

**Exegetical Notes, Exodus 30:11-38**  
**“Atonement Money, Washing, Oil and Incense”**  
Prepared by Charles H. Jensen, Pastor, Cornerstone Fellowship  
101 Kylies Road, Coatesville, PA 19329  
610-384-1375  
charleshjensen@aol.com

(After the affirmation of the Covenant {*See Exodus 24*}, God set up a system of organized religion to help the Israelites remember the obligation of the Covenant to which they had agreed. This religion was centered in the Tabernacle and its furnishings. These items were to remind the people of God’s presence and of their obligation to listen to God and to obey him. The promise of God’s blessing was linked to listening to him and obeying him.)

**Exodus 30:11-38**

**“Atonement Money”**

**Verse 11-12**

*Then YHWH said to Moses, “When you take a census of the Israelites to count them, each one must pay YHWH a ransom for his life at the time he is counted. Then no plague will come on them when you number them.”*

- This is not a command to take a census. It is instruction as to how to proceed to take a census should it be decided to take one.
- When a census is taken a payment is required of those counted. The word translated “ransom” means a payment that is made to buy something back. In this case, the Israelites are buying their own lives back from God. This concept requires that the Israelites acknowledge to whom they belong by right. They belong to God. And before they can live life they must pay homage to him who owns them by paying him this ransom.
- The promise related to plagues is not a promise to be free of all plagues because of the ransom. It is simply a promise to be protected from plague as punishment for taking an improper census. God will punish the people with a plague if they do not follow this instruction at the time of a census.

### Verse 13-14

***“Each one who crosses over to those already counted is to give a half shekel, according to the sanctuary shekel, which weighs twenty gerahs. This half shekel is an offering to YHWH. All who cross over, those twenty years old or more, are to give an offering to YHWH.”***

- “Crossing over” does not mean dying. It simply designated the act of joining those who were of age to do military service. Part of the reason for taking a census was to count the number of men who were eligible to fight if war broke out. Thus, the ransom was due when a man became eligible to fight for Israel. It was then that he was to pay this ransom to YHWH.
- Twenty gerahs was not much, about 1/5 of an ounce.

### Verse 15

***“The rich are not to give more than a half shekel and the poor are not to give less when you make the offering to YHWH to atone for your lives.”***

- The offering is the same for every man because God does not see one of his children as more valuable than the other. Though each is different, they are of equal value in the eyes of God.

### Verse 16

***“Receive the atonement money from the Israelites and use it for the service of the Tent of Meeting. It will be a memorial for the Israelites before YHWH, making atonement for your lives.”***

- The offerings received by this method are to be used to keep the Tent of Meeting and for the cost of its service.
- This is to be a standing ordinance for the Israelites throughout time.

## “Washing”

### Verse 17-21

***Then YHWH said to Moses, “Make a bronze basin, with its bronze stand, for washing. Place it between the Tent of Meeting and the altar, and put water in it. Aaron and his sons are to wash their hands and feet with water from it. Whenever they enter the Tent of Meeting, they shall wash with water so that they will not die. Also, when they approach the altar to minister by presenting an offering made to YHWH by fire, they shall wash their hands and feet so that they will not die. This is to be a***

*lasting ordinance for Aaron and his descendants for the generations to come.”*

- A new piece of furniture was ordered made for the use of the priests in the Tabernacle’s service. It was to be a bronze basin. In ancient times bronze was the metal from which mirrors were made. It is right to assume that this basin was to be made of highly polished bronze, so polished that when the priests bent over it to wash, they would see their own faces reflected in it.
- The priests were to use this basin to wash their hands and their feet before they entered the Tent of Meeting or offered sacrifice on the altar. This frequent washing was a reminder of the necessity for the priests to be pure before the Lord.

### **“Anointing Oil”**

#### **Verse 22-25**

*Then YHWH said to Moses, “Take the following fine spices: 500 shekels of liquid myrrh, half as much (that is, 250 shekels) of fragrant cinnamon, 250 shekels of fragrant cane, 500 shekels of cassia -- all according to the sanctuary shekel -- and a hin of olive oil. Make these into a sacred anointing oil, a fragrant blend, the work of a perfumer. It will be the sacred anointing oil.”*

- Here the recipe for the anointing oil is given. The base is pure olive oil. However, it is very heavily spiced and so would have had a very obvious and sweet odor.

#### **Verse 26-30**

*“Then use it to anoint the Tent of Meeting, the ark of the Testimony, the table and all its articles, the lampstand and its accessories, the altar of incense, the altar of burnt offering and all its utensils, and the basin with its stand. You shall consecrate them so they will be most holy, and whatever touches them will be holy. “Anoint Aaron and his sons and consecrate them so they may serve me as priests.”*

- All of the furnishings of the Tabernacle are to be anointed with this special oil marking them as holy, set apart for special use in the Tabernacle of the Lord.
- The priests are also to be anointed with this special oil.

### **Verse 31-33**

***“Say to the Israelites, ‘This is to be my sacred anointing oil for the generations to come. Do not pour it on men’s bodies and do not make any oil with the same formula. It is sacred, and you are to consider it sacred. Whoever makes perfume like it and whoever puts it on anyone other than a priest must be cut off from his people.’”***

- The oil made from this formula is only to be used as directed by God for the designated purposes of God. Any other use of it or making oil like it for some other use is strictly forbidden. If a person disregards these rules, he is to be “cut off.” He can no longer be considered a member of the people of God.

### **Incense**

### **Verse 34-38**

***Then YHWH said to Moses, “Take fragrant spices -- gum resin, onycha and galbanum -- and pure frankincense, all in equal amounts, and make a fragrant blend of incense, the work of a perfumer. It is to be salted and pure and sacred. Grind some of it to powder and place it in front of the Testimony in the Tent of Meeting, where I will meet with you. It shall be most holy to you. Do not make any incense with this formula for yourselves; consider it holy to YHWH. Whoever makes any like it to enjoy its fragrance must be cut off from his people.”***

- This is the formula for making the incense that is to be burned in the Tent of the Meeting on the altar of incense. Like the oil, it is to be set apart. No incense like it may be made for any other use. If an Israelite did use the formula to make incense for any other purpose he was to lose his standing as part of the people of God.

(These exegetical notes are the foundational study for the sermon entitled *Atonement Money, Washing, Oil and Incense*. They have been prepared by the Reverend Doctor Charles H. Jensen, Senior Pastor at Cornerstone Fellowship, Coatesville Pennsylvania. All rights are reserved by Dr. Jensen and *Cornerstone Fellowship*.)