

Leviticus Chapter 17

The laws in this chapter deal with various problems connected with sacrifice and eating meat (compare 7:26-27; and 11:39-40). In particular, they explain the special significance of blood in the sacrifices (especially verses 11-14). This situation involved the prohibition of killing animals without offering them to the Lord as the words “bringeth it not unto the door of the tabernacle ... to offer it unto the Lord” clearly show. The penalty for such an offense was for that man to “be cut off from among his people”. The phrase “to be cut off”, seems to indicate he will be punished by God directly (Exodus 30:33; Lev. 7:20-27; 20:17-18). The motive underlying this severe law is given (in verses 5-7): to prevent sacrifices to the “devils” (demons). The Hebrew term “seirim” is problematic, but usually means “goats”. The word referred to demons that were supposed to haunt areas of the wilderness (Isa. 13:21; 34:14). The allusion here is to the kind of goat worship practiced in Lower Egypt, a form of idolatry with which the Israelites had evidently had some contact (compare Joshua 24:14). The cult had flourished in the eastern delta region, and part of its abhorrent rituals involved goats copulating with women devotees. No offerings were to be offered outside of the tabernacle either (verses 8-9).

Verses 17:1 – 22:33: Holiness issues that pertain to the individual are enumerated.

Verses 1-9: The Lord warns against sacrificing anywhere other than at the door of the tabernacle of meeting (compare verses 5-7).

Leviticus 17:1 "And the LORD spake unto Moses, saying,"

After he had given him the law about the Day of Atonement, and the rites belonging to it.

"Saying": As follows.

Leviticus 17:2 "Speak unto Aaron, and unto his sons, and unto all the children of Israel, and say unto them; This [is] the thing which the LORD hath commanded, saying,"

Who were now constituted priests. The business of whose office it was to offer the sacrifices of the people, ordinary and extraordinary.

"And to all the children of Israel": Who were all under obligation to sacrifices at certain times. Under whom may be comprehended the Levites, who were not priests. And the strangers that sojourned in Israel, for these are concerned in the following law.

"And say unto them": Which is spoken to Moses, who was to say what follows to Aaron. And by him to his sons, and by his sons to the people of Israel, and by them to the strangers.

"This is the thing which the Lord hath commanded": Ordered to be observed as his will and pleasure by every one of them.

"Saying": Namely, what follows.

In this particular situation, God tells Moses to tell Aaron, and instead of Aaron telling his sons and the children of Israel, Moses is to tell them. This would probably be very important for each of them to know. Possibly if it went down the chain of command from God to Moses, to Aaron, to Aaron's sons, and then to the children of Israel, some of the important details might be lost.

Leviticus 17:3 "What man soever [there be] of the house of Israel, that killeth an ox, or lamb, or goat, in the camp, or that killeth [it] out of the camp,"

Whether high or low, rich or poor.

"That killeth an ox, or lamb, or goat in the camp": Which are particularly mentioned, as Gersom observes, because of these the offerings were. For the law respects the killing of them not for common food, but for sacrifice, as appears from the following verses. For this law was to be a statute for ever, whereas in that sense it was not, and could not be observed, especially when they were come into the land of Canaan. Nor would it have been decent or convenient to have brought such vast numbers of cattle every day to be killed at the door of the tabernacle. And must have made the service of the priests extremely laborious to kill them, or even to see that they were killed aright.

"Or that killeth it out of the camp": Which furnishes out another reason against the same notion, since it was not usual to kill for common food without the camp, but in their own tents within it. Whereas to sacrifice without the camp was commonly done.

Leviticus 17:4 "And bringeth it not unto the door of the tabernacle of the congregation, to offer an offering unto the LORD before the tabernacle of the LORD; blood shall be imputed unto that man; he hath shed blood; and that man shall be cut off from among his people:"

“Blood shall be imputed”: An unauthorized sacrifice could result in death.

