

From snout to tail

Exploring the Greek sacrificial animal
from the literary, epigraphical,
iconographical, archaeological,
and zooarchaeological evidence

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ABSTRACT

Animal sacrifice fundamentally informed how the ancient Greeks defined themselves, their relation to the divine, and the structure of their society. Adopting an explicitly cross-disciplinary perspective, the present volume explores the practical execution and complex meaning of animal sacrifice within ancient Greek religion (c. 1000 BC–AD 200).

The objective is twofold. First, to clarify in detail the use and meaning of body parts of the animal within sacrificial ritual. This involves a comprehensive study of ancient Greek terminology in texts and inscriptions, representations on pottery and reliefs, and animal bones found in sanctuaries. Second, to encourage the use and integration of the full spectrum of ancient evidence in the exploration of Greek sacrificial rituals, which is a prerequisite for understanding the complex use and meaning of Greek animal sacrifice.

Twelve contributions by experts on the literary, epigraphical, iconographical, archaeological and zooarchaeological evidence for Greek animal sacrifice explore the treatment of legs, including feet and hoofs, tails, horns; heads, including tongues, brains, ears and snouts; internal organs; blood; as well as the handling of the entire body by burning it whole. Three further contributions address Hittite, Israelite and Etruscan animal sacrifice respectively, providing important contextualization for Greek ritual practices.

Keywords: Greek animal sacrifice, anatomy, division, butchery, body part, multi-disciplinary approaches, zooarchaeology, iconography, epigraphy, texts, cross-cultural comparisons

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14. From flock to temple to table

The sacrificial animal of the fellowship offering in Ancient Israel in text and archaeology

Abstract

This chapter describes the “sacrificial animal” of the “fellowship offering” (*šəlāmim*) in ancient Israel, focusing on the various activities surrounding its selection, slaughter, associated rituals, butchering, distribution, preparation, and consumption. Biblical texts from the Hebrew Bible/Old Testament in its various forms (focusing on the Masoretic Hebrew tradition and with special attention to the Septuagintal texts as well) and the available archaeological sources for Israelite temple sacrifice (focusing on Tel Dan in northern Israel) are synthesized to reconstruct details about this Israelite sacrifice as it might have been practiced during the period of the Hebrew kingdoms during the first half of the 1st millennium BC. The aim is to describe the “sacrificial animal” of the *šəlāmim* in a way that will be useful for Classicists as a point of comparison between Israelite and Greek sacrificial systems.*

Keywords: Israel, Israelite animal sacrifice, Hebrew Bible, Old Testament, Septuagint, archaeology of Tel Dan, fellowship offering, selection, slaughter, blood, burning, butchery, distribution, consumption

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The ritualized slaughter and consumption of animals often designated as “sacrifice” is a transcultural phenomenon embedded within various religious systems of antiquity, both in practice and in ideology, and remains foundational in numerous cultures today. For inhabitants of the Mediterranean Basin and the ancient Near East in the 1st millennium BC, the

various cultural expressions of sacrifice exhibited many similarities in meaning and practice, as well as many differences. As such, comparisons of the varying manifestations of sacrifice serve as fodder for fruitful explorations of questions concerning interaction among the different cultures and often bring clarity to the distinctive characteristics of each.

This paper aims to describe the “sacrificial animal” of the so-called “fellowship offering” in ancient Israel, specifically the various activities surrounding its selection, slaughter, associated rituals, butchering, distribution, preparation, and consumption, and to do so in a way that will be useful for Classicists as a point of comparison with the Greek and Roman sacrificial systems. The focus will be on reconstructing details about this Israelite sacrifice as it might have been practiced during the period of the Hebrew kingdoms during the first half of the 1st millennium BC, as it is our earliest point of entry and, thus, most applicable to exploring questions of origins and influence. The method will be synthetic, engaging with both texts from the Hebrew Bible, or Old Testament, in its various forms,¹ and the available archaeological sources.

Textual witnesses to the fellowship offering sacrifice in the Hebrew Bible

Sacrifice is described in the Hebrew Bible as a central characteristic of the cult and is mentioned in narrative and cultic genres throughout the canon. The most detailed descriptions are found in the so-called Priestly Source (P) of the Penta-

* While I was present at the conference, this paper was not presented as part of the program and, thus, has not benefitted from direct interaction with the other contributors to this volume; its content, however, was deeply enriched by these interactions and thanks are extended especially to the organizers Gunnel Ekroth and Jan-Mathieu Carbon for their invitation to attend the conference and to contribute to the volume.

¹ The focus will be on the received Hebrew text within the Masoretic tradition (the MT), but there will be some interaction with the Greek Septuagintal (LXX) traditions as well, especially since these will be of special interest to Classicists.

teuch, and more specifically in the priestly sacrificial manual (Lev 1–7) where the five main categories of sacrificial offerings are described: the burnt offering (Lev 1:1–17, 6:8–13),² the grain offering (Lev 2:1–14, 6:14–23), the fellowship offering (Lev 3:1–17, 7:11–34), the sin offering (Lev 4:1–5:13, 6:24–30), and the guilt offering (Lev 5:14–6:7, 7:1–6).

Of these five categories of sacrifice, the most suitable for the purposes of comparison with the “sacrificial animal” described above is the “fellowship” offering (usually plural in the Hebrew Masoretic text [MT]: *šālāmim*, often with forms of *zebah*; in the Grek Septuagint [LXX]: σωτήριον in the Pentateuch, Joshua, and Judges, and εἰρηνικός in Samuel and Kings, often with forms of θυσία).³ There are a number of reasons for this focus. In regard to our texts, many of the processes associated with the “fellowship” offering are described in detail, sometimes with interesting variants among the biblical traditions, and it is apparently portrayed as the most frequent type of offering. In regard to archaeology, as will be discussed below, the fact that the animal victims are described as eaten and not burned up entirely (as is the case with the burnt offering) potentially allows for evidence of such practices to be more accessible through the examination of the archaeological remains of meals. Further, as the main offerings that are consumed by priests and also by the people, they are ripe for exploration of the social power dynamics of these rites, as expressed through feasting, as well as for inquiries into the deeper meanings of the associated acts. A final reason to focus here on the fellowship offering is to add to discussions of comparisons between it and the Greek θυσία, especially as both offerings entail the

burning of a symbolic portion of the animal (the fat and innards in the case of the *šālāmim*, and the fat-wrapped femur in the case of the θυσία) and the distribution of priestly portions before participants engage in a sacred feast.

