

# Leviticus 6:8–7:38

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[ 0 : 0 0 ] Again, the scripture text is Leviticus chapter 6, verses 8 through 13. Please stand, if you are able, for the reading of God's word.

The Lord spoke to Moses, saying, Command Aaron and his sons, saying, 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.

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.

Then he shall take off his garments and put on other garments and carry the ashes outside the camp to a clean place. The fire on the altar shall be kept burning on it. It shall not go out.

The priest shall burn wood on it every morning, and he shall arrange the burnt offering on it, and shall burn on it the fat of the peace offerings. Fire shall be kept burning on the altar continually.

[ 1 : 1 1 ] It shall not go out. And then on page 95, chapter 7, verse 28. The Lord spoke to Moses, saying, 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.

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. The priest shall burn the fat on the altar, but the breast shall be for Aaron and his sons.

And the right thigh you shall give to the priest as a contribution from the sacrifice of your peace offerings. Whoever among the sons of Aaron offers the blood of the peace offerings, and the fat shall have the right thigh for a portion.

For the breast that is waved and the thigh that is contributed I have taken from the people of Israel out of the sacrifices of their peace offerings, and had given them to Aaron the priest and to his sons as a perpetual due from the people of Israel.

This is the portion of Aaron and of his sons from the Lord's food offerings from the day they were presented to serve as priests of the Lord. The Lord commanded this to be given them by the people of Israel from the day that he anointed them.

[ 2 : 3 0 ] It is a perpetual due throughout their generations. This is the law of the burnt offering, of the grain offering, of the sin offering, of the guilt offering, of the ordination offering, and of the peace offering, which the Lord commanded Moses on Mount Sinai on the day that he commanded the people of Israel to bring their offerings to the Lord in the wilderness of Sinai.

This is the word of the Lord. Thanks be to God. You may be seated. Amen. Just a brief prayer.

Father, speak, for we come to you desiring to behold the truth of your holy word. Take it and plant it deep in us, and may it fashion us into your likeness, we pray.

We ask these things for Jesus' sake. Amen. There's a well-known musical, contemporary musical, that has gathered an enthusiastic following.

I'm sure many of you have watched it. Hamilton, based on a popular biography, a musical emerged from it. And people have admired it for multiple reasons.

[ 3 : 5 6 ] Some, because of its incredible lyricism, artistry, creativity. But for myself, because I can't rap, what I admire about it, certainly the rap element of it, but the invitation it gives to the audience to consider what it would look like to start a nation.

What would it look like to begin a nation? And that's where we are in the story of ancient Israel.

They were an emerging nation, a people who were once enslaved and oppressed, and had come out from under the strong hand of Pharaoh.

The people were divinely delivered. 600,000 men were among them. Whether that was all the men or fighting men is unclear, but regardless, the whole, in modest estimation, there were likely a few million of them.

They were now encamped in the desert of Sinai, at the foot of the mountain, receiving the words of the living God.

What was this nation to be known for? What type of government were they to have? How would they shape their civil laws?

[ 5 : 27 ] What would be their foreign policy? What would be their identity as nomadic people? As other surrounding peoples watched them, what would their reputation be as a brand new nation?

And in time, the Bible will answer these questions. But here, in the book of Leviticus, at the birth of the nation, the book establishes Israel's foundational identity.

God dwelt within her. God dwelt within her. What distinguished ancient Israel from all the other nations in all the world was that God lived with her.

Within her walls resided the presence of the living God. Where the nation was, God was. And where the nation went, God would go. And where the nation settled, God would settle.

Unless you think this comes with great simplicity and ease, we're given the book of Leviticus.

Because the book of Leviticus lays out for us what is required of the nation.

[ 6 : 51 ] God lives among you, but they are learning that hosting a holy God required a lot of special accommodations.

Hosting the holy God required the utmost devotion. It was no trivial matter. To keep God within her midst required a protocol to follow.

This morning, I've tagged this sermon, simply this, the economics of worship. The economics of worship.

We will see that God's worship must be done in God's way in order to hold on to God's presence.

The first seven chapters of Leviticus really line this up for us.

