

קָרַב *qrb* hiphil – “to bring near / to present / to offer”

Notes, Peter Schmidt, 2022

קָרַב *qrb* hi. is a frequent term, occurring almost 150 times in Exodus–Numbers alone. It is important to realize that it can be used with some variation.

On Lev. 1:3, the UBS *Handbook* points out:

He shall offer it: this does not refer to the act of killing the animal, as a literal translation may imply, but to bringing it near to the LORD for use as a sacrifice. TEV “present it” is a good model.

These notes below are meant to stress the point made above, and expand on it some. A careful word choice can avoid misunderstandings.

Hebrew has several verbs to distinguish between different aspects of “bringing”, as the use of synonyms in this verse below shows:

Lev. 2:8 (NRSV) You shall bring [בָּרָא] to the Lord the grain offering that is prepared in any of these ways; and when it is presented [קָרַב] to the priest, he shall take it [נָגַשׁ] to the altar.

קָרַב hi. is a technical term in the cultic language, meaning “to offer”. Hartley says it means “to present” an offering.¹ – But its translation may differ according to its grammatical and contextual usage.

Sometimes it simply expresses the physical bringing, sometimes the more abstract idea of presenting something to the Lord, and sometimes the carrying out of the sacrificial rites.

1. to bring (i.e., to bring near physically)

– Without the destination being stated explicitly:

Lev. 8:18 (NRSV) Then he brought forward the ram of burnt offering. Aaron and his sons laid their hands on the head of the ram, ¹⁹ and it was slaughtered.

Exod. 29:8 (NJPS) Then bring his sons forward; clothe them with tunics.

– With prep. לְ of location:

Lev. 1:3 (ESVUS16) He shall bring it to the entrance of the tent of meeting.

2. to offer (i.e., to present and dedicate – or “hand over”, as it were)

With the offerer as subject:

Lev. 1:2 (NASB) When any man of you brings an offering to the Lord, you shall bring your offering of animals from the herd or the flock.

With the LORD as recipient – with לְפָנַי יְהוָה:

Lev. 3:1 (NASB) Now if his offering is a sacrifice of peace offerings, if he is going to offer out of the herd, whether male or female, he shall offer it without defect before the Lord.

¹ WBC, 1992, on Lev. 1:2, referring to TLOT and Rendtorff.

3. to offer (as a summarizing term that includes the sacrificial rites)

There are verses where קרב hi. describes the offering not only in the abstract sense of “presenting”, but including the concrete actions.

For example, in Lev. 4:3, קרב hi. is used as a general word before the steps of the procedure are spelled out:

NASB ³ He is to offer to the Lord a bull without defect as a sin offering for his sin which he has committed. ⁴ He shall bring the bull to the doorway of the tent of meeting before the Lord, and he shall lay his hand on the head of the bull and slaughter the bull before the Lord.

Here, קרב hi. cannot mean “bring”, because the bringing only happens in v. 4 (expressed by the verb בוא hi.). It is also unlikely that it *only* means “present”, because the next verse includes the slaughtering.

In other places this is not so clear. In Lev. 1:5 the verbs קרב hi. and זרק could express two subsequent actions, or the second could indicate how the first happens. (Both verbs are *wəqatal* forms). Compare the two versions below:

ESVUS16 Aaron’s sons the priests shall bring the blood and throw the blood against the sides of the altar.

NLT07 Aaron’s sons, the priests, will present the animal’s blood by splattering it against all sides of the altar.

Another example is Lev. 23:8:

NASB For seven days you shall present an offering by fire to the Lord.

Obviously, the Lord’s command is not restricted to “presenting/dedicating” these offerings, but to actually carry out the full rituals. Again, קרב hi. seems to be used in a general, summarizing way.

Application

In every instance, the context needs to be taken into regard. Let us consider a few more cases.

– In Lev. 1:13, for example, the English versions decide differently on the aspect that they express:

NIV11R You are to wash the internal organs and the legs with water, and the priest is to bring all of them and burn them on the altar.

REB89 the entrails and shins must be washed in water, and the priest is to present and burn it all on the altar.

ESVUS16 the entrails and the legs he shall wash with water. And the priest shall offer all of it and burn it on the altar.

Reading this verse together with v. 12, the verb probably refers to the whole sacrifice (not only the washed pieces), and so, as a concluding instruction, it is appropriate to use the general word “offer”. The “burning” spells out how this happens. The priest does both.

– By contrast, in Ezek. 43:24, it is Ezekiel who “offers/presents” the animals, but it is the priests who do the burning!

REB89 Present [singular] them before the Lord, and have the priests throw salt on them and sacrifice them as a whole-offering to the Lord.

This, then, is an example for where **קרב** hi. does not include the final sacrificial acts.

– In Lev. 16:6 (ESV: “Aaron shall offer the bull as a sin offering”), the translation should not sound as if the animal were already sacrificed. That does not happen until v. 11. Therefore, “bring forward” is a suitable translation here in v. 6.

– However, in Lev. 12:7 (ESV: “he shall offer it before the Lord and make atonement for her”), “offer” is the right word. The “bringing” was already mentioned in v. 6 [בוא].

– In Ezek. 46:4, we read:

NASB The burnt offering which the prince shall offer to the Lord on the sabbath day shall be six lambs without blemish and a ram without blemish.

It is unlikely that the prince himself brings the lambs to the Temple. Therefore, meaning (1.) above, “bring”, is not fitting (unless it is taken as a causative). Nor does the prince carry out the sacrificial ritual at the altar personally (see 46:2), probably not even the slaughtering itself. Thus, meaning (3.), “offer/sacrifice” is not the best choice either. The prince is, however, responsible for dedicating the animals as offerings, and so meaning (2.), “offer/present” is appropriate. Compare:

GNTD On the Sabbath the prince is to bring to the Lord, as sacrifices to be burned whole, six lambs and one ram, all without any defects.

NJPS The burnt offering which the prince presents to the LORD on the sabbath day shall consist of six lambs without blemish and one ram without blemish.

Consulted literature: Rendtorff (p. 25) / TWOT / NIDOTTE / TLOT (esp. cols. 677/9) / HALOT. For reference: HALOT:

—2. to offer a sacrifice, used with all types of sacrifice ... —c. i. **הקריב** with acc. and **ל** of the place Lv 1:3, 15 Nu 5:25, or alternatively **ל** of the person Lv 2:8 9:9; —ii. ליהוה Lv 2:11, 14 3:3, 9, 14 Ezk 46:4 ...

—3. to bring forward, cause to come up to, advance: —a. i. with acc. of the person Ex 29:8 40:14 Lv 8:6, 13, 24 ... —b. with **ל** of the person Ex 28:1 Jos 8:23, with **ל** of God (יהוה) Nu 16:5, 9 ..., with **ל** of the place Ex 29:4 40:12.

Remark on Ezekiel 40–48: All instances fit under no. 2 “offer/present”. But in 43:23-24, one could differentiate and first use “bring”, then “present”.