

The Life is In the Blood

Animals, Sacrifices, and the Gods in Leviticus 17

Leviticus 17:1 And the LORD spoke to Moses, saying,

² "Speak to Aaron and his sons and to all the people of Israel and say to them, This is the thing that the LORD has commanded.

³ If any one of the house of Israel kills an ox or a lamb or a goat in the camp, or kills it outside the camp,

⁴ and does not bring it to the entrance of the tent of meeting to offer it as a gift to the LORD in front of the tabernacle of the LORD, bloodguilt shall be imputed to that man. He has shed blood, and that man shall be cut off from among his people.

⁵ This is to the end that the people of Israel may bring their sacrifices that they sacrifice in the open field, that they may bring them to the LORD, to the priest at the entrance of the tent of meeting, and sacrifice them as sacrifices of peace offerings to the LORD.

⁶ And the priest shall throw the blood on the altar of the LORD at the entrance of the tent of meeting and burn the fat for a pleasing aroma to the LORD.

⁷ So they shall no more sacrifice their sacrifices to goat demons, after whom they whore. This shall be a statute forever for them throughout their generations.

⁸ "And you shall say to them, Any one of the house of Israel, or of the strangers who sojourn among them, who offers a burnt offering or sacrifice

⁹ and does not bring it to the entrance of the tent of meeting to offer it to the LORD, that man shall be cut off from his people.

¹⁰ "If any one of the house of Israel or of the strangers who sojourn among them eats any blood, I will set my face against that person who eats blood and will cut him off from among his people.

¹¹ For **the life of the flesh is in the blood**, and I have given it for you on the altar to **make atonement for your souls**, for it is the blood that **makes atonement by the life**.

¹² Therefore I have said to the people of Israel, No **person among you shall eat blood**, neither shall any stranger who sojourns among you **eat blood**.

¹³ "Any one also of the people of Israel, or of the strangers who sojourn among them, who takes in **hunting any beast or bird** that may be eaten shall pour out its blood and cover it with earth.

¹⁴ For the life of every creature is its blood: **its blood is its life**. Therefore I have said to the people of Israel, You shall not eat the blood of any creature, for the life of every creature **is its blood**. Whoever eats it shall be cut off.

¹⁵ And every person who eats **what dies of itself** or what is **torn by beasts**, whether he is a native or a sojourner, shall **wash his clothes and bathe himself in water** and be unclean until the evening; then he shall be clean.

¹⁶ But if he does not wash them or bathe his flesh, **he shall bear his iniquity**."

(Lev 17:1-16)

Bloody Obsession

Americans are obsessed with blood.

- When a white senator calls herself an Indian, when a white congressman calls himself a Mexican, when a white professor calls herself black but none of them are ... Americans are obsessed with blood.

- When little kids have to have age-restricting warning labels put on video games that say “violence, gore, and blood” ... Americans are obsessed with blood.
- When I get emails from total strangers wanting to know if I think they are Nephilim because their blood-type is Rh-negative ... Americans are obsessed with blood.
- When mass shootings always seem to disrupt our lives just in time for political anti-gun legislation to be passed ... Americans are obsessed with blood.
- When a marriage in a small church in a small town in Colorado has the bride and groom seeking to slit their hands with knives to make a blood “marriage” covenant, Americans are obsessed with blood.
- When slaughterhouses regularly find loopholes in the stunning of an it bleeds out while conscious, causing the animal tremendous pain and suffering all in the name of making a buck ... Americans are obsessed with blood.
- When a country has been in a perpetual state of war for nearly 20 years with no real defined enemy, no geographical location, no explained way the war can end and no end in sight ... Americans are obsessed with blood.
- When vampirism moves from the movies (which is itself increasingly an obsession) to real life teenage lovers emulating *Twilight* and the *Vampire Diaries* in ritualistic blood-biting

modern-day “hickey” exchanges ... Americans are obsessed with blood.

This is neither good nor right nor healthy for any civilization. In fact, it quickly leads to its own rot, decay, and death. For in each and every one of these, there is a deep **disrespect for life** as God made it, an **obsession of death** in various forms, a **decreasing understanding of being separate** and holy (in other words of God in who he is), and an ignorance of the **life-changing knowledge** of the work of Jesus Christ in this dark world full of sin, death, and the works of the devil.

