

ROMANS 14

COMMENTARY

1 Now accept the one who is weak in faith, but not for the purpose of passing judgment on his opinions. 2 One person has faith that he may eat all things, but he who is weak eats vegetables only. 3 The one who eats is not to regard with contempt the one who does not eat, and the one who does not eat is not to judge the one who eats, for God has accepted him. 4 Who are you to judge the servant of another? To his own master he stands or falls; and he will stand, for the Lord is able to make him stand.

ch 14 Romans 14 is a chapter that tends to receive very little attention from today's Messianic Believers, because it has been traditionally interpreted that the Apostle Paul is indifferent when it comes to matters of diet and sacred days. Romans 14 can actually be one of the most ambiguous chapters of Scripture for not only today's Messianic Bible teachers, who largely ignore it, but at times, even some of today's Christian commentators. Everyone can easily agree upon a cursory reading of Romans 14:1-16 that some kind of issue regarding special days and eating is being addressed—but what those things specifically were, and how they divided the Believers in Rome, is something else. It is rightfully agreed that the Apostle Paul was warning the Roman Believers—a mixed group of Jewish and non-Jewish Believers—to not be divided over minor scruples, *but that might be about all we know for sure*. Romans 14:13 issues the instructive word, “Therefore let us not judge one another anymore, but rather determine this—not to put an obstacle or a stumbling block in a brother's way.”

The common conclusion drawn is that Paul in Romans 14 thinks that it is only the weak in faith, widely Jewish Believers, who eat kosher and keep sacred days like the seventh-day Sabbath. If people want to eat kosher and keep the Sabbath, that is fine—and if they do not, that is fine as well—as there are more important issues for Believers to focus their attention upon. Ben Witherington III's conclusion, in his Romans commentary, is that “Paul does not see the Mosaic requirements about such things as obligatory for Christians, even Jewish Christians.”¹ But as can be easily discerned, not enough attention is probably given to the First Century Roman setting of Paul's words—even among some of the best interpreters—and with them the specific intention of Paul wanting to see a degree of unity restored to the Roman Believers. He wants the various “opinions” (v. 1) held by some of the Roman Believers, causing unnecessary division, to be significantly moderated.

Far too frequently, the material in Romans ch. 14 has been concluded to support a Pauline philosophy of *adiaphora*,² a term defined by the *Westminster Dictionary of Theological Terms* to be “Elements of faith regarded as neither commanded nor forbidden in Scripture and thus on which liberty of conscience may be exercised (see Rom. 14:17; 1 Cor 6:12; 8:8; Gal. 5:6).”³ In his commentary on Romans, Martin Luther used ch. 14 to not only speak out against the Torah-prescribed dietary laws

¹ Witherington, 339.

² Cf. Calvin, 289; F. Davidson and Ralph P. Martin, “Romans,” in D. Guthrie and J.A. Motyer, eds., *The New Bible Commentary Revised* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1970), 1042; Stern, *Jewish New Testament Commentary*, pp 434-435.

³ Donald S. McKim, *Westminster Dictionary of Theological Terms* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 1996), 4.

and festivals, but against many of the customs, traditions, institutions, and cathedrals of European Catholicism.⁴ Today, with Romans ch. 14 principally approached as being an abstract essay by Paul on matters indifferent, various contemporary applications can range, as noted by Grant R. Osborne, to involve “legalistic divisions over movies, cards, dancing and social drinking...[and] quarrels over doctrines like the charismatic issue, the rapture/millennium and Calvinism-Arminianism.”⁵ We should think that anyone just skimming through Romans ch. 14, and then applying it in terms of whether contemporary Believers should read Harry Potter books or listen to rock music, **is something that is far removed from the circumstances which Paul originally addressed.**

Paul’s Epistle to the Romans has widely been read as being mainly a theological treatise, since the Protestant Reformation, although the trend toward approaching Romans mainly as a letter written to First Century Believers, has shifted over the past fifty to sixty years. Looking at the material of ch. 14, and what is communicated regarding eating and sacred days, the approaches to Paul’s instruction have not shifted as much as they should, in terms of evaluating something that has been taking place among the Roman Messiah followers, requiring a Pauline admonition (cf. 15:15). Among those who do feel that Romans ch. 14 is to be viewed more in terms of a letter to ancient Believers,⁶ and not some abstract essay, it is just assumed, though, that the eating and sacred days must be the kosher dietary laws, the Sabbath, and the appointed times of the Torah.

