

Kosher?

A Survey of Scripture

Introduction

Eating kosher has the following biblical requirements:

- NOT eating unclean animals
- NOT eating meat slaughtered to idols / demons / nothing
- NOT eating animals that were strangled (shot dead / paralyzed / shocked to death)
- NOT eating the meat with its blood or the blood
- NOT eating the fat

Please read Leviticus 11 and Deuteronomy 14 for a biblical foundation of kosher.

Presuppositions

- Most of us believe what we have been taught or have deduced from study. Who has taught us and our sources for study become very important, particularly who and what we accept as authoritative.
- Most Christian English translations have an anti-Semitic or anti-Law (Torah) bias. An interlinear bible is most helpful in determining what was actually written. A bible translated with a Hebraic perspective can sometimes be better in determining a more accurate understanding of a passage.
- Yeshua specifically stated that He did not come to abolish the Torah, but to fulfill it (Mt 5:17-20).
- G-d says, "For I am the L-RD: "I change NOT" (Mal.3:6). We also read, "Yeshua the Messiah, the SAME, yesterday, today and forever" (Heb.13:8).
- The basic commandments, statutes and ordinances G-d has directed can not be nullified or changed based upon one or two indirect, mistranslated (or misinterpreted) passages. Peter describes those who have misinterpreted what Paul had said and written, sometimes to their own destruction (2 Peter 3:14-18).
- The traditions of man still have a tendency to be stronger than the commandments of G-d in many of our perspectives and understandings. (Matthew 15:3 & 6; Mark 7:8-9; Colossians 2:8)
- CLEAN and UNCLEAR foods were established by G-d and understood by Noah, long before the Mosaic Covenant (Torah). (Gen 7:2, 8; 8:20)

Hermeneutics

Rules of hermeneutics (science of interpreting) must be followed. Two of these are (1) what are the best sources (translations)?, and (2) what is the context? Conclusions should be compatible with the whole teaching of Scriptures.

Partial quote from the Holman Bible Dictionary regarding Hermeneutics:

“The science of interpreting the Bible (or any piece of literature) is called hermeneutics. If we want to interpret a piece of literature, we must ask at least five questions: 1) Who was the writer and to whom was he writing? 2) What was the cultural-historical setting of the writer? 3) What was the meaning of the words in the writer’s day? 4) What was the intended meaning of the author and why was he saying it? 5) What should this mean to me in my situation today? These basic questions lead into other questions that must be explored in a serious attempt to understand the message of the Bible. The reader today must somehow try to enter the world of the biblical writer and seek to understand what the writer was saying. Then he must bring that ancient message into today’s world where the reader lives.”

Survey of scriptures from the Tanakh (“Old Testament”)

A. The Torah

Genesis 7:1,2

“And the L-RD said unto Noah, Come, you and all your house into the ark, for I have considered you to be righteous before me in this generation. Of every clean animal you shall take to you by sevens, the male and his female, and of animals that are not clean by two, the male and his female.”

Genesis 8:20-21

“And Noah built an altar to the L-RD; and took of every clean beast, and of every clean fowl, and offered burnt offerings on the altar”

In biblical times, the flesh of burnt offerings was eaten by the priests and their families. Animals that were sacrificed on the altar were generally shared by the officiating priests, and the families that brought the sacrifices. The flesh was eaten as a thing of delicacy and enjoyment. Unclean animals were forbidden to be offered or sacrificed. The flesh of unclean beasts was considered an “abomination” to the L-RD.

Genesis 9:3-4

“Every moving thing that liveth shall be meat [food] for you; even as the green herb have I given you all things. But flesh with the life thereof, which is the blood thereof, shall ye not eat”

Leviticus 3:17

"It shall be a perpetual statute throughout your generations in all your dwellings, that you shall not eat either fat or blood."

Leviticus 11:1-23

"And the L-RD spoke to Moses and to Aaron, saying to them, Speak to the children of Israel, saying, These are the animals which you shall eat among all the animals that are on the earth. Whatever has a divided hoof, which is clovenfooted, and also chews the cud, among the animals, that you shall eat. Nevertheless these you shall not eat of those that chew the cud, or of those that have a divided hoof, such as the camel, because it chews the cud, but does not have a divided hoof So, it is unclean unto you. And the rabbit, because it chews the cud, but does not have a divided hoof, it is unclean to you. And the hare (kangaroo), because it chews the cud, but does not have a divided hoof, it is unclean to you. And the swine (hog, pig, pork), though it has a divided hoof, and be clovenfooted, yet it does not chew the cud; it is unclean to you. Of their flesh you shall not eat, and their carcass you shall not touch; they are unclean to you. These you shall eat of all that are in the waters, whatever has fins and scales in the waters, in the seas, and in the rivers, those you shall eat. And all that do not have fins and scales in the seas, and in the rivers, of all that move in the waters, and of any living thing which is in the waters, they shall be an abomination to you. They shall be even an abomination to you. You shall not eat of their flesh, but you shall have their carcasses in abomination. Whatever has no fins nor scales in the waters, that shall be an abomination to you. And these are those which you shall have in abomination among the fowls (birds), they shall not be eaten, they are an abomination: the eagle, and the ossiprage, and the osprey, and the vulture, and the kite after his kind; every raven after his kind, and the owl, and the night hawk, and the cuckoo, and the hawk after his kind, and the little owl, and the cormorant, and the great owl, and the swan, and the pelican, and the gier eagle, and the stork, the heron after her kind, and the lapwing, and the bat. All insects that creep, going upon all fours, shall be an abomination unto you. Yet these you may eat of every flying insect that goes upon all fours, which have legs above their feet, to leap with on the earth, these of them ye may eat: the locust after his kind, and the bald locust after his kind, and the beetle after his kind, and the grasshopper after his kind. But all other flying insects, which have four feet, shall be an abomination to you.”

