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Defining the שלמים Sacrifice-A Study of Communion in the Old Testament

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Defining the **שְׁלֵמִים** Sacrifice: A Study of
Communion in the Old Testament

A Seminar Paper presented to the Faculty
of Concordia Seminary, St. Louis,
Department of Exegetical Theology
in partial fulfillment of the
requirements for the degree of
Master of Sacred Theology

by

Eric M. Nelson

January 2000

Approved by: Paul L. Schrieber,
Advisor

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DEFINING THE שְׁלָמִים SACRIFICE

One of the challenges of doing biblical exegesis is capturing the exact meaning of a word from the Hebrew or Greek languages. The English equivalent for certain words can be elusive. Not only is there a separation of language in biblical exegesis, but there is also a separation of time, geography, and culture, which compounds to the problem of providing an accurate translation.

This is certainly the case with the sacrifice known in the Hebrew as the שְׁלָמִים. How does one who lives thousands of years later in a different cultural context define this sacrifice that was given by Yahweh to Moses during the encampment at Mount Sinai? As it will soon be discovered, there is no single definition that is agreed upon by the scholars which captures the meaning of this Hebrew word. However, this does not mean defeat. Drawing from a Lutheran perspective, there is a word and act of worship which comes very close in securing the essence of the meaning of this Hebrew word and sacrifice.

It is at this point that the purpose of this paper is reached. This paper seeks to define and defend the meaning of the

שְׁלָמִים sacrifice as communion. In order to accomplish this goal, this paper has been divided into the following parts: I) The שְׁלָמִים Sacrifice According to Scripture, II) Exploring Translations of the Term שְׁלָמִים, III) Defining שְׁלָמִים as Communion.

Part I: The שְׁלָמִים Sacrifice According to Scripture

The starting point in examining how this sacrifice is described in Scripture is its mandate and institution. This is found in the book of Leviticus (3:1-17; 7:11-36). Within these texts of Scripture, Yahweh instructs Moses on how this sacrifice is to be properly carried out by the priests and the people. However, these passages are not without context. This is vital for understanding the nature and purpose of this sacrifice.

Context

The entire book of Leviticus takes place at Mount Sinai. It is a continuation of the Exodus event in which God delivered the Israelites from their cruel and oppressive bondage to the Egyptians and brought them to Sinai. For this reason, the book of Leviticus begins with the conjunction וְ which acts as a link as to what took place in the book of Exodus.

It is at Sinai that God establishes his covenant with the Israelites. These are the people whom Yahweh carried "on eagles'

wings" (עַל-כַּנְפֵי נְשָׂרִים) and brought to himself (Ex 19:4). It is within this Gospel context of deliverance that Yahweh declares that the people of Israel are to be for him "a kingdom of priests and a holy nation" (מַמְלַכַת כֹּהֲנֵי וְגוֹי קָדוֹשׁ, Ex 19:6). Therefore, God gives to Moses the Decalogue and the terms of the Book of the Covenant (Ex 20-23), which teaches the Israelites how they are to conduct themselves as Yahweh's holy nation whom he has delivered. In addition, Yahweh gives the instructions concerning the tabernacle (Ex 25-31). This tabernacle will serve as the special and localized dwelling place of Yahweh among his people. It is the designated place of worship for the Israelites. Also during this time, Yahweh sets apart Aaron and his sons to serve as priests at the tabernacle (Ex 28-29).

When the book of Leviticus begins, the tabernacle has been constructed, and the glory of Yahweh has filled it (Ex 35-40). Therefore, in the initial seven chapters of Leviticus, Yahweh mandates and institutes the five sacrifices that are to be offered at this tabernacle. This is the type of worship that is to be carried out by the priests and people of Yahweh. It is the means by which the Israelites would make atonement (כִּפּוּר) for their sins. It is the means by which God would have for himself a holy nation.

Holiness (קָדוֹשׁ) is central in understanding the sacrifices as well as the book of Leviticus. Yahweh declares to his people that

they are to be holy, for he is holy (Lev 11;44,45). Such holiness is necessary, for God will be dwelling - or "tabernacling" - among these people, for His name will be among them. (Dt 12:5,11,21).¹ For this reason, Yahweh gives the blood of the offered sacrifices to his people in order to make atonement for their lives (Lev 17:11). Through this means, Yahweh bestows holiness upon his people so that he may live among them.²

The sacrifices that God mandates and institutes within the initial seven chapters of Leviticus include the whole burnt offering (עֹלָה), the grain offering (מִנְחָה), the sin offering (חַטָּאת), the guilt offering (אֲשָׁמָה), and what is commonly called the "peace offering" (זֶבַח שְׁלָמִים). Although these sacrifices would be outwardly offered by men at the tabernacle, it is God who works forgiveness through them. Thus, they are "sacramental."³

The שְׁלָמִים Sacrifice

In the mandate and institution of the שְׁלָמִים sacrifice (Lev

¹According to Deuteronomy 12:5,11,21, Moses speaks of a place in which Yahweh will choose to "put (לָשׂוּם) his name" or "cause his name to dwell (לְשַׁכֵּן)." This refers to his gracious "tabernacling presence among his people. Alan Ludwig, "Communion in Holy Things in the Old Testament," Logia 5 (Epiphany 1996): 6.

²Ibid.

³Ibid., 7. Also see Horace D. Hummel, The Word Becoming Flesh (St. Louis: Concordia), 81.

3:1-17; 7:11-36), God instructs that a male or female animal from the herd or flock is to be brought forth (יִקְרִיבֵנוּ - 3:1,6,).

According to Leon Morris, the verb for "bringing near" became a technical expression in the Old Testament with the implied meaning that it is for sacrifice. When a worshiper caused an animal to draw near (the verb is used in the *hif'il* in 3:1,6,12), it was for the intention of sacrifice.⁴ In addition, since an animal was brought to the place of worship, this reveals that the שְׁלָמִים sacrifice is a bloody sacrifice. This implies that an animal will lose its life. Also, this animal is to be free from defect (תָּמִים - 3:1,6).⁵

The first step of this sacrifice is that the worshiper is to press (סָמַךְ) his hands on the head of the offering at the entrance of the tabernacle (3:2,8,13). This act reveals that the animal is to be the substitute for the worshiper. It also indicates that the sins of the worshiper have been transferred to the animal.⁶

⁴Leon Morris, The Atonement: Its Meaning and Significance (Leicester, England: Intervarsity Press, 1983), 45.

⁵However, in the case of the freewill offering, a deformed bull or lamb may be used (Lev 22:23).

⁶There are several theories that explain what the ritual of laying the hands on the animal means. However, such discussion is beyond the scope of this paper. For a more complete discussion, see Angel M. Rodriguez, Substitution in the Hebrew Cultus, Andrews University Seminary Doctrinal Dissertation Series, vol. 3 (Berrien Springs, MI: Andrews University Press, 1979), 201-8.

