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MINISTRIES

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Animal Sacrifices in Light of the Messiah

When believers begin to learn that the Law of God—the Torah—is still valid for believers today and that neither the Messiah nor the apostles taught that any part of it was done away with, some common questions tend to arise. Perhaps some of the most common questions concern the role of animal sacrifices in our theology.

Someone might ask, “Well if it’s true that every iota and dot of the Law is still in effect as Yeshua seems to say in Matthew 5:17-20, what are we to do about animal sacrifices? Do we build an altar and sacrifice goats in our yard?”

In a practical sense, that’s certainly the most relevant issue as it concerns keeping the Torah. How do we keep those aspects of God’s Torah today?

Some other relevant questions that often come up are as follows:

- What is the purpose of the animal sacrifices anyway?
- Are animal sacrifices going to occur when the Messiah returns as several passages in the Bible seem to suggest?
- If so, how do we view them in light of Yeshua’s death, which the New Testament describes as the ultimate “sacrifice” for our sins?
- Finally, what does all of this really have to do with sin, forgiveness, atonement, and the Gospel?

Thankfully, the Bible has answers to these important questions. We’ll explore these questions throughout this teaching and present some answers that will hopefully help you get a clearer understanding of this fascinating topic. After that, we’ll unpack the role that animal sacrifices play in our faith today.

Before we begin, while it’s unfortunate, you’ve likely noticed that this topic is often neglected within modern Christianity. We as 21st century westerners are thousands of years disconnected from the world of animal sacrifice. If we’re honest, it just seems utterly bizarre to us. Our minds get this picture of something from Indiana Jones and the Temple of Doom—creepy ritualistic services and bringing your

pet goat to a man in a strange robe who will slit its throat and sprinkle blood on things. It's weird!

However, being familiar with this topic is crucial to understanding some incredibly significant biblical teachings such as atonement and redemption, which are all wrapped up in the very gospel message of our Messiah. Therefore, we need to get over our western sensibilities a little bit. As Dr. William Lane Craig puts it:

Most of us have never seen an animal slaughtered, much less done it ourselves, and, accustomed as we are to buying our meat and poultry in antiseptically wrapped packaging in refrigerated bins, we are apt to find the animal sacrifices described in the OT revolting. Moreover, most of us have no familiarity with a world in which ritual practices fraught with symbolic meaning play a major role in one's interactions with the spiritual realm, and so the OT cult may strike us as bizarre and opaque. If we are to understand these practices, we need to shed our Western sensibilities and try to enter sympathetically into the world of a bucolic society that was not squeamish about blood and guts, and which had a highly developed ritual system in its approach to God.

-William Lane Craig, "The Atonement," p. 9

Ultimately, learning the details about the sacrifices and offerings is a means to knowing God in a greater way. It helps us understand His holiness and how He desires to be worshiped. It gives us a greater revelation of our Messiah and His work on the cross. This topic is definitely important and relevant to believers in Yeshua—even though it might seem strange to many of us!

With that said, let's begin. First, what exactly is the point of animal sacrifices? Why did God demand them? Why did He establish a priesthood and sacrificial system?

To answer these questions, we need to understand the problem between humans and God.

In the beginning, before sin entered the world, God's presence dwelt with man in the garden. There was perfect fellowship between God and man. Everything was how it should be. But when sin entered the world, that fellowship was broken. The result of sin was that man was exiled from the garden, and thus separated from God's presence:

Genesis 3:23-24

Therefore the Lord (YHWH) God sent him out from the garden of Eden to work the ground from which he was taken. He drove out the man, and at the east of the garden of Eden he placed the cherubim and a flaming sword that turned every way to guard the way to the tree of life.

Man was created to have a relationship with God. That's our purpose in life—to know God, to have fellowship with Him, to bring Him glory. But that relationship was broken due to sin. All of us are affected by this problem of being separated from God. Why? Because God is perfectly holy and righteous and thus cannot dwell in the midst of sin and death. Thus, sinful man cannot commune with God.

