

### Leviticus Bible Study #3

For lay leaders and deacons to conduct after the Sunday service, or during a midweek Bible study session.

#### Leviticus 2:1-16

**1** “When anyone brings a grain offering as an offering to the LORD, his offering shall be of fine flour. He shall pour oil on it and put frankincense on it **2** and bring it to Aaron's sons the priests. And he shall take from it a handful of the fine flour and oil, with all of its frankincense, and the priest shall burn this as its memorial portion on the altar, a food offering with a pleasing aroma to the LORD. **3** But the rest of the grain offering shall be for Aaron and his sons; it is a most holy part of the LORD's food offerings.

**4** “When you bring a grain offering baked in the oven as an offering, it shall be unleavened loaves of fine flour mixed with oil or unleavened wafers smeared with oil. **5** And if your offering is a grain offering baked on a griddle, it shall be of fine flour unleavened, mixed with oil. **6** You shall break it in pieces and pour oil on it; it is a grain offering. **7** And if your offering is a grain offering cooked in a pan, it shall be made of fine flour with oil. **8** And you shall bring the grain offering that is made of these things to the LORD, and when it is presented to the priest, he shall bring it to the altar. **9** And the priest shall take from the grain offering its memorial portion and burn this on the altar, a food offering with a pleasing aroma to the LORD. **10** But the rest of the grain offering shall be for Aaron and his sons; it is a most holy part of the LORD's food offerings.

**11** “No grain offering that you bring to the LORD shall be made with leaven, for you shall burn no leaven nor any honey as a food offering to the LORD. **12** As an offering of firstfruits you may bring them to the LORD, but they shall not be offered on the altar for a pleasing aroma. **13** You shall season all your grain offerings with salt. You shall not let the salt of the covenant with your God be missing from your grain offering; with all your offerings you shall offer salt.

**14** “If you offer a grain offering of firstfruits to the LORD, you shall offer for the grain offering of your firstfruits fresh ears, roasted with fire, crushed new grain. **15** And you shall put oil on it and lay frankincense on it; it is a grain offering. **16** And the priest shall burn as its memorial portion some of the crushed grain and some of the oil with all of its frankincense; it is a food offering to the LORD.

#### **Introduction**

The Levitical regulations concerning sacrifices are surprisingly flexible. The first chapter outlines that if someone cannot afford a bull for animal sacrifices, a lamb or goat will do. If someone cannot afford a lamb or a goat, a pigeon or dove is acceptable. In matters of grain offering, the same dynamic is present. One who made a grain offering could do so with raw flour, baked bread, fried bread, or even ears of grain. The more important matter for the Lord is the proper observance of the sacrifice itself, which is done from the heart. The *sine qua non* aspects of the sacrifices, despite their general flexibility, reveal to us the true heart of the system God gave the Israelites.

#### **Vs.1-3**

**1** “When anyone brings a grain offering as an offering to the LORD, his offering shall be of fine flour. He shall pour oil on it and put frankincense on it **2** and bring it to Aaron's sons the priests. And he shall take from it a handful of the fine flour and oil, with all of its frankincense, and the priest shall burn this as its memorial portion on the altar, a food offering with a pleasing aroma to the LORD. **3** But the rest of the grain offering shall be for

Aaron and his sons; it is a most holy part of the LORD's food offerings.

When this was written, Israel had only one recorded grain offering. Moses offered it alongside an animal sacrifice when erecting the Tabernacle. God's response to this was to fill the Tabernacle with His Glory.<sup>1</sup> This being the *first* offering at the altar was on account of the daily sacrificial requirement our Lord imposed for both morning and evening sacrifices.<sup>2</sup> Unless someone came to the priests with a private offering, the grain offering was not offered by itself. Even the grain offerings made during the feast of Firstfruits were performed as an accompaniment to a whole burnt offering.<sup>3</sup> Once the Israelites made it to the Promised Land, the core of their economy would be shaped by the dual forces of cattle ranching and farming, and the majority of sacrifices reflected this.

