

## The Grain Offering (מִנְחָה *minḥâ*)

*Peter Schmidt. 2021.*

*Standard reference works are referred to by their common abbreviations.*

### 1. Introduction

What does this paper offer, and how does that help?

I present a table on the many ways of preparing a grain offering, as they are mentioned in Lev 2. This is meant for the translator to get a better overview of the concrete items.

The main ingredient for the grain offering was סֹלֶת *sōlet* (often translated ‘fine flour’). I discuss the exact meaning of this term. This should help translators with the word choice for סֹלֶת *sōlet*.

I explain the difference between the *independent* and the *accompanying* (*complementary*) grain offering and discuss related exegetical issues. This allows one to come up with section headings that are helpful in guiding the reader. One might occasionally also use special terms within the text.

I clarify that not only burnt offerings, but also peace offerings, were accompanied by grain offerings – which is not always recognized. This makes no difference in translation, though.

### 2. What kind of an offering is the grain offering?

Levine (JPSTC, 1989) speaks of an “offering of grain”, Milgrom (AB, 1991) of “the cereal offering”. The English term “meal offering” is unhelpful<sup>1</sup> and “vegetable offering” misleading.

**The main ingredient of the grain offering was wheat semolina, prepared in different ways.** (For a description of semolina, see § 4.1.)

Most frequently, the grain offering is mentioned as an offering that was brought **in addition to the burnt offering and the peace offering**. But a grain offering could also be **offered by itself**.

The term מִנְחָה *minḥâ*, which also means ‘tribute’ (for a king), suggests that it was offered to express homage to the LORD.

The New International Bible Dictionary, in its entry on “Sacrifice and Offerings”, says (§ B. 1.):

The idea behind the grain offering seems to have been that since people would not ordinarily eat meals consisting only of flesh, it would be wrong to offer only flesh to God.

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<sup>1</sup> “Meal“ has two meanings in English. Besides denoting the food eaten at regular times, it also refers to “a coarse, unsifted powder ground from the edible seeds of any grain: *wheat meal; cornmeal*.” (dictionary.com).

Levine (on Lev 2:1), referring to *The Oxford English Dictionary*, rejects the term “meal”, because it is used primarily of grains other than wheat, whereas the Biblical text refers to wheat.

### 3. Which texts inform us about the grain offering?

- Lev 2 specifies in which form grain offerings were acceptable, and how they could be prepared.
- Lev 6:7-11 [English 6:14-18] repeats, and slightly expands, some of the points made in Lev 2. In addition, Lev 6:12-16 [English 6:19-23] deals with the special grain offering of the priests.
- Lev 7:9-10 confirms that certain grain offerings belong to the priests.
- Lev 7:11-14 specifies the form of the grain offering that is part of a peace-offering of thanksgiving.
- Lev 23 outlines the festival calendar. Vv. 16-20 specify what kind of grain offering is to be offered at the Festival of Weeks.
- Num 15 tells us the amounts that were required, depending on the kind of animal.
- Num 28–29 tell us the days and festivals at which sacrifices had to be brought, including grain- and drink offerings.
- Etc. – see Milgrom (200) and Hieke (HTK, 2014; 103).

### 4. What did the grain offering consist of?

Here we need to distinguish between the accompanying and the independent grain offering. As to the first one, we learn from Num 15:4ff. that it was simply semolina with oil. As to the second one, Lev 2 presents a variety of ways of preparation. They are systematically displayed in Table 1.

<b>Table 1: Ingredients and ways of preparing a grain offering according to Lev 2</b>				
<b>Lev 2</b>	<b>Material</b> <i>(terms from NASB)</i>	<b>Preparation</b>	<b>Remarks</b>	
<i>General rule:</i>				
v. 1	סֹלֶת	fine flour		i.e. wheat semolina, see discussion in § 4.1.
	שָׁמֶן	+ oil		
	לֶבְנָה	+ frankincense		
v. 13	מֶלַח	+ salt		
<i>Variations:</i>				
v. 4	סֹלֶת חֲלוֹת מִצֵּת וְרִקִּיקֵי מִצֵּוֹת	unleavened loaves of fine flour ... or unleavened wafers ...	in an oven	UBS <i>Handbook</i> (Péter-Contesse and Ellington, 1990): "...The first was probably a circular loaf placed on a stick (compare 26.26). In most languages the use of the term for cakes will be quite misleading if used for either term. The second term indicates something more like a kind of flat biscuit which is still eaten in the Near East today. ...". – Milgrom: <i>hallâ</i> is thicker; perhaps ring-shaped (or possibly perforated, i.e. pricked).
v. 5-6	... סֹלֶת מִצֵּה	fine flour, ... unleavened	on the griddle, then broken into bits	UBS <i>Realia Handbook</i> (Pritz, 2009; § 5.13.): "The griddle was a thick plate made of pottery (and later of metal) with small depressions similar to a modern waffle iron. It was placed on three stones between which a fire was built. Bread dough was then put on the surface of the griddle and cooked. ... In some languages translators may have to render the Hebrew word <i>machvath</i> as "flat

