

# **The Naked Bible Podcast 2.0**

**Number 65**

**“Leviticus 2-3”**

**Dr. Michael S. Heiser**

**With**

**Residential Layman  
Trey Stricklin**

**September 6, 2015**

## **Leviticus 2-3**

**Each of these two chapters covers a different offering: the grain offering (Lev 2) and the “peace offering” (Lev 3). This episode focuses on the theological messaging of prohibitions (leaven, honey) and requirements (salt) in the rituals.**

**TS:** Welcome to the Naked Bible Podcast, Episode 65, Leviticus 2-3. I'm your layman, Trey Stricklin, and he's the scholar, Dr. Michael Heiser. Hey Mike, how are you doing this week?

**MSH:** Very good, very good, ready to dig back into Leviticus. Who is this lunatic going through Leviticus?

**TS:** Well, somebody's got to so might as well.

**MSH:** Yeah, somebody has to do that job. Well, let's jump in here. Last time we only covered one chapter, Leviticus 1, which was the burnt offering, otherwise known as the whole burnt offering, and we mentioned that the point of that offering was sort of to initiate contact with God. It was sort of when the offerer brought the bull for the whole burnt offering or if they were poorer they brought something else, it was a signal to God that the worshiper wanted some of God's time. So you bring a gift to God's house, so to speak, to get a little bit of his time. Now in Leviticus 2 and 3, each of these chapters is going to cover a different offering. Again, we commented last time about the terminology offering and sacrifice, which we tend to overlap and interchange.

Technically in biblical speak, the word sacrifice is only used when there is a participatory meal when the animal's slaughtered that becomes part of the meal. We're actually going to see that come up for the first time in Leviticus 3. But both of these chapters are going to be in our parlance about the two different offerings, the grain offering is Leviticus 2 and then in Leviticus 3, what is typically in our translations the peace offering and I'm going to suggest a different way of rendering that. Again, it's not unique with me but I think helps to bring out what the point is. So beginning here in Leviticus 2, I want to read a summary of the grain offering from Baruck Levine's commentary. Levine is another one of these scholars whose academic career really has been focused on ritual. Last week I mentioned Dick Averbeck who is a friend of mine. I don't know Baruck Levine but Levine is very noted in biblical studies for this kind of material. And he summarizes the grain offering this way, which I think is helpful.

“Chapter 2 outlines the different types of *minchah*, which is the Hebrew word for grain offering, listing them according to their different methods of preparation. The ingredients were usually the same for the various offerings. The *minchah* was made of semolina, the choice part of wheat that was taken from the inner kernels. Olive oil was mixed in the dough or smeared on it and frankincense was applied to it enhancing the taste. **[MSH: So frankincense being a spice there.]** The *minchah*, Levine continues, could be prepared on a griddle, in a pan, or an oven. A fistful of the dough with the oil and frankincense added was burned on the altar. The rest was prepared in one of the accepted ways to be eaten by the priest and the sacred precincts of the sanctuary. Since the fistful of dough was burned on the altar, grain offerings could not be made with leavened dough as is discussed in the chapter. They had to be salted.”

**MSH:** Now, some of these elements in this we're going to spend a little bit of time on. The fistful of dough is what's essentially becomes the offering that's burnt on the altar given back to God. I want to sort of focus on a little bit of the procedure but the salt idea is important and I think it's

going to be important in surprising ways. So, again, just to get ourselves oriented here, Leviticus 2 is about the grain offering, which is just what it sounds like, grain. It has some things done to it and specifically, it had to be salted and could not be offered, the fistful that was put on the altar, could not be offered with leaven or, we're going to see as we get into the passage something called *debash* was also forbidden. Let's just jump in and read here, starting in verse 1.

“When anyone brings a grain offering as an offering to the LORD, his offering shall be of fine flour. He shall pour oil on it and put frankincense on it <sup>2</sup> and bring it to Aaron's sons the priests. And he shall take from it a handful of the fine flour and oil, with all of its frankincense, and the priest shall burn this as its memorial portion on the altar, a food offering with a pleasing aroma to the LORD. <sup>3</sup> But the rest of the grain offering shall be for Aaron and his sons; it is a most holy part of the LORD's food offerings.

