

Leviticus 11

Here in chapter 11 we have come to the third major section of Leviticus. In chapters 1-7, we had the offerings and the sacrifices, chapters 8-10 dealt with the priesthood, and now chapters 11-15 deal with those things which are clean and unclean.

The first subject addressed is the dietary law.

Leviticus 11:2-3

“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.

Animals that have cloven hooves and chew cud may be eaten. A few specific examples are given in Deuteronomy

Deuteronomy 14:4-5

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.

Deuteronomy 14:7

Nevertheless, of those that chew the cud or have cloven hooves, you shall not eat, such as these: the camel, the hare, and the rock hyrax; for they chew the cud but do not have cloven hooves; they are unclean for you.

From the sea only creatures with fins and scales were allowed as part of the diet.

Leviticus 11:9

“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.

Certain birds of prey are forbidden. No specific regulation against fowl is given although 20 different birds are mentioned. They seem to be either predatory birds or scavengers.

Leviticus 11:13-19

“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, 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.

Certain creeping insects are allowed

Not a lot of commentary is necessary regarding this due to the fact that most of us would avoid these things by choice, but you are free to eat flying insects that have joints above the knees like grass hoppers and locusts

These laws are repeated to the next generation in Deuteronomy 14 where Moses adds

Deuteronomy 14:21

“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 the Lord your God. ‘You shall not boil a young goat in its mother's milk.

In addition to the food restrictions other rules that would affect food preparation are given. These include being sure unclean meats do not come in contact with utensils used for cooking clean meats.

As time went on much examination was given to these laws and detail commentary was written to further explain the laws and restrict the diet of the Israelites. The kosher laws that are in

place today attempt to apply the dietary laws. An example would be not boiling a calf in its mother's milk.

This law was probably given to contrast a pagan practice that was done promising power to those who did so. As time went on the law was interpreted to mean dairy and meats cannot be eaten in the same meal. Details commentary has been written to explain how much time must transpire between eating meat and drinking dairy.

The New Testament addresses the dietary laws as it relates to the new covenant.

According to Jesus righteousness is not based upon diet

Mark 7:18-19

And he said to them, "Then are you also without understanding? Do you not see that whatever goes into a person from outside cannot defile him, since it enters not his heart but his stomach, and is expelled?" (Thus he declared all foods clean.)

Peter was told to no longer consider certain foods as unclean

Acts 10:14-16

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."

This was done three times. And the object was taken up into heaven again.

The laws passed on to the gentile churches were to avoid sexual sin, blood and foods offered to idols.

Acts 15:19-21

Therefore I judge that we should not trouble those from among the Gentiles who are turning to God,

but that we write to them to abstain from things polluted by idols, from sexual immorality, from things strangled, and from blood.

For Moses has had throughout many generations those who preach him in every city, being read in the synagogues every Sabbath."

Later Paul would establish a don't ask don't tell policy for things offered to idols

1 Corinthians 10:25-28

Eat whatever is sold in the meat market, asking no questions for conscience' sake; for "the earth is the Lord's, and all its fullness."

If any of those who do not believe invites you to dinner, and you desire to go, eat whatever is set before you, asking no question for conscience' sake.

But if anyone says to you, "This was offered to idols," do not eat it for the sake of the one who told you, and for conscience' sake; for "the earth is the Lord's, and all its fullness."

As time went on and the dietary issue became more and more of a problem among certain messianics and Paul wrote to warn that those who suggest that certain foods are more spiritual than others are propagating demonic doctrines that actually stand in the way of true Christianity and individual spiritual development

1 Timothy 4:1-5

Now the Spirit expressly says that in later times some will depart from the faith by devoting themselves to deceitful spirits and teachings of demons, through the insincerity of liars whose consciences are seared, who forbid marriage and require abstinence from foods that God created to be received with thanksgiving by those who believe and know the truth.

For everything created by God is good, and nothing is to be rejected if it is received with thanksgiving,

for it is made holy by the word of God and prayer.

Today we are free to choose to eat as we like.

- Some of our messianic brothers choose to eat according to the kosher laws because of the culture they live in.

