

Bible Study Question

Deuteronomy 14:21 states that “you shall not eat anything that dies of itself, you may give it to the alien who is within your gates, that he may eat it or you may sell it to a foreigner, for you are a holy people to the Lord your God.” Why can a foreigner or alien eat something that dies of itself, and doesn't it become toxic when an animal dies?

Answer:

Let's examine the following Scriptures, all of which relate to this question:

Deuteronomy 14:21: "You shall not eat anything that dies of itself; you may give it to the alien [Hebrew: *ger*] who is within your gates, that he may eat it, or you may sell it to a foreigner [Hebrew: *nokriy*]; for you are a holy people to the Lord your God."

Exodus 22:31: "And you shall be holy men to Me: you shall not eat meat torn by beasts in the field; you shall throw it to the dogs."

Leviticus 7:24: "And the fat of an animal that dies naturally ['dieth of itself': KJV], and the fat of what is torn by wild beasts, may be used in any other way; but you shall by no means eat it."

Leviticus 22:8: "Whatever dies naturally ['dieth of itself': KJV] or is torn by beasts he shall not eat, to defile himself with it: I am the Lord."

Leviticus 17:15-16: "And every person who eats what died naturally ['died of itself': KJV] or what was torn by beasts, whether he is a native of your own country or a stranger, he shall both wash his clothes and bathe in water, and be unclean until evening. Then he shall be clean. But if he does not wash them or bathe his body, then he shall bear his guilt."

Leviticus 17:10. "And whatever man of the house of Israel, or of the strangers who dwell among you, who eats any blood, I will set My face against that person who eats blood, and will cut him off from among his people."

Leviticus 11:39-40: "And if any animal which you may eat dies, he who touches its carcass shall be unclean until evening. He who eats of its carcass shall wash his clothes and be unclean until evening. He also who carries its carcass shall wash his clothes and be unclean until evening."

Strangers or foreigners in Israel were generally subject to the same laws as the Israelites (Numbers 15:14-16). However, not all strangers accepted the notion that they were to live by God's law. Just as God allowed divorce because of “hardness of your hearts,” though he never intended this from the beginning (Matthew 19:8), in accommodation of the reality of the unconversion of many of the strangers in Israel, the law in Exodus permits the giving or selling to strangers of animals that had died of themselves. Such a scenario might easily arise if a stranger happened to find an animal belonging to an Israelite, and asked if he could have the carcass. It would be permissible for the Israelite to give or sell it to him, but that does not mean the stranger is without sin if he eats of the carcass. If they ate of such meat they were defiled, the same as an Israelite might be defiled by it. They would bear their sin. The preferable thing to do would be to give it to the dogs, burn or bury it. Although it was permissible to use the fat of such animals for purposes other than eating.

Note that Gentile converts into the Church were specifically told to refrain from eating things strangled, or not properly bled, and from blood (Acts 15:20, 29), as preconditions to being admitted to fellowship. These were among unclean practices that were common among Gentile peoples, and still are today. God expects all who worship him to separate themselves from these practices. These requirements were not a complete list of obligations for Gentile Christians, who were expected to repent and obey all of God's commandments as applicable under the New Covenant (Acts 10:35; Romans 2:26).

Conventional medical doctrine is that human blood is sterile, but various studies have shown that bacteria may exist in the blood of apparently healthy individuals (*All Human Blood Is Infected With Bacteria*, Alan Cantwell, M.D.). In a study done at Tulane University School of Medicine, 100% of subjects studied had "dense bodies" in their blood, which under certain conditions developed into classical bacterial forms. Ninety-five of the subjects studied were diseased, and sixty were apparently healthy. The authors suspected that the "dense bodies" were a particular stage in the life cycle of bacterial organisms, serving as a survival mechanism in a hostile environment. Authors of the study stated that their findings "modify the currently held view that the blood of humans is sterile for bacteria under conditions of health" (Gerald J. Domingue and Jorgen U. Schlegel, "*Novel Bacterial Structures in Human Blood*," *Infection and Immunity*, February, 1977, pp. 621 - 627). Sick persons in the study were found to have many more "dense bodies" than healthy persons, and the "dense bodies" in sick persons more readily changed to classical bacterial forms. Many diseases can be transmitted by the blood of infected persons, such as HIV, various viral diseases, certain types of hepatitis, etc.

An animal that dies of itself might very well be diseased, and any disease organisms infecting the animal are likely to be in the blood. If the findings discussed above concerning human blood holds true for animals, it follows that the blood of even healthy animals may contain disease organisms in some form.

Blood is an excellent medium for the growth of bacteria, so infectious bacteria that are present are likely to proliferate very rapidly in a dead animal that has not been bled properly. As an example of how sick and dead animals can spread disease, The Centers for Disease Control recommends avoiding sick and dead animals as a means of avoiding being infected with plague. Plague is commonly diagnosed by testing blood for the presence of plague bacteria ("*Fatal Human Plague – Arizona and Colorado, 1996*," <http://www.cdc.gov>; "*Diagnostic Tests for Plague*," <http://www.rightdiagnosis.com>; "Plague Tests and Diagnosis," www.mayoclinic.com).

Blood also transports various toxic body wastes to organs that detoxify them or eliminate them from the body. When you eat blood you are eating toxic substances. While a small amount of ingested blood may not cause sickness (although it doesn't take much to transmit a communicable disease), ingestion of large amounts of blood can cause sickness and death.

The strange fact is, blood, when drank, is toxic. When confined to places where blood is supposed to be — such as the heart, vessels, and so on — it is essential for life. But when ingested it's a very different story. Of course all toxins have doses, and just as a tiny bit of poison won't necessarily harm you, the more you eat or drink, the greater the danger....

Because blood is so rich in iron — and because the body has difficulty excreting excess iron — any [human or] animal [except certain animals with specially designed mechanisms] that consumes blood regularly runs a risk of iron overdose. While iron is necessary for all animals and indeed most life, in high doses it can be toxic. This condition, called haemochromatosis, can cause a wide variety of diseases and problems, including liver damage, buildup of fluid in the lungs, dehydration, low blood pressure, and nervous disorders. ([“Is It Safe to Drink Blood?”](#), Benjamin Radford, September 2, 2011).

If not consumed in excess, the body of a healthy person regulates the amount of iron absorbed from ingested food. While some iron is found in the meat of clean animals such as cattle, the majority is in the blood. Excess iron consumption can damage and ulcerate the lining of the gastrointestinal tract, which makes it more difficult for the body to regulate the intake of iron. The result of excess iron intake can also include damage to the heart, brain and other organs, diabetes, arthritis, and other health problems, including death (see [Iron overload](#), [iron poisoning](#), and [Human iron metabolism](#), *Wikipedia*).

The bottom line is, God forbids the eating of blood, and the eating of animals that die of themselves or by some other means that does not allow proper bleeding. Separating ourselves from these practices is part of what makes us “holy” in God's sight. And in addition, there are very good health reasons to follow God's commands regarding these prohibitions.

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