**MSH:** By the way, the most holy designation for certain offerings, it's called most holy if the priests get to participate in consuming it. It doesn't have anything to do with any really any special sanctity in terms of God or what it accomplishes for the bringer. It's really about the participation of the priesthood. They get to partake of it. So continuing on in verse 4,

“When you bring a grain offering baked in the oven as an offering, it shall be unleavened loaves of fine flour mixed with oil or unleavened wafers smeared with oil. <sup>5</sup> And if your offering is a grain offering baked on a griddle, it shall be of fine flour unleavened, mixed with oil. <sup>6</sup> You shall break it in pieces and pour oil on it; it is a grain offering. <sup>7</sup> And if your offering is a grain offering cooked in a pan, it shall be made of fine flour with oil. <sup>8</sup> And you shall bring the grain offering that is made of these things to the LORD, and when it is presented to the priest, he shall bring it to the altar. <sup>9</sup> And the priest shall take from the grain offering its memorial portion and burn this on the altar, a food offering with a pleasing aroma to the LORD. <sup>10</sup> But the rest of the grain offering shall be for Aaron and his sons; it is a most holy part of the LORD's food offerings. <sup>11</sup> “No grain offering that you bring to the LORD shall be made with leaven, for you shall burn no leaven nor any *debash* as a food offering to the LORD.

**MSH:** Now *debash* typically in your English translations is translated as honey, so no leaven and no honey. Let's talk about what all this means. Levine and other scholars note that the proper ingredient is something called *soleth*, so fine flour is a little bit misleading but we're not to quibble too much about it, a specific part of the kernel of the wheat and whatnot. So that part of your translation, don't get too hung up on it in terms of the flour equivalence that we might use today. It was actually something pretty precise for this offering and it's clearly a food offering. That's pretty obvious. So we talked last time about why some of the sacrifices are sort of spoken of as food for God and God doesn't need food but yet we still have this language. So you can go back and listen to that.

Procedurally, it's easy to understand. You bring it, bring the proper material from the kernels smeared with oil and make sure you don't add leaven and make sure you don't have honey, *debash*, in it, and we're good to go. What does it all mean? Leaven, let's talk about that a

little bit and the *debash*, the two things you're not supposed to put into it. What's the rationale? Well, the Hebrew word for leaven is *chamets*. It comes from Acadian term that means fermented, no surprise there. Sour, it might also be part of the meaning there but any of you who've baked anything knows what leaven does, what yeast does. It makes the bread rise so and so forth. And there's some sort of fermentation process going on here. And you say why is that a big deal? Well, this is actually an overlap with a number of other cultures. Their leaven could be a good or a bad thing.

It was tended to be viewed negatively because it was, right or wrong, this is the way an ancient person looked at it. Leaven had something to do with, I don't know what the best word is to use here is, but it's sort of an altering of a natural order process or possibly a deteriorative process. Again, we're not talking science here. It was something you added to affect a change in something that otherwise normally you wouldn't get. So for some reason, that could be something you wouldn't want to do to a sacrifice or in other cultures you could do. Leaven isn't always a negative thing in biblical terminology but here it's something you don't include in the offering. Certainly that you're going to take that fistful and hand it back to the Lord and put it on the altar and so forth.

You want to avoid it there. The other issue is *debash*. *Debash* I think is actually more interesting because that is specifically mentioned in connection with ancient cults and so the logic certainly for *debash* and maybe to leaven is not only because of some sort of conception about it changing sort of a natural order of things but probably even more the point is that it was associated, and certainly this is true with *debash*, which is typically translated honey, with things, items that were used in the sacrifices of Israel's pagan neighbors, and so they are both specifically forbidden from the grain offering and in other circumstances other offerings as well. And *debash*, I think is the more interesting of the two because yeah, it could be associated with bees and with honey.

