



Clean Foods

What the Bible Teaches



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When it comes to obeying the clean food laws of the Bible, some outside the faith will find the practice novel, others peculiar. Still others will cite a passage or two in the New Testament in an effort to say that the True Worshiper no longer needs to concern himself or herself with that "old Mosaic law" in this age of grace. We answer the most popularly cited New Testament verses elsewhere in this brochure.

How important are clean foods to True Worship? Consider that it was the breaking of a "kosher" law that caused Adam and Eve to commit the original sin. Yahweh certifies certain foods as acceptable and other foods as unacceptable for our consumption. It was that way at creation and remains true today. Kosher simply means to be straight or right, by implication to be acceptable; also to succeed or prosper (*Strong's Concordance* No. 3787). Yahweh told mankind's original parents which food was right and acceptable and which was not. Obeying Him, we will succeed and prosper. Neither He nor His standards ever change, [Malachi 3:6](#).

Yahweh's laws of clean and unclean animals, fish, birds, insects, and even dead creatures, are found in His Word. Just as with the Ten Commandments, we can see these laws operating long before they were reiterated to Israel and handed down to Moses on stone tablets at Sinai. We also see them still in force in the New Testament.

Look at plants, for example. In [Genesis 1:29](#) Yahweh told Adam and Eve at the beginning of creation, "Behold, I have given you every herb bearing seed, which is upon the face of the earth, and every tree, in which is the fruit of a tree yielding seed; to you it shall be for meat [food]." Later, in His covenant with Noah, the Creator stipulates that the green plant is given for food ([Gen. 9:3](#)). Yahweh limited edible plants to those that are green and propagate by seeds. Those plants that lack either chlorophyll or seeds, or both, are called into question — including fungi such as mushrooms as well as various parasitic plants.

Another example in which we see clean food laws in operation long before Sinai is in Yahweh's instructions to Noah. Yahweh told Noah that clean animals were to go aboard the ark by sevens, but he was to limit the unclean to only two, [Genesis 7:2](#). Noah obviously had to know the difference because of the clean food laws. Peter knew the difference as well, as we see in his reaction to his own vision in [Acts 10](#).

The laws of clean and unclean food are like the moral laws — they have been in effect since the beginning of creation. Therefore, we cannot brush them off with the argument that they were merely "Mosaic" and given only to ancient Israel.

Deciphering Clean from Unclean

In [Leviticus 11](#) Yahweh details the laws regulating clean and unclean foods. Verses 1-8 focus on acceptable and unacceptable animals as food.

"And Yahweh spoke unto Moses and to Aaron, saying unto them, Speak unto the children of Israel, saying, These are the beasts which you shall eat among all the beasts that are on the earth. Whatsoever parts the hoof, and is clovenfooted, and chews the cud, among the beasts, that shall you eat. Nevertheless these shall you not eat of them that chew the cud, or of them that divide the hoof: as the camel, because he chews the cud, but divides not the hoof; he is unclean unto you. And the coney, because he chews the cud, but divides not the hoof; he is unclean unto you. And the hare, because he chews the cud, but divides not the hoof; he is unclean unto you. And the swine, though he divide the hoof, and be clovenfooted, yet he chews not the cud; he is unclean to you. Of their flesh shall you not eat, and their carcass shall you not touch; they are unclean to you" ([Lev. 11:1-8](#)).

Parting the hoof and being clovenfooted means the same. A clovenfoot is a split hoof of two toes. Chewing the cud is the process of casting up and re-chewing of food. These are the two criteria that qualify animals that can be used for food. Leviticus 11 lists several animals that do not fit these qualifications. These animals include the camel, rabbit (coney), and swine (pig). The swine (Heb. *Chazir*) is one the most gluttonous animals on the earth. This animal has been held sacred by the Greeks, Romans, and Anglo-Saxons. Yahweh also prohibited us from touching their carcasses.

Aquatic life is discussed in verses 9-12: "These shall you eat of all that are in the waters: whatsoever has fins and scales in the waters, in the seas, and in the rivers, them shall you eat. 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: They shall be even an abomination unto you; you shall not eat of their flesh, but you shall have their carcasses in abomination. Whatsoever has no fins nor scales in the waters, that shall be an abomination unto you" ([Lev. 11:9-12](#)).

For aquatic creatures to be fit to eat, they must have both fins and scales. One school of thought explains that marine animals without fins and scales tend to be bottom feeders, consuming the effluent that sinks to the mud. Having this in mind, we can perceive the reason Yahweh prohibited these marine species. Aquatic life unfit for human consumption includes shrimp, lobster, oysters, clams, crabs, and catfish. Modern science is now finding dangerous levels of harmful, heavy metals like mercury and lead in the flesh of many of these creatures. Yahweh certainly knows best!