This fact of being separated from God due to our sin is the great tragedy of human existence. But the good news is that God promises to one day completely abolish sin and death. There will be a new heaven and new earth and God's presence will once again overtake the earth as it was in the Garden of Eden. As it says at the end of Revelation:

Revelation 21:3

And I heard a loud voice from the throne saying, “Behold, the dwelling place of God is with man. He will dwell with them, and they will be his people, and God himself will be with them as their God.

Interestingly, Revelation goes on to say that there actually won't be a Temple in the New Jerusalem. In the previous chapter we learn that all evil and sin and death will be abolished and swallowed up in a Lake of Fire. Therefore, there won't be a need for a physical Temple or Tabernacle to house God's presence on earth. However, until that time in the future, there is a need for one. Why?

It goes back to the main reason man was separated from God's presence to begin with—sin and death. Simply put, God is holy and His presence cannot dwell in the midst of sin and death. It would be a contradiction—logically impossible. Holiness and life cannot exist in the same place as sin and death.

So the tabernacle and Temple became the boundaries between the holy and the common, clean and unclean, life and death. The purpose of the Tabernacle and Temple was so that God could dwell in the midst of His people and have fellowship with them. But why the need for animal sacrifices?

Well after the Tabernacle was constructed and the glory of YHWH filled it, we still see that nobody could commune with the presence of God:

Exodus 40:34-35

Then the cloud covered the tent of meeting, and the glory of the Lord (YHWH) filled the tabernacle. And Moses was not able to enter the tent of meeting because the cloud settled on it, and the glory of the Lord (YHWH) filled the tabernacle.

So while the presence of God dwelled within the Tabernacle on earth, something more was required for man to be able to commune with God. Leviticus tells us what that is:

Leviticus 1:2

Speak to the people of Israel and say to them, When any one of you brings an offering to the Lord (YHWH), you shall bring your offering of livestock from the herd or from the flock.

This brings us right back to where we started. The reason for a Tabernacle, priesthood, and animal sacrifices lies in the meaning of the Hebrew word “offering” used in this passage.

The word is *korban*, which actually has its root in the verb *karav*, meaning, “to draw near.” Indeed, that's ultimately the point of the offerings—to draw near to God. It all goes back to having a relationship with God, encountering His presence on earth. The Tabernacle, priesthood, and sacrifices are all part of God's solution for restoring the relationship between God and man as we await the New Jerusalem to come.

So man was able to commune with God in the Tabernacle by bringing an offering. The death of the animal provided a sort of proxy for man to draw near to God. In other words, the shed blood of the animal makes fellowship between God and man on earth possible. Look at what it says in the next two verses of Leviticus:

Leviticus 1:3-4

If his offering is a burnt offering from the herd, he shall offer a male without blemish. He shall

bring it to the entrance of the tent of meeting, **that he may be accepted before the Lord (YHWH)**. He shall lay his hand on the head of the burnt offering, **and it shall be accepted for him to make atonement for him**.

We talked about God being perfectly holy and thus He does not dwell in the midst of sin. For Israel, it was serious and risky business to have a holy God dwell in the midst of sinful man. In fact, approaching God carelessly resulted in death as we see with Aaron's two sons, Nadab and Abihu (Leviticus 10). We see this again in God's threat to leave Israel after the golden calf incident:

Exodus 33:3-5

“Go up to a land flowing with milk and honey; but I will not go up among you, lest I consume you on the way, for you are a stiff-necked people.” When the people heard this disastrous word, they mourned, and no one put on his ornaments. For the Lord (YHWH) had said to Moses, **“Say to the people of Israel, ‘You are a stiff-necked people; if for a single moment I should go up among you, I would consume you. So now take off your ornaments, that I may know what to do with you.’”**

In this passage, God said He would still allow Israel to possess the Land that He promised Abraham, despite the golden calf incident. But His presence would *not* go with them. Why? Because His perfect holiness would consume them on the way. Later Moses interceded on behalf of Israel and then God said His presence would go with them because Moses had found favor in God's sight.

The point here, again, is that God's presence is so utterly holy that He will consume all that is unholy when it draws near. Sin cannot exist in the same space as God's holy presence. This was not something to be taken lightly.

