

The Dietary Laws

If you ask a hundred Christians if the dietary laws of the Old Testament are still valid for us today, ninety-five of them will say “No,” and point out a couple of places in the New Testament that seem to prove their case. For example, in an incident recorded in both Matthew and Mark, Yahshua answered the Pharisees’ criticism of His disciples’ eating with unwashed hands with what seems like a refutation of the Levitical dietary precepts:

“Jesus called to the crowds and said, ‘Listen to what I say and try to understand. You are not defiled by what you eat; you are defiled by what you say and do.’” His point here is actually that the Pharisees didn’t understand the nature of defilement—that which makes you unclean or unholy. They thought that neglecting the traditional ceremonial hand washing before meals would somehow separate you from God. **“Then Jesus went into a house to get away from the crowds, and his disciples asked him what he meant by the statement he had made.”** Yahshua’s disciples didn’t quite get it either, apparently. **“‘Don’t you understand either?’ he asked. ‘Can’t you see that what you eat won’t defile you? Food doesn’t come in contact with your heart, but only passes through the stomach and then comes out again.’ (By saying this, he showed that every kind of food is acceptable.)”** We’ll come back to this last sentence. It’s the heart of the argument, but there are problems with it.

“And then he added, ‘It is the thought-life that defiles you. For from within, out of a person’s heart, come evil thoughts, sexual immorality, theft, murder, adultery, greed, wickedness, deceit, eagerness for lustful pleasure, envy, slander, pride, and foolishness. All these vile things come from within; they are what defile you and make you unacceptable to God.’” In other words, neither the food you eat nor the way you prepare it can make you unholy. What separates you from God is your sin. **“Then the disciples came to him and asked, ‘Do you realize you offended the Pharisees by what you just said?’ Jesus replied, ‘Every plant not planted by my heavenly Father will be rooted up, so ignore them. They are blind guides leading the blind, and if one blind person guides another, they will both fall into a ditch.’”** (Matthew 15:10-13 NLT, Mark 7:14-23 NLT, blended) Yahshua didn’t care if He offended the Pharisees’ delicate sensibilities. They were leading people astray; the record needed to be corrected. And He was just the Guy to do it.

The Pharisees were doing their best to follow the strict letter of the Mosaic Law, including the dietary part. So far, so good. The problem was that they were relying on their strict outward observance of the rules to earn favor with Yahweh—Who sees what’s in our hearts. Yahshua wasn’t saying that it was

wrong to follow the precepts of Moses, or that they had somehow been rendered obsolete by His coming. He was only saying that observance of the Law could not and would not reconcile us to a holy God. Just as “The Sabbath was made for man, and not man for the Sabbath,” so was the rest of the Torah: the dietary laws were there for our benefit, not God’s.

But what about that incriminating parenthetical, “**(By saying this, he showed that every kind of food is acceptable.)**”? Isn’t this saying that all bets are off, that we have been given divine permission to eat whatever we want? Not exactly. The primary passage defining the dietary laws is found in Leviticus 11. The summary verse reads, “**This is the law of the animals and the birds and every living creature that moves in the waters, and of every creature that creeps on the earth, to distinguish between the unclean and the clean, and between the animal that may be eaten and the animal that may not be eaten.**” (Leviticus 11:46-47) Two things, it says, have been defined in the preceding passage. First are those things which are clean (as opposed to unclean). If an Israelite were even to *touch* anything on this list, he would be ceremonially defiled, or “unclean until evening,” that is, temporarily disqualified from certain duties or privileges that required ceremonial cleanliness. Second, those things which are edible (as opposed to inedible) are identified. Thus any animal that was prohibited in the Leviticus 11 list was, by definition, *not food*. So Yahshua is *not* saying, “Go ahead and eat spiders and mice—I’m telling you it’s okay, never mind what the Torah said.” He is, rather, saying, “Nothing you put in your mouth can establish or destroy your relationship with Yahweh. Only the condition of your heart—your love, faith, and trust in Him—has any bearing on this relationship.” The things that were not considered “food” in the first place never even entered into the discussion.

I should point out that the New Living Translation is probably guilty of unwarranted extrapolation at this point: “**(By saying this, he showed that every kind of food is acceptable)**” isn’t actually in the Greek text in any recognizable way. It’s *katharizo pas broma*: the New King James simply renders it, “**purifying all foods.**” The Greek *katharizo* means to cleanse, purge, or purify; or to pronounce clean in a Levitical sense. The phrase is generally thought to be an editorial insertion by Mark, not that it matters. The bottom line is that the Mark 7 passage does nothing to abrogate the Levitical dietary laws: that which is *not* food is *not* purified.

Okay, then, what about I Timothy 4? Surely *that’ll* prove the case. “**Now the Holy Spirit tells us clearly that in the last times some will turn away from what we believe; they will follow lying spirits and teachings that come from demons. These teachers are hypocrites and liars. They pretend to be religious, but their consciences are dead. They will say it is wrong to be married and wrong to eat certain foods.**” See? See? The people telling us it’s “wrong to eat certain foods” are hypocrites and liars! “**But God created those foods to be eaten with thanksgiving by people who know and believe the**

truth. Since everything God created is good, we should not reject any of it. We may receive it gladly, with thankful hearts. For we know it is made holy by the word of God and prayer.” (I Timothy 4:1-5 NLT) Hold on a minute here. What’s God’s definition of “food?” It’s all the stuff on the “okay” list in Leviticus 11. The items on the no-no list aren’t classified as food at all. But when the rabbis tell you not to eat beef or lamb that was butchered by someone other than a duly authorized *shochet*, or when the Catholic Church tells you (as they did for centuries) that you can’t eat meat on Fridays, you can be relatively certain you’re dealing with “hypocrites and liars.” Again, things that aren’t defined as food in the Torah aren’t even part of the discussion. I know you were probably all watered up for some barbecued buzzard breast with minced mousemeat stuffing, but neither this passage nor the Mark 7 statement has authorized any such culinary adventures. Sorry.

Alright then, what about Peter’s vision of the sheet with all the non-kosher sandwich fixin’s on it? Rule number one: don’t take my word for anything. Let’s look up the passage. The day after Cornelius, a devout Roman centurion, received a vision about Peter, **“Peter went up on the housetop to pray, about the sixth hour. Then he became very hungry and wanted to eat; but while they made ready, he fell into a trance and saw heaven opened and an object like a great sheet bound at the four corners, descending to him and let down to the earth. In it were all kinds of four-footed animals of the earth, wild beasts, creeping things, and birds of the air. And a voice came to him, “Rise, Peter; kill and eat.” But Peter said, “Not so, Lord! For I have never eaten anything common or unclean.” And a voice spoke to him again the second time, “What God has cleansed you must not call common.”** (Acts 10:9-15) Peter, like the Pharisees and indeed, most Jews of his time, made an effort to follow the Mosaic dietary laws. They were such an ingrained religious tradition, nobody really thought about them much—they were second nature, as they should have been. But certain rabbinical prejudices had become equally ingrained in the culture, among them that gentiles were unclean dogs whom Jews were to despise and look down upon as lesser creatures.

So as Pete was puzzling over the meaning of his non-kosher vision, Cornelius’ messengers arrived and asked him to go with them to visit this gentile they worked for. Peter may have been impetuous, but he was teachable. He saw immediately what Yahweh was trying to tell him. He relates his conclusion in Acts 10:34-35, 43: **“In truth I perceive that God shows no partiality. But in every nation, whoever [i.e., not only Jews, but gentiles as well] fears Him and works righteousness is accepted by Him.... Whoever believes in Him will receive remission of sins.”** Was Peter’s vision about food? No. It was about dropping errant prejudices about other people whom God loved. Note that God wasn’t telling Peter to be tolerant of other people’s false beliefs. Cornelius was a believer, or at the very least, an honest searcher, and Yahweh never slams the door shut on these folks, no matter what their cultural background is. The problem was on Peter’s end. He had assumed

that because Yahweh had told the Israelites to keep themselves set apart from the nations, that gentiles could not enter the Kingdom of Heaven, at least not without becoming Jews first. God was showing him that this just wasn't true. Peter got the message. Why don't we?

As we examine Maimonides' take on the Levitical dietary laws, then, let us bear in mind that nothing Yahweh instructed in the Torah has been abrogated, diminished, or otherwise done away with. There are, however, several ceremonial cleanliness issues, mentioned in Leviticus in the context of dietary law, that have been fulfilled in the person of the Messiah. Maimonides doesn't distinguish these from what and what not to eat, so I will, briefly. These seem to be indicative of whether or not an Israelite was to be admitted into the camp, to be a part of the congregation. If a person was ceremonially unclean, he was to remain outside the camp, separated from those who were not contaminated. It's never really spelled out, but we are given a picture of how it worked in Deuteronomy 23:10-11. **"If there is any man among you who becomes unclean by some occurrence in the night, then he shall go outside the camp; he shall not come inside the camp. But it shall be, when evening comes, that he shall wash with water; and when the sun sets, he may come into the camp."** Being admitted "into the camp" is a picture of entering the Kingdom of God. There is no shortage of ways we can "defile ourselves," making us unfit for the Kingdom. But the blood of the Messiah has washed us clean, allowing us to come into God's very presence "when the sun sets," that is, upon our death (or rapture, whichever occurs first).

