

Parashat Tzav

“Let them give thanks to God for His mercy”

In what circumstances is a *Korban Todah* [offering of thanks] brought?

Is the *Korban Todah* obligatory or optional?

How does the *Korban Todah* differ from other sacrifices? Why?

Which sacrifice is similar to the *Korban Todah*, and how do these two sacrifices differ?

A. How Does One Thank God?

One of the sacrifices described in *Parashat Tzav* is the *Korban Todah*:

אם על תודה יקרִיבנו, והקריב על זבח התודה חלות מצות בלולת בשמן ורקיקי מצות משחים בשמן וסלת מרבכת חלת בלולת בשמן: על חלת לחם חמץ יקריב קרבנו על זבח תודת שלמיו: והקריב ממנו אחד מכל קרבן תרומה לה' לפהו הנרק את דם השלמים לו יהיה: ובשר זבח תודת שלמיו ביום קרבנו יאכל לא יניח ממנו עד בקר.

ויקרא ז', יב-טו

If he offers it for a *Todah*, then he shall offer with the *Todah* sacrifice unleavened loaves mingled with oil, and unleavened wafers spread with oil, and loaves mingled with oil, of fine flour soaked. With loaves of leavened bread he shall present his offering with the sacrifice of his *Shelamim* for a *Todah*. And he shall offer of it one out of each offering for a gift to God; it shall be the priest who sprinkles the blood of the *Shelamim*. And the flesh of the sacrifice of his *Shelamim*, for a *Todah*, shall be eaten on the day of his offering; he shall not leave any of it until the morning. (Lev. 7:12-15)

“Four Must Express Thanks”

The *Korban Todah* is brought to express thanks to God when one is saved from danger.¹ According to Rashi,² this sacrifice is brought for recovery from four³ types of danger, all of which are mentioned in Psalms 107:

¹ Most commentators interpret the word *Todah* to mean “thanks.” Radak, however, explains *Todah* as coming from the same root as *vidui*, “confession,” and comments that the *Korban Todah* is meant to be a general atonement for one’s sins. He writes:

הזבח שמתודה עליו עונותיו נקרא תודה, אבל לא היה לו תורת חטאת ואשם, אלא תורת שלמים, שהתודה לא היתה נאכלת אלא ליום ולילה. ואף על פי שהיה בא הזבח הזה על עונות, לא היה לו תורת חטאת ואשם, לפי שהחטאת והאשם באים על עון מיוחד, וזה הזבח היה האדם מביא אותו על כל עונותיו כשהיה רוצה להתוודות ולשוב לדרך הטובה.

The sacrifice upon which he confesses his sins is called *Todah*, but its laws are not parallel to [those of the] *Chatat* and *Asham* [sacrifices which atone for one’s sins], but parallel the laws of the *Shelamim*, for the *Todah* was only eaten that day and the following night. And even though this sacrifice comes to [atone for] sins, its laws are not parallel to the *Chatat* and *Asham*, for the *Chatat* and *Asham* come to [atone for]

“אם על תודה יקריבנו” – אם על דבר הודאה על נס שנעשה לו, כגון: יורדי הים והולכי מדבריות וחבושי בית האסורים וחולה שנתרפא שהם צריכין להודות שכתוב בהן (תהלים ק”ז): “יודו לה’ חסדו ונפלאותיו לבני אדם ויזבחו זבחי תודה.”

“If he offers it for a *Todah*” – if for a matter of thanksgiving or a miracle that was done for him, such as **those who travel by sea or through the wilderness, and those who were imprisoned, and one who was sick and recovered**, they must give thanks, for about them it is written: “Let them give thanks to God for His mercy, and for His wonderful works to the children of men,” “And let them offer the sacrifices of *Todah*.” (Rashi on Lev. 7:12)

Psalm 107 reads:

הָדוּ לַה' כִּי טוֹב כִּי לְעוֹלָם חַסְדּוֹ.

Give thanks to God, for He is good, for His kindness is forever.

Wanderers in the Wilderness

יֹאמְרוּ גְאוּלֵי ה' אֲשֶׁר גָּאֵלְם מִיַּד צָר: וּמֵאֲרֻצוֹת קִבְצִים מִמִּזְרַח וּמִמְעַרְב מִצְפּוֹן וּמִיָּם: תָּעוּ בַמִּדְבָּר בִּישִׁימוֹן דָּרְךְ עִיר מוֹשָׁב לֹא מִצְאוּ: רְעֵבִים גַּם צָמְאִים נִפְשָׁם בְּהֵם תִּתְעַטֵּף: וַיִּצְעֲקוּ אֶל ה' בְּצָר לָהֶם מִמִּצְוֹקוֹתֵיהֶם יִצִּילֵם... יוֹדוּ לַה' חַסְדּוֹ וְנִפְלְאוֹתָיו לְבְנֵי אָדָם.
פסוקים א-ח

The redeemed of God shall say, they whom He redeemed from the hand of the enemy, and gathered out of the lands, from the east and from the west, from the north and from the sea.

specific sins, **and this sacrifice one would bring for all of his sins when he sought to confess and return to the proper path.** (*Sefer HaShorashim*, root y-d-h)

² See Rashi on Lev. 7:12. Other medieval commentators supported this view: see Rashbam ad loc.; *Sefer Mitzvot Gadol*, pos. commandment 183; *Or Zarua* II:252; and Rosh on *Berachot* 9:3 (quoted below).

³ Some decisors reduce the number of dangerous situations that require one to bring a *Korban Todah*. The *Chatam Sofer* writes in his responsa that only the first three types of situations require a *Korban Todah*, while the fourth – traveling by sea – does not, since “he himself put himself in danger, and was at the mercy of heaven, for His mercy is great, and not at the mercy of animals (in the wilderness), and so he does not owe a *Korban Todah*, but must praise [God] publicly” (Responsa of the *Chatam Sofer*, *Orach Chayim* 51).

Ibn Ezra comments on Psalm 107: “‘And they will sacrifice’ – they must sacrifice, for the wanderer and the captive are physically healthy, and one who was ill was near dead.” This seems to indicate that only one who was ill is obligated to bring a *Korban Todah*.

Other approaches actually **increase** the number of situations that require bringing this sacrifice. Rabbenu Bahya writes:

קרבן תודה בא על נס והוא לשון הודאה. אם היה חולה ונתרפא מביא קרבן תודה, הוא שכתוב: “ויזבחו זבחי תודה ויספרו מעשיו ברנה”, או שאר שמחות, כגון שמחת חתן וכלה, שנאמר: “קול ששון וקול שמחה וגו’ מביאים תודה בית ה’” (ירמיהו ל”ג, יא).

