

# UNDERSTANDING "CLEAN AND UNCLEAN"

All too often we are told, and have been taught to believe that since the Messiah came, we are "free" to eat anything we wish, and are not bound by any of the dietary laws of Scripture. In fact, one of the ways throughout history that the Yehudim (Jews) were called on to prove they were truly converting to Christianity (and not just pretending for reasons of personal advantage) was by eating pork. It even became traditional to eat ham on Easter to celebrate the "triumph of Christ over the old Jewish ways". How sick is that! It is these sick traditions of man, that are based on inherited lies that are poisoning so many with the bitter wormwood of muddled truths, that are causing so many to perish!

This sick and twisted lie that proclaims that the dietary laws of Scripture are done away with could not be further from the spirit of יהושע Messiah or His earliest followers who wrote the Renewed/Second Writings, commonly called the 'New Testament'.

## But Didn't He Declare All Foods Clean?

This is a widespread belief that highlights the very real danger inherent in building doctrines that are based on English translations that were steered by the adherence to traditions and doctrines of man rather than the Truth of the original Scriptures.

One popular version of Marqos/Mark 7:18-19 reads,

*"...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.)"*

Yet what the Greek, from which it was translated, actually says is,

*"And He said to them, "Are you also without understanding? Do you not perceive that whatever enters a man from outside is unable to defile him, 19 because it does not enter his heart but his stomach, and is eliminated, thus purging all the foods?"*

The Greek word for 'purging' is καθαρίζω *katharizō* – Strong's G2511 which means, 'to cleanse, purify' and it is from this word for "purging" that we get the word "catharsis" --i.e., *a cleaning-out*. In other words, the body cleans itself out naturally. "Catharsis" can mean "cleansing", but this does not fit the grammatical context. **The whole phrase "thus he declared" is NOWHERE to be found in the original Greek text!** If He did mean to contradict יהודה's earlier instruction, then He was, by His own measure, someone of very little consequence:

*"Whoever breaks one of the least of these commandments and teaches men to do the same will be called least in the Kingdom of heaven." (Mattithyahu/Matt. 5:19a)*

No, יהודה did not change His mind. He still considers eating swine's flesh abominable:

**Yeshayahu/Isaiah 65:2-5** *"I have held out My hands all day long to a stubborn people, who walk in a way that is not good, after their own thoughts; 3 the people who provoke Me continually to My face, who slaughter in gardens, and burn incense on altars of brick; 4 who sit among the graves, and spend the night in secret places, who eat flesh of pigs, and the broth of unclean meat is in their pots, 5 who say, 'Keep to yourself, do not come near me, for I am set-apart to you!' These are smoke in My nostrils, a fire that burns all day."*

**Yeshayahu/Isaiah 66:16-17** *"For by fire and by His sword יהודה shall judge all flesh, and the slain of יהודה shall be many – 17 those who set themselves apart and cleanse themselves at the gardens after 'One' in the midst, eating flesh of pigs and the abomination and the mouse, are snatched away, together," declares יהודה."*

יהושע was not even talking about different kinds of food in Marqos/Mark 6. What He did mean is clear; He explains in the next verse that men don't have to eat unclean foods in order to be defiled; they are already defiled by what is in their hearts. Getting a little dirt from unwashed hands into one's system (which is what started the argument in the first place) is so minor in comparison to that, that it is basically a joke.

When Sha'ul (Paul) says things like, *"Nothing is unclean in itself"* or *"One man has faith that he may eat anything"*, we have to remember that every Scripture must be taken within the parameters set by the earlier Scriptures. Most of what he said about foods had to do with meat offered to idols, anyway, not unclean meats!!! They were not even considered food to start with, so they were already excluded from the question. Whatever he said has to fit with the rest of Scripture, especially the five books of Mosheh (The Torah):

*"To the Torah and to the Testimony! If they do not speak in agreement with these words, it is because there is no light in them." (Yeshayahu/Isaiah 8:20)*

## Wasn't Peter Told to Eat Unclean Beasts?

Simon Peter (Shim'on Kěpha), one of יהושע 's closest followers, had a vision in Yapho (Joppa), in which a sheet full of all kinds of animals, clean and unclean, was lowered from the sky. He was told, "**Arise, Kěpha, kill and eat!**" (Ma'asei/Acts 10) When he objected, he was told, "**What יהוה has cleansed, do not call unclean.**" So that means יהוה cleansed every kind of food after all, right? We can eat now anything without being concerned about those old-fashioned regulations?

**NO!!!** That's not the message Kěpha (Peter) got from this vision. In fact, after the same thing had happened three times, he was still very puzzled about what this could mean (v. 17). He knew Scripture well enough to know what it could not mean, but what did it mean? The answer came right away. Some Gentile men were at the door of the house where he was lodging, and when Kěpha (Peter) told them the story of what had happened, he made clear what the only meaning that he had drawn from it was:

**"Now I understand very well that יהוה is not one to show partiality, but in every nation the man who fears Him and does what is right is welcome to Him."** (v. 34)

It was people, not food, that יהוה was concerned about! (See Qorintiyim Aleph/1 Corinthians 9:9-10.) The sheet of unclean animals was just an illustration.

