

Leviticus Chapter Three

an Exegetical Commentary by Nate Wilson

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Leviticus 3:1-5

3.1 וְאִם-זֶבַח שְׁלָמִים קָרְבָּנוֹ אִם מִן-הַבְּקָר הוּא מִקְרִיב¹
 אִם-זָכָר אִם-נִקְבָּה תָּמִים יִקְרִיבֵנוּ² לִפְנֵי יְהוָה:
 3.2 וְסָמַךְ³ יָדוֹ עַל-רֹאשׁ קָרְבָּנוֹ וּשְׁחָטוֹ⁴ פֶּתַח אֹהֶל מוֹעֵד
 וְזָרְקוּ⁵ בְּנֵי אֹהֶל־הַכֹּהֲנִים אֶת-הַדָּם עַל-הַמִּזְבֵּחַ סָבִיב:
 3.3 וְהִקְרִיב⁶ מִזֶּבַח הַשְּׁלָמִים אֲשֶׁה לַיהוָה
 אֶת-הַחֹלֶב הַמְכַסֶּה אֶת-הַקֶּרֶב וְאֶת כָּל-הַחֹלֶב אֲשֶׁר עַל-הַקֶּרֶב:
 3.4 וְאֶת שְׁתֵּי הַכְּלָיִת וְאֶת-הַחֹלֶב אֲשֶׁר עֲלֵהֶן אֲשֶׁר עַל-הַכְּסָלִים
 וְאֶת-הִיתְרָת עַל-הַכֶּבֶד עַל-הַכְּלָיִת יְסִירָנָה⁷:
 3.5 וְהִקְטִירוּ⁸ אֹתוֹ בְּנֵי-אֹהֶל־הַמִּזְבֵּחַ עַל-הָעֵלֶה
 אֲשֶׁר עַל-הָעֵצִים אֲשֶׁר עַל-הָאֵשׁ אֲשֶׁה רִיחַ נִיחַח לַיהוָה פּ:

Verb#	Root	Parsing	Formatives	Meaning	Syntax
1	קרב	Hiph. Ptc. m.s.		bring near/offer	Cond.
2	קרב	Hiph. Impf. 3ms	3sm	“	M.V.
3	סמך	Qal Perf. 3ms	v.c.	lean/lay	M.V.
4	שחט	Qal Perf. 3ms	v.c. + 3ms	slaughter/kill	M.V.
5	זרק	Qal Perf. 3m.plur.	v.c.	sprinkle	M.V.
6	קרב	Hiph. Impf. 3ms	v.c.	near/offer	M.V.
7	סור	Hiph. Impf. 3ms	3sf	turn away/put aside	Explan. of #6
8	קטר	Hiph. Perf. 3m. plur.	v.c.	burn upward/ smoke	M.V.

3:1 And if his offering is a sacrifice of peace-offerings – if he is offering¹ from the cattle, whether a male or whether a female – he shall offer² it perfect before the face of Jehovah.
 3:2 And he shall lay³ his hand upon the head of his offering, and he shall slaughter⁴ it at the entrance of the Tent of Meeting. And the sons of Aaron, the priests, shall sprinkle⁵ the blood around upon the altar.
 3:3 Then he shall offer⁶ from the sacrifice of the peace-offerings a fire-offering to Jehovah: the fat covering of the innards, all the fat which is upon the innards,
 3:4 both of the kidneys, the fat which is upon them (*and* which is upon the flanks), and the lobe above the liver. He shall put this aside⁷ with the kidneys.
 3:5 Then the sons of Aaron shall burn it up⁸ on the altar, on top of the whole burnt-offering which is upon the sticks which is upon the fire, as a fire-offering of a soothing aroma to Jehovah.

Commentary

3:1 *And if his offering is a sacrifice of peace-offerings – if he is offering¹ from the cattle,*

“And if” – The LXX translates this as a third class conditional clause (indicating that this is something which is expected to happen).

- קָרְבָּנוֹ “offering” See notes on 1:2
- זֶבַח “sacrifice” Here is the first occurrence of this word in Leviticus. It is related to the word for “slaughter” and emphasizes the killing of an animal.

- שְׁלָמִים This is also a new word in Leviticus. You can see it is related to the word “shalom/peace.”
 - Always plural, except in Amos 5:22. I have followed Soncino and the NASB in rendering it “sacrifice of peace offerings,” but the KJV renders it singular. According to K&D, the plural denotes “the entire round of blessings and powers by which the salvation or integrity of man in his relation to God is established and secured.”
 - Also called the “thank-offering,” “slain offering” (K&D), “saving offering” (LXX = θυσια σωτηριου), “settlement-sacrifice,” “communion-sacrifice” (Hol.), and “fellowship offering” (NIV).
 - The connotations of this word “peace” have to do with wholeness, perfection, safety, well-being, and peace.
 - Soncino: “peace” because it brings peace between God and man, because it fulfills vows between man and man, and because both priest and offerer share it in fellowship.
 - K&D: This sacrifice is offered as thanksgiving for salvation already received or sometimes as a prayer for salvation desired in times of misfortune.
 - It is different from the burnt offering in that only the fat and kidneys are burnt on the altar. The rest of the animal is eaten as a meal (The priest gets the breast and right leg, and the offerer and his family and guests eat the rest before the Lord). It also can be male or female, unlike the burnt offering which was only male.
 - Three different kinds of peace offerings are distinguished in ch.6, the “praise-offering,” the “special-vow offering,” and the “free-will offering.”
 - HAW: The peace-offering symbolizes peace with God and man and fullness of life, prosperity, and joy. This is further pictured in the meal where there is human fellowship around the table in the presence of God. There is also an element of completion, since it is the last sort of sacrifice to be mentioned in the list of sacrifices. Ephesians 2:13-16 shows Christ to be the fulfillment of this – our final sacrifice who brings “peace.”
 - Just as the flesh of the peace-offering was eaten as a fellowship meal, so also we are commanded to eat the “flesh” of Jesus Christ, our peace, in the Christian sacrament of Communion (fellowship)/Eucharist/Lord’s Supper.
- הַבָּקָר “the cattle” or “the herd” (NAS, NIV) see notes on 1:2. שׂוֹר “steer” is used to describe this same animal in 4:10.

