

Leviticus Chapter 2: The Grain Offering

an Exegetical Commentary by Nate Wilson

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Leviticus 2:1-3

2.1 וְנִפֵּשׁ כִּי־תִקְרִיב¹ קִרְבַּן מִנְחָה לַיהוָה סֵלֶת יִהְיֶה² קִרְבְּנוֹ וַיִּצְקֶךָ³ עָלֶיָּהּ שֶׁמֶן וְנָתַתָּ⁴ עָלֶיָּהּ לִבְנָהּ:
 2.2 וַהֲבִיאָהּ⁵ אֶל־בְּנֵי אַהֲרֹן הַכֹּהֲנִים וְקִמַּץ⁶ מִשָּׁם מִלֵּא קִמְצוֹ מִסֹּלֶתָהּ וּמִשֶּׁמֶנָּה עַל־כָּל־לִבְנֹתָהּ וְהִקְטִיר⁷ הַכֹּהֵן אֶת־אֲזִכָּרְתָּהּ הַמִּזְבֵּחַ אֲשֶׁר רֵיחַ נִיחֹחַ לַיהוָה:
 2.3 וְהַנּוֹתָרָתָּ⁸ מִן־הַמִּנְחָה לְאַהֲרֹן וּלְבָנָיו קֹדֶשׁ קֹדָשִׁים מֵאֲשֵׁי יְהוָה ס:

Verb#	Root	Parsing	Formatives	Meaning	Syntax
1	קרב	Hiph. Impf. 2ms		offer	Protasis/Temp.
2	היה	Qal Impf. 3ms		be	Apodosis/M.V.
3	יצק	Qal Pf. 3ms	vav	pour	M.V.
4	נתן	Qal Pf. 3ms	vav	give/put	M.V.
5	בוא	Hiph. Pf. 3ms	vav + 3fs suffix	(cause to) go	M.V.
6	קמץ	Qal Pf. 3ms	vav	enclose	M.V.
7	קטר	Hiph. Perf. 3ms	vav	go up in smoke	M.V.
8	יתר	Niph. Ptc. masc. sing.	He prefix	be left over	Subject

2:1 Now when anyone of you shall offer¹ a grain offering to Jehovah, fine flour shall be² his offering, and he shall pour³ oil upon it and put⁴ frankincense upon it. 2:2 Then he shall take⁵ it to the sons of Aaron, the priests, and he shall grab⁶ from there a good handful of its fine flour and its oil together with all its frankincense, and the priest shall burn up⁷ its memorial portion on the altar – a fire-offering of a soothing aroma to Jehovah. 2:3 And the remainder from the grain-offering belongs to Aaron and to his sons – a most holy thing from the fire-offerings of Jehovah.

Commentary

2:1 Now when anyone of you shall offer¹ a grain offering to Jehovah, fine flour shall be² his offering, and he shall pour³ oil upon it and put⁴ frankincense upon it.

This section starts with an emphatic subject, נִפֵּשׁ which literally translates “soul,” as in “Now soul, if you offer an offering...” Most English Bibles translate this as an indefinite relative pronoun (“Someone” NIV, “Any” KJV, “Anyone” NAS), but it could also conceivably be vocative as in “Now everybody, listen up! When you offer...” The Soncino (Jewish) commentary says that this word “soul” emphasizes the fact that these offerings are symbolic of offering ourselves, and the grain offering of a poor man is accepted by God just as the rich man’s bull is accepted by God, as if the worshipper had offered himself.

The name of the particular offering described here is מִנְחָה . The secular use of the word is generally “a present by which one sought to obtain the favor of a superior” (K&D), or a “gift of homage or tribute” (Davidson). The Septuagint translates it δωρον θυσιασιν “sacrificial gift.” It could consist of anything – animal or vegetable, thus the KJV calls it a “meat-offering,” but in Leviticus it is consistently from the vegetable kingdom, so the Soncino translation and the ASV call it a “meal-offering” and the NAS and NIV translate it “grain offering.” Since this word “grain-offering” in Hebrew is feminine in gender, all the pronouns referring back to it in the next couple of

verses are also feminine (“she”), but since English doesn’t really have a sense of gender with inanimate objects, I translated all the pronouns to come as “it.”

The basic elements of this grain offering are flour, oil, and incense. The word for flour is סֹלֶת perhaps from the root verb סָלַל “to swing” (K&D). This was not just any flour, but specifically wheat flour and finely-ground at that. Only the very best should be offered to God (Son.). Oil and frankincense were also to be added to this fine wheat flour. The word for Frankincense is לְבָנָה, the root meaning of which is “white.” This white stuff was sap that came from trees in the Southern Arabian Peninsula and dried in the sun, then was collected and traded throughout the world as an aromatic perfume. Don’t you think it is interesting that God required an element in His sacrifice which was not native to Israel? Frankincense had to be imported from present-day Yemen and Oman! God has an interest in being worshipped by all His creation in all the world! It is interesting to note that elements from the animal kingdom are offered to God (*vis.* ch. 1) and now elements of the vegetable kingdom are offered to God (grain-offering), and shortly we will see an element of the mineral kingdom (salt) added to all the offerings. The fact that God requires elements from every class of physical matter indicates that He is the creator and Lord of EVERYTHING!

The Samaritan Pentateuch and the Greek Septuagint add the phrase “it is a grain-offering” to the end of this verse, but it is not necessary.

2:2 *Then he shall take⁵ it to the sons of Aaron, the priests, and he shall grab⁶ from there a good handful of its fine flour and its oil together with all its frankincense, and the priest shall burn up⁷ its memorial portion on the altar – a fire-offering of a soothing aroma to Jehovah.*

Whereas most of the words translated “offer” or “bring” so far in Leviticus come from a Hebrew root word meaning “be near” (קָרַב) the verb beginning this verse is from a word meaning “to go” (בָּוֵא), so the offerer was to “cause the grain offering to go” to the sons of Aaron, the priests.

The next step was to withdraw a handful of the grain offering for use on the altar. My question is, “Who does this, the offerer or the priest?” The object of the first verb is “priests” (although the Syriac translates it “priest” singular, the original is certainly plural), so a plurality cannot be the subject of the singular verb “he shall grab/take.” However, the word “priest” in the singular does appear as the subject with the next verb (“he shall burn up”), so can it be applied back to this verb (“he shall grab a handful”) or should the subject of the first verb (“He [the offerer] shall bring it”) be applied to it? The difference this makes is in whether the priest or the offerer is the one who performs this step of pulling out a handful of the grain offering to be burned on the altar. I believe that it is the offerer for several reasons:

1. The ancient Masorites who pointed and punctuated the Hebrew text knew the text better than we do today, and they put an Atnah (like the English semicolon) before “the priest shall burn up,” indicating a different (although related) action.
2. The subject was stated in verse 1 (“A soul” or “anyone”) and was understood for the next several verbs, not needing to be re-stated (“he shall pour,” “he shall put,” “he shall take”); only when there is a change of subject would it need to be stated, and the subject is not stated and changed until the next verb (“he shall burn up”).
3. This also fits with the offerer doing everything but the actual presentation on the altar. It connects him more directly with that part offered to God by fire if he is the one who draws that portion out.
4. Having the offerer draw out the portion to be burned could also be a way to keep the priest from a conflict of interest – the larger the handful given to God, the less the priest got for himself!

