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Summary of Ritually Unclean Animals
11: 41-47

Summary of ritually unclean animals DIG: Why do you think that God chose to make dead animals and dead people ritually unclean? What was the ultimate purpose in making people ritually clean? What were they restricted from doing if they became ritually unclean? How can believers defile themselves today? How would you rate your spiritual discernment?

REFLECT: During the Dispensation of Torah, God wanted the Israelites to demonstrate their holiness through a ritually "clean" diet. The Bible tells us specifically why these mitzvot were given, "Do not make yourselves unclean, do not defile yourselves with them . . . for you are to be holy, because I am holy" (11:43-45). Thus, the purpose of eating kosher was to set Isra'el aside as a separate nation (15:31). In addition, they had to be ritually clean, or holy, to participate in the sacrifices in the Tabernacle and later the Temple. The question is: How do you show yourself holy to the Lord today? How are you set apart from the world?

Crawling Things (11:41-44): The discussion of **contamination** through dead **animals** is concluded, and **the Torah** returns to the original topic of dietary prohibitions. A final category for forbidden **creatures** is introduced as swarming things that **crawl** on the ground, whether they be four-footed, many footed, or **crawl** on **their** bellies. This category contains everything from bugs to beetles to grubs to snakes and worms. **Any creature that swarms on the ground is a detestable thing; it is not to be eaten – whatever moves on its stomach, goes on all fours, or has many legs – all creatures that swarm on the ground; you are not to eat them, because they are a detestable thing. You are not to make yourselves detestable with any of these swarming, crawling creatures; do not make yourselves ritually unclean with them, do not defile yourselves with them. 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 (11:41-44).**



The mitzvah of discernment: The chapter ends with a summary of the dietary **mitzvot**. **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. Such, then, is the mitzvah concerning animals, flying creatures, all living creatures that move about in the water, and all creatures that swarm on the ground. Its purpose is to distinguish between the unclean and the clean, and between the creatures that may be eaten and those that may not be eaten (11:44-47).**

The Israelites were to **purify themselves** by observing the dietary **mitzvot** so **they** could access **the Tabernacle/Temple** and the sacrifices necessary to draw near to **God**. We are not given any rational explanations. It is simply a commandment of **the Holy One**. **The Israelites** were to keep the dietary **mitzvot**, thereby making **themselves holy because God is holy (11:44). He** has the right to make such mandates because **He is YHVH**. It wasn't **their** job to understand why some **animals** were designated as **ritually clean** or **unclean**. **Their** job was to distinguish between what was **ritually clean** and **unclean** and between what things could be **eaten** and what things could not be **eaten**. **But 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, to see link click Bm – The Weaker Brother or Sister**).

If **the Jewish people** were to keep **themselves ritually clean** and pleasing to **ADONAI**, **they** had to exercise discernment; this meant knowing **God's Word**, respecting **it**, and obeying **it**. Fathers and mothers had to teach their children **the Torah** and encourage **them** to live **holy**, set-apart, lives. **The priests** had to teach

the people and remind **them** of **God's mitzvot**. It was when **the nation** of **Isra'el** neglected **the Word of God** and refused to obey **it** that **they** began to follow the abominable practices of the pagan nations around **them**, and this would ultimately lead to **Isra'el's** discipline and exile (see the commentary on **Jeremiah Ga – The Fall of Jerusalem**).

The Jews had to remind **themselves** every hour of every day that **they** belonged to **YHVH**, the true and living **God**, and that belonging to **the nation of Isra'el** was a high and **holy** privilege: **I am ADONAI your God; therefore, consecrate yourselves and be holy, for I am holy (11:44).** In the language of the B'rit Chadashah: **Lead a life worthy of the calling to which you were called (Ephesians 4:1).** Obeying **God's** will isn't a burden; it's a privilege! As **Moshe** reminded **his people, "For what great nation is there that has God as close to them as ADONAI our God is, whenever we call on him? What great nation is there that has mitzvot and rulings as just as this entire Torah which I am setting before you today" (Deuteronomy 4:7-8)?**

The Israelite during the Dispensation of **Torah**, like believers today in the Dispensation of Grace, was not to walk **as other Gentiles walk, in the vanity of his mind (Ephesians 4:17).** It was a temptation to "go along with," and then imitate the worldly practices of the pagan nations around them. This led to **Isra'el's** defilement and discipline. I fear that the Church today is following the same philosophy and becoming more and more like the world. The Church does the most for the world when the Church is least like the world **(First John 2:15-16; James 1:27)**.

Jews who exercised spiritual discernment would "walk in **love**," and **their love** for **ADONAI** would motivate **them** to obey **His Torah**. Each morning, **the** observant **Jew** would recite the **Sh'mah**, the official **Jewish** confession of faith: **Sh'ma, Yisra'el! Adonai Eloheinu, ADONAI echad [Hear, Isra'el! ADONAI our God, ADONAI is one]; and you are to love ADONAI your God with all your heart, all your being and all your resources (Deuteronomy 6:4-5).** That is still **the first** and **greatest** commandment (see the commentary on **The Life of Christ Jb – Which is the Greatest Commandment?**).