As we read the Torah, it becomes plain that there's really no way to avoid becoming ceremonially unclean from time to time. (Actually, it's worse than that: it's next to impossible to remain ceremonially undefiled for longer than a New York minute.) Interestingly enough, Yahweh never commanded the Israelites to completely avoid this state, though being ceremonially clean is clearly to be preferred—a goal to shoot for. He said far less about how to avoid becoming "defiled" than He did about the subsequent purification process—typically, the washing of the body or clothes with water and the passage of time.

But as I said, Maimonides stuck pretty much to the practical dietary side of the subject—what and what not to eat and how to prepare it. Sadly, this makes perfect sense, because ever since the wilderness wanderings ended, there was no practical way to "go outside the camp." God's instructions in that regard became purely symbolic, and the symbols pointed toward Yahshua the Messiah. Therefore, it served the interests of the rabbis who'd rejected Him to bury the truth. But

we're following Maimonides' list for organizational purposes, so the dietary rules are where we're going next...

(143) *Examine the marks in cattle (in order to distinguish the clean from the unclean).* **“Now Yahweh spoke to Moses and Aaron, saying to them, ‘Speak to the children of Israel, saying, ‘These are the animals which you may eat among all the animals that are on the earth...’ (Leviticus 11:1-2)** What follows these verses is a litany of not just “cattle,” but all sorts of animals that might or might not be considered edible. The people weren't so much to examine the marks or characteristics on individual animals as to separate different *kinds* of beasts from each other: it wasn't that Angus beef might be okay but not Holstein, but rather that cows were clean and camels weren't. Yahweh would go on to speak not only of mammals, but also of sea creatures, bugs, reptiles, and birds. As we will see, the more complicated an animal's digestive system and the more “discriminating” its typical diet, the more likely it would be that its kind would be included in the “edible” category.

This was not the first time the issue of “clean” versus “unclean” animals was ever raised. 1,500 years (give or take) before the Law was handed down through Moses, Noah was instructed to **“take with you [into the ark] seven each of every clean animal, a male and his female; two each of animals that are unclean, a male and his female; also seven each of birds of the air, male and female, to keep the species alive on the face of all the earth.”** (Genesis 7:2-3) How did Noah know which was which? Either Yahweh told him specifically for this occasion, or more likely, Noah already knew because he had made sacrificial offerings to Yahweh of these kinds of animals in the past, as had his ancestors—going back to Adam. It isn't even hinted that what Noah did in Genesis 8:20 was an unprecedented act: **“Then Noah built an altar to Yahweh, and took of every clean animal and of every clean bird, and offered burnt offerings on the altar.”** However, using these animals for food—instead of eating only plants—was possibly a post-diluvian innovation. Yahweh told Noah after the flood subsided, **“The fear of you and the dread of you shall be on every beast of the earth, on every bird of the air, on all that move on the earth, and on all the fish of the sea. They are given into your hand. Every moving thing that lives shall be food for you. I have given you all things, even as the green herbs. But you shall not eat flesh with its life, that is, its blood.”** (Genesis 9:2-4) At this point in time, Yahweh did not distinguish between “clean” and “unclean” animals for dietary purposes. Since we aren't told why, we're left to speculate. Perhaps the intervening degradation of the gene pools of both man and his potential supper did not

reach a critically detrimental stage until the time of Moses. Perhaps the increase in environmental pollution that went hand in hand with shorter post-diluvian lifespans eventually made eating the meat of scavenger animals more dangerous. In any case, by the time of Moses, new instructions were deemed necessary. God hadn't changed, but our world had.

- (144) *Do not eat the flesh of unclean beasts.* “**Speak to the children of Israel, saying, ‘These are the animals which you may eat among all the animals that are on the earth: Among the animals, whatever divides the hoof, having cloven hooves and chewing the cud—that you may eat. Nevertheless these you shall not eat among those that chew the cud or those that have cloven hooves: the camel, because it chews the cud but does not have cloven hooves, is unclean to you; the rock hyrax, because it chews the cud but does not have cloven hooves, is unclean to you; the hare, because it chews the cud but does not have cloven hooves, is unclean to you; and the swine, though it divides the hoof, having cloven hooves, yet does not chew the cud, is unclean to you. Their flesh you shall not eat, and their carcasses you shall not touch. They are unclean to you.’**” (Leviticus 11:2-8) Yahweh made it easy to determine what animals were “edible” and which were not: of mammals, only those with divided hooves that also chewed the cud were to be used as food. This includes cattle (plus oxen, buffalos, bison, etc.), sheep (both wild and domestic), goats, and deer (including a broad range of wild herding animals inhabiting grasslands from one end of earth to the other). In Deuteronomy 14:4-5, the list looked like this: “**These are the animals which you may eat: the ox, the sheep, the goat, the deer, the gazelle, the roe deer, the wild goat, the mountain goat, the antelope, and the mountain sheep.**”

Specifically excluded because they did not meet the dual criteria are several animals that would have been quite familiar to the Israelites: notably, pigs and camels. Horses, donkeys, zebras, and onagers (the indigenous wild asses to which Ishmael was prophetically compared in Genesis 16:12) are among other potentially familiar hoofed beasts that didn't make the cut. Carnivorous or omnivorous hunters and scavengers (e.g. lions, wolves, apes) were not to be eaten, nor were omnivorous or vegetarian species that were susceptible to various diseases, such as the hyrax and the rabbit. In clarification, Yahweh stated, “**Whatever goes on its paws, among all kinds of animals that go on all fours, those are unclean to you.**” (Leviticus 11:27)

Since horsemeat and 'possum aren't protein staples for most folks, it would seem eating Torah-Kosher isn't a real big problem for the most part. In fact, as far as the typical American diet is concerned, there are only two

food types on the “forbidden” list that are problematical—pork and shellfish. We’ll cover seafood a bit later, but for now, let’s take a close look at the “other white meat,” pork. I know, pigs are quite intelligent, they’re kind of cute, and their reputation as being “filthy” animals is somewhat exaggerated. More to the point (be honest, now), pork can be mighty tasty: bacon, chops, ribs, ham, sausage—why should we have to give it up just because of some moldy 3,000-year-old dietary guidelines? I don’t mind abstaining from vulture meat and barbecued rat, but...

Yes, we have a fondness for our carnitas and pork chow mein, don’t we? So we scour the Bible looking for loopholes. An Israeli friend of mine who would never openly admit to a fondness for pork nevertheless refers to pigs as “short cows.” *Wink wink, nudge nudge*. And because we like the taste of pork products, we Christians desperately cling to passages like Mark 7 that seem to abrogate the inconvenient portions of the Torah. Don’t bother, my friend. If you’re a believer in Yahshua’s grace, eating pork won’t send you to hell. As a matter of fact, it might even send you to *Heaven* a bit ahead of schedule.

Remember, the Torah is our Owner’s Manual. It was written for our benefit, not Yahweh’s. Why doesn’t he want us to eat pigs? It’s because of what he designed *them* to be—barnyard garbage disposals, made to cleanse the world of spoilage and death. Pigs raised for consumption these days are mostly fed corn, but left to themselves, they’ll eat almost anything, including rotting garbage and the feces of other animals. It’s their job. Being “food” isn’t. They have no mechanism in their digestive tracts to filter out the toxins they ingest—it ends up being secreted through their skin or hooves (pickled pigs’ feet, anyone?) or absorbed into the meat. A cow or sheep will take between twelve and sixteen hours to digest and process its food; a pig’s digestive system is so simple, it’ll get the job done in three or four hours.

And disease? Everybody seems to know that pork needs to be cooked thoroughly in order to kill the worms that infest the meat, but hardly anybody actually gets out the ol’ meat thermometer to check to see if the requisite *minimum* of 170 degrees Fahrenheit has actually been reached. That’s what it takes (if you’re lucky) to kill *trichinella spiralis*—the trichina worm, one of nineteen such worms commonly found in pork. Merely cooking your pork chops until they have the consistency of a baseball mitt is no guarantee that the worms are dead. And don’t take comfort in the USDA stamp: all that means is that the pigs have been inspected. But trichinae are microscopic and nearly transparent—it takes an expert to find them, and the government inspectors aren’t even looking.

