

מקראות גדולות

The

COMMENTATORS'
BIBLE

THE JPS MIQRA'OT GEDOLOT

LEVITICUS ויקרא

*With the 1917 and 1985 English translations of
The Jewish Publication Society TANAKH, the questions of Abarbanel,
the commentaries of Rashi, Rashbam, Ibn Ezra, and Nahmanides,
and selections from the Masorah and from the commentaries of
Bekhor Shor, Kimhi, Hizkuni, Gersonides, Abarbanel, and Sforno*

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NJPS it shall be cut off from his kin. ²⁶And you must not consume any blood, either of bird or of animal, in any of your settlements. ²⁷Anyone who eats blood shall be cut off from his kin.

²⁸And the LORD spoke to Moses, saying: ²⁹Speak to the Israelite people thus: The offering to the LORD from a sacrifice of well-being must be presented by him who offers his sacrifice of well-being to the LORD: ³⁰his own hands shall present the LORD's offerings by fire. He shall present the fat with the breast, the breast to be elevated as an elevation offering before the LORD; ³¹the priest shall turn the fat into smoke on the altar, and the

RASHI 26 Either of bird or of animal. The blood of fish and edible insects is excluded from this prohibition. In any of your settlements. This is an obligation relating to the person, not an obligation relating to a sacred location, so it applies everywhere. B. Kid. 37b explains why this had to be written. [N]

30 His own hands shall present. The fat and the breast are on the hands of the one who is bringing the sacrifice; the priest places his hands under them and elevates the offering. **The LORD's offerings by fire.** And what are these offerings? **The fat with the breast.** Literally, "over" the breast. When the priest brings them from the place where the animals are slaughtered, he puts the fat on top of the breast. So when he transfers them into the hands of the priest who waves them, the breast is on top and the fat below: "the breast of waving ... over the offerings of the fat" (10:15; see OJPS). When he further transfers them to the priest who is to turn them into smoke, the breast is once again on the bottom: "the fat parts over the breasts" (9:20). We therefore learn that three different priests are required for this process. This is how B. Men. 62b explains it. [O] Note that our verse is phrased rather carefully. He "presents" the fat with the breast, which we might think means that the breast is also one of the "offerings by fire"; but no, the breast is presented to be elevated as an elevation offering (or rather, "waved for a wave offering," as OJPS more precisely has it).

31 The priest shall turn the fat into smoke on the altar, after which the breast shall go to Aaron and his sons. We learn that the meat cannot be eaten before the sacrificial parts go up onto the altar.

[N] Rashi actually refers to "ch. 1" of Kiddushin. The reference is apparently to this page, though the discussion there about eating blood focuses not on our verse but on 3:17. (The Talmud's conclusion is that, in a sacrificial context, one might think these rules only apply during the era of the Temple.) It may be that Rashi wished to point his readers to the more extended discussion of commandments that are to be performed "in any of your settlements." [O] According to Rashi's explanation, the offering is elevated on the hands of the one who brings it. But B. Men. 62b explains that if the owner cannot be present, they are put directly on the hands of the priest. In any case, three separate priests are involved.

NAHMANIDES "are not" (that is, may not be). This language is in fact standard—see, e.g., 11:39, where the singular is used, as in our verse. (Vv. 23–24 make clear that the reference is to the species that may be offered, whether a particular animal is valid for sacrifice or not.) What this passage adds is the punishment of being cut off for eating the forbidden fat. If the prohibition applied only to the specific animal that is sacrificed, what would be the point of 3:17? It is clear that the fat of the specific animal must be burnt as a "pleasing odor" (3:16) to the Lord. Wouldn't they have had to warn us not to eat the liver and kidneys as well, which are also included there? As to why Deut. 15:23, "you must not partake of its blood," does not mention fat as well—let the One who is found in every place bring me to the proper place, and I shall explain it there. [J]

30 He shall present the fat with the breast. The straightforward sense here would seem to be that the breast is elevated with the fat, but the thigh (v. 32) is not; 9:20–21 would then imply that, once the fat is burnt, the breast is elevated again, without the fat but together with the thigh. But the Sages say that the individual offering the sacrifice holds the fat parts, atop which the breast and thigh are placed for elevation. According to them, the mention in our verse of the breast by itself was intended to provide an opportunity for the rabbinic interpretation that if either the breast or thigh becomes ritually impure, the other one must still be elevated by itself.

[J] In fact, Nahmanides' explanation of this is found in his comment to Deut. 12:22.

ADDITIONAL COMMENTS **30 His own hands shall present the LORD's offerings by fire.** This demonstrates that he is bringing his offering to God, and that whatever the priests get is coming to them "from the table of the Most High" (Sforno). **An elevation offering.** Rather, with OJPS, "a wave offering." It is waved back and forth, up and down, to symbolize how "the eyes of the LORD range over the entire earth" (2 Chron. 16:9). The breast and thigh are appropriate for this, since these are their natural movements as well—the breast of the animal moving horizontally and its legs being picked up and set down vertically (Gersonides).

