

### Leviticus 3

Aaron Eime, Christ Church Jerusalem, 2021

In his commentary on the Torah, Dennis Prager says, ‘The Torah has either something to say to everyone or it has nothing to say to Jews’. The idea that the Torah is only for the Jewish people is like saying Shakespeare is only for the English and Beethoven is only for the Germans. That idea is absurd. Jesus Himself declares, ‘In the volume of the Book is written of me’. With this background, we continue our studies in Leviticus, endeavouring to become better disciples of the Messiah.

We now encounter the third voluntary offering described by Moses, the *הַשְׁלָמִים זֶבַח* (the peace offering). Sometimes in Jewish commentaries, it is written as *שְׁלָמִים קֹרְבָן* (the peace sacrifices). There seems to be some interchange between the words *זֶבַח* and *קֹרְבָן*. For example, in Exodus 12:27 the Passover Lamb is called a *זֶבַח* (*zevach*) and not a *קֹרְבָן* (*korban*). Although later it is also called a *פֶּסַח קֹרְבָן* (*korban Pesach*) or the Passover Sacrifice. The point is that here we have another blood sacrifice that has nothing to do with sin but has everything to do with peace, fellowship and relationship with the Living God. What type of peace is being referred to here? We are not talking about the peace that comes following a war, which might invoke some thankfulness on the part of the survivors who respond with an offering. Rather this is a freewill gift between the worshiper and the Lord, moving the relationship and fellowship to a higher level. The fellowship offering is a celebration of the inner harmony and peace experienced by a person who is ‘right’ with God. Rashi, an 11th-century scholar says, the offering not only commemorates peace but also promotes peace in the world, thus our sacrifices affect Creation. Nothing goes unseen in the eyes of the Lord.

The sacrifice is without defect or blemish, teaching us that everything connected to God is perfect. His priesthood is without blemish, His dwelling place, the incense etc. All is perfect with the perfect King. In our modern world, we should never consider giving our second best to God. Our intention should always be to bring the best we have to the Lord. The animal offered for sacrifice can also be either male or female. From this, we see only two biological genders and the gender is known, not debated or changed. If the gender is unknown, then the offering cannot be used, it is blemished. Interestingly the sacrifice is presented before the Lord at the Tent of Meeting (not on the northside of the altar) and the Hebrew implies the worshipper is the one who kills the animal and not the priest. The animal is then prepared on the altar by the priest and is consumed by the fire on top of the *olah*, the burnt offering. A portion of the blood is used while the text describes some in-depth butchery of the rest of the animal. The family of the worshipper ate parts of the sacrificed animal together with the Lord and the priests, the servants of the Lord. The symbolism is powerful, picturing the family as guests at the Lord’s Table. What cannot be consumed are both the fat and the blood. Prohibition against the eating of blood has appeared before. It seems a strange notion now to add animal fat to the forbidden list of food. The text of Leviticus does not give an explanation and we are left to ponder the spiritual implications of this command. Fat covers, insulates, and protects the internal organs, it burns effectively on the altar. It’s incredibly tasty and be used in cooking, medicine, light and some industry. Fat has a plethora of positive uses. In the book of Psalms, fat and sap are used together to describe something (in this case a tree) overflowing with life and health. What remains for us to ponder is that both blood and fat belong to the Lord and both are life-sustaining.

Verse 17 reminds us that the peace offering is a perpetual offering, a lasting ordinance that does not have a conditional end. That is, the offering does not end with the advent of the Messiah.

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Jesus rose from the dead ... and we still have to give our best to God. Putting these things into our discipleship today; freewill offerings are a valuable part of the life of the believer. All sacrifices so far are voluntary but they do reflect the status of the relationship between the faithful and the Lord. Anything we choose to devote to God should be the best, we should not take faith as something we do less than wholeheartedly. The prayer of a righteous man avails much, the act of faithfulness can affect the world around us in perhaps ways we cannot fathom. Modern-day actions and rituals of fellowship, such as communion, are healthy and dare I say Biblical in nature. God delights to fellowship with us, and this brings us peace, wholeness, wellbeing and maintains the relationship that we grow with the Lord.