

180418-4 Leviticus 11, The Dietary Law for Israel – Craig Thurman

Moses performed the week-long consecration service upon the priesthood, and the day following the priests, Aaron and his four sons, Nadab, Abihu, Eleazar, and Ithamar began their ministry. (chs.8-9) But before the day is completed, perhaps even at the very beginning when the first incense of the morning is burnt, Nadab and Abihu offered strange fire to the LORD and died as a result. (cf. Ex.30.7-9) To compound this tragedy, as the remaining sons continued offering up the sacrifices of Israel, Aaron directed them to burn the meat offering rather than eat that portion which was theirs. Moses later discovers what they had done and chides them for doing this. But Aaron justifies this action because of the sorrow they had for the deaths of their brethren. Where Nadab and Abihu acted presumptuously and died, Aaron would not act presumptuously and lived.

Nu 15:30 But the soul that doeth ought presumptuously (lit. with a high hand, בְּיָד רַמָּה, b^e-yad ra-mah), whether he be born in the land, or a stranger, the same reproacheth the LORD; and that soul shall be cut off from among his people.

Now the LORD imposes upon Israel His dietary law. This law requires of Israel that they eat meats that are of clean animals, and forbids eating meats that are of unclean animals.

Chapter 11

1 ¶ And the LORD spake unto Moses and to Aaron, saying unto them,

Beasts for eating, vss. 2-8, 28, 28:

2 Speak unto the children of Israel,

The things that shall be said are to be applied to every Israelite, priest, prince, elder, and common person alike.

saying, These are the beasts which ye shall eat among all the beasts that are on the earth.

The larger *land* animals. בְּהֵמָה, b^e-he-mah (pronounced, be-hey-mah)

3 Whatsoever parteth the hoof, and is clovenfooted, and cheweth the cud, among the beasts, that shall ye eat.

parteth, פָּרַס, pa-ras, meaning *divides* (Hebrew verb, Hiphil, causative active); the noun, פְּרָסָה, par-sah is tss. *hoof, claws, and –footed*.

cloven, שָׁסַע, sha-sa[g], meaning *a split hoof*; cf. Jud.14.6

cheweth the cud, מַעֲלֵת גֵּרָה, ma-[g]a-lath ge-rah,

מַעֲלֵת, of עָלָה, to come up, rise, go up.

גֵּרָה, is always tss. *cud*. The simple idea is that they chew upon their food. Whether they have a stomach with several compartments isn't the issue. The coney and the hare are said to chew the cud just as an ox would.

A cloven hoof, cleft hoof, divided hoof or split hoof is a hoof split into two toes. So, they could eat a giraffe. A giraffe chews the cud and splits the hoof; so also, ox (cattle), buffalo, sheep, goat, deer, gazelle, antelope and mountain sheep, moose, caribou, elk ...

4 Nevertheless these shall ye not eat of them that chew the cud, or of them that divide the hoof: as the camel, because he cheweth the cud, but divideth not the hoof; he is unclean unto you.

unclean, טָמֵא, tah-mey, adj.; KJV, *unclean, defiled, polluted*

These are unclean *to Israel*. This is a declaration to Israel. It is not that they are unclean in themselves.

Ro 14:14 I know, and am persuaded by the Lord Jesus, that there is nothing unclean of itself (with reference to eating meats): but to him that esteemeth any thing to be unclean, to him it is unclean.

There is nothing wrong with an animal that doesn't split the hoof or chew the cud. God declared everything that He had made in the day of His creative acts were *good*. There is nothing wrong with the wonderful, original diversity of God's creation. But here the LORD declared that these traits, not being in combination in certain animals, were to Israel unclean. It is that simple. Unless the word of God reveals any more than this, there is no other reason than that it pleased the LORD to declare these unclean for national Israel to eat.