Verses 13-19 discuss unclean birds. "And these are they which you shall have in abomination among the fowls; they shall not be eaten, they are an abomination: the eagle, and the ossifrage, and the osprey, And the vulture, and the kite after his kind; Every raven after his kind; And the owl, and the night hawk, and the cuckoo, and the hawk after his kind, And the little owl, and the cormorant, and the great owl, And the swan, and the pelican, and the gier eagle, And the stork, the heron after her kind, and the lapwing, and the bat" ([Lev. 11:13-19](#)).

The first unfit bird that is mentioned is the eagle (Heb. *neshar*, from *nashar*). *Neshar* means to cut or tear in pieces. From this definition we can see that the eagle is a raptor. The Ossifrage (*os* – bone, *frango* – break) probably signifies the black eagle. Among the Greeks and Romans the eagle was held sacred, and is represented carrying the thunderbolts of Jupiter. The vulture (Heb. *daah*)

from a root meaning "to fly," may be more probably rendered kite. *Daah* is different from the vulture. The Hebrew word *daiyah* indicates the vulture. The word for kite in The New ***Strong's Exhaustive Concordance of the Bible*** is No. 344, *ayah*, and it denotes a species of the hawk. The interesting fact that surrounds these birds is that they are all birds of prey or scavengers.

Forbidden birds are also listed in [Deuteronomy 14:11-18](#), but Yahweh does not specify why these particular birds are forbidden. Other kinds of bird are permitted, such as chicken, goose, duck and turkey.

We will now examine those New Testament passages that are commonly used in claims that the Old Testament food laws are no longer binding.

The Passage in Question - Mark 7:18:

"And he said unto them, are you so without understanding also? Do you not perceive, that whatsoever thing from without enters into the man, it cannot defile him...?"

Erroneous interpretation – Yahshua was condemning the Scribes and Pharisees for their strict law keeping, decreeing that virtually any "food" is harmless and therefore edible.

Proper Understanding – When taken in proper context, this passage is not difficult to understand. At the beginning we find Yahshua's disciples eating with unwashed hands in plain sight of the Scribes and Pharisees. The Scribes and Pharisees were two Jewish sects in the time of Yahshua. These Jews had many rabbinical traditions that had been handed down through the ages, and one of those was ceremonial washing of hands before eating. We can see this in the first few verses. "For the Pharisees, and all the Jews, except they wash their hands oft, eat not, holding the tradition of the elders. And when they come from the market, except they wash, they eat not. And many other things there be, which they have received to hold, as the washing of cups, and pots, brazen vessels, and of tables" ([Mark 7:3-4](#)).

When the Scribes and Pharisees saw Yahshua's disciples eating before washing their hands, they accused Yahshua and His disciples of breaking their traditions. Yahshua was not pleased with their condemnation, but in turn accused them of placing their own man-made doctrine or dogma over Yahweh's commandments. "Well has Isaiah prophesied of you hypocrites, as it is written, This people honors me with their lips, but their heart is far from me. Howbeit in vain do they worship me, teaching for doctrines the commandments of men. For laying aside the commandment of Elohim, you hold the tradition of men, as the washing of pots and cups: and many other such like things you do. And he said unto them, Full well you reject the commandment of Elohim, that you may keep your own tradition" ([Mark 7:6-9](#)).

Yahshua does not condemn them for compliance with Yahweh's kosher food Laws, but instead condemns them for their doctrines of men. These doctrines were not part of Yahweh's Torah, but were laws established by Jewish leaders through many generations. Yahshua's condemnation goes even further than their doctrines of men. Yahshua chastised the Scribes and Pharisees for their carnal natures.

Throughout the New Testament it becomes clear that these Jewish leaders who were responsible for teaching Yahweh's Law became complacent with the more important matters. This may be seen in Matthew 23:23, where Yahshua makes this statement: "Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you pay tithes of mint and anise and cummin, and have omitted the weightier matters of the law, judgment, mercy, and faith: these ought you to have done, and not to leave the other undone." This was most evidently the problem in Mark 7, which we can see through Yahshua's statement in verse 21. "For from within, out of the heart of men, proceed evil thoughts, adulteries, fornications, murders, thefts, covetousness, wickedness, deceit, lasciviousness, an evil eye, blasphemy, pride, foolishness: All these evil things come from within, and defile the man" ([Mark 7:21-23](#)).