This does not mean that they could not kill and eat an animal from their herd. It does mean, if this animal is to be sacrificed unto the LORD, it must be killed at the tabernacle door as they had been previously instructed. If they kill the animal (to be sacrificed), any other place than the tabernacle, they will have offended God. This is such a serious offence, that the person doing this will no longer be considered an Israelite. The blood belongs to God.

Leviticus 17:5 "To the end that the children of Israel may bring their sacrifices, which they offer in the open field, even that they may bring them unto the LORD, unto the door of the tabernacle of the congregation, unto the priest, and offer them [for] peace offerings unto the LORD."

We see from this verse, that there is no question that this does not mean the slaughter of an animal to eat, but means the sacrifice of an animal. An animal to be sacrificed to God must be brought to the sanctuary and sacrificed in the exact manner in which God had told them to sacrifice. This offering could bring peace when done properly, thus the peace offering. God had provided a place for the sacrifice, no other place would be acceptable. The priest alone was to

handle the blood of the animal. Every sacrifice shadowed some part of the great sacrifice Jesus made for us all, this is why it could not be altered in any way. Do it God's way, or not at all.

Leviticus 17:6 "And the priest shall sprinkle the blood upon the altar of the LORD [at] the door of the tabernacle of the congregation, and burn the fat for a sweet savor unto the LORD."

The altar of burnt offering (Lev. 1:5).

"At the door of the tabernacle of the congregation": Near to which it stood (see Lev. 1:5).

"And burn the fat for a sweet savor to the Lord": The fat that covered the inwards, the kidneys, the flanks and caul of the liver (see Lev. 3:3).

We see from this verse above that the blood and the fat, which belonged to God alone, had to be handled by just the priest. We have discussed before that the shedding of blood is the only way to do away with sin. Without the shedding of blood, there is no remission of sin. The burning of the fat made a sweet savor to God. This pleased God.

Leviticus 17:7 "And they shall no more offer their sacrifices unto devils, after whom they have gone a whoring. This shall be a statute for ever unto them throughout their generations."

"Devils": The word in the original is the "shaggy goat" of (Lev. 4:23). But it is sometimes employed, as here, to denote an object of pagan worship or a demon dwelling in the deserts (2 Chron. 11:15; Isa. 13:21; 34:14). The worship of the goat, accompanied by the foulest rites, prevailed in Lower Egypt. And the Israelites may have been led into this snare while they dwelt in Egypt.

"After whom they have gone a whoring": Idolatry being a spiritual adultery, a forsaking of God, who had taken them into a conjugal relation, and been as a husband to them, and cleaving to idols, which were as paramours (see Jer. 31:32).

"This shall be a statute for ever unto them throughout their generations": Not only this of not sacrificing to devils, but all before commanded. Particularly that they should bring their sacrifices to the priest, at the door of the tabernacle of the congregation.

We see that the whoring here, is of a spiritual nature. The heathens had sacrificed to their false gods in the fields. This is what is spoken of here. God is a holy God. He should never be confused with these false gods. That is just what would have happened, if they had killed the animal for sacrifice in the field. God had a specific thing that must be done with the blood. The animal killed in the field would most surely lose some of its blood out there in the field.

Leviticus 17:8 "And thou shalt say unto them, Whatsoever man [there be] of the house of Israel, or of the strangers which sojourn among you, that offereth a burnt offering or sacrifice,"

To Aaron and his sons, and to the children of Israel (as in Lev. 17:2).

"Whatsoever man there be of the house of Israel": Belonging to that nation, and to any of its tribes and families. Of whatever age; as a young man or an old man, as the Targum of Jonathan. Or of whatsoever rank, class, and condition in life.

"Or of the strangers which sojourn among you": That is, of the proselytes among them. Not the proselytes of the gate, who were not admitted to offer sacrifice on the altar of the Lord. And if they were, they could not for non-compliance with this law be cut off from the Jewish church and commonwealth. Of which they were no part, only suffered to dwell among them. But partook of none of their privileges. But this is to be understood of proselytes of righteousness, such as embraced the Jewish religion. And submitted to all the rituals of it, and had communion with the body of the people. And shared in all the immunities of their civil and church state, and so liable in case of any real practice to be cut off from them.

