

protection. With the sea between them and the Egyptians the God-Israel relationship was significantly summarized in (Exod 14:31): And when the Israelites saw the great power the Lord displayed against the Egyptians, the people feared the Lord and put their trust in him and in Moses his servant.

Under providential care the Israelites arrived at the mountain where they were to worship God (Exod 3:12). There they prepared for worship (Exod 19). There God spoke to the congregation of Israel (Exod 20-23; cf. Deut 4:10) establishing a covenant with them. They were instructed to construct an altar representing the twelve tribes of Israel (Exod 20:24; 24:4), on which burnt offerings and fellowship offerings were presented to God in worship. The blood of the sacrificial animals was designated as "the blood of the covenant" and sprinkled on the altar and on the people. In Egypt the blood on the door frames had been the means of their salvation. Here it was essential as they brought their offerings into the presence of God to establish the God's covenant with them.

With the erection of the sanctuary or tabernacle as God's dwelling place among the Israelites the blood of the sacrifices became the means of atonement and purification as they came into the very presence of God. Sacrifice and the shedding of blood were essential in maintaining a relationship with God as they came to worship.

Conclusions

in this study we have focused attention upon the meaning and significance of sacrifice in the relationship between godfearing individuals and God prior to the Sinaitic revelation. Through Moses detailed instructions were given for offering various kind of sacrifices, their significance, and the manner in which they were presented (Lev 1-7). Offerings and the priesthood were instituted for the nation of Israel as the worship of God was established at the Tabernacle (Lev 8-10 and 16).

Based on the biblical account preceding this divine revelation at Mount Sinai let us consider the following conclusions as to the meaning of sacrifice in the God-man relationship:

(1) Sacrifices were spontaneous gifts brought as a voluntary offering to God. Prior to the divine command to the Israelites to bring the passover offering only one command is given by God for the bringing of a sacrifice. God commanded Abraham to offer his son Isaac as a sacrifice (Gen 22). Sacrifices brought by Cain, Abel, Noah, and Jacob were offered in the context of a conscious relationship to God.

(2) The significance or meaning of these sacrifices seems to be expressed in thanksgiving, appreciation, and a concern about a mutual commitment in the divine-human relationship.

(3) The altar represented a meeting place between man and God. Although it is generally assumed that sacrifices were made at these altars the fact is that the biblical account seldom indicates that offerings were offered. For the sacrifices of Cain and Abel no altars are mentioned. A tamarisk tree marked the place for fellowship between Abraham and God