If the grain offering is flour, a certain protocol is observed. Oil (olive oil in particular) is poured on it first, to make it flammable. Frankincense adds an aroma to the offering which designates the act as holy. Since the grain offerings accompanied animal offerings, the frankincense may also have assisted in clearing away the smell of offal and blood from the altar. More importantly, both olive oil and frankincense come from *plants* reflecting the agrarian practices to come when the children of Israel begin living in their homeland. This means that even a farmer would have to make a real sacrifice from his produce as well. He must grow a variety of crops, or else make payments to other farmers, in order to make these sacrifices. Here, the economy of Israel was being formed before the conquest of Canaan even began, by dictating terms of sacrifice which ensures crop rotation, mutual aid between farmers, and a budding merchant class to make these items available. This is likely also the reason for the additional requirement of salt, which not only acts to preserve the sacrifice before it is offered but also creates a market for salt *merchants* within the Promised Land.

Note that only a handful of the grain offering is burned on the altar. Because the priests were not going to have a land inheritance outside of a few cities in Israel, the remainder of the offering provides them with a steady diet. Their access to meat was restricted, so the addition of olive oil and frankincense added nutrients to the flour for the priests to not only survive, but also to have the energy to conduct the massive amount of labor necessary for the sacrifices they had to make every day. Moses writes that it is a *most holy* part of the offering, rather than the part which went into the fire. The word for “holy” is *קֹדֶשׁ*,<sup>4</sup> denoting not only a sacred quality but also a *separate* quality to the substance. It is separate in that it was reserved especially for Aaron's family.

What made the food the priests ate so holy? It was the demonstration of absolute reliance Aaron and his sons had on God. With no ground of their own to till, the priesthood had an additional layer of uncertainty to the reception of their daily bread. They had to rely on God to make the crops grow, rely on Him inspiring the people to bring in their offerings, and for the weather conditions to be right for continuing to cook their food on the spot. In other words, Aaron and his sons were to model the Lord's prayer which states “give us this day our daily bread”<sup>6</sup> - and in turn, Christians are called to express a *priestly* reliance on the Lord through this prayer. With this we have the beginning of the universal priesthood foreshadowed by the Aaronic line and introduced by Christ before the Crucifixion even took place. The dynamic was such that if the people suffered from famine or war, the priesthood was called to suffer with them and pray for daily bread; it is for this reason that Eli's sons are condemned as harshly as they are, for they abused the sacrificial system so as to *thrive* during the time of crisis in which they dwelt.<sup>7</sup>

---

1 Exodus 40:16:-38

2 Exodus 29:38-46

3 Leviticus 23:9-14

4 Transliterated “Kodesh,” Strong's #6944

5 <https://biblehub.com/hebrew/6944.htm>

6 Matthew 6:11

7 1 Samuel 2:12-17, 27-36

## Vs.4-10

4 “When you bring a grain offering baked in the oven as an offering, it shall be unleavened loaves of fine flour mixed with oil or unleavened wafers smeared with oil. 5 And if your offering is a grain offering baked on a griddle, it shall be of fine flour unleavened, mixed with oil. 6 You shall break it in pieces and pour oil on it; it is a grain offering. 7 And if your offering is a grain offering cooked in a pan, it shall be made of fine flour with oil. 8 And you shall bring the grain offering that is made of these things to the LORD, and when it is presented to the priest, he shall bring it to the altar. 9 And the priest shall take from the grain offering its memorial portion and burn this on the altar, a food offering with a pleasing aroma to the LORD. 10 But the rest of the grain offering shall be for Aaron and his sons; it is a most holy part of the LORD's food offerings.

Grain offerings were not identical, depending on how the person making the sacrifice chose to prepare the grain. This is likely a matter of convenience, and the long term planning of Leviticus comes into view with these options. As Moses writes the regulations for the Levites and priests, the children of Israel are *traveling*, making a community oven difficult to set up and tear down every day. Offering grain as fine flour or a pan-fried cake over a fire is simply easier to do for those on the move along with the priests. But when the children of Israel move into the land, traveling long distances with flour means the element for sacrifice is at greater risk for spoiling on account of weather or insects; when they are settled, carrying the grain offering as a loaf or pan-fried cake is more sensible. Yet the rules remain more or less the same, especially with the deepening connections between the priests and the welfare of the people. As with flour offerings, if the people prosper so do the priests – and if the people are in famine so are they.