Note: many try to say that these animals are unclean because of certain inherent risks for eating them, and so try to justify applying this dietary law in the churches of Christ. (trichinosis, botulism, quick spoilage, etc.; but clean meats, if handled poorly can have some of the same problems) It is best to keep this as simply as it is stated by the word of God. Clearly, what Israel ate prior to this time was just as good as what they shall eat now, except that the LORD gave this prohibition. And what did this rule do for Israel? It proved whether they would be obedient or not. It proved what was resident in their hearts. The meats themselves didn't do anything to them. It wasn't what they ate that *defiled* them, but what proceeded out of the heart. That an Israelite would eat things that were against the law of God proved the wickedness that was in their hearts. For them to disregard this rule was sin.

Mt.15.17 Do not ye yet understand, that whatsoever entereth in at the mouth goeth into the belly, and is cast out into the draught? 18 But those things which proceed out of the mouth come forth from the heart; and they defile the man. 19 For out of the heart proceed evil thoughts, murders, adulteries, fornications, thefts, false witness, blasphemies: 20 These are the things which defile a man: but to eat with unwashen hands defileth not a man.

5 And the coney, because he cheweth the cud, but divideth not the hoof; he is unclean unto you.

6 And the hare, because he cheweth the cud, but divideth not the hoof; he is unclean unto you.

7 And the swine, though he divide the hoof, and be clovenfooted, yet he cheweth not the cud; he is unclean to you.

Israel would not eat donkey or horse because they are not clovenfooted. They are single-toed animals or one hoofed, and they do not chew the cud ...

8 Of their flesh shall ye not eat, and their carcase (their dead body) shall ye not touch; they are unclean to you.

The carcase is defined in verse 31 and very likely emphasizes the natural death of the creature, vss. 24, 31; Deu.14. 21.

Le.11.31 These are unclean to you among all that creep: whosoever doth touch them, when they be dead, shall be unclean until the even.

Defining the carcase as that which is dead (v.31), and being made unclean for touching it, informs us that touching them while living is not an unclean act. So Israel could tend to teams of horses, herds of swine (Lk.8.32), and certainly handled camels, donkeys, and all sorts of animals without incurring defilement. (cf. Gen.12.16; Ge. ch.24; 2Sa.8.4) The issue is when they are dead. But it is so that every carcase, every dead body is declared unclean.

Le 21:1 And the LORD said unto Moses, Speak unto the priests the sons of Aaron, and say unto them, There shall none be defiled (same for unclean, נָטָו) for the dead among his people ...

Eze 44:25 And they shall come at no dead person to defile themselves: but for father, or for mother, or for son, or for daughter,

for brother, or for sister that hath had no husband, they may defile themselves. 26 And after he is cleansed, they shall reckon unto him seven days.

27 And in the day that he goeth into the sanctuary, unto the inner court, to minister in the sanctuary, he shall offer his sin offering, saith the Lord GOD.

But there is an allowance for killing clean animals for meat without incurring uncleanness.

Water creatures for eating, vss. 9-12:

9 ¶ *These shall ye eat of all that are in the waters: whatsoever hath fins and scales in the waters, in the seas, and in the rivers, them shall ye eat.*

10 *And all that have not fins and scales in the seas, and in the rivers, of all that move in the waters, and of any living thing which is in the waters, they shall be an abomination unto you:*

*abomination, שְׂקֵץ, she-qetz; a masc. noun always tss. with the English *abomination* (7 of 10 times in this chapter; cf. Lev.7.21; Is.66.17; Ez.8.10, appears to be a reference to either the water creatures or the fowls of the air that are to be detested.); the verb, שָׂקַץ, sha-qatz, is tss. *abhorred, detest, and abomination.**

They were to judge things as God judged for them.

11 *They shall be even an abomination unto you; ye shall not eat of their flesh, but ye shall have their carcasses in abomination.*

12 *Whatsoever hath no fins nor scales in the waters, that shall be an abomination unto you.*

Very clear. No fins and scales means the Israelite was forbidden of God's law to eat it. They would not eat crab, shrimp, prawns, halibut, flounder, porpoise, shark, whale, eel, crawfish, catfish, ray, squid, octopus, clam,

oyster, etc. Why? First of all, because He said so. If we know nothing else about why we know enough. But if we will know anything else it must come from the word of God.

