

SEVENTH MESSAGE:
INSTRUCTIONS FOR THE PRIESTS CONCERNING REGULAR FIRE-OFFERINGS
Leviticus 6:24 - 7:21

Introduction

These verses are numbered Leviticus 6:17 - 7:21 in the Hebrew text. At Leviticus 7:1, the numbering in the Hebrew and English texts begin to run simultaneously again. This message is an extensive one, covering all five of the major offerings of Israel. It deals with the portions of the fire-offering ceremonies that were conducted away from the altar. Those portions were to be eaten in courtyard of The Tabernacle. Eating the portions of the offerings that are described in this message completed the ceremony of the offerings.

These instructions, like those of the two previous messages, were directed toward the priests. The reason is the worshiper did not participate in the parts of the offerings that are described in this MESSAGE. Those parts were given to the priests for their use, to be eaten by them as a part of their support. This message instructed the priests about how to handle the parts of the offerings that were given to them. In those portions of the ceremonies, the priest symbolized Jehovah's receiving the worshiper, whereas in the portions of the ceremonies conducted at the altar the priest symbolized the worshiper's yielding himself to Jehovah (see comments on Lev. 1:5 in MESSAGE 1 under the heading and Aaron's sons, the priests).

This message deals with the regular forms of these offerings, in which portions of the offerings were given to the priests. When offerings were offered by the priests themselves or by groups to which the priest belonged, the portions that ordinarily went to the priests were incinerated in a clean place outside the camp. The symbolic significance was the same in both cases, but the form of the ceremony was changed so a priest would not receive benefit from his own offerings. The special forms of the offerings in which a priest participated in presenting the offering are described in Leviticus 4:3-21 (sin-offering); Leviticus 6:23 (homage-offering); Leviticus 7:7 (offense-offering); and Leviticus 8:22-29 (slaughter-offering).

This message taught that every portion of a fire-offering was to be handled with extreme respect and care because of the spiritual truths it represented. Just because some portions of the offerings were carried away from the altar did not mean that they could be treated lightly. Every drop of blood, every scrap of fat and every bit of meat was to be handled with respect and honor. Failure to do so showed disrespect for the offerings and was rebellion against God's commands, deserving death.

This message may be outlined as follows:

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Interpretation

CHAPTER 6

Introductory note (6:24)

Verse 24. **And Jehovah spoke to Moses, saying,**

These words introduce a new message to Moses from Jehovah.

(1) Sin-offerings (6:25-30)

Verse 25. **Speak to Aaron and to his sons, saying, This is the law of the sin-offering. In the place where the rededication-offering is killed, the sin-offering must be killed before Jehovah. It [is] a holiness of holinesses.**

Speak to Aaron and to his sons, saying, Moses was told to relate this message to Aaron and his sons, showing that the message was of concern both to the high priest and the ordinary priests.

This is the law of the sin-offering. The first portion of the message (vs. 25-30) deals with the sin-offering and was introduced by a brief review of some aspects of that offering that had already been presented in the message for the people (see comments on Lev. 4:1 - 5:13 in MESSAGE 2).

In the place where the rededication-offering is killed, the sin-offering must be killed before Jehovah. Animal offerings were to be brought to The Tabernacle alive and killed at the altar. Killing the animal symbolized the surrender of the worshiper's life to Jehovah, so it was a part of the ceremony and needed to be carried out at The Tabernacle (see comments on Lev. 1:3,5,11 in MESSAGE 1 and on Lev. 4:4,14,24 in MESSAGE 2).

It is a holiness of holinesses. This expression means that the meat of the sin-offering had a special holiness and, therefore, was to be eaten by the priests only (see comments on Lev. 2:3 in MESSAGE 1 under the heading [It is] a holiness of holinesses). Nothing had been said in the message for the people concerning what was to be

done with the meat of a sin-offering (see Lev. 4:27 - 5:13). The reason is that the worshiper was not involved in what was done with the meat after he presented his offerings at the altar. That responsibility belonged to the priests. This message deals with what the priest was to do with the meat of the offering.

Verse 26. **The priest who officiates over the sin-offering will eat it in The Holy Place. It must be eaten in the court of The Tent of Meeting.**

The priest who officiates over the sin-offering. "Officiates over the sin-offering" is a translation of one Hebrew word. A literal translation would be "sin-offerings it." It is an intensive form of the verb and means to preside over the offering.

will eat it in The Holy Place. It must be eaten in the court of The Tent of Meeting. The meat of a sin-offering was to belong to the priest who officiated over the offering. It was to provide food for him, so as to assist in his support. Undoubtedly he was free to share it with his fellow priests, because Leviticus 6:17 had stressed that all males among the priests could eat the priests' portions of the fire-offerings (see comments on that verse in MESSAGE 5 under the heading Every male among the sons of Aaron may eat it). That instruction is repeated in verse 29 of this chapter. Since some of the priests would not be assigned to active duty on certain days and since some were prohibited from serving at the altar because of blemishes (see comments on Lev. 21:16-24 in MESSAGE 26), those priests were free to share in eating from offerings over which some other priest had primary control.