It's something that is excreted. Just try to think of it the way they did. We're going to get other Old Testament laws about excretions, whether it's excrement or the loss of bodily fluids, and they're going to render the person or a thing ritually impure. So again, the excretion could be viewed as an impurity and that's why you forbid the *debash* here, because of this conceptual logic to what it is. The verb here could also refer to the nectar of fruit and there is some passages where that's probably what *debash* means. What would the logic there be? The fruit is losing some of its natural properties.

Again, it's hard for us to conceive of why something would be good or bad to the ancient mind. It's often very abstract but I think the safe ground here is that these were materials that were used in pagan sacrifices. We actually have texts from ancient Syria, Ugaritic text, Phoenician texts, that specifically use *debash*, honey, something excreted like this, in their sacrifices and so the logic might be something as simple as this notion of souring something or using something excreted should not be part of the Lord's system, the Lord's cult, cult is a term that scholars use for sacrificial system, just because it's used by people who worship other gods so we don't want to do that.

Other religions used animals, too. Why are we using them? I think there has to be more than the fact they were used by other systems even though in the literature of Ugarit and Syria, Phoenicia, Mesopotamia, *debash*, the honey substance does occur with some regularity and so that in and of itself might mean there was too much of an association there. But I think also the excretory aspect of it or the souring aspect of it, losing some of its natural properties from the

way God made it, that kind of thinking probably has something to do with why it's excluded here. I don't want to get too far ahead of myself. When we get to those passages about ritual impurity, like specifically when a woman is enduring her menstrual cycle or a man has a nocturnal emission or after the act of sex, you're rendered ritually impure, the logic to this is that blood and semen and in the prescientific worldview of the biblical writer, even female vaginal fluids, those have something to do. They're an integral part of life. If something loses too much blood, it dies.

Without the active sexual procreation in the prescientific mind, the mixing of the bodily fluids there, that has to happen to create life. And so when it you lose those things, it's sort of the absence of life force which is translated into an association with death or dying. And the logic here is that those things render a person ritually impure because to occupy sacred space, you need to be reminded that Yahweh of Israel is the source of life. He is not the source of death and decay, souring and excretion, excrement, that kind of thing. He is the source of life. And as a reminder, had nothing to do with morality because every woman is going to have a menstrual cycle. You're going to have sex. There's nothing wrong with it but if you lose these bodily fluids, it's losing the life force.

You have to be whole when you approach sacred space. You have to have all of your life force with you, that kind of thinking. And so as a reminder of these ideas to associate the God of Israel with life and not death, prosperity and not decay, some of these abstract thoughts, you were rendered ritually impure and you had to go through a procedure and then you were ok. It has nothing to do with issues of morality. We'll get into, and I alluded to this in our very first episode, introducing Leviticus, the difference between ritual purity and impurity, and moral impurity or purity. So some of this thinking translates back here, as we're in Leviticus 2, about what not to use on the altar and part of that is the logic. It's very foreign to us to think about food items this way but hey, we don't have a sacrificial system. We don't have this very clear and sharp distinction between common space and sacred space. We don't have this kind of thinking in our heads, but they did.

It all feeds into sort of this logic behind what you do or don't do within the Israelite cult, within the Israelite sacrificial system. And so here we have an indication, Leviticus 2, something as simple as a grain offering, the way you handle it and conduct the procedure can be a gesture of disloyalty to the God of Israel. You bring your grain offering and it has leaven in it or *debash*, well, that's what the other gods do, and you shouldn't associate the Lord's offering or the Lord himself with this kind of material. It becomes almost a point of blasphemy. A simple act like this becomes a theological statement as to your view of the nature of your God. We don't think in these terms but the ancient person is going to think in these terms and these are important lessons. They're just living object lessons built into the sacrificial system. In verse 13, here's another one.

<sup>13</sup> You shall season all your grain offerings with salt. You shall not let the salt of the covenant with your God be missing from your grain offering; with all your offerings you shall offer salt.

