

# LEVITICUS

## Chapter 11

### *Clean and Unclean Animals*

And the LORD spoke to Moses and Aaron, saying to them, 2 “Speak to the people of Israel, saying, These are the living things that you may eat among all the animals that are on the earth. 3 Whatever parts the hoof and is cloven-footed and chews the cud, among the animals, you may eat. 4 Nevertheless, among those that chew the cud or part the hoof, you shall not eat these: The camel, because it chews the cud but does not part the hoof, is unclean to you. 5 And the rock badger, because it chews the cud but does not part the hoof, is unclean to you. 6 And the hare, because it chews the cud but does not part the hoof, is unclean to you. 7 And the pig, because it parts the hoof and is cloven-footed but does not chew the cud, is unclean to you. 8 You shall not eat any of their flesh, and you shall not touch their carcasses; they are unclean to you. 9 “These you may eat, of all that are in the waters. Everything in the waters that has fins and scales, whether in the seas or in the rivers, you may eat. 10 But anything in the seas or the rivers that does not have fins and scales, of the swarming creatures in the waters and of the living creatures that are in the waters, is detestable to you. 11 You shall regard them as detestable; you shall not eat any of their flesh, and you shall detest their carcasses. 12 Everything in the waters that does not have fins and scales is detestable to you. 13 “And these you shall detest among the birds; they shall not be eaten; they are detestable: the eagle, the bearded vulture, the black vulture, 14 the kite, the falcon of any kind, 15 every raven of any kind, 16 the ostrich, the nighthawk, the sea gull, the hawk of any kind, 17 the little owl, the cormorant, the short-eared owl, 18 the barn owl, the tawny owl, the carrion vulture, 19 the stork, the heron of any kind, the hoopoe, and the bat. 20 “All winged insects that go on all fours are detestable to you. 21 Yet among the winged insects that go on all fours you may eat those that have jointed legs above their feet, with which to hop on the ground. 22 Of them you may eat: the locust of any kind, the bald locust of any kind, the cricket of any kind, and the grasshopper of any kind. 23 But all other winged insects that have four feet are detestable to you. 24 “And by these you shall become unclean. Whoever touches their carcass shall be unclean until the evening, 25 and whoever carries any part of their carcass shall wash his clothes and be unclean until the evening. 26 Every animal that parts the hoof but is not cloven-footed or does not chew the cud is unclean to you. Everyone who touches them shall be unclean. 27 And all that walk on their paws, among the animals that go on all fours, are unclean to you. Whoever touches their carcass shall be unclean until the evening, 28 and he who carries their carcass shall wash his clothes and be unclean until the evening; they are unclean to you. 29 “And these are unclean to you among the swarming things that swarm on the ground: the mole rat, the mouse, the great lizard of any kind, 30 the gecko, the monitor lizard, the lizard, the sand lizard, and the chameleon. 31 These are unclean to you among all that swarm. Whoever touches them when they are dead shall be unclean until the evening. 32 And anything on which any of them falls when they are dead shall be unclean, whether it is an article of wood or a garment or a skin or a sack, any article that is used for any purpose. It must be put into water, and it shall be unclean until the evening; then it shall be clean. 33 And if any of them falls into any earthenware vessel, all that is in it shall be unclean, and you shall break it. 34 Any food in it that could be eaten, on which water comes, shall be unclean. And all drink that could be drunk from every such vessel shall be unclean. 35 And everything on which any part of their carcass falls shall be unclean. Whether oven or stove, it shall be broken in pieces. They are unclean and shall remain unclean for you. 36 Nevertheless, a spring or a cistern holding water shall be clean, but whoever touches a carcass in them shall be unclean. 37 And if any part of their carcass falls upon any seed grain that is to be sown, it is clean, 38 but if water is put on

the seed and any part of their carcass falls on it, it is unclean to you. 39 “And if any animal which you may eat dies, whoever touches its carcass shall be unclean until the evening, 40 and whoever eats of its carcass shall wash his clothes and be unclean until the evening. And whoever carries the carcass shall wash his clothes and be unclean until the evening. 41 “Every swarming thing that swarms on the ground is detestable; it shall not be eaten. 42 Whatever goes on its belly, and whatever goes on all fours, or whatever has many feet, any swarming thing that swarms on the ground, you shall not eat, for they are detestable. 43 You shall not make yourselves detestable with any swarming thing that swarms, and you shall not defile yourselves with them, and become unclean through them. 44 For I am the LORD your God. Consecrate yourselves therefore, and be holy, for I am holy. You shall not defile yourselves with any swarming thing that crawls on the ground. 45 For I am the LORD who brought you up out of the land of Egypt to be your God. You shall therefore be holy, for I am holy.” 46 This is the law about beast and bird and every living creature that moves through the waters and every creature that swarms on the ground, 47 to make a distinction between the unclean and the clean and between the living creature that may be eaten and the living creature that may not be eaten.

