

# LEVITICUS CHAPTER 17

## PRESCRIPTIONS FOR PRACTICAL HOLINESS

### THE SANCTITY OF BLOOD

This seventeenth chapter introduces the fourth and final section of the book. Moses remains God's spokesman, but His words are now addressed to the whole community without distinction (v2,8). This section has often been called the "holiness code". Chapter 17 is a kind of bridge. It connects the first 16 chapters which are mainly concerned with ritual matters, to the last 11 chapters, mainly concerned with ethical matters. The theme of this chapter is all about "blood". Blood guilt, bloodshed, sprinkled blood and a ban on consuming blood. This chapter may not be the most attractive, but it is absolutely crucial to a correct understanding of the Christian message.

#### Structure

It is divided into two parts:

V1-9 A ban on random sacrifices.

V10-16 A ban on consuming blood.

#### 1. A ban on random sacrifices v1-9

This passage teaches that animals used in worship must only be killed at the official altar at the door of the Tabernacle. The reason for this law was to prevent the people from falling into pagan idolatry. The actual term for "demons" (v7) signifies hairy or shaggy goats that inhabited desert places. Walter Kaiser suggests that goat worship was part of Egyptian religion and that this is what Joshua was referring to when he spoke of Israel's ancestors worshipping false gods in Egypt (Josh 24v14). A later example of this goat worship may be seen in 2 Chronicles 11v15, in which Jeroboam institutes a priesthood for the cult of "demons" = goat idols. This legislation is an obvious application of the first commandment, "You shall have no other gods before Me".

#### 2. A ban on consuming blood v10-16

This legislation unlike the former is not new. When God first sanctioned the eating of meat after the Flood, He required that humans should refrain from eating meat that had not been drained with blood (Gen 9v3,4).

Moses reveals the right way to kill clean animals (v13). Finally, a ruling is given for anyone who eats an animal found dead (v15).

Two reasons are given for this total ban on consuming blood.

A) Blood represents life v11,14

B) Blood makes atonement v11