

Leviticus Chapter 22

Special Regulations For Sacred Offerings



[Picture from abidedknowing.wordpress.com.]

Leviticus 22:1-9 Instruction About Eating the Offerings for Aaron and His Sons

The priests were liable to the same uncleanness instructions as the laymen. Specifically, they could not minister in the Tabernacle:

- If they were a leper
- If they had a discharge
- If they touch a corpse
- If they had a seminal emission
- If they touch a teeming thing
- If they touch someone else who is unclean
- If they eat an animal which dies or is killed in the wild

When the priest was rendered unclean by any of these means, he was to bathe in water and wait until the sun sets. All this was daily uncleanness except leprosy or a discharge, which must first heal before cleansing could take place.

Leviticus 22:10-16 Instruction about the Eating of Sacrifices, for Non-Priests

The priest's family could eat of the sacrificed food. But who was part of the priest's family?

Those who **could not eat** of the offerings were:

- Any layman in Israel or anywhere else
- A sojourner staying with the priest
- A hired man
- A daughter married to a layman
- A widowed or divorced daughter with children



Those who **could eat** of the offerings were:

- The immediate family of the priest, living in his home
- A slave purchased by the priest
- A widowed or divorcee daughter without children who returns to the priest's home to live

Verses 14-16 tell us that if anyone eats any of these offerings by mistake, he is to *add to it a fifth of it and shall give the holy gift to the priest* (22:14).

Leviticus 22:17-25 Animal Sacrifices Must Be Without Defect

Specifically, the animals offered could not be

- Blind
- Fractured
- Maimed



- Having a running sore or eczema or scabs
- Having its testicles bruised or crushed or torn or cut

Verse 23 adds: *In respect to an ox or a lamb which has an overgrown or stunted member, you may present it for a freewill offering, but for a vow it will not be accepted.*

[Unblemished offering picture from www.cofac.org.]

Leviticus 22:26-28 Limitations on Slaughtering Very Young Animals

There are basically two limitations here:

1. Animals could not be sacrificed before their eighth day
2. A young animal and its mother could not be sacrificed on the same day.

Leviticus 22:29-30 A Thanksgiving Sacrifice Must be Eaten the Same Day

Leviticus 22: 31-33 Five Reminders of Their Covenant With God

1. *You shall keep My commandments, and do them*
2. *You shall not profane My holy name*
3. *I will be sanctified among the sons of Israel*
4. *I am the LORD who sanctifies you*
5. *I brought you out from the land of Egypt, to be your God*

THOUGHTS AND APPLICATIONS

Basically, the priests had the same clean/unclean regulations as everybody else. But the clarification of who could eat the sacrifice is interesting. Clearly, all the priest's immediate family could eat it. But who is to be considered part of his immediate family? The answer is, presumably his wife (although she is never mentioned), both sons and daughters, and purchased slaves. But that's all. Guests, hired workers, and daughters married to laymen could not. Apparently, daughters who married within the family of Aaron could eat of the sacrifices. After a few generations, this would not necessarily be a close relative.

The interesting thing is, divorced or widowed daughters, who had no children and returned home, and purchased slaves could eat the sacrifice. This would seem to say that widowhood and divorce and slavery were real (even though they were not necessarily right) in the sight of God. There is no consideration given here for whether the divorce of the daughter was legitimate or not. Only that it was real. The divorced daughter was not seen as still married to her former layman husband in God's eyes (since God is the one saying she is divorced) or she would be unqualified to eat the sacrificial food. She was, it seems, no more married than the widowed daughter.

It could be argued that the divorced daughter and the widowed daughter and the slave had no other means of support except the priest/father. But this is not about having enough to eat. The same argument could be made for the widowed or divorced daughter with children who returns home, the sojourning guests, and hired men. They could all eat any of the other food in the home of the priest. This is not about their physical support but about what honors and dishonors the food which has been sacrificed to God.

We should not ask the question: "Why these regulations?" For example, "Why can a divorced or widowed daughter without children eat of the sacrifices and the one with children cannot?" The answer is—the ones with children were unclean with respect to eating the sacrificed food. But why

is that? Only God knows. This chapter is clearly about **what** God says is holy, not **why** God says it is holy.