

e-concepts

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A Study and Application of Deuteronomy 14

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Verse 1-20: Concepts of Clean and Unclean

The Law talks about clean and unclean people, animals, fish/seafood, birds, and insects. In the Law, everything is classified as “holy” or “unholy.” What is not holy includes both the clean and the unclean. Clean was the normal condition of most people and things. Clean was made holy through the sacrificial ritual. Clean became unclean through sinfulness or degradation. Unclean was contaminated, diseased, or impure—not necessarily sinful. When no sin was involved, no forgiveness was required. All that was needed was washing to be clean. Uncleanness had to be dealt with before any participation in the sanctuary. Usually, one was unclean until evening and by washing with water.

In the case of the animals mentioned, we probably don’t know exactly what those animals were. The land animals were of two types: split hooves/chewing cud. Sea creatures had to have fins and scales. Shrimp and lobster were not clean. Clean birds were not meat eaters (such as vultures). Dead animals, which the person did not kill and drain the blood out of, were also unclean. Cleanness and uncleanness is a category, not a condition. If our child comes in with dirty hands, they are unclean but still in category of our child. A pig is unclean, whether it is actually clean or dirty. Cleanness is defined by God and declared by the priests.

Reasons for Cleanness and Uncleanness

God didn’t give a reason but some have been proposed: (1) Certain animals were used in pagan worship. But the bull was clean, and it is most common sacrifice in both Israel and for pagans. (2) Health explanation. Pork is unhealthy. No refrigeration. The Bible does not say that anywhere. Not all unclean animals are harmful. But Jesus declared all animals to be clean (Acts 10), when there still were no refrigerators. (3) Symbolic interpretation. The holy represented the priests, the clean represented the Jews, and the unclean represented the pagans. (4) The sovereignty of God. God simply chose them by election, just as He chose you and me.

Verse 22-29: Jews have interpreted this as a second tithe. I agree. Four types of food were to be tithed: *grain, new wine, oil, and first-born of herd*. They were to eat this in the presence of the Lord (in Shiloh or Jerusalem) to *learn to fear the Lord*. If the distance was too far, then sell them, and take the money to Shiloh and Jerusalem, spend the money on whatever you want (v. 26). They were to give some to the Levite (v. 27).

Verse 28: Every third year, bring it into your own town (not the sanctuary), and give it to the Levite, orphan, and widow in your own town. That makes the first tithe, second tithe, and third tithe every third year. 10% was first tithe for taxes. Second tithe was 9% for this feast and Levites. Third tithe every third year would be 3 1/3% for their own town. **This would average 22 1/3% of annual income.**

Applications:

1. We can use the clean/unclean list as a general guide for healthy food because God would not give them bad food to eat. But that is not an application of this passage because you would be using it for your own benefit rather than as an obedience to God. The real application is to be separate from the world because you are being obedient to the Word of God.
2. We should see our wealth as belonging to God. Understand that our income is from God. We should not keep it as a security so that we don’t need to fear God.
3. Our wealth should inspire a spirit of giving, as the Jews supported the Levites.
4. There is nothing wrong with consuming (enjoying) our wealth, as long as it is done in a context of being mindful of the presence of God and not like the world. The world’s concept of consumption is living in luxury. There are no objections to wealth in the Bible. No objections to enjoying wealth. But there are many objections to living in luxury.

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