

## Spiritual Sacrifices: What Should We Offer To God?

In the Torah, God commanded his people to bring animal sacrifices to him when they worshiped. In the New Testament, the apostles speak about offering spiritual sacrifices to God. In first Peter chapter 2, verse 5, Peter says this:

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**1 Peter 2:5** you yourselves like living stones are being built up as a spiritual house, to be a holy priesthood, to offer spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ [Messiah Yeshua].

In Romans chapter 12, verse 1, Paul has something very similar to say. He says:

### **Romans 12:1**

I appeal to you therefore, brothers, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God, which is your spiritual worship.

So, just what are these spiritual sacrifices? What makes it acceptable to God? Is there anything about the physical sacrifices commanded in the Torah that might give us some insight into these spiritual sacrifices? Let's take a look.

The Hebrew word for a sacrificial offering is *Korban*. Korban comes from a word that means to draw near. One of the ideas behind the sacrifices in the Torah, is that the person bringing the offering is drawing near to God. These sacrifices were offered at the tabernacle, which was the place where God would dwell.

### **Exodus 25:8**

And have them build me a sanctuary, that I may dwell among them.

When God had this dwelling place on earth, the sacrifices had to be offered at that dwelling place. Since God was present at the tabernacle, that was where a person would go in order to draw near to God.

### **Leviticus 17:8-9**

And say to them further: Anyone of the house of Israel or of the aliens who reside among them who offers a burnt offering or sacrifice, and does not bring it to the entrance of the tent of meeting, to sacrifice it to the LORD [YHWH], shall be cut off from the people.

This requirement of giving offerings at the place where God dwells gives us some insight into how these spiritual sacrifices should be given.

### **Colossians 3:16-17 I Corinthians 3 : 16, 17**

Do you not know that you are God's temple and that God's Spirit dwells in you? If anyone destroys God's temple, God will destroy him. For God's temple is holy, and you are that temple.

The word "you" in this verse is plural, meaning that it refers to multiple people, not just one person. So Paul here is saying that God dwells in the congregation, which is God's spiritual

temple. So, if we follow the analogy, then the spiritual sacrifices would need to be offered in this spiritual temple—that is, they would need to be offered inside the congregation.

Another aspect to the physical sacrifices is the smell that they would produce.

### **Leviticus 1:9**

...And the priest shall burn all of it on the altar, as a burnt offering, a food offering with a pleasing aroma to the Lord [YHWH]

This idea of a pleasing aroma is a Hebrew idiom. Having a good smell to someone means that you have favor with them; having a bad smell to someone means that you will face their wrath. Here are a few examples of this kind of phrasing:

**Exodus 5:21** and they said to them, “The Lord [YHWH] look on you and judge, because you have made us stink in the sight of Pharaoh and his servants, and have put a sword in their hand to kill us.”

**Genesis 34:30** Then Jacob said to Simeon and Levi, “You have brought trouble on me by making me stink to the inhabitants of the land, the Canaanites and the Perizzites. My numbers are few, and if they gather themselves against me and attack me, I shall be destroyed, both I and my household.”

Those were examples of providing a bad smell and, so, receiving wrath. Here is an example of providing a pleasing smell and receiving favor:

### **Genesis 8:20-21**

Then Noah built an altar to the Lord [YHWH] and took some of every clean animal and some of every clean bird and offered burnt offerings on the altar. And when the Lord [YHWH] smelled the pleasing aroma, the Lord [YHWH] said in his heart, “I will never again curse the ground because of man, for the intention of man’s heart is evil from his youth. Neither will I ever again strike down every living creature as I have done.”

So when the offerings provide a pleasing smell to God, then the one making the offering will receive God’s favor.

What sort of spiritual things provide a pleasing smell to God?

### **Ephesians 5:1-6**

Therefore be imitators of God, as beloved children. **And walk in love, as Christ loved us and gave himself up for us, a fragrant offering and sacrifice to God.** But sexual immorality and all impurity or covetousness must not even be named among you, as is proper among saints. Let there be no filthiness nor foolish talk nor crude joking, which are out of place, but instead let there be thanksgiving. For you may be sure of this, that everyone who is sexually immoral or impure, or who is covetous (that is, an idolater), has no inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and God. Let no one deceive you with empty words, for because of these things the wrath of God comes upon the sons of disobedience.

Here we see that the love of Christ is called a fragrant or good-smelling offering to God, but sexual immorality, impurity, and covetousness brings God's wrath instead. So the people who are doing these immoral things are clearly not offering acceptable spiritual sacrifices.

Here's another example.