Last Stand in the Courtyard: Lev 17 in Context

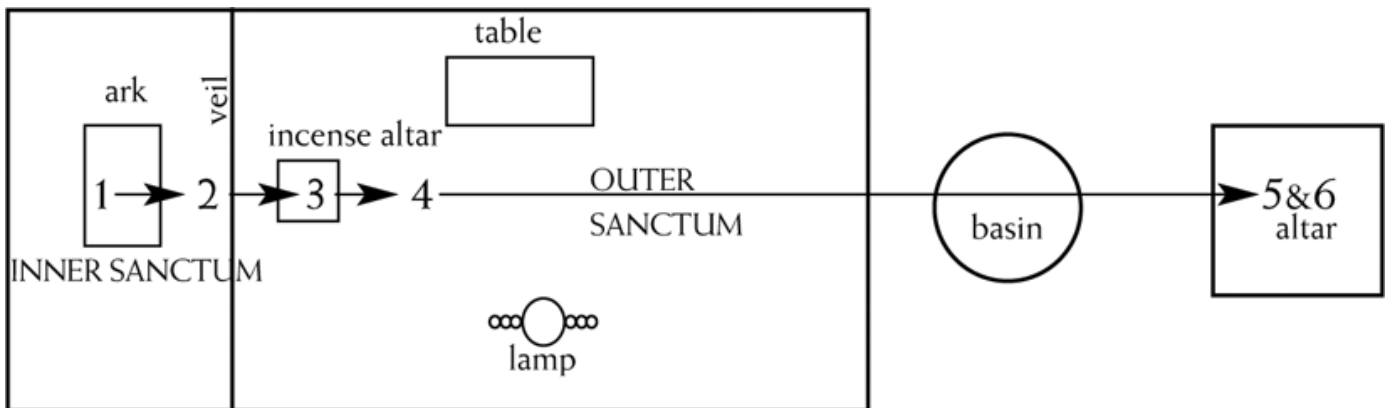
Leviticus 17 reminds me in a couple of ways of the famous **last stand at the Alamo**. Not that there is a war going on here, other than perhaps a war for the minds and hearts of Israel to remain loyal to Yahweh. That famous war which took the lives of William B. Travis, James Bowie, and Davy Crocket ended on the morning of March 6, 1836 when Mexican forces led by Santa Anna broke through a breach in the outer wall of **the courtyard** and overpowered them,

killing nearly all of the 200-250 Texans, soaking the courtyard in blood.

If you recall, Leviticus is structured as a kind of living tabernacle. Its chapters are organized into three realms of space: courtyard (chs. 1-17), holy place (chs. 18-24), and most holy place (chs. 25-27). We have been “touring” the courtyard these past 16 chapters, seeing on one side the various bloody offerings and sacrifices that take place here and on the other the kinds of “separation” laws of clean and unclean things that keep someone from entering. We’ve just looked at the center at the altar and the greatest of all the remedies for any form of ritual or ceremonial uncleanness in the Day of Atonement.

Now, that ritual did not stay in the courtyard. It in fact went into the Most Holy Place, where the ark-throne had to be sprinkled with blood. However, there was then a progressive purging of the sanctuary from the inside out (inner sanctum → outer sanctum → outer altar), symbolizing where atonement originates and how it contagiously cleanses as the power moves outward from the source at the ark of the covenant upon which Yahweh himself sat enthroned.

1. Ark cover (sprinkling 1×).
2. In front of ark cover (sprinkling 7×).
3. Incense altar (daubing 1× on horns).
4. In front of incense altar (sprinkling 7×).
5. Outer altar (daubing 1× on horns).
6. Outer altar (sprinkling 7×).¹



This puts us [right back in the courtyard again](#). Leviticus 17 becomes our “last stand” in the courtyard. And, like the Alamo’s last stand, this chapter is filled with blood. [Blood is its dominating theme](#). The word (*dam*) appears 13 times.

Before looking at the contents of these bloody instructions, I want to ask why this would be the way we would end our tour of the courtyard? On one hand, the [courtyard is the place of blood](#). This is the place where the

¹ [Roy Gane](#), *Leviticus, Numbers*, The NIV Application Commentary (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2004), 279.

sacrificial animals were all killed and drained of their blood. The text itself takes us back to the beginning of chapter one where all this sacrificial animal-killing stuff started, thus completing the ring (our tour of the courtyard).

| End Recalls Beginning | |
|--|--|
| Lev 17:2–4 | Lev 1: 2–4 |
| <p style="color: purple;">Speak to Aaron and his sons and to all the people of Israel and say to them ...</p> <p style="color: purple;">If any one of the house of Israel kills an ox or a lamb or a goat in the camp, or kills it outside the camp, and does not bring it to the entrance of the tent of meeting to offer it as a gift to the LORD in front of the tabernacle of the LORD, bloodguilt shall be imputed to that man.</p> | <p style="color: purple;">Speak to the people of Israel and say to them,</p> <p style="color: purple;">When any one of you brings an offering to the LORD, you shall bring your offering of livestock from the herd or from the flock ... He shall bring it to the entrance of the tent of meeting ...²</p> |

Further, Leviticus 16 has been full of the sprinkling and dabbing of blood on the holy places, thereby showing its vital importance to atonement and forgiveness that comes

² See Mary Douglas, *Leviticus as Literature*, 192-93.

through blood. As Hebrews puts it, **without the shedding of blood there is no forgiveness of sins (Heb 9:22)**. So, with the sacredness and holiness of blood having just come into our view in the previous chapter in the most profound way it will in Leviticus, this is a good place to further develop the theme.

