

Deuteronomy 17:1

<https://thebiblesays.com/commentary/deut/deut-17/deuteronomy-171/>

Along with prohibiting pagan objects in or near the central sanctuary, Moses tells the Israelites to avoid offering any defective animal to the Suzerain (Ruler) God because this is a detestable thing to Him.

In a continuation of the discussion of maintaining the purity of worship at the central sanctuary, Moses warned the people that they could *not sacrifice to the LORD your God an ox or a sheep which has a blemish or any defect*. They were not to bring an offering that had any defect to the Suzerain God. A *blemish* (Hebrew “mûm”) was any kind of physical defect. A *defect* (Heb. “dābār ra’,” lit. “matter of evil”) refers to some kind of flaw in the animal that occurred because of an accident. These two words are used together in [Deuteronomy 15:19 – 23](#) to describe that which was not allowed in a firstborn animal sacrifice to the LORD.

The *ox* was a large domesticated animal used essentially in Israel for farm work such as plowing ([Deuteronomy 22:10](#)). Oxen are still used in this manner in undeveloped parts of the world, and are generally castrated males. Oxen were also used to transport burdens. The *sheep* was also a domestic animal. In ancient times, sheep often represented a source of wealth and livelihood, providing food to eat and milk to drink.

The Israelites were to make sure not to sacrifice to the LORD their God any animal which had a *blemish* or *any defect*. According to [Deuteronomy 15](#), the defective animal may suffer from an inability to walk that may result from trauma. Or, it may also suffer from nutritional diseases, infectious diseases, or an inability to see ([Deuteronomy 15:21](#)). Any such conditions would make the animal defective and thus unacceptable to be sacrificed to the Suzerain God.

The reason Moses gave as to why a defective animal would not be accepted by the Suzerain God was that *it is a detestable thing to the LORD your God*. The word translated as *detestable thing* (Heb. “to’ evah”) is a term often translated as “abomination” in many English translations ([Deuteronomy 7:25](#)) and denotes something (or someone) that is abhorrent and unacceptable. In Exodus this word refers the way Egyptians viewed Hebrews, as people they would not associate with. In the use here, the practice of idolatry is

unacceptable in the eyes of God; such practice will violate the covenant between God and His people (who agreed to abide by the covenant).

A defective animal was unacceptable to the LORD as a sacrifice. We are not to give the LORD our leftovers. The LORD deserves the best that we can give Him.

Biblical Text:

¹You shall not sacrifice to the Lord your God an ox or a sheep which has a blemish *or* any defect, for that is a detestable thing to the Lord your God.