

Leviticus

Lesson 3

As we begin our third lesson in the Book of Leviticus, you may have noticed that I did not follow my usually opening remarks concerning the beginning of a new book study. I did not tell you the origin of the name of the book as we call it in our English language. That omission was purposeful. The book of Leviticus is one of the least used but most vital content in the whole Scripture. When reading through the many commentaries of old, most scholars will indicate that the Old Testament Book of Leviticus is vital mainly to the understanding of the New Testament Book of Hebrews. I disagree with that position. It is important to the understanding of the Book of Hebrews but it is much more important to the understanding of the entire Old and New Testaments down to the Book of Hebrews and on to the last verse of the Revelation. Why do I say that? The genesis of that belief comes from the name of the this book as it was called in the Jewish Word of God. Let us explore that point for a moment.

If you were to pick up a Jewish Tanakh, the equivalent of our Old Testament, and turn to the third book, it would not say Leviticus. It would say *Torath Kohanim*. *Torath* means *book of the*, and *Kohanim* means *priests*. So in the Jewish Bible, this book is called the *Book of the Priests*. Now we must make a distinction. Which priests? The name *Kohanim* tells it all.

In my second lesson in the Book study of Deuteronomy, I provided you with a chart that revealed the order that the camp was to caravan from place to place following the cloud by day or the fire by night after leaving Mount Sinai. It is profitable to insert that chart in this lesson too. Look at the chart carefully.

Order of the March of the Camp

First	Judah
Second	Issachar
Third	Zebulun
Fourth	Tabernacle Complex taken down and follows Zebulun – Gershon and Merari <i>The Tabernacle Complex to be completely erected before Holy objects arrive.</i>
Fifth	Reuben
Sixth	Simeon
Seventh	Gad
Eighth	Holy Objects - Kohath
Ninth	Ephraim
Tenth	Manasseh
Eleventh	Benjamin
Twelfth	Dan
Thirteenth	Asher
Fourteenth	Naphtali

In the chart, we notice that fourth in the order of the caravan, the descendants of Gershon and Merari were tasked with transporting the Tabernacle Complex with the exception of the Holy objects which would be the Ark of the Covenant, the Table of Show Bread, the Altar of Incense, the Menorah and the rest. The Holy objects were to be eighth in the caravan and carried by the Kohaths.

The Gershons, Meraris and Kohaths were all descendants of Jacob's son named Levi. Therefore, all of these descendants from these three men were Levites and they were designated by the LORD as the perpetual religious leaders of the Nation of Israel. Aaron, the first high priest was from the tribe of Levi and were therefore Levites by birth. Gershon was the eldest son of Levi. Merari was the youngest son of Levi. Kohath was the middle son and the grandfather of Moses and Aaron (Genesis 46:11; Exodus 6:16; Numbers 3:17; 26:57–58; 1 Chronicles 6:1; 23:12).

All three sons would be enlisted as the perpetual religious leaders of the Nation of Israel; however, the sons of Kohath held the most important role in the LORD's Levitical organization. The descendants of Kohath held the distinct privilege that they could be the priests among the nation. Some would be honored to hold the position of the High Priest. No descendant of Gershon or Merari could ever do that. They would have the honor of receiving the offerings, as we are learning about this new book study of Leviticus. They could touch and carry the most Holy objects of the Tabernacle complex; no descendant of Gershon or Merari could ever do that.

With that as the background, this third book of the Bible is the *book of the Kohanim* or instructions for the most important Levitical duties in the worship of the LORD, the Kohaths. If this book is for the Kohath priests, why is it important to us? Let me give an example of why this book is important.

As a teenager, when I would get in trouble and be punished by my parents, for some reason, I would pick up my Bible and begin to read it. Being honest, I only read my Bible when I was in trouble or if some tragedy occurred in my family. At the age of eleven, when my father died in March of that year, I clung to my Bible and *read it religiously!* How could life go on without dad? How could we pay the bills? I understood that because my mother procured me a job throwing the Waxahachie Daily Light in my neighborhood and told me I had to go to work in order to pay for my own things. She was desperate to hold on to house, the car, put food on the table and simply pay the utility bills. I would find her reading her Bible late at night and sometimes all night. I, too, knowing how hard it was, picked up a second job that year working honey bees for Stroope's Honey. For the Fourth of July and the New Years, I picked up a third job selling fireworks at a stand on the side of the road just outside of the city limits. I struggle with that because money was too hard to come by and I never understood why someone would spend hard earned money to blow away in a flash. As I grew older, I noticed that as my friends whose relationships with girlfriends were breaking up, they, too, broke open the Word of God and searched for answers. In my ministry of almost thirty years, I was in a unique position called Helping Hands at Sagemont Church. Weekly, people would make appointments with me for guidance. In almost every case, something had gone terribly wrong in their life either by their own making, the making of others, or the fall of the economy. In almost every case they were looking for a spiritual answer to their real and personal dilemma. They had poured through their Bibles. They knew the answer was there. But because they did not know where to look, they were weary and came to me to show them where to find their answer. They came to me with a load of bricks filled with trouble that they could not carry any longer on their own and they asked me to help carry their load until they could get their strength back. They, in essence, were looking for an answer from God and a remedy for their mess.

