

Parashah One Hundred – Twenty

Numbers 28:1–29:40; Ezekiel 45:13–20; Hebrews 9:11–14

notes by Tim Hegg

The Centrality of Sacrifice

Our *parashah* this Shabbat is an interesting continuation of the previous section in which the daughters of Zelophehad claimed the right of ownership of the inherited land, and Moses passes the mantle of authority to Joshua bin Nun. Obviously the continuation of the nation is the emphasis, both in the claiming of the Land which would be their dwelling place and in establishing leadership for the nation.

The fact that God directs Moses, by His Ruach, to turn now to a listing of the sacrifices and laws of the festivals is with the specific purpose of reminding us why the nation should exist in the first place. Certainly she needs spiritual guidance in the form of an eternal covenant of the priesthood. Likewise she needs leadership to direct her way. But we must never forget that Israel exists to honor and sanctify the Name of Adonai upon the earth, that is, to make known the truth of His existence and glory. Israel is to be the torch of Light to the nations revealing the one true God to the world and drawing all the nations to Him. How will she do this? By living out God's commands through a heart of faith and loyalty to Him, not only as individuals but as a nation dedicated to the praise of the One who redeemed her. Thus, daily, weekly, monthly, and yearly Israel as God's chosen nation was to complete a prescribed ritual of sacrifice and observance which in itself pointed back to the One who was to stand forever in their midst as the *Shekinah*. It was, in the broadest sense, to indicate that the life of the nation in its entirety was to reflect her covenant relationship with the Creator. Every day, week, month, and year was given to Him as an act of worship. Israel was therefore to be known as a nation characterized by her priests and their sacred duties.

It is curious that the sacrifices are called “My food” (28:1), a phrase which seems to support the ill-directed notion that Israel received her sacrificial customs from the pagan nations who believed the gods came and ate the food of the sacrifice. The phrase “My sacrifices” is understandable, but “My food”!? What are we to make of this?

God, in His infinite wisdom, reveals Himself to us in terms we understand and can appreciate. In the same way that He does not have a body yet describes Himself as having eyes, ears, a mouth, hands, arms, feet—even a nose, so here He describes Himself as eating food. For mortals, food is an essential element of life. Without it, we would cease to exist. What is more, our existence would be snuffed out almost immediately. We can live only a very short time without food. Thus, to use the symbol of food—to take up “man's language” in order to convey His thoughts, “food” symbolizes that which is most important—most essential. For God to describe the sacrifices as “My food” is to ascribe to them an essential, central place—the sacrifices are absolutely necessary. It also takes up the metaphor of a covenant meal, for in the ancient world, covenants were often concluded by the members of the covenant eating a ceremonial meal to demonstrate the friendship the covenant between them had created.

It is no surprise to those of us who have come to believe in Yeshua that God would reveal the essential and central importance of the sacrificial system because the sacrifices were a foreshadow of Yeshua's own payment for sin. He is the central focus and His death and resurrection for sinners is the keystone to the entire arch of God's salvation. Everything hinges upon Him, and without Him there is no salvation at all—none whatsoever. To be found in Him is to be found secure; to be found without Him is to be utterly lost. It is with the picture of food in mind that He could describe Himself as the “bread from heaven” and later, Paul would teach us that Yeshua is our Passover lamb, the one we have “eaten” as the essential element of our spiritual lives. Indeed, Yeshua Himself alludes to this metaphor when He declares to His disciples that unless they eat His flesh and

drink His blood, they have no fellowship with Him (John 6:53f). In what seems a grotesque and pointedly non-kosher statement, Yeshua is simply reminding them that the life which is found in Him (and the life of the flesh is found in the blood) can be theirs as well, but they may obtain it only when He, like the sacrifices “consumed” upon the altar, becomes the essential element of spiritual life and nourishment. Like the sacrificial parts laid upon the altar as the “food” of the Almighty, so Yeshua gave Himself as the sacrifice upon the altar of God’s infinite holiness. Likewise, He gives Himself to us as the divine “food” that alone nourishes our souls and sustains our spiritual life. And in the same way that food sustains our physical lives, so our souls are maintained by the abiding presence of Yeshua (cf. Rom 8:9). So the shocking statement of our Master is not shocking at all when we remember that the sacrifices given to Israel are metaphorically considered as “food.” He was simply saying to His talmidim that unless they personally accept His sacrifice, participating in the covenant meal, they could have no righteous standing before the Father.

