

Leviticus Chapter One

an Exegetical Commentary by Nate Wilson

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Leviticus 1:1

1:1 BHS וַיִּקְרָא¹ אֶל-מֹשֶׁה וַיְדַבֵּר² יְהוָה אֵלָיו מֵאֵהָל מוֹעֵד לֵאמֹר³:

1:1 And Jehovah called¹ to Moses and spoke² to him from the Tent of Meeting to say³,

Verb#	Root	Parsing	Formatives	Meaning	Syntax
1	קרא	Qal Impf 3ms	Vav Consecutive	Call	Main Verb
2	דבר	Qal Impf 3ms	V.C.	Speak	M.V.
3	אמר	Qal Infin. Constr.	Lamed	Say	Identical Action

Commentary

Why does the book begin with “and”? Because it is a continuation of the law-giving which Moses started in Exodus, the previous book.

It is interesting to see three different root verbs used in this one little sentence, all with a parallel meaning of verbal communication. In the verb chart above, you can see the three words, “call,” “speak,” and “say.” The Jews call the book of Leviticus by the very first word of the book וַיִּקְרָא “and He called.” Our God is a communicative Person. He “calls” to His people; He “speaks” to us; He “says” things to us! This book of Leviticus proves that God is a very imminent God in His creation, not only in His verbal communication, but also, as we’ll see in the chapters to come, in the interest He takes in every physical aspect of human life—our food, our bodies, our businesses, our social systems, and even our vacations! Those of us who have God’s Word in our language and in our possession have the very words of God that we can read any time we want!

The fact that Jehovah called Moses is mentioned 56 times in the 27 chapters of Leviticus. In the Book of Exodus, God spoke from Mount Sinai, but in the Book of Leviticus, He speaks from the Holy of Holies in the tabernacle from above the mercy seat of the ark of the covenant (Zodhiates). Since the cloud of the glory of the LORD filled the tabernacle, Moses was not able to enter into the tent of meeting, so the Voice was heard by him proceeding “out of” (“from”) the tent (Soncino).

The place God called Moses to speak to him is called the “tent of meeting” (KJV “tabernacle of the congregation”). According to Harris, Archer, and Waltke, “Meeting” stems from **לעד**, the root meaning of which is “to appoint.” The translators of the ancient Greek Septuagint incorrectly identified the root as **עד** “witness,” thus translating the phrase “tent of meeting” over 100 times as **σκηνης του μαρτυριου** “tent of witness.” Holliday affirms that this word means “an appointed time or place (in this case a place) for meeting with other people or with God,” and it was “used widely for all religious assemblies.” Vos clarifies that it refers, not to the meeting of the people with their God, but “to the meeting of Jehovah with the people... The word that is rendered ‘meeting’ does not designate an accidental encounter, but something previously arranged. It implies that Jehovah makes the provision and appoints the time for coming together with His people. The idea is of importance, because it is one of the indications of that conscious intercourse between God and man which characterizes the Biblical religion.”

According to some passages, the tent was outside the camp (Ex. 33:7-11; Num. 11:24-30), but according to others it was located in the middle of the camp (Ex. 25:8). Literary critics have traditionally explained these passages as coming from two sources, E and P, with P not reflecting a historical situation. It is, however, entirely possible that

there were two successive tents called '*ohel mo'ed*'. The first was Moses' tent, which was used before the completion of the tabernacle... (HAW).

APPLICATION:

- Praise God that He initiates communication with us rather than leaving us to wander on our own!
- We have the very words of God written in our Bibles, so we should pay close attention to them and take every opportunity to study them.

Leviticus 1:2-17

The Burnt Offering

- 1.2 דְּבַר⁴ אֶל־בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל וְאָמַרְתָּ⁵ אֲלֵהֶם אָדָם כִּי־יִקְרִיב⁶ מִכֶּם בְּחֶסֶד מִן־הַבְּהֵמָה מִן־הַבְּקָר וּמִן־הַצֹּאן תִּקְרִיבוּ⁷ אֶת־קִרְבָּנְכֶם:
 1.3 אִם־עֲלֶה קִרְבָּנוֹ מִן־הַבְּקָר זָכָר תָּמִים יִקְרִיבֵנוּ⁸ אֶל־פֶּתַח אֹהֶל מוֹעֵד יִקְרִיב⁹ אֹתוֹ לְרֹצְנוֹ לִפְנֵי יְהוָה:
 1.4 וְסָמָךְ¹⁰ יָדוֹ עַל רֹאשׁ הָעֹלָה וְנִרְצָה¹¹ לוֹ לְכַפֵּר¹² עָלָיו:
 1.5 וְשָׁחַט¹³ אֶת־בֶּן הַבְּקָר לִפְנֵי יְהוָה וְהִקְרִיבוּ¹⁴ בְּנֵי אֹהֶרֶן הַכֹּהֲנִים אֶת־הַדָּם וְזָרְקוּ¹⁵ אֶת־הַדָּם עַל־הַמִּזְבֵּחַ סָבִיב אֲשֶׁר־פֶּתַח אֹהֶל מוֹעֵד:
 1.6 וְהִפְשִׁיט¹⁶ אֶת־הָעֹלָה וְנִתַּח¹⁷ אֹתָהּ לְנִתְחֶיהָ:
 1.7 וְנִתְנוּ¹⁸ בְּנֵי אֹהֶרֶן הַכֹּהֲנָן אֵשׁ עַל־הַמִּזְבֵּחַ וְעָרְכוּ¹⁹ עֵצִים עַל־הָאֵשׁ:
 1.8 וְעָרְכוּ¹⁹ בְּנֵי אֹהֶרֶן הַכֹּהֲנִים אֶת הַנִּתְחִים אֶת־הָרֹאשׁ וְאֶת־הַפָּדָר עַל־הָעֵצִים אֲשֶׁר עַל־הָאֵשׁ אֲשֶׁר עַל־הַמִּזְבֵּחַ:
 1.9 וְקָרְבוּ וּכְרָעוּ יָרְתְּצוּ²⁰ בְּמַיִם וְהִקְטִיר²¹ הַכֹּהֵן אֶת־הַכֹּל הַמִּזְבֵּחַ עֲלֶה אִשָּׁה רֵיח־נִיחֹחַ לִיהוָה ס:

NAW: 2 Speak⁴ to the sons of Israel and say⁵ to them, “When any man from *among* you offers⁶ an offering to Jehovah, from the cattle, from the herd, and from the flock y’all shall offer⁷ your offerings. 3 If his offering is a sacrifice for burning up, he shall offer⁸ it—a perfect male from the herd; unto the entrance of the Tent of Meeting, he shall offer⁹ it, for his acceptance before the face of Jehovah. 4 And he shall lay¹⁰ his hand upon the head of the sacrifice to be burned up, and it will be accepted¹¹ for him, to make atonement¹² on his behalf. 5 And he shall slaughter¹³ the son of the herd before the face of Jehovah, and the sons of Aaron the priests shall offer¹⁴ the blood, and they shall sprinkle¹⁵ the blood around on the altar which is at the entrance of the Tent Of Meeting. And he shall skin¹⁶ the sacrifice for burning up, and he shall cut¹⁷ it into its pieces. 7 And the sons of Aaron the priest shall put fire upon the altar and they shall arrange¹⁹ sticks upon the fire. 8 And the sons of Aaron the priests shall arrange¹⁹ with the pieces the head and the fat over the sticks which are upon the fire which is upon the altar. 9 And its innards and its legs he shall wash²⁰ with water, and the priest shall burn up²¹ the whole on the altar as a sacrifice for burning up, a fire-offering of a soothing aroma to Jehovah.