God would appoint an entire family of people from among them, from the family line of Aaron, to serve as Israel's priests. If you're familiar with the Bible, it was established in Exodus.

[ 8 : 04 ] We've seen hints at it in the first five chapters. And this morning, these two chapters primarily, almost exclusively, focus in on the priesthood.

God had allocated to himself a subset of the nation to maintain and uphold the nation's worship.

Their worship would be indicative that God was with them.

If they failed to worship, the nation would fail. These priests were to mediate this worship. They stood before God on behalf of the people.

To maintain worship was therefore the most important feature of the nation. If you fail to worship, you'll fail to keep God within the walls.

Well, I would like us to see two things this morning as we consider this divine economy, the economics of worship. Two things.

[ 9 : 05 ] We will firstly see a priestly obligation. A priestly obligation. And followed by a priestly provision. A priestly provision.

You see it there in chapter 6, verse 8. The Lord spoke to Moses, saying, Command Aaron and his sons. Here in this text, it's addressed to the priests.

The priests were in charge of preserving the nation, the purity of the people, the priority of instruction and worship. They were to serve and protect, so to say. And our text largely repeats what has come before in the first five chapters.

And we'll begin to escalate or amplify these. We've seen these offerings already. There's a burnt offering. It's followed by a grain offering, a sin offering, then a guilt offering, and a peace offering. And that's the order. It comes in chapters 6 and 7. The opening chapters of Livicus were directed to the people. The people were to listen to the Lord and hear what was required of them.

[ 10 : 18 ] What would it take for God to remain among them? You will observe that short phrase, And the Lord spoke to Moses, saying, Speak to the people of Israel. See, chapters 1 to 5 pertain to the worshiper.

When am I supposed to go sacrifice? What am I actually supposed to bring? Well, in these chapters this morning, the focus is to be on the priests.

What is to be done when the people bring what they're supposed to bring. The duty of the priests was to ensure the offerings were properly presented in an acceptable form.

See, gifts and offerings to God were packaged in a specified way. In other words, the wrapping mattered. It required care.

It would require precision and particularities. If the priests were to be well-versed with these requirements, failure to do so would actually result in the rejection of a sacrifice.

[ 11 : 21 ] Allow me to point that out to us in chapter 7, verse 17. The priests are given instructions regarding the peace offering, but what remains of the flesh of the sacrifice on the third day shall be burned up with fire.

If any of the flesh of the sacrifice of his peace offering is eaten on the third day, he who offers it shall not be accepted, neither shall it be credited to him. It is tainted, and he who eats of it shall bear its iniquity.

So imagine this, the peace offering. You could bring all sorts of things, and you bring an animal. And there it is. The portions are allocated. And for some reason, you celebrate with friends, and you worship together, and you fellowship together, and you dine together.

Day one, you consume some of it. Day two, you consume some of it. And you still have some left over on the third day. It was the priest's job to say you cannot eat.

You must let it pass on the third day. Do not consume it, for if you do, days one and two are actually nullified and voided.

[ 12 : 34 ] Now, you might ask, well, what's the thinking behind that? It could be all sorts of things. Maybe it's meat gone bad after the third day.

Maybe it's urgency. Day one and two, you're a wealthy individual, and you bring a massive bull, and you have all this meat left over. Days one and two, you're just celebrating with loved ones.

And you didn't maybe neglect the poor or those on the margins. And the Lord is saying, no, dispense it all for all the people. I don't know why.

But here, what we find is when it comes to worship of God, it would demand the utmost devotion, and it would be mediated by the priests. It was not merely a thought.

It was also an action. And beyond an action, it would come in a form. For Israel is not only what they brought, but how they brought it and how it was offered.

[ 13 : 35 ] Returning to the gift metaphor, there are gifts given out of thought. Maybe I saw something, and I thought of you, and here it is.

There is another level of a gift. I saw a gift. I thought of you. I put it in a gift bag, stuffed it with tissue paper, and here it is. And there's another form of a gift.

I saw the gift, thought of you, wrapped it well, bow-tied it and all, wrote a card, and gave it to you on this precise day.

A day. Right? And here it is. What is being brought? How it was being brought was important.