"That offereth a burnt offering or sacrifice": Any other sacrifice besides a burnt offering, as a sin offering, or a trespass offering, or a peace offering.

Leviticus 17:9 "And bringeth it not unto the door of the tabernacle of the congregation, to offer it unto the LORD; even that man shall be cut off from among his people."

In a public manner, by one of the priests of the Lord. By which it might appear that he did not take upon him to be a priest himself, nor to offer it to an idol.

"Even that man shall be cut off from his people": From being one of them, and having communion with them, and sharing in their privileges. Or by death, either by the hand of the civil magistrate, or rather by the hand of God. So Jarchi, his seed shall be cut off, and his days shall be cut off. That is, he shall die childless, and in the midst of his days, a violent and premature death. Also (see notes on Lev. 17:4).

This would be false worship. Many of our churches today have wandered away from the way of worship that God wants. False worship of any kind, whether unintentional or not, is unacceptable unto God. We must be very careful with new doctrines that pop up here and there. Every spirit should be tried to see whether it be of God, or not, before we adopt it into our worship services. The next few Scriptures tell us how we can tell if the spirit is of God, or not.

1 John 4:1-3 "Beloved, believe not every spirit, but try the spirits whether they are of God: because many false prophets are gone out into the world." "Hereby know ye the Spirit of God: Every spirit that confesseth that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh is of God:" "And every spirit that confesseth not that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh is not of God: and this is that [spirit] of antichrist, whereof ye have heard that it should come; and even now already is it in the world."

Verses 10-16: As a direct consequence of limiting the slaughter of animals to the tabernacle, the blood of these animals could not be "eaten", that is, drunk or eaten in meat which had not been

drained of blood. This principle results in what the Jews called “kosher” meat. The importance is underscored emphatically, the prohibition occurring six times in five verses (verses 10-14). Noah was to avoid the blood in (Gen. 9:4). Violation of this law involved the guilty in being “cut ... off from among his people”, presumably by a divinely initiated act (verse 4). “For the life of the flesh is in the blood:” Most translations and commentators regard the preposition “in” in this phrase as expressing essence and therefore they omit it in translation. Thus, “the life of the flesh is the blood”. So construed (verse 11), virtually identifies the life of an animal with its blood.

At a basic level this is obvious: when an animal loses its blood, it dies. Its blood, therefore, gives it life. By refraining from eating flesh with blood in it, man is honoring life. To eat blood is to despise life (compare Gen. 9:4-6). The sanctity of human life is associated with not eating blood. Thus, one purpose of this law is to teach respect for all life. Shed blood constituted visible evidence that life had indeed been offered up in sacrifice. Only as atonement is linked with death, represented by shed blood, and not life set free, would it appear to become efficacious in the covering of human sin. Thus, the second reason for the ban is given as “I have given it to you upon the altar to make an atonement for your souls: for it is the blood that maketh an atonement for the soul” (verse 11).

Leviticus 17:10 "And whatsoever man [there be] of the house of Israel, or of the strangers that sojourn among you, that eateth any manner of blood; I will even set my face against that soul that eateth blood, and will cut him off from among his people."

That is by birth an Israelite, of every age, sex, or condition, as before.

"Or of the strangers that sojourn among you": Proselytes of righteousness, for the following law was only obligatory on such, and upon Israelites. As appears from its being lawful to give or sell that which dies of itself to a stranger. That is, to a proselyte of the gate, or to a Heathen (Deut. 14:21).

"That eateth any manner of blood": That is, as Ben Gersom interprets it, of beasts and birds, concerning which the prohibition only is, according to him. For as for the blood of others there was no obligation, nor were any guilty on account of them. Particularly the blood of fishes, and of locusts, or human blood. The blood of a man's teeth, which a man might swallow without being guilty of the breach of this law. Some restrain this to the blood of the sacrifices before treated of. But Jarchi observes, lest any should think, because it is said, it is "the blood that maketh the atonement for the soul". That a man is not guilty only on account of the blood of sanctified things, therefore it is said "any manner of blood".