The origins of the fellowship offering in context

While a clear understanding of the origins and etymology of the fellowship offering remains elusive, the Hebrew term *šālāmim* is cognate to the *šlmm* sacrifices mentioned in the 13th century BC cultic texts of Ugarit. These texts, usually cultic lists, concern the slaughter and consumption of animal victims from the flock and herd, most frequently in a royal context.⁴ Further, the Ugaritic *šlmm* are often listed in conjunction with the “burnt offering” (Ugaritic *šrp*; cf. the Hebrew root *šrp*, “to burn”) and semantically related to the Hebrew designation for the burnt offering (*ʾōlā*), as in the Ugaritic couplet *šrp w-šlmm* mirroring *ʾōlōt ū-šālāmim* in the Hebrew Bible. Scattered references may also be found in Phoenician and Punic texts, though it is not entirely clear that these references suggest close parallels with the biblical offerings known by the same name.⁵

Occurrences of the fellowship offering in the Hebrew Bible

In the Hebrew Bible itself, the term consistently occurs in the plural. A single exception is found in Amos 5:22 where it appears as *šelem* (notably, in terms of the discussions below on dating, mentioned in conjunction with burnt and grain offerings), which seemingly parallels examples in Ugaritic where it also occurs as a singular.⁶ Some have taken the form as a plural of intensification or amplification of some notion of “well-being” (from *šālēm*) or plural in reference to the multiple portions surrendered to Yahweh (i.e., the fat and the blood) or simply as a regular plural referring to the different stages or multiple offerings, while others suggest it is not a plural form at all but merely a noun with a reduplicated or enclitic *mem*.⁷

² Verse references here correspond to the English text versification that occasionally differs from the Hebrew system.

³ There is significant discussion surrounding how best to gloss the term *šālāmim* in English and, to quote Jacob Milgrom, all attempts are “at best, educated guesses” (Milgrom 1991, 220). Common glosses as summarized in Milgrom 1991 and Averbeck 1997 include “fellowship” or “communion offering” (cf. the classic definition proposed by Robertson Smith [1889]), “well-being offering” (Milgrom [1991], related to *šālēm*, as intensified “wholeness”), “peace offering” (Wenham [1979], from the Hebrew nominal form *šālōm*; cf. the LXX εἰρηνικός and Latin Vulgate *pacificus*), “tribute/gift/greeting offering” (Levine [1974, 3–52; 1989, 14–15], from Akkadian *šulmanu*, note however that many have challenged this suggestion for contextual reasons in that the proposed Akkadian cognates are not used in sacrificial contexts, yet this is precisely what Levine argues: it functions parallel to the political offering), “recompense” (cf. Piel *šillēm* in the Covenant Code, Exod 20:22–23:19), “payment offering” (in terms of a portion substituting for the whole offering, i.e., the blood that is splashed and the fat that is burned, as discussed below), or “concluding sacrifice” (based on the observation that it is often last in the list of sacrificial offerings—this, however, may simply be an accident of literary tradition or a practical feature in that time is allowed for feasting; note, too, that it is not always last: cf. Lev 9:3–4 where the grain offering is offered last or at same time as the fellowship offering) to name a few. See Anderson 1987, 36–55; Milgrom 1991, 217–225; Averbeck 1997, 135–143; *HALOT* 4, 1535–1538; Gerleman 1997, 1337–1348; Seidl 2006, 105–116; for more complete surveys with further references.

⁴ Consumption is implied in each text though often not explicit; for one example where consumption is clearly stated, see *KTU* 1.115.

⁵ For summaries, with citations of Ugaritic and Phoenician/Punic parallels as well as other cognates, cf. Milgrom 1991; Schwemer 1995; Averbeck 1997; Seidl 2006.

⁶ See Milgrom 1991, 220, for examples.

⁷ Although, as Seidl 2006, 106, points out, it is impossible to be sure, as the term never occurs as the subject of a verbal clause or is never modified

Perhaps lending some support to the idea of translating it as a reduplicated form of a singular noun, in addition to the Ugaritic evidence, may be the texts of the Septuagint, which with some degree of regularity render the terms in the singular (σωτήριον, εἰρηνικός), unless context dictates otherwise (e.g., if multiple “fellowship offerings” are offered).

Of the 87 occurrences of the fellowship offering (*šlāmim*) in the Hebrew text, the vast majority fall within the larger priestly corpus with 53 examples in what most would identify as P (here specifically in portions of Exodus, Leviticus, and Numbers), and another six examples in Ezekiel, a 6th-century BC composition with clear ties to an antecedent priestly tradition.⁸ In these technical priestly texts, the fellowship offering is described as a subtype of the larger category of “sacrifice” (*zebah*),⁹ namely, as a sacrificed animal whose flesh was consumed in a sacred feast.

