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Ritually Clean and Unclean Beasts
11: 1-8

Ritually clean and unclean beasts DIG: How is this chapter an extension of the principles in the previous one (to see link click Bh – The Death of Nadab and Abihu)? What was the only justification that God offered for the dietary mitzvot? What was their moral mandate? Individually, and nationally, why was it important for the Isrealites to eat kosher?

REFLECT: In Dani'el 1, we see where strict adherence to such dietary mitzvot helped strengthen God's people and establish His purpose. However, in Acts 10:9-23, the mitzvot concerning ritually clean and unclean animals was lifted. Why do you think this is? In what sense would the removal of these mitzvot help to spread the Gospel?

Ritual impurity is the biblical concept that a person can be in a state which, according to the Torah, prevents the person from having any contact with the Tabernacle or Temple and its sacrifices. God was in the process of teaching His people a critical spiritual reality (to see link click Bk – Ritually Clean and Unclean Animals).

We have now come to the third major section of **Leviticus**. The subject matter is changed from **the priests** to **the people**; from **offerings to God** to **food from man**; from **worship before God** to **the walk in this world**. The change is made from **the sacred** to **the secular** without any change of pace or level. There is no thought that this is anything different. Today we make a false distinction between the sacred and the secular. We think if it is in the Church, it is sacred. Even gossip in the Church seems to be regarded as sacred (especially if it is couched as a prayer request!). If gossip is outside the Church, then it is secular. Friends, we can't make that distinction. Why? Here, **God** moves right from the sacred to what many would call secular, but **He** makes no distinction. Neither should we![161]

A moral mandate: There was a **purity** component to their observance: **animals** were classified as either **ritually clean** or **unclean**, and handling the carcass of

some **unclean animals** rendered **the eater unclean**. **But the dietary mitzvot were also primarily about holiness.** At the end of **Leviticus Chapter 11, ADONAI** declares the dietary bans as an issue of **holiness**, and **He** commands **Isra'el** to keep **them** on the basis of the imitation of **YHVH Himself**. **For I am ADONAI your God; therefore, consecrate yourselves and be holy, for I am holy; and do not defile yourselves with any kind of swarming creature that moves along the ground. For I am ADONAI, who brought you up out of the land of Egypt to be your God. Therefore you are to be holy, because I am holy (11:44-45).**

The only justification **He** offers for the dietary mitzvot is that **He** is **the LORD** who brought **the Israelites out of Egypt**; therefore, **He** has the right to tell **them** what to **eat**. By keeping the dietary mitzvot, **the Israelites** were set apart, in other words, **holy**. In that sense, **they** would be imitating deity: **be holy, for I am holy (11:45).** The same reason is offered to explain why we are not to **eat the flesh of torn animals,** "**You are to be my specially separated people. Therefore, you are not to eat any flesh torn to pieces by wild animals . . ." (Exodus 22:31).** So too, we are commanded not to **eat** the meat of any **animal** that has died of natural causes because we are **a holy people to ADONAI your God (Deuteronomy 14:21).** Therefore, the dietary mitzvot are about **holiness**. When **Peter** exhorts us to **be holy, he** offers us no other standard of **holiness** than the one provided in the Scriptures, saying: **follow the Holy One who called you, become holy yourselves in your entire way of life, since the TaNaKh says, "You are to be holy because I am holy" (First Peter 1:15-16).**

*Dear Heavenly **Father**, Praise **You** that you are both 100% love and 100%* **holy**. ***Your** love and holiness always work perfectly together. It is very comforting to know how great **Your** love is. It is also a comfort, though in a very different way to know **You** are **holy**. **Your** holiness means that **You** will never tell me to do something that is not the very best for me. **You** are always watching over me as my perfect Heavenly **Father**. **Your** holiness does not diminish with age. **You** are just as **holy** and wise now, as you were when Abraham was living.*

*Thank you for **Yeshua** being **the lamb of God (John 1:9)** and bearing our **sin** so that you could give your holiness to those who love and follow you. **He made the One who knew no sin to become a sin offering on our behalf, so that in Him we might become the righteousness of God. (2 Corinthians 5:21).** Please help us to remember that loving **You** does not mean that **Your** gift of righteousness can be taken by someone grabbing it**.** Receiving the gift is a two-way*

*street. **You** did everything to create the gift, but we need to receive the gift by our love **(Matthew 22:37)**.*

*Receiving the gift makes us new creatures in **You, "in Messiah." Therefore if anyone is in Messiah, he is a new creation. The old things have passed away; behold, all things have become new (Second Corinthians 5:17)** and **therefore, there is now no condemnation for those who are in Messiah Yeshua (Romans 8:1).** Being **"in Messiah"** means thinking and acting like **You**. Because **You** are perfectly **holy**, our being **"in Messiah"** causes us to strive with all our heart to follow **You** in **holiness**. **Your holiness** is Awesome! In **Yeshua's holy** name and power of **His** resurrection. Amen*

This makes sense. Remember that being **holy** is not the same thing as being righteous. To be **holy** is to be set apart. Keeping the dietary mitzvot certainly sets one apart, but it didn't really make anyone righteous. Our righteousness comes to us through faith in **Messiah**. Keeping the dietary mitzvot is a different thing. Those B'rit Chadashah believers who choose to follow the dietary mitzvot (see below), live a **holy** life in conformity to the righteousness **Messiah** has already given them.

