

4 Adar 1, 5779 (09/02/19) **Biblical Kosher, Nothing More, Nothing Less** J. M. Terrett

Terumah Offering Aaron Shaw sharing this week's Torah portion

Torah: Exodus 25:1-27:19

Haftarah: I Kings 5:12 (26)-6:13

Brit Chadashah: 2 Corinthians 9:1-15

Reading: Marie p. 27 and Ps. 26. Jewish hero: Elijah. Carrier: Aaron

Sermon: “This is the law concerning animals and birds and every living creature which moves through the water and that swarms upon the earth. In order that you would make a distinction between that which is impure and that which is pure, and between the living creature that may be eaten, and the living creature that may not be eaten (Leviticus 11:46, 47)

First let me give you a lesson in biblical biology, then I want to talk to you about three additional dietary exclusions. Then I want to finish with a discussion of the difference between biblical kosher which we need to observe, and the Talmudic, rabbinic kosher which is based on misunderstandings and traditions which are not binding upon Messianic Jews. We need to learn not to go beyond that which is written follow the Word of the L-RD and not be sidetracked by the traditions of men.

In Hebrew, the word **kosher** means fit and proper and it has two general applications in the life of a practicing Jew. First, it both refers to food which may be eaten and the manner in which this food must be prepared. It has also come to mean which combinations of food are appropriate to be eaten together and that which must be eaten separately.

The second application of the word kosher can refer to any action, or thought which is considered either proper or improper. The Bible says we are to seek for light and avoid darkness. Our lives need to be fully kosher (proper) and we should never allow anything improper (unkosher) into our lives. So, I am endeavouring to give you a kosher message on what kosher means and how to apply it to our kosher lives.

Just before we go into Jewish biology, let me briefly talk to you about kosher labels which appear on food packages. Sometimes a capital U will appear surrounded by a circle with or without the word kosher underneath it. Other times it may be a capital MK or a capital BK. It may even be an oblong surrounding the Hebrew word Kosher with a number above it and inside the oblong. Sometime a Hebrew Kaph designates that a product is kosher.

Sometimes the U may be followed by a D, to designate dairy. Sometimes the word parve or pareve appears on the product label and means that according to the laws of kosher (kashrut), these foods may be eaten at any time of the year. As Messianic Jews and Gentiles, we are not bound by the complicated laws of traditional kashrut, because they are based on the traditions and judgments of men and not on the Word of the L-rd. We follow biblical kosher, nothing more and nothing less.

Now onto biblical biology and the difference between clean and unclean animals. According to Leviticus 11 and Deuteronomy 14 there are five kinds of animals on our planet: those who walk, those who crawl, those who slither, those who swim and those who fly. Kosher actually designates which kind of meat is safe to eat and any new animal we may encounter has to be evaluated according to the following stipulations.

1. **If it walks**, it must have hooves that are divided and split and it must ruminate (finish digesting its food). It is unkosher (unclean) if any of the four stipulations are missing. Animals with paws or undivided, unsplit hooves are not kosher. Hooved animals that do not chew the cud are not kosher. Rabbits, bears, beaver, pigs, horses, camels and most other fur bearing animals without hooves are not kosher. The big five kosher hoofed animals we can eat are: cattle, sheep, goats, buffalo and most kinds of antelope. Hippos, rhino, giraffe and elephants are not kosher because they do not meet the four criteria for animals that walk. No reptiles or amphibians are kosher because none of them have hooves.
2. If an animal **crawls** it must have jumping legs. Grasshoppers are kosher, along with locusts. Spiders, centipedes, ants and termites are not kosher, because they lack the necessary jumping legs.
3. Nothing that **slithers** on its belly is kosher. Snakes and snails are never kosher.
4. **If it flies**, it must have wings and if it has wings, it must fly. Bats and flying reptiles are not kosher. Ostriches and penguins are not kosher. It also cannot be a carrion eater. Seagulls, hawks, owls, buzzards, and fish-eating birds are not kosher. The big five kinds of kosher birds are: chicken, turkey, ducks, geese and pigeons (doves). Song birds are also kosher along with pheasants, quail, prairie chicken and most game birds. Only the eggs of kosher birds are kosher. No other kinds of eggs are kosher, not even caviar.
5. **If it swims**, it must have fins and scales and it doesn't matter if it is a carnivore. Tuna and all kinds of fish with fins and scales are kosher, but not sharks, whales, seals or cat fish, because they do not have fins and scales. Eel, swordfish and sturgeon are unkosher, but surprisingly piranhas have fins and scales, so they are technically kosher. No bottom feeders are kosher if they do not have fins and scales. Lobster, shrimp, clams, scallops and crabs are never kosher. Neither is octopus, squid or anything else that lives in the water but does not have fins and scales.

All grains, fruit, vegetables and edible seaweed are kosher. Kosher refers uniquely to what kind of flesh is safe to eat. All edible plants are kosher even if they taste disgusting.

Let me just backtrack a little and warn you that some people wrongly say that biblical kosher is a watered-down form of kosher. You water down G-d's Word when you add to it or take away from it. I would accept rabbinic kashrut if and only if the rabbis were to gather all of our people around the Holy Mountain and have G-d give His seal of approval to these complicated and sometimes contradictory stipulations.