Verb#	Root	Parsing	Formatives	Meaning	Syntax
4	דבר	Piel Imptv. 2ms		speak	M.V.
5	אמר	Qal Perf. 2ms	Vav consecutive	say	Id. Act to #4
6	קרב	Hiphil Impf. 3ms		draw near	Temp./Cond. (Begin Indir. Dis- c.)
7	קרב	Hiph. Impf. 2mpl		“	M.V.
8	קרב	Hiph. Impf. 3ms	3ms	“	M.V./Apod. #6
9	קרב	“		“	M.V./Id. Act. #8
10	סמך	Qal Perf. 3ms	v.c (gives Impf. sense)	lay, lean	M.V.
11	רצה	Niph. Perf. 3ms	v.c.	paid for/accepted	Result
12	כפר	Infin. Const. Piel.	+Lamed	cover/atone	Purpose
13	שחט	Qal Perf. 3ms	v.c.	slaughter/kill	M.V.
14	קרב	Hiph. Perf. 3c.pl.	v.c.	draw near/offer	M.V.

15	זרק	Qal Perf. 3cpl.	v.c.	sprinkle	M.V./Id. Act. #14?
16	פשט	Hiph. Perf. 3ms	v.c.	take off/strip	M.V.
17	נתח	Piel. Perf. 3ms	v.c.	divide/cut	M.V.
18	נתן	Qal Perf. 3c.pl.	v.c.	give	M.V.
19	ערך	Qal Perf. 3c.pl.	v.c.	lay/stack/prepare	M.V.
20	רחץ	Qal Perf. 3ms	v.c.	wash/rinse	M.V.
21	קטר	Hiph. Perf. 3ms	v.c.	go up in smoke	M.V.

Commentary

1:2 *Speak⁴ to the sons of Israel and say⁵ to them, “When any man from among you offers⁶ an offering to Jehovah, from the cattle, from the herd, and from the flock y’all shall offer⁷ your offerings.*

God commands Moses to speak to the children of Israel as a prophet delivering God’s word to God’s people. Moses is the greatest prophet of the Old Testament. The commands in this passage are generally in the Perfect tense (considered as completed action) and prefixed with a Vav (which throws the action into the future). I believe that this may lend more Imperative force than a simple Imperfect verb structure would have. It’s almost like God expects that these commands will indeed be obeyed so He considers them a done deal before they are even carried out!

The audience is literally “sons of Israel,” speaking of descendants of Jacob who was renamed Israel. In this context, “sons of” does not necessarily designate male descendents exclusive of female descendents; it can mean “children of.” Special emphasis is then turned to the individual offering the sacrifice. The word “man” is placed in an unusual position at the beginning of the phrase, drawing special attention to it. Again, this word “אָדָם/man” can mean “human being” exclusive of sex, but in this context, I believe that it was the men as the federal head of their household who offered the sacrifice. The system was representative: the father represented his family, the tribal chief represented his tribe, and Moses represented the people before God. Every subject and pronoun in this verse is masculine.

You will notice that the KJV has the word “If” where the more recent translations say “When.” The Hebrew word **כִּי** has quite a range of meaning in introducing a clause and can mean “If,” but I translated it “When” because it is assumed that people will bring sacrifices, so it is not so much a matter of *if* they will do it, but rather *when*.

The word used for offering/sacrifice is a derivative of the word **קרב** which means to “draw near.” The verb I translated “offer” literally means “to cause to draw near,” and the noun I translated “offering” literally means “a thing which is brought near.” Holladay says that it designates a “gift in the general sense.”

This first section introduces the offering of large animals for burnt offerings and lists what sorts of animals can be offered. There are three categories: **מִן־הַבְּהֵמָה** “from the behemah—large, four-footed animals/cattle,” **מִן־הַבְּקָר** “from the herd—of cattle/cows and bulls,” and **וּמִן־הַצֹּאן** “from the flock—of sheep.” The Hebrew text presents all three equally (cf. Soncino), but the English translations break out the second two (herd and flock) as a subset of the first (cattle) as a logical division. The Latin Vulgate adds *id est* “it is the same” before “from the behemah” emphasizing that the sacrificial process is the same for cattle, herd and flock. While this is true, it is not in the original text.

The person of the verb suddenly switches from the solitary man (considered in the third person) to all the men (considered in the second person) offering the sacrifices. That’s why the KJV uses the word “ye,” a second person plural distinction which we have lost in modern English (“you”), although preserved somewhat in the Southern dialect “y’all.” The sacrifice, however, remains singular. This could indicate the inclusion of singular offerings for multiple people, such as the sin offering for the whole assembly in Lev. 4 (cf. Soncino). It is one sacrifice offered by multiple men.

According to the editors of the BHS, the Samaritan Pentateuch, Syriac, and Septuagint leave off the נכח- “your” in “your offering,” but when I looked at the Septuagint, it appeared to be there (τα δωρα υμων). Jewish commentators Rashi and Ibn Ezra note that this emphasizes the fact that an offering could not be made from stolen goods, it had to be your own (Soncino).

1:3 *If his offering is a sacrifice for burning up, he shall offer⁸ it—a perfect male from the herd; unto the entrance of the Tent of Meeting, he shall offer⁹ it, for his acceptance before the face of Jehovah.*

Verse Three introduces a new word for the sacrifice. Whereas in v.2, the general word for “gift/offering” was used, here we have the word עלה derived from the verb meaning “to go up.” The idea is that this offering “goes up” in smoke when it is burned, so it designates a burnt-offering or sacrifice, or, as I translated it, “a sacrifice for burning up” in order to avoid the semantic confusion of using the word “offering” again and to get the root idea of going “up.”

The next seven verses through verse 9 describe how a bull (a male from the herd) is offered as a burnt sacrifice.