When it was brought, how it is offered. And all of this fell on the priests. They had an obligation to ensure that God is worshipped properly. And as the people brought their offerings, the priests had a protocol to follow.

[ 14 : 40 ] A protocol to follow. And I'm just going to point this one out in the text that Amy read in this burnt offering in verses 8 to 13. We hear for the first time that the priests had an obligation to keep the altar burning.

The altar, three times it is mentioned that the altar shall be kept burning in verse 9, 12, and 13. The fire was never to die.

It was never to go out. The fire should burn continuously. And there's no mention as why it should remain burning. But it was to remain burning.

What could it mean? I'm unsure. There's certainly many proposals out there. But it does illustrate this fact. That the offerings were to be regular, continual, and nonstop.

Worship would be regular, consistent, and perpetual. It would be equated to being an Israelite.

What marks should an Israelite have? Certainly shared language and shared customs, but Israel would be identified by how she worshipped.

[ 15 : 57 ] The people of God would be distinguished by the worship of God, and the priesthood existed to perpetuate and to preserve this. This was the priest's obligation. A further obligation even pertained to what they wore.

Maybe you caught it here. God had a wardrobe preference for the priests. The priests were to wear linen undergarments, and they had a linen outer garment.

And in the morning when they went to change, to clear off the altar of the ash, they would wear their sacred linen garments and go and shovel all the ash and set it to the side.

And the priest was then required to go change and to come in clothes, retrieve the ash, walk it out of the city, and dispose of it. And you might ask, well, why would that matter?

Why did they have to change? Well, it certainly communicated that what was holy should never come into contact with what was common.

[17:10] The garments that the priests served in, namely the linen garments, were deemed holy and could not come into contact with the common outsiders outside the tabernacle precincts.

perhaps you might have heard it as a young child. The priest was wearing his church clothes and they could not be worn to the club.

Neither could his gym clothes be worn into the tabernacle. You see, the priest was obligated to represent what was holy before the people. This was their obligation.

obligation. And slowly, we begin to sense it, that Israel would be identified by her worship. The people of God would be identified by how they worshipped God.

They were not permitted to gloss over it. They were not permitted to push it to the side. They were not permitted to dismiss it. And the priests were under obligation to ensure that the nation prioritized this.

[18:22] The priests had to safeguard Israel's worship. They ensured that the sacrifices were acceptable. They warned the people what were violations and unacceptable.

They followed the protocol. In worship, there would be propriety. They kept the fire burning as to say to the people the worship of God would be continual and consistent.

It did not matter. as a priest, because I don't feel like it, I'm not going to do it. No. Because you're a priest.

You will do it regardless. Well, my week is going well, so I will worship now. No. Whether your week is well or bad, worship must continue.

Whether life is full and busy, empty or relaxed, worship would continue. Worship would be both a duty when you didn't want to do it and it would be a delight when you wanted to do it.

[19:23] And why all this? Why all this worship? Because what marks you off as the people of God is the presence of God dwells within you and this is what is required.

And perhaps you're sensing that this is getting close to home because the priestly obligations reveal that worship would never happen periodically or out of mere convenience.

No, it would be perpetual and out of command. Verse 9, command Aaron and his sons. And you might have caught it at the end of the chapter 7. The Lord commanded Moses on Mount Sinai and he commanded the people of these offerings.

We get this idea that somehow the worship of God would be permanent among the people of God. It is the central fixture in the people of God.

God is worthy of worship whether you show up or not. And God would receive worship. And that means and whether the people wanted to or not.

[20:40] See, the entire camp of, and you just imagine this, the entire camp of Israel at any moment of any day, regardless of season, whether by sunlight or moonlight, there you would see it. If you looked to the center of the camp, there would be smoke rising.

And when the sun set and was pitch black, you would just inhale and you could smell it. The coals burning, representative of their identity as constant worshipers of God, their worship ought never cease, for their God would be eternally worthy of praise.

The priestly obligation ensured that God would receive enduring worship. Now, the text also highlights not only the priest's obligation, but the priestly provision.

There's a second command stipulated at the end of chapter 7. The first, well, chronologically, the first command is right there in verse 36.

