

# 'The Question stated about abstaining from blood'

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## **The Question stated about abstaining from blood.**

The Israelites are reckoned to have had two sorts of Proselytes, one to the law of Moses, the other only to the precepts of the sons of Noah. The first they circumcised the other not. Yet the Patriarchs were circumcised before the law of Moses though they lived only under the Precepts of the sons of Noah, circumcision being instituted upon a covenant with Abraham & his posterity. And therefore circumcision made men debtors to the law upon no other account then as it adopted them sons of Abraham Isaac & Iacob. For all the Israelites were obliged to the law of Moses.

The Gentiles were called not to become sons of Abraham by adoption but to believe in Iesus Christ & therefore were not obliged to circumcision & the law of Moses, but being sons of Noah they were obliged to the Precepts of the sons of Noah. The Gentiles who observed these Precepts were allowed to live among the people of Israel & are called Proselytes of justice & Proselytes of the Gate, & strangers sojourning in Israel & (in the fourth Commandment) strangers within the Gates of Israel. And it was sufficient for Christians to become such Proselytes.

The Apostles therefore being consulted about obliging the Gentiles by circumcision to become the sons of Abraham & keep the law of Moses returned such an answer as imported that it was sufficient for them to observe the laws imposed upon the sons of Noah before the days of Abraham.

Some of those laws were moral & sufficiently enforced by the Christian religion; as to abstain from idolatry blasphemy & theft: others were positive; as to abstain from things offered to idols, from blood & things strangled & from fornication; that is, from communicating with the heathen in their festivals upon things offered to idols because it tends to idolatry, from blood & things strangled because it leads to cruelty, & from prohibited women because of the ill consequences, whether they were prohibited untill marriage only or by reason of affinity, or of their being idolaters or during their menses.

Noah was allowed to feed upon animals provided they were killed by bleeding to death. But he was not allowed to feed upon blood lest he should thirst after the blood of animals & for the sake of it become cruel & kill more animals then were necessary for food, or cut them in pieces before they were quite dead by bleeding. He was not to eat things strangled because that sort of death is painful. He was not to eat a limb taken off from a living animal because of the cruelty. And so Moses commanded that the people of Israel should not seeth a Kid in the mothers milk, nor take a bird with its young nor muzzle the mouth of an Ox which treadeth out the corn, because such actions incline men to cruelty & savour of unmercifulness.

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In the wilderness the children of Israel & the strangers which sojourned among them were to kill all their sheep & Oxen & Goats at the door of the Tabernacle, & pour out their blood because it is the life of the flesh & the flesh [ according to the Law of Nations given to Noah.] was not to be eaten with the life thereof Levit. XVII.3, 4, 10, 11, 13, 14.. But when the Lord thy God, saith Moses, shall enlarge thy border, & thou shalt say I will eat flesh: if the place which the Lord thy God hath chosen to put his name there be too far from thee thou shalt kill of thy herd & of thy flock & thou shalt eat in thy gates whatsoever thy soul lusteth after – only be sure that thou eat not the blood. For the blood is the life [mentioned in the law of nations given to Noah,] & [by that Law] thou mayst not eat the life with the flesh. Thou shalt not eat it, Thou shalt pour it upon the earth as water. Deut. XII.15, 20, 21, 23, 24. This Law Moses imposed not only upon the people of Israel but also upon the stranger who sojourned among them, & therefore looked upon it as the law of nations; not as one of the new Laws given to Israel in Mount Sina, but as an old law given to the sons of Noah presently after the flood an old law which needed only to be explained & enforced. When therefore Moses saith, be sure that thou eat not the blood; for the blood is the life & thou mayst not eat the life with the blood: doth not Moses in saying thou mayst not eat the life with the blood recite that ancient law & thereby enforce his prohibiting the eating of blood? And in saying be sure that thou eat not the blood, for the blood is the life doth he not explain what is meant by נפש anima, the soul or life in that ancient law? And when in relating the history of the flood, he recites that ancient law Flesh with the life thereof ye shall not eat, doth he not insert the blood by way of explication, Flesh with the life thereof [which is the blood thereof] shall ye not eat? The language used by Noah might be so far antiquated in the days of Moses as in reciting that ancient law to need an explication.

Cain was a tiller of the ground & offered the fruit of the ground to the Lord & Abel was a keeper of sheep & offered of his flock. Sheep were therefore kept & sacrificed & eaten before the flood, & upon {Noah's} sacrificing God renewed the license of eating {illeg} it provided they eat it without נפש the blood: which makes it probable that blood was prohibited before the flood. Moses prohibited it & so did the Apostles to all nations not because blood defileth him that eateth it but because the prohibition tendeth to mercy.

Quære, whether the law be still in force.

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In six or eight hundred years, languages alter very much, & the language in which this law was given to Noah Flesh with the נפש thereof thou shalt not eat, was given to Noah might be so altered before the days of Moses that the word נפש Nepesh might need an explication. When therefore Moses commands both the children of Israel & the strangers who sojourned amongst them that they should not eat the blood of animals with the flesh, & enforces his command with this reason For the blood is the נפש of the flesh & the flesh with the נפש thereof thou shalt not eat (Levit XVII & Deut XII) doth he not recite the ancient law of Noah: Flesh with the נפש thereof shall ye not eat, & doth he not interpret the word Nepes by saying that the blood is the נפש of the flesh? And when in relating the history of the flood he sets down that ancient law Flesh with the נפש thereof, which is the blood thereof, shall ye not eat, Gen IX.4 doth he not insert the words blood thereof into the law for interpreting what is to be here understood by the word נפש? This word here must signify a corporeal substance which can be eaten & therefore not the life but the blood in which the life is seated or the blood of the life as it is called in the next words Gen IX. 5.

When therefore Moses inserts the word blood into this Law in this manner Flesh with the נפש thereof, that is the blood thereof, thou shalt not eat was it not for explaining what the word נפש signifies? And when Moses

These things were done for food & the distinction between beasts clean & unclean before the flood shewed what beasts were then lawful to be sacrificed & eaten & what not: & after the flood when God said to Noah Every moving thing that liveth shall be meat for you even as the green herb have I given you all things he repeted & reestablished an old Law. And when he added: but flesh with the blood thereof shall ye not eat: it may be taken for a part of that old Law. This Law against eating blood was repeated by Moses to all nations & again by the Apostles; not because blood defileth him that eateth it, but because the prohibition is a check to salvageness & cruelty.

Quære, Whether the Law be still in force?

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[Editorial Note 1]

Tis not any defilement by prohibited meats but the danger of idolatry & cruelty upon which the prohibition of eating them is founded, not the company of weomen, but the ill consequences in certain cases which occasioned the prohibition in those cases.

[Editorial Note 1] The text on this page is written upside down.

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