Deuteronomy Chapter 14

Verses 1-29: This chapter continues the condemnation of apostasy with an emphasis on holiness. It applies the third commandment and its restrictions. The contents of the chapter are:

1. A prohibition of pagan rites (verses 1-2);
2. A prohibition against eating unclean flesh, which is called an abomination (verses 3-20);

In this context, the rite may have been a type of imitative magic, designed to revitalize the god Baal on who the fertility of the land was believed to depend (compare 1 Kings 18:28).

Verses 1-21: Moses tells the people of Israel how God had given them three distinguishing privileges, which were their honor, and figures of those spiritual blessings in heavenly things, with which God has in Christ blessed us.

1. **Election**: The Lord hath chosen thee. He did not choose them because they were by their own acts a peculiar people to him above other nations. But he chose them that they might be so by his grace; and thus were believers chosen (Eph. 1:4).

2. **Adoption**: Ye are the children of the Lord your God. Not because God needed children, but because they were orphans, and needed a father. Every spiritual Israelite is indeed a child of God, a partaker of his nature and favor.

3. **Sanctification**: Thou art a holy people. God's people are required to be holy, and if they are holy, they are indebted to the grace God which makes them so. Those whom God chooses to be his children, he will form to be a holy people, and zealous of good works.

They must be careful to avoid everything which might disgrace their profession, in the sight of those who watch for their halting. Our heavenly Father forbids nothing but for our welfare. Do thyself no harm; do not ruin thy health, thy reputation, thy domestic comforts, thy peace of mind. Especially do not murder thy soul. Do not be the vile slave of thy appetites and passions. Do not render all around thee miserable, and thyself wretched; but aim at that which is most excellent and useful. The laws which regarded many sorts of flesh as unclean, were to keep them from mingling with their idolatrous neighbors. It is plain in the gospel, that these laws are now done away. But let us ask our own hearts, are we of the children of the Lord our God? Are we separate from the ungodly world, in being set apart to God's glory, the purchase of Christ's blood? Are we subjects of the work of the Holy Ghost? Lord, teach us from these precepts how pure and holy all thy people ought to live!

Verses 1-2: Two things are evident as to the practices in verse 1:

1. The laceration of the body with the consequent flow of blood was a part of the mourning customs employed in religions outside of Israel.
2. Laceration may have been part of a seasonal rite within the Canaanite fertility cult.
The prohibitions against cutting one’s self and shaving “make any baldness between your eyes for the dead” were both likely rooted in pagan customs and therefore unacceptable expressions of mourning for a chosen people who were living for God alone.

**Deuteronomy 14:1** "Ye [are] the children of the LORD your God: ye shall not cut yourselves, nor make any baldness between your eyes for the dead."

“Ye shall not cut … any baldness”: The two practices, lacerating the body and shaving the head, were associated with mourning customs of foreign religions. Though the actions could in themselves appear to be innocent, they were associate with practices and beliefs reprehensible to the Lord. Compare (Lev. 19:27-28; 21:5; 1 Kings 18:28; 1 Cor. 3:17).

It was the custom of the heathens around them to cut themselves and shave their heads in mourning for the dead. This is strictly forbidden for God's people. The reason it is forbidden is, because their LORD God is the giver of life. To do this, would show no faith in God. Jesus even said, that we should rejoice at one's death and mourn at one's birth. Christianity believes in life after death.

**Deuteronomy 14:2** "For thou [art] a holy people unto the LORD thy God, and the LORD hath chosen thee to be a peculiar people unto himself, above all the nations that [are] upon the earth."

“Thou art a holy people unto the LORD thy God”: Again comes the important reminder of their peculiar relation to God. O vers 250 times, Moses emphasized to Israel, “the LORD your God”.

They have been given God's law, and they are to set an example for the rest of the world. The world is to know these are God's chosen. Their lives are to reveal their relationship with the LORD. "Peculiar" is speaking of their being different. They are set aside to show the world the grace of God.

Verses 3-21: “Of any thing that dieth of itself”: Eating the meat of an animal that had died a natural death was prohibited because the animal had not been killed in the proper fashion and the blood drained out (see note on 12:23). The animal, however, could be eaten by “the alien who is in your town” (see notes on Lev. 17:10-16).