Although my concern is “Who does it?” apparently the concern for Jewish commentators has been “How much is a handful?” Rashi talks about how you can keep the thumb and little finger free so that a handful is defined as what can be held by the three middle fingers “neither sparse nor overflowing.” Now before we criticize the Jews for nit-picking, don’t we do the same thing? We get all worked up over unimportant details and lose sight of the really important things. The classic story of the church splitting over the choice of color for the carpet in the sanctuary comes to mind, but maybe it would hit closer to home to bring up issues such as mode of baptism (immersion, sprinkling, or pouring?), or which translation of the Bible we should use, or what style of music is acceptable in worship, or whether to use loaf bread and wine or wafers and juice for the Lord’s Supper... The list goes

on and on. We need to keep the main thing the main thing and not get sidetracked by rabbit trails such as “How much is a handful?” The main thing is to glorify God!

The Hebrew phrase for this action can be translated literally, “he-shall-enclose from-there fullness his-handful from-her fine-flour.” Because of the awkward construction, we get a variety of English translations:

KJV: “take thereout his handful of the fine flour thereof”

NAS: “take from it his handful of its fine flour”

NIV “take a handful of the fine flour”

However, the concepts of “enclosing” and the “fullness” of the handful tend to get lost in these translations, so I tried to maintain them somewhat by my translation “he shall grab from there a good handful.”

The third verb in this verse has to do with the burning of this memorial portion on the altar. The portion to be burned consisted of a “good handful” of the fine flour, a handful of the oil, and then all of the incense which had been put on top of the grain offering. This was the portion offered to God on the altar. The word describing this portion has זָכַר (“remember”) as its root, and is consistently rendered “memorial” in English translations. Perhaps this is a time for the worshipper and the priest to pause and remember their God before the priest takes the food from the layman to eat it. Conversely, perhaps it is an invocation for God to “remember” the worshipper as he brings his offering. Both are entirely Biblical concepts:

GOD REMEMBERS THOSE WHO WORSHIP HIM (ASV, italics mine):

- Genesis 8: 1 And God *remembered* Noah, and all the beasts, and all the cattle that were with him in the ark.
- Judges 16:28 And Samson called unto Jehovah, and said, “O Lord Jehovah, *remember* me, I pray Thee, and strengthen me, I pray Thee, only this once, O God, that I may be at once avenged of the Philistines for my two eyes.”
- I Samuel 1:11 And [Hannah] vowed a vow, and said, “O Jehovah of hosts, if Thou wilt indeed look on the affliction of Thy handmaid, and *remember* me, and not forget Thy handmaid, but wilt give unto Thy handmaid a man-child”... 19 And they rose up in the morning early, and worshipped before Jehovah, and returned, and came to their house to Ramah: and Elkanah knew Hannah his wife; and Jehovah *remembered* her.
- II Kings 20:3 “*Remember* now, O Jehovah, I beseech Thee, how I have walked before Thee in truth and with a perfect heart, and have done that which is good in Thy sight.” And Hezekiah wept sore.
- Nehemiah 5:19 “*Remember* unto me, O my God, for good, all that I have done for this people.”
- Psalm 25:6 *Remember*, O Jehovah, thy tender mercies and thy lovingkindness; For they have been ever of old. 7 *Remember* not the sins of my youth, nor my transgressions: According to Thy lovingkindness *remember* thou me, For Thy goodness’ sake, O Jehovah.
- Jeremiah 15:15 “O Jehovah, Thou knowest; *remember* me, and visit me, and avenge me of my persecutors; take me not away in thy longsuffering: know that for Thy sake I have suffered reproach.”
- Luke 23:42 And he said, “Jesus, *remember* me when Thou comest in Thy kingdom.”

GOD’S PEOPLE REMEMBER HIM IN WORSHIP

- Deuteronomy 8:18 But thou shalt *remember* Jehovah thy God, for it is He that giveth thee power to get wealth; that He may establish His covenant which He sware unto thy fathers, as at this day. 19 And it shall be, if thou shalt forget Jehovah thy God, and walk after other gods, and serve them, and worship them, I testify against you this day that ye shall surely perish.
- I Chronicles 16:12, 15 *Remember* His marvellous works that He hath done, His wonders, and the judgments of His mouth... *Remember* His covenant forever...
- Nehemiah 4:14 And I looked, and rose up, and said unto the nobles, and to the rulers, and to the rest of the people, “Be not ye afraid of them: *remember* the Lord, who is great and terrible...”
- Psalm 63:5-6 And my mouth shall praise Thee with joyful lips when I *remember* Thee upon my bed and meditate on Thee in the night-watches.
- Ecclesiastes 12:1 *Remember* also thy Creator in the days of thy youth...
- Isaiah 64: 5 Thou meetest him that rejoiceth and worketh righteousness, those that *remember* Thee in Thy ways.

- Jonah 2:7 When my soul fainted within me, I *remembered* Jehovah; And my prayer came in unto Thee, into Thy holy temple...
- II Timothy 2:8 *Remember* Jesus Christ, risen from the dead, of the seed of David, according to my gospel:
- In the New Testament, the object most often associated with “remember” is “word” – the teachings of Jesus, the Word of God.

We should “remember” God always! And we should call upon Him to “remember” us. It would be entirely appropriate to create memory triggers when we do certain actions, just as God commanded the Israelites to “remember” Him whenever they offered a grain-offering. Christians disciplined through the Navigators have a tradition of putting Bible verse cards on their bathroom mirrors so that whenever they look in the mirror, they remember a verse of Scripture. That is a good sort of memory trigger to create. I have a habit of praying first thing in the morning; it is an anchor point in my day when I take time to remember God and ask Him to remember me. Whenever we have a birthday celebration in my family, we take time to remember what God has done through that person over the past years. We need to take time regularly to memorialize God and His works and to pray to Him! If you haven’t already done so, take the time to establish some memory triggers that remind you to pray and remember God at regular times.

