

# Thanksgiving of the Chosen People

Returning to the Peace Offering

**Leviticus 7:11** And this is the law of the sacrifice of **peace offerings** that one may offer to the LORD.

**12** If he offers it for a thanksgiving, then he shall offer with the thanksgiving sacrifice unleavened loaves mixed with oil, unleavened wafers smeared with oil, and loaves of fine flour well mixed with oil.

**13** With the sacrifice of his peace offerings for thanksgiving he shall bring his offering with loaves of leavened bread.

**14** And from it he shall offer one loaf from each offering, as a gift to the LORD. It shall belong to the priest who throws the blood of the peace offerings.

**15** And the flesh of the sacrifice of his peace **offerings for thanksgiving** shall be eaten on the day of his offering. He shall not leave any of it until the morning.

**16** But if the sacrifice of his offering is **a vow offering or a freewill offering**, it shall be eaten on the day that he offers his sacrifice, and on the next day what remains of it shall be eaten.

**17** But what remains of the flesh of the sacrifice on the third day shall be burned up with **fire**.

**18** If any of the flesh of the sacrifice of his peace offering is eaten on the third day, he who offers it shall not be accepted, neither shall it be credited to him. It is tainted, and he who eats of it shall bear his iniquity.

**19** "Flesh **that touches any unclean thing shall not be eaten**. It shall be burned up with **fire**. All who are clean may eat flesh,

**20** but the person who eats of the flesh of the sacrifice of the LORD's peace offerings while an uncleanness is on him, that person shall be **cut off** from his people.

**21** And if anyone **touches an unclean thing**, whether human uncleanness or an unclean beast or any unclean detestable creature, and then

eats some flesh from the sacrifice of the LORD's peace offerings, that person shall be **cut off** from his people."

<sup>22</sup> The LORD spoke to Moses, saying,

<sup>23</sup> "Speak to the people of Israel, saying, You shall eat no fat, of ox or sheep or goat.

<sup>24</sup> The fat of an animal that dies of itself and the fat of one that is torn by beasts may be put to any other use, but on no account shall you eat it.

<sup>25</sup> For every person who eats of the fat of an animal of which a food offering may be made to the LORD shall be **cut off** from his people.

<sup>26</sup> Moreover, you shall eat no blood whatever, whether of fowl or of animal, in any of your dwelling places.

<sup>27</sup> Whoever eats any blood, that person shall be **cut off** from his people."

<sup>28</sup> The LORD spoke to Moses, saying,

<sup>29</sup> "Speak to the people of Israel, saying, Whoever offers the sacrifice of his **peace offerings** to the LORD shall bring his offering to the LORD from the sacrifice of his peace offerings.

<sup>30</sup> His own hands shall bring the LORD's food offerings. He shall bring the fat with the breast, that the breast may be waved as **a wave offering** before the LORD.

<sup>31</sup> The priest shall burn the fat on the altar, but the breast shall be for Aaron and his sons.

<sup>32</sup> And the right thigh you shall give to the priest as a contribution from the sacrifice of your peace offerings.

<sup>33</sup> Whoever among the sons of Aaron offers the blood of the peace offerings and the fat shall have the right thigh for a portion.

<sup>34</sup> For the breast that is waved and the thigh that is contributed I have taken from the people of Israel, out of the sacrifices of their peace offerings, and have given them to Aaron the priest and to his sons, as a perpetual due from the people of Israel.

<sup>35</sup> This is the portion of Aaron and of his sons from the LORD's food offerings, from the day they were presented to serve as priests of the LORD.

<sup>36</sup> The LORD commanded this to be given them by the people of Israel, from the day that he anointed them. It is a perpetual due throughout their generations."

<sup>37</sup> This is the law of the burnt offering, of the grain offering, of the sin offering, of the guilt offering, of the ordination offering, and of the peace offering,

<sup>38</sup> which the LORD commanded Moses [on Mount Sinai](#), on the day that he commanded the people of Israel to bring their offerings to the LORD, in the wilderness of Sinai."

(Lev 7:11-38)

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## Thanksgiving

[September 1620.](#) The four deck, hundred-foot-long ship set sail from Southampton. [102 passengers](#) and 30 crew made for tight quarters, and the delays that set the ship in the northern ocean in late fall made for brutal conditions. Besides the men, 33 children and 19 women made the cold voyage over the Atlantic abyss.

*In the name of God, Amen. We, whose names are underwritten, the Loyal Subjects of our dread Sovereign Lord King James, by the Grace of God, of Great Britain, France, and Ireland, King, defender of the Faith, etc.:*

Most made it through the two-month voyage, only to have arrived some 250 miles off course, north of

Manhattan where they had originally decided to establish themselves. As they walked off the deck for land, each man, including my great, great ... grandfather, **William Brewster**, the pastor on board the ship signed their signatures to the following compact so that there might be law and order in the new colony.