**MSH:** That's verse 13. So what in the world is up with that? So according to this verse and other verses, all offerings and sacrifices were to have salt. You say why. Well, it is sort of easier to understand if the sacrifice or the offering included the sacrifice of an animal because Israelites

were forbidden from consuming the blood, again, the life of the flesh is in the blood, that sort of thing. We'll get to that passage and I may allude to it a little bit later as we proceed here. I may have to. But again, blood was a thing that had life in it. It was a life force. If you lost too much of it, if you didn't have it, you're dead, real simple. And you're not allowed to consume it because that source of life is given by God.

It belongs to God and so it must go back to him. You're going to have some of the blood contained in the meat when it gets burned and all that sort of thing. You're going to splash it around in different places to sanctify sacred space. It goes back to God. You do not consume it because it does not belong to you. It was given to you. You are not going to ingest blood of another living thing. Again, a lot of ancient cultures thought this way because blood is a life force that you're somehow going to gain more power, gain some power through this, through ingesting this. The Levitical system just cuts that right off at the knees. We're not doing this and so you would add salt to meat because salt will absorb more the blood. So you can drain it but salt actually absorbs blood after draining from slaughter. So it is actually a means to just get as much blood out of the thing as you could.

That's understandable when you have a blood sacrifice. What about grain offerings? We don't have any blood there so what's up with the salt there? Well, I think the key here is that, is this phrase the salt of the covenant with your God. Let me just read the verse again.

<sup>13</sup> You shall season all your grain offerings with salt. You shall not let the salt of the covenant with your God be missing from your grain offering; with all your offerings you shall offer salt.

**MSH:** Now, as you can imagine, scholars have spent a lot of time trying to figure this out and there's a huge amount literature on not just general Levitical system but on this specific point. In the Ancient Near East, covenants of a wide variety, not just the biblical covenants here because there's a covenant referred to here, the salt of the covenant with God, not just biblical covenants and not just a covenant in this one verse but just broadly speaking in the Ancient Near East, salt was used in covenant ceremonies to make a covenant obligation, to make a covenant agreement binding.

The logic seems to be, I'll just give you an example. Scholars have noted in Ancient Near Eastern treaty curses that if the treaty were violated by one party or the other, that person's land would be sowed or plowed under with salt so as to prevent anything from growing on it again. And so by using salt in a covenant agreement, it was a reminder that if I violate this covenant, something bad is going to happen. The other side is going to come over here and kick us in the butt, conquer us, plow fields under with salt and we'll never be able to live here again. So it was a symbolic or visual reminder. You better not violate this agreement. Now this expression biblically occurs only here and in two other places, one of them is Numbers 18:19, which says,

<sup>19</sup> All the holy contributions that the people of Israel present to the LORD I give to you, and to your sons and daughters with you, as a perpetual due. It is a covenant of salt forever before the LORD for you and for your offspring with you."

**MSH:** And then 2 Chronicles 13:5 says,

<sup>5</sup> Ought you not to know that the LORD God of Israel gave the kingship over Israel forever to David and his sons by a covenant of salt?

**MSH:** If you go back and look at 2 Samuel 7, the Davidic covenant, you're not going to read about a covenant of salt. You're not going to read about it in Psalm 89 which also talks about the Davidic covenant. So what does the expression mean? The expression is drawn from the fact that, at least in some Ancient Near Eastern context, of the threat of having your land overrun and never being able to live there again. So you would use salt in a covenant ceremony as a reminder of you better go bind this agreement are making and biblically speaking, the phrase occurs in covenant relationships that are designed to last forever. It's binding. So the covenant of salt idea is something that the Bible references, and specifically here, the *minchah*, the grain offering, is a reminder because it includes salt even though there's no blood here. And every sacrifice needs to include salt.