Next, the animal is to be slaughtered at the entrance of the tabernacle (3:2,8,13). The slaughter is to be done by the worshiper. According to Gordon J. Wenham, the Hebrew word for slaughter (שָׁחַט) is a specific term that is usually only used for sacrificial slaughter in the Old Testament. Wenham further states that in post Biblical Hebrew, this word refers to a specific method of killing which ensured that all the blood from the animal was drained out from the animal's body. Because it was already forbidden for Israel to eat flesh with blood in it (Gen 9:14; Lev 17:10ff.), this word may have had the same meaning here.⁷

After the animal has been slaughtered, the priest takes the blood from the sacrificed animal and sprinkles (זָרַקוּ) the blood around the altar (3:2,8,13). The priest then removes the parts from the sacrificed animal for the offering by fire (אֲשָׁה) made to Yahweh (3:3,4,10,14,15). These parts include the fat (חֵלֶב) covering the inner parts of the animal (קָרֵב), the two kidneys (שְׁתֵי הַכְּלִיֹּת) with the fat on them, and the appendage, or lobe (הַיֶּרֶחַ),⁸ of the liver (עַל־הַכֶּבֶד). If a lamb is offered, then the entire fat tail (תְּמִימָה הָאֵלֶּיָּהּ), which is to be taken away close to

⁷Gordon J. Wenham, The Book of Leviticus, The New International Commentary on the Old Testament, eds. R. K. Harrison and Robert L. Hubbard, Jr. (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1979), 53.

⁸The exact translation of יֶרֶחַ is uncertain. Ibid., 76.

the backbone (לְעֶמֶת הָעֵצָה), was added to the offering by fire as well (3:9). The priest is to burn these parts of the animal on the altar for Yahweh as food (לֶחֶם) for a pleasing aroma (רִיחַ נִיחָח - 3:5,11,16).

The שְׁלָמִים sacrifice concludes with the communal meal. Unlike the other offerings, the Israelite community was permitted to eat part of the meat from the animal of the שְׁלָמִים sacrifice. Only the priests and the male members of their family were permitted to eat certain portions from the grain offering, sin offering, and guilt offering (there was no meal with the whole burnt offering since the whole animal was burnt on the altar). Thus the communal meal is a unique feature in the שְׁלָמִים sacrifice.

In order to participate in the communal meal, an Israelite must be ceremonially clean. If anyone unclean eats any of the meat of the שְׁלָמִים sacrifice, that person must be cut off (כָּרַת) from the people (7:21). Also, the meat that is to be eaten must be clean as well. If it has touched anything ceremonially unclean, it is to be burnt up (7:19). Finally, the eating of fat or blood is strictly forbidden (3:17). Anyone who eats the fat or the blood is to be cut off from the people (7:22-27).

Yahweh also instructs what portions of the sacrifice are to be given to the priest. The worshiper is to bring with his own hands the fat along with the breast (הַחֹזֶה). The breast is to be

waved before Yahweh as a wave offering (תְּנוּפָה - 7:30). In addition, the worshiper is also to bring the right thigh (שׁוֹק הַיְמָיִן) as a contribution (תְּרוּמָה) to the priest (7:32). What exactly is meant by the wave offering and the contribution is not agreed upon by the scholars and goes beyond the scope of this paper.⁹ However, these portions, which are presented as a wave offering and a contribution, no doubt belong to Yahweh. He, in turn, gives these portions to the priests (7:35).

Finally, Yahweh also gives certain provisions as to when the flesh of the sacrifice is to be eaten. This is contingent on the type of שְׁלָמִים sacrifice that is offered. If it is an offering of thanksgiving (תּוֹדָה), then the worshiper is also to bring unleavened cakes mixed with oil, unleavened wafers spread with oil, and cakes of fine flour mixed with oil (7:12). The worshiper is to offer one of each of these cakes to Yahweh. These are the portions that Yahweh gives to the priest who sprinkled the blood of the שְׁלָמִים sacrifice (7:14). Also, the flesh of the thanksgiving offering is to be eaten on the day that it is offered. None of the meat is to be left over for the next day (7:15). In contrast, the flesh from the votive offering (נִדְבָר) and the freewill offering (נִדְבָה) may be eaten on the next day (7:16). However, whatever flesh remains on

⁹For a discussion on the wave offering and the contribution, see Wenham, 126-7.

the third day is to be burnt with fire (7:17). Cake offerings are not stipulated in the votive and freewill offerings. The reason as to why Yahweh gives these parameters concerning when the flesh of the **שְׁלָמִים** sacrifice is to be eaten is not given in Scripture.

The distinction of the three types of the **שְׁלָמִים** sacrifices implies that each one had a specific occasion and purpose as to when it was to be offered. If the worshiper wished to give thanks to God for an unexpected or unmerited blessing that was received, the thanksgiving offering was given.¹⁰ For example, Psalm 107 states that thank offerings are to be sacrificed (v. 22) because Yahweh saved the people from their distress and rescued them from the grave (vv. 19,20). The votive offering, on the other hand, was to be given in completion of a vow (Lev 22:18,21,23). Finally, the freewill offering was to be given as an expression of love for God.¹¹ It was a spontaneous act of generosity by the worshiper that was motivated by the goodness of God.¹² For example, Moses instructs the Israelites that they are to celebrate the Feast of Weeks by giving a freewill offering in accordance with the blessings they received from God (Dt 16:10).

¹⁰Samuel J. Schultz, The Old Testament Speaks, 2d ed. (New York: Harper and Row, 1970), 66.

¹¹Ibid.

¹²Wenham, 79

This is how the **שְׁלָמִים** sacrifice is to be done according to the mandate and institution given by Yahweh to Moses in Leviticus. In summary, what distinguishes this sacrifice from the others is that it has a communal meal in which family and friends - who were ceremonially clean - could eat part of the flesh of the sacrifice. This was a real luxury for the Israelite, who generally did not have much meat in his daily diet.¹³ With the mandate and institution of the **שְׁלָמִים** sacrifice established, it is at this point that its meaning shall be explored.

Part II: Exploring Translations of the Term **שְׁלָמִים**

As previously mentioned, finding an exact meaning in exegesis can be difficult. Therefore, it should come as no surprise that there a number of translations offered to define the **שְׁלָמִים** sacrifice. In this section, various translations of the **שְׁלָמִים** sacrifice shall be presented and analyzed so that their respective strengths and weaknesses may be exposed. Such a task should enable a more precise definition of this sacrifice.

