

# Deuteronomy 18:3

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

And this shall be the priest's due from the people, from them that offer a sacrifice, whether it be ox or sheep; and they shall give unto the priest the shoulder, and the two cheeks, and the maw.

## Analysis

**This shall be the priest's due from the people** (וְזֶה יְהִי מִשְׁפָּט הַכֹּהֲנִים מֵאֵת הָעָם)—the word mishpat means ordained right, legal due, not optional generosity. God establishes mandatory provision so priests wouldn't depend on human whims. The specific portions—**the shoulder, and the two cheeks, and the maw** (hazero'a vehallechayim vehagevah)—designated choice meat cuts.

The shoulder (zero'a) symbolizes strength and service; the cheeks (lechayim) the seat of speech and proclamation; the maw (gevah, stomach) the digestive organ. Some rabbinical tradition sees symbolic significance: strength to serve, speech to teach, and sustenance to live. These weren't leftover scraps but quality portions from every sacrifice, ensuring priests shared in the people's worship materially.

Leviticus 7:28-34 provides parallel legislation, adding the breast and right thigh for wave and heave offerings. The cumulative effect: priests received substantial portions from multiple types of sacrifices, making their material support abundant when the people worshiped faithfully. When Israel neglected offerings, priests starved—as happened in Malachi's day (Malachi 3:8-10).

## Historical Context

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This legislation governed Israel's sacrificial system from wilderness wanderings through the monarchy until the temple's destruction (586 BC, then AD 70). The detailed anatomy reflects ancient Near Eastern butchering practices. Archaeological evidence from Iron Age Israel shows priestly cities received significant agricultural support. When Israel fell into apostasy, priests often suffered materially (Nehemiah 13:10-11), demonstrating the link between spiritual faithfulness and ministerial provision.

## Related Passages

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**Romans 10:9** — Confession and belief for salvation

**John 3:16** — God's love and salvation

## Study Questions

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1. How should churches ensure adequate provision for pastors and ministry leaders based on biblical principles?
2. What does the mandatory (mishpat) nature of priestly support teach about giving being obligation, not just generosity?

## Interlinear Text

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וְזֶה	וְיִהְיֶה	מִשְׁפַּחַט	לַכֹּהֵן	מֵאֵת	הָעָם
H2088	H1961	due H4941	And this shall be the priest's H3548	H853	from the people H5971
מֵאֵת	זֹבְחֵי	הַזֶּבַח	אִם	שֶׁאוֹר	אִם
H853	from them that offer H2076	a sacrifice H2077	H518	whether it be ox H7794	H518 or sheep H7716
וְנָתַן	לַכֹּהֵן	הַזֵּרֶעַ	וְהַלְטֵי		
and they shall give H5414	And this shall be the priest's H3548	the shoulder H2220	and the two cheeks H3895		
וְהַקֶּבֶה:					
and the maw H6896					