

# Studies in Leviticus

The Fellowship or Peace Offering (Leviticus 3:1-17)

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### Background

Our first study of the Book of Leviticus, in Chapter 1, focussed on the burnt-offering ('ôlâ). The second study, in Chapter 2, focussed on the cereal-offering (minhâ), an offering of dedication or consecration.

In this our third study we want to begin to look at Chapter 3 which focuses on the fellowship or peace offering.

### The Message

#### Features of the Fellowship or Peace Offering

This offering conveys two basic ideas, namely fellowship and peace. The traditional translation of the Hebrew name for this offering is 'peace offering', a name which in turn is derived from the Hebrew word for 'shalom' meaning 'peace, completeness or wholeness'. The biblical concept of peace is quite profound and also quite simple, for if man is at peace with God he must also be at peace with himself and his neighbours. So a true understanding of biblical peace is incredibly challenging.

There are three elements defining this peace:

- Peace with God. (Romans 5: 1)
- The Peace of God. (Philemon 4: 7)
- Peace from God. (1 Corinthians 1: 3)

The feast, therefore, is an expression of friendship and fellowship growing out of the fact that the breach between man and God has been healed by His grace. It is also important to note that the feast is held in God's house, not in that of the offerer, emphasizing the fact that God is the host. This is symbolic of Christ who can be taken to represent the offering here, since His blood is shed for our guilt and to bring us into reconciled relation with God, and who Himself then becomes the meat by which we who are reconciled are thereafter sustained (John 6: 51 - 58).

Thus we have a joint feast in which all three partake. God, the priest and the offerer. This can therefore represent our fellowship with the Father, and with His Son Jesus Christ (1 John 1: 3). We must remember also that cleanliness is an important condition (1 John 1:9). We are still Christians if we are sinful, but we can hold no 'feast' and enjoy no communion with God while we are in that condition. The application to Christians is very plain (1 Peter 1: 13 - 16), cascading into our act of taking communion in Church. We must be right with God, right with ourselves and right with each other.

The fellowship offering was the only sacrifice of which the offerer might also eat a part (Leviticus 7: 14-15, 7: 31-34). Since the offering was connected with a sacrificial meal of which several partook, a small bird would be insufficient. This is one of the specific distinctions between the fellowship and burnt offerings.

Seven features constituted the ritual of the Fellowship offering, as follows:

1. The presentation, vs. 1, 2. (hiqrîb)
2. The laying on of hands, v. 2. (sāmak)
3. The slaying of the victim, v. 2. (šāhat)
4. The sprinkling of the blood, v. 2. (zāraq)

5. The separating of the pieces, vs. 3, 4. (Not washing)
6. The burning of the fat (the select parts), vs. 3 - 5. (*hiqtîr*)
7. The eating of the remainder, 7: 15. (*‘ākal*)

The peace or fellowship offering had to fulfil certain criteria (presupposing a sanctuary, an altar, and an officiating priesthood), which included:

- i. It could be male or female.
- ii. It had to be perfect.
- iii. It could be out of the herd or out of the flock, but not from fowl.
- iv. After slaughter, the blood had to be sprinkled all around the altar.
- v. All the fat (the select or choice parts) had to be sacrificed.
- vi. The sacrifice had to be classed as clean (see also Leviticus 11 and Deuteronomy 14).
- vii. Not all of the animal was burnt.
- viii. Some of it was consumed by the offerer.
- ix. The offering could only be presented at the door of the Tabernacle. See Matthew 10: 32; Romans 10: 9 - 10.
- x. The remainder of the offering had to be eaten by the offerer and his family and the priests on the day of the offering.
- xi. The fellowship offering was to be burnt on top of the burnt offering.

Further information on the fellowship offering can be found in Leviticus 19:5-8; 22:21-25.

TABLE 1: THE RITUAL PROCEDURES LAID DOWN FOR SACRIFICES OF BURNT AND PEACE OFFERINGS (LEVITICUS 1 AND 3)

Order of Acts	1	2	3	4	5	6
Hebrew terms	<i>hiqrîḥ</i>	<i>sāmāk</i>	<i>šāhat</i>	<i>zāraq</i>	<i>hiqtîr</i>	<i>‘ākal</i>
<b>‘ôlâ (burnt - offering)</b> Leviticus 1: 1-17						
<b>Bull</b>	Lv.1:3	Lv.1:4	Lv.1:5a	Lv.1:5b	Lv.1:9b	—
<b>Sheep or goat</b>	Lv.1:10b	—	Lv.1:11a	Lv.1:11b	Lv.1:13b	—
<b>zēbah (šēlāmîm) (peace - offering)</b> Leviticus 3: 1-17						
<b>Bull</b>	Lv.3:1b	Lv.3:2a	Lv.3:2a	Lv.3:2b	Lv.3:5	—
<b>Lamb</b>	Lv.3:6b	Lv.3:8a	Lv.3:8a	Lv.3:8b	Lv.3:11	—
<b>Goat</b>	Lv.3:12b	Lv.3:13a	Lv.3:13a	Lv.3:13b	Lv.3:16	—

The peace offering was to be consumed upon the burnt offering on the altar (Leviticus 3: 5), thus symbolizing that the peace it typified was founded upon the fact of atonement and acceptance on the part of the offerer through the ritual of the burnt offering. The peace offering usually followed the meal offering (see the details in the dedication of Aaron, Leviticus 8, and those of the Day of Atonement, Leviticus 16).

### Other Information

The fat (select parts) had to be sacrificed to God. This means that the best of the offering had to be given to God, putting the Lord first. Our lives too are to be a sacrifice to God, but do we always give Him the best of ourselves - always putting Him first? We must note the fact that the eating of the fat of all animals was not prohibited, but only those used in sacrifice, and in these only when they were being so used. The prohibition of the eating of blood, however, applied to all animals and in all cases (Leviticus 17: 10 - 12).

The offering is an expression of a desire to maintain and demonstrate right relations between God, man and his neighbour. This harmony might be expressed as an offering which accompanied a vow of some kind (Leviticus 22:21) or as a thank offering (Leviticus 22:29) or a free will offering (Leviticus 22:21). The offerings expressed the individual's gratification to God for His goodness, or were simply spontaneous expressions of devotion.

It is clear from 7: 28 - 34 that certain parts of the peace offering belonged to the priests. The ceremonial show in which the 'parts' featured, was a token of their dedication to God first, and their being received back again from Him by the priests. By comparison of 7: 15, 22: 29 - 30 and other texts, it will be seen that the offerer himself had for his portion all that remained. It also will be seen that he was at liberty to invite his friends to the feast, which must always be eaten at the sanctuary and which was an occasion of joy (Deuteronomy 12: 4 - 7, 17, 18). The only condition for partaking of the feast was that of ceremonial cleanliness (Leviticus 7: 20, 21).