

Leviticus

Lesson 13

XII. The Law Forbidding the Egyptian and Canaanite Ways

Now we come to the law forbidding Egyptian and Canaanite ways among the Nation of Israel in the Promised Land. We have spoken often about the Jews being in Egypt for four hundred and thirty years, where all they knew was Egyptian life. We need to set the background to understand why the LORD's words become specific and graphic in chapters 17 through 20.

First, who are the Egyptians and Canaanites? They are cousins. When Noah's family and descendants were divided at the Tower of Babel, ninety-eight years after the flood and coming off the Ark, the sons born to Ham were Cush, Mizraim, Phut, and Canaan. When the LORD confounded the languages at the Tower of Babel and forced the families to move apart from each other to populate the world, Cush, Mizraim, Phut, and Canaan headed in the same direction from Babylon. Canaan stopped in the territory we call Canaan Land, which the LORD will take away from them and give to the Jews as the Promised Land. Mizraim stopped at the Nile River and settled in that territory. The Hebrew name "Mizraim" has been translated into English as "Egypt." Phut continued west along the Mediterranean Sea coast and settled just past Mizraim/Egypt. The Hebrew name "Phut" has been translated into English as "Libya." Cush traveled south of Mizraim/Egypt and settled in the Mountains along the upper Nile. The Hebrew name "Cush" has been translated into English as "Ethiopia." Looking at a map, we see that the border of Mizraim/Egypt touches Canaan on the east, Phut on the west, and Cush on the south.

Second, the relationship between Mizraim and Canaan's descendants over thousands of years is particularly close. The borderline between the two nations lies where the Wadi Egypt enters the Mediterranean Sea. From there, the line runs straight to the northern tip of the Sea of Aqaba, the eastern gulf finger attached to the Red Sea. As cousin nations, with no real natural boundaries that would segregate the countries from each other, the people of Mizraim/Egypt and Canaan shared many cultural practices, including their gods, customs, morals, sexual relationships, and ways of life.

Third, because the Nation of Israel grew from infancy in Egypt, all they knew was Egyptian life and ways. Entering Egypt, Israel had no restrictions upon it. It had no theology, no religion, no laws of its own. It had no true national heritage. It was a family of seventy people. Leaving Egypt, it had the Egyptian theology, religion, laws, and ways ingrained in its heart and soul. Worse than that, most Egyptian ways were matched in the Canaanite ways, and the LORD wanted a complete break from all of that for Israel. In short, all that was evil in Egypt was also found in Canaan. Evil always concerns humans and the human ways of life. For that reason, the LORD instructed Israel to destroy all the Canaanites and their ways of life upon taking the Promised Land. Why? The LORD gave Israel His specific laws, and He did not want any Israelite living in the Promised Land to fall back into or replicate their ways of life for four hundred and thirty years in Egypt.



Generally accepted border between Egypt and Canaan/Israel through the centuries.

Fourth, more needs to be said. The ways of Egypt and Canaan were the ways of the entire world. Every person in the world practiced some form of the same gods, morals, sexual relationships, and ways of life. The gods worshiped across the world had different names but were no less the same gods. The only thing different across the world was the specific local norms and customs. Israel was the LORD's new nation, and He wanted it to be different from the world as a whole. He wanted Israel to be a holy nation, set apart from the rest of the world, for His holy purpose. For that purpose, the LORD gave laws. But, in the next four chapters, the LORD is going to be specific with His directions. No detail is too small to be dismissed or overlooked. He knows the Canaanites' ways that He forbids the Israelites to replicate; He also knows the gullibility of Israelites and that they will repeat the Egyptian ways if He is not specific.

Finally, just to be sure we understand and remember, the laws in this book were for the Nation of Israel, not the rest of the world. Israel will be the only nation held accountable to the LORD for breaking these laws. However, any non-Jew who comes to live in the nation will be expected to abide by these laws. If an immigrant comes to live in the Nation of Israel and seeks to hold to his past ways of life, import them into Israel, the penalty for doing so is death. Foreign customs and ways of life mean nothing to the LORD and His new nation. He has a plan for Israel, and it is different from the ways of life found in the rest of the world.

