

SUMMARY NOTE ON THE MESSAGES ON THE FIRE-OFFERINGS

Leviticus 7:37-38

General interpretation

These two verses are a note summarizing all of the preceding messages in Leviticus. They indicate that the messages outlining the basic principles of the fire-offerings have been completed. This note was not part of a message given by Jehovah. It was a summary statement written by Moses when he recorded the messages he had received.

Critical Note

Leviticus 7:38 says that these messages were given to Moses “in mount Sinai” but also states that they were spoken “in the wilderness of Sinai.” Driver and White assumed that “in mount Sinai” had to mean up in the mountain. Therefore, they concluded that “the editor” of Leviticus drew from a source that stated the revelations were given to Moses up in the mountain and that he realized that the statement conflicted with the statement he himself had penned in Leviticus 1:1 that the messages were spoken to Moses out of The Tent of Meeting. They then claimed that he added the words “in the wilderness of Sinai: to try to harmonize the two statements. They made these assumptions to support their claim that Leviticus was composed by combining at least two different documents. This conclusion is based on a cynical attitude toward the honesty of “the editor” of these materials. Surely if “the editor” of these materials had been so dishonest as to add a phrase to try to reconcile the verse with his own statement, he would have gone further and omitted the words “in Sinai” altogether. It is not reasonable at all that any “editor” would be so clumsy in an unsuccessful effort to hide his own dishonesty.

The fact is, however, that the Hebrew word “in” was sometimes used to mean “at” (I Sam. 29:1; Eze. 10:15,20). No reason can be given as to why it should not have had that meaning in this verse and in other similar passages (Lev. 25:1; 26:46; 27:34; Num. 3:1). If the preposition is understood to mean “at,” the resultant statement is clear. It means that the messages in Leviticus 1-7 were given “in” the wilderness of Sinai, “at” Mount Sinai, and “from” The Tabernacle.

Verse 37. **This is the law of the rededication-offering, of the homage-offering, and of the sin-offering, and of the offense-offering, and of the fillings, and of the slaughter-offering of peace-offerings.**

This is the law. The word translated “law” is the Hebrew word “Torah,” which most English Bible students know. It is a general word meaning “teaching.” It referred to any truth God revealed, not only to commandments in the strictest sense (see comments on Leviticus 6:9 in MESSAGE 5 under the heading This is the law of the rededication-offering). It means that in these messages Jehovah gave His instructions concerning how the fire-offerings were to be conducted in Israel from that day forward. The word was used in Jehovah’s previous messages only in the messages given for the priests in Leviticus 6:8-7:21 (see the use of that word in Lev. 6:9,25; 7:1,11). In this verse it applies to all the previous messages in Leviticus. It recognizes that the messages given for the people in Leviticus 1:1-6:18 and in Leviticus 7:22-36 were as much official instructions from Jehovah as were the messages for the priests.

This Summary Note then names all the five types of fire-offerings that are discussed in Leviticus 1-7. It means that Jehovah’s instructions concerning the procedures to be used in those offerings had been completed.

of the rededication-offering. Instructions concerning rededication-offerings were given in MESSAGE 1 (Lev. 1:3-17), MESSAGE 5 (Lev. 6:9-13), and MESSAGE 7 (Lev. 6:25-30).

and of the homage-offering. Instructions concerning homage-offerings were given in MESSAGE 1 (Lev. 2:1-16), MESSAGE 5 (Lev. 6:8-18), MESSAGE 6 (Lev. 6:19-23), and MESSAGE 7 (Lev. 7:9-10).

and of the sin-offering. Instructions concerning sin-offerings were given in MESSAGE 2 (Lev. 4:1-5:13) and in MESSAGE 7 (Lev. 6:25-30).

and of the offense-offering. Instructions concerning offense-offerings were given in

MESSAGE 3 (Lev. 5:14-19), MESSAGE 4 (Lev. 6:1-7), and MESSAGE 7 (Lev. 7:1-7).

and of the fillings. All the other names included in this verse are names of offerings that had been used frequently in the previous messages. This name is different. It had not occurred previously. Discerning its meaning has resulted in a variety of opinions. All English translations of this term make it refer to consecrating or dedicating the priests to serve Jehovah.¹ Translating the term in that manner grew out of the fact that the only other occurrences of the term in connection with the fire-offerings were in messages that concerned the hallowing ceremonies for Aaron and his sons (Ex. 29:22,26,27,31;34,35 Lev. 8:22,28,29,31,33). However, rendering the term as “consecration” or “ordination” is an interpretation of its meaning, not a translation. The word literally means “fillings.” Two factors strongly indicate that the term should not be understood to mean “dedication,” “consecration,” “ordination,” or some other similar rendering. Instead, it should be understood to mean filling the priests’ needs through rights given to them at their hallowing.