The Lord commanded this to be given them by the people of Israel, namely a portion of their offerings. The second command is verses 37 and 38, the priest's obligation to maintain the sacrificial system.

[22:02] the priest's had a provision. In order for the priest to fulfill their obligation, it would require the people to supply the provision.

The occupation and the vocation of Aaron's family would be the priesthood. That would be their job. That was their livelihood. And the logic works like this. Israel worships God.

God. And in their worship of God, they would bring offerings, whether animals, grain, bread, and they would present it to the Lord.

And the priests would then mediate the offering and mediate the worship. And from that offering, the priests would take some of the portion for their livelihood.

Israel, was to worship. They required the priests. And the priests required the people to provide for them. See, recently I had a lunch.

[ 23 : 08 ] It goes something like this. Recently I had a lunch with a friend in the neighborhood who doesn't go to church. And he works from home.

And over the course of lunch, he inquired, he said, Bing, so tell me, what does a pastor actually do?

What does a pastor actually do? And if you ever wonder what a pastor does, it's kind of a summation of I'm a mixture of a researcher, teacher, public speaker, counselor, fundraiser, manager, administrative assistant, all the while supposed to model, be a pillar of virtue.

That's what we do. All in one person. Or there's three of us here. And the conversation continued and he said, well, how does the church make money?

How does the church make money? And I answered, well, through the gifts and the generosity of its people. And he was a little surprised and he says, so Bing, you're telling me you live off the donations of other people?

And I said, yeah, I do. I do. It's not lost on me. And then he followed up with this question, is that stressful? And I said, it can be, but thankfully not at the moment.

[ 24 : 29 ] It can be, but thankfully not in the moment. You see, I was trying to piece together for him this principle that is at work in Leviticus chapter 7.

The pastor leads the people in worship. And in response, the people provide for the pastor to enable them to do that better.

It's not far from me that my livelihood is dependent on the generosity and the gifts of those whom I have the privilege of serving. Candidly, the well-being of our pastoral team and our staff is dependent on the people.

And this is the operative principle in this text. The priests would be dependent upon the people. And as the people brought their sacrifices, the priests would be provided for.

And this is embedded in these two chapters. And I don't want to belabor it, but you see it throughout these two chapters. Chapter 6, verse 16.

[ 25 : 34 ] Verse 26. When the offerings are presented, the priests receive a portion. And the Bible is very clear that these, in chapter 6, verse 16, and 6, verse 26, they were to be eaten on the temple precincts in a holy place.

It's kind of the modern-day equivalent of, you know, if you work at a fancy company or a big tech company and they provide lunch on site, this is what is being provided for the priests, lunch or dinner on site.

But there are other provisions as well. 7, verse 8, verse 9, verse 10, verse 32. These portions are provided to the priests, and it seems like they're able to take it home for their families, whether it be the hide or the skin of an animal, a handful of grain, or the right hind leg of one of the animals.

What was important and established by these chapters is the provision of the priests were to be a priority. of the nation. It is so essential, so foundational to the upkeep of the nation that God himself interjects.

You've got to catch this. Look at chapter 6, verse 16. verse 17. And the rest of it, this is the grain offering, the rest of it shall be, for Aaron and his sons, they shall eat it, and it shall be eaten unleavened in the holy place.

[ 27 : 19 ] In the quarter of the tent of meeting, they shall eat it. It shall not be baked with leaven. Verse 17. The only I in this passage. God says, you want to know how important it is that you provide for the priesthood?

Right there. I have given it as their portion of my food offerings. So God says, it is so important for you to maintain, as the people, to maintain the priesthood that he inserts himself, I mean, of course, he's in the text, he inserts himself in the text speaking that the sacrifices are actually all mine.

But there is a portion that I am allotting to the priesthood. That's how foundational it would be.

These offerings that the priests benefit from are most holy.

They are a set-apart offering. Now, we think of, when I say the word holy, you immediately, probably like me, think of a moral quality. Good. Perfect.

Righteous. But being holy is more than that. There's a quality of being holy that it is set apart, that it is distinct from. And here, in this passage, multiple sacrifices are mentioned as most holy.