In its association with frequent meat eating, whether exclusive or not, the fellowship offering was in many ways less regulated than other offerings. Within priestly texts, there are prescriptions for various members of the community, from the king to the laity, regarding the initiation of this type of sacrifice on a variety of occasions, ranging from public to private. Thus we are not surprised to find the offering and consumption of *šlāmim* in texts outside the priestly corpus, not only once in Deuteronomy (Deut 27:7) and in repetitions of the law in the book of Joshua, but also in narrative texts associated with central shrines such as Bethel (Judg 20:26) and especially Jerusalem where they are included in the dedication of Solomon’s temple (1 Kgs 8 and paralleled in 2 Chron 7), as well as in rededications of the temple and/or the altar, such as those by Hezekiah (2 Chron 30) and Manasseh (2 Chron 33). Fellowship offerings also feature in stories that describe the times before the temple, such as the offerings performed by Saul and David, as well as by “the people” (i.e., the common members of the community) mentioned in 1–2 Samuel. Thus, the examples in priestly and narrative texts illustrate that the fellowship offerings were offered by individuals in each segment of society at various times and for various purposes.¹⁰

The use of biblical texts in reconstructing practices associated with the fellowship offering in the Monarchic Period

While it is fairly straightforward to survey the texts of the Hebrew Bible in order to derive a sense of how the fellowship offering was conceptualized in practice, the more difficult task is to apply these texts to our historical reconstruction of Israelite sacrifice in the Hebrew monarchic period (c. 10th/9th–6th century BC) due to myriad complications surrounding the date and provenance of the various complexes of texts. As a living canon of faith for ancient Israel, the scriptures as we have them are the end result of a long process in which authoritative writings were collected, arranged, and edited over hundreds of years from different sources and in different locales while undergoing various expansions and abridgments. This, then, makes associating descriptions with precise historical contexts a difficult endeavor within the Hebrew tradition itself. It becomes even more complicated when variant traditions that arise from the distribution and translation of these sacred texts in other cultural contexts are considered.

According to the biblical presentation, however, all of the sacrificial prescriptions have their origin in the revelation of Yahweh to his people Israel soon after the exodus from Egypt. While many scholars remain skeptical of the biblical portrayal in general, and the descriptions of Moses and the exodus in particular, and view these as much later reflections of earlier memories with varying degrees of historicity, there is nothing inherently “late” (i.e., dating to the Persian or Hellenistic periods) in the actual cultic practices that are described in any of the complexes of texts. To the contrary, as scholars of the ancient Near East have often pointed out, many of the descriptions of the priestly rituals and paraphernalia appear to reflect a rather “early” time-period; indeed, fascinating parallels between ritual practices described in P and similar practices described in Late Bronze Age (14th–13th century BC) texts from Emar, Mari, and Hattuşa may suggest an early common context for the shared traditions. Parallels that relate specifically to priestly rituals include descriptions of particular festivals and the construction of tent shrines, as well as the practice and significance of scapegoat rituals, purification practices, and even blood manipulation rites.¹¹

This is not to suggest that the descriptions of these traditions as we have them in P date to the Late Bronze Age; to the contrary, based on both internal evidence from the literary study of the Pentateuch and external evidence from extant textual evidence, especially from the later texts from Qumran,

by an adjective; cf. his full discussion there.

⁸ On the relationship among P, H, and Ezekiel, see Milgrom 1991, 3–35, and Knohl 1987; 2007; and for arguments that Ezekiel postdates P, see Hurvitz 1974; 1982; 2000, specifically. For challenges to standard models of linguistic dating, see Young & Rezetko 2019 and references there.

⁹ With Milgrom 1991, 217–218 (contra Rendtorff’s [1967] proposal for public *šlāmim* and a private *zebah*), taking *zebah šlāmim* quite literally as “the sacrifice of the fellowship offering.”

¹⁰ Cf. further discussion in Milgrom 1991, 224–225.

¹¹ See specific parallels addressed in Weinfield 1983; Fleming 2000; Feder 2011; Knohl 2015. For Hittite comparisons, see also the paper by Mouton in this volume, *Chapter 13*.

many would agree that the form of our current text likely dates to the Persian period (5th century BC), with some fluidity among traditions extending into the Hellenistic period (4th and 3rd centuries BC, at least). Further, there is evidence that the meaning of particular sacrifices may have been developed in later traditions (comparing descriptions of the guilt and sin offerings in P and the related Holiness Code [H], for example), and that variant forms of rituals persisted in different locations or at different times (comparing the Passover prescriptions in P and Deuteronomy, for example). This, then, raises particular problems for our reconstruction in that one must seek to isolate the forms of Iron Age II practice (9th–7th century BC) from texts that reached their final form in the Persian period, and that this final form of the text preserves various versions of such practices.

Complicating the matter further are current debates surrounding the formation of the Pentateuch in general, and over the date and provenance of the Priestly Source in particular (if, in fact, the ritual texts of P are to be connected with the narrative texts of P as is often assumed).¹² While a full discussion of these debates is beyond the scope of this chapter and the reader is directed elsewhere,¹³ this author presently finds the arguments for a preexilic date (i.e., a pre-6th century BC) for the priestly ritual materials to be most convincing based on the arguments of language (classical Hebrew is employed, not exilic/postexilic Hebrew; though this is also not without its problems),¹⁴ the relationships among the sources and historical reconstructions as we understand them, and archaeological resonance.¹⁵ Notably, even critics of a preexilic date are not opposed to arguments for practices dating to earlier times.¹⁶ Provenance, however, is closely related to views regarding dating and, even among the proponents of a preexilic date for P, the question remains open. Arguments have been made for a northern shrine at Shiloh (thus, even potentially pre-monarchic) and for a pre-Hezekian (early 8th century BC, at least) temple in Jerusalem, as well as for other positions.¹⁷

Regardless of the date of the final form of the text, if we affirm that these traditions may be associated with actual practice (and this is not agreed upon as certain),¹⁸ the fact that

these rituals were nuanced and imbued with extended meaning in later forms should not derail us from our task, in that our aim is to reconstruct *practices*—that is to say, the principal human and animal participants and the physical processes and material components involved in the acts of sacrifice—and not *texts*; indeed, the fact that rituals were adapted to fit new circumstances, and even that variant traditions arose, would seem only to strengthen the argument that “real” practices lie behind these descriptions. An evaluation of the extent of the correspondences between the textual descriptions and the actual practices, it will be suggested below, may be enhanced by an integration of archaeology.

Archaeological evidence of Israelite sacrifice and the fellowship offering

Indeed, archaeology can bring a physicality to our discussion of the sacrificial animal of the fellowship offering in ancient Israel by providing *realia*—animal bone and artifactual remains, especially—that may be compared and contrasted with the extant written traditions. The coordination of these finds with the texts may further be enhanced by ethnographic parallels with contemporary societies and by experimental archaeology.

