

The Grain Offering

*A few points that matter for the word choice.
PS. Draft only. 2019.*

I. What did the grain offering consist of?

Levine speaks of an “offering of grain”, Milgrom of “the cereal offering”. English “meal offering” is inappropriate (see Levine on Lev 2:1), as is “vegetable offering”.

Leaving aside the additional ingredients oil, frankincense, and salt, **in principle, this was an offering of grain: usually semolina (of wheat), prepared in different ways**, or – in the case of first fruits – fresh ears of barley.

Most frequently, the grain offering is mentioned as an offering that was brought in addition to the burnt offering (The question whether it also was offered alongside peace offerings is not discussed here.) In that case, the form was But it could also be offered by itself. In that case, the worshipper had several options ...??

- Lev 2 specifies in which form grain offerings were acceptable, and how they could be prepared.
- Lev 6 ...
- 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 the offerings had to be brought, including grain- and drink offerings.

Can include grain, flour, cake, wafer, with oil and frankincense and salt. *CHECK AGAIN.*

Table: Ingredients and ways of preparing a grain offering				
Lev 2		Material	Preparation	Remarks
<i>General rule:</i>				
v. 1	סֹלֶת	wheat semolina		Gane: “Although this was not “fine flour” in terms of texture, it was “fine” in the sense that it was choice food ... rather than ordinary flour ...” Kiuchi: “choice flour”.
v. 2	שֶׁמֶן	+ oil		
v. 2	לֶבְנָה	+ frankincense		
v. 13	מֶלַח	+ salt		
<i>Variations:</i>				
v. 4	סֹלֶת חֲלוֹת מִצֵּת וְדִקְיָקִי מִצֵּוֹת	unleavened cakes of fine flour or: unleavened wafers	in an oven	<i>Handbook</i> : “...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 (on the first kind): thick, but flat, and round.

v. 5-6	סֶלֶת	fine flour, unleavened, mixed with oil	on the griddle, then broken into bits	<i>Realia Handbook</i> (§ 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> .) – PT Interlin.: “baking tray”.
v. 7	סֶלֶת	fine flour with oil	in a pan	The <i>Realia Handbook</i> deals with the word for ‘pan’ together with the above. However, Hartley speaks of a “deep pan with a lid”, and Milgrom speaks of deep frying, 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”), cf. Lev 23</i>				
v. 14	אֶבֶב קִלְוִי נֶרֶשׁ פְּרִמָּל	(1) fresh heads of grain [NET: “soft kernels”], (2) grits of new growth [NJPS: grits of the fresh grain]	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”). – Milgrom: “groats (< “to crush”) of the fresh ear”. – I.e., not ground to flour[?].
<i>Clarification:</i>				
v. 12		alright as first fruit offering, <u>but not</u> <u>allowed in the</u> <u>grain offering</u> <u>proper:</u> leaven & honey		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 fruit, and 2Chr 31:5 for honey as “first/choice fruit”. <i>Handbook</i> : “ Them : 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.

On v. 14: *Handbook*: “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.”

That it is unleavened is stated in v. 5 only, but applies to all cases??.

Levine and Milgrom agree with Rabbinic exegesis that this was wheat.

How is סֶלֶת *sōlet* different from קֶמַח *qemah*?

UNDONE.

Hartley:

The grain offering is prepared from wheat that is ground and sifted; ... Levine (9) holds that סֶלֶת is semolina, i.e., flour taken from the inner kernels. סֶלֶת, a luxury

item in ancient society (cf. Ezek. 16:13), is thus distinguished from קֶמַח, “meal,” a coarse mixture of whole grain and bran.

This might be based on TWOT, but there the entry on *sōlet* puts the emphasis on “finely ground flour”, explained as being derived from “crushed” (in contrast to *qemaḥ* as the common people's flour).

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.

NJPS: “semolina”.

Milgrom explains:

... *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*).

... and quotes from the rabbinic tradition:

A sieve lets through the flour but retains the *sōlet*.

Handbook (on Lev 2:1):

Fine flour: in Hebrew there are two words that refer to ground grain. The first, which is used here, 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). 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 expressing some difference between the two, the English versions all have just “flour” for the first, while the second is rendered as “flour / fine flour / finest flour / fine wheat flour / choice flour”.

I suppose in translation, if it gets too complicated to convey the physical / preparation side of things, one can operate with a functional term “fine flour” vs. “(normal) flour” – even though that distorts the matter. But that is the second step. I’d first like to know what it really was.

Gane says that “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)

Kiuchi seems to agree when he translates it “choice flour.”

HALOT (*solet*):

SamP. *sālāt*: MHeb., JArm. סֹלֶת/סֹלֶת; ? < Akk. *siltu* a porridge (AHw. 1044a); > Arb. *sult* barley without the husks, roasted grain, > Eg. *trt* fine flour, ? Eth. (Leslau 37): סֹלֶת: **wheat porridge, groats, finely milled flour** (Dalman *Arbeit* 3:292f; BRL²:3) Gn 186 (? gloss on קֶמַח, Dalman *Arbeit* 3:291) Ex 292.40 Lv 21.4.7 511 613 1410.21 2317 245 Nu 615 713-79 (12 times) 88 154.6.9 285-28 (7 times) 2914 1K 52 2K 71.16.18 Ezk 1613.19 4614 1C 929 2329.

LATEST LITERATURE TO BE ADDED

II. Complementary *versus* Independent Grain 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 other sacrifices**, offered in conjunction with the burnt offering (and also the peace offering – rarely recognized, but I think yes [cf. Milgrom 196 / Also see what Lev 7:12f. contributes to this understanding: that is about thanksgiving offering, thus peace offering?! ...]). > Num 15.

In principle, the commentators agree on this. But which is in view where?

Leviticus 2 probably just speaks of (1)!

This seems to be how Milgrom takes it. On 7:10, he says: “The offering cannot refer to adjunct cereal offerings because the latter were entirely consumed on the altar.” Wenham (67-68) seems not so clear, talking of both (1) and (2) with regard to ch. 2. Hartley (29-30) treats (1) as exceptional cases only. (Also, Wenham (67) and Milgrom (195ff.) disagree on whether or not (1) was sth. like “the burnt offering of the poor”.)

Why do I think Milgrom is right? Because he observes (on Num 15:4):

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 (2) there is no point of baking it or preparing it in any other way, because it gets burned anyway.
- In general, ch. 6-7 relate to what has been said before in ch. 1-5. I assume the same for what Lev 6/7 say about the grain offering in ch. 2 (6:7-16 [Engl. 14-23] and 7:9-10). 7:9-10 talks of baked stuff, therefore it can only refer to (1). 6:9/11 [Engl. 16/18] and 7:9-10 also says the grain offering belongs to the priest(s) [details debated]; that is totally in line with 2:10 (and 3): “The remainder of the grain offering belongs to Aaron and his sons.”, but would not apply to (2).

REVIEW MILGROM'S COMMENTS ON OTHER PLACES.

Translation: Should we come up with two expressions, “accompanying (adjunct / complementary) grain offering” *versus* “independent / stand-alone / proper grain offering”?

One can argue that from the prescriptions in ch. 2, it is clear that it is not about (2). But even commentators seem to overlook this!

One might ask, is a distinction in terminology necessary? I think it could well avoid confusion in later texts where the grain offering is mentioned, without the details being made explicit.

UNFINISHED.