

Chapter Twenty-Six

Holy Cow! What's on the Menu ?

There is a need to address the various “traditions” associated with what the Bible, specifically the Apostolic Writings or the New Testament, teaches about food. This section applies equally to Roman Catholic as well as Protestant traditions on the subject. It represents one of the traditions each camp basically has in common.

Before examining the various Scriptures that deal with the subject, I feel it necessary to restate a disclaimer. The decisions people make regarding what they believe the Bible says about food are not in any way linked to their individual status of salvation before God. I am not asserting any form of legalism here. If people read these comments and conclude differently and go ahead with their practice of eating pork and shellfish, their salvation status before God remains unchanged. They are not more or less “saved” than any other true believer in the Messiah. Although, from a purely health standpoint, I might

suggest that eating pork and shellfish may not keep you from Heaven but it just might send you there sooner.

As previously demonstrated, the Bible has a baseline list in Leviticus 11 about what constitutes food and what does not. It is helpful to remember that when Israel received the Torah and agreed to the covenant, they were composed of native-born Jews as well as the “mixed multitude” of gentiles who left Egypt and were part of that same community. They all declared in Exodus 19:8, as one, “All the people answered together, and said, “All that the LORD has spoken we will do.” There was one Torah for the native-born and the foreigners with them. Leviticus 24:22 states, “You shall have one kind of law for the foreigner as well as the native-born; for I am the LORD your God.” Numbers 15:15,16 states, “For the assembly, there shall be one statute for you and for the stranger who lives as a foreigner, a statute forever throughout your generations. As you are, so the foreigner shall be before the LORD. One law and one ordinance shall be for you and for the stranger who lives as a foreigner with you.’ ”

There was never any room for two separate standards of teaching based on whether one was Jewish or gentile. There was, and remains, One Torah for all.

As we saw in previous chapters, gentiles have been “grafted in” to the remnant of believing Jews. According to Ephesians 2 and 3, they are now fellow citizens, fellow heirs, fellow members, and

fellow partakers. They are no longer foreigners and strangers but members of the covenants embodying God's promise. The Torah, God's gracious instructions for the redeemed community, is for them as well.

We have already addressed some common traditions of men, such as Replacement Theology and Dispensationalism, that would attempt to separate believers from a significant portion of the Word of God. Let us look at some other traditions of interpretation that essentially attempt to do the same.

There are a number of “traditional” interpretations of select New Testament passages that seek to create a “new teaching” at variance with what the Bible explicitly establishes about food in Leviticus 11. That, in itself, should be a clue about any interpretive schema that changes the Word of God or makes it “flexible to the whims of man”. It is either the absolute, unerring, inspired, and authoritative Word from God Himself that He claims is unchanging and eternal or it is merely the creation of the minds of men and, therefore, just one opinion among many on any matter. Let's examine these Scriptures one by one and see what they actually tell us.

Mark 7

We began this book with a careful and thorough examination of Mark 7 and learned that Yeshua was teaching that clean,

Biblical foods do not become unclean merely by the avoidance of the man-made ceremonial ritual hand-washing tradition of the Pharisees. That is the context of His declaring “all foods clean”, although, as we saw, the insertion of that phrase into the text is not based on any early manuscripts. The passage in Mark 7 does not speak to the issues surrounding eating unclean meats.

Acts 10 – Peter’s Pork Picnic

One of the most frequent passages that enters into conversations about food is Acts 10. I have heard people refer to this as God’s revelation to Peter that He had made everything clean to eat and that Peter should reverse his previously held scruples and go ahead and have a ham sandwich. Could this possibly be true? If God can reverse His teaching on this, what would prevent Him from reversing any teaching, including our salvation status in Him? Theologians and Bible students need to be cautious of any teaching that has the net effect of altering the Word of God. Remember the issue between Eve and the serpent in the garden? The first command that mankind broke was a food law. Just sayin.

Remember how we previously learned the importance of defining the “issue” in seeking to understand any passage of Scripture? So what’s the issue being dealt with in Acts 10?

The passage begins in Acts 10:1,2 stating, “Now there was a certain man in Caesarea, Cornelius by name, a centurion of what was called the Italian Regiment, a devout man, and **one who feared God** with all his house, who gave gifts for the needy generously to the people, and always prayed to God.” Where the text describes Cornelius as “one who feared God” it is actually translating the Greek word “phoboumenoi” meaning “God-fearers”. This term does not merely reflect a person’s morality as such. It does not mean, “He is a God-fearing man.” It was a legal and technical term for a specific type of gentile who was drawn to the worship of the God of Abraham but chose to not undergo formal ritual conversion¹ to “become a Jew”, a practice, by the way, entirely man-made without any Scriptural foundation. These “God-fearers” were already conversant with the Torah and observant of its teachings, including the food laws of Leviticus 11. Quite possibly, the only reason Cornelius opted for this intermediate status of God-fearer instead of full ritual conversion was his military position. Certainly, the politics of his “converting” would have been an issue for him and his future with Rome. Without a doubt, any leader in the Roman army could not be perceived as having divided loyalties.