Regarding הקטיר “burn up/sublimate/offer up on smoke” and regarding “a fire-offering of a soothing aroma to Jehovah,” see commentary on 1:9

2:3 *Now, the remainder from the grain-offering belongs to Aaron and to his sons – a most holy thing from the fire-offerings of Jehovah.*

There is no verb in this verse. It starts with a participle used as a noun subjectively: “the remainder” (i.e. the flour and oil left after the handfuls were taken out) and describes two things about it:

1. In Hebrew, it literally says “The-remainder from the grain-offering to-Aaron and-to-the sons-of-him.” This construction indicates possession, i.e. it is a possession of Aaron and his sons (the priests). Some sacrifices were the exclusive right of the singular priest who offered them, but this seems to be saying that the flour and oil was shared among all the priests – perhaps whoever was on “lunch-break” at the time, or perhaps the priests divided it among themselves as food to take home to their immediate families. A legitimate parallel to this practice in the church today is the way a congregation allows its minister(s) to have a certain amount of the money placed in the offering plate. Such offerings should be shared among all who need income to do dedicated kingdom functions (missionaries, para-church ministers, elders, deacons, and others as appropriate) and not merely to those who serve as preachers, just as the grain-offering was not only for the priest who officiated the sacrifice but to all the sons of Aaron. It is good and right that all such people in Christian service be paid from the offerings to God.
2. The second half of this verse translates literally “a-holy-of holies from-the-fire-offerings of-Jehovah.” This stresses the sanctity of the flour and oil given to the priests. The statement that this is “from Jehovah’s offerings” kinda turns the handful offered to God on the altar and the majority left-over around: it is not an offering to the priest from which God gets a little handful; rather the whole offering is God’s, and the priest gets to keep a “remainder!” As we will see later, God placed strict guidelines around who could eat this food and where. Only priests and their immediate families could eat it, and some of it could only be eaten in a holy part of the temple. Likewise, today, we need to keep strict guidelines on the allocation of money offered to the Lord in our congregations. Not only should we guard this holy money carefully from theft, we must also hold the treasurers accountable to spending it in holy causes. The Evangelical Council on Financial Accountability is a good idea, auditing Christian organizations to make sure they spend their money properly. As a parallel, Christians need to regard their gifts as holy. Giving chintzy amounts into the offering plate - just because you feel you are supposed to put in something - mitigates against the honoring of that gift as holy, as does the giving large amounts of money in an ostentatious way. We should consider our gifts to the Lord as “a thing most holy” (KJV). If a congregation regards its gifts as holy, they will be more apt to see to it that it is spent honorably, too.

Leviticus 2:4-10

Instructions Regarding 3 types of Grain Offering

- 2.4 וְכִי תִקְרַב⁹ קֶרֶבַן מִנְחָה מֵאֲפֶה תֹנֹר סֵלֶת חֲלוֹת מִצַּת בְּלוּלָת¹⁰ בְּשֶׁמֶן וּרְקִיקֵי מִצּוֹת מְשֻׁחִים¹¹ בְּשֶׁמֶן ס:
- 2.5 וְאִם-מִנְחָה עַל-הַמִּזְבֵּחַ קֶרֶבֶן סֵלֶת בְּלוּלָה¹² בְּשֶׁמֶן מִצָּה תִהְיֶה¹³:
- 2.6 פְּתוֹת¹⁴ אֶתָּה פְתִים וַיִּצְקֶתָ¹⁵ עָלֶיהָ שֶׁמֶן מִנְחָה הוּא ס:
- 2.7 וְאִם-מִנְחַת מֵרֻחַשׁת קֶרֶבֶן סֵלֶת בְּשֶׁמֶן תַּעֲשֶׂה¹⁶:
- 2.8 וְהֵבֵאתָ¹⁷ אֶת-הַמִּנְחָה אֲשֶׁר יַעֲשֶׂה¹⁸ מֵאֵלֶּה לַיהוָה וְהִקְרִיבָהּ¹⁹ אֶל-הַכֹּהֵן וְהִגִּישָׁהּ²⁰ אֶל-הַמִּזְבֵּחַ:
- 2.9 וְהָלִים²¹ הַכֹּהֵן מִן-הַמִּנְחָה אֶת-אֲזִכְרֹתָהּ וְהִקְטִיר²² הַמִּזְבֵּחַ אֲשֶׁה רֵיחַ נִיחַח לַיהוָה:
- 2.10 וְהַנּוֹתָרָתָ²³ מִן-הַמִּנְחָה לְאַהֲרֹן וּלְבָנָיו קֹדֶשׁ קֹדְשִׁים מֵאֲשֵׁי יְהוָה:

Verb#	Root	Parsing	Formatives	Meaning	Syntax
9	קרב	Hiph. Impf., 2ms.		offer	Temp./Protasis to #13?
10	בלל	Qal Psv. Ptc., Fem. Pl.		mix	Adj.
11	משח	Qal Psv. Ptc., M. Pl.		smear	Adj.
12	בלל	Qal Psv. Ptc., Fem. Sing.		mix	Adj.
13	היה	Qal Impf., 3fs		be	M.V.
14	פתת	Qal Infin., Abs.		break up	M.V. (Imptv.)
15	יצק	Qal Perf., 2ms	vav	pour	M.V.
16	עשה	Niph. Impf., 3sf		make	M.V.
17	בוא	Hiph. Pf., 2ms	vav	go	M.V.
18	עשה	Niph. Impf., 3ms		make	Rel. Cl. Adj.
19	קרב	Hiph. Pf., 3ms	vav + 3sf obj.	be near	M.V.
20	נגש	Hiph. Perf., 3ms	vav + 3sf obj.	approach	M.V.
21	רום	Hiph. Perf., 3ms	vav	be high	M.V.
22	קטר	Hiph. Perf., 3ms	vav	go up in smoke	M.V.
23	יתר	Niph. Ptc., Masc. Sing.	He prefix	be left over	Subject

2:4 Now when you offer⁹ a grain offering baked in an oven, *it shall be* unleavened cakes of fine flour mixed¹⁰ with oil or unleavened wafers spread¹¹ with oil. 2:5 And if your offering is a grain offering *cooked* upon the skillet, it shall be¹³ unleavened – fine flour mixed¹² with oil. 2:6 Crumble¹⁴ it to crumbs and you shall pour¹⁵ oil over it; it is a grain-offering. 2:7 And if your offering is a deep-fried grain-offering, it shall be made¹⁶ of fine flour with oil. 2:8 And you shall take¹⁷ the grain-offering which he shall make¹⁸ from these things to Jehovah, and he shall offer¹⁹ it to the priest, and he shall bring²⁰ it to the altar. 2:9 Then the priest shall lift out²¹ from the grain-offering a memorial portion, and he shall burn *it* up²² on the altar – a fire-offering of a soothing aroma to Jehovah. 2:10 And the remainder²³ from the grain-offering belongs to Aaron and to his sons – a most holy thing from the fire-offerings of Jehovah.

Commentary

This section repeats the essence of the generalities of the grain offering of 2:1-3, giving particular instruction to how the grain offering is prepared – whether it be made in an oven, on a griddle, or deep-fried.