Finally, these warnings about blood **prepare us for moving forward** into the laws that concern the more holy space. Something will be said near the beginning of the next chapter, as a kind of introduction to the second ring of the book dealing with laws in the holy place. **“You shall not do as they do in the land of Egypt, where you lived, and you shall not do as they do in the land of Canaan, to which I am bringing you. You shall not walk in their statutes” (Lev 18:3)**. To put it another way, they and their behaviors, were to be different, peculiar ... *separate*.

There is one thing the people of that land were doing that bears direct significance to Leviticus 17. **They were eating blood**. And not just any blood, especially in Canaan. This deserves a slight detour back to something I mentioned earlier which has a relationship to some things we talked about last week.

When Moses sent **the spies** into the land, they returned with grave news. **Numbers 13:32-33**, “The land, through which we have gone to spy it out, is *a land that devours its inhabitants*.” This was no mere metaphor of something like land that is hard to farm making life too hard on the people so that they are defeated by it. This was a land flowing with milk and honey. It was something else. They immediately add, “... and all the people that we saw in it are of great height. And there we saw the Nephilim.” The reference to “devouring” the inhabitants is a reference to the **Nephilim**.

As seen here, these Nephilim **are giants**. Looking back at the story from last week and Azazel, you may recall that the sins of the watchers who were led by Azazel was to mate with women and produce giants. This is the story both in 1 Enoch and in Genesis 6 where we first encounter the word “Nephilim.” But Enoch says something that illuminates the meaning of Numbers 13. “**These giants consumed the produce of all the people until the people detested feeding them. So the giants turned against the people in order to eat them. And they began to sin against birds, wild beasts, reptiles, and fish. And their flesh was devoured the one by the other, and they drank blood**” (**1En 7:4-5**; cf. **Jub 7:22**).

Blood. That’s our connection. On this, the most renowned modern commentator on 1 Enoch writes, “As a climax to the description, the author adds ‘and they drank the blood’—in the eyes of a Jew, the ultimate abomination and violation of created life (Gen 9:5–6; cf. the exegetical expansion in *Jub* 7:27–34 and 21:18–20; cf. also 1 Enoch 98:11).”³

This observation takes us back to something much, much earlier in biblical history, to the time of the Flood. You see, this chapter against eating blood, which is supposed to keep Israel separate from the nations, goes back to a time when there were no nations, when everyone was under the same command. God tells Noah, “

Be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth. The fear of you and the dread of you shall be upon every beast of the earth and upon every bird of the heavens, upon everything that creeps on the ground and all the fish of the sea. Into your hand they are delivered. Every moving thing that lives shall be food for you. And as I gave you the green plants, I give you

³ George W. E. Nickelsburg, *1 Enoch: A Commentary on the Book of 1 Enoch*, ed. Klaus Baltzer, Hermeneia—a Critical and Historical Commentary on the Bible (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress, 2001), 186.

everything. But you shall not eat flesh with its life, that is, its blood. And for your lifeblood I will require a reckoning: from every beast I will require it and from man. From his fellow man I will require a reckoning for the life of man.

(Gen 9:1-5)

Again, we can go back to the **Garden of Eden**. The first command is identical to the one given to Adam. Be **fruitful and multiply**. Noah is to be a new Adam after the waters of the Flood have finally retreated, exposing the new land below. But then **something changes**. God will now put the fear of dread of man into the souls of all animals. Enoch provides a good reason why. Animals were being sinned against.

Then another reversal takes place. Originally, God gave Adam and Eve all the plants of the Garden. This is repeated with Noah. Nothing is said about eating animals in the Garden, however. But here, **God gives man everything**. But this is on a condition. They **cannot eat flesh with the blood in it**. This was a command that all the descendants of Adam were supposed to obey. They didn't. So, God is restating this command in Leviticus 17 for his chosen people. They must not be like the nations around them. They must be separate.

Outlining the chapter is of paramount importance, because of the ramifications it has upon creating a contradiction with Deuteronomy. I'll give you two common outlines and then explain the problem.

- | | |
|--|---|
| A. Introduction (1-2) | A. Introduction (1-2) |
| B. No (domestic) animals to be killed outside the tabernacle (3-7) | |
| C. No sacrifices to be offered outside the tabernacle (8-9) | B. No sacrifices to be offered outside the tabernacle |
| D. No blood to be eaten (10-12) | C. No blood to be eaten (10-12) |
| E. Rules about hunting game (13-16) ⁴ | D. Rules about hunting game (13-16) |

The difficulty is in interpreting which kind of killing is in mind in **vv. 3-7**. It is a debate that can be traced to **at least the first century** where Rabbi Ishmael argued that these verses intended to prohibit the killing of **any animal** away from the central altar, while Rabbi Akiba said that the Torah **never forbids** non-religious slaughter and that Leviticus 17 is specifically talking about the killing of sacrificial animals.⁵

⁴ This is Wenham's Outline. Milgrom sees C. as prohibiting the sacrifice to other gods and breaks E. into two laws, the first (13-14) says that the blood of the game must be buried and the second (15-16) that if they eat an already dead animal must be purified. I find the first implausible and the second helpful.