**Ch 11** Part of the manual of purity (chs 11–15), here dealing with dietary rules. Because the family table was an extension of the Lord’s altar, God proclaimed what foods would defile them (“unclean”) or not defile them (“clean”). By eating unclean foods, the people would die in their impurity as Nadab and Abihu had done (10:1). (TLSB)

**11:1** God addresses both Moses and Aaron for the first time. As high priest, Aaron is included as a custodian of God’s teachings. (TLSB)

**11:2** *the ones you may eat.* Ch. 11 is closely paralleled in Dt 14:3–21 but is more extensive. The animals acceptable for human consumption were those that chewed the cud and had a split hoof (v. 3). Of marine life, only creatures with fins and scales were permissible (v. 9). Birds and insects are also covered in the instructions (vv. 13–23). The distinction between clean and unclean food was as old as the time of Noah (Ge 7:2). The main reason for the laws concerning clean and unclean food is the same as for other laws concerning the clean and unclean—to preserve the sanctity of Israel as God’s holy people (see v. 44). Some hold that certain animal life was considered unclean for health considerations; but it is difficult to substantiate this idea. Uncleanness typified sin and defilement. For the uncleanness of disease and bodily discharges see chs. 13–15. (CSB)

**11:3–8** Israelites could eat meat from an animal only if it had a split hoof and chewed its cud. Specific examples are provided to avoid confusion. (TLSB)

**11:6** *hare.* Does not technically chew the cud with regurgitation. The apparent chewing movements of the rabbit caused it to be classified popularly with cud chewers. (CSB)

**11:9–12** Fish could be eaten only if they had scales and fins.

**11:13–19** A list of birds that are unclean and not to be eaten. Some are birds of prey, and others feed on carcasses of dead animals. (TLSB)

**11:20–23** Insects that walked on all fours were unclean. Since insects have six or more legs and not four, these regulations seem to apply to insects that move (creep) like an animal on four legs. Hopping insects, including locusts, katydids, crickets, and grasshoppers, distinguished themselves and were edible. (TLSB)

**11:20** *all fours.* Although insects have six legs, perhaps people in ancient times did not count as ordinary legs the two large hind legs used for jumping. (CSB)

**11:24–28** Contact with a carcass made an individual unclean until the ritual bath before sunset. (TLSB)

**11:29–38** Israelites or anyone living within their camp became unclean by touching the following: dead rodents or reptiles (vv 29–31), an article onto which a carcass falls (v 32), a container into which a carcass falls (v 33), contaminated food or drink (v 34), oven or stove onto which part of a carcass falls (v 35), a carcass in a spring or cistern (v 36), and wet seed onto which part of a carcass falls (vv 37–38). (TLSB)

**11:36** *cistern holding water.* The use of waterproof plaster for lining cisterns dug in the ground was an important factor in helping the Israelites to settle the dry areas of Canaan after the conquest (cf. 2Ch 26:10). (CSB)

**11:39–40** Ritual impurity also resulted from touching the carcass of an edible, four-legged animal found dead from natural causes. (TLSB)

**11:41–43** Israelites seeing a snake could not help but recall the fall into sin and God’s promise of a Savior to deliver them. (TLSB)

**11:41** *ground.* Verses 29–30 identify the animals that move about (or swarm) on the ground. (CSB)

**11:44–45** *For I am the LORD.* This covenant phrase appears 45 times from here to the end of Lv and served to remind the Israelites that He had distinguished Israel from other nations (20:24), that He might sanctify the chosen people (20:8; 21:8) and be their God. (TLSB)

**11:44** *be holy, because I am holy.* Holiness is the key theme of Leviticus, ringing like a refrain in various forms throughout the book (e.g., v. 45; 19:2; 20:7, 26; 21:8, 15; 22:9, 16, 32). The word “holy” appears more often in Leviticus than in any other book of the Bible. Israel was to be totally consecrated to God. Her holiness was to be expressed in every aspect of her life, to the extent that all of life had a certain ceremonial quality. Because of who God is and what he has done (v. 45), his people must dedicate themselves fully to him (cf. Mt 5:48). See Ro 12:1. (CSB)

We might define as holy anything belonging to the sphere of God’s being or activity. Tertullian: “The will of God is our sanctification, for He wishes His ‘image’—us—to become likewise His ‘likeness’; that we may be ‘holy’ just as [He] Himself is ‘holy’ ” (ANF 4:50). (TLSB)

**11:45** *brought ... out of Egypt.* A refrain found 8 more times in Leviticus (19:36; 22:33; 23:43; 25:38, 42, 55; 26:13, 45) and nearly 60 times in 18 other books of the OT. (CSB)

**11:46–47** A summary of ch. 11. (CSB)

*This is the law.* Summary statement. Although multifaceted, all of God’s ordinances fall under a common heading of “the Law,” lovingly designed by God so that His people might share in His holiness. (TLSB)

**Ch 11** Each dietary regulation was lovingly put in place so that God might protect His people from death such as what was experienced by Nadab and Abihu, who died because of their impurity. As seen in this section, the wages of sin is death (Rm 6:23a). Disobedience of God’s Word results in death. But in His Word, He grants life and fellowship by His grace. • Merciful Lord, You alone are holy, and You shared holiness with us through the atoning sacrifice of Jesus Christ, who fulfilled the Law, and declared what was unclean to be clean. We thank You, Lord, for Your great mercy, through Christ, our Lord. Amen. (TLSB)