2:4 Now when you offer⁹ a grain offering baked in an oven, *it shall be* unleavened cakes of fine flour mixed¹⁰ with oil or unleavened wafers spread¹¹ with oil.

For commentary on “if,” “offer,” and “offering,” see 1:2. For commentary on “grain-offering” and “fine flour,” see 2:1. The NASV and KJV are accurate in the redundancy of the concept of “offering” here, for literally it says, “When you offer an offering of a grain-offering...”

מֵאֲפֶה תֵנּוֹר “from baking of an oven” – This sort of oven would resemble a large clay pot with a fire at the bottom of it. I was fascinated to see men cooking flatbread in the country of Yemen using this method. They would make the dough round and then slap it onto the inner wall of a big clay urn. The tackiness of the dough kept it stuck to the wall of the urn, and the fire at the bottom of the urn cooked it. Then they would remove the cooked bread with tongs – delicious!

חֲלֹט מֵצֹת “unleavened cakes” Davidson says the root for “unleavened” is *matzatz*, meaning “to suck,” but the idea was that no leavening agents were used (i.e. no yeast or sourdough or baking soda). The cakes were to be made of “fine flour mixed with oil” (perhaps some water too?). There is some uncertainty over the root of the word “cakes,” whether it means “round” (indicating a round or ring-shaped bread – Hol., Son.) or whether it means “pierced” (as crackers are made with holes in them – K&D, HAW, BDB.), but the English translations pretty much agree on calling them “cakes.” It is not, however, what we would conceive as a cake (like a birthday cake); this is a flat-bread like tortillas, chapatti, crackers, or pita-bread. It was traditional for the Jews to bring ten cakes of this sort of bread for their minchah offering (Son.).

רִקְקֵי מֵצֹת “unleavened wafers” – There is no satisfactory explanation why “unleavened” is spelled two different ways in this verse, first without the vav and then with one. It would be pronounced the same either way, however, because of the vowel pointing. Although the Cairo codex is one of the most ancient manuscripts of the Hebrew O.T. available, it tends to be sketchy in places, and in this verse, it omits “mixed with oil and unleavened wafers” – this is probably a homoioteleuton, where the copyist copied up to the first “matzot” and then resumed after the second “matzot,” not realizing there were two “matzot’s” and that he had skipped a phrase in the middle. The word for “wafers” comes from the root *רקק*, meaning “to be thin.” Keil & Delitzsch call it “pancakes,” but I think it would be more like a cracker. I went with “wafers” because that seems to be the consensus of English translations and because it is a good descriptor. The way this kind of bread was probably made was that a batter of flour and water was mixed up, then it was baked in the clay oven. After it was cooked, they spread some oil on the cracker. I’ve always wondered why some restaurants serve butter with their crackers ... maybe this is the answer!

2:5 *And if your offering is a grain offering cooked upon the skillet, it shall be¹³ unleavened - fine flour mixed¹² with oil.*

For commentary on “grain-offering” and “fine flour,” see 2:1. This second kind of grain-offering could be prepared like a tortilla or chapatti.

עַל-הַמִּחְבֵּת “upon the skillet” comes from an Arab root meaning “low” and may also indicate flatness - translated in Ezekiel as a “wall” of iron (Son.). I chose the word “skillet” because it is familiar to me - we cook flatbreads in iron skillets at my house quite often. Other English translations go with “pan” – a more generic word (KJV, Hol., K&D) or “griddle” – indicating a large, flat cooking surface (NIV, NAS, Son.).

בְּלוּלָה “mixed” – This participle is almost exactly the same as in v.4, except that it has a singular subject (“flour”) instead of a plural one (“cakes”). The tortillas were to be made with flour and oil mixed together (no leavening) and cooked on a skillet.

2:6 *Crumble¹⁴ it to crumbs and you shall pour¹⁵ oil over it; it is a grain-offering.*

Once cooked, the grain-offering was to be crumbled to bits and have oil poured on it.

פָּתַתְּ אֹתָהּ בְּתִימִים ¹⁴ “crumble it to crumbs” – as you can see, the verb at the beginning (“crumble” #14) and the noun at the end (“crumbs”) have the same root, *פתת* “break up,” so I tried to use parallel words in English. Most English translations use two different words because of the awkwardness - such as the KJV “part it in pieces” and

the NAS “break it into bits.” Here we also have an infinitive verb (literally “to crumble”) used as an imperative (“You must crumble”).

This verse is obviously a continuation of a previous verse. (The subject of this verse is the feminine pronoun “it,” referring to the feminine word “grain-offering” in a previous verse.) But does it refer to both the oven-baked grain-offering (v.4) and the skillet-offering (v.5), or only to the skillet-offering? Jewish commentators say that only the skillet-offerings were to be broken up, whereas the classic German commentators, Keil & Delitzsch say it was both. Common sense would tell me that this might apply to all grain-offerings, but I’d hate to side against the consensus of Jewish commentators!

Breaking bread and putting oil on it is a universal tradition. Western tradition is to use a knife to cut a loaf into slices and then spread each slice with margarine (oil) or butter, but what we’re reading here is more of a middle-eastern tradition still practiced today. The breaking of bread was part and parcel of Biblical tradition. Here in the sacrificial system, the bread was broken up before it was served to God and His priests. It is significant that Jesus also used the breaking of bread during His “last supper” to symbolize His death – “this is my body which is broken for you.” The breaking of bread is also indicative of fellowship; when the Christians “broke bread from house to house,” they were “eating meals together” in community (Acts 2).

2:7 *And if your offering is a deep-fried grain-offering, it shall be made¹⁶ of fine flour with oil.*

Now we come to the third way of preparing a grain-offering: the deep-fry!

For commentary on “grain-offering” and “fine flour,” see 2:1. The operative word here is מְרֻחֶשֶׁת which I translated “deep-fry,” and others translate “pan” (NAS, NIV), “frying pan” (Hol., KJV), or “stew pot” (Son., BDB). This was a deeper pot which was filled with oil, into which the bread dough was dropped to cook. The root word רָחַח has to do with agitation - “to be stirred up” (BDB) or “to boil” (K&D). The Hebrew word here could be transliterated “recheshet,” and could be onomatopoeic for the sizzling sound that the dough makes when it hits the hot oil in the bottom of a deep-fry (Son.).

This fry-bread-grain-offering was made with the same ingredients of fine flour and oil. The phrase “fine flour mixed with oil” appears in the oven-baked and skillet-cooked formulas, but in this deep-fry formula it is just “fine flour with oil;” it is possible that the word “mixed” is implied by ellipsis “fine flour [mixed] with oil” – but then again, if it were deep-fried in oil, it would be plenty oily!