⁵ For the discussion see **Baruch A. Levine**, *Leviticus*, The JPS Torah Commentary (Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society, 1989), 112-13; **Jacob Milgrom**, *Leviticus 17-22: A New Translation*

Here's the problem. Deuteronomy 12 does not restrict all forms of killing. Here's the relevant passage: "Take care that you do not offer your burnt offerings at any place that you see, but at the place that the LORD will choose in one of your tribes, there you shall offer your burnt offerings, and there you shall do all that I am commanding you. However, you may slaughter and eat meat within any of your towns, as much as you desire, according to the blessing of the LORD your God that he has given you. The unclean and the clean may eat of it, as of the gazelle and as of the deer. Only you shall not eat the blood; you shall pour it out on the earth like water" (Deut 12:13-16). If we take the first outline, I see no way of avoiding an outright contradiction with Deuteronomy 12. I do not believe the Scripture contradicts itself and that when people come to this conclusion, it is because they have not thought long enough or hard enough on how to solve the apparent riddle. As we will see when we go through this, the context of the passage itself seems to me to necessitate that there is no contradiction. Let's turn to that now and see for ourselves as we take our last stand in this courtyard of God's holy sanctuary.

with Introduction and Commentary, vol. 3A, Anchor Yale Bible (New Haven; London: Yale University Press, 2008), 1452-53 has a similar discussion but concludes the opposite.

Introduction

Leviticus 17 begins as most chapters do with the introductory words that it is **the LORD**, the Word of the LORD (targums) speaking. “**And the LORD spoke to Moses, saying, ‘speak to Aaron and his sons and to all the people of Israel and say to them, This is the thing that the LORD has commanded...’**” (**Lev 17:1-2**). This is language that takes us back to the second verse of the books where it says, “**Speak to the people of Israel and say to them...**” This is the clue that we have come **full circle** in our march around the courtyard. But it continues to impress upon us that these are not merely the words of Moses. These are the commands of Yahweh himself, and Yahweh does not contradict himself.

No Sacrifices Outside the Tabernacle (3-9)

Jews and the Goat-Demons (3-7)

There are **five separate commands** thus given. The first centers on “**any one of the house of Israel**” “**killing**” “**an ox or a lamb or a goat**” “**in the camp**” or “**outside the camp**” (**3**). The audience is **any Jew**, any biological descendant of Jacob.

This fits with them killing it “in the camp.” But since a Jew can also be “outside the camp” for a variety of reasons, this is included. The point will be, they are not killing it in the courtyard of the tabernacle.

The second part deals with killing. Some have isolated the word from the larger context. As Wenham notes, the word “kill” (*shachat*) “may cover slaughter for nonsacrificial purposes (e.g., Gen 37:31; 1Sa 14:32), though it is most commonly used for the ritual slaughter in sacrifice (cf. Lev 1:5, 11, etc.).⁶ Well enough and good. By the way, this is a different word than is found in the sixth commandment, “You shall not murder (*ratsach*).” The idea here is not the unjustified murder of a beast, but killing it most likely, as we will see, for food.

But Wenham does something here that should be a warning. He inexplicably stops his exegesis at the word-study and concludes that because the word *can* mean nonsacrificial slaughter, it *does* include that here. He immediately says, “The point made by this law is that in the wilderness no secular slaughter is permitted. If an Israelite wished to eat meat, he must bring his chosen animal to the

⁶ Gordon J. Wenham, *The Book of Leviticus*, The New International Commentary on the Old Testament (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1979), 241.

tabernacle as a peace offering. There the priest would kill it in the approved way, sprinkle the blood and burn the fat.” He never bothers to prove *why* it must mean this here. This forces him⁷ into the Deuteronomy contradiction. But is this right? No, for several reasons.

The phrase “ox or a lamb or a goat” is only found one other time (where “sheep” replaces “lamb”). In that context ([Lev 22:26ff](#)), it clearly refers to these animals as viewed as sacrifices. And this seems obvious here too if we keep reading. For example, [vs. 4](#) tells them they must bring this dead animal “to the entrance of the tent of meeting to offer it as a gift to the LORD in front of the tabernacle of the LORD.” Verse 4 presupposes that the killing was for a sacrifice (i.e. a “gift;” see [1:10; 7:14](#)).