				cooking pan” or “flat iron for baking.”” (Compare hotplates for <i>crêpes</i> .) – Paratext Interlinear: “baking tray”.
v. 7	סֹלֶת	fine flour	in a <b>pan</b>	The <i>Realia Handbook</i> deals with the word for ‘pan’ together with the above. However, Hartley (WBC, 1992) speaks of a “deep pan with a lid”, and Milgrom speaks of <u>deep frying</u> , pointing to the prepositions ( <i>here</i> : “in”; <i>above</i> : “on”), and to rabbinic sources saying “a pan is deep and what is prepared therein is spongy ...; a griddle is flat and what is prepared thereon is hard”. <i>Handbook</i> : “In some cases an instrument was made so that it could serve as a pan when held one way and a griddle (verse 5) when turned over.”
<i>Special case: first fruits offering (“early ripened things”)</i>				
v. 14	אֲבִיב קָלִי  נֶרֶשׁ כְּרִמָּל	(1) fresh heads of grain,  (2) grits of new growth [NJPS: grits of the fresh grain] <sup>2</sup>	roasted in the fire	(1) Levine: “grain just prior to ripening, when the kernels, not yet darkened, still have a greenish color”. – Milgrom: “milky grain, ... an intermediate stage between mere stalks with no spikes or ears on them and fully ripe grain”. (2) Levine: “hulled kernels of grain” (< “to crush”). [“hulled” means with the hull removed. PS] – Milgrom: “groats (< “to crush”) of the fresh ear”. – I.e., not ground to flour. – NIDOTTE (4:448): “a coarse flour made with pestle and mortar–beaten grain”. <sup>3</sup>
<i>Clarification:</i>				
vv. 11-12		leaven & honey: alright as first fruits offering, <u>but not allowed in the grain offering proper</u>		Milgrom: “ <i>them</i> . Refers not to leaven and honey per se but rather to the cereal offerings that are cooked with them (Dillmann and Ryssel 1897)”. Cf. Lev 23:17 for leavened loaves as first fruits, and 2Chr 31:5 for honey among first fruits”. <i>Handbook</i> : “ <b>Them</b> : this pronoun seems to refer to the grain offerings made with yeast or honey mentioned in verse 11. ... [first fruits] ... refers to grain in this context. ... In these cases they seem not to have been burned, even partially, on the altar. Probably they were simply given to the priests to be presented to God before they ate them.” – Cf. Levine.

### Remarks

- That the variety described in v. 7 should be unleavened, like the others, is not stated in that verse, but see the general rule in vv. 11-12, cf. Milgrom (183).
- On v. 14, the *Handbook* comments:  
TEV and NJB give the impression that there were two possible kinds of offerings—either roasted grain or ground meal. RSV and most other versions seem to indicate that only one kind of offering was involved—meal from fresh grain that is first roasted and then ground or pounded. Either interpretation is acceptable.

<sup>2</sup> “Grits” in NASB and NJPS seems to be used in the general sense of crushed or coarsely ground grain; often, *grits* refers to corn [maize], boiled for breakfast.

<sup>3</sup> “Groats” are grain berries with the hull removed, sometimes broken or cut into large fragments [German: ≈ Grütze: grob zerkleinerte Körner; ≈ Schrot: grob gemahlene Körner. Die Abgrenzung ist unscharf.]

I think it is safer to take the apposition in Hebrew as a second description of the same thing, not as expressing a second option.

Milgrom agrees with rabbinic exegesis that v. 14 is about barley. Hartley thinks other grains are included here.

**Translation:** NET08’s rendering is recommendable: “soft kernels roasted in fire – crushed bits of fresh grain”. NRSV says “coarse new grain from fresh ears, parched with fire”.

In addition to Lev 2:14, we should also take note of Lev 23:17 (how the texts relate to each other is debated), see Table 2:

Lev 23 v. 17	לֶחֶם ... שְׂתִים שְׁנֵי עֶשְׂרִים סֵלֶת תְּהַיִּינָהּ חֶמֶץ תֵּאֲפִינָהּ	NJPS: ... two loaves of bread ... of two-tenths of a measure of choice flour, baked after leavening, ....	Levine on 2:14: “Our text indicates a <u>voluntary</u> , unscheduled sacrifice to be <u>burned on the altar</u> and hence to be prepared with <u>unleavened</u> dough. The offering ordained in 23:14-17 is an <u>obligatory</u> offering, to be baked on Shavuot from the new grain crop, of <u>leavened</u> dough. It is to be <u>placed before the Lord</u> rather than <u>burned</u> on the altar.” See also Sklar [TOTC <sub>2</sub> , 2013]. Cf. Mishnah, Menahot 5:1.
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- Exceptionally, the “grain offering of jealousy” in Num 5:15 consisted of **barley**.

