

## Leviticus Bible Study #9

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

### Leviticus 7:1-38

**1** “This is the law of the guilt offering. It is most holy. **2** In the place where they kill the burnt offering they shall kill the guilt offering, and its blood shall be thrown against the sides of the altar. **3** And all its fat shall be offered, the fat tail, the fat that covers the entrails, **4** the two kidneys with the fat that is on them at the loins, and the long lobe of the liver that he shall remove with the kidneys. **5** The priest shall burn them on the altar as a food offering to the LORD; it is a guilt offering. **6** Every male among the priests may eat of it. It shall be eaten in a holy place. It is most holy. **7** The guilt offering is just like the sin offering; there is one law for them. The priest who makes atonement with it shall have it. **8** And the priest who offers any man's burnt offering shall have for himself the skin of the burnt offering that he has offered. **9** And every grain offering baked in the oven and all that is prepared on a pan or a griddle shall belong to the priest who offers it. **10** And every grain offering, mixed with oil or dry, shall be shared equally among all the sons of Aaron.

**11** “And this is the law of the sacrifice of peace offerings that one may offer to the LORD. **12** If he offers it for a thanksgiving, then he shall offer with the thanksgiving sacrifice unleavened loaves mixed with oil, unleavened wafers smeared with oil, and loaves of fine flour well mixed with oil. **13** With the sacrifice of his peace offerings for thanksgiving he shall bring his offering with loaves of leavened bread. **14** And from it he shall offer one loaf from each offering, as a gift to the LORD. It shall belong to the priest who throws the blood of the peace offerings. **15** And the flesh of the sacrifice of his peace offerings for thanksgiving shall be eaten on the day of his offering. He shall not leave any of it until the morning. **16** But if the sacrifice of his offering is a vow offering or a freewill offering, it shall be eaten on the day that he offers his sacrifice, and on the next day what remains of it shall be eaten. **17** But what remains of the flesh of the sacrifice on the third day shall be burned up with fire. **18** If any of the flesh of the sacrifice of his peace offering is eaten on the third day, he who offers it shall not be accepted, neither shall it be credited to him. It is tainted, and he who eats of it shall bear his iniquity.

**19** “Flesh that touches any unclean thing shall not be eaten. It shall be burned up with fire. All who are clean may eat flesh, **20** but the person who eats of the flesh of the sacrifice of the LORD's peace offerings while an uncleanness is on him, that person shall be cut off from his people. **21** And if anyone touches an unclean thing, whether human uncleanness or an unclean beast or any unclean detestable creature, and then eats some flesh from the sacrifice of the LORD's peace offerings, that person shall be cut off from his people.”

**22** The LORD spoke to Moses, saying, **23** “Speak to the people of Israel, saying, You shall eat no fat, of ox or sheep or goat. **24** The fat of an animal that dies of itself and the fat of one that is torn by beasts may be put to any other use, but on no account shall you eat it. **25** For every person who eats of the fat of an animal of which a food offering may be made to the LORD shall be cut off from his people. **26** Moreover, you shall eat no blood whatever, whether of fowl or of animal, in any of your dwelling places. **27** Whoever eats any blood, that person shall be cut off from his people.”

**28** The LORD spoke to Moses, saying, **29** “Speak to the people of Israel, saying, Whoever offers the sacrifice of his peace offerings to the LORD shall bring his offering to the LORD from the sacrifice of his peace offerings. **30** His own hands shall bring the LORD's food offerings. He shall bring the fat with the breast, that the breast may be waved as a wave offering before the LORD. **31** The priest shall burn the fat on the altar, but the breast shall be for Aaron and his sons. **32** And the right thigh you shall give to

the priest as a contribution from the sacrifice of your peace offerings. **33** Whoever among the sons of Aaron offers the blood of the peace offerings and the fat shall have the right thigh for a portion. **34** For the breast that is waved and the thigh that is contributed I have taken from the people of Israel, out of the sacrifices of their peace offerings, and have given them to Aaron the priest and to his sons, as a perpetual due from the people of Israel. **35** This is the portion of Aaron and of his sons from the LORD's food offerings, from the day they were presented to serve as priests of the LORD. **36** The LORD commanded this to be given them by the people of Israel, from the day that he anointed them. It is a perpetual due throughout their generations.”

