

INTRODUCTION TO THINGS MESSIANIC

**An Introduction for Newcomers
to the Messianic Movement**

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MESSIANIC APOLOGETICS
messianicapologetics.net

Introduction to Things Messianic

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Abbreviations and Special Terms

The following is a list of abbreviations for reference works and special terms which are used in publications by Outreach Israel Ministries and Messianic Apologetics. Please familiarize yourself with them as the text may reference a Bible version, i.e., RSV for the Revised Standard Version, or a source such as TWOT for the *Theological Wordbook of the Old Testament*, solely by its abbreviation. Detailed listings of these sources are provided in the Bibliography.

ABD: *Anchor Bible Dictionary*
AMG: *Complete Word Study Dictionary: Old Testament, New Testament*
ANE: Ancient Near East(ern)
Apostolic Scriptures/Writings: the New Testament
Ara: Aramaic
ASV: American Standard Version (1901)
ATS: ArtScroll Tanach (1996)
b. Babylonian Talmud (*Talmud Bavli*)
B.C.E.: Before Common Era or B.C.
BDAG: *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature* (Bauer, Danker, Arndt, Gingrich)
BDB: *Brown-Driver-Briggs Hebrew and English Lexicon*
C.E.: Common Era or A.D.
CGEDNT: *Concise Greek-English Dictionary of New Testament Words* (Barclay M. Newman)
CGL: *Cambridge Greek Lexicon* (2021)
CHALOT: *Concise Hebrew and Aramaic Lexicon of the Old Testament* (Holladay)
CJB: Complete Jewish Bible (1998)
CJSB: Complete Jewish Study Bible (2016)
DRA: Douay-Rheims American Edition
DSS: Dead Sea Scrolls
EDB: *Eerdmans Dictionary of the Bible*
EJ: *Encyclopaedia Judaica*
ESV: English Standard Version (2001)
Ger: German
GNT: Greek New Testament
Grk: Greek
HALOT: *Hebrew & Aramaic Lexicon of the Old Testament* (Koehler and Baumgartner)
HCSB: Holman Christian Standard Bible (2004)
Heb: Hebrew
HNV: Hebrew Names Version of the World English Bible
IDB: *Interpreter's Dictionary of the Bible*
IDBSup: *Interpreter's Dictionary of the Bible Supplement*
ISBE: *International Standard Bible Encyclopedia*
IVPBBC: *IVP Bible Background Commentary (Old & New Testament)*
Jastrow: *Dictionary of the Targumim, Talmud Bavli, Talmud Yerushalmi, and Midrashic Literature* (Marcus Jastrow)
JBK: New Jerusalem Bible-Koren (2000)
JETS: *Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society*
KJV: King James Version
Lattimore: The New Testament by Richmond Lattimore (1996)
LITV: *Literal Translation of the Holy Bible* by Jay P. Green (1986)
LES: *Lexham English Septuagint* (2019)
LS: *An Intermediate Greek-English Lexicon* (Liddell-Scott)
LSJM: *Greek-English Lexicon* (Liddell-Scott-Jones-McKenzie)
LXE: *Septuagint with Apocrypha* by Sir L.C.L. Brenton (1851)
LXX: Septuagint
m. Mishnah
MT: Masoretic Text
NASB: New American Standard Bible (1977)
NASU: New American Standard Update (1995)
NBCR: *New Bible Commentary: Revised*
NEB: New English Bible (1970)
Nelson: *Nelson's Expository Dictionary of Old Testament Words*
NETS: New English Translation of the Septuagint (2007)
NIB: *New Interpreter's Bible*

NIDB: *New International Dictionary of the Bible*

NIV: New International Version (1984)

NJB: New Jerusalem Bible-Catholic (1985)

NJPS: Tanakh, A New Translation of the Holy Scriptures (1999)

NKJV: New King James Version (1982)

NRSV: New Revised Standard Version (1989)

NLT: New Living Translation (1996)

NT: New Testament

OT: Old Testament

REB: Revised English Bible (1989)

RSV: Revised Standard Version (1952)

t. Tosefta

Tanach (Tanakh): the Old Testament

Thayer: *Thayer's Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament*

TDNT: *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*

TLV: Messianic Jewish Family Bible—Tree of Life Version (2014)

TNIV: Today's New International Version (2005)

TWOT: *Theological Wordbook of the Old Testament*

UBSHNT: United Bible Societies' 1991 Hebrew New Testament revised edition

v(s). verse(s)

Vine: *Vine's Complete Expository Dictionary of Old and New Testament Words*

Vul: Latin Vulgate

YLT: Young's Literal Translation (1862/1898)

WMB: World Messianic Bible (2020)

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To Eat or Not to Eat?

Many subjects arise when today's Messianic Believers often talk about their faith and practice to their evangelical Christian family and friends.¹ We should try to do our best to emphasize common beliefs and convictions as they relate to who Yeshua (Jesus) the Messiah is as our Savior, what He has accomplished for us, and the richness we possess in seeing Him throughout the pages of the Tanach (Old Testament) as opposed to just the Apostolic Scriptures (New Testament).² Likewise, we should also emphasize the Messianic prophetic fulfillment, both past and future, which we see in the Biblical holidays that God gave in Leviticus 23 (cf. Colossians 2:17). But unlike much of mainstream Christianity, we do not believe that the New Testament gives God's people the place to eat anything they want, and that it annuls the dietary laws of the Torah.

This third set of Messianic convictions is quite easy to camouflage in day-to-day activities, unless friends and associates are over-inquisitive about one's eating habits. But nevertheless, many Christians believe that the New Testament says that God's people can now eat whatever they want, with the kosher dietary laws being a thing of the past. Is it truly this way, though?

The issue of eating the way God has prescribed is one where we need to realize whether or not God has the right to tell His people what they can and cannot ingest into their bodies, and why He specifically issued these commandments. Messianic practice directly challenges much of modern Christian thought as it relates to "food." Why does one need to follow the dietary commandments the Lord issued? What lessons might we learn

¹ This article was originally written for the author's book *Torah In the Balance, Volume I* (Kissimmee, FL: TNN Press, 2003).

² Cf. Ephesians 4:1-6.

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from following them, in addition to how the kosher laws may affect our health?

How did humanity start eating meat?

The Biblical dietary laws which specifically relate to food, are mainly found in Leviticus 11 and are repeated in Deuteronomy 14. However, before these commandments were codified to the Ancient Israelites at Mount Sinai, it is important to observe how there were a series of prior instructions given by God, all the way back in the Garden of Eden, which specifically relate to food.

In Genesis 1:29 the Lord told Adam and Eve, “Behold, I have given you every plant yielding seed that is on the surface of all the earth, and every tree which has fruit yielding seed; it shall be food for you” (NASU). The first man and first woman on Earth were vegetarians and they did not eat meat. But, this instruction was given by God *prior to* the Fall of humanity, and later we see the dynamics change. And, prior to Noah’s Flood, humanity was not permitted to kill animals for food.

It is important to recognize how the first negative commandment ever given by God to humanity was actually related to food. Genesis 2:16-17 specifies, “The LORD God commanded the man, saying, ‘From any tree of the garden you may eat freely; but from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat, for in the day that you eat from it you will surely die’” (NASU). We all know the result of Adam and Eve’s actions: because they ate the forbidden fruit, they were expelled from the Garden of Eden, we each have to deal with the consequences of their sin, and we must be redeemed through Yeshua (Romans 5:12, 15).