While there is no shortage of archaeological contexts to explore questions of sacrifice in the southern Levant within the timeframe of our focus, i.e., the 9th–7th centuries BC, they are not all of equal weight in helping us describe the archaeological animal of priestly sacrifice. In fact, aside from numerous examples of “cultic corners” associated with domestic spaces and other cult places,¹⁹ there are only three arguably Yahwistic temples excavated which bear evidence of activity during this time period: Tel Arad, Tel Moza, and Tel Dan.²⁰ As temples paralleling the Jerusalem temple not only in terms of contemporary activity but also in terms of function, they will provide the most suitable contexts for comparison. Of these, Tel Dan will provide our most important parallel for a number of reasons described below.

¹² Cf. Rendtorff 1993, reflecting on the contrast between his approach and Milgrom's.

¹³ For recent discussions, see Ska 2006, 159–161; Shectman & Baden 2009; Gertz *et al.* 2016; Kratz 2016.

¹⁴ Cf. and contrast the essays in Miller-Naudé & Zevit 2012; Hendel & Joosten 2018; Young & Rezetko 2019.

¹⁵ Cf. the various linguistic, comparative, and archaeological contributions in Haran 1978, 132–148; Zevit 1995; Friedman 1997; Halpern 2003a; 2003b; Hurvitz 1974; 1982; 2000; Rendsburg 1980; Milgrom 1991, 3–13; Wenham 1979, 81–91; Weinfeld 1983; Feder 2011.

¹⁶ See e.g. Blum 2009, 31–32, following Wellhausen 1885, 404.

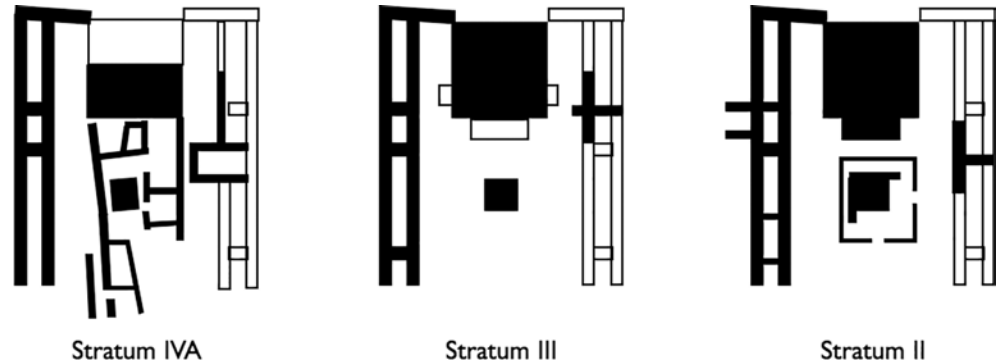
¹⁷ See Milgrom 1991, 29–35.

¹⁸ Cf. Schiffman 2016, 73–74.

¹⁹ See numerous examples in Zevit 2001 and Hess 2007.

²⁰ For Arad, see Aharoni 1968; for Moza, see Kisilevitz 2015; and for Dan, see Biran 1994.

Fig. 1. The sacred precinct at Tel Dan (Area T) showing major Iron Age II architectural features by stratum. Illustration by J. Greer after Biran 1994, 182, 188 and 205.



Tel Dan as a type-site for explorations of the Israelite fellowship offering

Tel Dan, located in the Upper Galilee region of northern Israel, close to the borders of Syria and Lebanon, stands out as a significant site for explorations of Israelite sacrifice, first of all, due to the recorded memory in the Hebrew Bible of this site having served as a Yahwistic temple, and, in fact, as one of two national shrines for the northern kingdom of Israel.²¹ Specifically, 1 Kings 12 recounts the division of the kingdom following the death of Solomon and the establishment of temples at Bethel and Dan intended to rival the temple in Jerusalem, and these are mentioned later in this same corpus as well (cf. 1 Kgs 13; 2 Kgs 10:29; 2 Kgs 17; 23). While some have questioned the correlation of these textual traditions to “history” as it is currently understood in our modern context and the interpretation of the remains as those of a Yahwistic temple, this author has argued elsewhere that its Yahwistic association is relatively clear.²²

Even if the “orthodox” nature of the worship may be questioned, the site boasts extensive cultic architecture in the sacred precinct of Area T (Fig. 1), including a prominent platform upon which the temple would likely have stood, the partial remains of a massive four-horned altar, and numerous small finds associated with religious practices, some of which will be described below. Extensive evidence for eating activity abounds, as well, including the remains of several *tannur*-type ovens, an olive press, and the remains of numerous cooking pots and other eating and serving vessels along with several large pithoi. Tens of thousands of animal bones have also been recovered, many of which bear cut marks associated with all stages of animal processing, as discussed below. Indeed, it

would be difficult to deny that highly concentrated and extended eating events took place in this space, and their enactment in an environment with a high concentration of cultic indicators clearly identifies these events as cultic feasts. Further, the general characteristics of the meals as may be determined archaeologically seem to fit with Israelite sacrifice, as will be discussed below.

An integrated description of the sacrificial animal of the fellowship offering in Ancient Israel

In what follows, this essay will integrate the textual details given for the fellowship offering in the various literary traditions of the Hebrew Bible with archaeological data, primarily from Tel Dan but from other sites as well, in order to develop a robust description of how such sacrifices and their associated feasts relate to the archaeological animal and the “scripts” associated with them.²³

THE SELECTION OF THE ANIMAL

As mentioned above, the clearest description of the fellowship offering is to be found in the priestly manual of Lev 1–7. Here, it is specified that the animal may be taken from the “herd”, that is it may be a bovine, or from the “flock”, that is, it may be a sheep or a goat, with the prescriptions repeated for each; as far as sex, it may be male or female regardless of species. Such a prescription finds broad resonance in a Levantine archaeological context in a variety of ethnic subgroups, in that cattle, sheep, and goats are the primary sacrificial animals. Even in contexts in which pigs are eaten in domestic contexts, they are

²¹ Much of what follows is drawn from Greer 2013, wherein full discussions may be found; on the site of Tel Dan, see Biran 1994; Davis 2013; and on the initial faunal analysis, see Wapnish & Hesse 1991.

