

# BREAD OF LIFE TORAH STUDIES

*"I am the bread of life. He who comes to me shall never hunger ..." John 6:35*

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## LEVITICUS 3-7

What is the meaning of sacrifice in general? It is an offering of something valuable, as a sign of an interior offering of self.... Do not offer to the Lord service that is half-hearted. Ask yourself the questions: What does this mean to God? And what does it mean to me? Why is it important to God? Why should it be important to me? We are greatly blessed and honoured to be called children of God. How do our lives and our worship reflect that? Man looks on the outward appearance but God looks on the heart. David had a heart after God's own heart, and he declared in II Samuel 24:24 *"I will not offer burnt offerings to Yahweh my God which cost me nothing."*<sup>1</sup>

Beyond the remedial and moral benefits of the sacrificial system stands a more profound purpose, which gives the text of Leviticus an allegorical meaning on top of its historical meaning. This purpose was to prepare Israel for the one who truly redeems and saves mankind, namely, Yeshua Ha Mashiach—"the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world"—the imperfect forecasting the perfect. Hence the letter to the Hebrews states that the priest of the Old Law "often" offered "the same sacrifices, which can never take away sins, whereas" Christ offered "one sacrifice for sins, for ever." (Heb. 10:11)

In our previous study, we looked at the first two of the five different kinds of sacrifice spoken of in Leviticus—the burnt offering and the grain offering – both freewill offerings by fire which were "a pleasing aroma to the LORD." We will now unpack, the final three offerings to discover what they can teach us regarding our relationship with God.

### CHAPTER 3

#### ***Shelamim* – The "Fellowship" or "Peace" Offerings - Lev.3, 7:11-36**

The Peace Offering serves as a freewill, spontaneous expression of thanksgiving and joy—an expression of the personal generosity and gratitude a person feels as a servant of God. The offerer would have particular reason to give thanks to the LORD – for example, because he has seen God's hand in the circumstances of his life. This is explicitly expressed in Deuteronomy 27:7: *"You shall offer peace offerings, and shall eat there, and rejoice before the Lord your God."*

#### **Peace offerings fall into two categories:**

1. A thanksgiving offering (7:12) to mark our submission to His will for all the kindness He has shown us in the past;
2. A vow or freewill offering (7:16) expressing the supplications of the heart concerning the future.

These two types are brought out in Psalm 50:14-15:

*Offer to God thanksgiving, and pay your vows to the Most High. Call upon me in the day of trouble; I will deliver you, and you shall glorify me.*

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<sup>1</sup> *Leviticus and the True Sacrifice*, <https://www.catholicculture.org/culture/library/view.cfm?recnum=9216>

Midrash adds that in the time of the Messiah, the sacrifices of atonement for sin will cease, but the thanksgiving offerings will never cease. Similarly prayers of supplication for relief from distress will end, but hymns of thanksgiving will always be sung.

The Shelamim offering provides an opportunity for individuals, no matter what their financial status, to share their bounty with God. The offering could be cattle (3:1), sheep (3:7), or a goat (3:12). It could be male or female, but must be without defect. If it was a Thanksgiving Offering, it could also include a variety of breads (7:12).

The purpose of the Peace Offering was to consecrate a meal between two or more parties before God. One Rabbi said: Whoever brings *shelamim* brings shalom into the world. (*Shelamim* comes from *Shalom* and has capacity to increase *peace* in the world) “One who brings a peace offering seeks to bring the spiritual world and material world into harmony.” Jewish tradition reminds us that a person who truly appreciates the good things in their lives knows how to share with others. In other words, rather than expressing happiness by what they own, this offering demands we express happiness by what is shared.

“PEACE is the supreme objective – the Shelamim is meant to re-establish peace between God & man, man & his fellow man, & between the individual and his conscience.” This is not a moral doctrine of pacifism –It requires constant effort from man.<sup>2</sup> **Discuss**

**The Shelamim builds community** because one is required to share it with their neighbours. A portion is for the altar, a portion for the Priest, and a portion for the worshipper, symbolizing the communion between the LORD, His ministers and His worshippers, and the *shalom* all are to enjoy together. Thus, the offering to God simultaneously becomes an offering for the whole community. “...sharing the meal of the thanksgiving offering with numerous guests serves as an occasion for the public acknowledgment of God’s providential loving-kindness.”

The thought or *intent* behind the sacrifice is of critical importance and wrong intent will invalidate the offering and have detrimental consequences. (v.18) 7:20 *‘But the person who eats the flesh of the sacrifice of the peace offering that belongs to the LORD, while he is unclean, that person shall be cut off from his people.*

The flesh of the offering must be consumed the same day or next morning, but what is left over on the 3<sup>rd</sup> day must be burned not eaten; no blood may be consumed; the fat and offal is consumed on the altar not eaten; etc. On a spiritual level, these rulings highlight the importance attached to the *intent*, in the mind and heart of the worshipper. We could also see that wise health-related issues seem to be woven into the sacrificial system.