The text continues to show Cornelius being visited by an angel with an important message in Acts 10:3-8, “At about the ninth hour of the day, he clearly saw in a vision an angel of God

coming to him and saying to him, “Cornelius!” He, fastening his eyes on him and being frightened, said, “What is it, Lord?” He said to him, “Your prayers and your gifts to the needy have gone up for a memorial before God. Now send men to Joppa, and get Simon, who is also called Peter. He is staying with a tanner named Simon, whose house is by the seaside. When the angel who spoke to him had departed, Cornelius called two of his household servants and a devout soldier of those who waited on him continually. Having explained everything to them, he sent them to Joppa.”

It is significant that Cornelius was praying at the ninth hour of the day. According to the Jewish reckoning of time, this was at 3:00 in the afternoon, the time of the afternoon prayers at the Temple. As a gentile drawn to the worship of the God of Abraham, it was only natural for him to follow the same pattern.

Through this vision of an angel and his message to Cornelius, God set in motion the sending of men to the city of Joppa to seek out Simon Peter. I find it interesting that God was working behind the scenes and orchestrating events and situations to further His plan long before Peter had his vision.

Is this not true of us, as well? We are not aware of all that God is doing for us, outside our scope of understanding and vision. Our lack of awareness should never be misunderstood as proof of God's lack of care towards us. It has been said, “When

you don't understand what the hand of God is doing, trust His heart.”

In Acts 10:9-16 we see the story unfolding, “Now on the next day as they were on their journey and got close to the city, Peter went up on the housetop to pray at about noon. He became hungry and desired to eat, but while they were preparing, he fell into a trance. He saw heaven open and a certain container descending to him, like a great sheet let down by four corners on the earth, in which were all kinds of four-footed animals of the earth, wild animals, reptiles, and birds of the sky. A voice came to him, “Rise, Peter, kill and eat!” But Peter said, “Not so, Lord; for I have never eaten anything that is common or unclean.” A voice came to him again the second time, “What God has cleansed, you must not call unclean.” This was done three times, and immediately the thing was received up into heaven.”

Unfortunately, some people stop reading at this point and force a conclusion to their inquiry. They assert, “Since God has cleansed all these animals and redesignated them as kosher to eat, then Peter was free to have a pulled pork sandwich.” Not so fast.

First, remember that this was a “vision” that Peter had. It was not reality. He did not eat anything. This vision happened “while they were preparing” the meal.

Secondly, the meaning can be understood as a test of what standard Peter would use to respond to the challenge to “rise, kill, and eat.” Peter’s response demonstrates his fidelity to the Torah to define what is kosher food and what is not. He tells the Lord “for I have never eaten anything that is common or unclean.” For Peter, the only source of definition of what is “common or unclean” was the Torah. His answer showed that he passed the test. Instead of the traditions of men, Peter’s standard for determining what is acceptable to eat is found in the Torah. This becomes critical for Peter as God later reveals to him how his bias in rejecting gentiles is based on the traditions of men and not the Word of God.

Thirdly, we know that Peter did not suddenly believe that God had changed His mind on the food laws of Leviticus 11 because of the very next verses in Acts 10:17-20 which state, “Now while **Peter was very perplexed in himself what the vision which he had seen might mean**, behold, the men who were sent by Cornelius, having made inquiry for Simon’s house, stood before the gate, and called and asked whether Simon, who was also called Peter, was lodging there. **While Peter was pondering the vision**, the Spirit said to him, “Behold, three men seek you. But arise, get down, and go with them, doubting nothing; for I have sent them.”

After the vision had been played out three times, the text informs us that “Peter was **very perplexed in himself** what the vision which he had seen might mean”. He still didn’t get it.

Before we look down our noses at Peter’s apparent denseness in not comprehending the meaning, we should consider how many times God has tried to communicate things to our own, oftentimes stubborn, minds. At any rate, it is clear that Peter did not interpret the vision as a green light for a bacon sandwich or a shrimp cocktail. Peter was still trying to comprehend what God was telling him through this vision. It was not immediately clear to him.

The text continues in Acts 10:21-23, “Peter went down to the men, and said, “Behold, I am he whom you seek. Why have you come?” They said, “Cornelius, a centurion, a righteous man and one who fears God, and well-spoken of by all the Jewish nation, was directed by a holy angel to invite you to his house, and to listen to what you say.” So, he called them in and provided a place to stay.” To Peter’s credit, he obeyed the message in the vision, received the visitors as his overnight guests and the next day he and some brothers accompanied them to Joppa to visit Cornelius.

