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Then Noah Built an Altar to the LORD and He Sacrificed Burnt Offerings On It 8: 20-22

Then Noah built an altar to the LORD and He sacrificed burnt offerings on it **DIG:** Why do you think ADONAI has decided not to destroy the human race again, even though mankind is still evil? To what future and final solutions does God's mercy point? What is the LORD's evaluation of the basic nature of mankind?

REFLECT: What motivates you to worship God? What is more important, method or motivation? Why? How do you make a pleasing aroma to ADONAI?



The first thing **Noah** did was to build **an altar to ADONAI**, to thank **Him** for **His** gracious protection and pray for **His** mercy in the future. This is also the first mention in the Bible of the word **altar**. At this point the garden of Eden has been destroyed by the Flood. They no longer had the visible Sh'khinah presence to whom they could bring their **offering**. So, **Noah** sets the pattern that will eventually be written down in the book of **Leviticus** and builds **an altar**.

Noah sacrificed some of the clean animals and clean birds, probably the seventh of every kind that he had taken into the ark **(8:20a)**. The idea of cleanness in the TaNaKh is

rooted in the holiness of **ADONAI**. Certain animals were *set apart* for worship, they were **the clean animals**. **The LORD** looked upon these with favor. However, others were *not to be used* for worship because they were deemed unclean and unacceptable to **Him**. Earlier, Cain had brought an unacceptable offering to **the LORD**, while **He looked with favor on Abel and his offering (4:4-5)**. **Noah** was fully aware of the oral tradition of the system of worship that would eventually be written down by Moses in the book of **Leviticus**.

Therefore, **his** offering was not only acceptable because **clean animals** and **birds** were used, but also because **Noah sacrificed burnt offerings on the altar (8:20b)**.

Burnt offerings were a voluntary act of worship and atoned for unintentional sin in general. They were an expression of devotion, commitment and complete surrender to **the LORD** (see my commentary on **Exodus**, **to see link click Fe - The Burnt Offering**). **The burnt offering** had to be a **bull, ram or male bird**, a dove or a young pigeon for the poor. **Noah** was **to burn all of it on the altar**. **It was a burnt offering, an offering made by fire, an aroma pleasing to ADONAI (Leviticus 1:6-9)**.

The LORD is pictured as smelling **the pleasing aroma** of **Noah's offering (8:21a)**.

Sacrificed **animals** do not atone for **sin**, as the writer to the Hebrews states so beautifully: **it is impossible for the blood of bulls and goats to take away sins (Hebrews 10:4)**.

Only **Christ** can do that. So before **the Messiah** came, the sins of TaNaKh believers were temporarily set aside when they brought an acceptable offering as Abel had done. On what basis was their **sin** set aside? It was their faith. **When they brought their offering, it demonstrated their faith** because **without faith it is impossible to please God (Hebrews 11:6)**. The reason the **aroma** of **the burnt animal** was **pleasing to the LORD**, was that it represented **faith**. **And ADONAI said in His heart**, indicates that it was something that **He** was going to commit **Himself** something. But, it had both a negative and a positive aspect.

Negatively, **He** promised this: **Never again will I curse the ground because of man, even though every inclination of his heart is evil from childhood (8:21b)**. This is **the LORD's** way of saying that mankind has a **sin** nature. **This becomes the source of the rabbinic doctrine of the evil inclination. The rabbis teach that everyone is born with an evil inclination and a good inclination. But the evil inclination often gains mastery over the good inclination.** While Judaism does not believe that man has a **sin** nature, it comes close with this concept of **the evil inclination**. But in spite of that fact that **every inclination of man's heart is evil from childhood**, **ADONAI** promised that **He** would **never again destroy all living creatures, as He had done** with the Flood. **The LORD** had taught mankind that sin inevitably brings judgment. Destroying mankind every few generations would serve no useful purpose.

Positively, as long as the earth endures, certain things will never cease. In essence, **ADONAI** promised to continue the cycle of seasons because, in this cycle, **He** would reveal essential sanctification truths through the Jewish festivals (see the commentary on **Leviticus Dw - God's Appointed Times**). These High Holy Days correspond to the physical seasons. In addition, these festivals would be prophetic in nature and picture the First and Second Comings of **His Son** (see the commentary on **Leviticus Ed - The Four-Month Interval**).

He mentions four things. First, **seed time and harvest**, secondly, **cold and heat**, thirdly, **summer and winter**, and fourthly, **day and night**. As long as the earth exists, the cycle of life will continue (**8:22**). This is what **Jeremiah** calls the **covenant with day and night (Jeremiah 31:35-37, 33:17-26)**. **The rabbis teach that this oath would only be enforced as long as the earth lasts. But in the last days, ADONAI will destroy the earth completely and renew it, and at that time He will not be restrained by this oath.** This closely resembles the view of **Peter** in the New Covenant. **The present heavens and earth are reserved for fire, being kept for the day of judgment and destruction of ungodly men (Second Peter 3:7)**. After the thousand-year rule of **Jesus Christ** on this earth, there will be a **new heaven and new earth, for the first heaven and first earth will have passed away (Revelation 21:1)**.

The rabbis teach that after YHVH made these promises to Noah, He outlined to Noah, and to the future generations which would come from him, some of their responsibilities. In fact, the rabbis see a total of seven stipulations from these verses . They call these torahs, the Seven Commandments given to the descendants of Noah. The Torah of Moshe, the rabbis assert, was given to Isra'el; obedience to these seven mitzvot alone was, in ancient times, also required on non-Jews living among the Israelites, or attaching themselves to the Jewish community. The seven mitzvot are:

- 1. the establishment of courts of justice**
- 2. prohibition of blasphemy**
- 3. prohibition of idolatry**
- 4. prohibition of incest**
- 5. prohibition of murder**
- 6. prohibition of robbery**
- 7. prohibition of eating fresh cut meat of a living animal (eating of blood)**

It is important to note the similarity between these seven mitzvot and the four

requirements the Messianic Community placed upon the non-Jewish believers who were coming into the believing community in Acts 15:20. The non-Jews were, in essence, being asked to follow all the traditional guidelines any Jewish community would have asked of its non-Jewish members. Interestingly enough, in the next verse it says, Moshe “is read in the synagogues every Shabbat.” In other words, they were telling the new non-Jewish believers that they had to follow these minimal guidelines as equal participants in their communities. If there was a desire to learn and do more, their leadership told them how to do so - they just had to go to the synagogue where they would hear the teachings of Moshe (Sanhedrin 56 a-b)!

Although there would never again be a worldwide judgment there would be a perpetual testimony that could be **clearly seen** by all mankind yet to come. The testimony of **the Flood** is seen everywhere in the structure of the rocks of the earth’s surface, the worldwide *fossil graveyard*, and the universal evidence of *catastrophism*. **Man’s sin** nature has distorted both into a system of *evolution* and *uniformitarianism*. But the Bible says that even though **they deliberately forget they** are still held accountable (**Second Peter 3:5**) because **what may be known about God is plain to them. For since the creation of the world God’s invisible qualities - His eternal power and divine nature - have been clearly seen, being understood from what has been made, so that men are without excuse (Romans 1:19-20)**. Mankind is held accountable because the evidence is everywhere for all who have eyes to see. **The Lord is patient, not wanting anyone to perish, but everyone to come to repentance (Second Peter 3:9b)**.

ADONAI was going to make a covenant, or an agreement, with **Noah**. We will see this new beginning as we begin the next chapter. This covenant is a very important one. When **God** made it with **Noah**, **He** made it with you and me and the entire human family that is on the earth today.¹⁵⁹