The journal *Healthwise* reported that there are 150,000 new cases of trichinosis in the U.S. each year. Some authorities estimate that as many as twenty-five percent of the American population is infected. So why isn't this epidemic recognized and dealt with? Two reasons: first, the obvious—there's money to be made, and lots of it, if the pork industry is allowed to continue doing business as usual. The second reason is the stealthy nature of the disease. "Trichinosis is the chameleon of diseases," said the *Saturday Evening Post* (7/8/82). "The number and variety of ailments with which it is more or less commonly confused approach the encyclopedic." The journal goes on to list 41 disorders ranging from commonplace to esoteric that are frequently misdiagnosed instead of the real culprit, trichinosis—everything from arthritis and asthma to typhus and cholera.

I think it's safe to say that this is one place where our "Christian" traditions have led us into error. We should never have taken the Church's word over Yahweh's. But I'm afraid there's a sinister plot afoot there as well, and it's not over anything as trivial as money. You see, the original Babylonian mystery religion was predicated on the tragic death and miraculous rebirth of Tammuz (Satan's prototypical Messiah counterfeit), who was, the legend goes, killed by a wild boar in his fortieth year. Devotees of the religion would therefore symbolically "weep for Tammuz" for a forty-day Lenten period each year (cf. Ezekiel 8:14), at the end of which they would ritually slaughter the pig that killed Tammuz and celebrate his (Tammuz', not the pig's) resurrection as a god—in the form of an egg-laying rabbit (I'm not making this stuff up, I swear). Does any of this sound familiar? It should. After Constantine declared Christianity legal at the Council of Nicaea in 325, all sorts of pagan sun-god traditions were woven into the fabric of "Christianity," including the oh-so-popular "Easter" ham. It was an often-stated objective of the "Church" hierarchy at this stage to separate itself from all things Jewish. But you can't do that without separating yourself from Yahweh. It was a really stupid thing to do.

Satan's not stupid, of course. He's got something for everybody. And so we observe that the entire Muslim world is deathly afraid of pigs. Are they following the word of Yahweh, then? Hardly. They're merely buying into another of Satan's counterfeits. There's more to the Mosaic dietary laws than just pigs. Ask 'em about camels—specifically declared unclean in the Torah. Middle Eastern Muslims not only eat them, they sacrifice them in droves to Allah every year at the Ka'aba.

- (145) *Examine the marks in fishes (to distinguish the clean from the unclean.*
"These you may eat of all that are in the water: whatever in the water has fins and

scales, whether in the seas or in the rivers—that you may eat. But all in the seas or in the rivers that do not have fins and scales, all that move in the water or any living thing which is in the water, they are an abomination to you.” (Leviticus 11:9-10)

As He did with mammals, Yahweh has provided very clear, simple instructions as to what aquatic creatures are to be considered “edible” and which are not. As before, there are two criteria, both of which must be met: both fins and scales had to be present, which pretty much restricted the category of seafood to true fish—i.e., the bony fishes. Cartilaginous “fish” like sharks and rays have fins but no scales. Sea snakes and certain sea creatures that might be construed to have scales (like shrimps or lobsters) don’t have fins. Both types are thus prohibited. All shellfish (clams, oysters, scallops, mussels, etc.) are out of bounds, as are crustaceans like crabs, lobsters, shrimp, and crayfish. Aquatic mammals like whales, dolphins, and porpoises (read: mahi-mahi) don’t have scales, so they’re not to be eaten, nor are the more exotic sea creatures like octopi, squids, sea cucumbers...you get the idea.

Once again, we don’t have to look too far to find practical reasons for nixing everything but regular fish. Most of the prohibited sea creatures are scavengers, no matter which end of the food chain they occupy. Their God-given job in life is to clean the waters of death and decay. Anybody who’s ever had a successful aquarium knows that one of the secrets of maintaining balance is to have a few scavengers and snails in with the pretty fish to keep the tank clean. Shellfish and mollusks filter pollutants out of their environment, but their simple digestive systems have no capacity for keeping these toxins out of their own tissues. Though they themselves are not normally adversely affected by the nasty stuff they ingest, their flesh retains the accumulated toxins. The bottom line: you never really know if they’re “safe.” So God made the decision easy for us. Fins and scales, or forget it. *Caveat emptor.*

- (146) *Do not eat unclean fish.* **“They [whatever in the water does not have fins and scales] shall be an abomination to you; you shall not eat their flesh, but you shall regard their carcasses as an abomination. Whatever in the water does not have fins or scales—that shall be an abomination to you.”** (Leviticus 11:11-12)
- Here we see the negatively stated converse to Mitzvah #145. It’s not a separate precept. But as long as we’re here, let me point out another detail that forces us to look beyond the mere letter of the law. We see here (as in other places) that not only weren’t the Israelites to eat the forbidden flesh, they weren’t even to touch the carcasses of these creatures after they had died. The consequences of touching the carcass of any unclean animal are summarized in verses 24-25: **“By these you shall become unclean; whoever touches the carcass of any of them shall be unclean until evening; whoever carries**

part of the carcass of any of them shall wash his clothes and be unclean until evening.”

“Whoever carries part of the carcass of any of them?” I hate to tell you this, but Yahweh commanded every Israelite to do precisely that—or something very close to it. Remember Mitzvah #41? The Jews were instructed to attach tassels—called *tsitzits*—to the corners of their garments, each containing a single blue thread, the purpose of which was **“that you may look upon it and remember all the commandments of Yahweh and do them, and that you may not follow the harlotry to which your own heart and your own eyes are inclined.”** (Numbers 15:39) Where did the blue dye come from? There was only one source, the cerulean mussel, a.k.a. the murex. So by wearing the *tsitzit* with the required blue thread, the Jews *were* in a sense “carrying part of the carcass” of an unclean creature. At the very least, their keeping of the law of the *tsitzit* had required someone else to become ceremonially unclean for their benefit—processing the dye from the shellfish corpses. When they saw the blue threads in their *tsitzits*, they should have been reminded that somebody had borne their uncleanness for them. The blue thread was prophetic of the Messiah.

Yahweh was practically screaming that **“whatever the law says, it says to those who are under the law, that every mouth may be stopped, and all the world may become guilty before God. Therefore by the deeds of the law no flesh will be justified in His sight....”** Did God *purposely* build this glitch into His Law, making it impossible to remain ceremonially clean? I believe He did. Paul goes on to explain: **“For by the law is the knowledge of sin. But now the righteousness of God apart from the law is revealed, being witnessed by the Law and the Prophets, even the righteousness of God, through faith in Jesus Christ, to all and on all who believe. For there is no difference; for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God.”** (Romans 3:19-23) We are all unclean, and keeping the Law cannot make us clean. Only the blood of Christ can do that.

- (147) *Examine the marks in fowl, to distinguish the clean from the unclean. “All clean birds you may eat. But these you shall not eat: the eagle, the vulture, the buzzard, the red kite, the falcon, and the kite after their kinds; every raven after its kind; the ostrich [a mistranslation in the NKJV: it’s ossifrage (Hebrew: *peres*), i.e. a lammergeyer or osprey], the short-eared owl, the sea gull, and the hawk after their kinds; the little owl, the screech owl, the white owl, the jackdaw, the carrion vulture, the fisher owl, the stork, the heron after its kind, and the hoopoe and the bat.”* (Deuteronomy 14:11-18) In Deuteronomy, Moses repeated many of the instructions he had delivered previously in Exodus, Leviticus, and Numbers. Here we see a list of forbidden fowl—although the precise species intended by Moses are in question, the picture’s pretty

clear: all of these are carnivorous birds of prey, scavengers, or otherwise indiscriminant in their dietary habits. The bat, of course, is not a bird (nor did Moses say it was) but it's listed here because it flies like one.

That leaves an unspecified litany of “clean” birds that were okay for food and sacrifices. Yahweh Himself provided quail to eat (Exodus 16:13, Numbers 11:31-32) and turtledoves and pigeons were specified as acceptable sacrifices—thus clean—in Leviticus 5:7, etc. Partridges are mentioned in passing in I Samuel 26:20. It's pretty clear that domestic fowl like chickens, turkeys, ducks, and geese would have been considered clean as well, although they're not specifically listed. It's apparent from inadvertent New Testament references (a hen and her chicks, eggs, cockcrowing) that chickens were kept in Judea at the time of Christ.