In the Hebrew text, emphasis is put on the qualifications of the animal by early placement in the sentence: it must be a MALE, and it must be PERFECT. Here זָכָר “male” specifically designates the male gender. And the animal must be תָּמִים “complete, whole, perfect” – In both Greek and Hebrew, the concept of “perfect” is combined with the concept of “complete;” we don’t really have a word in English that does this. The KJV, NAS, and NIV all use a negative construction (“without blemish/defect”), but the Hebrew word is not a negative one, so I used the positive word “perfect” to be more consistent in translation. The animal to be sacrificed must be a prime specimen—the best—without defects or missing parts. Jesus fulfilled these very details when He was sacrificed for our sins: He was a male, and He was perfect—both physically and morally.

After the offerer chooses his bull, he is to present it at the entrance of the Tent Of Meeting. The reason given in the text is, “for his acceptance before the face of Jehovah.” The root for the word “acceptance” (“voluntary will” in KJV) is רצה. As a noun, it means “desire, goodwill, favor” and as a verb (which we will see in the next verse) it means “pay for, make good.” Literally what we have here in v.3 is “to his goodwill,” so you can see where the KJV gets its translation (the KJV also follows Jewish tradition in translating this verse –Soncino), but judging from the verb form of the same word, which seems to indicate that the good will is not created by the subject himself, but rather by his “payment” or by something which “makes good,” I prefer the more modern versions which translate this word “accept” -- although technical accuracy demands that they not translate it as a verb as they have done (“that he may be accepted” NASV), but rather as a noun “acceptance,” or, as K&D put it, “for good pleasure for him (the offerer) before Jehovah.”

The word “Jehovah/LORD” at the end of the verse is absent in the Cairo codex fragment, reading “accepted before the face” instead of “accepted before the face of Jehovah,” but this codex seems to leave out a lot of stuff anyway, and it certainly does not change the meaning. This would easily be explained by a superstitious fear of the use of the divine name. English translations tend to omit the concept of “face” in the word לְפָנָי, and that’s understandable, because it is generally used like our preposition “before, in front of,” but because the root meaning of the word is “face,” I prefer to keep it (“before the face of Jehovah”). Without the sacrifice, the worshipper cannot be accepted before the holy God. People are sinful and unacceptable to God by nature. The only way that Man and God can be brought together face to face is through a sacrifice which removes the sin and defilement from the person. Thus the next step in v.4...

1:4 *And he shall lay¹⁰ his hand upon the head of the sacrifice to be burned up, and it will be accepted¹¹ for him, to make atonement¹² on his behalf.*

After the selection and presentation of the sacrificial animal, the next step was for the worshipper to lay (literally “lean on”) his hand on the head of the animal. This action symbolized a transfer. Throughout the Bible, when someone laid hands on someone or something else, he was transferring something from himself to that other per-

son or thing. Sometimes it was a transfer of authority to rule, as in the case of a king. Sometimes it was a transfer of spiritual gifts, as in the case of the apostles. And, in the sacrificial system, it was the transfer of guilt. Perhaps the meaning could also be expanded as a “transfer of the feelings and intentions by which the offerer was actuated... [not only] the consciousness of his sinfulness... but also ... the desire to walk before God in holiness and righteousness” (K&D), but I think the primary aspect was guilt-transfer. Symbolically, the worshipper laid his hand on the head of the sacrificial animal to transfer the guilt of his own sin upon the head of the animal to be offered. The animal will then be accepted in his behalf as atonement for his sin, and the worshipper will be accepted before the face of God as a result of the transaction.

Note that this required the physical presence of the one for whom the sacrifice was made. Rich folks couldn’t hire others to do this religious exercise for them; they couldn’t get away from facing up to God for their sin (Soncino).

“upon the head of _____” The Syriac uses *pwrbnh* (equivalent to Hebrew קָרְבָּנוֹ or English “his offering”), but all other texts use the word הָעֹלָה or “the burnt offering.” This really doesn’t make much difference; it is substituting a more general word used earlier in the chapter for the more specific word used in this context. Both are referring to the same thing. It’s understandable that in the translation to Syriac, there was a slip-up.

Verbal #11 in v.4 is the verb form of the noun “acceptance” found in v.3. It means “to be paid for, or to be made good.” The worshipper is made good by the transaction with the sacrificial animal. Note the perfect tense—there is surety of completed action before it is even done! This gave confidence to the worshipper to approach God knowing that he would indeed be accepted. This is one of the greatest advantages Judeo-Christianity has over any other religion, the surety of how God will respond to us.

קָפַר/make atonement – According to Harris, Archer, and Waltke, this word is always used in connection with the removal of sin and defilement, although it has a second meaning “to smear with pitch” which is used only in Gen. 6:14. It is not so much related to the verb “cover” as to the nouns for “ransom” and “atonement” (note consonantal similarity between this word קָפַר/kappair and the phrase for “Day of Atonement” יוֹם כִּפּוּר/[Yom] Kippur). Thus the verb is not so much “to cover over a sin, pacifying a deity” (as Brown, Driver, and Briggs state), but rather “to atone by offering a substitute.” It is usually used of the priest offering a bloody sacrifice for a worshipper—in Leviticus there are 49 instances of this without variant meanings. It was the symbolic expression of innocent life given for guilty life (cf K&D).

Again, we see that Jesus is the fulfillment of this sacrifice. Jesus had no sin to make him unacceptable before God. When he died on the cross, a transfer took place whereby our sins were imputed to Him and His righteousness was imputed to us—Isaiah 53 clearly shows this picture. Those of us who believe that this is what Jesus did are acceptable before the face of God. We were paid for, we were made good, we were atoned for by the offering of a substitute! Hallelujah!

1:5 *And he shall slaughter¹³ the son of the herd before the face of Jehovah, and the sons of Aaron the priests shall offer¹⁴ the blood, and they shall sprinkle¹⁵ the blood around on the altar which is at the entrance of the Tent Of Meeting.*

For some reason, the Septuagint pluralizes the subject (σφραξουσιν = “they shall slay”) It does the same thing in v. 11. The plural subject would indicate the priests rather than the worshipper doing the slaughtering. A couple thousand years after the law was given to Moses, the translators of the Septuagint apparently had it in their minds that the priests were to take over more of the worship activities than was originally given to them. A little over a thousand years still later, Jewish commentator, Rashi, wrote that it didn’t matter who did it—the worshipper, the priest, or even a hired agent! (Soncino) Before we get upset at them, think about how we have done the same thing with the pastors/priests in our modern-day churches.

The sacrificial animal is given a little more definition here, literally “a son of the herd,” which seems to indicate that this is a “young bull,” as the NAS & NIV put it (KJV= “bullock”), and not a mature bull. It was to be slaughtered right in the presence of Jehovah-God, at the entrance to the tent of Meeting. The priests were to make the

offering of blood, sprinkling the blood of the bull on the altar--and not just “on” the altar, but “around” and “on;” there are two prepositions here (KJV= “round about upon the altar,” NAS= “around on the altar,” NIV= “against the altar on all sides”). The idea is that the worshipper would use a knife to slit the throat of the bull, thus killing it, and the priests would catch the blood in a bowl and sprinkle the blood liberally all over and around the altar. This presentation of the life blood upon the altar was central to the sacrifice.