Leviticus 17:7

“And they shall no more sacrifice their sacrifices unto the satyrs, after whom they go astray. This shall be a statute for ever unto them throughout their generations.”

Leviticus 20:25-26

“You shall therefore make a difference between clean animals and unclean, and between unclean fowls and clean: and you shall not make your souls abominable by animal, or by fowl, or by any manner of living thing that moves on the ground, which I have separated from you as unclean. And you shall be holy unto me. for I, THE L-RD, am holy, and have separated you from other people, that you should be mine.”

Deuteronomy 14:3-21

“Thou shalt not eat any abominable thing. These are the beasts which ye may eat: the ox, the sheep, and the goat, the hart, and the gazelle, and the roebuck, and the wild goat, and the pygarg, and the antelope, and the mountain-sheep. And every beast that parteth the hoof, and hath the hoof wholly cloven in two, and cheweth the cud, among the beasts, that ye may eat. Nevertheless these ye shall not eat of them that only chew the cud, or of them that only have the hoof cloven: the camel, and the hare, and the rock-badger, because they chew the cud but part not the hoof, they are unclean unto you; and the swine, because he parteth the hoof but cheweth not the cud, he is unclean unto you; of their flesh ye shall not eat, and their carcasses ye shall not touch. These ye may eat of all that are in the waters: whatsoever hath fins and scales may ye eat; and whatsoever hath not fins and scales ye shall not eat; it is unclean unto you. Of all clean birds ye may eat. But these are they of which ye shall not eat: the great vulture, and the bearded vulture, and the ospry; and the glede, and the falcon, and the kite after its kinds; and every raven after its kinds; and the ostrich, and the night-hawk, and the sea-mew, and the hawk after its kinds;

16 the little owl, and the great owl, and the horned owl; and the pelican, and the carrion-vulture, and the cormorant;

18 and the stork, and the heron after its kinds, and the hoopoe, and the bat. And all winged swarming things are unclean unto you; they shall not be eaten. Of all clean winged things ye may eat. Ye shall not eat of any thing that dieth of itself; thou mayest give it unto the stranger that is within thy gates, that he may eat it; or thou mayest sell it unto a foreigner; for thou art a holy people unto the L-RD thy G-d. Thou shalt not see the a kid in its mother's milk.”

B. The Prophets**Isaiah 65:3-6**

“A people who provoke me to anger continually to my face . . . who eat swine's flesh, and the broth of abominable things is in their vessels . . . These are a smoke in my nose, a fire that burns all day long. Behold, it is written before me: I will not keep silence, but will recompense, even recompense into their bosom.”

Isaiah 66:1-3, 16-17

“Thus saith the L-RD: The heaven is My throne, and the earth is My footstool; where is the house that ye may build unto Me? And where is the place that may be My resting-place? For all these things hath My hand made, and so all these things came to be, saith

the L-RD; but on this man will I look, even on him that is poor and of a contrite spirit, and trembleth at My word. He that killeth an ox is as if he slew a man; he that sacrificeth a lamb, as if he broke a dog's neck; he that offereth a meal-offering, as if he offered swine's blood; he that maketh a memorial-offering of frankincense, as if he blessed an idol; according as they have chosen their own ways, and their soul delighteth in their abominations;" ...

"For by fire will the L-RD contend, and by His sword with all flesh; and the slain of the L-RD shall be many. They that sanctify themselves and purify themselves to go unto the gardens, behind one in the midst, eating swine's flesh, and the detestable thing, and the mouse, shall be consumed together, saith the L-RD."

This passage is eschatological (a prophecy for the end time / last days). These chapters are talking about the "Day of the L-rd" when G-d will intervene in human affairs, at the end of this modern age (Isa.63:1-6; 64:1-3; 65:17; 66:5-11, 15-16).

Note on 66:3 Dogs and pigs are both unclean and are also mentioned in Matthew 7:6 and 2 Peter 2:22.

Notes on 66:7 "They that sanctify themselves and purify themselves to go unto the gardens" is a reference to pagan religious rituals, and "eating swine's flesh, and the detestable thing, and the mouse" is associated here with paganism.

Ezekiel 4:14

"Then said I: 'Ah L-rd G-d! behold, my soul hath not been polluted; for from my youth up even till now have I not eaten of that which dieth of itself, or is torn of beasts; neither came there abhorred flesh into my mouth.'"

Daniel 1:8-16

"But Daniel purposed in his heart that he would not defile himself with the king's food, nor with the wine which he drank; therefore he requested of the chief of the officers that he might not defile himself. And G-d granted Daniel mercy and compassion in the sight of the chief of the officers. And the chief of the officers said unto Daniel: 'I fear my L-rd the king, who hath appointed your food and your drink; for why should he see your faces sad in comparison with the youths that are of your own age? so would ye endanger my head with the king.' Then said Daniel to the steward, whom the chief of the officers had appointed over Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah: 'Try thy servants, I beseech thee, ten days; and let them give us vegetables to eat, and water to drink. Then let our countenances be looked upon before thee, and the countenance of the youths that eat of the king's food; and as thou seest, deal with thy servants.' So he hearkened unto them in this matter, and tried them ten days. And at the end of ten days their countenances appeared fairer, and they were fatter in flesh, than all the youths that did eat of the king's food. So the steward took away their food, and the wine that they should drink, and gave them vegetables."

Survey of scriptures from the Torat Shalichim (Teachings of the Apostles or “New Testament”)

Mark 7:1-19

7:18-19 : “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.)” [NASB]

Traditional Interpretation: Yeshua is saying it is all right to eat anything we please.