The offering was to be eaten in The Holy Place. The expression "The Holy Place" occurred previously in Leviticus 6:16, and it was used only to refer to the courtyard of The Tabernacle (see comments on Lev. 6:16 in MESSAGE 6 under the heading The Holy Place). To make the point absolutely clear where the meat of the offerings was to be eaten, the verse then specifically says it was to be eaten in "the courtyard of The Tent of Meeting." The priests were not free to use the flesh of a sin-

offering in any way except to eat it, and they were not free to eat it in any place other than the courtyard of The Tabernacle. The purpose of this requirement was to clearly symbolize that the worshiper had been received back into God's service after his cleansing (see comments on Lev. 4:11-12 in MESSAGE 2). In this portion of the offering, the priest symbolized Jehovah and pictured Jehovah's receiving and using the body of the worshiper.

Verse 27. Whatever touches its meat must be holy. And that which splatters from its blood on a piece of clothing, you must wash that on which it splatters in The Holy Place.

Whatever touches its meat must be holy. The portion of the offering that was to be eaten by the priests was not to be allowed to touch any person or object unless he or it had been set aside for special service to Jehovah. This statement does not mean that any object or person who touched the meat of a sin-offering would become holy but that only those who were holy were allowed to touch it (see comments on Lev. 6:18 in MESSAGE 5 under the heading everyone who touches them must be holy). The purpose of this provision was to preserve the symbolism that the forgiven worshiper was received back into Jehovah's service.

And any of its blood that splatters on a piece of clothes, you must wash that on which it splattered in The Holy Place. The word translated "splatters" is the word used in Leviticus 4:6, and it is properly translated "splatters." Splattering blood on a priest's clothing was not a part of the ceremony of the sin-offering. Blood was splattered on a priest's clothing as a part of the hallowing ceremonies for a priest, but that blood was not from a sin-offering (see Ex. 29:21; and comments on Lev. 8:30 in MESSAGE 10). The blood referred to here was blood that accidentally splattered on a priest's clothing as he conducted the ceremony. Even those small droplets of blood symbolized the surrendered life of the worshiper. They were to be washed away from the clothing in The Holy Place, in other words, in the courtyard of The Tabernacle (see comments on Lev. 6:16 in MESSAGE 6 under the heading The Holy Place and on verse 26 above). Not one drop of the blood was to be taken lightly or

profaned because of the deep significance of what it represented.

Verse 28. And a clay pan in which it was cooked must be broken, but if it was cooked in a bronze pan then it shall be scoured and rinsed in water.

This verse is not talking about washing a soiled garment. It is talking about the pan in which the meat of the sin-offering was cooked. The meat of the offering was to be given equal respect to that given to the blood, because it represented the surrendered life of the repentant sinner. It was to be eaten in The Holy Place, and no part of it was to be treated as insignificant. None of it was to remain even on the pans in which it was cooked. The pans were to be completely cleaned of anything that remained from the meat. If the pot was made of bronze, it was to be washed thoroughly. If it was made of clay (pottery), it was to be broken and destroyed, because clay vessels are porous and will absorb some of the broth or drippings from the meat so that it cannot be completely cleaned away. It seems that the pottery cookware that was available to them was unfired and certainly not glazed.

The word used here to describe the cooking of the meat was a general word, for any kind of cooking. In Numbers 11:8 and in 2 Samuel 13:8, it is applied to baking; but in Exodus 16:23 it is contrasted with baking. In Deuteronomy 16:7 it is applied to roasting (compare Ex. 12:9), though in 2 Chronicles 35:13 it is contrasted with roasting. In Exodus 23:19, 34:26; and Deuteronomy 14:21 it is applied to smothering. In 2 Kings 4:38 it is applied to boiling, and in Exodus 12:9 to some method of cooking with water. That the word was a general word for all types of cooking is also shown by the use of different kinds of pans for the cooking (2 Chronicles 35:13). Evidently the priests were free to cook the meat in any manner they desired as long as they ate it in The Holy Place and handled it with utmost respect.

29 Every male among the priests may eat of it. It is a holiness of holinesses.

Every male among the priests may eat of it. Meat from a sin-offering was to be eaten by priests only, but any male of the priestly family was allowed to eat it. This provision allowed for men of the priestly family to eat of it even if they were not officiating at the altar (see comments on Lev. 6:16-18 in MESSAGE 5).

It is a holiness of holinesses. The meat from sin-offerings was an object of special holiness, which was to be eaten and touched only by the priests (see comments on Leviticus 2:3 in MESSAGE 1 under the heading [It is] a holiness of holinesses).