In the list of numbers of sacrifices and measures of flour, oil and wine, we might think there is little for us to ponder, save that to perform these sacrifices would take careful planning! This is a recipe that could easily be confusing. One of the things that seems obvious is that every sacrifice is accompanied with a meal offering mixed with wine and oil. This extra sacrifice may well be symbolic of the joy (wine) and peace (oil) which the sacrifice brings as God is pleased with the “soothing aroma.” It is not as though God is somehow placated by the “perfume” of the sacrifice! No, again, the symbolism is of the death of Yeshua. On the one hand it is a horrid thing upon which even God could not look, for He turned His face away from the One who bore the sins of the people (Ps 22:1, cf. Matt 27:46; Mark 15:34; John 20:17). Yet, in a very real sense, the death of Yeshua is the only “soothing aroma” that could please the Father, for only through the death of Yeshua could the sins of His people be honestly atoned (wiped clean). No other being in the universe is both eternal and holy. And since an infinite sacrifice was required to atone for the infinite sins of the people (at least when their sin is compared to God’s infinite holiness), only an Infinite or Eternal One could make such a sacrifice. Only the sacrifice of Yeshua could be a soothing aroma in the nostrils of God when it came to bringing His estranged people back to Him. Thus, the wine and the oil speak of the renewed relationship, the joy that comes from sins forgiven. Indeed, the symbolism of the meal offering is the fellowship enjoyed when God and the atoned sinner eat together. “Behold, I stand at the door and knock. If anyone will hear my voice and open the door, I will come in to him and will have supper with him and he with me” (Rev 3:20). Eating together is what it’s all about! It is the sealing of a covenant which the Almighty has made with us. And so the covenant meal is included in the sacrifice.

But it should be noted that the goat sacrifice is not accompanied by wine or oil. This is to symbolize that the sacrifice which above all others stands for the payment of sin is not mixed with man’s response. The sacrifice of Yeshua needed nothing added to it in order to pay the penalty for the sins of the people. It was entered into entirely by the sacrificial victim and no one else. So it is true with Yeshua who, by His death alone, atones for our sins. It is contrary to all that God has taught us to attempt to add to the sacrifice that He made on our behalf. “He saved us, not on the basis of deeds which we have done in righteousness, but according to His mercy, by the washing of regeneration and renewing by the Ruach HaKodesh, whom He poured out upon us richly through Yeshua HaMashiach yeshuateinu (our salvation), that being justified by His grace we might be made heirs according to the hope of eternal life.” (Tit. 3:5-7)

There are many other lessons that we may learn from this “list,” but perhaps none is more important than what this list tells us about God’s plan of redemption. Here, the list begins by noting the first festival to occur is on the fourteenth of the “first month.” But the reason God designates this as the first month is not because it coincides with some natural occurrence, as the change of seasons or position of the sun in the sky, but because it was in this month that the redemption of Israel from Egypt occurred. In other words, the festivals of the Lord bequeathed to Israel can only be

understood when they are seen to reveal God's plan of redemption. Like the Shabbat, which is not found within the normal cycle of the physical universe, so the Festivals reveal God's redemptive plan, not the cycle of natural occurrences. While the festival times of the nations revolved entirely around the cycle of the seasons, God's appointed times reveal His plan to save His people.

Finally, it becomes clear that the festival of Sukkot, the final festival in the cycle, has far more sacrifices than any of the other festivals. Why? Since the festivals tell the story of God's plan of redemption, and Sukkot is the story's conclusion, it is marked by a celebration of worship that far exceeds the others. Here is the picture of God dwelling with His people in full fellowship and communion. It is like the finale of a symphony, when all of the themes introduced in the earlier movements are brought together in a great crescendo. Thus, the sacrifices themselves speak of the finished work of redemption and the relationship which they bring about between God and His chosen people.