Now, there is much to say for the physical benefits of the diet יהוה prescribed:

**"If you will listen very carefully to [and obey] the voice of יהוה your Elohim and do what is right, and give ear to all His commandments and carefully preserve all His prescribed limits, I will put none of the diseases on you that I brought on the Egyptians, because I am יהוה who makes you healthy."** (Shemoth/Exodus. 15:26)

In a very real way, **"we are what we eat"**. Eating blood has indeed been found to cause many types of cancer. The danger of trichinosis from eating pork is well known. Shellfish are actually poisonous several months out of the year. And we could go on and on. So yes, there are definitely hygienic reasons to eat clean foods as the Scriptures define them. But this reason can only be taken so far. The priests who worked in the Temple had to have a doctor on hand because of the stomach problems they incurred by eating so much meat, yet they were obeying יהוה by doing so. Ultimately, **"The reign of Elohim is not eating and drinking, but righteousness and peace and joy in the Set-Apart Spirit."**

(Romiyim/Romans 14:17) יהוה is not so concerned about what we eat as with what we learn from it. The main point of the dietary laws is what they teach us. Now this does not cancel the literal commands:

**"...Hypocrites! You tithe mint, anise, and cummin, but neglect the weightier matters of the Torah--justice, mercy, and faithfulness! These are what you ought to have done--without neglecting the others [either]."** (Mattithyahu/Matthew 23:23)

יהושע said to get to the heart of the matter, but we can't learn much from what we aren't doing. But יהוה constantly reiterates that we must both **"do and observe"** the things He commands us to and not just "jump through hoops", but find out the deeper meaning behind the loving instruction of our Heavenly Father. It is a gift He gives to help us know Him better. Do we really want to refuse such a gift?

## So What Kind of Things Can we Learn?

Clean animals must both have a divided hoof and chew the cud (**Wayyiqra/Leviticus 11**), like the cow, sheep, goat, or deer. A divided hoof makes an animal sure-footed.

The three pilgrimage- festivals are literally called **"three feet"** (or legs) in Hebrew. (**Shemoth/Exodus 23:14**) A three-legged piece of furniture is the most stable. If we follow יהוה's calendar instead of man's, we will have stability. Our "walk" also means the way we live out our faith.

Chewing the cud, as a cow does, is a picture of meditating on יהוה's Word "day and night" (**Yehoshua/Joshua 1:8**) -- i.e., over and over, until it goes deep into our hearts and can be eventually feed those who are young in faith.

A pig, on the other hand, has a cloven hoof and therefore looks clean on the outside. His "walk" may look wonderful, but it will eat anything and cannot pass impurities from its body since it cannot sweat. It is a picture of indiscriminately taking in any and every "wind of doctrine", whether from יהוה or men. So we are not to eat swine.

## Learning to Make Distinctions

One of the explicit reasons יהוה gave Israel His instructions was so that we would learn to **"make a distinction between Set-apart and the profane, between unclean and clean."** (**Wayyiqra/Leviticus. 10:10; 11:46-47**)

This does not just refer to food. One of the most poignant examples of being unclean was the disease of leprosy. Every time in Scripture that we see someone specifically stricken with this affliction (Miryam, Elisha's servant Gěhazi, and King Uzziyah), he or she was desiring a position he or she had not been allotted.

Thus, **being ritually "unclean" is a picture of being selfish.** Other types of ritual uncleanness involve activities necessary in this world but which somehow touch death or corruption. (**Wayyiqra/Leviticus 5:2; Wayyiqra/Leviticus 11-15; Bemidbar/Numbers. 19; Debarim/Deuteronomy. 23:14**) Likewise, a selfish choice may not in itself be a sin, but it is a path that leads us away from love for one another, which is life as יהוה defines it. So it is something to be avoided--a plague to our souls.

As we see in the Sermon on the Mount, יהושע does not relax the commandments in the least; rather He often makes them stricter. The Apostles did the same. When deciding on the "ground rules" for new believers who were returning to יהודה from among the Gentiles, they considered four prohibitions indispensable:

**"Abstain from pollutions of idols, from illicit sexual intercourse, from things strangled, and from blood."** (Ma'asei/Acts 15:20).

A meat can be clean yet not kosher (which means "acceptable" or "appropriate"). Chicken is a "clean" meat, but if its blood is not removed, it is still not to be eaten, since we may not eat animals with their life [literally, soul] still in them (Bereshith/Genesis 9:4), and "the life of the flesh is in the blood." (Wayyiqra/Leviticus 17:11)

But this word rendered "strangled foods" was specifically used of any animal killed without being bled, but with the wider connotation of anything not killed according to Scriptural requirements. Though Mosheh only said all the blood must be taken out, the Apostles went further and said Gentiles should eat only what is 'kosher' or 'clean' by Torah standards. This was so that the Yehudi (Jews) and Gentiles could begin to share the same dinner tables, since Yehudi (Jews), from whom these Gentiles needed to learn how to live a set-apart life, would not eat from a table where unclean foods were being eaten. Any further argument is a moot point. All who accept the Messiah are now part of the Commonwealth of Yisra'el/Israel (Eph'siyim/Ephesians 2:12), so the Covenant made with Yisra'el/Israel for all its generations applies to us all:

**"I am יהודה your Elohim, who has made a distinction between you and other peoples. Therefore, you must make a distinction between clean animals and unclean, and not make your souls abominable by means of any animal ...which I have separated from you as unclean. Then you will be set apart unto Me, because I have set you apart from other people, to be Mine."** (Wayyiqra/Leviticus. 20:24ff)

In other words, "Your body is the Dwelling Place of the Set-Apart Spirit." (Qorintiyim Aleph/1 Corinthians. 6:19) What we do with it matters; we can't just spiritualize it away. He wants us to "both divide the hoof and chew the cud": not choose between the letter and the spirit of His instruction, as so many have done, but be among those who both "believe and are zealous for the Torah" (Ma'asei/Acts 21:20), who "keep the commandments of יהודה AND have the Testimony of יהושע". (Hazon/Revelation. 12:17)