

Deuteronomy 14 - 15

By Charles Dailey©2018 Revision of 11/11/2024 ESV

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Special Treatment for Israel

(14:1) "You are the sons of the LORD your God. You shall not cut yourselves or make any baldness on your foreheads for the dead.

- A new relationship with the **Lord** has been spelled out. **They are sons of God.** He is not a god to be appeased (like the idols), He is one that can be thought of as a Father.
- The **sons of God** were not to copy the funeral practices of the Canaanites like cutting themselves or cutting their hair (men).

(2) For you are a people holy to the LORD your God, and the LORD has chosen you to be a people for his treasured possession, out of all the peoples who are on the face of the earth.

- They are a **holy people** because the **Lord** has made them **holy**. They are receiving special treatment. This is the idea of grace.

Rules That Affected the Menu

Because Israel is to be a set-apart people, they would have a more limited diet than the nations around them. This food came be labeled *Kosher*, which meant "fit for consumption." The nation was adhering to these rules during the time of Christ, but the rules were done away as the Gospel was made available for the non-Jewish people, the Gentiles. The story is developed in Acts chapter 10 in the New Testament.

Now, back to Moses:

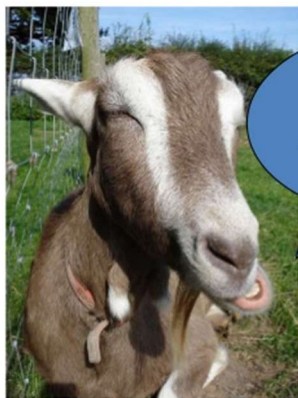
(3) "You shall not eat any abomination. (4) These are the animals you may eat: the ox, the sheep, the goat, (5) the deer,

the gazelle, the roebuck, the wild goat, the ibex, the antelope, and the mountain sheep. (6) Every animal that parts the hoof and has the hoof cloven in two and chews the cud, among the animals, you may eat.

- The first law that God gave to Adam and Eve was about food and they broke that law.
- **Abomination** might be translated *abhorrent*. That is the idea of the word. Certain foods may be fine in themselves, but God did not want His special people eating them.
- The first three animals in verse 4 are domesticated and the rest are wild. Both domesticated and wild were available for food. They could eat beef, mutton, goat, deer and several other wild varieties.

Chewing the cud is when

the grass is regurgitated and chewed by the flat molars and premolars



What's up...I'm chewing my cud...Sometimes I chew over 100 times before swallowing!

A cow makes between 40,000-60,000 jaw movements a day chewing

(7) Yet of those that chew the cud or have the hoof cloven you shall not eat these: the camel, the hare, and the rock badger, because they chew the cud but do not part the hoof, are unclean for you.

- A **cloven hoof** is a split hoof such as cattle, deer, antelopes, gazelles, goats and sheep.

(8) And the pig, because it parts the hoof but does not chew the cud, is unclean for you. Their flesh you shall not eat, and their carcasses you shall not touch.

- All pork was forbidden. Ham, bacon, sausage and all cuts.

(9) "Of all that are in the waters you may eat these: whatever has fins and scales you may eat.

- The rules for fish and seafood are stated.

(10) And whatever does not have fins and scales you shall not eat; it is unclean for you.



- Oysters, scallops.

(11) "You may eat all clean birds.

- Pigeons are okay. There is no easy distinguishing features, so the birds that are forbidden are spelled out in verse 12.
- Today, birds like chickens, quail, doves, partridge, ducks and geese, turkey, Cornish hens are standard fare for Jewish tables.

(12) But these are the ones that you shall not eat: the eagle, the bearded vulture, the black vulture, (13) the kite, the falcon of any kind; (14) every raven of any kind; (15) the ostrich, the nighthawk, the sea gull, the hawk of any kind; (16) the little owl and the short-eared owl, the barn owl (17) and the tawny owl, the carrion vulture and the cormorant, (18) the stork, the heron of any kind; the hoopoe and the bat. (19) And all winged insects are unclean for you; they shall not be eaten. (20) All clean winged things you may eat.

- These last verses, in the English, contradicts themselves, first forbidding winged insects and then saying that clean ones can be eaten. *The New Living Translation* clears it up with more words:

All winged insects that walk along the ground are ceremonially unclean for you and may not be eaten. But you may eat any winged bird or insect that is ceremonially clean.

The Greek Septuagint Translation reads:

All winged animals that creep are unclean to you; ye shall not eat of them. Ye shall eat every clean bird. (Deuteronomy 14:19-20 Brenton)

We take it that *walking on the ground* is the key. Locusts could be eaten because they can jump.

- **Tom Bradford** writes:

... this notion entertained today by Jews and by a growing group of Christians that the foods listed as clean is inherently healthier than the list of unclean foods simply does not bear itself out in reality. ... the foods themselves don't necessarily have direct inherent health benefit (and others direct inherent health negatives although it is certainly possible that some might).

The Japanese, for instance, are as equally famous for eating sea foods that are specifically banned as unclean as they are for living extraordinarily healthy and long lives.