3:1b *whether a male or whether a female – he shall offer² it perfect before the face of Jehovah.*

- “whether male or female” – Although this sacrifice certainly speaks of Jesus Christ, who is our “salvation,” our “peace,” and who creates “fellowship,” the stipulation of a male is not given here. I wonder why? I could not find any commentators who offered an explanation for this. Perhaps it was just God’s way of keeping some gender balance in the herds of His people – if they were never allowed to sacrifice a female, perhaps a person could end up sacrificing all his males and have a flock of only females who couldn’t reproduce. Or perhaps Keil and Delitzch’s concept of the sacrifice as being a representation of the offerer is more operative in the peace offering: God invites both men and women into fellowship with Him, and so both male and female animals could be sacrificed in the peace offering, whereas the sin offering pointed more towards the one man, Christ who would die for our sins and thus was represented by a male animal sacrifice. I am merely offering suggestions here, with the full understanding that Jesus Christ was still the fulfillment of the peace offering.
- תָּמִים “perfect” KJV = “without blemish,” NAS & NIV = “without defect.” This is an adjective describing the animal to be offered, not an adverb describing how the supplicant offers the peace offering. It was to be a perfect animal.
- לְפָנַי “before the face of” or “in front of” see notes on 1:5

3:2 *And he shall lay³ his hand upon the head of his offering, and he shall slaughter⁴ it at the entrance of the Tent of Meeting.*

- “And he shall lay” See notes on this verb in 1:4. “The imposition of the donor’s hand indicated, as previously, the dedication of the offering to God and the worshipper’s identification with it as his own property” (Harrison: IVP).
- “slaughter it at the entrance” KJV = “kill it at the door,” NAS = “slay it at the doorway,” NIV = “slaughter it at the entrance.” See notes from 1:5. The offering which brings peace and salvation necessitates the death of an entity, showing that the way to peace and salvation for mankind would necessitate the death of Christ. Salvation and peace are not free and easy; they come with a terrible price.
- There are two grammatical constructions for a command in the Hebrew used in this passage, one being an Imperfect verb and the other being a Perfect verb prefixed by a Vav. Some distinction is made between the commands to offer the peace offering in verses one and three as well as the command to remove the fat in verse four (which are Imperfect verbs) and the commands to lay hands on, slaughter, sprinkle blood, and burn up the offering (vs. 2 & 5), which are Perfect verbs with the Vav prefix. The general actions are the former, and the latter are more specific actions involved in the sacrament of the offering.
- “Tent of Meeting” see notes from 1:1.

3:2b *And the sons of Aaron, the priests, shall sprinkle⁵ the blood around upon the altar.*

This phrase is a repeat from 1:5, so see notes there on “sprinkle” and “around on.”

Blood is a necessary element for peace and salvation; that is why the blood of Christ is so important in the New Testament. Again, the priests are the ones who bring the blood to the altar. “Christ the peaceful prince has made peace for us by His atoning death, achieving for us what we could never do for ourselves, and terminating the state of alienation between God and Man (Isa. 9:6, Eph. 2:14-16)” (Harrison: IVP).

3:3 *Then he shall offer⁶ from the sacrifice of the peace-offerings a fire-offering to Jehovah:*

- “he shall offer” the Vulgate and Septuagint pluralize this verb as “they shall offer,” shifting the action from the supplicant to the priests. See my notes on 1:5 and 1:11 as to why this shift is wrong. The killing of the animal was to be done by the people, not the priests.
- The peace offering had part that was burned up (the fat, intestines, and kidneys) and part that was eaten.
- אֲשָׁה “fire-offering” see notes on 1:9.

3:3b *the fat covering of the innards, all the fat which is upon the innards,*

- הַחֵלֶב this is a different word for “fat” than the word פֶּדֶר used in 1:8 and 1:11, but probably denoting the same thing.
- הַמְכַסֶּה literally “the covering of,” but translated “that covers” by most other English versions.
- “innards” KJV = “inwards,” NAS = “entrails,” NIV = “inner parts.” See notes on this word in 1:13.
- עַל-הַקֶּרֶב “upon the innards” NIV = “connected to them.”
- What is the distinction being made here between the “fat covering” and the “fat upon” the innards? Jewish commentators differ on this, although it is offered that the second phrase includes the fat that covers the maw (Soncino). Keil and Delitzsch say that the first is the large net which stretches from the stomach over the bowels and completely envelopes them, and the second is the fat attached to the intestines, which could easily be peeled off. I can envision this because I’ve been deer-hunting a couple of times, but it may be hard to imagine if you haven’t butchered an animal before!
- The fat was to be offered to the Lord. Two reasons are suggested for this:
 - one, the fat was considered the choicest part, and was therefore what was given to God – the application being that we should give only the best to God,
 - two, that God was protecting His people by taking the part that would be bad for them to eat, since eating fatty foods can facilitate not only circulatory disorders but also the transfer of parasites which tend to reside in adipose tissue (Harrison).

3:4 *both of the kidneys, the fat which is upon them (and which is upon the flanks),*

- שְׁתֵּי “both of,” Son. = “two,” Hol. = cardinal number of dual.

- הַכְּלָיִת “kidneys,” lit. “ends.” From כָּלָה “to yearn” – the kidneys were considered the seat of the passions (Son.) and represented the “secret workings and affections of the soul” (Dav.).
- “and the fat” I sided with Soncino and the KJV here. The NAS and NIV render it “with the fat” – not that it makes much difference.
- הַכְּסָלִים “flanks” I also sided with Soncino and the KJV here; NAS & NIV render this “loins.” The root כָּסַל, according to Soncino is used to describe the stars that flank the constellation Orion on both sides of the stomach! This is the fat visible upon the upper part of the flanks.