The Cairo codex fragment omits Aaron’s name and also omits the object of “the blood,” saying “the sons of the priests shall make offering and shall sprinkle the blood” instead of “the sons of Aaron, the priests shall offer up the blood and sprinkle the blood.” Again, the Cairo seems to leave out a lot of details, but even so, these omissions don’t change the instructions.

It is interesting how Jesus fulfilled the distinction between what the worshiper and what the priest did in His death: He was put to death by humans, but it was He Himself, as the greatest high priest who consciously offered His own blood before Jehovah.

1:6 *And he shall skin¹⁶ the sacrifice for burning up, and he shall cut¹⁷ it into its pieces.*

The Samaritan Pentateuch and the Septuagint pluralize the subject here, saying “They shall divide” instead of “he shall divide” This happens in v. 9, 12, and 13. Again, this is a distinction between priest and worshipper, which I am inclined to believe was claimed more and more by the priests over time.

The two verbs are the main thing in this verse: the animal is to be skinned (literally “strip” / KJV= “flay”) and quartered, or “cut into pieces.” The word for “burnt sacrifice” is feminine, as is the accusative pronoun (“it” literally “her”) and the possessive pronominal suffix (“its pieces” literally “her pieces”). Here is one of the few places where the KJV translators weren’t exact in their translation, as they translated it “his pieces,” but seeing as how the bullock was a male it’s not a big deal. Quartering the animal probably made it easier to lift onto the altar.

1:7 *And the sons of Aaron the priest shall put fire upon the altar and they shall arrange¹⁹ sticks upon the fire.*

“the sons of Aaron the priest” is rendered “the priests—sons of Aaron” in the Syriac; however, the Vulgate omits the phrase altogether. Other manuscripts of the Septuagint, the Samaritan Pentateuch, the Syriac, and one of the Targums pluralize it “the sons of Aaron, the priests” – this would match the wording of vs. 5 and 8 better, but it doesn’t change the instructions of how the sacrifice was to be offered.

The descendants of Aaron were the priests, and the priests had exclusive care of the holy altar. They were in charge of keeping fire on the altar—it was never to go out. Interestingly enough, the word for “sticks”(KJV, NAS, and NIV “wood”) is no different from the word for “trees.” They had to be careful about how they tended the fire on the altar, both verbs in this verse are careful, orderly verbs, “put/give” fire and “arrange/set in order” the trees/logs/sticks/wood on the altar. Even the placement of the sacrifice on the altar was neat and orderly as we’ll see in the next verse. Just as the priests were to take care and be orderly in this little detail of having a fire, so we, too, as Christians should take care and be orderly about every little instruction God gives us in His word.

1:8 *And the sons of Aaron the priests shall arrange¹⁹ with the pieces the head and the fat over the sticks which are upon the fire which is upon the altar.*

Several manuscripts of the Samaritan Pentateuch, the Septuagint, the Syriac and one of the Targums add a vav (= “and”) before the object “the head”, but it really doesn’t make a difference since it is obviously a list of several parts to be put together. A little more significant variant –which I believe to be an aberration - is found in the Cairo fragment which omits the “fire.”

Every part of the animal which has been slaughtered and cut up is mentioned except for the skin. A new part that hasn’t been mentioned heretofore is the fat. The Israelites weren’t supposed to eat fat, but were to burn it as an offering to God. The NAS translates the word as “suet” which *Webster’s New World Dictionary* defines as “the hard, crumbly fat deposited around the kidneys and loins of cattle and sheep; used in cooking and making tallow.” The NAV may have picked up this word “suet” from a comment by Jewish commentator Nachmanides, who said the root of the word used here meant “divide,” thus limiting the meaning of the word to the fat which divides the

upper intestines from the lower, but Soncino indicates that most Jewish commentators take the word to mean “fat” in general. It is pretty clear that every part of the animal (except the skin, which was given to the priest, and the contents of the intestines, which were washed out—cf. K&D) was intended to be burnt up on the altar.

1:9 *And its innards and its legs he shall wash²⁰ with water, and the priest shall burn up²¹ the whole on the altar as a sacrifice for burning up, a fire-offering of a soothing aroma to Jehovah.*

The Septuagint omits the first phrase about burning the offering after washing it, also pluralizing the word “priest.” Towards the end of the verse, the NIV picks up on what several manuscripts say—including those of the Samaritan Pentateuch, Septuagint, Syriac and the Pseudo-Jonathan Targums—adding a verb of being: “it is an offering made by fire” instead of “an offering made by fire.” There is a significant amount of support for the NIV making this variation from the standard Masoretic text, but while it may make for an easier reading (which makes it suspect of later editing), it doesn’t make a difference in meaning.

What is the significance of washing the inner parts (NAS= “entrails”) and legs with water? It is disjunctive from the rest of the passage which starts every verse with “and t[he]y shall;” now we have a verse starting with “and its inner parts” – special emphasis is being drawn to this. Perhaps it is disjunctive in time—this washing is mentioned after the parts have already been put on the altar, so perhaps it is going back in time to before the parts are put up there and saying to be sure and wash them (cf. Soncino). But they were just going to be burned; why wash them? Perhaps this reinforced the priority of purity, not only the ceremonial purity which God required but the practical cleanliness of the priests as they were handling bloody meat.

The word for “innards/inner parts” is from the same root קרב that the word for “offer” and “draw near” comes from; K&D say that it refers to the “intestines of the abdomen or belly, such as the stomach and bowels, which would necessarily have to be thoroughly cleansed.” The word for legs comes from the root כרע “to crouch” (Hol-laday), and generally refers to the “legs... of oxen and sheep... from the knee down to the foot” (K&D). The ends of the legs and the intestines are parts usually discarded in butchering an animal because they are no good for eating, but God wanted even these parts burned on His altar.

“The verb descriptive of the burning is everywhere *hiqtir*. This verb does not describe burning of the consuming kind, but of the sublimating kind, a process whereby something is changed into a finer substance. The verb for destructive burning is *saraf*, and this is actually used for the burning of parts of the animal outside the camp, but never of the burning upon the altar” (Vos). The NAS translation renders it “offer up in smoke” and the Jewish Soncino commentary translates it “make it smoke.”

This concludes the initial instructions on burnt offerings. There is a poetic twist to the conclusion of this section as it calls the smoke going up “a sweet savor” (KJV), “a soothing aroma” (NAS), “an aroma pleasing” (NIV), literally, “air-soothing.” It conjures up the image of God in heaven bending over, inhaling the air, and beaming with pleasure. There may also be a bit of poetic word play in the similarity of the last two words נִיחֻחַ לַיהוָה. We are left with no doubt that God will accept the offering and that He will be pleased with it; what a tremendous assurance!

