

# Deuteronomy 12:23

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

Only be sure that thou eat not the blood: for the blood is the life; and thou mayest not eat the life with the flesh.

## Analysis

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Repeating the blood prohibition: 'Only be sure that thou eat not the blood: for the blood is the life; and thou mayest not eat the life with the flesh.' The emphatic chazaq (כִּזְקֹק, 'be strong/firm') stresses resolve needed to obey. The theological explanation: 'the blood is the life' (הַדָּם הוּא הַחַיָּה, hadam hu hanephesh, literally 'the blood is the soul/life'). Blood represents the life-force, which belongs to God alone. Consuming blood would be appropriating what is God's. The parallel phrasing 'thou mayest not eat the life with the flesh' clarifies the principle: eating blood is eating life itself, which is sacrilege. This unchanging prohibition maintains respect for life's sanctity.

## Historical Context

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This principle appears in Genesis 9:4 (Noahic covenant), Leviticus 17:11 (Mosaic covenant), and Acts 15:20 (apostolic council). Its persistence across covenants suggests perpetual moral principle, not merely ceremonial. Ancient Near Eastern sacrifice often involved consuming blood to commune with deity; Israel's prohibition distinguished them. Blood's atoning role (Leviticus 17:11) requires treating it as sacred. Christ's blood, poured out for atonement, fulfills and transcends this symbolism (Hebrews 9:11-14).

## Related Passages

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**1 John 4:8** — God is love

**1 Corinthians 13:4** — Characteristics of love

**Matthew 25:31** — Final judgment

**Romans 2:1** — Judging others

## Study Questions

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1. How does the equation 'blood = life' illuminate Christ's sacrifice as giving His life for ours?
2. Why does God insist on respect for blood even in non-sacrificial contexts?
3. What does consuming Christ's blood symbolically (communion) signify given the prohibition on literal blood consumption?

## Interlinear Text

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ב ק	דוּ ק	לְבִלְתִּי	תֹאכַל	הַדָּם	כִּי
H7535	<b>Only be sure</b>	H1115	<b>and thou mayest not eat</b>	<b>for the blood</b>	H3588
	H2388		H398	H1818	
הַדָּם	ה וְאֵל	הֵן פֶּשַׁע	וְלֹא	תֹאכַל	הֵן פֶּשַׁע
<b>for the blood</b>	H1931	<b>is the life</b>	H3808	<b>and thou mayest not eat</b>	<b>is the life</b>
H1818		H5315		H398	H5973
					H5315
הַבָּשָׂר:					
<b>with the flesh</b>					
H1320					

## Additional Cross-References

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**Leviticus 17:11** (Blood): For the life of the flesh is in the blood: and I have given it to you upon the altar to make an atonement for your souls: for it is the blood that maketh an atonement for the soul.

**Genesis 9:4** (Blood): But flesh with the life thereof, which is the blood thereof, shall ye not eat.

**Deuteronomy 12:16** (Blood): Only ye shall not eat the blood; ye shall pour it upon the earth as water.

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