In summary, then, usually the grain offering consisted of **wheat semolina, as such, or prepared in the form of a loaf, or a wafer, or a kind of waffle crumbled to pieces, or deep-fried, and with oil and frankincense and salt added**; as first fruits offering it was **ears of grain in their early stage, which were roasted and crushed**.

Apparently, the way of preparation was left to the worshipper’s preference.

#### 4.1. What exactly is סֵלֶת *sōlet*, and how does it differ from קֶמַח *qemah*?

After reviewing a range of resources (see quotations in § 4.1.3.), the best explanation is as follows: ***Sōlet* is semolina<sup>4</sup> from the endosperm of wheat.**

##### 4.1.1. Some basics about grains

First, we need to have a clear picture in mind of what a grain consists of. The Figure 1 and the Table 3 below should help with that.

<sup>4</sup> Semolina is defined by dictionary.com as “a granular, milled product of durum wheat, consisting almost entirely of endosperm particles, used chiefly in the making of pasta”, and by merriam-webster.com as “the purified middlings of hard wheat (such as durum) used especially for pasta (such as macaroni or spaghetti)”. According to britannica.com (accessed 18 March 2021), it is “the purified middlings of hard wheat used in making pasta; also, the coarse middlings used for breakfast cereals, puddings, and polenta”.

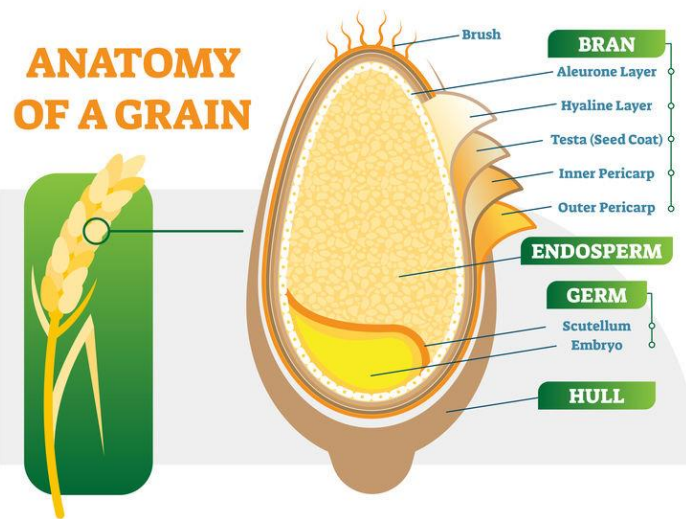


Figure 1: Anatomy of a grain. (Source: 123RF.com.)

Table 3: Terms related to the composition and processing of grain seeds			
English	Function	Significance	German
hull (husk; <i>when removed: chaff</i> )	Shell/coat covering and protecting the seed.	Inedible.	Spelze (Hülse)
berry / kernel  <i>Consisting of:</i>	Reproductive part of the plant.	Edible.	(Getreide-)Korn
bran	Multi-layered outer skin. Needed for protection and development of the germ.	Edible. Whole-grain (wholemeal) flour contains both the bran and the germ.	Schale; Kleie ( <i>wenn entfernt</i> )  (Vollkornmehl ↔ Weißmehl)
germ / embryo	A comparatively small part of the grain. The germ is what sprouts and develops into a new plant.	For producing white flour, both are removed.	Keim(ling)
endosperm	By far the largest part of the grain. Serves as food supply: provides energy (starch) for the growth of the germ.	Edible. <b>This endosperm is what semolina and white flour consist of.</b>	Endosperm; Mehlkörper (Nährgewebe)

Without elaborating on the techniques by which grain was ground in antiquity or is ground today, and how the different parts of the grain are separated from each other, these are the steps that matter for our subject:

In the process of **threshing**, the grains are separated from the straw, and the hull comes off.

- If the baker wants to make **whole-grain bread** (= wholemeal bread), the entire wheat berry is used.<sup>5</sup>
- If he wants to use **white flour** for his bread, the bran and the germ are removed, and only the endosperm is utilized.

The **grinding** process is repeated until the desired grain size is achieved. The coarse semolina would be sieved out fairly early on.

The resources seem to agree that **it is not the fineness of the grain size that is the main condition for calling the product *sōlet*. Rather, it is its substance: it comes only from the endosperm.**<sup>6</sup> At the same time, there is some ambiguity: while some call it semolina, others retain the word flour. In a way this is justified; while semolina is coarser than regular flour, it comes in different textures.

Figures 2a and 2b show what semolina looks like. It can be white or yellowish.



**Figure 2a: Semolina.** (Source: Sanjay ach, English Wikipedia, CC BY-SA 3.0.)



**Figure 2b: Semolina.** (Source: 123RF.com.)

The regular flour *qemah* (usually of barley) might have been ground finer than the wheat semolina, but it would be whole-grain flour and look darker.

