

Daily Bread with Brother Hwa-Chi (Not reviewed by the speaker, for personal use only)

Leviticus 17:1-9

Brothers and sisters, peace be with you, this is Hwa-Chi. Thank the Lord, it's time to read the bible again. This week, we are going to read Leviticus Chapter 17, and today we will read verses 1-9.

The Day of Atonement sacrifices in Leviticus 16 are the central focus of this book. As on this day, the high priest could enter the Most Holy Place through the sacrificial offerings, meeting with God at the mercy seat. On one hand, this brought the congregation of Israel into God's presence, and on the other hand, it involved obeying God's instructions for Israel. God became the God of Israel, and the Israelites became His people. This was a significant milestone in God's eternal purpose for humanity. If the saints remember, the offerings of the Day of Atonement included a sin offering and a goat for Azazel, which was meant to carry the sins of Israel away from their dwelling camp. There was also a burnt offering and a grain offering. Among the five main offerings, only the peace offering was missing, because the primary purpose of the Day of Atonement was to bring people before God and have them accepted by Him.

Chapter 17 is a continuation of the Day of Atonement offerings described in chapter 16. To be able to come before God and be accepted by Him is a tremendous grace. The next is for people to offer a peace offering of thanksgiving. The peace offering is initiated by individuals to express gratitude, fulfill vows, or willingly offer themselves. This offering is shared by God and people, and because it is initiated by people, God reminds them to pay close attention to several matters in order to avoid offending Him.

The first matter is the location of the offering, the second is the object of the offering, and the third is the basis of the offering — namely, the blood. During their 400 years of affliction in Egypt, the Israelites had followed the Egyptians in worshipping various idols. Even after leaving Egypt and arriving at Mount Sinai, when Moses first ascended the mountain to receive God's commandments, Moses

was in God's presence for forty days, but the people below grew impatient and began to worship the golden calf. Now that the tabernacle was completed and God had come to dwell among the Israelites in glory, the high priest Aaron, through the sacrifices of the Day of Atonement, entered the mercy seat in the Most Holy Place to meet with God. According to God's commandments to Moses regarding the sacrificial regulations, the peace offering is one that the Israelites could willingly initiate as an expression of thanksgiving, fulfillment of vows, or a freewill offering. Thus, God particularly reminds the Israelites of these three matters after the sacrificial offerings of the Day of Atonement.

Verses 1-2: "And the Lord spoke to Moses, saying, 'Speak to Aaron, to his sons, and to all the children of Israel, and say to them, "This is the thing which the Lord has commanded, saying:"

This is the first time that God instructs Moses to speak to Aaron and his sons and to all the children of Israel. Aaron and his sons represent the priests. God wanted Moses to speak to both the priests and the people because what He was about to say required mutual reminder and collective observance by the priests and the people. In Leviticus, we often read that God instructs Moses to speak to the Israelites, where Moses, standing as a leader, speaks to the people. At other times, God instructs Moses to speak to Aaron and his sons, where Moses, acting as a prophet, conveys God's instructions to the priests. Here, Moses is speaking in both roles of prophet and leader to both the priests and the people, indicating that what he is about to say is extremely important.

Verses 3-4: "Whatever man of the house of Israel who kills an ox or lamb or goat in the camp, or who kills it outside the camp, and does not bring it to the door of the tabernacle of meeting, to offer an offering to the Lord before the tabernacle of the Lord, the guilt of bloodshed shall be imputed to that man. He has shed blood; and that man shall be cut off from among his people,"

Indeed, this is a very serious matter. To disobey God's command means that the person is to be cut off from the people of Israel, meaning he would lose his right to dwell among the Israelites and would no longer be considered a member of God's people. And what was so severe? It concerned the location of where the sacrificial animals were killed. The Israelites were to bring their ox, lamb, or goat to the entrance of the tabernacle of meeting, to slaughter them before the Lord's tabernacle and offer them to the Lord as an offering.

In verse 5, we will see that this was intended as an offering of peace. If the sacrifice was not slaughtered in the Lord's presence, the blood was still shed, and the guilt of bloodshed would fall upon the individual, who would then be cut off from his people. These verses contain much important information, and we need to carefully examine them to clearly understand God's will.