Who Does What: Burnt Offering of a Bull

	MASORETIC TEXT (Hebrew O.T.)		SEPTUAGINT (Ancient Greek translation of O.T.)	
	Worshipper	Priests	Worshipper	Priests
v.3	Select animal Present it at tabernacle		Select animal Present it at tabernacle	
v.4	Lay hand on animal		Lay hand on animal	
v.5	Kill animal	Sprinkle blood around altar		Kill animal Sprinkle blood around altar
v.6	Skin & quarter animal		Skin animal	Quarter animal
v.7		Arrange fire & wood on altar		Arrange fire & wood on altar
v.8		Arrange animal pieces on altar		Arrange animal pieces on altar

v.9	(One priest) Wash innards & Burn sacrifice	(Multiple priests) Wash innards & Burn sacrifice
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Sacrifices were not a new thing to the Israelites. Abel, Noah, Jacob, and others are specifically mentioned as offering sacrifices. The Hebrews in Egypt were familiar enough with it to want to go out to the wilderness to offer a sacrifice with Moses, and Jethro also offered burnt-offerings in the camp of the Israelites. Keil & Delitzsch state, “The sacrificial laws presuppose the presentation of burnt-offerings, meat-offerings, and slain-offerings as a custom well known to the people, and a necessity demanded by their religious feelings... The object of the sacrificial laws in this book was... simply to organize and expand the sacrificial worship of the Israelites into an institution in harmony with the covenant between the Lord and His people...” What was new in Leviticus was the concept of sacrifice as *expiation*, that animal offerings hitherto had been an expression of self-surrender and life-fellowship with God and now Moses was instituting sacrifice as something to take away sin and appease God’s wrath (K&D). Vos disagrees with this, saying that animal sacrifices have always had an expiatory element (viz. the slaughtering of animals to provide coverings for Adam and Eve after they fell). Ruth Beechik suggests in her book, *Adam and His Kin*, that God provided information on animal sacrifice orally to Adam which is elaborated in writing only later on by Moses.

K&D explain further that in the offering of an animal sacrifice according to the laws here, the offerer was “covered, on account of his unholiness, from before the holy God, or, speaking more precisely, from the wrath of God and the manifestation of that wrath; that is to say, from the punishment which his sin had deserved, as we may clearly see from Gen 32.20 and still more clearly from Ex 32.30. In the former case Jacob’s object is to reconcile the face of his brother Esau by means of a present, that is to say, to modify the wrath of his brother, which he has drawn upon himself by taking away the blessing of the first-born. In the latter, Moses endeavours by means of his intercession to expiate the sin of the people, over whom the wrath of God is about to burn to destroy them... to protect the people from the destruction which threatens them in consequence of the wrath of God... The power to make expiation, i.e. to cover an unholy man from before the holy God, or to cover the sinner from the wrath of God, is attributed to the blood of the sacrificial animal, only so far as the soul lives in the blood, and the soul of the animal when sacrificed takes the place of the human soul. This substitution is no doubt incongruous... When God therefore, said, ‘I have given it to you upon the altar to make atonement for your souls’ (chap. 17.11), and thus attributed to the blood of the sacrificial animals a significance which it could not naturally possess; this was done in anticipation of the true and perfect sacrifice which Christ, the Son of Man and God, would offer in the fullness of time through the holy and eternal Spirit, for the reconciliation of the whole world (Heb. 9.14).” K&D go on to say that this expiation was accomplished not only by the mechanical action of the sacrifice but also through the faith of the offerer seeking reconciliation with God just as much as salvation today is through faith in Jesus Christ.

Leviticus 1:10-13

1.10 וְאִם־מִן־הַצֹּאֵן קָרְבָּנוֹ מִן־הַכְּשָׂבִים אוֹ מִן־הָעִזִּים לְעֹלָה זָכָר
 תָּמִים יִקְרִיבֵנוּ²²: 1.11 וְשָׁחַט²³ אֹתוֹ עַל יָרֵךְ הַמִּזְבֵּחַ צָפֹנָה לְפָנַי
 יְהוָה וְזָרְקוֹ²⁴ בְּנֵי אֹהֶל הַכֹּהֲנִים אֶת־דָּמּוֹ עַל־הַמִּזְבֵּחַ סָבִיב:
 1.12 וְנָתַח²⁵ אֹתוֹ לְנִתְחָיו וְאֶת־רֵאשׁוֹ וְאֶת־פְּדָרוֹ וְעַבְרֵי²⁶ הַכֹּהֵן
 אָתָם עַל־הָעֵצִים אֲשֶׁר עַל־הָאֵשׁ אֲשֶׁר עַל־הַמִּזְבֵּחַ:
 1.13 וְהִקְרִיב וְהִפְרָעִים יְרַחֵץ²⁷ בַּמַּיִם וְהִקְלִיב²⁸ הַכֹּהֵן אֶת־הַכֹּל
 וְהִקְטִיר²⁹ הַמִּזְבֵּחַ עֲלֶיהָ הִיא אִשָּׁה רֵיחַ נִיחַח לַיהוָה פ:

1:10 Now if his offering is from the flock—from the sheep or from the goats, he shall offer²² it—a perfect male—as a sacrifice for burning up, 11 and he shall slaughter²³ it on the side of the altar northwards before the face of Jehovah. Then Aaron’s sons, the priests, shall sprinkle²⁴ its blood around on the altar. 12 And he shall cut²⁵ it into its pieces, also with its head and its fat, and then the priest shall arrange²⁶ them upon the sticks which are on the fire which is on the altar. 13 However, the innards and the legs he shall wash²⁷ with water, and the priest shall offer²⁸ the whole, and he shall burn [it] up²⁹ [on] the altar. It is a sacrifice for burning up, a fire-offering of a soothing aroma to Jehovah.

Verb#	Root	Parsing	Formatives	Meaning	Syntax
22	קרב	Hiph. Impf. 3ms	3ms	Offer/draw near	M.V./Apod.
23	שחט	Qal Perf. 3ms	v.c.	slaughter/kill	M.V.
24	זרק	Qal Perf. 3cpl.	v.c.	sprinkle	M.V.
25	נתח	Piel. Perf 3ms	v.c.	divide/cut	M.V.
26	ערך	Qal Perf. 3c.s.	v.c.	lay/stack/prepare	M.V.
27	רחץ	Qal Perf. 3ms	v.c.	wash/rinse	M.V.
28	קרב	Hiph. Perf. 3ms	v.c.	offer/draw near	M.V.
29	קטר	Hiph. Perf. 3ms	v.c.	go up in smoke	M.V./Id.Act. #28?