Therefore, when it came to dealing with the problem of human sin and death in light of approaching a holy God, the animal sacrifices functioned in a few of different ways. One aspect of the animal sacrifices was propitiatory—that is, averting God's just wrath upon sinful man. Craig explains:

The sacrificial system functioned to facilitate the juxtaposition of the holy and the unholy. It did this, not merely by purging the Tabernacle and its paraphernalia of impurity, but also by propitiating God and so averting His wrath upon the people. The roasting of the sacrificial animals, in particular, is repeatedly said to produce “a pleasing odor to the Lord” (e.g., Lev 1:9, which implies that the sacrifices helped to cultivate God's favor (cf. Gen 8:21).

-William Lane Craig, “The Atonement,” p. 11

Another aspect of the animal sacrifices was expiatory. There were some sacrifices, for example, that cleansed the Tabernacle and sacred objects. But sacrifices also served to remove the ritual impurity as well as the moral guilt *of the people*. They served to make “atonement,” or bring about reconciliation between God and man so that man could draw near to God in the Tabernacle or Temple. This is also a repeated promise in the Torah:

Leviticus 4:20

“...As he did with the bull of the sin offering, so shall he do with this. And the priest shall make atonement for them, and they shall be forgiven.”

Leviticus 4:25,26

“Then the priest shall take some of the blood of the sin offering with his finger and put it on the horns of the altar [...] So the priest shall make atonement for him for his sin, and he shall be forgiven.”

Leviticus 5:9,10

“And he shall sprinkle some of the blood of the sin offering on the side of the altar [...] And the priest shall make atonement for him for the sin that he has committed, and he shall be forgiven.”

So how exactly did the sacrifices bring about atonement resulting in a person’s sins being forgiven so that the worshipper could draw near to God? Why is a sacrifice required in order for a man to be reconciled with God and therefore be allowed to commune with God? Going back to a passage we read earlier, Leviticus 1:2-4, Craig gives us some interesting insight here:

The personal Levitical animal offerings were accompanied by a telling hand-laying ritual. The offerer of the animal sacrifice was to lay his hand upon the animal’s head before slaying it (Lev 1:4). The Hebrew expression *samak yado* indicates a forceful laying of the hand: one was to press his hand upon the head of the beast to be sacrificed [...] this emphatic gesture is plausibly meant to indicate the identification of the offerer with the animal, so that the animal’s fate symbolizes his own. Death is the penalty for sin, and the animal dies in place of the worshipper. This is not to say that the animal was punished in the place of the worshipper; rather the animal suffered the fate that would have been the worshipper’s punishment had it happened to him. The priest’s sprinkling the blood of the sacrifice on the altar, whatever its exact meaning, indicates minimally that the animal’s life has been offered to God as a sacrifice to atone for the offerer’s sin.

-William Lane Craig, “The Atonement,” pp. 12-13

The death of the animal reminds us that we deserve death because of our sin. But the animal dies instead of us. When the worshipper placed his hands on the animal, it symbolized the worshipper’s transfer of his identity onto the animal. The animal, in a sense, died on behalf of the worshipper.

As we’ve noted, animal sacrifices are said to “make atonement” throughout the Torah, which is often connected to the forgiveness of sins. But there’s actually another dimension of atonement that’s interesting for us to consider.

Drawing near to God through presenting a burnt offering included taking the blood from the slaughtered animal and sprinkling it on the sides of the altar:

Leviticus 1:5

Then he shall kill the bull before the Lord (YHWH), and Aaron’s sons the priests shall bring the blood and throw the blood against the sides of the altar that is at the entrance of the tent of meeting.

What was the significance of this ritual? According to some scholars, the key to understanding this lies in the concept of the blood containing the “life,” that is, the soul of the creature. Or in Hebrew, the *nefesh* of the creature:

Leviticus 17:11

For the life [*nefesh*] of the flesh is in the blood, and I have given it for you on the altar to make

atonement for your souls [*nefesh*], for it is the blood that makes atonement by the life [*nefesh*].