**37** This is the law of the burnt offering, of the grain offering, of the sin offering, of the guilt offering, of the ordination offering, and of the peace offering, **38** which the LORD commanded Moses on Mount Sinai, on the day that he commanded the people of Israel to bring their offerings to the LORD, in the wilderness of Sinai.

## Introduction

The shift in focus from the general population of Israelites to the priests has begun in anticipation of Aaron's anointing ceremony. But before Aaron and his sons can even begin to fulfill the duties of their offices, more detailed instructions must be given so they may begin *immediately*. This tells us why the first seven chapters are entirely devoted to instituting the sacrificial system. God commands morning and evening sacrifices, guilt offerings, sin offerings, peace offerings and more in order to establish, maintain, and regain sacred space for proper worship. All of the laws concerning human conduct, diet, and cleanliness are secondary to the pressing need to establish a place for the presence of our Lord so that the Israelites could be in relationship with Him.

This emphasis on sacrifice was not lost on the Old Covenant saints, to the point where they often fell into a dry formalism. When the prophet Micah speaks on behalf of the Israelites in the eighth century B.C., their question boils down to “how many sacrifices do You want us to do to make You happy with us?”<sup>1</sup> Asaph the Psalmist relates a message from God wherein the Lord corrects the peoples' distorted view of the offerings.<sup>2</sup> It appears that throughout their history, the Israelites mistook the initial priority on sacrifices to be something that ought to be done *to the exclusion* of weightier matters like virtue and justice, the more important things that occur when a proper relationship with God is established. This formalist bad habit continued well into the first century A.D., with Christ criticizing the ceremonial obsessions of the Pharisees.<sup>3</sup> Nonetheless, a bit of sympathy for the Israelites is due, for they saw that the first third of the Law which began the Levitical system was all about such matters.

## Vs.1-10

**1** “This is the law of the guilt offering. It is most holy. **2** In the place where they kill the burnt offering they shall kill the guilt offering, and its blood shall be thrown against the sides of the altar. **3** And all its fat shall be offered, the fat tail, the fat that covers the entrails, **4** the two kidneys with the fat that is on them at the loins, and the long lobe of the liver that he shall remove with the kidneys. **5** The priest shall burn them on the altar as a food offering to the LORD; it is a guilt offering. **6** Every male among the priests may eat of it. It shall be eaten in a holy place. It is most holy. **7** The guilt offering is just like the sin offering; there is one law for them. The priest who makes atonement with it shall have it. **8** And the priest who offers any man's burnt offering shall have for himself the skin of the burnt offering that he has offered. **9** And every grain offering baked in the oven and all that is prepared on a pan or a griddle shall belong to the priest who offers it. **10** And every grain offering, mixed with oil or dry, shall be shared equally among all the sons of Aaron.

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1 Micah 6:6-8

2 Psalm 50:7-15

3 Luke 11:37-42

The priestly regulations concerning the guilt offering are the same as the sin offerings. The priests may eat from them, but only in the sanctuary and in a separate cooking vessel from the food offering given to God on the altar.<sup>4</sup> Moses reminds the reader of the processing required for a sacrifice (removal of the fat, the tail, etc.), so as to impress the order of operations on the reader's mind. Here however Moses adds that the priests may take the animal pelts from the guilt and sin offerings as well. This too has a practical consideration, as the pelts could be used for clothing, carpeting, and bedding. Additionally, the hair on the pelts could have served as repair materials for the Tabernacle, especially for goats (the Tabernacle's curtains were made of goat hair).<sup>5</sup>

One ought to note as well the way that the food from sacrifices is distributed. The priest who conducts a sacrifice benefits first from taking the meat – although he cannot take it to his personal tent, it must be eaten in a “holy place,” e.g. the Tabernacle courtyard. The intensive labor involved in skinning, gutting, burning, and cooking an animal meant taking a break afterward, wherein the priest would eat to conserve his energy. Meanwhile, the grain offerings are distributed evenly among the priests in the Tabernacle; this way, even if a priest was not assigned to conduct animal sacrifices, he still gets to eat. God made sure that all of the priests' living was *earned*, but also that all of their needs were met.