Torah-positive Interpretation: It is important to read this in context starting with verse 1. First, you need to understand that Yeshua is dealing with an Oral Tradition set by the elders called “n’tilat-yadayim,” or more properly called – ritual handwashing. It is found in the Mishnah tractate called Yadayim. When one would buy something in a marketplace, it could be that one might buy food (such as meat or fruits and vegetables) touched by a "goy" or even a ceremonially unclean person (such as a niddah). Because of this chance, the rabbis ruled that one MUST wash his hands up to the wrist with water to remove the uncleanness he might have picked up by touching the food. The table in the Jewish home became the altar and the father became the priest. Just as the priests would wash before serving in the Temple, the father would wash his hands before eating or distributing the food at the dinner table or on Shabbat. We see this every Shabbat in our congregation at the Shabbat table when we all wash our hands before we eat the bread. This is not commanded in the Torah, but a tradition of the elders we have incorporated into our service to teach us a spiritual truth of Torah. It is a great reminder.

Next, you must understand that to the Hebrew mind, FOOD is only the CLEAN FOODS listed in Leviticus 11. To a Jew, anything else is not even considered food, as G-d did not give it to them to eat. Anything but clean foods are an abomination in the sight of G-d. So, you MUST understand we are dealing with kosher or clean foods to begin with in this discussion of Yeshua’s. We are not even talking about swine flesh or seafood here. These are not foods for Israel to eat.

The end of the passage has been translated in some versions of the Bible “Thus He declared all food to be clean.” but that is not what the greek text says. The words "Thus He declared" do not appear IN THE GREEK TEXT of the New Testament! Those words are added by many modern church-translators to convey the doctrinal position that Yeshua was nullifying Kashrut (biblical kosher law). The Greek text simply says:

"kai eis ton afedroma ekporeuetai katharizon[one] panta ta bromata"

"and into the drain (intestine) it (digested food) goes out (of the body) purifying all the food"

Several translations of Mark 7:19 have this sentence as the concluding portion of the verse: (Thus He declared all foods clean.) This includes NASB, NKJ, NIV, (You will note these are not quoting that Yeshua said they were clean; it is a parenthetical remark, presumably by Mark.)

The New Century Version (NCV) has: (When Yeshua said this, he meant that no longer was any food unclean for people to eat.)

A look at other translations closer to the original Greek documents has a very different result:

The Interlinear Bible: (MK 7:19) This is because it does not enter into his heart, but into the belly, and goes out into the wastebowl, purging all the foods.

KJV and Darby's New Translation (DNT): (Mk 7:19) Because it entereth not into his heart, but into the belly, and goeth out into the draught, purging all meats?

YLT (Young's Literal Translation): (Mk 7:19) because it doth not enter into his heart, but into the belly, and into the drain it doth go out, purifying all the meats.

NONE of these latter translations has a parenthetical commentary by either Mark or Yeshua that would state that all foods have thereby been declared clean. Instead, they have this "purging" or "purifying" as a part of what Yeshua said.

It now becomes very clear that what Yeshua said merely described the eating and elimination process, thereby purging the body of digested foods, the waste. That is basically what He was describing in this verse. (See below for the impact and further meaning.)

Since The Interlinear Bible does not have any inclusion of the parenthetical statement, why is it found in the NASB, NIV, NKJ, NCV, and some others? (This parenthetical is found in some manuscripts of lesser repute, not the more reliable ones.) It seems that this is one of many translation entries based on a particular bias, not on what the majority of the discovered documents included.

In verse 19 NOTE the phrase –"thus purging all foods." Yeshua is saying that all clean, kosher, and G-d approved food is ritually clean for Israel to eat EVEN IF YOU DO NOT WASH YOUR HANDS! He was NOT abrogating the Torah on kashrut. The whole subject matter of His teaching here in this chapter is the washing of hands before eating as a tradition (which they had magnified above caring for their aged fathers and mothers). Yeshua is telling them to get their spiritual priorities straight! He was not doing away with the hand washing tradition either, as some would think. He was simply telling them not to place their Oral Law or traditions above the written Torah of G-d. We cannot

place anything above Torah. Anything else is the teaching of men. He was dealing with the matter of spiritual priorities in the hearts of the Pharisees.

Yeshua was trying to teach the Pharisees that it is those things that proceed out of the heart of a man, such as envy, jealousy, murder, strife, and anger, that really defile a man, and make him unclean in the eyes of G-d. He was explaining to them that to eat with unwashed hands couldn't defile a person spiritually because the body's cleansing process in digestion can remove any impurities from eating kosher food with unwashed hands, but washing your hands could not cleanse the heart! They were busy washing their hands, cups, pots, plates, and other eating utensils (like we see today) to make sure they were not being made ritually unclean, but their hearts were far from G-d and His Torah. Again, Yeshua gets to the "heart" of the matter (as always) and set the Pharisees straight on the true meaning of uncleanness according to true Torah observance.

This is a lesson to teach us not get so busy doing the "oral traditions" of the fathers and forget doing the weightier matters of the Torah; such as love, justice, and mercy. Let us never place the Talmud and the teachings from the sages (as good as they are) above G-d's Torah as given to Moshe and interpreted by Yeshua. When we wash our hands at the Shabbat table let it reflect the spiritual truth it portrays "Who can ascend to the mountain of G-d. He who has a pure HEART and clean HANDS." Let us always remember it takes both the heart and hands to be clean by the washing of the water of Torah.