"I will set my face against that soul that eateth blood": Signifying how greatly he should be provoked thereby. How much he should resent it, how exceedingly displeasing it would be to him, and what severity might be expected to be exercised towards him for it. For dreadful it is to have the face of God set against a man (see Psalm 34:16). Maimonides observes, that this form of speech does not occur in any third precept besides these two. Concerning idolatry or sacrificing a son to Moloch (Lev. 20:3). And eating blood; because eating of blood gives an occasion to one species of idolatry, worshipping of devils (see Lev. 19:26).

"And will cut him off from among his people": Which confirms the above sense of the phrase of cutting off as expressive of death by the hand of God (see notes on Lev. 17:4).

We have been told over and over that the blood belongs to God. A person that eateth the blood would be as if he were calling himself god. We are not god. We are His servants.

Verses 11-16: The shedding of "blood" is necessary for forgiveness of sin. The New Testament affirms this truth (Heb. 9:22).

Leviticus 17:11 "For the life of the flesh [is] in the blood: and I have given it to you upon the altar to make an atonement for your souls: for it [is] the blood [that] maketh an atonement for the soul."

"For the life of the flesh is in the blood": This phrase is amplified by "its blood is identified with its life" (17:14). Blood carries life sustaining elements to all parts of the body; therefore, it represents the essence of life. In contrast, the shedding of blood represents the shedding of life, i.e., death (compare Gen. 9:4). New Testament references to the shedding of the blood of Jesus Christ are references to His death.

When Christ died, He shed His blood to redeem us. He poured out His life (1 Peter 1:18-20).

"Blood that maketh an atonement": Since it contains the life, blood is sacred to God. Shed blood (death), from a substitute atones for or covers the sinner, who is then allowed to live.

Oxygen, the body's most critical nutrient, is carried through the "blood". The human body can live on when all other parts of the body fail, but when the heart stops, death is inevitable. That is why atonement was made through blood. The Old Testament sacrifices that had to be offered each day pointed toward the ultimate, once for all blood sacrifice of Christ.

Even in Noah's time God had warned not to eat blood.

Genesis 9:4 "But flesh with the life thereof, [which is] the blood thereof, shall ye not eat."

This was so important that God warned them over and over not to eat the blood. I will show another Scripture on this and then go on.

Deuteronomy 12:23 "Only be sure that thou eat not the blood: for the blood [is] the life; and thou mayest not eat the life with the flesh."

This is possibly why the Jews found it so repulsive when Jesus told them to eat His flesh and drink His blood. This was not a literal statement that Jesus said, but symbolic of partaking of the life that Jesus provided for all who would believe.

John 6:54 "Whoso eateth my flesh, and drinketh my blood, hath eternal life; and I will raise him up at the last day."

The bread was symbolic of the flesh of Jesus, and the wine was symbolic of the blood of Jesus. We see that our real life comes when we partake of Jesus. He is our life.

Leviticus 17:12 "Therefore I said unto the children of Israel, No soul of you shall eat blood, neither shall any stranger that sojourneth among you eat blood."

Great or small as Jarchi observes, for the reason above given. Which, though not expressed before, was the true reason of this law, which had been given before, and now repeated (see Lev. 3:17).

"Neither shall any stranger that sojourneth among you eat blood": Any proselyte of righteousness; this is not observed before.

This does not mean that you cannot eat meat after the excess blood has been drained off. The meat properly cooked, after draining off the excess blood is certainly supposed to be eaten.

1 Timothy 4:1-3 "Now the Spirit speaketh expressly, that in the latter times some shall depart from the faith, giving heed to seducing spirits, and doctrines of devils;" "Speaking lies in hypocrisy; having their conscience seared with a hot iron;" "Forbidding to marry, [and commanding] to abstain from meats, which God hath created to be received with thanksgiving of them which believe and know the truth."