What the issues involving eating and sacred days actually involved for the Roman Believers may require a closer reading of Paul’s admonishment than is commonly seen by many who encounter Paul’s letter—precisely because “opinions” (v. 1) are being addressed. These opinions may concern the Law of Moses, but not as directly as some may think. C.E.B. Cranfield issues a bit of caution in his Romans commentary, “Some recent commentators have exhibited great confidence in their approach to the interpretation of this section. This we find surprising; for it seems to us to be extremely difficult to decide with certainty what exactly the problem is with which Paul is concerned in this section.”⁷ Any examination needs to carefully review what is being stated, and most especially the larger themes seen in Paul’s letter. And, it might be a bit hasty to automatically conclude that the dietary laws, Sabbath, and appointed times are being specifically considered—because they are commandments laid forth in God’s Torah, and not “opinions” held by human individuals.

Romans ch. 14 is commonly approached from the perspective of the “weak” being Jewish Believers still observing things like the kosher dietary laws, Sabbath, and appointed times. There are, to be sure, alternatives to be considered regarding the fare being eaten (v. 2) and the sacred days being observed (vs. [3]5-6). When approached as a letter—and **not** as an abstract essay—the interpreter necessarily has to posit what situation may have arisen in Rome to require Paul to address this. Because of the wide number of theological and ideological hurdles any alternative view to Romans ch. 14 must jump over, such an alternative must be sustainable not only from the text of Paul’s letter, but what would have been reasonably possible within a mixed community of Jewish and non-Jewish Messiah followers in the First Century Mediterranean.

Controversies erupting during mealtimes are not irregular to the Apostolic Scriptures, especially per the incident between Paul and Peter in Antioch (Galatians 2:11-14).⁸ Some, labeled by Paul to be “weak” brethren, were not confident enough to eat meat, and instead only ate vegetables (v. 2). The reasons for this may have varied, but the fallout of the Edict of Claudius, and how it altered the availability and accessibility of meat for the Jewish community and the Messianic Jews, will need to be

⁴ Luther, 195.

⁵ Osborne, 359.

⁶ Cf. Edwards, 317.

⁷ Cranfield, *Romans 9-16*, 690.

⁸ Consult the examination of Galatians 2:11-14 appearing in the *Messianic Kosher Helper* by Messianic Apologetics.

considered. Apparently, the “weak” choosing to not eat meat, merited some unfair criticism from the “strong” (v. 4). Philip F. Esler describes how the scene depicted, is what was being served during Roman fellowship meals:

“Paul seemed to be responding to dysfunctional gatherings of the Christ-movement in Rome rather than the total isolation of one group from another. Perhaps we should imagine gatherings in a strong person’s house where there is a meal with meat and vegetables, but the weak will only eat the vegetables and are abused by the strong for doing so.”⁹

That such meal times could have involved various sub-assemblies or sub-groups of Roman Believers, deduced from the demographic list of greetings in ch. 16, also needs to be considered. It is not improbable by any means how certain fellowships of the Roman Believers were more conservative, and others less so, on issues like eating.

Consequently, Paul would then proceed to make a further statement on sacred days (vs. 5-6, or perhaps vs. 3-6 in total).