A *Korban Todah* is brought for a miracle, and its name indicates expressing thanks. If he was sick and was healed he brings a *Korban Todah*, as it is written: “And let them offer the sacrifices of *Todah* and declare His words with singing,” or for other happy events, such as the joy of [the marriage of] a bride and groom, as it says: “The voice of happiness and the voice of joy, etc., they bring *Todah* to the house of God” (Jer. 33:11). (Rabbenu Bahya on Lev. 6:2)

They wandered in the wilderness in a deserted way; they found no inhabited city. Hungry and thirsty, their soul fainted in them. **And they cried to God in their trouble, and he delivered them from their distresses... Let them give thanks to God for His mercy, and for His wonderful works to the children of men.** (Ps. 107:1-8)

The Imprisoned

כי השביע נפש שקקה ונפש רעבה מלא טוב: יִשְׁבִי חֶשֶׁךְ וְצַלְמוֹת אֲסִירֵי עֲנִי וּבְרִזָּל... וַיִּצְעֲקוּ אֵל ה' בְּצַר לָהֶם מִמַּצְקוֹתֵיהֶם יוֹשִׁיעֵם... יוֹדוּ לַה' חֲסִדוֹ וְנִפְלְאוֹתָיו לְבְנֵי אָדָם.

פסוקים ט-טו

For He satisfied the longing soul, and the hungry soul He filled with good. They who sat in darkness and in death's shadow, bound in affliction and iron... **And they cried to God in their trouble, and he delivered them from their distresses... Let them give thanks to God for His mercy, and for His wonderful works to the children of men.** (Ps. 107:9-15)

The Ill

כי שבר דלתות נחשת ובריחי ברזל גדע: אֲוִלִים מִדְּרֹךְ פִּשְׁעֵם וּמַעֲוֹנוֹתֵיהֶם יִתְעַנּוּ: כָּל אֲכָל תִּתְעַב נִפְשָׁם וַיִּגִּיעוּ עַד שְׁעַרֵי מוֹת: וַיִּצְעֲקוּ אֵל ה' בְּצַר לָהֶם מִמַּצְקוֹתֵיהֶם יוֹשִׁיעֵם: יִשְׁלַח דְּבָרוֹ וַיִּרְפְּאֵם וַיִּמְלֹט מִשַּׁחֲתוֹתָם: יוֹדוּ לַה' חֲסִדוֹ וְנִפְלְאוֹתָיו לְבְנֵי אָדָם.

פסוקים טז-כא

For He broke the gates of brass and cut apart the bars of iron. Crazy from the way of their transgression, and afflicted because of their iniquities, their soul abhorred all food, and they came to the gates of death. **And they cried to God in their trouble, and he delivered them from their distresses.** He sent His word and healed them, and delivered them from their graves. **Let them give thanks to God for His mercy, and for His wonderful works to the children of men.** (Ps. 107:16-21)

Travelers by Sea

וַיִּזְבְּחוּ זִבְחֵי תוֹדָה וַיִּסְפְּרוּ מַעֲשָׂיו בְּרִנָּה: יוֹרְדֵי הַיָּם בְּאֲנִיּוֹת עֲשִׂי מְלָאכָה בַּיָּם רַבִּים... וַיֹּאמֶר וַיַּעֲמֵד רוּחַ סְעָרָה וַתְּרוּמֵם גְּלִיו: יַעֲלוּ שָׁמַיִם יִרְדּוּ תְּהוֹמוֹת נִפְשָׁם בְּרָעָה תִתְמוּגַג... וַיִּצְעֲקוּ אֵל ה' בְּצַר לָהֶם וּמִמַּצְוֹקֹתֵיהֶם יוֹשִׁיעֵם... יוֹדוּ לַה' חֲסִדוֹ וְנִפְלְאוֹתָיו לְבְנֵי אָדָם. וַיִּרְמְמוּהוּ בְּקֶהֱל עָם וּבְמוֹשָׁב זְקֵנִים יִהְלִלוּהוּ...

פסוקים כב-לב

And let them offer the sacrifices of *Todah* and declare His words with singing. They who go down to the sea in ships, who do business in great waters... And He spoke, and raised the stormy wind, which lifted the waves. They ascended to heaven and went down to the deeps, their soul melted in distress... **And they cried to God in their trouble, and he delivered them from their distresses... Let them give thanks to God for His mercy, and for His wonderful works to the**

children of men. Let them exalt Him in the assembly of the people, and praise Him in the seat of the elders ... (Ps. 107:22-32)

... מי חכם ויִשְׁמַר אֱלֹהֵי יִתְבוֹנְנוּ חֲסֵדֵי ה'.

שם, פסוק מג

...Who is wise, let him observe these things, and let them consider the mercies of God. (Ps. 107:43)

Rescue from Danger Leads to Giving Thanks

This chapter describes people caught in dangerous circumstances. In fear and anguish they call out to God, Who saves them. They then thank Him, as the verse states: "Let them give thanks to God for His mercy, and for His wonderful works to the children of men." This statement is repeated four times throughout the chapter, following each instance of rescue (verses 8, 15, 21 and 31). In addition, the chapter begins with the verse: "Give thanks to God, for He is good; His mercy endures forever," and ends with "Let them consider the mercies of God." The psalm as a whole describes man's feeling of dependence on God and his need to thank God when He saves us.

Obligation to Recite the "HaGomel" Blessing

The Sages obligate a person who experienced one of these four types of dangerous situations to recite the "HaGomel" blessing:

אמר רב יהודה אמר רב: ארבעה צריכין להודות – יורדי הים, הולכי מדברות, ומי שהיה חולה ונתרפא, ומי שהיה חבוש בבית האסורים ויצא.
יורדי הים מנלן? דכתיב: "יורדי הים באניות..." ואומר: "יודו לה' חסדו ונפלאותיו לבני אדם" (פסוקים כג-לא); הולכי מדברות מנלן? דכתיב: "תעו במדבר בשימון דרך... יודו לה' חסדו" (ד-ה); מי שחלה ונתרפא - דכתיב: "ישלח דברו וירפאם... יודו לה' חסדו" (כ-כא); מי שהיה חבוש בבית האסורין מנלן? דכתיב: "יושבי חשך וצלמות... יודו לה' חסדו" (י-טו).
מאי מברך? אמר רב יהודה: "ברוך גומל חסדים טובים". אביי אמר: וצריך לאודוויי קמי עשרה, דכתיב: "וירוממוהו בקהל עם..." (פסוק לב).

ברכות נד, ב

Rav Yehuda said that Rav said: Four must give thanks: those who travel by sea, those who walk through the wilderness, one who was ill and recovered, and one who was imprisoned and set free.

Those who travel by sea – from where do we derive this? As it is written: "They who go down to the sea in ships..." and says, "Let them give thanks to God for His mercy, and for His wonderful works to the children of men." (Ps. 107:23-31). Those who walk through the wilderness – from where do we derive this? As it is written: "They wandered in the wilderness in a deserted way...Let them give thanks to God for His mercy" (Ps. 107:4-8). One who was ill and recovered – as it is written: "He sent His word and healed them...Let them give thanks to God for His mercy" (Ps. 107:20-21). One who was imprisoned – from where do we derive this? As it is written: "They

who sat in darkness and in death's shadow...Let them give thanks to God for His mercy" (Ps. 107:10-15).