It is interesting that God allowed three different ways for this offering to be prepared. He recognizes the diversity mankind has in making bread and appreciates them all. Are we also willing to recognize that the ways we eat, interact socially, and worship are not the only Biblical ways to do it? In the book of Revelation, John saw people from every tribe, tongue and nation worshipping before the throne, so there must have been some cultural distinctives he saw in that multitude for him to say that they were from different nations. The greater the number of diverse groups of people there are worshipping God in truth, the greater glory God receives!

2:8 *And you shall take¹⁷ the grain-offering which he shall make¹⁸ from these things to Jehovah, and he shall offer¹⁹ it to the priest, and he shall bring²⁰ it to the altar.*

The supplicant was to bring his grain-offering to a priest.

הַעֲשֵׂה. The verbal #18 is rather problematic because its form dictates that it be translated “he shall be made,” but “grain-offering” is feminine and the subject is a masculine “you,” so it doesn’t make sense with either. Translators have had to change this word to make it fit. The Septuagint keeps the passive aspect and changes the gender to feminine (“she [the grain-offering] shall be made of these things”). The standard English translations keep the masculine gender and change the passive aspect (“he [the supplicant] shall make [actively]”). This calls into question the inerrancy of the Bible. It certainly appears that we have a grammatical error here, and yes we do in this Masoretic text, but the vowel pointings are not part of the original writings of the Old Testament – they were added later by the Masorite scribes. If you take the exact same consonants and put different vowel pointings on

them, our word “he shall be made” changes to “he shall make,” so I think that the original writing was correct, but that the Masorites, meticulous as they usually were with accuracy, accidentally put the wrong vowels on this particular word. The work of man is not infallible, but the word of God endures infallible!

There is also a switch from second person to third person in this verse. The commands regarding the grain offerings began in the third person in verses 1-3 (“he shall offer”), and the details of verses 4-7 were worked out in second person (“your offering”), and now it is going back to third person. Perhaps this reflects that the way in which a person cooked their bread was an issue of personal taste, and now we’re going back to a more impersonal 3rd person for the general commands that apply to all the grain offerings.

מֵאֵלֶּה “from these” – the antecedent being the “fine flour” and the “oil” mentioned in the previous verses.

The main point of this verse, however, is the strong sense of movement toward the altar. This verse contains three different words for this movement – more than any verse in Leviticus so far:

- ¹⁷וְהִבֵּאתָ “cause to go” – “And you shall take...to Jehovah”
- ¹⁹וְהִקְרִיבָהּ “cause to be near” – “And he shall offer it to the priest” (For some reason the English versions translate this in the passive – “it shall be offered” – perhaps to atone for translating the preceding passive verb as an active one, but I maintain with Davidson that this is an active Hiphil with a singular feminine object – “And he shall offer her [the grain offering (which is a feminine noun)]”)
- ²⁰וְהִגִּישָׁהּ “cause to approach” – And he [the priest] shall bring it to the altar”

Why the repetition of taking, offering, and bringing? Perhaps because we humans have always been naturally selfish and in need of strong encouragement to bring our offerings to God. We still need that kind of encouragement today. Children from their youngest age need to be taught to “give of your best to the Master,” as the hymn says. We need to teach our children the concepts of tithing, generosity, and charity to the poor – establishing that motion of our possessions in the direction of God. With an average giving pattern of only 2% of income in the United States, adults need to be reminded to give, too! Those who teach the Bible should not shy away from teaching on giving just because it might be “socially unacceptable;” we need to teach the WHOLE counsel of God, and that includes the passages that pertain to finances! We can’t assume that people know how to give. We need to cover the Biblical guidelines of how much, how, to whom, and why – not in a legalistic sense, but in a Biblical way that provides people with the information they need to make decisions. This extends beyond money to also include *service* – giving of your time and your energy to the Lord and His people.

2:9 *Then the priest shall lift out²¹ from the grain-offering a memorial portion, and he shall burn it up²² on the altar – a fire-offering of a soothing aroma to Jehovah.*

Most of this offering was food for the priest, but the priest had to give an offering to God as well. He was to take a memorial portion out of the grain offering and burn it on the altar for the Lord.

הִרִיב - literally, “he shall cause to be high” – the idea is to “lift out” or “take up;” the parallel word for this same action described in 2:2 is verbal #6 קָבַץ “enclose/ grab [a handful]/ take.”

For commentary on “memorial portion” see 2:2; for commentary on “burn up” and “a fire-offering of a soothing aroma to Jehovah” see 1:9.

We can say all day long that something belongs to the Lord or that we have dedicated something to the Lord, but until we have actually set it apart and given it over to the Lord, it is not really His. The Pharisees would say “Corban” over their wealth, supposedly dedicating it to God, but the way it worked out practically was that they kept that wealth to themselves for their own personal use and would not use it to help the poor or even their own parents. Christians today do the same thing. Christians today dedicate their children to the Lord, but don’t give them over to His purposes – they don’t really want them to become missionaries or anything; they do all they can to encourage them to excel in sports, school, social life, and business instead. Christians say they belong to God, but if you look at the way they spend their time, the façade is obvious - most dispensable time is spent on enter-

tainment, pleasure, and self-indulgence of every kind. Christians say, “God is my co-pilot” but really just do whatever they want to do and sanctify it by saying that they felt led of God to do those things. Christians today say that all they have belongs to God, but their giving doesn’t even match the Biblical standards of generosity; they are like the rich young ruler, unwilling to sell all he had to give to the poor, and thus in danger of losing his soul. Whatever we dedicate to the Lord must be removed from our possessions and irrevocably given to God, just as the memorial portion was totally burned up on the altar to God.

2:10 *And the remainder²³ from the grain-offering belongs to Aaron and to his sons – a most holy thing from the fire-offerings of Jehovah.*

This is an exact repeat of the Hebrew text of 2:3; see commentary on 2:3. The Septuagint and the KJV, instead of using the exact same wording as 2:3, change the wording a little by substituting a synonym or two (i.e. “that which is left over” instead of “remnant”).