Verse 30. **But any sin-offering from which some of its blood is taken into The Tent of Meeting to cover over [him] in The Holy [Place], shall not be eaten but incinerated with fire.**

A sin-offering from which some of the blood was taken into The Tent of Meeting was a sin-offering that was offered by a priest (see comments on Lev. 4:5-7 in MESSAGE 2) or by the whole nation (see comments on Lev. 4:16-18 in MESSAGE 2).

In this verse, “covering” from sin is connected with the blood taken into The Tent of Meeting; however, it is a mistake to conclude from this practice that covering from sins was connected only with the blood of a sin-offering. In Leviticus 4:20 it is connected with the meat of the sin-offering, and in Leviticus 4:26, 31, 35 with the fat of the sin-offering. The “covering” in this verse and throughout the book of Leviticus did not symbolize pardon from sin through the shed blood of Jesus. It referred to covering a believer from the effects of his sins, and that covering came from actions of repentance and service performed by a person in covenant relationship with God. The believer had already been pardoned by being in covenant relationship with God. He needed only covering from the sins that had come into his life after his initial cleansing and that interfered with his fellowship with God (see comments on Lev. 1:4 in MESSAGE 1 under the heading to cover over him).

The term “The Tent of Meeting” referred to the tent portion of The Tabernacle complex (see comments on Leviticus 1:1 in MESSAGE 1 under the heading out of The Tent of Meeting). The term “The Holy [Place]” could refer to any portion of The Tabernacle complex, but in this verse it is used synonymously with “The Tent of Meeting” (see comments on Leviticus 4:6 in MESSAGE 2 under the heading of The Holy [Place]). “Incinerated with fire” was a term used consistently to refer to portions of a sin-offering of a priest or of the whole nation. The meat from a sin-offering offered by a priest or the whole nation was to be incinerated in a clean place outside the camp so that a priest would not benefit from his own offering. The symbolism was the same as in other forms of the sin-offering that were eaten by the priests, which was that the worshiper was received back into God’s service after being forgiven (see comments on Leviticus 4:12 in MESSAGE 2 under the heading and he shall incinerate it . . .)

CHAPTER 7

(2) Offense-offerings (7:1-7)

Verses 1-7. **1 And this is the law of the offense-offering. It is a holiness of holinesses.**

2 In the place where they kill the rededication-offering, they must kill the offense-offering, and he must splash its blood on the altar round about.

3 And he shall bring [to the altar] from it all of its fat—the fat tail and the fat that covers the intestines

4 And the two kidneys and the fat that is on them, which [is] on the flanks and the attachment between the liver and the kidneys [that] he set aside.

5 And the priest shall roast them on the altar, a fire-offering to Jehovah. It is an offense-offering.

6 Every male among the priests may eat of it. It must be eaten in The Holy [Place]. It is a holiness of holinesses.

These verses contain the principles that were to guide the priests when officiating over offense-offerings. The main point to be noted in them is

that the same principles applied to the offense-offering that applied to the sin-offering. The distinguishing features of the offense-offering had already been pointed out (the animal to be offered, which was a ram--see comments on Lev. 5:15,18; in MESSAGE 2 and on Lev. 6:6 in MESSAGE 4); the offenses for which it was to be offered (see comments on Lev. 5:15,17 in MESSAGE 3); and the principle of restitution (see comments on Lev. 5:16 in MESSAGE 4 and on Lev. 6:4-5 in MESSAGE 5). In all other respects, the offense-offering was identical to the sin-offering.

The handling of the fat of an offense-offering had not been described in the message to the people concerning offense-offerings (Lev. 5:14-6:7), so it is described here. It was to be handled in the same way as the fat of a sin-offering, which is described in Leviticus 4:8. The wording varies slightly between that passage and this passage, but the meaning is the same. This aspect of the offense-offering is identical to the sin-offering (see comments on Lev. 4:8-10 in MESSAGE 2).

As was the case with the sin-offering, nothing had been said in the message to the people about what was to be done with the meat of the animal. The reason was that the people did not participate in that aspect of the offering. It was conducted by the priests after the worshiper had departed from the altar. The primary purpose for this message was to instruct the priests about what to do with the meat of the animal. It was to be given to the priests for their use. The same instructions are given concerning the handling of the meat of the offense-offering as had been given concerning the meat of the sin-offering. The procedure and symbolism was the same in both cases (see comments on Lev. 6:25 above).

(3) Rededication-offerings (7:8)

Verse 8. And the priest who brings [to the altar] a man's rededication-offering, the hide of the rededication-offering will belong to the priest.

