

Unclean Things, Eating

Are there any instances where it is acceptable to eat unclean meats?

If as a Messianic Believer you are committed to follow the kosher dietary laws, you have to keep in mind that we do interact with others who eat unclean things on a regular basis. Most significant among those who eat unclean things are our fellow Christian brothers and sisters, and notably among those our close family and friends. We have to understand that what a person eats is at most secondary to the way a person acts. If in our observance of the kosher dietary laws we do not treat others with love, grace, or mercy, then we have lost the focus of what separating clean and unclean tries to convey. The essence of separating clean and unclean is separating the holy from the profane, and may be extended to how we separate out any ungodly and unsanitary thoughts about our fellow human beings. While we should all strive as Messianics to eat kosher in our daily lives, there may be circumstances we will find ourselves that may require us to eat unclean things.

It is almost unavoidable that we will be confronted with eating unclean things. The Apostle Paul wrote the Corinthians that in the context of evangelism one is to “eat anything that is set before you without asking questions for conscience' sake” (1 Corinthians 10:27, NASU). This is not a statement to eat anything somebody wants; but simply to be respectful to one's host eating what he has prepared with gratitude. This is because ultimately “the kingdom of God is not eating and drinking, but righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Spirit” (Romans 14:17, NASU). However, even though eating what someone prepares for you in the context of witnessing the gospel to them is allowed; this is not a reason to take seconds from what has been prepared. It is simply to recognize that the Lord sees beyond what a person eats, and is more concerned about their character. As Messianic Believers today, we have the responsibility to demonstrate that the integrity of both God's holiness and love can be maintained with the continuity of the kosher laws.

Another important instance where it may be acceptable to eat unclean things would be to extend life. The Jewish theological principle of *Pikku'ach Nefesh* allows for the ritual of any Torah commandment to be broken to preserve life, save the commandments against idolatry. This means that if one is on the verge of death because of starvation, pork or shellfish can be eaten. History shows that many Jews in the Holocaust had to eat unclean things in order to stay alive.