the actual sanctuary itself four layers of curtains, the Holy Place and the Most Holy Place. We'll talk about the furnishings of those in a moment.

Cherubim - I've mentioned them already. On the curtain, particularly that separates the Holy Place from the Most Holy Place, were the embroidered

cherubim, symbolic of going back to the tree of life, reminding us of Eden, reminding us that the cherubim serve to guard the presence of God.

Let's talk a little bit about what's inside the Sanctuary. The structure included the Most Holy Place, the inner sanctum, and then Holy Place. Within the Most Holy Place was the Ark of the Covenant, called that because it was that chest or box in which the tablets of the Testimony were kept. Remembering our covenant that we've been talking about, two tablets of the covenant were made, one for the *Suzerain*, one for the people. The tablets of the covenant were kept in this chest. That's why it's called the Ark (*aron* is the Hebrew word) of the covenant.

Now, not only do you have those cherubim on the curtain between the Most Holy Place and the Holy Place; they're also overshadowing the cover of the Ark. The cover of the Ark is called the "atonement cover:" *kiporet* is the word here. Perhaps you know about *Yom Kippur*, the Day of Atonement. We're going to talk more about that. [there is considerable discussion on the meanings of *kipper*]

Moving out from the Most Holy Place into the Holy Place, on the north side of the Holy Place is a table and the table is specifically for putting out bread. And you're thinking, "bread?" Remember that back then a significant part of one's sustenance came from bread. People have estimated as much as 60% would come from bread-type things. So, bread was the best representation of the source of life. And all we need to do is start thinking of the connections here. Manna from heaven and Jesus called himself Bread from heaven. Built into the actual sanctuary was bread, which looked forward to (was an adumbration of) the Living Bread. That's on the north side.

On the south side was the lampstand. The lampstand shows up also later on in some very symbolic passages. We're going to look at it in Zechariah, we're going to look at it in the book of Revelation, and we're going to see this whole idea of light coming to symbolize and connect spirit. Now, I'm not sure how far you want to push this, and I'm not one to pick everything apart and find the

Trinity everywhere, but it is fascinating to me, that as you look the three main pieces of furniture, if you want to call it that, that are in the Tabernacle proper, they include the Ark of the Covenant with God, the Bread of the Presence that symbolically points towards the Living Bread from heaven – Jesus, and the lampstand that points toward Spirit.

Not only that, we have an altar for incense, placed right next to the curtain separating the Most Holy Place and the Holy Place. And as that incense goes up, it's a protective covering and cloud. Every time the high priest, once a year, went into the Most Holy Place, he carried the incense ahead of him, and that was intended as a protective covering. That becomes a very interesting symbolic indicator, and the book of Revelation picks up on this: In fact, it already occurs in Psalms. I can't remember which Psalm exactly, I'll have to go back and look at it. But it talks about the prayers being incense. And incense is representative of prayers.

Moving outside to the courtyard, we have the altar itself – a fairly large altar. If we unpack those dimensions it would probably be somewhere around six feet on each side; wood but overlaid with bronze, obviously so it could be carried, not terribly heavy. It was on the altar that the sacrificial animals would have been burned, and against that altar that the blood of the animals would have been sprinkled as well. In between the altar and the actual Tabernacle proper was the basin, sometimes called the *laver*. This was also important because after this priest has dealt with all the blood and the gore of the sacrifices, before the priest can go into the Tabernacle, there's got to be a major cleaning process taking place, and so the *laver* is for that purpose.

[visual diagram] Probably you've seen much more sophisticated diagrams, but this will at least help us. On the east side was the entryway. Notice the Most Holy Place was intended to be a square. Here's our path into the Presence of God.

The altar had horns on each side; you know those protrusions that poke up a little bit on each corner. Student question: “When they sacrificed the animals, did they just kill them?” No, they brought it in. In fact if I can just fast forward from this position about fifteen hundred years, we read the instructions in rabbinic materials, Jewish materials that talk about the first century when Jesus would have been living. They talk about the temple that was standing at that time and say there were hooks in the walls all the way around on which the offerers, when they brought their lamb, would hang that animal. It was killed at that point, they collected the blood, and took it to the priest. This was intended to be, as I said, a really graphic lesson about the mess that’s involved and the pain that’s involved and the horror that’s involved in dealing with sin. We’ve lost sight of it, and perhaps it’s a very good educational tool to get ourselves to think about it again. Probably the closest you could come, would be watching the *Passion of the Christ*. The seemingly interminable crucifixion scene t was done for a purpose, to show us a little bit of how awful that really was.