*Having undertaken, for the Glory of God, and advancements of the Christian faith, and the honor of our King and Country, a voyage to plant the first colony in the Northern parts of Virginia; do by these presents, solemnly and mutually, in the presence of God, and one another; covenant and combine ourselves together into a civil body politic; for our better ordering, and preservation and furtherance of the ends aforesaid; and by virtue hereof to enact, constitute, and frame, such just and equal laws, ordinances, acts, constitutions, and offices, from time to time, as shall be thought most meet and convenient for the general good of the colony; unto which we promise all due submission and obedience.*

The famous Mayflower Compact was thus enacted on November 11, 1620, and as they walked off the ship, those belonging to God's covenant people offered up prayers of thanksgiving to God.

But their trials were just beginning. That winter proved to be nearly unbearable. Of the 102 original passengers, only 53 survived it. But those who did said this was due in no small measure to the **divinely ordained providences** of Almighty God whose hand was with them, even during the loss of so many of their friends. Yes, their thanksgiving included even the harsh providences of God.

Having been blown so far off course, they would not find themselves setting down in previously established Virginia or even the island of Manhattan, but in an unforgiving cape off Massachusetts. One night, struggling with where to make camp for the winter, a small flimsy boat carrying a scouting party was picked up by a massive wave during a December storm and **miraculously set down** safely and on a little island within sight of an abandoned Indian village, complete with cleared land, stores of corn, and fresh water. Turns out, the native inhabitants had all recently died of some terrible disease and the place was deserted.

Except for one man, an Indian named **Squanto**. As Michael Medved tells the story, the Pilgrims were grateful to God for the shelter, food, and water and wanted to repay what they had taken.

One of the few survivors of that devastation turned up several months later to welcome the English newcomers. Against all odds, he proved to be the single human being on the continent best-suited to help the struggling settlers, since he spoke English and had already embraced Christianity ... He had grown up in this very village before a ruthless sea captain kidnapped him as a boy and sold him into slavery in Spain. After four years, he was freed by kindly monks, then made his way to England, and finally sailed across the Atlantic—only to find his friends and family all wiped out by disease. Over the next few months, Squanto helped the English newcomers plant crops and negotiate a friendly trade agreement with the region's most important chief—Massasoit. No wonder Pilgrim leader William Bradford called Squanto '*a special instrument sent of God for their good.*'”<sup>1</sup>

God's providences keeping them alive through the winter resulted in what has come to be known as “[The First Thanksgiving](#).” It was a three-day harvest festival held in [October/November of 1621](#). The 53 surviving Pilgrims were joined by 90 Indian warriors where they

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<sup>1</sup> Michael Medved, “What’s the Truth About the First Thanksgiving?” PragerU (Nov 13, 2017), <https://www.prageru.com/video/whats-the-truth-about-the-first-thanksgiving/>. You can read the account of Squanto from William Bradford, Bradford's History “*Of Plimoth Plantation.*” *From the Original Manuscript* (Boston, Wright & Potter, 1901), 115ff.

feasted on vegetables, fish, possibly wild turkeys, and five recently killed deer that the warriors brought to the table.

This became a tradition which itself became something deeply entrenched in the American psyche. For example, on [June 20, 1676](#), the governing council of Charlestown, Massachusetts held a meeting to determine how to express thanks for the good fortune that had seen their community established. They unanimously voted to proclaim [June 29](#) as a day of thanksgiving to God.

Special days of thanksgiving began to spread, first through New England and then south into the lower colonies. On [Nov 1, 1777](#), the Continental Congress, under the leadership of Samuel Adams, proclaimed a day of national thanksgiving saying in part, “Forasmuch as it is the indispensable duty of all men to adore the superintending providence of Almighty God; to acknowledge with gratitude their obligation to him for benefits received ... together with penitent confession of their sins ... through the merits of Jesus Christ, mercifully to forgive and blot them out of remembrance ... it is recommended ... to set apart Thursday the [eighteenth day of December](#) next, for solemn thanksgiving and praise.”

These continued sporadically through 1815 where they ceased until the Civil War, when Abraham Lincoln decided the Union needed an [annual Day of Thanksgiving](#),<sup>2</sup> which to this day many American people still celebrate, and which I presume many of you did this past Thursday.

## The Peace Offering

The first time the word “[thanksgiving](#)” (*todah*) appears in the Bible is [Leviticus 7:12](#). Along with “[a vow offering](#)” or a “[freewill offering](#),” it comes to us as one of several possible kinds of the so-called “[peace offering](#)” or “[fellowship/communion offering](#)” (NIV), the offering we saw back in Leviticus 3. In its present chapter, it is the [fifth of the five](#) offerings that have been reiterated due to the new focus that was not in the earlier chapters—the priests.

Last time, we looked at the first four offerings ([Lev 6:8-7:10](#), or in the Hebrew numbering 6:1-7:10) of this

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<sup>2</sup> An interesting summary of these is [C. Matthew McMahon](#), “The First Thanksgiving – The Pilgrims Landing and a National Day of Thanks,” *A Puritan’s Mind*, <https://www.apuritanmind.com/the-christian-walk/the-first-thanksgiving/>. For a list of monumental Thanksgiving events in American history, see the Appendix at the end of the sermon.

two-chapter recapitulation. When they were explained earlier, they were the 1<sup>st</sup>, 2<sup>nd</sup>, 4<sup>th</sup>, and 5<sup>th</sup> offerings described. The third, the peace or fellowship offering, was saved till now. Because the peace offering takes up most of the remaining text of Leviticus 6-7, it will help to remember the basics of the offerings.