The *book of the Kohanim*, given the Greek name *Leuitikon Biblion* (Levite Bible) in the Septuagint in 250 BC when the Old Testament was translated into Greek for the Greek speaking Jews, was not a good retitling of the book. Our name *Leviticus* come from a rendering of the Greek into English from *Leuitikon* (the “u” being pronounced as a “v”). This book was properly written for the Kohaths as an instruction manual to give answers to the other tribes of Israel when life had gone wrong and they were filled with sin before the LORD. He provided a way for that remedy for the Jews when they came to the Tabernacle to seek the LORD in worship for the remission of sins. Nothing is new about human nature as the LORD created it. People in trouble will instinctively seek Him, their Creator. He provided ministers to give those answers by providing the elements of His laws.

As my daughter made her journey through three years of law school, her mother and I became her faithful and constant students. As she studied here notes, we would listen for hours on end as she would teach us what she was learning. The one thing that we learned early is that the laws on the books all have specific elements that must be present in order for that law to be used. That is exactly what the LORD is doing in these first required offerings found in the first seven chapters of

the book. He is teaching the priests, the Kohaths, the elements of each law. As the book develops, more laws are attached to these first laws based on how the elements appear. But, be that as it may, the reason the LORD is being so detailed in these basic offerings is because the elements must be known and followed faithfully. They will be the ingredients in the foundation of the process for the eternal salvation for each person – individually. They will also be ingredients in the foundation set by the LORD when He came to earth and took on the human flesh and blood to be the ultimate sacrifice for our sins.

This book rightfully should be called the *book of the priests* because it is their handbook from the LORD for helping those in need. With that as the background, let us do a little law review of Chapters 1 and 2. Today's lesson will be a variant of the *burnt offering* called the *peace offering*.

Law Review – Chapter One and Two – The Burnt and Grain Offerings

The first two required offerings were simple and easy to understand. The burnt offering could be from two kinds of animals, those kept in herds or those kept in flocks. For the Nation of Israel, one year out of Egypt and at the foot of Mount Sinai, that meant the animals that were taken from Egypt. Herds of oxen were taken. Flocks of sheep, goats, turtle dove and pigeons were taken. A male oxen without blemish was offered at the door of the tent of meeting. A sheep or goat without blemish was offered at the north side of the Brazen Altar. The turtle dove or young pigeon was given to the priest at the west side of the Altar. The giver would place his hand on the head of the ox, sheep or goat and then cut its neck. The priest would catch some of the blood and sprinkle it around the Altar and then stoke the fire. While the priest stoked the fire, the giver would skin and quarter the animal so the priest could place it on the Altar. The inner parts and legs would be washed in the basin of water before being placed on the Altar and completely consumed in the fire and rendered to ash. The neck of the turtle dove or young pigeon was wrung by the priest on the west side of the Altar and the blood was drained there. The feathers were removed as well as the contents of the crop and cast to the east side of the Altar where the ashes were gathered. The wings were torn off and the bird was placed on the Altar to be totally consumed in the fire and rendered to ash.

The grain offering used fine flour, oil and incense (spice). The simplest and first way to make the offering was to place all the raw ingredients in a bowl and present it to the priest. The priest would take a handful and cast it onto the Altar to be totally consumed. The rest of the raw mixture was given to the priest for use by the other priest or their families. The grain offering could also be baked in an oven, fried on a griddle, pan cooked or roasted. However, the mixture could not include leaven or honey. No matter how this offering was brought to the Altar, a small amount was placed on the Altar and burned until it was ash. The leftover portions of the offering were given to the priest for the other priests or their families to consume. Grain offerings that contained leaven and/or honey could be brought to the priests and their families, but could never be offered on the Brazen Altar.

Now we come to the third offering, the peace offering.

D. The Peace Offering

1. From the Herd (3:1-2).

a) Male or Female

The peace offering is similar to the burnt offering, but not the same. The LORD said in Chapter 3 verse 1, ‘*Now if his offering is a sacrifice of peace offerings, if he is going to offer out of the herd, whether male or female, he shall offer it without defect before the LORD. He shall lay his hand on the head of his offering and slay it at the doorway of the tent of meeting, and Aaron's sons the priests shall sprinkle the blood around on the altar.*’ (3:1-2).

