

## Hilkhot Shechitah / Laws of Slaughtering

### Chapter 1:1& 4, 14:16

1 It is a positive commandment that whosoever wishes to eat of the flesh of a domestic animal, wild beast, or bird, must first perform *shehitah* upon it, and only thereafter may he eat of it, as it is said, “and you shall kill of your herd and of your flock” (Deut. 12:21). Scripture also says with regard to a blemished firstling, “even as the roebuck and the hart is eaten, so shall you eat them” (*ibid.* 12:22).

Thus you learn that a wild beast is in the same category as a domestic animal in respect to *shehitah*. In regard to birds Scripture says, “and whosoever man . . . takes in hunting any beast or bird that may be eaten, he shall pour out the blood thereof” (Lev. 17:13), which teaches that the slaughtering of a beast. There is thus but one law of *shehitah* applying to all of them.

4 this method of slaughtering, which is mentioned in the Torah without definition, must needs be explained, in order to know upon what organ of the animal *shehitah* is to be performed, what is the extent of *shehitah*, with what instrument and when, where, and how it is to be performed, what things invalidate it, and who may perform it. All these matters are contained in the general commandment of the Torah, “then shall you kill of your herd and your flock as I have commanded you, and you shall eat within your gates” (Deut. 12:21), which means that Moses was commanded concerning all these matters orally, as in the case of the rest of the Oral Law, which is referred to as “commandment,” as we have explained in the introduction to this work.\*

### Chapter 14

16 When one performs the commandment of covering up the blood, he should do it not with his foot, but with his hand, or with a knife or utensil, so as not to conduct the performance of the commandment in a contemptuous manner, thus treating God’s commandments with scorn. For reverence is due not to the commandments themselves, but to Him who has issued them, blessed be He, and who delivered us from groping in the darkness by making the commandments a lamp to straighten out the crooked places and a light to teach us the paths of uprightness. And so indeed Scripture says, “Your word is a lamp to my feet, and a light to my path” (Ps. 119:105).