What should we make of the second half of [vs. 4](#)? It says that if they do not do this, “bloodguilt shall be imputed to that man. He has shed blood, and that man shall be cut off from among his people.” This harkens back to the Genesis 9 which teaches the sons of Noah about the seriousness of shedding blood. It isn’t because this is a general command and killing any animal whatsoever would bring bloodguilt

⁷ Milgrom, Douglas, and others also follow this line of thinking.

(it wouldn't, unless it were unlawful killing). It is that he has spilled sacrificial blood in a place God has not prescribed. This is blasphemous and sacrilege in the extreme.

Hence, **the punishment** is that they are **cut off from their people**. We are entering here into something we will see for the rest of Leviticus. Thus far, all the sins of the people have been forgivable. Most of these referred to unintentional sins of ritual purity and the like. In other words, they were not moral sins. But not all of them. Some were moral sins and they were forgivable, like Aaron's sin of the Golden Calf which was atoned when he offered the bull on the Day of Atonement. This is an important point. There is no atonement for this person here. Rather, he is to be cut off from the people. Why? The only sensible reason is because he has **made a mockery of the sacrifices** and of God by offering them his own way in his own place and (as we will see) to something that isn't even God!

Again, Hebrews says, "**Without the shedding of blood there is no forgiveness of sins**" (**Heb 9:22**). What kind of blood? *Sacrificial* blood. That is what is in mind here too. If the sacrifice is not offered in the sanctuary, there can be no forgiveness, because it is a blasphemous sacrifice. Do you see?

It isn't that this is a sin that is unforgivable because some sins can't be forgiven. It is that the only means of forgiveness is being mocked. That's the problem. Hence, vv. 4 seriously reinforces Rabbi Akaba's view. What is in mind here is not any old killing of animals, but the sacrificial killing of animals.

Vs. 5 makes this even more obvious. “This is to the end that the people of Israel may bring their sacrifices that they sacrifice in the open field, that they may bring them to the LORD, to the priest at the entrance of the tent of meeting, and sacrifice them as sacrifices of peace offerings to the LORD.” How this doesn't put to rest any discussion is beyond me. The people are bringing their “sacrifices,” not their lunch meat. They are offering “sacrifices in the open field,” not going out hunting for meat to put in their stew. It specifically refers to these as “peace offerings” (ch. 3), the purpose of which was to enter into a kind of “communion” with God. How can this happen if the entire sacrifice takes place far away from God's house where the LORD resides among his people?

Vs. 6 simply adds to this. “The priest shall throw the blood on the altar of the LORD at the entrance of the tent of meeting and burn the fat for a pleasing aroma to the

LORD.” He is doing what he was commanded to do (**Lev 3:2, 8, 13**), because this animal killing was for the purpose of the earlier law.

But it is **vs. 7** that really puts this into perspective. “So they shall no more sacrifice their sacrifices to goat demons, after whom they whore. This shall be a statute forever for them throughout their generations.” This explains the reason they would have not gone to the tabernacle. They were not, in fact, offering this offering to the right God in the wrong place. They were offering it in the wrong place because they were offering it to a *different* god. What is this god?

The word is *seirim*. It is a word we find in **Isaiah 13:21** and **34:14** where it refers to a demon. The most well-known of all goat demons is **Pan**, whose shrine existed at the base of Mt. Hermon (among other places) before the coming of Christ, whose cave Jesus called “the gates of hell.” It might be interesting to note, based on what we talked about earlier, than all the ancient people thought that when the Nephilim died, they became **demons**.⁸

⁸ Pan is probably not a dead Nephilim, because they were half *human*, half god. But, Enoch and the more recent book of Jasher and even strange texts like Isaiah above or the strange “Ariel” “lion-men” killed by one of David’s mighty men (**2Sam 23:20**) give evidence that half-god, half-

Pan was a half-goat, half-man looking creature. He and others like him are depicted as music loving, sexually deviant demon-gods. Curiously, his worship died out just about the time that the Messiah was being born into the world. But it was alive and well in ancient days and this passage says that the people deliberately worshiped the goat-demons and a sign of this was that they would not take their sacrifice to the temple of Yahweh, but kept it outside in the place much closer to the demons than to Yahweh's special presence among his people. This law was to teach Israel that there was only one God they were to be sacrificing to. **There can be no peace with Yahweh by offering a peace-offering to Pan.** All there can be is exile away from God's presence and banishment from God's people in the wilderness.

Stranger and Burnt Offerings (8-9)

A second law is similar to the first. **Vv. 8-9** now talk about the "**burnt offering.**" These were the most common offerings that were discussed in Ch. 1. These were given for purposes

animal creatures also existed in some way, shape, or form. As half god, they could still resemble men, as angels sometimes do throughout the Bible.

of thanksgiving or to ask a special request of the LORD or so on.