Commentary

This passage is very much parallel to verses 3-9, dealing with how to offer a burnt sacrifice. The difference described in the text is that this passage deals with the burnt offering of a sheep or goat whereas the former dealt with the sacrifice of a bull. The process is pretty much the same—in fact, there are no significant differences, and, perhaps as a result, this second passage is less detailed than the former. The location is now assumed (v.3 “the doorway of the tent of meeting”); the purpose is assumed (v.3-4 “that he may be accepted before the LORD...to make atonement on his behalf”); and a few actions are also assumed, including the laying on of hands, skinning the animal, and putting fire and wood on the altar. There are also some interesting additions in this section which were not found in the first, including the “north side” of the altar, the use of a stated subject in the last sentence “It is,” and the use of the verb “offer” (KJV & NIV “bring”) in connection with the priest (in the first section it was only used in connection with the worshipper). These differences bring the passage all the more to life—this isn’t a mechanical repetition; some real thought went into the unique presentation of this second section.

1:10 Now if his offering is from the flock, from the sheep or from the goats, he shall offer²² it—a perfect male—as a sacrifice for burning up,

In this section of verses (1:10-13) we’re dealing with the burnt sacrifice of a goat or sheep, presumably as a sin offering. The Hebrew word order emphasizes this, as it begins with “Now, if from the flock...” whereas normally it would have started with a verb such as “he shall offer.” It draws attention to the fact that this is a new section. The word for “sheep” is masculine, as in “rams,” (Holladay), and the word for “goats” can be feminine or masculine, but the passage stipulates that the offering is to be a male.

Different translations of the Bible have different minor variations, but there is no significant difference in meaning. The KJV, for example, pluralizes the word “flock” (The Hebrew word is singular, and the KJV rendered it singular “flock” in v.3). The NIV puts a definite article (“the”) in front of the word “offering” when there is no definite article—one has to wonder if this is another attempt to avoid the masculine pronoun again, since it literally says in Hebrew “his offering.” The ancient Samaritan Pentateuch and the Septuagint add “to Jehovah” to define who the sacrifice is being offered to—this is not in the Hebrew text at this point, although it is implied by the context. Even more interestingly, the Samaritan Pentateuch throws the word “for a burnt offering” (or, as I translated it “as a sacrifice for burning up”) forward in the sentence next to the word for “his offering;” the NIV goes with the Samaritan word order “if the offering is a burnt offering from the flock...” Despite the different translations, however, the meaning is the same: A man may bring an animal from his flock—either a sheep or a goat—as a burnt offering to God, and that animal must be a perfect male.

See comments for 1:3 on “perfect,” “male” and “sacrifice for burning up.”

1:11 *and he shall slaughter²³ it on the side of the altar northwards before the face of Jehovah. Then Aaron’s sons, the priests, shall sprinkle²⁴ its blood around on the altar.*

The Septuagint translators took the liberty to add “and he shall lay his hand on its head” from v.4, to the beginning of this verse, perhaps because they felt that this action was so important in the ceremony of sacrifice that it should not be left unstated. I agree that it was an important part of the ceremony which should have been kept in carrying out the actions of the sacrifice, but it is never a good idea to add to the words of Holy Scripture! The Septuagint also pluralizes the verbs for “slaughter,” and “cut” (v.12), presumably shifting the action from the worshipper to the priests. These are liberties which should not have been taken with the text.

The sacrifice was to be killed on (or “against”) the side (literally the “thigh”) of the altar northwards before the face of Jehovah. This sheds more light to the details given in v.5, which stated that the blood was to be sprinkled around on the altar “that is at the doorway of the Tent of Meeting.” Putting the two passages together, we can say that the Tent of Meeting was to the north of the altar of sacrifice. What was the significance of this location? Practically it was close to the altar, so the priests wouldn’t have to carry the blood and carcass far to the altar. Spiritually, it was a reminder of the reality that this was a transaction done in the presence of God. The Tent of Meeting is where God met with Israel, so they were to be facing the entrance of that tent as a reminder that they were meeting with God with a substitute killed in their behalf so they could be forgiven of their sins. Keil and Delitzsch suggest that it was only fitting for the sacrifice to be done on the North side because the steps to the altar were on the South side, the East side was the place for refuse, and the West side faced the holy place (which they said would have been most unsuitable, although they don’t explain why!). The North side of the altar faced the table of shew-bread, with the continual offering of loaves of bread.

The worshipper was to slit the throat of the animal, and the attending priests were to catch the blood in a bowl and sprinkle the blood liberally both “upon” and “around” the altar. The animal, the altar, the blood, and the burning are the key elements of this sacrifice. (See commentary on 1:5 for more details.)

1:12 *And he shall cut²⁵ it into its pieces also with its head and its fat, and then the priest shall arrange²⁶ them upon the sticks which are on the fire which is on the altar.*

See commentary on 1:6-8.

Because of the Zaqef qaton accent (like our comma) over the word “to his pieces” and the Vav conjunction before “he shall arrange” (usually indicating the beginning of a clause), it’s hard to know what to do with the phrase in the middle “and (with) his head and his fat”—does it go with “cut in pieces” or does it go with “arrange...on the altar”? I cast my vote with the KJV and NAS in putting it with the former; I think the NIV is stretching it too far to put it with the latter. Keil and Delitzsch agree, although they believe we are dealing with an unstated verb here, i.e. “cut it up according to its parts and (sever) its head and its fat.” This awkward word order, however calls attention to the head and fat (see commentary on “fat” in 1:8), perhaps so that it will not be forgotten, since in nor-

mal butchering for eating, it was the rest of the body that was paid attention to, and God is here emphasizing that the WHOLE animal was to be offered up.

A peculiar textual variant comes into play here in the number of priests. Whereas in v.8, the *plural* priests were to arrange the quartered animal upon the altar, here in verse 12, it is the *singular* priest who is to arrange the sacrifice upon the altar. The ancient Greek Septuagint and Latin Vulgate translate them both plural. I don't think this is a terribly significant variant. It didn't really matter how many priests were involved in the sacrifice; what mattered was that a priest and not a layman be the one who put the sacrificial elements on the altar. Why a priest? To maintain the separation between sinful man and the holy God. There had to be a go-between. A sinful man could not directly approach the holy God; he had to go through a priest who had been approved before God's presence to be a mediator between his fellow man and God. The book of Hebrews makes it abundantly clear that Jesus Christ fulfilled this function as the High Priest to end all High Priests. Jesus was not only the perfect Lamb, he was also his own officiating priest in offering Himself as a sacrifice, and He lives forever in heaven now to be the mediator between man and God. When we pray, we do so in Jesus' name—our prayers go through Him to the Father. Jesus is our Priest now, and there is no longer a need among God's people, the church, for an earthly priest.

1:13 *However, the innards and the legs he shall wash²⁷ with water, and the priest shall offer²⁸ the whole, and he shall burn [it] up²⁹ [on] the altar. It is a sacrifice for burning up, a fire-offering of a soothing aroma to Jehovah.* The Vav conjunction which begins verse 12, like our English word “and” is a connective word for consecutive events, but the Vav can also be a disjunctive conjunction like our English word “but.” Such is the case here in verse 13 (KJV=“but,” NAS=“However,” NIV=omitted!). Concerning the cause for this disjunction (I suggest it is temporal) as well as elaboration on “inner parts,” “legs,” reason for washing, the special verb used here for “burning up,” and the “soothing aroma to Jehovah” see commentary in v.9.