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<sup>5</sup> Nowadays, the grain is ground, with the bran being separated out, and later added back to the finely ground white flour. Whether this procedure was the same in antiquity I cannot tell.

<sup>6</sup> This is paralleled in the German convention, where flour types are graded according to how much of the non-endosperm parts (mineral content) are retained.

#### 4.1.2. Translation of *sōlet* and *qemaḥ*

In distinguishing between *qemaḥ* and *sōlet*, the translator has two options:

- (1) to try and find descriptive wordings that communicate what the items really were;
- (2) to replace the types by functional equivalents, i.e. to convey that one of them was the flour used in everyday life, and the other an item of luxury or for offerings.

The explanation and advice of the *Handbook* (on Lev 2:1) is appropriate:

**Fine flour:** in Hebrew there are two words that refer to ground grain. The first, which is used here [i.e., סֹלֶת *sōlet*], represents a kind of semolina or coarser wheat flour. It is a product that is less finely ground than the material referred to by the second word (found in Num 5.15, for example) [i.e., קֵמַח *qemaḥ*]. However, the first type was considered a more sumptuous kind of flour (made from wheat), used primarily in ritual offerings. The second type, on the other hand, was just ordinary flour (made from barley or wheat) and was rarely used in offerings to God. In translation the primary focus should not be on the fineness of the grinding, but on the high quality of this particular kind of flour as opposed to the commonness of the other type.

If the translator has trouble finding corresponding terminology, it is possible to use an ordinary word for the common flour or meal (or “coarse meal, or flour”) and the same word qualified by “best” or “finest” for the more luxurious product (compare NJV “choice flour”).

In Lev 2:1, most English versions render *sōlet* as “fine (wheat) flour / finely-ground flour / finest flour / choice flour”. They focus on the quality then, rather than describing what it consists of.

In 1Ki 5:2 [English 4:22], where *sōlet* and *qemaḥ* occur next to each other in an account about food supplies for Solomon’s palace, many call *qemaḥ* ‘meal’. NJPS calls *sōlet* ‘semolina’ here. NET08 uses the descriptive phrase “finely milled flour”, contrasted with “cereal”, which is imprecise.

In 1Ki 5:2, the French versions distinguish the two terms in the following ways (Table 4):

Version	<i>sōlet</i>	<i>qemaḥ</i>	Remarks
NVSR78Col NBS (2010)	fleur de farine	farine	functionally equivalent
BDS (2015)	farine fine	farine ordinaire	
TOB (2010)	semoule	farine	factually correct, but misleading, because these renderings do not convey that <i>sōlet</i> was valued as being of higher quality
FC97	farine grossièrement moulue	farine finement moulue	
PDV2017	semoule	farine fine	

In the cultic context, in Lev 2:1, BDS uses the alternative phrase *fleur de farine*. TOB, FC97 and PDV all simply speak of *farine*. It would be nice if the distinction between regular and fine flour, reflected in the text about Solomon’s palace, could also be retained when it comes to the requirements for the grain offering.

#### 4.1.3. Quotations from the literature (annotated)<sup>7</sup>

TWOT:

The word (from Akkadian *salātu* “crush”), denoting a finely ground flour, is known throughout the ancient Mediterranean world (e.g. Akkadian *siltu*, Arabic *sultun*, Aramaic *sūltā*, Egyptian *tprt*). As opposed to *qemaḥ* “meal” which came from whole kernels and bran, this finest of flour was ground exclusively from the inner kernels of the wheat (hence, LXX *semidalis*, Vulgate *simila*).

*According to others, the aspect “finely ground” is not what makes the difference to qemaḥ. As to “inner kernels”, that refers to the endosperm; it is true that the endosperm is “inside” the bran, but it is not “inside” in relation to the germ.*

Levine translates “semolina flour” and comments:

The usual translation “fine flour” is ... incorrect. This is not to say that flour for the *minḥah* was not finely ground or pounded in a mortar – it undoubtedly was. However, the point of this verse is to prescribe the substance of the offering and not how that substance was to be prepared.

Hartley summarizes the above two when he says (on v. 1):

The grain offering is prepared from wheat that is ground and sifted; ... Levine (9) holds that סֵלֶת is semolina, i.e., flour taken from the inner kernels. סֵלֶת, a luxury item in ancient society (cf. Ezek. 16:13), is thus distinguished from קֶמַח, “meal,” a coarse mixture of whole grain and bran.

*The aspect of the wheat being “sifted” is prone to be misunderstood. According to the Mishnah, sōlet consisted of the coarser parts, the finer parts went through the sieve (see below). And as above, “inner kernel” is not the most helpful description of the endosperm.*

HALOT:

wheat porridge, groats, finely milled flour.