Jesus became the ultimate peace offering, who, “for the joy set before him, endured the Cross”—thus securing peace for all who believe. *Rom. 5:1 Therefore, having been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ.*

Some of Jesus’ parting words to his disciples were: *Peace I leave with you; my peace I give you* (Jn 14:27). What an awesome gift this is! Do we remember to give thanks for the true *shalom* our LORD has given to us? It is truly a peace beyond understanding, even in times of trouble. Do we allow clouds of doubt and fear to override this peace?

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<sup>2</sup> Rabbi Elie Munk, *The Call of the Torah*, p.61

In Judaism today, the Berakah, (Hebrew: “blessing”), is an expression of praise or thanks directed to God, which is recited at specific points of the synagogue liturgy, during private prayer, and at every Sabbath table and Festival. This blessing translated into early church practise—In fact, the word *Eucharist* means ‘act of thanksgiving’—a time when we join together in **fellowship** with the family of God, to rejoice and give thanks to Him for His abundant grace, provision, and so much more. 1 Corinthians 11:34 shows that the early believers regularly ate together when they met.

## CHAPTERS 4-7 – Sin Offerings

The first three offerings were voluntary and they are the heartbeat of the Tabernacle—being brought by worshippers who desired to draw close to God. We now come to the Sin and Trespass Offerings, which were obligatory for atonement to be made.

As we read through chapters 4-7 of Leviticus, it becomes quite confusing to differentiate between the Sin Offering, and the Guilt or Trespass Offering. (I was gratified to read in my Jewish commentary that the Rabbis also see a blurring here—even seeing a blurring between deliberate and unintentional sin.) Therefore, rather than try to prise out the details, I will just offer a simple overview:

### Sin Offering

The fourth offering was called *chattath*<sup>3</sup>, literally ‘sin’ or ‘sin offering’: *If a person sins unintentionally against any commandment of the LORD in anything which ought not to be done...(4:2)*, when it comes to his knowledge, he has become guilty before the LORD. This offering is the penalty for the weakness or passivity that leads to unintentional sin—a vivid reminder to the individual to be more mindful in the future. The very fact that unintentional sin requires atonement tells us that we cannot dissociate ourselves from our actions by saying, “I didn’t mean to do it.”

Note, there is no explicit sacrifice for deliberate, intentional sin and wilful sins against the LORD. “For that kind of deliberate, conscious, intentional sin, the only adequate moral response is *teshuvah*, repentance. This involves (a) remorse, (b) confession, and (c) a resolution never to commit the sin again.”<sup>4</sup> The strictness of this is brought out in Numbers 15:29-31:

*One and the same law applies to everyone who sins unintentionally, whether a native-born Israelite or a foreigner residing among you. 'But anyone who sins defiantly, whether native-born or foreigner, blasphemes the LORD and must be cut off from the people of Israel. Because they have despised the LORD's word and broken his commands, they must surely be cut off; their guilt remains on them.'*

**Q. What does the NT have to say about this?** Read Heb. 6:4-6; 10:26-28; 1 Jn. 3:4-10; Mt. 18:15-17

No-one was exempt, the Sin Offering was required from: a common person, a ruler, the whole congregation of Israel, or an anointed priest, including the High Priest. The High Priest, through his elevated office, has responsibility for the spiritual well-being of the nation. If he sins it brings guilt upon the entire people, so he is also required to atone for his own sin.

Sin offerings were killed by the sinner himself at the place of the burnt offering. The blood service was performed by the priest; the fat & innards go up in smoke on the altar but “... the entire bull shall be removed outside the camp, to a pure place and burned on wood ...” (4:12) This speaks of death and destruction of the sin nature. In Temple times, “outside the camp” meant outside the walls of Jerusalem. The writer of Hebrews speaks of this ritual in relation to Jesus:

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<sup>3</sup> The word ‘sin’ in Hebrew, *Chattah*, means to “miss the mark”.

<sup>4</sup> Sacks, *Covenant & Conversation*, p.86.

Hebrews 13:10-13 *We have an altar from which those who serve the tent have no right to eat. For the bodies of those animals whose blood is brought into the holy places by the high priest as a sacrifice for sin are burned outside the camp. So Jesus also suffered outside the gate in order to sanctify the people through his own blood. Therefore let us go to him outside the camp and bear the reproach he endured.*

Certain questions arise from this scripture – for example:

**Q. Where is the altar we have? Who are “those who serve the tent”? What does it mean for us to “go to him outside the camp and bear the reproach he endures”? (Jn. 15:18-20)**

## CHAPTER 5

***Asham* - Trespass Offering** - Read Lev. 5:1-5; 6:1-5 to understand the basis of this offering.

The fifth and final offering was the *asham*, traditionally translated “Guilt Offering” or “Trespass Offering”, which has more emphasis on words, thoughts, and what one has failed to do. It reminds us that we can do harm unintentionally and this can have consequences, both physical and psychological. One aspect of this offering was to make amends for one’s sin. As such, this offering had a specific monetary value, and one who owed another on account of a debt due to a “sin” could repay it in silver (5:15-16). In addition, a 20% fee was assessed and given to the priest, who mitigated the debt by sacrificing a *ram* (5:16).