3:4b *and the lobe above the liver. He shall put this aside⁷ with the kidneys.*

- הַיִּתְּרָה “lobe” A Feminine Singular noun from יָתַר “to be left over.” Davidson and Keil & Delitzsch relate it to “stretch over,” and thus the KJV translates it “caul,” and the NIV “covering,” but K&D later say that’s not what it means. The Soncino commentary explains that this was the “protecting wall over the liver” and translates it “lobe” (cf. NASB).
- הַכִּבְדֹּד “liver” All are agreed on this translation. It literally means “weight.” The liver was regarded as the seat of emotions.
- עַל-הַכְּלָיִת “with the kidneys” (cf. KJV, NAS, NIV). Jewish translators say it can mean “hard by,” “together with,” or “in addition to” the kidneys (Son.).
- Brown, Driver, & Briggs take the whole phrase to mean “the fatty appendage extending from the liver to the kidneys.”
- יָסִירָנָהּ “He shall put her aside” From סָוַר “to turn away” KJV = “take away” NIV = “remove.” This verb has a Feminine Singular object attached to it, and refers back to the antecedent “lobe” which is the only Fem. Sing. word in the verse, although, from the context, it would not be accurate to say that the other parts such as the kidneys and the fat were not also dealt with in the same manner. They were all to be set aside by the offerer so that the priest can then pick it up and burn it on the altar.

3:5 *Then the sons of Aaron shall burn it up⁸ on the altar, on top of the whole burnt-offering*

- וְהִקְטִירוּ⁸ “burn up” See comments in 1:9, although there it has a singular subject (he, the priest) and here it is plural (they, the priests).
- אֹתָו lit. “him” What was referred to as a Feminine Singular object in the previous verse is now being referred to as a Masculine Singular object in this verse. I believe it refers simply to all the innards and fat that has been enumerated for setting aside as a burnt-offering to the Lord.
- “sons of Aaron” This is omitted in the Vulgate, but is augmented by “the priests” in the Septuagint. This doesn’t make much difference, as it is obviously talking about the priests who officiate the sacrifices at the altar.
- עַל-הַכֹּלֵל “on top of the whole burnt offering” Most English translations don’t use the word “whole” here, but the Hebrew word has that connotation, and I’m inserting “whole” to distinguish it more clearly from אֲשֶׁה (found in the second half of this verse) which they also translate “burnt-offering” but which has more the connotation of “fire” and thus I translate “fire-offering.” This is to be “upon” or “on top of” previously-offered burnt offerings, because burnt offerings were offered first every morning and were probably still smoking on the altar all day (K&D).

3:5b *which is upon the sticks which is upon the fire, as a fire-offering of a soothing aroma to Jehovah.*

- הָעֵצִים “sticks” see 1:8.
- עַל-הָאֵשׁ “upon the fire” The Samaritan Pentateuch and the Septuagint add the phrase “which is on the altar,” perhaps to match the pattern of 1:8 and 1:12.
- רִיחַ נִיחֹחַ “soothing aroma” See 1:9.

Leviticus 3:6-11

3.6 וְאִם־מִן־הַצֹּאן קָרְבָּנוֹ לְזֶבַח שְׁלָמִים לַיהוָה

זָכַר אֹן נִקְבָּה תָּמִים יִקְרִיבָנוּ⁹:

3.7 אִם־כֶּשֶׁב הוּא־מִקְרִיב¹⁰ אֶת־קָרְבָּנוֹ וְהִקְרִיב¹¹ אֹתוֹ לִפְנֵי יְהוָה:

3.8 וְסָמַךְ¹² אֶת־יָדוֹ עַל־רִאשׁ קָרְבָּנוֹ וְשָׁחַט¹³ אֹתוֹ לִפְנֵי אֹהֶל מוֹעֵד

אֹהֶל מוֹעֵד וְזָרְקוּ¹⁴ בְּנֵי אֶהֱרֹן אֶת־דָּמֹו עַל־הַמִּזְבֵּחַ סָבִיב:

3.9 וְהִקְרִיב¹¹ מִזֶּבַח הַשְּׁלָמִים אֲשֶׁה לַיהוָה חִלְבוֹ הָאֲלִיָּה תְּמִימָה

לְעֵמֶת הָעֶצֶה יְסִירָנָה¹⁵ וְאֶת־הַחֵלֶב הַמְּכַסֶּה אֶת־הַקֶּרֶב

וְאֵת כָּל־הַחֵלֶב אֲשֶׁר עַל־הַקֶּרֶב:

3.10 וְאֵת שְׁתֵּי הַכְּלָיִת וְאֶת־הַחֵלֶב אֲשֶׁר עֲלֵהֶן אֲשֶׁר עַל־הַכְּסָלִים

וְאֶת־הֵיתְרָת עַל־הַכְּבֵד עַל־הַכְּלָיִת יְסִירָנָה¹⁵:

3.11 וְהִקְטִיר¹⁶ הַכֹּהֵן הַמִּזְבֵּחַה לַחֵם אֲשֶׁה לַיהוָה פ:

Verb#	Root	Parsing	Formatives	Meaning	Syntax
9	קרב	Hiph. Impf. 3ms	3ms	offer/bring near	M.V.
10	קרב	Hiph. Ptc. ms		“	Cond.
11	קרב	Hiph Perf. 3ms	v.c.	“	M.V. (apodosis)
12	סמך	Qal Perf. 3ms	v.c.	lay/lean	M.V.
13	שחט	Qal Perf. 3ms	v.c.	slaughter	M.V.
14	זרק	Qal Perf. 3m.pl.	v.c.	sprinkle	M.V.
15	סור	Hiph. Impf. 3ms	3sf	turn away/remove	Explan. ^a /M.V. ^b
16	קטר	Hiph. Perf. 3ms	3ms + v.c.	burn up/smoke	M.V.

3:6 Now, if his offering for a sacrifice of peace offerings to Jehovah is from the flock – male or female – he shall offer⁹ it perfect.

3:7 If he is offering¹⁰ a lamb as his offering, then he shall offer¹¹ it before the face of Jehovah.

3:8 And he shall lay¹² his hand upon the head of his offering; then he shall slaughter¹³ it before the face of the Tent of Meeting, and the sons of Aaron shall sprinkle¹⁴ its blood around upon the altar.

3:9 Then he shall offer¹¹ from the sacrifice of the peace-offerings a fire-offering to Jehovah: its fat – the entire fat tail (He shall remove^{15a} it close to the backbone), and the fat covering of the innards, and all the fat which is upon the innards.