Fowls for eating, vss.13-19:

13 And these are they which ye shall have in abomination among the fowls; they shall not be eaten, they are an abomination: the eagle, and the ossifrage, and the ospray,

14 And the vulture, and the kite after his kind;

15 Every raven after his kind;

16 And the owl, and the night hawk, and the cuckow, and the hawk after his kind,

17 And the little owl, and the cormorant, and the great owl,

18 And the swan, and the pelican, and the gier eagle,

19 And the stork, the heron after her kind, and the lapwing, and the bat.

Flying insects for eating, vss. 20-23:

20 ¶ All fowls that creep, going upon all four, shall be an abomination unto you.

21 Yet these may ye eat of every flying creeping thing that goeth upon all four, which have legs above their feet, to leap withal upon the earth;

22 Even these of them ye may eat; the locust after his kind, and the bald locust after his kind, and the beetle after his kind, and the grasshopper after his kind.

23 But all other flying creeping things, which have four feet, shall be an abomination unto you.

i.e., detest eating flies, bees, hornets.

24 And for these ye shall be unclean: whosoever toucheth the carcase of them (again, refers to the natural occurrence of death, vss. 8, 31; Deu.14.21) shall be unclean until the even.

The phrase *until the even* isolates the Israelites from society for a specified time. (vss.24, 25, 27, 28, 31, 32, 39, 40) Obviously, touching dead things can be deadly. But whether this is so here the LORD declared such persons unclean, and therefore separated them from others until even.

25 And whosoever beareth ought of the carcase of them shall wash his clothes, and be unclean until the even.

26 The carcasses of every beast which divideth the hoof, and is not clovenfooted, nor cheweth the cud, are unclean unto you: every one that toucheth them (that is, their dead bodies) ***shall be unclean.***

27 And whatsoever goeth upon his paws, among all manner of beasts that go on all four, those are unclean unto you: whoso toucheth their carcase shall be unclean until the even.

i.e. a lion, leopard, cat, dog, porcupine, lynx, bobcat, cougar

28 And he that beareth the carcase of them shall wash his clothes, and be unclean until the even: they are unclean unto you.

Creeping things upon the earth for eating, vss.29-321; 41, 42

29 These also shall be unclean unto you among the creeping things that creep upon the earth; the weasel, and the mouse, and the tortoise after his kind,

30 And the ferret, and the chameleon, and the lizard, and the snail, and the mole.

31 These are unclean to you among all that creep: whosoever doth touch them, when they be dead, shall be unclean until the even.

32 And upon whatsoever any of them, when they are dead, doth fall, it shall be unclean; whether it be any vessel of wood, or raiment, or skin, or sack, whatsoever vessel it be, wherein any work is done, it must be put into water, and it shall be unclean until the even; so it shall be cleansed.

33 And every earthen vessel, whereinto any of them falleth, whatsoever is in it shall be unclean; and ye shall break it.

and ye shall break it, תִּשְׁבֹּרֵוּ, Qal fut. 2ppl. masc. of שָׁבַר; meaning to break, destroy, hurt.

34 Of all meat which may be eaten, that on which such water cometh shall be unclean: and all drink that may be drunk in every such vessel shall be unclean.

35 And every thing whereupon any part of their carcase falleth shall be unclean; whether it be oven, or ranges for pots, they shall be broken down: for they are unclean, and shall be unclean unto you.

they shall be broken down, יִתַּץ, yu-tatz, Hophal (causative passive) fut. 3ps. masc. of נָתַץ; KJV, to break down, cast down beat down, pull down, to destroy, overthrow; so the Israelites is to cause the oven, range to be broken down, which J. P. Green's Bible Interlinear tss. as shall be smashed.

36 Nevertheless a fountain or pit, wherein there is plenty of water, shall be clean: but that which toucheth their carcase shall be unclean.

37 And if any part of their carcase fall upon any sowing seed which is to be sown, it shall be clean.

38 But if any water be put upon the seed, and any part of their carcase fall thereon, it shall be unclean unto you.

39 And if any beast, of which ye may eat, die (meaning dies of itself); he that toucheth the carcase thereof shall be unclean until the even.