Ingesting some dirt from unwashed hands will not defile a man, Yahshua taught in verse 18. But evil thoughts will defile because they come from the heart, verses 19-20. Nowhere in Mark 7 do we find Yahweh's clean food Laws mentioned. We simply see the same message Yahshua taught during his ministry here on earth. We are to observe Yahweh's physical Laws without neglecting His weightier Laws.

The Passage in Question - Acts 10:15:

"And the voice spoke unto him again the second time, What Yahweh has cleansed, that call not common."

Erroneous Interpretation – Yahweh has cleansed all meats in the New Testament era.

Proper Understanding – To grasp this verse, and Peter's vision surrounding it, is to understand the context of the entire chapter. At the start of this passage we find a Gentile named Cornelius, an army captain. We learn that he is righteous and is well respected by all those around him, including the Jews. One day Yahweh sends an angel to deliver a message to Cornelius: send men to Joppa to Simon the Tanner where they will meet the Apostle Peter. Cornelius complies.

Before the men arrive, Peter goes onto the housetop to pray and there becomes hungry. As Peter prays he falls into a trance through which Yahweh reveals a message that will change True Worship forever. In his vision Peter sees a great sheet come down from the sky and on this sheet he finds all

types of unclean beasts. Next, Peter hears a shocking proclamation. A voice commands, "Rise, Peter; kill and eat." Peter cannot believe what he is hearing. He is confused and baffled at this command. It is repeated three times by the angelic being before the sheet is taken away.

Peter argues that he has never eaten anything unclean, verse 14, not even to this day—10 years after the death of Yahshua. Surely if the laws of clean and unclean foods had been abolished at the Savior's death, one of the greatest apostles of the New Testament would have been aware of it immediately after Yahshua's death. After all, Peter was filled with the Holy Spirit, which taught the apostles all things ([John 14:26](#)).

After the vision the three men that were sent by Cornelius find Peter and he returns with them to meet Cornelius. Once there, Peter explains the meaning of his vision of the sheet. "You know how that it is an unlawful thing for a man that is a Jew to keep company, or come unto one of another nation; but Elohim has showed me that I should not call ANY MAN common or unclean" ([Acts 10:28](#)). Thereafter Cornelius becomes the first Gentile convert to the faith. Here we have the simple explanation of this vision from the mouth of the inspired Apostle Peter himself: Gentiles, once considered unclean, may now enter the Covenant promise. Yahweh simply used unclean food to symbolize "unclean" Gentiles, who can now enter the Promises.

The *Adam Clark's Commentary on the Bible* notes, "He [Peter] now begins to understand the import of the vision which he saw at Joppa. A gentile is not to be avoided because he is a gentile; [Elohim] is now taking down the partition wall which separated them from the Jews" (p. 984).

In the Old Testament Yahweh's promise was only offered completely to Israel, and not freely given to the Gentiles until the death of Yahshua the Messiah. At the death of Yahshua the wall that separated Jew from Gentile was broken down through the blood of our Savior. "Wherefore remember, that you 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; That at that time you were without Messiah, being aliens from the commonwealth of Israel, and strangers from the covenants of promise, having no hope, and without Elohim in the world: But now in Messiah Yahshua you who sometimes were far off are made nigh by the blood of Messiah. For he is our peace, who has made both one, and has broken down the middle wall of partition between us" ([Eph. 2:11-14](#)).

In verse 35 of [Acts 10](#) Peter summarizes the lesson of his vision that he received in Joppa on the rooftop of the house of Simeon the Tanner: "But in EVERY NATION he that fears him [Yahweh], and works righteousness, is accepted with him." Clearly the vision seen by Peter was to show him in a very graphic and profound way that Gentiles—who were once considered unclean—were now permitted into Yahweh's covenant. Nowhere in this passage are Yahweh's clean food Laws discussed or repealed. Peter himself denies that he should ever eat anything that conflicts with the clean food Laws.

The Passage in Question - Romans 14:1-3:

"Him that is weak in the faith receive you, but not to doubtful disputations. For one believes that he may eat all things: another, who is weak, eats herbs. Let not him that eats despise him that eats not; and let not him which eats not judge him that eats: for Elohim has received him."

Erroneous Interpretation – The apostle Paul shows that those who wish to eat whatever they desire should not be judged by those who choose to follow the clean food laws.

Proper Understanding –To grasp the meaning we must realize what the concern was at the time it was written. Another of Paul's writings, [1Corinthians 10](#), is helpful in our understanding of [Romans 14](#). These two letters were written only a year apart and have similar issues. His letter to the Corinthians may hold the solution as to why Paul called those who ate only herbs here "weak."