The Lord’s instructions relating to food continue in Genesis 9:1-4, with what He told Noah after the conclusion of the Flood:

“And God blessed Noah and his sons and said to them, ‘Be fruitful and multiply, and fill the earth. The fear of you and the terror of you will be on every beast of the earth and on every bird of the sky; with everything that creeps on the ground, and all the fish of the sea, into your hand they are given. Every moving thing [*kol-remes*] that is alive shall be food for you; I give all to you, as I gave the green plant. Only you shall not eat flesh with its life, *that is*, its blood’” (Genesis 9:1-4, NASU).³

³ John H. Walton, *NIV Application Commentary: Genesis* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2001), 341-342 discusses some of the issues of the term *remes*, detailing that “In no place is *remes* a catch-all category for all creatures. It is one category of creature only.” Based on cognates in Ancient Near Eastern literature, he concludes that this would mainly involve various forms of

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Many will examine these verses and immediately conclude that Noah and his family were given permission to eat all kinds of meat, which would include things later codified in Leviticus and Deuteronomy as being “unclean.” It is very true that here God gave humanity permission to eat meat, perhaps to limit lifespans as witnessed by the genealogical list of Genesis 11.⁴ But does this mean that Noah and company ate “unclean” things? Note that in these verses there is a specific limitation placed on eating meat: “You must not, however, eat flesh with its life-blood in it” (Genesis 9:4, NJPS).

Before thinking that Noah would have actually eaten meat regarded unclean, consider the context of the Noahdic Flood. It is commonly believed that Noah was given the task of collecting only two of each species of animal, a male and a female, into the ark, so that the animals affected by the Flood would be preserved:

“And of every living thing of all flesh, you shall bring two of every *kind* into the ark, to keep *them* alive with you; they shall be male and female. Of the birds after their kind, and of the animals after their kind, of every creeping thing of the ground after its kind, two of every *kind* will come to you to keep *them* alive” (Genesis 6:19-20, NASU).

One problem remains if only two of each kind of animal affected by the Flood were brought onto the ark. When the ark rested on Mount Ararat and the animals were let go, if Noah and his family immediately started eating meat, then as a result they could be held responsible for the extinction of certain animal species. However, in Genesis 7:2 the Lord had instructed, “You shall take with you of every clean animal by sevens, a male and his female; and of the animals that are not clean two, a male and his female” (NASU). Somehow this verse is conveniently glossed over by too many Bible teachers, because it indicates that long before the Torah was formally given to Israel, there was an understanding of clean and unclean meats. It is acknowledged by both Jewish and Christian resources, though, that the seven pairs of clean animals were to be used for either the

wild game, which would hence be classified as clean on the lists of Leviticus 11 and Deuteronomy 14.

⁴ This is discussed in more detail in the author’s exegetical paper on Genesis 9:3-7, “Why Meat?” (appearing in the *Messianic Kosher Helper*).

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sacrifices offered by Noah at the conclusion of the Flood,⁵ or for both sacrificing and for food.⁶

This Biblical history lesson provides the necessary background we need to understand why God has given His people the dietary commandments. From the Garden of Eden and until right after the Flood, humans were only permitted to eat plants such as fruits, vegetables, herbs, and nuts. The Scriptures do not specify which plants are acceptable or unacceptable, but obviously if something is poisonous then it should not be consumed. Following the Flood the Lord gave permission for humans to eat meat, yet at that time there was already an understanding of what was clean and unclean. Concurrent with this, when permission was extended for eating meat, humans were prohibited from consuming blood (Genesis 9:4-6).

What does God consider food?

Many of the arguments lobbied at Messianic people, from well meaning Christians, concern an understanding of “food.” In order to properly respond to these assertions, food has to be Biblically defined, with some foundation in God’s Torah. All too often (American) Christianity fails to consider what has been classified as “food” in the Bible (Heb. *okel*; Grk. *brōma*), and modern people often read messages into the Scriptures concerning food. This is important to grasp, because one cannot read modern understandings of “food” into the Scriptures in order to justify cravings for eating certain things, but instead students need to understand what “food” is from the perspective of the Biblical writers—and most especially, the Jewish Apostles in the New Testament.

Let us now examine the dietary commandments God gave to His people from both Leviticus 11 and Deuteronomy 14.

The opening statement which is made concerning the dietary commandments says, “The LORD spoke again to Moses and to Aaron, saying to them, ‘Speak to the sons of Israel, saying, “These are the creatures which you may eat from all the animals that are on the earth”’” (Leviticus 11:1-2, NASU). It is more direct in Deuteronomy 14:3, when the Lord simply stated, “You shall not eat any abomination” (ATS). The Hebrew *toevah* is defined as relating to an “abomination,” “physical

⁵ Nosson Scherman, ed., et. al., *The ArtScroll Chumash, Stone Edition*, 5th ed. (Brooklyn: Mesorah Publications, 2000), 33.

⁶ Allen P. Ross, “Genesis,” in John F. Walvoord and Roy B. Zuck, eds., *The Bible Knowledge Commentary: Old Testament* (Wheaton, IL: Victor Books, 1985), 38.

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repugnance," "various objectionable acts," and "idolatrous practices" (BDB).⁷ But do note how God says that non-observance of the kosher instructions is only "an abomination unto you" (Leviticus 11:12, KJV; Leviticus 11:10, 12, 20, 23). While today's Messianic people do have a very high view of the kosher dietary laws, violation of them is by no means on the same level as committing murder or adultery, and no capital penalty for their violation was specified for Ancient Israel.

From this point, God gave His instruction concerning which animals may be eaten and considered food, and which animals may not be considered food.

Land Animals

"Whatever divides a hoof, thus making split hoofs, *and* chews the cud, among the animals, that you may eat. Nevertheless, you are not to eat of these, among those which chew the cud, or among those which divide the hoof: the camel, for though it chews cud, it does not divide the hoof, it is unclean to you. Likewise, the shaphan, for though it chews cud, it does not divide the hoof, it is unclean to you; the rabbit also, for though it chews cud, it does not divide the hoof, it is unclean to you; and the pig, for though it divides the hoof, thus making a split hoof, it does not chew cud, it is unclean to you. You shall not eat of their flesh nor touch their carcasses; they are unclean to you" (Leviticus 11:3-8, NASU).

"These are the animals which you may eat: the ox, the sheep, the goat, the deer, the gazelle, the roebuck, the wild goat, the ibex, the antelope and the mountain sheep. Any animal that divides the hoof and has the hoof split in two *and* chews the cud, among the animals, that you may eat. Nevertheless, you are not to eat of these among those which chew the cud, or among those that divide the hoof in two: the camel and the rabbit and the shaphan, for though they chew the cud, they do not divide the hoof; they are unclean for you. The pig, because it divides the hoof but *does not chew* the cud, it is unclean for you. You shall not eat any of their flesh nor touch their carcasses" (Deuteronomy 14:4-8, NASU).

The list of land animals which may be eaten by God's people is rather succinct. The requirements given for clean land animals are that they must have a full hoof split in two and chew a cud. Clean land animals most commonly eaten today include: cows, sheep, goats, and various types of

⁷ Francis Brown, S.R. Driver, and Charles A. Briggs, *Hebrew and English Lexicon of the Old Testament* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1979), 1072.

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game such as deer. Unless someone goes to a very fancy gourmet restaurant, paying exorbitant fees for their meal, most do not eat rabbit or badger. The most notable animal on the list that is considered unclean, of course, is the pig. And, the consumption of pork is quite a big industry and phenomenon today.

Before we go any further, many of you are no doubt aware of the strong Jewish animosity toward pork. This is not simply because pork is forbidden from being eaten in the Bible, but it is also because many Jews throughout the Middle Ages were persecuted by Christians by being forced to eat pork. This historical reality *must* be taken very seriously by any Believer engaged in interreligious dialogue with Jewish people, and especially Jewish evangelism. Another reason may be due to the historical fallout from the Maccabean crisis of the Second Century B.C.E.,⁸ when the tyrant Antiochus Epiphanes desecrated the Temple, sacrificed pigs on the altar, and forced Jewish people to Hellenize and convert to Greek religion—including forced consumption of pork (1 Maccabees 1:47-48).

