

Cambridge University Press

978-0-521-87724-4 - Sacrifice and Gender in Biblical Law

Nicole J. Ruane

Frontmatter

[More information](#)

SACRIFICE AND GENDER IN BIBLICAL LAW

The Hebrew Bible contains numerous laws for sacrificing animals, food, and children. Most of these are highly specific about the gender of participants and, especially, of victims. This book is an investigation of the significance of gender distinctions in sacrificial rituals and how the rites reflect, create, and manage social gender roles with their material prerogatives. *Sacrifice and Gender in Biblical Law* considers the laws of the firstborn, the ritual of the red cow, the prohibition on boiling a kid in its mother's milk, and other laws of purity and sacrifice; it shows how gender distinctions in these rituals affect their form, their function, and their legitimacy.

Nicole J. Ruane is a lecturer at the University of New Hampshire. She has previously taught at Syracuse University, Northeastern University, Union Theological Seminary, and the General Theological Seminary. She has published dictionary articles, and her work was included in *A Question of Sex?*, edited by Deborah Rooke.

Cambridge University Press

978-0-521-87724-4 - Sacrifice and Gender in Biblical Law

Nicole J. Ruane

Frontmatter

[More information](#)

Cambridge University Press

978-0-521-87724-4 - Sacrifice and Gender in Biblical Law

Nicole J. Ruane

Frontmatter

[More information](#)

Sacrifice and Gender in Biblical Law

NICOLE J. RUANE

University of New Hampshire



Cambridge University Press
978-0-521-87724-4 - Sacrifice and Gender in Biblical Law
Nicole J. Ruane
Frontmatter
[More information](#)

CAMBRIDGE
UNIVERSITY PRESS

32 Avenue of the Americas, New York, NY 10013-2473, USA

Cambridge University Press is part of the University of Cambridge.

It furthers the University's mission by disseminating knowledge in the pursuit of education, learning, and research at the highest international levels of excellence.

www.cambridge.org

Information on this title: www.cambridge.org/9780521877244

© Nicole J. Ruane 2013

This publication is in copyright. Subject to statutory exception and to the provisions of relevant collective licensing agreements, no reproduction of any part may take place without the written permission of Cambridge University Press.

First published 2013

Printed in the United States of America

A catalog record for this publication is available from the British Library.

Library of Congress Cataloging in Publication Data

Ruane, Nicole J., 1970–

Sacrifice and gender in biblical law / Nicole J. Ruane. – First edition.

pages cm

Includes bibliographical references and index.

ISBN 978-0-521-87724-4 (hardback)

1. Sacrifice – Biblical teaching. 2. Sex role – Biblical teaching. 3. Gender identity in the Bible.
4. Animal sacrifice. 5. Bible.

O.T. – Criticism, interpretation, etc. I. Title.

BS1199.S2R83 2013

296.4'92–dc23 2013010928

ISBN 978-0-521-87724-4 Hardback

Cambridge University Press has no responsibility for the persistence or accuracy of URLs for external or third-party Internet Web sites referred to in this publication and does not guarantee that any content on such Web sites is, or will remain, accurate or appropriate.

Cambridge University Press

978-0-521-87724-4 - Sacrifice and Gender in Biblical Law

Nicole J. Ruane

Frontmatter

[More information](#)

For Drew and for Frank



Cambridge University Press

978-0-521-87724-4 - Sacrifice and Gender in Biblical Law

Nicole J. Ruane

Frontmatter

[More information](#)

Contents

<i>Acknowledgments</i>	<i>page xi</i>
<i>List of Abbreviations</i>	<i>xiii</i>
Introduction	1
Nancy Jay, Gender, and Sacrifice	5
Sacrifice	9
Biblical Law	12
Outline	16
1 Women’s Sacrificial Roles in Biblical Law	18
Women’s Variable Status in Written Rituals	18
Women as Officiants	22
Women as Offerers	27
Communal Offerings	27
Personal Offerings	29
Women as Consumers	33
Women as Slaughterers	34
Conclusion	37
2 Gender, Animals, and Sacrificial Victimology	40
Nomenclature	43
Public and Private Sacrifice	45
Gender and Hierarchy in Priestly Offerings	47
‘ <i>Ōlā</i>	47
<i>Šēlāmîm</i>	49
“Most Holy” Offerings	50
Gender and Animal Husbandry	56
Reproduction and the Ritual Calendar	62
Sacrifice and Domestication	65