## Vs.11-13

11 “No grain offering that you bring to the LORD shall be made with leaven, for you shall burn no leaven nor any honey as a food offering to the LORD. 12 As an offering of firstfruits you may bring them to the LORD, but they shall not be offered on the altar for a pleasing aroma. 13 You shall season all your grain offerings with salt. You shall not let the salt of the covenant with your God be missing from your grain offering; with all your offerings you shall offer salt.

It would be tempting to say that the ban on leaven in grain offerings is on account of a symbolic connection between leaven and sin, but we must be careful. Sin is not compared to leaven until Christ does so, labeling the hypocrisy and false teachings of the Pharisees, sadducees and the Herodians as leaven.<sup>8</sup> St. Paul later directly uses leaven as a symbol for malice, evil and false teaching.<sup>9</sup> These are valid for the self-understanding of Christians today, especially as we do our best to extirpate sin from ourselves with the help of the Holy Spirit.

But the ancient Israelites themselves did not receive this message. If anything, the connection is made not to sin, but to the Exodus. Both before<sup>10</sup> and after<sup>11</sup> the tenth plague upon Egypt, rules are set for the children of Israel to *remember* the Passover and the seven days wherein unleavened bread was eaten. It was the diet they were given while fleeing slavery, and the remembrance of that moment was not to be solely observed in the yearly Passover feast day. By this we understand the triple use of the term *memorial* for the portion of grain sacrificed. Every single time the people made one of these offerings, they were reminded of the deliverance God gave them.

The priests, in having this portion of unleavened bread, stayed in a kind of permanent Passover remembrance. Their bread was all unleavened, their meat (when they received it in peace offerings) was roasted, and they had no land of their own to speak of for tilling; they were *always* remembering. In this way the priesthood *further* foreshadows the priesthood of all believers, in that we take

---

8 Matthew 16:5-12, Mark 8:15, Luke 12:1-2

9 1 Corinthians 5:6-8, Galatians 5:7-10

10 Exodus 12:14-20

11 Exodus 13:3-10

Communion and hear every time, “do this in remembrance of Me.”<sup>12</sup> Christians are called to be in a constant state of reminder for the Gospel and our deliverance from sin the same way the priesthood constantly ate unleavened bread to remember the Exodus.

### **Vs.14-16**

**14** “If you offer a grain offering of firstfruits to the LORD, you shall offer for the grain offering of your firstfruits fresh ears, roasted with fire, crushed new grain. **15** And you shall put oil on it and lay frankincense on it; it is a grain offering. **16** And the priest shall burn as its memorial portion some of the crushed grain and some of the oil with all of its frankincense; it is a food offering to the LORD.

The firstfruits offering here is distinct from the feast of firstfruits in Leviticus 23. Not all plants come to fruition at the same time, and perhaps a farmer would desire to make a private grain offering with the firstfruits of the season. If he does so, it is an offering of *roasted* grain, effectively turning it into a plant-version of the *roasted* lamb from the Passover.<sup>1314</sup> It is also the first and freshest of the crops, the same way the Passover lamb was to be one year old. In other words, even the crops were to preach the Gospel as they understood it in their day.

The exact amount of grain to be sacrificed is not specified. This gives the priests breathing room to address any needs they may have for feeding their families. Nonetheless, in the case of firstfruits offerings, the fresh crops were to be unprepared except by their roasting. In this way, it is evident that they were not treated as any other grain would be (made into bread, cakes, etc.). Though later on roasted grain becomes a commonplace staple in Israel,<sup>15</sup> here it demonstrates *reserving* the grains for God.

---

12 Luke 22:19 et.al.

13 Exodus 12:8-9

14 The method did admittedly differ, in that roasting corns of wheat is a slower process.

15 Ruth 2:14