Leviticus 2:11-16

Grain Offering: Exceptions and First-fruits

- 2.11 כָּל-הַמִּנְחָה אֲשֶׁר תִּקְרִיבוּ לַיהוָה לֹא תַעֲשֶׂה²⁵ חֲמֵץ
כִּי כָל-שָׂאֵר וְכָל-דְּבַשׁ לֹא-תִקְטְרוּ²⁶ מִמֶּנּוּ אֲשֶׁה לַיהוָה:
- 2.12 קָרְבַּן רֵאשִׁית תִּקְרִיבוּ²⁷ אֹתָם לַיהוָה וְאֶל-הַמִּזְבֵּחַ לֹא-יַעֲלוּ²⁸ לְרִיחַ נִיחָח:
2.13 וְכָל-קָרְבַּן מִנְחָתְךָ בַּמֶּלַח תִּמְלַח²⁹ וְלֹא תִשָּׁבֵת³⁰ מֶלַח בְּרִית אֱלֹהֶיךָ
מֵעַל מִנְחָתְךָ עַל כָּל-קָרְבָנְךָ תִּקְרִיב³¹ מֶלַח ס:
- 2.14 וְאִם-תִּקְרִיב^{32a} מִנְחַת בְּכוֹרִים לַיהוָה אֲכִיב קִלְוִי³³ בְּאֵשׁ גָּרֵשׁ פְּרֹמֶל
תִּקְרִיב^{32b} אֶת מִנְחַת בְּכוֹרֶיךָ:
- 2.15 וְנָתַתָּ³⁴ עָלֶיהָ שֶׁמֶן וְשִׁמְתָּ³⁵ עָלֶיהָ לְבִנְיָה מִנְחָה הִוא:
- 2.16 וְהִקְטִיר³⁶ הַכֹּהֵן אֶת-אִזְכָּרְתָּהּ מִגְרֵשָׁהּ וּמִשְׁמֹנָהּ עַל כָּל-לְבִנְיָתָהּ אֲשֶׁה לַיהוָה פ:

Verb#	Root	Parsing	Formatives	Meaning	Syntax
24	קרב	Hiph. Impf. 2mp		offer	Rel. Cl. Adj.
25	עשה	Niph. Impf. 3fs		make/do	M.V.
26	קטר	Hiph. Impf. 2mp		smoke	Explan.
27	קרב	Hiph. Impf. 2mp		offer	M.V. (Concess. #26)
28	עלה	Qal./Hiph. Impf. 3mp		go up	M.V. (Id. Act. #26)
29	מלח	Qal. Impf. 2ms		salt	M.V.
30	שבת	Hiph. Impf. 2ms		cease	M.V. (negative parallel to #29)
31	קרב	Hiph. Impf. 2ms		be near	M.V. (positive parallel to #29)
32	קרב	“		“	a) Protasis b) M.V. – apodosis
33	קלה	Qal. Psv. Ptc. Sing.		roast	Adj.
34	נתן	Qal Pf. 2ms	+ vav	give	M.V. parallel #3 in 2:1
35	שום	Qal Pf. 2ms	+ vav	put/set/place	M.V. parallel #4 in 2:1
36	קטר	Hiph. Perf. 3ms	+ vav	smoke	M.V.

11 No grain-offering which you shall offer²⁴ to Jehovah shall ever be made²⁵ leavened, for you shall not burn up²⁶ any leaven or any honey from his portion of a fire offering to Jehovah. 12 You may offer²⁷ them as an offering of first-fruits to Jehovah, but they shall not ascend²⁸ on the altar as a soothing aroma. 13 Furthermore you shall salt²⁹ every grain offering with salt, and never let the salt of the covenant of your God be lacking³⁰; you shall offer³¹ salt upon all your offerings. 14 Now if you offer^{32a} a grain-offering of first-fruits to Jehovah, you shall offer^{32b} fresh heads of grain roasted³³ in the fire – crushed grain fresh from the field – as a grain offering of your first-fruits. 15 And you shall put³⁴ oil on it and lay³⁵ frankincense upon it. This is a grain-offering. 16 Then the priest shall burn up³⁶ its memorial portion from its crushed grains and from its oil with all its frankincense as a fire-offering to Jehovah.

Commentary

This section wraps up the grain offering instructions with restrictions of what could not be offered on the altar, what should always be offered with a sacrifice, and how to offer a first-fruit offering.

2:11 *No grain-offering which you shall offer²⁴ to Jehovah shall ever be made²⁵ leavened, for you shall not burn up²⁶ any leaven or any honey from his portion of a fire offering to Jehovah.*

Leaven was forbidden in the burnt offerings. This included yeast and honey in particular, and thus any leavening agent, such as sour-dough, which made bread rise by organic means or which fermented, emitting the gasses which filled a bread dough to make it rise.

חֶמֶץ “a thing which is leavened” Leavened bread was offered at the Feast of Weeks and eaten by the priests (Lev. 23:17-20), but it was not to be burned on the altar. The reason for this is not fully explained here. A pagan might explain that his particular deity didn’t like the smell of burnt honey, but I don’t think a believer in the One True God can say that. There may have been some practical reasons lost to us today why God didn’t want them burning yeast or honey on the altar, but there is certainly some symbolic meaning in this too. In the New Testament, Jesus and the Apostles used “leaven” to represent sins which were particularly infectious. Jesus said, “beware the leaven of the Pharisees and of Herod” (Mark 8:15,) and Paul instructed that we “purge the old leaven of malice...” (I Cor. 5:6-8). However, leaven was not all bad; it was also used to represent the growing influence of the kingdom of God which Jesus ushered in. Symbolically, leaven was used to represent something with a pervasive influence, and in this case we may surmise that it is speaking of a pervasive sinful influence. When a person brought a burnt offering to Jehovah, he was not to bring leaven with it, and this may have been a reminder that he was not to come with a heart carrying the “leaven” of infectious sins like anger or malice or gossip (Col. 3:8).

There are a number of minor scruples in this verse which should not be made too much of, since they do not change the meaning and application, but I will list them here:

- The Septuagint translation renders verbal #25 actively “you shall make” instead of “shall be made.”
- חֶמֶץ “honey” From root word meaning “brown.” The Jews say this was not bee-honey but fruit juice, whereas non-Jewish translations say it is bee-honey.
- Several manuscripts use the word “offer” instead of the word “burn up” for verbal #26.
- חֶמֶץ “his portion” is omitted in most English translations.

2:12 *You may offer²⁷ them as an offering of first-fruits to Jehovah, but they shall not ascend²⁸ on the altar as a soothing aroma.*

The nouns in verses 10-12 are almost all in emphatic positions, calling special attention to them: “the remainder,” “grain-offering,” “leaven,” “honey,” and now “first-fruits.” Emphasis is placed on them as they have special rules governing them.

רֵאשִׁית “first-fruits” From the root word “head,” it means “that which comes first.” A first-fruits offering was a gift to the priests of the first (and best) produce of the garden/field/vineyard. So, a leavened loaf of bread or a honey-sweetened pastry made from the first bit of grain harvested from the field could (and should) be offered as a first-fruits offering to the priests.

אֲתָם²⁷ תִּקְרְבוּ “y’all shall offer them” The masculine plural “them” refers not to the feminine singular “first-fruits” but to the elements of “leaven” and “honey” mentioned in the previous verse.