Yeshua was simply teaching that eating foods without ritually washing one's hands before eating had no power to defile your spirit. That was the context of this teaching, and not the laws of Kashrut. The issue of kosher never even entered into this discussion. There are some who say that the sense of this passage concerning hand-washing cannot be "confined" to its direct sense; it can and should be expanded to include kashrut. The first rule of hermeneutics (biblical exposition) is "It says what it says." To expand this principle beyond hand-washing with no direct ground, in a quasi-rabbinic kal v'chomer (lower to higher premise) reasoning, is unjustified. One could as easily reason that because a man is allowed in the Torah to nullify his daughter's rash vows, all people can at all times nullify all their vows. We cannot nullify things of greater force (directly written Torah, like kashrut) because things of lesser legal force (man-originated customs, like ritual hand-washing) have been shown to be unnecessary. This is hermeneutically and logically unsound.

Quote concerning Mark 7:2-23 from the [Jewish New Testament Commentary](#), Dr. David Stern (p. 92-94):

[NOTE: In this commentary, Tanakh = Old Testament; Oral Torah (Law) = Mishna; P'rushim = Pharisees; Halakhah/halakhic = way to walk, Jewish law (Messianic halakhah = Messianic way to walk)]

Verses 2-4 Mark's explanation of n'tilat-yadayim, ritual handwashing, in these verses corresponds to the details set forth in Mishna tractate Yadayim. In the marketplace one may touch ceremonially impure things; the impurity is removed

by rinsing up to the wrist. Orthodox Jews today observe n'tilat-yadayim before meals. The rationale for it has nothing to do with hygiene but is based on the idea that "a man's home is his Temple," with the dining table his altar, the food his sacrifice and himself the Cohen (priest). Since the Tanakh requires kohanim to be ceremonially pure before offering sacrifices on the Temple altar, the Oral Torah requires the same before eating a meal.

Verses 5-13 Yeshua could not be opposing tradition as such because the New Covenant itself speaks favorably of its own traditions (1C 11:2&N, 2 Th 2:15&N). And at Yn (Jn) 7:37&N we have an example of Yeshua honoring a tradition spoken of in the Mishna but nowhere in the Tanakh. [i.e., the living water ceremony & Yeshua.]

In fact, traditions are necessary in life. A state cannot be run by a constitution without legislation. Likewise the Jewish nation could not be run by the Written Torah alone, without the orderly application of it and addition to it implied in the concept of tradition. But just as a country's legislation cannot contradict or supplant its constitution, so too tradition (Jewish, Messianic, Christian, or whatever) cannot violate or alter G-d's word (see Mt 12:2-11&NN, Mt 18:18-20&N). The Oral Torah comes very close to implying that it can (Bava Metzia 59a, quoted at Ac 9:4N); but according to the present passage this position is inconsistent with Messianic Judaism.

Verse 19 Thus he declared all foods ritually clean, even if the participants at the meal have not washed their hands. But Yeshua did not, as many suppose, abrogate the laws of kashrut and thus declare ham kosher! Since the beginning of the chapter the subject has been ritual purity as taught by the Oral Torah in relation to n'tilat-yadayim (vv. 2-4&N) and not kashrut at all! There is not the slightest hint anywhere that foods in this verse can be anything other than what the Bible allows Jews to eat, in other words, kosher foods. Neither is kashrut abolished in Ac 10:9-28 or Gal 2:11-16; see notes there [see below].

Rather, Yeshua is continuing his discussion of spiritual prioritizing (v. 11&N). He teaches that tohar (purity) is not primarily ritual or physical, but spiritual (vv. 14-23). On this ground he does not entirely overrule the Pharisaic/rabbinic elaborations of the laws of purity, but he does demote them to subsidiary importance. See Yn 7:22-23&N on the halakhic process of assigning ranks to potentially conflicting laws. Yeshua here is making Messianic halakhah (way to walk, Jewish law).

The Greek text at this point is a dangling participial clause, literally, "cleansing all the foods." There is no "Thus he declared"; I have added these words for the sake of clarifying the one meaning I believe this passage can have, namely, that it is Mark's halakhic summary of Yeshua's remarks (see Section V of the Introduction to the JNT, paragraph on "The Translator and His Interpretations"). However, some believe this phrase is not a comment by Mark but part of what Yeshua

himself said and render it: "a process which cleanses all food." According to this understanding, Yeshua is explaining that the body's ordinary digestive process makes all foods clean enough to be eaten, so that handwashing is of minor importance and the P'rushim [Pharisees] shouldn't be giving it so much attention. Conclusively against such a rendering is that it suddenly puts the focus on hygiene instead of ritual purity, which is the topic of the rest of the passage. It does not answer the halakhic sh'eilah ("question"; see Mt 22:23N) about ritual purity posed by the P'rushim, because food can have in it not a single germ and yet be ritually unclean.

Moreover, the nominative masculine form of the Greek participle "katharizon" ("cleansing") agrees grammatically with "legei" ("he replied," literally, "he says") in v. 18, so that on the basis of the linguistic evidence it makes better sense to suppose that "cleansing all the foods," like "he replied," is a comment by Mark and not part of what Yeshua said.

Acts 10:9-15

“On the morrow, as they went on their journey, and drew nigh unto the city, Peter went up upon the housetop to pray about the sixth hour: And he became very hungry, and would have eaten: but while they made ready, he fell into a trance, And saw heaven opened, and a certain vessel descending unto him, as it had been a great sheet knit at the four corners, and let down to the earth: Wherein were all manner of fourfooted beasts of the earth, and wild beasts, and creeping things, and fowls of the air. And there came a voice to him, Rise, Peter; kill, and eat. But Peter said, Not so, L-rd; for I have never eaten any thing that is common or unclean. And the voice spake unto him again the second time, What G-d hath cleansed, that call not thou common.”

Traditional Interpretation: The L-rd was showing Peter that the kosher laws do not apply to Christians. He told Peter to slaughter unkosher animals and eat them. This means G-d has cleansed even unkosher creatures and they are now divinely approved for human consumption.