3:10 And both of the kidneys, the fat which is upon them (*and* which is upon the flanks), and the lobe above the liver, he shall put this aside^{15b} with the kidneys.

3:11 Then the priest shall burn it up¹⁶ on the altar as food of a fire-offering to Jehovah.

Commentary

3:6 Now, if his offering for a sacrifice of peace offerings to Jehovah is from the flock –

- This verse is parallel to 3:1 “If from the cattle (בקר),” but applies to offerings from the flock (הצאן). This word can apply to any small cattle, such as sheep and goats, but is translated “sheep (προβατων)” in the LXX.
- See 1:2 on “offering.”
- See 3:1 on “sacrifice of peace offerings.”

3:6b male or female – he shall offer⁹ it perfect.

- The parallel to 3:1 continues, except that the “if’s” are dropped (“if a male or if a female”). See commentary on 3:1 on the use of both genders.
- See 3:1 on “perfect”

The flock may have both sheep and goats in it. I heard from a friend that has observed flocks in Israel that it is good for a flock to contain both, because the goats are more adventurous and can find new places to graze and actually lead the sheep to them, but you don’t want a flock of only goats because they are so unruly you’d never be able to herd them; sheep, on the other hand, herd well. This section through the end of the chapter is on offering sheep (v.7-11) and goats (v.12-16) as peace offerings.

3:7 *If he is offering¹⁰ a lamb as his offering, then he shall offer¹¹ it before the face of Jehovah.*

- כֶּשֶׁב “lamb” First we take the offering of the sheep as a peace offering. (Some Hebrew manuscripts have apparently misspelled this word by transposing the last two letters כבש, but that would mean “footstool,” and this is obviously talking about sheep!)
- מִקְרִיב¹⁰ ... וְהִקְרִיב¹¹ “offering ... offer” See comments in 1:2. This word in participle form (#10) parallels 3:1 “If he is offering from the cattle.”
- לְפָנֵי יְהוָה literally “before the face of Jehovah” – any act of worship not offered to the true God is a sin; He is the only true object of worship.

3:8 *And he shall lay¹² his hand upon the head of his offering; then he shall slaughter¹³ it before the face of the Tent of Meeting,*

- See comments from 1:4 and 1:5 regarding the laying on of hands and the slaughter of the animal.
- לְפָנֵי אֹהֶל מוֹעֵד literally “before the face of the Tent of Meeting.” See 1:1 on the Tent of Meeting. The interesting thing is the differences in the parallel passages speaking of where to offer the animal:
 - 3:1 says to offer the cattle “before the face of Jehovah.”
 - 1:3, 1:5, and 3:2 say to offer the animal and its blood “at the door of the Tent of Meeting.”
 - 1:11 says to “slaughter it on the side of the altar Northwards to the face of Jehovah.”
 - And here in 3:8, it is “before the face of the Tent of Meeting” (The LXX says “at the doors of the Tent of Meeting,” and the ancient Syriac translation renders it “at the entrance of the Tent of Meeting.”)

The parallels indicate that the special presence of God, the door of the Tent of Meeting, and the North side of the altar were all close together and facing each other. It was in this special place that people were to seek the face of God – His special presence. Of course, God is omnipresent, but He appears to manifest His presence and dwell in a special way in certain places, such as in the Old Testament temple and in the bodies of New Testament Christians. It is a testimony to the love and grace of God to locate His special presence so close to sinful humans and “meet” with us. It is also significant that this special presence was located so close to the altar, because it is only by the sacrifice of a perfect substitute on the altar (the lamb, and finally, Jesus, the Lamb of God) that any human can meet with God. God locates His special presence right beside the way into His presence – the altar of the Old Testament, and today, His people carry the Gospel (of Jesus, the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world) which is the way into His presence, and His special presence is located in the bodies of the same people who carry this Gospel!

3:8b *and the sons of Aaron shall sprinkle¹⁴ its blood around upon the altar.*

- This is an almost exact repeat of 3:2b and 1:5b, so see comments there.
- The Septuagint (LXX) has a couple of insignificant variants, adding the descriptor “the priests” to “the sons of Aaron,” using the verb “pour out” instead of “sprinkle,” and changing the pronoun to a definite article from “its blood” to “the blood” (the latter of which the Samaritan Pentateuch also does). The LXX also says “to God (θεω)” rather than “to Jehovah (κυριω)” in the next verse (9) and “with the loins” rather than “close to the backbone.” It appears in places that these ancient translations were more concerned with getting the general idea across than with absolute precision of translation, which, can be o.k., generally – the apostles in the New Testament made translations of Old Testament passages into Greek with the same kind of looseness, but as long as we have an accurate original, let’s stick with that.

3:9 *Then he shall offer¹¹ from the sacrifice of the peace-offerings a fire-offering to Jehovah: its fat – the entire fat tail*

- מִזֶּבַח הַשְּׁלָמִים “from the sacrifice of the peace-offerings” See 3:1.
- אֵשָׁה ... חֵלְבוֹ “a fire-offering ... its fat” See 1:9 on “Fire-offering.” A portion of this peace offering – namely “its fat” – was to be offered as a burnt offering. The word for “fat” is Masculine Singular.
- הָאֵלֶיָּהּ תְּמִימָהּ “the fat tail entire” The word for “fat tail” is Feminine Singular, and the word “entire” matches in gender and number. The word for “entire” can also mean “perfect/unblemished,” but the meaning of “whole/entire” is more probable. This “fat tail” word, according to Davidson, stems from an Arabic root meaning “to be fat,” and describes the big tails (or “rumps” as the KJV renders it) that hang off the back of Middle-Eastern sheep, mostly composed of fat, and weighing 15 pounds or more (K&D).