Well Being Sacrifice

The first translation that will be explored is that given by Jacob Milgrom. Milgrom's definition of the word **שְׁלָמִים** is based

¹³Ibid., 81.

upon what he perceives is the specific motivation that elicits its giving by the Israelite. This motivation is a feeling of well-being. Therefore, his translation for this sacrifice is "well-being."¹⁴

According to Milgrom, the common link in the three types of the **שְׁלָמִים** sacrifice is rejoicing.¹⁵ He states that the freewill offering, which is the most common given, is a by product of one's happiness (Nu 15:3,8; Eze 46:12). The votive offering is brought after the successful fulfillment of a vow (Pr 7:14).¹⁶ Finally, the thanksgiving offering, according to Milgrom, is based on four occasions which the Rabbis have derived from Psalm 107. The first occasion is a safe return from a desert journey (vv. 4-8); the second occasion is release from prison (vv. 10-16); the third occasion is recovery from an illness (vv. 17-22); and the fourth occasion is a safe return from a sea voyage (vv. 23-25).¹⁷ Thus

¹⁴Jacob Milgrom, Leviticus 1-16, The Anchor Bible, eds. William Foxwell Albright and David Noel Freedman, no. 3 (New York: Doubleday, 1991), 204.

¹⁵Ibid., 218.

¹⁶Ibid., 219.

¹⁷According to Milgrom, the Rabbis did not consider the thanksgiving offering as a **שְׁלָמִים** sacrifice. One reason is that it is considered to be a later development in the history of the sacrifice. Also, it is given with a bread offering and must be eaten on the same day, which sets it apart from the freewill and votive offerings. Ibid.

the three occasions for giving the types of the **שְׁלָמִים** sacrifice - product of one's happiness (freewill offering), completion of a vow (votive offering), and deliverance from danger or an illness (thanksgiving offering) - all contain the feeling of rejoicing.

As Milgrom concedes, all translations of the **שְׁלָמִים** sacrifice are "at best" educated guesses.¹⁸ For this reason, one must not assume that he holds his translation as the final word on the matter. Bearing this in mind, an analysis of his translation is now in order.

For Milgrom, the motivating factor that prompts the offering of this sacrifice is a feeling of "well-being." Indeed, there are occasions in Scripture in which there is a sense of well-being in the giving of this sacrifice. For example, when the covenant was ratified between God and the Israelites in Exodus, burnt offerings and **שְׁלָמִים** offerings were given (Ex 24:5 - this is the first occasion recorded in Scripture in which a **שְׁלָמִים** sacrifice is actually offered). This was a time of well-being and rejoicing, for Yahweh and his people were celebrating their new covenant relationship. Another occasion in which there is a sense of well-being and rejoicing at the giving of this sacrifice includes the anointing of Saul as king (1 Sa 10:8). Also, Milgrom's definition appears to fit the dedication of the tabernacle, in

¹⁸Ibid., 220.

which a leader from each of the twelve tribes brought an offering, which included the **שְׁלָמִים** sacrifice (Nu 7).

However, not all occasions in which a **שְׁלָמִים** sacrifice is offered are associated with a feeling of well-being and celebration. For example, the book of Judges records the civil war which broke out between the tribe of Benjamin and the other Israelite tribes. This war was instigated by the brutality that happened to the concubine of a Levite, who had traveled to Gibeah (Jdg 19). After two days of battle, the Israelites had suffered heavy losses. The account then states that the Israelites went to Bethel, where they wept, fasted, and offered whole burnt and **שְׁלָמִים** offerings (Jdg 20:26). Therefore in this context, the translation of "well-being" does not appear to be accurate.

Other occasions in which the translation of "well-being" does not seem appropriate include the offering of the **שְׁלָמִים** and whole burnt offerings in the next chapter of Judges (21:4). On this occasion, the Israelites were again weeping because the tribe of Benjamin was to be cut off from Israel for failing to assemble (vv. 2-6). In addition, King David sacrificed whole burnt and **שְׁלָמִים** offerings (2 Sa 24:25) after the Lord had brought three days of plague upon the Israelites because David had incurred guilt by counting his men (v. 10). Neither of these two instances reveal a feeling of well-being during the offering of this sacrifice.

However, a case could be made from what is burnt on the altar in the **שְׁלָמִים** sacrifice to support Milgrom's translation, which has its basis on feeling. As mentioned previously, the portions that are burnt on the altar in this sacrifice include the fat covering the inner parts of the animal, the two kidneys with the fat which is on them, and the appendage (or lobe) of the liver. In the Old Testament, emotion is based in the kidneys and inner parts (eg. Job 19:27, Ps 16:7, Jer 12:2).¹⁹

However, the same portions of the sacrificial animal are also burnt on the altar in the sin offering and the guilt offering, and these offerings were made for atonement for the sins and ceremonial uncleanness of the Israelites. For example, if an Israelite were to touch anything ceremonially unclean, that person is guilty and must make a sin offering (Lev 5:3). Or if an Israelite were to deceive a neighbor through robbery, a guilt offering was to be made (Lev 5:21,25 [English - Lev 6:2,6]), Thus these offerings, which offer the same parts of the animal on the altar, are not prompted by emotion, but by specific reasons.

In addition, the specific reason as to why these portions are to be burnt on the altar in the **שְׁלָמִים** sacrifice (or the sin or guilt offering as well) is not given in Scripture. Therefore, any such argument that links the motivation of the sacrifice to what

¹⁹Wenham, 80.

is burnt on the altar is speculative. Consequently, Milgrom's translation of "well-being" is not to be accepted as the best, suitable translation for the **שְׁלָמִים** sacrifice.

Sacred Gift of Greeting Sacrifice

Baruch A. Levine views the function of this sacrifice to be a gift of greeting that was offered to God.²⁰ One reason he gives in support of this view is the cognates of this sacrifice in other Semitic languages of the Ancient Near East. In a Ugaritic epic, Keret, a king of a besieged city, offered a *shalamuna* to the commander of the attacking army in order to persuade him to relent in his siege.²¹ In addition, Levine also points out the Akkadian language cognate term, *shulmanu*, has the meaning of "a gift of greeting." This gift would be presented by vassals to their suzerains when they visited them. Also, emissaries would bring them on their mission to their allies.²²

In these cognates of other Semitic languages, the meaning of a tribute or a greeting is present. In Hebrew, the word *shalom* (**שָׁלוֹם**) - a cognate of **שְׁלָמִים** - is the word used to express a

²⁰Baruch A. Levine, *Leviticus*, The J.P.S. Torah Commentary, ed. Nahum M. Sarna (Philadelphia: The Jewish Publication Society, 1989), 15.

²¹Ibid.

²²Ibid.

greeting. Therefore, according to Levine, the **שְׁלָמִים** was offered when one greets another by saying "shalom." Consequently, in the Hebrew cultic use, the **שְׁלָמִים** took the form of an animal sacrifice, which was offered to God when one came before him to greet him at the sacrificial meal. Thus, Levine states that it became the adopted name of a particular sacrifice which indicated the fellowship experienced by the worshipers and the priests in the presence of divinity, as they greeted their divine guest.²³

What Levine rightly states is that there is a fellowship experience present at the offering of the **שְׁלָמִים** sacrifice. The sacrifice with its communal meal was given to the people whom God had delivered and made his own possession (Ex 19:4,5). In other words, God's covenant people were the ones who were to offer this sacrifice. In addition, one of the stipulations of this sacrifice is that only fellow, ceremonially clean people of the covenant may eat from it at the communal meal (Lev 7:20,21). As a result, a true fellowship is present in both the vertical (God-person) and horizontal sense (person-person) during the offering of this sacrifice, which included a communal meal.

