

Numbers 28:9-10

“Then on the sabbath day two male lambs one year old without defect, and two-tenths of an *ephah* of fine flour mixed with oil as a grain offering, and its drink offering: *This is* the burnt offering of every sabbath in addition to the continual burnt offering and its drink offering.”

Daily offerings were to be presented before the Lord in the Tabernacle, and later the Temple, and so it should be no surprise that there were some specific offerings to be made on the weekly Sabbath. The standard offering to be presented before the Lord has been immediately specified in Numbers 28:1-8:

“Then the LORD spoke to Moses, saying, ‘Command the sons of Israel and say to them, “You shall be careful to present My offering, My food for My offerings by fire, of a soothing aroma to Me, at their appointed time.” You shall say to them, “This is the offering by fire which you shall offer to the LORD: two male lambs one year old without defect as a continual burnt offering every day. You shall offer the one lamb in the morning and the other lamb you shall offer at twilight; also a tenth of an ephah of fine flour for a grain offering, mixed with a fourth of a hin of beaten oil. It is a continual burnt offering which was ordained in Mount Sinai as a soothing aroma, an offering by fire to the LORD. Then the drink offering with it *shall be* a fourth of a hin for each lamb, in the holy place you shall pour out a drink offering of strong drink to the LORD. The other lamb you shall offer at twilight; as the grain offering of the morning and as its drink offering, you shall offer it, an offering by fire, a soothing aroma to the LORD.’”

The Sabbath offering of Numbers 28:9-10, is the same as this daily offering, although with some additions. What is stated for the Sabbath offering is an effective doubling of the daily offering, although as Timothy R. Ashley points out, “On this holiest day of the week, in addition to the two lambs of the regular daily offering, two more yearling male lambs without blemish were offered. Num. 28:23 seems to indicate that these additional offerings were sacrificed after the regular sacrifice in the morning.” R.K. Harrison further summarizes,

“The daily burnt offering furnished a regular opportunity for the congregation to consecrate its total life to the Lord, who had bestowed upon Israel its life as a nation. The daily sacrifice was thus basic to all other forms of worship, which were escalated according to their importance. Thus the weekly Sabbath was observed by doubling the sacrificial offerings of the other weekdays. Male yearling lambs were sacrificed, accompanied by cereal and drink offerings as prescribed. The amount of the grain offering was doubled for each lamb on the Sabbath, but nothing is said about an increase in the amount of olive oil. The ceremonies would doubtless occur at midday or early afternoon.”²

What can also be recognized is how the Sabbath observance of the Levitical priests is to be somewhat distinguished from that of the normal individual in Ancient Israel. As Gordon J. Wenham details, “The layman hallowed the sabbath day (Saturday) by resting from his normal work, thereby imitating his creator and recalling his redemption (Ex. 20:8-11; Dt. 5:12-15). The priests marked the sabbath by offering two extra lambs as a burnt offering after the usual morning sacrifice.”³

¹ Ashley, 565.

² Harrison, *Numbers*, 363.

³ Wenham, *Numbers*, 200.

Numbers 28:9-10 Sabbath and Rest in the Tanach

While the Sabbath offering specified in Numbers 28:9-10 effectively doubles the standard, daily offering—it cannot go overlooked how in the future, Messianic Temple foretold by the Prophet Ezekiel, that an even larger sacrifice will be offered:

“The burnt offering which the prince shall offer to the LORD on the sabbath day shall be six lambs without blemish and a ram without blemish; and the grain offering shall be an ephah with the ram, and the grain offering with the lambs as much as he is able to give, and a hin of oil with an ephah” (Ezekiel 46:4-5).

When modern Bible readers see the presence of animal sacrifices presented before the Lord in the Torah—both daily and Sabbath sacrifices—we are admittedly a bit disconnected. We do not live in a time when animal sacrifices are offered as a key component of our religious worship. Yet, these kinds of offerings presented before God, are not intended to provide atonement or covering for sin, but instead “to give a fragrant aroma, an offering made by fire for *ADONAI*” (28:6, CJB). About as far as many can go, in processing a correlation between ancient and modern Sabbath observance, would be to recognize how those in leadership in the Body of Messiah—similar, but obviously not the same as the Levitical priests—do tend to have important duties to fulfill on *Shabbat*. They might not be sacrificing animals, but they will frequently have to help facilitate gatherings of God’s people.

Writing from a Seventh-Day Adventist perspective, which is obviously pro-Sabbath for Believers in the post-resurrection era, Roy Gane offers the following, edifying thoughts in the *NIV Application Commentary* series on this passage:

“In addition to the morning evening and burnt offerings at the Israelite sanctuary, two lambs are to be sacrificed as burnt offerings every Sabbath (28:9-10). It is not surprising that the Sabbath should be honored in this way and by renewal of the ‘bread of the Presence’ (Lev. 24:8). In addition to its function as a celebration of creation (Ex. 20:11), the Sabbath took on additional meaning for the Israelites as a reminder of divine deliverance from Egypt (Deut. 5:15). Like creation, God accomplished the redemption from Egypt by his creative power, which was displayed in the plagues on Egypt, salvation from Pharaoh’s army at the Red Sea, and miraculous provision for his people in the desert (Ex. 7-17)....

“For Israel, the sanctified Sabbath (Gen. 2:2-3) was more than a commandment. According to Exodus 31:13, 17 (cf. Ezek. 20:12), it served as a sign of the covenant relationship by which the Lord sanctified his people, who emulated their Creator by resting from their work. Those who rest on the Sabbath acknowledge their dependence on God as their Creator and Sanctifier. Such dependence continues every moment that he sustains human life (Job 12:10; Ps. 114:14-15; 145:15-16; Dan. 5:23). So the basic meaning of the Sabbath, which encapsulates this divine-human relationship, cannot become obsolete as long as human beings inhabit Planet Earth....

“If God’s ‘new covenant’ {having referenced Jeremiah 31:31-34} sanctifies his people by putting his holy law in their hearts, and if basic Sabbath rest is a timeless part of that law...it makes sense that the ‘new covenant’ restores the Sabbath to its proper place. It is those who allow God to sanctify them who can truly keep the sanctified day. When the Israelites disobeyed the Lord and failed to receive his sanctification, any Sabbath rest they observed was a hypocritical

He goes on to conclude, trying to establish some association with the practices of contemporary Christianity, “The church has likewise celebrated its redemption by joining together once a week to eat the Lord’s Supper (Acts 20:7; 1 Cor. 16:2).”

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outward form, a *'tour de farce.'* However, when people accept God's grace and internalization of his law, he makes them holy as he is holy (cf. Lev. 19:2), and their Sabbath-keeping becomes a genuine sign of a real sanctification experience (Ex. 31:13; cf. Isa. 56:6-14)."⁴

⁴ Roy Gane, *NIV Application Commentary: Leviticus, Numbers* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2004), pp 754-755.