Like the *burnt offering*, the *peace offering* could be an animal from the herd of oxen. But in this case, it could be a male or female oxen without blemish. Like in the burnt offering, the giver would lay his hand on the head of the animal and kill it at the door of the tent of meeting. In the same way as the *burnt offering*, the priest would catch some of the blood and sprinkle it around the Brazen Altar.

Before moving on to discover the steps in the rest of the peace offering ceremony, let us consider the word “peace” as it is used here. In his 1525 translation, Tyndale used the words “peace offering” in his translation and rightfully so. In his 1380 translation, Wycliffe used the words “peaceable things,” and rightfully so. In 1380, the best translation of the Hebrew word *selemime* was “peaceable things.” It meant a happiness for things such as safety, welfare or prosperity. By 1525, the word “peace” by itself meant the same except it included the idea of the happiness of a friendly relationship between people. But now we must deal with the word “happiness” used to define the translation of the word *selemime*. In 1380 and 1525, the word “happiness” was used the way we use the word “thankfulness” today. Tyndale’s use of the words “peace offering” have been carried through in most English translations to today, but the newer versions that use the words “fellowship offering (NIV, Holman, CSB)” or “thank offering,” are closer to the original intent of the LORD’s meaning. This *peace offering* is not for sin, but for gratitude. It is a thank you gift to the LORD for safety, wellbeing, or prosperity. Of course, all of this has to do with the fellowship of one with another in a right relationship. Between relatives and friends, there is a happiness that fills the souls and the offering is a thanks to the LORD for that time of life.

With the *burnt offering*, the word “sacrifice” was not used, but it is used here with this *peace offering*. We must never confuse the word “sacrifice” with the word “offering.” The two are different and have different meanings in Scripture. In our definition of words today, the term “sacrifice” is most often used to mean *doing without something*. By 1805, the term *self-sacrifice* was developed and it meant to *do without so someone else could have something*. Through the years, we have dropped the *self* from the term and we used the word *sacrifice* to mean *self-sacrifice*. That is not the intent of the word anywhere in the Bible. The LORD never asks you to give something that you need, He never asks you to do without, so anyone else can have. The LORD gives you the provisions for life. He asks for a tithe or an offering from what He has given you but He never asks you to give something you cannot afford to give. He never gives you something that you need for you to give it to someone else. In the Scripture, the word “sacrifice” always means *to take the life – to kill*. In the peace offering, the life of an animal was taken so that the body of the animal could be offered as a gift to the LORD. Without a death, there is no sacrifice being offered. Nothing died in a grain offering, so there is no sacrifice associated with that offering. In addition, the grain offering is just a small gift from the massive harvest that the LORD gave to you. With the burnt offering, it, too, is but a tenth of what the LORD gave to you. For example, the LORD will give you ten animals and he asks you to give one back to Him in a sacrifice peace offering. You are never giving all that He gave you and placing you in a position of doing without.

Be that as it may, the peace offering of the oxen was sacrificed at the door of the tent of meeting. With the animal skinned and quartered, the procedures for the remaining part of the offering changed from that of the burnt offering.

b) The Fat

Concerning the fat on the organs of the animals, the LORD says, ‘*From the sacrifice of the peace offerings he shall present an offering by fire to the LORD, the fat that covers the entrails and all the fat that is on the entrails, and the two kidneys with the fat that is on them, which is on the loins, and the lobe of the liver, which he shall remove with the kidneys.*’ (3:3-4).

Notice that the whole skinned oxen was not placed on the Brazen Altar. Only the fat attached to the inner organs, the loins, the two kidneys, with their fat, and the liver were placed on the Altar

and burnt to ashes. At this point, the Scripture does not tell us what was done with the rest of the animal, but we will find out that it was given to the priest to cook for the other priests or their families.

c) The Aroma

When fat is cooked on an open fire, it melts into grease drops in the fire and smoke is formed. The priests are the ones to place the animal on the Altar for that to happen. The LORD says, “*Then Aaron's sons shall offer it up in smoke on the altar on the burnt offering, which is on the wood that is on the fire; it is an offering by fire of a soothing aroma to the LORD.*” (3:5). We have studied the phrase “soothing aroma to the LORD” and it means the same here (see lesson 1).