- Some of us have dietary restrictions based upon allergies, others by doctors orders and all of us have ones based upon taste.
- The important thing to keep in mind is that while your health and as a result your availability to be used by God may be affected by your diet your spirituality or Christian development has nothing to do with what you put in your mouth and everything with to do with what you put in your head and your heart.

This section continues with other rules are given regarding ceremonial cleanliness

24-

Forbids anyone from touching the carcass of an unclean animal

This would make it impossible for a person to eat a meal cooked by a chef who also cooked unclean animals

32-

Anything that is touched by certain rodents was unclean. If one falls in a bowl the bowl is to be broken, if it fall on your food or in your water that is unclean.

Some see in this the basic principles for the protecting israel from the spread of disease.

A doctor in Veinna the mid 1800s discovered that Medicle students were conducting autopsies before examining women in labor. As a result 25% were dying during childbirth. He implemented hand washing and the rate went down to 2.5%

He was ridiculed for his methods.

Chapter 12 explains uncleanness caused by childbirth

A woman who gave birth to:

- Son was unclean for 33 days
- Daughter it was 66 days

No explanation is given for either but would certainly allow for a bonding time between mother and child

WHAT IS THE PURPOSE OF THESE LAWS?

Now that we have uncovered the dietary laws themselves it is important to consider why they were given. Diets are given for several reasons; weight loss, general health, allergic reactions or even as a way to support someone else as they go through one of these things. The biblical dietary laws are somewhat different. While we might naturally equate them to health reasons there is actually nothing in scripture that suggests health as a reason for the rigid diet for Israel. That does not mean you shouldn't be concerned about your health, although a friend shared these thoughts on social media yesterday

"Women who carry a little extra weight tend to live longer than men who mention it"

Scholars have come up with various reasons as to why the Bible includes these dietary restrictions.

Some have suggested that the unclean animals were often used in false worship practices. The problem with that is many clean animals are also used in the worship of idols. In India today the cow is considered sacred and I have seen chickens offered to false gods in Ghana.

Others suggest these laws were given for health reasons. The problem with this is that there is not a syllable in the Old Testament which states that God had the health of His people in mind when He gave the Dietary Laws.

Some suggest that the dietary laws if kept will ensure that we will live a healthier and this a happier life. They might even quote

Deuteronomy 7:15

And the Lord will take away from you all sickness, and will afflict you with none of the terrible diseases of Egypt which you have known, but will lay them on all those who hate you.

But the promise to kept from disease was not based upon their diet but their willingness to obey the Word. The specific commands leading up to this statement include:

- Not making a covenant with the Canaanites
- Destroying idols
- Being a holy people

Same true in Exodus 15:26

and said, "If you diligently heed the voice of the Lord your God and do what is right in His sight, give ear to His commandments and keep all His statutes, I will put none of the diseases on you which I have brought on the Egyptians. For I am the Lord who heals you."

God promised good health to Israel not because they kept a certain diet but because they remained faithful to Him.

This promise is not repeated to the church. We are never promised that as a believer you will not get sick. But we are promised that no matter what we face God will be with us, will use our circumstances to perfect us and will even show himself strong through our weakness. Many have been won to the kingdom through the physical infirmity of a faithful Saint. Spurgeon wrote:

"As for the true Christian, he expects to have his reward in the next life, and to endure hardness in this"

The purpose of these laws was to teach Israel regarding the concept of separation in order to remain holy or clean. A person who violated these laws was ceremonially unclean and was forbidden for to be involved in worship for a period of time.

The word "unclean" is used 32 times in this chapter alone. A few examples include:

Leviticus 11:8

Their flesh you shall not eat, and their carcasses you shall not touch. They are unclean to you.

Leviticus 11:24

"By these you shall become unclean; whoever touches the carcass of any of them shall be unclean until evening;

Clean means different things in different situations

- Cleanliness in Leviticus has little to do with germs and everything to do with being in a right condition with God where by we can worship Him

Since the book of Leviticus is about worship things are listed that will make the people unclean and keep them from being able to participate in worship.

In the same way there are things that will keep us from experiencing the presence of God and the benefits of His presence, including the blessings He wants to bestow upon us

Seems best to consider this as part of the call to live separate because God has saved us

Leviticus 11:44-45

For I am the Lord 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.

For I am the Lord who brings you up out of the land of Egypt, to be your God. You shall therefore be holy, for I am holy.