However, not all is right with Levine's definition, for he appears to have the direction of the action in this sacrifice going in only one direction. Levine defines this sacrifice as a

²³Ibid.

"sacred gift of greeting." In short, the sacrifice is a gift the people offer to Yahweh. Thus, the focus is on the worshiper and not on Yahweh, who is the guest of the meal, according to Levine.²⁴

In order to capture the meaning of the **שְׁלָמִים** sacrifice, the focus should be on what Yahweh does, for he is the one who instituted and mandated this sacrifice for his people to do. As it was pointed out earlier, the sacrifices are sacramental. Thus, as a sacrifice, they are a gift offered by the people, as Levine stated. However, they also involve a gift given by God. For God is the one who gives the blood to make atonement (Lev 17:11). In addition, Yahweh is not just the guest who receives the **שְׁלָמִים** sacrifice; he also is the host. The sacrifice is given at his dwelling place, that is, his tabernacle (or temple), and the animal that is slaughtered and eaten belongs to him. These aspects of this sacrifice are overlooked in Levine's definition.

In conclusion, Levine, like Milgrom, states that the word **שְׁלָמִים** is difficult to define. He also states that his preferred translation of "sacred gift (or offering) of greeting" reveals the particular role of this sacrifice within the Israelite religion.²⁵ This achieves a distinguishing translation for this sacrifice that sets it apart from the other sacrifices. What also is to be

²⁴Ibid.

²⁵Ibid., 14.

embraced by Levine's translation is that it recognizes the communion that is present in the offering of this sacrifice along with its communal meal. But as it has been noted, this preferred definition of Levine overlooks the role that Yahweh plays in this sacrifice that he himself mandated and instituted. For this reason, this definition does not properly define the meaning of this sacrifice.

Saving-Offering

The commentary on the Pentateuch by C. F. Keil and F. Delitzsch defines this sacrifice according to its salvific purpose. For this reason, the translation of "saving-offering" is deemed to be the more correct translation.²⁶ According to Keil and Delitzsch, the term **שְׁלָמִים** is derived from the Hebrew word **שָׁלַם**, which means to be whole or uninjured. This plural name given for this sacrifice (except for the one occasion in Amos 5:22, in which it is the singular **שָׁלַם**) expresses "the entire round of blessings and powers, by which the salvation or integrity of man in his relation to God is established and secured."²⁷ Therefore, the

²⁶C. F. Keil and F. Delitzsch, The Pentateuch, vol. 2, in Commentary on the Old Testament in Ten Volumes, vol. 1, The Pentateuch: Three Volumes in One, trans. James Martin (reprint, Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1981), 298.

²⁷Ibid., 299.

constant object for this sacrifice was salvation. On some occasions, this sacrifice was offered to indicate thanksgiving for salvation already received, and on other occasions, this sacrifice was offered as a prayer for salvation desired. Thus this sacrifice encompassed both thank-offerings and offerings of supplication given for the purpose of salvation, according to Keil and Delitzsch.²⁸

The case for the translation of "saving-offering" for the שְׁלֵמִים sacrifice is further buttressed by the Septuagint. In the Septuagint, one frequent translation for this sacrifice is σωτήριον (e.g. Ex 20:24; Lev 6:5 [Eng. and Gr. 12]; Eze 43:27, and Am 5:22).²⁹ According to the abridged version of Liddell and Scott's Greek-English Lexicon, the basic meaning of this Greek word is "saving" or "deliverance."³⁰ Thus, this translation of the Septuagint agrees with the translation that is offered by Keil and Delitzsch's commentary.

This translation does have its merit. First of all, it focuses on God's action. By means of this sacrifice, God is the

²⁸Ibid.

²⁹Ibid.; Rolf Rendtorff, Studien zur Geschichte des Opfers im Alten Israel (Neukirchen-Vluyn: Neukirchener, 1967), 132.

³⁰James M. Whiton, ed., A Lexicon Abridged from Liddell and Scott's Greek-English Lexicon (New York: American Book, 1871), 688.

one to whom thanks is given for salvation received, and he is the one who receives the supplication for salvation desired. It is his powers and blessings, by which salvation is established and secured for the one who has a relationship with him, that gives definition to the plural term **שְׁלָמִים**, according to Keil and Delitzsch. This leads to the second strength of this translation, which is that it encompasses the relationship between Yahweh and the one who offers the sacrifice. In Keil and Delitzsch's discussion on this sacrifice, there is an existent relation, or communion, between the one who offers the "saving offering" and his God. As a result of this communion, one may thank Yahweh for the salvation received or request for salvation desired by offering this sacrifice.

The weakness, however, with the translation of Keil and Delitzsch is that it fails to distinguish this sacrifice from the other sacrifices.³¹ For it could be argued that the object of salvation is present in other sacrifices as well. For example, the whole burnt offering is given to make atonement (**כִּפָּר**) for the

³¹It should be noted that the distinguishing characteristic of the communal meal is not entirely absent in Keil and Delitzsch's discussion of the **שְׁלָמִים** sacrifice. For they state that the term **שְׁלָמִים** is a shortened form of **זֶבַח שְׁלָמִים**. They further mention that the term **זֶבַח** in its more narrow sense refers to slain-offerings which end with a sacrificial meal. Therefore, to say that they offer no distinguishing feature in their discussion of this sacrifice would be misleading (Keil and Delitzsch, 298).

one offering the sacrifice (e.g. Lev 1:4). The same holds true for the sin offering (e.g. Lev 4:26,35) and the guilt offering (e.g. Lev 5:18), for these sacrifices are also given to make atonement for sins. Therefore, it could be argued that the term "saving-offering" could apply to these sacrifices as well. Consequently, because this translation fails to set apart this sacrifice from the others, it is not adequate.

Peace Offering

Perhaps the most obvious translation for the **שְׁלָמִים** sacrifice is "peace offering," for the Hebrew word for peace - **שָׁלוֹם** - and the **שְׁלָמִים** sacrifice share the common root of **שָׁלַם**. This etymological connection serves as a basis of argumentation for Martin Noth and Gordon Wenham.³²

According to Noth, the meaning of the term **שְׁלָמִים** goes back to the stem **שָׁלַם**. The basic meaning of this stem (which is difficult to specifically define) is "to be intact" or "unconsumed." Thus the word "peace" expresses the "intactness" of the relationship between God and the one who offers the peace offering.³³ In addition to this expressed relationship, Noth states that the term

³²Martin Noth, Leviticus: A Commentary, The Old Testament Library, trans. J. E. Anderson (London: S.C.M. Press, 1977), 31; Wenham, 77.

