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The Unblemished Sacrifice 22: 17-25

The unblemished sacrifice DIG: What do God's values say about His expectations for approaching Him? What does the desire for perfection say about the value of the offering? Of the Recipient? Of the worshiper? Compare the descriptions that render both the sacrifices and priests unfit for the bronze altar (Leviticus 21:18-20 and Leviticus 22:22-24).

REFLECT: Why do you think ADONAI only accepts perfect sacrifices? In what area of your life are you giving less than your best? Where are you trying to just get by with offering God the leftovers of your life? What is keeping you from offering the LORD your best? What will you do today to begin giving Him your best? Who can you help with this?

After five days of testing, Yeshua qualified as the perfect Lamb of God without blemish.



Levitical **sacrifices** were to be **unblemished animals**. The Hebrew word translated **unblemished** is *tamim*, the same word which is sometimes rendered *integrity*, or sometimes as *perfect*. Since the beginning of **Leviticus**, every prescribed **animal sacrifice** has been required to be **unblemished**, but until now, we haven't had a description of what constitutes a **blemish**. The Torah continues

with a long list of **defects** that disqualify an **animal** from **sacrifice**. It is prohibited to even bring a **blemished animal** for **sacrifice** because it will not be accepted.⁴⁰²

ADONAI said to **Moshe**, “**Speak to Aaron and his sons and to the entire people of Isra’el; tell them: ‘When anyone, whether a member of the house of Isra’el or a foreigner living in Isra’el, brings his offering, it can be either in connection with a vow (Hebrew: *neder*) or as a voluntary offering (Hebrew: *nedabah*) (22:17-18a).’**” **Vows** were an important element of **Israelite** religion, and making a **vow**, in itself a private act, was often interrelated with public worship. In **First Samuel** we learn that **Elkanah** and **his** family, on a pilgrimage to **Shiloh** to offer the annual **sacrifices**, attended to their private **vows** on the same occasion. The payment of a **vow** could take the form of a **sacrifice**. The appropriateness of **the Peace Offering (to see link click [Ak](#) - The Peace Offerings: At Peace with God)** for such a payment is suggested in **Proverbs 7:14**. There we read that a **prostitute** might lure an unsuspecting young man to **her** house by offering him a portion of her **peace sacrifice**, “**I had to offer peace sacrifices today, and I fulfilled my vows**. There were no restrictions regarding where the donor of a peace offering could eat his portion of **the offering**, so long as it was done promptly, **and brought it to ADONAI as a burnt offering (22:18b)**. **The burnt offering** (see [Ai](#) - **The Burnt Offering: Acceptance by God**), in addition to being the mainstay of public worship, **it** also served as an individual **sacrifice**, often brought as a **voluntary offering**.⁴⁰³

Gentiles, or **foreigners**, also donated **sacrificial offerings** to **YHVH**. In the ancient Near East, it was customary to pay respect to the god of the host country. **Solomon’s** prayer (see the commentary on **the Life of Solomon [Bn](#) - Solomon’s Prayer of Intercession: The fifth request - a prayer for foreigners**), refers to **the stranger** from a distant land who, impressed with the reputation of **the God of Isra’el**, wished to worship **Him** in Jerusalem.⁴⁰⁴

In order for you to be accepted, you must bring a male without defect from the cattle, the sheep or the goats. It was better not to **vow**, than to try one’s best and fall short. **You are not to bring anything with a defect, because it will not be accepted from you. Whoever brings a sacrifice of peace offerings to ADONAI in fulfillment of a vow or as a voluntary offering, whether it come from the herd or from the flock, it must be unblemished and without defect in order to be accepted. Deuteronomy 17:1** states the same requirement, but to the children of **the Exodus** generation.