A. The Forbidden Worship

1. The Sacrifice

a) Offered in the Wrong Place

The LORD comes to the law forbidding Egyptian and Canaanite ways by addressing worship. What better place to begin? It is the worship the LORD will not tolerate. Specifically, it is the worship of a sacrifice in the wrong place. Chapter 17, verse 1. *"Then the LORD spoke to Moses, saying, Speak to Aaron and to his sons and to all the sons of Israel and say to them, 'This is what the LORD has commanded, saying, Any man from the house of Israel who slaughters an ox or a lamb or a goat in the camp, or who slaughters it outside the camp, and has not brought it to the doorway of the tent of meeting to present it as an offering to the LORD before the tabernacle of the LORD, bloodguiltiness is to be reckoned to that man. He has shed blood and that man shall be cut off from among his people.'"* (17:1-4).

The LORD's instruction to begin this section says, *"Speak to Aaron and to his sons and to all the sons of Israel and say to them"* Often, we have seen the LORD say in Leviticus, *"Speak to Aaron,"* or *"Speak to Aaron and to all his sons,"* but here the LORD adds *"... and all the sons of Israel...."* He took the long way around to say *this instruction is for everyone in the Nation of Israel.* Still, the LORD had to be specific with the Israelites because He knew they were the kind of people to split hairs and to get around the law in generations to come.

The topic is not instantly apparent in these first four verses, but it will be in the remaining context. The LORD is not talking about the routine slaughter of clean animals for food; the LORD is talking about the sacrificial process in worship. For the nation of Israel, all sacrifice worship, for a prescribed offering, is to be slain at the Tabernacle, or, as we will discover later in the Book of Deuteronomy, at the place in every tribal area where the LORD chooses for worship. The shedding of the animal's blood anywhere, instead of where the LORD approves, is a sacrifice in the wrong place, for the wrong purpose, and, as we will soon see, for the wrong god. The key to this passage is found in the words *"... in the camp ... outside the camp...."* In general, all sacrifices of all people and religions of the world before the time of the Exodus were slain at a designated altar for a specific god except one. The altar may be part of an elaborate temple complex or as simple as a stone altar built for their favorite god or goddess. These altars were permanent structures for the people to plead with a specific god for a particular need. But not so with one of the gods. For him, a sacrifice could be made in an open field outside of a populated area. It was never a specific and permanent

place for that god. But that god was not the God. That god was a figment of man's imagination. He is a fake god. Israel is forbidden to make any sacrifices to any gods in any place that is the wrong place. Shedding the blood of an animal to a fake god in the wrong place means the slayer is to be cut off from the Nation of Israel. Why? Shedding the blood of an animal for food is to feed a body, and the LORD approves. Shedding the blood of an animal before the LORD is for worship. But shedding an animal's blood to a fake god is the same as the shedding of innocent blood, and the LORD calls that murder.

b) Offered for the Right Reason

Israel is warned by the LORD not to make a sacrifice in the wrong place but to make a sacrifice for the right reason. Verse 5. *"The reason is so that the sons of Israel may bring their sacrifices which they were sacrificing in the open field, that they may bring them in to the LORD, at the doorway of the tent of meeting to the priest, and sacrifice them as sacrifices of peace offerings to the LORD."* (17:5).

While in Egypt, one of the favorite gods to be worshipped is the god whose sacrifices are made in the open fields. It is the herdsmen and shepherds' favorite god because it is the god of fertility of herds and flocks. If you will remember, when Joseph brought his father and brothers to Egypt, he placed them in the land of Goshen as the herdsmen and shepherds of pharaoh's herds and flocks. In that capacity, they served all the pharaohs for four centuries until a pharaoh came along that did not know Joseph and did not care about all the hundreds of thousands of Hebrews in his kingdom. The Jews worshiped the Egyptian god of herds and flocks in Egypt. They were to worship him no longer in the fields. Instead, the LORD instructed the Jews to have no other gods before Him. Israel is to abandon all other gods and bring its sacrifices to the LORD in His Tabernacle. He is the right reason for a sacrifice in worship.