Torah-positive Interpretation: It is misleading to stop reading in Verse 15 because Peter himself provides the correct interpretation a few verses later: "And he said unto them, Ye know how that it is an unlawful thing for a man that is a Jew to keep company, or come unto one of another nation; but G-d hath shewed me that I should not call any man common or unclean" (Acts 10:28).

G-d used the clean and unclean animals as an illustration to teach Peter an important lesson. However, the lesson was not about food, but about people. Did Peter say, "G-d has shown me that I should not call any food unclean"? No, he realized that was not what the L-rd was showing him. Instead, he said, "G-d has shown me that I should not call any man unclean."

The point was that the Gentiles, considered unkosher by ancient Jewish authorities (see the Mishnah at Ohalot 18:7; Mitzvot Torah, pr neg. 143; Maimonides in Hilchot Rotzeach, c. 12. sect. 7; Zohar in Exod. fol. 21. 1; Babylonian Talmud, Tractate Erubin, fol. 62. 2), had been cleansed through faith in the Messiah.

In other words, Yeshua can make a Gentile kosher! At this pivotal point in church history (Acts 10), they learned that believing Gentiles were to be accepted and welcomed as full-fledged members of the Family of G-d.

We are told by Peter that he "pondered the vision to understand its meaning", and when he arrived at an understanding of what G-d was trying to tell him, he states the message for us clearly:

"You know it is (rabbinically) unlawful for a Jewish man to keep company with Gentiles: but G-d has shown me that I should not call ANY MAN common or unclean." Acts 10:28

What Peter's vision meant (10:17) is that Jews are not to regard non-Jews as inherently unclean, or even common (Hebrew = hol, for lower, unholy use). Messianic Jews are to fellowship with non-Jews ... but that does translate into abandoning Jewish culture and adopting non-Jewish. This passage is never explained by Peter or anyone as nullifying the kosher laws for Jews.

When Peter returned to Jerusalem, some of the brethren who were of the Pharisees contended with him, because he had gone to visit uncircumcized Gentiles. Peter then rehearsed the whole matter to them, from the beginning, expounding the whole story in order (Acts 11:2-4), beginning with the vision of the sheet from heaven with all the wild beasts and creeping things, and the command to "slay and eat" (v.7). He recounted how a voice told him, "What G-d hath cleansed, call not thou common" (v.9), and how immediately the men arrived from Cornelius, a Gentile, seeking an audience with him, and how G-d's Spirit bade him to go with them. He then recounted how Cornelius had a vision causing him to send the men to fetch Peter, and how when he told them the gospel message, the Holy Spirit came upon every one of them, as it had upon the Jewish brethren previously.

What was the whole lesson in all this story? G-d was opening the door for the truth of the gospel message to go to the Gentiles -- whom the Jewish people considered "unclean." They had nothing to do with Gentiles, but remained separated, apart, lest they would be contaminated or "defiled" spiritually. But G-d used the vision of the heavenly sheet with all the unclean animals to show Peter that any human being whom G-d has cleansed, and forgiven, must not be considered "unclean" spiritually, but fully accepted as a brother in Messiah!

Romans 14:14-17

"I know, and am persuaded by the L-rd Yeshua, that there is nothing unclean of itself: but to him that esteemeth any thing to be unclean, to him it is unclean. But if thy brother be

grieved with thy meat, now walkest thou not charitably. Destroy not him with thy meat, for whom Messiah died. Let not then your good be evil spoken of: For the kingdom of G-d is not meat and drink; but righteousness, and peace, and joy in the Holy Spirit.”

Traditional Interpretation: To mature Christians, nothing in itself is “clean” or “unclean.” We are free to consume anything we wish. However, the Jewish Christians in Rome were “weaker” (spiritually) than the Gentile believers. They were still bound by the Law and wanted to keep the kosher laws. Therefore, Paul said the Gentiles should voluntarily abstain from consuming unkosher foods and thereby avoid offending their “weaker” Jewish brethren.

Torah-positive Interpretation: Again, if we read the entire chapter, it interprets itself. (Remember: A text taken out of its context becomes a pretext!) In Verse 2, the Apostle Paul defines the weaker brother as one who eats only vegetables--not one who keeps kosher! (Kosher and vegetarianism are two entirely different things.) The question, then, was not what was kosher and what was not, but whether it was acceptable for a believer to eat meat at all.

There were many problems associated with the consumption of meat in the ancient world--including the fact that meat sacrificed to idols flooded the marketplaces. One might purchase meat in Rome or Corinth, for instance, without even knowing it had come from a pagan temple.

Some believers addressed this problem simply by becoming vegetarians. They were convinced that it was a sacrilege to eat meat that had been dedicated to idols, even unwittingly. The only way to avoid the problem entirely was not to eat meat at all! In 1 Corinthians 8 and 10, Paul discusses this issue extensively and sets the record straight. His remarks here in Romans 14 have nothing to do with kosher laws, but with the eating of meat that had been offered to idols.

The argument these people are having is over the matter of whether it is all right to eat ANIMAL FLESH VERSUS VEGETARIANISM! What kind of animal flesh is not the subject here -- only the matter of eating animal flesh versus strict vegetarianism!

Notice: One person “eateth herbs” and does not eat “all” things -- that is, both herbs and animal flesh. This is the whole substance of this discussion. Paul goes on to explain in verse 6, latter part, “He that eateth [flesh], eateth to the L-rd, for he giveth G-d thanks; and he that eateth not, to the L-rd he eateth not, and giveth G-d thanks. . . . But why dost thou judge thy brother? or why dost thou set at nought thy brother? for we shall all stand before the judgment seat of Messiah” (verses 6-10).