²² Specifically, Greer 2017a, where these arguments, with citations, are developed in detail. See also Davis 2013 and Ackerman 2013.

²³ On ritual practices as “scripts,” see Hesse *et al.* 2012.

apparently avoided in sacrificial contexts,²⁴ thus contrasting significantly with Greek and Roman sacrificial traditions.

Regardless of which animal is offered, it must be *tāmim* (LXX: ἄμωμος), a technical term often translated “without blemish,” a requirement that also extends to animals for the burnt offerings (Lev 1:3, 1:10), sin offerings (Lev 4:3, 4:23, 4:28, 4:32, cf. 9:2, 9:3), and guilt offerings (Lev 5:15, 5:18, 5:25, 6:6).²⁵ Outside of the priestly manual of Lev 1–7, the term is applied to offerings of the Passover lamb or goat (Exod 12:5), and in other descriptive priestly texts such as in the description of the Aaronide ordination (Exod 29:1), the red heifer offering (Lev 19:2), and the offering associated with the fulfilment of the Nazarite vow (Num 6:14), as well as requirements for daily, Sabbath, new moon, and other festival sacrifices (Num 28–29; cf. Num 15:1–16). It is also included in later reformulations of priestly stipulations in H,²⁶ as well as in Ezekiel’s description of the idealized sacrifices of the visionary temple (Ezk 43:22–25, 45:18–23, 46:4, 46:13) and in Deuteronomic law (Deut 15:21; cf. Deut 17:1, though not identified by the term *tāmim*).²⁷ Of these related texts, it is in H that one finds the greatest detail as to what constitutes a “blemish.” In Lev 22:17–25, typically assigned to an H stratum, such proscriptions include blind, diseased, injured, or disabled animals, as well as emasculated males and any blemished animal obtained by a foreigner; curiously, the LXX adds to this list the prohibition of the use of an animal without a tongue, literally “tongue-less” (γλωσσότμητος), perhaps related to the Greek sacrificial tradition in which the tongue was often a priestly portion.²⁸ The postexilic prophetic book of Malachi provides testimony via the critique that such prescriptions were not always followed (Mal 1:6–8).

Identifying many of these blemishes archaeologically is not possible (blindness, certain diseases of the skin, etc.), though it is possible to detect blemishes that would have affected the bone. Across all contexts (domestic, royal, cultic, etc.) in the archaeological record, evidence of diseased or malformed bones is observed but it is rare. One example discovered among the thousands of bones from Area T at Tel Dan may have relevance to our discussion: a deformed tibia, likely due to an injury, found in a sacrificial deposit that is described

in detail elsewhere.²⁹ This may suggest a violation of priestly prescription (cf. Mal 1:6–8), or may indicate that such stipulations were not in effect or applicable in that context.

More helpful in understanding the selection of the sacrificial animal of the fellowship offering archaeologically may be the results of a recent isotopic study that suggest that sheep and goats associated with sacrifice at Tel Dan were raised and grazed for their entire lives in the immediate vicinity of the tel.³⁰ The local sourcing of these animals may indicate that specific flocks and herds were kept for slaughter in the temple, and thus that their purity was controlled and, as a result, assured. This might have been especially important at a site like Tel Dan that shows evidence of a multi-ethnic population throughout the Iron Age,³¹ and comports well with the prohibition of the use of blemished animals purchased from a foreigner for sacrifice (cf. Lev 22:25). One also recalls the Deuteronomic prescription that worshipers on pilgrimage to Jerusalem with tithe offerings were permitted to purchase animals upon arriving at the temple (Deut 14:24–26), an allowance that was maintained regarding Herod’s temple in the Roman period as well, as attested in later Second Temple sources.³²

THE SLAUGHTER OF THE ANIMAL

According to the biblical texts, the animal victim of the fellowship offering, once selected, was slaughtered, with the hand of the offerer symbolically placed upon its head (Lev 3:2, 3:8, 3:13; cf. Lev 1:4). The slaughter was performed not on the altar, as is commonly assumed, but in the courtyard, by the entrance of the sacred precinct for cattle (Lev 3:2), and, apparently, in the same location for sheep and goats (Lev 3:8, 3:13), though the wording varies slightly and it may be that this was understood to have taken place more specifically at the right side of the altar at the designated spot for the slaughter of flock animals of the burnt offering (cf. Lev 1:11).³³

As far as can be determined from the observations of the bones when compared to ethnographic parallels, archaeological evidence from Area T at Tel Dan has indeed yielded the remains of animals that may be associated with slaughter.³⁴ More specifically, two specimens bore evidence of lateral cut marks on the ventral surfaces of atlas vertebrae which may in-

²⁴ Cf. e.g. Bethsaida in Arav & Freund 2009 and, on the animal bones, see Fisher 2005.

²⁵ See this author’s original survey in Greer 2017b.

²⁶ On the date, see Knohl 2007, the earlier formulations of which are followed by Milgrom (see Milgrom 1991, 13–42).

²⁷ Milgrom (1991, 147) notes that the term refers to spiritual impurity in Deuteronomic literature as opposed to cultic impurity in Priestly literature.

²⁸ For later developments, see Hesse & Wapnish 1985, 82–83, citing Munk *et al.* 1976; note, too, the description of the examination of the sacrificial animal in Philo *Leg.* 1.166. On the tongue as a priestly portion, see Carbon 2017.

²⁹ See Greer 2017b.

³⁰ As presented in Arnold *et al.* 2021.

³¹ For Iron Age I, see Ilan 1999; 2019; and for Iron Age II, see Thareani 2016.