viii	CONTENTS	
	Masculinity and Blemish	68
	Conclusion	75
3	Mothers, Milk, and Meat: The Exclusion of Motherhood from Sacrifice in Cultic Food Laws	77
	Mothers and Sacrifice	77
	“Feminized Protein” and the Sacrificial Cult	80
	Mothers and Meat	85
	Deuteronomy 22:6–7	86
	Boiling a Kid in Its Mother’s Milk	87
	Exodus 22:29–30 and Leviticus 22:27–28	97
	Conclusion	103
4	Females and Death: The Sacred Impurity of the Red Cow	106
	The Rite of the Cow	109
	Part I: Sacrifice and the Creation of Impurity	111
	The Red Cow and Sacrifice	111
	The Red Cow as a <i>Ḥaṭṭā’t</i>	117
	The Elimination of Impurity	123
	Part II: Gender Significance	130
	<i>Ḥaṭṭā’t</i> Offerings	130
	The Red Cow as a Female Victim	132
	Waters of Impurity	136
	Redness and Blood	142
	Sacred Impurity	144
	Conclusion	145
5	Impurity and the Creation of Difference	148
	Purity and Sacrifice	148
	The Nature of Ritual Impurity	151
	Purity and Gender Hierarchy	165
	Skin Disease and the Function of Impurity	170
	Corpse Contamination: Embracing the Rejected	172
	Leviticus 15	175
	Sexuality as Sickness	175
	Genital Substance versus Gender Role	179
	Menstrual Sex and the Contagion of Gender	181
	Childbirth	184
	The Greatest Impurity	185
	Circumcision	188
	Sacrifice, Purity, and the Personhood of Mothers	189
	Conclusion: Purity, Gender, and Sacrifice	190

Cambridge University Press
978-0-521-87724-4 - Sacrifice and Gender in Biblical Law
Nicole J. Ruane
Frontmatter
[More information](#)

CONTENTS	ix
6 Fathers and Firstlings: The Gendered Rhetoric of Child Sacrifice	194
Introduction	194
Firstborn and Firstlings	198
Redemption and the Fictional Victim	203
The Female Firstborn	205
Fathers and Firstlings	210
Mothers as Offerers	212
Mothers and <i>Mōlek</i>	215
Child Sacrifice and Fertility	224
Conclusion: Child Sacrifice and Animal Sacrifice	228
Conclusions	230
<i>Bibliography</i>	235
<i>Biblical References Index</i>	255
<i>Subject Index</i>	264

Cambridge University Press

978-0-521-87724-4 - Sacrifice and Gender in Biblical Law

Nicole J. Ruane

Frontmatter

[More information](#)

Cambridge University Press

978-0-521-87724-4 - Sacrifice and Gender in Biblical Law

Nicole J. Ruane

Frontmatter

[More information](#)

Acknowledgments

This project is a revision and expansion of my doctoral dissertation at Union Theological Seminary (NYC) titled “‘Male without Blemish’: Gender and Sacrifice in Priestly Law.” The impetus for the dissertation came during a discussion on Leviticus when I was a teaching assistant for Professor Alan M. Cooper. A student asked me why male animals were used for some sacrificial offerings, whereas females were used for others. I had no answer to give her at the time, but as I thought about her question, I began to wonder whether the criteria for victim selection might say a great deal about both the nature of biblical forms of sacrifice and biblical ideas about gender. Like the dissertation, this book is largely an attempt to answer that question and to explore its implications for concepts about both people and animals in sacrificial rites. I am extremely grateful to Professor Cooper not only for that teaching opportunity but also for his encouragement and guidance as my dissertation advisor. I am also grateful to Professor David Carr who has offered support, direction, and advice through many versions of this work and beyond. As members of the dissertation committee both he and Professor Brigitte Kahl gave thoughtful feedback and suggestions for further study.

This book could not have been completed without the help of many others. I am thankful to those who provided feedback on various sections, particularly Professor James W. Watts who graciously shared his time, insight, and research on Leviticus with me – I am very grateful for all three – and Professor Susan Ackerman, whose careful reading and suggestions helped significantly improve the quality of the final chapter. The anonymous reviewers for Cambridge University Press also gave important advice for the expansion of the project. I thank Cambridge University Press for its patience and help throughout the publication process. I am very grateful for the help of Dr. Amelia Devin Freedman, who read significant portions of the book and

Cambridge University Press

978-0-521-87724-4 - Sacrifice and Gender in Biblical Law

Nicole J. Ruane

Frontmatter

[More information](#)

provided honest, detailed, and clear criticism. However, any errors in either fact or analysis are my own.

Many thanks also go to Susan Lee, who was instrumental for information on the construction of an academic book, and to Laurel Severns Gunzel and Paul Thorson, who were vitally important in helping me obtain research materials. I am especially appreciative for the help of the late John F. Stacks, who read or edited many stages of this work and gave encouragement at each step. One of my greatest regrets is that he was unable to see this book in its final form. I also thank him and my mother, Carol Stacks, for always encouraging me to follow my interests. I am enormously grateful for the many colleagues, students, and friends who have patiently listened to my thoughts about the topic of sacrifice; I hope they know who they are. Finally, this work could not have been completed without the care and support of Andrew R. Powell and the patience of Francis J. Powell, to whom it is dedicated.