HALAT:

Weizengries, feingemahltes Mehl

*“Wheat porridge / groats” are not precise translations of “Weizengries” in the original HALAT; better would be “wheat semolina”. “Finely milled flour” is correct as translation, but not the best description for sōlet.*

NIDOTTE s.v. סֵלֶת, vol. 3, p. 269f., glosses with “wheat flour”. It summarizes what others say, but does not contribute anything new. There is no entry for קֶמַח. The article on “Bread, Cake” (vol. 4, pp. 448-453) touches on our question (p. 448), but does not provide further explanations.

NJPS translates “semolina”. So does Milgrom, and he explains (on Lev 2:1):

... *sōlet* is identified with grits or, more precisely, semolina, “The grain-like portions of wheat retained in the bolting-machine after the fine flour has been passed through” (*Webster*).

He quotes from the rabbinic tradition, for example:

“A sieve lets through the flour but retains the *sōlet*.” [Mishnah, Avot 5:15]

Gane (NIVAC, 2004) says:

In 2:1-3 the grain offering handed over to the priest was to be semolina/grits (*solet*) of wheat (cf Ex 29:2; 2 Kings 7:16). Although this was not “fine flour” in terms of texture, it was “fine” in the sense that it was choice food (cf. Ezek 16:13, 19) rather than ordinary flour (cf. 1 Kings 4:22)

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<sup>7</sup> For the words *grits* and *groats*, see footnotes no. 2 & 3.



Hieke (pp. 201f.), referring to Rendtorff, also argues for a valuable product of wheat, strictly *Weizengrieß*, but translates *Weizenfeinmehl* to reflect the quality. *In his comments, he stresses the sieving related to sōlet (based on rabbinic literature, where this is applied metaphorically). However, as with Hartley (see above), there is some lack of clarity in the explanation. Sieving means that the larger parts are retained. The fine flour went through. So sōlet was coarser!*

*Unless they refer to sieving as a way of separating the endosperm from the bran and the germ. How this was achieved is not explained.*

DCH has “semolina” as its main gloss, and adds “choice wheat flour”.

*This is typical for what we find elsewhere: the consensus seems to be that sōlet is semolina, but there is uncertainty about how finely it was ground.*

*None of the consulted resources contains an explanation for why barley would normally be ground to finer flour, but wheat to coarser semolina.*

## 5. Independent *versus* accompanying grain offering

### 5.1. Overview

ISBE (s.v. Sacrifices and Offerings in the OT, § V. E. Cereal Offering, vol. 4, p. 268) first gives a summary of Lev 2 and then closes with the remark: “Cereal offerings accompanied animal sacrifices, ...” This is representative for what might be a quite common misunderstanding. In fact, the rules of Lev 2 do *not* apply to the accompanying cereal offering.

A distinction needs to be made between two kinds of grain offerings.

- the grain offering as an **independent offering**, offered on its own
- the grain offering as an **accompaniment to animal sacrifices**, offered in conjunction with the burnt offering and the peace offering.

In principle, the commentators agree on this.<sup>8</sup> But which is in view where? Table 5 below lists key references and differentiates between the two kinds of grain offerings.

<b>Table 5: Major differences between the independent and the accompanying grain offering</b>		
<b>Type of grain offering</b>	<b>Independent grain offering</b>	<b>Accompanying grain offering</b>
<b>Texts (examples)</b>	<b>Lev 2</b> sections on grain offering in <b>Lev 6–7</b>	<b>Num 15, Num 28–29</b> Lev 14:20 (after healing from skin disease) 1Ki 8:64 (at dedication of Temple)

<sup>8</sup> See, e.g., Milgrom (*Leviticus*, I, 198): “The cereal offering in Scripture is of two types: an accompaniment to animal sacrifices and an independent, discrete offering. To begin with, it is the required auxiliary of the burnt offering and the well-being offering. ... In addition to these required cereal accompaniments, certain sacrificial situations also require cereal offerings, such as the *tôdâ*, the thanksgiving offering (7:12-14), the priestly consecration (8:26-27 ...), and the Nazirite on completion of his vow (Num 6:19-21). ...”. Cf. Milgrom (JPSTC) on Num 15:4.

<b>Substance</b>	usually semolina, prepared in all kinds of different ways; plus oil, frankincense, and salt (Lev 2)	semolina, mixed with oil (Num 15:4ff.)
<b>Application</b>	token portion is burned on the altar; the rest is for the priests (esp. Lev 2:2-3ff.) – with the exception of the priest’s <i>own</i> grain offering (Lev 6:16 [English 23])	completely burned on the altar (explicitly so in Lev 14:20; less explicitly in Num 28:5ff.; clearly also in 2Ki 16:13/15, but at Ahaz’s illegitimate altar)
<b>Mishnah</b> [quoted by Neusner, 1988]	Menahot 6:1 “(A) These are meal offerings [from which] the handful is taken, and the residue of which belongs to the priests: (B) (1) the meal offering of fine flour, and (2) [the meal offering prepared in] a baking pan, ...” etc. (as Lev 2).	Menahot 5:3 (C) “The meal offering which is brought with drink offerings requires oil but does not require frankincense. 6.2 “(A) ... and the meal offering brought with drink offerings ... [belong] to the altar. (B) And the priests have no [portion] in them.”