לֹא-יֵעָלוּ²⁸ “they shall not ascend” or “they shall not be raised” This verb comes from the root “to be high,” and its form can either be Qal (simple = “go up”) or Hiphil (causative = “be caused to go up”). English translations render this in a wide variety of ways: KJV = “be burnt,” ASV = “come up,” NAS = “ascend,” NIV = “be offered.” Since this verb is a parallel to #26 in the previous verse (“you shall not cause to burn up”), I suppose that the KJV rendering is o.k., but the ASV and NAS are more technically correct. The idea is that they should not be burned on the altar, and their smoke should not go up as a pleasing aroma to God.

Here’s a thought: How often do we ignore God’s rules governing our lives and try to offer something different up to Him instead? I can’t help but think that a lot of Christian worship services today are like burning fruit and honey on the altar to God. The supplicants may think they are offering a special thing to God, but they are violat-

ing the principles He has laid down in His word, and so instead it is offensive to Him. Some specific examples come to mind, although they are by no means an exhaustive list:

- Lots of people talking in “tongues” at once during a worship service may think they are worshipping God by it, but by violating the principles of orderly worship laid out in I Cor., they are really offending God instead.
- People with a commendable zeal for the spread of the Gospel who, nevertheless place such an emphasis on human action to save themselves that they dishonor the sovereignty and grace of God in salvation.
- Christian men discussing a sporting event in the halls of the church building may think they are honoring God by fellowship, but God is actually offended by their idolatrous preoccupation with sports.
- Christian women may think they are honoring God by wearing highly-fashionable clothes to church, but they are actually drawing the attention of men away from God and toward their bodies and dishonoring God.

Oh God, please make us aware of the ways in which we are ignorant of Your word and seek to burn honey and yeast on Your altar, and help us instead to be a soothing aroma to You!

2:13 *Furthermore you shall salt²⁹ every grain offering with salt, and never let the salt of the covenant of your God be lacking³⁰; you shall offer³¹ salt upon all your offerings.*

After the prohibition of what NOT to offer, God lays down a command of what to ALWAYS offer with a sacrifice: salt. It starts out saying to salt the grain offering, but goes on to say that *every* offering should be salted.

The entire sentence is in singular. Every verb has a singular masculine subject, and every noun is singular in the Hebrew text here. (The LXX incorrectly makes all the “you’s” plural and also erroneously adds “of the Lord” and “to the Lord” in this verse.) The singular “you’s” make the action very personal; every single person who offers a sacrifice was to put salt on the offering. The command is stated, then repeated in negative form and then again in positive form to underscore the command!

You shall salt ...

- *you shall not cause salt to cease*

+ *you shall offer salt* (not “add” as per the NIV, that would be a totally different verb)

בְּמֶלַח תִּמְלַח “with-salt you-shall-salt” The verb (#29) is a *hapex legomenon* which all the major English translations render “season,” but you can see from the Hebrew phrase here that both words have the same root, מֶלַח, which means “salt.” It is called “salt of the covenant of your God.” The big question is, “What does this signify?” The straight answer is that the meaning is not explicitly stated in the Scripture. The only mention of salt previous to this was as an ingredient in the concoction of incense (Ex. 30). This is the first mention of a “covenant of salt” in the Bible; there are only two other instances (Num. 18:19 and II Chr. 13:5) which occur after this, and they do not contain explanations either. The one thing that is common to the Numbers and the Chronicles passages, however, is the concept of perpetuity – it signified that something would be everlasting, and indeed, as we are reminded over and over again in Psalm 136, God’s covenant love endures forever! That is all we can say with certainty about the meaning of the salt – that it represents the unchanging relationship God has with His people. Many other ideas have been suggested, and I will list them below, but remember that they are just guesses:

- Salt, a mineral, completes the representation of the animal, vegetable, and mineral kingdoms upon the altar, as all things were created by God and are offered back to Him.
- Salt is a preservative, so it represented strength and purity before God
- Salt was a trade item, so it represented value given to God (HAW)
- Salt was a seasoning, so it made the aroma of the sacrifice more pleasant to God
- A Jewish legend says that “at the Creation, God made a covenant with the waters that were divided, that they would be offered in the form of salt on the altar” (Son.)
- Among ancient Greeks and Arabs (but apparently not Jews), there was a tradition of sealing a treaty or contract permanently by the two parties eating salted bread together (HAW) – this is the closest to the meaning of the “covenant of salt” as mentioned in Numbers and Chronicles.

How can we apply this personally to ourselves? It would be a minor point to say that if every sacrifice were to be salted, and if many of those sacrifices were to be eaten by the priest and/or the supplicant, then God seems to approve of using salt as a seasoning on food. (In Dr. Brewer's book, *Metabolic Toxemia of Late Pregnancy*, he debunks the myth that pregnant women should avoid salt in their diet, recommending instead a high-protein diet to avoid toxemia swelling.) We must go on to apply this principle symbolically, however. How can we symbolize in common life the everlasting love that God has for us, His children? Just as this symbolic salt was part of every sacrifice in the temple worship of the Jews, so the remembrance of God's covenant of love with us - epitomized in the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ - must be a pervasive part of Christian worship today. It should never be forgotten or left out. I believe that it is entirely appropriate to have symbols that remind us of the reality of the covenant relationship we have with our God. Let us be creative in developing such symbols!

2:14 *Now if you offer^{32a} a grain-offering of first-fruits to Jehovah, you shall offer^{32b} fresh heads of grain roasted³³ in the fire – crushed grain fresh from the field – as a grain offering of your first-fruits.*

This last section goes back to the first verses of chapter two which describe a grain offering of fine flour. Verses 14 & 15, however describe a first-fruits offering of grain which is not ground as finely as the offering in verses 1-3.

בְּכוֹרֶיךָ ... בְּכוֹרֶיךָ “first-fruits ... your first-fruits” This word stems from the root “bacar” = “to be first” and is applied to the first-born son of a marriage as well as to the first fruits or grains produced by a new plant. In both cases (children and produce), the first was considered special to God and was His by right. In other words, all first-born sons (as well as first-born cattle and animals) were to be either given over to work in the temple or else bought back from God so that they could be kept at home. Likewise, the first fruits were to be given as an offering to God. This was symbolic of the fact that everything belongs to God and every good thing that comes to us is a gift from God. Giving back to Him the first-fruit is an acknowledgement that God is the giver of all that will be grown in the field and orchard. It is also an act of thankfulness to God when the garden begins to bear fruit!

אֶבִיב קִלְוֵי 33 בָּאֵשׁ גֵּרֶשׁ בְּרִמָּל “fresh-heads-of-grain roasted in-the-fire crushed-grains-of an-orchard”

NIV: “crushed heads of new grain roasted in the fire”

KJV: “green ears of corn dried by the fire, even corn beaten out of full ears”

Son: “corn in the ear, parched with fire, even groats of the fresh ear”

K&D: “ears roasted by the fire and rubbed to obtain the grains”

NAS: “fresh heads of grain roasted in the fire, grits of new growth” (This is the translation I favor.)