Paul goes on, “Let us not therefore judge one another any more [as to whether we are vegetarians or meat eaters, i.e., those who eat clean meats -- both are acceptable with G-d]: but judge this rather, that no man put a stumblingblock or an occasion to fall in his brother's way” (v.13). Now, with this context understood, let's notice the next two verses:

“I know, and am persuaded by the L-rd Yeshua, that there is nothing unclean of itself: but to him that esteemeth any thing to be unclean, to him it is unclean. But if thy brother be grieved with thy meat [eating flesh], now walkest thou not charitably. Destroy not him with thy meat, for who Messiah died” (Rom.14:14-15).

Again, the context, as we have seen, is vegetarianism versus eating animal flesh. The issue is not eating clean animal flesh versus unclean animal flesh. The problem here was not that some were eating pork, ham, and clams, versus others who only ate clean meats! The underlying issue was simply whether one should eat any meat at all, versus pure vegetarianism. Paul said that if a person considered in his own mind and conscience that eating meat would be wrong, then he should do it. To such a person, it would have defiled their conscience. However, he said, it was not “unclean” of itself to eat animal flesh (of permitted animals).

1 Corinthians 8:1-13; 10:7, 14-28

Traditional Interpretation: Paul’s statements are the final authority (in conflict with the ruling against eating meat offered up to idols in Acts 15:10, 29; 21:25; Rev. 2:14, 20) and allow us to eat food regardless of the circumstances of idolatry involved in the preparation thereof.

See also Leviticus 17:7 quoted above.

Acts chapter 15 does not give an exhaustive enumeration of all of the laws which apply to gentiles, but rather the “greater burden” or outerlying limits of the Noachidic or Gentile Law (Acts 15:28). This is based on a Jewish principle called “KOL V'KHOMER” (light and heavy) which recognizes that certain commandments are of greater weight than others (see Mt. 23:23; the principle is used in Mt. 12:11-12 & Jn. 7:22-23). There was never any question as to whether Gentiles could forsake justice, blaspheme, murder or steal; so there was no need to list these with the greatest burden of Gentile Law.

The Noachidic Law against idolatry is given very strict borders. Idolatry is to include eating meat offered to idols.

Now in 1Cor. 8:1-13; 10:7, 14-28 Paul agrees that one may not knowingly eat meat offered up to idols. The halachic issue Paul questions, is whether or not one must ask, when purchasing meat, whether or not it has been offered to idols. Paul argues (based on Ps. 24:1=1Cor. 10:26, 28) that meat is not actually altered by the idol but that eating such meat appears to others to endorse the idol to which it was offered. If meat is advertised as having been offered to idols, then believers may not eat it, since this would appear to endorse the idol. However, since the idol has no real power over the meat, believers are not required to ask, since this would imply that the believer believed that the idol had power over the meat, thus ascribing power to the idol and endorsing idolatry by acknowledging the idol's alledged power.

A basis for Paul's argument can be found by comparing Paul's summation of his argument in 1 Cor. 10:28 to the story of the martyr Eleazar in 2 Maccabees 6:1-29. Eleazar was a prominent Jew under the Helene rule. A day came when all of the Jews were to show their loyalty by eating meat offered to idols at a public feast. Eleazar was not willing to do so, but because of his prominence, the authorities offered to allow him to sneak kosher meat into the feast and eat it instead, thus only appearing to eat meat offered up to idols. Eleazar refused, knowing that this would appear to endorse idolatry, despite the fact that the meat would be kosher. As a result Eleazar was executed. This story demonstrates that eating meat offered to idols is wrong, not because of the meat itself, but because of the implied endorsement of the idolatry. Thus, Paul's interpretation does not conflict with Acts 15 but actually implies a very strict interpretation, by which eating kosher meat would also be forbidden, if the meat were falsely advertised as having been offered to an idol.

Colossians 2:16-23

2:16-17...20-23 : “Let no man make a decision for you in meat, or in drink, or in respect of an holy day, or of the new moon, or of the Sabbath days. These are a shadow of things coming for the body of Messiah.” ... “Since you died with Messiah to the basic principles of this world, why, as though you still belonged to it, do you submit to its rules: ‘Do no handle! Do not taste! Do no touch!’ These are all destined to perish with use, because they are based on human commands and teachings. Such regulations indeed have an appearance of wisdom, with their self-imposed worship, their false humility and their harsh treatment of the body, but they lack any value in restraining sensual indulgence.”

Traditional Interpretation: NT believers are not subject to dietary restrictions.

Torah-positive Interpretation: This scripture does not make it okay to break the commandments of G-d. Quite the opposite, it calls upon us not to allow man's logic to manipulate our thinking against G-d's will. It also notifies us that these things are shadows that are to be enjoyed by Messiah's body until He comes again. Then we will appreciate them even more! Note that a shadow is not necessarily a bad thing, for example see Acts 5:15.

The real issue Paul is confronting in this passage is a Colossian heresy, the precise nature of which is a matter of debate among theologians. It no doubt involved a religious syncretism which blended certain aspects of Jewish law, Gnosticism, and pagan mysticism. This heresy emphasized a strong ascetic element (such as ‘Do no handle! Do not taste! Do no touch!’, self-imposed worship, false humility and harsh treatment of the body). The kosher laws themselves (specifically, the guidelines regarding clean and unclean foods) did not come from men, but from G-d, the Author of the Torah. Therefore, the biblical kosher laws are not “based on human commands and teachings” condemned here by the Apostle Paul.

1 Timothy 4:1-5

“Now the Spirit speaks expressly, that in the latter times some shall depart from the faith, giving heed to seducing spirits, and doctrines of devils; speaking lies in hypocrisy; having their conscience seared with a hot iron . . . Forbidding to marry, and commanding to abstain from meat, which G-d has created to be received with thanksgiving of them which believe and know the truth. For every creature of G-d is good, and nothing to be refused, if it is received with thanksgiving and (if it) is sanctified (made holy) by the Word of G-d and interaction (with Him).”