The scene of conflicts taking place at Roman fellowship meals requiring Paul’s instruction in ch. 14, and the “strong” judging the “weak,” can all be posited on the customary assumption that the “weak” kept kosher and the “strong” did not, and that the sacred days are the Sabbath and appointed times.

Alternatively, if one assumes that during mealtimes between the Jewish and non-Jewish Believers in Rome, that the stipulations of the Apostolic decree regarding meat were being observed (Acts 15:20, 29), then the meat being served would be *katharos* (καθαρός) or “clean” (v. 20), but it might be regarded as *koinos* (κοινός) or “common” (v. 14) due to where it could have originated, which may have been more from Roman rather than Jewish sources. Our proposed alternative to be evaluated, for interpreting the matter of eating and sacred days in Romans ch. 14, is that (1) unnecessary criticism has arisen during fellowship meals between Jewish and non-Jewish Believers, with some of the former not eating the *clean* meat provided. These people are not to be judged, (2) because many of the same hold certain days, days when they do not eat, in high regard. Such sacred days, as at least partially suggested by various Christian commentators, but also held by some early Christian leaders, would have been optional Jewish fast days. All of these actions are performed out of personal conviction to the Lord.

Today’s Messianic people often do not know what to do with Romans ch. 14, for any number of reasons—and far too many still approach Romans ch. 14 as being an abstract essay on *adiaphora*. Having a First Century, Rome-specific setting in mind for Romans ch. 14, and being able to defend such a vantage point, is imperative, as various commentators holding to more customary interpretations regarding this section, may be seen to actually make a number of comparisons to today’s Messianic movement. While it is not thought that the majority of Messianic people keep kosher or *Shabbat* out of some salvation-by-works praxis, it is believed that keeping these things as a matter of sanctification and holiness is unneeded. Osborne is one who makes a comparison and contrast between what he considers the issue of the “weak” in Romans 14 to be, and how Messianic assemblies today would similarly be “weak”:

“Their observance [of Jewish ritual] was not salvific but cultic; that is, they followed such regulations as part of their worship of Christ. These regulations were not a basis of their Christian faith but part of their religious observance...[T]hey believed that they had to follow these practices in order to walk with Christ properly...[M]any Jewish-Christian congregations today would fit this scenario.”¹⁰

⁹ Esler, 350.

¹⁰ Osborne, 357.

Craig S. Keener, an evangelical theologian who is more favorable than not to the Messianic Jewish movement, even concludes, “For Paul, foods themselves are religiously neutral; that is, one may keep food customs because of upbringing, cultural preference or ethnic attachment, but one who keeps them out of the belief that it is religiously profitable is ‘weak in faith’ (14:1).”¹¹

To facilitate some better discussion and engagement, with the material of ch. 14, the following commentary—while evaluating the positions and interjections of Christian commentators on Romans for sure—will consider some of the thoughts of various Messianic teachers who have written on Romans as commentaries (David H. Stern, Tim Hegg). The section which follows our examination of Romans 14:1-23, labeled “Romans 14 application,” will consider some of the proposals made in Messianic books written for wide distribution on the topic of kosher (none are presently extant for Romans 14 on the topic of the Sabbath).

14:1 The scene of Romans ch. 14 begins with a statement acknowledging how there have been various opinions, which have unnecessarily divided the Messiah followers in Rome. Paul says, “Now accept the one who is weak in faith, but not for the purpose of disputes about opinions” (TLV). The term *dialogismos* (διαλογισμός) relates to, “content of reasoning or conclusion reached through use of reason, *thought, opinion, reasoning, design*” (BDAG).¹² This is variably rendered as “disputable matters” (NIV), “doubtful points” (NEB), “doubtful issues” (HCSB), “differences of opinion” (Common English Bible), or even “difficult points” (Kingdom New Testament). The thrust of this admonition is that born again Believers can hold to different positions, and it ultimately does not matter either way or another, as a particular action or practice is intended to glorify God. In the estimation of David H. Stern, from his *Jewish New Testament Commentary*, “Where Scripture gives a clear word, personal opinion must give way. But where the Word of God is subject to various possible interpretations, let each be persuaded in his own mind.”¹³

