DEUTERONOMY

Chapter 14

*Clean and Unclean Food*

**You are the children of the Lord your God. Do not cut yourselves or shave the front of your heads for the dead, 2 for you are a people holy to the Lord your God. Out of all the peoples on the face of the earth, the Lord has chosen you to be his treasured possession. 3 Do not eat any detestable thing. 4 These are the animals you may eat: the ox, the sheep, the goat, 5 the deer, the gazelle, the roe deer, the wild goat, the ibex, the antelope and the mountain sheep. 6 You may eat any animal that has a split hoof divided in two and that chews the cud. 7 However, of those that chew the cud or that have a split hoof completely divided you may not eat the camel, the rabbit or the coney. Although they chew the cud, they do not have a split hoof; they are ceremonially unclean for you. 8 The pig is also unclean; although it has a split hoof, it does not chew the cud. You are not to eat their meat or touch their carcasses. 9 Of all the creatures living in the water, you may eat any that has fins and scales. 10 But anything that does not have fins and scales you may not eat; for you it is unclean. 11 You may eat any clean bird. 12 But these you may not eat: the eagle, the vulture, the black vulture, 13 the red kite, the black kite, any kind of falcon, 14 any kind of raven, 15 the horned owl, the screech owl, the gull, any kind of hawk, 16 the little owl, the great owl, the white owl, 17 the desert owl, the osprey, the cormorant, 18 the stork, any kind of heron, the hoopoe and the bat. 19 All flying insects that swarm are unclean to you; do not eat them. 20 But any winged creature that is clean you may eat. 21 Do not eat anything you find already dead. You may give it to an alien living in any of your towns, and he may eat it, or you may sell it to a foreigner. But you are a people holy to the Lord your God. Do not cook a young goat in its mother’s milk.**

**14:1** *sons of the Lord*. In the OT, the people of Israel were regarded as God’s own children; they were part of His household and subject to His rules. In the NT, all Christians are described as members of God’s household (Eph 2:19; 1Tm 3:15) and as sons of God the Father (Rm 8:12–17). (TLSB)

*cut yourselves.* A pagan religious custom (see 1Ki 18:28). (CSB)

In Canaanite religion, people ritually cut themselves until blood flowed. (TLSB)

*shave the front of your heads.* Shaving the forehead was a practice of mourners in Canaan. (CSB)

Mourners were forbidden to tear out the hair from the front of their head (either out of despair or to arouse pity). (TLSB)

**14:2, 21** *holy to the Lord*. See note on Lev 11:44. The regulations regarding clean and unclean foods were intended to separate Israel from things which made them ceremonially unclean. (CSB)

**14:2** *treasured possession.* See note on Ex 19:5. (CSB)

**14:3–21** The subject of clean and unclean food is discussed in greater detail in Lev 11 (see notes there). (CSB)

Luther held that God gave four basic reasons for forbidding His people at that time from eating unclean animals: (1) They were literally unclean and so unfit for human consumption (at least for that time and place). (2) Such strict dietary laws, which distinguished God’s people from the other nations, would discourage His people from making additional laws of their own devising. (3) Through the strict laws, human pride might be broken, so that God’s people might grow in desire for the One who would deliver them from their sins. (4) In seeing that “unclean, rapacious, and cruel animals were forbidden,” God’s people would be moved to love and gentleness (AE 9:134–38).

**14:3** *eat any abomination*. Same attitude toward unclean food as toward pagan practices of the land God’s people were to enter. (TLSB)

**14:21** *Do not eat … already dead.* Because of the prohibition against eating blood, since the dead animal’s blood would not be properly drained (see 12:16, 24; see also notes on Ge 9:4; Lev 17:11). (CSB)

*Do not cook a young goat in its mother’s milk.* See note on Ex 23:19. (CSB)

**14:1–21** The Lord calls His people, as members of His household, to avoid mimicking the self-destructive behaviors of their pagan neighbors. The Israelites were to adopt new and distinct table manners, eating only clean food. As members of God’s household (Eph 2:19), we, too, must leave behind all those behaviors and habits that damage ourselves and the Christian community (Eph 5:1–7). Since God has adopted us in Christ Jesus, our Father in heaven will always give us His Holy Spirit so that we may be cleansed from all our sin (Rm 8:12–17). • Father, cleanse me from my guilt, and give me the will and the strength to lead a life worthy of my calling. In Jesus’ name. Amen. (TLSB)

*Tithes*

**22 Be sure to set aside a tenth of all that your fields produce each year. 23 Eat the tithe of your grain, new wine and oil, and the firstborn of your herds and flocks in the presence of the Lord your God at the place he will choose as a dwelling for his Name, so that you may learn to revere the Lord your God always. 24 But if that place is too distant and you have been blessed by the Lord your God and cannot carry your tithe (because the place where the Lord will choose to put his Name is so far away), 25 then exchange your tithe for silver, and take the silver with you and go to the place the Lord your God will choose. 26 Use the silver to buy whatever you like: cattle, sheep, wine or other fermented drink, or anything you wish. Then you and your household shall eat there in the presence of the Lord your God and rejoice. 27 And do not neglect the Levites living in your towns, for they have no allotment or inheritance of their own. 28 At the end of every three years, bring all the tithes of that year’s produce and store it in your towns, 29 so that the Levites (who have no allotment or inheritance of their own) and the aliens, the fatherless and the widows who live in your towns may come and eat and be satisfied, and so that the Lord your God may bless you in all the work of your hands.**

**14:22–29** See Nu 18:21–29. Taken together, the two passages suggest the following: 1. Annually, a tenth of all Israelite produce was to be taken to the city of the central sanctuary for distribution to the Levites. 2. At that time, at an initial festival, all Israelites ate part of the tithe. 3. The rest, which would be by far the major part of it, belonged to the Levites. 4. Every third year the tithe was gathered in the towns and stored for distribution to the Levites and the less fortunate: aliens, fatherless and widows (see 26:12). 5. The Levites were to present to the Lord a tenth of their tithe. See note on Lev 27:30. (CSB)

In Nu 18:20–27, the Levites received the tithe. Here we see that the collection of the tithe was also a festive occasion that included a meal with the Levites and needy individuals. (TLSB)

**14:22** *set aside a tenth.* See notes on Ge 14:20; 28:22. (CSB)

**14:23** *dwelling for his Name.* See note on 12:5. (CSB)

**14:25** *silver.* Pieces of silver of various weights were a common medium of exchange, but not in the form of coins (see note on Ge 20:16). (CSB)

**14:26** *wine or strong drink*. God blessed the use of alcohol in this communal celebration. (TLSB)

**14:27** Cf Nu 18.

**14:22–29** God would provide for His people through the land that He was giving them. He commands them to use their portion for worship and to provide for the needy. Today, God calls us to share with our neighbor in need from the abundance of our possessions (cf Eph 4:28; Lk 10:25–37). Because God provides for us, we do not need to be anxious about our sustenance in this life (Mt 6:31). We are free to gratefully receive the generosity of others, to joyfully use the best we have in the worship of God, and to cheerfully experience God’s love as we give to those in need (2Co 9:7). • Lord, thank You for Your great generosity to me. By Your Holy Spirit, lead me to give cheerfully and gratefully because of the gifts You have given. In Jesus’ name. Amen. (TLSB)