It was an animal offering, not mandatory but given freely, where the fat was burned for the LORD, a portion was given to the priest, and the rest was eaten by the offerer (and presumably the family), before the LORD who is symbolically taking part in the meal. Thus,

The distinctive nature of this offering was the communal celebration of the worshipers occasioned by the sharing in the meat of the offering. It was a “fellowship,” or “communion,” offering that indicated and enacted the fact that there was “peace” between God and his people and that the person, family or community was, therefore, in a state of “well-being.” This is why the peace offering was always the last offered when it was presented in series with other kinds of offerings.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> R. E. Averbeck, “Sacrifices and Offerings,” ed. T. Desmond Alexander and David W. Baker, *Dictionary of the Old Testament: Pentateuch* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2003), 715.

I think that because it was **the last offered**, literally on top of any other offerings already burnt on the altar, this explains why its position has moved from third to **last in this new list**.

The passage we are looking at is **Leviticus 7:11-38** (the end of the chapter). You can **divide it into the following sections** (two are marked out by “**the LORD spoke to Moses saying**” [22, 28]):

- I. Lay consumption of fellowship offerings (vv. 11–21)
- II. General prohibition against consuming fat or blood (vv. 22–27)
- III. Priestly portions (vv. 28–36)
- IV. Summary of the five offerings (37-38)

I said last time that the reason for going over these five offerings again is that the focus shifted from the people (**Lev 1:2**) to the priests (**6:2**). The priests stay in view here, however, the focus does shift a little back to the people. In essence, the focus is really on everyone: the people, the priests, and the LORD, thus completing the laws of the five sacrifices of Israel.

## *The Peace Offering for Thanksgiving*

The passage begins by explaining that the **fifth and final offering** is now in view. “**And this is the law (*torah*)<sup>4</sup> of the sacrifice of peace offerings that one may offer to the LORD**” (**Lev 7:11**). Recall that important distinction made between an **offering**, which is anything brought to be burnt on the altar and a **sacrifice (*zebach*)**, which is specifically something that is to be eaten by the offerer. That word for a sacrifice returns here, and its consistent use throughout these seven chapters is that it **only refers to the peace/fellowship offering**, because this is the only offering that everyone eats together. Hence, what will now be explained is the manner in which this sacrifice may be consumed by the laity.

It begins by discussing the peace/fellowship offering as a “**thanksgiving**” (***todah***). That is, we are not dealing here with a **thanksgiving offering**, but a peace/fellowship offering that is *given out of thanksgiving*. The Rabbis understood from Psalm 107 that there were **four reasons to give a peace offering** of thanksgiving: A safe return from a **sea voyage** (**Ps**

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<sup>4</sup> We noticed last time that *torah* appears seven times in these two chapters. Five times it opens a new offering (6:7; 14, 25, 7:1; 11). Once it associates the law of a guilt/reparation offering with that of the sin/purification offering (7:7). Once it summarizes all five offerings (37), thus making a perfect number of offerings.

107:23-25), safe return from a [desert journey](#) (4-8), recovery from [illness](#) (17-22), and [release from prison](#) (10-16). It is curious to me that what many recognize as The First Thanksgiving was in fact offered up to the LORD God for the [safe sea voyage](#) combined with the safety of those remaining through the long harsh winter who didn't die.

For a different example, I did not tell you about the [first thanksgiving in Texas](#), which actually predates the one in Massachusetts. The little-known story concerns [Juan de Oñate](#), an amateur conquistador and experienced prospector who had been petitioning King Philip II for permission to explore and colonize Nuevo Mexico. He was finally granted permission and in 1595 he left with an estimated 500 men and 7,000 head of cattle to journey across the unforgiving Chihuahua Desert.

The 50-day journey saw the quick dwindling of supplies. Their last five days were spent almost entirely without water, until they spotted the banks of the Rio Grande. The account of that sighting is recorded by Capt. Gaspar Pérez de Villagrá,

The gaunt horses approached the rolling stream and plunged headlong into it. Two of them drank so much that they burst

their sides and died. Two others, blinded by their raving thirst, plunged so far into the stream that they were caught in its swift current and drowned. Our men... threw themselves into the water and drank as though the entire river did not carry enough to quench their terrible thirst. Then satisfied, they threw themselves upon the cool sands, like foul wretches stretched upon some tavern floor in a drunken orgy, deformed and swollen and more like toads than men.