The disqualifying **defects** are then given in detail. **If it is blind, injured, mutilated, has an abnormal growth or has festering or running sores, you are not to offer it to ADONAI or make such an offering by fire on the bronze altar to ADONAI (22:19-22).**

In the center of this section lies an exception to the general prohibition. **If a bull or lamb has a limb which is too long or short, you may offer it as a voluntary offering; but for a vow it will not be accepted (22:23). Voluntary offerings** allow **animals** to be **sacrificed** even though **deformed** or **stunted**. Having one part of **the animal shorter or longer** than normal did not achieve the ideal sense of balance required for **sacrifices** involving the perfect fulfillment of **a vow**, but neither did it call into question the wholeness of **the animal** as the other **blemishes** and **defects** did. Hence, those types of **animals** could be used for **sacrifices** that were **voluntary offerings**, free expressions of gratitude to the goodness of **YHVH**. However, **an animal with bruised, crushed, torn or cut genitals** could **not** be **offered to ADONAI**. This was a similar disqualification for **priests** in **21:20**. **You are not to do these things in your land (22:24).**⁴⁰⁵

Even if **the sacrifice** is not **their** own, but one that **they** brought to the Temple on behalf of **a pagan**, it must be **unblemished**. The Torah specifically warns: **You are not to receive any of these from a Gentile for you to offer as bread for your God, because their deformity is a defect in them - they will not be accepted from you (22:25).**

Why was it so important that **the sacrifices** were **unblemished**? It teaches us to always place our best in the service of **the Lord**. The human tendency is to live a life of self-service and offer to **YHVH** that which is leftover at the end. We give tithe if we can afford to after all our own appetites are satisfied. We give our time to the Kingdom if there is time left after we have spent ourselves on our own pursuits. The demand for only **unblemished animals** teaches us that **ADONAI** should receive the best of what we have to offer, not the leftovers. In the first chapter of **Malachi**, this message is brought home in a straightforward rebuke. **The prophet** scolds the northern kingdom of **Isra'el** for bringing to **God blemished animals** that even a human **governor** would reject.

A son honors his father and a servant his master. But if I'm a father, where is the honor due Me? and if I'm a Master, where is the respect due Me? I says ADONAI-Tzva'ot to you priests who despise My name. You ask: How are we despising your name? By offering polluted food on My bronze

altar! Now you ask: How are we polluting you? By saying that the table of ADONAI doesn't deserve respect; so that there's nothing wrong with offering a blind animal as a sacrifice, nothing wrong with offering an animal that's lame or sick. Try offering such an animal to your governor, and see if he will be pleased with you! Would he even receive you?" asks ADONAI-Tzva'ot (Malachi 1:6-8). Obviously not!

More importantly, in the B'rit Chadashah, **the blemish** on an **animal** unfit for **sacrifice** came to represent sin. The symbolism was interpreted thusly: Because man is blemished by sin (see the commentary on [Genesis Ay - The Fall of Man](#)), he must bring **an unblemished animal** in his place. **Messiah** is described as **a lamb unblemished and spotless (First Peter 1:19)** who **offered Himself without blemish to God (Hebrews 9:14)**. In this Messianic interpretation of the **sacrificial** requirements, **Yeshua's** perfect obedience to **the Father** made **Him the unblemished**, perfect **lamb** suitable for **sacrifice**.⁴⁰⁶

At **the feast of the Passover** (see [Dy - Pesach](#)), the man of the house was commanded to examine **a lamb** for **the Passover** meal (**Exodus 12:3-6**). For five days, from **the tenth of Nissan** to the fourteenth he was to **examine the lamb** to make sure it was without **defect** or **blemish** and worthy to be **the Pesach sacrifice**. **Yeshua** entered Jerusalem on Sunday, **the tenth of Nisan** and was examined by the Jews for **five days**. As far as the Jewish religious leaders were concerned, they had two goals. They would question **Yeshua** in front of the multitude to turn the people against **Him**, and they looked for a specific way to charge **Him** with a crime so they could put **Him** to death by Roman law. But it was not successful. After those **five days** of examination by the Pharisees, by the Sadducees, by the Torah-teachers and by the Herodians, **Messiah** answered all their objections and questions; therefore, **He** was found to be without **defect** or **blemish** (see the commentary on [The Life of Christ lx - The Examination of the Lamb](#)). **Yeshua** ate the Seder meal on the night of **the Passover**, the same night that all the Jewish people ate it. But because **the Son of God** qualified as **the Pesach Lamb**, **He** was slaughtered on the day of **the Passover, the fifteenth of Nisan**.⁴⁰⁷