The LORD makes a switch in this verse that we should not overlook. By abandoning the offering to a false god in the wrong place in the open field and bringing it for the right reason before the LORD, the offering becomes "... *sacrifices of peace offerings to the LORD.*" The LORD gave the instructions for this kind of offering in chapter 3. In that chapter, we learned that the *sacrifice of peace offering* is not for sin but gratitude. It is a thank you gift to the LORD for safety, wellbeing, or prosperity. The sacrifice to the false god in Egypt's open fields is a bribe to encourage the god to grant fertility to their herds and flocks. The LORD changes the reason for the gratitude in the sacrifice of peace offering to after the blessing has already come upon the herds and flocks with abundant offspring.

c) Offered in the Right Way

A sacrifice in the right place provides the way for a sacrifice in the right way. Verse 6. *"The priest shall sprinkle the blood on the altar of the LORD at the doorway of the tent of meeting, and offer up the fat in smoke as a soothing aroma to the LORD."* (17:6).

With this passage, the LORD makes sure Israel's people understand the difference between offerings He will accept and those He will reject. The LORD puts the priestly system in place for a purpose, to make sure the offerings are handled and presented in the right and proper way according to His instruction. Sacrifices include blood; the blood must be handled correctly. At home, when slaying an animal for a meal, the blood is simply poured on the ground and covered with dirt. But with a sacrifice, that is different. Blood is holy with the sacrifice, and it belongs to the LORD. It is to be sprinkled on the altar where the fat portions of the animal are to be offered. Through the shedding of the blood, atonement comes.

d) Offered to the Wrong God

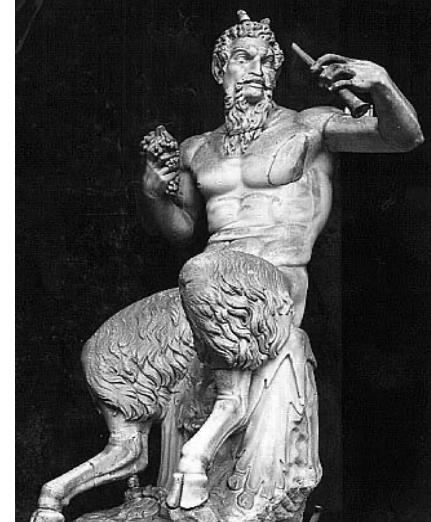
Now we come to the problem of a sacrifice to the wrong god. The LORD puts the hammer down on the false god for the Israelites and names the god worshiped in the open field that He detests. Verse 7. *“They shall no longer sacrifice their sacrifices to the goat demons with which they play the harlot. This shall be a permanent statute to them throughout their generations.”* (17:7)

The goat demons. Other versions say “the goat idols.” The goat. There we have it. Today, we have all studied in school the topic called *mythology*. We learned the names of pagan gods worshiped in the past and still today in many places on earth in mythology. These prevalent false gods were called by different names in different nations, but they were still the same gods. For instance, Zeus was also Jupiter. Poseidon was Neptune. Cronus was Saturn. Aphrodite was Venus. Ares was Mars. Hermes was Mercury. All these pagan gods had their glorious temples or altars built at great expense in multiple locations worldwide, except one that we have not named – the goat.

What mythological god was a goat? His name is Pan. Long before the Greeks gave him the name Pan, he was called *he goat*. The Hebrew word for *goat demons* is *sa’ir*. *Sa’ir* is a title more than a name. It means *he goat*. It is found as a title here in Leviticus 17:7 and in 2 Chronicles 11:15. All worship, throughout time of the He Goat, was far away from the populated cities and villages. His name is Pan. He did not have large temples built to worship him. Worship of this god occurred out in nature, in the open fields, or caves. Pan was the god who ruled over shepherds, herdsmen, hunters, and rustic music. Some of the most disgusting and obscene, godless sculptures and paintings of the Pan’s He Goat’s worship have been created by followers. Such art always represents what has happened in the past, and the worship of the He Goat was nothing less than godless. When the LORD says, “*with which they play the harlot*,” it would be easy to read into that the sexual deviance associated with the He Goat god displayed in the sculptures and paintings of Pan. But the LORD considered any worship of any false god as harlotry. Israel is to love the LORD God and Him only. He is a jealous God and will not allow those who love Him to interact in worship with false, fabricated gods. To Him, it is no different than a married man offering money to a woman to whom he is not married for sexual favors – harlotry.