Ten days later on April 30, 1589, Oñate decided to celebrate the safety through the desert with his men and the native Mansos tribe. “We built a great bonfire and roasted the meat and fish, and then all sat down to a repast the like of which we had never enjoyed before. We were happy that our trials were over; as happy as were the passengers in the Ark when they saw the dove returning with the olive branch in his beak, bringing tidings that the deluge had subsided.”<sup>5</sup>

These are all the very reasons given in Scripture for an Israelite to offer his peace sacrifice out of thanksgiving. But, of course, they had much stricter regulations to follow. First of all, his animal sacrifice had to be accompanied with unleavened loaves of bread mixed with oil, unleavened wafers

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<sup>5</sup> Andrew Weber, “Did Texas Host The First Thanksgiving?” KUT 90.5 (Nov 23, 2016), <https://www.kut.org/post/did-texas-host-first-thanksgiving>.

smeared with oil, and loaves of fine flour well mixed with oil ([Lev 7:12](#)). Thus, bread was essential to the sacrifice. Oil is obviously the central focus here, and it is because oil has the symbolic feature of something put on a thing to [dedicate it to the LORD](#). In fact, of all the offerings, this is one offering that belongs to the offerer at the beginning, whereas all the others are already marked out as sacred gifts that belong to the LORD from the start.<sup>6</sup>

These unleavened loaves and wafers were “[offered](#),” meaning that they went on the altar and were cooked. However, in the next verse we see something that [might seem contradictory](#) at first. Along with the animal sacrifice, he is to bring his thanksgiving offering of loaves of [leavened](#) bread ([13](#)). This is the first time we have seen something with leaven allowed in an offering. There is no contradiction, you just have to understand the purpose.

Recall that we have said that leaven represents something spiritually. It represents [decay](#) and [rot](#), and in this way, it represents [sin](#). This must not be allowed on the altar of God. But these loaves are not cooked on the altar. They are

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<sup>6</sup> Jacob Milgrom, *Leviticus 1–16: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary*, vol. 3, Anchor Yale Bible (New Haven; London: Yale University Press, 2008), 463. His discussion of the oil is on pp. 468–69 under the topic of the “wave” or as he calls it the “elevation offering” (*E. The Tĕnûpâ*).

brought ahead of time already cooked somewhere else. This is the main difference. Once brought, they are then given to the priest, after being dedicated to the LORD (14). Thus, leaven can have positive characteristics as well, so long as it is not cooked on the LORD's altar. Abraham Wright puts it this way,

Here “leaven” is admitted in the offering, whereas before it was forbidden. Leaven therefore is taken in a good sense as well as in an ill. Thus, the Apostles are resembled to a little leaven ... they being sent out of God into the unleavened world by preaching to leaven it clean through. And there is a leaven of the new nature accepted, as there is a leaven of the old nature rejected. For look how the Leaven makes the bread savory, and strong, and wholesome. Look also how it makes it rise and heave up, which otherwise would be sad and heavy. So does God's regenerating Spirit change us, make us savory, and all our duties pleasing to God; and we rise up, our hearts and souls are heaved up in all love, in thankfulness to him who in mercy has so looked upon us.<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>7</sup> Abraham Wright, *A Practical Commentary or Exposition upon the Pentateuch viz. These Five Books of Moses: Genesis, exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, Deuteronomy* (London: G. Dawson, 1662), 124. Wording and spelling modernized.

It seems to me that this is probably the source of some people who claim that the **Lord's Supper** should have **leavened bread**, for this thanksgiving fellowship/peace offering is the OT type of the Lord's Table. And we do not offer this on an altar. But to me, this makes little difference, for both leavened and unleavened bread would have direct biblical support, and Christians ought not fight over matters that have biblical support, but rather should, as the offering itself presupposes, have peace.

As the thanksgiving reason concludes, the flesh of the animal of the peace offering is to be **eaten on the day of the offering**. He is not to leave any of it until the morning (**Lev 7:15**). The reason is that this is a holy place, and the decay of the animal's carcass is not to be allowed to stay in the sanctuary precinct overnight.

### *The Peace Offering for A Vow*

As the offering continues, its second possible reason it named. “**But if the sacrifice of his offering is a vow offering...**” (**Lev 7:16**). A **vow offering** is brought after the successful fulfillment of a vow to the LORD in order to gain his help in a difficult or troubling situation (see, e.g., **Gen**

28:20; 31:13; Lev 22:18, 21–23; Num 15:8; 21:2; 30:2–15; Deut 23:18). The one who made the vow was responsible before the Lord to pay it (Lev 27:2–13; Deut 23:21–23).<sup>8</sup> Recall that the purification/reparation offering was given if a vow *had not been performed*. Now, an offering is given *if it has been*. But here the attitude is wholly different. Rather than seeking forgiveness and paying God back for an unfulfilled rash vow, the offering is a display of the well-being between he and God, and the thankfulness he has because God has helped him.

This was an important thing. Absalom says to David, “Let me go to Hebron and fulfill the vow that I made to the Lord. For your servant made a vow when I lived in Geshur of Aram: if the Lord ever brings me back to Jerusalem, I will worship the Lord [in Hebron, LXX]” (2Sa 15:7b–8). Or, “I am obligated to sacrifice a well-being offering, for today I have fulfilled my vows” (Prov 7:14; cf. Isa 19:21; Nah 2:1; Ps 22:6; 50:14; 61:6, 9; 65:2; 66:13; 116:14, 18; Job 22:27).<sup>9</sup>

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<sup>8</sup> Milgrom, *Leviticus 1–16*: , 419; Averbeck, 717.