We can easily see from this that, we are to eat meat. It is a doctrine of devils to teach not to eat meat. The next verse shows that it is, in fact, the flesh of an animal when it calls it creature.

1 Timothy 4:4 "For every creature of God [is] good, and nothing to be refused, if it be received with thanksgiving:"

Possibly one of the reasons the religious people of Jesus' day were turned off was when Jesus said they must eat of His flesh and drink His blood.

John 6:53 "Then Jesus said unto them, Verily, verily, I say unto you, Except ye eat the flesh of the Son of man, and drink his blood, ye have no life in you."

They were so caught up in the law that they did not realize that Jesus was speaking of the bread symbolizing His flesh and the fruit of the vine symbolizing His blood. They were not actually drinking His blood and eating His flesh. He just meant that to have life eternal, we must partake of Him. He is our life.

Verses 13-14: It was customary with heathen hunters, when they killed any game, to pour out the blood as an offering to the god of the hunt. The Israelites, to the contrary, were enjoined by this directive and banned from all such superstitious acts of idolatry.

Leviticus 17:13 "And whatsoever man [there be] of the children of Israel, or of the strangers that sojourn among you, which hunteth and catcheth any beast or fowl that may be eaten; he shall even pour out the blood thereof, and cover it with dust."

This form of speaking, which is often used in this chapter, is still observed to point out the persons on whom the law is obligatory, Israelites and proselytes of righteousness.

"Which hunteth and catcheth any beast or fowl that may be eaten": That is, clean beasts and fowls, such as by a former law are observed. And this excepts unclean ones, as Jarchi. But includes all clean ones, whether wild or tame, that may be taken and killed though not taken in hunting. But such are particularly mentioned, because not only hunting beasts and fowl were common, but because such persons were more rustic and brutish and, being hungry, were in haste for their food. And not so careful about the slaying of the creatures, and of, taking care about their blood.

"He shall even pour out the blood thereof, and cover it with dust": That it might not be eaten by men, nor licked up by beasts and that there might be kept up a reverend esteem of blood, being the life of the creature. And this covering of it, as Maimonides tells us, was accompanied with a benediction in this form, "Blessed art thou, O Lord our God, the King of the world, who hath sanctified us by his precepts. And hath given commandment to us concerning covering of the blood." And the same writer elsewhere gives us another reason of this law, that the Israelites might not meet and feast about the blood, as the Zabians did. Who, when they slew a beast, took its blood and put it into a vessel, or into a hole dug by them, and sat and feasted around it (see Lev. 19:26).

You can see the proper thing to do with the blood of an animal that you kill to eat, is to put the blood back into the earth.

Leviticus 17:14 "For [it is] the life of all flesh; the blood of it [is] for the life thereof: therefore I said unto the children of Israel, Ye shall eat the blood of no manner of flesh: for the life of all flesh [is] the blood thereof: whosoever eateth it shall be cut off."

Of every animal.

"The blood of it is for the life thereof": For the production, preservation, and continuance of life. That on which life depends, as Jarchi observes.

"Therefore I said unto the children of Israel, ye shall eat the blood of no manner of flesh": Of beasts or birds, whose flesh was fit for food. But their blood was not to be eaten, for the reasons before given.

"For the life of all flesh is the blood thereof": Which is repeated, that it might be observed and taken notice of, as that in which the force of the reason lay for giving this law.

"Whosoever eateth it shall be cut off": By death, whether he be an Israelite or a proselyte of righteousness. Wherefore if this law was now in force, its penalty also would be continued, whereas it is not, and which shows the abrogation of it. Also (see notes on Lev. 17:4).

So many satanic cults around the world today are literally drinking the blood of animals. We read that forever man is not to drink blood. The blood belongs to God. Our life is in the hands of God as well. These satanic cults, doing this terrible thing, have cut themselves off from God.

Verses 15-16: This cleansing was necessary because these animals would not have had the blood drained properly (compare Exodus 22:31; Deut. 14:21).