#### **Matthew 7:21-23**

Not everyone who says to me, 'Lord, Lord,' will enter the kingdom of heaven, but the one who does the will of my Father who is in heaven. On that day many will say to me, 'Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in your name, and cast out demons in your name, and do many mighty works in your name?' And then will I declare to them, 'I never knew you; depart from me, you workers of lawlessness.'

"Depart from me" is the exact opposite of "draw near," so it appears that the people described in this verse were also not offering acceptable spiritual sacrifices. But these people were prophesying, casting out demons, and doing mighty works—all things that Yeshua himself did. If those things don't qualify as acceptable spiritual sacrifices, then what does? If those things are not the will of God, then what is?

Sometimes, we make the mistake of offering God a lot of things that he doesn't want, instead of a little bit of the thing that he does want. And this is a mistake, because God is very specific about the kind of offerings that he wants from us.

#### **Micah 6:6-8**

With what shall I come before the LORD [YHWH], and bow myself before God on high? Shall I come before him with burnt offerings, with calves a year old? Will the LORD [YHWH] be pleased with thousands of rams, with ten thousands of rivers of oil? Shall I give my firstborn for my transgression, the fruit of my body for the sin of my soul?" He has told you, O mortal, what is good; and what does the LORD [YHWH] require of you but to do justice, and to love kindness, and to walk humbly with your God?

Here we see that there is nothing that can be offered in substitution for the things that God really wants from us. The offerings of justice, kindness, and humility cannot be replaced by other things. And this is true no matter the quantity of those other things.

#### **Psalms 51:16-17**

For you have no delight in sacrifice; if I were to give a burnt offering, you would not be pleased.  
The sacrifice acceptable to God is a broken spirit; a broken and contrite heart, O God, you will not despise.

#### **Isaiah 1:11-17**

What to me is the multitude of your sacrifices? says the LORD [YHWH]; I have had enough of burnt offerings of rams and the fat of fed beasts; I do not delight in the blood of bulls, or of lambs, or of goats. When you come to appear before me, who asked this from your hand? Trample my courts no more; bringing offerings is futile;

incense is an abomination to me. New moon and sabbath and calling of convocation—I cannot endure solemn assemblies with iniquity. Your new moons and your appointed festivals my soul hates; they have become a burden to me, I am weary of bearing them. When you stretch out your hands, I will hide my eyes from you; even though you make many prayers, I will not listen; your hands are full of blood. Wash yourselves; make yourselves clean; remove the evil of your doings from before my eyes; cease to do evil, learn to do good; seek justice, rescue the oppressed, defend the orphan, plead for the widow.”

We know that there was nothing wrong with celebrating festivals or sabbaths, or with offering animals and incense. On the contrary, God commanded his people to do those things! But they are not a replacement for the most fundamental things that God wants from his people, and they do not compensate for failing to love your neighbor as yourself. This is why the spiritual sacrifices have to be offered inside of the congregation—that is, inside of ourselves. Our love for God and for other people may be expressed outwardly, but it originates inside of our hearts.

**Matthew 15:16-20** And he said, “Are you also still without understanding? Do you not see that whatever goes into the mouth passes into the stomach and is expelled? But what comes out of the mouth proceeds from the heart, and this defiles a person. For out of the heart come evil thoughts, murder, adultery, sexual immorality, theft, false witness, slander. These are what defile a person. But to eat with unwashed hands does not defile anyone.”

**Romans 10:10**

For with the heart one believes and is justified, and with the mouth one confesses and is saved.

**Deuteronomy 6:5**

You shall love the Lord [YHWH] your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your might.

If you are wondering what God wants you to do—what kind of offering he wants from you, what his will for you is—we would encourage you to do two things: First, examine yourself. Humble yourself before God, and if there are attitudes or habits that you have that smell bad to him, repent of those sins, and stop doing those things.

And second, look around you, and find ways to be just, and to be kind, and to help meet the needs of the people around you. Don’t worry about your offerings to God being “too small,” because God will not be more impressed by a larger offering. When it comes to spiritual sacrifices, becoming a humble, just, and kind person is exactly the kind of offering that he’s looking for.

We’ll leave you here with one final verse:

**James 4:8-10**

Draw near to God, and he will draw near to you. Cleanse your hands, you sinners, and purify

your hearts, you double-minded. Lament and mourn and weep. Let your laughter be turned into mourning and your joy into dejection. Humble yourselves before the Lord, and he will exalt you.

*We pray you have been blessed by this teaching. Remember, continue to test everything. Shalom!*

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Lussy, le 26. 11. 2020 / Jean-Pierre Trachsel