

Thanksgiving in the Book of Leviticus

[Leviticus 7:15](#) (Read verses [11-15](#))

Thanksgiving is a special time shared by all Americans who gather together to eat tons of turkey, watch parades and football games, and share with one another all of the reasons they are thankful.

Thanksgiving is a national holiday rooted in the history of this great country. In 1621 pilgrims and puritans celebrated Thanksgiving for the full harvest they received from God, and by 1789 our first president George Washington marked Thanksgiving “as a day of public thanksgiving and prayer to be observed by acknowledging with grateful hearts the many and signal favors of Almighty God.”

However, the notion of offering thanks to God didn’t originate with the pilgrims and puritans who immigrated to America; it actually goes back as far as the book of Leviticus in the Old Testament.

The book of Leviticus is full of commands and laws from God for the Israelites to offer up sacrifices on certain days, at certain times, for certain reasons. The majority of these sacrifices were required of the Israelites... no ifs, ands, or buts!

However, there was one sacrifice in Leviticus that wasn’t a requirement. This sacrifice was to be a pure expression of thanks to God, it’s called the *Todah* (“Thanks”) offering. In fact, today when you travel to Israel one of the first words you learn in Hebrew is *Todah* – “thank you”!

When the thankful Israelite would arrive at the Temple he would give a portion of his bread (about 5 loaves) to the priests. The priest would take the offered lamb or goat and sacrifice it to the Lord; that whole lamb would be offered up to God. After it’s been cooked the priest would take that barbecued lamb off the altar and give it to the thankful Israelite who was required to eat all of it by the end of the day: “*The flesh of the sacrifice of his peace offering for thanksgiving shall be eaten the same day it is offered. He shall not leave any of it until morning*” ([Lev. 7:15](#)).

I love the way the Lord structured this sacrifice. First, it wasn’t required, which means God doesn’t want a manufactured “Thank You” from us. Instead, He wants us to give Him the praise and thanks He deserves from the heart. Second, the Lord didn’t take sacrifice for Himself; it was for the Thankful Israelites.

WHAT REALLY IS THE TRUE MEANING OF THANKSGIVING?