

The Grain Offering



Leviticus 2:1-16

Observations Concerning the Grain Offering

The **Grain** Offering can perhaps be understood in comparison with the whole **burnt** offering which we have already considered in Leviticus chapter 1. We will begin by noting the similarities of the two sacrifices. Next, we will identify the distinctive *differences* of the **grain** offering, as opposed to the **burnt** offering. Finally, we shall make some other observations which will help us to determine its meaning and application.

The **Grain Offering** was prepared and presented at the altar in the same way as those already described. As they had to be prepared from fine flour, which had to be prepared from the *First of the Year's grain harvest*. The principle was reaffirmed: Only the best of a person's resource is good enough to offer to God.

The grain offering was also known as the meal or cereal offering. It was the only offering **without** blood, and was called a *gift*. This offering demonstrated Israel's dependence on God, as shown by the presentation of the produce of the earth. Although it **accompanied** the burnt offering, the grain offering was a separate offering. The former symbolized a life devoted to God; the latter presented fruits of labor dedicated to him.

While grain was not unfamiliar to the Israelite, it was not a common commodity, either. Remember, the Israelites are not living in Egypt, where grain was common, nor are they yet living in Canaan, where they would grow grain. The Israelites were currently camped at the base of Mt. Sinai. They were in the desert, where grain could not be grown, and where it could not be purchased, either. Thus, the sacrifice of grain was either impossible to do until reaching Canaan, or it was something not easy to do. *I have come to the conclusion that this grain was taken with the Israelites for seed (cf. [2 Cor. 9:10](#)). To sacrifice their seed to God was indeed an act of faith.*

Grain Offerings “Ingredients”

FLOUR

Flour was the basis of the offering it represented the bread of life as bread was the main support to life. The sacrifices burnt on the altar are called the bread of God; Jesus described himself as the Bread of life. The flour was to be of the finest quality, 'fine flour' fully ground and finely sifted, free from any coarseness, unevenness, and empty husks. The mill stones must grind the wheat to an absolute fineness. Christ's life was one of passing through the grinding millstone of suffering, trial, and temptation.

OIL

The oil was poured upon the flour; it is spoken of as being '**anointed**' with oil in Lev. 7:12. Oil is of course a symbol of the Holy Spirit.

FRANKINCENSE

The frankincense was a costly incense from South Arabia and East Africa. Both its fragrance and value enhanced the grain offering.

SALT

Another necessary ingredient was salt; salt must be added to every sacrifice. Salt has a purifying influence, Christ's influence purified the lives of those he contacted, **and believers are called to be the salt of the earth**. Salt is the emblem of incorruption and Christ's body saw no corruption (Psalm 16:10). Finally it is called 'the **salt of the covenant**' in verse 13. The offerer was in a covenant relationship with God and salt was seen as the seal of friendship. God has made an everlasting covenant of friendship with us.

Forbidden ingredients for the Grain Offering were *Leaven* and *Honey*

Leaven is a type of Yeast which is a group of single-celled (unicellular) fungi, a few species of which are commonly used to leaven bread, ferment alcoholic beverages, and even drive experimental fuel cells.

Honey was also forbidden (verse 11). Honey represents things that are sweet and pleasing and attractive to the *flesh* to the *natural man*. When *honey* is burnt it begins to *ferment and turns sour*, the *smell of burning honey is very different to the fragrance of burning incense*.

They were both prohibited because they cause fermentation which represents **corruption.*

“Three Types” of Cooked Grain Offerings

1. Bread *baked in the oven*
2. Cakes *baked or fried in a pan* that is, on a flat plate or griddle;
3. Cakes baked in a *covered pan*

NOTE: All were made of fine flour mixed with oil. Since most of these offerings were eaten by priests, Frankincense was left out of them. Frankincense would have perforated a cake if baked into it.

“Presentation” of the Grain Offering

In presenting the offering the offerer simply came to the door of the tabernacle having prepared it as instructed and gave it to the priests. There was **no** ceremony just simple **submission**, for there was nothing meritorious in his action only **obedience**.

The priest received the grain offering from him, took a handful of the grain or cakes, with all the frankincense and burned it on the altar.