- (148) *Do not eat unclean fowl. “And these you shall regard as an abomination among the birds; they shall not be eaten, they are an abomination: the eagle, the vulture, the buzzard, the kite, and the falcon after its kind; every raven after its kind, the ostrich [wrong word: see the note on #147], the short-eared owl, the sea gull, and the hawk after its kind; the little owl, the fisher owl, and the screech owl; the white owl, the jackdaw, and the carrion vulture; the stork, the heron after its kind, the hoopoe, and the bat.”* (Leviticus 11:13-19) This is the negative permutation of the previous mitzvah, and the Leviticus passage supporting it is almost identical to the one we saw in Deuteronomy. It's no particular surprise that scripture agrees with scripture. But does science agree? We've (unfairly, perhaps) come to view science as somehow antithetical to matters of faith. But as time marches on, honest researchers perceive a growing correlation between the *data of science* (though not necessarily the common interpretation of that data) and the *words of scripture* (though not necessarily the spin put on them by the religious establishment). Our ignorance of this correlation is the fault of neither science nor scripture, but rather of scientists and clerics with agendas to advance.

So, does science agree with scripture in regard to the Torah's dietary precepts? In a word, yes. In 1953 (that's right, the facts have been available for over half a century now), the Johns Hopkins University School of Medicine published an article in their “Bulletin of the History of Medicine” by a Jewish physician named David I. Macht, M.D. It was given the unwieldy title *An Experimental Pharmacological Appreciation of V'yrikra XI and D'varim XIV*. Perhaps if he had entitled the article *The Health Ramifications of the Leviticus 11 and Deuteronomy 14 Dietary Laws*, it might have received more attention (or have been rejected for publication altogether). At any rate, Dr. Macht set about testing extracts of the flesh and blood of a wide range of animals, including fifty-four

different kinds of fish, identified as “clean” or “unclean” in the Torah. Under controlled laboratory conditions, he subjected each sample to the same standard toxicological analysis. The results were, depending on your point of view, either yawningly predictable or stunningly revealing: every single sample that the Torah listed as “clean” or edible was shown to be non-toxic, while every subject tested from the Mosaic Law’s “unclean” or inedible list turned out to be toxic. There was a one hundred percent correlation between Yahweh’s instructions and Dr. Macht’s experiments. Pigs, by the way, ranked way up there in toxicity with rats and groundhogs.

- (149) *Examine the marks in locusts, to distinguish the clean from the unclean.* **“All flying insects that creep on all fours shall be an abomination to you. Yet these you may eat of every flying insect that creeps on all fours: those which have jointed legs above their feet with which to leap on the earth. These you may eat: the locust after its kind, the destroying locust after its kind, the cricket after its kind, and the grasshopper after its kind. But all other flying insects which have four feet shall be an abomination to you.”** (Leviticus 11:20-23) Bugs in general are on the “inedible” list. “Creeping on all fours,” of course, is merely a figure of speech: it says less about the number of legs than the mode of transport. Insects, spiders, centipedes, scorpions—all kinds of creepy crawlies are hereby declared unclean. But there’s one notable exception: insects that have jointed legs used for hopping are approved as food. Grasshoppers, locusts, and crickets are okay to eat.

Because of recent swarms in which billions of locusts have swept across 60 countries in Africa, Asia, and Australia eating everything in their path, researchers have been studying these creatures intently in recent years. They can eat their body weight (2 grams) in food every day while traveling up to 130 kilometers. But stopping them with pesticides has proven problematical. It turns out that they are incredibly fussy eaters who know better than humans how to regulate and balance their food intake. They “taste” their environment through microscopic “hairs” on their legs as well as through their mouthparts. This helps them avoid areas that have been treated with pesticides. Oxford University researchers have discovered that locusts will regulate their food intake: when given food diluted fivefold with indigestible cellulose, the locusts merely increase their intake—fivefold! They will also compensate for past deficiencies in their diet if given the opportunity, eating precisely the right balance of proteins, carbohydrates, and salts. So locusts and their cousins are safe to eat (which is not to say they’re not an acquired taste).

- (150) *Do not eat a worm found in fruit.* **“And every creeping thing that creeps on the earth shall be an abomination. It shall not be eaten. Whatever crawls on its belly,**

whatever goes on all fours, or whatever has many feet among all creeping things that creep on the earth—these you shall not eat, for they are an abomination.”

(Leviticus 11:41-42) What’s worse than finding a worm in your apple? Finding half a worm! Moses is clarifying here the description of what constitutes an unclean “creeping thing.” It includes worms, caterpillars, grubs, centipedes—things with many legs or no legs at all. If they crawl around on their bellies and don’t have hopping apparatus like locusts, they’re not good to eat.

- (151) *Do not eat of things that creep upon the earth. “And every creeping thing that creeps on the earth shall be an abomination. It shall not be eaten. Whatever crawls on its belly, whatever goes on all fours, or whatever has many feet among all creeping things that creep on the earth—these you shall not eat, for they are an abomination.”* (Leviticus 11:41-42) This is pretty much a restatement of #150, as are #152-154. It’s interesting to note that Yahweh’s issue with pork (among other things) has a lot to do with the avoidance of inadvertently eating “creeping things” that the Israelites couldn’t even see—creeping things that would nevertheless cause disease and death. They weren’t being asked to analyze and understand microbiology, however; they were merely being told to trust Yahweh for guidance.
- (152) *Do not eat any vermin of the earth. “For I am Yahweh your God. You shall therefore consecrate yourselves, and you shall be holy; for I am holy. Neither shall you defile yourselves with any creeping thing that creeps on the earth.”* (Leviticus 11:44) I can’t really see the distinction between “vermin” and “creeping things” in this context. But it’s clear that the Israelites had quite enough information to avoid eating unhealthful foods. Failure to observe God’s statutes in this regard carried its own natural consequences with it: **“It shall come to pass, if you do not obey the voice of Yahweh your God, to observe carefully all His commandments and His statutes which I command you today, that all these curses will come upon you and overtake you...Yahweh will make the plague cling to you until He has consumed you from the land which you are going to possess. Yahweh will strike you with consumption, with fever, with inflammation, with severe burning fever...”** (Deuteronomy 28:15, 21-22) God didn’t have to make a special effort to come and “punish” those who didn’t keep His dietary Laws. The fruit of disobedience was built in. The whole point of giving them the “law” was to spare them from the consequences of breaking it. The creepy crawlies of God’s creation all have their place, their jobs, their functions, whether the pollination of plants, breaking down organic matter into usable soil, cleaning up the carcasses of the dead, or any number of things. If we take them out of their proper environments and put them within our bodies, they’re going to do their jobs there instead if they can. And that could be a bad thing.

- (153) *Do not eat things that swarm in the water.* **“You shall not make yourselves abominable with any creeping thing that creeps; nor shall you make yourselves unclean with them, lest you be defiled by them.... This is the law of the animals and the birds and every living creature that moves in the waters, and of every creature that creeps on the earth, to distinguish between the unclean and the clean, and between the animal that may be eaten and the animal that may not be eaten.”** (Leviticus 11:43, 46-47) These rabbinical directives are often maddeningly imprecise, but Yahweh’s words are crystal clear. Swarming in the water is not the issue; many clean fish, from sardines to tuna, “swarm,” that is, they swim in schools. When we elevate the commentary of man over the precepts of God, we’ll fall into error every time. As far back as the Garden of Eden, we have been twisting God’s words to our own harm. It seems funny to say it, but we need to constantly ask the very thing Satan asked Eve: “Has God really said that?” When men and angels presume to tell us what Yahweh wants, we need to go back and check—*Has God really said that?* (By the way, that goes for what I’m telling you as well. Test everything I say in the crucible of God’s Word. I’ve been known to make mistakes.)
- (154) *Do not eat winged insects.* **“Every creeping thing that flies is unclean for you; they shall not be eaten.”** (Deuteronomy 14:19) **“All flying insects that creep on all fours shall be an abomination to you.”** (Leviticus 11:20) In contrast to bugs that merely crawl along the ground, flying insects are singled out here as being unclean. We have already seen the exception to the rule: locusts and their hopping cousins—even though they also fly—have been declared clean. It’s worth noting that while flying insects themselves are unclean, the product that one of them manufactures—honey—is not. John the Baptist is said to have eaten “locusts and wild honey” in the wilderness. Yum.
- (155) *Do not eat the flesh of a beast that is terefah (literally, torn).* **“You shall be holy men to Me: you shall not eat meat torn by beasts in the field; you shall throw it to the dogs.”** (Exodus 22:30) It’s fascinating that Yahweh links the concept of “holiness” to obeying His rules concerning what and what not to eat. Here we see that animals—even those that would ordinarily be considered clean, or edible, must not be eaten if they have been killed by carnivorous beasts in the wild—even if the kill is fresh. The Israelites couldn’t have known what was going on at the microbiotic level, how the bite of a scavenger or carnivore could spread deadly microorganisms to the victim, or how the blood left to pool within the carcass could be harmful (see #167). If a shepherd saw a wolf kill one of his sheep, the natural reaction might be, *Well, it’s dead but it’s fresh—we might as well go ahead and eat it. Waste not, want not.* Yahweh didn’t bother telling them that it could be

hazardous to their health; He just said, *I have set you apart from the peoples around you, those who wouldn't hesitate to eat road kill like this. So trust Me to know what's best for you: you can feed it to your dogs—part of whose job is to be scavengers—but don't eat it yourself.* Part of being “holy,” or set apart to Yahweh, is trusting Him enough to obey Him, even if we don't understand His reasons.