³³Noth, 31.

"peace" secures the special meaning of this sacrifice in which only certain portions of the animal were burnt on the altar while the rest was eaten by the participants in a communal meal. Originally, this constituted a meal shared by God and the worshiper, which formed the basis of the community and its constant rejuvenation and renewal.³⁴

Wenham also concludes that the translation "peace offering" is the best rendering of this sacrifice. He reaches this conclusion not only because the Hebrew word for peace is etymologically linked with the **שְׁלָמִים** sacrifice, but also because of what the term "peace" means in Hebrew. According to Wenham, the term peace has a more profound meaning than just an absence of war or strife. True peace in the Hebrew context means health, prosperity, and peace with God (i.e. salvation). It is this understanding of the word peace that best fits the Old Testament evidence of this sacrifice.³⁵

Indeed, much can be said in favor for this translation of the **שְׁלָמִים** sacrifice. The most obvious point, which has already been mentioned, is that the Hebrew word for peace does share the same root as this sacrifice. In addition, words which have the basic meaning of peace are used in other translations of the Old

³⁴Ibid.

³⁵Wenham, 77.

Testament. The Septuagint translates this term with the word εἰρηνικά (e.g. 1 Sa 13:9; 2 Sa 6:17,18; 24:25; 2 Ki 16:13), while the Vulgate's uses the word *pacifica*.³⁶ Another strength of the translation "peace offering" is that it embraces the relationship that God has with his people, which both Noth and Wenham have stated. According to Noth, this "intact" relationship that God has with his people is expressed in this sacrifice, which includes the communal meal. In its original understanding, this sacrifice and meal formed the basis of the community, for it was shared by God and the worshipers.³⁷ By focusing on this relationship of peace expressed at this sacrifice, especially during its unique communal meal, not only is there both a vertical (God-man) and horizontal (man-man) relationship indicated in this translation, but it also distinguishes this sacrifice from the others that are mandated in Leviticus.

Indeed a vertical and horizontal relationship is expressed at the communal meal. However, how is it that this sacrifice with its shared meal formed the basis of the community as Noth states? His discussion of the meaning of the sacrifice overlooks the Sinaitic event in which God gathers the Israelites and states that

³⁶Rendtorff, 132.

³⁷Noth, 31.

he has redeemed them himself to be his possession, his kingdom of priests, and establishes a covenant with them (Ex 19:4-6). Such a discussion which links this sacrifice to the giving of the covenant at Sinai is needed to support his case, for it was at the ratification of the covenant that the first **שְׁלָמִים** sacrifices were offered (Ex 24:5) in the history of Israel.

The main weakness that is present in the translation "peace offering" is that the exact meaning of the root **שָׁלַם** is difficult to capture. Thus to establish a meaning of this sacrifice by using its etymological root does not lend itself to assurance. Wenham concedes that the root **שָׁלַם** is common and has a wide variety of meanings.³⁸ Noth also states that the specific meaning of this root cannot be fixed with certainty.³⁹ In addition, even if the Hebrew word for peace - **שָׁלוֹם** - is the correct derivative, this word itself is also difficult to decisively define. Thus a more precise definition is desired.

Concluding Sacrifice

It is fitting that the last translation that will be briefly considered is the "concluding sacrifice." The reason behind this translation is that often this sacrifice is given with the whole

³⁸Wenham, 30.

³⁹Noth, 31.

burnt offering at the end (e.g. Ex 24:5; Jos 8:31; 2 Sa 6:17,18; 24:25; Eze 46:2).⁴⁰ However, one weakness with this translation is that this sacrifice is not always given with the whole burnt offering (e.g. 1 Sa 11:15, Ps 116:17). The other weakness is that this translation says very little of the nature and purpose of this sacrifice. It only reveals that this sacrifice is normally the last one offered.

Concluding Remarks

In summary, it is evident from the discussion above that finding a precise definition is a challenge. Indeed, the discussion presented in this section is by no means exhaustive. Other translations that have been proposed by scholars for this sacrifice include "shared offering" and "covenant sacrifice."⁴¹

However, by exploring the various translations and analyzing their strengths and weaknesses, a better understanding of this sacrifice is achieved so that a fitting translation may be given. For example, it was found that a translation should incorporate the relational aspect that is present in this sacrifice - especially in its communal meal. This was evident in the translation "peace offering" and the "saving offering" Also, it

⁴⁰Rendtorff, 133.

⁴¹Wenham, 76-77.

was found that the basis for the giving of this sacrifice is not based on feeling, as Milgrom's "well-being offering" suggested. In addition, it was discussed that God is the one who established and hosted this sacrifice, which Levine's "gift of greeting" translation failed to see. Such aspects need to be present in the discussion of the meaning of this sacrifice. Moreover, it was discovered that the translation of this sacrifice should distinguish this sacrifice from the other sacrifices (a weakness of the translation "saving offering"), and its definition should not be vague (a weakness of the translation "peace offering"). With these points in mind, the definition proposed in this paper will now be presented.

Part III: Defining שלמים as Communion

It is the contention of this paper that the best definition for the Hebrew sacrifice termed the שלמים is "communion." For it is at the offering of this sacrifice, along with its unique communal meal, that the communion which God has with his people (vertical) and the communion that the fellow Israelite people have with one another (horizontal) are fully expressed. Thus it is very similar to the Sacrament of the Altar. Both entail meals that are given and hosted by God. Both are intimate expressions of communion.

In examining the Old Testament, there are "types" of the Sacrament of the Altar. The most obvious example would be the Passover of Exodus 12. As Kent Heimbigner stated in his S.T.M. thesis, both were sacrifices. Both were eaten. Both used bread, and both talk of a lamb shedding blood.⁴² As a result, Heimbigner rightly concludes that the Sacrament of the Altar in the New Testament fulfills the Old Testament Passover.⁴³

Another type includes the water from the rock and the manna, which God provided out of his grace for the Israelites as they wandered through the wilderness. These events are noted by Paul in 1 Corinthians 10:3-4 as means by which God sustains his people with the same spiritual food and drink. For the Israelites drank from the same rock, who was Christ. Therefore, the eating of the manna and drinking of the water from the rock are connected to the Lord's Supper in which Christ is truly present and offers himself to his people as food and drink.⁴⁴ As a result, the people of God are again sustained by Christ by means of the Holy Supper, which our Lord gives out of his grace and mercy.

⁴²Kent A. Heimbigner, "The Relation of the Celebration of the Lord's Supper to the Office of the Holy Ministry" (S.T.M. thesis, Concordia Seminary, 1991), 13.

⁴³Ibid., 14.

⁴⁴Sverre Aalan, "Das Abendmahl als Opfermahl bei Paulus," Novum Testamentum 6 (1963): 132.

