

# Leviticus

## Lesson 2

### Law Review – Chapter One – The Burnt Offering

In Chapter One we learned about the law of the *burnt offering*. The offering could be from either the herd or the flock. If it was from the herd, it was a bull without defect offered at the door of the Tent of Meeting. If it was from the flock, it could be a sheep or goat offered at the north side of the Brazen Altar. If it was a turtle dove or a young pigeon, it was offered on the west side of the Brazen Altar. With the bull, sheep and goat, the giver placed his hand on the head of the animal to transfer his sin to the animal and then he would cut its neck. The priest would catch some of the blood to sprinkle around the Brazen Altar. While the priest was sprinkling the blood and stoking the fire, the giver would skin and quarter the animal. The inner organs and the legs of the animal were washed in the water from the Basin nearby. The priest would place all the parts of the animal on the Brazen Altar and burn them until they were completely consumed. The offering of the turtle dove or young pigeon was different. The giver gave the bird to the priest who wrung its neck and placed the head on the Brazen Altar. The crop was emptied and thrown on the east side of the Altar along with all the feathers smolder and burned in the ashes. The blood was poured out on the west side of the Altar, the wings were torn off and the body was placed on the Brazen Altar to be totally consumed. Two types of animals could be given for the *burnt offering*, four choices of animals were allowed and all were to be burnt until they were nothing but ashes. The smell of the smoke from the animals was a sweet aroma to the LORD, holy and acceptable to Him.

In Chapter 2 we come to the Law of the Grain Offering.

#### C. The Grain Offering

##### 1. The Raw-Ingredient Grain Offering

###### a) The Ingredients (2:1)

In Chapter 2 verse 1 we find the raw ingredients of the grain offering. “*Now when anyone presents a grain offering as an offering to the LORD, his offering shall be of fine flour, and he shall pour oil on it and put frankincense on it*” (2:1). We might note here that some English translations use the words *cereal offering* instead of *grain offering* in this verse. Either is correct. The English word *cereal* comes from the Latin word which means the edible grain portions of various grasses. All grains come from some variety of a grass plant. We should also mention here that in some old versions of the English Bibles, the *grain offering* is called a *meat-offering*. Most scholars agreed that the word *meat* is a misprint for the word *meal* which would surely be an appropriate ancient alternative for the words *grain or cereal*.

Three ingredients are given for the grain offering – fine flour, oil and frankincense. These raw ingredients were all mixed together. We do not know if these ingredients were combined before arriving at the Brazen Altar or mixed at the Altar; nevertheless, they were mixed together for the offering. The exact measurements of each ingredient is not given here.

###### (1) Fine Flour

In the ancient world as also today, flours were ground from a variety of grains. The most common were wheat, barley and corn. Any of these would work for the *fine flour* grain offering as long as the product was *fine*. That is an interesting word. In our western world we tend to think of grains being ground to a coarse texture or pulverized to a dust texture. But that is not the meaning of this word. The word *fine* indicates the quality of the flour rather than the ground texture. The flour was to be of a superior quality – high grade, from the most perfect seeds.

## (2) Oil

The kind of oil is not mentioned here, but no doubt it is a reference to olive oil. Although, oils have been extracted since ancient times from all sorts of seeds and used as ingredients in cooking and as a carrier liquid for incense. Olive, flaxseed, hemp, coconut, sesame, grapeseed, canola, corn, sunflower, peanut, palm, and avocado are all used to produce oils and were available to the Israelite people. Nonetheless, olive oil was the most widely used and meant in the Scripture. Oil was extracted from all of these options in the same way, by pressing the product in a press until the oils were squeezed out. Ancient oil presses are not rare and many styles have been discovered.

In ancient times, oil was comparable to butter that we use today in the sense that it was added to grain or meal products to make them more palatable to the taste. In certain cultures, olive oil, as well as other flavorful oils are used extensively in food preparation.

## (3) Frankincense

We think of *frankincense* as a incense or perfume used for the smell it produces. We know of its uses in the preparation of a body for burial to help cover up the smell of the rotting flesh. But *frankincense* is actually the resin from a vegetable plant that can be consumed by humans. We find it in the supplement sections of our drug stores under the name Boswellia and it is consumed to help with osteoarthritis, rheumatoid arthritis, asthma and inflammatory bowel disease. It is called *frank* because of the freeness with which the odor goes forth when burned. It burns for a long time with a steady flame. The tree that it comes from is cut and the first resin which comes forth is the purest and whitest. With each successive cut, the resin becomes spotted with yellow. As frankincense becomes old, it loses its white color. In ancient days, the finest of the frankincense in the world was found in Arabia, the very area where Mount Sinai was located.

## b) The Act of Worship (2:2)

The LORD instructed the act of worship for the grain offering when He says, *“He shall then bring it to Aaron's sons the priests; and shall take from it his handful of its fine flour and of its oil with all of its frankincense. And the priest shall offer it up in smoke as its memorial portion on the altar, an offering by fire of a soothing aroma to the LORD”* (2:2).

