

NINTH MESSAGE:  
INSTRUCTIONS FOR THE PEOPLE CONCERNING  
WAVE-OFFERINGS AND THE CONTRIBUTION FOR THE PRIESTS  
Leviticus 7:28-36

Introduction.

This message completes the presentation of the slaughter-offering of peace-offerings. The slaughter-offering was the most complex of the offerings. It actually was a fellowship meal participated in by Jehovah, the priests, the worshiper, and his guests. This message discusses the portions of the fellowship meal that belonged to Jehovah and to the priests. The fat of the animal was Jehovah's portion of the fellowship meal. Jehovah enjoyed it as it was roasted on the altar. Two portions of the animal were the priests' portion of the fellowship meal. Those portions were called the "wave-offering" and the "contribution." The description of these aspects of the slaughter-offering completes the picture of true fellowship.

This message concerning the portions for Jehovah and the portions for the priests was addressed to the people. The reason was that it was the responsibility of the people to see that Jehovah and the priests received their portions, just as it was the responsibility of the priests to see that the worshiper and his guests received their portion (see Introduction to MESSAGE 7).

After a study of all the messages concerning slaughter-offerings, it is possible to see more clearly the reason for its unusual name "slaughter-offering of peace-offerings." The name signifies that one slaughter-offering was composed of several peace-offerings (see comments on Lev. 3:1 in MESSAGE 1 under the heading a slaughter-offering of peace-offerings). Previous messages discussed four of those peace-offerings: the blood (Lev. 3:2), the fat (Lev. 3:3-5), Jehovah's portion-of the bread that accompanied the animal (Lev.7:14), and the meal shared by the worshiper and his guests (Lev. 7:11-13,15-21). This message adds more details about the offering of the fat (vs. 29-31), but primarily it discusses the final two portions of the fellowship meal, which are the wave-offering for Jehovah and the contribution for the priests.

This message has no sub-topics.

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Critical note.

Because of the complicated nature of the slaughter-offering, some have suggested that it was the result of combining two older types of offerings. Evidence for this suggestion is supposedly found in the fact that different portions of the slaughter-offering were presented in different passages. True to their obsession about edited documents, critics assert that the different passages originated in different documents. A much better and easier explanation is that different aspects of the offering were presented in different messages simply for the sake of clarity. Too much information communicated all at once can be overwhelming. Jehovah communicated different aspects in separate messages to enable His instructions to be more easily understood.

The portions of the slaughter-offering discussed in this message are not mentioned in the Record prior to Sinai. The reason is that they are portions that were to be given to the priests. Prior to Sinai heads of families officiated at the altar, and not priests. No provision was made for giving a portion of the offerings to the priests at that time because Jehovah had no priests at that time (see comments on Lev. 7:14 in MESSAGE 7 under the heading It will belong to the priest). It was perfectly logical and reasonable that these new features of the offering should have been presented separately because they were new and needed special attention. The various parts of the offering, though explained in different messages, fit so perfectly together into one beautiful

and meaningful whole that it is most unlikely that the offering could have been the result of combining two offerings that originally had separate existences. It is also unlikely that different aspects of the offering that supposedly were derived from different documents could have fitted so perfectly together into one unified ceremony.

Critics also claim to find evidence in the description of the slaughter-offering that the offering gradually changed over the years. They support this contention by comparing Leviticus 7:32-34 with Deuteronomy 18:3. The two passages use different words to describe the portion of the animal that was to be a contribution to the priests. The critics contend that a different practice is described in the two passages, showing that at one time one practice was followed while at another time another practice was followed. Based on this contention, they claim that neither of these passages could not have come from the time of Moses. However, a little study will indicate that the two passages do not describe two different practices but instead describe the same practice with two different wordings.

The meaning of the word in Leviticus 7:32,34 that describes the portion of the animal that was to be a contribution to the priests (*shoq*) is not certain. The meaning of the root is unknown and offers no clue concerning its meaning. English translations use various contradictory translations, but a large number use “thigh.”<sup>1</sup> Modern interpreters suppose that it means “thigh” on the basis of Judges 15:8; Psalm 147:10; Proverbs 26:7; Song of Solomon 5:15; and Isaiah 47:2; however, none of these verses gives clear evidence as to exactly what part of the animal’s body is meant. However, two verses do give strong indications that the word means something other than “thigh.” The first is Deuteronomy 28:35, where this word (*shoq*) and another little known word (*berek*) are made equivalent to “from the sole of your foot to the top of your head.” The two words together describe the whole body, so one word must mean the top half of the body and the other word the bottom half of the body. The question remains as to which half is described by *shoq* and which half by *berek*. Genesis 48:12 provides some assistance, because it uses the word *berek* to refer to Joseph’s lap, which would mean the lower part of his body. Therefore, the word used in Leviticus 7:32, 34 (*shoq*) must refer to the upper half of the body. Leviticus 7:32 specifies that the right portion of the *shoq* was to be a contribution to the priests, so the meaning is that the right part of the upper body was the priests’ part. Therefore, the translation “right front quarter” is used in this writing.