**Remark**

Gideon offered the meat of a young goat together with “unleavened bread [מִצֵּי] from an ephah of flour [קִמְחָה]” (Judg. 6:19-21). Since this was an accompanying grain offering, one would expect semolina, not bread.<sup>9</sup> Manoah, also offering a young goat, gave an unspecified “grain offering [מִנְחָה]” alongside it (Judg. 13:19).

5.2. Leviticus 2

**The chapter Leviticus 2 just speaks of the independent grain offering!**

Milgrom (198) relates Lev 2 to the cereal offering “offered by itself”.<sup>10</sup>

5.3. Excursus: The purpose of the independent grain offering

Assuming that Lev 2 talks of the independent grain offering, what was its purpose?

<sup>9</sup> One could classify his gifts as a peace offering of thanksgiving, which would demand unleavened bread, among other things (see § 5.5. below); but a peace offering would normally involve guests.

<sup>10</sup> With regard to ch. 2, Wenham (67-68) does not clearly distinguish between independent and accompanying grain offerings. Hartley (29-30) confuses the two kinds when he first speaks of a small portion being burnt on the altar, and the rest becoming the priests’, and then quoting instances for *accompanying* offerings like 2Ki 16:13, and restricting the *independent* one to exceptional cases.

The New International Bible Dictionary, in its entry on “Sacrifice and Offerings” (§ B. 1.) says on “grain offerings”:

They were sometimes accompanied by frankincense. Only a portion was consumed by fire on the altar; the rest was kept by the priests, ...

This is imprecise: in the independent grain offering, frankincense was required – and burned completely; but frankincense was not part of the accompanying grain offering.

Milgrom explicates (195):

Rabbinic tradition clearly regards the cereal offering as the poor man's burnt offering.

What speaks for this is that the text on the cereal offering follows the one on the burnt offering, just as is the case with the reparation offering, in which cereal is an alternative for birds (5:7-10; 11-13).

The other explanation for the position of the text on the cereal offering would be that it *accompanies* the burnt offering, and therefore it is logical to deal with it in this spot. But what is described in ch. 2 is not the kind of grain offering that goes *with* a burnt offering. What also speaks against this conclusion is that the peace offering, too, required an accompanying cereal offering. So one could expect the section on the cereal offering to come after both the burnt offering and the peace offering have been dealt with (cf. the discussion *op. cit.*, 195-196) – although that is not compellingly so.

Milgrom supports the rabbinic tradition: the cereal offering is “for the benefit of those who cannot afford a burnt offering of a quadruped or bird” (196). However, Wenham (NICOT, 1979; 67) expresses valid demurs when he says:

The completely different way in which the ingredients of the sacrifice were used makes unlikely the suggestion of rabbinic commentators that the cereal offering was the burnt offering of the very poor.

Hieke (197f.) also sees the cereal offering as an alternative to the burnt offering, but with regard to the *position* of the text can accept both explanations.

#### 5.4. Leviticus 6–7

##### **What we read about the grain offering in Lev 6–7 also refers to the independent grain offering.**

This is Milgrom's conclusion after extensive discussion (on 6:7 [English 6:14], pp. 389-391).<sup>11</sup> On 7:10, p. 412, he says:

The offering cannot refer to adjunct cereal offerings because the latter were entirely consumed on the altar.

On Num 15:4, Milgrom (JPSTC, 1990) states:

The private meal offering became a priestly revenue after a token portion was offered on the altar, but one that accompanied a meat offering was burnt completely on the altar as prescribed in Leviticus 14:20 and 23:13.

Lev 2 speaks of various ways of preparing a grain offering. If I have it right, **in the case of the accompanying grain offering, there is no point in making it into bread, or preparing it in any other way, because it gets burned anyway** (although idolaters make cakes for the Queen of Heaven, Jer 7:18; 44:17-19). It is thus not surprising that Num 15 does not mention anything about baking bread etc. Cf. Ezek. 46:13-15.

In general, **Lev 6–7 relate to what has been said before in ch. 1-5**. I assume the same for what these two chapters 6–7 say regarding the grain offering (6:7-16 [Engl. 14-23] and 7:9-10): it relates to the grain offering as it has been talked about in ch. 2. The texts match up in several ways:

- Lev 7:9-10 talks of **baked stuff**, as does 2:4ff.
- Lev 6:9/11 [Engl. 16/18] and 7:9-10 say the grain offering **belongs to the priest(s)** [details debated]; that is in line with 2:10 (and 3) (“The remainder of the grain offering belongs to Aaron and his sons.”), but would not apply to the accompanying grain offering.