When the priest sprinkled the animal's blood on the altar, according to this verse, he essentially applied the animal's *nefesh*, or life, to the altar. Why? Because the "life" is in the blood. However, because of the ritual of the laying on of hands, the animal's blood, or its life, carried the identity of the worshipper—thus, it was symbolically the worshipper's life that is applied to the altar.

So why was the blood placed on the altar? Again, it's all about man having fellowship with God. D. Thomas Lancaster explains:

In the ancient world, people considered altars as touching points between heaven and earth. An altar worked like a gate, a sort of mystical portal between the realm of man and the realm of the divine. Whatever touched the altar became holy (ritually set apart) to God and entered his presence. From on top of the altar, the bodies of the sacrifices ascended in smoke to God. Through the medium of the animal's blood, the offer's soul entered the presence of God. In short, the soul of the worshipper came near to God in his holy place. The sacrificial substitute overcame the problem of approaching a holy God.

D. Thomas Lancaster, "What About the Sacrifices?" p. 17

Now that we have an idea of the purpose of the animal sacrifices, we can move on to see how they might apply in light of the New Testament.

As we mentioned at the beginning of this teaching, Yeshua affirmed the ongoing authority of every "iota" and "dot" of the Torah, which of course would include animal sacrifices. In fact, in the gospels, he directly instructs people to participate in the sacrificial system:

Mark 1:40-44

And a leper came to him, imploring him, and kneeling said to him, "If you will, you can make me clean." Moved with pity, he stretched out his hand and touched him and said to him, "I will; be clean." And immediately the leprosy left him, and he was made clean. And Jesus (Yeshua) sternly charged him and sent him away at once, and said to him, "See that you say nothing to anyone, but go, **show yourself to the priest and offer for your cleansing what Moses commanded**, for a proof to them."

Some might argue that since this event occurred before Yeshua's death and resurrection, the sacrificial system obviously still applied. But after Yeshua rose from the dead and inaugurated the New Covenant, sacrifices are now done away with. The problem with that argument is that the believers in Yeshua in the New Testament, including the apostles themselves, still participated in Temple services long after Yeshua's resurrection. Here are just a few examples:

Acts 2:46

And day by day, **attending the temple together** and breaking bread in their homes, they received their food with glad and generous hearts

Acts 3:1

Now Peter and John were going up **to the temple** at the hour of prayer, the ninth hour.

Acts 21:26

Then Paul took the men, and the next day he purified himself along with them and **went into the temple**, giving notice when the days of purification would be fulfilled **and the offering** presented for each one of them.

In this next verse, Paul uses the Temple service as an analogy in support of his argument that it is right for the people to support their teachers. If Paul saw the Temple service as illegitimate in light of Yeshua's resurrection, surely he wouldn't appeal to it in support of his teaching:

1 Corinthians 9:13-14

Do you not know that those who are employed in the temple service get their food from the temple, and those who serve at the altar share in the sacrificial offerings? In the same way, the Lord commanded that those who proclaim the gospel should get their living by the gospel.

In addition to the New Testament references indicating a continuation of the Temple services and animal sacrifices, many theologians teach that there will again be a future earthly priesthood and temple where sacrifices will be performed after Yeshua's Second Coming and before the new heavens and new earth. This is during what's called the "Millennial Reign." It will be an era when the Messiah will rule and reign on earth from Jerusalem.

Revelation 20:4-5

Then I saw thrones, and seated on them were those to whom the authority to judge was committed. Also I saw the souls of those who had been beheaded for the testimony of Jesus (Yeshua) and for the word of God, and those who had not worshiped the beast or its image and had not received its mark on their foreheads or their hands. They came to life and reigned with Christ for a thousand years. The rest of the dead did not come to life until the thousand years were ended. This is the first resurrection. Blessed and holy is the one who shares in the first resurrection! Over such the second death has no power, but they will be priests of God and of Christ, and they will reign with him for a thousand years.

