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Do Not Eat the Blood

12: 13-28

Do not eat the blood DIG: What would be the difference in the offerings of the Israelites during their wilderness wanderings and once they had settled in the Promised Land? How would people deal with slaughtering animals for meat if they lived far away from the sanctuary? Why should congregations support their Messianic rabbis or pastors? Why did God forbid eating the blood of animals? How is shedding of blood the heart of the gospel?

REFLECT: Has ADONAI given mankind the authority to kill animals for food (see Genesis 9:3)? Are animals made in the image of God? Explain. Are you required to offer burnt offerings today? Why? Why not? Are we obligated to give a ten percent tithe today in the Dispensation of Grace (see the commentary on **The Life of Christ, to see link click [Do](#) - When You Give to the Needy, Do Not Do It to be Honored by Others**)?

Because of Yeshua's shed blood, the entire Levitical system pointed to Messiah.

The following verses make some distinctions that would be necessary when **the Israelites** were settled in **the Land**, but which were unnecessary during the years in the wilderness. During the wanderings of **the Israelites**, when **they** stopped to camp (see the commentary on Exodus, **to see link click [Ep](#) - The Camp of the Twelve Tribes of Isra'el**), **the sanctuary** would be in **their** midst. When **they** populated **their** new **Land**, however, although there would be many different settlements, **the sanctuary** would be in a specific place.³¹³

At this point **Moshe's** speech turns to the question of killing **animals** for food. These verses focus on **the Israelites' treatment of the blood of animals** that were either sacrificed at the altar, or eaten at home, a theme **Moses** discussed in **Leviticus 17:1-16**. **YHVH** introduced this theme after **Noah** and **his** family came out of the ark, for it was then that **He** permitted mankind to **eat meat** (see the commentary on **Genesis [Cz](#) - Whoever Sheds Human Blood, by Humans Shall Their Blood Be Shed**). In **Genesis**, **God** prohibited the shedding of human blood. **He** also established what we today call "capital punishment."

Since humans are made in the image of **God** and derive their life from **God**, to murder someone is to attack **God Himself**, and to rob that person of **God's** gift of life. **Ha'Shem** decreed that the murderers should be punished by losing their own lives, and the right to enforce this law belonged to the officials of the state (**Romans 13:1-4**).³¹⁴

Either the unclean or clean (12:13-16): How would **people** deal with slaughtering **animals** for **meat** if **they** lived far away from **the sanctuary**? According to **Leviticus 17:1-6**, **oxen**, **lambs**, and **goats** killed from consumption could only be eaten after certain sacrificial rituals (with those **animals**) took place at the Tabernacle. The intention of this requirement was to prevent the people from making idolatrous sacrifices away from **the Israelite** encampment (**Leviticus 17:7**). But this mitzvah declared that wild **animals** caught by hunters could be killed and consumed without this limitation (as long as **their blood** was properly drained), since they were not sacrificial **animals**. **Be careful that you do not offer your burnt offerings in any place you see. Rather do so only in the place ADONAI chooses in one of your tribes - there you are to offer your burnt offerings, and there you are to do all I am commanding you. However, you may slaughter and eat meat within all your gates - whatever your soul's desire, according to the blessing ADONAI your God has given you. Either the unclean or clean may eat of it, as they would wild animals like a gazelle or a deer. But remember, you are not to eat the blood - you are to pour it out on the ground like water (12:13-16).**³¹⁵

Long before science discovered the significance of **blood**, **YHVH** declared that **life was in the blood** and that **the blood** should be respected and not treated like common food. **For the life of the creature is in the blood, and I have given it to you on the altar to make atonement for your lives - for it is the blood that makes atonement because of the life (Leviticus 17:11). The Talmud says the same thing, "Does not atonement come through the blood" (Mas. Yoma 5a)? "Surely atonement can be made only with the blood, as it says, 'For it is the blood that makes atonement by reason of life' (Mas. Zevachim 6a)!"** The entire Levitical system pointed to **Messiah**. **The Torah has a shadow of the good things to come - not the form itself of the realities. For this reason, it can never, by means of the same sacrifices they offer constantly year after year, make perfect those who draw near. For it is impossible for the blood of bulls and goats to take away sins (Hebrews 10:1 and 4).** Therefore, **the Israelites** brought home the anticipation of the coming of **the Messiah**. Every time **they** ate, **they** were reminded of these truths.