If this conclusion is correct, then Leviticus 7:32,34 is consistent with Deuteronomy 18:3, which says that the “shoulder, the two jaws, and the entrails” were to be given to the priest. Though the word translated “entrails” is also a little known word, the passage obviously refers to portions of the upper part of the body. Thus, the wording in Deuteronomy 18:3 is simply a more detailed description of the one word used in Leviticus 7:32,34. The two passages are not describing two different practices as the critics say. They are descriptions of the same practice in two different wordings.

It is certain that Moses knew more about the meaning of all of these words than anyone in the present day. Therefore, his words in Deuteronomy 18:3 should be used to throw light on the meaning of Leviticus 7:32, not to disparage its accuracy or its divine origin. The critics have again used their lack of knowledge to support a dubious theory, which is a most unscholarly practice.

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<sup>1</sup> KJV translates the word as “shoulder.” NAB uses “leg, and NEB uses “hind leg.” RSV, ASV, NASB, NIV, HCSB, NEB, MT, SGV, JB, LB, and NWT all use “thigh.”

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Interpretation

## CHAPTER 7

Verse 28. **And Jehovah spoke to Moses, saying,**

This verse introduces another message of Jehovah to Moses.

Verse 29. **Speak to the people of Israel, saying, The one who offers his slaughter-offering of peace-offerings to Jehovah must [personally] bring his offering to Jehovah from his slaughter-offering of peace-offerings.**

Speak to the people of Israel, saying. Moses was told to deliver this message to the people. The reason has already been stated in the Introduction to this message, which was that it made the people responsible for seeing that the priests received their portions of the offering.

The one who offers his slaughter-offering of peace-offers to Jehovah must [personally] bring his offering to Jehovah from his slaughter-offering of peace-offerings. This verse refers to the portion of the slaughter-offering that the worshiper was to deliver to Jehovah as His part of the fellowship meal. It emphasizes that the worshiper was to personally bring those portions of the offering to Jehovah.

Verse 30. **His hands must bring Jehovah's fire-offering, [that is], the fat. Regarding the breast, he must bring the breast to wave it as a wave-offering to Jehovah's face.**

His hands must bring Jehovah's fire-offering. Presenting Jehovah's portion of the fellowship meal was not to be left to the officiating priest. The worshiper was to present Jehovah's portion with his own hands. That portion of the offering is called "Jehovah's fire-offering."

[that is], the fat. Jehovah's fire-offering consisted of the fat of the animal. The handling of the fat was described in MESSAGE 1. The procedure for the offering of a bull or cow was: (1)

The worshiper was to press his hands on the head of the animal (Lev. 3:2a). (2) The priest was to splash the blood around the altar (Lev. 3:2b). Obviously, the animal was killed before the blood could be splashed. (3) The worshiper was to skin the animal, cut the meat into its pieces, and the priest was to represent the worshiper by presenting the fat of the animal to Jehovah, (Lev. 3:3-4; compare with Lev. 1:5-6). (4) The priest was to roast the fat on the altar (Lev. 3:5). The same procedure was followed when a sheep was offered (Lev. 3:7-11) and also when a goat was offered (Lev. 3:12-16; see comments on each of those passages in MESSAGE 1). This verse adds the detail that after the meat was carved into pieces, the worshiper was responsible for taking the fat and delivering it to Jehovah with his own hands. The fat was the best and richest part of the animal, and it belonged to Jehovah. The priest was to receive the fat in behalf of Jehovah and roast it on the altar in behalf of the worshiper.

Regarding the breast, he must bring the breast to wave it as a wave-offering to Jehovah's face. This verse adds for the first time that the worshiper was also to present to Jehovah the breast of the animal. The breast was also a choice part of the animal, and it too belonged to Jehovah. However, the breast was not to be roasted on the altar. It was assigned to the priests to be included in their part of the fellowship meal (see v. 31).