When the LORD says, “*They shall no longer sacrifice their sacrifices to the goat demons with which they play the harlot*,” it means that the Israelites had already committed such sin in acts of worship to the He Goat. Where did they learn to worship the He Goat? The only place they could have learned to worship the goat was in Egypt, where they had been for four centuries. The problem would persist in Canaan if not stopped by the LORD. Canaanites worshiped the He Goat too. In fact, because the Nation of Israel will not fulfill the order to destroy all the Canaanites when it enters the Promised Land, the influence of Canaanite culture will be a thorn in the Israeli flesh through all time as it is still today. The Canaanite worship of Pan remains so strong after taking the Promised Land that a temple to Pan is built in Caesarea Philippi, which is said to be Pan’s birthplace. Before being named Caesarea, the town was named Paneas, after the god, Pan. It sits on the ancient major trade route called *The Way of the Sea*. All trade headed east of Mount Hermon and down the Euphrates or Tigris Rivers to the gulf passed by Paneas. The surrounding area was called Panion. The LORD knew about the worship of this god and demands that Israelites never do it again.

We find one more interesting fact in this passage. Remember, the LORD says, “*They shall no longer sacrifice their sacrifices to the goat demons*.” As we have said, the Hebrew word for *goat demons* is



He Goat in Hebrew - Known in Greece as Pan

literally *He-Goats*. The LORD is not addressing one particular He-Goat god, but all the He-Goat gods. In mythology, *Pan* gave birth to twelve *he-goats* named *Kelaineus*, *Argennon*, *Aigikoros*, *Eugeneios*, *Omester*, *Daphoenus*, *Phobos*, *Philamnos*, *Xanthos*, *Glaukos*, *Argos*, and *Phorbas*. They are all *he-goat* gods that people in all nations worship by these and other names.

Additionally, two other *Pans* are *Agreus* and *Nomios*. Neither of these was related in mythology to the first *Pan* we mentioned with the twelve sons. Although all of these *He-Goats* were fictitious, they were created by the minds of man, worshiped as real, and the very thought of the worship of these gods detested the LORD. Therefore, the LORD rightly forbids the worship of them all in the one Hebrew word, *sa'ir* - He-Goats, goat demons. Once again, history books and ancient literature proves the truth found in God's Word about these *He-Goats*.

2. The Burnt

The sacrifice of peace offering to any god other than the LORD God is important to the LORD, but the burnt offering is just as important. Verse 8. *"Then you shall say to them, 'Any man from the house of Israel, or from the aliens who sojourn among them, who offers a burnt offering or sacrifice, and does not bring it to the doorway of the tent of meeting to offer it to the LORD, that man also shall be cut off from his people.'*" (17:8-9).

The LORD summarizes this point in short order, and we can explain it quickly. Any sacrifice or offering is to be presented to the One LORD God at His chosen place. The Israelites and those living with the Israelites are never to sacrifice to any god but the LORD God. The penalty for being caught making a sacrifice or offering to any other god is to be "... *cut off from his people*." The death penalty is not the point here; excommunication from being a member of the Nation of Israel is the point.

B. The Forbidden Blood

1. The Animal's Life Taken by Man

a) The Blood Which Atones the Soul

From the forbidden worship, we come to the forbidden blood associated with the animal's life taken by a man that contains the blood which atones for the soul. In chapter 3, verse 17 says, *"It is a perpetual statute throughout your generations in all your dwellings: you shall not eat any fat or any blood."* Chapter 3 contains the instructions for the *Sacrifice of Peace Offering*. You might ask, "Why did the LORD wait until the third chapter to forbid the eating of blood. First, chapter 1 contains the instructions for the burnt offering. With that offering, the blood is sprinkled on the Brazen Altar, with the remaining blood poured at the base of the altar. The entire animal is burnt to ashes on the altar except for the hide. With nothing about the burnt offering eaten, there is no need for the instruction. Chapter 2 contains the instructions for the grain offerings. No blood is present; no blood is eaten. Chapter 3 moves to the instruction for the *Sacrifice of Peace Offering*, which requires placing the fat and entrails on the Brazen Altar but all the rest of the meat is given to the priests to eat. The instruction concerning the meat and its blood became an issue, and the LORD declared the statute forbidding the eating of the blood associated with the *Sacrifice of Peace Offering*. In the lesson in chapter 3, we asked if the statute was just for the animal offerings where the meat is eaten applies to all animals slain for daily food. I stated then that in chapter 17, we would learn that the statute applies to all slain animals for the offerings or at home for food. Here we come to that statute. Verse 10. *"And any man from the house of Israel, or from the aliens who sojourn among them, who eats any blood, I will set My face against that person who eats blood and will cut him off from among his people. For the life of the flesh is in the blood, and I have given it to you on the altar to make atonement for your souls; for it is the blood by reason of the life that makes atonement. Therefore I said to the sons of Israel, 'No person among you may eat blood, nor may any alien who sojourns among you eat blood.'*" (17:10-12).