This verse moves to the subject of the rededication-offering. "And the priest who brings [to the altar] a man's rededication-offering" means the priest who places the blood, fat, and meat on the altar after the worshiper had presented the animal. In a rededication-offering, the whole animal beneath the hide was roasted on the altar, so only a minor portion of the ceremony was conducted away from the altar. Very little instruction remained to be given to the priests concerning this offering. That portion of the ceremony, however, played an important part in the symbolism. The hide of the animal was to be given to the officiating priest for his use. The priest symbolized Jehovah. His receiving the hide symbolized Jehovah's receiving and using the body of the worshiper for His service because the worshiper had made a new commitment of Himself to God (see comments on Lev. 1:6 in MESSAGE 1 under the heading And he shall skin the rededication-offering).

(4) Homage-offerings (7:9-10)

Verses 9-10. And every homage-offering that is baked in the oven and every one that is made in a pan or on a griddle will belong to the priest who brings it [to the altar].

10 Even every homage-offering, whether mixed with oil or dry, will belong to all the sons of Aaron, a man like his brother.

And every homage-offering. This verse moves to the special responsibilities of the priests concerning homage-offerings. The portions of homage-offerings that were not roasted on the altar were to be eaten by the priests, just like sin-offerings and offense-offerings. In the case of homage-offerings, the message to the people had already specified that priests were to eat the portions that were not offered on the altar (see comments on Lev. 2:3 in MESSAGE 1 under the heading [It is] a holiness of holinesses; and on Lev. 6:16-18 above).

that is baked in the oven and every one that is made in a pan or on a griddle. The main emphasis of these verses is that the regulations concerning the eating of the homage-offering applied to all types of that offering that were described in Leviticus 2:1-10 (see comments on those verses in MESSAGE 1).

will belong to the priest who brings it [to the altar]. The portion of the homage-offering that was not offered on the altar was to belong to the priest who officiated over the offering. He was to eat it in The Holy [Place] as a sign that Jehovah had received the worshiper's possessions, which the worshiper had dedicated to Him, and that He would use them in His work.

Even every homage-offering, whether mixed with oil or dry. These words make it even more specific that the remainder of an homage-offering after Jehovah's portions had been offered on the altar belonged to the priests. No provision was made in the instructions concerning homage-offerings in MESSAGE 1 for an homage-offering to be offered without the use of any oil at all. However, a difference was made between homage-offerings in which the oil was mixed in the dough (oven-bakes bread, Lev. 2:4, and pan-baked bread, Lev. 2:7) and homage-offerings in which the oil was poured over the offering after it was placed on the altar (raw flour, Lev. 2:1, and early produce, Lev. 2:14-16). That distinction is maintained in this verse by using the words "mixed with oil" to indicate an offering in which the oil was mixed in the dough and the word "dry" to indicate an offering in which the oil was poured over the offering after it was placed on the altar.

will belong to all the sons of Aaron, a man like his brother. This statement makes specific an insight that was implied in Leviticus 6:26 and Leviticus 6:29 that, though the priest who officiated over an offering received the portion that belonged to the priests and he was primarily responsible for handling it properly, he was free to share it with other priests (see comments on Lev. 6:26 above under the heading will eat it in The Holy Place. It must be eaten in the court of The Tent of Meeting). In fact, this statement says he was obligated to share it with other priests. They were to treat each other

as brothers and freely share. The result was that eating the portions of the offerings that belonged to the priests became a time of holy fellowship among Jehovah's anointed ministers. It helped to mold the priests into a holy brotherhood.

- (5) Slaughter-offerings (7:11-21)
 - (a) For thanksgiving (7:11-15)

Verse 11. And this is the law of the slaughter-offering of peace-offerings that he may offer to Jehovah.

This verse begins a discussion of the principles that were to guide the priests as they supervised the observance of slaughter-offerings of peace-offerings (see comments on Lev. 3:1 in MESSAGE 1 under the heading a slaughter-offering of peace-offerings.)

Verse 12-13. 12 If one offers it for thanksgiving, then he shall offer with the slaughter-offering of thanksgiving unleavened cakes mixed with oil and unleavened wafers smeared with oil and well-mixed fine flour cakes mixed with oil.

13. With cakes of leavened bread he may offer his offering with a slaughter-offering of peace-offerings of thanksgiving.

If he offers it for a thanksgiving. One occasion on which a worshiper could offer a slaughter-offering was to express thanksgiving for some blessing he had received from God. Two other occasions are mentioned in verse 16. A slaughter-offering was divided out among Jehovah, the priests, and the worshiper. As each received and consumed his portion of the offering, harmonious fellowship was symbolized and actually enjoyed. When a slaughter-offering was offered to express thanksgiving, all those who shared in eating the offering joined in expressing thanks to Jehovah for His blessings. Jehovah's portion of the fellowship feast was the fat that was roasted on the altar (see comments on Lev. 3:3-5 in MESSAGE 1). This passage is devoted to discussing the portion of the animal that went to the worshiper and his guests.