What blessing does one recite? Rav Yehuda said: "Blessed is He Who grants good mercy." Abaye says: And he must give thanks before ten [men], as it says: "Let them exalt Him in the assembly of the people" (Ps. 107:32). (*Berachot* 54b)

The "*HaGomel*" blessing, which is recited before ten men, as per Abaye's opinion, is a public statement of praise to God. Why must this be done in public?

This blessing is not simply a personal prayer that must be said with ten men present. The purpose of thanking God in public is to include the community in the individual's personal miracle, which naturally involves recounting to others the details of the event, since God's name is honored when His miracles are publicized. It is no longer only the individual who is giving thanks to God and praising Him, but the entire community.⁴

The *Korban Todah*

How does man give thanks to God?

The psalm describes a number of stages in this process:

Recognition of God's Kindness

The first stage in thanking God is recognizing the good that He has done for one. Man must recognize that God is the one who "satisfied his soul" and rescued him from suffering:

"יודו לה' חסדו... כי השביע נפש שוקקה..."

פסוקים ח-ט

Let them give thanks to God for His mercy... For He satisfied the longing soul... (Ps. 107:8-9)

"יודו לה' חסדו... כי שיבר דלתות נחושת..."

פסוקים טו-טז

⁴ In the Talmudic source quoted above, Abaye derives the obligation to recite the blessing in public from the words "[Let them exalt Him] in the assembly of the people." According to this statement, the phrase "Let them exalt Him" refers to the sanctification and elevation of God's name that occur as a result of reciting the blessing in public. The subject of this action is the community, the "assembly of the people," not only the person reciting the blessing. This explains the custom cited by the *Shulchan Aruch* (*Orach Chayim* Rabbanit?? 219:2) in which the congregation answers "Amen" and recites, "He Who granted good to you, He shall grant you every good, *selah*," or, according to another custom: "God, Who granted you every good, He shall grant you forever, *selah*, and eternally." A number of reasons are listed as to why the congregation recites this additional phrase as opposed to merely responding "Amen" (see the responsa of Rabbi Yekutiel Yehuda Halberstam, the Rebbe of Klausenberg, quoted in the responsa *Chemdat Tzvi* III:7). However, according to the interpretation cited above, it is possible that by doing so, the congregation joins the person reciting the blessing in glorifying God's name.

Let them give thanks to God for His mercy... For He broke the gates of brass... (Ps. 107:15-16)

This is the first, most fundamental step; without it, one cannot truly express his gratitude to God.

Expressing Thanks

The next stage is expressing this (feeling of gratitude/thanks) in words, blessing, prayer – “Let them give thanks to God for His mercy.”⁵

(Practical Thanks/Thanks in Action) – Sacrifice and (Story)

Further on, the (psalm) adds another stage:

”יודו לה' חסדו... ויזבחזו זבחי תודה ויספרו מעשיו ברינה”.

פסוקים כא-כב

Let them give thanks to God for His mercy... And let them **offer** the sacrifices of *Todah* and **declare** His words with singing. (Ps. 107:21-22)

These are concrete expressions of gratitude – bringing a sacrifice of thanks and verbally recounting His goodness.

Public Praise of God

Following the descriptions of the four types of situations, the psalm goes on to describe an additional stage of the process: public praise of God.

”יודו לה' חסדו... וירוממהו בקהל עם ובמושב זקנים יהללוהו”.

פסוקים לא-לב

Let them give thanks to God for His mercy... **And let them exalt Him** in the assembly of the people, and **praise Him** in the seat of the elders.” (Ps. 107:31-32)

The Sacrifice – Thanking by Giving

Why is one obligated to bring a *Korban Todah*? Why is it not enough to praise God verbally and publicize the miracle?

There are many ways to express one's gratitude. One way is to give thanks verbally, but words are not always enough to fully express one's feelings. Man feels that he must give something of himself to the One Who gave him so much.

The Sacrifices of Genesis – *Korbanot Todah*

⁵ The word *hoda'a*, “thanks” can also be interpreted as coming from the same root as the word *vidui*, “confession” – the first stage of the process, in which man recognizes and “confesses,” or verbally expresses, the good that God has done for him. When man verbally acknowledges this, he also thanks God for it (see *Ein Ayah* 9:16).

The desire to express thanks to God is the foundation of all sacrifices. Cain and Abel thank God for their produce, instinctively choosing to do so by giving of their possessions to God (Gen. 4:3-4). Noah, too, builds an altar and brings sacrifices to God upon leaving the ark (Gen. 8:20).

The *midrash* explains Noah's reason for bringing sacrifices:

...ישב נח ודרש בלבו ואמר: הקב"ה הצילני ממי המבול והוציאני מן המסגר הזה ואיני חייב להקריב לפניו קרבן ועולות? מה עשה נח לקח מן הבהמה הטהורה... ובנה את המזבח הראשון שהקריבו עליו קין והבל, והקריב ארבעה עולות, שנאמר: "ויבן נח מזבח לה"..."

פרקי דרבי אליעזר, פרק כ"ג

...Noah sat and thought to himself and said: "God saved me from the waters of the flood, and took me out of this (Rabbanit??); am I not obligated to bring sacrifices to him?" What did Noah do – he took from the pure animals... and built the first altar upon which (Cain and Abel brought sacrifices Rabbanit??), and he brought four burnt-offerings, as it says: "And Noah built an altar for God..." (Pirkei DeRabbi Eliezer 23)

The first sacrifices in human history were not brought out of obligation or in pursuit of atonement, but from a feeling of gratitude toward God for the goodness He granted to man. This gratitude led man to feel the need to give something of his own to God. The *Korban Todah*, then, is the oldest form of sacrifice and expresses the original meaning of sacrifices in general.⁶

Obligatory or Optional?

Is the *Korban Todah* an obligatory or optional sacrifice? **Must** a person who was ill or in danger bring a *Korban Todah*, or may he decide to **voluntarily** bring this sacrifice in order to express his gratitude toward God?

The *Korban Todah* as an Optional Sacrifice

At first, a voluntary expression of thanks might seem to be more meaningful than an obligatory one. One who brings a sacrifice of his own initiative, without any obligation to do so, is clearly expressing genuine feelings of gratitude to God. Rashi seems to think that the *Korban Todah* is, in fact, optional:⁷

"אם על תודה יקריבנו" – אם על דבר הודאה על נס שנעשה לו, כגון יורדי הים והולכי מדברות וחבושי בית האסורים וחולה שנתרפא שהם צריכין להודות, שכתוב בהן "יודו לה' חסדו ונפלאותיו לבני אדם, "ויזבחו זבחי תודה". **אם על אחת מאלה נדר שלמים הללו** – שלמי תודה הן.