OJPS eateth it shall be cut off from his people. ²⁶And ye shall eat no manner of blood, whether it be of fowl or of beast, in any of your dwellings. ²⁷Whosoever it be that eateth any blood, that soul shall be cut off from his people.

²⁸And the LORD spoke unto Moses, saying: ²⁹Speak unto the children of Israel, saying: He that offereth his sacrifice of peace-offerings unto the LORD shall bring his offering unto the LORD out of his sacrifice of peace-offerings. ³⁰His own hands shall bring the offerings of the LORD made by fire: the fat with the breast shall he bring, that the breast may be waved for a wave-offering before the LORD. ³¹And the priest shall make the fat smoke upon the altar; but the breast shall

RASHBAM 26 In any of your settlements. Though in the outlying districts the animals certainly have no sacred status.

IBN EZRA 26 You must not consume any blood, either of bird or of animal. Birds are specifically mentioned here because their equivalent of *helev*, the prohibited animal fat, is not offered on the altar and is therefore in fact permitted for consumption. The conclusive proof of my comments to this entire section, vv. 23–27, comes from the book of Deuteronomy, which three times (Deut. 12:23, 24, and 25) insists with regard to nonsacrificial meat that the blood must not be eaten, and never mentions fat at all. At this point in the argument, the eyes of my "Sadducean" friend (see my comment to v. 23) were opened, and he blurted out an oath that he would never again trust his own judgment in interpreting the commandments, but would rely on the interpretations that have come down to us in Jewish tradition.

וּנְבִרְתָהּ הַנֶּפֶשׁ הָאֲכָלָת מֵעֵמִיָּה: 26 וְכָל-
דָּם לֹא תֹאכְלוּ בְּכָל מוֹשְׁבֵי תֵיכֶם לְעוֹף
וְלַבְּהֵמָה: 27 כָּל-נֶפֶשׁ אֲשֶׁר-תֹאכַל כָּל-
דָּם וּנְבִרְתָהּ הַנֶּפֶשׁ הַהִוא מֵעֵמִיָּה: פ
וְיִדְבַר יְהוָה אֶל-מֹשֶׁה לֵאמֹר: 29 וְיִדְבַר
אֶל-בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל לֵאמֹר הַמִּקְרִיב אֶת-זֶבַח
שְׁלָמֵיכֶם לַיהוָה יָבִיא אֶת-קָרְבָּנוֹ לַיהוָה
מִזֶּבַח שְׁלָמֵיכֶם: 30 וְיָדָיו תְּבִיאֵינָה אֶת אֲשֵׁי
יְהוָה אֶת-הַחֹלֶב עַל-הַחֹזֶה יְבִיאֵנּוּ אֶת
הַחֹזֶה לְהַגִּיף אֹתוֹ תְּנוּפָה לְפָנֵי יְהוָה:
וְהַקֵּטֶר הַכֹּהֵן אֶת-הַחֹלֶב הַמִּזְבֵּחַ: 31

ABARBANEL'S QUESTIONS + Why is the fat presented with the breast (v. 30) and not with the thigh (v. 32)? + Why does the breast go to all of the priests (v. 31) and the thigh only to the priest "who offers the blood and the fat" (v. 33)?

NJPS breast shall go to Aaron and his sons. ³²And the right thigh from your sacrifices of well-being you shall present to the priest as a gift; ³³he from among Aaron's sons who offers the blood and the fat of the offering of well-being shall get the right thigh as his portion. ³⁴For I have taken the breast of elevation offering and the thigh of gift offering from the Israelites, from their sacrifices of well-being, and given them to Aaron the priest and to his sons as their due from the Israelites for all time.

³⁵Those shall be the perquisites of Aaron and the perquisites of his sons from the LORD's offerings by fire, once they have been inducted to serve the LORD as priests; ³⁶these the LORD commanded to be given them, once they had been anointed, as a due from the Israelites for all time throughout the ages.

³⁷Such are the rituals of the burnt offering, the meal offering, the sin offering, the guilt offering, the offering of ordination, and the sacrifice of well-being, ³⁸with which the LORD charged Moses on Mount Sinai, when He commanded that

RASHI 32 The right thigh. The "thigh" is the tibia and its flesh, extending from the calcaneus to the patella—the middle of the three sections of the animal's leg. (The calcaneus and below is that part which butchers sell along with the head.)

33 He from among Aaron's sons who offers the blood and the fat. That is, any priest who is eligible to offer them. So anyone who is impure when the blood is dashed or when the fat is turned into smoke is excluded from sharing in this meat.

34 Elevation offering ... gift offering. Actually, what NJPS calls the "elevation" offering is "waved" back and forth horizontally (see OJPS); it is the "gift" offering of NJPS that is "heaved" up and down (that is, elevated and lowered; see OJPS).

37 The offering of ordination. Not of ordination in general, but specifically for the day when the priesthood was inaugurated.