“A kid in his mother's milk”: This prohibition no doubt reflected a common practice in Canaanite religion which was superstitiously observed hoping the fertility and productivity would be increased (compare Exodus 23:19; 34:26).

The principal passage on the “beasts, that ye shall eat” (is Leviticus chapter 11). Since Deuteronomy restates the Torah for the second generation, these dietary issues are presented again. All the laws of distinction (clothing, the work week, and diet), had one purpose, to set apart Israel from its neighbors: “Ye shall therefore be holy” (Lev. 11:45).
Deuteronomy 14:3 "Thou shalt not eat any abominable thing."

“An abominable thing”: The term is used in the Old Testament for something impure, unclean, and totally devoid of holiness (7:25-26; 14:3; 17:1, 4; 18:9; 20:18). In (7:25 and 12:31), it is employed in association with pagan religious rites. Perhaps part of the reason for the prohibition against eating certain types of meat was the association existing between those animals and foreign, pagan religions.

This separation of themselves from things God had forbidden to the Jews to eat, separates them from other people. We see a Scripture in the New Testament, which shows this was just for the Jews.

1 Timothy 4:4-5 "For every creature of God [is] good, and nothing to be refused, if it be received with thanksgiving:" "For it is sanctified by the word of God and prayer”.

The separation for the Jews of these things was to teach them holiness in the LORD.

Romans 14:14 "I know, and am persuaded by the Lord Jesus, that [there is] nothing unclean of itself: but to him that esteemeth any thing to be unclean, to him [it is] unclean."

The abominable food the Jews eat are abominable, because God forbid them to eat it. They are being disobedient to God when they eat it.

Deuteronomy 14:4 "These [are] the beasts which ye shall eat: the ox, the sheep, and the goat,"

That is, which they might lawfully eat of, which were allowed for their food. For they were not obliged to eat of them if they did not choose it.

"The ox, the sheep, and the goat": Which were creatures used in sacrifice, and the only ones. Yet nevertheless they might be used for food if chosen.

Deuteronomy 14:5 "The hart, and the roebuck, and the fallow deer, and the wild goat, and the pygarg, and the wild ox, and the chamois."

Seven varieties of game; Hart, gazelle, roebuck, wild-ox, giraffe, buffalo and a kind of goat. It may not be unnecessary to remark that neither to the nomads nor to the fallāḥīn is hunting sport. It is, especially to the former, a hard and hungry search for food. The nomad is not a hunter. The hunters of Arabia are the Sleyb, wandering gypsies without cattle and camels. According to Burckhardt, they live on dried gazelle-flesh. Besides the varieties of game given here as edible, the ancient Arabs relished also the flesh of the wild-ass.

Deuteronomy 14:6 "And every beast that parteth the hoof, and cleaveth the cleft into two claws, [and] cheweth the cud among the beasts, that ye shall eat."
In this and the two following verses two general rules are given, by which it might be known
what beasts were fit for food and what not. One is if they parted the hoof, and the other if they
chewed the cud, such might be eaten. But such that only chewed the cud, but did not divide the
hoof, as the camel, hare, and coney, might not be eaten. And so if they divided the hoof, and did
not chew the cud, as the swine, they were alike unlawful (see notes on Lev. 11:3-8).

The three verses above, are a re-stating from Leviticus of the meat that is permitted the Israelite
to eat. Perhaps for health reasons, we would feel better if we followed these rules ourselves.

The above would be classified as clean animals. "Pygarg" is an antelope.

Deuteronomy 14:7 "Nevertheless these ye shall not eat of them that chew the cud, or of
them that divide the cloven hoof; [as] the camel, and the hare, and the coney: for they chew
the cud, but divide not the hoof; [therefore] they [are] unclean unto you."

To whom one of these descriptive characters may agree but not the other.

"That chew the cud, or of them that divide the cloven hoof": There being some that chewed the
cud but did not divide the hoof. Others that divided the hoof but did not chew the cud, of which
instances are given as follow.

"As the camel": Because he cheweth the cud, but divideth not the hoof. He is unclean unto you;
and not to be eaten, whether male or female.

"And the hare, and the coney": Or rabbit: because (rather, though) he cheweth the cud. He has a
runnet in his stomach, as those animals have which chew the cud, and therefore is said to chew
it. or "though he cheweth"; which yet, some observe, the coney or rabbit does not, it having
upper teeth.