In [1 Corinthians 10](#) Paul discusses the issue of food or meats sacrificed to idols. "Behold Israel after the flesh: are not they which eat of the sacrifices partakers of the altar? What say I then? that the idol is any thing, or that which is offered in sacrifice to idols is any thing? But I say, that the things which the Gentiles sacrifice, they sacrifice to devils, and not to Yahweh: and I would not that you should have fellowship with devils" ([1Cor. 10:18-20](#)).

Paul here faces a dilemma, which at that time was a major concern for the Jew and the Gentile convert. He writes in verse 25, "Whatsoever is sold in the shambles, that eat, asking no question for conscience sake." In the Gentile meat markets ("shambles" = makellon, a butcher's stall) meat was sold that had been first sacrificed to different idols; and many Jew and Gentile converts whom Paul calls "weak" in faith did not buy or eat this meat, considering it impure. Paul, however, said that this food was sacrificed to nothing. These pagan idols were meaningless, nonliving objects invented by man. Paul realized that they could do neither good nor bad because as "deities" they were non-existent.

But then Paul's warns of an issue that all of Yahweh's people should acknowledge and be concerned with. He says in [1Corinthians 10:29](#) that we are not to partake of anything that may offend or upset a brother in the faith. Paul says that he would not even eat any meat or drink wine if it would offend a brother and cause him to stumble in the truth ([Rom. 14:21](#)). We should remember the second greatest commandment: love your neighbor as yourself ([Matt. 22:39](#)).

If we apply what we read in [1Corinthians 10](#) to [Romans 14](#), we may conclude that those that were weak and ate only herbs lacked the faith to realize that meat sacrificed to idols was no different from other food. Such idols are neither good nor bad, but take on existence only for those who would believe in them. These idols had no effect on the meat that was sacrificed to them. The meat was still proper for man to eat according to Yahweh's dietary food Laws (assuming it first

qualified as clean).

For those who prefer to be vegetarian, that is okay, Paul says, 14:2-4. Then he addresses those who choose to set aside one day for fasting, vv. 5-6. He sums up Romans 14 in verse 20: "For meat [food] destroy not the works of Elohim." Don't let disputes over idol meat, vegetarianism or fasting cause division among brothers and sisters in Messiah.

Nothing in any of these passages allows the eating of meat that doesn't qualify lawfully, however.

The Passage in Question - Colossians 2:16:

"Let no man therefore judge you in meat, or in drink, or in respect of an holy day, or of the new moon, or of the Sabbath days."

Erroneous Interpretation – We are not to judge others on the freedom they now have in Messiah. No longer is the keeping of Old Testament food Laws or any other laws necessary for New Testament believers.

Proper Understanding – Is Paul speaking to the assembly or to the world in general? The answer is key to understanding this passage. If Paul is speaking to a pagan world that has neglected Yahweh's Word, then it would only make sense to conclude that Paul is saying that we are no longer under Old Testament regulations and must not be judged in those matters. But if Paul is speaking to an obedient assembly, then this passage would take on a much different meaning. The truth is, this letter is to an Assembly of believers at Colosse.

The following verse 17 is key: "Which are a shadow of things to come: but the body [is] of Messiah." Translators have italicized the word "is," meaning it was added. If we take "is" out, and read verses 16 and 17 together, we see that it is the body of Messiah that should do the judging. "Man" in verse 16 refers to any person, including outsiders. "Don't let any outsider judge you in what you eat, but only the Body of Messiah," Paul is saying.

The 4th verse is an additional help. It reads, "And this I say, lest any man should beguile you with enticing words." From this we can see that the Apostle Paul's concern was for this assembly, for there were those outside the assembly trying to persuade the people of Colosse to reject their present beliefs. With this in mind it is evident that Paul's statement in [Colossians 2:16](#) was for an assembly that was obediently following Yahweh's Laws. His warning is not to let heathens—outsiders—try to persuade you differently regarding the keeping of clean food Laws and other laws of Yahweh.

The Passage in Question - 1 Timothy 4:4:

"For every creature of Yahweh is good, and nothing to be refused, if it be received with thanksgiving."

Erroneous Interpretation – Every creature is acceptable for consumption if received with thanksgiving.