Why, because you Israelites have entered into a binding covenant relationship with your God that is intended to last forever. So salt included in the sacrifices was a perpetual reminder of the enduring, at least intentionally, the enduring relationship between the Yahweh, the God of Israel, and his people Israel. They're specifically told do not forget to add salt to all your sacrifices. With all your offerings, you shall offer salt. So it's not just to make it taste better because in many cases, nobody's eating it, or the offerer is not eating it, and the idea is permanence. This is how you signify a permanent binding covenant relationship. You did it with the covenant ceremony. You're doing it here with your offerings, all the sort of stuff. These are just sort of object lessons to teach very specific points. So the salt element is kind of important here. And just by virtue of what the offering is called, if we go back up here to verse 2, let me read verse 2 again.

<sup>2</sup> and bring it to Aaron's sons the priests. And he shall take from it a handful of the fine flour and oil, with all of its frankincense, and the priest shall burn this as its memorial portion on the altar,

**MSH:** So the fistful that is taken and given to the Lord on the altar that needs to have salt in it is a memorial portion. The Hebrew term is *azkarak*, which comes from, it's a noun form of the same three consonants, *zakar* form the verb to remember. So memorial portion is the noun, remember is the verb. Well, look at the imagery. I'm bringing this grain offering and frankly every offering that we were bringing is supposed to have salt in it. And this isn't the only offering that's going to be called a memorial portion. It's to remember. God's going to remember. It's for us to remember, too. It's a memorial event, a memorial act to remember the binding covenant relationship that we entered into voluntarily at Sinai with the God of Israel, and all the baggage that comes with it the blessings and the cursings.

And so this is sort of built into the system to remind Israel of what the relationship supposed to be that they headed into. In Leviticus 3, we get another offering, the "peace offering". This is in Hebrew *zevach shlamim*, and it's the first place *zevach* occurs in Leviticus, which is the noun for sacrifice. It's probably better translated the sacrifice of well-being. Now *zevach shlamim*, you might notice if you had a little Hebrew *shlamim* sounds a little bit like *shalom* and it's true, same consonants, S-L-M. *Shlamim* is related to the word *shalom*, which is



why English translations usually have peace offering because *shalom* is generically taken to mean peace, peace be unto to you. When you say *shalom* to someone, that's what you mean. Hope everything is well with you. So some scholars, and I'd like it a little bit better, refer to this as the sacrifice of well-being.

Now often this sacrifice, just like we saw with the burnt offering last time in the last episode, is combined with other sacrifices, especially with the *olah*, the burnt offering, to celebrate important events in your life, in the history of the Israelite people. In most cases, it was a personal sacrifice. Just like with the burnt offering, think about the three offerings we've hit to this point. The burnt offering is this initial knock on the door. I want to spend time with God. I want to approach God and I hope God will accept me. Then we have the grain offering, the *minchah*, which says I am reminded of the relationship, the binding relationship, that we have entered into with God as a people and I have entered into because I'm a member of this community.

And now we have the *zevach shlamim*. I'm doing this. I want to have this offering and often it's just a personal sacrifice. There's no sin that needs to be forgiven in view here. It's, I want to give this back to God, this sacrifice because it is well with me and I'm thankful. That is the fundamental logic of the peace offering. It's not that I have a sin I need to take care of. I need to make peace with God. God, do you like this goat enough? No, that isn't it. It's that you have peace with God. You have this relationship with God. And you want to thank God for the well-being that that relationship has brought you. It's significant. Leviticus 3, let's just read a little bit of it before I get to the comment I make on it. It starts off,

“If his offering is a sacrifice of peace offering, if he offers an animal from the herd, male or female, he shall offer it without blemish before the LORD. <sup>2</sup> And he shall lay his hand on the head of his offering and kill it at the entrance of the tent of meeting, and Aaron's sons the priests shall throw the blood against the sides of the altar. <sup>3</sup> And from the sacrifice of the peace offering, as a food offering to the LORD, he shall offer the fat covering the entrails and all the fat that is on the entrails, <sup>4</sup> and the two kidneys with the fat that is on them at the loins, and the long lobe of the liver that he shall remove with the kidneys. <sup>5</sup> Then Aaron's sons shall burn it on the altar on top of the burnt offering, which is on the wood on the fire; it is a food offering with a pleasing aroma to the LORD. <sup>6</sup> “If his offering for a sacrifice of peace offering to the LORD is an animal from the flock, male or female,