(1) The first factor that argues against understanding this term to mean “consecration” is that understanding the word in that manner subtracts from the word any distinctive meaning. It becomes simply a substitute for the word “hallowing.” Exodus 29 contains Jehovah’s instructions concerning how priests were to be hallowed or dedicated into God’s service, and

¹ English translations have interpreted this term, rather than translating it; and they have all missed its meaning. KJV and ASV always render it as “consecration.” RSV alternates between “ordination” and “consecration.” SGV and NEB alternate between “installation” and “installation-offering”; DRV between “consecration” and “oblation of consecration”; JB between “investiture” and “sacrifice of investiture.” NASB uses “ordination” and “ordination offering” but adds the marginal note, “Lit., ‘filling.’” HCSB alternates among “ordination,” “ordain,” “ordination offerings,” and “presentation offering.” AB alternates among “consecration and ordinations,” “used in the ordination,” “consecration,” and “ordination offering.” LB uses “ordination,” “consecration used in the ordination ceremony,” “consecration,” “consecration offering,” and “offering.” Amazingly all of these variations occur in just eleven verses which are the only verses where the term appears in connection with fire-offerings (Ex. 29:22,26,27,31,34,35; Lev. 8:22,28,29,31,33).

Leviticus 8 contains descriptions of how those hallowing or dedication ceremonies were actually carried out. In both of those chapters, the word used to describe the hallowing or dedication of the priests is *qadesh* (שָׂדֵךְ), which means “to make holy.” (Ex. 29:1,9,29,33,35,36; Lev. 8:12,33; see also Ex. 28:3,41; 2; Lev. 16:32; 21:10; Num. 3:3; Jud. 17:5,12; 1 Kings 13:33; 2 Chr. 13:9; Eze. 43:26). The term was used not only for hallowing a priest but also for hallowing the whole nation of Israel, The Tabernacle, its furniture, the altar, and other items that were set apart for Jehovah’s use. In various translations, the term has been translated “hallow,” “sanctify,” “set apart,” “dedicate,” “consecrate,” and “devote.” However it is translated, it is the standard term for setting apart a person or object for Jehovah’s service. It would seem logical and reasonable that, when the different word “fillings” is used, it is not just another word with the same meaning. It is a distinct word with a separate significance of its own. Otherwise, the familiar word “to hallow” would have been used. It is better to look deeper to find the distinctive meaning of this term.

(2) The second factor that shows that this term does not mean “dedicating” or “setting apart” to Jehovah’s service is that it makes this summary verse include events that are not mentioned in the materials it summarizes. The messages in Leviticus 1-7, which are summarized by this verse, do not mention the consecration or dedication of the priests. For this Summary Note to be meaningful, all the term it uses must refer to some instruction that is described in Leviticus 1-7, including this term. This term, like the others in the verse, must refer to instructions given in the previous messages, not to instructions given elsewhere.

Meyrick sought to solve this problem by suggesting that the term was used in this verse to refer to the homage-offering commanded in Leviticus 6:19-23. Those verses describe an homage-offering that was to be offered by a priest on the day of his hallowing, but that offering was a private offering of personal commitment, not a part of the public hallowing ceremonies. Therefore, instructions for that private offering are not accurately described by the term “dedicate” (see comments on Lev. 6:20 in MESSAGE 6 under the

heading of This is the offering Aaron and his sons must offer to Jehovah in the day of his being anointed). This suggestion is not an adequate argument for understanding the term to mean “dedication” or “hallowing.”

A different solution was offered by Driver and White. They suggested that the source material used by the “editor” of Leviticus 1-7 contained a paragraph on the “consecration-offering” but that the “editor” omitted that paragraph when he copied the previous work. They then claim that the “editor” forgot to delete the reference to that paragraph when he copied the Summary Note that is found in this verse. This suggestion is wholly supposition, built on the highly questionable development theory of the origin of this book. Not one shred of objective evidence exists to support it.

