

DEUTERONOMY

Chapter 14

Clean and Unclean Food

“You are the sons of the LORD your God. You shall not cut yourselves or make any baldness on your foreheads for the dead. 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. 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. 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. 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. 9 “Of all that are in the waters you may eat these: whatever has fins and scales you may eat. 10 And whatever does not have fins and scales you shall not eat; it is unclean for you. 11 “You may eat all clean birds. 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. 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.

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)

any baldness on your foreheads. 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.* The regulations regarding clean and unclean foods were intended to separate Israel from things which made them ceremonially unclean. (CSB)

14:3–21 The subject of clean and unclean food is discussed in greater detail in Lev 11. (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). (TLSB)

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 *shall not eat ... died naturally.* Because of the prohibition against eating blood, since the dead animal's blood would not be properly drained. (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 "You shall tithe all the yield of your seed that comes from the field year by year. **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. **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. **27** And you shall not neglect the Levite who is within your towns, for he has no portion or inheritance with you. **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.

14:22–29 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)

14:25 *turn into money.* Pieces of silver of various weights were a common medium of exchange, but not in the form of coins. (CSB)

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

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)