This law concerns not just “the house of Israel,” but also “of the strangers who sojourn among them.” In those days, it was probably the “mixed multitude” (Ex 12:37) that came out of Egypt with the Israelites, people from other nations who wanted no more of the oppression of the Pharaoh. But if they were to live in the land, they had to obey the commands of Yahweh. They were expected to offer sacrifices to him and to worship him, for this was his land and his people they sojourned among.

When they offered their burnt offerings, they also had to “bring it to the entrance of the tent of meeting to offer it to the LORD” (9). If they did not, the result was the same, for the same reason as before. They must be cut off from their own people, because they have rejected the worship of Yahweh and the only means of atonement he has provided.

Eating the Blood (10-12)

The third law of the chapter is vv. 10-12. This as the middle of five, and is thereby the central law, which I would

argue is not just literary, but **theological**. It undergirds all the rest. It concerns **eating the blood**. “If any one of the house of Israel or of the strangers who sojourn among them eats any blood, I will set my face against that person who eats blood and will cut him off from among his people” (10). Notice again the punishment. They are to be cut off. Why?

In this law, the reason remains the same (though, as we will see in the next law, by extension there is another reason). This blood is the blood of a sacrifice. “... I have given it for you on the altar to make atonement for your souls, for it is the blood that makes atonement...” (11). To eat the blood that is supposed to be sprinkled and dabbed on the sanctuary to purify it so that forgiving, cleansing power could come out from the presence of a holy God and make atonement for the people was to **cannibalize that power** by ingesting it into their own person, foregoing the ritual, ignoring the rules, and blaspheming the righteous Name of the LORD who alone brings atonement.

But something more is said here. “For the life of the flesh is in the blood ... the blood ... makes atonement by the life” (11). This again goes back to **Genesis 9:4**, “You shall not eat flesh with its life, that is, its blood.” God is telling us here

that there is an [incredible power in blood](#). It is the very power of life itself. No other fluid, no other substance, has this power in all the universe. Not in the same way.

This is at the heart of some of the darkest things in our history. Satanic cults going back to the beginning of time [eat the blood of sacrifices](#), especially human sacrifices, to take in this life-force in a kind of antichrist atonement that mocks all that God is. Pagan religions of every stripe and shade have engaged in this. This was the world before Christianity. It is quickly becoming the world in a post-Christian West.

This goes back probably even further to [demonic entities](#) that have terrified those who do not know the LORD in times past. Consider the darkness of consuming the blood when viewed from the perspective of a [vampire](#), and I'm not talking about the westernized, good-guy vamps of contemporary literature and movies. I'm talking about true evil as Count Dracula was portrayed originally by Bram Stoker. Vampires are ancient and ubiquitous and terrifying to all people of all times and places.

Some scholars have suggested that [the origin of vampire myths](#) goes back to ancient [Babylon](#).⁹ Most people think that

⁹ For instance, [Judd H. Burton](#), *Interview With The Giant: Ethnohistorical Notes on the Nephilim* (Burton Beyond Press, 2009), 24-33.

Stoker made up the legend, but nothing could be further from the truth. In [China](#) it is called *giang shi*, a demon who drinks blood. In [Peru](#) it is the *pumapmicuc* who sucked blood from sleeping victims. In [Greece](#) they were the *empusa*, winged demon-women who lured handsome youths to their deaths to drink their blood and eat their flesh. In [India](#) they speak of a vampire who hangs upside down from a tree like a bat. The [Maya](#) worshiped a giant blood-sucking creature named *Camazotz*—half man, half bat. The [Apache and Comanche](#) Indians speak of the giant cannibal owl. Several (Lilith in [Isa 34:14](#), the *aluqa* in [Prov 30:15](#), possibly sirens in [Isa 13:21](#)) have made it into [the Scripture](#) as demons. An ancient Babylonian spell shows you their terror,

Spirits that minish heaven and earth, that minish the land, of giant strength, of giant strength and giant tread, demons like raging bulls, great ghosts, ghosts that break through all houses, demons that have no shame, seven are they! They rage against mankind; they spill their blood like rain, devouring their flesh and sucking their veins.

(Utakki Limnuti Tablet V.Col.IV.10-18, 25-27)¹⁰

¹⁰ See [R. Campbell Thompson](#), *The Devils and Evil Spirits of Babylonia: Being Babylonian and Assyrian Incantations Against the Demons, Ghouls, Vampires, Hobgoblins, Ghosts, and Kindred Evil Spirits, Which Attack Mankind* (reprinted by Forgotten Books at Google Books, originally published around 1903), p. 71.

This is a far cry from the pop-culture romanticism of the vampire as good-guys.

This law concludes by reinforcing this point. “Therefore I have said to the people of Israel, No person among you shall eat blood, neither shall any stranger who sojourns among you eat blood.” (Lev 17:12). This is the reason that Jews drain the blood from the animal before it is consumed. But as I said earlier, even in this we can go astray, as it is a common practice in slaughterhouses to drain the blood while the animal is living and in a great deal of pain. Even though the law says they have to be unable to feel anything, it is often more convenient (and easy) to skirt the law for the sake of profits without ethics.