We see the reason these are forbidden to eat, is that they do not follow both the cloven hoof and
chewing the cud.

Deuteronomy 14:8 "And the swine, because it divideth the hoof, yet cheweth not the cud, it
[is] unclean unto you: ye shall not eat of their flesh, nor touch their dead carcase."

Though he divideth the hoof, and be cloven footed. Not only its hoofs are parted, but cloven
quite through, and so in this respect answers Moses's first descriptive character of clean
creatures.

"Yet he cheweth not the cud": And a learned physician observes, that such creatures that chew
not the cud, so perfect a chyle cannot be elaborated by them as is by those that chew the cud, and
therefore their flesh must be less wholesome. And of the swine, he says, they have but one belly,
and so there is no rumination or chewing the cud by them. Wherefore they are to be placed, and
are in a lower degree than the camel, the coney, and the hare.
We went into detail on this in Leviticus. We will just state here, that pork that is not well cooked can make you very sick. This is a law of preservation for the Jews. You might list it as a dietary law. A swine is a scavenger. This is why it is forbidden.

Deuteronomy 14:9 "These ye shall eat of all that [are] in the waters: all that have fins and scales shall ye eat:"

The fishes there, even such as have fins and scales, but they that have not were not to be eaten. (see notes on Leviticus 11:9-12.

Deuteronomy 14:10 "And whatsoever hath not fins and scales ye may not eat; it [is] unclean unto you."

Which is repeated that they might take particular notice of this law, and be careful to observe it, this being the only sign given.

"It is unclean unto you": The Targum of Jonathan says, that not only the flesh of such fish, but the broth, and pickles made of them, were to be an abomination (see Lev. 11:12).

Again, the separation here is of those fish which are scavengers and eat anything. The fish without fins have no discretion about what they eat. They are blood eaters.

Deuteronomy 14:11 "[Of] all clean birds ye shall eat."

Which the Targum of Jonathan describes, everyone that has a craw, and whose crop is naked, and has a superfluous talon, and is not rapacious. But such as are unclean are expressed by name in the following verses, so that all except them might be reckoned clean and fit for food. Maimonides observes, that only the number of the unclean are reckoned, so that all the rest are free.

Deuteronomy 14:12 "But these [are they] of which ye shall not eat: the eagle, and the ossifrage, and the osprey,"

Jarchi observes, that the unclove birds are particularly mentioned, to teach that the clean sort are more than the unclean, and therefore the particulars of the fewest are given. These are all the same names as in (Lev. 11:13), excepting one, "the glede" (Deut. 14:13). Which is a kind of kite or buzzard. The Jerusalem Targum renders it the vulture, and the Targum of Jonathan the white "dayetha" or vulture. In (Lev. 11:14) there translated the "vulture".

Deuteronomy 14:13 "And the glede, and the kite, and the vulture after his kind,"

A bird of the vulture kind, which evidently has its name from its sharp sight. This is omitted in Leviticus.

Deuteronomy 14:14 "And every raven after his kind,"

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Deuteronomy 14:15 "And the owl, and the night hawk, and the cuckoo, and the hawk after his kind,"

"The cuckoo": (Cockow): More probably the sea-gull. (see on Lev. 11:16).

Deuteronomy 14:16 "The little owl, and the great owl, and the swan,"

"The little owl": Both night-jar and screech-owl. Probably, the southern little owl, "one of the most universally distributed birds in the Holy Land." It inhabits ruins (Psalm 102:6-7). Arabs call it 'mother of ruins.

"The swan": Rather, the goose (see Lev. 11:18).

Deuteronomy 14:17 "And the pelican, and the gier eagle, and the cormorant,"

"And the pelican": which has its name in Hebrew from vomiting. Being said by Aben Ezra and Baal Hatturim, to be a bird that vomits its food. And it is observed by several naturalists, of the pelican, that it swallows down shellfish, and after they have lain some time in its stomach, it vomits them up again. Where having been heated, the shells open, and it picks out the meat.

"And the gier eagle": The Hebrew word Rachemah is manifestly identical with Rachamah, the name which the Arabs give to the common vulture of Western Asia and Egypt (see Lev. 11:18).

"Cormorant": Rather, the plungeon; a seafowl (see Lev. 11:17).

