

## Leviticus 3:17; 7:22-27; 19:26

### “A Prohibition on Eating Blood”

“It is a perpetual statute throughout your generations in all your dwellings: you shall not eat any fat or any blood” (Leviticus 3:17).

“Then the LORD spoke to Moses, saying, ‘Speak to the sons of Israel, saying, ‘You shall not eat any fat *from* an ox, a sheep or a goat. Also the fat of *an animal* which dies and the fat of an animal torn *by beasts* may be put to any other use, but you must certainly not eat it. For whoever eats the fat of the animal from which an offering by fire is offered to the LORD, even the person who eats shall be cut off from his people. You are not to eat any blood, either of bird or animal, in any of your dwellings. Any person who eats any blood, even that person shall be cut off from his people’” (Leviticus 7:22-27).

“You shall not eat *anything* with the blood, nor practice divination or soothsaying” (Leviticus 19:26).

3:17 The direction, “An eternal decree for your generations in all your dwelling places; you may not consume any fat or any blood” (ATS), is actually preceded by details pertaining to the peace offering, which was to be presented by the Ancient Israelites before the Lord in the Tabernacle, and later the Temple. The prohibition of eating fat from the animals of the flock or herd—namely sheep, goats, and cattle—are in view. The fat, just like the blood, was to be a part of the animal reserved for God: *kol-cheilev v'kol-dam lo to'keilu* (כָּל־חֵילֶב וְכָל־דָּם לֹא תֹאכְלוּ), “any-of fat or-any-of blood not you-must-eat” (Kohlenberger).<sup>1</sup> The fat was supposed to be specifically presented before the Lord and burned (3:5, 11, 16), yet the prohibition of eating such fat was extended beyond the peace offering, and to all who would eat red meat.

Appearing previously in vs. 3-4, 9-10, 14-15 is the Hebrew term rendered as “fat,” *cheilev* (חֵילֶב), which lexically can mean “**fat**, covering the interior of the body,” as well as “metaph. **the best, select**” (*CHALOT*).<sup>2</sup> This is widely recognized to be the suet, which is different from the muscular fat of an animal that is marbled within its flesh. John H. Hayes summarizes,

“God received some of the viscera and thus shared in the offer: The fat (suet; hard fatty tissue) near the loins and covering the entrails, the two kidneys with their fatty covering, and the appendage of the liver (the caudate lobe) were burned on the altar. The liver may have been cut to prevent hepatoscopy, or liver divination, widely popular in ancient times.”<sup>3</sup>

Baruch J. Schwartz further describes some of the main reasons why the fat or *cheilev* was prohibited from being eaten:

“Fatty portions of slaughtered animals were considered to be the richest, tastiest morsels. But of all are the layers of suet...the hard, subcutaneous fatty tissue surrounding

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<sup>1</sup> Kohlenberger, 1:272.

<sup>2</sup> *CHALOT*, 104.

<sup>3</sup> Hayes, “Leviticus,” in *New Interpreter’s Study Bible*, pp 149-150.

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the internal organs; therefore these portions would be assigned to God. That which is 'too good' for mortals might logically be assumed to be a proper repast for a deity. Burning suet also provides a dense smoke of sweet, meaty fragrance, suggesting that pleasure is derived from it by a transcendent divine being."<sup>4</sup>

Walter C. Kaiser interjects how "No symbolism is directly assigned to the fat, as with most of these sacrifices," but goes on to describe that "from the culture, times, and Scripture, it is possible to conclude that fatness represents the richest and the best part of the animal."<sup>5</sup> That *cheilev* can be akin to "best" is witnessed in Pharaoh's word to Joseph: 'I will give you the best of the land of Egypt and you will eat the fat of the land [*cheilev ha'eret*, הַחֵלֶב הָאֶרֶץ]' (Genesis 45:18). Even with him representing some source-critical views of the Pentateuch (thus making the instruction here in Leviticus 3:17 the so-called product of P or the Priestly writer),<sup>6</sup> Samuel E. Balentine still correctly recognizes how the thrust of this instruction is not only that God should receive the best parts of an animal—but that God's people should be joyfully motivated to offer Him the best parts of an animal:

"We may understand that in Priestly theology God's 'everlasting covenant' with creation is both mirrored and sustained by 'perpetual statute[s]' (Lev. 3:17: *huqqat 'olām*; cf. the same phrase in 7:36; 10:9; 16:29, 31, 34; 17:7; 23:14, 21, 31, 41; 24:3) such as those that proscribe the consumption of blood, fat, kidneys, and liver lobe. These are reserved for God not only because they represent the best of life that humans may offer. In a larger sense, they are gifts motivated by the sheer joy of being invited to embody and ritually enact the covenant that sustains the world God has created, blessed, and endowed from the beginning of time with the capacity to be 'very good' (cf. Gen. 1:31)."<sup>7</sup>

In his commentary on Leviticus, though, R.K. Harrison points out that the Leviticus 3:17 prohibition on consuming animal fat, undoubtedly had some kind of a health component to it:

"The prohibition of animal fat for human consumption seems also to have been based in part on dietary considerations. Animal fats eaten consistently in significant amounts over a lengthy period of time can raise the cholesterol level already present in the blood and, especially in conjunction with hypertension, can result in such conditions as atherosclerosis and arteriosclerosis, both of which cause circulatory accidents. Had the eating of animal fat and suet been permitted, such an imbalance of cholesterol might well have been precipitated among the Hebrews, since they were already ingesting such saturated fats as butter (*i.e.* curds) and cheese. But by restricting the intake of potentially damaging fats, the circulatory system would be enabled to maintain a reasonable blood-cholesterol level, and allow the factor known as high-density lipoprotein to protect the arteries and the heart against disease. Some modern cancer researchers also maintain that a diet high in saturated fats can lead to mammary gland and colon cancer in those who are constitutionally (*i.e.* genetically) predisposed. The ban on eating the fat of beasts offered for sacrifice was extended in Leviticus 7:23 to

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<sup>4</sup> Baruch J. Schwartz, "Leviticus," in *Jewish Study Bible*, 210.

<sup>5</sup> Kaiser, in *NIB*, 1:1025.

<sup>6</sup> Consult the entry for the Book of Leviticus in the workbook *A Survey of the Tanach for the Practical Messianic*.

<sup>7</sup> Balentine, 40.

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all animal meats eaten in a non-sacrificial context. Since tapeworms can sometimes be found in fatty tissues, even those of the 'clean' bovine species, the regulations governing the eating of animal fat would be another important means of protecting the Israelites against this kind of parasitic infestation."<sup>8</sup>

The prohibition on eating fat or suet, as well as blood, is labeled to be a *chukat olam* (חֻקַּת עוֹלָם) or an "everlasting statute" (Keter Crown Bible)—meaning that it is not to be something easily overlooked or dispensed with. It is not difficult to discern today, that even with the *cheilev* to be presented to God in Israel's Tabernacle or Temple, **that people should not be eating concentrated fat**. Even those who debate over whether or not the clean and unclean animal distinctions have anything to do with health, will scarcely debate that eating fat is not a good thing. Yet, given how not eating fat or suet will widely pertain to how meat is processed and butchered—even by some rigidly kosher-keeping traditions—not eating any trace of fat is something difficult to avoid. So, when honoring these instructions in a modern context, people need to be careful to not only cut off fat from the meat they cook or eat, but be more conscious of low-fat meats, which should have little to no suet.

7:22-27 Preceding the instruction of Leviticus 7:22-27, which is issued to the general community of Israel, are details regarding the guilt offering (7:1-10) and the peace offering (7:11-20). A reminder is also issued regarding the severity of not touching unclean things, and not eating from sacrifices which belong to God (7:21). Following the instruction which forbids the consumption of blood and fat in Leviticus 7:22-27, are further details regarding the peace offering, and the portions of meat that the priests would be permitted to eat for themselves (7:28-34). What is important to take note of, is how the Leviticus 7:22-27 prohibition of consuming blood and fat is associated with the sanctity of the Tabernacle, and later Temple service, an indication of how serious the Lord wanted the normal people of Israel to take their eating of clean animal flesh.

7:22-23 This instruction opens with God directing Moses, "Speak to the Israelites, saying, 'No fat of ox or sheep or goat shall you eat'" (Alter). Later in v. 31, it is specified how fat was to be burned on the altar,<sup>9</sup> but there are details regarding the consumption of meat for the normal people that need to be weighed. Just as previously analyzed above for Leviticus 3:17, the *cheilev* (חֵלֶב) is forbidden to be eaten. But, as J.H. Hertz proceeds to say,

"The three sacrificial animals [ox, sheep, goat]; their fat, called חֵלֶב [*cheilev*], is forbidden, except when such fat is covered with flesh, when it does not come within the prohibition. The fat of other 'clean' animals is spoken of as שׁוֹמֵן [*shuman*], and is permitted."<sup>10</sup>

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<sup>8</sup> Harrison, *Leviticus*, 58.