רש"י ויקרא ז', יב

⁶ This need to give stems from the awareness that man is giving to God from what God gave to him, as David states: "For everything is from You, and from Your hand we gave to You" (I Chron. 29:14).

⁷ This seems to be Rambam's interpretation as well, as he does not mention the obligation to bring a *Korban Todah* in his *Hilchot Ma'aseh HaKorbanot* [his explanation of the commandments relating to sacrifices].

“If he offers it for a *Todah*” – if for a matter of thanksgiving or a miracle that was done for him, such as those who travel by sea or through the wilderness, and those who were imprisoned, and one who was sick and recovered, they must give thanks, for about them it is written: “Let them give thanks to God for His mercy, and for His wonderful works to the children of men,” “And let them offer the sacrifices of *Todah*.” **If for one of these he swore an oath to bring a *Shelamim*** – it is a *Shelamim* of *Todah*. (Rashi on Lev. 7:12)

According to Rashi, one may make an oath to bring a *Korban Todah*, but one is not obligated to do so.⁸ It is important to note that in contrast to the other types of optional sacrifices, the *Todah* depends upon one having been saved from a dangerous situation. This would seem to imply that it cannot be voluntarily brought whenever one wishes.

The *Korban Todah* as an Obligatory Sacrifice

However, the Talmud states that one who survived any of these dangerous situations “**must** give thanks,” whether verbally or by bringing a sacrifice.⁹ This would indicate that the *Korban Todah* is obligatory.¹⁰ Why did the Torah establish this sacrifice as obligatory instead of allowing a person to voluntarily express his thanks, should he feel the need to?

It is possible that the purpose of the obligation to bring the *Korban Todah* is to **encourage man to express thanks to God**, since not everyone acknowledges this need instinctively. The obligation to bring this sacrifice teaches man to recognize the need to give thanks to God.

A Feeling of Gratitude

It seems that the primary component of the *Korban Todah* is the fact that it is voluntary. Initially, when a person felt grateful to God, he would bring a sacrifice to express his thanks. Later on, the Sages obligated one to thank God for saving him from dangerous situations. In addition to saying the “*HaGomel*” blessing, this obligation might include bringing a *Korban Todah* as well.¹¹ Still, **the main element of the obligation is to feel gratitude towards God** and to express that feeling by bringing the *Korban Todah*.¹² The Sages sought to educate man to be grateful to God and therefore obligated him to

⁸ There are two opinions regarding how to interpret Rashi. The first opinion states that the *Korban Todah* is voluntary (see *Petach HaDvir* 219:12). However, Rabbi Yerucham Fishel Perle (Rabbanit Hebrew spelling?? פערלא) proves from Rashi’s commentary on verse 7 (s.v. “*ve’im neder o nedava*”) that he considers this sacrifice obligatory (see Rabbi Perle’s commentary on Rav Sa’adia Ga’on’s *Sefer HaMitzvot*, pos. commandment 59, 259:1).

⁹ The link between the “*HaGomel*” blessing and the *Korban Todah* is not explicitly mentioned in the Talmud, but the *Tur* hints that “*HaGomel*” was instituted in place of the *Korban Todah* (see *Tur siman* 219, based on the commentary of Rosh on *Berachot*, 9:3) In other words, when the Temple stood one was **obligated** to bring the *Korban Todah*, and today the **obligation** remains to recite “*HaGomel*.”

¹⁰ According to a number of medieval and later commentators, the *Korban Todah* was obligatory (see Rabbi Perle’s commentary on Rav Sa’adia Ga’on’s *Sefer HaMitzvot* 1:259-260).

¹¹ It should be noted that in the opinion of the *Magen Avraham*, the “*HaGomel*” blessing, like the *Korban Todah*, is optional. However, later commentaries disagreed with this approach, especially the *Sefer Mitzvot Katan*, who writes that the recitation of this blessing is biblically mandated.

¹² Rav Kook writes:

שיכיר עצמו לחייב על העדר קורת רוחו ושמחתו בגורלו שהיה לו, עד שבאו ימי הרעה שבהם לא ידעה נפשו שבעה.

bring this sacrifice. However, they did not abandon the original focal point of the practice: voluntarily bringing a sacrifice out of a feeling of gratitude.

B. The *Korban Todah* as a *Korban Shelamim*

The Details Reflect the Nature of the Sacrifice

Each sacrifice expresses a different sentiment felt by the person bringing it. The *halachic* details, which vary from sacrifice to sacrifice, reflect the idea that each sacrifice is meant to express. In this section, we will focus on the details unique to the *Korban Todah*.

The Properties of the *Korban Shelamim*

In the fifth chapter of the *mishnayot* of tractate *Zevachim*, a comparison is drawn between two types of sacrifices: the “Holy of Holies” [*Kodshei Kodashim*] and their laws, and the “Lesser Holies” [*Kodashim Kalim*] and their corresponding laws. The *Korban Todah* is defined here as one of the “Lesser Holies” (see *Zevachim* 5:7). The comparison may be summarized as follows:

	Holy of Holies	Lesser Holies
Place of slaughter	The north side of the altar	The entire court of the Temple
Who eats from the sacrifice	The owner never eats from it	The altar [i.e., part of the sacrifice is burned], the priests and the owner
Where must it be eaten	In the court of the Temple	Anywhere in Jerusalem
When must it be eaten	The day of the sacrifice and the following night	The day of the sacrifice, the following night and the following day

The most striking feature of the *Korban Shelamim* is that there are three parties who partake of it: the altar, the priest and the owner of the sacrificed animal. In this sense, the *Korban Todah* belongs in the category of the *Korban Shelamim*, one of the Lesser Holies – since it too is eaten partly by the owners.

The *Korban Todah* is a *Shelamim*

Why is the *Korban Todah* defined as a type of *Shelamim*? Presumably, a person who miraculously survived a dangerous event and sought to thank God would bring a *Korban Olah* – a sacrifice that is burnt completely for God, from which man does not partake at all.¹³ In order to resolve this question, we will consider the details of the *Korban Shelamim* more carefully.

That he should (recognize himself??) for his lack of (??) and his happiness over his fate, until the (days of evil) came in which his soul knew no (satisfaction??). (Rabbanit??) (*Ein Ayah* on *Berachot* 9:16)

¹³ The first *Korbanot Todah* brought in history were, in fact, of this kind. Both Cain and Noah brought *Korbanot Olah* and grain-offerings: “And it was after days passed, and Cain brought of the fruit of the ground a **grain-offering to God**” (Gen. 4:3); “And Noah built an altar for God; and he took of every pure beast and of every pure bird, and **he offered Olah-offerings** on the altar” (Gen. 8:20).