The remainder belonged to the priests. A handful of the Grain Offering was burned on the altar, while the rest was given to Aaron and his sons which was called the **“Memorial Portion”**; while the other portion was called “a thing **Most Holy**” It was eaten by Aaron and his sons in the court of the tabernacle. Only a small portion of this offering belonged to God, but it was a memorial, which means that the handful **represented the whole in the sight of God and was accepted by Him as the whole**. It was a sweet savor offering, like the burnt and the peace offerings, it was something pleasant and sweet to God with no thought of sin-bearing or cleansing of sin in the offering. It was a freewill offering given voluntarily not under compulsion.

NOTE: The grain offerings were either **public** or **private** and were either brought with a burnt or peace offerings or by themselves.

“Similarities Between the Grain and Burnt Offerings”

- (1) **Both offerings required the highest quality offering to be sacrificed.** In the case of the whole *burnt* offering, the animal, whether bull, goat, sheep, or bird (turtledove or pigeon), had to be young, male (except for birds), and without blemish.
- (2) The *grain* offering that is to be offered had to be **“fine.”** The term **“fine”** could mean **“fine quality,”** which it does by implication, but the **“fine”** here refers to the finely ground flour which is to be offered.³⁸ To obtain fine flour entailed a great deal of extra effort on the part of the person who ground it, for it was not something which one purchased from the store. *The flour would have had to have been ground on a primitive grinding stone, a process which, at best, usually produces only coarse flour.* (I suspect that even our commercially purchased whole wheat flour would be difficult to produce on such a primitive grindstone.) Such “fine” flour was that which was fit for a king (cf. [1 Ki. 4:22](#)).
- (3) **The Grain Offering was, like the Burnt Offering, an offering by fire.** Frequently in both chapters 1 and 2 of the Book of Leviticus we find the expression, “an offering by fire ...” (cf. 1:9, 13, 17; 2:2, 9, 10, 16). Both the Burnt Offering and the Grain Offering were offered to God by fire, on the altar of burnt offerings. **The Grain Offering and the Burnt Offering produced a “soothing aroma to the Lord.”** Only the Burnt, Grain, and Peace Offerings (cf. 3:5, 16) were said to produce a **“soothing aroma to the Lord.”**
- (4) **There is a close correspondence between the Burnt Offering and the Grain Offering because the two offerings are often carried out together.** The Grain Offering was often an adjunct of another offering (cf. [Exod. 29:38-46](#); [Lev. 23:9ff.](#); [Num. 6:13ff.](#); 7:13, 19, etc.; 8:8; 15:1-9). The 28th and 29th chapters of the Book of Numbers most dramatically demonstrate the association between the

Grain and the other offerings. The Grain Offering was instructed by God to follow the Burnt Offering ([Num. 28](#), cf. also [Josh. 22:23, 29](#); [Judg. 13:19, 23](#)). Thus, while the Grain Offering itself does not atone, there is atonement very near at hand whenever the Grain Offering takes place.

“Distinctive” of the Grain Offering

Having considered some of the ways in which the Grain Offering is similar to the Burnt Offering, let us now proceed to identify some of the distinctive of the Grain Offering, those characteristics of this offering which set it apart from the first (Burnt) offering. It is in these distinctives, I believe, that we shall find the unique contribution of the Grain Offering.

(1) The Grain Offering is distinguished from the Burnt Offering by that which is being offered up to God. The Burnt Offering was an animal offering; the Grain Offering was a vegetable offering. The Burnt Offering could either be a bull ([Lev. 1:3-9](#)), a male sheep or goat ([Lev. 1:10-13](#)), or a pigeon or turtledove of either sex ([Lev. 1:14-17](#)). The Grain Offering was just that, an offering of grain, which was most likely either wheat or barley.