To indicate that the breast was for Jehovah but assigned to the priests, it was waved over the altar. Exodus 29:22-25 indicates that the worshiper held the offering in his hands and that the priest grasped his hands and guided them in a waving motion over the altar. Probably this motion was toward the altar and then back toward the priest, to indicate that the breast was given to God and then turned back to the priest by Jehovah. The name for this portion of the offering is a noun based on a root meaning "to move to and fro," or "to wave." It means "a waving." When used as a title for this offering, it is best translated as "wave-offering." The "wave-offering" was mentioned prior to this passage only in Exodus 29:24,26,27, as a part of instructions to Moses concerning the hallowing ceremonies for the priests. Evidently wave-offerings were first introduced at Sinai, for the same

reason that portions of the bread that accompanied a slaughter-offering were first introduced at Sinai. The reason was that prior to Sinai heads of families, not priests, officiated over fire-offerings. Assigning a portion of the offering to the priests was not appropriate at that time, because at that time Jehovah had no priests (see comments on Lev. 7:14 in MESSAGE 7 under the heading [as] a contribution to Jehovah).

Numbers 6:19 and 1 Samuel 2:12-17 both show that the worshiper first cooked the meat and then brought it to Jehovah as His part of the fellowship meal. Obviously, the worshiper would cook it along with the portions of the meat that he served to himself and his guests in The Holy Place. So before the worshiper and his guests sat down to the meal, the worshiper took Jehovah's portion and delivered it to the priest.<sup>2</sup>

**Verse 31. And the priest shall roast the fat on the altar, and the breast from the slaughter-offerings of your peace-offerings will be for Aaron and his sons.**

This verse makes clear that the fat was to be roasted on the altar, but the wave-offering was to be delivered to the priests. Both the high priest and the regular priests were to share in eating the breasts taken from slaughter-offerings.

**Verse 32. Also you must give the right front quarter of your slaughter-offerings of peace-offerings as a contribution to the priest.**

This verse tells of a third portion of the animal. That portion was to be given as a contribution to the officiating priest. It consisted of the right front quarter of the animal (see Critical Note above). It was a direct contribution to the officiating priest. It gave him and other priests with

whom he shared it full participation in the fellowship meal (see comments on Lev. 7:14 in MESSAGE 7 under the heading [as] a contribution to the priest). The breast was Jehovah's portion of the meal, but it was assigned to the priests to eat. The right front quarter was the priest's portion in his own right. Very clearly, Jehovah, the priests, the worshiper, and his guests all shared in one fellowship meal though in different ways. Nothing is said here about waving the right front quarter over the altar. However, when Jehovah gave instructions for hallowing the priests, Moses was told to wave it over the altar (Exodus 29:22-24). Also, when Moses was carrying out Jehovah's instructions concerning hallowing the priests, he waved the right front quarter over the altar (see comments on Lev. 8:25-28 in MESSAGE 10). Evidently, all of the mentioned items were to be waved over the altar as a sign that they were given to Jehovah before being assigned out for parts of the fellowship meal.

**Verse 33. The one who offers the blood of the peace-offerings and the fat among the sons of Aaron, to him shall be the right front quarter for a portion.**

The priest who officiated over a slaughter-offering of peace-offerings was to receive the right front quarter of the animal as his part of the meal. Later passages make it clear that he was free to share it with other priests and with his family if he wished. In Lev. 10:14, it is made clear that the whole family of a priest was permitted to eat of the waved breast and the contributed right front quarter (see comments on Lev. 10:14 in MESSAGE 13). In Leviticus 22:10-13, specific rules are laid down governing who in the priest's family was included (see comments on Lev. 22:10-13 in MESSAGE 27). A variation in this procedure was made when a priest offered a slaughter-offering. In that case, the right front quarter was roasted on the altar, so that a priest would not receive benefit from his own offering (see comments on Lev. 8:28 in MESSAGE 10).

<sup>2</sup> English translations are not consistent in translating the name of this offering; however, KJV, RSV, NASV, ABV usually use "wave offering." ASV, SGV do the same, except that they add a hyphen. HCSB usually uses "presentation offering." NEB usually uses "special gift," while JB and LB generally use "gesture of offering." DRV uses eleven different translations, but none of them constitute a distinct name.

Verse 34. **For I have taken the waved breast and the contributed right front quarter from the people of Israel out of the slaughter-offerings of peace-offerings, and I have given them to Aaron the priest and to his sons as a statute for an age from the people of Israel.**

This verse emphasizes that the wave-offering for Jehovah and the contribution for the priest both belonged to the priests by decree of Jehovah. That decree was a lasting one. The practice was to continue on and on through future generations in Israel, though not necessarily without ever an end. The words translated “statute for an age” are the same words as those found in Leviticus 6:18. They indicate that the obligation was to extend throughout the age, but they allow for God to discontinue it at some time if He wished, which He did in Jesus (see comments on Lev. 6:18 in MESSAGE 5 under the heading [It is] a statute for an age through your generations concerning Jehovah’s fire-offerings and on Lev. 3:17 in MESSAGE 1 under the headings [Here is] a statute and for an age).