then he shall bring with the slaughter-offering of thanksgiving. When offered to express gratitude, the offering was called a “slaughter-offering of thanksgiving.” This phrase does not describe a different type of offering and probably was not meant to be a special name for the offering. “Slaughter-offering” was the name of the offering, and “of thanksgiving” described the purpose for which it was offered. This phrase occurs only three other times in the Old Testament (Lev. 22:29; Ps. 107:22; 116:17).

unleavened cakes mixed with oil, and unleavened wafers smeared with oil, and well-mixed fine flour cakes mixed with oil. When a worshiper offered a slaughter-offering to express thanksgiving, he was to accompany it with cakes of bread. The purpose was to provide bread for the feast to be eaten along with the meat. Offering bread with a slaughter-offering identified it as a slaughter-offering brought for the purpose of thanksgiving. The bread helped to distinguish it from slaughter-offerings for other purposes.

These words mention three kinds of bread that could be presented with a slaughter-offering of thanksgiving. The first two kinds of bread are described in the same words as breads used for an homage-offering of oven-baked bread (see comments on Lev. 2:4 in MESSAGE 1 under the heading [It must be] unleavened cakes of fine flour mixed with oil or unleavened wafers smeared with oil). The third kind of bread is clearly the same as the grilled bread that could be offered as an homage-offering (see comments on Lev. 2:5 in MESSAGE 1). However, this bread was not brought as an homage-offering. It was bread to accompany the slaughter-offering as, so that those who participated in the fellowship feast would have bread to eat as well as meat.

With cakes of leavened bread he may offer his offering with a slaughter-offering of peace-offerings of thanksgiving.

These words describe a fourth kind of bread that could be presented with a slaughter-offering of thanksgiving. This bread included leaven. Leaven was allowed in this bread because the breads being described in this verse were not roasted on the altar.

They were for Jehovah, but they were assigned to the priests to eat along with their share of the meat of the slaughter-offering. No leaven was allowed on the altar, because leaven tended to encourage spoiling; however, leavening was not forbidden in the food of the priests or of the people (see comments on Lev. 2:11-12 in MESSAGE 1). The priests' portion of the fellowship meal was eaten by the priests and their families in their homes (see comments on Lev. 7:33-34 in MESSAGE 9, on Lev. 10:14 in MESSAGE 11, and on Lev. 22:10-13 in MESSAGE 27); and the worshiper's portion was eaten with his guests in The Holy Place. Since this bread was a part of the fellowship feast and not offered on the altar, leavened bread was allowed.

Verse 14. **And he shall offer from it one from each [kind of] offering [as] a contribution to Jehovah. It will belong to the priest who splashes the blood of the peace-offerings.**

And he shall offer from it one from each [kind of] offering [as] a contribution to Jehovah. One cake of each kind of bread was to be taken out of the basket to be Jehovah's portion of the bread. This first part of each kind of bread belonged to Jehovah to honor his preeminence. However, Jehovah assigned that portion to the priests to be eaten by them in their part of the fellowship meal.

Jehovah's portion of the bread that was assigned to the priests is called a “contribution.” The word translated “contribution” has given much difficulty to translators. It comes from a root which means “to be high,” or “to be exalted.” Two ideas have been proposed as to why this portion of the bread was connected with the idea of being high or lifted up. One is that this offering may have been raised up above the altar before it was given to the priests. This could have been the case with regard to the bread offered with a slaughter-offering of thanksgiving; however, the term was used in other instances where that ceremony seems to have been impossible. For instance, the term was applied to voluntary gifts given for the construction of The Tabernacle (Ex. 25:2,3; 35:5,21,24; 36:3,6) and to the half-shekel offering that was given by each Israelite over twenty years of age when a census was taken (Ex. 30:13,14,15). It was also used in connection with the tithe (Num. 18:24) and in

connection with the priest's portion of booty that the Israelites took when they defeated the Midianites (Num. 31:29,41,52). In each of these instances, lifting the offering over the altar seems most unlikely. The other idea that has been proposed is that this word refers to an offering that was "lifted out" of a larger amount. In every instance where this term is used, that which was given was a portion of the person's income or a portion of booty taken. Thus, this explanation of the meaning of the word seems best. A contribution is a gift that a person lifts out of his possessions for the benefit of another. Therefore, the translation "contribution" will be used for this term in this writing. In this case, the "contribution" was the portion of each type of bread which was lifted out of the basket of bread for Jehovah and then assigned to the priests.