These are important things to consider, because in this hour as the Messianic community grows, non-Jewish Believers need to be very sensitive to the injustices which have occurred to the Jewish people involving pork. Non-Jewish Believers entering into the Messianic movement have a responsibility to reconcile with their Jewish neighbors. Forced consumption of pork is one of the things which needs to be acknowledged and repented of. If Jewish people are to be provoked to jealousy for faith in the Messiah (Romans 11:11), the last thing non-Jewish Believers should be doing is preaching about a messiah who eats pork—the same “Jesus” who in the minds of many Jews, the Catholic Church and others persecuted and hunted down their ancestors for. (On the contrary, such non-Jewish Believers should seriously consider *giving up pork!*) Furthermore, it is notable that Bible readers do indeed witness Yeshua casting a legion of demons into a herd of swine:

“Now there was a herd of many swine feeding at a distance from them. The demons *began* to entreat Him, saying, ‘If You *are going to* cast us out, send us into the herd of swine.’ And He said to them, ‘Go!’ And they came out and went into the swine, and the whole herd rushed down the steep bank into the sea and perished in the waters” (Matthew 8:30-32, NASU).

⁸ Alfred J. Kolatch, *The Second Jewish Book of Why* (Middle Village, NY: Jonathan David Publishers, 1985), 318.

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Was this only a coincidence? No, it was not. The text plainly states that the demons were cast into *unclean* animals, swine, as opposed to a herd of cattle or sheep which would be clean.

Marine Creatures

"These you may eat, whatever is in the water: all that have fins and scales, those in the water, in the seas or in the rivers, you may eat. But whatever is in the seas and in the rivers that does not have fins and scales among all the teeming life of the water, and among all the living creatures that are in the water, they are detestable things to you, and they shall be abhorrent to you; you may not eat of their flesh, and their carcasses you shall detest. Whatever in the water does not have fins and scales is abhorrent to you" (Leviticus 11:9-12, NASU).

"These you may eat of all that are in water: anything that has fins and scales you may eat, but anything that does not have fins and scales you shall not eat; it is unclean for you" (Deuteronomy 14:9-10, NASU).

The list of marine creatures acceptable to eat is very short. Only two requirements are given: they must have fins and scales. This would qualify many types of fish, freshwater and seawater, but it would disqualify certain types of predator and scavenger fish (i.e., shark, catfish) and all types of popular shellfish (i.e., shrimp, crab, lobster, oyster, clam). It would also disqualify other creatures in the water, such as seals and whales.

There are internal debates in observant Judaism about certain types of fish which have scales at one point in their lives but then lose them, or those which do not have scales all over themselves. We will not determine for you whether contested fish such as swordfish or sturgeon are clean and are acceptable to be eaten. We trust you will be led by the Holy Spirit and be convicted as to what type of fish you should and should not eat. (At the very least, however, consider such fish as borderline and preferable to eat over those things which are certainly not clean such as shrimp or crab.)

Birds and Flying Creatures

"These, moreover, you shall detest among the birds; they are abhorrent, not to be eaten: the eagle and the vulture and the buzzard, and the kite and the falcon in its kind, every raven in its kind, and the ostrich and the owl and the sea gull and the hawk in its kind, and the little owl and the cormorant and the great owl, and the white owl and the pelican and the carrion vulture, and the stork, the heron in its kinds, and the hoopoe, and the bat" (Leviticus 11:13-19, NASU).

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"You may eat any clean bird. But these are the ones which you shall not eat: the eagle and the vulture and the buzzard, and the red kite, the falcon, and the kite in their kinds, and every raven in its kind, and the ostrich, the owl, the sea gull, and the hawk in their kinds, the little owl, the great owl, the white owl, the pelican, the carrion vulture, the cormorant, the stork, and the heron in their kinds, and the hoopoe and the bat" (Deuteronomy 14:11-18, NASU).

The list of unacceptable birds which are not to be eaten primarily include birds of prey, some of which are believed to be extinct today. These unclean birds, however, include "the eagle, the vulture, the black vulture, the red kite, any kind of black kite, any kind of raven, the horned owl, the screech owl, the gull, any kind of hawk, the little owl, the cormorant, the great owl, the white owl, the desert owl, the osprey, the stork, any kind of heron, the hoopoe and the bat" (Leviticus 11:13-19, NIV). None of these creatures are widely consumed by anyone, notably as many of these birds like the eagle or falcon are considered endangered species. (There is a growing trend in America to eat ostrich or emu as delicacy meats, but it is only limited to a few parts of the country.) Birds which are considered acceptable for consumption today include: chicken, turkey, duck, goose, and numerous other fowl that are primarily wild.

Insects

"All the winged insects that walk on *all* fours are detestable to you. Yet these you may eat among all the winged insects which walk on *all* fours: those which have above their feet jointed legs with which to jump on the earth. These of them you may eat: the locust in its kinds, and the devastating locust in its kinds, and the cricket in its kinds, and the grasshopper in its kinds. But all other winged insects which are four-footed are detestable to you" (Leviticus 11:20-23, NASU).

This listing primarily concerns insects and which insects may and may not be eaten. Most Western people today do not eat insects, and it is notable that those who do as culinary delights primarily eat those considered clean: locusts, crickets, and grasshoppers.

Other Forbidden Creatures

"Now these are to you the unclean among the swarming things which swarm on the earth: the mole, and the mouse, and the great lizard in its kinds, and the gecko, and the crocodile, and the lizard, and the sand reptile, and the chameleon. These are to you the unclean among all the

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swarming things; whoever touches them when they are dead becomes unclean until evening" (Leviticus 11:29-31, NASU).

Other forbidden creatures also include animals which are not commonly eaten unless in the modern context of being considered delicacies. It is notable that most do not eat: mice, rats, alligators, crocodiles, snakes, or lizards.

Other Ordinances

"You shall not eat anything which dies *of itself*. You may give it to the alien who is in your town, so that he may eat it, or you may sell it to a foreigner, for you are a holy people to the LORD your God. You shall not boil a young goat in its mother's milk" (Deuteronomy 14:21, NASU).

Similar to many of the other forbidden animals above, most in today's West do not have farms where one would sell dead animals to their neighbors. Although it is important to be aware of this, the command would simply not apply to most. (And besides, who would want to eat an animal which died of natural causes, anyway?)

Deuteronomy 14:21 is, however, a place where the common Jewish practice of not mixing milk and meat originates. It has been interpreted throughout a great deal of Jewish history, as meaning that Scripture prohibits eating meat and dairy products at the same time—a debate which was notably present in the Second Temple world of Yeshua (m.*Chullin* 8:3-4; b.*Chullin* 104a; 130a). If Messianic Believers choose to follow this interpretation, they certainly have the right to do so. But the verse itself only states to "not cook a kid in its mother's milk" (ATS). This admonition first occurs in Exodus 23:19, "You shall bring the choice first fruits of your soil into the house of the LORD your God. You are not to boil a young goat in the milk of its mother" (NASU).

While the instruction of Exodus 23:19 and Deuteronomy 14:21 only specifies not cooking a young goat or kid in the milk of its mother, it is seen that in the Rabbinic tradition, the meat of sheep, cattle, and even fowl may not be cooked in milk.⁹ When viewing Exodus 23:19 literally, it says to not *bashal*, generally meaning to "boil, seethe" (BDB),¹⁰ meat in milk. Some, reading this with an ancient context in mind, have taken this as a

⁹ Scherman, *Chumash*, 437.

¹⁰ BDB, 143.

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prohibition against an Ancient Canaanite religious ritual.¹¹ The understanding that this is a total prohibition against mixing milk and meat is not stated explicitly in the text, but it has been deduced by many from it.

Abraham served milk and meat when God Himself appeared to him in human form, and He ate with him: "He took curds and milk and the calf which he had prepared, and placed *it* before them; and he was standing by them under the tree as they ate" (Genesis 18:8, NASU). Rabbinical commentaries on this passage often conclude that the milk products were served first as the calf was being prepared.¹² The Jewish Rabbis commonly conclude that between eating the milk products and the calf being slain, butchered, and roasted, a sufficient amount of time for digestion had occurred so meat could then be eaten. Considering the historical reality that meat would have to be prepared for his guest, it is not impossible that dairy, and later meat, were served by Abraham.

You must decide for yourself how to interpret this. Many in the Messianic community believe that there is no Biblical prohibition for the separation of meat and dairy, there are others who believe that there is such an obvious prohibition, and then there are those who are somewhere in the middle. This third group separates meat and dairy as much as possible for their own personal health, or in deference to some Jewish tradition, but would ultimately follow it out of personal choice—not forcing it on others.