Romans ch. 14 is **traditionally** read from the vantage point that the disputable opinions or matters in view, are the kosher dietary laws, the seventh-day Sabbath, and the appointed times. The fact that what divided the Roman Believers is labeled as *opinion*, should cause all readers to slow down in quickly rushing to such a thought. Unless we are prepared to discount Paul’s previous word about Believers upholding God’s Torah in Messiah (3:31), the disputable matters in view would involve issues for which there was no definite Biblical solution—unlike the flesh of animals that was definitively declared “unclean” in the Torah (discussed further on v. 20), or the Sabbath which was to be a sign between God and His people “forever” (Exodus 31:17). Tim Hegg is one who asserts,

“This in itself should...put to rest the notion that Paul is discussing issues of Sabbath and kosher food laws, for though in our times these might be considered matters of ‘opinion,’ they surely could not have been so construed in Paul’s day. What must fall under the category of ‘opinions’ are those things for which both sides could equally be considered righteous and worthy.”¹⁴

A theologian like John R.W. Stott, holding the more customary view of Romans ch. 14, would state that “questions of diet and days are precisely *non-essentials*”¹⁵—a statement which Torah observant Messianic people should be able to agree with, *when* it can be reasonably deduced that such diet is not *kashrut* and such days are not *Shabbat* and the *moedim*, but instead are differences of opinion in association with diet, and that other, extra-Biblical sacred days are in view.

While v. 1 includes direction from Paul to the Romans “not to quarrel over opinions” (ESV), it has to be noted how Messianic interpreters are not always in agreement as to the identity of

¹¹ Keener, 163.

¹² BDAG, 232.

¹³ Stern, *Jewish New Testament Commentary*, pp 434-435.

¹⁴ Hegg, *Romans 9-16*, 408.

¹⁵ Stott, 358.

Ton...asthenounta tē pistei (Τὸν...ἀσθενοῦντα τῇ πίστει), “the one who is weak in faith” or “a person whose trust is weak” (CJB). Customarily, it has been interpreted that the “weak” in view are various Jewish Believers, whose personal conviction is that they will only eat vegetables (v. 2). Another thought, as indicated by Hegg’s commentary on Romans (following Mark Nanos), is that the “weak” were actually Jewish people in Rome who were non-Believers, but were on the road to Messiah faith. As he proposes,

“[There is] another suggestion, one that I think fits the context and the message of Paul. [Nanos] suggests that those weak in faith are the Jewish members of the synagogue who had demonstrated a genuine faith in the God of Israel, but who were still in the process of being convinced that Yeshua was the promised Messiah. Their genuine faith had been demonstrated within the community but they were still considering the evidence regarding whether Yeshua was, in fact, the promised Messiah of that faith. In one sense, the genuine character of their faith would be confirmed by their confession of Yeshua as Messiah, but until that time came, they could not be charged with faithlessness. Their faith was weak only in the sense that it was not as strong as it would be when they fully espoused Yeshua.”¹⁶

The “weak in faith” are stated in the text of v. 2 following, to be those who would only eat vegetables. While there might be some component of Jewish people in Rome on the road to Messiah faith involved in this, there is nothing which would definitively require the “weak in faith” to be such. The weak could be committed Jewish Believers or non-Jewish Believers who had been proselytes, or just Believers in general with what Paul personally considered an overly-conservative opinion. Their trust in Messiah, and in His Lordship of all things (v. 9), was just not as fully encompassing or transcending as Paul’s was, or those whom he would consider as not being “weak.”