Having said that, let us deal with three ritual limitations that are often attached to kosher because they forbid the consumption of food to get spiritual or sexual power.

A. Do not boil a kid in its mother's milk (Ex. 23:19; 34:26; Deut. 14:21)

In the ancient Middle East, idolatrous people would boil a baby goat in its mother's milk to get the life force of the goat and the sexual power of the mother. This does not mean that you cannot mix meat and dairy. You can also eat dairy with chicken and fish. I would never boil a baby goat in its mother's milk and all I want from my food is nutrition and never spiritual or sexual power.

Having said this, I would not eat a cheese burger for two reasons – I am casein intolerant and celiac. In other words, I cannot have any dairy or gluten (wheat) in my diet. The Bible does not forbid the eating of meat and dairy together, as long as the meat and the milk come from kosher animals.

B. Do not eat blood (Gen. 9:4; Lev. 3:17; 7:26. 27;17:10-14; Deut. 12:16; 15:23)

What is in the blood that prevents us from eating it? The life. Idolaters in the Ancient Middle East would eat animals alive. This is unnecessary cruelty and is inhumane. We must kill the animal before we eat it and once it is dead and the life is no longer in the blood, there is no longer a problem. Shedding the blood is a good idea, because the blood is like the sewer of the body and contains many impurities which are not found in the flesh.

It is impossible to remove all the blood from meat, because if you did, all you would be left with, would be dust. What must be removed from the meat is the life of the animal. Once the life is taken, then there is no longer a problem.

Organ meats (liver, kidney, tripe and haggis) can be considered kosher only if they come from a kosher animal. Some authorities forbid all tripe (organ meat), but most stipulate that it can be kosher if it comes from a kosher animal.

C. Do not eat fat (Lev. 3:14-17; 7:22-25)

Sometimes, understanding what the Bible teaches requires carefully examining the meaning of the words that are used. It may also require cross referencing and understanding the historical context in which the material is presented. Most forbidden practices that relate to food either stipulate that the meat is not safe to consume, or that particular practices involve indulging in pagan idolatry. When it comes to fat, it is often referred to along with blood and the organ meats like kidney and liver.

We are forbidden to extract the fat of any animal we are sacrificing to the L-rd. The fat belongs to the sacrifice and may not be harvested to be eaten once the animal's meat is offered to the L-rd. There are three possibilities to consider when it comes to eating the fat of sacrificial animals. Eating the fat of sacrificed animals is forbidden because it would be the same as stealing part of the sacrifice which should belong entirely to G-d. Eating the Fat of an animal which has not been sacrificed is not being discussed here.

If you are convinced that you should eat no fat whatsoever, that is a personal conviction based on a biblical prohibition which you are taking one step further than that which was stipulated. It is good and proper to have these strong convictions, as long as we do not impose them on others. Romans 14:1-15:7 deals with these kinds of convictions and it would be a good topic to delve into in depth at one of our Yeshiva Bible Studies – as long as we did not make it a fellowship issue and refuse to fellowship with anyone who disagrees with us on this issue.

Since it is virtually impossible to remove all the fat from the meat we eat, unless we salt it excessively, and it is not good for our system to absorb so much salt, we need to put this prohibition back into its original context. People were cheating with their sacrifices and would extract the fat and keep it for themselves, even though it rightly belonged to the L-rd. It was a way of cheating the L-rd because every part of the sacrificial animal belonged to the L-rd, including all the blood, all the meat and all the fat – and even the guts.

Different kinds of offerings were dealt with differently. Burnt offerings were wholly consumed by fire. A portion of the sin offering was eaten by the priests and most of the thanksgiving offering was eaten by the worshipper, as part of a ritual feast of gratitude. The animal had to be killed and not eaten alive. Once the life left the blood, it was no longer a problem, but bleeding the animal is healthier. If all of the animal was to be offered to the L-rd, none of it could be taken away by the one offering it.

If it was not a sacrificial animal, then most or all of it could be consumed as food as long as it was a kosher animal. When you are in doubt, ask the rabbi and we will arrive at a good decision together. I want to follow what the Bible teaches in every area of my life and kosher is used as an illustration that we must always avoid everything and anything which is not proper and make sure that all we do is based on what the Bible teaches is proper.

Biblical kosher deals with what kinds of animals are safe to eat. Rabbinic Jews put salt in all their food, because we are told to salt all of our offerings. I am grateful to the L-rd for everything that I eat, but that which I eat for sustenance is not the same as that which would be offered as a sacrifice to Him. We were forbidden to eat certain kinds of offerings and we have to draw a clear distinction between what we eat for food and what we offer up to Him. All the blood sacrifices were fulfilled when our Messiah died on the cross and rose from the dead. All that is left are stipulations about what should be eaten and that which should not be eaten.

Biblical kosher acknowledges that all the sacrificial stipulations are fulfilled in our Messiah and do not apply to the food we eat for sustenance. Eating kosher is a spiritual discipline where we seek to live according to what the Bible describes as right and proper and avoid any inkling of darkness which is always trying to creep into our lives.

The Gentiles in our midst are not required to keep biblical kosher, but we would ask that any food that is brought to shul for Onegs and Noshes be kosher. Email me your questions or set up some time when we can discuss this marvellous topic.

Shabbat Shalom and Shavua Tov.