We find a stark warning in this passage. The LORD says, *“I will set My face against that person who eats blood and will cut him off from among his people.”* For the LORD to set His face against a person means that He is angry with that person. In this case, the LORD will cast the person out of the Nation of Israel.

We also find here that *“For the life of the flesh is in the blood, and I have given it to you on the altar to make atonement for your souls; for it is the blood by reason of the life that makes atonement.”* In Exodus, the story of the Passover occurs. On the 14th of Abib, the lamb was slain and roasted. The blood was painted on the doorframes of every Jewish family. The death came at midnight to every firstborn whose home did not have the blood on the doorframes. The life blood died in every firstborn in Egypt without the blood on the home’s doorframe. Do we know how many Egyptians, from man to beast, died that night because their blood died? Yes. The exact number of the living firstborn sons of Israel and their beast. The book of Numbers tells us the story about the deaths of the Egyptians that night.

¹¹Again the LORD spoke to Moses, saying, ¹²“Now, behold, I have taken the Levites from among the sons of Israel instead of every firstborn, the first issue of the womb among the sons of Israel. So the Levites shall be Mine. ¹³For all the firstborn are Mine; on the day that I struck down all the firstborn in the land of Egypt, I sanctified to Myself all the firstborn in Israel, from man to beast. They shall be Mine; I am the LORD.” (Numbers 3:11-13).

The death of the blood of every firstborn man and beast in Egypt on the night of the Passover paid the atonement for every firstborn man and beast in the Nation of Israel. It is the death of the blood that atones, for life is in the blood. When the blood dies, the flesh dies. Therefore, the blood of all animals slain for an offering or food is forbidden.

b) The Blood Which Contains the Life

The blood which atones the soul is also the blood that contains the life. Verse 13. *“So when any man from the sons of Israel, or from the aliens who sojourn among them, in hunting catches a beast or a bird which may be eaten, he shall pour out its blood and cover it with earth. For as for the life of all flesh, its blood is identified with its life. Therefore I said to the sons of Israel, 'You are not to eat the blood of any flesh, for the life of all flesh is its blood; whoever eats it shall be cut off.’”* (17:13-14).

When taking an animal for food, the blood must be drained on the ground and covered with dirt. Why? To the LORD, *“its blood is identified with its life.”*

2. The Animal’s Life Taken by Nature

But what about when you find the animal’s life taken by nature? Verse 15. *“When any person eats an animal which dies or is torn by beasts, whether he is a native or an alien, he shall wash his clothes and bathe in water, and remain unclean until evening; then he will become clean. But if he does not wash them or bathe his body, then he shall bear his guilt.”* (17:15-16).

The LORD addressed the law for an animal found dead in Chapter 11. *“Also, if one of the animals dies which you have for food, the one who touches its carcass becomes unclean until evening. He too, who eats some of its carcass shall wash his clothes and be unclean until evening, and the one who picks up its carcass shall wash his clothes and be unclean until evening.”* (11:39-40). Here in chapter 17, the LORD simply adds the penalty for not washing or bathing after touching an animal not slain by man. The LORD says, *“...then he shall bear his guilt.”* In such cases, for his sin, at some time, the man will need to present a guilt offering to the LORD.

With that, we conclude Leviticus 17. From forbidden worship to forbidden blood, we will come to the forbidden relationships in chapter 18 in the next lesson.