It is not necessary to conclude that the “weak in faith” are Jews in Rome on the way to fully trusting in Yeshua. Yet, Hegg is correct to broadly emphasize, though, “Paul’s point here is that receiving one who is weak in faith should be demonstrated by a full reception, not a half-hearted one. The weak in faith are not to be received in order to convince them to change their current *halachah* regarding food or days, but they are to be received as genuine members of the body of Messiah...”¹⁷

14:2 Paul begins this vignette by contrasting the eating of meat versus only eating vegetables. He states, “One person has faith to eat anything, but the weak eats only vegetables” (TLV). Is this an abstract statement being made by Paul, meaning that “all things” (*panta*, πάντα) are unqualified, hence Paul considers the Torah’s dietary code to be irrelevant? Or, is the “all things” something which would be considered qualified, meaning that it would be in alignment with the intention of the Apostolic decree, which included a prohibition “from blood and from things strangled” (Acts 15:29), as a part of concern for the sensibilities of Jewish Believers and non-Believers, among other things? When the situation of Romans 14 is viewed from the vantage point of Paul’s instruction needing to be issued because of tensions that have arisen during fellowship meals—where publicly Jewish and non-Jewish Believers in Rome would be able to have witnessed what various eating preferences of others were—then it is right to assume that the Apostolic decree was being followed, but that questions were being raised by those Paul considers “weak,” when it came to eating meat. N.T. Wright will interject how,

“[T]he center of [this] lay[s] the centuries-old Jewish taboos regarding food, both what to eat, how to prepare it, and with whom and in what condition to eat it. Like any such deep-rooted culture

¹⁶ Hegg, *Romans 9-16*, 407.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, 408.

He goes on to conclude that this is to take place “in anticipation of their faith through a confession of Yeshua as the Messiah.”

issue, it would emerge in different forms in different situations, but with an underlying family resemblance; and it is not difficult to imagine the context of the present warning..."¹⁸

Keeping kosher in the Diaspora was not always easy for many Jewish people, especially in interacting with their neighbors. The ongoing challenge of not eating meat sacrificed to idols (cf. 1 Corinthians 8; 10), widely meant that Diaspora Jews would only procure meat and wine from their own sources. While there would be Jewish butchers and slaughterhouses, able to provide meat that was untainted by idolatry, and would not be strangled with heavy amounts of blood coagulated in the meat, as would often be seen in pagan sacrificial meat sold for popular consumption—Jewish butchers and slaughterhouses were not always available or accessible. In many cases, this meant that mainly, or even only, vegetables would be eaten by Jews. There is a wide array of attestations to a vegetarian diet being adopted by Jews intending to avoid idolatrous association, in the Tanach, Apocrypha, and Josephus:

"But Daniel made up his mind that he would not defile himself with the king's choice food or with the wine which he drank; so he sought *permission* from the commander of the officials that he might not defile himself...and the commander of the officials said to Daniel, 'I am afraid of my lord the king, who has appointed your food and your drink; for why should he see your faces looking more haggard than the youths who are your own age? Then you would make me forfeit my head to the king.'... 'Please test your servants for ten days, and let us be given some vegetables to eat and water to drink.'...So the overseer continued to withhold their choice food and the wine they were to drink, and kept giving them vegetables" (Daniel 1:8, 10, 12, 16; cf. Josephus *Antiquities of the Jews* 10.190).

"Now when I was carried away captive to Nineveh, all my brethren and my relatives ate the food of the Gentiles; but I kept myself from eating it" (Tobit 1:10-11).

"And she gave her maid a bottle of wine and a flask of oil, and filled a bag with parched grain and a cake of dried fruit and fine bread; and she wrapped up all her vessels and gave them to her to carry...Then he commanded them to bring her in where his silver dishes were kept, and ordered them to set a table for her with some of his own food and to serve her with his own wine. But Judith said, 'I cannot eat it, lest it be an offense; but I will be provided from the things I have brought with me'" (Judith 10:5; 12:1-2).