Like **Isra'el** in TaNaKh, believers today must not only **walk worthy of their calling** and **walk in love**, but must also **pay careful attention to how [we] conduct [our] lives – living wisely, not unwisely . . . so don't be foolish, but try to understand what the will of the Lord is (Ephesians 5:15** and **17). We**

must keep **our** eyes open and look around carefully lest we **defile ourselves**. **Jews** who knew what **ADONAI** said was **ritually clean** and **unclean**, and who exercised constant caution, weren't likely to touch something **ritually unclean** and **defile themselves**. When **we walk as children of the light (Ephesians 5:8), we won't stumble over some carcass in the darkness; God's Word** is **the light that directs our path (Psalm 119:105).**

What the prophet **Hosea** said about **Isra'el** in **his** day is true of many professing believers today: **You will stumble by day, and the prophet's will stumble with you . . . My people are destroyed by lack of knowledge (Hosea 4:5). But solid food is for the mature, for those whose faculties have been trained by continuous exercise to distinguish good from evil (Hebrews 5:15).** Nothing is more rare in the Church today than discernment. The natural man knows nothing of it, and the carnal man is devoid of it. Only the spiritual man has it and we have all too few in that category.[174]

Haftarah Sh'mini: Sh'mu'el Bet (2 Samuel) 6:1–7:17 (A), 6:1–19 (S)

(see the commentary on Deuteronomy Af – Parashah)

Thus your house and your kingdom will be made secure forever before you; your throne will be set up forever (Second Samuel 7:17). The haftarah reading for **Sh'mini** concerns the tragedy of **Uzzah, son of Abinadab**. **The Ark of God** was originally placed in **the Most Holy Place** was being returned triumphantly on **a wagon** from **the Philistines** who had captured **it**. The procession was being led by **two sons** of **Abinadab, Uzzah** and **Ahio**, with **Ahio** leading the oxen that were pulling **the wagon**, and **Uzzah** standing beside **the Ark**. However, when the oxen stumbled and **Uzzah reached out to steady the Ark,** but **Ha'Shem** became angry and **struck him dead** on the spot. **King David**, very afraid, decided to leave **the Ark** at **the house of Obed-Edom the Gittite**. **David** soon learned that **Obed-Edom** had been wonderfully blessed by the presence of **the Ark**, so the decision was made to restore **it** to **Jerusalem**.

The haftarah concludes with the giving of the promise to **King David**. Through **Nathan** the prophet, **ADONAI** explained to **David** that though **he** cannot build an indestructible **"house"** for **God (First Chronicles 17:4-5), God** will **build him an indestructible "house" (First Chronicles 17:11, 14-17).** Alas, **David's son** will **build** that **house**. A line of **kings** will come from **David's** loins. Indeed, **the house**,

the kingdom, and **throne** shall all be established **eternally** (see the commentary on **the Life of David Ct – The LORD's Covenant with David**).[175]

B'rit Hadashah reading (Hebrews 7:18-19):

Thus, on the one hand, the earlier rule is set aside because of its weakness and inefficacy (see the commentary on **Hebrews Bi – The Former Priesthood Was Temporary**)**, for the Torah did not bring anything to the goal; and, on the other hand, a hope of something better is introduced, through which we are drawing near to God (Hebrews 7:18-19). Aaron's** line endured through two Temples. Ultimately, a permanent **priesthood**, **the** spiritual **priesthood** of **Melchizedek** grants access to **God's** throne in heaven (see **Hebrews Be – Melchizedek Was a Type of Christ**).

An early Jewish hymn sings of the eternal heavenly origin of Melchizedek, a man whose beginnings are not in the Torah, not even in the world. Melchizedek had no predecessor in office. **He** was **the** first **priest**, and **he** was the one to whom **Abram tithed** with **Levi** still in **his** loins **(Hebrews 7:3-5; Genesis 14:17-20)**. Possibly **the priesthood** of **Levi**, with its **mitzvot** of **ritual purity**, could achieve some superficial wholeness in the outer man **(Hebrews 7:11)**. But **cleansing** the conscience and **purity** of the inner man requires even more **(Hebrews 9:6-10, 13-14,** and **10:1-18)**. The order of **Melchizekek** (see **Herbews Bf – The Order of Melchizedek and the Order of Aaron**) addresses these hopes. Access to **ADONAI** in heaven is not lost, because **Messiah** clothes us in **righteousness**. Put off deeds of the flesh! Put on the deeds of **Messiah** (see the commentary on **Second Corinthians Bb – Going Home**).

*Dear Heavenly **Father**, Praise **Your** wisdom, **love**, and **holiness**. How awesome is **Your** gift of **righteousness** to those who **love 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 (Second Corinthians 5:21).** Thank **You** that **Your** gift of **righteousness** is not a coat to be put on and taken off; rather it is **You, Yourself,** living within those who **love You**. **Yeshua answered and said to him: If anyone loves Me, he will keep My word. My Father will love him, and We will come to him and make Our dwelling with him (John 14:23).** I rejoice in **Your** gift of **righteousness** so that I can live with **You** in heaven. I show my joy and **love** for **You** by living my life on earth with a heart focused on pleasing **You** for all eternity. **For I consider the sufferings of this present time not worthy to be compared with the coming glory to be revealed to us***

(Romans 8:18). *In hard or in easy times I always want to* ***love You*** *and please* ***You****. In* ***the Name*** *of* ***the One who sits at Your right hand****. Amen*