

The Morning Offering and the Evening Offering

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1. What are the morning- and the evening offerings?

Essential are two passages from the Pentateuch:

Ex 29:38-42 (NIV):

³⁸ “This is what you are to offer on the altar regularly each day: two lambs a year old. ³⁹ Offer one in the morning and the other at twilight. ⁴⁰ With the first lamb offer a tenth of an ephah of fine flour mixed with a quarter of a hin of oil from pressed olives, and a quarter of a hin of wine as a drink offering. ⁴¹ Sacrifice the other lamb at twilight with the same grain offering and its drink offering as in the morning—a pleasing aroma, an offering made to the LORD by fire.

⁴² “For the generations to come this burnt offering is to be made regularly at the entrance to the Tent of Meeting before the LORD. ...

Num 28:1-8 (NIV):

¹ The LORD said to Moses, ² “Give this command to the Israelites and say to them: ‘See that you present to me at the appointed time the food for my offerings made by fire, as an aroma pleasing to me.’ ³ Say to them: ‘This is the offering made by fire that you are to present to the LORD: two lambs a year old without defect, as a regular burnt offering each day. ⁴ Prepare one lamb in the morning and the other at twilight, ⁵ together with a grain offering of a tenth of an ephah of fine flour mixed with a quarter of a hin of oil from pressed olives. ⁶ This is the regular burnt offering instituted at Mount Sinai as a pleasing aroma, an offering made to the LORD by fire. ⁷ The accompanying drink offering is to be a quarter of a hin of fermented drink with each lamb. Pour out the drink offering to the LORD at the sanctuary. ⁸ Prepare the second lamb at twilight, along with the same kind of grain offering and drink offering that you prepare in the morning. This is an offering made by fire, an aroma pleasing to the LORD.

To summarize, **both in the morning and in the evening a lamb had to be offered. This is characterized as a burnt offering** (or as an *isseh* ‘offering by fire[?] / gift’). **Along with it go the appropriate meal- and drink offerings** – like with other burnt offerings too.

Everything together is also called a food offering (only once in Num 28:2, *qārbānî laḥmî*). In Ezekiel, the requirement for morning offerings is renewed (Ezek 46:13-15).

2. Which words are used for the morning- and the evening offerings?

There is no standard phrase for referring to this whole set of offerings. We find the following combinations (with even more variation in the Hebrew wordings themselves):

- “burnt offering of the morning and meal offering of the evening”, 2Ki 16:15
- “the lamb and the meal offering ... every morning for a ... burnt offering”, Ezek 46:15
- “burnt offering of the morning”, Lev 9:17; Num 28:23; 2Ki 16:15
- “meal offering of the morning”, Ex 29:41; Num 28:8; (similar 2Ki 3:20; Ezek 46:14)
- “meal offering of the evening”, 2Ki 16:15; Ezra 9:4/5; Ps 141:2; Dan 9:21; (similar 1Ki 18:29)
- “burnt offerings of/in the morning and the evening, 2Chr 2:3[Engl.4]; 13:11; 31:3; Ezra 3:3
- “burnt offering of the evening” is not used on its own.

3. Translation

In Ex 29:41 and Num 28:8, the lamb is mentioned first, so when the text goes on to speak about the “meal offering of the morning”, it means just that – the meal offering of the morning (NIV: “Prepare the second lamb . . . , along with the same kind of grain offering . . .”).

However, the other expressions are short ways for referring to more than is said. It is quite obvious that the expression “burnt offering of the morning and meal offering of the evening” in 2Ki 16:15 **must include both the burnt offerings and the meal offerings both in the mornings and in the evenings**. I take it as a double merism: The whole is expressed by two parts of it. I.e. The burnt offering of the morning includes the burnt offering of the evening, and the meal offering of the evening includes the meal offering of the morning.

Curiously, even GNB, NLT and GWN all stick to the literal rendering. I think it would be justified to follow CEV, which says “the morning and evening sacrifices as well as all gifts of grain and wine”, or better slightly adapted: **“the morning- and evening sacrifices as well as their gifts of grain (= meal offering)”**. (The fact that in addition to the meal offering also drink offerings are included should be learned from the context; not every detail can be made explicit.)