**MSH:** Again, go through the same procedure. The Lord gets the fatty portions. Across the board in the sacrificial system not only here but elsewhere just in terms of consumption, that was considered the best part. So God gets the best part. The rest of the chapter goes through, well, if it's a goat, if it's this or that, all that sort of thing. What you're doing is you're bringing this offering, you're killing this animal not because there's something wrong with you that you hope God will take away. You're bringing it, especially if you already initiated your time with God with the whole burnt offering. Now you're doing a peace offering like the chapter 3 just says, with the two right on top of each other.

You're doing it because the Lord wants some of your time. I hope you'll accept my burnt offering. Now I'm going to bring a peace offering because it's well with me, I appreciate, I'm thankful for the relationship that we have. I'm thankful that you chose Israel. I'm thankful you're our God. It's not a negative sort of thing. It's a scene of a peaceful harmonious relationship that already exists between the worshiper and God. And you start things off with the burnt offering. God accepts you and then you bring the peace offering. If you throw in a grain offering, chapter 2, yes I'm acknowledging, and I'm reminded of the covenant relationship that we're in. It was initiated by You. You're the God of gods, that sort of thing. You put these three offerings together, it's sort of a personal worship time. It's a personal affirmation time of your relationship to God and your thankfulness for that relationship. And it is significant that in all of what we read here, Leviticus 3 never mentions blood atonement. It's nowhere in the passage.

It never mentions blood atonement in the regulations for the peace offering to be well with your soul. It's absent because that isn't what it's about. Now in our next episode, chapters 4 and 5 where we get the "sin offering", which I'm going to object to the terminology there, and the "guilt offering", I'm not really going to like that either. When you get to those two offerings, that's a little bit different. Then there's something that needs to be taken care of here, at least in terms of your fitness for sacred space. That's a little different than the first three. So those two sacrificial offerings are a different story. But here at this point in Leviticus 3 here, we have the animal slayed. We have this communal meal where the worshiper gets to participate in a sacred meal. You don't have any of that in view. It's not about making you better. It's not about taking away something wrong with you. It's about wanting to spend time with God. So I'm going to read a little bit from what Levine says to summarize a little bit of chapter 2 but also with chapter 3 here. He says,

"It's best in order to understand chapter 3, the offering of well-being, to understand that we need to understand against the backdrop of the first two, the burnt offering and the grain offering. The *zevach*, the sacrifice of well-being was presented differently from the burnt offering and the grain offering although they overlap in some features. Some of the same animals used for burnt offerings could also be used for the *zevach shlamim* and the same altar is used for all three types. Also, the blood of the sacrificial animal offered as a *zevach*, a sacrifice was applied to the altar of burnt offerings in different ways but in the same spirit. There were, however, significant differences that inform us of the special character of this particular sacrifice whereas the *olah*, the burnt offering of chapter 1, was completely consumed by the altar fire and in this way given over to God entirely. The *zevach shlamim*, the sacrifice of well-being, was a sacred meal in which sections of the sacrifice were shared by the priests and the donors of the offering. Only certain fatty portions of the animal were burnt on the altar as God's share. If we look back at the *minchah*, the grain offering, that could be eaten only by the priests. So the eating of that particular sacrifice was not so restricted or at least the one in Leviticus 3 doesn't get that restriction. The donor can participate.

**MSH:** What's the point? What's the picture? I mean you get non-priests partaking of this particular sacrifice here in Leviticus 3 where that wasn't the case with the other two. Chapter 1, everything went to God, whole burnt offering. Chapter 2, the priest could have some that. Then

you put a fistful and gave some of that to God. Here in Chapter 3, the sacrifice of well-being, which is more personal, the worshiper gets to participate in the meal as well. So what we have here to sort of summarize is that what makes this particular sacrifice of well-being, the “peace offering”, distinctive is that it's a communal celebration of worshipers, the offerers, occasioned by and sort of constructed around the meat of the offering. It's a fellowship meal. It's a communion meal that indicated the fact that there was peace between God and the person bringing the offering and of course the priests.