Why did God give His people the dietary commandments?

What was the actual purpose of God giving His people the dietary commandments?

"For I am the LORD your God. Consecrate yourselves therefore, and be holy, for I am holy. And you shall not make yourselves unclean with any of the swarming things that swarm on the earth. For I am the LORD who brought you up from the land of Egypt to be your God; thus you shall be holy, for I am holy.' This is the law regarding the animal and the bird, and every living thing that moves in the waters and everything that swarms on the earth, to make a distinction between the unclean

¹¹ John I. Durham, *Word Biblical Commentary: Exodus*, Vol. 3 (Waco, TX: Word Books, 1987), 334.

¹² J.H. Hertz, ed., *Pentateuch & Haftorahs* (London: Soncino, 1960), 63; Scherman, *Chumash*, 79.

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and the clean, and between the edible creature and the creature which is not to be eaten" (Leviticus 11:44-47, NASU).

At the end of giving the dietary laws in Leviticus 11, the Lord commanded His people to "be holy; for I am holy." The Hebrew verb here is *qadash*, meaning, "to be set apart, to be holy, to show oneself holy, to be treated as holy, to dedicate, to be made holy, to declare holy or consecrated, to behave, to act holy, to dedicate oneself" (AMG).¹³ The word *kashrut*, from which the modern Anglicized term "kosher" is derived, is related to *qadash*. This concept is reemphasized in Deuteronomy 14:2, "For you are a holy people to the LORD your God, and the LORD has chosen you to be a people for His own possession out of all the peoples who are on the face of the earth" (NASU), an admonition notably given *before* the repetition of the dietary commandments. This ever-important concept is repeated once again in the Apostolic Scriptures in Titus 2:14, describing Yeshua, "who gave Himself for us to redeem us from every lawless deed, and to purify for Himself a people for His own possession, zealous for good deeds" (NASU; cf. 1 Peter 2:9).

The Lord gave His people the dietary commandments so that they would be separate from the world. Eating properly every day is a tangible exercise which not only causes people to think about the God who provides food for them, but how is He also the God who wants His people to be holy in *all* their deeds. The dietary laws are to instruct God's people in what is holy and unholy, that they may be set-apart unto Him.

Although many of us who strive to eat the way God had laid out in His Word, may receive criticism at times from family, friends, or peers (often because they do not understand), are we trying to please them or please the Lord? Are we striving for the satisfaction of being accepted by other people, or the fulfillment we should have in obeying God? Hopefully we will choose the Heavenly Father's will over human will, but in such obedience we should be a proper reflection of His good character to others (1 Peter 1:14-16).

This finishes our commentary on what God considers acceptable meats as food for consumption. We will now address common Christian arguments concerning why God's people today are apparently no longer supposed to eat the way God prescribe in the Torah. But regardless of what we think, He plainly does assert, "For I, the LORD, do not change"

¹³ Warren Baker and Eugene Carpenter, eds., *Complete Word Study Dictionary: Old Testament* (Chattanooga: AMG Publishers, 2003), 980.

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(Malachi 3:6, NASU), as God's basic intention is still the good of His human creations. The dietary laws can *still* benefit people today who follow them.

What did Peter see in his vision?

The first and primary argument given by most Christians to Messianic people, as to why the dietary commandments of the Torah supposedly no longer are relevant or apply today, is what occurs in the Apostle Peter's vision in Acts 10:9-16:

"On the next day, as they were on their way and approaching the city, Peter went up on the housetop about the sixth hour to pray. But he became hungry and was desiring to eat; but while they were making preparations, he fell into a trance; and he saw the sky opened up, and an object like a great sheet coming down, lowered by four corners to the ground, and there were in it all *kinds of* four-footed animals and crawling creatures of the earth and birds of the air. A voice came to him, 'Get up, Peter, kill and eat!' But Peter said, 'By no means, Lord, for I have never eaten anything unclean and unclean.' Again a voice *came* to him a second time, 'What God has cleansed, no *longer* consider unclean.' This happened three times, and immediately the object was taken up into the sky" (Acts 10:9-16, NASU).

Most Christians conclude that God reversed the kosher dietary laws, and that God's people can eat whatever they want. Pork and shellfish are now permissible to eat. Peter, who observed the dietary laws as a good Jew, was now told by a vision that he could go to the marketplace and eat what was considered unclean in the Torah.

But is this truly the case? In the verses following did Peter truly do this? No, he did not. On the contrary, when Acts 10:17-48 are reviewed, Peter went to the home of the Roman centurion Cornelius. He was a non-Jew, but a righteous man who feared the Holy One of Israel. Peter presented him with the good news of salvation in Messiah Yeshua. Cornelius and all in his house were saved and filled with the Holy Spirit:

"When Peter entered, Cornelius met him, and fell at his feet and worshiped *him*. But Peter raised him up, saying, 'Stand up; I too am *just* a man.' As he talked with him, he entered and found many people assembled. And he said to them, 'You yourselves know how unlawful it is for a man who is a Jew to associate with a foreigner or to visit him; and *yet* God has shown me that I should not call any man unclean or

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unclean. That is why I came without even raising any objection when I was sent for. So I ask for what reason you have sent for me" (Acts 10:25-29, NASU).

In his dialogue with those of Cornelius' household, Peter presented the *correct* interpretation of the vision God gave him—and it has absolutely nothing to do with the dietary laws. Peter concluded, "God has shown me that I should not call any man common or unclean [*koinon ē akatharton*]" (Acts 10:28, RSV). The Greek text uses *anthrōpos*, which very clearly means "**a person of either sex, w. focus on participation in the human race, a human being**" (BDAG).¹⁴ When Peter was shown various diverse unclean animals (Acts 10:12), such creeping and detestable animals were used to represent great human sin, similar to what is seen in Ezekiel 8:9-10:

"And He said to me, 'Go in and see the wicked abominations that they are committing here.' So I entered and looked, and behold, every form of creeping things and beasts *and* detestable things, with all the idols of the house of Israel, were carved on the wall all around" (Ezekiel 8:9-10, NASU).

God showed Peter a unique vision because all members of the *human family* have been made clean by the blood of Messiah Yeshua, and no person should be considered common or unclean. Because the good news or gospel was preparing to be spread beyond the borders of the Land of Israel and to non-Jewish people, it was necessary for God to communicate this concept to Peter in conceptual thought.¹⁵ The Lord had made "unclean" pagans clean in the Messiah, and it was entirely acceptable to intermingle with them for the sake of the good news. Peter later is forced to conclude, "I most certainly understand *now* that God is not one to show

¹⁴ Frederick William Danker, ed., et. al., *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature*, third edition (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000), 81.

¹⁵ It is notable that there is no Biblical prohibition regarding associating with those of the nations. This was an extra-Biblical regulation added by some of the Rabbis of Judaism. The Mishnah says, "Dwelling places of gentiles [in the Land of Israel] are unclear" (m.*Ohalot* 18:7; Jacob Neusner, trans., *The Mishnah: A New Translation* [New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1988], 980) and as such Jews in the Second Temple period did not often voluntarily associate themselves with others.

The Greek word *athemitos* used in Acts 10:28, in most Bibles rendered as "unlawful," does not mean unlawful in the sense of something prohibited by the Torah. It pertains, rather, "**to not being sanctioned, not allowed, forbidden**" (BDAG, 24), relating to custom or opinion, as opposed to something that is Biblical law. A rendering like "forbidden" (HCSB, Phillips New Testament) is seen among some versions.

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partiality, but in every nation the man who fears Him and does what is right is welcome to Him" (Acts 10:34-35, NASU).

Those who conclude that Peter's vision dealt with the "cleaning of unclean meats" are not reading their Bibles closely enough. By the actions which occur after his vision, it is contextually obvious how it mainly concerns the salvation of human beings who can be washed clean of their sins by the Messiah's blood, not the supposed "cleansing" of unclean meats. After seeing his vision, Peter did not go to the local marketplace and buy pork or shellfish; Peter went to the home of Cornelius and presented him with the good news of Israel's Messiah. Peter associated with someone whom he would have been prejudiced to think was "unclean."