What does the name *Shelamim* mean?

Shelamim as Payment

According to Rashbam, the word *shelamim* refers to payment:

...לשון שלמים שמשמע לשון "נדר וצריך לשלם את נדריו" שהוא לשון תשלומים...
רשב"ם ויקרא ג', א

...The word *shelamim*, which indicates that "He swore and must pay out his oath," which is from the same root as *tashlumim* [payments]... (Rashbam on Lev. 3:1)

According to Rashbam, the *Korban Shelamim* is unique in that it is brought as payment for an oath, and not as an obligatory sacrifice.

Shelamim as Peace

Rashi interprets the same verse differently:

"שלמים" – שמתילים שלום בעולם. דבר אחר: שלמים שיש בהם שלום למזבח ולכהנים ולבעלים.

"*Shelamim*" – for they bring peace [*shalom*] into the world. Another thing: *Shelamim*, for there is peace in them for the altar, the priests and the owner. (Rashi on Lev. 3:1)

Rashi interprets the word *shelamim* as referring to *shalom*, peace. The *Korban Shelamim* is unique in that everyone – the altar, the priest and the owner – partake of it, thereby bringing about peace among all of them.

Olah and *Chatat* – Awe and Distance

The experience of one who brings a *Korban Shelamim* is entirely different from one who brings a *Korban Olah* or *Korban Chatat*. Someone bringing an *Olah* or *Chatat* is submissive and humbled before God. These sacrifices are usually obligatory, sometimes due to a sin.¹⁴ In addition, the entire sacrifice is offered to God (or, alternatively, a small part is given to the priest), and the owner of the sacrifice is prohibited to eat from it. This instills in him a sense of **man's insignificance before God**, and he recognizes the great distance between him and his Creator. The *Olah* and *Chatat*, therefore, are brought due to a sense of awe and distance.

Shelamim – Love and Closeness

One who brings a *Korban Shelamim* undergoes a completely different spiritual experience. Rashbam interprets the word *shelamim* as referring to payment, which defines the *Korban Shelamim* as payment

¹⁴ While there is an option to bring a voluntary *Korban Olah*, most of the obligatory sacrifices – the *Korbanot Tamid* offered twice a day, and the *Korbanot Mussaf* brought on the Sabbath and festivals – fall under the category of *Olah*. *Korbanot Shelamim*, on the other hand, are rarely brought as obligatory sacrifices on the Sabbath and festivals (see note 15).

for an oath. This sacrifice is completely voluntary,¹⁵ brought when one decides to swear an oath to voluntarily bring a sacrifice. This act is motivated by a person's need to give to God in order to express his love for Him.

This mutual love is also expressed in the sharing of the sacrifice, as expressed by Rashi above. Rabbi David Zvi Hoffman writes:

...קרבן זה הוא סעודה משותפת למזבח, לכהנים ולבעלים. הסעודה הזאת נקראת "סעודת שלום" – זבח שלמים. היא מתארת את ההרמוניה בין המקריב ובין ה' ועבדיו.

This sacrifice is a shared meal between the altar, the priests and the owner. This meal is called "A Meal of Peace" – the *Shelamim* sacrifice. It reflects the harmony among the one who brings the sacrifice and God and His servants.

This shared meal, so to speak, between man and God forms a unique bond between them and expresses their mutual love.¹⁶

It is now clear why the *Korban Todah* is a type of *Korban Shelamim*. The *Korban Todah* is brought when man feels that God has been kind to him. He feels God's love for him, and seeks to express his love for God by giving back to Him.

C. The *Lechem Todah* – Bread of Thanksgiving

... וְהִקְרִיב עַל זֶבַח הַתּוֹדָה חֲלוֹת מִצּוֹת בְּלוֹלֹת בְּשֶׁמֶן וְרִקְיָקִי מִצּוֹת מִשְׁחִים בְּשֶׁמֶן וְסֹלֶת מִרְבֵּכֶת חֲלוֹת בְּלוֹלֹת בְּשֶׁמֶן. ויקרא ד', יב

...Then he shall offer with the *Todah* sacrifice unleavened loaves mingled with oil, and unleavened wafers spread with oil, and loaves mingled with oil, of fine flour soaked. (Lev. 7:12)

A Unique Addition to the *Korban Todah*

The laws of the *Korban Todah* include a unique addition to the sacrifice: bread.¹⁷ The status of this bread is fundamentally different from the grain-offerings that accompany other sacrifices.

The owner of the sacrifice must bring four types of bread:

¹⁵ There are a few instances in which a *Korban Shelamim* is brought as an obligatory sacrifice (such as the *Shelamei Atzeret* and the *Shelamei Chagiga*). However, the introduction of this sacrifice in *Parashot Vayikra* and *Tzav* describes it as a voluntary sacrifice, or one brought in as payment for an oath. This seems to be the fundamental character of the sacrifice, as Rashbam states (see above).

¹⁶ The *Korban Shelamim* is associated with joy and gratitude in a number of places in the Bible: "And you shall bring *Shelamim* and eat them there, and you shall rejoice before the Lord, your God" (Deut. 27:7); as well as the reinstatement of Saul as king: "And they brought *Shelamim* sacrifices before God; and there Saul and all of the men of Israel rejoiced greatly" (I Sam. 11:15).

¹⁷ Bread is brought with the *Shelamei Nazir* as well (see Num. 6:14-20).

- A. Unleavened loaves mingled with oil
- B. Unleavened wafers spread with oil
- C. Loaves mingled with oil, of fine flour soaked
- D. Loaves of leavened bread

A Huge Quantity of Bread

One must bring ten loaves of each type of bread, for a total of forty loaves. These loaves are made from twenty *isaron* of fine flour and one *log* of oil.¹⁸ One *isaron* is a tenth of an *epha*, or about 2.5 liters, and so twenty *isaron* equal approximately fifty liters. In other words, a huge amount of bread was brought with this sacrifice.¹⁹

Why does such a large quantity of bread accompany the *Korban Todah* specifically? We will return to this point below.

D. Leavened Bread

Another unique aspect of the *Korban Todah* is the fact that it is brought with leavened bread.

The Prohibition of Offering Leaven

Parashat Vayikra contains a commandment prohibiting the use of leaven in grain-offerings:

כָּל הַמִּנְחָה אֲשֶׁר תִּקְרִיבוּ לַיהוָה לֹא תַעֲשֶׂה חֻמֶּץ, כִּי כֹל שָׂאֵר וְכֹל דָּבָשׁ לֹא תִקְטְרוּ מִמֶּנּוּ אִשָּׁה לַיהוָה: קִרְבַּן רִאשִׁית תִּקְרִיבוּ אֹתָם לַיהוָה וְאֵל הַמִּזְבֵּחַ לֹא יַעֲלוּ לְרִיחַ נִיחָח.