Tithes and offerings (12:17-19): You may not eat within your gates the tithe of your

grain or new wine or oil, or the firstborn of your herd or of your flock, or any of your vow offerings that you vow, or your freewill offerings, or the offering of your hand. Rather you are to eat them before ADONAI your God in the place ADONAI your God chooses - you, your son and daughter, your slave and maid, and the Levite within your gates - and you will rejoice before ADONAI your God in every undertaking of your hand. Be careful that you do not neglect the Levite as long as you live on the earth (12:17-18). If an Israelite brought an animal to be sacrificed at the sanctuary, he could offer it as a peace offering (see the commentary on Exodus [Fg - The Peace Offering](#)), and then enjoy eating the meat as part of a special feast (Leviticus 3:1-17, 7:11-38). Then the priest would drain the blood beside the altar. If the ritual called for it, the priest would catch enough blood in a basin and sprinkle it on or at the base of the bronze altar. By following this procedure, the Jews not only showed respect for God's gift of life, but they also showed respect for the animal that gave its life for the worshipper.³¹⁶

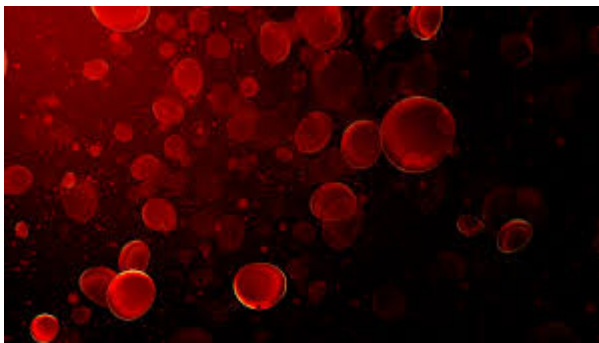
Be careful that you do not neglect the Levite as long as you live on the earth (12:19). The priests and the Levites had no inheritance in the land of Isra'el, for ADONAI was their inheritance (Numbers 18:20; Deuteronomy 10:8-9; Joshua 13:14 and 33, 14:13, 18:7). So, they trusted God for His provision through the people. YHVH assigned to the priests' portions from various sacrifices (Leviticus 6:14-7:38) as well as the firstfruits of the harvests and the first-born animals (Numbers 18:8-19). The Levites received the people's tithes and in turn gave a tithe of that to the priests (Numbers 18:20-32). The people also brought an extra tithe every three years, which was shared with the poor. People who lived too far from the sanctuary were permitted to sell the produce, and with the money buy a substitute sacrifice when they arrived (14:24-26).

The basic principle in the Bible is that those who serve the Lord and His people should have the support of God's people. The worker is deserving of his wage (Luke 10:7), and those who proclaim the Good News to get their living from the Good News (First Corinthians 9:14). Believers who receive spiritual blessings from Messianic rabbis, teachers, and preachers should share material blessings with them (First Timothy 5:17-18). If all of God's people practiced the kind of giving described in Second Corinthians 8 and 9, God's servants would be provided for, and the work of the Lord would prosper around the world.³¹⁷

You are not to eat the blood (12:20-28): The permission of the previous verses is expanded somewhat here and repeated, the repetition emphasizing the importance of distinguishing what could be eaten only at the sanctuary and what could be eaten

anywhere.³¹⁸ **In the wilderness, when all the people were near the sanctuary, no animal might be slaughtered for food without first dedicating it as a peace offering. With their entry into the Promised Land, with the majority of people living further and further away from the sanctuary, they were permitted to slaughter animals for food wherever they lived.**