The term "contribution" does not occur in the Record prior to Sinai as a reference to a portion of a slaughter-offering. This phase of the slaughter-offering seems to have been introduced at Sinai. Prior to Sinai, priests did not officiate over the offerings. Heads of families did the officiating, so no need existed for a portion for the priests prior to Sinai (see Introduction to MESSAGE 1).¹

It will belong to the priest. Jehovah's share of the thanksgiving feast was not roasted on the altar but given to the priest who officiated at the offering. It was contributed to Jehovah through meeting the needs of His priests and their families. Jehovah assigned His portion of the bread to the

priests to be eaten with their portion of the fellowship meal. The remainder of the bread was eaten by the worshiper and his guests in their portion of the fellowship meal.

who splashes the blood of the peace-offerings. Priests are identified in several ways in the book of Leviticus. Here a priest is identified as one "who splashes the blood" on the altar. Priests were the only ones who were authorized to perform that service. This verse is consistent with the description of the handling of the blood in this offering as described in MESSAGE 1 in that the word "splash" is used in both passages (compare this verse with Lev. 3:2,8,13).

Verse 15. And the meat of the slaughter-offering of peace offering for his thanksgiving must be eaten on the day of his offering. He must not leave any of it until morning.

This verse applies to the meat of the offering, probably both to the portion eaten by the priests and also to the portion eaten by the worshiper and his guests. It applies, not to the bread that accompanied the offering, but to the meat of the offering itself. It had to be eaten on the same day that the animal was presented at the altar. Spoilage of the meat may have played a role in this requirement, because old or spoiled meat surely would not have been expressive of fellowship. However, slaughter-offerings offered for other purposes could be eaten on the second day (see comments on Lev. 7:16 below). The delay of another day in that case seems to indicate some other reason. The reason seems to be to preserve the connection between the meal and the blessing for which the worshiper was grateful. The blessing had been received at some previous time, and delay in eating the meat of the offering would have tended toward forgetting the reason for which the offering was presented.

¹ KJV translates this word as "heave offering, "oblation," and "offering." ASV does the same, except that it adds a hyphen, to form the word "heave-offering." HCSB alternates between translating it as "offering" and as "contribution." RSV uses a variety of translations but most often uses "offering." SGV, NASB, NEB use great variety but most often translate with "contribution." DRV uses many translations but amazingly most often translates it as "firstfruits." JB translates this word in twelve different ways but uses "portion set aside" more often than any other. LV so completely frees itself from the text in rendering this word that the distinctiveness of this offering disappears completely in that version. ABV goes even further by translating this one word in twenty-one different ways. The only translation it uses more than four times is "offering." It is obvious that the translators are confused. The English reader has to be even more so.

- (b) With payment of a vow
or a voluntary gift
(7:16-21)

Verse 16. And if [he offers it for] a vow or [for] a voluntary gift, the slaughter-offering of his offering must be eaten on the day of his offering his slaughter-offering, and the remainder of it may be eaten on the morrow.

The verse names two other occasions for which a slaughter-offering could be offered. They were: (1) the payment of a vow and (2) the presentation of a voluntary gift. A vow means a solemn promise to give a certain item to Jehovah at some time in the future (Gen. 28:20-21; 31:13). When an offerer fulfilled his vow, he was to accompany his payment with a slaughter-offering. Actually, this passage leaves the question open as to whether the slaughter-offering was to be presented at the time the vow was made or at the time it was fulfilled. However, other passages settle the question and make it clear that it accompanied the payment of the vow (Num. 15:3,8; Ps. 66:13; Prov. 7:14). The offering of a slaughter-offering with the payment of a vow symbolized that the vow had been made to express the worshiper's joy over the fellowship that existed among himself, Jehovah, Jehovah's priests, and Jehovah's people. His guests at the fellowship meal were witnesses to his joy.

The word translated "voluntary gift" refers to gifts voluntarily given to Jehovah. They were not offered on The Tabernacle altar but given directly to Jehovah's work (Ex. 35:29; 36:3; Lev. 23:38; Num. 29:39; Deut. 12:6,17; 16:10; 23:23; II Chr. 31:14; Ezra 1:4; 3:5; 8:28; Ps. 119:108). A slaughter-offering was to be presented along with a voluntary gift. Like a slaughter-offering presented with the fulfillment of a vow, it showed that the gift was given to express joy over the fellowship enjoyed by Jehovah's people.

Numbers 15:3,8 and Psalm 66:13 show that, if the worshiper desired, he could offer a rededication-offering to accompany his gift instead of a slaughter-offering. In that case, the rededication-offering symbolized that the vow or gift was given to express the worshiper's dedication of his whole self to Jehovah.