We are all on this journey to celebrate the victory of our King: a caravan making our way to Jerusalem to celebrate the grand finale of God's redemption in Yeshua. Along the way we sing and dance with anticipation of the joy we will have as we gather there. While the journey may have its troubles, the realization that our destination is secure, gives us the courage and desire to travel on. There, in that final movement of the divine symphony of redemption, our Messiah will be known in truth, not as one who failed to accomplish the task of Redeemer, but as the Sovereign Son of God Who has defeated the enemy, and secured salvation for all of His people. In that day, He will be seen as the only One, and His Name will be revered by all. Then He will be King over all the earth! (Zech 14:9)

(See chart of Sacrifices below)

Burnt Offerings of Numbers 28-29

| Event | Animals | Grain offering | Libation |
|-------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Daily 2 total | male lamb 1yr.-a.m. male lamb 1 yr - p.m. | •1/10 ephah flour + 1/4 hin oil | 1/4 hin of shachar (beer?) for each (1/2 hin total) |
| Shabbat 4 total | 2 male lambs 1yr a.m. 2 male lambs 1yr p.m. | •2/10 ephah flour +1/2 hin oil | 1/4 hin wine with each lamb (1 hin total) |
| Rosh Chodesh 11 total | 2 bulls of the herd 1 ram 7 male lambs 1 yr 1 male goat-sin offering | •3/10 ephah flour +3/4 hin oil for ea bull •2/10 ephah flour +1/2/ hin oil for ram •1/10 ephah flour +1/4 hin oil for ea lamb •nothing for goat | 1/2 hin wine - bull 1/3 hin wine - ram 1/4 hin wine - lamb 1/3 hin wine - goat |
| Pesach 11 total | 2 bulls of the herd 1 ram 7 male lambs 1 yr 1 male goat-sin offering | •3/10 ephah flour +3/4 hin oil for ea bull •2/10 ephah flour +1/2 hin oil for ram •1/10 ephah flour +1/4 hin oil for ea lamb •nothing for goat | 1/2 hin wine - bull 1/3 hin wine - ram 1/4 hin wine - lamb 1/3 hin wine - goat |
| Shavuot 11 total | 2 young bulls 1 ram 7 male lambs 1 yr 1 male goat-sin offering | •3/10 ephah flour +3/4 hin oil for ea bull •2/10 ephah flour +1/2 hin oil for ram •1/10 ephah flour +1/4 hin oil for ea lamb •nothing for goat | 1/2 hin wine - bull 1/3 hin wine - ram 1/4 hin wine - lamb 1/3 hin wine - goat |
| Yom Teruah/ Rosh HaShannah 10 total | 1 bull of the flock 1 ram 7 male lambs 1 yr 1 male goat-sin offering | •3/10 ephah flour +3/4 hin oil for ea bull •2/10 ephah flour +1/2 hin oil for ram •1/10 ephah flour +1/4 hin oil for ea lamb •nothing for goat | 1/2 hin wine - bull 1/3 hin wine - ram 1/4 hin wine - lamb 1/3 hin wine - goat |
| Yom HaKippurim 10 total | 1 bull of the flock 1 ram 7 male lambs 1 yr 1 male goat-sin offering | •3/10 ephah flour +3/4 hin oil for ea bull •2/10 ephah flour +1/2 hin oil for ram •1/10 ephah flour +1/4 hin oil for ea lamb •nothing for goat | 1/2 hin wine - bull 1/3 hin wine - ram 1/4 hin wine - lamb 1/3 hin wine - goat |