Traditional Interpretation: The Apostle Paul condemns the practice of abstaining from certain foods for religious purposes and shows that every creature G-d made is “good” for food because it is has been “sanctified,” or cleansed by the Word of G-d and prayer. Therefore, the kosher laws are no longer in effect for Christians.

Torah-positive Interpretation: To command to abstain from meat means to force vegetarianism, which would be an unbiblical command. The Word tells us which meats are food and which are not. The meats being talked about are those approved by scripture, which are sanctified by the Word. That is how they are “sanctified” (made holy, set apart, clean). So, only those creatures which are considered clean according to the Word are good for food. When understood on the basis of foundational truth, this scripture clearly does not make all meats acceptable for food. Think righteously, would G-d call the things which He commanded Israel to do “doctrines of devils”? It doesn’t make sense to suppose that this scripture speaks against eating kosher, which to do is according to the commandment of G-d Himself.

When Paul says, “Every creature of G-d is good,” the word “every” should not be understood in an absolute sense. Compare, for example, Genesis 1:29, where G-d told Adam and Eve that He had given them “every” tree and plant for food. Does this mean they were supposed to eat lilies, dandelions, and ragweed? Did He want them to nibble on shrubs or the bark of trees? Certainly not! In the very next chapter, in fact, G-d told them not to eat the fruit of the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil (Gen. 2:16-17). Only one chapter earlier, G-d had told them they could eat of “every” tree! Obviously, the term “every” should be understood here in a relative, rather than absolute sense. This same principle applies to the terms “every” and “all” in Genesis 9:3, where G-d told Noah, “Every moving thing that liveth shall be meat for you; even as the green herb have I given you all things.” The word “every” here does not mean Noah was going to run right out and start munching on snails, mice, armadillos, lizards, and other unclean delicacies any more than the word “all” means he would start eating poisonous vegetation or leaves from trees.

The meaning in 1 Timothy 4, then, is that every creature G-d made for food is good and should not be refused. It is “sanctified” by the Word of G-d (which tells us in Leviticus 11 and Deuteronomy 14 which creatures are intended as food and which ones are not) and prayer. Paul's comments were not aimed at biblical kosher laws at all, but at pagan teachings like those of the spiritists, who claimed that the consumption of animal flesh was a hindrance to contacting the spirit world, or the Theosophists and Hindus, who

avoided meat because they believed the souls of departed ancestors were reincarnated in cattle and other animals.

Conclusion

We have introduced the biblical foundation for kosher dietary laws starting with Noah in Genesis 7-9, focusing on the detailed instructions G-d has given in the Torah (Leviticus and Deuteronomy) and noting the Prophets (Isaiah, Ezekiel and Daniel). Then followed a commentary on all of the traditional passages from the teachings of the Apostles understood by Christianity to annul G-d's commandments regarding kosher (Mark 7:1-19 ; Acts 10:9-15 ; Romans 14:14-17 ; 1 Corinthians 8:1-13; 10:7, 14-28 ; Colossians 2:16-23 ; 1 Timothy 4:1-5). At the very end of the NT, in fact, the frog is still said to be "unclean" (in agreement with Leviticus 11:10), and there are still "unclean" birds (Rev. 16:13; 18:2). Therefore, the distinction between creatures that are "clean" (i.e., intended for food) and "unclean" (not intended for food) was not done away with in the NT.

Sometimes people point out that the Bible says everything G-d made was "good" (Gen. 1:31). Yes, this is true; but it doesn't say everything He made is food. Everything G-d made is good and has a purpose. But not everything He made is intended to be food for us. For example, many creatures are scavengers. They serve a useful purpose as the "vacuum cleaners" of the earth, but as such they are infested with bacteria, microscopic worms or larvae, and other impurities. Dogs and cats are useful as companions for people. They were not designed for human consumption, but are here to serve us in other ways. So every creature is useful, but not every creature is food.

If our brothers and sisters who share a common faith in Messiah still disagree with our conviction to observe kashrut we ask at this point they heed the words of Paul who said, "If your brother is distressed because of what you eat, you are no longer acting in love. Do not by your eating destroy your brother for whom Messiah died." (Romans 14:15-16).

Appendix: The Purpose of Kosher Laws

According to Jewish tradition, the kosher laws fall under the category of Chukkim (“statutes”)--that is, laws for which no specific reason is given. It's true that nowhere in the Torah does G-d explain the reason for the kosher laws. We are expected to obey simply because He said we should. No other reason is needed or even offered. We should do so because we love Him.

Nonetheless, advances in our own understanding of science and medicine have shown that many kosher laws do, indeed, have practical benefits. They were not merely arbitrary regulations meant to make life more difficult for the Israelites while they wandered through the desert.

In his popular book None of These Diseases (continuously published for more than 25 years now), S.I. McMillen, MD, explains the preventive, curative, and therapeutic effects of the OT dietary laws and rites of purification.

Dr. McMillen shows that these biblical guidelines are based on sound medical and scientific principles and were designed by the Creator to protect the Children of Israel and to prolong their lives.

Gordon Tessler, PhD, a well-known clinical nutritionist, has also written extensively on the benefits of the biblical kosher laws. In The Genesis Diet, Dr. Tessler says:

One of the primary reasons for the epidemic levels of heart disease, strokes, cancer, arthritis, diabetes, and obesity in America today is poor nutrition. For the average American, everything that is edible is good but to G-d, only those things which He calls “food” are edible. The poisoned, processed, and devitalized foods that make up the Standard American Diet (SAD) are destroying the next generation as well as the present one. No wonder the number one prayer in most congregations today is for healing--healing for ourselves, our family members, and our friends.

