

# Deuteronomy 12:20-25

<https://thebiblesays.com/commentary/deut/deut-12/deuteronomy-1220-25/>

*Moses again told the Israelites that they were allowed to slaughter of their herd and flock and eat their meat within their gates when the central sanctuary is too far from them. Also, the animal's blood was to be poured out on the ground like water, because blood is the life of the flesh.*

Moses repeated the commands given earlier in the chapter and provided more details. He starts with the situation *when the LORD your God extends your border as He has promised you, and you say, 'I will eat meat,' because you desire to eat meat, then you may eat meat, whatever you desire.* This was said earlier in v. 15.

The principle here was that, as the Suzerain LORD expands the borders of the Promised Land, His vassals could possibly live a long way from where the LORD chose for corporate worship. So, a person was now permitted to slaughter and prepare meat in the house whenever they wished without having to bring it to the tabernacle as was required during the exodus. To this point, those listening to Moses' speech have only known the tabernacle as something that was in close proximity to their camp. Now they will enter the land and spread out, as *God extends their border.*

So, the ruling principle here was that *if the place which the LORD your God chooses to put His name is too far from you, then you may slaughter of your herd and flock which the LORD has given you, as I have commanded you; and you may eat within your gates whatever you desire.*

Moses told those Israelites who were too far from the designated place of worship to eat the meat of their *herd and flock, just as a gazelle or a deer is eaten.* The *gazelle and the deer* were wild animals, and the Law allowed the people to consume them for a normal meal. They were allowed to eat *herd and flock* animals (which were suitable for sacrifice) in their home, just as they would eat the *gazelle and deer* which were not suitable.

As stated in v. 15, both *the unclean and the clean alike may eat of the herd and the flock.* This means that even those who were ceremonially unclean could eat meat at home. They could not, however, participate in communal worship before the LORD ([Leviticus 7:21](#); [Numbers 9:6](#)).

Although those living far from the central sanctuary were permitted to eat the meat of the herd and the flock, they were to *be sure not to eat the blood*. The reason is clearly given in this verse. Moses explained that *the blood is the life, and you shall not eat the life with the flesh*. Blood is a symbol for life, and life belongs to the LORD ([Genesis 9:1-4](#); [Leviticus 17:10-12](#)).

Not only were the people told not to *eat* the blood, they were commanded to *pour it out on the ground like water*. Moses then repeated the same command that they could *not eat it* (meaning meat with blood still in it). He then told them the reason for this. It was *so that it may be well with you and your sons after you*.

This is the stated reason for the repetitions of this command in this chapter. Not eating the blood of animals, even at home, was required in order to ensure a peaceful, prosperous life in the Promised Land. In fact, by doing this they would *be doing what is right in the sight of the LORD*. Obeying the LORD results in blessing. The dietary rules God provided likely provided many natural health benefits. But a substantial additional blessing would come from each Israelite as they blessed one another by following God's law to love one another as they loved themselves.

#### **Biblical Text:**

<sup>20</sup> **“When the Lord your God extends your border as He has promised you, and you say, ‘I will eat meat,’ because you desire to eat meat, *then* you may eat meat, whatever you desire.** <sup>21</sup> **If the place which the Lord your God chooses to put His name is too far from you, then you may slaughter of your herd and flock which the Lord has given you, as I have commanded you; and you may eat within your gates whatever you desire.** <sup>22</sup> **Just as a gazelle or a deer is eaten, so you will eat it; the unclean and the clean alike may eat of it.** <sup>23</sup> **Only be sure not to eat the blood, for the blood is the life, and you shall not eat the life with the flesh.** <sup>24</sup> **You shall not eat it; you shall pour it out on the ground like water.** <sup>25</sup> **You shall not eat it, so that it may be well with you and your sons after you, for you will be doing what is right in the sight of the Lord.**