What did the Jerusalem Council rule about food?

Many Christians usually try to justify their consumption of unclean things by saying that the Jerusalem Council of Acts 15 ruled that the non-Jewish Greeks and Romans coming to faith, were not required to follow God's commandments relating to clean and unclean meat. But is this really the case? What happened, and what was the ruling made by James the Just:

"But some of the sect of the Pharisees who had believed stood up, saying, 'It is necessary to circumcise them and to direct them to observe the Law of Moses.' The apostles and the elders came together to look into this matter" (Acts 15:5-6, NASU).

The issues being discussed and debated at the Jerusalem Council concerned what was to be done with the new non-Jewish Believers. Was it mandatory that the new, Greek and Roman Believers, be circumcised and participate in a full-fledged "conversion" to Judaism to be saved? No. But what were they to do in order to fellowship with Jewish Believers? James ruled,

"Therefore it is my judgment that we do not trouble those who are turning to God from among the Gentiles, but that we write to them that they abstain from things contaminated by idols and from fornication and from what is strangled and from blood. For Moses from ancient generations has in every city those who preach him, since he is read in the synagogues every Sabbath" (Acts 15:19-21, NASU).

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Now, is there any reference in these verses to clean and unclean things? Yes, there is. We can all understand what the prohibitions from idolatry and sexual immorality are. But what does “from the meat of strangled animals and from blood” (NIV) actually mean?

The Greek word often translated “strangled” in these verses is *pniktos*. AMG states that *pniktos* means “strangled meat, meaning the flesh of animals killed by strangling without shedding their blood (Acts 15:20, 29; 21:25). The Mosaic Law prohibited the eating of it (Lev. 17:13, 14 [cf. 7:26, 27]; Deut. 12:6, 23).”¹⁶ TDNT makes some very important observations, summarizing,

“The issue is the prohibiting of certain foods on the basis of Lev. 17:13-14; Dt. 12:16, 23. The OT regulations had been sharpened by the rabbis...It seems that the practice of eating the flesh of strangled or choked animals falls under the OT prohibition, and since Gentile customs are connected with the cultus they cause particular aversion to Jews, including Jewish Christians.”¹⁷

Leviticus 17:13-14 had notably instructed,

“[W]hen any man from the sons of Israel, or from the aliens who sojourn among them, in hunting catches a beast or a bird which may be eaten, he shall pour out its blood and cover it with earth. For *as for the* life of all flesh, its blood is *identified* with its life. Therefore I said to the sons of Israel, ‘You are not to eat the blood of any flesh, for the life of all flesh is its blood; whoever eats it shall be cut off’” (Leviticus 17:13-14, NASU).

What did the Jerusalem Council rule concerning the new, Greek and Roman Believers coming to faith, and their eating habits? Did it tell them that they were to eat according to the Torah? The Greek *pniktos* here is indeed quite in favor of this.

Did Yeshua “declare all foods clean”?

Of course, the arguments against eating as God has prescribed do not stop. Many Christians will readily admit that Yeshua, as a First Century

¹⁶ Spiros Zodhiates, ed., *Complete Word Study Dictionary: New Testament* (Chattanooga: AMG Publishers, 1993), 1186.

¹⁷ H. Bietenhard, “*pniktós*,” in Geoffrey W. Bromiley, ed., *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*, abridged (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1985), 895.

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Jew, observed the dietary commandments of the Torah. But, they will say that Yeshua abolished the kosher laws in the Gospels, perhaps even as a definite sign that the Torah's instructions were on the way "out." Did Yeshua really abrogate these commandments as many Christians believe? Mark 7:18-19 is often used as a proof text to say that the Messiah abrogated the Torah's dietary code:

"And He said to them, 'Are you so lacking in understanding also? Do you not understand that whatever goes into the man from outside cannot defile him, because it does not go into his heart, but into his stomach, and is eliminated?' (*Thus He declared all foods clean.*)" (Mark 7:18-19, NASU).

Many will examine these two verses, here quoted from the New American Standard, and then make their case that Yeshua did indeed "declare all foods clean." But in order to understand what He was actually communicating, readers must consider the entire scope of His statements, and examine the Greek source text. Previously, Mark 7:1-5 records,

"The Pharisees and some of the scribes gathered around Him when they had come from Jerusalem, and had seen that some of His disciples were eating their bread with impure hands, that is, unwashed. (For the Pharisees and all the Jews do not eat unless they carefully wash their hands, *thus* observing the traditions of the elders; and *when they come* from the market place, they do not eat unless they cleanse themselves; and there are many other things which they have received in order to observe, such as the washing of cups and pitchers and copper pots.) The Pharisees and the scribes asked Him, 'Why do Your disciples not walk according to the tradition of the elders, but eat their bread with impure hands?'" (Mark 7:1-5, NASU).

Notice that *the issue* which this group of Pharisees brought against Yeshua specifically related to His Disciples eating with unwashed hands. These Pharisees held to a tradition which required them to "give their hands a ceremonial washing" (NIV) or "wash the hands to the wrist" (YLT) before eating, which is what Yeshua's Disciples failed to do. This and related traditions were later detailed in the Mishnah tractate *Yadayim*.

It is with this background that Yeshua told these Pharisees that what goes into a person would not defile him, but it is what comes out of a person which would defile him. This spiritual principle is by far what is most important, as Proverbs 12:18 admonishes, "There is one who speaks rashly like the thrusts of a sword, but the tongue of the wise brings

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healing" (NASU)—as what a person says can be administered as a deadly weapon (cf. Ephesians 4:29). However, even though this is true, this does not suddenly negate or completely cancel out the significance of the Bible's dietary instructions. These Pharisees were making an issue out of an extra-Biblical tradition in regard to a ritualistic hand washing before eating. Author David Friedman makes the following important observations from his book *They Loved the Torah*:

"In this passage, Yeshua nowhere negated the validity of *kashrut*. To do so would contradict his statement of Matthew 5:17-18, where he said he had not come to abolish the Law. Instead, Yeshua was teaching about the misconceptions of the (... *n'tilat yadayim*, the ritual hand washing before meals). The group of Pharisees in this text always carried out this ritual hand washing before each meal, believing that not to do so according to their specific method would cause a person to be ritually defiled. Therefore, Yeshua said, 'To eat with unwashed hands does not defile the man.' That is, not performing the ritual hand-washing ceremony according to the method of this group of first-century Pharisees did not make one impure before God, and thereby did not obligate the person to cleanse himself ritually."¹⁸

Another description of this appears later in Matthew 15:1-2: "Then some Pharisees and scribes came to Yeshua from Jerusalem and said, 'Why do Your disciples break the tradition of the elders? For they do not wash their hands when they eat bread'" (NASU). Friedman makes another important observation:

"In Matthew 15:2, [this] is considered a type of 'traditions of the elders.' In the Greek text... (*paradosin ton presbuteron*) reflects the Hebrew concept.. (*masortey ha'avot*, or 'traditions of the fathers') and not a mandated *mitzvah* [commandment] from the Torah. This concept denotes the development of traditions, not necessarily found in the Torah, which deal with how to perform a certain *mitzvah*."¹⁹

The CJSB renders Mark 7:19 with "Thus he declared all foods ritually clean," reflecting an opinion that it was unnecessary to participate in the extra-Biblical ceremonial hand washings to eat. This rendering could be valid, but the Greek text does not say, "Thus He declared" in it at all, and the CJSB has inserted an opinion which may actually confuse the issue.

¹⁸ David Friedman, *They Loved the Torah* (Baltimore: Lederer Books, 2001), 25.

¹⁹ Ibid.

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The clause in question reads *katharizōn panta ta brōmata*, literally meaning “purging all the foods” (LITV).