Yet **the priesthood** offering **the sacrifices** also had to be **without blemish** (see [Dp - Priests with Defects](#)). That both **priest** and **sacrifice** had to be **unblemished** implied some connection between **them**. Just as **the sacrificial animals** had to be **unblemished** to be accepted at **the bronze altar**, so too **the priest** that brought **them** had to be **unblemished**. The distinction between **priest**

and **sacrifice**, then, begins to blur, especially when we consider the person of **Messiah. He is the unblemished Lamb and the unblemished Priest** all in one (see the commentary on **Hebrews [Ay](#) - Messiah's Qualifications as our Great High Priest**). **He** brought **His** own blood to **the altar of sacrifice. He is Priest and Sacrifice, unblemished** and perfect on both counts.⁴⁰⁸

*Dear Heavenly **Father**, Praise **You** for always being perfectly holy and loving! **Your** holiness means that **You** can always be trusted in all that **You** do and in all that you tell me. Though I may not understand why **You** are doing something, I can confidently rest in the fact that whatever **You** do, it is the very most loving and best for me.*

*When problems come up they usually look big. In the flesh we think: Big Problem - small **God**. But when the focus remains on **God's** Almighty Holiness and love, then the situation is reversed: Big **God** - small problem. The prophet **Habakkuk** wondered why **God** would use the brutal Babylonians to crush **Isra'el** whom **He** loves (**Habakkuk 1:13**). When **Habakkuk** lifted **His** eyes to focus on **his** great **God**, **his** attitude became rejoicing and **he** felt **God's** strength. **Though the fig tree should not blossom, nor fruit be on the vines, the produce of the olive fail and the fields yield no food, the flock be cut off from the fold and there be no herd in the stalls, yet I will rejoice in the LORD; I will take joy in the God of my salvation. God, the LORD, is my strength; He makes my feet like the deer's; he makes me tread on my high places (Hanukkah 3:17-19).***

Jeremiah** also questioned **God's** fiery wrath. **He blazed against Jacob like raging fire, devouring everything around (Lamentations 2:3c)**. Then **Jeremiah** realized that Holy **God** could not tolerate sin and was keeping **His** promise to punish evil. **ADONAI has done what He planned; He has fulfilled His word that He commanded from days of old (Lamentations 2:17a-b)**. As **Jeremiah** lifted his eyes and focused on how merciful and faithful **God** always is, then **he** had **hope**. **This I recall to my heart - therefore I have hope: Because of the mercies of Adonai we will not be consumed, for His compassions never fail. They are new every morning! Great is Your faithfulness. "ADONAI is my portion," says my soul, "therefore I will hope in Him" (Jeremiah 3:21-24).

*When I wonder why sometimes in **discipline**, **You** may allow events to happen in this world that I cannot understand. But I know that I can always trust **You** in every*

*detail to do what will bring the best result, for I know **You** love me. **Now all discipline seems painful at the moment - not joyful. But later it yields the peaceful fruit of righteousness to those who have been trained by it (Hebrews 12:11).***

*Please help me to remember to lift my eyes up to **You**, our wonderful, holy and loving Heavenly **Father**. Then I will have **hope**. **Your** heart is always full of compassion and **Your** mercies are new every morning. Nothing can separate me from **Your** awesome love! Thank **You** and praise **You** always! I have great **hope** as I focus on **You**! In the name of **Your** holy **Yeshua the Messiah** and the power of **His** resurrection. Amen*