<sup>9</sup> Ibid.

## *The Peace Offering for Freewill*

The last reason for the peace offering is that it is “[a freewill offering](#).” Again, this is not a different kind of offering, but the reason the peace offering is given. It is [only in the context of the peace offering that the term “freewill” appears in the Bible](#). And this is a completely different idea than the way this phrase is used philosophically in theology today.

Philosophically, the idea of [freewill](#) usually means something like any act done out of complete indifference to one thing or another. It is often called the [Liberty of Indifference](#). The idea is that there can be no coercion, no predetermined outcome, no external forces working upon a person’s will to make them choose a thing. And, of course, this comes to a head in the doctrine of salvation, where people often argue that they use their freewill to choose God and thus, God saves them.

This is so utterly removed from the idea of a freewill offering that it is difficult to think that they are even the same English word. First off, the idea that with this kind of freewill you choose God is in direct contradiction to Jesus’ words, “[You did not choose me, I chose you...](#)” ([John](#)

15:16). Second of all, and even more basic, there is no such thing as a will that is so completely free of predetermined outcome or external forces that it is “free” to act out of indifference. This was brought home powerfully by Lewis Carroll. When Alice is at the fork in the road, and she asks which way she should go and the Cheshire cat asks, “Where do you want to go.” And she says, “I don’t know.” And he replies, “Then it doesn’t matter.” That’s the freewill of a person who is totally indifferent. They just stand there waiting for crazy cats to ask them questions. They never go anywhere because they have no desire to do anything.

A freewill offering does, in fact, presuppose that there is such a thing as a human will, which sadly there are some Christians who deny this. Humans in fact do have wills. One can even say that their wills are free *in a certain sense*. That is, they are free to behave however their minds and emotions direct them to act. Wills do not act out of indifference in a causeless void. They act on things already present. Think of salvation again. The Liberty of Indifference assumes that a person’s mind and emotions are not negatively predisposed against God (it also assumes that they are not positively predisposed towards God, which of course makes all choices impossible, which is absurd and unbiblical because people

who hate God are making an active choice against him already). But Scripture plainly tells us that **our minds are at enmity with God** and **our emotions positively hate him**. Until, that is, we are converted by his Holy Spirit through the Gospel acting upon us from the outside.

Suddenly, **our minds and emotions** (i.e. our hearts) are changed and we freely choose to follow the **LORD**. Why? Because we now understand him, and we no longer hate him, but love him for his grace and mercy in Christ. Thus, the will follows these new affections. That's the idea behind of a freewill offering.

This isn't an offering done against your will. It isn't mandatory. It isn't compulsory. Further, all freewill offerings have the common denominator of **rejoicing** being the motivation for bringing the peace offering.<sup>10</sup> No one forces you to give this offering. “**You shall sacrifice peace offerings and shall eat there, and you shall rejoice before the LORD your God**” (**Deut 27:7**). Therefore, it is the offering that springs out of the spontaneous happiness that God puts in a person's heart, for whatever reason.<sup>11</sup> Notice, God gives you

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<sup>10</sup> Milgrom, *Leviticus 1–16*, 419–420.

<sup>11</sup> Gane cites C. S. Lewis on this point. “About death, I go through different moods, but the times when I can *desire* it are never, I think, those when this world seems harshest. On the contrary, it is just when there seems to be most of Heaven already here that I come nearest to longing for the *patria* [homeland]. It is the bright frontispiece [the picture opposite the title

happiness, then you respond. As it tells us in Leviticus when they began making the tabernacle, “**All the men and women, the people of Israel, whose heart moved them to bring anything for the work that the LORD had commanded by Moses to be done brought it as a freewill offering to the LORD**” ([Ex 35:29](#)).

In the case of the vow or freewill offering, it is to be eaten on the day that he offers his sacrifice, and, presumably since it is so large, on the next day what remains of it shall be eaten ([16](#)). This is the grace of God to allow this to take place. However, even this has its limits. For “what remains of the flesh of the sacrifice on the third day shall be burned up with fire” ([17](#)). And, in fact, “if any of the flesh of that sacrifice is eaten on the third day, the one offering it shall not be accepted, neither shall it be credited to him. It is tainted, and he who eats of it shall bear his iniquity” ([18](#)). In other words, it is a grave sin, because it presumes upon grace and defiles the sanctuary.

Further regulations put more limits on the offering. If the animal flesh touches any unclean thing, it cannot be

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page in many books] [which] whets one to read the story itself. All joy (as distinct from mere pleasure, still more amusement) emphasizes our pilgrim status: always reminds, beckons, awakes desire. Our best havings are wantings.” [C. S. Lewis](#), “Letter to Dom Bede,” in *The Collected Letters of C. S. Lewis*, ed. Walter Hooper, vol. 3 (New York: HarperCollins e-books; Harper-SanFrancisco, 2004–2007), 522–523.

eaten, but must be burned with fire (19). Anyone who is clean can eat it, but the one who is unclean and eats the peace offering must be cut off from his people. There is no remedy for this sin (20). Vs. 21 reinforces the point. In case you do not know what it means to touch something unclean, it tells you. If you touch any human uncleanness or an unclean beast or a detestable creature, this makes you unclean and if you eat the sacrifice, you will be cut off from the people.