Why does G-d call these animals “unclean”? Nature itself speaks volumes on this subject. A little careful observation reveals that the pig, for example, is an omnivorous eater -- it eats virtually anything and everything. It is a walking, wallowing “garbage can” on legs. It's flesh is very unclean. Also, unlike the cow which has two stomachs, to digest food, the pig has only one stomach, to digest all the filth which it consumes so avidly.

Scavenger fish and sea creatures are multipliers of filth and contamination. They contain high levels of cholesterol, mercury, disease, worms, parasites, and sometimes pesticides and other residue from man-made pollutants which they absorb from the waters where they dwell.

Catfish, and other bottom-dwelling sea life, like the pig on land, are the scavengers of the “deep.” They are the “vacuum-cleaners” at the bottom of the sea, eating all the filth which filters down to the sea bottom. As “filters of filth,” they become “filth.” They are not to be eaten or consumed at all.

All the edible animals listed as kosher in Leviticus 11 and Deuteronomy 14 are complete herbivores. None of them eats meat, flesh, or bugs. They eat grass, vegetation, fruits, and grains. Also, they have two or three stomachs or secondary cud receptacles and a digestive tract that is 6 to 12 times the length of their bodies. Such animals avoid the multiple diseases as well as the worms and other parasites carried by other animals. Their long alimentary canal assures them of a much more complete digestion and detoxification of the food they eat.

What about the unclean animals which G-d forbids us to eat? These animals are called “omnivores,” and will eat just about anything. Their alimentary canal is much shorter, and as a result of their eating habits, they are much more prone to be disease-carriers. The popular “pig,” for example, can carry up to 200 different diseases, and 18 different worms and other parasites! Pigs carry large round worms, which can be 18 inches long, the gullet worm, three kinds of stomach worms, a tiny hair worm, a hookworm, and the thorn-headed worm, all in the small intestine. Several species of nodular worms, and one species of the whip worm, and the kidney worm, exist in the large intestine.

One worm parasite that infects many pigs is trichinella spiralis, which causes a disease known as trichinosis -- for which even today there is no known cure. The trichinae worms are so small that only a highly trained inspector using a powerful microscope can detect their presence.

Writes Elmer A. Josephson in G-d's Key to Health and Happiness,

“Senator Thomas C. Desmond, who served as chairman of the New York Trichinosis Commission stated, ‘Physicians have confused trichinosis with some fifty ailments, ranging from typhoid fever to acute alcoholism’ ...

It has been reported from a lab of one of our northern universities that trichinae-laden swine flesh was heated to an unbelievably high temperature and then put under a microscope. To the amazement of the technicians some worms were still alive and moving about. The supposition that all of these worms can be killed in cooking is not to be relied upon” (p.59).

Pigs simply were not created to be eaten by mankind. Many poisons, in life, may seem to “taste” good -- but that doesn't make them safe! Consider arsenic, which is alleged to taste like almonds. A special report on trichinosis was presented at a Conference on Communicable Diseases by Dr. Manley, an expert on animal diseases. According to Dr. Manley, that report revealed that autopsies showed that one out of three people are infected with trichinosis! Thus trichinosis would appear to be a much more serious and widespread problem that most people begin to believe.

The hog has an omnivorous appetite and a poorly built stomach. Within three hours of its eating putrid carrion, swill from the trough, or the feces of other animals, it may be butchered and served on a dining table as a “pork roast” or “pork chops.” But is the flesh “clean”? Who can make “clean” that which G-d declares is “unclean”? The truth is, hogs have running sores in their front hooves from which oozes a greenish substance which is an avenue of elimination for the toxic poisons the hog has ingested. If these outlets are stopped up, greenish sores appear on the hog's body. The hog is Nature's walking, rooting, grunting vacuum cleaner, which ingests all the filth, squalor, swill, and garbage in its path.

In The Genesis Diet, Dr. Tessler says:

“Obviously, the indiscriminate eating patters of omnivores like pigs make them disease carriers. Pigs are known to carry up to 200 diseases and 18 different parasites and worms, including the deadly worm called trichinella spiralis. This worm is commonly called trichinosis and there is no known cure for these spiral worms. The trichinae worms are so small and transparent that only trained inspectors using high-powered microscopes can detect their existence. Trichinosis can cripple or even kill anyone that eats as little as a forkful of contaminated food! Trichinosis can mimic other diseases such arthritis, rheumatism, or typhoid fever. (NOTE: On his video, Dr. Tessler says that even cooking does not kill the trichinae worm!)

“Pigs have more incidences of arthritis than any other known animals in the world. Arthritis may be a virus or a parasite that is transmitted from pigs to humans as a direct result of eating the flesh and blood of hogs and pigs. Perhaps many other diseases are misdiagnosed and their real cause is roundworms, gullet worms, hookworms, thorn-headed worms, trichina worms, stomach worms, nodular worms, tapeworms, as well as many other parasites found in the flesh of the unclean swine. A person may be committing slow suicide when they eat bacon, ham, sausage, or pork chops.

“Even hog farmers who insist that corn fed hogs are safe won't give you a guarantee that their indoor hogs haven't eaten any rats, mice, fecal waste, or maggots within the past few days. The metal doorknobs in pig nurseries become corroded after a year or so due to the gases produced by the pigs urine and feces. The same gases and pig dander that eat away metal doorknobs are harming the respiratory tracts of hog farmers. Their unusually high incidences of respiratory ailments, from coughing and sniffles to lung scarring and pneumonia can no longer be attributed to weather and allergies alone. The hog waste spills from hog farms are contaminating our land, our rivers, and our water supply. Pork should be considered a homotoxin (human poison) and the probable cause of many common sicknesses and degenerative diseases.”