<sup>9</sup> "The priest shall offer up the fat in smoke on the altar, but the breast shall belong to Aaron and his sons" (Leviticus 7:31).

<sup>10</sup> Hertz, 433.

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The Hebrew term *shuman* (שִׁמָּן) is something which is notably found in Rabbinic literature like the Talmud, and not in the Hebrew Tanach itself,<sup>11</sup> reflecting later Jewish rulings and deliberations. The *ArtScroll Chumash* further notes a traditional Jewish view that the fat from non-sacrificial animals, particularly wild game, is permitted for consumption:

“As the following verses make clear, fat is forbidden only from species that are eligible to be used as offerings, but one may eat the fat of such animals as צִבִי וְאַיִל [*tzvi v’ayal*], deer and hart—and the other kosher wild animals that may not be used for offerings.”<sup>12</sup>

Although cattle, sheep, and goats are the clean animals specified in v. 23, whose fat is not to be consumed, is the fat of wild game animals totally excluded from this? Some would argue that a logical deduction would be that the fat of other clean animals, even if not used in sacrifice, should not be eaten. Jewish scholar Baruch A. Levine is one who argues in his Leviticus commentary, “Once the *helev* of sacrificial animals was forbidden, the *helev* of all pure animals was forbidden as well, whether or not the animals in question were actually sacrificed.”<sup>13</sup>

7:24 It is described how “The fat of a carcass or of an animal mauled to death may be used for any purpose, but you must certainly not eat it” (Keter Crown Bible). For sure, while prohibited from eating, the fat of clean animals which died naturally or were killed violently could be used for some useful purpose. R. Laird Harris describes some of the uses that such fat could have had for the Ancient Israelites:

“The carcass of an unclean animal was not to be touched [7:21]; but a sheep or goat that died a natural death or was killed by a wild beast could be used—only not for food. Its hide and wool, presumably, were usable. Its fat was also usable (v.24), but for what? Presumably the people had not yet learned to make soap from fats. Did they use fat for grease for carts, etc.? Perhaps its chief use would have been for fuel.”<sup>14</sup>

But what about the fat of animals that were slaughtered for meat, but not for sacrifice? The text of v. 24 does not specify, as its intention is more focused on what can be done with clean animals that died naturally or were killed; they can be used for various industrial purposes. Presumably, parts of animals slaughtered for meat, not to be eaten such as the fat, could also be used for industrial purposes. As will be stated in v. 25 following, when clean animals were offered in sacrifice before God, it is then that their fat was to be burned before Him (v. 31).

7:25-27 “For anyone who eats the fat of animal species from which one may bring a fire-offering to HASHEM—the soul that eats will be cut off from its people” (v. 25., ATS). Fat that was specifically presented to the Lord in an offering by fire at the Tabernacle and later Temple, the *isheh* (אִשָּׁה),<sup>15</sup> “shall be cut off from his kin” (NJPS). Vs. 26-27 further detail, “You shall not consume any blood, in any of your dwelling places, whether from fowl or from animals. Any person who consumes any blood—that soul will be cut off from its people” (ATS), as the consumption of fat is closely tied to the consumption of the

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<sup>11</sup> *Jastrow*, 1536.

<sup>12</sup> Scherman, *Chumash*, 578.

<sup>13</sup> Levine, 45.

<sup>14</sup> Harris, in *EXP*, 2:558.

<sup>15</sup> “an offering made by fire” (*BDB*, 77).

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blood from clean birds and land animals. Yet as Hertz notes for Jewish history and kosher application, "Since the two species alone are named, the Rabbis deduced that the law did not apply to fish. Therefore the process of ritual *salting*, which is used for the purpose of extracting the blood, is unnecessary with the latter."<sup>16</sup>

While the deliberate consumption of fat and blood is something quite serious, as noted for sure, what is the context of being "cut off," represented by the Hebrew verb *karat* (כָּרַת)? Is being "cut off" the offender being isolated from his or her family, or the community at large? Or, is being "cut off" some kind of death of the offender, as is seen elsewhere with other offenses in the Torah (Exodus 31:14; Numbers 4:18-20)? Schwartz summarizes some of the options which have been present in frequent Jewish examination of this passage:

"Traditional commentators correctly understood that it implies a penalty inflicted by God and not a form of ostracism or ex-communication. They often saw it as death by divine agency or the denial of eternal bliss in the next world, but it is more probable that 'cutting off' is extirpation, i.e., the eventual total extinction of one's line, by whatever means God sees fit."<sup>17</sup>

Derek Tidball describes more generally how being "cut off" would involve some form of death, but something enacted by God over a longer space of time:

"The origin of the word *kārat* ('cut off') does not lie in the lawcourts but in the fields. A tree was 'cut off' when it was felled, and a bush when it was razed. This penalty is thought to have covered a range of punishments, from being childless, through being denied a place in the afterlife, to having life suddenly terminated in death. It did not, by any means, always imply immediate death, still less execution at the hands of fellow citizens. Where death did occur, it was usually as a result of an act of God."<sup>18</sup>

**7:22-27 application** Leviticus 7:22-27 focuses more on the consumption of fat, than it does on the consumption of blood, but it does highlight how serious the consumption of both would be for those within Ancient Israel: it would be met with the penalty of *karat*, as it would be widely associated with how the fat of an animal sacrificed was to be burned before God, just as blood of animals eaten was to be associated with the atonement of sin. But how do kosher-friendly Messianic people, living in the Twenty-First Century, approach or apply these instructions with what they eat today?

A theologian like Kaiser only thinks that "The prohibition on eating fat is not an absolute injunction; it applies only to the fat of beasts offered in sacrifice,"<sup>19</sup> presumably being a bit flexible with how fat might be used in some contemporary cuisine. Yet, Kaiser does recognize that the prohibition on consuming blood is something universal (cf. 3:17; 17:11-12; Deuteronomy 12:16; 15:23).

While not avoiding any remote trace of fat and blood in one's eating is difficult, either for the Ancient Israelites or contemporary Western people today, people do need to exhibit more caution and attention with what they eat than they probably do. Harrison is one commentator, as a Christian Old Testament theologian, who directs the attention of

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<sup>16</sup> Hertz, 434.

<sup>17</sup> Schwartz, in *Jewish Study Bible*, 221.

<sup>18</sup> Tidball, 104.

<sup>19</sup> Kaiser, in *NIB*, 1:1052.

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readers to the health benefits of avoiding meat with a higher concentration of blood, given how blood often carries with it various communicable diseases. He states,

“There are obvious hygienic as well as theological implications in mind, of course, since blood conveys disease as well as health, and if ingested can therefore be the vehicle of a variety of ailments. The traditional insistence of the Jews upon the rightness of their method of slaughtering animals so as to remove all the blood from the tissues is one of the abiding values of their culture which ought to commend itself more consistently to Gentiles. From a hygienic and dietary standpoint, such *kosher* meat is the safest that can be eaten.”<sup>20</sup>

Most of the commercially processed meat today, from clean animals such as cattle or sheep or chicken, does have a large quantity of its blood removed—and should not be considered on the same level as the “things strangled” prohibited by the Apostolic decree of Acts 15:21, 29. However, *shechitah* or ritual Jewish slaughter does have the advantage of removing the highest quantity of animal blood possible, something confirmed by Harrison. And as Sue Fishkoff notes in her book *Kosher Nation*,

“Non-Jews have been buying kosher meat since late colonial times, believing it to be healthier than non-kosher...Americans in the late nineteenth century who were influenced by the health and wellness diets promoted by Kellogg’s, Post, and other emerging food giants also sought out kosher meat and poultry.”<sup>21</sup>

Contemporary Messianic people who are kosher-friendly can certainly demonstrate a preference for patronizing those sources of clean meat that are certified *kashrut* by Jewish authorities. Yet, the prohibitions of Leviticus 7:22-27 doubtlessly pertain to the quantitative consumption of fat or blood, and not the momentary consumption of a small portion or trace of it in one’s meal.

19:26 The admonition, “You shall not eat anything with its blood. You shall not practice divination or soothsaying” (NJPS), appears within a collection of widely miscellaneous instructions, which were to make Ancient Israel quite separate from its neighbors. It appears within the Torah portion *Kedoshim* (19:1-20:27) or “Holy Ones.” God’s direction to His people is: *et-chuqotai tish’moru* (אַתְּחַקְתִּי תִשְׁמְרוּ), “You are to keep My statutes” (19:19) or “You shall observe My laws” (NJPS). In various study Bibles, the commandments of Leviticus 19:9-37 are listed as “Sundry Laws.”<sup>22</sup> Surrounding the Leviticus 19:26 directive for the Israelites to avoid consuming blood, are various other instructions witnessed in the surrounding verses, which have been interpreted differently throughout Jewish history (v. 27).