Now we come to the “Aha!” moment for Peter in Acts 10:23-28, “On the next day Peter arose and went out with them, and some of the brothers from Joppa accompanied him. On the

next day, they entered into Caesarea. Cornelius was waiting for them, having called together his relatives and his near friends. When Peter entered, Cornelius met him, fell down at his feet, and worshiped him. But Peter raised him up, saying, “Stand up! I myself am also a man.” As he talked with him, he went in and found many gathered together. He said to them, “You yourselves know how it is an **unlawful thing** for a man who is a Jew to join himself or come to one of another nation, but **God has shown me that I shouldn’t call any man unholy or unclean.**”

Peter's declaration that they “know” how it is an “unlawful thing” for a Jew to have interaction with a gentile betrays the source of that tradition of men. Nowhere in the Torah is such a “law” found. Israel was always destined to be a light to the gentiles. There is nothing about gentiles that needs to be avoided. The only separation involves pagan beliefs and practices, but never the people themselves. As previously mentioned in our study, there is nothing in the Torah about restricting a Jew from having fellowship with or entering the home of a gentile. Peter was struggling with the common prejudice of the day that arose from the man-made Eighteen Measures against contact with gentiles.

The significant statement by Peter that “God has shown me that I shouldn’t call any **man** unholy or unclean” is a full and

satisfying answer to the meaning of Peter's vision. Peter had passed the test regarding the food challenge by applying the correct standard, the Torah, instead of man-made traditions. Here God is asking Peter to follow suit in applying the same standard, the Torah, to the issue of acceptance of gentiles instead of the traditions of men he was previously in bondage to.

Later in Acts 10:34 Peter boldly declares, "Truly I perceive that **God doesn't show favoritism**; but in **every nation** he who fears him and works righteousness is acceptable to him." This was a radical departure for Peter as well as the others with him.

Peter began sharing the gospel with them. In Acts 10:44-48 it states, "While Peter **was still speaking these words**, the Holy Spirit fell on all those who heard the word. They of the circumcision who believed were amazed, as many as came with Peter, because the gift of the Holy Spirit **was also poured out on the Gentiles**. For they heard them speaking in other languages and magnifying God. Then Peter answered, "Can anyone forbid these people from being immersed with water? They have received the Holy Spirit **just like us**." He commanded them to be immersed in the name of Yeshua the Messiah."

The significance of the Holy Spirit's coming upon these gentiles "during" Peter's sermon demands comment. First, it demonstrates the sovereignty of the Holy Spirit. Second, it

shows that these gentiles were filled with the Holy Spirit before they had any chance to submit to the false, man-made ritual that had misused circumcision as a conversion ritual that would allegedly “make them into Jews”. This was proof positive that this was not a God-ordained requirement for gentiles. The text also says that these gentiles were saved “just like us”. How are Jews saved? By grace through faith in the Messiah. How are gentiles saved? By grace through faith in the Messiah. Period. No other man-made rituals are necessary.

In Acts 11:2,3 we see the reaction of some legalistic brothers in Jerusalem, “When Peter had come up to Jerusalem, those who were of **the circumcision** contended with him, saying, “You went into uncircumcised men and ate with them!” Imagine their reaction when they learned that Peter actually went into the home and even ate with gentiles. Oh, the shock of it all. Do you see how deeply held traditions of men can hold even believers captive and in bondage to false teachings that run counter to the Word of God? Remember, these legalistic critics of Peter were also believers!

Peter retold his story about the vision and its meaning. The sequence of events proves the sovereignty of the Holy Spirit and refutes the traditions of men regarding the legalistic teachings of “the circumcision faction” within the congregation in Jerusalem. Peter demonstrated that he finally understood the

clear meaning of the vision when he said, “God has shown me that I shouldn’t call any **man** unholy or unclean”. The vision had **nothing to do with food** or the abrogation of the Torah's teaching regarding food as listed in Leviticus 11. It was all about Peter's prejudice against gentiles based solely on man-made traditions.

1 Tim 4:1-5

The next text that comes up in discussions about food bears investigation. In Paul's first letter to his young disciple Timothy, he is sharing much wise counsel to help him in his ministry. Timothy is warned about people wanting to teach a “different doctrine”, espousing “myths” and “vain talking”. He is given instruction on qualifications for ministry. He is warned about “seducing spirits” and “doctrines of demons”. He is told to turn away from “empty chatter and oppositions of what is falsely called knowledge”. Wise words that apply to today as well. If these words had been heeded by ministers today, perhaps there would be no need for the book you are reading.