Deuteronomy 14:18 "And the stork, and the heron after her kind, and the lapwing, and the bat."

"And the stork": An unclean feeder, its flesh is rank.

"Heron": The common heron: An edible bird in Europe once highly prized at their table. But it feeds on, besides fish, many unclean land animals, snakes, rats, etc.

"The lapwing": The upupa or hoop: a beautiful bird, but of the most unclean habits (see Lev. 11:19).

"The bat": Moses begins his catalogue of birds with the noblest, and ends it with the vilest, which is the bat. An animal of a dubious kind, between a bird and a mouse. It feeds on insects, as Dr. James observes, and so is improper food for the inhabitants of very warm climates.

Deuteronomy 14:19 "And every creeping thing that lieth [is] unclean unto you: they shall not be eaten."
Which the Targum of Jonathan thus paraphrases. "All flies and wasps (or hornets). And worms of lentiles and of beans, which are separated from food, and fly as birds. They are unclean" (see notes on (Lev. 11:20-21).

**Deuteronomy 14:20** "[But of] all clean fowls ye may eat."

Even of all fowls, but those before excepted. fowl is misleading; the term winged covers both birds and flying insects and here probably refers only to the latter. Aben Ezra instances in the locust, as being a clean fowl, that might be eaten. And so the Targum of Jonathan is "every clean locust ye may eat;" (see Lev. 11:22).

These regulations again, are dietary laws. The birds that are forbidden here, on the whole are "scavengers" and live on dead things. They are part of God's system of cleaning up the dead things on the earth. The most important thing about these things, is God's care for His people. We see that God wants them to learn to obey His commands without questioning why.

**Deuteronomy 14:21** "Ye shall not eat [of] any thing that dieth of itself: thou shalt give it unto the stranger that [is] in thy gates, that he may eat it; or thou mayest sell it unto an alien: for thou [art] a holy people unto the LORD thy God. Thou shalt not seethe a kid in his mother's milk."

The prohibition against eating anything that “dieth of itself” was probably intended to prevent defilement from consuming blood. The sacrifice of the young goat being seethed in its mother’s milk (Exodus 23:19; 34:26) was a grotesque, inhumane act. Sacrifice of animals is not pleasant in any setting, but excesses like those of the Canaanites were strictly prohibited.

“Seethe a kid in his mother’s milk”: Most take this as a prohibition directed against a Canaanite practice. No one seems certain of what it actually involved, but it does appear at the end of the laws on festivals in the covenant code (compare Exodus 23:19; 34:26). Some think the unnatural custom might have been practiced superstitiously, perhaps to promote fertility.

We see in this that, the stranger (heathen), has no such ordinance. He can eat whatever is available. He is not a circumcised person, so does not obey the dietary laws. The Hebrew's holiness in the Lord would keep them from eating it. A Hebrew will not serve milk and meat at the same meal. This is possibly, the extreme of the statement above. "Seething" is a form of boiling. The only reason for this would be sympathy for the animals, I suppose.

Verses 22-29: The rabbis suggested that, in addition to the normal “tithe” given to the Levites and priests, there was a second tithe consisting of a festal meal eaten by the offeror and his guests at the sanctuary (verses 22-27), and that there was a third tithe gathered in the third and sixth years of a sabbatical period (verses 28-29). Some scholars suggest that the tithe of (verses 28 and 29), is the only additional one and hence is the second tithe. Still others contend that there was but one tithe, which varied in accordance with the dictates of the sacred times and circumstances.
A second portion from the produce of their land was required. The whole appointment evidently was against the covetousness, distrust, and selfishness of the human heart. It promoted friendliness, liberality, and cheerfulness, and raised a fund for the relief of the poor. They were taught that their worldly portion was most comfortably enjoyed, when shared with their brethren who were in want. If we thus serve God, and do good with what we have, it is promised that the Lord our God will bless us in all the works of our land. The blessing of God is all to our outward prosperity; and without that blessing, the work of our hands will bring nothing to pass. The blessing descends upon the working hand. Expect not that God should bless thee in thy idleness and love of ease. And it descends upon the giving hand. He who thus scatters, certainly increases; and to be free and generous in the support of religion, and any good work, is the surest and safest way of thriving.