"But Judas Maccabeus, with about nine others, got away to the wilderness, and kept himself and his companions alive in the mountains as wild animals do; they continued to live on what grew wild, so that they might not share in the defilement" (2 Maccabees 5:27).

"These I was desirous to procure deliverance for; and that especially because I was informed that they {Jewish priests in Rome} were not unmindful of piety toward God, even under their afflictions; but supported themselves with figs and nuts" (Josephus *Life* 14).¹⁹

Obviously in a city like Ancient Rome, not unlike Ancient Babylon for previous generations of Jews, the Jews of Rome would more often than not have been conscientious about the sources of the meat they would eat, and whether or not such meat would be tainted by idolatry. Among many of the Greco-Roman cities of the Mediterranean, animals would be improperly strangled in sacrifice, and then the meat butchered and sold to the public. Vegetarianism easily eliminated the threat of idol contamination or association.

¹⁸ Wright, in *NIB*, 10:735.

¹⁹ *The Works of Josephus: Complete and Unabridged*, 2.

There might, however, be more to be considered, contributing to the issue of why those in Romans 14:2 considered “weak” might have abstained from eating meat. The argument has been advanced that the Jewish butchers and slaughterhouses in Rome were unwilling to sell to many of the Messianic Jews, as a fallout of some of the controversies which had erupted in association with the expulsion of the Roman Jews by the Edict of Claudius. In his commentary, Witherington summarizes some of the factors which need to be weighed:

“After the debacle among Jews, apparently caused by the disputes over Jesus, and the expulsion of the Jews in A.D. 49, ‘the officials who controlled the meat market would have withdrawn the provision of “suitable food.” There may have been some in Rome who were no longer eating meat because kosher meat was not available in the markets. Given the official control of the market it would have required the action of a senior official, with the emperor himself giving his approval, for the reopening of the segment of the market for the Jews.’ [quoting: B.W. Winter, “Roman Law and Society in Romans 12-15”]...Then after the Jews’ return under Nero, the few Jewish butchers in Rome might have been unwilling to service Jewish Christians, and Jewish Christians might have avoided synagogues, which might have cut them off from sources of acceptable meat.”²⁰

If it can be recognized that there were dietary ramifications for the Messianic Jews of Rome—with few Jewish butchers being willing to sell meat to them—as a consequence of Claudius’ expulsion of the Roman Jews from the city, then such widescale inability to procure meat from Jewish sources would cause many to do what many other Diaspora Jews would do: eat vegetarian.

The implication, of the Apostolic decree, is that in abstaining “from what is strangled and from blood” (Acts 15:20), the non-Jewish Believers would have to, in all likelihood, procure their meat from Jewish sources. This was not always possible, but such does not automatically mean that animals could not have been butchered in a non-strangled manner in the marketplace for them (that is, if the customer was just as right in the First Century as he is in the Twenty-First Century). It is not difficult to posit how wealthy persons among the Messiah followers in Rome—the probable hosts for various fellowship gatherings and meals—would have seemingly been able to make arrangements with Roman butchers or slaughterhouses, for a meat source compatible with the intentions of the Apostolic decree.

The meat being consumed, by those who were not weak, is labeled by Paul later in v. 14 to be *koinos* (κοινός), which can notably regard “that which ordinary people eat, in contrast to those of more refined tastes” (BDAG).²¹ Meat that is *koinos* or “common” (v. 14, LITV) need not be regarded as pork or shellfish, but could have been meat of Biblically clean animals (v. 20) butchered in alignment with the intentions of the Apostolic decree, **not as a part of pagan sacrifice**, but procured from Roman and not Jewish sources. Yet, regarding whether such meat actually being *koinos*/common or not, is to Paul a personal value judgment to be made.

