

Fatling

Notes. Addition to paper on Sacrificial Animals. PS. 2020.

There is little debate about the meaning of the terms below. They are compiled and the references given in order to facilitate consistent translation, and for getting a fuller picture about the role of fattened animals in the Bible.

ISBE, s.v. “Fatling; Fatted Animal”, says:

A domestic animal, generally young, well cared for, and fattened for sacrificial slaughter, although not restricted to such use (cf. 1 S. 28:24; Mt. 22:4; ...)

Hebrew / Greek	References	Remarks	Meaning
מְרִיא	2SA 6:13; 1KI 1:9/19/25; ISA 1:11; 11:6; EZK 39:18; AMO 5:22		Animal HB: “a stall-fed animal, usually a calf, that is reserved for sacrifice. It is best translated “stall-fed calf”, “fattened calf”, or “choice calf.”” (Cf. BDB.) HALOT: “fatted steer”.
מָח	PSA 66:15 ISA 5:17		HALOT: “fatling sheep”
מִרְבֵּק	1SA 28:24 JER 46:21 AMO 6:4 MAL 3:20	preceded by עֵגֶל ‘calf’ in the construct > ‘calf of the stall’, or (in Amos:) וְעֵגְלִים מִתּוֹךְ מִרְבֵּק ‘and calves from the midst of the stall’	SDBH: “= construction ► where domestic animals are kept permanently with the purpose of fattening them - <u>stall</u> ”. (ISBE takes it as a ptc. adj.: “ <u>fatted</u> ”, and HALOT as a noun meaning ‘ <u>fattening</u> ’.) Versions that keep the word ‘stall’ and explicate the fattening are, e.g.: NJPS, REB in Jer 46:21 “stall-fed calves”; NLT in Amos 6:4 “calves fattened in the stall”; but in Amos 6:4 and Mal 3:20 the aspect of fattening is not essential.
אִבֵּס	1KI 5:3 [English 4:23] PRO 15:17	‘to fatten’ – used as pass. ptc.	of birds (geese?) and of ox; SDBH: “= to cause an animal to be fat ◀ by giving it special food ► so

			that it can be slaughtered and eaten; ≈ fat food was highly appreciated – fattened”
בָּרִיאַ	GEN 41:2ff. 1KI 5:3 EZK 34:3 EZK 34:20 ZEC 11:16	(elsewhere also of people) in Gen. 41:2ff. and 1Ki. 5:3 of cattle; in Ezek. 34:20 of sheep; in Ezek. 34:3 it is nominalized (“the fat <i>sheep</i> / the fatlings”), as also in Zech. 11:16 בֶּשֶׂר הַבְּרִיאָה ‘the flesh of the fat <i>ones</i> [sheep]’.	‘fat’ (adj.) SDBH: “= state whereby a human or animal has a lot of excess fat; ≈ considered a sign of health and wealth – fat”
σιτιστός	MAT 22:4	parable of wedding banquet	Concise GEDNT: ‘fattened’, here: calves. Animal HB: “... stall-fed cattle that are being fattened for slaughter.”
σιτευτός	LUK 15:23/27/30	parable of prodigal son	Concise GEDNT: ‘fatted / fattened’ (calf) For NICNT & NIGTC, see footnote. ¹

¹ Green (NICNT, 1997) says in a footnote on Luke 15:23:

The adjective σιτευτός refers here to grain-fed beef. In *Through Peasant Eyes* (94), K. E. Bailey notes that a slaughtered calf would provide enough meat for 35 to 75 persons; elsewhere he speaks of over a hundred at the table (*Poet and Peasant*, 187).

Marshall (NIGTC, 1978):

The reference is to an animal specially fed and kept to be slaughtered on a special occasion.