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<sup>11</sup> So already in his *Comment* on ch. 2, p. 200; Hieke (103) follows him.

- According to Lev 6:8 [English 15], it **contained frankincense**. This matches 2:1ff., but not the specifications for the accompanying grain offering in Num 15:4ff.

But what about Lev 7:8-10? These verses mention a burnt offering first; should not the next verse be read as talking about an *accompanying* grain offering? The verses read (NASB):

<sup>8</sup> Also the priest who presents any man’s burnt offering, that priest shall have for himself the skin of the burnt offering which he has presented.

<sup>9</sup> Likewise, every grain offering that is baked in the oven and everything prepared in a pan or on a griddle shall belong to the priest who presents it.

<sup>10</sup> Every grain offering, mixed with oil or dry, shall belong to all the sons of Aaron, to all alike.

I would say, the mentioning of the grain offering after the burnt offering simply matches their discussion in Lev 1 and 2 (first burnt offering, then grain offering) – with no combined (accompanying) offering being in view.

### 5.5. Special case: The thanksgiving grain offering in Lev 7:11-14

This short passage is potentially even more confusing than some of the other places. True, the word *minhâ* does not occur in these verses, but they clearly speak of a kind of grain offering. The whole section 7:11-38 gives additional instructions about the peace offering.

Within this context, *one* case to deal with is the one that is introduced “If you offer it for thanksgiving, ...” (v. 12a, NRSV). Not every peace offering was “for thanksgiving”. But if it was for the purpose of thanksgiving, then the offerer had to observe the rule that is spelled out: “... along with the sacrifice of thanksgiving he shall offer unleavened cakes ...” (v. 12, NASB). The usual accompanying grain offering for peace offerings consisted of just semolina in its raw form. The requirement fixed here is for an independent grain offering. What this had to look like is specified as follows (v. 12; English by NRSV):

חלות מצות בלולת בשמן	unleavened cakes mixed with oil,
ורקיקי מצות משחים בשמן	unleavened wafers spread with oil,
וסלת מרבכת חלת בלולת בשמן	and cakes of choice flour well soaked in oil

The three kinds of preparation match the ones that are enlisted in Lev 2:4-6. The first two are worded identically; the third one differs slightly:<sup>12</sup>

- 7:12 speaks explicitly of חלת ‘loaves’, which is not the case in 2:5-6 (but probably implied);
- 7:12 does *not* mention מצה “unleavened”, which *is* stated in 2:5-6 (and probably implied in 7:12);
- in 7:12, before the loaves are said to be בלולת *b<sup>o</sup>lûlôt* ‘mixed [with oil]’ like in 2:5-6, the flour is described as מרבכת *murbeket* (√ *rbk*, only here and 6:14; 1Chr. 23:29); NJPS renders the two phrases together by saying “with oil mixed in, well soaked” (cf. *Handbook*.) Whether this is meant to be a special feature of the thanksgiving grain offering (more oily to convey generosity?), or just a more elaborate description, can be questioned.

<sup>12</sup> Neither Milgrom nor Hartley comment on these differences. Hieke and Levine alert to them briefly. Levine:

The grain offering ordained here is patterned after the one presented in 2:4f., except that it was to be prepared with “soaked” flour, like the priestly *minhah*—the holocaust of 6:14.

**In summary**, the grain offering described in this section is a kind of independent grain offering. However, **it differs from the usual independent grain offering in the following points:**

- The flour is “soaked”.
- It comprises leavened bread (v. 13).
- No token portion is burned on the altar. (Leavened bread must not be burned on the altar, see Lev 2:11. Cf. Lev 23:17, and Menahot 5:1-2; 7:1-2.)
- The priest receives only a levy (תִּרְיָמָה *rûmâ*, v. 14) – one piece of each kind.
- The rest is eaten by the offerer and his guests (see Milgrom, Sklar, Hieke).

Whether this independent grain offering was demanded *in place of* the usual grain offering that accompanied the peace offering, or *in addition to* it, is not explained. I lean toward the latter.

Remark: There is a parallel to the showbread in that the loaves of the showbread are also eaten by the priests (Lev 24:9).

Regarding other texts that speak of grain offerings, as a caveat I will quote Milgrom, who admits (200; cf. Hieke, 103):

When the cereal offering is part of a series of sacrifices, it is sometimes difficult to tell whether it is an adjunct to the burnt and sometimes the well-being offering or a discrete sacrifice. [With some discussion following.]

#### 5.6. Special case: Amos 4:5

In Amos 4, the prophet delivers a sarcastic speech, encouraging people to sacrifice at pagan cultic sites. V. 5 reads (NASB):

Offer a thank offering also from that which is leavened ...

But what is the absurd bit in this particular command? To begin with, grain offerings were to be brought of *unleavened* products (Lev 2:11). But in the special case of the *thank offering* (which is talked about here), leavened bread *was* part of it (Lev 7:13).