Proper Understanding –A "creature of Yahweh" that meets clean food qualifications is defined in the next verse: "For it is sanctified by the Word of Elohim and prayer." It is the Word that sanctifies or sets apart those animals (listed in [Leviticus 11](#) and [Deuteronomy 14](#)) that Yahweh says we may eat. Without any further study it should be clear as crystal that Paul is not promoting the eating of ceremonially unclean animals that Yahweh has ordained as abominable for mankind. Who would argue that rats, bats, lizards, scorpions and skunks are good for food?

Yahweh's dietary Laws have not been annulled, but remain for all of Yahweh's New Testament saints. As it becomes more knowledgeable about food and its effects on health, modern science is verifying what the Bible has been teaching for millennia—that certain meats are harmful and are not meant to be eaten. Therefore, we can see why Yahweh prohibited specific "foods" as unfit. Even then, however, True Worshipers do not need a scientific explanation. The simple fact that the Maker of our bodies tells us what to avoid is reason enough to obey.

In Addition...

Yahweh's Word prohibits consumption of both fat and blood ([Lev. 3:17](#); [7:23, 26-27](#)). The fat of the animal was offered to Yahweh in sacrifice ([Lev. 3:16](#)). It belongs to Him. The life of the animal is found in its blood ([Lev. 17:10-14](#)). Both fat and blood of the sacrifice were treated separately from the meat of the sacrifice and neither were eaten. Thus, it is necessary to remove all blood from the flesh of Scripturally clean animals before eating and to avoid eating residual blood.

At the time of slaughter, rapid draining of most of the blood must occur. This process is unnecessary with fish, as very little blood remains in the meat of fish. Any remaining blood can be removed by soaking in brine.

The following meats meet the qualifications as clean according to [Leviticus 11](#) and [Deuteronomy 14](#):

Biblically Clean Fish

(Must have both fins and scales)

- Albacore (Crevalle, Horse Mackerel, Jack)
- Alewives (Branch Herring, River Herring)
- Anchovy
- Barracuda
- Bass
- Black Drum
- Blackfish
- Blueback (Glut Herring)
- Bluebill
- Sunfish
- Bluefish
- Blue Runner (Hardtail)
- Bonitos
- Boston Bluefish (Pollack)
- Bowfin
- Buffalofish
- Butterfish
- Carp
- Chub (Bloater, Longjaw, Blackfin)
- Cod
- Crappie
- Crevalle (Albacore)
- Croaker
- Darter
- Flounder (Dab, Gray Sole, Yellow Tail)
- Frost Fish (Ice Fish, Smelt)
- Gaby
- Grayling
- Groupers (Gag)
- Grunts
- Gulf Pike (Robalo, Snook, Sergeant)
- Haddock
- Hake
- Halibut
- Hardtail (Blue Runner)
- Herring
- Horse Mackerel (Albacore)

- Kingfish
- Long Nose Sucker (Northern Sucker, Red Striped Sucker) Mackerel
- Menhaden
- Mullet
- Muskellunge (Jack)
- Orange Roughy
- Perch
- Pickerel (Jack)
- Pig Fish
- Pike (Jack)
- Pilchard (Sardine)
- Pollack
- Pompano
- Porgy (Scup)
- Red Drum (Redfish)
- Redfin (Red Horse Sucker)
- Red Snapper
- Red Striped Sucker (Long Nose Sucker)
- Robalo (Gulf Pike)
- Rockfish
- Salmon (Chum, Coho, King, Pink, Red)
- Sardine (Pilchard)
- Scup (Porgy)
- Sea Bass
- Sergeant Fish (Gulf Pike)
- Shad
- Sheepshead
- Silver Hake (Whiting)
- Silversides Smelt (Frost Fish)
- Snook (Gulf Pike)
- Spanish Mackerel
- Striped Bass Sucker
- Tarpon
- Tilapia
- Trout
- Tuna (Albacore, Bluefin, Yellowfin, Shipjack)
- Weakfish

- Whitefish
- White Sucker
- Whiting (Silver Hake)
- Yellow Perch

Biblically Unclean Fish and Seafood

- Abalone
- Bullhead
- Catfish
- Clam
- Crab
- Crayfish
- Eel
- Krill
- Lobster
- Mussel
- Oyster
- Paddlefish (Spoonbill)
- Scallop
- Sculpin
- Shark
- Shrimp
- Squid
- Stickleback
- Sturgeon (Caviar)
- Swordfish
- Whale

Clean Red Meat

(Must chew the cud and have a divided hoof)

- Antelope
- Beef
- Buffalo
- Deer

- Elk
- Goat
- Moose
- Sheep

Clean Fowl

(Cannot be a raptor or scavenger)

- Chicken
- Dove
- Duck
- Goose
- Grouse
- Pheasant
- Quail
- Turkey



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