Theologians have identified this future period of a thousand years when Yeshua will reign on earth to be the same "world to come" prophesied about throughout the *TANAKH*. In the passages discussing this world to come, there are several references to an earthly priesthood and a new glorious Temple that will be rebuilt. And these passages even detail some of the animal sacrifices that will take place. Here is a list of passages within the context of the Millennial Reign that discuss animal sacrifices:

- Ezekiel 43:20, 26; 45:15, 17, 20
- Isaiah 56:7
- Jeremiah 33:18
- Zechariah 14:20-21
- Malachi 3:3-4

In addition to the passages in the New Testament that indicate a continuation of animal sacrifice as well as the passages throughout the *TANAKH* indicating that animal sacrifices will be performed in the future, there's this interesting passage in Jeremiah that is often overlooked:

Jeremiah 33:20-22

Thus says the Lord (YHWH): If you can break my covenant with the day and my covenant with the night, so that day and night will not come at their appointed time, then also my covenant with David my servant may be broken, so that he shall not have a son to reign on his throne, and my

covenant with the Levitical priests my ministers. As the host of heaven cannot be numbered and the sands of the sea cannot be measured, so I will multiply the offspring of David my servant, and the Levitical priests who minister to me.

In this passage, God declares that His covenant with the Levitical priesthood can never be broken. His covenant with them and with David is as absolute as the reliability of day and night. If we doubt the validity of the Levitical priesthood, according to Jeremiah, we must also doubt the validity of God's promise to David to bring the Messiah who will reign from his line. Obviously, that would be very problematic. God keeps His promises. All we need to do is look outside to see that day and night still come. Therefore, the Levitical priesthood has not been abolished.

Having established that, how do we make sense of the ongoing validity of animal sacrifices in light of the New Testament's teaching regarding the Messiah? Do animal sacrifices somehow take away from the value of the Messiah's sacrifice? The key to resolving this apparent dilemma is by recognizing that it is only through the Messiah's death that our sins are forgiven:

Hebrews 10:10-12

And by that will we have been sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ (Yeshua the Messiah) once for all. And every priest stands daily at his service, offering repeatedly the same sacrifices, which can never take away sins. But when Christ had offered for all time a single sacrifice for sins, he sat down at the right hand of God.

Did you catch that? The author of Hebrews states that animal sacrifices could never take away sins. It's the Messiah's sacrifice that takes away sin. This is even clearer earlier in Hebrews:

Hebrews 10:1-4

For since the law has but a shadow of the good things to come instead of the true form of these realities, it can never, by the same sacrifices that are continually offered every year, make perfect those who draw near. Otherwise, would they not have ceased to be offered, since the worshippers, having once been cleansed, would no longer have any consciousness of sins? But in these sacrifices there is a reminder of sins every year. **For it is impossible for the blood of bulls and goats to take away sins.**

As the author of Hebrews says, the animal sacrifices have always only been a shadow that points to the reality accomplished in the Messiah's work. They aren't given to take away sins in an eternal or ultimate sense. They simply point to that which does. Therefore, animal sacrifices made before *and after* Yeshua's sacrifice are memorial in nature and thus do not devalue His sacrifice. There are not two ways of salvation, nor two ways of forgiveness. It's all on the basis of Messiah. Messianic theologian Tim Hegg puts it this way:

Since the animal sacrifices were never given to make the infinite payment for sin which God requires, a payment only the infinite and eternal Son of God could accomplish, we recognize that offering a sacrifice at the Tabernacle or Temple could in no way diminish the value of Messiah's death. Only if the Scriptures taught that animal sacrifices actually did make eternal payment for sin before the coming of Yeshua, could offering them after Yeshua's death signal a disregard for what He had accomplished. In fact, the offering of sacrifices, rather than detracting from Yeshua, point to His work of redeeming sinners.

-Tim Hegg, *"Why We Keep Torah: Ten Persistent Questions,"* p. 33

“But wait a minute!” Some might say. “Doesn’t the Torah teach that animal sacrifices brought about forgiveness of sin?”

This is true. According to several verses we quoted earlier, animal sacrifices clearly atoned for sin. So how do we reconcile this apparent contradiction?

This is cleared up once we understand that the atonement accomplished via animal sacrifice related specifically to matters of ritual purity in regards to the earthly Temple or Tabernacle. That is to say, sin prevented one from being able to draw near to God in the Temple or Tabernacle. Thus, the animal sacrifices functioned to bring about a “temporal atonement” so that the worshipper could return to a state of ritual purity and thus participate in the Temple or Tabernacle service.

