



# DRAWING NEAR

A THEOLOGICAL EXEGESIS OF THE LEVITICAL  
SACRIFICES

## ABSTRACT

This exegesis analyses the five primary mandatory and voluntary offerings (qorbanot) detailed in the Book of Leviticus (the Burnt, Grain, Peace, Sin, and Trespass Offerings). The study explains the ritualistic methods of presentation, including the significance of the fat belonging to the LORD (Leviticus 3:16) and the unique application of blood for atonement (Leviticus 4:20). It outlines the distribution of the sacrifices, specifying that the LORD, the priests (who received portions like the wave breast and heave thigh), and in the case of the Peace Offering, the worshipper, were all distinct recipients. The analysis highlights that these offerings served three inseparable purposes: securing atonement (for sin/guilt), establishing purity (for the sanctuary), and confirming fellowship (Shalom) with God. Ultimately, the system is interpreted as a typological shadow, finding its complete and final fulfilment in the person and work of Jesus Christ, who provides the perfect and ultimate sacrifice for total dedication, purification, and permanent reconciliation, thus shifting the covenant mandate from animal sacrifice to a life of "living sacrifice" (Romans 12:1) today.

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EXEGESIS OF THE LEVITICAL SACRIFICES

# Drawing Near

## *The Enduring Meaning of the Levitical Offerings*

The ancient Israelites were bound to God through a system of worship rooted in **sacrifice**. Detailed primarily in the Book of Leviticus, the five main offerings (or *qorbanot*, meaning "that which brings near") weren't just rituals—they were a divinely ordained curriculum for maintaining fellowship, securing atonement, and expressing total devotion to a Holy God.

Understanding these offerings unlocks profound insights into faith, commitment, and the nature of forgiveness that remain relevant today.

## I. The Five Foundations of Worship

The offerings can be grouped into two categories: **Mandatory** (for purification and restitution) and **Voluntary** (for devotion and fellowship).

### 1. The Mandatory Offerings (Atonement and Justice)

Offering	Purpose & Focus	The Ritual's Heart	Modern Application
<b>Sin Offering</b> ( <i>Chatta't</i> )	<b>Purification.</b> Atoned for <b>unintentional sins</b> and ritual impurity that defiled the sanctuary.	The <b>blood</b> was applied to the altar (or inside the Tabernacle, depending on the sinner) to cleanse the holy space.	Recognizing sin and seeking <b>spiritual purification</b> (1 John 1:9).
<b>Trespass Offering</b> ( <i>'Asham</i> )	<b>Restitution.</b> Atoned for sins involving <b>quantifiable guilt or material loss</b> (e.g., theft, defrauding).	Required the animal sacrifice <b>plus mandatory restitution</b> of the loss, with an <b>added 20% penalty</b> .	Actively seeking <b>reconciliation and making amends</b> when we wrong others.

### 2. The Voluntary Offerings (Devotion and Fellowship)

Offering	Purpose & Focus	The Ritual's Heart	Modern Application
<b>Burnt Offering</b> ( <i>'Olah</i> )	<b>Total Consecration.</b> Served as general atonement and symbolized the worshipper's total surrender.	The <b>entire animal</b> (except the skin) was <b>consumed by fire</b> , ascending wholly to the LORD as a "sweet savour."	<b>Total devotion</b> and giving our whole lives as a "living sacrifice" (Romans 12:1).
<b>Grain/Meat Offering</b> ( <i>Minchah</i> )	<b>Homage &amp; Gratitude.</b> Expressed thankfulness for God's provision and sustenance.	A small "memorial" portion was burned; the rest went to the priests. <b>No leaven or honey</b> was permitted.	Offering our <b>time, resources, and gifts</b> (our "firstfruits") back to God in gratitude.
<b>Peace Offering</b> ( <i>Shelem</i> )	<b>Fellowship &amp; Wellbeing.</b> Celebrated <i>Shalom</i> (wholeness, peace)	It was a sacred meal: the <b>fat</b> burned for God, the <b>priests</b> received	Cultivating <b>intimate communion</b> with God and celebrating Christian

Offering	Purpose & Focus	The Ritual's Heart	Modern Application
	between God and the worshipper.	the breast (wave) and thigh (heave), and the <b>worshipper</b> ate the rest.	<b>fellowship</b> (Communion/Eucharist).

## II. The Significance of the Shared Portion

The **Peace Offering** stands out because it was the only animal sacrifice that ended in a shared meal.

The priest would perform two symbolic actions before consuming his portion:

- **Wave Offering (*Tenufah*):** The portion was waved side-to-side, symbolizing its presentation to God throughout all the earth. The priests received the **breast**.
- **Heave Offering (*Terumah*):** The portion was lifted up and down, symbolizing its presentation between heaven and earth. The priests received the **right thigh/shoulder**.

By eating the remaining meat, the worshipper was "**eating at God's table**," solidifying the covenant and celebrating the peace achieved.

## III. The Lesson of the Enduring Fire

The command in Leviticus 6:13, "**The fire shall ever be burning upon the altar; it shall never go out**," provides a powerful metaphor. The continuous fire ensured the altar was always ready for acceptance.

For us, this means that our spiritual devotion must be **continuous and unwavering**. Worship is not a weekly event, but a daily disposition—a fire of commitment that we must tend and never let extinguish.

## IV. Christ: The Fulfilment of Every Sacrifice

While the Levitical system established the *pattern* of approaching a holy God, it was ultimately temporary. The entire system points to the **perfect and final sacrifice** of Jesus Christ:

- **The Perfect 'Olah:** Christ was the ultimate **Burnt Offering**, giving His entire life, once and for all, securing total acceptance (Hebrews 10:10).
- **The Perfect Chatta't:** His blood serves as the **perfect purification** for *all* sin, past and future, cleansing not just the physical sanctuary, but our very conscience (Hebrews 9:14).
- **The Perfect Shelem:** Through Him, we have achieved **eternal *Shalom*** (peace with God), transforming temporary fellowship into permanent communion (Romans 5:1).

The sacrifices teach us that approaching God requires a life marked by **atonement, justice, surrender, and thanksgiving**. Today, we live out these principles by accepting the forgiveness offered in Christ and offering our lives—wholly, justly, and gratefully—back to Him.