40 And he that eateth of the carcase of it shall wash his clothes, and be unclean until the even: he also that beareth the carcase of it shall wash his clothes, and be unclean until the even.

There is a separation of the one that bears the carcase and the one which might have eaten of this meat from the congregation. Objectively, the

LORD isolates these from Israel. It certainly seems that for the good of others they are separated. Who know why the animal died?

41 And every creeping thing that creepeth upon the earth shall be an abomination; it shall not be eaten.

42 Whatsoever goeth upon the belly, and whatsoever goeth upon all four, or whatsoever hath more feet among all creeping things that creep upon the earth, them ye shall not eat; for they are an abomination.

So, snakes, insects, worms, caterpillars, spiders are an abomination, with the creeping things of the water (crab, lobster, shrimp, octopus, oyster, clam, crawfish, flounder, halibut, shark, squid, etc.), the specific fowls of the air, and certain four-legged, winged insects are all abomination.

43 ¶ Ye shall not make yourselves abominable with any creeping thing that creepeth, neither shall ye make yourselves unclean with them, that ye should be defiled thereby.

The commandment to be holy is not given to the nations, but to Israel. The people of God are to *be* holy; they are subject to becoming defiled by disregarding the word of God.

44 For I am the LORD your God: ye shall therefore sanctify yourselves, and ye shall be holy; for I am holy: neither shall ye defile yourselves with any manner of creeping thing that creepeth upon the earth.

Whether they understood why, they were to believe and apply this word.

45 For I am the LORD that bringeth you up out of the land of Egypt, to be your God: ye shall therefore be holy, for I am holy.

As the LORD was not like the gods of the nations, so Israel was not to be like the other nations. The LORD was their God, and Israel was His people.

The reason why the dietary law, vss.46, 47; Deu.14.1. 2:

46 This is the law of the beasts, and of the fowl, and of every living creature that moveth in the waters, and of every creature that creepeth upon the earth:

47 To make a difference between the unclean and the clean, and between the beast that may be eaten and the beast that may not be eaten.

This regulation was given only to Israel. This was never given to any other people in the earth. This law was imposed upon Israel to divide between them and all of the other nations in the earth.

Le 20:22 Ye shall therefore keep all my statutes, and all my judgments, and do them: that the land, whither I bring you to dwell therein, spue you not out. 23 And ye shall not walk in the manners of the nation, which I cast out before you: for they committed all these things, and therefore I abhorred them. 24 But I have said unto you, Ye shall inherit their land, and I will give it unto you to possess it, a land that floweth with milk and honey: I am the LORD your God, which have separated you from other people. 25 Ye shall therefore put difference between clean beasts and unclean, and between unclean fowls and clean: and ye shall not make your souls abominable by beast, or by fowl, or by any manner of living thing that creepeth on the ground, which I have separated from you as unclean. 26 And ye shall be holy unto me: for I the LORD am holy, and have severed you from other people, that ye should be mine.

No such prohibition existed prior to this pronouncement. Prior to this time there were no distinction made in the eating of the flesh of animals, perhaps other than what communicated among men as being good, bad, or noxious. But there was no rule from the LORD on this matter.

There are those who would exploit our ignorance on this topic concerning clean and unclean meats to their advantage. These are what I call *Judaizers*.

Baptist-Judaizers appear to be increasing in the ranks of the Lord's churches because most of the membership has become personally disinterested in what the Bible teaches. It's almost heretical for a Christian to open the Bible and believe just what is written.

Those who suppose that the Christian should keep the dietary law as here described have run into a very serious problem. There is no way to discover what some of these creatures are that are named in this chapter. What is the coney; and among the fowls of the air what is the ospray, the cuckow, stork, and lapwing; or what is the flying creeping thing called the bettle?