Leviticus 17:15 "And every soul that eateth that which died [of itself], or that which was torn [with beasts, whether it be] one of your own country, or a stranger, he shall both wash his clothes, and bathe [himself] in water, and be unclean until the even: then shall he be clean."

Through any disease upon it, or by means of any other creature seizing upon it and worrying it, or was not lawfully killed. If a man ate ever so little of it, even but the quantity of an olive, it was a breach of this law. Which is connected with the preceding, there being a similarity between them, because such creatures must have their blood in them. Not being regularly let out, and so eating of them would offend against the above law. It is very probable, as Grotius thinks, that Pythagoras took his notion from hence, and strictly enjoined his followers to abstain from all animals that died of themselves, as Laertius and Aelianus relate. And which Porphyry suggests, was what universally obtained among men.

"Or that which was torn with beasts": Though not dead, yet ready to die, and so unfit for food (see notes on Exodus 22:31).

"Whether it be one of your own country, or a stranger": A native of Israel, or a proselyte of righteousness. For as for any other stranger he might eat of it (Deut. 14:22).

"He shall both wash his clothes, and bathe himself in water": In forty seahs of water, as the Targum of Jonathan, dip himself all over.

"And be unclean until the even": And so, have no conversation with men in civil or religious things.

"Then shall he be clean": When he has washed his garments, and bathed himself, and the evening is come, and then shall be admitted to society as before. This is to be understood of one who ignorantly eats of the above things, not knowing them to be such. Otherwise, if he did it presumptuously, he was to be punished.

Something that died of itself would probably be diseased. You can see that this prohibition would be for man's own good.

Leviticus 17:16 "But if he wash [them] not, nor bathe his flesh; then he shall bear his iniquity."

Neither wash his clothes: nor bathe his flesh. If he is negligent, and does not take care to make use of these ablutions.

"Then he shall bear his iniquity": His guilt shall remain on him, and he shall suffer the punishment the law exposes him to. Either by the hand of God, or the civil magistrate, which is due to persons that enter into the sanctuary in their uncleanness, or eat of holy things. For not washing his body the punishment was cutting off, and for not washing his garments, beating, as Jarchi says.

The washing is to purify. The purifying of the animal is for sanitation reasons. All sorts of germs would be on an animal not washed. Then the washing of himself would also be to purify. Without being purified, you would continue to be unclean.

Leviticus Chapter 17 Questions

1. What is different about how God wanted this message given to the people?
2. What is intended in verse 3 about killing an ox or goat?
3. When a person shed blood improperly, what happened to him?
4. Where is the only place proper to kill an animal for sacrifice?
5. Who was the only one permitted to handle the blood of the sacrificed animal?
6. Where does verse 6 tell us he is to sprinkle the blood?
7. What is he to burn, that makes a sweet savor to the LORD?
8. What is the only way to do away with sin?
9. What is the whoring in verse 7?
10. Who had sacrificed to their false gods in the field?
11. Was this restriction just for the Israelites?
12. What about false worship that is unintentional?
13. How can we try the spirits and know whether they are of God or not?

14. Any spirit that denies that Jesus Christ came in the flesh is what?
15. What happens to those who eat blood?
16. The life of the flesh is in the _____.
17. What is the blood upon the altar for us?
18. Who was warned in Genesis 9:4 not to eat blood?
19. Why did the Jews find it repulsive, when Jesus said to drink His blood?
20. Was Jesus speaking of literal blood when He said this?
21. What was symbolic of Jesus' flesh?
22. What was symbolic of His blood?
23. Where do we find the Scripture that says, it is a doctrine of devils to forbid to eat meat?
24. What one word in these Scriptures let us know that this is animal flesh?
25. How are they to dispose of the blood of animals that are killed for food?
26. The life of all flesh is the _____ thereof.
27. What is one thing satanic cults are doing that is really terrible?
28. Why should you not eat of something that died of itself?
29. What is washing to do?
30. What two things must be washed, before you may eat of this flesh?