Finally, another Old Testament type of the Lord's Supper is the covenant ratification of Exodus 24. This account states that sacrifices were given and a meal was eaten in the presence of God. Horace Hummel states in his book, The Word Becoming Flesh, that the ratification sacrifice contained a unique blood, which is the blood of the covenant (Ex 24:8). Thus these two elements of the sacrifice with the unique blood and the meal were fulfilled as Christ instituted his Supper as the "new covenant in my blood."⁴⁵ (One of the sacrifices that was offered at the covenant ratification was the communion offering. This is a significant point that will be further elaborated later in the paper.)

The שלמים sacrifice also serves as an Old Testament type of the New Testament Sacrament of the Altar. It is this connection that will help support the translation of "communion" for this Hebrew term. With this in mind, it is now time to consider the translation of "communion" by exploring what God gives through this sacrifice that he mandated for his people to do.

What is Given

As David Chytraeus notes, the sacrificial system was the "nerve and sinew" of the ministry of the Israelite religion, and

⁴⁵Horace Hummel, The Word Becoming Flesh (St. Louis: Concordia, 1979), 76.

the "sinew" of the public assemblies. The sacrificial system served as the means by which the general proclamation and further transmission of the true teaching of God and his Son, who would offer himself as a sacrifice, took place. According to Chytraeus, this parallels the Sacrament of the Altar, which is the "nerve" of the New Testament church's public assemblies. For it is the Lord's Supper that proclaims the teaching of the death of Christ as a sacrifice for our sins, and it declares the teaching of the assurance of forgiveness and salvation is given to anyone who in faith desires such solace.⁴⁶ In short, Christ is the central proclamation of both the sacrificial system and the Lord's Supper. It is his soteriological work that gives both their efficacy.

Indeed, Chytraeus reveals the Lutheran understanding of the Sacrament of the Altar as Christocentric. Lutheran theology believes and confesses that the One who sacrificed himself in order to make atonement for the whole world is truly present under the bread and wine. For the Confessions state that this sacrament is "the true body (*Lieb*) and blood (*Blut*) of our Lord Jesus Christ, under the bread and wine..." (*Small Catechism* VI, 555).⁴⁷

⁴⁶David Chytraeus, *On Sacrifice*, trans. John Warwick Montgomery (St. Louis: Concordia, 1962), 58.

⁴⁷All references from the Lutheran Confessions are from the *Triglot Concordia*, trans. F. Bente and W. H. T. Dau (St. Louis: Concordia, 1921).

Thus complete atonement for sins is given by means of the Lord's Supper. As the Confessions state about the benefit of the Lord's Supper, "That is shown by these words: *Given and shed for you, for the forgiveness of sins*; namely, that in the Sacrament forgiveness of sins (*Vergebung der Sunden*), life (*Leben*), and salvation (*Seligkeit*) are given us through these words" (*Small Catechism* VI, 557). That is why the Lord's Supper is considered a sacrament, that is, a means of grace.

However, is atonement given by means of the communion sacrifice? In other words, can it be said that it is sacramental, that is, a means of grace? Chytraeus makes this connection for the whole sacrificial system in general with the Lord's Supper, since Christ is the central proclamation for both, but can the connection be made specifically for the communion sacrifice?

Jacob Milgrom denies that the communion sacrifice (or "well-being" sacrifice as he translates it) is offered for an expiatory purpose. Milgrom points out that in the mandate and institution of the sacrifice, there is no mention that confession of sins are to be made when the hands are placed upon the animal. In addition, this sacrifice is not brought on the occasion of wrong doing.⁴⁸

⁴⁸Milgrom, 221.

Milgrom does present a compelling case against the expiatory function of the communion sacrifice. It could be further argued that unlike the other bloody sacrifices, the Hebrew word for atonement - **כִּפֶּר** - is not found anywhere in its mandate and institution. This may explain why this sacrifice is often found coupled with the whole burnt offering in Scripture, for the whole burnt offering is given to make atonement (Lev 1:4). Therefore, can it truly be said that the communion sacrifice imparts righteousness and forgiveness?

This is a vital issue. For if this sacrifice is truly a communion sacrifice, then it is imperative that atonement be made through its offering. God requires holiness for his people if they are going to be in communion with him (i.e. they are to be holy because he is holy - Lev 19:2). For this reason, if atonement is not given through this sacrifice, then it fails to be a means through which God imparts holiness to his people. As a result, atonement needs to be present in order for this sacrifice to express the vertical relationship between God and man.

Indeed, a vertical relation is expressed in this sacrifice, for the offering is a "soothing odor (**רִיחַ נִיחַח**) to Yahweh" (Lev 3:5).⁴⁹ How can this be? As Joel Lehenbauer states in his S.T.M.

⁴⁹Ludwig, 7.

thesis, the key to the purpose and meaning of the sacrifice, according to Leviticus, may be found in the sacrificial blood. Lehenbauer further states that the focal point of nearly every sacrifice or cleaning ritual in Leviticus is some type of blood manipulation - a manipulation which is clearly present in the communion offering (Lev 3:2,8,13). Thus, the main purpose of sacrifice, according to Leviticus, is to make atonement.⁵⁰ The key verse for this claim is Leviticus 17:11. In this verse, Yahweh states that he has given the blood for his people for the purpose of making atonement.⁵¹ Therefore, the blood is a means of grace by which God satisfies his anger and gives atonement for the sins of his people.⁵²

In addition, although Leviticus - as well as the whole Pentateuch - does not explicitly link atonement with the communion sacrifice, this link is expressed in other portions of the Old Testament. An implication is made in 1 Samuel 3:14 that the sacrifices and offerings in general do atone, which would be in agreement with Leviticus 17:11. But a more specific link between

⁵⁰ Joel D. Lehenbauer, "The Lord's Supper's Eschatology in the Blood of the Covenant" (S.T.M. thesis, Concordia Seminary, 1991), 152.

⁵¹Ibid., 180-1.

⁵²Ibid., 182.

atonement and the communion sacrifice is made in Ezekiel 45:15,17. Some argue that the verb "to make atonement" (כָּפַר) only applies to the whole burnt offering and the sin offering in these passages. However, that is an arbitrary interpretation.⁵³ On the contrary, Leon Morris states that atonement is linked to all of the mentioned sacrifices, which would include the communion sacrifice.⁵⁴

Indeed, it could be further argued that the ritual of the fellowship sacrifice, as it is prescribed in Leviticus, implies atonement. For if there is no expiatory function of this sacrifice, then why is it mandated for the worshiper to press his hands on the animal (Lev 3:2,8,13)? Moreover, as previously discussed, why was the blood cast around the altar by the priest (Lev 3:2,8,13)? These acts are identical with the initial acts performed in the whole burnt offering, which is clearly given for atonement. In addition, it was only when these two steps of atonement were completed that the worshiper could proceed to the communal feast, which is hosted by Yahweh himself.⁵⁵ This is an

⁵³Angel Rodriguez refers this "rather arbitrary limitation" to Jacob Milgrom and Antonio Charbel. See Rodriguez, 228.