It's interesting to see another little difference between this section and the previous. In v.9, it was “*its* inner parts and *its* legs” whereas here in v.13 it is “*the* inner parts and *the* legs” (emphasis mine). It just underscores to me that each section in the Bible, even repetitive parts like this, were written with individual care and carry uniquenesses, thus each section of the Bible should be read with individual care rather than skipped simply because it may look repetitive.

The verb numbered 28 here is the same Hebrew word translated “offer” and “offering” everywhere else in this passage. The root meaning is “to be near,” and since it has the Hiphil stem here, it has a causative meaning: “cause to be near,” thus it is translated “bring” or “offer.” The King James translators use the word “bring” in this section, both in regard to the one offering the sacrifice and in regard to the priest who places the sacrifice on the altar, whereas in the previous section, they translated the word consistently “offer.” The NIV translators apparently wanted to make a distinction between the action of the worshipper and the action of the priest, so they translated it “offer” in regards to the worshipper, but “bring” in regards to the priest, perhaps underlining that the action of the priest was primarily that of carrying things to the altar whereas the worshipper was the one who was making the offering. It seems inconsistent to me etymologically, but I can see why they would want to make the distinction. Anyway, whether you translate it as “offer” or as “bring” decides whether the priest's “offering/bringing” and “burning up” are identical actions (offering is the same as burning up), or consecutive actions (bringing the carcass to the altar and then burning it)—I go for the former, but wouldn't want to argue over it!

Who Does What: Burnt Offering from Flock

	Worshipper	Priest(s)
v.10	offer lamb or goat	
v.11	slaughter it	sprinkle blood on altar
v.12	cut it up	arrange pieces on altar
v.13	wash legs and entrails	bring/offer and burn it up on altar

Note that according to the Hebrew text, the worshipper's work revolves around the animal, and the work of the priest revolves around the altar.

Leviticus 1:14-17

1.14 וְאִם מִן־הָעוֹף עֲלָה קִרְבָּנוֹ לַיהוָה וְהִקְרִיב³⁰ מִן־הַתּוֹרִים
אוֹ מִן־בְּנֵי הַיּוֹנָה אֶת־קִרְבָּנוֹ:
1.15 וְהִקְרִיבֶנּוּ³¹ הַכֹּהֵן אֶל־הַמִּזְבֵּחַ וּמָלַק³² אֶת־רֹאשׁוֹ וְהִקְטִיר³³ הַמִּזְבֵּחַ
וְנִמְצָה³⁴ דָּמּוֹ עַל קִיר הַמִּזְבֵּחַ:
1.16 וְהִסִּיר³⁵ אֶת־מְרֹאתָו בְּנֹצְתָהּ וְהִשְׁלִיךְ³⁶ אֹתָהּ אֶצֶל הַמִּזְבֵּחַ
לְדָמָה אֶל־מְקוֹם הַדָּשָׁן:
1.17 וְשָׁסַע³⁷ אֹתוֹ בְּכַנְפָיו לֹא יִבְדִּיל³⁸ וְהִקְטִיר³⁹ אֹתוֹ
הַכֹּהֵן הַמִּזְבֵּחַ עַל־הַעֲצִים אֲשֶׁר עַל־הָאֵשׁ עֲלֶיהָ הוּא
אֲשֶׁה הַיַּח נִיחַח לַיהוָה ס:

Verb#	Root	Parsing	Formatives	Meaning	Syntax
30	קרב	Hiph. Perf. 3ms	vav	offer/draw near	M.V./Apod.
31	קרב	Hiph. Perf. 3ms	vav + 3ms	offer/draw near	M.V.
32	מלק	Qal Pf. 3ms	vav	pinch off	MV
33	קטר	Hiph. Perf. 3ms	vav	go up in smoke	M.V./Id.Act. #28?
34	מצה	Niph. Perf. 3ms	vav	drain out	MV
35	סור	Hiph. Perf. 3ms	vav	turn away	MV
36	שלך	Hiph. Perf. 3ms	vav	cast	MV
37	שסע	Piel Pref. 3ms	vav	cleave	MV
38	בדל	Hiph. Impf. 3ms		separate	Qualify #37
39	קטר	Hiph. Perf. 3ms	vav	go up in smoke	M.V.

1:14 And if his offering to Jehovah is a sacrifice for burning up from the birds, then he shall offer³⁰ his offering from the turtle-doves or from the young pigeons. 15 And the priest shall offer³¹ it unto the altar, and he shall pinch off³² its head and burn³³ it up on the altar, and its blood shall be drained out³⁴ on the flat side of the altar. 16 Then he shall remove³⁵ its crop with its feathers, and he shall throw³⁶ it to the East side of the altar—to the ash pit. 17 And he shall tear³⁷ it by its wings, but he shall not sever³⁸ it, and the priest shall burn³⁹ it up on the altar, on the sticks which are on the fire. It is a sacrifice for burning up—a fire offering—a soothing aroma to Jehovah.

Commentary

The third and final category of burnt offerings was the birds. This was the offering of a poor man who could not afford a larger animal. Such birds were kept domesticated (K&D) or were caught in the wild by daring cliff-climbers and sold.

1:14 *And if his offering to Jehovah is a sacrifice for burning up from the birds, then he shall offer³⁰ his offering from the turtle-doves or from the young pigeons.*

Again, the forward placement in Hebrew of “if from the...” signals the transition to this third section. It is interesting that while the NAS and NIV have made “his offering” the Subject of the sentence and “burnt sacrifice” the Predicate Nominative of the sentence, the KJV lumps the two together “if the burnt sacrifice for his offering is...”

As in the previous section, I have rendered the verb קרב in every occurrence as “offer” just to show that it is the same word, although most English translations render it “offer” in some places and “bring” in other places (see comment in 1:13).

This sort of offering was to be from the “turtle-doves” (the NIV misses the word “from” here and also makes the noun singular when it is plural) or from the “young pigeons.” The Hebrew word for “turtle-dove” (pronounced “tor” – don’t forget to roll your “r”!), could be onomatopoeic for the sound the bird actually makes (BDB), and the “young pigeon” is literally, “the sons of the dove” -- “son of” being a Hebraism for “young” (Son.). The word for “dove” is pronounced “yonah” – you may recognize that this is the same as the name of the famous prophet whom God sent to Nineveh!

1:15 *And the priest shall offer³¹ it unto the altar, and he shall pinch off³² its head and burn³³ it up on the altar, and its blood shall be drained out³⁴ on the flat side of the altar.*

Unlike the procedure of the larger offerings, with the birds it was the priest who killed the animal. He is to “wring off” (KJV, NAS, NIV), “nip off” (BDB), “pinch off” (Holl., Son., K&D) the bird’s head. Then the head is to be tossed immediately onto the altar to be burned up (K&D).