Laws Concerning Game (13-16)

Draining the Blood (12-13)

The fourth law finally moves us out of the specific type of killing for sacrifices into the broader category of killing an animal for other lawful reasons, such as food. Its regulation concerns who to do with the blood of one of these animals that does not have to be taken to the tabernacle because it is not a sacrifice. “Any one also of the people of

Israel, or of the strangers who sojourn among them, who takes in hunting any beast or bird that may be eaten shall pour out its blood and cover it with earth. For the life of every creature is its blood: its blood is its life. Therefore I have said to the people of Israel, You shall not eat the blood of any creature, for the life of every creature is its blood. Whoever eats it shall be cut off” (13-14).

Notice, these are animals that are hunted. Nothing is said here about going to the tabernacle with its blood, because the point is not about offering a sacrifice. In perfect agreement with Deuteronomy 12 and Genesis 9, some animals may be killed for food, so long as it is clean rather than unclean animals (see Ch. 11).

If the animal is killed on, say, a long journey where it is then eaten by a campfire, the law specifies that the blood must be poured out and covered over with earth. In other words, you drain the blood before eating, but then you collect that blood and bury it. Why? The reason is the same. “The life of every creature is its blood: its blood is its life.” Again, the punishment is the same because the regulation has been repeated. They are to be cut off.

Here, the reason for the cutting off is not related to atonement, but simply to life. To not do this is to **disregard the life** God created. It is to treat it with contempt, as a profane thing. Blood is not profane. It must not be allowed to lay around for other animals to come along and eat and become unclean like the carrion scavengers. An illustration might help. When a wild animal, such as a bear, gets its first taste of human blood, the animal is always put down rather than re-released. This is because once it tastes the blood, it changes and from that point on, it becomes a different creature, thirsty for more blood, consumed with idea of tasting more. The same runs through perverted individuals that want to become like vampires or cultures that are obsessed with blood. One little taste and they are hooked on death. The uncleanness is highly contagious and its results are morally deadly. So bury the blood.

Purification

The **fifth** and final law concerns an animal that has died or been **torn by beasts** (15-16). Previous laws have discussed touching it (see throughout **Lev 11; 14:8**). This one continues

the thought of **eating**. It applies to the native or the sojourner. They are permitted to eat it (so long as it is a clean animal), but they **must wash their clothes** and **bathe in water** and be unclean until evening (**15**), because it was found dead. If they refuse, they “**shall bear [their] iniquity**” (**16**). This returns to the need for all things in Israel to be clean so that contagious holiness does not break out against unclean people and consume them. It is a nice way to round off our tour of the courtyard, by having us think about the unclean half (Chs. 11-15) that was mostly omitted from this chapter that focused much more on the sacrificial side of it (Chs. 1-7).

Relevance Today?

In thinking about **the relevance** of all this for our day, where we no longer worry about such things, I thought I would start with an excellent application of blood-eating vampires as seen through the movie *The Addiction* as explained by my friend Brian Godawa. This movie,

... uses the vampire genre as a metaphor for the addictive sinful nature of humanity. The vampires spout human philosophy as they kill their victims, attempting to prove

there is no moral authority to condemn what they do. One of them even concedes R.C. Sproul's theological point [yes, it literally quotes Sproul in the movie], that, "we're not sinners because we sin, we sin because we are sinners." One victim is shocked at being bitten by her friend. She anxiously blurts out, "How could you do this? Doesn't it affect you? How can you do this to me?" To which her vampiress friend sardonically replies, "It was your decision. Your friend Feuerbach said that all men counting stars are equivalent in every way to God. My indifference is not the concern here. It's your astonishment that needs study." This reversal is an apologetic argument against unbelief, par excellence. If God is dead, as the modern secular mindset proposes, and man is his own deity, creating his own morality, then no one should be surprised when people create their own morality by feasting on the blood of others. Without God, there is no such thing as "evil."¹¹

He concludes, "The only difference between the living and the undead is that the vampires are aware of their corruption, while the living are self-deceived in thinking

¹¹ Brian Godawa, "An Apologetic of Horror," *Christian Research Journal* 32:5 (2009), 48 [46-51-], https://www.academia.edu/3794183/An_Apologetic_of_Horror.

they are not. Pure Romans 1 through 3 with a vengeance.”¹²

Clearly, sin is lurking just under the surface of all these laws, and it is our job to understand our own propensities to break God’s laws and follow our own paths.

Godawa’s point is precisely the point being made by our passage. To eat the blood is to eat the life itself. It is to be **morbidly fascinated with death**. This is how I began the sermon, by showing you that one of the great concerns of our age is our cultures obsession with blood and dead.