Stuart (WBC, 1987) comments:

Amos therefore indicts an unwitting violation of the sacrificial laws in the burning of leaven (contrary to Lev 2:11; cf. 6:14–17). Leavened bread was part of the peace offerings (Lev 7:13), but it was not to be burned.

Likewise, Niehaus (*The Minor Prophets*, McComiskey (ed.), 1992) says:

Leavened cakes were also to be offered, but not burned ... They were rather to be eaten by the priests.<sup>13</sup>

He says further:

..., the people went further than the law requires by burning leavened bread on the altar, ...

Presumably, they did this as an added gesture of appeasement, as though God were interested in the sacrifice itself rather than in the spiritual condition of his people.

**Translation:** It is essential then, that the verb at the beginning of Amos 4:5, which is קָטַר *qtr* pi., not be rendered with a too general term like “offer”, as in the NASB quote above and many other English versions, but with ‘let go up in smoke’ (see

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<sup>13</sup> For some reason, neither Hubbard (TOTC, 1989) nor Hill (Cornerstone, 2008) nor the *Handbook* (de Waard and Smalley, UBS, 1979) see this as the point that Amos was making.

HALAT, NIDOTTE), or simply “burn”. Otherwise part of Amos’s argument is lost.

### 5.7. Translation

My suggestion is to think about whether the independent and the accompanying grain offering should be distinguished in translation. Just like we differentiate between places where *minhâ* means ‘gift’ and where it means ‘tribute’, one might as well differentiate between places where *minhâ* means a grain offering by itself, and where it means a grain offering that goes with an animal sacrifice. One could find expressions like

“independent / discrete / stand-alone / proper grain offering” *versus*

“accompanying / adjunct / complementary / supplementary grain offering”.

Num 15 and 28–29 always speak of *sôlet* ‘semolina’ (mixed with oil) only. Lev 2 lists different kinds of bread. Thus, one could argue that it is obvious that two different kinds of offerings are in view. But just speaking of “grain offering” blurs the distinction, and the majority of Bible readers are probably not aware of it.

From reading Lev 2 and Lev 6–7, readers will be familiar with grain offerings. When they get to Lev 23, Num 15, Num 28–29 and other texts, they might wonder why the grain offerings that are required there do not match the specifications from Lev 2 and 6–7.

Num 6:13-15 shows how difficult it can get. Here, both types of grain offering occur next to each other. These verses read (NASB, emphases added):

<sup>13</sup> ‘Now this is the law of the Nazirite when the days of his separation are fulfilled, he shall bring the offering to the doorway of the tent of meeting.

<sup>14</sup> He shall present his offering to the Lord: one male lamb a year old without defect for a burnt offering and one ewe-lamb a year old without defect for a sin offering and one ram without defect for a peace offering,

<sup>15</sup> and a basket of unleavened cakes of fine flour mixed with oil and unleavened wafers spread with oil, **along with their grain offering and their drink offering.**

In v. 15, the “cakes” and “wafers” are an independent grain offering, although the word *minhâ* is not used. The “grain offering” that is mentioned at the end is the accompanying grain offering for the animals. The *Handbook* states this, and points to NIV who “places this phrase at the beginning of the verse to make it clear that these offerings accompanied the animal sacrifices, ...”. Either way, the reader might wonder why, in addition to “their grain offering”, the text also speaks of cakes and wafers.

Whether it is feasible to employ two different terms, as put forth above, I cannot tell. It might not be very practical in the running text, and in many places not necessary. But it seems advisable **to utilize them in section headings, for the sake of orienting the reader.** I suggest something like the following:

Heading at Lev 2:1      Specifications for the independent grain offering

Heading at Lev 6:7 [14] Further details on the independent grain offering

Heading at Num 15:1    Accompanying grain- and drink-offerings<sup>14</sup>

Finally, if a translation uses the same word for both kinds of grain offerings, a glossary entry could explain the distinction.

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<sup>14</sup> NIV adequately says “Supplementary Offerings”. Many other versions speak of offerings or sacrifices in general. Those section headings miss the theme of this section.

## 6. Grain offerings accompany both burnt- and peace offerings

That not only burnt offerings, but also peace offerings, were accompanied by grain offerings, is not always recognized. ISBE (s.v. Sacrifices and Offerings in the OT, § V. E. Cereal Offering, vol. 4, p. 268), for instance, first gives a summary of Lev 2 and then closes with the remark: “Cereal offerings accompanied animal sacrifices, but mostly in the case of the ‘ōlâ.”

However, such vagueness seems unwarranted in light of the introduction to Num 15, where v. 3 speaks of both “a burnt offering or a sacrifice [זָבַח]” and then lists the grain offerings for the various cases. Milgrom sees the grain offering as “required” also of the well-being [= peace] offering (*Leviticus*, AB, pp. 196-198), and so does Levine (*Numbers 1–20*, AB, 1993) (on ch. 15; *Introduction*).