³² Cf. Bar-Oz *et al.* 2007 in this context.

³³ The variance in wording, could, however, be related to a text-critical issue; cf. the text-critical apparatus in the *BHS*, the standard scholarly edition of the MT, for vv. 2, 8, 13 with LXX.

³⁴ See the classic work of Binford 1978; 1981; and cf. more recent applications in Klenck 1995; and Grantham 1995; 2000.

dicare slaughtering. A variety of metal instruments and several blades were also found that were likely used in the slaughter of the animals, as well as in their processing and consumption.

THE MANIPULATION OF BLOOD

The next step in the procedures laid down in the texts is the draining of the blood and, though not explicitly stated in the priestly manual, the collection of the sacrificial blood in a specialized vessel, a *mizrāq*, before it is “splashed”—a verbal form of Hebrew *zrq*, from which the nominal form *mizrāq* is derived (such a connection is lost in the LXX’s rendering of προσχέω, “to pour”, for *zrq*, and φιάλη for *mizrāq*)—against the altar on all sides, regardless of whether the animal was an ox or sheep or goat (Lev 3:2, 3:8, 3:13).³⁵ As an act central to cultic performance, the splashing of the blood was reserved for the priests.³⁶

Excavations of the sacred precinct at Tel Dan have revealed evidence of a large central altar, only one horn of which has been preserved, in addition to its base, upon which such blood would have been splashed.³⁷ This altar may be reconstructed based on proportions from other archaeological examples of horned altars, such as the well-preserved blocks of a dismantled altar from Beersheva,³⁸ yielding the massive dimensions of 4.75 × 4.75 m for its square base and 3 m for its height. It may further have borne some distinctive features, such as a *yesōd* (LXX: βάσις), a low step-like structure protruding beyond the base, upon which blood would have been poured as part of sin offering rituals (Lev 4:7, 4:18, 4:25, 4:29, 4:34, 5:9); similar features may possibly be identified on the altars from Moza and Arad as well, with regional differences apparent between northern Israel and southern Judah.³⁹

More specific to blood manipulation is the discovery of what is likely a *mizrāq* excavated in the western chambers of the precinct (Fig. 2).⁴⁰ Its identification is based not only on stylistic features but more significantly on the context of its discovery alongside a pair of shovels, a third broad-bladed shovel, and a sunken pot filled with the ash of animal remains. These artifacts correspond precisely to those associated with priestly “altar kits” described in the Hebrew Bible as accoutrements of the altar of burnt offering of the tabernacle

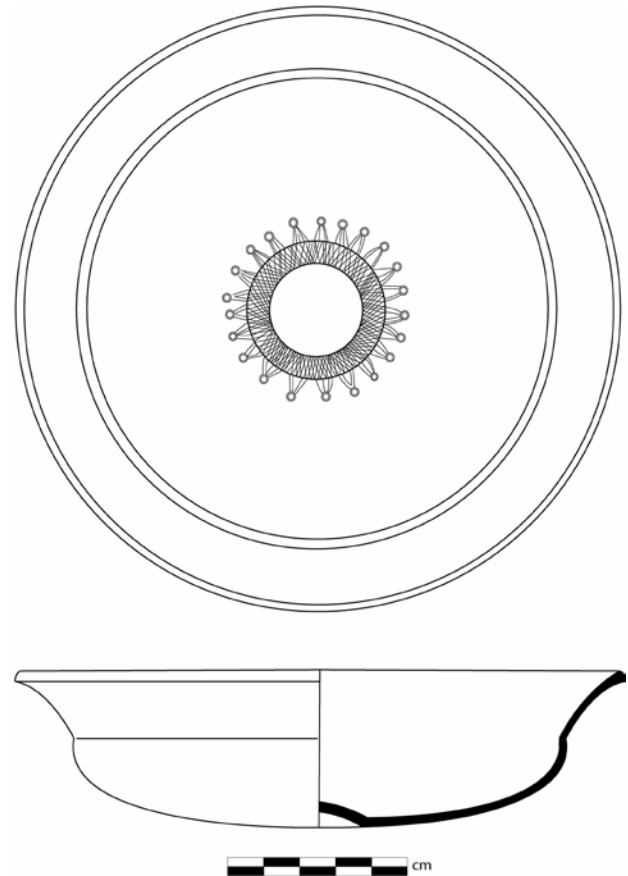


Fig. 2. A bronze bowl discovered in the sacred precinct of Tel Dan that has been identified as a *mizrāq*, a ritual vessel for the collection of sacrificial blood. Illustration by J. Greer after Biran 1986, 186, fig. 15.

and Jerusalem temple (cf. Exod 27:1–8, repeated in Exod 38:1–7; Num 4:13–15; see also 1 Kgs 7:40, 45, paralleling 2 Chron 4:11, 16).

THE BURNING OF FAT AND INNARDS

Following the procedures of the textual prescriptions, the animal was then disemboweled, with special attention given to the internal fat portions coating the abdominal and pelvic cavities and connecting the organs (Lev 3:3–4, 3:9–10, 3:14–15). All of these portions of fat were removed, along with the kidneys and the liver, and, in the case of the sheep, the entire tail with its fat was cut off presumably where it joins the trunk (Lev 3:9). Then, all of this was “turned to smoke” (verbal forms of *qtr* in Hebrew; in the LXX, the action was simply described as “offered up” [verbal forms of ἀναφέρω]) on the altar (Lev 3:5, 3:11, 3:16). While at least one major ash deposit has been discovered at Tel Dan, nothing with the telltale characteristics of the burning of concentrated animal fat and bone, such

³⁵ The connection between the *mizrāq* and the ritual of collecting the blood to be splashed upon the altar is made explicit in the later Targums: cf. *Tg. Onk.* Exod 24:6; *Tg. Ps.-J.* Exod 24:6, 24:8; Lev 1:11.

³⁶ Cf. Milgrom 1991, 223 with further comments.

³⁷ See Biran 1994, 159–233, for a more detailed description of the finds from Area T.