There is some slight variance of translation for v. 26a, with *lo to’kelu al-ha’dam* (לֹא תֹאכְלוּ עַל הַדָּם) rendered as something along the lines of either “You shall not eat anything

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<sup>20</sup> Harrison, *Leviticus*, 82.

<sup>21</sup> Sue Fishkoff, *Kosher Nation: Why More and More of America’s Food Answers to a Higher Authority* (New York: Schocken Books, 2010), 151.

<sup>22</sup> Spiros Zodhiates, ed., *Hebrew-Greek Key Study Bible*, NASB (Chattanooga: AMG Publishers, 1994), 163.

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with its blood" (NRSV), or "You shall not eat over the blood" (ATS), ultimately coming down to how to choose to view the preposition *al* (על). John E. Hartley details,

"If the preposition על means 'with,' the use of 'eat' instead of 'drink' indicates that 'the blood' refers to either a pudding of blood or meat laden with blood. While על may have this meaning, the object of the preposition על is usually joined with a named substance that stands as the direct object of 'eat' (e.g., Exod 12:8; Num 9:11; cf. Ezek 33:25). Another interpretation takes על to mean 'over'..."<sup>23</sup>

While the consumption of blood by the Israelites is doubtlessly forbidden, the context of it in v. 26a is what needs to be considered, with "Do not eat over the blood" (Keter Crown Bible) connecting readers to what is further communicated in v. 26b: *lo tenachashu v'lo te'oneinu* (לֹא תִנְחָשׁוּ וְלֹא תִעֲוִנוּ), "You shall not practice divination or soothsaying" (NJPS) or "neither shall you use enchantment, nor observe times" (Jerusalem Bible-Koren). Regardless of some of the specific renderings seen for v. 26b, it has to be recognized that a prohibition of consuming blood appears immediately before a prohibition on sorcery, and sorcery was a capital offense in the Torah (Exodus 22:18; Deuteronomy 18:14; cf. 1 Samuel 28:9; Isaiah 47:12-14). There are definitely justified reasons to consider that the prohibition of consuming blood in v. 26a, is somehow connected to ancient pagan rituals of "interpret[ing] omens or tell[ing] fortunes" (ESV) in v. 26b. Schwartz observes,

"From context it appears that *You shall not eat anything with its blood*, which refers to eating meat without having drained the blood (see 17.10-14; 1 Sam. 14.32-35), must, like the two prohibitions that follow, be associated with pagan forms of divination and magic. The acts prohibited in the next...[verses] are extreme expressions of grief and mourning (see Deut. 14.1-2; 1 Kings 18.28); as they are associated with conjuring up dead spirits and the gods of the netherworld, they are not to be copied from the pagan people."<sup>24</sup>

Referencing Ramban, the Orthodox Jewish *ArtScroll Tanach* further indicates, "In its literal meaning, the verse refers to a practice of sorcerers, who would gather blood in a ditch, and, by means of incantations, would foretell future events."<sup>25</sup> Hartley goes further, in describing,

"In the worship of chthonic deities, the animal was sacrificed on the ground, rather than on an altar or stone, and the blood drained into a deep trench dug out near the place of sacrifice and allowed to soak in before the meat from that sacrificial animal was eaten...This blood rite was to draw the spirits to the surface and to enhance the power of foretelling."<sup>26</sup>

There are two notable places in the Tanach where this practice appears to either be detectable, or be in some kind of view:

"They struck among the Philistines that day from Michmash to Ajjalon. And the people were very weary. The people rushed greedily upon the spoil, and took sheep and oxen and calves, and slew *them* on the ground; and the people ate *them* with the blood.

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<sup>23</sup> Hartley, *Leviticus*, pp 329-330.

<sup>24</sup> Schwartz, in *Jewish Study Bible*, 255.

<sup>25</sup> Scherman, *Chumash*, 663.

<sup>26</sup> Hartley, *Leviticus*, 320.

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Then they told Saul, saying, 'Behold, the people are sinning against the LORD by eating with the blood.' And he said, 'You have acted treacherously; roll a great stone to me today.' Saul said, 'Disperse yourselves among the people and say to them, "Each one of you bring me his ox or his sheep, and slaughter *it* here and eat; and do not sin against the LORD by eating with the blood.'" So all the people that night brought each one his ox with him and slaughtered *it* there" (1 Samuel 14:31-34).