The next step was for the blood to be drained out. There is a little bit of disagreement as to how to translate this word, but the basic idea is the same. The Samaritan Pentateuch has the most different translation—probably due to a spelling error—using the word for “find” (which is a homonym in Hebrew for the correct word), the Latin Vulgate and Greek Septuagint merely drop the letter Nun at the beginning, changing the verb from passive to active “and he shall wring out,” instead of “the blood shall be wrung out.” The NAS uses a less intense word “drained” whereas the KJV uses a little more intense word “wring.” Keil and Delitzsch remind us that there’s not a lot of blood in a bird, so it probably had to be “pressed out” and there probably wasn’t enough to sprinkle around, as was the case with the larger animals. But the basic idea is that the blood was removed from the bird. This was to be done on the “side” of the altar (as most English versions put it), but since the word for “side” literally means wall” or “flat surface,” (Holl.), I liked BDB’s rendering “flat side.”

1:16 *Then he shall remove³⁵ its crop with its feathers, and he shall throw³⁶ it to the East side of the altar—to the ash pit.*

The first verb literally means “cause to turn away;” the NIV renders it “remove,” NAS “take away,” and the KJV “pluck away.” The bird’s crop, or the alimentary canal, is where the food is digested. These words for “crop” and “feathers” are *hapex legomena*, occurring only once in the Bible, and while the “crop” is generally agreed upon, there is a bit of controversy over the second word – whether it should be translated “feathers” or as waste material in the crop. Davidson related this word to the root **אצ** “to go out,” and the famous 10th Century Jewish commentator, Rashi, translated it “entrails.” Following him, Nachmanides translated it “feathers in the crop,” Keil and Delitzsch translate it “feces,” and the NIV goes for “its contents.” Others, however say that the word stems from **נצח** “to fly” (BDB) or “to blossom” (Holl.), thus Luther, Cohen, the KJV and NAS all translate it “feathers,” and that is the translation I went for. However, Keil and Delitzsch remind us that, whatever the case, the intestines would have come out anyway with the crop, and because the other sacrificial animals were to be skinned, the bird, by analogy, at least would need to have its feathers plucked, so no matter which way you translate this, it comes out pretty much the same in action.

Interestingly enough, in the Masoretic Hebrew text, this word for “feathers/contents” appears to have a feminine pronoun attached, i.e. “her” feathers, whereas you would expect a masculine pronoun. The Samaritan Pentateuch, Syriac, most Targums, and the KJV all change the pronoun to a masculine one (“his feathers”) because only males were to be sacrificed! The next pronoun in the text is also feminine in the Masoretic text (“and he shall cast her to the side...”) and most of the versions also change it to masculine. Perhaps this is an error in the Masoretic text, but since English has neutral pronouns for animals, we can play it safe and translate these pronouns in the neuter “it.”

These waste materials—the intestines and the feathers—were to be thrown to the East side of the altar. The East side is where the ash-pit was—literally “a place of fat.” The word “fat” is generally translated into English as “ash” because this was apparently a mixture of animal fat and wood ashes from the altar (BDB, Hol.). Such a pile of fatty-ashes seems out-of-place in God’s holy place of worship, and some have tried to “clean it up” in interesting ways: Cohen relates a Jewish legend which says that all the parts cast away to this place miraculously disap-

peared (Son.), but the Cairo text gives a little more naturalistic suggestion, saying that the waste material was “burned up” instead of merely tossed to the side. I don’t see any Biblical basis for either of these, though.

1:17 *And he shall tear³⁷ it by its wings, but he shall not sever³⁸ it, and the priest shall burn³⁹ it up on the altar, on the sticks which are on the fire. It is a sacrifice for burning up—a fire offering—a soothing aroma to Jehovah.* The word “tear” is in the Piel stem, which indicates an intense action. The Qal (non-intense) stem of the same verb is often used to describe an animal with a hoof that is “split” or “divided.” The priest was to grab that bird by the wings and rip it open. However, the text gives a qualifying term – the only verb in this section of the Hebrew text without a vav attached to it (see the Formatives column in the verb chart for this section — this is verb #38). I believe, that the lack of the vav (the other manuscripts containing a vav notwithstanding) would call attention to the fact that this verb “not sever” is a qualification of the former one “tear.” The priest is to tear the bird, but not all the way in two, or, as the NIV puts it, “not severing it completely.” Why? Perhaps the priests would have felt obligated to chop the little bird into pieces just like the larger animals if God hadn’t said this, and this would underscore my hypothesis that the large animals were quartered primarily for ease of handling rather than for symbolic religious reasons.

This passage ends with the same phrase as the former two (See comments on 1:8). The priest is to burn the body on the altar as a burnt offering, and it will be a soothing smell to the Lord.

Who Does What: Burnt Offering of Birds

Worshipper		Priest(s)
v.14	Offer turtle-dove or young pigeon	
v.15		-Bring bird to altar -Pinch off head and burn it -Drain out blood on side of altar
v.16		-Remove crop and feathers -Throw them to east side of altar
v.17		-Tear open bird’s body partially -Burn it on altar

Applications:

1. We should realize the seriousness of our violations of God’s laws: that our sins anger God and require the death of an individual.
2. We should praise God that He does not leave us to die in our sin and estrangement from Him, but that He provides a way of reconciliation with Him through the sacrifice of another.
3. We must realize that Jesus Christ fulfilled the animal sacrifices, being a young, perfect male, offering the ultimate sacrifice of His divine self upon the cross .
4. Just as the ancient Jew signified his belief in God’s provision of atonement by laying his hand on the head of the sacrificial animal, so we must place our trust in Jesus who paid the death penalty we deserve for our sin and reconciled us to God.
5. We should appreciate the fact that God has made some people richer and some poorer, and that He required more of the man with means (bullock) than He did of a poor man (dove), yet accepted both equally.
6. We should never doubt that God has heard our prayer or accepted our worship when we offer it to Him — we can rest assured that He enjoys it like a “soothing aroma.”
7. We should respect the holiness of God. God is so separate from man that, in the Old Testament, only a priest could approach God’s altar with a sacrifice. According to the New Testament, Jesus is our priest by which we may come directly to God without another human priest, but we should never take that privilege lightly or enter the worship of God carelessly.
8. We should also beware the error of giving over to the clergy the responsibility which God has given us to worship Him, like the Jews did with the Septuagint in reassigning the slaughter of the animal from the worshipper to the priests.

9. Just as the “whole” animal was offered upon the altar, the New Testament exhorts us to “present our bodies a living sacrifice” to God. Our “whole [person should be consecrated and surrendered] to the Lord to be pervaded by the refining power of divine grace.” (K&D)