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The Peace Offerings: At Peace with God

3: 1-17

The peace offerings, at peace with God DIG: What was unique about the peace offering? How do the various laws fit the idea of reconciliation between God and His people: The part played by the worshiper? The priest? The blood? The fat? The fire? The altar? Why was eating any fat or blood strictly forbidden (Leviticus 17:11; Deuteronomy 12:23-25)?

REFLECT: Is there anything standing between you and God right now? If so, He wants it out of the way. When have you felt most alienated from God? How important is it to you that all barriers between yourself and God be removed? Why? What do you do to build a better relationship with Him? How do you show your deep gratitude for what God has done for you?

The peace offerings are best understood as a shared meal between God, the priesthood and the worshiper.

The peace offering was a shared meal in which **the worshiper** celebrated with **the priests** the benefits of a **peaceful** relationship with **God**. It was a joyous time of feasting in the presence of **ADONAI**, made possible by the blood atonement and prompted by the blessings from **the LORD**. This sacrifice was probably one of the most anticipated occasions of all the rituals because of its nature as a communal meal - it was a great feast. The main emphasis of the peace offering was celebrating all the benefits of being at peace with **God**, indicating that all was well between **the worshiper** and **ADONAI**.⁴⁰

The peace offerings were the only **sacrifices** from which **the worshiper** received a portion. **The burnt offering** was completely consumed on **the bronze altar**. **The grain offerings** were either completely consumed on **the bronze altar** or shared among **the priesthood**. Only **the priests** ate **the purification offering** and **the guilt offering**, **the worshiper** had no share in **them**. The only **offering** that all parties shared in, was **the peace offering**.

Chapter 3 introduces the *shalamim*, **the peace offerings**. The singular form of *shalem* occurs only in **Amos 5:22**. In every other instance it is in the plural as *shalamim*. The Hebrew root of **the peace offering** (*shalem*) is derived from the same root as the word *shalom*, which means **peace**. It is usually preceded by the word *zevach*, meaning *sacrifice*. So literally it reads, *zevach shlamin*, or *sacrifice of peace*. Hence the translation of peace **offerings**. Like **the burnt offering** (**to see link click Aj - The Burnt Offering**) and **the grain offering** (see **Ak - The Grain Offering**), **the peace offerings** were voluntary. **They** could be brought as **fellowship offerings** or to fulfill **vows** or to simply rejoice in **the fellowship** between **ADONAI** and **His** people.⁴¹

Now that the worshiper had drawn near to YHVH through the burnt and grain offerings, he showed his appreciation by the giving of a peace offering. The peace offerings were voluntary acts initiated inside the Temple courtyard, given in deep gratitude for what God has done for him. Any animal from the herd or flock could be used. YHVH received the choicest parts on the altar. And the priesthood and the worshiper received the remainder of the meat. Thus, the shalam afforded the worshiper the experience of joining together with the priesthood in a sacred meal at which YHVH Himself was to be the honored guest.

The peace offerings were still **animal sacrifices**, but **they** differed from **the burnt offering** in that not all of it was **burnt**. The way **the animal** was sectioned off by **the priest** indicates that the intention of the one who offered it was to **eat** it. The Hebrew word *cheleb* has the general sense of **“fat,”** but here **it** refers specifically to **the fat** that covers or surrounds the kidneys, the liver and the intestines. Although not regarded as the choice food for humans, under normal circumstances, *the cheleb* was desired by **YHVH**. **God** considered it to be the richest and most valuable part of **the fat**. **Deuteronomy 32:14**, for example, refers to the finest quality of **the wheat** as **the fat of the wheat**.⁴² When **they** refrained from **eating it** they were to remember the blessings that **God** had given **them** in **their** own lives, and in return they reserved for **Him** the best of **the animal**.