'[W]hat creatures are intended by these is not now easy to know; very different are the sentiments both of the Jews and Christians concerning them ...' Gill

There is nothing but speculation about what exactly these refer to. If the issue concerning the law is as vital as some demand it is certain that we ought to know what these creatures are so that we can have the assurance that we have complied with this part of the law. But that is not possible. But we do not have enough information. In the wisdom of God those specifics are lost, and we don't need to know. We do have all that we need to know about this as it related to Israel. Christians, though, not being subject to this law, or any other part of it have no need of that information any longer. We have the law of Christ. Not only will the faith of Christ fulfil the law of God so that we love the LORD our God with all our heart, soul, mind and strength, and our neighbor as ourselves; not only will the faith of Christ keep us from covetousness, murder, blasphemy and profanity, adultery, stealing, and lying. But it also keeps the commandments of Christ! We will be baptized, join with His church, edify one another, proclaim the doctrines of Christ, and keep every other commandment that our Lord Jesus has delivered to us.

This seemingly little issue regarding the dietary law is used by these Judaizers to lead the saints of the churches of Jesus Christ away from the operation of grace under the new covenant and back to the law of Moses and our own works for salvation. (The proponents of this rule do not believe in eternal security. They scoff at this great doctrine.) Here is some of what they say to promote their error.

They say that the people of God in the Old Testament, previous to the giving of the Law of Moses, were always eating only clean meats. (A warning when confronted with most of these folks of this persuasion: part of the deception is to move us from the English Bible into the Hebrew language and into extra-biblical writings of the Jews. There is a very basic rule that we should always remember: if you can't see it in the English you can't believe it.

Did humanity, before the giving of this rule in Leviticus chapter 11, know to eat only clean meats? No, they did not. Those of Adam's day ate no meat at all. They were vegans. (I'm not supporting the vegan movement today. It is unbiblical. The environment in antediluvian world was quite different than that which succeeded it. Today vegans must add supplements to their diet.) From Adam until after the flood mankind only ate plant matter.

Ge.1.29 ¶ And God said, Behold, I have given you every herb bearing seed, which is upon the face of all the earth, and every tree, in the which is the fruit of a tree yielding seed; to you it shall be for meat. 30 And to every beast of the earth, and to every fowl of the air, and to every thing that creepeth upon the earth, wherein there is life, I have given every green herb for meat: and it was so.

There should be no doubt about what food both man and beast ate prior to the great flood. Someone objects by stating, but lions (and lots of other creatures) were unsuited for eating vegetation, and certainly better for meat-eating. That is natural reasoning which is opposed to the word of

God. Again, the Bible tells us of a day when the natural order of the animal kingdom shall return to their previous, originally created nature.

Isa 11:7 And the cow and the bear shall feed; their young ones shall lie down together: and the lion shall eat straw like the ox.

So the assertion that men and animals ate meat in the beginning of the creation of all things is wrong. Did these men know about clean and unclean animals? At least we know this much: that the LORD gave specific instructions concerning clean and unclean animals to Noah.

Ge.7.1 ¶ And the LORD said unto Noah, Come thou and all thy house into the ark; for thee have I seen righteous before me in this generation. 2 Of every clean beast thou shalt take to thee by sevens, the male and his female: and of beasts that are not clean by two, the male and his female. 3 Of fowls also of the air by sevens, the male and the female; to keep seed alive upon the face of all the earth.

But prior to this time they never ate these animals. It is one thing to discern between clean and unclean animals. It is one thing to offer sacrifices of animals to the LORD.

Ge 4:4 And Abel, he also brought of the firstlings of his flock and of the fat thereof. And the LORD had respect unto Abel and to his offering ...

Ge 8:20 And Noah builded an altar unto the LORD; and took of every clean beast, and of every clean fowl, and offered burnt offerings on the altar.

But it is quite another to take the leap to think someone would eat the flesh of another living creature apart from a revelation from the LORD. If God hadn't revealed this to men how could they think to do such a thing? If there even were such a think it would have been aberrant behavior in men. Certainly the animal kingdom has no such rational capacity to take the leap to eating flesh.

The Bible tells precisely when carnivorous activity began.