3:9b *(He shall remove^{15a} it close to the backbone), and the fat covering of the innards,*

- לְעִמָּתָּהּ “close to” Davidson says that the root of this word is an Assyrian root “amah” having to do with “association” or “family”, but Brown, Driver & Briggs say it comes from the Hebrew root “amam” which has to do with “closeness/proximity” or “parallel/corresponding.” The KJV and ASV translate this “hard by.”
- הָעֵצָה “the backbone” Masculine Singular – this is the only time this word is found in the Bible. Davidson says this comes from an Arab word meaning “hard/firm,” but the Soncino commentary says it comes from the Hebrew root “ya’atz,” meaning “to counsel” (because it was near the kidneys which were considered the seat of reasoning). Davidson’s explanation sounds more likely; Holiday translates it “tail-bone.”
- יִסְרְוֶנָה¹⁵ “he shall remove her” See 1:5 on “remove.” Here is where the gender of the previous words are significant. So far, we’ve talked about “fat,” a “fat tail,” and a “backbone;” which of these is to be removed? The feminine gender of this pronoun points back to the only feminine noun mentioned – the “fat tail.” The backbone extends into the tail, so naturally one would have to cut off some of the spine in lopping off the tail, and one would sever it as close to the back as possible in order to get as much of the tail as possible. The one who should remove the tail is the person making the offering, not the priest – the person was to prepare the things to be sacrificed and the priest was just to place them and burn them on the altar.
- וְאֵת “and” (+ Direct Object indicator – which the NIV translates as “all”) The construction of the preceding phrase is a little bit awkward, so the Samaritan Pentateuch and some of the Targums apparently try to fix it by removing the vav from the next word (וְאֵת) to make “the fat” the direct object of this verb (i.e. “he shall remove the fat”). The problem with this (besides the fact that “fat” is masculine and the pronoun is feminine) is that there is an aetna mark under the verb (“he shall remove”), indicating that it ends a thought, so we can’t tack a word from the next phrase onto it. The vav (“and”) should be preserved to begin the next thought, making it a further explanation of the “fat” offered in the “fire-offering” – not only the fat tail should be removed for the fire-offering, but also the fat inside the animal.
- The rest of the verse is a repeat of 1:13 and 3:3. My explanation for translating הַקִּיֹּרֹב as “innards” is in my commentary on 1:13.

3:9c *and all the fat which is upon the innards.*

- See notes from 3:3 on the distinction between the fat “covering” the innards and the fat “upon” the innards.

3:10 *And both of the kidneys, the fat which is upon them (and which is upon the flanks), and the lobe above the liver, he shall put this aside^{15b} with the kidneys.*

- This is exactly the same as 3:4, so see notes from there.

3:11 *Then the priest shall burn it up¹⁶ on the altar as food of a fire-offering to Jehovah.*

- אֵשָׁה ... וְהִקְטִיר¹⁶ “He shall burn up ... fire-offering” See notes from 1:9.
- הַכֹּהֵן “the priest” – the parallel passage in 3:5 has this pluralized “the priests.”
- לֶחֶם “bread,” or in general, “food.” This is the first time so far in Leviticus that the offering is called God’s “food.” (The LXX translators must have been looking off in 1:9 when they translated this because they totally

missed the “food” here and rendered it “a sweet savor.”) The spelling of this word “lechem” does not tell for sure whether it is in construct form or not (“food of” vs. “food”), since both are spelled the same. K&D, SON, ASV, and KJV take it as a construct and supply a verb of being and a definite article “*It is the* food of...” but the NIV and NASV do not take it as a construct and also do not add in words (“as food, a fire-offing”). I prefer to go with the historical translations which use the construct form. However, according to Kelley, a construct must take on the definiteness or indefiniteness of its genitive relative – which in this case is “fire-offering,” an *indefinite* noun (and “fire-offering” is not in construct form pointing to the definite Jehovah, so it is definitely in-definite!). So, grammatically, there is not a warrant for supplying a definite article (“the”) before “food,” thus my translation “as food of a fire-offering.”

So, in what sense is a sacrifice of fat “food” to God? God is not a temporal being that needs carbohydrates to convert into energy – He is a Spirit. What does this mean? Is it merely a figure of speech for the disposal of something – as in “well, that’s not for us to eat, it’s God’s,” or is there more to it? I am reminded of Jesus’ words in John 4:34, “My food is to do the will of Him who sent Me and to accomplish His work.” Throughout the Psalms, it is clear that God takes a special delight – perhaps akin to the mental delight and physical renewal we humans find in food – in the worship and righteousness and obedience of His people. As we offer ourselves as living sacrifices – males or females, sheep or goats (Jews or Gentiles?), offered symbolically on the altar in part rather than as the ultimate sacrifice that Jesus was – to worship and obey God, He takes a special delight in it. This modern kind of peace offering (as opposed to the burnt offering fulfilled in Jesus) is His continuing diet – His food, and this is our fellowship with Him!

Leviticus 3:12-17

3.12 וְאִם עֹז קָרְבָּנוֹ וְהִקְרִיבוֹ לִפְנֵי יְהוָה:
 3.13 וְסָמְדָּךְ אֶת-יָדוֹ עַל-רֹאשׁוֹ וְשַׁחֲטֵהוּ¹⁹ אֹתוֹ לִפְנֵי אֹהֶל מוֹעֵד
 וְזָרְקוּ²⁰ בְּנֵי אֹהֶרֶן אֶת-דָּמּוֹ עַל-הַמִּזְבֵּחַ סָבִיב:
 3.14 וְהִקְרִיב²¹ מִמֶּנּוּ קָרְבָּנוֹ אֲשֶׁה לַיהוָה
 אֶת-הַחֶלֶב הַמְכַסֶּה אֶת-הַקֶּרֶב וְאֵת כָּל-הַחֶלֶב אֲשֶׁר עַל-הַקֶּרֶב:
 3.15 וְאֵת שְׁתֵּי הַכְּלִיֹּת וְאֶת-הַחֶלֶב אֲשֶׁר עַלֵהֶן אֲשֶׁר עַל-הַכְּסָלִים
 וְאֶת-הַיִּתְרֹת עַל-הַכֶּבֶד עַל-הַכְּלִיֹּת יִסְרְנָה²²:
 3.16 וְהִקְטִירָם²³ הַכֹּהֵן הַמִּזְבֵּחַה לַחֵם אֲשֶׁה לְרִיחַ נִיחֹחַ כָּל-חֶלֶב לַיהוָה:
 3.17 חֻקַּת עוֹלָם לְדֹרֹתֵיכֶם בְּכֹל מוֹשְׁבֵי־תֵיכֶם כָּל-חֶלֶב וְכָל-דָּם לֹא תֹאכְלוּ²⁴:

Verb#	Root	Parsing	Formatives	Meaning	Syntax
17	קרב	Hiph. Perf. 3ms	3ms + v.c.	near/offer	M.V.
18	סמדך	Qal Perf. 3ms	v.c.	lay/lean	M.V.
19	שחט	Qal Perf. 3ms	v.c.	slaughter	M.V.
20	זרק	Qal Perf. 3m.plur.	v.c.	sprinkle	M.V.
21	קרב	Hiph. Perf. 3ms	v.c.	near/offer	M.V.
22	סור	Hiph. Impf. 3ms	3fs	turn away/remove	M.V.
23	קטר	Hiph. Perf. 3ms	3mp + v.c.	burn up/smoke	M.V.
24	אכל	Qal Impf. 2m.pl.		eat	M.V.

3:12 But if his offering is a goat, he shall offer it¹⁷ to the face of Jehovah.
 3:13 And he shall lay¹⁸ his hand upon its head, and he shall slaughter¹⁹ it before the face of the Tent of Meeting. And the sons of Aaron shall sprinkle²⁰ its blood around upon the altar.
 3:14 Then he shall offer²¹ from it his offering as a fire-offering to Jehovah: the fat covering of the innards and all the fat which is upon the innards.
 3:15 And both of the kidneys, the fat which is upon them (*and* which is upon the flanks), and the lobe above the liver he shall put this aside²² with the kidneys.
 3:16 Then the priest shall burn them up²³ on the altar as food of a fire-offering for a soothing aroma. All the fat is Jehovah's.
 3:17 *This is* a perpetual statute throughout your generations in all your places of residence: You shall not eat²⁴ any fat or any blood!

Commentary

3:12 *But if his offering is a goat, he shall offer it¹⁷ to the face of Jehovah.*

- This is an exact parallel to 3:7, which began the stipulations for the peace offering of a lamb. This now begins the instructions concerning offering a goat as a peace offering (See 3:1 for commentary on the peace offering.).
- עֹז “a goat” (LXX “of goats”) Can be male or female (Son.).
- On “offer” see 1:2, on “face of” see 1:3.

3:13 *And he shall lay¹⁸ his hand upon its head, and he shall slaughter¹⁹ it before the face of the Tent of Meeting, and the sons of Aaron shall sprinkle²⁰ its blood around upon the altar.*

- This is a parallel passage to 1:5b, 3:2b, and 3:b, so see comments there. The only difference from 3:8 is that this says “upon its head” instead of “upon the head of his offering.”

- The LXX (ancient translation into Greek) adds variations which should be familiar by now, saying that the priests (rather than the worshipper) should slaughter the animal, adding that the sons of Aaron are “the priests,” and that the animal should be slaughtered at the “door” of the Tent of meeting rather than “in front of/before the face of” the Tent of Meeting. See comments on the parallel passages as to why the LXX is not right here.
- The process was just the same as in the burnt offering: the worshipper would bring his animal to God’s special place, lay his hand on the animal to identify with it, and cut its throat. The priests would hold a bowl under the animal’s neck to catch the blood, then sprinkle the blood all around on the altar. The death of a substitute and the shedding of blood are essential, as the New Testament clearly states:
 - Hebrews 9:22b “Without the shedding of blood there is no forgiveness.”
 - Colossians 1:21-22 “And although you were formerly alienated and hostile in mind engaged in evil deeds, yet He [Jesus] has now reconciled you in His fleshly body through death, in order to present you before Him holy and blameless...”
 - Ephesians 1:7 “In Him [Jesus] we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of our trespasses, according to the riches of His grace.”

3:14 *Then he shall offer²¹ from it his offering as a fire-offering to Jehovah: the fat covering of the innards and all the fat which is upon the innards.*

- ²¹וְהִקְרִיב “and he shall offer” As in all the offerings described so far in Leviticus, there is a second stage to the animal sacrifice after the blood is drained out and sprinkled on the altar. The animal is then butchered up by the worshipper. In the case of the fellowship/peace offering, the ribcage would be opened and the guts taken out and offered on the altar while the meat would be shared as a meal between the priests and the worshipper and his family and friends.
- מִמֶּנּוּ “from it” KJV/ASV = “thereof” This is the preposition “from” plus a 3sm object, referring to the singular masculine word “goat” in 3:12.
- The rest of the verse is the same as 3:3b & 3:9b.

3:15 *And both of the kidneys, the fat which is upon them (and which is upon the flanks), and the lobe above the liver he shall put this aside²² with the kidneys.*

- See commentary on 3:4 and 3:10; this is an exact repeat.

3:16 *Then the priest shall burn them up²³ on the altar as food of a fire-offering for a soothing aroma. All the fat is Jehovah’s.*

- ²³וְהִקְטִיבָם “and he shall burn them up” The curious thing is that the parallel passages – 3:5 & 3:11 have a singular object “he shall burn it up” instead of “burn them up.” But there is no masculine plural noun to refer back to in the passage. (“Kidneys,” like most parts of the body, is feminine.) So, the singular “it” in 3:5 and 3:11 apparently considers the fat and kidneys as a single unit to be offered to God, this verse apparently considers the same parts as a plurality offered to God by fire.
- לֶחֶם אֵשָׁה “food of a fire-offering” see commentary on 3:11.
- לְרִיחַ נִיחָח “for a soothing aroma” See commentary on 1:9. The Samaritan Pentateuch and the Septuagint (LXX) say “soothing aroma to Jehovah,” but the words “to Jehovah” do not appear to be in the original Hebrew text.
- כָּל־חֵלֶב לַיהוָה lit. “all fat to Jehovah” – the lamed prefix to a noun is a typical Hebraism for a possessive “belongs to Jehovah.” See commentary on 3:3b for hypotheses on why God chose the fat. Whatever the reason, anything that God wants is His by right, and we have no business taking from what belongs to Him. Fat was only one of many things God claimed. He claimed His people. He claimed the glory of worship. He claimed the land that the people lived on. And He claimed a portion of all the assets that a person could gain, from children to animals (and their fat) to first-fruits to tithes. And, by the way, He still claims these things today – He never relinquished them. We should never do anything to slight what is God’s. If our land belongs to Him ultimately, it is blasphemy for a government to charge property tax and claim ownership of the wild animals. If our children belong to Him, we had better take great care of them!

