

Deuteronomy 15:19

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

All the firstling males that come of thy herd and of thy flock thou shalt sanctify unto the LORD thy God: thou shalt do no work with the firstling of thy bullock, nor shear the firstling of thy sheep.

Analysis

All the firstling males that come of thy herd and of thy flock thou shalt sanctify unto the LORD thy God—The bekhor (בְּכוֹר, 'firstborn') belongs to God, echoing Passover: God spared Israel's firstborn while judging Egypt's (Exodus 11-12). Sanctifying (קִדַּשׁ, qadash, 'to set apart as holy') the firstborn acknowledges all life originates from and belongs to God.

Thou shalt do no work with the firstling of thy bullock, nor shear the firstling of thy sheep—No economic exploitation of consecrated animals. They're withdrawn from utilitarian use, pointing to Christ, the **firstborn among many brethren** (Romans 8:29), who **through the eternal Spirit offered himself without spot to God** (Hebrews 9:14). The firstborn law trained Israel: God's holy things aren't tools but objects of worship.

Historical Context

Ancient Near Eastern cultures practiced firstborn dedication (sometimes human sacrifice, which God condemns—Leviticus 18:21). Israel's bloodless dedication of firstborn animals demonstrated God's claim on life without pagan brutality, foreshadowing Christ the ultimate Firstborn sacrifice.

Related Passages

Ephesians 2:8 — Salvation by grace through faith

John 3:16 — God's love and salvation

Revelation 20:12 — Judgment according to deeds

Matthew 25:31 — Final judgment

Study Questions

1. What 'firstfruits' (first of time, money, energy) do you sanctify to God versus reserving for personal use?
2. How does Christ as the 'firstborn' (Romans 8:29, Colossians 1:15) secure your adoption into God's family?
3. In what areas are you tempted to 'work with' (exploit) what you've consecrated to God?

Interlinear Text

כָּל H3605	בְּכֹרֹת H1060	אֲשֶׁר H834	יָלְדוּ H3205	בְּבִקְרְךָ H1241	צֹאֲנֶיךָ: H6629	הַזָּכָר H2145
All the firstling that come of thy herd and of thy flock males						
תִּקְדֹּשׁ יִשׁ H6942	לַיהוָה ה H3068	אֱלֹהֶיךָ H430	לֹא H3808	תַּעֲבֹד H5647		
thou shalt sanctify unto the LORD thy God thou shalt do no work						
בְּכֹרֹת H1060	שׁוֹרְךָ H7794	וְלֹא H3808	תִּגְזֹז H1494	בְּכֹרֹת H1060	צֹאֲנֶיךָ: H6629	
All the firstling of thy bullock nor shear All the firstling and of thy flock						

Additional Cross-References

Exodus 13:2 (Parallel theme): Sanctify unto me all the firstborn, whatsoever openeth the womb among the children of Israel, both of man and of beast: it is mine.

Exodus 13:12 (References Lord): That thou shalt set apart unto the LORD all that openeth the matrix, and every firstling that cometh of a beast which thou hast; the males shall be the LORD'S.

Deuteronomy 16:14 (Parallel theme): And thou shalt rejoice in thy feast, thou, and thy son, and thy daughter, and thy manservant, and thy maidservant, and the Levite, the stranger, and the fatherless, and the widow, that are within thy gates.

Deuteronomy 12:17 (Parallel theme): Thou mayest not eat within thy gates the tithe of thy corn, or of thy wine, or of thy oil, or the firstlings of thy herds or of thy flock, nor any of thy vows which thou vowest, nor thy freewill offerings, or heave offering of thine hand:

Leviticus 27:26 (References Lord): Only the firstling of the beasts, which should be the LORD'S firstling, no man shall sanctify it; whether it be ox, or sheep: it is the LORD'S.

Numbers 18:15 (References Lord): Every thing that openeth the matrix in all flesh, which they bring unto the LORD, whether it be of men or beasts, shall be thine: nevertheless the firstborn of man shalt thou surely redeem, and the firstling of unclean beasts shalt thou redeem.

Numbers 18:17 (References Lord): But the firstling of a cow, or the firstling of a sheep, or the firstling of a goat, thou shalt not redeem; they are holy: thou shalt sprinkle their blood upon the altar, and shalt burn their fat for an offering made by fire, for a sweet savour unto the LORD.