## *The Fat and the Blood*

The laws for the peace offering take a turn in vs. 22. This is marked by “The LORD (the Memra) spoke to Moses, saying...” (22). Moses was now to tell the people (23), you shall eat no fat, of the ox or sheep or goat. This refers still to the peace/fellowship offering. Fat becomes the focus. “The fat of an animal that dies of itself and the fat of one that is torn by beasts may be put to any other use, but on no account shall you eat it” (24). Indeed, “every person who eats of the fat of an animal of which a food offering may be made to the LORD shall be cut off from his people” (25). Why? As we saw previously, the fat belongs to the LORD. It is his and to eat of it is grand larceny.

It then moves to blood. “Moreover, you shall eat no blood whatever, whether of fowl or of animal, in any of your dwelling places. Whoever eats any blood, that person shall be cut off from his people” (26-27). We’ve seen this before (3:17), and it will become a major part of Leviticus 17, so I’ll refrain from a whole lot more commentary here, except to say that this refers to eating the blood from an animal that has not been drained (1Sa 14:33, Wenham, 125). Second, the life is in the blood, and to eat the blood is to become a kind of vampire, one of the most unclean things we have in the genre or horror to this day.

## *Priestly Portions of the Peace Offering*

The last main section turns to the priest’s portions of the offering. So far, we’ve looked at the person giving the offering. What about the priests? “The LORD (Memra) spoke to Moses, saying … (28)” “Whoever offers the sacrifice of his peace offering to the LORD must bring that offering to the LORD from the sacrifice of his peace offerings” (29). This seems poorly worded to me by the ESV, but it essentially just means that of your offering, part of it is going to belong to the LORD (see the NIV for example).

His own hands are to bring the “the LORD’s food offerings” (30). He is to bring the fat with the breast, that the breast may be “waved” as “a wave offering” before the LORD.” This idea of a wave offering goes back to the rabbits, and you get the picture that there is some kind of waving motion back and forth to this ritual. Fact is, we aren’t sure what was going on. This has recently been questioned, because when you understand that the peace offering is the only offering of the five that originally belongs to the offerer who then has to “dedicate” this offering himself, that this word “wave” is better translated as “elevate.” In other words, some see this as a ritual act of dedicating that which was his to the LORD.<sup>12</sup>

At any rate, the priest is to burn all the fat on the altar, because that belongs to the LORD (31). But he gets to keep the breast (31) and the right thigh “as a contribution” (32-35). And thus, together, the priest, the offerer (and his family), and the LORD sup together over this sacrificial meal, a perpetual due throughout their generations (36).

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<sup>12</sup> Milgrom, Lev 1-16, 461-73.

## *The Summary*

The passage concludes that “**this is the law**” of these five offerings (37), which the LORD commanded Moses on Mount Sinai, on the very day that he commanded the people of Israel to bring their offerings to the LORD, in the wilderness of Sinai (38).

## **Giving Thanks Today**

In thinking about both this passage I could not help but think of **the day(s) of thanksgiving** that others have asked us to remember, both in the realm of religion and the realm of the state. It seems both an obvious and important application from the text. This is all the truer considering that **Romans 1** clearly teaches that the first and chief reason that God gave humanity over to its wicked desires was because “**Although they knew God, they did not honor him as God or give thanks to him**” (**Rom 1:21**). **Thanklessness** is the first of all other sins, for it is a failure at the starting point to acknowledge and worship the Creator. It is a turning inward on self and a forgetting of providences, both merciful and severe, that God brings into our lives. Rash vows come from

it. Joyless hearts come from it. Peaceless non-communion with God are the result.

The “others” that have asked us to give thanks include not only Presidents like Lincoln, Adams, and Washington, not only Continental Congresses and local magistrates and governors from bygone eras, but also our [Confession of Faith](#). Following the Westminster Confession, the LBC 1689 22.5 says, “[Solemn humiliation, with fastings, and thanksgivings, upon special occasions, ought to be used in an holy and religious manner.](#)” Originally penned some 25 years *after* the Williams Bradford and Brewster offered up the First Thanksgiving, and from the very land the Pilgrims were fleeing, the Assembly offered [Psalm 107](#), the very Psalm cited by the Rabbis as the reasons for the thanksgiving peace offering as proof. “[Oh give thanks to the LORD, for he is good, for his steadfast love endures forever!](#)” ([Ps 107:1](#)).

They go on to cite [Moses’](#) spontaneous song as the children of Israel made safe passage through the Red Sea ([Ex 15:1-21](#)), [Nehemiah’s](#) dedication of the wall of Jerusalem ([Neh 12:27-43](#)), and [Esther’s](#) establishment of Purim for the salvation of God from the wicked Haman ([Est 9:20-22](#)) as examples of singular and annual days of thanksgiving.