| | | | |
|-----------------|--------------------------------------|--------------------------|---------------------|
| Sukkot | 13 bulls of the flock | | |
| 13+2+14+1=30 | 2 rams | | |
| 12+2+14+1=29 | 14 male lambs 1 yr | | |
| 11+2+14+1=28 | 1 male goat-sin offering | •3/10 ephah flour | |
| 10+2+14+1=27 | ----- | +3/4 hin oil for ea bull | 1/2 hin wine - bull |
| 9+ 2+14+1=26 | each of the 7 days the number | •2/10 ephah flour | 1/3 hin wine - ram |
| 8+2+14+1=25 | of bulls is diminished by 1, but all | +1/2 hin oil for ram | 1/4 hin wine - lamb |
| 7+2+14+1=24 | other sacrifices remain the same | •1/10 ephah flour | 1/3 hin wine - goat |
| total 189 | ----- | +1/4 hin oil for ea lamb | |
| | Eighth day | •nothing for goat | |
| Shemini Atzeret | 1 bull, 1 ram, 7 lambs 1 yr | | |
| 10 total | 1 goat for sin offering | | |

Grand Total: 259

Lessons from this Summary of Sacrifices

1. Every Phase of God's Plan for the Ages Depends Upon Sacrifice/Atonement

A. The Festivals outline God's plan of salvation (in its fullest meaning)

1. Pesach: redemption (payment for bride)
2. Shavuot: revelation, light to the nations (Betrothal/Ketubbah)
3. Yom Teruah/Rosh HaShannah: reign of Messiah; coronation; millennial reign (call of bride to return)
4. Yom HaKippurim: Jubilee; return of all things to its rightful owner; Israel as the unfaithful betrothed one returns to rightful groom/cleansed of uncleanness
5. Sukkot: gathering of the nations; final victory of God's Messiah (marriage/dwelling as one)

B. Each Festival (=outworking of God's plan) is based upon sacrifice

1. the sacrifices prescribed are in addition to the daily sacrifices
2. without the additional sacrifices, the festival cannot be celebrated in its fullness

2. The Everyday Life of God's People Depends Upon Sacrifice/Atonement

A. The daily sacrifice is listed first, and sets the pattern for all the other sacrifices

(The manner in which the text is given shows clearly that some of the information is to be derived logically from what has been given in a previous context)

B. The daily sacrifice consisted in morning and evening offerings. This speaks of one's whole existence ("when you lie down, and when you arise")

3. Sacrifice Must Be Accompanied with True Faith to Affect Atonement

A. Every sacrifice, except the Goat offering, is accompanied by a Meal Offering

1. oil & wine: symbolic of the spiritual aspect; of the work of the Ruach HaKodesh
2. strong drink (daily) and wine (all others): symbol of joy; of full shalom

B. Why no meal offering with the Goat sacrifice?

1. to show that the sacrifice for sin was not mixed with man's response of faith.

The sin offering is entirely accomplished by God alone. Man can add nothing to this offering for sin.

2. The Goat offering does have a libation: a pouring out. This emphasizes the fact that the sin offering is Godward—it satisfies God's justice and righteousness, as do all the other sacrifices.

4. **The Ultimate Goal to Which God's Plan Moves is the Reign of Messiah Over All Mankind**

A. Why are the sacrifices called “God's food”?

1. Obviously, God does not eat, nor does He need food to sustain His life
2. To show that this is fundamental to God's plan as nothing else. Even as food is an absolute necessity for maintenance of our lives, so the sacrificial atonement ordained by God is essential to all He has purposed.
3. This teaches us that the sacrifice of Yeshua, to which all the sacrifices point, is the central and essential aspect of God's work, and without it nothing of all God's purposes could be accomplished. “For as many as are the promises of God, in Him they are yes; therefore also through Him is our Amen to the glory of God through us” (2Cor 1:20)

B. Sacrifices for Sukkot far out number those of any other festival

1. 70 bulls, 14 rams, 98 sheep, 7 goats = 189 animals total + 10 for Shemini Atzeret = 199
2. Diminishing number of bulls for each day may be symbolic of the nations coming one by one to join themselves to Israel and her God.
3. Because of the great number of sacrifices, Sukkot is referred to simply as “The Festival.” It is the ultimate goal to which all the other festivals point.
4. It symbolizes the reign of God over all the earth, and the completed victory of His Messiah, Yeshua.