(2) The Grain Offering differed from the Burnt Offering in that the latter was a (4) The Grain Offering was not a “whole burnt offering,” but only a portion of it was burned on the altar, while the rest was eaten by the priests. The Burnt Offering was totally consumed upon the altar, with the priests benefiting only from the hide ([Lev. 1:5-9; 7:8](#)). With the Grain Offering only a handful of the offering was burned on the altar, while the rest was given to the priests:

(3) Blood sacrifice, while the former was not. Since the “**Grain Offering**” was not an animal offering, there was no blood shed in this offering. We know that apart from the shedding of blood, there is *no* remission of sins (cf. [Heb. 9:22](#)), and thus the Grain Offering did *not* make atonement for sin. Consequently, the offerer was *not* instructed to identify himself with the grain he was about to offer, as was the case with the Burnt Offering, with which the offerer identified himself by laying his hand on the head of the animal ([Lev. 1:4](#)). The purpose, then, of the Grain Offering was other than that of making atonement for sin. The “**Grain Offering**” represented **“Thanksgiving”**

The purpose of the Grain Offering is *not* atonement, but worship, acknowledgment of God’s divine provision of the needs of the Israelite for life itself. *The Grain Offering praised God for His abundant supply of the “daily bread” of the Israelite.* But while men do not contribute to their redemption, they do participate in the growing of the crops by which God sustains their life. Thus, the human element is present in the Grain Offering in a way that it is not in the Burnt Offering

“Life Application” of the Grain Offering

- 1.) **Give Offering “Sacrificially”.** While Christians today do not offer up Grain Offerings to God, we can offer up sacrifices by giving. These “**sacrifices**” are described by the New Testament writers in Old Testament sacrificial terms. This is the kind of giving we see in the Old Testament when **a.)** The Israelite offered up the **first fruits** of his fields, trusting God to provide an additional harvest. It is the type of giving we find exemplified by **b.)** The **Gentile widow**, who provided for the prophet Elijah, even though her grain container was emptied ([1 Ki. 17:8-16](#)).
- 2.) **“First Fruit”**
- 3.) **“Sacrifice of Praise”**

Leviticus 2 (KJV)

Divided in 4 Parts

Part 1 "Uncooked Grain Offering" (1-3)

¹And when any will offer a meat offering unto the LORD, his offering shall be of fine flour; and he shall pour oil upon it, and put frankincense thereon:

²And he shall bring it to Aaron's sons the priests: and he shall take there out his handful of the flour thereof, and of the oil thereof, with all the frankincense thereof; and the priest shall burn the memorial of it upon the altar, to be an offering made by fire, of a sweet savor unto the LORD:

³And the remnant of the meat offering shall be Aaron's and his sons': it is a thing most holy of the offerings of the LORD made by fire.

Part 2 "Various Cooked Grain Offerings" (4-10)

⁴And if thou bring an oblation of a meat offering baken in the oven, it shall be unleavened cakes of fine flour mingled with oil, or unleavened wafers anointed with oil.

⁵And if thy oblation be a meat offering baken in a pan, it shall be of fine flour unleavened, mingled with oil.

⁶Thou shalt part it in pieces, and pour oil thereon: it is a meat offering.

⁷And if thy oblation be a meat offering baken in the frying pan, it shall be made of fine flour with oil.

⁸And thou shalt bring the meat offering that is made of these things unto the LORD: and when it is presented unto the priest, he shall bring it unto the altar.

⁹And the priest shall take from the meat offering a memorial thereof, and shall burn it upon the altar: it is an offering made by fire, of a sweet savor unto the LORD.

¹⁰And that which is left of the meat offering shall be Aaron's and his sons': it is a thing most holy of the offerings of the LORD made by fire.

Part 3 "Ingredients: *Prohibited (Leaven and Honey) Required (Salt)*" (11-13)

¹¹No meat offering, which ye shall bring unto the LORD, shall be made with leaven: for ye shall burn no leaven, nor any honey, in any offering of the LORD made by fire.

¹²As for the oblation of the first fruits, ye shall offer them unto the LORD: but they shall not be burnt on the altar for a sweet savor.

¹³And every oblation of thy meat offering shalt thou season with salt; neither shalt thou suffer the salt of the covenant of thy God to be lacking from thy meat offering: with all thine offerings thou shalt offer salt.

Part 4 "First Fruits (*Early*) Grain Offerings" (14-16)

¹⁴And if thou offer a meat offering of thy first fruits unto the LORD, thou shalt offer for the meat offering of thy first fruits green ears of corn dried by the fire, even corn beaten out of full ears.

¹⁵And thou shalt put oil upon it, and lay frankincense thereon: it is a meat offering.

¹⁶And the priest shall burn the memorial of it, part of the beaten corn thereof, and part of the oil thereof, with all the frankincense thereof: it is an offering made by fire unto the LORD.