If a tithe of our increase belongs to Him, we had better be generous and prompt in giving it! Likewise, worship – attention, affection, desire, and the offering of time and money – is the exclusive right of God, and for us to spend our time or money on anything that is not paying attention to, showing affection for, or expressing desire for Him makes Him rightly jealous. Father, help me to live my life under the acknowledgement that You are God and my every breath and every penny is Yours.

3:17 *This is a perpetual statute throughout your generations in all your places of residence: You shall not eat²⁴ any fat or any blood!*

- חֻקָּה “a statute” Hol. = “due,” NIV = “ordinance,” It comes from the root חקק = “to engrave;” an important law was engraved into stone for all to see and remember. This statute must be really important, for it has three universal descriptors:
- עוֹלָם “perpetual/ enduring/ eternal” Literal meaning = “concealed,” i.e. the vanishing point; generally, time out of mind (past or future). The regulations typically said to be of lasting duration were bound up to 1) the land, 2) the temple, 3) the priesthood. Consider as God was giving these laws, many were for when Israel would, in the future, be able to fulfill them. They had NOT been observed before, at least not in the same way or with the same rigor (if at all). Hence these were what could be called "cultic" Laws bound up with the Land, Temple, Priesthood. Such laws are NOT binding on Christians today, certainly not as they were upon the Jews. Reason? The expansion of the covenant in the NT is predicated upon the universal access to God that has been made "possible" through Christ. Heaven is the Land, Christ has entered the Temple, He is the Priest. The cultic Laws therefore are NOT normative for Christians. o'lam does not necessarily imply perpetuity without termination. There could well be a terminus. (Steve Schlissel)
- לְדֹרֹתֶיךָ “throughout your generations” (NIV = “for the generations to come,” KJV “for your generations”). The statute to come is not just for the hearers of Moses’ time, but for all their descendents!
- בְּכֹל מְוֹשְׁבֵי־יָדְיָם “in all your places of residence” (KJV, NAS = “dwellings”) This noun comes from the root יָשַׁב “to sit,” so it could be literally translated “seats,” and is expanded to mean “assemblies, dwelling places” (BDB), and “residences, living areas” (Hol.). (The LXX translates it κατοικια “houses.”) So this statute holds not only for a long time, for all the generations to come, but also applies in every *place* that God’s people will ever live, everywhere in the entire world!

So, what is this eternal, universal law? “You shall not eat any fat or any blood.”

What do we do with this? I grew up in churches all my life and never heard this preached along with the 10 Commandments as one of the important laws; in fact, this command is usually relegated to the “ceremonial law,” which is generally agreed to have been only in force for ethnic Jews only during the time of the Old Testament. Was the admonition to Gentiles in the New Testament against eating blood (Acts 15:22-29) a continuation of this law? No; the Acts 15 regulations listed specific practices of idol worship in pagan Rome which must be repudiated if one was to live as a Christian. It was an early guard against syncretism. Steve Schlissel says, “The issue in Acts 15 was the conditions for table fellowship; it was not to come up with a short list of OT laws that Gentiles forever must obey.” In many cases, this is all a moot point, since so many butchers drain the blood out of an animal before quartering it anyway, and since the trend seems to be toward using vegetable oil in fried foods rather than lard. What about fatty dairy products such as butter, cheese, and ice cream? I don’t think that God was prohibiting dairy products: Abraham served God butter and milk in Gen. 18; Proverbs 27:27 says that if you take care of your flocks, you’ll get to drink the milk; Canaan was called the land of “milk and honey;” and David ate butter and cheese in II Sam. 17:29 and I Sam 17:18. What God prohibits here is the practice of melting down the fat from inside the animal into lard for cooking and eating. For now, it seems wisest to follow the statute still today and not eat fat or blood, but to do this with the understanding that it is no longer a binding law on us.

I was curious, so I did a search throughout the Bible for this phrase “perpetual statute,” and here’s what I found:

- The “perpetual statutes” given by God are only found in the law-giving books of Exodus, Leviticus, and Numbers.

- These perpetual statutes all had to do with what is nowadays called the “ceremonial law.” Not all the ceremonial law, however was enshrined in “perpetual statutes.” Some “ceremonial” laws, such as the food laws which were abrogated in the New Testament, were not called “perpetual statutes” in the Old Testament.
- Following is a list of the only things I could find in the whole Bible which are called “perpetual” or “eternal” statutes:
 - *Laws governing the priests and temple worship:* Sons of Aaron (Ex. 29:9), Levitical cities of refuge (Num. 35:29), priestly linen clothing (Ex. 28:43), priest’s ceremonial washing (Ex. 30:21), Levites working in temple (Lev. 24:9), priest’s meal-offerings (Lev. 6:22), priest’s duty to blow trumpets before war (Num. 10:8), priest’s duty to keep the lamps burning (Lev. 24:3), priest eating the shewbread (Lev. 24:9), offering sacrifices at altar (Lev. 17:7), and prohibition of priests drinking alcohol while on temple duty (Lev. 10:9).
 - *Feast days and Sabbaths:* First-fruits (Lev. 23:4), Pentecost (Lev. 23:21), Passover (Ex. 12:14), Unleavened Bread (Ex. 12:17), Feast of Booths (Lev. 23:41), Day of Atonement (Lev. 16:29-34), Feast of Trumpets (Num. 10:8)
 - *Cleanliness-laws for laity:* Washing with lye (water mixed with ashes) after touching a dead body (Num. 19:10-21), and, of course the prohibition against eating fat and blood in Lev. 3:17.
- Other statutes are mentioned without the descriptor of perpetuity, which also fit into the ceremonial law, such as Sabbaths (Ez. 44:24), The sin-offering (Num. 1), family vows (Num. 30:16), purifying booty won in war (Num. 31:21), the passing down of inheritances (Num. 27:11), and the prohibition against cross-breeding (Lev. 19:19).
- Statutes applied not only to the Jews in Israel, but also to the “sojourners” (Num. 9:14) and the “strangers” (Num. 15), so it wasn’t ethnically-bound, nor was it bound only to people who worshipped Jehovah – it applied to people of other religions from other races who were passing through the land.
- Of the hundreds of occurrences of the word “statute” in the Old Testament, the only times that the word “statute” was used outside the context of God’s “ceremonial law” were: (1) in reference to laws of Egypt (Lev. 18:3), and Persia (Dan.6) - Keeping God’s statutes is often contrasted against worshipping other gods (I Ki. 9:6), (2) a rule David made about sharing the booty of war with those who stayed back from a battle to guard the camp (I Sam. 30), and (3) the covenant-promise God made to Jacob, which was later called a “statute” by Moses and David (Ps. 105:10).
- In each of these books, and throughout Deuteronomy (which was a review of the already-given law), countless exhortations are given to keep God’s statutes along with the commandments and ordinances. Blessings are promised to those who obey these statutes, and curses are given for disobedience.
- Many of the prophets - most notably Ezekiel - specifically blamed Israel’s violations of the statutes as the reason why God punished the nation with exile.
- The word “statute” is not used in the New Testament (at least not in the American Standard Version), but Jesus did observe the cleanliness laws and the holidays.