Everybody was right with God. The person, the family, the community, was in a state of well-being. It's not about erasing any deficiency. That sort of thinking, at least that there's something wrong that needs to be addressed, is going to happen in Leviticus 4-5. But for the first three here, bringing in our last episode here with chapter 1, this is what we have. They tend to be personal. They're not about forgiveness of sin. They're about can I come into your presence, the burnt offering. I want to spend some time with God so I'm going to go to his house. I hope he'll accept me. God does and then we have the *minchah* with salt. I'm reminded of the covenant relationship that we have together and the peace offering. It's a good thing. All that is a good thing. It is well between us. I have peace with God and I just wanted to express my gratitude over that situation.

I'm not making peace with God. I have it and I have it because of the covenant God initiated that we have entered into. And the implication, by implication is I'm not going out and worshiping Baal. I'm not going out and committing heinous crimes and sins and whatnot. But the point of the offering itself, the sacrifice itself is to celebrate something that already exists. Now in terms of sort of application if you want to call it that, we'll wrap up with this. As far as these two sacrifices, think about it. The grain offering, I think the focal point there is the salt. 'You shall season all your grain offerings with salt. You shall not let the salt of the covenant with your God be missing.'

In fact, all of your offerings you shall offer with salt. This was an offering of remembrance, remembering the permanency, the binding relationship between God and his people. Now if you had that in your head, think about the verses like this. Remember Matthew 5:13, part of the Sermon on the Mount? 'You are the salt of the earth, but if salt has lost its taste, how shall its saltiness be restored? It is no longer good for anything except to be thrown out and trampled under people's feet.' I would suggest to you that the notion of salt being no good anymore has some relationship to the notion of a violation of the covenant and when Jesus is preaching to the Judeans, to the Jews there in Judea, in their mind they're still in exile. Israel as a nation is still exile. I hope you realize that. In my experience, a lot of evangelicals just don't get this point.

The return from exile, we talked about this in our series in the book of Acts, the return from exile according to the Old Testament always included all the tribes. All the tribes didn't come back. That just never happened. Israel, Israelites, Judeans, the people who are living in Judea, the ones who did get to come back, they are the descendants of the ones that did get to come back, they know that the rest of their countrymen are still scattered. They are still scattered everywhere throughout the known world. That's why what happens in Acts, especially at Pentecost, and I'm not going to go back in the book of Acts, but all of the concatenation of ideas there about reclaiming the nations and God sort of having cell groups in all these nations to kick-start the process of spreading the word about the Messiah in his providence and then

they get gathered because God is now, it's not a question of all of you coming back to land here. I'm going to get you.

I'm going out to get you to gather my people together. And we talked with the fullness of the Gentiles and all that kind of stuff. Well, you go back here to the Sermon on the Mount, there is sense because they understand that salt is used in offerings about the binding agreement, boy, there's something wrong here. We're still in exile. How's that going to get fixed? I thought the covenant was permanent. Look at us. We're still in exile. Is this what Jesus is talking about, the salt has lost its savor? In other words, God, is he still angry with us or what? It could also refer more personally. You can get somebody thinking about their own relationship with God. How deep is my commitment? Yeah, we're in exile. What about me? This is just something culturally that would've had a different kind of baggage with the original hearers than it does with us. Mark 9:50, 'Salt is good but if the salt has lost its saltiness, how will you make it salty again? Now that could sound traumatic if you associate it with the breaking of the covenant with exile.

That is not something you want to hear, can you make it salty again. Then Jesus says have salt in yourselves and be at peace with one another. Shorthand version, Mike's paraphrase, worry about the relationships that you can, that you have some control over, that you yourself and your life here have some control over. Have salt in yourselves. Be at peace with one another. Let your yes be yes and your no be no. Be faithful to each other. There are all sorts of ways you can take that and go with it in that cultural context and with sort of the worldview baggage that goes with the use of salt in the Old Testament. It was just inextricably tied. Do a word study on salt in the Old Testament and you're going to find it's inextricably linked to the sacrificial system and the covenant.