Amazingly, the focus in Leviticus is on *animals*. In this, there is an implicit argument from the lesser to the greater. It is **vital to care about the blood of the lesser** being in order to see **how much more precious** the blood of the greater being is and how much more serious it is when it is taken. Some people care about the greater but not the lesser, because they start in the wrong place.

Others say they care about the lesser (animals), but want to kill babies in the womb. They’ve managed to justify this because they are “globs of tissue” and “a woman’s body.” But that’s wicked nonsense that is working its logic out before our eyes as now many millions of people want to kill

¹² This is apparently a review he did at another time. This was posted by Scott, “The Addition,” Puritan Board (Oc 4, 2005), <https://www.puritanboard.com/threads/the-addiction.9342/>.

babies born during botched abortions even though they are now here in this world quite alive. This is a refusal to move from the lesser to the greater. Both are vital.

All humans are made in God's image, as Genesis 9 frames it. Yet, animals are made by God too and have the life-blood in them. The Hebrew is the *nephesh*, the **soul**, and it is exactly the same word that God gives to humans. To not care about them is, ultimately, to not care about us, because it is to not care about the God who made both.

But there is a **second application** here. Let me return to **the goat demon** for a moment. By most counts, Pan is the only god who dies.¹³ The story goes that the Egyptian sailor was sailing along the western coast of Greece in the first years of the Christian era when he heard a voice shouting, "**The great god Pan is dead.**" It doesn't say how Pan died. Some say the gods only die **when people stop believing in them**, which is itself an interesting idea, because what happens when people *start* believing in them again, as they are, increasingly, today?

¹³ The Wikipedia on Pan says, "Pan is the only Greek god who actually dies." However, in some counts, Zeus actually has a tomb. Callimachus, Hymn 1 recounts how the Cretans believed Zeus had died and they knew of his tomb (the hymn itself rejects the idea as blasphemy because Zeus is immortal).

Chesterton has a long treatise on this and states at one point, “It is said truly in a sense that Pan died because Christ was born. It is almost as true in another sense that men knew that Christ was born because Pan was already dead.”¹⁴ I want to make the suggestion that when Christ is worshipped, the gods do die *in a sense*. While they are immortal, until the last day when God will throw the fallen angels into Gehenna, they do lose their powers over us and through us, to a great extent, also over culture when Christ is honored. When we lose faith in Christ, as is happening today, in his power, in his work, those gods resurface, and their slavery starts anew. This is a true darkness. And it is disconcerting how fast this darkness is spreading today.

Leviticus 17 presents us with the only true and sure hope that we have against such darkness. **The blood.** Again, Hebrews says, “**without the shedding of blood there is no forgiveness.**” It does not have in mind the blood of bulls of goats which could never take away sins. It has in mind **the blood of Jesus Christ** which was offered once-for-all. Why? Because his is the True Blood, the blood that carried eternal Life itself.

¹⁴ **G. K. Chesterton**, *The Everlasting Man* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishers, 2011).

The **profaning of his blood** is the rejection of the message that he has died for the forgiveness of all of your sins. It is the ultimate blasphemy, the ultimate profanity, because it is a rejection of the Life-blood that appeases God's wrath against your treachery. When an individual or a culture rejects this, they give themselves over to death and, eventually, the blood-thirsty gods of old return. Then, the Dark Ages come upon us and woe to one and all.

But you have heard this message today that **Jesus is the fulfillment of these bloody rites**. His death was offered in heaven itself, presented to God in the Most Holy Place it could be presented. His blood takes away your sins when you are called by God and trust in Christ by faith.

The NT symbolizes this faith in a profound way through **the Lord's Supper** where you have not only the right, but the obligation to consume *his* blood. Not literally, but by faith. **"For anyone who eats and drinks without discerning the body eats and drinks judgment on himself"** (1Cor 11:29). You must discern his body, that is, you must believe that he did this for you. Somehow, these symbols are united to the very body and blood of Christ in heaven so

that by faith, we feed upon the living Christ himself in communion.

Jesus makes this clear in another place. “Truly, truly, I say to you, unless you eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink his blood, you have no life in you. Whoever feeds on my flesh and drinks my blood has eternal life, and I will raise him up on the last day. For my flesh is true food, and my blood is true drink. Whoever feeds on my flesh and drinks my blood abides in me, and I in him” (Jn 6:53-56). The only legal ingesting of sacrificial blood now is the blood of Jesus Christ.

Turn to Christ. Drink his blood. Eat his body. Not physically. Not as cannibals. Not as dead vampires. Spiritually. As those who have been brought from death to life by the Living God. Partake in fellowship with Father, Son, and Holy Spirit through the Peace Offer given for you. Trust that Christ’s sacrifice of blood takes away your sins. Step out of this culture of death, away from its fixation upon blood, and into the light of the resurrected Son of God and know the meaning of true life abundant and eternal through his blood spilt for you.

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