Likewise, where only either the morning- or the evening sacrifice is in view, I suggest thinking about translating both “burnt offering of the morning” and “meal offering of the evening” in the same way – **simply with “morning offering” and “evening offering”**. This would include all gifts – the animal and its accompanying meal- and drink offerings. Otherwise the reader will think that in the morning there was only a burnt offering and in the evening only a meal offering.

For example, in Num 28:23, where NIV keeps the term “regular morning burnt offering”, the German NLT renders this more generally as “the usual daily morning offerings” (*orig.* [die] üblichen täglichen Morgenopfer[n]).

In Ezra 9:4, where Hebrew has *minhat hâ ‘âreb*, NIV, NET, NLT and GNB all use the wider wording and say “evening sacrifice / evening offering”, instead of “evening meal offering”. That is appropriate. But they do not do it in 2Chr 2:3[Engl.4], where Hebrew has *‘ôlâ*. They keep “burnt offering”.

2Ki 3:20 is a bit special. The verse reads (NIV):

The next morning, about the time for offering the sacrifice [*minhâ*], there it was—
water flowing from the direction of Edom!

Again, NIV, NET, NLT and GNB all speak of “sacrifice” – although *minhâ* usually means the grain offering. The reason for this translation is probably that they, too, assume it refers to both the animal and the accompanying grain offering, as some commentators do (Neudorfer (Wuppertaler, 1998); Barnes (CBC, 2012); some others do not comment.) It could also be that the above-quoted versions follow the view that is presented in the *Handbook* – i.e. that *only* the animal is meant. The *Handbook* comments:

For **the sacrifice**, some versions speak of “the meal offering” (NJPSV, AB). While it is true that the Hebrew term used here very often refers to a cereal offering rather than to an animal sacrifice, this is not always the case in the Old Testament. The regular pattern at the time when the books of 1–2 Kings were written seems to have been to make a burnt offering early every morning at dawn and an evening cereal offering at the close of the day (compare 2 Kgs 16.15). ...

That would mean that the instructions from the Pentateuch were not followed, which is conceivable. But we need to take a step back. The fact that 2Ki 16:15 explicitly talks of “the morning burnt offering [*‘ôlâ*]” shows that this must be included in 3:20 as well. So what we *can* say is that in 3:20, *minhâ* is used for both the burnt offering and the meal offering. What we *cannot* say is that *minhâ* is used for the meal offering *instead* of the burnt offering. In 1Ki 18:29, the same author uses *minhâ* in what NIV translates “until the time for the evening sacrifice” (NIV). It is unlikely that he would there refer to the meal offering only, or to the burnt- and the meal offering, but use the same term to refer to only the burnt offering here in 2Ki 3:20. – This means that the legal prescriptions probably *were* followed.

Speaking simply of “morning offering” and “evening offering” avoids having to decide between these two views, and is probably good enough.

Ezek 46:15 supports this. The verse reads (NIV):

NIV: So the lamb and the grain offering and the oil shall be provided morning by morning for a regular burnt offering.

Here, “burnt offering [*’ōlā*]” includes the animal and the grain offering.

4. The regular / continual offering

“Regular (*tāmīd*) offering” is another expression for the morning- and the evening offerings.

The following wordings are found, with complete references:

- **“regular burnt offering”**, Ex 29:42; Num 28:3/6/10/15/23/24/31; 29:6/11/16/19/22/25/28/31/34/38; 1Chr 16:40; Ezra 3:5; Neh 10:34 [Engl.33]; Ezek 46:15.
- **“regular grain offering”**, Neh 10:34 [Engl.33] (Num 4:16 might concern the high priest's offering).
- **“the regular one”** (“offering” is missing by ellipsis), Dan 8:11/12/13; 11:31; 12:11.

Some translate “daily (burnt offering)” (e.g. NLT in Num 28:3), but whether that is helpful may be questioned, because it happened twice daily.