- (156) *Do not eat the flesh of a beast that died of itself. “You shall not eat anything that dies of itself; you may give it to the alien who is within your gates, that he may eat it, or you may sell it to a foreigner; for you are a holy people to Yahweh your God.”* (Deuteronomy 14:21) Here we have a slightly different scenario: an otherwise clean animal that has died of “natural causes,” either old age, disease, or accident not involving a carnivorous predator. An Israelite, being set apart for Yahweh's purposes, was not to risk eating such meat, presumably for two reasons: first, it would be difficult to tell if the blood had been completely drained from the carcass, and second, it would have been hard to determine what role harmful microorganisms had had in the animal's death. (Yahweh didn't explain any of this, of course. He just said: *trust Me.*) Yet this situation clearly wasn't as risky as eating the meat from an animal that had been killed by a wild predator (see #155), so Yahweh gave permission to give away or sell the meat to the foreigners living in close proximity with the Israelites.

This is one of the rare cases where Yahweh makes a specific distinction between “laws” that must be kept by Israelites but may be ignored with impunity by non-Israelites. This distinction goes a long way toward verifying my contention that the Law of Moses was to be acted out by Israel as the sign of a people set-apart from all others for Yahweh's purpose. Its requirements, though useful and meaningful, were not religiously binding on gentiles—for instance, goyim believers were not asked to show up in Jerusalem three times a year to participate in the Feasts of Yahweh. That doesn't mitigate the instructional value of the Torah for gentiles: we will joyfully and attentively heed its spirit and lessons if we know what's good for us. And in cases like this, if steaks from a steer that died of old age were offered for sale by a Jew who wouldn't eat them for religious reasons, it might behoove the discerning gentile buyer to pass on the deal.

- (157) *Slay cattle, deer and fowl according to the laws of shechitah if their flesh is to be eaten. “When Yahweh your God enlarges your border as He has promised you, and you say, ‘Let me eat meat,’ because you long to eat meat, you may eat as much meat as your heart desires. If the place where Yahweh your God chooses to put His name is too far from you, then you may slaughter from your herd and from*

your flock which Yahweh has given you, just as I have commanded you, and you may eat within your gates as much as your heart desires. Just as the gazelle and the deer are eaten, so you may eat them; the unclean and the clean alike may eat them.” (Deuteronomy 12:20-22) According to the rabbis, the phrase “as I have commanded” in this passage refers to the technique of Jewish ritual slaughtering known as *shechitah*. The authorized butcher, called the *shochet*, is to kill the animal with a quick, deep stroke across the throat with a perfectly sharp blade. This method is relatively painless, causes unconsciousness within two seconds, and allows a rapid and complete draining of the blood. Because it is recognized as the cleanest and most humane method of slaughter possible, this method is used widely, even in non-kosher slaughterhouses.

I’ve got no problem with their method of *shechitah*. But the context of the Deuteronomy passage reveals another issue, one more definitive of Yahweh’s admonition: “as I have commanded.” After telling them (again) not to adopt the pagan practices of the nations the Israelites were supposed to displace, Yahweh told them, **“But you shall seek the place where Yahweh your God chooses, out of all your tribes, to put His name for His dwelling place; and there you shall go. There you shall take your burnt offerings, your sacrifices, your tithes, the heave offerings of your hand, your vowed offerings, your freewill offerings, and the firstborn of your herds and flocks. And there you shall eat before Yahweh your God, and you shall rejoice in all to which you have put your hand, you and your households, in which Yahweh your God has blessed you.”** (Deuteronomy 12:5-7) God knew that His people were going to want to eat meat wherever they settled in the Land. And He said that was okay, as long as the meat was from a clean animal and the blood had been drained out properly (see verses 23-24; see also Mitzvah #168). But ritual sacrifices in which the meat was to be eaten were part of the prescribed Levitical worship, and these were to take place *only* at a designated central location He would choose (eventually to settle at Jerusalem). You could enjoy a nice steak wherever you were, but Yahweh didn’t want *offerings* made anywhere except where the Tabernacle/Temple and the Ark of the Covenant were. If you want to party with Yahweh, you have to go where Yahweh is hosting the party.

There is, of course, a practical application for us, even if we’re not Jews, even if we don’t live in the Land of Promise. We must meet God on God’s terms or not at all. People from Nimrod to Nadab and Abihu, from Ananias and Sapphira to Osama bin Laden, have attempted to force their way into the Kingdom of God, to sneak in through the side door, to do things their way. But Yahshua said, **“I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through Me.”** (John 14:6)

- (158) *Do not eat a limb removed from a living beast. “Be sure that you do not eat the blood, for the blood is the life; you may not eat the life with the meat.”*
 (Deuteronomy 12:23) The rabbis must have laid awake all night thinking up this stuff. I mean, whose mind works like that? All the Torah said was “Don’t eat blood.” (See #167.) So if that means you can’t cut the hind leg off a living animal and eat it, then okay, we won’t do that. Some things ought to go without saying, and this is one of them—which is probably why God didn’t say it.
- (159) *Do not slaughter an animal and its young on the same day. “Yahweh spoke to Moses, saying: When a bull or a sheep or a goat is born, it shall be seven days with its mother; and from the eighth day and thereafter it shall be accepted as an offering made by fire to Yahweh. Whether it is a cow or ewe, do not kill both her and her young on the same day.”* (Leviticus 22:26-28) Remember what we discovered back in Chapter 3 (see Mitzvot #59-63) about the human parent/child relationship being symbolic of the relationship between our Creator and us? The present precept extends and clarifies the concept. This is actually a prophecy that predicts Yahweh’s amazing—dare I say *illogical*—mercy. All of the Levitical sacrifices ultimately point toward Yahshua’s death on Calvary’s cross. Think of Him as the “parent” in this equation. Yahweh manifested Himself as a human being, only to be nailed to a Roman cross bearing the sins of all mankind. If you or I had been God, we would have angrily turned the earth into a charcoal briquette before the sun had set, would we not? Don’t look so pious; you know it’s true.
- But what did Yahweh do? He calmly continued with His plan of redemption, the course of action He had put in motion before the foundation of the world: no judgment “by fire” would be made until “seven days” had passed. Seven *days*? Yes, metaphorically, the complete appointed time of man on this earth—7,000 years (see II Peter 3:8), beginning with the fall of Adam, and ending with the close of the Millennial Kingdom. (The whole thing is explained in my previous work, *Future History*. If you don’t know what I’m talking about, please go back and read it.) There is far more here than a mere plea for humanity and tenderness when dealing with livestock. This is an indication that no judgment (called here “an offering made by fire”) will fall upon sinful mankind until we have been given *all the time in the world* to repent and turn to Yahweh. But one way or another, God’s wrath is coming upon all of mankind. Either we will be protected from it—sheltered by the blood of our Messiah—or we will face it on our own. It’s our choice.
- (160) *Do not take the mother-bird with the young. “If a bird’s nest happens to be before you along the way, in any tree or on the ground, with young ones or eggs,*

with the mother sitting on the young or on the eggs, you shall not take the mother with the young; you shall surely let the mother go, and take the young for yourself, that it may be well with you and that you may prolong your days.” (Deuteronomy 22:6-7) As we saw in the previous mitzvah, the parallel relationships, parent-child and God-man, are in view. Here, however, neither judgments nor offerings are in the picture. Rather, God’s provision is seen: Yahweh’s Spirit (as the mother bird) is the one making the sacrifice; we are to thankfully accept the provision of sustenance and salvation being offered—at such great personal expense. The relinquishing of the hen’s “young ones or eggs” is a picture of God’s sacrifice of the Messiah.

But in this context, what would it mean to **“take the mother with the young”**? You can’t capture or kill God the way you might a bird in the field. Or can you? Some in this world, not content to gratefully acknowledge God’s provision, want to be seen as gods themselves—to be looked upon as providers, admired in all their fine-feathered glory, worshiped as lords of the air, while they exploit God’s people for their own gain. They covet the place and power of Yahweh, and by blocking others’ access to God (since they can’t actually kill Him) they conspire to take His place in the hearts and minds of the people who might otherwise benefit from Yahweh’s great gift. These verses in Deuteronomy are a warning to those who would usurp the place of God, whether through religion, politics, or commerce. Accept the Gift with thanksgiving; revere the Giver, and thereby “prolong your days.”