Deuteronomy 14:22 "Thou shalt truly tithe all the increase of thy seed, that the field bringeth forth year by year."

“Tithe”: A tenth. The tithe specified in these verses was only that of the agricultural produce which the land would provide. This was a second tithe to be used for the celebration of convocations of worship at the sanctuary (verses 23-26), in addition to the first tithe mentioned, known as the Levitical tithe, which went to support the priest and Levites who served the people (compare Lev. 27:30-33 and Num. 18:21-32). A third welfare tithe was also offered every 3 years (see notes on 14:28, 26:12).

Part of Israel’s sacred worship included the enjoyment of their feasts and offering with the Lord (7:7).

A "tithe" is a tenth of their increase. Seed refers to everything grown by that seed. It appears, they take the a tenth to the place of worship, and prepare it as food there. The eating of these holy things in a sense, makes them partakers of holiness.

Deuteronomy 14:23 "And thou shalt eat before the LORD thy God, in the place which he shall choose to place his name there, the tithe of thy corn, of thy wine, and of thine oil, and the firstlings of thy herds and of thy flocks; that thou mayest learn to fear the LORD thy God always."

“Eat before the LORD”: The tithe was to be taken to the central sanctuary where the worshipers were to eat a portion in fellowship with the Lord.

This meal is to be a holy communion with the LORD. This being brought to the Holy Place, shows that this no longer belongs to the person bringing it. The fact that he eats of that which is the LORD's, shows he is actually partaking of the LORD. This eating shows obedience to the LORD. Had he eaten this a tenth at home, it would have been sin. All of this shows he is interested in pleasing the LORD.

Deuteronomy 14:24 "And if the way be too long for thee, so that thou art not able to carry it; [or] if the place be too far from thee, which the LORD thy God shall choose to set his name there, when the LORD thy God hath blessed thee:"
“If the way be too long”: If certain Israelites lived too far from the sanctuary for it to be practical for them to carry their agricultural tithe there, then they could exchange the tithe locally for silver and subsequently convert the money back into substance at the sanctuary.

Jerusalem would be chosen as the place of worship. Some of the places are pretty far away from there. This is to cover the inconvenience of going many miles to keep this. There must be an offering, to show their gratitude for the LORD blessing them.

**Deuteronomy 14:25** "Then shalt thou turn [it] into money, and bind up the money in thine hand, and shalt go unto the place which the LORD thy God shall choose:"

The tithe, which would be lighter and easier carriage.

"And bind up the money in thine hand": Put it into a bag or purse, and tie it up and carry it in the hand. Which some think was ordered, that it might not be mixed with other money. But it seems only to have respect to journeying, and making it fit for that. The Jewish writers, some of them, give a different sense of the word we render "bind up". And interpret it of marking the silver, or impressing a form, figure, or image on it with the hand. They mean that it must be coined money; so Maimonides. They may not profane the sacred tithe with money not coined, nor with money not current, nor with money which is not in a man's power. For it is said:

"In thine hand": Which the man is possessed of and is his own property.

"And shalt go unto the place which the Lord thy God shall choose": Carrying the money along with him, for which he sold the tithe.

He must take the money to the place the Lord has chosen for him to worship. He still makes the trip to the LORD's house, but is not weighted down with the animals.

**Deuteronomy 14:26** "And thou shalt bestow that money for whatsoever thy soul lusteth after, for oxen, or for sheep, or for wine, or for strong drink, or for whatsoever thy soul desireth: and thou shalt eat there before the LORD thy God, and thou shalt rejoice, thou, and thine household;"

He might buy what provision he would with it. What he best liked, and was most agreeable to his appetite.

"For oxen, or for sheep": He might purchase beef or mutton, or any other sort of meat that could be got, and was lawful to be eaten, as before directed.

"Or for wine, or for strong drink": To drink with his food, whether wine or any other liquor. The Targum of Jonathan is, wine new or old, which he chose. But the latter, strong drink, Aben Ezra says, was a liquor made of honey and of dates, and of wheat and barley (see notes on Prov. 20:1; 23:29-35; 31:4-7).

"Or for whatsoever thy soul desirèth": Whether was eatable or drinkable.
"And thou shalt eat there before the Lord thy God": He having put his name in that place; and dwelling there, as the Lord did in the temple of Jerusalem.