The Chinese and many other cultures eat animals that have paws (something specifically excluded as food) and there is no evidence that they live shorter lives or less healthy lives than anyone else.

The idea that the list of biblically clean foods was based on hygiene and health is incorrect. That notion came from Jewish writers of the Middle Ages, many of whom had become famous physicians; and it has been proven to have little basis.

(21) "You shall not eat anything that has died naturally. You may give it to the sojourner who is within your towns, that he may eat it, or you may sell it to a foreigner. For you are a people holy to the LORD your God. "You shall not boil a young goat in its mother's milk."

- This shows that the issue is not one of health, but is ceremonial. An animal that **died** is okay for the *sojourner* or the *foreigner* to eat.
- **Wilbur Fields**, writing in his commentary on Exodus comments on the strange comment in verse 21 about boiling a goat in its mother's milk:

This law is now generally understood to make allusion to a Canaanite religious practice, in which a kid was boiled in its mother's milk. This practice was included in the rituals at Ugarit, when such a dish was prepared at festal ceremonies pertaining to the fertility of the soil. In the Ugaritic tablet on "The gods pleasant and beautiful," it is written, "Boil a kid in milk, a lamb in butter."

The practice of boiling small cattle in milk has been continued among Bedouin to this time. God did not want His people's practice even to resemble those of the heathen.

Jews do not prepare or serve *meat dishes* and *milk dishes* at the same meal. Orthodox Jews even keep separate kitchens for preparation of milk and meat dishes. The connection between this custom and Ex. 23:19 seems rather remote, although the Kosher diet laws of the Jews would certainly eliminate any

possibility of cooking a kid in its mother's milk. J. H. Hertz, a Jewish commentator, says that the practice of not eating milk and meat together was doubtless observed long before the age of the rabbis (about 400 B.C.-A.D. 500), and in connecting the practice with this text, they merely sought a support in the Torah for the very ancient Jewish practice.

Money Matters for the Worshipers

(22) "You shall tithe all the yield of your seed that comes from the field year by year.

- God would provide financial blessings, but they must learn to honor the Lord with the produce.

(23) And before the LORD your God, in the place that he will choose, to make his name dwell there, you shall eat the tithe of your grain, of your wine, and of your oil, and the firstborn of your herd and flock, that you may learn to fear the LORD your God always.

- They would participate in the **tithe** by having a meal from it. Naturally the tither would not be eating all of it. It's primary purpose was to support the Levites.

(24) And if the way is too long for you, so that you are not able to carry the tithe, when the LORD your God blesses you, because the place is too far from you, which the LORD your God chooses, to set his name there, (25) then you shall turn it into money and bind up the money in your hand and go to the place that the LORD your God chooses (26) and spend the money for whatever you desire—oxen or sheep or wine or strong drink, whatever your appetite craves. And you shall eat there before the LORD your God and rejoice, you and your household.

- It was not necessary to physically carry the **tithe** to the Tabernacle location. The **tithe** could be sold and the money taken to the Tabernacle. Then food the tither prefers could be

purchased so he would enjoy his portion of the food. He wouldn't be eating all of the tithe.

(27) And you shall not neglect the Levite who is within your towns, for he has no portion or inheritance with you.

- Because **the Levites** did not receive tracts of land to cultivate, the Lord is concerned that they will not be neglected by those tribes who saw great increase in their wealth.

(28) "At the end of every three years you shall bring out all the tithe of your produce in the same year and lay it up within your towns. (29) And the Levite, because he has no portion or inheritance with you, and the sojourner, the fatherless, and the widow, who are within your towns, shall come and eat and be filled, that the LORD your God may bless you in all the work of your hands that you do.

- A special **tithe** would be set aside every third **year** and kept locally. It was to be used for the **Levites**, the **sojourners**, the **fatherless** and **widows**.

"Deuteronomy 15 continues with the Lord's laws concerning helping the poor and the disadvantaged. God's character is such that He places the needs of the poor as a high priority; but He also places the responsibility of caring for the poor on the shoulders of every individual in the community of those set-apart for God (with those having the most expected to do the most)." — **Tom Bradford**

Money Matters for All Citizens

(15:1) "At the end of every seven years you shall grant a release. (2) And this is the manner of the release: every creditor shall release what he has lent to his neighbor. He shall not exact

it of his neighbor, his brother, because the LORD's release has been proclaimed.

- Old bills were to be dismissed. **Bruce Oberst** points out that a number of our states have similar laws. A man cannot be held indefinitely for a debt, and in most states if the overdue money is not collected by the creditor within a specified number of years, the borrower is no longer held legally responsible for the debt.
- This instruction seems to be connected with an earlier statement in Exodus where it reads:

"For six years you shall sow your land and gather in its yield, but the seventh year you shall let it rest and lie fallow, that the poor of your people may eat; and what they leave the beasts of the field may eat. You shall do likewise with your vineyard, and with your olive orchard.

(Exodus 23:10-11 ESV)

The seven-year cycle is mentioned here also. Exodus is discussing the land while this passage discusses debts.