- (161) *Set the mother-bird free when taking the nest.* **“If a bird’s nest happens to be before you along the way, in any tree or on the ground, with young ones or eggs, with the mother sitting on the young or on the eggs, you shall not take the mother with the young; you shall surely let the mother go, and take the young for yourself, that it may be well with you and that you may prolong your days.”** (Deuteronomy 22:6-7) This, of course, is merely the affirmative permutation of the previous mitzvah. Notice something, however: the instruction comes with a promise—the same promise that accompanied the Fifth Commandment. That shouldn’t be too surprising, since the precept, at its heart, is virtually the same: **“Honor your father and your mother, that your days may be long upon the land which Yahweh your God is giving you.”** (Exodus 20:12) Honoring our earthly father and mother is symbolic of our honoring our Maker, Yahweh. Leaving the mother bird unmolested while gathering her eggs is also a picture of honoring our Creator—gratefully availing ourselves of God’s sacrificial gift of salvation.
- (162) *Do not eat the flesh of an ox that was condemned to be stoned.* **“If an ox gores a man or a woman to death, then the ox shall surely be stoned, and its flesh**

shall not be eaten; but the owner of the ox shall be acquitted. But if the ox tended to thrust with its horn in times past, and it has been made known to his owner, and he has not kept it confined, so that it has killed a man or a woman, the ox shall be stoned and its owner also shall be put to death.” (Exodus 21:28-29) This has nothing to do with diet and everything to do with principles. First principle: no good comes from evil—the end must not justify the means, nor should the guilty prosper at the expense of the innocent. If one’s actions (or inactions) lead to death, there should be no “upside” to it for the negligent or guilty party. A modern twist on this is the idea of convicted criminals writing best-selling books about their crimes—making a fortune on others’ misfortune from behind bars. Thankfully, there are now laws prohibiting the practice. The Torah, it should be noted, always had one.

The second principle is that of personal responsibility. Accidents happen, but if they could have been prevented—even if such prevention meant inconvenience, expense, or risk to the one responsible—then they are no longer accidents, but crimes. I don’t think it’s too much of a stretch to apply this rule to one of Yahweh’s pet peeves: false teaching. If we tolerate false doctrine in our midst when it is in our power to bring the truth to light, we ourselves share the fault (see Ezekiel 3:18-19). To whom much is given, much is required.

- (163) *Do not boil meat with milk.* “**The first of the firstfruits of your land you shall bring into the house of Yahweh your God. You shall not boil a young goat in its mother’s milk.**” (Exodus 23:19; cf. Exodus 34:26, Deuteronomy 14:21) This is a mitzvah that observant Jews today can really get their teeth into, so to speak. It’s a great example of how things can get totally out of hand if we refuse to pay attention to what Yahweh actually said and obviously meant. The first thing to go was the parent-child connection: instead of a young goat being boiled in its own mother’s milk, it was any kid being boiled in any goat’s milk. Then it was any meat being boiled in any kind of milk. Pretty soon, that became a blanket prohibition against eating dairy products (milk, cream, cheese, etc.) in the same meal with meat. Then the rabbis extended this simple instruction to forbid eating milk and *poultry* together. (Better safe than sorry, right?) The Talmud subsequently took the game to the next level, prohibiting the cooking of meat and fish together or even serving them on the same plates. For some unknown reason, though, it’s supposed to be okay to eat fish and dairy together. You can also eat dairy and eggs in the same meal. Confused yet?

All this behavioral evolution is brought to you by people who *swear* that an “oral law” explaining everything was delivered to the elders at the same time Moses was being given the written Torah. These traditions,

they say, were orally transmitted, *flawlessly*, from rabbi to student for almost two thousand years until somebody finally wrote it all down, calling it the *Mishnah*—which in turn became the basis of the Talmud—which in turn is chock full of contradictory rabbinical opinion. An oral law, orally transmitted for millennia without corruption? Yeah, picture that. Face it, guys. The oral law isn't worth the paper it's printed on.

But it gets worse. According to the rabbis, not only can't you eat meat with dairy products (and so forth), you can't even use the same utensils—pots, pans, dishes, silverware, etc.—to prepare and serve them. And cleaning up is a problem, too: you have to use separate sinks, or run *fleishik* (meat) and *milchik* (dairy) paraphernalia separately in the dishwasher (admittedly a compromise—you're ideally supposed to have *two* dishwashers). We are solemnly assured that G-d (that's "God," heaven forbid you should use His actual name) is terribly impressed with people who actually negotiate this outrageous obstacle course. On the other hand, if you eat a bacon cheeseburger, all hope of getting on His good side is lost forever.

Okay, I'm being silly. But not half as silly as this fraud the rabbis have foisted upon gullible and unsuspecting Jews who actually take their advice. What's really going on here? Go back to where the rabbis made their first wrong turn. "**You shall not boil a young goat in its mother's milk.**" It's a parent-child illustration—*again*. And again, it's a Messianic prophecy with an instructive principle attached. The "mother" once again represents Yahweh's Spirit in this illustration, and the "young goat" represents the Messiah, specifically in His role as sin-bearer in our stead. And the "milk" is that which comes from the Spirit to sustain us, to help us grow, to keep us healthy—it's nothing short of God's holy Word. So what is the mitzvah telling us? We are never to use God's Word as a weapon against God's work. Ironically, the Jews have made a contact sport out of this very practice for thousands of years, and we just saw a classic example of it. Another example: TV preachers whose "ministries" have more to do with funding than with fundamental truth. Another: sects or denominations that use a few carefully selected passages to create doctrines and dogma designed to subjugate, control, and fleece the would-be faithful. Another: politicians who piously play the "Christian card," wooing the religious right while sacrificing the clear precepts of Yahweh on the altar of political expediency. Another: businessmen who think of the church or synagogue merely as fertile fields for new commercial contacts. I think you get the picture.

(164) *Do not eat flesh with milk.* “**The first of the firstfruits of your land you shall bring to the house of Yahweh your God. You shall not boil a young goat in its mother’s milk.**” (Exodus 34:26) According to the Talmud, this passage is a distinct prohibition from the one we just reviewed. But as you can see, the wording in the Torah is virtually identical. The rabbis are hallucinating again. Notice that in both instances, this precept is contextually linked to the offering of firstfruits. In general, this indicates a spirit of grateful acknowledgement of Yahweh’s provision. In particular, the Feast of Firstfruits was one of seven specific annual holidays, or *miqrym*, set aside as prophetic markers of significant events in Yahweh’s plan of redemption—in this case the resurrection of the Messiah: the *miqra* was ultimately fulfilled on the Feast of Firstfruits in 33 A.D. Both of the Exodus passages are also concerned in a larger sense with the congregational worship of Israel, specifically the directive for all males to appear before Yahweh three times a year, at Passover/Unleavened Bread/Firstfruits in the spring, then at the Feast of Weeks, then at Trumpets/Atonement/Tabernacles in the fall. (But for what it’s worth, the precept is mentioned in the context of *dietary rules* in Deuteronomy 14:21.)

The first thing we need to ask ourselves is: why would Yahweh say something like this *three times*? What’s so all-fired important, and what could it possibly have to do with the third *miqra*? It is a well documented fact that both Egypt and Canaan practiced pagan fertility rites that included boiling a kid in its mother’s milk. By sprinkling the resulting broth on their gardens and fields after the harvest, they hoped to placate the gods into granting them a bountiful harvest in the coming season. By tying this odd commandment to the Feast of Firstfruits, Yahweh was in effect saying, *Don’t petition the false gods of your neighbors or give them thanks; they can’t do anything for you—or against you. Worship Me alone, for I am the sole source of your blessing, the One True God.* As a matter of fact, a few verses later He specifically reminded them: “**You shall not bow down to their gods, nor serve them, nor do according to their works; but you shall utterly overthrow them and completely break down their sacred pillars.**” (Exodus 23:24)

The specifications for the Feast of Unleavened Bread stated that a male lamb (*not a goat*) a year old was to be sacrificed, an offering made by roasting it in fire (*not boiling it in milk*) (see Leviticus 23:12). If the Israelites substituted the pagan practice for the one Yahweh had instituted, the picture He was painting would be obliterated. The lamb was a picture of innocence—ultimately a metaphor for Yahshua the Messiah—whereas the goat symbolized sin (as in the prescribed services of the Day of Atonement). Likewise, it was fire, not hot water (or milk), that stood for

judgment. So boiling a goat in its mother's milk spoke of something quite different than Yahweh's intended picture lesson—a sinless Yahshua bearing our well-deserved punishment Himself, a sacrifice for which we should be eternally grateful. This is all a long, *long* way from “Don't put cheese on your burger.”