⁵⁴Morris, 60.

⁵⁵Derek Kidner, "Sacrifice - Metaphors and Meaning," Tyndale Bulletin 33 (1982): 133.

important aspect. For as Angel Rodriguez states, Leviticus clearly delineates the impurity of man. As a result, man is never free to approach God by his own merit. Purification is needed in order to be in his presence.⁵⁶

In summary, there is a significant parallel between what God does through the communion sacrifice and the Lord's Supper, for both are means of atonement for sins. In other words, they are both means of grace in which God imparts his righteousness to his people so that they may be in fellowship, or communion, with their Lord.

This link of atonement provides a basis for another important parallel between these two acts of worship. For just as the flesh (and blood) of the atoning sacrifice is truly present and eaten in the Sacrament of the Altar, this also holds true for the communion sacrament (except the eating of blood was strictly prohibited in the Old Testament - e.g. Lev 7:26,27; 17:10-14). In the communal meal of the communion sacrifice, the very flesh offered for atonement is given by Yahweh for his people to eat (however, unlike what is eaten in the Sacrament of the Altar, the sacrifice eaten at the communion sacrifice was not offered once for all). It is this unique communal meal that will be explored next in defending the "communion" translation for this sacrifice.

⁵⁶Rodriguez, 230.

To Whom It is Given

In the previous section, it was discovered that atonement is indeed given through the communion sacrifice. Therefore, like the Sacrament of the Altar, it is a means of grace in which God bestows holiness and righteousness upon his people. This, of course, is not the only parallel between these two acts of worship (for this bond of atonement is shared between the Sacrament of the Altar and the other sacrifices as well). What distinguishes the communion sacrifice from the other sacrifices is the communal meal. Thus both of the Sacrament of the Altar and the communion sacrifice are the means established by God to express an intimate communion, both vertically (God-man) and horizontally (man-man), through the sharing of a meal.

Because the Hebrew word for atonement (כִּפֹּר) is not found in its mandate and institution, and it is often offered with other sacrifices (namely the whole burnt offering), it appears that atonement is not the primary purpose of the communion sacrifice.⁵⁷ Rather it appears that the main purpose, as indicated by the sharing of a meal, is communion. Such a meal is a vivid display of God's grace and mercy, for not only is God dwelling among his people, but he also considers his people worthy to eat a holy meal

⁵⁷Ludwig, 7; Rodriguez, 227.

in his presence.⁵⁸ The meal they eat consists of the sacrificial offering, which is Yahweh's "food" (Lev 21:6,8; 22:25).⁵⁹

The same holds true for the Sacrament of the Altar. It is a vivid display of God's grace and mercy. For in this sacrament, the Lord himself is present in the elements of the bread and wine, which he has invited his people to "take, eat" and to "drink...all of you" (Mt 26:26-27). Therefore, the people gather to eat the sacrificial offering, which was also the case with the communion offering. What is offered is the Lord's food that he established and graciously gives his people to eat and drink.

Who may eat of these meals that God provides his people? Both acts of worship specify who is a worthy participant. In the case of the Sacrament of the Altar, Paul states that whoever eats the bread or drinks the cup in an unworthy manner (*ἀναξίως*) is guilty (*ἔνοχος*) of the body and blood of the Lord (1 Cor 11:27). Therefore, if one were to participate in the Holy Supper in an unworthy manner, judgment would come upon that person. For Paul goes on to state that the one who fails to recognize (*διακρίνων*) the body of the Lord eats and drinks judgment (*κρίμα*) on himself

⁵⁸James Lowell Bishop, "The Original (God-Intended) Meaning and Purpose of Old Testament Sacrifice" (S.T.M. Thesis, Concordia Seminary, 1957), 101.

⁵⁹Ronald de Vaux, Studies in Old Testament Sacrifice (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 1964), 39.

(1 Cor 11:29).⁶⁰ Thus, the Confessions state: "...but he is truly worthy and well prepared who has faith in these words: 'Given, and shed for you, for the remission of sins'" (*Small Catechism* VI, 557). Therefore, the one that doubts or does not believe the Word of Christ that proclaims that he is truly present for the forgiveness of sins is unfit to participate in the sacrament.

In the same manner, the communion sacrifice also stipulates who is worthy to participate in the communal meal that follows the sacrifice and sprinkling of the blood. Only those who are ceremonially clean (טהור) may partake of the meal. Anyone who is unclean (טמא) and eats of the flesh is to be cut off (נִכְרְתָהּ) from the people (Lev 7:19-21). Therefore, as is the case with the Sacrament of the Altar, the unworthy participant also receives judgment.

What results from the "closed communion" that is found in both acts of worship is an intimate expression of both a vertical and horizontal unity. In both instances, the Lord hosts and provides the meal to people whom he has called, gathered, and made

⁶⁰There are some who interpret the word "body" of this passage to refer to the presence of the church. However, the context and logical progression of this section of Paul's letter indicates that this "body" referred to in this passage means the true bodily presence of Christ. For further discussion, see A. Andrew Das, "1 Corinthians 11:17-34 Revisited," Concordia Theological Quarterly 62 (July, 1998): 187-208.

his own through deliverance. In either case, no one outside the *corpus* of believers (the unclean, or those who do not discern the body) may partake of this meal. For the meal is a holy thing in both occasions, which can only be given to God's holy people. As a result, where the meal is given and eaten according to the mandate and institution of Yahweh, there is a full expression of communion.

It should be noted that because only those who belong to God's holy people may partake of these acts of worship, a peaceful relation is, in effect, presupposed in both occasions. In the communion sacrifice, the one who offers the sacrifice along with those who partake of the communal meal are part of the covenant community that God delivered and brought to himself. In other words, the communion sacrifice did not establish the covenant, but rather it ratified it. It was a consequence of the covenant relationship made between God and his people at Sinai.⁶¹ In the same way, the Sacrament of the Altar is given to the people of the new covenant, which was put into effect through the once-for-all sacrifice of Christ. Thus, the idea of the sacrament being a re-sacrifice for the forgiveness of sins is rejected. In other words, it is not a work done to reestablish the covenant, but, like the communion sacrifice, is administered and received by the

⁶¹Bishop, 101.

corpus of believers as a result of the covenant relationship that God has with his people.

Because of the communal meal, the communion offering closely resembles the Sacrament of the Altar more than any other Old Testament sacrifice. Therefore, both of these acts of worship, which involve eating a meal hosted by God with fellow members of his holy people, truly express the close relationship that Yahweh has with his people. However, this is not the final parallel to be explored, for both also serve as reminders of the covenant that God made with his people.