First, we see that God highly values life, even the life of the sacrificial animals. God cherishes their blood, and whether it is shed within the camp or outside it, if it is not shed at the entrance of the tabernacle, before the Lord, He will hold the person accountable for this shedding of blood. God is the source of life and the Creator of all things. He respects the life of the sacrificial animals, and their blood must be offered on the altar to acknowledge His sovereignty over life. Taking life without God's will is considered murder, and God will demand justice for this crime.

The sacrificial animals prefigure Christ, and the animals must be slaughtered before the tabernacle, symbolizing that offerings to God must be in the place He appoints. When the Israelites were in the wilderness, they had to offer sacrifices before the tabernacle. Centuries later, when the temple was built in Jerusalem, sacrifices had to be made in the outer court of the temple. By the New Testament, offerings are to be made within the church.

Dear brothers and sisters, this is a very serious reminder. When offering to God, especially peace offerings of thanksgiving or vows, it cannot be done freely in any place but must be in the church, in the presence of God, and among God's people. Otherwise, not only will your offering fail to please God, but it may also bring calamity upon you. According to the scripture's plain meaning, during the forty

years of Israel's wilderness journey, the Israelites could not slaughter their cattle, sheep, or goats at will. Every animal had to be slaughtered for sacrifice and before the tabernacle. This is because, having endured slavery in Egypt, the Israelites had only a limited number of animals. These clean animals could only be slaughtered for sacrifices.

If it was a burnt offering, sin offering, or trespass offering, the Israelites could not partake of the meat and had to leave it entirely to the priests. But the peace offering was a sacrifice that the Israelites could share with friends and family, and they could initiate it themselves. God was concerned that the Israelites might misuse the peace offering and offend Him, so He specifically reminded them that peace offerings had to be made at the entrance of the tabernacle, in the presence of the Lord.

This allowed for God's portion and the priest's portion to be considered, with the remainder to be shared by the offeror and their family and friends. In reality, God's intent was not to forbid the Israelites from privately slaughtering their animals, so this prohibition only applied during the 40 years in the wilderness.

When the Israelites were about to enter the promised land of Canaan in the Book of Deuteronomy, God clearly instructed them through Moses. In Deuteronomy 12:15, "However, you may slaughter and eat meat within all your gates, whatever your heart desires, according to the blessing of the LORD your God which He has given you; the unclean and the clean may eat of it, of the gazelle and the deer alike." This states that when they enter the good land and reside in the cities of Canaan, they may freely slaughter their livestock and eat meat as they desire.

Then, in verses 17–18, "You may not eat within your gates the tithe of your grain or your new wine or your oil, of the firstborn of your herd or your flock, of any of your offerings which you vow, of your freewill offerings, or of the heave offering of your hand. But you must eat them before the LORD your God in the place which the LORD your God chooses, you and your son and your daughter, your male servant and your female servant, and the Levite who is within your gates; and you shall rejoice before the LORD your God in all to which you put your hands."

This indicates that, to offer peace offerings, they must go to the place chosen by God, and they must slaughter the animals in His presence. Since the Israelites would be spread across the vast land of Canaan, some of them far from Jerusalem, God designated a place in each city. The Israelites had to offer peace offerings at the designated place, and they were to eat and drink with the Levite in that city, the one who would help them offer their sacrifices.

Verse 5: “to the end that the children of Israel may bring their sacrifices which they offer in the open field, that they may bring them to the Lord at the door of the tabernacle of meeting, to the priest, and offer them *as* peace offerings to the Lord.”

The Israelites would tend their cattle and sheep in the fields, and during their time in Egypt, they also followed the customs of the world, offering sacrifices to idols in the open fields. Now, with God dwelling among them, He issued specific ordinances for sacrifices, especially concerning the location. They were no longer to offer sacrifices in the fields; they had to bring their offerings to the entrance of the tabernacle and present them before the LORD. Furthermore, they could not offer the sacrifices themselves; they were to hand them to the priests to be presented as peace offerings to the LORD. God commanded this to break the Israelites' old ways and bad habits from their time in Egypt.

The wilderness was a transitional period in which the Israelites learned to follow God and live a life in accordance with His will. Thus, the ordinances were a safeguard for the Israelites to prevent them from unknowingly offending God. This is similar to what Paul mentions in Galatians 3:23–24: “But before faith came, we were kept under guard by the law, kept for the faith which would afterward be revealed. Therefore, the law was our tutor to bring us to Christ, that we might be justified by faith.” The law was a guardian and teacher for the Israelites, helping them stay within God’s boundaries until Christ came, leading believers to follow the Holy Spirit and no longer be under the law's control.