Yet the permission was given in such a way that the original intent of the mitzvah was preserved (**Leviticus 17:1-12**). There the prohibition was aimed at preventing the pollution of worship by Canaanite ritual, and at preventing **the Israelites** from **eating the blood** of the **animals**. Here, **Moses** warned against **eating the blood** whether **the animals** were killed at home or at **the sanctuary**.³¹⁹ **When ADONAI your God enlarges your territory as He has promised you, and you say, "I want to eat meat," because your soul craves meat, then you may eat meat - all your soul's desire. If the place ADONAI your God chooses to put His Name is too far from you, then you may slaughter any of your herd and flock that ADONAI has given you - as I have commanded you - and you may eat within your gates, all your soul's desire. Just as the gazelle or hart is eaten, so you may eat it - the unclean and clean alike may eat it (12:20-22).**



The lone restriction on the **eating of meat** was **the people** were forbidden to **eat the blood**. **Only be sure that you do not eat the blood - for the blood is the life, and you are not to eat the life with the meat. Pouring blood on the ground** would be a safeguard against **pouring it** on a pagan altar. **You are not to eat it; you are to pour it out on the ground like water.** By refraining from **eating blood**, the Israelites demonstrated a respect for life and ultimately for **the Creator** of life. As **Leviticus 17:11** indicates, **the blood** is a ransom price for sins, so **blood** is sacred and should not be consumed.³²⁰ **You are not to eat it, so that it may go well with you and your children after you, when you do what is right in ADONAI's eyes (12:23-25).**

Any food, vegetable or animal, that was specifically offered to **YHVH**, whether a **tithe**, or a

firstborn, or any other reason, had to be brought to **the sanctuary**. **Although in the Promised Land animals or ordinary consumption might be slaughtered in any place, consecrated animals had to be offered on the bronze altar in the sanctuary.** Only the holy things and vow offerings that are yours are you to take and go to the place that ADONAI chooses. You are to offer your burnt offerings - the flesh and the blood - on the altar of ADONAI your God. The blood of your sacrifices is to be poured out on the altar of ADONAI your God, but the meat you are to eat. Obedience to God's mitzvot in these matters would be necessary for His blessing. Take care and listen to all these words that I am commanding you, so that it may go well with you and your children after you forever, when you do what is good and right in the eyes of ADONAI your God (12:26-28).

This emphasis on the shedding of **blood** is at the heart of the gospel. We aren't saved from our sins by the life of **Messiah**, or the fine example of **Messiah**, but by the sacrificial death of **Messiah, in whom we have redemption (Ephesians 1:7)**. The blood of Yeshua is precious to us (**First Peter 1:19**) because of who shed it - the spotless **Lamb of God** - but also because of what it accomplishes for those who trust in **Him: justification (Romans 5:9); cleansing (Revelation 1:5; First John 1:7); eternal salvation (Hebrews 9:11-28); access to YHVH (Hebrews 10:19-20); and reconciliation (Ephesians 2:13)**, to name but a few of the blessings we have through **Messiah's blood** (see the commentary on **The Life of Christ [Bw](#) - What God Does For Us at the Moment of Faith**).³²¹

*Dear holy Heavenly **Father**, Praise **You** that **Yeshua** was willing to take our place on the altar and be our sacrifice for our sins. **He made the One who knew no sin to become a sin offering on our behalf, so that in Him we might become the righteousness of God (Second Corinthians 5:21)**. Praise you that **Yeshua's** life was perfectly holy so **He** could be **the Lamb of God**. The next day, John sees **Yeshua** coming to him and says, "**Behold, the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world (John 1:29)**! We worship **You**! In **Yeshua's** holy name and power of **His** resurrection. Amen*