Of course, for OT saints, those days of thanksgiving went hand-in-hand with offering thanksgiving peace offerings. Their thanksgiving dinners were slaughtered animals and unleavened breads cooked on an altar to the LORD (at least, not if they could help it) with leavened bread brought to the sanctuary. Thanksgivings today still have the same kinds of foods. The difference is, we do not cook our food on an altar in a temple through a priestly class interceding for us to God. This gives them both **discontinuity** and **continuity**.

The **discontinuity** appears because the Son of God came as the High Priest of God and offered himself as the Lamb of God for our sins. In doing this, his **living offering of life**, his **death offering on a cross**, and his **commemorative meal-sacrifice** of the Supper are the long, full conclusion of the shadowy OT offering types. His life is the voluntary **burnt offering**, an acceptable aroma to the Father. His life is the voluntary **grain offering**, a perfect unleavened life of sinless perfection, salted to preserve the elect and taste that the Lord is good. His death is the mandatory **purification offering**, making pure the high places of heaven that have been so tainted with sin and death, bringing forgiveness of sins to all who call upon his name. His death is the mandatory

**reparation offering**, repairing the breech between man and God that came even from our unconscious and non-deliberate sins.

And all of this is symbolized in the **peace** he has won for us through these activities in human flesh. This offering of peace is held out to all who call upon the name of Christ. It is held out to those who would take and eat, in remembrance of him. For he is the **manna-bread** come down from heaven. He is the **miraculous meat** that feeds the horde in the desert.

All of this should make any right-minded person **joyful** and **thankful** in their hearts such that they would desire to partake of a meal with the living God by faith any time that it is offered them. It also ought to make any right-minded person break out in spontaneous moments of shared communal thanksgiving with others so that they might see and taste of the joys unspeakable that have been brought about by the faithful tender kindnesses of God walking with them and protecting them through the storms of life.

Just here, there is **a bit of sadness** to modern Thanksgiving. This past month I have heard for the first time in my life several stories from friends about knowing **people who literally hate Thanksgiving**. *The Babylon Bee* has been having fun satirizing our day in the same regard.

One article was titled, “**Obscure Holliday Known As ‘Thanksgiving’ Apparently Celebrates Obsolete Custom called ‘Gratitude.’”**<sup>13</sup> One friend confirmed he knows people who hate turkey and thus hate Thanksgiving. Some hate giving thanks to the Most High for his kindness and preservation. Thus, another *Bee* article is titled, “**Atheist Prepares To Offer Heartfelt Thanks To Random, Uncaring Universe On Thanksgiving.**”<sup>14</sup> Another friend of mine told me she met someone who hates Thanksgiving because she has so many problems in her life, which also hits this point.

Too many people have false ideas of some kind of forced Thanksgiving, which has never been the point. Remember, the heart of the freewill offering is that it comes from a heart of joy, and that thanks is offered to God for *all things*. The heart of the vow offering is that it comes from a recognition God was with you. The heart of the thanksgiving offering is that there is in fact a God to whom we owe thanks, even when life is not as we had planned it to be. Thus, the heart of the peace offering is that your heart is soft towards God.

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<sup>13</sup> “Obscure Holliday Known As ‘Thanksgiving’ Apparently Celebrates Obsolete Custom called ‘Gratitude,’” *The Babylon Bee* (Nov 27, 2019), <https://babylonbee.com/news/bizarre-thanksgiving-holiday-apparently-celebrates-obsolete-custom-called-gratitude>.

<sup>14</sup> “Atheist Prepares To Offer Heartfelt Thanks To Random, Uncaring Universe On Thanksgiving,” *The Babylon Bee* (Nov 17, 2017), <https://babylonbee.com/news/atheist-prepares-to-offer-heartfelt-thanks-to-random-uncaring-universe-on-thanksgiving>.

Anything less is idolatry and makes the thanksgiving something to be rejected and a person to be cut off, because they have taken no pleasure in God's grace to them in Christ. It seems to me that the who idea of a people **being cut off by God** still obtains. For when men and women and children are careless with God's grace and forgetful of his holiness and his sanctuary, the people perish. Nations fall into disrepair. The severity of the offering comes upon God's churches, as at Corinth when took the Lord's Supper with anger in their hearts towards one another. And it obtains in eternity when those who are not thankful and do not give of their bounty freely to God, who have not partaken in the glorious food of Christ will be cut off from the Eternal Land. “**So Jesus said to them, ‘Truly, truly, I say to you, unless you eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink his blood, you have no life in you. Whoever feeds on my flesh and drinks my blood has eternal life, and I will raise him up on the last day’** (John 6:53-54).

