

# LEVITICUS

## Chapter 17

### *The Place of Sacrifice*

**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.**

**17:1–4** Outside the tabernacle, God considered the ritual sacrifice of animals and disposal of their blood a capital crime. Only those sacrifices commanded by God and offered at the entrance to the tent of meeting were permitted. (TLSB)

**17:4** *tabernacle of the LORD.* The people, with few exceptions (e.g., Dt 12:15, 20–21), were directed to sacrifice only at the central sanctuary (Dt 12:5–6). Sennacherib’s representative referred to Hezekiah’s requiring worship only in Jerusalem (2Ki 18:22). One reason for such a regulation was to keep the Israelites from becoming corrupted by the Canaanites’ pagan worship. (CSB)

*bloodguilt.* The life of any creature is in its blood (vv 11, 14). God compares their needless slaughter to murder of human beings. (TLSB)

*cut off from his people.* God’s punishment may include execution at His own hand, but most certainly a dismissal from God’s covenant community. (TLSB)

**17:5** *they sacrifice in the open field.* Pagan nations poured the blood of slaughtered animals on the ground to appease the “spirits.” The Lord required singular devotion and one altar. (TLSB)

**17:7** *goat demons.* Earth spirits envisaged as he-goats much like the satyrs of mythology. Cf 2Ch 11:15; Is 13:21; 34:14. Some interpreters associate these pagan deities with the Azazel goat, though Scripture never affirms such an association. (TLSB)

**17:1–9** God proclaims His dwelling place as the exclusive place for sacrifices. He does not want His people running after false gods. Today, avoid every association with idolatrous practices. Jesus is the only way to the Father (Jn 1:17–18; 14:6). He alone atones for our sins of idolatry with His precious blood (Rm 3:25). By God’s grace, He offers eternal life (Rm 6:23). • Father in heaven, grant us undivided hearts focused on Your dear Son, who came to ransom us from our sin, that we might receive the joy of Your salvation. Amen. (TLSB)

*Laws Against Eating Blood*

**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[a] 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.”

**17:10–12** God reserved blood for a divine purpose, the atonement of sins. (TLSB)

**17:11** *the life of the flesh is in the blood.* The blood shed in the sacrifices was sacred. It epitomized the life of the sacrificial victim. Since life was sacred, blood (a symbol of life) had to be treated with respect (Ge 9:5–6). Eating blood was therefore strictly forbidden (see 7:26–27; Dt 12:16, 23–25; 15:23; 1Sa 14:32–34). (CSB)

*blood ... make atonement.* Practically every sacrifice included the sprinkling or smearing of blood on the altar or within the tabernacle (v. 6; 1:5; 3:2; 4:6, 25; 7:2), thus teaching that atonement involves the substitution of life for life. The blood of the OT sacrifice pointed forward to the blood of the Lamb of God, who obtained for his people “eternal redemption” (Heb 9:12). “Without the shedding of blood there is no forgiveness” (Heb 9:22). (CSB)

**17:13–14** The Israelites and those who came among them as strangers were permitted to hunt birds and animals to supplement their diets. The blood from these birds and animals was drained on the ground and covered with earth. Dt 12:15–16, 20–25; 15:21–23 use this ordinance as permission to slaughter domestic animals for their consumption. (TLSB)

**17:15** *dies of itself or what is torn.* Such animals would not have had the blood drained from them and therefore would be forbidden. (CSB)

**17:10–16** God forbids the wanton killing of birds and animals. He desires that respect be shown for all life. Those who kill wantonly are held accountable for each life. Thanks be to God for the precious, life-giving blood of Jesus, who has reconciled us to the Father. • Father of mercy, You provided Your ancient people with ordinances that respected lifeblood as the atonement of sins. By Christ’s blood, You redeemed all people. Thank You for Your gracious gifts through Jesus Christ. Amen. (TLSB)