The only difference between a vow and a voluntary gift was that a vow was promised ahead of time, whereas a voluntary gift was not. Therefore, a slaughter-offering that accompanied payment of a vow and a slaughter-offering that accompanied the presentation of a gift were both handled in the same way. However, a slaughter-offering that accompanied the fulfillment of a vow or a voluntary gift was conducted differently from a slaughter-offering offered for thanksgiving. This verse shows two features that distinguished slaughter-offerings for vows and voluntary gifts from slaughter-offerings for thanksgiving. (1) No bread was offered with the slaughter-offering for a vow or voluntary gift. It might be said that offering bread in those cases is implied. However, this passage is describing the distinction between the two types of slaughter-offerings. It would seem, therefore, that the omission was deliberate and that it indicated that bread was not offered in connection with slaughter-offerings that were for vows or voluntary gifts (see comments on Lev. 8:2; 9:18-21; 12:12; 23:17 where this distinction affects interpretation.) The logic behind the inclusion of bread with a slaughter-offering for thanksgiving is that it provided a gift to accompany the offering, whereas in a slaughter-offering for a vow or a voluntary the gifts themselves filled that role. (2) The slaughter-offering for a vow or voluntary gift could be eaten over a period of two days, whereas a slaughter-offering for thanksgiving had to be eaten in the same day as the offering. The logic behind the allowance of additional time in the case of a vow or voluntary gift possibly was that the slaughter-offering for thanksgiving was offered for a blessing that had been received previously, whereas the slaughter-offering for a vow or a voluntary gift was offered with a gift that was being given at that time. In the case of the vow or gift, an additional day could be allowed without separating the meal from the purpose of the offering as much as it would have been if it had been allowed in the case of thanksgiving.

Verse 17. And the remainder of the meat of his slaughter-offering of peace-offering must be incinerated in fire on the third day.

Any meat that was not eaten during the fellowship meal on the third day was to be disposed of by incinerating it in fire. Presumably this same provision applied to any meat left on the second day from a slaughter-offering of thanksgiving. The left-over meat was not to be roasted on the altar, because the fat of the slaughter-offering already had been offered on the altar as Jehovah's part of the fellowship-meal at the time the offering was made. The word translated "incinerated" is the word used in Leviticus 4:12,21 for handling an animal offered as a sin-offering. That animal was to be incinerated in a clean place outside the camp (see comments on Lev. 4:11-12 in MESSAGE 2 and on Lev. 4:21 in MESSAGE 2). Since the same word is used in this verse, likely the incinerating of the meat left from these slaughter-offerings was to be handled in the same way as meat from the sin-offering. If the worshiper and his guests had not been able to eat all of the meat, the left over portion was still a part of the offering to God. It needed to be handled in a respectful and meaningful way. It was to be incinerated outside the camp in a clean place.

Verse 18. And if any of the meat of his slaughter-offering of peace-offerings is eaten on the third day, the one offering it will not be accepted. Neither will it be credited to him. It will be spoilage, and the person who eats of it will bear his iniquity.

If any person did eat any of the meat on the third day, the eating would not be accepted by Jehovah. Since the worshiper who brought the offering was in charge of the meal to be prepared from the meat, he was held liable if he let any person eat of the meat on the third day, and he would receive no credit from Jehovah for the offering. His allowing the meat to be eaten without proper connection to the offering would show that his heart attitude was not right, and Jehovah would not accept the offering. The meat that had been improperly eaten is called "spoilage." The word "spoilage" is used only three other times in the Old Testament (Lev. 19:7; Is. 65:4; Eze. 4:14), and always it refers to this left-over portion of a

slaughter-offering. The word means a "foul thing" or "a spoiled thing." The spoilage came from the departure from the ceremony rather than from the decay of the meat. Any person who ate of this left-over portion of the offering would "bear his iniquity," which means, the weight of his sin would bear down on him. He would receive appropriate punishment for his offense (see comments on Lev. 5:1 in MESSAGE 2 under the heading then he shall bear and his iniquity). Lev. 19:7-8 shows that the punishment due was death, because the sin was one of rebellion against God's clear commands (see comments on those verse in MESSAGE 23).

The word translated "iniquity" is the same as that used in Lev. 5:1. It means "crookedness" (see comments on Lev. 5:1 in MESSAGE 2 under the heading his iniquity). The reason this act of eating was sinful was that it destroyed the symbolism of the offering, abused an object set apart for Jehovah, and was disobedient to Jehovah's clear command. Some have seized on passages such as this one to contend that the early Israelites were not able to discern the difference between a moral offense and a ceremonial deviation. Such a contention completely misses the point of the warning in this verse. In the first place, God spoke and revealed this warning. Surely, it is out of the question to contend that He could not discern such distinctions. In the second place, the ceremonies were established by the authority of God. To depart from Jehovah's commands concerning ceremonial requirements was as serious an offense for an Israelite as it would be for a Christian to depart from Jesus' teachings concerning baptism and the Lord's Supper. Baptism and the Lord's Supper are also ceremonies, but they were given by the authority of God. If a Christian deviates from what God revealed about them, he offends against God. In the same way, when an Israelite deviated from the ceremonies revealed by God at Sinai, he offended God and his sin was a sin of rebellion. The real lack of discernment is on the part of the modern critics, not on the part of the ancient Israelites.