"And thou shalt rejoice, thou and thy household": Eat their food with cheerfulness and gladness, making a feast of it and keeping it as such. He and his whole family, his wife and children, or as many as were with him. And all males were obliged to appear at the three grand yearly festivals, and it was at one of these this was to be done.

They actually use the money to buy what they are taking to the LORD's house. They carry whatever they have purchased, and eat it in the presence of the LORD. This is the same as before, the only difference is they buy their offering.

Deuteronomy 14:27 "And the Levite that [is] within thy gates; thou shalt not forsake him; for he hath no part nor inheritance with thee."

As not from giving him the first tithe, as Jarchi remarks, so he was not to forget him in this. He was not to leave him behind, but take him with him to partake of this entertainment.

"For he hath no part nor inheritance with thee in the land (see Deut. 12:12)."

We have discussed before that the Levites live of the offerings that are brought to the church.

Verses 28-29: Torah prescribed three tithes (for the first two, see Lev. 27:30-32; Num. 18:21-32). This third tithe, the benevolence tithe, was collected “every third year” for “the stranger, and the fatherless, and the widow”. The Torah demanded that the poor be cared for by God’s people, a point echoed in (James 1:27). Jesus went so far as to equate His followers’ treatment of the disadvantaged with their treatment of Him (Matt. 25:35-40).

Deuteronomy 14:28 "At the end of three years thou shalt bring forth all the tithe of thine increase the same year, and shalt lay [it] up within thy gates:"

“At the end of three years”: In year 3 and year 6 of the 7 year sabbatical cycle, rather than taking this tithe to the central sanctuary, it was instead stored up within the individual cities in the Land. This tithe was used to feed the Levites, the orphan, the widow, and the stranger (i.e., foreigner) who lived with the Israelites. Compare (26:12; Num. 18:26-32).

This is speaking of that portion which is set aside for the Levite and the stranger. This is separated out from their own food. It is kept for the necessities we see in the next verse.

Deuteronomy 14:29 "And the Levite, (because he hath no part nor inheritance with thee,) and the stranger, and the fatherless, and the widow, which [are] within thy gates, shall come, and shall eat and be satisfied; that the LORD thy God may bless thee in all the work of thine hand which thou doest."
Shall come and take the first tithe, according to Jarchi. But though this he was to do, yet is not what is intended here. But he was to partake of the second tithe, or what was in the room of it, the poor's tithe, with whom he is here joined.

"And the stranger, and the fatherless, and the widow, which are within thy gates, shall come": And take the second tithe, as the above writer rightly interprets it. And which he says we be given to the poor of this year (see Deut. 12:12).

"And shall eat and be satisfied": Make a plentiful meal, eat freely as at a feast. And, as the same writer observes, they were not obliged to eat it at Jerusalem. According to the way they were bound to eat the second tithe of the two years, that is, the two preceding this.

"That the Lord thy God may bless thee in all the work of thine hand which thou doest": As might be expected, when his commands, and particularly those respecting the tithes and firstlings, were obeyed.

The portion that is set aside is specifically for the Levite, but is also used to feed the hungry stranger, or widow, or orphans. This is for those who have nothing of their own. The Hebrew must always care for those less fortunate than himself. This is one thing that made him like his God. When he does help the helpless, God will abundantly bless him.

**Deuteronomy Chapter 14 Questions**

1. Why were they not to cut themselves for the dead?
2. What did Jesus say about birth and death?
3. Who were they to set an example for?
4. What kind of people were they called in verse 2?
5. What is different about them?
6. Thou shalt not eat any ______________ thing.
7. What are the beasts they can eat?
8. "Pygarg" is an ______________.
9. What are some of the animals they cannot eat?
10. Why was pork specifically forbidden?
11. What kind of law is covered here?
12. What fish can be eaten?
13. What fish are forbidden?
14. What are some birds strictly forbidden to eat?
15. "Scavengers" live on _______ things.
16. Who can eat of things that die of themselves?
17. What is "seething"?
18. What is a "tithe"?
19. Where shall they eat the holy things?
20. What is this meal in verse 23?
21. What is the exception in verse 24?
22. Explain what the person far off does to fulfill this?
23. Where must they eat the offering?
24. What do the Levites live of?
25. What is verse 28 speaking of?
26. What is the one thing that makes these Israelites like God?