(3) Of a foreigner you may exact it, but whatever of yours is with your brother your hand shall release.

- The rule does not apply to indebted **foreigners**.

(4) But there will be no poor among you; for the LORD will bless you in the land that the LORD your God is giving you for an inheritance to possess—(5) if only you will strictly obey the voice of the LORD your God, being careful to do all this commandment that I command you today.

- The way to financial success was to obey the **voice of the Lord**.

(6) For the LORD your God will bless you, as he promised you, and you shall lend to many nations, but you shall not borrow, and you shall rule over many nations, but they shall not rule over you.

- Israel was to become an international lender, but never an international borrower.

(7) "If among you, one of your brothers should become poor, in any of your towns within your land that the LORD your God is giving you, you shall not harden your heart or shut your hand against your poor brother, (8) but you shall open your hand to him and lend him sufficient for his need, whatever it may be.

- There was to be no checking credit for a brother in Israel. He was to be given a loan to meet his needs.

(9) Take care lest there be an unworthy thought in your heart and you say, 'The seventh year, the year of release is near,' and your eye look grudgingly on your poor brother, and you give him nothing, and he cry to the LORD against you, and you be guilty of sin.

- A man of means might say "The year of release is coming up right away. I don't want to loan money."

(10) You shall give to him freely, and your heart shall not be grudging when you give to him, because for this the LORD your God will bless you in all your work and in all that you undertake.

- The **Lord** will **bless** all of the **work** of the man who loans.

(11) For there will never cease to be poor in the land. Therefore I command you, 'You shall open wide your hand to your brother, to the needy and to the poor, in your land.'

- In verse 4, God did not want poverty among His people, but the reality is that there would always **be poor** people. In the New Testament, Jesus said:

For the poor you always have with you, but you do not always have me. (John 12:8 ESV)

Jesus would not have us sidetracked from His worship for humanitarian reasons. He will not take second place, even to the **poor**.

THE END OF FORCED HEBREW SLAVERY

(12) "If your brother, a Hebrew man or a Hebrew woman, is sold to you, he shall serve you six years, and in the seventh year you shall let him go free from you.

- Slavery was tolerated, but it had strict limitations. He or she was to be set free during the **seventh** year of service. This was a time of mentoring for the slave so they could become wealthy when they were released.

(13) And when you let him go free from you, you shall not let him go empty-handed. (14) You shall furnish him liberally out of your flock, out of your threshing floor, and out of your winepress. As the LORD your God has blessed you, you shall give to him.

- Beyond a simple release, that person was to be compensated with sheep, grain and **wine**. That person would be equipped to set up their own household following their time of indenture.

(15) You shall remember that you were a slave in the land of Egypt, and the LORD your God redeemed you; therefore I command you this today.

- When Israel left **Egypt**, they were compensated by the **Lord** for their years of **slavery**.

The people of Israel had also done as Moses told them, for they had asked the Egyptians for silver and gold

jewelry and for clothing. And the LORD had given the people favor in the sight of the Egyptians, so that they let them have what they asked. Thus they plundered the Egyptians. (Exodus 12:35-36 ESV)

(16) But if he says to you, 'I will not go out from you,' because he loves you and your household, since he is well-off with you, (17) then you shall take an awl, and put it through his ear into the door, and he shall be your slave forever. And to your female slave you shall do the same.

- Not all **slaves** wanted to be free. Some would prefer to remain in the **household** where they served. Not all slaves in the war between the States wanted freedom either. Some chose to remain where they were.
- If the slave chose to remain, he was to be branded by a hole in his **earlobe**.

(18) It shall not seem hard to you when you let him go free from you, for at half the cost of a hired worker he has served you six years. So the LORD your God will bless you in all that you do.

- It is pointed out that the slave owner has been getting a bargain with half-priced labor. (The slave—and perhaps his family—had to be housed, fed and clothed at the master's expense) Releasing slaves will bring the **blessing of God** on the slave owner. **God's blessing** can bring a very great financial **blessing**.

The Law of the Firstborn Animals

(19) "All the firstborn males that are born of your herd and flock you shall dedicate to the LORD your God. You shall do no work with the firstborn of your herd, nor shear the firstborn of your flock. (20) You shall eat it, you and your household, before the

LORD your God year by year at the place that the LORD will choose.

- The **firstborn** animal is not to be worked in the field nor any wool taken from sheep. There is to be no gain from this dedicated animal. When it is offered at the Tabernacle, the family may have it for dinner while at the Tabernacle.

(21) But if it has any blemish, if it is lame or blind or has any serious blemish whatever, you shall not sacrifice it to the LORD your God.

- Only the **unblemished** was to be offered to the **Lord**.

(22) You shall eat it within your towns. The unclean and the clean alike may eat it, as though it were a gazelle or a deer. (23) Only you shall not eat its blood; you shall pour it out on the ground like water.

- The blemished animal can be eaten anywhere by both the **clean** and **unclean** Israelites, just as they would a wild, Kosher animal.
- The same rule applies: **pour out the blood**.