[ 28 : 43 ] Meaning that these sacrifices are set apart by God for the priests. The priestly provision was so essential that it was legislated in verses 35 and 36.

This is commanded by the Lord. These are the laws. It would be picked up. We don't have time to chase them down. Picked up by the apostle Paul.

1 Corinthians 9. 1 Timothy 5. But the question worth asking is this. Why would God legislate this? Why would he stipulate and specify the portion and the amounts the priests were to receive? Of course, it preserves the priesthood and their livelihood.

If you stopped providing for the priests, the corporate worship of God would be in jeopardy. If pastors could not earn a living serving as pastors, they would be pressed to leave the ministry and the result would be weakening churches.

[ 29 : 49 ] But there are other reasons as well. I think it points to both the shortcomings of the people and the priest. It sadly anticipates the sinful heart that inhabits both you and me.

God commands and prescribes it because it protects the people from being exploited by the priests. Now follow.

There are people back in those days and today that occupy a particular office in church leadership that exploit God's people.

No priest was allowed to claim more than what God apportioned to them. Israel, we know. Spoiler alert. We'll have wicked priests.

And those priests will prosper at the expense of their people. Well-known story. Eli had two sons. Terrible.

[ 30 : 55 ] Wicked. First Samuel chapter 2. That even serving as priests, God despised them. The indictment in the prophet of the book of Ezekiel, Israel's priests were fat.

Maybe literally. Maybe figuratively. But what it was, they were finely clothed and the people were neglected. The priests exploited the people for their own self-gain.

You see, the command is likely given as a safeguard so the priests would refrain from exploiting the people. Yet they still did it. But it's a safeguard for the people as well.

So that you don't withhold from the priests. It doesn't allow one to go to worship tight-fisted, holding on to everything. It won't allow the worshiper to overlook the one who served them.

The law existed so that the people would not overlook the priests. God would not allow the people to neglect their pastors. It would be a safeguard so that the people would not forget who mediated on their behalf.

[ 32 : 05 ] And the goal, if the laws were kept, is that the priests would joyfully serve the people and the people would joyfully, selflessly provide for the priests so that together they would form this worshiping community.

One writer puts it this way, the result would be a happy ideal. Priests serving the people and the people serving the priests, enabling all of God's people to live in harmony.

And this is the economics of worship. The people provide for the priests. The priests perform their duties before God for the people. And the provision of the people empowers the priests to fulfill their obligations and as a result the nation collectively worships so that God remains within her.

So that the nation would bear her unique identity in all the world and would be able to say with Isaiah the prophet, shout and sing for joy, O inhabitant of Zion, for great in your midst is the Holy One of Israel.

See, joy fills the community when the economics of our worship follows God's way. Well, the economy of worship would persist for the next 1300 years for the nation.

[ 33 : 36 ] It would do its best to sustain the nation's worship, to contain the presence of God within her amongst his people. However, you might know where I'm headed.

There would come a priest, a new priest who would upend this economic system. He would serve the people and somehow require no payment.

He would offer sacrifices and somehow keep no portion for himself. He would come to a people not in need of provision. provision. But come to a people to offer provision.

And you know his name. His name is Jesus. He would take no bread. Instead, he would be the bread. He would take no portion of the blood sacrifice for he himself would be the very sacrifice who bears the sins of the world.

And now there is a new economy. A blood bought by the son of God for the people of God economy.

[ 34 : 51 ] And this is the new economy where Jesus, the priest, provides for the people. He provides for all people. And as the new economy or new covenant was instituted, he gathered his disciples around a meal, a table.

It would be a perpetual meal, a permanent meal, an eternal meal that he himself would say, I will eat of it again with you one day in the kingdom.

Luke's gospel records it unfolding in this way. And Jesus took bread. And when he had given thanks, he broke it and gave it to them saying, this is my body which is given for you.

Do this in remembrance of me. And likewise, the cup after the meal. Having eaten, saying, this is the cup that is poured out for you.

It is the new covenant in my blood. And this morning, we have an opportunity to partake in this meal offered by this priest.

[ 36 : 02 ] The priest's provision. And the■.