When It was Given

On the first occasion in which the Sacrament of the Altar was given, Jesus was alone with his disciples. It was within this intimate gathering that Jesus distributed his true bodily presence "in, with, and under" the bread and the wine (e.g. 1 Cor 11:23-25). It was this very body and blood of Jesus that would be betrayed and handed over to his enemies that very night (e.g. 1 Cor 11:23). Eventually, his enemies would have him crucified, which would serve as the once-for-all sacrifice for our sins (Ro 6:10; Heb 7:27). Therefore, this reveals that not only was the sacrament instituted for the forgiveness of sins (cf. Mt 26:28), but it was also instituted to reveal the close communion that God

would now have with his people, based on the atoning work of Christ. As a result, this new covenant basis for fellowship, or communion, between God and his people was truly offered by Christ to his disciples in the upper room during that Passover evening (Mt 26:28; Mk 14:24; Lk 22:20; 1 Cor 11:25).

In the same manner, the communion sacrifice was also first given in the context of a close communion between God and his people during the establishment of a covenant. This covenant was the Sinaitic Covenant established by God with his people after their deliverance from Egypt (Ex 19-24). During the ratification of the covenant of Exodus 24, sacrifices were offered, which included the communion sacrifice and the whole burnt offering (v. 5). From these sacrifices, Moses took the blood and poured half into bowls, and the other half he sprinkled on the altar. After the people assented to the stipulations of the covenant as read by Moses (v. 7), he then took the blood that he had gathered and sprinkled (וִיזְרַק) it on the people, stating that it was the blood of the covenant (דְּמֵהֶבְרִיתָ - v. 8). Therefore the initial offering of this sacrifice indicates its purpose for the expression of communion. For God had delivered his people to himself and made a covenant with them. When the people agreed to the terms of the covenant, blood from this sacrifice and the whole burnt offering was sprinkled upon them as a seal. Thus, the people were brought

into communion with their God and each other on the basis of this sealed covenant made at Sinai.

In addition, when Christ mandated and instituted the Sacrament of the Altar, he gave this imperative to his disciples: "Do this in remembrance of me" (τοῦτο ποιεῖτε εἰς τὴν ἐμὴν ἀνάμνησιν - Lk 22:19; 1 Cor 11:24,25). For this reason, the church is to reenact this sacrament according to its mandate and institution in order to remind the participants of the new covenant that was established by the One who is truly present "in, with, and under" the elements of the bread and wine (Jer 31:34; cf. Mt 26:28). In the same manner, when the communion sacrifice is offered, which was often coupled with the whole burnt offering, there is essentially a reenactment of the covenant ratification ceremony.⁶² Consequently, this sacrifice, in effect, served as reminder of the covenant that was made at Sinai.

Concluding Remarks

The initial comments of this paper noted that doing exegetical work is challenging, especially when there is disagreement concerning the meaning of a particular word. This certainly held true for the Hebrew term **שְׁלָמִים**. It was discovered

⁶²In other words, like the covenant ratification at Mount Sinai, the whole burnt offering and communion sacrifice were given and a communal meal followed.

that this term and sacrifice had a variety of translations, such as "well-being" or "gift of greeting" or "peace." These translation did have merit to them, but they also failed in some manner to capture the rich meaning and intent of the **שְׁלָמִים** sacrifice.

Therefore, in order to gain a better understanding of this sacrifice, it was compared to the Sacrament of the Altar. Through this comparison, it was discovered that both of these acts of worship have common traits between them. Both offered atonement (although it must be remembered that the Lord's Supper offers Christ's once-for-all atonement, whereas the communion sacrifice needed to be given again and again - cf. Heb 10:10-12). Both entailed meals that were hosted by God in which the sacrifices that made atonement were consumed by the people. Both involve what is known as "closed communion." And both were first given in a context of an intimate gathering between God and his people during the time in which a covenant was established.

It was through this examination of the common traits between these two acts of worship that the translation "communion" for the Hebrew term **שְׁלָמִים** was demonstrated to be the best fit. Although it may argued that all sacrifices reveal some sort of communion that God has with his people, the primary purpose of the **שְׁלָמִים** sacrifice is to express this communion between God and his covenant people.

This is most evident by the distinguishing mark of this sacrifice, which is the communal meal. For like the Sacrament of the Altar, God offers a holy meal for his holy people in the ritual of the communion sacrifice. Therefore this meal of the communion sacrifice, much like the Lord's Supper, reveals the close, intimate relationship between God and his people.

However, the value of comparing the Sacrament of the Altar to the communion sacrifice does not end with a better understanding of this Old Testament act of worship. In addition, a greater understanding of the Lord's Supper is also acquired. For if it is true that the Sacrament of the Altar is the antitype of the communion sacrifice (that is, it serves as a fulfillment to this Old Testament act of worship), then a better understating of the antitype is gained by studying its Old Testament type.

To illustrate this point, it could be argued from such a comparative study that the true bodily presence was indeed intended by the words of institution from our Lord (e.g. 1 Co 11:23-25). For it had been demonstrated that Yahweh does indeed give atonement through the ritual of sacrifice and sprinkling of blood that is part of the communion sacrifice. As a result, when the Israelites gather to eat for the communal meal, they in fact consume the very flesh of the atoning sacrifice. Consequently, if the Sacrament of the Altar truly fulfills the communion sacrifice,

then it follows that when God's people gather to consume the bread and the wine, they are in fact consuming the very flesh (and blood) of the atoning sacrifice, who is the Lord Jesus Christ himself.

Another significant point that can be drawn from the examination of the typological relationship is the concept of closed communion. It was noted that God had given this sacrifice to people that he delivered and made his own (cf. Ex 19:4-6). Therefore, the communion that the people have with God and one another was established by Yahweh himself. In other words, the people did not voluntarily band together and form this covenant relationship, but they were redeemed and brought together by their God. Therefore, it was this vertical and horizontal unity between God and his covenant people that was to be expressed at the communion sacrifice with its communal meal (cf. Lev 7:20-21). For it is only for his holy people that these holy things were given. Nothing or no one impure may be a part of it.

In the same way, the people of the new covenant relationship, which was established by the atoning work of Christ, were also called, gathered, and redeemed by God to be his own people (cf. 1 Pet 2:9-10). In other words, this was not the people's own doing, but rather God made them his own by his grace and mercy (cf. Ro 9:15-16; Eph 2:8-9). Because the people of the new

covenant relationship have been brought together by God into the body of Christ, there are to be no divisions among them when they come together to worship God through Holy Communion (cf. 1 Cor 11:18). Thus like the communion offering, the Sacrament of the Altar is to be an expression of the vertical and horizontal unity that exists between God and the people, for these are holy things that God only intends to give to his holy people.

In summary, the **שְׁלָמִים** sacrifice is a vital key in discovering what our Lord intends with his relationship among his people. As a result, it serves the body of Christ well to examine this act of worship to see what says to us who live under the new covenant. For we, like the people of the Israelites of the Old Testament, are to express our communion with God and with one another when the Sacrament of the Altar is administered. And it is through the study of the term **שְׁלָמִים** that we gain a better understanding of what this communion relationship - which God established through his Son - entails.

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