Animal sacrifices also functioned as a “shadow” to demonstrate God’s method of forgiving sins in an ultimate sense—that is, the innocent paying the price for the guilty. As Hegg puts it:

The sacrifices functioned to substantiate the *method* by which God forgives sins, but they did not provide the very means for this forgiveness.

-Tim Hegg, “Why We Keep Torah: Ten Persistent Questions,” p. 26

The author of Hebrews himself makes this same distinction between temporal and ultimate atonement:

Hebrews 9:13-14

For if the blood of goats and bulls, and the sprinkling of defiled persons with the ashes of a heifer, sanctify for **the purification of the flesh**, how much more will the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered himself without blemish to God, **purify our conscience** from dead works to serve the living God.

The cleansing of the flesh refers to the worshipper returning to a state of ritual purity so that they can be allowed to draw near to God in the Temple or Tabernacle service. The animal sacrifices, however, could *not* purify the conscience. They weren’t given for that purpose. Animal sacrifices functioned in the earthly realm to purify the flesh, and Yeshua’s sacrifice functioned in the heavenly realm to purify the conscience.

Thus, again, animal sacrifices do not detract from Yeshua’s sacrifice because they weren’t given to purify our conscience. They aren’t intended to take away sin in an ultimate sense. Only Yeshua’s sacrifice can do that.

Some might argue that animal sacrifices are now pointless on the basis that they only directed us to the Messiah. And now that we have the Messiah—the substance—we no longer need the “shadow.” But as we pointed out earlier, if that’s true, the apostles apparently didn’t get the memo. In fact, even the author of Hebrews, who goes to great lengths to demonstrate how the Messiah is a superior sacrifice and priest, acknowledged the continuing validity of the Levitical Priesthood on earth:

Hebrews 8:4

Now if he (Messiah Yeshua) were on earth, he would not be a priest at all, **since there are priests who offer gifts according to the law.**

The earthly priesthood, Temple, and animal sacrifices still serve a valid function. First, they bring about ritual purity for those who had become ritually impure through sin so that they could be allowed to participate in the temple service on earth.

Second, they also serve to paint a picture of God's plan of redemption through Messiah. That's why the author of Hebrews continually describes the Temple, priests, and animal sacrifices as "shadows." Paul uses similar language in Colossians in reference to the Sabbath and festivals, which are said to be a "shadow" of things to come:

Colossians 2:16-17

Therefore let no one pass judgment on you in questions of food and drink, or with regard to a festival or a new moon or a Sabbath. **These are a shadow of the things to come, but the substance belongs to Christ.**

It is a rather visceral experience having to kill something innocent simply because we sinned. It is a deep reminder of the sacrifice Messiah made on our behalf.

It's noteworthy to mention that both Paul and the author of Hebrews state that the Sabbath, festivals, priesthood, sacrifices, etc., *continue to function* in this way. They were writing after the death, resurrection, and ascension of the Messiah. If they thought the "shadows" were functionally meaningless now that Messiah had come, why even bring it up? Why go to such great lengths to explain the role and function of these Torah commandments if they don't even matter anymore? Why not just say, "We don't have to worry about these things anymore, because the Messiah has come"? The very fact that the author of Hebrews spends entire chapters explaining how Yeshua could legitimately be a priest according to the Torah indicates that he still considers the Torah's regulations concerning the priesthood to be authoritative, right?

Another thing to note about this passage from Colossians is that Paul says there are still things in the future to which the shadows point. Thus, not only do the shadows point back to Yeshua's death and resurrection, but they point forward still to Yeshua's future reign and the restoration of all things. Thus the argument, "We already have the substance so we don't need the shadow anymore" is based on a false premise. According to Paul, the full substance has not yet arrived.

