

Deuteronomy 12:26-28

<https://thebiblesays.com/commentary/deut/deut-12/deuteronomy-1226-28/>

In contrast to allowing the eating of meat in the home, Moses commands the Israelites to take their holy things and their votive offerings to the central sanctuary in order to offer burnt offerings to the Suzerain (Ruler) God.

Having outlined to the Israelites concerning the slaughter of their domestic animals within their gates when the central sanctuary is too far away, Moses now turns to the rules concerning the holy things and the votive offerings that are brought to the central sanctuary, which will be located in the place of His choosing ([Deuteronomy 12:5](#)). Moses told the people that *only your holy things which you may have and your votive offerings, you shall take and go to the place which the LORD chooses*. The word translated *only* (Heb. “raq”) can be translated “however” or “nevertheless.” There is a contrast being emphasized between the prescribed *holy things* such as their *offerings* and their normal daily routines, such as slaughtering and eating meat for the daily menu.

The term *holy things* refers to that which is sacred and is dedicated to the Suzerain God. The word *holy* (Heb. “qādôsh”) describes that which is “set apart” for a specific purpose. Here, it refers to that which was set apart as a sacrifice to the LORD. This entails anything that is sacrificial in character. So, the *holy things* refer to the sacrifices and offerings that the Israelites were supposed to bring to the central sanctuary. The *votive offerings* were any offerings made as payment of a vow. These items the people were to *take and go to the place which the LORD chooses*.

Once the worshiper brought these things to the LORD’s chosen place, he was to offer his *burnt offerings, the flesh and the blood, on the altar of the LORD your God*. Again, the emphasis is the distinction between what was to be done at home and what was to be done at the place God will choose for ceremonial worship. The Bible uses repetition for emphasis. God really emphasizes here that worshipping Him is to be done on His terms. Israel is to seek His ways rather than seek to get God to support their ways. This is key to maintaining a proper relationship between God, as the superior Suzerain ruler, and the people as His vassals who He desires to bless.

The *burnt offerings* (Heb. “ōlâ”) is literally translated as “that which goes up” such as the smoke and aroma from cooking meat on the altar. The entire flesh of the animal was to be cooked *on the altar*. After the animal had been cooked, the worshipper was to *eat the flesh*. The translation of “ōlâ” to English as *burnt offering* creates an image of the worshippers gnawing on charred coals of burned meat, which is not the real picture of what was intended. ‘Olâ (“to go up”) could refer to rising smoke, aroma, the lifting of the gift to the LORD, or ascending the steps to place the meat on the elevated altar. It is highly improbable that the portion to be eaten was burned, particularly since God commanded those who offered the sacrifice to eat their feast with rejoicing. The command to rejoice is repeated three times in this chapter (verses 7, 12, 18). It is much more likely the sacrifice was cooked to a delicious perfection. The portions of sacrifices that were to be consumed completely in the fire would not have also been consumed by the celebrators.

Finally, Moses urged the Israelites to *be careful to listen to all these words which I command you*. The verb translated *to listen* (Heb. “shāmar”) describes both the mental activity of hearing as well as responding to what was heard. By responding in obedience, honoring God’s precepts would guarantee wellbeing for the Israelites and their descendants. Living a life that is pleasing to the Suzerain (Ruler) God will have the quite practical benefit of creating a society of mutual good, based on the tenet “Love your neighbor as yourself,” which will lead directly to the opportunity for great rejoicing.

Biblical Text:

²⁶ Only your holy things which you may have and your votive offerings, you shall take and go to the place which the Lord chooses.²⁷ And you shall offer your burnt offerings, the flesh and the blood, on the altar of the Lord your God; and the blood of your sacrifices shall be poured out on the altar of the Lord your God, and you shall eat the flesh.²⁸ Be careful to listen to all these words which I command you, so that it may be well with you and your sons after you forever, for you will be doing what is good and right in the sight of the Lord your God.