

Deuteronomy 14:19-20

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Moses continues with the dietary laws and briefly describes the flying insects that are clean and those that are unclean to Israel.

Continuing the discussion of dietary laws, Moses next instructed the Israelites concerning the flying insects that were permitted and those that were prohibited. He declared that *all the teeming life with wings are unclean to you; they shall not be eaten*. The phrase *teeming life* (Heb. “shereş”) can also be translated as “flying insects,” because, as seen in [Leviticus 11:20 – 21](#), it refers to insects that have wings. These were to be considered unclean and were not to be eaten.

Moses then summarized his instructions in this section. He simply said that the people *may eat any clean bird* (v. 20). The Hebrew word for *bird* (Heb. “ôp”) is a broad term which can be used to designate both birds and insects. Because insects are already mentioned in the previous verse (v. 19), verse 20 seems to summarize the instructions regarding flying creatures in general (which is why insects and bats are included). Overall, the list is primarily about birds, beginning in verse 11.

Note that no insects are listed here in our passage. This abbreviated section in Deuteronomy finds its full explanation in the book of Leviticus, where the permitted insects are listed. There, Moses said to Israel, “All the winged insects that walk on *all fours* are detestable to you. Yet these you may eat among all the winged insects which walk on *all fours*: those which have above their feet jointed legs with which to jump on the earth. These of them you may eat: the locust in its kinds, and the devastating locust in its kinds, and the cricket in its kinds, and the grasshopper in its kinds” ([Leviticus 11:20-22](#)).

Thus, the *teeming life* in our passage must refer to insects “which walk on all fours” but which do not have “above their feet jointed legs” because they are prohibited ([Leviticus 11:21](#)).

Biblical Text:

¹⁹ And all the teeming life with wings are unclean to you; they shall not be eaten. ²⁰ You may eat any clean bird.