Although there are a variety of translations, there are several key elements in common:

1. It was to be fresh and new. The word for “fresh-heads-of-grain” comes from a root word meaning “green/ bright/ fresh,” and the mention of the “orchard/ field” at the end is also a reference to it being the early part of the crop, fresh from the field. The first part of the crop should be given right away; they should not wait until the harvest was all over to see if they had enough left over to give some to God. And they were to bring it to the altar fresh, not put it off until the grain had lost its freshness.
2. It was to be a whole grain. The word “corn” is technically descriptive of any grain. According to my Webster's dictionary, “corn” is used in England (the home of the KJV, which translates this “corn”) to refer particularly to “wheat” rather than to the “maize-corn” with which Americans would normally associate the word. The word “heads/ears” has to do with the whole body of the grain.
3. It was to be “crushed/ beaten/ rubbed/ milled to groats or grits”. There are two schools of thought: one is that the grain was beaten with a flail or rubbed with the hand to get rid of the chaff (K&D, KJV), and the other is that the grain was actually ground like cracked wheat (bulgur) or coarsely-ground grits or groats (Son., Hol., NAS). I tend to go with the latter, but the basic idea is that it was partly processed, not ground to fine flour.
4. It was to be roasted. The roasting process would make the grain easier to eat raw or to grind.

How can we apply this principle today? Last year, a farmer gave me several of the first sacks of wheat that he had harvested from his field. That was a pretty exact application! Not everyone is a wheat farmer, but many people have gardens; I have seen several people give the first vegetables produced in their garden to a church pastor or ministry. The principle can also be applied in non-agricultural contexts: you can give the first 10% of your personal or business income to a church or a missionary. When I was a boy, I remember a wealthy businessman who owned a new Corvette and who became convicted of the selfishness of his investment in such an expensive sport car. He exchanged his Corvette for two modest cars and gave one of them to be used by the church. Giving of your “first-fruits” is a powerful reminder that what you have is not merely the result of your labor but is a gift from God. We need to invest our wealth in God’s purposes and not spend it all selfishly and greedily upon ourselves.

We should not wait to see if we have enough for ourselves before giving. There have been times when my wife and I have forgotten to carve out the first 20% of our salary cheque as a gift to God, and whenever that has happened, it seems that there is no money left over at the end of the month to remedy the situation, but whenever we give our tithes first-off, we find that there is always enough left over to cover our needs. We should give first and then expect that the God who gave the “first fruits” will see to it that we receive plenty more “fruit” to provide for all of our needs. Giving should also be done right away; we should not reserve tithe money with the intention of eventually giving it to God – go ahead and get it out of your account and into the church while it’s fresh! This is not a way to earn favor with God - He doesn’t need our food and money, it is rather a way for us to worship God. It is a way to constantly live before God with an attitude of thanksgiving for His provision for us!

2:15 *And you shall put³⁴ oil upon it and lay³⁵ frankincense on it. This is a grain-offering.*

The singular “you’s” carry through to this verse, as the individual completes the preparation of his first-fruits offering of grain, which should be presented with oil and frankincense. The verbal tense, however, changes in this verse from the imperfect imperative structure (2:11-14) to a vav-perfect imperative structure (2:2,8,9). It is translated the same (i.e. as a command), but the vav-perfect structure seems to be indicative of the end of a set of commands.

וְנָתַתָּה³⁴ עָלֶיהָ שֶׁמֶן וְשִׁמְתָהּ³⁵ עָלֶיהָ לְבִנְיָה “put oil...lay frankincense” This is translated the same in all the major English translations except for the NIV, which omits “lay” (verbal #35). This parallels the grain offering of fine flour described in 2:1, but the verbs here are different from the verbs used in 2:1 (“pour oil” and “put frankincense”). In both cases, however, the oil was to penetrate the grain and the frankincense was to be laid on top. See commentary on 2:1 for “frankincense.”

הוּא מִנְחָה הוּא “He is a grain-offering.” See commentary on “grain-offering” in v. 2:1. The curious thing is that the predicate nominative of this sentence (“grain offering”) is *feminine*, but the subject of the sentence (“He”) is *masculine*! Of course, in English we don’t even think about such things because we don’t consider inanimate objects to have gender. One solution to the gender difference is that here we have four words together describing this particular grain-offering: “heads” (masculine), “crushed grain” (feminine), “oil” (masculine), and “frankincense” (feminine), and these things are summed up with a masculine pronoun rather than with a feminine one, just as the masculine “sons” in Hebrew sums up all a parent’s male and female offspring. The copyists of the ancient Cairo Hebrew codex sought to correct the problem by making the pronoun feminine (“she”) so it would agree in gender, and it must be admitted that this works better with the feminine pronouns in verse 16 which also refer to the grain-offering.

2:16 *Then the priest shall burn up³⁶ its memorial portion from its crushed grains and from its oil with all its frankincense as a fire-offering to Jehovah.*

Just as in the other types of grain-offerings, the priest was to burn a memorial portion upon the altar together with all the incense, and then the priest could keep the rest to eat. The priest was the only person who could officiate at the altar.

There are four words in this verse containing a ה (3p. sing. fem.) suffix (translated “its”). These all refer back to the singular feminine word תְּנִיחָה “grain offering” found in the previous verse.

For commentary on “memorial portion” see 2:2; for commentary on “burn up” and “a fire-offering” see 1:9.

Keil and Delitzsch give an elaborate allegorical interpretation of the grain offering, and I am not sure what to think of it, but here is a summary: Since the grain offering was given entirely to the Lord and to His priests, Keil and Delitzsch say that the sacrifice was symbolic of the spiritual food prepared and enjoyed by the congregation of the Lord. The oil represents the Spirit of God as the principle of all spiritual vitality, and the bread, flour, and grain from the field are symbols for the word of God. These two elements - the Spirit and the Word - are the basis of spiritual life and sanctification. These things must be kept free from the “leaven” of hypocrisy and from the “honey” of carnal enjoyment because these things are destructive of spiritual life, while salt (the purifying strengthening power of the covenant to avoid moral corruption) and the incense of prayer were to be added that spiritual life might become well-pleasing to the Lord. So the allegory is that of the spiritual life of a Christian which is maintained spiritually by the Spirit of God and His promises and humanly by meditation upon the Bible and prayer. The neglect of any one of these four things makes for a very unhealthy Christian and the neglect of any more than one should call into question whether or not a person is in fact a Christian.

While these things are true, I think the main meaning to the Israelites when they offered their grain offerings was that of worshipping God out of the substance of their food. This grain offering was an acknowledgement that God is sovereign over the produce of the field and was also an expression of thankfulness to Him for the provision of food. Let us always keep in mind this principle that all we have comes from God. Let this motivate us to worship our sovereign God with thankful hearts and be generous in giving.