

# The Sacrificial System

Leviticus 1:1-2

## I. Preliminary Discussions

### A. Categories of Offerings

The opening chapters of Leviticus introduce the five main types of offerings that will dominate the religious life of Israel under the Mosaic Covenant. These five offerings can be divided into two categories of sacrifices based on certain linguistic features.

#### 1. Communal Offerings

- a) The burnt offering, grain offering, and fellowship offering comprised the category of communal offerings.
- b) They are distinguished by the repeated use of the phrase **רִיחַ־נִיחֻיֹת לַיהוָה**, “a soothing aroma to Yahweh.”
- c) They were voluntary offerings expressing the worshiper’s faith, devotion, and communion with God.

#### 2. Expiatory Offerings

- a) The sin offering and guilt offering make up the category of expiatory offerings.
- b) They are distinguished by the absence of the phrase, “a soothing aroma to Yahweh.” Thus, they are often called “non-soothing aroma offerings.”
- c) They were obligatory offerings made to God to repair the relationship with God which had been broken because of sin of impurity.
- d) They were often followed by communal offerings which expressed thanks and devotion for God’s gracious forgiveness and a return of fellowship with him.

## II. Prescript (1:1-2)

### A. Literary functions

1. Sets the book within the larger literary structure of the Pentateuch (1:1; cf. Exod 40:34-35).
2. Introduces the book as a whole (cf. 27:34)
3. Introduces in general the laws for the sacrificial system (cf. 7:37-38)
4. They introduce the laws specifically for the communal offerings (cf. 4:1; 5:14)

### B. Setting

1. The phrase “tent of meeting/meeting tent” appears frequently throughout Leviticus and refers to a designated location where Yahweh met with various individuals for the purpose of revelation or ritual sacrifice.
2. There are two structures in the Pentateuch referred to as the “tent of meeting.”

Nathan Schneider

- a) A structure set up by Moses outside the camp of Israel where Moses met with Yahweh (Exod 33:7).
  - b) The tent structure located in the center of the tabernacle courtyard (Exod 40:34-35).
3. Throughout Leviticus, the “tent of meeting” refers to the tabernacle structure, which superseded the temporary structure set up by Moses.