It just is. This is what you're doing. This is a reminder of this relationship. Second point for chapter 3, what about the *zevach shlamim*? Point of application if you want to call it that, the offering well-being, think of it this way, the fellowship, which was the point of that sacrifice and it was personal, the fellowship of the Lord's table is no longer an animal sacrifice. The sacred meal is one that commemorates the sacrifice of the Messiah, not an animal that you brought. The life giver gives his blood and then takes up his life again but not taking up the blood. Remember Christ's resurrection body didn't have blood, remember that? Because after the cross, there remains no more sacrifice for sin. Nothing else can follow. We're not talking about blood anymore. There is no more sacrifice that's going to happen or that has any effectual relationship to this problem. Blood is out of the picture, which against the backdrop of Levitical imagery means something. And so I'll end with Ephesians 5:1-2,

Therefore be imitators of God, as beloved children. <sup>2</sup> And walk in love, as Christ loved us and gave himself up for us, a fragrant offering and sacrifice to God.

**MSH:** Paul pulls that Levitical language out and says that was Jesus, pretty point-blank. Christ loved us and gave himself up for us as a fragrant offering and sacrifice to God and it was permanent. No more blood. Blood's already been given. It's not even on the table anymore. Nothing else can follow. So I think both in terms of how we approach Leviticus 2 and 3, we learned some things if we think about it. The way they thought about it and also what I'm trying to do here, we're only three chapters in, is I'm also trying to draw points of comparison and contrast really with how much better, how much more permanent, how much more workable, I

hate use the word easier but I guess I will here, our relationship with God is now because this stuff was done for us and it's no longer dependent on our procedures or observing procedures given to us. It's a totally different story.

**TS:** Is a reason that the kidneys and liver are singled out in Leviticus 3?

**MSH:** I'm not sure if there's a precise reason. The fat always gets emphasis for God and the way I would answer that is that a lot of the fat specifically mentioned, in terms of the Hebrew terminology, is the fat that clings to those parts. So I tend to think that's why they're specifically mentioned, because of the other term, like in verse 4, the two kidneys with the fat that is on them at the loins. These are perceived as the best parts of the animal for consumption. And so it's all sort of lumped together. That's what the fat is on.

**TS:** Is the actual Hebrew word for kidney and liver used there?

**MSH:** Yeah, now a word like kidney, it's a term that is known as far as specifically what body part that refers to. Some of the other ones are more, what's the word I'm looking for, more scattershot for innards. But in this case, we've got something a little more specific.

**TS:** So they were well-versed in the human anatomy?

**MSH:** They're well-versed in the bovine anatomy. Obviously they're going to be able to tell visual similarities, body parts and things like that.

**TS:** Well, that's interesting because there's been some, like in the Greek mythology Prometheus with his liver, was being punished by the vulture pecking his liver for giving them fire. So I didn't know if there was some kind of deeper meaning attached to the liver and kidneys specifically.

**MSH:** It's kind of interesting. Here you have the long lobe of the liver that's removed with the kidneys and whatnot. I'd have to look and see if somebody like Levine or Everbeck or Milgram was another guy whose focus is sacrificial material. But what your question makes me think of is that it would be interesting if all of that was sort of "given" back to God because it's well known, especially with the liver, that pagan religions would use those specific, that specific part, the part I'm not sure about is the kidneys, for divination, sort of reading the liver. They would take the liver out of an animal and if it was this or that color or if it had this or that divot in it, it meant something. It was an omen.

And so it has me wondering now if by giving that back to God it's sort of a silent polemic against that idea, that we would retain this and then do something with it to discern the will of God or get divine knowledge from it or something like that. So it could be sort of a little slap there but I'm actually not sure about that. But I can see the logic if, and I'm just wondering, if anybody's done a study on that. If they have I don't know it but I can't say I've looked for it either.