

Chapters 8 and 9 of Leviticus describe the elaborate ceremony that was conducted to consecrate Aaron and his sons for the priesthood. After a variety of offerings were made, Aaron and his sons were required to remain inside the tabernacle for seven days while the LORD consecrated them for service. When the seven days were completed Aaron inaugurated his duties as high priest with offerings made in behalf of the people. The LORD then showed His acceptance of the new priests and their offerings when His glory appeared.

Leviticus 8

1 And the LORD spake unto Moses, saying, 2 Take Aaron and his sons with him, and the garments, and the anointing oil, and a bullock for the sin offering, and two rams, and a basket of unleavened bread; 3 And gather thou all the congregation together unto the door of the tabernacle of the congregation.

“And the LORD spake unto Moses, saying, Take Aaron and his sons with him” – The LORD instructs Moses to collect everything that was needed to begin the consecration ceremony and bring them with Aaron and his sons to the door of the tabernacle. They are about to undergo the consecration ceremony that was described by the LORD in Exodus 29.

“and the garments, and the anointing oil” – The garments refer to the holy garments that the priests were to wear when fulfilling their duties. They had been made according to the instructions given in Exodus 28. The recipe for the anointing oil was given in Exodus 30:22-33 and its use was restricted to the things of God. It was used to anoint the objects of the tabernacle in order to sanctify them (set them apart) for the LORD. Aaron and his sons will also be anointed to sanctify them for the priesthood.

“and a bullock for the sin offering, and two rams, and a basket of unleavened bread” – A bull, two rams and a basket of unleavened bread were also brought to be used as the various offerings to be performed during the ceremony.

“And gather thou all the congregation together unto the door of the tabernacle of the congregation” – The congregation of the children of Israel were also to assemble at the same place so that they could observe the ceremony. Since the children of Israel numbered well over a million, the term “congregation” likely refers to the elders and leadership representing the various tribes.

4 And Moses did as the LORD commanded him; and the assembly was gathered together unto the door of the tabernacle of the congregation. 5 And Moses said unto the congregation, This *is* the thing which the LORD commanded to be done.

Moses obeyed and once everyone had gathered in front of the tabernacle, they were ready to start. Moses begins the ceremony by announcing that everything that was to happen was in accordance to commands of the LORD. This was not something that Moses dreamed up to exalt his brother Aaron but was in obedience to the procedure the LORD gave in Exodus 29.

6 And Moses brought Aaron and his sons, and washed them with water.

The ceremony begins with what may have been the equivalent of giving Aaron and his sons a sponge bath. The physical cleansing was symbolic of the fact that those who minister for God must be cleansed of their sin before they can serve. Christ, our Great High Priest, is sinless and His ministers need to endeavor to live clean lives before Him and get forgiveness for the inevitable times when they do sin.

Leviticus 8:7-36: These verses describe the elaborate ceremony to consecrate Aaron and his sons as priests. Moses put the garments of the high priest on Aaron along with the accouterments of the office (the breastplate, the mitre, etc.) before pouring anointing oil over his head as an act of sanctification for the LORD’s service. He then put the priestly garments on Aaron’s sons. Moses then had Aaron and his sons lay their hands upon the bull to identify their sins with it and then slew the bull as a sin offering. The blood was used to anoint the horns of the altar to sanctify it before burning the fat from the bull upon it. Next, the two rams were brought and Aaron and his sons also laid their hands on the head of the first ram which was then offered as a burnt offering. The second ram became the ram of consecration. After Aaron and his sons laid their hands on its head, this ram was killed and its blood used to consecrate Aaron and his sons. Moses dabbed the ram’s blood on the right ear, right thumb and right big toe of each man and then sprinkled the rest of the blood on the altar. The body parts of the ram as well as unleavened cakes and oiled cakes served first as a wave offering and then as a burnt offering. Moses then sprinkled Aaron and his sons with more anointing oil. Finally, they had to spend the next seven days inside the tabernacle for the LORD to complete their consecration.

Leviticus 9:1-21: On the 8th day Aaron and his sons were allowed to exit the tabernacle and instructed to offer a young calf as a sin offering and a ram as a burnt offering. Then Aaron was to instruct the people to bring a young goat kid for a sin offering, and both a calf and a lamb for a burnt offering, each being less than a year old. Each of these offerings and the other various offerings described were offered in the behalf of the people and served to inaugurate Aaron and his sons in their ministry as priests.

Leviticus 9

22 And Aaron lifted up his hand toward the people, and blessed them, and came down from offering of the sin offering, and the burnt offering, and peace offerings.

“And Aaron lifted up his hand toward the people, and blessed them” – Aaron’s position as high priest did not mean that he was exalted above the people; rather his primary role as priest was to serve the people. Through Aaron and his sons being priests, the people now had an avenue for dealing with their sins and so their consecration was an occasion for joy. As a result Aaron lifts up his hand toward the people and pronounces a blessing upon them.

“and came down from offering of the sin offering, and the burnt offering, and peace offerings” – Apparently the altar was slightly elevated, so when all of the various offerings had been completed he had to step down in order to walk away from the altar.

23 And Moses and Aaron went into the tabernacle of the congregation, and came out, and blessed the people: and the glory of the LORD appeared unto all the people.

“And Moses and Aaron went into the tabernacle of the congregation” – We are not told why Moses and Aaron entered the tabernacle or what they did while they were inside. One commentator suggested that Moses took Aaron inside to present him to the LORD. Another suggested that Moses took Aaron inside to instruct him in the priestly duties inside the tabernacle. Another suggestion is that they prayed a prayer of consecration and commitment of Aaron to his priestly duties as well. They likely also prayed for the people and their continued obedience to the LORD.

“and came out, and blessed the people” – The joy of the occasion continued as now both Moses and Aaron bless the people.

“and the glory of the LORD appeared unto all the people” – In what form the glory of the LORD appeared or the location is not described. Most commentators believe the LORD appeared as a bright light. Moses had promised the people that this would happen in vs. 4, 6. The glory of the LORD appeared at the consecration of the tabernacle to show His acceptance of the work that had been done and here the glory appears at the consecration of Aaron and his sons into the priesthood to show that they were accepted as priests.

24 And there came a fire out from before the LORD, and consumed upon the altar the burnt offering and the fat: *which* when all the people saw, they shouted, and fell on their faces.

“And there came a fire out from before the LORD” – In whatever form the glory of the LORD appeared, fire shot out or emanated from Him toward the altar. Perhaps the glory appeared above the altar and the fire went downward.

“and consumed upon the altar the burnt offering and the fat” – The burnt offering was already burning when the glory of the LORD appeared, but the fire from the LORD totally consumed it so that there was nothing left. The fire showed that the LORD also accepted the offering that had been made by the newly consecrated priests.

“*which* when all the people saw, they shouted [to cry out in distress or for joy], and fell on their faces” – It is unclear whether the shout was in fear or in joy because the Hebrew word used here for “shouted” can have either meaning. It would certainly be consistent with the people’s behavior to be frightened at the sight of God’s glory and the fire, for they were frightened at Mt. Sinai when they heard the voice of the LORD and saw the manifestations of His presence on the mountain (Ex. 20:18-20). Alternatively, they may have shouted for joy when they saw that the LORD had accepted Aaron and his sons as priests and the sacrifices that had been offered in their behalf. The people’s response to the sight in either case was to fall on their faces and worship the LORD.