ויקרא ב', יא-יב

No grain-offering that you bring to God shall be made with leaven, for you shall make no leaven, nor hoey, smoke as a fire-offering to God. As an offering of first fruits you may bring them to God, but they shall not come upon the altar for a sweet aroma. (Lev. 2:11-12)

This prohibition is repeated in *Parashat Tzav*:

...הַנוֹתֵרֶת מִמִּנְחָה יֹאכְלוּ אֶהֱרֹן וּבָנָיו מִצֹּת תֹּאכַל בְּמִקְוֹם קֹדֶשׁ בַּחֲצַר אֹהֶל מוֹעֵד יֹאכְלוּהָ: לֹא תֵאָפֶה חֻמֶּץ...

ויקרא ו', ט-י

And that which is left over Aaron and his sons shall eat; it shall be eaten without leaven in a holy place, in the court of the Tent of Meeting they shall eat it. It shall not be baked with leaven... (Lev. 6:9-10)

Even the leftovers of the grain-offering, which are eaten by the priests, must be unleavened *matza*.

¹⁸ Rambam, *Hilchot Ma'aseh HaKorbanot* 9:17.

¹⁹ The bread accompanying the *Shelamei Nazir* consists of a much smaller amount of only two types of bread (see Num. 6:14-20).

Leavened Bread Accompanies the *Korban Todah*

Yet leavened bread is specified to accompany the *Korban Todah*. This addition to the *Todah* is not a grain-offering and is not offered on the altar; therefore, strictly speaking, this addition does not contradict the prohibition described above. Still, the Torah is generally opposed to bringing leavened bread as an offering, and yet it specifically commands that leavened bread must be brought with the *Korban Todah*! Why?

In order to better understand this unique aspect of the *Korban Todah*, we must first understand why the Torah forbids bringing leaven as an offering, and why it emphasizes that the grain-offerings must be made with unleavened *matza*.

Leaven – A Symbol of Wealth and Pride

What is the significance of leavened and unleavened bread?²⁰

Leavened bread is a delicacy that is the result of a long process of preparation. This bread symbolizes wealth and success, as well as the pride that accompanies them.²¹

Unleavened Bread [*Matza*] – A Symbol of Progression and Humility

Matza, on the other hand, is the result of stopping the preparation of the dough midway, before the dough begins to rise. *Matza* is poor man's bread; it expresses imperfection, poverty, and the humility that accompanies them.

An Offering of *Matza* – Humility before God

Sacrifices to God are accompanied specifically by *matza*, in an expression of man's imperfection and incompleteness compared to God. Man cannot offer God leavened bread, the symbol of wealth and pride; he must stand before his Creator in utter humility and realize that even his very life depends upon God's will.

The *Korban Todah* – Wealth and Wholeness

Why, then, are we commanded to bring leavened bread with the *Korban Todah*?

As described above, the *Korban Todah* is meant to express a different spiritual state than the *Olah* and *Chatat*. It expresses the deep love between man and God and gratitude for the good that God has granted us. In this situation, one brings both *matza*, which symbolizes the dangerous situation and

²⁰ For an extensive discussion of this topic, see Rav Yoel Bin Nun, "*Chametz UMatza BePesach BeShavuot UBeKorbanot HaLechem*," *Megadim* 13.

²¹ According to the *Zohar* (II:40, 2) *matza* symbolizes the virtue of unity. The *Sefer HaChinuch* writes:
ועוד שמעתי טעם באיסור שאור ודבש, לפי שהשאור מגביה עצמו, וכן הדבש מעלה רתיחתו הרבה, ולכן נתרחקו, לרמוז כי תועבת ה' כל גבה לב.

And I have heard a reason for the prohibition of [offering] leaven and honey: since the leaven raises itself, and so the honey bubbles up greatly, and therefore they were distanced [from the sacrifices] in order to hint that any arrogance is an abomination before God. (*Sefer HaChinuch*, commandment 117)

man's rescue from it, and leavened bread, which symbolizes man's gratitude for the divine redemption from danger. Were one to bring only *matza*, which symbolizes incompleteness, one might appear unappreciative of everything God has done for him.

The *Korban Todah* expresses one's happiness at the relative completeness that he has achieved with God's help. Therefore it is appropriate to bring leavened bread, which symbolizes wholeness, together with this sacrifice in order to reflect the bounty that God has bestowed upon man.

E. Eating the Sacrifice until Morning

ויקרא ז', טו. ובשר זבח תודת שלמיו ביום קרבנו יאכל לא יניח ממנו עד בקר.

ויקרא ז', טו

And the flesh of the sacrifice of his *Shelamim*, for a *Todah*, shall be eaten on the day of his offering; he shall not leave any of it until the morning. (Lev. 7:15)

Less Time to Eat

The *Korban Todah* is a type of *Korban Shelamim*, which falls into the category of Lesser Holies. All sacrifices in this category may be eaten on the day they are brought and the following night and day. The *Korban Todah*, however, may only be eaten the day it is brought and the following night. Why does the Torah reduce the amount of time during which one is allowed to eat from this sacrifice? This question is underscored by the fact that this particular sacrifice is accompanied by a large quantity of bread, as noted above. Thus, one who brings a *Korban Todah* is left with an enormous amount of food that must be eaten very quickly.

Partaking of the Sacrifice – a Feast of Thanksgiving

Apparently, this law is meant to ensure that one will not consume the entire offering himself; rather, he must invite others to eat with him. This shared meal reflects the same idea discussed above – that the *Korban Todah* must be accompanied by a verbal expression of gratitude to God. The individual act of bringing a sacrifice and expressing thanks becomes a communal event in which God's kindness is publicized and He is praised.²² This is hinted at in Psalms: "And let them offer the sacrifices of *Todah* and declare His words with singing," (Ps. 107:22), and thus, in the next verse: "Let them exalt Him in the assembly of the people" (Ps. 107:23).

F. The *Korban Todah* and the Passover Sacrifice

Similarities between the *Korban Todah* and the Passover Sacrifice

²² This is Abarbanel's interpretation. The *Netziv* also states this in a number of places: see *HaEmek Davar* on Lev. 7:12-13, 22:29, and Num. 15:8.

The *Korban Todah* involves a communal feast of thanksgiving, is eaten with bread, and may not be left over until the next morning. These laws apply to another sacrifice as well – the Passover Sacrifice.²³ The Passover Sacrifice is also a *Korban Shelamim*, is eaten communally and must be finished by the next morning, and must be eaten with bread (*matza*).