5:5 *And it shall be, when he is guilty in any of these matters, that he shall confess that he has sinned in that thing.*

“Confession is required for most individual sacrifices of animals. The confession is made when the hands are leaned on the head of the animal. Rambam cites the wording of the confession was: ‘I have sinned, I have acted wrongly, I have transgressed the law by committing (the specified) sin. I repent before You and this is my atonement.’”<sup>5</sup>

On a mystical level... repentance is not only a means to gain forgiveness, but actually retroactively uproots and “undoes” the sin—and confession is a fundamental part of this process. Just as the sin was comprised of two elements, physical and emotional – namely, the physical wrongdoing and the passion that fuelled it – the repentance also requires a physical and emotional manifestation. The heartfelt regret uproots the sinful passion, and the sinful deed is reversed through a physical deed of repentance, namely, confession (which requires the verbal enunciation performed by the lips).<sup>6</sup>

Jesus Himself taught us to pray: *“Our father ... forgive us our trespasses as we forgive those who trespass against us...”*

*Let a person examine himself first, and then he may eat of the bread and drink from the cup.* (1Cor. 11:28)

*“...confess your sins to one another and pray for one another, that you may be healed (James 5:16).*

We would all be familiar with Jesus’ answer to the question: Which is the greatest Commandment? — *“You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your mind. This is the first and great commandment. And the second is like it: ‘You shall love your neighbour as yourself.’ On these two commandments hang all the Law and the Prophets.”* (Mt. 22:37-40)

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<sup>5</sup> Munk, *ibid* p.39

<sup>6</sup> Rabbi Menachem Mendel of Lubavitch (1749-1866)

## In Conclusion

We have now come to the end, for now, of the instructions regarding sacrifices. Since these laws were so central to the religious life of Israel, the question arose: "How did Judaism survive without them? The short answer is that the sages of the Middle Ages realised that sacrifices were symbolic enactments of processes of mind, heart, and deed that could be expressed in other ways as well."<sup>7</sup> Indeed, we have already seen that God despised the blood of sacrifices, even in Temple times, if the heart intent was not right. King David certainly understood this when he wrote Psalm 51:15-17

*O Lord, open my lips, And my mouth shall show forth your praise. For you do not desire sacrifice, or else I would give it; You do not delight in burnt offering. The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit, A broken and a contrite heart —These, O God, you will not despise.*

The sacrificial system of the Old Testament was a means of grace by which the relationship between God and humanity begins to be restored. Ultimately, the sacrificial system was inadequate, and none could repay the debt that was owed until Christ sanctified us through the offering of his body (Heb. 10:10). He paid the debt we could not pay.

Nevertheless, we can take lessons from each one of these offerings, and especially from the order in which they are given, because each one is very relevant to our own faith walk. Let us finish by briefly looking at each these offerings again—remembering that the first three are freewill, and the last two are obligatory:

1. *Olah – Whole burnt offering* –Total freewill surrender of our lives to God through Christ. *"Present your bodies, a living sacrifice, holy acceptable to God..."* Romans 12:1. *"Draw near to God and he will draw near to you..."* James 4:8
2. *Minchah – Grain Offering* – Voluntary expression of devotion to God, recognizing His goodness and providence. Drawing near with thanksgiving and worship, through the Holy Spirit (oil); with a pure heart (frankincense); in Covenant relationship (salt). *"Whenever you eat this bread and drink this cup, you proclaim the Lord's death until he comes."* 1 Cor. 11:26 *"Let us not neglect the meeting together..."* Heb. 10:25
3. *Shelamim – Peace Offering*. We share our peace/*shalom* in fellowship with our community of faith, in joy and generosity of heart, thanking God for his faithfulness to us. *Therefore by Him let us continually offer the sacrifice of praise to God, that is, the fruit of our lips, giving thanks to His name. But do not forget to do good and to share, for with such sacrifices God is well pleased.* Heb. 13:15-16
4. *Chatat – Sin Offering* – Be conscience of falling short in how we live our lives, and be quick to confess our failings to the Lord, and if appropriate to another person. "He always lives to make intercession" for us - Heb. 7:25.
5. *Asham – Trespass Offering* – Be conscience of the more hidden sins of thought, word, or deed that may contaminate us. Make amends if we have hurt others by our words, or misappropriated another's property.

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<sup>7</sup> Sacks, *ibid* p121.