- (165) *Do not eat the of the thigh-vein which shrank.* “So Jacob called the name of the place Peniel: “For I have seen God face to face, and my life is preserved.” Just as he crossed over Penuel the sun rose on him, and he limped on his hip. Therefore to this day the children of Israel do not eat the muscle that shrank, which is on the hip socket, because He touched the socket of Jacob's hip in the muscle that shrank.” (Genesis 32:30-32) Based on this incident, Jews even today consider the sciatic nerve and the adjoining blood vessels forbidden as food—it must be cut out. As a practical matter, however, this tissue is so difficult to remove, Jewish *sochets* normally don't deal with it; they just sell the hindquarters to non-kosher butchers. Moses states that the practice was a longstanding tradition even in his day (five centuries or so after Jacob's wrestling match). But nowhere in the Torah is there a hint of divine instruction about this. It's nothing but what it purports to be—a man-made tradition.

Believe it or not, I've got no problem with tradition. Traditions help us get through our days without having to re-invent the wheel every ten minutes. Think of them as habits on steroids. But while I see traditions as useful, even necessary, components of our collective human psyche, I have a serious issue with the equating of our traditions with God's commands. They are not the same thing. As a case in point, this mitzvah is clearly a tradition, not an instruction from Yahweh. Of course, there's no particular reason *not* to keep the custom if it helps you define your place in the world. But don't go saying that God told you to do it. He did nothing of the sort. This convention has no legitimate place in any listing of Yahweh's instructions.

- (166) *Do not eat chelev (tallow-fat).* “Yahweh spoke to Moses, saying, ‘Speak to the children of Israel, saying: You shall not eat any fat, of ox or sheep or goat. And the fat of an animal that dies naturally, and the fat of what is torn by wild beasts, may be used in any other way; but you shall by no means eat it. For whoever eats the fat of the animal of which men offer an offering made by fire to Yahweh, the person who eats it shall be cut off from his people.’” (Leviticus 7:22-25) The context here is instruction concerning the peace offering (which could be either a thank offering, a freewill offering, or an offering consecrating a vow). This was a sacrifice that was to be consumed by the one offering it, shared with the priests, and dedicated to Yahweh. The “fat,” Yahweh's portion,

was defined thus: **“The fat that covers the entrails and all the fat which is on the entrails, the two kidneys and the fat that is on them by the flanks, and the fatty lobe attached to the liver above the kidneys, he shall remove, as it was taken from the bull of the sacrifice of the peace offering.”** (Leviticus 4:8-10) In other words, the fatty portions of the animal that existed in separate or unmixed areas, not necessarily the fat that was marbled in among the musculature. As it turns out, there are chemical differences between this *“chelev”* and ordinary muscle and sub-dermal fat which may explain Yahweh’s warning in a practical sense.

These fat portions of an offering were to be burned in homage to Yahweh, not eaten. The cultural baggage attached to the Hebrew word *heleb* tells us why. It not only means fat, but also “the best, the choice parts.” For instance, the word is used in Genesis 45:18 to describe the best the country had to offer—the “fat of the land.” So by burning it instead of eating it, one was symbolically offering Yahweh the best part of his sacrifice. It wasn’t until the twentieth century that we understood the health risks of a fatty diet. Yahweh however, having designed us, knew what was best for us—and it wasn’t fat.

Interestingly, Yahweh wasn’t particularly interested in “getting the fat portions for Himself,” only in making sure we dumb humans didn’t eat it. If a clean animal was unfit for sacrifice (having been attacked by wild beasts, for instance—see #155) its owner could still make use of the fat for purposes other than eating—making candles or soap, for example.

- (167) *Do not eat blood.* **“You shall not eat any blood in any of your dwellings, whether of bird or beast. Whoever eats any blood, that person shall be cut off from his people.”** (Leviticus 7:26-27) The rabbis got this one right. If the number of times we are instructed about something is any indication of the significance God attaches to it, then Yahweh considers not consuming blood to be *really* important. No fewer than fourteen separate times is the practice specifically condemned in scripture. Beyond these, passages like Psalm 16:4 link the drinking of blood to pagan religious rites, which were to be avoided at all costs.

Yahweh actually gave us a reason this time, explaining why blood was to be avoided—in biological terms that shed light on the spiritual aspects of the subject. **“Be sure that you do not eat the blood, for the blood is the life; you may not eat the life with the meat. You shall not eat it; you shall pour it on the earth like water.”** (Deuteronomy 12:23-24) This concept wasn’t new with the Mosaic Law, either. It was first introduced way back in Noah’s day, right after the flood. **“Every moving thing that lives shall be food for you. I have given you all things, even as the green herbs. But you shall not eat flesh with its life, that**

is, its blood.” (Genesis 9:3-4) This is the first time in the Bible that God specifically put meat on the menu (although Abel kept flocks, so who knows?). And right here at the beginning, Yahweh instructs Noah not to eat blood with his meat because the life of the animal was in the blood—or as stated here, it *was* the blood. Again, we read: **“Whatever man of the house of Israel, or of the strangers who dwell among you, who eats any blood, I will set My face against that person who eats blood, and will cut him off from among his people. For the life of the flesh is in the blood, and I have given it to you upon the altar to make atonement for your souls; for it is the blood that makes atonement for the soul.”** (Leviticus 17:10-11) Yahweh is declaring those who consume blood to be His enemies. He’s really serious about this point.

Finally, the admonition was repeated for the benefit of the gentile believers of the fledgling *Ekklesia*: **“For it seemed good to the Holy Spirit and to us to lay no greater burden on you than these requirements: You must abstain from eating food offered to idols, from consuming blood or eating the meat of strangled animals, and from sexual immorality. If you do this, you will do well.”** (Acts 15:28-29) They weren’t asked to do much—they weren’t required to become Jewish proselytes in order to be Christians, undergo circumcision, keep the Jewish ceremonial law, or anything like that. But the few words of admonition that were handed down were considered absolutely essential for their spiritual growth and well-being, and these included Yahweh’s long-standing prohibition against eating blood.

It doesn’t take a trained medical professional to understand that “the life is in the blood.” If blood isn’t constantly flowing to the tissues of the body, the result is death, in very short order. It doesn’t matter where the problem is—if the pump that’s supposed to push it through the body has been damaged, or the arteries have been obstructed, or the blood has left the body through a wound—the body doesn’t care. No blood, no life. It’s that simple.

From a bio-spiritual viewpoint, blood serves several functions. First it brings oxygen and nourishment to the tissues. Think of the erythrocytes—the red blood cells—as being analogous to the Holy Spirit’s sustenance in our lives. If God’s *ruach*/breath is not supplying every nook and cranny of the body of Christ (the Church), the parts not receiving nourishment will be in danger of dying and falling away. Just as physical life requires oxygen, spiritual life requires God’s *Ruach Qodesh*—His Holy Spirit. In this world, you’re not truly alive unless you have both.

Second, the blood is the vehicle through which the body is cleansed. Metabolic waste products are collected by the blood and brought to collection centers like the liver and kidneys, where they are safely

extracted. If this were not done, our tissues would absorb and collect toxins and pollutants, making us sick and ultimately killing us. This is analogous to the Spirit's influence in our lives: removing the toxicity of sin allows the growth of love, which in turn leads to joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self control.

Third, the blood protects us from disease. Its leucocytes, or white blood cells, attack microorganisms that attempt to invade our bodies from outside. Think of this function as being roughly equivalent to the Holy Spirit's role as Comforter, the Spirit of Truth (cf. John 14:17) who gives believers discernment, the ability to fight off the attacks of Satan and spot the false teaching of his minions. If the Spirit is not present within us, we have no defense at all against these things.

There's far more to it, of course, but I think you get the picture. On a strictly practical note, I should point out that the toxicology study we saw earlier, the one by Dr. David Macht that demonstrated the remarkable scientific accuracy of the Mosaic dietary laws (see Mitzvah #148), also had something to say about eating blood. In every animal tested, both clean and unclean, the blood turned out to be more toxic than the flesh. If we know what's good for us, we will never question God's word.

Blood is sacred. It bears life. That's why the blood of bulls, lambs, and goats was deemed acceptable for the temporary atonement of man's sins in the Old Covenant economy. As we saw above, **"It is the blood that makes atonement for the soul."** (Leviticus 17:11). Blood does for our bodies what the Holy Spirit does for our souls, providing the breath of life, food, protection, and cleansing. So after being told time after time not to consume blood, how is it that we hear this provocative—no, *revolutionary*—statement leaving the lips of Yahshua? **"Most assuredly, I say to you, he who believes in Me has everlasting life. I am the bread of life. Your fathers ate the manna in the wilderness, and are dead. This is the bread which comes down from heaven, that one may eat of it and not die. I am the living bread which came down from heaven. If anyone eats of this bread, he will live forever; and the bread that I shall give is My flesh, which I shall give for the life of the world.... Unless you eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink His blood, you have no life in you. Whoever eats My flesh and drinks My blood has eternal life, and I will raise him up at the last day. For My flesh is food indeed, and My blood is drink indeed. He who eats My flesh and drinks My blood abides in Me, and I in him. As the living Father sent Me, and I live because of the Father, so he who feeds on Me will live because of Me. This is the bread which came down from heaven—not as your fathers ate the manna, and are dead. He who eats this bread will live forever."** (John 6:47-51, 53-58) He's not talking about us all becoming cannibalistic

vampires here—He’s not talking about consuming his body and blood, but rather incorporating His life and Spirit. Yahshua is saying as bluntly as He can that we must assimilate Him—that he must become a part of us—if we are to experience the eternal life that only He can provide. His flesh is His nourishing Word, and His blood is His Spirit—the breath of eternal life. **“Life is in the blood.”** No metaphor in the world is going to explain this adequately, but this comes close.