So how shall we apply this? We should uphold the statutes of God – yes even today!

1. I believe that since Jesus has fulfilled the sacrifices and (as the book of Hebrews clearly shows) has become our great High Priest to end all high priests, it now falls upon Jesus to fulfill the perpetual ordinances which were laid upon the priests. He fulfills these things perfectly – He keeps the light bright in heaven because His presence is light; He maintains a city of refuge for us in heaven; He even promised not to drink wine again as long as He tarries in heaven (Matt. 26:29)! Perhaps a case could also be made for a spiritual fulfillment of these things in the lives of all believers, since we are now a kingdom of priests – but these would be spiritual applications of the physical duties of the Old Testament priests, such as keeping our lives pure from sin (not just keeping our clothes clean), being at work in God’s kingdom (not working in the physical temple building), offering ourselves to God (instead of burning things on an altar), seeking God’s presence to go before us always (instead of blowing silver trumpets when engaging in battles), and avoiding alcohol or anything else that would obscure our thinking when we are teaching and preaching.
2. As for the Sabbaths and feast-days, I have long wrestled with the teaching of Scripture that they are eternal. Some say that all the Old Testament holidays were abolished in the New Testament, but the only thing I can see clearly is that the day of Sabbath was changed from the seventh day of the week to the first day of the week. The only places in the New Testament that I’m aware of dealing with abolition of Old Testament days

are Rom. 14: 5 and Col. 2:16. In both places, Paul is dealing with people who did not want to change the Sabbath day from Saturday to Sunday – none of the holidays mentioned in the law as “perpetual statutes” are mentioned in these verses. So why not observe the holidays ordained by God? God created mankind to need holidays, and all cultures create holidays for themselves. God’s people even in the Old Testament had the freedom to create new holidays – such as the Jews did with Purim in Esther’s day and with Hanukkah in the time of the Maccabees (a feast which Jesus himself observed, by the way). Perhaps we are no longer bound to rigidly observe only the statutory Old Testament feasts, but seeing as that Old Testament holiday calendar was designed by God Himself, there would be real benefits from patterning our modern holiday system after it as an example. I can’t help but wonder if God is really insulted when His people instead observe things like Martin Luther King Day, Labor Day, and Halloween. Don’t get me wrong - I believe that there is nothing wrong with enjoying whatever can be redeemed of our culture’s holiday system, and I will continue to enjoy Christmas, but I will also seek to understand these Old Testaments feasts and find connecting points for the observance of modern holidays.

3. Regarding the two laws for practical living laid upon the laity, no one can dispute the importance of observing them! Perhaps it could no longer be considered a sin to not observe them, but there might be wisdom in using them as practical guidelines. Who can dispute the importance of washing your hands with soap after touching dead bodies and anything else with communicable diseases? Just think of it, every time you wash your hands or take a bath, you are upholding God’s good law! Likewise the prohibition against eating fat and blood. Go ahead and trim the fat off your meat! Cook your food in olive oil! You will experience real health benefits from doing so. But don’t worry if someone serves you blood sausage or lard-cakes; you can eat them with a clean conscience.

Applications:

- Much of Chapter 1 carries over to this chapter, so see my applications at the end of Ch.1.
- We need peace with God, and God shows His grace by providing a way of peace with Himself – the death of an innocent life.
- The death and resurrection of Jesus Christ fulfills God’s requirement for the death of an innocent party. Jesus’ blood bought forgiveness for our sin and peace with God. We must believe this (3:1, 2, 13).
- Those who believe in Jesus should express their fellowship with Him and with His people by observing the Lord’s Supper and offering ourselves as living sacrifices to Him (3:1).
- We should give the best to God (3:3).
- All of our worship should be before the face of God – He is the only true object of our worship! (3:7)
- Praise God that He locates His special presence close to sinful people in order to meet with them and save them (3:8).
- Since God locates His special presence now in the bodies of Christians, we are now the way by which others enter the presence of God – by our telling them the Gospel (3:8).
- In the peace offering, God required that the fat be offered to Him, leaving the good meat to His people. In our own lives, sometimes, God takes away something we like (just as the ancients considered the fat desirable) in order to give us something that is better for us (3:9).
- The Fat offered from the animal was called God’s food. Jesus said that His food was to do the will of God. Let us offer the food of our obedience and worship to our God today! (3:11).
- We should respect God’s claims of ownership over all things, just as He claims ownership over the fat (3:16).
- God’s word has some very practical guidelines on good health, such as not eating fat or blood! (3: 16, 17)
- The law system that God created here was good. In Christian liberty, let us not “throw out the baby with the bathwater” when we run into an Old Testament law that seems strange to us, but rather seek to understand it and find out if there are valid ways to still connect with it even if we are not bound to it anymore (3:17).