For more on this, we recommend our teaching:

[Colossians 2](#)

So as we can see, animal sacrifices in the Torah are far from pointless, even after Yeshua's death, resurrection, and ascension. It's no wonder, then, that so many Christian theologians acknowledge that animal sacrifices will again be performed and will still function as shadows during the Millennial Reign. As the former chancellor of Dallas Theological Seminary, John F. Walvoord, puts it:

Though varied explanations have been given for Ezekiel 40-48 which unfolds these details, no satisfactory explanation has been made other than that it is a description of millennial worship. In any case, it is clear that the sacrifices are not expiatory, but merely memorials of the one complete sacrifice of Christ. If in the wisdom and sovereign pleasure of God the detailed system of sacrifices in the Old Testament were a suitable foreshadowing of that which would be accomplished by the death of His Son, and if a memorial of Christ's death is to be enacted, it would not seem unfitting that some sort of sacrificial system would be used.

-John F. Walvoord, "Israel in Prophecy," p. 126

So now that we've learned the general purpose of animal sacrifices as well as how we ought to view them in light of Yeshua's death, what does that mean for us today? We saw that animal sacrifices will be performed again in the future—why not now? After all, they are part of the Torah, and the Torah remains binding on believers, right? So why do we not perform animal sacrifices today?

First, as we hope to have made clear, we believe animal sacrifices have not been abolished. There's no indication in the New Testament that they've been abolished or made void. Plus, they still serve a valid function and will again in the future. So the reason we don't do animal sacrifices today is not because they've been abolished.

The answer is simply this: We are not able to keep these aspects of the Torah the way God said to keep them right now. Here are a few points to consider.

First, we are commanded to sacrifice only in Jerusalem, the place where YHWH placed His name:

Deuteronomy 12:13-14

Take care that you do not offer your burnt offerings at any place that you see, but at the place that the Lord (YHWH) will choose in one of your tribes, there you shall offer your burnt offerings, and there you shall do all that I am commanding you.

These commandments are to be facilitated by the Levites within a working Temple or Tabernacle in Jerusalem. Since there is no Temple or Tabernacle in Jerusalem and no functioning Levitical priesthood to facilitate carrying out such commandments, there is simply no way to keep them.

To use an analogy, the driving laws in America only apply to drivers. If you don't have a driver's license, you cannot "keep" the laws concerning speed limits, stop signs, etc. In fact, if you attempt to drive illegally—that is, without a license—you would be a lawbreaker, even if you drove below the speed limit and stopped at stop signs. So, in this way, by not driving, you are obeying the law.

It's the same way with the animal sacrifices. The entire framework for keeping the commandments doesn't exist right now. Forget the fact that we aren't "licensed." We don't even have a car. There isn't even a road to drive on right now. Do you get the picture? By not doing sacrifices without a temple, you are in fact obeying the law of God. The Torah commands us to not do sacrifices our own way. It does require a tabernacle or temple with a functioning priesthood. So, by not doing sacrifices in the absence of a temple and functioning priesthood, one is actually obeying the Torah.

So what do we do? Well, the sacrificial system and Levitical priesthood will be reestablished during the Millennial Reign, after the Messiah's Second Coming. So, in the meantime, we do our best to keep the parts of Torah we're able to keep while anticipating the day when we can observe the Torah more fully.

*For more on this, we might suggest our blog post:
What Do I Do?*

Our situation today is really no different than when Israel was in exile in Babylon. The fact that they couldn't keep the commandments pertaining to the sacrificial system didn't nullify the commandments. It just meant that those commandments were on pause until they could return to the land, rebuild the Temple, and start keeping them again.

In conclusion, animal sacrifices are all about having a relationship with God on earth through the Temple service. In addition to bringing about ritual purity, they teach us about the holiness of God and also foreshadow God's plan of redemption through Messiah. They haven't been done away with.

There's no way to perform them right now due to the fact that there's no Temple in Jerusalem, but they will be reestablished during the Millennial Reign. Finally, animal sacrifices do not detract from Yeshua's sacrifice because they were never given to accomplish that which only Yeshua's work on the cross could accomplish.

We hope that this introductory teaching helps with understanding some of the basic and common questions surrounding this subject.

We pray you have been blessed by this teaching. Remember, continue to test everything. Shalom! For more on this and other teachings, please visit us at www.testeverything.net

Shalom, and may Yahweh bless you in walking in the whole Word of God.

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