### **Vs.11-18**

**11** “And this is the law of the sacrifice of peace offerings that one may offer to the LORD. **12** If he offers it for a thanksgiving, then he shall offer with the thanksgiving sacrifice unleavened loaves mixed with oil, unleavened wafers smeared with oil, and loaves of fine flour well mixed with oil. **13** With the sacrifice of his peace offerings for thanksgiving he shall bring his offering with loaves of leavened bread. **14** And from it he shall offer one loaf from each offering, as a gift to the LORD. It shall belong to the priest who throws the blood of the peace offerings. **15** And the flesh of the sacrifice of his peace offerings for thanksgiving shall be eaten on the day of his offering. He shall not leave any of it until the morning. **16** But if the sacrifice of his offering is a vow offering or a freewill offering, it shall be eaten on the day that he offers his sacrifice, and on the next day what remains of it shall be eaten. **17** But what remains of the flesh of the sacrifice on the third day shall be burned up with fire. **18** If any of the flesh of the sacrifice of his peace offering is eaten on the third day, he who offers it shall not be accepted, neither shall it be credited to him. It is tainted, and he who eats of it shall bear his iniquity.

Peace offerings had varied uses. A man could make a peace offering out of thanksgiving for something God did for him, out of devotion (also called a “freewill” offering), or to signal that he has fulfilled his vow. Because each use of the offering could be different, different observances may be necessary. Of course, every peace offering includes sharing the meal between the one making the offering, the priest, and anyone invited as well; but the *time* in which people may eat it may be different, as well as some specifics as to the materials presented. Offerings of thanksgiving were to be enjoyed in one day, while votive and freewill offerings had another day in which the people could eat their portion of the sacrifice. In all cases, the priest is invited to celebrate with God's people.

There is a peculiar restriction concerning eating the peace offering on the third day. We might be tempted to connect this to the third day after Christ's death on the Cross, and thus connect the restrictions to the Gospel (particularly the Resurrection) in a typological fashion. However, Moses simply writes that the meat of the offering is tainted by that time: to eat it puts people at risk for illness, uncleanness, etc. Hence, the rest of the meat must be burned with fire. It was holy and consecrated after the sacrifice was conducted and when the meal was being shared; to permit it to be made profane by rotting is a sign of spiritual neglect.

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4 Leviticus 6:24-29

5 Exodus 26:7-10

## Vs.19-27

**19** “Flesh that touches any unclean thing shall not be eaten. It shall be burned up with fire. All who are clean may eat flesh, **20** but the person who eats of the flesh of the sacrifice of the LORD's peace offerings while an uncleanness is on him, that person shall be cut off from his people. **21** And if anyone touches an unclean thing, whether human uncleanness or an unclean beast or any unclean detestable creature, and then eats some flesh from the sacrifice of the LORD's peace offerings, that person shall be cut off from his people.”

**22** The LORD spoke to Moses, saying, **23** “Speak to the people of Israel, saying, You shall eat no fat, of ox or sheep or goat. **24** The fat of an animal that dies of itself and the fat of one that is torn by beasts may be put to any other use, but on no account shall you eat it. **25** For every person who eats of the fat of an animal of which a food offering may be made to the LORD shall be cut off from his people. **26** Moreover, you shall eat no blood whatever, whether of fowl or of animal, in any of your dwelling places. **27** Whoever eats any blood, that person shall be cut off from his people.”

Great care is taken to preserve the holy nature of the sacrifices. That which is offered to the Lord must be entirely separate from the rest of the world, flesh of an animal that has been made sacred by sacred men using sacred tools on sacred space. If something unclean touches that meat, such as a leper's hands or an unclean animal, then to eat it is to accept as holy something which has been made profane. God commands that if anything would make an offering unclean, the flesh of the offering must be burned as an act of both cleansing and destruction; the world, with all its uncleanness, has made an encroachment on the sacred and thus it must be rededicated through purifying fire. Whoever would blaspheme by defiling the offerings would thus merit severe punishment.