Verses 35 **This [is theirs] from the fire-offerings of Jehovah [by] the anointment of Aaron and [by] the anointment of his sons in the day He offers them as priests of Jehovah.**

This [is theirs] from the fire-offerings of Jehovah. The wave offering and the contribution were portions of the fire-offerings that belonged to the priests. “Fire-offerings” was a term that applied to all of the offerings offered to Jehovah at the altar of The Tabernacle (see comments on Lev. 1:9 in MESSAGE 1 under the heading a fire-offering).

[by] the anointment of Aaron and [by] the anointment of his sons. The word translated “anointment” is a noun based on the same root as the verb “to anoint.” It was used to refer to the oil used in anointing, but here it clearly refers to the act of anointing that set a man aside to be a priest. The wave-offering and the contribution belonged to the priests by a right that was granted to them at their anointment. Anointing was the heart of the ceremony that set them aside as priests. No one had the right to appoint himself as a priest or to try to take the privileges of a priest on his own. A man

received the right to eat the portions of the offerings that belonged to priests only after he was formally and officially anointed, and he was chosen to be anointed by God Himself.

This verse definitely states that both the high priest and the ordinary priests were to be anointed.

In the day He offers them as priests of Jehovah. The wording in this phrase is unique and should not be disguised, as most translations do. It does not say “in the day they were anointed” or “in the day they were offered” “or “in the day they were presented.” It says “in the day He offers them.” God chose them and set them aside as priests. When they were anointed, He offered them to Himself as a gift and as servants to do His will. The priests were an offering God presented to Himself. Other priests did the anointing, but they did it at Jehovah’s instructions and in His behalf. So it was really Jehovah who did the anointing and the offering.

Verse 36 **Which Jehovah commanded to give to them on the day of His anointing them out of the people of Israel. [It is] a statute [for] an age through their generations.**

Which Jehovah commanded to give to them. Giving the wave-offering and the contribution to the priests was done by Jehovah’s commandment. The priests received those portions of the offerings by divine authority.

to give to them on the day of His anointing them. These words do not mean that the priests were to be given the wave-offering and the contribution only on the day they were anointed. It means they were given the right to them on the day of their anointing. The verse emphasizes that God anointed them for Himself. The act of anointing was to be done by human instrumentality, but it was to be done on God’s behalf. Jehovah was the authority responsible for their anointing, which set them aside as priests. On the day He anointed them, they received the right to the waved breast and the contributed right front quarter.

out of the people of Israel. The priests' anointing separated them out from the people of Israel for special holy service. Most translations translate these words as "by the people of Israel" and make it mean either that the people did the anointing or that the people gave the wave-offering and the contribution to the priests. Neither is correct. The preposition is literally "from with." They were separated out from being with the people. They were special henceforth because they were set aside for holy service to Jehovah God.

[It is] a statute for an age through their generations. The words translated "statute for an age" are the same words found in Leviticus 3:17. They repeat the emphasis made in verse 34 that these parts of the offerings belonged to the priests by virtue of a statue made by God and that it was to continue indefinitely into the future through generation after generation. The statement still left open the possibility that this requirement could someday be cancelled by Jehovah, which He did in Jesus (see comments on Lev. 7:34 above).

#### Application.

Just as the Aaronic priests were entitled to support for themselves and their families from offerings that belonged to Jehovah, just so Christian ministers today are entitled to support for themselves and their families out of the offerings that are given to Jehovah by the people they serve. Putting food on the table of God's ministries through offerings given to God is a part of the loving fellowship shared by Jehovah, His people, and His ministers. When churches receive the tithes and offerings that belong to God, they must be careful to see that a portion of those tithes and offerings are used to provide adequate support for their ministers and their families. By that means ministers are not required to spend their time at secular work but are freed to spend their time serving God and God's people.

When a congregation is not large enough or financially strong enough to provide full time support for its minister and his family, a minister's willingness to serve as a bi-vocational minister and earn at least part of his support through secular work is an unselfish service and should be greatly honored. Paul served in that manner as a tentmaker in order to be able to reach new believers who had not yet learned the importance of unselfish giving. However, he clearly acknowledged that receiving support from those he served was a right he gave up to be able to reach people who did not yet know Jesus or who had not yet learned the joy of giving (Acts 18:1-4; 20:33-35; 1 Cor. 9:14-15; 1 Thess. 2:9; 2 Thess. 3:9). Many ministers serve in the same unselfish spirit today, but their willingness to do so should not be used by a congregation as an excuse for its failure to adequately support its minister if it is able to do it.

Providing adequate support for Christian ministers from a church's tithes and offerings not only frees ministers to do God's work but also promotes unselfishness, love, and fellowship among God, His ministers, and His people.