There is a debate in Bible translation regarding how *katharizōn panta ta brōmata* should be rendered. The majority of modern English versions render it as “Thus he declared all foods clean” (NRSV) or something close. Many English versions render this phrase in parenthesis (),²⁰ indicating the opinion of some that this statement may have been added by Mark or a later scribe to clarify Yeshua’s words. However, there has always been a long-standing minority opinion that “purging all the foods” is the more accurate translation. In his commentary on Mark, Robert A. Guelich indicates how “Others view this as a possible anacoluthon drawing an obvious, if sarcastic, conclusion that the digestive process ‘cleanses all foods.’”²¹

In the context of Mark 7, Yeshua said that it was not eating with unwashed hands which made one unclean, but what went into a person’s heart. He then finished His discourse with saying that food (*which Biblically does not include pork or shellfish*) eaten with unwashed hands did not defile a person: “*This is because it does not enter into his heart, but into the belly, and goes out into the wastebowl, purging all the foods*” (Mark 7:19, LITV). Food which is eaten with unwashed or dirty hands is to be processed by the natural functions of the body, and “*is eliminated, thus purifying all foods*” (NKJV).

Two liberal English translations, surprisingly enough, render Mark 7:19 along these lines. *The New Covenant* by Willis J. Barnstone renders it as “since it doesn’t enter the heart but the stomach, and goes into the sewer, purging all foods.”²² *The Original New Testament* by Hugh J. Schonfield says, “because it enters his stomach, not his mind, and is evacuated in the toilet.”²³

“Thus He declared” is an addition by Bible translators which is not in the Greek source text. On the contrary, the text speaks of the bodily elimination of food by excretion. This is confirmed by the parallel passage in Matthew 15:17: “Do you not understand that everything that goes into the mouth passes into the stomach, and is eliminated?” (NASU).

²⁰ Including, but not limited to: RSV, NASB, NIV, NRSV, ESV, HCSB.

²¹ Robert A. Guelich, *Word Biblical Commentary: Mark 1-8:26*, Vol. 34a (Dallas: Word Books, 1989), 278.

²² Willis J. Barnstone, trans., *The New Covenant* (New York: Riverhead Books, 2002), 68.

²³ Hugh J. Schonfield, trans., *The Original New Testament* (New York: Harper & Row, 1985), 22.

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Yeshua the Messiah did not abrogate the Biblical dietary commandments in Mark 7. He criticized a group of Pharisees for their ritualistic handwashing, and said that food eaten with unwashed hands was not unacceptable. But at the same time He also said that what was more important is what comes out of a person's mouth. Today's Messianic people who follow the dietary commandments do not need to be harsh to those who do not. We need to speak words of encouragement and life into others, that the Holy Spirit may convict them to fully obey the Lord, demonstrating the benefits that eating kosher can bring to a person.

What did Paul think about food?

Another claim of contemporary Christians, in defense of them not following the dietary laws, comes from the comments of the Apostle Paul to Timothy. Paul wrote his faithful colleague, "For everything created by God is good, and nothing is to be rejected if it is received with gratitude" (1 Timothy 4:4, NASU). Paul preceded these words with,

"But the Spirit explicitly says that in later times some will fall away from the faith, paying attention to deceitful spirits and doctrines of demons...*men* who forbid marriage *and advocate* abstaining from foods which God has created to be gratefully shared in by those who believe and know the truth" (1 Timothy 4:1, 3, NASU).

One Christian writer I encountered said, "Paul warns Timothy that in the latter times there will be teachers who will command the Christians to '*abstain from foods which God created to be received with thanksgiving.*' Paul says that this will be evidence of a departure from the faith."²⁴ His implication was that Paul declared that God has made everything good and acceptable to be eaten, and those teaching otherwise would be preaching false doctrine. It should be no surprise that Christian writers like these are vehemently against a Messianic community which encourages a positive view of the kosher dietary laws for God's people.

But is this really what 1 Timothy 4:1-4 says? Author Gordon Tessler notably remarks in his book *The Genesis Diet*,

"In order to interpret 1 Timothy 4:4 in this way, we must reject the clean and unclean laws of God, as well as endorse cannibalism! If we believe that God is telling us to eat poisonous snakes, rats, worms, spiders, and

²⁴ Dennis Kiszonas, "What's For Supper?" Berean Searchlight. Vol. 61 No. 8:18.

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each other, then God would be contradicting His word and would not be the same yesterday, today, and forever (Hebrews 13:8)."²⁵

Paul did not say that “all creatures” could be eaten (although everything God made is good), because God *does not* consider all creatures to be food. This is easily confirmed as one compares the respective Hebrew and Greek terms for “food,” *okel* and *brōma*, used in the Scriptures. When Paul spoke about food, he should be rightly referring to what God considered to be food from Leviticus 11 and Deuteronomy 14, as he would also remind Timothy of the authority of the Tanach or Old Testament for all teaching and doctrine (2 Timothy 3:16-17).

Tessler further observes, concerning 1 Timothy 4:1-4, that

“Some people in the church of the first century were **‘departing from the faith’** teaching false doctrines. These people were advocating celibacy (forbidding to marry) and vegetarianism (abstaining from certain foods or meats). This teaching or doctrine was forbidding activities that God desires His children to do. The Lord certainly ordained for us to marry and He created certain clean foods **‘to be received with thanksgiving by those who believe and know the truth’**.²⁶

Paul was actually warning Timothy about various ascetic practices which were making their way into the *ekklēsia*. Abraham Smith notes it as much in the *New Interpreter’s Study Bible*: “The apostle draws a contrast between the false teachers who promote celibacy and physical asceticism (4:1-5) and the recipient who actually gains nourishment for godly training (4:6-10).”²⁷ Some of this actually took place en masse in the Third and Fourth Centuries with the founding of various monastic movements in the emerging Christian Church, many of which had high eschatological expectations. As Justo L. González indicates in his resource, *The Story of Christianity*, “This impulse towards celibacy was often strengthened by the expectation of the return of the Lord. If the end was at hand, it made no sense to marry and to begin the sedentary life of those who are making plans for the future.”²⁸ Dispensationalist author John F. Walvoord makes

²⁵ Gordon Tessler, *The Genesis Diet* (Raleigh: Be Well Publications, 1996), 97.

²⁶ Ibid., pp 98-99.

²⁷ Abraham Smith, “1 Timothy,” in Walter J. Harrelson, ed., et. al., *New Interpreter’s Study Bible*, NRSV (Nashville: Abingdon, 2003), pp 2133-2134.

²⁸ Justo L. González, *The Story of Christianity*, Vol. 1 (San Francisco: Harper Collins, 1984), 137.

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some further notable comments, in his book *The Church in Prophecy*, in regard to these verses and what they are perhaps really talking about:

"Of special interest is the prophecy that in the end of the age there will be prohibition of marriage and requirement to abstain from certain foods. It is evident in the Roman Church today that priests are forbidden to marry on the ground that the single estate is more holy than the married estate, something which is not taught in the Word of God....Another obvious factor is the religious custom to abstain from meats on Friday and to refrain from certain foods during Lent. This again is a man-made invention and certainly not taught in the Word of God."²⁹

It is interesting that Walvoord, surely a person who would have disagreed with today's Messianics on the validity of the kosher dietary laws, would attest that 1 Timothy 4:1-4 is possibly alluding to Roman Catholic abstention from things during Lent—and not Messianic people keeping a kosher style of diet, abstaining from pork and shellfish as the Bible instructs.

Those who live a Messianic lifestyle do not advocate total celibacy and total vegetarianism, nor do we advocate abstention from Biblical foods as a part of human traditions. Today's Messianic people do fully encourage people to eat, with thanksgiving, those *good things* which the Lord considers food in Leviticus 11 and Deuteronomy 14. We are not part of some end-time apostasy designed to draw people away from Messiah Yeshua. On the contrary, the Biblical dietary commandments are to teach God's people about God's holiness, and they may indeed be beneficial for maintaining proper health.

Another claim that many people use to tell Messianic people that it is now acceptable to eat unclean things is what Paul wrote in Romans 14:14: "I know and am convinced in the Lord Jesus that nothing is unclean in itself; but to him who thinks anything to be unclean, to him it is unclean" (NASU). On this basis, those in the Christian community may tell Messianics that Torah-defined unclean meat such as pork and shellfish is not unclean in and of itself, and that it is acceptable to eat. Are Paul's words here contrary to the admonition of the Jerusalem Council in Acts 15, which instructed the non-Jewish Believers to stay away from things strangled? Could there be something we have missed?