At any rate, those protrusions on each corner of the altar were basically designed to keep all the wood on the altar. You’ve got a fire going there and these kept that wood in place. They will come to have their own symbolic significance later on in the history of Israel, which we will talk about later.

Here’s our basin or *laver*. The priest came in, and they dealt with burning the incense, a daily exercise, as well as the table for the shewbread, and keeping the lamps in the lampstand burning, because those were supposed to be eternally burning as well.

Additional Details

A couple more details and then we need to talk about sacrifices. Part of being set apart was the process of anointing. The Hebrew word means “to smear with oil.” Now “anoint” sounds like a nice term, but it means to smear with oil. The Hebrew verb is *mashach* from which comes *mashiach* from which comes *messiah* which is translated into Greek as *Christos*, Christ. So, when we’re talking

about Jesus Christ, we're talking about Jesus, the Anointed One. Setting apart not only the high priest, but also kings, involved anointing, smearing with oil. As this whole process got underway, they set up the sanctuary and did the ordination process. This involved putting the oil on these people and then putting blood on the ear and the thumb and the big toe. This is symbolic – at least according to the rabbinic idea – of the priests being ready to hear the Word of God and properly speak the Word of God and do actions that were appropriate and walk in a way that was appropriate.

A second important detail was the incense. It was a special incense for being burned in the tabernacle. Unlike other incenses, this was supposed to be a special mixture. That's probably what Nadab and Abihu did wrong when it says in chapter ten, they took their censors and they went kind of dashing into the Tabernacle, contrary to the command of the Lord. And although we're not told explicitly what that was, it may be that they had taken something that was profane in terms of the incense. There might be some other reasons in there too that I'm going to suggest in about five minutes.

The sanctuary is maintained by a half shekel tax. A half shekel is about a fifth of an ounce. When you first read this it sounds like it's a one-time contribution, but as we continue to read through the historical narratives in the Old Testament, we get the impression that it was something they collected on a regular basis, and that becomes eminently clear when you have the incident with Jesus in Matthew chapter 17. Sarah? (“Is this where fish finds the...”) Yes, what about the fish? (“... they find the money in the mouth of the fish.”) Good. Some of the opponents came to Peter and said, “So, did your master pay the temple tax?” And Peter said, “Sure, of course, yes, definitely.” It all gets back to Jesus and he said, “Peter, why don't you just go find this fish...”, and in the mouth of the fish there will be enough temple tax for Peter and for Jesus as well, even though Jesus went on to say that the Son, in other words himself, the Son of the king doesn't really

have to pay the temple tax. So, here is a New Testament story that picks up on this half-shekel tax idea.

Levites and Priests

There's lots to say about the Levites. Numbers chapter 3 for example talks about their function in terms of carrying and caring for the Tabernacle. That was their Levitical function. They were those who packed up the stuff, carried it, and camped around it in order to be kind of an outer boundary or barrier beyond the courtyard curtains. Once the temple came along, they had other things they did. They were also teachers, singers, and Temple musicians. The Levites played a major role in terms of temple, not Tabernacle, but temple sanctuary prophesying with music and singing as well.

The priests specifically were the ones who offered the sacrifices. This is going to be a bone of contention a little later on when we start talking about a rebellion on part of the people. Notice they're both responsible for teaching Torah. God appointed his ministers and they were supposed to be teaching the people so they would not be bereft of knowledge of what God wanted them to do.

The Role of the High Priest

As we go through these things that the high priest was wearing when he was officiating, what I want you to look for, in almost all of these, is the ways in which the high priest's clothing represented his role as mediator. First of all, what was the ephod? It's a word we don't use very much. Anybody know what the ephod was? The best thing I can come up with to describe it is, you know those vests that policemen wear when they're out and they got this florescent orange on them and they have Velcro straps on the waist, might be about so long. The ephod extended down farther and it had a front panel and shoulder pieces just the way those little vests do. It had a back to it and probably some ties that hung it together on the sides. It was not a complete garment, but an over garment. On the shoulders were engraved the names of the sons of Israel, children of Israel. As the high priest was making his way into the sanctuary, he was carrying the sons of Israel on his

shoulders, part of his intercessory role. He was bearing them into the presence of God.