Because the priests are expected to eat meat from various sacrifices, the dietary restrictions which were introduced earlier in Leviticus are reiterated here.<sup>6</sup> Note that the focus shifts once more from the priests to the entirety of Israel, clearing up any potential confusion. It could be that Moses was presented with the granular question of what to do with the extra fat and blood from a peace offering; they are instructed to eat the offering in a day or two, does this include consuming those parts of the animal which are in other contexts banned from consumption? The answer is simple: *don't eat the blood or the fat.*

## Vs.28-36

**28** The LORD spoke to Moses, saying, **29** “Speak to the people of Israel, saying, Whoever offers the sacrifice of his peace offerings to the LORD shall bring his offering to the LORD from the sacrifice of his peace offerings. **30** His own hands shall bring the LORD's food offerings. He shall bring the fat with the breast, that the breast may be waved as a wave offering before the LORD. **31** The priest shall burn the fat on the altar, but the breast shall be for Aaron and his sons. **32** And the right thigh you shall give to the priest as a contribution from the sacrifice of your peace offerings. **33** Whoever among the sons of Aaron offers the blood of the peace offerings and the fat shall have the right thigh for a portion. **34** For the breast that is waved and the thigh that is contributed I have taken from the people of Israel, out of the sacrifices of their peace offerings, and have given them to Aaron the priest and to his sons, as a perpetual due from the people of Israel. **35** This is the portion of Aaron and of his sons from the LORD's food offerings, from the day they were presented to serve as priests of the LORD. **36** The LORD commanded this to be given them by the people of Israel, from the day that he anointed them. It is a perpetual due throughout their generations.”

Here we arrive at the “wave offering.” It is not exactly a separate sacrifice itself, but a ceremonial part of the peace offering which presents the priestly portion of the food as still being part of the sacrifice. We cannot forget that even though it is just fat and organs that are burning on the altar, the *whole* animal is a sacrifice to God. The priests engage in ceremonial eating for special parts of the offering, waving them in front of the Lord first in recognition that it is still *His* animal which they partake of.

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<sup>6</sup> Leviticus 3:17

National traditions still play a role in the format of the sacrifices. The priestly portion of the offerings is explicitly the breast and thigh of the animal. While not explicitly stated, the breast is likely reserved for the priests on account of the breastplate and ephod worn by the high priest;<sup>7</sup> wherein the heart is a sacred part of the animal, and the priests present a covered chest when going before God, this is reserved in recognition of his office. The *thigh* is reserved, and the right thigh in particular, most likely on account of the remembrance tradition among Israelites concerning Jacob. When Jacob wrestled the Angel of the Lord, his hip was torn out of its socket. Moses remarks on account of this, “to this day the people of Israel do not eat the sinew of the thigh that is on the hip socket, because he touched the socket of Jacob's hip on the sinew of the thigh.”<sup>8</sup> Whether it was Jacob's right or left hip which was dislocated does not matter: the priests still removed the sinew and ate the meat which was around it in a manner that identified them not as *above* the children of Israel, but as fellow kinsman with other Israelites.

### **Vs.37-38**

**37** This is the law of the burnt offering, of the grain offering, of the sin offering, of the guilt offering, of the ordination offering, and of the peace offering, **38** which the LORD commanded Moses on Mount Sinai, on the day that he commanded the people of Israel to bring their offerings to the LORD, in the wilderness of Sinai.

Here Moses concludes the guide to the sacrificial system. Aaron and his sons are counted ready to be ordained as the priestly family in Israel, and shall be consecrated in the next chapter. When he says that it was commanded “on the day” in which Israel was instructed to bring sacrifices, this is in reference to a period of time for the priestly instructions to take place. Aaron and his sons, as well as any priest studying Leviticus for a future ordination, took extensive time learning these practices before their first sacrifices were made – and after they begin their service, there is yet more for them to learn.

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7 Exodus 28:15-30

8 Genesis 32:32