For those **Jews** living in the dispensation of Torah (see the commentary on **Exodus Da – The Dispensation of the Torah**) there was a moral aspect to the dietary mitzvot because they are **YHVH's** mitzvot. The same **God** who said: **Do not commit adultery,** said: **You are not to eat meat from these or touch their carcasses; they are ritually unclean for you (11:8). He** made no distinction between **His** mitzvot. **He** did not relegate some to moral categories and others to ceremonial categories. **The Israelites** needed to obey them (not for salvation, but as their blueprint for living), so that their lives would be blessed.

The Hebrew word for the dietary mitzvot is *kashrut*, which is from the word *kosher*, meaning *fit* or *proper.* All through **Leviticus 11**, the Torah describes which **animals** are *fit* and *proper* to be **eaten**, and which are not. They are regarded as positive commandments numbered among the 613 mitzvot of the Torah.[162]

Land animals: ADONAI said to Moshe and Aaron, "Tell the people of Isra'el, 'These are the living creatures which you may eat among all the land animals: any that has a separate hoof which is completely divided and chews the cud — these animals you may eat' (11:1-3)." Only mammals that both **chew the cud** and have **a split hoof** were considered permissible for consumption. These **animals** are characterized as herbivores possessing four

stomach compartments and two-toed **hooves**. Examples include **cattle, sheep, goats, buffalo, ibex** (wild goat), **gazelle, deer, wild ox** and **giraffe**.



Mammals which do not possess these characteristics are regarded as **ritually unclean**. The Torah lists **four examples** of **animals** that possess one kosher characteristic but not the other. **But you are not to eat those that only chew the cud or only have a separate hoof. For example, the camel, the coney and the rabbit are ritually unclean for you, because they chew the cud but don't have a separate hoof; while the pig is ritually unclean for you, because, although it has a separate and completely divided hoof, it doesn't chew the cud (11:4-7). The camel** and **the pig** are offered as examples of **ritually unclean animals**. **The camel** and **the rabbit** chew cud, but do not have **a separate hoof**; while **the pig** has **a separate hoof** but does not **chew cud**. From a casual observance, **a pig** appears to be kosher. It has **cloven hooves**, but it does not **chew cud**. **The rabbis teach that the pig is symbolic of hypocrisy. One who puts on an exterior show of righteousness is likened to a pig. "When the swine is lying down it puts out its cloven hoofs, as if to say,"I am clean" (Gen Rabbah 65:1).**[163]

Although the Torah says: **You are not to eat meat from these or touch their carcasses; they are ritually unclean for you (11:8),** and **you are not to make** yourself ritually **unclean by touching them (11:43), these prohibitions have always been understood with respect to the violation of entering the Tabernacle/Temple while in a state of ritual uncleanness. The sages understood this as applying only to the pilgrims entering Jerusalem and the Temple for the festivals. This is made clear in the Talmud as follows: Rabbi Yitzchak said, "A man should purify himself ritually for the pilgrimage festival, as it is written: You shall not touch their carcasses**

(11:8). It has been taught in the same regard concerning where it says: you are not to make yourself ritually unclean by touching them (11:43). I might interpret the verse to mean that ordinary Israelites are cautioned not to touch the carcases of unclean animals. Therefore, it says in another passage: Say to the priests, the sons of Aaron . . . cautioning them against becoming ritually unclean from a corpse (21:1), but other Israelites are not cautioned. May we not then argue from the lesser to the greater (*kal v'homer*)? If in the case of serious ritual uncleanness, like corpse contamination, the priests are cautioned while the common Israelites are not cautioned, how much less are the Israelites to be cautioned in the case of an insignificant ritual uncleanness, like, for example, contamination from carcasses! So how should I understand the commandment that says: You shall not touch their carcasses (11:8)? I understand it to mean that you shall not touch their carcasses on the pilgrimage festivals when the common Israelite must enter the Temple compound (*Rosh Ha'Shanah* 16b quoting **Leviticus 11:8, 43** and **21:1**). **Rabbi Yitzchak's explanation may skirt the issue to some degree, but his logic formed the standard of the halachah.**[164]

In the final analysis, today Messianic Jews and Gentiles have the freedom in Messiah to choose whether they want to eat kosher or not (see the commentary on **First Corinthians Bm – The Weaker Brother or Sister**).