In addition, on the front of the ephod was the breast piece that had two significant roles. First of all, it had 12 stones over the heart of Aaron. Now, he was not carrying them on his shoulders, but instead he was carrying the 12 children of Israel representing in those stones over his heart as he went into the presence of God. Then the *Urim* and *Tummim* were in the little pocket inside the breast piece. We don't really know what *Urim* and *Tummim* mean or how they worked. The most common suggestion is that they mean "light and perfection," because the Hebrew word for light is *or*, so the plural would be *orim* or *urim*. *Tam* means whole or complete, so *tummim* could be "perfections"--so "lights and perfections." There are other ways of looking at it. *Urim* starts with the first letter of the alphabet and *tummim* starts with the last letter of the alphabet, so maybe in some ways it's kind of a comprehensive statement. Some folks say *urim* might not come from "light" it might come from the Hebrew word "to curse." The curses, on the one hand, and the good things on the other - perfections. We're not sure and we don't know how they worked. But here is the key: Exodus 28 (and by the way, all this is described in Exodus 28, if you want to go back and check on it) says, "Aaron will bear the means for making decisions." And that's what the *urim* and *thummim* were; they were the means for making decisions. So however they worked, when the high priest brought a difficult case into God's presence, somehow he would get an answer in regard to it, and we actually have as the history of Israel unfolds, some indications that these things kept being used at least for a time, through David's time, and maybe beyond that. So we'll come back to that later.

The high priest also had a purple robe, a rich sort of blue robe, with bells and pomegranates around the bottom of it. Pomegranates probably represented the fruitfulness of the land. The number of seeds in a pomegranate says something about its fruitfulness. The bells meant that he would be heard while he was in the

inner sanctum.

We also have a turban, and what's engraved on the turban? "Holy to the Lord." So he was carrying on his head a declaration of his position as mediator. And then white linen under clothes were an indication of purity. I've already said this, but just to remind ourselves, it is Jesus who is our great High Priest as the book of Hebrews makes eminently clear. He's filling that intercessory role. That's why it is indeed so important that our prayers really be offered intentionally, not lamely but intentionally, in the name of Christ Jesus.

Ordination Ceremony

We need to talk about ordination. You get a sense as we read these chapters how carefully they did this. Everything was done just right; nothing was haphazard, nothing spontaneous. Not that God doesn't like spontaneous worship, but that wasn't to be the case in this situation. Nadab and Abihu seemed to have engaged in spontaneous worship. Again whatever the case was, we don't know precisely, but it was contrary to the command of the Lord. It was an affront, a compete affront to the holiness of God. Therefore they lost their lives as a result. Fire consumed them; you can read all about it in Leviticus chapter 10. It's a tragic situation but as we're going to see,, it's not only here. Whenever there's a new step forward in God's design for His people, there are always people who seem to push the boundaries, and at that point in time God chooses to teach a lesson. Usually he's extraordinarily merciful and not wreaking punishment like this, but in this case, a sober lesson was in order.

As a result, the restrictions of the priest were articulated after the Nadab and Abihu incident—at least some of them. And some of these may then give us a little indication in terms of what Nadab and Abihu might have been doing wrong. Also Leviticus 21 gets at some of these restrictions, the whole idea here is to sustain without a shadow of a doubt, God's holiness.

Therefore the ministers who were priests needed to demonstrate in their lives God's holiness. So they weren't to engage in mourning practices, in other

words, tearing their clothes and letting their hair become dirty. Obviously if that was the case they couldn't come in to the presence of God. That wasn't right. They couldn't drink while officiating, which some people say might be one of the issues behind the Nadab and Abihu incident. Maybe they were just, as part of the celebration, somewhat inebriated, and then dashing in there without thinking very carefully. By the way, one more quick distinction here - some people go all the way back to Exodus 24, and you'll remember that Nadab and Abihu were the ones that were up on the mountain with the elders of Israel, seeing the presence of God. The suggestion is maybe they expected that that was going to be their place. After all, they had this experience on the mountain with God. They sort of translated that arrogantly and said we deserve to be in His presence. We're going in--taking that presumptuous move in a very awful way, and not distinguishing between holy and profane. That's the big deal there. The last three restrictions come out of Leviticus 21: they weren't to trim beards, were to marry virgins, and have no physical defects. By the way, people with physical defects who were in the Levitical line were still provided for, but they couldn't go in to the sanctuary of God.

At this point we need to stop; we'll pick up sacrifices next time.

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