Ge.9.1 ¶ And God blessed Noah and his sons, and said unto them, Be fruitful, and multiply, and replenish the earth. 2 And the fear of you and the dread of you shall be upon every beast of the earth, and upon every fowl of the air, upon all that moveth upon the earth, and upon all the fishes of the sea; into your hand are they delivered. 3 Every moving thing that liveth shall be meat for you; even as the green herb have I given you all things. 4 But flesh with the life thereof, which is the blood thereof, shall ye not eat. 5 And surely your blood of your lives will I require; at the hand of every beast will I require it, and at the hand of man; at the hand of every man's brother will I require the life of man.

Animal predation began:

Ge 31:39 That which was torn of beasts I brought not unto thee; I bare the loss of it; of my hand didst thou require it, whether stolen by day, or stolen by night.

Ge 37:33 And he knew it, and said, It is my son's coat; an evil beast hath devoured him; Joseph is without doubt rent in pieces.

So, by the word of God meat-eating began immediately after the great flood.

But were they restricted to eating only the meat of clean animals? There is not a word to this effect in the Bible. We have no alternative but to conclude that everyone ate what was *good for food*. If that is not so, and men ate only clean animals for food before the Leviticus account then why give this law at all? The rule becomes senseless. The fact is, the giving of the dietary law presumes that everyone was doing quite otherwise; that they were eating all kinds of creatures for food.

1Ti 4:4 For every creature of God is good, and nothing to be refused, if it be received with thanksgiving: 5 For it is sanctified by the word

of God and prayer. 6 ¶ If thou put the brethren in remembrance of these things, thou shalt be a good minister of Jesus Christ, nourished up in the words of faith and of good doctrine, whereunto thou hast attained.

Ro 14:14 I know, and am persuaded by the Lord Jesus, that there is nothing unclean of itself: but to him that esteemeth any thing to be unclean, to him it is unclean.

What was the purpose for giving to Israel this dietary law? The LORD by giving to *Israel* this law installed a wall which divided between them and all of the nations of the earth.

Le 20:25 Ye shall therefore put difference between clean beasts and unclean, and between unclean fowls and clean: and ye shall not make your souls abominable by beast, or by fowl, or by any manner of living thing that creepeth on the ground, which I have separated from you as unclean. 26 And ye shall be holy unto me: for I the LORD am holy, and have severed you from other people, that ye should be mine.

And today, since Christ has died, that barrier is removed which the law raised up between Israel and the nations so that we may all come into the same body, one of the churches of Christ, and serve Him together until He returns.

Eph.2.11 ¶ Wherefore remember, that ye being in time past Gentiles in the flesh, who are called Uncircumcision by that which is called the circumcision in the flesh made by hands; 12 That at that time ye were without Christ, being aliens from the commonwealth of Israel, and strangers from the covenants of promise, having no hope, and without God in the world: 13 But now in Christ Jesus ye who sometimes were far off are made nigh by the blood of Christ. 14 ¶ For he is our peace, who hath made both one, and hath broken down the middle wall of partition between us ...

It is interesting that this issue comes up in the latter day. Now, we are warned against those who would teach abstention from meats.

1Ti.4.1 ¶ Now the Spirit speaketh expressly, that in the latter times some shall depart from the faith, giving heed to seducing spirits, and doctrines of devils; 2 Speaking lies in hypocrisy; having their conscience seared with a hot iron; 3 Forbidding to marry, and commanding to abstain from meats, which God hath created to be received with thanksgiving of them which believe and know the truth.

Conclusion, there was nothing wrong with the folks that ate every meat that was good for food in that day. It was only wrong for Israel. And today, there is no dietary law for the members of Christ church, whether they are Jew or Gentile. Only national Israel received this rule. In Christ is has passed away and the division has been removed. We are, Jew and Gentile, one new man in Christ: the Christian.

Eph.2.15 Having abolished in his flesh the enmity, even the law of commandments contained in ordinances; for to make in himself of twain one new man, so making peace; 16 And that he might reconcile both unto God in one body by the cross, having slain the enmity thereby: 17 And came and preached peace to you which were afar off, and to them that were nigh. 18 For through him we both have access by one Spirit unto the Father.

These ordinances are part of that instrument that the LORD shall use to judge, chasten, or punish Israel through their O.T. history to keep them a people unto the coming of Christ.