As we might expect from Yahweh, however, it’s not all metaphor. I’ll preface the following information with the blanket admission that I don’t have a shred of physical proof for what I’m about to tell you. I’m taking the word of men—some now passed on—who have nevertheless consistently honored Yahweh in their life, words, and work. I told most of this story in somewhat more detail in *Future History*, Chapter 13: “Jerusalem, Jerusalem,” so I’ll just cut to the chase. In 1982, an amateur archeologist named Ron Wyatt discovered the resting place of the Ark of the Covenant—in Jerusalem, in a cave located directly beneath the site of Yahshua’s crucifixion. The cross was held upright in a square hole cut in the limestone bedrock, and a prominent crack extended from this carved recess all the way to the hidden chamber some thirty feet below. This crevasse was apparently caused by the earthquake mentioned in Matthew 27:51. Wyatt found the inside of the crack coated with a black substance, some of which had splashed onto the top of the Ark—the mercy seat. Chemical analysis revealed the substance to be human blood. Whose? The One whose blood was *supposed* to be sprinkled on the mercy seat—the Lamb of God, Yahshua Himself!

It’s a great story so far, but it gets better. Wyatt, sometime before his death in 1999, had a lab in Israel test the blood (without telling them where it came from, of course). I’ll let Bill Fry, of Anchor Stone International, pick up the narrative:

“In order to perform a chromosome count (karyotype) test on human blood you must be able to isolate and culture living white blood cells. This is because white blood cells are the only cells in the blood that carry genetic material. These cells must also be alive because they have to be cultured so they mature and divide. At a certain stage of cell division the chromosomes within the cell become visible under a microscope. When this stage is reached a dye or chemical is added that stops the growth cycle. Then the chromosomes are counted by sight through a microscope.... Best case scenario, blood cells can live outside of the body approximately two weeks. A sample older than this would not contain living cells so there would be no way to perform a karyotype test. This is the reason Ron

[Wyatt] so specifically pointed out that the blood of Christ was alive. Even though the dried blood sample was 2,000 years old, when rehydrated and examined under a microscope, it contained living cells, including white blood cells....

“The results of the chromosome test conclusively affirms the identity of this man as the Christ because it testifies that he was the product of a virgin birth! Under normal circumstances all human beings have 46 chromosomes, 23 from their mother and 23 from their father. There are 22 pairs of autosomes which determine things such as our height, hair and eye color, etc. The 23rd pair is the sex determinant pair. They consist of either X or Y chromosomes. The mother only has X chromosomes. The father has both X and Y chromosomes.

“If the sex-determinant pair is matched XX, the child is a female. If XY, the child is a male. Thus we see that the single chromosome provided by the father in this chromosome pair determines the gender of the child. When the blood sample Ron Wyatt took from the crack in the rock ceiling above the Mercy Seat was tested, it contained 24 chromosomes—23 from the mother and one Y chromosome from the father, 24 chromosomes. As Dr. Eugene Dunkley states in his article on the genetics of the blood of Christ, 24 chromosomes is exactly what would be expected if a man was born of a virgin. There are 23 chromosomes from the mother and a Y chromosome from a father. But that father cannot be a human father because the other 22 chromosomes on the father’s side are missing. Therefore the existence of a Y chromosome is at the very least a mystery, if not a miracle.”

This puts the maxim “The life is in the blood” in a whole new light, doesn’t it? Yes, while our bodies are alive, our blood is the conveyor of life. But in the case of Yahshua, life—*eternal* life—really *was* in the blood. It still is. In any number of ways.

- (168) *Cover the blood of undomesticated animals (deer, etc.) and of fowl that have been killed. “Whatever man of the children of Israel, or of the strangers who dwell among you, who hunts and catches any animal or bird that may be eaten, he shall pour out its blood and cover it with dust; for it is the life of all flesh. Its blood sustains its life. Therefore I said to the children of Israel, ‘You shall not 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) The draining of blood is not just a ritual sacrifice procedure. It’s a health rule (in addition to its weighty symbolism), and therefore applies to wild game hunted for food as well as to domesticated animals. If meat is to be eaten safely, it must fit within the definition of a “clean” animal (with divided hooves and chewing cud) or a

“clean” bird (not a carrion eater) and be completely drained of blood shortly after being killed (see #157). Moreover, the blood thus drained out must not be allowed to pool above ground, where carnivores, scavengers, and vermin could find it, but must be covered with earth. Yahweh designed us. He knows what it will take to keep us healthy.

- (169) *Do not eat or drink like a glutton or a drunkard (not to rebel against father or mother).* “If a man has a stubborn and rebellious son who will not obey the voice of his father or the voice of his mother, and who, when they have chastened him, will not heed them, then his father and his mother shall take hold of him and bring him out to the elders of his city, to the gate of his city. And they shall say to the elders of his city, ‘This son of ours is stubborn and rebellious; he will not obey our voice; he is a glutton and a drunkard.’ Then all the men of his city shall stone him to death with stones; so you shall put away the evil from among you, and all Israel shall hear and fear.” (Deuteronomy 21:18-21) And you thought *spanking* was over the top. The ACLU would love to get their hands on this one. This particular mitzvah puts teeth into the Fifth Commandment, “Honor your father and your mother....” (See #59.) The values Yahweh’s law instilled into Israel’s Theocratic society (and hopefully on some level, our own) manifested themselves in a citizenry that was devout, hard-working, and respectful of God and man alike. A man who despised these values and God’s instruction was likely to be just the opposite—rebellious, lazy, and self-indulgent. He would have been what was described in Mitzvah #3 as a man who blasphemes (Hebrew: *naqab*, meaning to puncture or perforate, figuratively to libel, blaspheme, or curse”) God, or one who, as in Mitzvah #61, curses (*qalal*, meaning to take lightly, to bring into contempt, or despise) his parents. Both of these offenses carried the death penalty. In the present case, the focus is brought to bear on the likely symptoms: gluttony, drunkenness, and disobedience. But it’s all the same idea: Yahweh was protecting His chosen people against apostasy and rebellion.

The religious establishment of Yahshua’s time smelled an opportunity. They thought they might be able to invoke this precept in a misguided attempt to rid themselves of that inconvenient young rabbi in their midst who kept poking holes in their pretensions. Like lawyers today, they knew it wasn’t the evidence; it was what you could make out of it. First, they’d thought (and said) that John the Baptist was a demon-possessed lunatic for dressing up like a sack of potatoes and eating locusts and wild honey in the desert—and preaching the uncomfortable truth about them. But when Yahshua came along, refusing to fast while His disciples were with Him, drinking (and making) wine—and preaching the same uncomfortable truth about the religious bigwigs—they figured they might be able to arrange a

stoning party for him based on Deuteronomy 21. They figured wrong. Yahshua observed that these hypocrites were awfully hard to please: **“To what shall I liken this generation? It is like children sitting in the marketplaces and calling to their companions, and saying: ‘We played the flute for you, and you did not dance; we mourned to you, and you did not lament.’ For John [the Baptist] came neither eating nor drinking, and they say, ‘He has a demon.’ The Son of Man came eating and drinking, and they say, ‘Look, a glutton and a winebibber, a friend of tax collectors and sinners!’ But wisdom is justified by her children.”** (Matthew 11:16-19)

It isn't eating (or even *over*-eating) that the Torah is warning against in this mitzvah. Nor is it drinking alcoholic beverages (though its excess is reproved time and again in scripture). God is warning His people about rebellion, about taking His Law lightly, about stubbornly refusing to heed His word. Deciding what (and how much) to eat is just the tip of the iceberg; all of God's Torah has practical ramifications for us, either because it helps us live our lives according to Yahweh's design, or because it points directly toward His plan of redemption. Disregarding the Mosaic dietary laws in the name of “freedom under Christ” is a big mistake, for these aren't so much “laws” as they are instructions. As often as not, they carry their own penalty—the natural consequence of failing to heed the Owner's Manual.