"Therefore say to them, "Thus says the Lord GOD, "You eat *meat* with the blood *in it*, lift up your eyes to your idols as you shed blood. Should you then possess the land?""" (Ezekiel 33:25).

*IVPBBC* offers a further summary of the direction of v. 26, concluding that the mandate for the Ancient Israelites not to consume blood here, is not specifically to be considered a part of the kosher dietary laws, as much as it is a prohibition against being involved in pagan rituals:

"\*Divination involves a variety of methods used by prophets (Mic 3:11), soothsayers, mediums and sorcerers to determine the will of the gods and to predict the future. These included the examination of the entrails of sacrificial animals, the analysis of omens of various types and the reading of the future in natural and unnatural phenomena (see Gen 44:5). The prohibition against eating meat with the 'blood still in it' in this verse is tied to the injunction against participating in any form of divination and sorcery. Thus, rather than being a dietary law, this decree involves the practice of draining blood from a sacrificial animal into the ground or a sacred pit, which was designed to attract the spirits of the dead (see 1 Sam 28:7-19) or chthonic (underworld) deities in order to consult them about the future. Such practices are found in several \*Hittite ritual texts and in Odysseus' visit to the underworld (*Odyssey* 11.23-29, 34-43). These practices were condemned (Deut 18:10-11) because they infringed on the idea of \*Yahweh as an all-powerful God who was not controlled by fate."<sup>27</sup>

Animal blood being involved in ancient pagan rituals, is indeed witnessed in classical mythology such as Homer's *Odyssey*, where the blood seeping into the ground is intended to conjure up the dead:

"[W]e ran the ship ashore, and took out the sheep, and ourselves walked along by the stream of the Ocean until we came to that place of which Circe had spoken. There Perimedes and Eurylochos held the victims fast, and I, drawing from beside my thigh my sharp sword, dug a pit, of about a cubit in each direction, and poured it full of drink offerings for all the dead, first honey mixed with milk, and the second pouring was sweet wine, and the third, water, and over it all I sprinkled white barley. I promised many times to the strengthless heads of the perished dead that, returning to Ithaka, I would slaughter a barren cow, my best, in my palace, and pile the pyre with treasures, and to Teiresias apart would dedicate an all-black ram, the one conspicuous in all our sheep flocks. Now when, with sacrifices and prayers, I had so entreated the hordes of the dead, I took the sheep and cut their throats over the pit, and the dark-clouding blood ran in, and the souls of the perished dead gathered to the place, up out of Erobos, brides, and young unmarried men, and long-suffering elders, virgins, tender

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<sup>27</sup> Walton, Matthews, Chavalas, pp 133-134.

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and with the sorrows of young hearts upon them, and many fighting men killed in battle, stabbed with brazen spears, still carrying their bloody armor upon them. These came swarming around my pit from every direction with inhuman clamor, and green fear took hold of me" (*Odyssey* 11.20-43).<sup>28</sup>

Following the v. 26 prohibition on consuming blood and practicing divination, is how in v. 28a a prohibition on mourning for the dead by cutting oneself or self-mutilation is issued: "You shall not make any cuts in your body for the dead..." V. 28b then prohibits tattooing, rightly concluded to be a form of bodily dishonor: "...nor make any tattoo marks on yourselves."

The Leviticus 19:26 instruction on not consuming blood does go beyond what has been detailed elsewhere in the Torah about blood being associated with the sacrificial system and atonement (17:10-16). The consumption of blood, aside from being viewed as abhorrent and a blatant disregard for the life of an animal that is slaughtered to provide sustenance for human beings, was something that was involved, in various forms, with illicit pagan rituals.

The Leviticus 19:26 instruction highlights some of the varied dimensions and dynamics of what it would have meant for the Ancient Israelites not to consume blood. Not consuming blood did not just have components of the people treating clean animal meat and animals in general with a degree of respect, but it also had components to it of not participating in pagan religious practices. It further helps to emphasize the broader-encompassing elements of the kosher dietary laws, which should not be limited to only separation of God's people, or health and hygiene—but should definitely include various religious reasons to keep Israel away from paganism.

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<sup>28</sup> Homer: *The Odyssey of Homer*, trans. Richmond Lattimore (New York: HarperPerennial, 1967), pp 168-169.