Keil suggested a still different solution and simply stated that the term refers to the consecration ceremonies that are mentioned in Exodus 29 and Leviticus 8. But there, is no logical reason why this Summary Note for Leviticus 1-7 should have included a reference to only this one item from materials outside the passages being summarized. A better explanation needs to be found, which fortunately can easily be done.

The correct understanding of this name is found in the meaning of the word itself. It means literally “the fillings.” When used apart from the fire-offerings, it always referred to some object that was filled up with another object. Examples are:

Ex. 9:8	filling of the hand
Ex 16:32,33	filling of an omer
Lev. 2:2	filling of a hand
Lev. 8:33	filling of the days
Lev. 16:12	filling of a fire pan
Num. 22:18; 24:13	filling his house
Jud. 6:38	filling of a bowl
1 Kings 17:12	filling of the hand
2 Kings 4:39	filling of his garment
1 Chr. 29:5	filling of himself
2 Chr. 29:31	filling of the hands
Eccl. 4:6,6	filling of the hand

“Filling of the hands” was the most common expression that used the term. That expression

meant that a person's hands were filled with an object that he needed. In connection with the fire-offerings, the term should be understood in the same way. It must refer to some item placed in the priests' hands to fill their needs. Understood in that manner, "the fillings" refers to instructions that were repeatedly mentioned in Leviticus 1-7. The parts of the fire-offerings that were placed in the priests' hands were the portions given to them for their support. Portions of the offerings that were given to the priests include:

- (1) Portions of the rededication-offering (see comments on Lev. 1:6 in MESSAGE 1 under the heading And he shall skin the rededication-offering),
- (2) Portions of the homage-offering (see comments on Lev. 2:3 in MESSAGE 1 under the heading And the remainder of the homage-offering [shall be] for Aaron and for his sons, on Lev. 6:16 in MESSAGE 5 under the heading And Aaron and his sons shall eat the rest of it, and on Lev. 6:22 in MESSAGE 6 under the heading All of it must be roasted to Jehovah),
- (3) First-fruits(see comments on Lev. 2:12 in MESSAGE 1 under the heading but they must not rise up as a soothing fragrance),
- (4) Portions of the slaughter-offering (see comments on Lev. 3:1 in MESSAGE 1 under the heading a slaughter-offering of peace-offerings, on Lev. 7:10 in MESSAGE 7 under the heading will belong to all the sons of Aaron, a man like his brother, on Lev. 7:14 in MESSAGE 7 under the headings And he shall offer from it one from each [kind of] offering [as] a contribution to Jehovah and It will belong to the priests, on Lev. 7:30 in MESSAGE 9 under the heading of Regarding the breast, he must bring the breast to wave it as a wave-offering to Jehovah's face, and on Lev. 7:32-36 in MESSAGE 9),

- (5) Portions of the sin-offering (see comments on Lev. 4:12 in MESSAGE 2 under the heading he shall take out to the outside of the camp to a clean place, and on Lev. 4:21 in MESSAGE 2 under the heading And he shall carry forth . . . and on Lev. 6:26 in MESSAGE 7 under the heading will eat it in The Holy Place).

Since this term is found in a list of types of offerings, it might be supposed that it is the name of another type offering and that it should be translated "filling-offering." However, in this verse the names of the offerings are all in the singular, whereas this term is in the plural. This fact indicates that this term is not the name of a different type of offering but a description of parts of each of the five offerings. It describes the parts of those offerings that were assigned by Jehovah to the priests.

To see how these insights apply to the hallowing of Israel's priests, see comments on Leviticus 8:22,28,29,31.

And of the slaughter-offering of peace-offerings. Instructions concerning the slaughter-offering of peace offerings were given in Leviticus 3:1-17 in MESSAGE 1, in Leviticus 7:11-21 in MESSAGE 7, in and in Leviticus 7:28-36 in MESSAGE 9.

Verse 38. Which Jehovah commanded Moses at Mount Sinai on the day that He commanded the people of Israel to bring their offerings to Jehovah in the wilderness of Sinai.

This verse is specific as to time, place, speaker, and recipient of these revelations. The time when these commandments were given was "on the day that He commanded the people of Israel to bring their offerings." "Day" here does not mean a 24-hour day but the period of time during which God gave the messages of Leviticus 1-7. However long it took for these messages to be delivered, they were delivered in a definite time span. This statement refutes the idea that Israel's distinctive way of worship through fire-offerings developed slowly over many years. Statements in Leviticus are specific that the messages in Leviticus were delivered between the first day of the first month of

the second year after Israel left Egypt and the first day of the second month of that same year. The first nine of the messages (Lev. 1-7) evidently were delivered in the first nine days of that month (see INTRODUCTION TO LEVITICUS under the heading Theme).