²⁹ John F. Walvoord, *The Church In Prophecy* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1964), pp 54-55.

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The Greek term commonly translated “unclean” in Romans 14:14 is not the same that is normally associated with “unclean” meat. In Leviticus 11 and Deuteronomy 14, the Hebrew term translated “unclean” relating to meats is *tamei*, with its Greek Septuagint rendering being *akathartos*. But the word used in Romans 14:14 is *koinos*. “This word means ‘common’...in the sense of common ownership, property, ideas, etc” (TDNT).³⁰ *Koinos* relates to “**to being of little value because of being common, common, ordinary, profane,**” and “of that which ordinary people eat, in contrast to those of more refined tastes” (BDAG).³¹ “Common food” is not the same as “unclean ‘food,’”³² because common food would include those things that are Biblically clean, but perhaps considered inedible by a certain sector of people, in particular a strict sect of Judaism.³³ *Koinos* is more properly understood to mean “common,” used in Mark 7:2 to refer to the Disciples’ *koinais chersin*, their “impure hands.” LITV renders Romans 14:14 correctly with “I know and am persuaded in *the* Lord Jesus that nothing by itself *is* common; except to the *one* counting anything to be common, *it is* common.”

AMG states that *koinos* can mean “to lie common or open to all, common or belonging to several or of which several are partakers.”³⁴ The reference to things “common” in Romans 14:14 are most certainly to food, because Paul later would say, “For if because of food your brother is hurt, you are no longer walking according to love. Do not destroy with your food him for whom Messiah died” (Romans 14:15, NASU). He then directed in Romans 14:20, “Do not tear down the work of God for the sake

³⁰ F. Hauck, “*koinós*,” in TDNT, 447.

³¹ BDAG, 552.

³² In actuality, the term “unclean food” should be regarded as an oxymoron, as Biblically something that is unclean and not on the food lists of Leviticus 11 and Deuteronomy 14 cannot be considered food.

³³ Consider how in 1 Maccabees 1:47, it is attested that Antiochus Epiphanes issued a decree “to sacrifice swine and unclean animals” (RSV), *hueia kai ktēnē koina*, at the Temple in Jerusalem. The verse following includes a reference to “everything unclean and profane” (1 Maccabees 1:48, RSV), *panti akathartō kai bebēlōsei*, similarly followed by a later reference to “an unclean place” (1 Maccabees 4:43, RSV) or *topon akatharton*.

It would seem best that the so-called “unclean animals” (1 Maccabees 1:47) are actually “common animals” (NETS), given the two later uses of *akathartos*. The pigs sacrificed would be unclean, but the other animals could actually be clean animals sacrificed by the Seleucid Greeks, but not at all being *tamim* or fit for sacrifice in God’s holy place (i.e., Exodus 12:5; Leviticus 1:3, 10; 3:1, 6, 9, etc.). Although being pagans they did sacrifice swine, traditional Greco-Roman religion did use Biblically clean, albeit common animals, in their sacrifices as well.

³⁴ Zodhiates, *Complete Word Study Dictionary: New Testament*, 872.

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of food. All things indeed are clean, but they are evil for the man who eats and gives offense" (NASU). This would be in the context, though, of what "food" is *Biblically defined*, most probably whatever the Roman Believers would have eaten together at their fellowship meal times. Pork and shellfish are not food, and neither should they be considered "common." That which the Lord has made to be food, however, is clean and is good for consumption.

The Apostle Peter said when he saw his vision, "I have never eaten anything that is common or unclean" (Acts 10:14, RSV). This meant that Peter had never eaten of anything that was common, and that he had also not eaten of anything that was unclean. *He likely followed a stricter dietary regimen than many of his Jewish contemporaries.* The things which would be common, would be those things that were considered food by the Torah, but were perhaps not consecrated properly by certain Rabbinical standards. Those things which were unclean were those things that the Torah declared unacceptable for consumption.

So what did Paul mean when he said that nothing was *koinos* or common of itself? Could the things that were "common" refer to things that were acceptable to eat, but were not acceptable to eat according to some of the Rabbinical standards of Paul's time? In Romans 14:2, he indicated, "One person has faith that he may eat all things, but he who is weak eats vegetables *only*" (NASU). Here, Paul was setting vegetarianism against eating meat. One of the possible reasons that vegetarianism could have been adopted by some of the Believers in Rome, was that Jewish butchers or slaughterhouses might not have sold kosher meat to them. This is not impossible per the controversies which had been stirred up in the Roman Jewish community over "Chrestus" (the message of "Christ," actually), with the Emperor Claudius having forced the Jews out of the city for a season (Acts 18:2; Suetonius *Life of Claudius* 25.2). Following his death and the return of Jews to Rome, Jewish Believers doing business with Jewish non-Believers would not have been easy. So rather than eat the "common" clean meat of the time—technically clean meat but acquired from Roman and not Jewish sources—such people could have simply eaten vegetables.

I believe from this vantage point, Paul said, "I know and am persuaded in *the* Lord Jesus that nothing by itself is common; except to the *one* deeming anything to be common, *it is* common" (Romans 14:14, LITV). In other words, the "food" being talked about here would be those things considered "food" from a Biblical perspective, but "common" by certain, stringent Rabbinical standards. This food would probably have included

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things like beef or lamb or chicken, considered to be clean, but would probably have been considered “common” by a certain group of Roman Believers. They would not have eaten clean meat from the Roman marketplace, even though the clean animals could have been slaughtered in the Roman marketplace properly according to their specifications. Paul said that this meat was not “common,” *per se*, but obviously to the one who considered it common, it was common.

We should not believe that Romans 14:14 spoke of pork and shellfish being “clean meats” as many contemporary Christians do. For, Paul himself said in 2 Corinthians 6:17, “Therefore, COME OUT FROM THEIR MIDST AND BE SEPARATE,’ says the Lord. ‘AND DO NOT TOUCH WHAT IS UNCLEAN [*akathartos*]; and I will welcome you” (NASU). If Romans 14:14 had been speaking of the “cleansing of unclean meats,” then Paul may contradict himself here when instructing Believers to touch not the unclean thing. Did Paul instruct his readers to stay away from things *akathartos*, meaning meats that would be considered unclean? Paul quoted directly from Isaiah 52:10-11:

“The LORD has bared His holy arm in the sight of all the nations, that all the ends of the earth may see the salvation of our God. Depart, depart, go out from there, touch nothing unclean [*tamei al-tigga'u*]; go out of the midst of her, purify yourselves, you who carry the vessels of the LORD” (Isaiah 52:10-11, NASU).

This is very interesting, because as Paul said to stay away from the unclean, the Prophet Isaiah also said “all the ends of the earth will see the salvation of our God.” It is no coincidence that the Hebrew word for “salvation” here is *yeshuah*, the improper noun form of our Messiah’s given name *Yeshua*. When we read this passage, is there a connection between having salvation in one’s life and staying away from unclean things? Certainly, if we want to live a life like Yeshua’s, we will endeavor to eat as He ate. We do not need to be defiantly opposing commandments of God which decree that certain creatures are unadvised for human consumption.

We may further consider the following words that God Himself has issued about clean and unclean things and the Last Days:

“For the LORD will execute judgment by fire and by His sword on all flesh, and those slain by the LORD will be many. Those who sanctify and purify themselves *to go* to the gardens, following one in the center, who eat swine’s flesh, detestable things and mice, will come to an end altogether,’ declares the LORD. ‘For I know their works and their

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thoughts; the time is coming to gather all nations and tongues. And they shall come and see My glory” (Isaiah 66:16-18, NASU).

It is important to note how the KJV rendering of these verses states that it is those who eat unclean things, who will be the people who say that they are “holier than thou”—not those who *only* eat acceptable things, as today’s Messianic people may be inappropriately accused:

“A people that provoketh me to anger continually to my face; that sacrificeth in gardens, and burneth incense upon altars of brick; which remain among the graves, and lodge in the monuments, which eat swine’s flesh, and broth of abominable *things is in* their vessels; which say, stand by thyself, come not near to me; **for I am holier than thou.** These *are* a smoke in my nose, a fire that burneth all the day” (Isaiah 65:3-5, KJV).