What is your attitude about peace with God and expressing this freely, from the heart, with thanks? Lidia Maria Child tells you hers:

*Over the river, and through the wood,*

*To Grandfather's house we go;  
the horse knows the way to carry the sleigh  
through the white and drifted snow.  
Over the river, and through the wood,  
to Grandfather's house away!  
We would not stop for doll or top,  
for 'tis Thanksgiving Day (1844).*

I bet some think that this was a Christmas song. But that is because someone later came along and changed the words. Her song was about **remembering all the things she had to be thankful for** when it was time for Thanksgiving to roll around again. The heart of a child towards her grandparents and fond memories she had of them is the heart of true thanksgiving.

If you are in Christ and can call yourself his chosen because you have faith in him granted to you as a kind gift, you have all things to be thankful for to your heavenly Father, who has carefully ordained all things, to his Only Begotten Son who has brought peace through his offerings, and to the Spirit who has given you personal peace so that you might have eternal fellowship with the Living Triune God.

Therefore, enjoy your fellowship with him and his people today. And offer up your thanksgiving to God with your mouth, with your heart, with your soul, and with your body as you go forth from this place encouraged by his good graces towards you.

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## Chronology

- 1541 May 29. Francisco Vásquez de Coronado and his expedition hold a thanksgiving celebration in Palo Duro Canyon in the Texas panhandle.
- 1564 June 30. French settlers led by René Goulaine de Laudonnière hold a thanksgiving celebration at La Caroline, near present-day Jacksonville, Florida with the Timucua tribe.
- 1565 Sept 8. Pedro Menéndez de Avilés holds a thanksgiving celebration in St. Augustine, Florida with the Timucua tribe.
- 1598 April 30. Juan de Oñate and his expedition hold a thanksgiving celebration near present-day San Elizario, Texas with the Mansos tribe.
- 1607 George Popham and a group of English settlers have a thanksgiving celebration with the Abenaki Indians near the Kennebec River in Maine.
- 1610 English colonists in Jamestown, Virginia, hold a day of thanksgiving to mark the arrival of a supply ship.
- 1620 The *Mayflower*, the ship carrying the English colonists who will settle Plymouth, arrives at Cape Cod. Some passengers go ashore and give thanks at Provincetown, Massachusetts.
- 1621 English colonists and the Wampanoag tribe hold a three-day harvest festival.
- 1623 Governor Bradford proclaims a day of thanksgiving for the rain that ends a drought.
- 1630 Members of the Massachusetts Bay Colony hold a service of thanksgiving.
- 1631 Governor John Winthrop declares a day of thanksgiving for the arrival of a ship with supplies.
- 1639 Civil authorities in Connecticut proclaim an annual day of thanksgiving. Beginning in 1644, annual thanksgiving day is regularly proclaimed in Connecticut, except in 1675 because of the outbreak of King Philip's War.
- 1644 Dutch civil authorities in New Amsterdam (later New York) proclaim a day of thanksgiving.
- 1693 The Plymouth church sets apart a day of thanksgiving, April 5, "That the Government over us is yet in the hands of saints."
- 1777 The Second Continental Congress appoints one or more thanksgiving days each year until 1784, the year the Revolutionary War ended, each time recommending to the executives of the various states the observance of these days in their states.
- 1789 &
- 1795 President George Washington issues thanksgiving day proclamations.
- 1799 President John Adams issues thanksgiving day proclamations.
- 1814 &
- 1815 President James Madison issues thanksgiving day proclamations.
- 1817 New York State officially adopts Thanksgiving Day as an annual custom.
- 1827 Sarah Josepha Hale publishes her novel *Northwood*, which includes two chapters about Thanksgiving Day.
- 1846 Sarah Josepha Hale launches her campaign for a National Thanksgiving Day.
- 1863 Abraham Lincoln issues two thanksgiving day proclamations.
- 1877 Sarah Josepha Hale, at the age of eighty-nine, writes her last editorial on behalf of a National Thanksgiving and retires as editor of *Godey's Lady's Book*.
- 1920 The first Thanksgiving Day parade is sponsored by Gimbel Brothers Department Store in Philadelphia—fifteen cars, fifty people, and a firefighter dressed as Santa Claus parade through the streets and Santa Claus climbs a ladder into the Gimbel's toy department.
- 1924 The first "Macy's Christmas Day Parade" is held on Thanksgiving Day.
- 1927 Macy's changes the name of its parade to Macy's Thanksgiving Day Parade. Puppeteer Tony Sarg creates the first giant balloons.
- 1934 The first National Football League game held on Thanksgiving Day is played.
- 1939 President Franklin Delano Roosevelt changes the date of Thanksgiving from the last Thursday to the fourth Thursday in November.
- 1941 Congress Establishes Thanksgiving Day as an official holiday on the fourth Thursday of November.
- 1947 The National Turkey Federation starts the practice of giving one live and two dressed (ready-to-cook) turkeys to the president of the United States.
- 1970 Frank James, known as Wamsutta, makes a speech in Plymouth, Massachusetts, thus beginning the annual National Day of Mourning.
- 2000 United Nations International Year of Thanksgiving.
- 2001 Thanksgiving stamp issued by the U.S. Post Office.<sup>15</sup>

<sup>15</sup> From Penny Colman, *Thanksgiving: The True Story* (New York: Henry Holt and Company, 2008), 127-29.