List of Abbreviations

AB	Anchor Bible
ABD	<i>Anchor Bible Dictionary</i> . Edited by David Noel Freedman. 6 vols. Garden City, 1992
ASJ	<i>Acta Sumerologica (Japan)</i>
BA	<i>Biblical Archaeologist</i>
BAR	<i>Biblical Archaeology Review</i>
BDB	Brown, F., S. R. Driver, and C. A. Briggs. <i>A Hebrew and English Lexicon of the Old Testament</i> . Oxford, 1907
BibInterp	<i>Biblical Interpretation</i>
BR	<i>Bible Review</i>
BTB	<i>Biblical Theology Bulletin</i>
CAD	<i>The Assyrian Dictionary of the Oriental Institute of the University of Chicago</i> . Chicago, 1956–
CBQ	<i>Catholic Biblical Quarterly</i>
DCH	<i>Dictionary of Classical Hebrew</i> . Edited by D. J. A. Clines. Sheffield, 1993–
DDD	<i>Dictionary of Demons and Deities in the Bible</i> . Edited by K. van der Toorn. Leiden, 1997
DNWSI	<i>Dictionary of the North-West Semitic Inscriptions</i> . J. Hoftijzer and K. Jongeling, 2 vols. Leiden, 1995
EJ	<i>Encyclopaedia Judaica</i> . 16 vols. Jerusalem, 1972
ETS	<i>Ephemerides Theologicae Lovanienses</i>
HALOT	Koehler, L., W. Baumgartner, and J. J. Stamm, <i>The Hebrew and Aramaic Lexicon of the Old Testament</i> . Translated and edited under the supervision of M. E. J. Richardson. 4 vols. Leiden, 1994–99
HTR	<i>Harvard Theological Review</i>
HUCA	<i>Hebrew Union College Annual</i>

Cambridge University Press

978-0-521-87724-4 - Sacrifice and Gender in Biblical Law

Nicole J. Ruane

Frontmatter

[More information](#)

xiv

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

<i>IDB</i>	<i>Interpreter's Dictionary of the Bible</i> . Edited by G. A. Buttrick. 4 vols. Nashville, 1976
<i>JANES</i>	<i>Journal of the Ancient Near Eastern Society</i>
<i>JAOS</i>	<i>Journal of the American Oriental Society</i>
<i>JBL</i>	<i>Journal of Biblical Literature</i>
<i>JBQ</i>	<i>Jewish Bible Quarterly</i>
<i>JCS</i>	<i>Journal of Cuneiform Studies</i>
<i>JESHO</i>	<i>Journal of the Economic and Social History of the Orient</i>
<i>JFSR</i>	<i>Journal of Feminist Studies in Religion</i>
<i>JJS</i>	<i>Journal of Jewish Studies</i>
<i>JNES</i>	<i>Journal of the Near Eastern Society</i>
<i>JQR</i>	<i>Jewish Quarterly Review</i>
<i>JSOT</i>	<i>Journal for the Study of the Old Testament</i>
<i>JSS</i>	<i>Journal of Semitic Studies</i>
<i>KAI</i>	<i>Kanaanäische und aramäische Inschriften</i> . Donner, H. – Rollig, W. Weisbaden, O. Harrassowitz, 1962
<i>KTU</i>	<i>Die Keilalphabetischen Texte aus Ugarit</i> . Dietrich, M. – Loretz, O. – Sanmartin, J. Neukirchen Vluyn: Neukirchener Verlag, 1976.
<i>MT</i>	Masoretic Text
<i>NICOT</i>	New International Commentary on the Old Testament
<i>OTL</i>	Old Testament Library
<i>OTS</i>	<i>Old Testament Studies</i>
<i>RB</i>	<i>Revue Biblique</i>
<i>SJOT</i>	<i>Scandinavian Journal of the Old Testament</i>
<i>TDOT</i>	<i>Theological Dictionary of the Old Testament</i> . Edited by G. J. Botterweck and H. Ringgren. Translated by J. T. Willis, G. W. Bromiley, and D. E. Green. 11 vols. Grand Rapids, 1974–
<i>VT</i>	<i>Vetus Testamentum</i>
<i>ZAW</i>	<i>Zeitschrift für die alttestamentliche Wissenschaft</i>
<i>ZDPV</i>	<i>Zeitschrift des deutschen Palästina-Vereins</i>