At the Brazen Altar, the giver would hold out the bowl where the ingredients were mixed together and the priest on duty would reach in and grab a handful of the mixture and place it on the fire. Notice that the handful of the mixture was called the *“memorial portion.”* The English word *memorial* is our attempt to translate the Hebrew word that means *to remember*. The whole mixture of the raw ingredients was not offered on the Altar, only a portion, only a handful, just a little of the mixture to use as a reminder of the purpose of the grain offering. What was the purpose of the grain offering? The burnt offering was for the remission of sin. For that the sacrifice of an living animal was the only remedy. The grain offering could never take the place of the burnt offering. Rather, the grain offering is a memorial, a reminder. Of what? It was a reminder of the graciousness of the LORD Who provides generously for the needs of each individual, according to each need. The smell of the cooking bread on the Brazen Altar was a sweet aroma to the LORD, a reminder of His goodness to His people.

## c) The Remainder of the Mixture (2:3)

Not all the mixture was placed on the Brazen Altar. That which remained in the bowl after the handful was removed was given to the priest. Verse 2:3 says, *“The remainder of the grain offering belongs to Aaron and his sons: a thing most holy, of the offerings to the LORD by fire”* (2:3). For the priest it was a ready-made dough mix to take and cook. The left-over portion was a *thing most holy* because it was the provision for the daily needs of the ministers of the LORD. Priests were not allowed to own

land, herds, flocks or raise crops. The *burnt offering* provided them with animal hides for clothing, water bags and whatnot. The grain offering provided them with their daily bread.

## 2. The Oven-Baked Grain Product (2:4)

But the LORD did not require the grain offering to be only raw ingredients mix together. The grain could be cooked in the oven and brought to the Altar as cakes or wafers. The Scripture says, *“Now when you bring an offering of a grain offering baked in an oven, it shall be unleavened cakes of fine flour mixed with oil, or unleavened wafers spread with oil”* (2:4).

The baked goods could be cakes or wafers. But notice the one restriction, they had to be unleavened. We know of leaven today as *yeast*. It is a product produced by the fermentation process which cause the bread dough to rise. Any dough, allowed to sit for a while, will begin to ferment and produce leaven or yeast. If you wanted leavened bread, a small amount of old fermented dough would be added to new dough which would cause the whole lump of new dough to expand and rise into a large loaf filled with small air pockets. The LORD will condemn the use of leaven or yeast and use it as an example of sin, how it puffs up the person, making him or her seem bigger or better than they really are. Bread cakes or flat wafers that were cooked in the oven and brought to the LORD could not contain leaven or yeast. That meant that the dough had to be fresh with no old left-over dough mixed in. In other words, the nature of the old dough could not be included with the nature of the new life in the LORD.

## 3. The Griddle-Cooked Grain Offering (2:5-6)

Baking the grain was not the only method by which a cooked offering could be brought to the LORD. He allowed the grain mixture to be cooked on a griddle. The Scripture says, *“If your offering is a grain offering made on the griddle, it shall be of fine flour, unleavened, mixed with oil; you shall break it into bits and pour oil on it; it is a grain offering”* (2:5-6).

Some English versions of the Bible use the words *frying pan* instead of *griddle* in this verse. The Hebrew word is *marbesheth* and it actually means a *pan that is used to boil* foods. Instead of filling the pan with vegetables, meat and water to boil, the pan was left dry and the dough was cooked like we would cook a pancake or tortilla. Oil was used to hold the flour together in the pan, but after the fried bread was removed from the pan, it was divided into smaller pieces and more oil was poured over the bread. Notice also that the bread could not contain leaven for the same reason as mentioned before.

## 4. The Pan-Cooked Grain Offering (2:7-10)

The grain offering could also be cooked in a pan rather than quickly fried or baked in an oven. Cooking in the pan was a slower process that provided a different textured product. The Bible says in verse 7-9, *“Now if your offering is a grain offering made in a pan, it shall be made of fine flour with oil. When you bring in the grain offering which is made of these things to the LORD, it shall be presented to the priest and he shall bring it to the altar. The priest then shall take up from the grain offering its memorial portion, and shall offer it up in smoke on the altar as an offering by fire of a soothing aroma to the LORD”* (2:7-9).

The pan cooked bread had a different amount of oil included that allowed the product to be moist yet cooked inside. This bread was brought to the Brazen Altar where the priest on duty would tear off a *memorial portion* and burn it on the Altar for a sweet smelling aroma to the LORD. It is the same as with all the means of grain offerings that the LORD would allow. Not mentioned here, but mentioned with the first option of the raw ingredient offering, the left-over cooked bread was surely given to the priest on duty that day to be shared with the other priests families. We know that because the Scripture says in verse 10, *“The remainder of the grain offering belongs to Aaron and his sons: a thing most holy of the offerings to the LORD by fire”* (2:10). The people would give their offerings to the

LORD and the LORD would give a portion of His gifts to the priests to provide for their daily needs.