³⁸ See the description in Zevit 2001, 171–175, with references there.

³⁹ As presented in Greer 2017c, and currently being prepared for publication.

⁴⁰ A full discussion is found in Greer 2010.

as the greasy, black soil that has been discovered in Greek contexts,⁴¹ has as of yet been identified in any Levantine context as far as is known to this author presently. Still, the immolation of the fat portions in the Hebrew *šalāmim*, with special reference to the fat-tail, may serve as an important parallel to the burning of the tail along with the fat-wrapped femur in the Greek θυσία.

THE BUTCHERING OF THE ANIMAL

Though not explicitly stated in the priestly manual prescriptions for the fellowship offering, the animal was then butchered before being distributed, cooked, and eaten. Drawing from the butchering details given for the burnt offering (Lev 1:6–9), we may infer that after the animal was skinned, it was decapitated and at least quartered, with the lower legs removed. Details from the prescriptions concerning the priestly portion (Lev 7:28–36), described below, make it clear that the “breast” (*hāzeh*; LXX: στήθυνιον) was also considered a separate unit, likely similar to the brisket cut known today.

Archaeology, in combination with ethnographic field studies and experimental projects, provides more detail surrounding these processes.⁴² For example, a high percentage of metapodials (the bones of the lower legs) from both cattle and sheep/goats from Tel Dan exhibit banded cut marks encircling the distal end of the shaft, likely created during the skinning process. Furthermore, numerous joints bear evidence of cut marks perpendicular to the long axis of the associated long bones, surely the result of segmenting the forequarters and hindquarters into smaller units prior to distribution. This latter observation is significant in providing evidence for what may already be assumed: all of these processes, if the proximity of the deposition is any indication, took place within the precinct itself; that is, no stage of the process was “outsourced” beyond the temple courtyard.

THE DISTRIBUTION OF MEATY PORTIONS

Returning to the biblical texts, the next activity in the process would have been the distribution of certain portions of meat, along with various bread products (Lev 7:11–21), to the officiating priests, which has parallels in other cultures and was practiced in Greek and Roman religion as well. On the matter of what these priestly portions entailed, however, various traditions are preserved in the biblical texts, both within and

beyond the priestly corpus. In the MT, followed by the Samaritan Pentateuch (SP), these traditions include a random portion associated with the shrine at Shiloh (1 Sam 2:12–17),⁴³ the right hindlimb (*šōq*) and breast (*hāzeh*) portions of the standard Priestly tabernacle tradition (Exod 29:27–28; Lev 7:28–37, 8:25–26, 9:20, 10:14–15), the forelimb (*zərōʾā*) portion (along with the breast and hindlimb portions) of the Nazirite tradition (Num 6:13–20), and the forelimb (along with cheeks [*lāḥāyayim*] and diaphragm [*qēḥāh*] portions) of the Deuteronomic tradition (Deut 18:3–4).⁴⁴ In addition to these variances, the LXX systematically harmonizes differences between hindlimb and forelimb traditions, when they are at odds, and renders the priestly portions consistently as a forelimb (βραχίων) portion in each case (Exod 29:27–28; Lev 7:28–37, 8:25–26, 9:20, 10:14–15; cf. Sir 7:31);⁴⁵ such a distinction is followed by secondary Greek references in Philo (*Leg.* 1.145) and Origen (*Hom. Lev.* 5:12), as well as in the Latin Vulgate (Latin *armus* = Greek βραχίων).⁴⁶ A detailed survey of these variances suggests that two dominant traditions were in effect in ancient Israel—one assigning the hindlimb and the other assigning the forelimb to priests—and that these differences, when considered in the broader ancient Near Eastern context, may suggest affinities with northern Israelite and southern Judahite populations, respectively.⁴⁷ Regardless of whether the texts specify a hindlimb or forelimb portion, these portions constitute the “choice” portions (cf. Ezk 24:4), and, when the side of the limb portion is specified, it is always the right-sided portion that is given to the priest (cf. Exod 29:27–28; Lev 7:32–33 in MT, LXX, and SP, as well as later traditions).

It is this last detail, that of a preference for right-sided portions, that becomes an important archaeological indicator of potential evidence for priestly portions of the *šalāmim* offering among the sacrificial deposits at Tel Dan.⁴⁸ Such may be suggested within the sacred precinct, where two spheres of activity have been identified: one assigned to the activities of the priests, and the other to the activities of common worshippers. When the bones from a number of buried deposits were

⁴³ Note, however, that Qumran 4QSam^a adds the hindlimb and brisket portions; cf. McCarter 1980, 78–79; Fincke 2001, 9, 285 pl. III.

⁴⁴ The LXX renders the Deuteronomic prescriptions as σιαγόνια for *lāḥāyayim* (“cheeks”) and ἔνυστρον, “fourth stomach,” for *qēḥāh* (“diaphragm”). The latter is surely more problematic than the former (cf. the expected φρήν, διάζωμα).

⁴⁵ See later attempts at harmonizing the Deuteronomic and Priestly prescriptions in the Temple Scroll from Qumran (cf. 11QT Col. 20:14–16, Col. 21:2–5, Col. 22 [with fragments from 11Q20 Cols 5–6]:8–11; also cf. *m. Hullin* 10:1, 10:4, 11:1).

⁴⁶ Josephus (*AJ* 3.229) curiously provides an additional variant in his reference to the Lev 7:32–34 priestly portion as including τὴν κνήμην τὴν δεξιάν (“the right lower leg”), perhaps being noncommittal on whether the portion was from the forelimb or the hindlimb.

⁴⁷ See Greer 2019 for the full argument; cf. Joosten 2015.

⁴⁸ For the full discussion, see Greer 2013, 43–96.

⁴¹ E.g. Romano & Voyatzis 2014. Note especially “Appendix 3: The Micromorphology of Mt. Lykaion, 2006–2010” by S.M. Mentzer, which identifies the “ashy, greasy black soil” and “fat-derived char” as the result of the intentional burning of animal remains.

