

Deuteronomy 12:15

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

Notwithstanding thou mayest kill and eat flesh in all thy gates, whatsoever thy soul lusteth after, according to the blessing of the LORD thy God which he hath given thee: the unclean and the clean may eat thereof, as of the roebuck, and as of the hart.

Analysis

A critical distinction: 'Notwithstanding thou mayest kill and eat flesh in all thy gates, whatsoever thy soul lusteth after, according to the blessing of the LORD thy God which he hath given thee: the unclean and the clean may eat thereof, as of the roebuck, and as of the hart.' This distinguishes sacrificial slaughter (only at central sanctuary) from ordinary slaughter for food (anywhere). Before centralization, all meat consumption involved sacrifice (Leviticus 17:3-7). Now, with distant sanctuary, regular meat-eating is permitted locally. The phrase 'unclean and the clean' means ritually clean/unclean persons, not animals—both may eat non-sacrificial meat. This prevents worship centralization from eliminating meat consumption for distant tribes.

Historical Context

This represents significant legal development from Levitical law. Leviticus 17:3-7 required all slaughter at Tabernacle to prevent offerings to 'demons' (שְׁעִירִים, se'irim, literally 'goat-demons'). Deuteronomy's centralization made this impractical—distant Israelites couldn't travel to Jerusalem for every meal. Thus, non-sacrificial slaughter becomes permissible. This demonstrates law's contextual

application: principles remain, but application adapts to circumstances. The distinction between common and sacred remains critical.

Related Passages

Matthew 25:31 — Final judgment

Revelation 20:12 — Judgment according to deeds

Study Questions

1. How does this verse demonstrate that biblical law adapts application to changing circumstances while maintaining principles?
2. What is the difference between sacred (worship) and common (daily) activities, and how do we maintain both?
3. How do we avoid collapsing all life into 'sacred' (rigorous legalism) or reducing worship to 'common' (casual irreverence)?

Interlinear Text

בָּקַל H7535	בָּקַל H3605	אֵת H185	נַפְשְׁךָ H5315	תִּזְבֶּה חַן H2076
		lusteth after	whatsoever thy soul	Notwithstanding thou mayest kill
וְיָאָכְלֵנוּ H398	בָּשָׂר H1320	כְּבִרְכַּת H1293	יְהוָה H3068	אֱלֹהֶיךָ H430
and eat	flesh	according to the blessing	of the LORD	thy God
				H834
וְנָתַן H5414	לְךָ H0	בָּקַל H3605	שַׁעַרְיָךְ H8179	הַטֵּמֵא H2931
which he hath given		in all thy gates	thee the unclean	and the clean
				H2889
וְיָאָכְלֵנוּ H398	כִּפְזֵי H6643	וְכַאֲלֵנוּ H354		
and eat	thereof as of the roebuck	and as of the hart		

Additional Cross-References

Deuteronomy 14:5 (Parallel theme): The hart, and the roebuck, and the fallow deer, and the wild goat, and the pygarg, and the wild ox, and the chamois.

Deuteronomy 14:26 (References God): And thou shalt bestow that money for whatsoever thy soul lusteth after, for oxen, or for sheep, or for wine, or for strong drink, or for whatsoever thy soul desireth: and thou shalt eat there before the LORD thy God, and thou shalt rejoice, thou, and thine household,

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