NAHMANIDES 36 To be given them, once they had been anointed. NJPS is not quite precise here; OJPS, "which the LORD commanded to be given them of the children of Israel, in the day that they were anointed," is more literal. The sense of the text is that, at the time the priests were anointed, the Lord commanded that these things be given to them ever afterward. The same applies to "once they have been inducted" of v. 35. The NJPS translation follows the explanation of Ibn Ezra, that the Hebrew preposition which OJPS translates here as "in" can indeed mean "from"; see 8:32, "what is left over of [not in] the flesh and the bread."

38 With which the LORD charged Moses on Mount Sinai ... in the wilderness of Sinai. According to the Sages, all of the commandments—from the broadest generalities down to the most precise regulations—were given to Moses on Mount Sinai; some of them, and specifically the laws of Leviticus, were then repeated to him in the Tent of Meeting. According to the straightforward sense, however, the burnt offerings, the sin offerings, and the offering of ordination were commanded to Moses on Mount Sinai, while the meal offerings, the guilt offerings, and the offerings of well-being were commanded in the wilderness, in the Tent of Meeting. But perhaps the Hebrew phrase here does not mean "on Mount Sinai" but "at Mount Sinai," in the Tent of Meeting. This is certainly true of "the continual burnt offering that was offered at Mount Sinai" (Num. 28:6), which was not

be Aaron's and his sons'. ³²And the right thigh shall ye give unto the priest for a heave-offering out of your sacrifices of peace-offerings. ³³He among the sons of Aaron, that offereth the blood of the peace-offerings, and the fat, shall have the right thigh for a portion. ³⁴For the breast of waving and the thigh of heaving have I taken

of the children of Israel out of their sacrifices of peace-offerings, and have given them unto Aaron the priest and unto his sons as a due for ever from the children of Israel.

³⁵This is the consecrated portion of Aaron, and the consecrated portion of his sons, out of the offerings of the LORD made by fire, in the day when they were presented to minister unto the LORD in the priest's office; ³⁶which the LORD commanded to be given them of the children of Israel, in the day that they were anointed. It is a due for ever throughout their generations.

³⁷This is the law of the burnt-offering, of the meal-offering, and of the sin-offering, and of the guilt-offering, and of the consecration-offering, and of the sacrifice of peace-offerings; ³⁸which the LORD commanded Moses in mount Sinai, in the day that he commanded the children

RASHBAM 35 Perquisites. NJPS has understood this word—elsewhere translated as "anointing"—correctly. What the priests receive from the sacrifices constitutes their pay: "the skin of the burnt offering" (v. 8), the meat of the sin offering (6:19) and the guilt offering (v. 7), one each of the breads from the thanksgiving offering (v. 14), the breast and thigh of the sacrifice of well-being (vv. 31-34), and "what is left" of the meal offering (6:9).

IBN EZRA 33 The right thigh. This goes to the specific priest who dashes the blood against the altar.

34 The breast. This goes to all the priests.

35 The perquisites. Literally, "the anointing"; but NJPS has the sense. These are the rewards given to Aaron and his sons, for anointing confers princely status.

36 Once they had been anointed. Again NJPS has the sense; contrast the more literal "in the day that they were anointed" (OJPS). These are their perquisites from that day on. The same is true of "what is left over of the flesh and the bread" (8:32), where even OJPS agrees that the Hebrew preposition must mean "of" or "from."

37 The offering of ordination. This offering is described in Exodus 29.

38 Offerings to the LORD, in the wilderness of Sinai. They made no offerings until they reached Mount Sinai. As I have explained in my comment to

והיה הקזה לאהרן ולבניו: ³² ואת שוק הימין תתנו תרומה לפהו מזבחי שלמיכם: ³³ המקריב אתדם השלמים ואת-החלב מבני אהרן לו תהיה שוק הימין למנה: ³⁴ כי את-הקזה התנופה ואת שוק התרומה לקחתל מאת בני-ישראל מזבחי שלמיהם ואתן אתם לאהרן הפהו ולבניו לחק-עולם מאת בני ישראל:

³⁵ ואת משחת אהרן ומשחת בניו מאשי יהיה ביום הקריב אתם לכהן ליהוה: ³⁶ אשר צוה יהוה לתת להם ביום משחו אתם מאת בני ישראל חקת עולם לדורתם:

³⁷ ואת התורה לעלה למנחה ולחטאת ולאשם ולמלואים ולזבח השלמים: ³⁸ אשר צוה יהוה את-משה בהר סיני

ABARBANEL'S QUESTIONS ♦ Why are the breast and the thigh specifically given to the priests (v. 34) rather than any other part of the animal? ♦ Doesn't this contradict Deut. 18:3, which specifies that "everyone who offers a sacrifice ... must give the shoulder, the cheeks, and the stomach to the priest"? ♦ Why is the breast an "offering of elevation" and the thigh a "gift offering"?

ADDITIONAL COMMENTS 38 He commanded that the Israelites present their offerings to the LORD. Specifically to the Lord, and not to idols (Gersonides).