## 5. The Forbidden Ingredients

### a) Offerings without Leaven and Honey (2:11)

The LORD has already mentioned the one restriction for the grain offering by using the word *unleavened*. But, knowing the nature of mankind, He makes sure that the people understand His restriction. Verse 11 says, “*No grain offering, which you bring to the LORD, shall be made with leaven, for you shall not offer up in smoke any leaven or any honey as an offering by fire to the LORD*” (2:11).

We have already discussed in the study the restriction of leaven in the grain offerings. However, the LORD includes honey in this verse. Why? The process of fermentation always uses some kind of sugar. Fermentation is a chemical process where sugar, or glucose is broken down anaerobically. In the process, a foaming or frothing occurs in the process of breaking down the sugars growing microorganisms in the absence of air producing carbon dioxide and alcohol. Modern societies use sugar every day, yet in ancient times, sugar was rare save for the sweet sugar known as honey, a special treat in the ancient world. When honey was added to the dough mixture, the fermentation process was jump started and occurred rapidly in the pre-refrigeration world. Therefore, the LORD knowing that honey would cause the acceleration of leaven or yeast to occur, long before it was finally understood and explained by Louis Pasteur in 19<sup>th</sup> century, it was forbidden from being included in any grain offering presented at the Brazen Altar.

### b) Offerings with Leaven and Honey

But leaven and honey was not restricted from all offerings given to the LORD. Verse 12 says, “*As an offering of first fruits you shall bring them to the LORD, but they shall not ascend for a soothing aroma on the altar*” (2:12).

The offering of *first fruits* is mentioned for the first time in the book of Leviticus and it is associated with the grain offering. First fruits is the initial tithe of the grain field given to the LORD at the Tabernacle or Tent of Meeting. Those grains could be raw, cooked in the oven, griddle or in the pan and they could include leaven and honey. However, when they were brought to the LORD as an offering, no portion of the first fruits offering containing leaven or honey could be placed on the Brazen Altar. What was the purpose of bringing a grain offering containing leaven or honey to the LORD? It was a gift to the LORD that the LORD would give to the priests for their families. Leaven and honey were not forbidden from the Tabernacle property, it was only restricted from being offered on the Brazen Altar as a grain offering, but not as a first fruit offering.

## 6. Seasoned with Salt

Salt has always been used in the diets of almost all people of all lands. It is a chemical compound primarily of sodium chloride used as a preservative, purifier, or seasoning. In this passage the LORD required it on grain offerings as seasoning. Verse 13 says, “*Every grain offering of yours, moreover, you shall season with salt, so that the salt of the covenant of your God shall not be lacking from your grain offering; with all your offerings you shall offer salt*” (2:13).

Whether or not the grain offering is for the Brazen Altar or simply a first fruits offering for the priests, salt was to be added for seasoning. The verse says that it is the *salt of the covenant of your God*. What does that mean? To capture the understanding of this phrase we need to include its reference to the Mosaic covenant in Numbers 18:19, the Davidic Covenant in 2 Chronicles 13:5 and the sacrifices in Ezekiel 43:24. In each case, the *salt of the covenant* emphasizes the enduring nature, the everlasting agreement, of the LORD in His covenants with His people.

#### 7. The Roasted Grain Offering (2:14-16)

Finally, the LORD allows for a roasted or parched grain offering. The LORD says, “*Also, if you bring a grain offering of early ripened things to the LORD, you shall bring fresh heads of grain roasted in the fire, grits of new growth, for the grain offering of your early ripened things. You shall then put oil on it and lay incense on it; it is a grain offering. The priest shall offer up in smoke its memorial portion, part of its grits and its oil with all its incense as an offering by fire to the LORD*” (2:14-16).

The LORD calls for the *fresh heads of grain* to be *roasted in the fire*. Think of it this way, an ear of corn on the stalk in the field is a *fresh head of grain*. You can roast that ear of corn in its husk in a fire or you can roast it in a pan or on a griddle without the need for oil or grease of any kind. The head of grain is not taken apart, it is roasted just as it comes cut off the plant. The same is true for wheat, barley, maize, etc. In the case of the latter, the roasted grains will begin to fall off the stalks as they are roasted and the pan or griddle was needed to keep the grains from falling into the fire.

The LORD also calls them the *grits of new growth*. Here in America we think of *grits* as the coarsely ground hominy that is cooked into a mush. But that is not the meaning of the word *grits* in this passage. Here it means the uncrushed, unground, unbeaten, grain cornel seeds. They may be separated from each other, but each *grit* is a totally intact cornel of wheat, barley, corn seed, etc. They are to be roasted whole, cooked intact.

After being roasted in some method over the fire, oil and incense was to be added to them before they were given to the priest to place on the Brazen Altar. As with all the other options for the grain offerings, only a *memorial portion* of the offering was placed on the Altar. The rest of the offering was given to the priests on duty to feed their families. As always, the roasted offering on the Brazen Altar provided a sweet and pleasing aroma to the LORD.

This roasted offering was to be presented to the LORD as soon as the first, early heads of grain, of whatever kind of plant, were ripened and ready to consume. The LORD required the offering to be given to Him, but, in turn, He had priests and their families that needed to be fed.

With that, the grain offering is easy to grasp. Next we will study the peace offering.