The Lord has actually said that in the Last Days He will judge those who eat swine’s flesh, detestable things, and mice. *These people are defiant toward God about it.* We should sincerely hope and pray that those Christians who vehemently may tell Messianic people that what we are doing is wrong will see the significance of His Instruction and not be judged, because they would be pretty hard-pressed to dismiss or ignore these prophecies. No one can easily dismiss the ongoing importance of the dietary laws, if people are going to be, at the very least, *negatively affected* in the Last Days, for eating pork.

Christianity’s Double Standard

Based on the responses to various, common Christian arguments we have examined, it is evident that many contemporary Christian people have missed some things when it comes to the kosher dietary laws and what God has intended from them. Many Christian pastors strongly declare from the pulpit that God has made all animals acceptable for eating, while at the same time they may strongly condemn the consumption of alcoholic beverages and smoking tobacco.

This is strong evidence of a double standard used to judge others, because there is *more* spoken of in the Scriptures about food and eating than about drinking. In fact, all that is really said about alcohol is “do not get drunk with wine” (Ephesians 5:18, NASU), and it was Yeshua whose first miracle was turning water into wine (John 2:1-11). Paul wrote Timothy to “use a little wine for the sake of your stomach and your

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frequent ailments" (1 Timothy 5:23, NASU).³⁵ And as Alfred J. Kolatch directly observes in his *Jewish Book of Why*, "The smoking of tobacco is not mentioned in the Bible."³⁶

None of us should endorse careless drinking or smoking, but we can recognize how those who condemn such things, and then go around and eat all the unclean things they want, are not judging or evaluating with a fair scale. A common verse quoted to Messianic people is Colossians 2:16, "Therefore no one is to act as your judge in regard to food or drink or in respect to a festival or a new moon or a Sabbath day" (NASU). But Colossians 2:8 prefaced this by saying, "See to it that no one takes you captive through philosophy and empty deception, according to the tradition of men, according to the elementary principles of the world, rather than according to Messiah" (NASU). Are the dietary commandments of Scripture empty traditions and deceptions of fallen human beings? No, they are not. They are ordinances which were given by God to make His people holy. Messianic people who keep these Biblical commandments are not to take judgment from those in the world (or even those in the Christian community) if something does not align with Scripture. Have God's commandments all of a sudden become vain and worthless worldly philosophies? I do not believe so.

But many Christians will still interpret these verses as meaning that they can eat whatever they want, regardless of what God says. So let them. **Let us not harshly condemn those who do not presently see things the way we do about what God considers food.** Let us see if these Christians truly act in kind and do not judge Messianic people for eating the way He has prescribed. But if some decide to treat us harshly, let our Heavenly Father be their Judge, for a few of them could sadly be some of those who defiantly eat unclean things mentioned in Isaiah 66:16-18. I would hope and pray that such people are just being immature and are speaking before they think—and in most cases, they are.

³⁵ To argue that this "wine" was just some form of grape juice is without strong support. While wine in antiquity may have been watered down at times, suggesting that "wine" in Scripture is not at all alcoholic is often the product of a fundamentalist, North American brand of Christianity (reflecting a society that once experimented with Prohibition). In stark contrast, **none** of today's European Biblical scholars propose that "wine" in Scripture is anything but an alcoholic beverage.

For a further review, consult B.C. Bandstra, "Wine," in Geoffrey Bromiley, ed., *International Standard Bible Encyclopedia*, 4 vols. (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1988), 4:1068-1072.

³⁶ Kolatch, 285.

A Proper Attitude for Messianics and Christians

It has been our family's unfortunate observation that some make the dietary laws into a (major) stumbling block for many Christians who believe they are unimportant, when explaining their Torah obedient convictions to them. All too often, Christian people who do not keep a kosher style of diet, are said to have "bacon breath" and be "pork loving pagans." Insulting people with derogatory slurs will not at all help them to see the importance of these instructions, or lead them into greater maturity.

While it is a fact that God does say that in the Last Days He will judge those who defiantly eat pork and other unclean things, it is also a fact that many Believers *are turning* to these instructions. Many are seeing the health benefits of eating a kosher style of diet, and no longer consuming pork or shellfish. As the Messianic movement grows and many Christians realize that there is more to our faith than just the "New Testament," many now no longer eat unclean things like pork and shellfish—as a direct consequence of sincere conviction by the Holy Spirit, and their personal growth in holiness.

Yet if we intend to really live a life like Yeshua's—and while this does mean we should *eat* the way He did—it also means we must not be harmful or mean-spirited to others who presently do not see things the way that we do. We need to be loving and merciful in our critiques, for by no means is one's salvation determined on what a person eats—rather, the issue of eating the way God prescribed is one of maturity and commitment. *It could also add more years to your life as well!*

How should today's Messianic people approach those who might criticize us? This is something that each of us will have to figure out on our own, because it has been my sad observation that often those who claim to know the Messiah are usually more critical toward Messianic Believers who eat kosher than those who are secular. Hopefully, these Christians will simply realize that we are trying to live a life like Yeshua's, and while they may not completely understand why we may not eat things like pork or shellfish, they will be mature and realize that this is not a salvation issue. *There are, after all, plenty of people who sincerely love God and eat bacon on a regular basis.* We should pray that they will not be found criticizing something that our Savior did. Instead, *we* should demonstrate the positive benefits of eating kosher, especially in what it teaches about God's

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holiness. Such an example will cause people to ask the appropriate questions (cf. Matthew 5:16).

Can we make sacrifices for God?

The whole purpose of understanding the dietary commandments of Scripture is the holiness of God's people. They are to teach each of us how to better separate the holy and the profane. With the evidence we have provided in favor of born again Believers following these commandments today, there are still going to be people who continue to eat unclean things, and not accidentally.

The real question at hand has always been: **Does God have the right to tell His people how to eat?** Well, does God have the right to tell His people how to conduct themselves? Absolutely! His Instruction is for our own good, after all!

Regardless of our theological differences on minor issues, we all believe that Yeshua the Messiah, God's only Son, came down to Earth from His glory in Heaven to become our perfect sacrifice—being the ultimate example of humility (Philippians 2:5-11). He endured incredible hardships, mockeries, torture, and finally death for us. His execution on the tree covered our sin, it covered our pride, greed, lust, hatred, murder, fornication, *and* our consumption of what the Lord has labeled “unclean.” If our personal salvation is truly valuable, and we remember what the Messiah had to give up for us, perhaps not eating unclean things is not as “bad” as it sounds. Perhaps making the small sacrifice of giving up things that our flesh may want, is actually worth the spiritual fulfillment of pleasing God.

Is our Heavenly Father interested in what we eat? *Perhaps we need to ask Adam and Eve this question!*

SUGGESTED STUDY QUESTIONS FOR CHAPTER 22

1. What is the controversy regarding the validity of the dietary laws of the Torah between Messianics and Christians?
2. How did humanity start eating meat after the Flood?
3. What does God consider to be food? Land animals? Marine creatures? Birds? Insects?
4. What are some of the things God considers unacceptable for consumption?
5. Why is the pig viewed with extreme disgust in Judaism?
6. Do you believe the practice of separating meat and dairy is Biblical? Why or why not?
7. What was the purpose of God giving His people the dietary laws?
8. What is the interpretation of Peter's vision as given by Peter himself?
9. What is the context of *pniktos* in relation to Acts 15:20 and the dietary laws of the Torah?
10. How does ritual handwashing relate to Yeshua's comments in Mark 7:19?
11. What did Paul tell Timothy about food (1 Timothy 4)?
12. What is the possible historical background behind Romans 14, and the Jewish Believers adopting vegetarianism?

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13. What does God say He will do with those who eat unclean things in Isaiah chs. 65-66?

14. How should we as Messianic people follow the dietary laws with an appropriate attitude?