14:3 While Paul has mentioned how the “weak” among the Believers in Rome are vegetarian (v. 2), their presence should not be the problem it has apparently become. He is clear to direct: “Don’t let the one who eats disparage the one who does not eat, and don’t let the one who does not eat judge the one who eats, for God has accepted him” (TLV). The main action to be avoided, by those who were not weak, is seen in the verb *exoutheneō* (ἐξουθενέω), **“to show by one’s attitude or manner of treatment that an entity has no merit or worth, disdain”** (BDAG),²² variably rendered as “regard/treat with contempt” (NASU/NIV), “look down” (HCSB), “condemn” (Kingdom New

²⁰ Witherington, pp 334-335; also Osborne, 358; Kruse, 512.

Against: Stern, *Jewish New Testament Commentary*, pp 432-433, who argues on the basis of Paul’s seeming acceptance by the Jewish community in Acts 28.

²¹ BDAG, 552.

²² Ibid., 352.

Testament), or “look down upon” (Moffat New Testament). Here, it is worthwhile to note how Judean Jews often were highly suspicious of the kosher adherence of Diaspora Jews:

“R. Simeon b. Eleazar says, ‘Israelites who live abroad are idolaters. How so? A gentile who made a banquet for his son and went and invited all the Jews who live in his town—even though they eat and drink their own [food and wine], and their own waiter stands over them and serves them, they nonetheless serve idolatry’ (t.*Avodah Zarah* 4:6).²³

Here, it is actually depicted how even at a banquet hosted by a non-Jew, where the Jews present were served different, presumably acceptable kosher food—they were still thought to commit idolatry. The reverse kind of attitude, toward those choosing to eat vegetarian among the Roman Believers—that these people are somehow not godly or virtuous—is to be dismissed according to Paul.

Now while he notes it at the point of v. 5, Douglas J. Moo draws our attention to how Paul’s discussion will not only be limited to eating preferences. He indicates, “Paul interrupts his theological argument to cite another point,”²⁴ and so he discusses the secondary issue of sacred days, to show the supposed “strong” why they should not be looking down upon those they considered “weak.” But does his discussion about eating meat get interrupted with the statements about sacred days in v. 3 or v. 4, or even v. 5? Paul’s instruction does detail how for certain there is to be no judgment taking place between the Believers in Rome.

The issue that I would like to raise is whether vs. 3-4 are just a continuation of the remarks made in vs. 1-2, or if they actually help to introduce or bridge the statements about sacred days in vs. 5-6. V. 3 employs the participles *esthiōn* (ἐσθίων) and *mē esthiōn* (μὴ ἐσθίων), referring to the “eater” and “non-eater,” the same terms also repeated in v. 6. Is this referring to a person who eats all, versus one who does not eat all at the fellowship meals—or a person who eats, versus one who does not eat or fasts? Does this relate to the actions described in vs. 1-2 preceding about meals involving meat and vegetables, or the actions following in vs. 5-6 about sacred days and eating/not eating?

Not enough examiners probably consider that there is some relationship intended between the one who “eats” in v. 3, with what is stated in v. 6 regarding the sacred days. The people who do not eat meat (v. 2), are most probably the same people who hold certain days in high regard (v. 5-6). The point that is often not considered, by holding an entire day in high regard unto the Lord, **is much more serious than not eating meat** (v. 7). And, we should think, Paul will use this to make an important rhetorical point to the Romans. The connection between eating and not eating (v. 3) and sacred days (v. 5), is why not all are convinced that such sacred days must be the seventh-day Sabbath/*Shabbat* or appointed times/*moedim*.

14:4 Whether vs. 3-4 are taken as a preface to what will be detailed in vs. 5-6 or not, the point is that the actions being performed are not at all immoral and ungodly. Paul states, “Who are you to criticize someone else’s servant? It is for his own master to say whether he succeeds or fails; and he will succeed, for the Master can make him do so” (Goodspeed New Testament). The actions that the “weak” are performing, are being accomplished as unto God, and it is God’s business and not the business of human people to judge them.

²³ Neusner, *Tosefta*, 2:1276.

²⁴ Moo, 841.