The Passover Sacrifice – A National *Korban Todah*

Underlying these parallels is the concept that **the Passover Sacrifice is a national *Korban Todah***. Just as an individual brings a *Korban Todah* and recounts his miraculous rescue, so the entire nation arranges a feast of gratitude in which they retell the story of the exodus from Egypt and praise God for His redemption of the Jewish people.²⁴

The Difference – Leavened Bread vs. *Matza*

Yet the similarities between the two sacrifices highlight the difference between them. Both must be eaten with bread, but the *Korban Todah* is eaten with both leavened and unleavened bread. The Passover Sacrifice, on the other hand, may only be eaten with unleavened *matza*,²⁵ and leavened bread is strictly forbidden.²⁶

²³ See Rabbi Menachem Leibtag, “*Korban Pesach VeKorban Todah*,” *Daf Kesher* 697, Nisan 5759, at: <http://www.etzion.org.il/dk/1to899/697daf.htm#Heading3> .

²⁴ It is interesting to note that Psalm 107, which focuses mainly on the four types of situations following which one must give thanks to God, is recited on Passover as the daily song of praise in some communities. This psalm describes a number of aspects of the exodus from Egypt. The verses: “They wandered in the wilderness in a deserted way; they found no inhabited city. Hungry and thirsty, their soul fainted in them” (Ps. 107:4-5) clearly apply to the people who left Egypt, who may also be described as “They who sat in darkness and in death’s shadow, bound in affliction and iron... He brought them out of darkness and death’s shadow, and broke their bands in sunder.” (Ps. 107:12-14). The splitting of the Red Sea might also be reflected in the words: “They who go down to the sea... And He spoke, and raised the stormy wind, which lifted the waves. They ascended to heaven and went down to the deeps” (Ps. 107:25-26).

Possibly alluding to this parallel as well, the *Tur* writes:

“והתוספות כתבו שצריך לעשות ג' (מצות) ... ונוהגין באשכנז וצרפת לעשותן מעשרון, **זכר ללחמי תודה** שהיוצא מבית האסורים מביא תודה ותודה היה בה ג' מינין של מצה... ולכל ג' חלות עשרון אחד...”

And the *Tosafot* write that one must make three (*matzot*)... and those in *Ashkenaz* and France customarily made them out of one *isaron*, **to commemorate of the bread of the *Todah***, for one who is freed from prison brings a *Korban Todah*, which included three types of *matza*... and every three loaves were [made from] one *isaron*...

²⁵ During the Passover Seder, the child asks: “Why is this night different from all other nights? For on all other nights we eat leavened and unleavened bread, but on this night we eat only unleavened bread.” This question might refer to the apparently unexplained difference between a regular *Korban Todah*, which is brought with both leavened and unleavened bread, and the Passover Sacrifice, a unique subcategory of the *Korban Todah*, which is eaten only with *matza*.

²⁶ Another difference between the two sacrifices is that the *Korban Todah* may be prepared in any manner the owner desires: “And the *Todah*... may be eaten (with anything/in any manner??)” (*Mishna* tractate *Zevachim* 5:6). The Passover Sacrifice, on the other hand, may only be roasted. Regarding the obligation to roast the Passover Sacrifice, Rav Kook writes:

זאת היא פעולת הצליה המכנסת את כל הכח שבבשר בתוכו [=גורמת לדם להיבלע בבשר] בלא התפוררות מחוצה לו [בניגוד לבישול שמפליט אותו החוצה]. ובוה יואר כל יחיד בסגולתה של קדושת המצוה, כינוס חילו המקודש, האצור בנשמתה הגדולה של האומה בכללה, בצורה

If the Passover Sacrifice is indeed a national *Korban Todah*, why isn't it brought with leavened bread?

The Passover Sacrifice – The Beginning of the Redemption

The Passover Sacrifice is brought on the 14th of *Nisan* and eaten the following night. What happened in Egypt on that date? The Israelites slaughtered their lambs and spread the blood on their doorpost. That night was the Plague of the Firstborn, and the exodus took place the next morning.²⁷ The Passover Sacrifice does not symbolize the **end** of the redemption but only a stage in the process of redemption. Therefore, it would not be appropriate to bring it with leavened bread, since the nation's joy is not yet complete; we still anticipate the completion of the redemption.

Yet leavened bread is forbidden not only on the 14th of *Nisan*, but on the 15th, the day of the exodus from Egypt, and for the entire seven days of Passover. Why?

The redemption was not complete when the Israelites left Egypt; this was only a stage in the process:

...וְהוֹצֵאתִי אֶתְכֶם מִתַּחַת סִבְלַת מִצְרַיִם, וְהִצַּלְתִּי אֶתְכֶם מִעַבְדֵיכֶם, וְנָצַלְתִּי אֶתְכֶם בְּזֶרְעַ נְטוּיָהּ וּבְשִׁפְטִים גְּדֹלִים:
וְלִקְחֹתִי אֶתְכֶם לִי לְעַם וְהִיְתִי לְכֶם לֵא-לֵהִים...
וְהִבֵּאתִי אֶתְכֶם אֶל הָאָרֶץ...

שמות ר', ו-ח

And I shall take you out from the suffering of Egypt, **and I shall save you** from their slavery, **and I shall redeem you** with an outstretched arm and with great judgments;

And I shall take you as a nation for Me, and I became your God...

מכוננת כזאת, עד כדי ההכרה של היחידיות הגמורה של כל האומה כולה, בקדושת כל אחד ואחד מפרטיה, המכוננת בתוכו בכל הווייתו. ואינו נאכל אלא צלי.

The act of roasting causes all of the strength of the meat to remain within it [i.e., the blood remains within the meat], without being scattered outside of it [as opposed to boiling, which removes the blood]. And this may enlighten every individual regarding the (special properties) of the holiness of this commandment, (Rabbanit??). (*Olat Ra'ayah* I p. 179)

Roasting preserves all of the properties of the meat and reflects the unity of the various elements that comprise the nation.

²⁷ See Ex. 12:51:

ויהי בעצם היום הזה הוציא ה' את בני ישראל מארץ מצרים על צבאותם.

And it was on this very day that God took the Children of Israel from the land of Egypt by their hosts (Ex. 12:51)

Rashi, in his commentary on Deut. 32:48, writes:

במצרים נאמר "בעצם היום הזה הוציא ה'" (שמות, פרק י"ב, פסוק נ"א), לפי שהיו מצרים אומרים בכך וכך אם אנו מרגישים בהם אין אנו מניחים אותם לצאת, ולא עוד אלא אנו נוטלין סייפות וכלי זיין והורגין בהם. אמר הקב"ה הריני מוציאן בחצי היום וכל מי שיש בו כח למחות יבא וימחה.

About Egypt it was said: "On this very day God took out" (Ex. 12:51), for the Egyptians would say: 'We swear by such and such that we shall not let them leave, and not only that, but we shall take up swords and weapons and kill some of them.' The Holy One, Blessed be He, said: 'Behold, I shall take them out at midday, and let anyone with the power to protest come and protest.' (Rashi on Deut. 32:48)

In Rashi's opinion, the Israelites left Egypt on the day of the 15th, not at midnight the previous night.