2. From the Flock

a) Male or Female

As with the burnt offering, the peace offering could be taken from the flock. The LORD says this about lamb being offered. “*But if his offering for a sacrifice of peace offerings to the LORD is from the flock, he shall offer it, male or female, without defect. If he is going to offer a lamb for his offering, then he shall offer it before the LORD, and he shall lay his hand on the head of his offering and slay it before the tent of meeting, and Aaron's sons shall sprinkle its blood around on the altar.*” (3:6-8). This part of the ceremony is the same as with the oxen in the burnt offering and the peace offering. However, unlike the burnt offering, the peace offering can be a male or female lamb without defect.

b) The Fat

Reading on we find that the fat of the lamb is to be offered in the same manner as the fat of the oxen with one added exception, the fat of the tail. The Scripture says, ‘*From the sacrifice of peace offerings he shall bring as an offering by fire to the LORD, its fat, the entire fat tail which he shall remove close to the backbone, and the fat that covers the entrails and all the fat that is on the entrails, and the two kidneys with the fat that is on them, which is on the loins, and the lobe of the liver, which he shall remove with the kidneys. Then the priest shall offer it up in smoke on the altar as food, an offering by fire to the LORD.*’ (3:9-11). It is not shown here, but the rest of the meat was given to the priests and their families to eat. We will learn that later in Chapter 7.

c) The Goat

As with the burnt offering, the instructions for the lamb and the goat were together. With this peace offering, the two were separated. Concerning the goat, which has no fatty tail, a separate instruction must be given. The LORD says for the goat, “*Moreover, if his offering is a goat, then he shall offer it before the LORD, and he shall lay his hand on its head and slay it before the tent of meeting, and the sons of Aaron shall sprinkle its blood around on the altar. From it he shall present his offering as an offering by fire to the LORD, the fat that covers the entrails and all the fat that is on the entrails, and the two kidneys with the fat that is on them, which is on the loins, and the lobe of the liver, which he shall remove with the kidneys. priest shall offer them up in smoke on the altar as food, an offering by fire for a soothing aroma; all fat is the LORD'S.*” (3:12-16).

Another difference between the burnt and peace offerings is quickly noticed. The LORD did not allow the turtle doves or young pigeons to be used in the peace offering.

d) The Perpetual Statute

Attached to the peace offering regulations is an interesting perpetual statute. The LORD says, “*It is a perpetual statute throughout your generations in all your dwellings: you shall not eat any fat or any blood.*” (3:17).

Wycliffe 1380 translated “perpetual statute” as *everlasting right*. Tyndale 1525 translated it as a *law forever*. Both are correct. By the mid 14th century, as Wycliffe was doing his work, the word *perpetual* had garnered the meaning of *everlasting, unceasing, existing indefinitely, and continuing forever in the future*. That definition of the word has lasted to this day and is clearly understood.

The word “statute” meant *law or decree*. It means the same today, but it is not used as commonly in the home; however, it is still used extensively in the legal world.

Other versions of the English Bible will translate the two words as *lasting ordinance, permanent law, statute forever, rule kept forever, everlasting statute and statute age-during*. All of these translations are perfectly acceptable for a correct understanding of the length of this law from the LORD, “*you shall not eat any fat or any blood.*” The question we must ask here is, “Is this a statute for just the priest or is it for all the nation of Israel?”

As we know, if you are going to eat meat, it is impossible to remove all the fat before cooking. Additionally, the fat acts as a seasoning for the meat while cooking. We can bleed an animal, but it, too, is impossible to remove all the blood before cooking.

Concerning the fat, back in Chapter 1, in the instructions for the burnt offering, the *suet* of the animal was placed on the fire. In that chapter we learned that the *suet* was the *purest fat* found on an animal. It was the best fat found on the animal and highly prized. Here in verse 17, the LORD does not use the word *suet* but the word *fat*. What is the difference?

When we arrive at Leviticus Chapter 17, we are going to learn that *blood*, is the bearer of life. Another place in the Scripture we learn that *life is in the blood*. Therefore, it is easy to understand that the blood belongs to the LORD because He is the giver of life. He required the blood to be shed from the offerings that were offered to Him. As for the fat, according to Smith,

The Hebrews distinguished between the suet or pure fat of an animal and the fat which was intermixed with the lean (Neh. 8:10). Certain restrictions were imposed upon them in reference to the former: some parts of the suet, viz., about the stomach, the entrails, the kidneys, and the tail of a sheep, which grows to an excessive size ... produces a large quantity of rich fat, were forbidden to be eaten in the case of animals offered to Jehovah in sacrifice (Lev. 3:3, 9, 17; 7:3, 23). The ground of the prohibition was that the fat was the richest part of the animal, and therefore belonged to God (3:16).³

As for the perpetual statute found here in 3:17, with the peace offering, the blood was spilt and the richest parts of the fat were offered on the Brazen Altar. The rest of the meat of the offering was given to the priest and their families to eat. That meat included fat that was not cut away and put on the Altar. Therefore, verse 3:17 most probably means that the priests were never to eat of the fat that was placed on the Altar or the blood that was spilt from the sacrifice. It is a perpetual statute for the Levites found here in the Levitical Law.

In our next lesson, we will learn about the sin offering.

³ Unger, M. F., Harrison, R. K., Vos, H. F., Barber, C. J., & Unger, M. F. (1988). In *The new Unger's Bible dictionary* (Rev. and updated ed.). Chicago: Moody Press.