The concept of cleanness was designed to illustrate the need for holiness.

God demanded holiness of his people. They must separate themselves from all which God said was defiling. The dietary law was thus grounded in the holiness of the God who had brought them up out of Egypt.

This is an oft repeated concept in scripture

Leviticus 19:2

"Speak to all the congregation of the sons of Israel and say to them, 'You shall be holy, for I the LORD your God am holy.

Leviticus 20:7

'You shall consecrate yourselves therefore and be holy, for I am the LORD your God.

Leviticus 20:26

'Thus you are to be holy to Me, for I the LORD am holy; and I have set you apart from the peoples to be Mine.

Leviticus 21:8

'You shall consecrate him, therefore, for he offers the food of your God; he shall be holy to you; for I the LORD, who sanctifies you, am holy.

Deuteronomy 23:14

"Since the LORD your God walks in the midst of your camp to deliver you and to defeat your enemies before you, therefore your camp must be holy; and He must not see anything indecent among you or He will turn away from you.

1 Peter 1:15

but like the Holy One who called you, be holy yourselves also in all your behavior;

1Peter 1:16

because it is written, "YOU SHALL BE HOLY, FOR I AM HOLY."

Listen again to the reason for the dietary laws

Leviticus 11:44-45

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For I am the Lord who brings you up out of the land of Egypt, to be your God. You shall therefore be holy, for I am holy.

Just as touching an unclean animal would contaminate a person so sin affects our relationship with God. Our access to the throne of grace will be impeded by sin.

1 John 1:6

If we say that we have fellowship with Him, and walk in darkness, we lie and do not practice the truth.

Some sins will make it impossible for us to return to certain areas of ministry.

1 Corinthians 9:27

But I discipline my body and bring it into subjection, lest, when I have preached to others, I myself should become disqualified.

Titus 1:16

They profess to know God, but in works they deny Him, being abominable, disobedient, and disqualified for every good work

The basic concept behind the dietary laws is to illustrate the concept of clean and unclean.

Perhaps the best commentary on this subject comes from the prophet Haggai, who wrote

Haggai 2:12-14

“If one carries holy meat in the fold of his garment, and with the edge he touches bread or stew, wine or oil, or any food, will it become holy?” ’ ”

Then the priests answered and said, “No.”

And Haggai said, “If one who is unclean because of a dead body touches any of these, will it be unclean?”

So the priests answered and said, “It shall be unclean.”

Then Haggai answered and said, “ ‘So is this people, and so is this nation before Me,’ says the Lord, ‘and so is every work of their hands; and what they offer there is unclean.

If that which is clean comes into contact with that which is unclean, the clean is defiled. We see this concept in action every day

As a result the New Testament exhorts us

2 Corinthians 6:17

Therefore

“Come out from among them

And be separate, says the Lord.

Do not touch what is unclean,

And I will receive you.”

2 Corinthians 7:1

Therefore, having these promises, beloved, let us cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God.

The OT taught to separate from foods, dead bodies and disease in order to illustrate the need for us to keep the law of separation in our walk with Christ. This principle needs to be applied to

Sin

If your right eye causes sin remove it

Relationships

Do not be unequally yoked

FINALLY - The choice of animals does not appear to be arbitrary as the animals classified are consistent in certain ways.

Also sin is not forbidden arbitrarily.

The list of things that God forbids for mankind are all destructive. A life lived for pleasure will come up empty as well as leave a wake of destroyed lives behind us.

Perhaps the best way to see his is to look at an anti 10 commandments

You shall have no other gods before Me.

Worship whatever you want

You shall not make idols.

Make your own God and worship it.

You shall not take the name of the LORD your God in vain.

Use Gods name as a household curse word

Remember the Sabbath day, to keep it holy.

Don't rest, keep going, push yourself

Honor your father and your mother.

Dishonor and shame your parents. Don't listen to them.

You shall not murder.

Kill whoever you don't like or gets in your way from succeeding or makes you angry

You shall not commit adultery.

Break your marriage vow and be with whoever makes you happy at the moment.

You shall not steal.

Take whatever you want you deserve it.

You shall not bear false witness against your neighbor.

Lie to get ahead

You shall not covet.

Desire, lust and want what others have.

Ask yourself what society you would rather live in