The presentation of one of the **peace offerings** was conditioned on **a worshiper** having first met the requirements of confession and repentance (through a **purification** and **guilt offering**), and dedication (through a **burnt** and **grain offerings**). An **offering from the herd** was the most expensive, **a lamb** was somewhat expensive, and the **offering** of **a goat** was the least expensive. No birds

could be offered, because **the peace offering** was to be used for a festive meal and a bird would not provide enough food.



If someone's offering was a peace offering, and he offered **an animal from the herd**, whether male or female, he was to present before YHVH an animal without defect. He was to lay his hand on the head of his offering and slaughter it at the entrance to the Tabernacle (3:1-2a). The worshiper laid his hand on the head of his offering thereby identifying himself with the animal before personally slaughtering it in the identical manner as the burnt offering. The text indicates that the peace offering was not to be killed as if one was hunting. The Hebrew word translated **slaughtered** (Hebrew: *ushechatov*), is from the same root (Hebrew: *shachat*) from which we get the term for a ritual slaughter. This indicates that the peace offering was to be eaten, not just burned up in smoke.⁴³

The priest then sprinkled the blood against the base of the bronze altar. But only certain select cuts of the animal were burned on it. Then the priest cut the animal up and burned three parts on the bronze altar: **all the fat that covered the inner parts or was connected to them, both kidneys with the fat on them near the loins, and the covering of the liver, which he removed with the kidneys**. Then the priest apparently placed those **three parts** on top of the burnt offering that was already burning on the wood (3:2b-5). The Hebrew word for **kidneys** comes from a Hebrew root which means *to yearn*. As a result, in the biblical Hebrew concept this was the seat of their emotions. "I love you with all my **kidneys**," isn't really romantic so English substitutes the word **heart** (Job 19:27).

If he offered **an animal from the flock** as a peace offering to ADONAI, he was to offer a male or female without defect. That was the general rule. Then the flexibility of the peace offering was seen in the acceptability of either a **lamb** or a

goat without defect. **If he offered a lamb, he was to present it before God. He was to lay his hand on the head of his offering and then slaughter it on the north side of the bronze altar. Then Aaron's sons sprinkled its blood against the altar on all sides.** Then the priest cut the animal up. Again not the whole offering was burnt, just certain parts. **For the peace offering he was to bring a sacrifice made to YHVH by fire: first, its layer of fat, secondly, the entire fat tail, which could weigh as much as fifteen to twenty pounds by itself, cut off close to the backbone, and thirdly, all the fat that covered the inner parts or was connected to them, which included both kidneys with the fat on them near the loins, and the covering of the liver, which he removed with the kidneys. The priest then burned them on top of the burnt offering (3:6-11).** The meat of the animal was divided between the priest and the worshiper.

If the offering was a goat, he was to present it before YHVH. He was to lay his hand on its head and slaughter it in front of the Tabernacle. Then Aaron's sons shall sprinkle its blood against the altar on all sides. Again, the priest cut the animal up, but the whole goat did not burn, but merely certain parts. The same procedure was followed as with the lamb except for the fat tail.⁴⁴ **He is to present from it his offering, an offering made by fire to YHVH; it is to consist of the fat covering the inner organs, all the fat above the inner organs, the two kidneys, the fat on them near the flanks, and the covering of the liver, which he will remove with the kidneys. The priest then burned them on the bronze altar, an offering made by fire, a pleasing aroma to YHVH. Philippians 4:18 explains that the fragrant aroma meant the sacrifice was acceptable . . . well pleasing to God.** Then the principle of why the fat was burned was stated: **All the fat is God's**, but the meat remained for the priests and the worshiper (3:12-16).