⁴² See Greer 2013, especially 43–96, for details regarding evidence of cut marks and the associated processes.

analyzed and grouped according to these two spheres of activity, several non-random distribution patterns were identified and suggested to relate to various sacrifices within the priestly system. Evidence for priestly portions of the *šālāmim* offering was suggested by the fact that 67% of the meaty longbone portions from the forelimbs and hindlimbs of sheep and goats in the priestly area were from the right side of the animal and 33% from the left, whereas in the area of the common worshippers the trend was reversed: only 37% of the meaty longbone portions from the forelimbs and hindlimbs of sheep and goats were from the right side and 63% were from the left. Thus, the higher percentage of right-sided limb bone fragments in the area of the priests may be explained as the remains of meals in which the priests consumed their portions of *šālāmim* offerings surrendered by worshippers, as is also indicated by the predominance of left-sided portions in the courtyard where the worshippers consumed the rest of the animal.

THE PREPARATION AND CONSUMPTION OF MEAT IN THE SACRIFICIAL MEAL

After the priestly portion was distributed, the worshippers prepared and consumed the sacrificial meat. Few prescriptions regarding the meal itself are laid out in the texts, though details are given regarding the duration of the feast in that it must be completed by the following morning (Lev 7:15–18; an additional day is added for votive and freewill versions of the fellowship offerings), as well as stipulations concerning the purity of both the worshiper and the meat (Lev 7:19–21), in addition to prohibitions concerning the consumption of blood and fat (Lev 7:22–27). From these details we can surmise that, as is explicitly stated in the case of the sin offering for priests (Lev 6:26), the sacred feasts most likely would have taken place within the precinct itself, for it would have provided an environment in which the duration and purity of the feast could be closely monitored.

Archaeological material from the sacred precinct at Tel Dan is congruent with such details.⁴⁹ The purity regulations may find some resonance in the bathing installations discovered in the sanctuary, both in the presence of a stepped pool and a large basin, and the discovery of several oil lamps is consistent with the notion that feasts continued into the night. Furthermore, the entire area bears numerous signs of preparation and consumption in the form of animal bone remains that not only exhibit cut marks associated with processing, as mentioned above, but also those associated with preparation techniques. Chief among these are numerous specimens that exhibit spiral breakage patterns and/or deep depressions typical of those that appear on “green” bones



Fig. 3. An example of a bone specimen exhibiting chop marks from the sacred precinct of Tel Dan. Photograph by J. Greer.

(i.e., fresh bones surrounded by flesh) that have been chopped with cleaver-type instruments (Fig. 3). The size of the majority of bone fragments is also consistent with sizes of the cuts of meat suitable for being placed in typical cooking pots. Other bones show cut marks associated with the carving of meat away from broad bone surfaces, such as the pelvis. Numerous remains of cooking pots, in addition to other serving and eating vessels, have also been recovered in high concentrations.

Taking the evidence as a whole, we suggest that the disarticulated quarters and other meat units were chopped into smaller portions that included the meat, associated sinew, bone, and marrow, which were then deposited in cooking pots with liquids and other spices and ingredients, as is commonly observed in contemporary ethnographic parallels.⁵⁰ The portions were then cooked in stews, as was common in Greco-Roman practice,⁵¹ based on the numerous cooking pots discovered as well as the breakage patterns and the fact that very few specimens exhibit burn marks typical of roasting on the ends of bones. Biblical texts, too, prescribe this manner of cooking both explicitly and obliquely for cultic meals (e.g., Exod 29:31; Lev 6:28, 6:31; Num 6:19; 1 Sam 2:13, 2:15; 1 Kgs 19:21; Ezek 46:20, 46:24; cf. Zech 14:21); the only exception would be the earliest prescriptions for the Passover meat, which was roasted (Exod 12:8), but even here later traditions seem to incorporate stewing methods (cf. Deut 16:7,

⁴⁹ See Greer 2013, 43–96, and the synthesis at 97–124.

⁵⁰ Cf. Klenck 1995; Grantham 1995; 2000.

⁵¹ Cf. Ekroth 2007.

and note 2 Chron 35:13 apparently aiming to harmonize the two different traditions). These preparation methods also serve as the source for graphic metaphoric allusions in the prophetic literature (e.g., Ezek 24:3–12; Mic 3:3).

The consumption itself likely took place in family units spread in and around the precinct, such as we suggest at Tel Dan, gathered around shared cooking pots out of which the stew would have been served in shallow bowls. The variety of vessel forms typical of domestic contexts employed, alongside the different cuts of meat as well as further details from the biblical traditions, suggest a less-regulated environment, perhaps one in which worshipers provided their own assemblages and foodstuffs rather than relying on a centralized authority, such as the temple institution, for redistribution. This situation at Tel Dan, however, seems to change over the nearly two centuries of feasting that took place there, eventually moving to a more restricted environment. It is during this later phase of feasting that we see the strongest evidence of the right-left portion distribution, discussed above.⁵²

Future directions

Regardless of the mechanics of sacrifice and the details concerning the sacrificial animal in ancient Israel that have been laid out here, taking the life of an animal and sharing in the consumption of its flesh was always considered a highly charged, sacred event and the emphasis was on the disposition of the worshiper and the efficacy of the procedure as they pertain to the greater significance of the act which often remains shrouded in the texts. The sacrificial animal, however, serves as a conduit to convey these deeper meanings and thus understanding the mechanics of the procedures may, in fact, shed light on other dimensions as well. These may include notions of fellowship with the divine and with the community in the sharing of the meal, or elements of transference and purification or atonement that may be present in the slaughter and blood manipulation, or the leveraging of these conceptions for social power by different groups or individuals. It is hoped that a comparison of the sacrificial animal in ancient Israel, as described here, with Greek, Etruscan, and Hittite sacrifice discussed elsewhere in this volume, in addition to those systems from Mesopotamian and Egyptian contexts, will lead to further fruitful comparisons of the cognitive and social implications of these acts.

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⁵² Greer 2014.

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