The place where these commandments were given was “at Mount Sinai” and “in the wilderness of Sinai.” In Hebrew, the same preposition is used in the phrase “at Mount Sinai” as in the phrase “in the wilderness of Sinai.” The preposition is usually translated “in” in English; however, it often has the force of “at.” Leviticus 1:1 states specifically that Jehovah spoke these messages to Moses out of The Tent of Meeting after it was constructed in the midst of Israel’s camp. The place the commandments were given was not up in or on the mountain but at the foot of Mount Sinai, which is located in the wilderness of Sinai. The major point is that the messages were delivered all in one place, and that that one place was “at” Mount Sinai “in” the wilderness of Sinai. (see Critical Note at the bottom of Introduction to this Summary Note).

The speaker who gave these commandments was Jehovah Himself. The verse says, “Jehovah commanded the people of Israel to bring their offerings.” He commanded the form Israel was to use in presenting fire-offerings to Him.. Thus, Israel’s fire-offerings were divinely revealed. If they were divinely revealed, they could not have been gradually developed by human priests through a slow evolutionary process.

The recipients of these commandments were “the people of Israel.” Many statements in the previous chapters specify that the messages were spoken to Moses and that he was to relate them to the people of Israel. Jehovah’s delivering the commandment through Moses does not refute the

truth that God gave these commandments to the people of Israel. A specific man heard the messages, and he then presented them to a specific group of Israelites, who are identified by name, time, and place.

These statements concerning the time, place, speaker, and recipients of the messages must either be true, or they are a deception. No amount of scholarly interpretation can cover up that the statements must either be factual, or else they are a lie. It is unreasonable to believe that the exalted truths of these messages could have been developed by men who would lie about how they received those truths. These messages present exalted moral ideals that have stood the test of time through the centuries. The forms and ceremonies through which those ideals are presented have changed, but the ideals themselves remain as valid today as when they were first spoken at Sinai. A group of deceivers could not have produced such exalted moral ideals. For deceivers to have produced the moral ideals of this book would have been a far greater miracle than for them to have been announced to Moses by an audible voice produced by Jehovah God in The Tabernacle.

Critical theories about how the offerings of Israel developed over many years turn the book of Leviticus into a lie. In other words, they make the writer of this book into a deceiver. Or worse, if one accepts that this book is divinely inspired, they make God Himself into a deceiver. If we accept the development or documentary theory of the origin of Leviticus, we must throw out this verse. If we throw out this verse, how many more verses of Leviticus are a fake? The only other alternative is to accept this book to be what it claims to be—a record of messages spoken to Moses at Sinai by Jehovah God Himself

Application

Jehovah God is a communicating God. He spoke directly and specifically to Moses, and He commanded Moses to communicate His messages to the people of Israel. He wanted the people to know Him accurately. Therefore, He went to great lengths to clearly communicate who He is and what He is like. Jehovah is still a communicating God. He speaks today through various means: nature, the Holy Spirit, daily experiences, and dreams. But most of all, He speaks through His Word. When we study God's Word, the Bible, we do not just hear good advice that has come through ages of human experience. We hear truth revealed by God, truth that human experience never could have discovered or developed.

Some ask why God does not speak today through an audible voice, like He did at Sinai. The reason is that He does not need to. What He spoke long ago was written down and still exists. He has not changed, so He does not need to change what He revealed in former days. And He has no need to repeat what He already has said. Today we have a much more tangible and effective way of knowing what He has revealed. We have a written record we can read. It is recorded in an infallible, inerrant Book. We have the privilege of receiving that message, not once by a spoken voice, but over and over again through reading a written Word. Since it is written, we have time to study it carefully and absorb it fully. Receiving His message through a written Word is much more satisfactory than hearing it one time through a spoken message.

When we want God to speak to us, we can receive His message any time. All we have to do is open our Bibles and read. His messages there are so extensive that it takes a lifetime of constant study to understand them all. Yet they are so practical that even the simplest can understand enough of them for them to change his life. So let's listen to what God revealed to Moses and to Israel at Sinai, and let's learn from what He said. Then we can go on to fuller and clearer truths God has revealed in later parts of the Bible. We do not need to regret that God seldom speaks today with an audible voice. We have a better way. We have His written inerrant Word that never changes and that will last forever.