Verse 6: “And the priest shall sprinkle the blood on the altar of the Lord *at* the door of the tabernacle of meeting, and burn the fat for a sweet aroma to the Lord.”

The priests were to help the Israelites offer their peace offerings, sprinkling the blood of the sacrifices on the altar, symbolizing that the worshipper’s sins were covered, and God would no longer hold them accountable. Additionally, the fat of the sacrifices was to be burned on the altar as a sweet aroma, pleasing to the LORD. Of course, the breast of the wave offering would be shared by the priests, and the thigh of the heave offering would belong to the officiating priest, while the rest of the meat would be given to the worshipper, allowing them to eat and enjoy it with family and friends. This was a sacrificial offering shared by God, the priests, and the worshipper, making it a joyful celebration.

Verse 7: “They shall no more offer their sacrifices to demons, after whom they have played the harlot. This shall be a statute forever for them throughout their generations.”

Here, God reminds the Israelites once again not to follow their old traditions from Egypt, offering sacrifices to demons and indulging in idolatrous practices, which ultimately led them into bondage. Now that God had come among them, they were to have a new beginning and a new life, no longer offering sacrifices to demons. This was to be a perpetual statute for all generations. God made it very clear that the object of their worship was to be the LORD alone, a commandment meant to endure forever among the Israelites.

Over nearly a thousand years of Israelite history, this principle was demonstrated. Whenever the Israelites obeyed God's commandments and served the LORD alone, He would bless them richly; whenever they departed from His commandments and worshipped foreign idols, they would face severe discipline. Ultimately, this led to the destruction of the northern kingdom of Israel by the Assyrian Empire and the destruction of the southern kingdom of Judah by the Babylonian Empire, consequences of forsaking God and worshipping foreign idols.

Verses 8–9: “Also you shall say to them: ‘Whatever man of the house of Israel, or of the strangers who dwell among you, who offers a burnt offering or sacrifice, and does not bring it to the door of the tabernacle of meeting, to offer it to the LORD, that man shall be cut off from among his people.’”

The previous verses discussed peace offerings, but here burnt offerings are also mentioned. God instructed Moses to tell the priests and the Israelites that anyone among them, or any foreigner residing among them, who offered a burnt offering or peace offering must do so at the entrance of the tabernacle to present it to the LORD. Otherwise, that person would be cut off from the people.

Here God once again emphasizes that the location for offering sacrifices must be at the entrance of the tabernacle. In New Testament terms, this means it must be in the church. Believers may wonder why burnt offerings are mentioned here and what special meaning they carry. The Book of Leviticus is where God formally issued sacrificial ordinances to the Israelites, replacing prior practices. The patriarch Abraham, when he obeyed God's call to leave Ur of the Chaldeans and came to Canaan, would build an altar and offer sacrifices to God at each significant location in his journey. At that time, God had not yet set specific ordinances for sacrifices, so the sacrifices Abraham offered were likely burnt offerings.

In Genesis 12:7, we see that Abraham built an altar and offered sacrifices at Shechem, his first stop in Canaan. In Genesis 12:8, he built another altar on the mountain east of Bethel, and in Genesis 13:18, he built an altar at Hebron. Isaac and Jacob also did the same. At significant moments in their lives, they built altars and offered sacrifices to God. This was a personal testimony of following God.

But by the time of Moses, God sought to establish a corporate testimony, which required sacrifices to be offered at a specific, God-chosen location. During their time in the wilderness, this location was at the entrance of the tabernacle. Today, in the New Testament church, believers also go through key points in their spiritual growth. At each stage, they must renew their dedication to God, this is their personal testimony. This personal testimony becomes part of the corporate testimony, meaning that offerings can only be made within the church. This clearly

shows us that each Christian's spiritual growth is inseparable from church life, for one's spiritual growth must be connected to the church and service within the church. May God help us.

Let us pray together: Lord, thank You! After we received grace and salvation, You did not let us be solitary Christians. You placed us in the church life. Just as the Israelites lived within the camp where God's tabernacle was. Just as they had to offer sacrifices at the entrance of the tabernacle, today we, too, can only offer true worship and praise to You within the church life. Bless my church to be a church according to Your heart, that the burnt offerings and peace offerings offered in the church may be pleasing to You, becoming a beautiful testimony of You in this land. We pray in the Holy Name of Jesus Christ.