Verse 19. **And the meat that touches any unclean thing must not be eaten, and the meat must be incinerated in fire. Everyone who is clean may eat the meat.**

This verse deals with the ceremonial observance of “clean” and “unclean.” The distinction between “clean” and “unclean” was an ancient concepts that had been practiced by the people of God long before Sinai and that had been mentioned four times previously in Leviticus (see comments on Lev. 4:12 in MESSAGE 2 under the heading he shall take out to the outside of the camp to clean place, on Lev. 5:2,3 in MESSAGE 2; and on Lev. 6:11 in MESSAGE 5.). Later Jehovah gave full regulations concerning how the Israelites were to observe the distinctions between clean and unclean, and those regulations are recorded in Leviticus 11-15. Briefly, “unclean” persons, objects, and conditions were symbols of evil or sin. Observing this kind of symbolism was for the purpose of teaching the Israelites by symbols the importance of avoiding every kind of moral evil. An Israelite might become unclean in two ways. He could have an unclean condition in himself, or he could come into contact with a person or object that was unclean. The first represented sin that was in his life. The second represented association with sinful persons or practices. The symbolism taught that both were dangerous to the spiritual life.

This verse gives two instructions concerning maintaining cleanness with regard to eating the meat of a slaughter-offering. First, if the meat of a slaughter-offering should touch an unclean person or object, it was not to be eaten in the fellowship meal. It was to be incinerated, evidently outside the camp in a clean place (see v. 17 above). This rule symbolized that sinful deeds interfere with fellowship among God and His people. Second, every person who was clean was free to participate in the fellowship meal. This rule symbolized that freedom from sin encourages fellowship among God and His people.

Verse 20. **And the person who eats meat from the slaughter-offering of peace-offerings that are for Jehovah and his uncleanness [is] on him, that person shall be cut off from His people.**

If a person did not respect Jehovah’s commandment and ate of the meat of a slaughter-offering while in an unclean condition, he was to be “cut off from among his people.” Failure to obey the commandment was defiance of God. Thus, he was not truly one of God’s people and needed to be removed from them. “Cut off from among His people” was an expression that meant he was to be put to death. This meaning is shown clearly by Lev. 20:1-5, where the expression “cut him off from among His people” is made equivalent to “put him to death.” Though this penalty seems severe for an infraction against a symbolic ceremony, it is a just penalty because these ceremonies were commanded by Jehovah and any departure from Jehovah’s commandments is rebellion against God. Israel was to be a nation of people devoted to Jehovah. Therefore, people among them who refused to be devoted to Him and instead rebelled had to be removed from their midst to prevent the rebellion from spreading throughout the nation (see comments in Introduction to MESSAGE 24 and on Lev. 20:2 in MESSAGE 24).

Verse 21. **And a person who touches anything unclean, whether [it is] uncleanness of a man or unclean livestock or any unclean detestable thing and eats the meat of the slaughter-offering of peace-offering that [is] for Jehovah, that person shall be cut off from His people.**

Also, any person who was unclean through contact with an unclean person, creature, object, or condition and who ate of the meat of a slaughter-offering was guilty of rebellion and deserved the same penalty. “Uncleanness of man” is explained in Leviticus 12-13:45; 14:1-32; 15 (see comments on those verses in MESSAGES 15,16, and 17). “Unclean livestock” is explained in Leviticus 11:1-8 (see comments on those verses in MESSAGE 14). “Unclean detestable thing” is explained in Leviticus 11:9-47 (see comments on those verses in MESSAGE 14).

The word translated “detestable thing” in this verse, and the word translated “spoilage” in verse 18 are both translated “abomination” in KJV. The two words are entirely different and should not be translated alike. The meat in verse 18 was spoiled by being eaten too late to be a part of the ceremony of the slaughter offering. The meat in this verse was detestable because it was

ceremonially unclean. The two ideas are entirely different and should not be confused. The translations “detestable thing” and “spoilage” used in this writing maintains the distinctions in the original Hebrew.

Application.

Christian ministers and worshipers do not handle fire-offerings at an altar filled with glowing coals, but every task or object they do handle in the Lord’s work is sacred and holy. They must be careful to treat with the greatest of reverence all the works of God with which they have a responsibility. For ministers, this responsibility includes every penny of the offerings of their churches and every penny of their salaries. It also includes all the furniture and equipment in their churches, as well as their homes and cars. For lay persons, it includes every responsibility that their church entrusts to their care. For ministers and lay persons, it includes the responsibility of keeping their moral lives scrupulously clean. To propose to work for God without this deep respect for duties and objects devoted to God’s service is hypocrisy and sin. All Christians need to be careful not to take their responsibilities in the Lord’s work lightly or to treat them flippantly. Whatever task God entrusts into our care is a holy responsibility and must be carried out in strict obedience to His commands.