



[Hebrews 10:1-4](#)

(1) For the law, having a shadow of the good things to come, *and* not the very image of the things, can never with these same sacrifices, which they offer continually year by year, make those who approach perfect. (2) For then would they not have ceased to be offered? For the worshipers, once purified, would have had no more consciousness of sins. (3) But in those *sacrifices there is* a reminder of sins every year. (4) For *it is* not possible that the blood of bulls and goats could take away sins.

New King James Version

Perhaps we think of this as a rather minor affair, but [God](#) shows that He has, and we must have, respect for the life of an animal. In His instructions on the subject of the regular sacrifices, God commands us not to eat the blood! The blood must be drained on the ground and not imbibed by a human being. He does this out of respect for the animal, for its life is in the blood even as ours is.

Animals have at least a low level of feeling. They experience fear; situations can frighten them. And who will say that one's pet, a dog or a cat, does not have a special relationship or feeling for him or her? Certainly, it does.

Can we extend that to include a bullock, goat, sheep, kid of the goats, or a lamb as having feelings too? To be sure, they do not have human feelings. Nevertheless, they have life, and in the sacrifices, they symbolize—every single one of them—the life of [Jesus Christ](#). How many animals had to give their lives to make a witness and an example of His sinlessness, His approach to life, or His [payment for our sins](#)? We will never know; but just to give an approximate idea, Josephus records that, when he lived in the middle of the first century, the Romans took a census of all of the lambs that were killed in Jerusalem for [Passover](#) one year. They tallied 256,000 lambs killed for just one Passover observance—more than a quarter million lambs died to illustrate a lesson!

Perhaps it would help us to understand why God tells the Israelites in Exodus 12 that

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keeping Passover should be a family affair. It was not to be done at the Temple or Tabernacle. In His instructions, God specifies that nearly every family should kill its own lamb ([Exodus 12:3-4](#)). He desires to make the point to every individual that he is responsible for the death of the Lamb of God, Jesus Christ!

However, consider this: The overwhelming majority of those Israelite families were not rich. Most of them had only small flocks and herds, so they had just a few sheep and very few lambs. In most cases, they lived with their animals, and whenever they put a lamb to death on Passover, it was quite likely the family pet! They killed something very close to them, a living thing to which they had emotional attachments. Millions of beloved pets died over centuries! Perhaps this can provide us more insight to see that nothing is too great a price for God to pay for us.

— John W. Ritenbaugh

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