And I shall bring you to the land... (Ex. 6:6-8)

The first three stages: “**And I shall take you out...and I shall save you...and I shall redeem you**” refer to the exodus from Egypt. The next stage, “**And I shall take you...**” refers to the Israelites becoming God’s chosen people. This is accomplished at the encounter at Mount Sinai when God gives the nation His Torah. The final stage, “**And I shall bring you,**” refers to God bringing the nation to the Land of Israel. Passover is the celebration and commemoration of a stage in the process of redemption, not the completion of the redemption. Therefore, only *matza* is eaten and leavened bread is forbidden.²⁸

From Passover to *Shavuot* – The Process of Redemption

When do we celebrate the completion of the redemption? On which holiday do we thank God for all of the good He has done for us?

...כי תבואו אל הארץ אשר אני נתן לכם וקצרתם את קצירה והבאתם את עמר ראשית קצירכם אל הכהן... וספרתם לכם ממקרת השבת מיום הביאתכם את עמר התנופה שבע שבתות תמימת תהינה: עד ממקרת השבת השביעת תספרו חמשים יום והקרבתם מנחה תדשה לה: ממושבתיכם תביאו להם תנופה שתים שני עשרנים סלת תהינה חמץ תאפינה בכורים לה: ויקרא כ"ג, י"ז

...When you come to the land which I give to you, and you reap its harvest, then you shall bring the sheaf of the first fruits of your harvest to the priest... And you shall count for your from the day after the Sabbath, from the day that you brought the sheaf of waving, seven complete weeks they shall be; until the day after the seventh Sabbath, you shall count fifty days, and you shall present a new grain-offering to God. You shall bring two loaves of waving of two *isaron*; they shall be of fine flour, baked with leaven, for first fruits to God. (Lev. 23:10-17)

The count only begins on Passover, which symbolizes the commencement of a process that is ultimately completed on *Shavuot*. What is the significance of this holiday?

Giving Thanks for the Land

The Torah refers to *Shavuot* by two other names: “The holiday of the harvest” (Ex. 23:16) and “the day of the first fruits” (Num. 28:26). *Shavuot* falls during the harvest season, and on this holiday an offering of two loaves of bread is brought – an offering that symbolizes our gratitude for the fruits of the land. *Shavuot* is also when fruit begins to ripen, and from this point in the year onward the first fruits are brought as an offering (*Mishna tractate Bikurim* 1:10). These first fruits also express thanks to God for the produce He has provided:

והיה כי תבוא אל הארץ אשר ה' א-לוהיך נתן לך נחלה וירשתה וישבת בה: ולקחת מראשית כל פרי האדמה אשר תביא מארצך אשר ה' א-לוהיך נתן לך ושמת בטנא והלכת אל המקום אשר יבחר ה' א-לוהיך לשכן שמו שם... דברים כ"ו, א-ב

²⁸ See Rav Yoel Bin Nun’s article cited above (see note 20) for an extensive discussion of this point.

And it will be when you enter the land which the Lord, your God, gives to you for an inheritance, and you possess it and settle in it, then you shall take of the first of all of the fruit of the ground, which you shall bring in from your land that the Lord, your God, gives to you; and you shall put it in a basket and you shall go to the place that the Lord, your God, shall choose for His name to dwell there. (Deut. 26:1-2)

Shavuot, the day of the first fruits, is also a holiday of thanksgiving, in which we thank God for the goodness of the land.

The Two Loaves – Leavened Bread

The loaves of the *Shavuot* offering are **leavened bread**. This parallels the *Korban Todah*, which is also accompanied by leavened bread, as opposed to the other types of sacrifices, which are accompanied by *matza*.

Bringing leavened bread symbolizes **gratitude to God for the good land** He gave us and for the fruits it produces. The fact that the two loaves are leavened bread expresses our thanks for the end result of the redemption – God giving us the Land of Israel.

Shavuot – Gratitude for the Completion of the Redemption

Shavuot is also the date on which the nation of Israel received the Torah.²⁹ The two final stages of the redemption are receiving the Torah and entering the Land of Israel. On *Shavuot*, we celebrate the completion of both of these stages. It is particularly appropriate to bring an offering of leavened bread on this holiday in order to express our joy at the bounty God has given us and our thanks for the completion of the process of redemption.

G. Summary of the Laws of the *Korban Todah* and Their Significance

Unique Elements	Their Significance
Giving thanks is not only done verbally, but by giving of one's possessions (sacrifice).	Man's nature is to instinctively "give" to God for His kindness. <i>The Korban Todah</i> is the oldest form of sacrifice.
Some say that the <i>Korban Todah</i> is obligatory for one who has experienced a miraculous rescue.	The Torah is educating us regarding our obligation to give thanks. One who does not express his gratitude is not properly aware of the good he has received.
Part of the <i>Korban Shelamim</i> is eaten by the owners, in contrast to the "Holy of Holies."	This symbolizes a shared meal with God. The <i>Shelamim</i> is a sacrifice that expresses love and closeness.
The <i>Korban Todah</i> is brought with both leavened and unleavened bread, in contrast to other grain-offerings, which include only <i>matza</i> .	The <i>Korban Todah</i> expresses gratitude for God's kindness, which brought one from a situation of danger and imperfection (symbolized by the

²⁹ While it is not explicitly mentioned that the Torah was given on *Shavuot*, calculations based on biblical verses indicate that it was given on this date. Nowadays the celebration of *Shavuot* focuses mainly on this aspect of the holiday, despite the fact that in the Bible it is primarily described as an agricultural holiday, as noted above.

	<i>matza</i>) to a state of wholeness (represented by the leavened bread). In this state, there is no concern that one may become arrogant or prideful.
The <i>Korban Todah</i> is brought with a large quantity of bread that must be eaten in a short amount of time (that day and the following night).	This forces the individual to invite others to partake of his sacrifice, and transforms the meal into a feast of thanksgiving .
The Passover Sacrifice is parallel to the <i>Korban Todah</i> in a number of ways (the time it must be eaten, the fact that it is eaten with bread).	The Passover Sacrifice is a national <i>Korban Todah</i> , in which we recount the story of the exodus from Egypt and give thanks to God.
There are a number of differences between the Passover Sacrifice, the <i>Korban Todah</i> , and the two loaves offered on <i>Shavuot</i> : The Passover Sacrifice is brought with <i>matza</i> ; The <i>Korban Todah</i> is brought with both <i>matza</i> and leavened bread; The two loaves brought on <i>Shavuot</i> are leavened bread.	The Passover Sacrifice expresses thanks to God for one stage of the process of redemption; therefore, it is eaten with <i>matza</i> . On <i>Shavuot</i> , the process of redemption is completed when the nation receives the Torah; therefore, leavened bread is offered.

“Even were our mouths as full of song as the sea, and our tongues full of joy as all of its waves... We cannot thank You enough!”