Moses warned the Israelites **not to eat any of the fat of cattle, sheep or goats. The fat of the animal found dead or torn by wild animals may be used for any other purpose** (such as oil for lamps or for non-cooking purposes), but not for eating. **Anyone who ate the fat of an animal had to die, because all the fat is God's.** It was a symbol of offering the best to God (Genesis 45:18). **This was a lasting ordinance, literally meaning up to the end of a period of time for the generations to come, wherever the Israelites lived, they must not eat the blood of any bird or animal,** because it was the means of atonement. In addition, **if anyone ate blood, that person would also die (3:17).** In other words,

as long as **the Torah** was in force, **the Jews** were **not** to **eat any fat or blood**.

The Messianic significance: The **peace offering** celebrates our peace with **God** after the Messiah has given **Himself** for us. Paul illustrates the connection between partaking of the peace offering and the Pesach Seder imagery. **The “cup of blessing” over which we make the blessing - isn’t it a sharing in the bloody sacrificial death of the Messiah?** The third cup of the Passover Seder is called **the cup of redemption, or the cup of blessing** (see the commentary on **The Life of Christ Kk - The Third Cup of Redemption**). And **the bread we break, isn’t it a sharing in the body of the Messiah (First Corinthians 10:16)?** Both of these rhetorical questions begin with *ouchi*, which means that a “yes” answer is anticipated.

The bread we break, isn’t it a sharing in the body of the Messiah? Because there is one loaf of bread, we who are many constitute one body, since we all partake of the one loaf of bread. Look at physical Isra’el: don’t those who eat the sacrifices participate in the altar? Because there is one loaf of bread, Yeshua said: I am the bread of life (John 6:35), we who are many constitute one body, since we all partake of the one loaf of bread (First Corinthians 10:16-17). Because we are one with **Messiah** we are one with each other. As we come into *fellowship* with **Messiah** through **the Lord’s Supper**, we come into *fellowship* with each other in a unique way: **The person who is joined to the Lord is one spirit (6:17)**. All believers stand on the same ground at the foot of the cross, as forgiven **sinner**s who possess **eternal life** (see the commentary on **The Life of Christ Ms - The Eternal Security of the Believer**).⁴⁵

When **the Master** commanded **His apostles** to **eat of His flesh (Matthew 26:26)**, **He** may have had some of **the peace offering** in mind. Such imagery is certainly present when **He** spoke of **the matzah** of *the afikoemen* as **His body** (see the commentary on **The Life of Christ Kj - Breaking of the Middle Matzah**). **The matzah** of *the afikoeman* was a ritual substitute for **the Passover lamb - a peace offering!** By partaking in **Messiah**, we partake in **the peace offering**, and we are given **fellowship** with **God** because **it** is a shared meal with **Him**. We sit, and eat and drink with **Him**. As **Yeshua** has said: **If anyone hears My voice, I will come in and eat with them (Revelation 3:20)**. As our **peace offering**, **His body** was resurrected **on the third day** just as a remaining flesh of a **peace offering** needed to be destroyed **on the third day** before decomposition began.⁴⁶

Dear Heavenly **Father**, I praise **You** for the wonderful blessings **You** have given to me in **Messiah, Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Yeshua the Messiah, who has blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places in Messiah (Ephesians 1:3)**. Our response is to offer back to **You** a sacrifice of praise, similar to a **peace offering. Through Yeshua, then, let us continually offer up to God a sacrifice of praise - the fruit of lips giving thanks to His name (Hebrews 13:15)**. We offer **it** without obligation, but out of joy from our hearts in appreciation for **You** and our relationship with **You** - our fantastic wonderful **Father, Savior** and **Helper**.

Prayer of praise/peace offering-Praise **You! You** are Holy, Almighty, All-Powerful, All Wise, our Forgiving **Savior** and Loving **Father!** We rejoice in spending time reading **Your Word** and meditating on it so that we might live more pleasing to **You. You** are **the Light** of our life and our reason to live! Though times get hard, we can always remember that soon we will be able to praise **You** thru all eternity as we live with **You** in heaven - **no tears, no pain, no sorrow (Revelation 21:4)**, only joy and peace. In **Yeshua's** holy name and power of resurrection. Amen