The text that frequently comes up in discussions about food is 1 Tim 4:1-5 which states, “But the Spirit says expressly that in later times some will fall away from the faith, paying attention to seducing spirits and doctrines of demons, through the hypocrisy of men who speak lies, branded in their own conscience as

with a hot iron, **forbidding marriage** and **commanding to abstain from foods which God created to be received with thanksgiving** by those who believe and know the truth. For every creature of God is **good**, and **nothing is to be rejected** if it is received with thanksgiving. For it is **sanctified through the word of God** and prayer.”

One of the main errors that Paul was writing against was the expanding menace of Gnosticism. It was growing in popularity among the intellectuals, even within believing communities. This theory sees all physical things as of a lower order and only places value on spiritual, ethereal qualities. This is in stark contrast to the fact that when God made the world and mankind He said it was good! The Gnostics were a cultic system that valued knowledge above all else. Indeed, the word Gnostic is from the Greek word “gnosis” referring to knowledge or insight. This had the effect of distorting the gospel message into something akin to a “New Age” redefinition of terms. These cultic teachers taught that the body was inferior and, thus, evil. They redefined salvation as knowledge of a hidden divinity within, as opposed to the true gospel message of repentance and the new birth. Gnostics also tended to be strict vegetarians and adopted a strict ascetic practice of celibacy and viewed marriage as less than spiritual in their definitions.

When we examine the text in light of this background, we see what issue Paul is responding to. He is rejecting the Gnostic teaching that “forbids marriage” and “commanding to abstain from foods which God created to be received with thanksgiving”.

God is the author of marriage. In the book of Genesis, He designed it, defined it, and continues to bless it.

He also gave instructions regarding food in Leviticus 11. When the text in 1 Timothy states “foods which God created to be received”, it can only refer back to where He lists and defines those foods that were “created to be received” and that is Leviticus 11. This is clear from Paul’s statement that these were “sanctified through the word of God”. Sanctified means set apart so where did God “set apart” these foods but Leviticus 11? God created “those foods” and defined them as “food to be received”. He did not change His mind. Paul was condemning these false teachers who went beyond the Word of God to prohibit Biblically “clean” foods.

1 Corinthians 10:23-33

Paul is giving instructions to the believers who are living in one of the most pagan cities anywhere. In fact, the phrase “to play the Corinthian” refers to very loose moral behavior. Corinth was a city wholly given over to idolatry and all manner of li-

centiousness and sexual immorality. I can think of a few cities within our own country that are similar.

The challenge for the new, gentile believers living within this city was how to avoid idolatry, in all its forms. One of the problems was the meat markets. Meat that was sold in these markets was frequently offered in idol worship within the surrounding pagan temples prior to being sold in the markets. These new gentile believers were not sure whether eating such meat would be tantamount to participating in idolatry or if it was permitted.

The text states, “All things are lawful for me,” but not all things are profitable. “All things are lawful for me,” but not all things build up. Let no one seek his own, but each one his neighbor’s good. **Whatever is sold in the butcher shop, eat, asking no question for the sake of conscience**, for “the earth is the Lord’s, and its fullness.” But if one of those who don’t believe invites you to a meal, and you are inclined to go, eat **whatever is set before you**, asking no questions for the sake of conscience. But if anyone says to you, “**This was offered to idols**,” don’t eat it for the sake of the one who told you, and for the sake of conscience. For “the earth is the Lord’s, with all its fullness.” Conscience, I say, not your own, but the other’s conscience. For why is my liberty judged by another conscience? If I partake with thankfulness, why am I denounced for something I give thanks for? Whether therefore you eat or drink, or

whatever you do, do all to the glory of God. Give no occasion for stumbling, whether to Jews, to Greeks, or to the assembly of God; even as I also please all men in all things, not seeking my own profit, but the profit of the many, that they may be saved.”

Paul's counsel here is not an abrogation of the food laws of Leviticus 11. He is teaching about the perception of idolatry and the sensitivities of others. He is referring to buying and eating otherwise Biblical food that may or may not have been offered to idols. He previously stated in 1 Corinthians 8:4 that “no idol is anything in the world”. The issue is the conscience of the other person.

He is saying that if you eat Biblically approved meat sold in the market, don't concern yourself about whether it was used in idolatry. If you go to a meal and are offered meat, Paul says to “eat whatever is set before you, asking no questions for the sake of conscience”. He is not saying to eat non-food prohibited by Leviticus 11. The issue is whether this food was sacrificed to idols.

On the other hand, Paul does say, “But if anyone says to you, **“This was offered to idols,”** don't eat it for the sake of the one who told you, and for the sake of conscience.” He is teaching the idea of deferring to the sensitivities of another person's conscience. He invokes the ethic of not wanting to cause anyone

to stumble, even though he personally knows that “an idol is nothing” and there is nothing wrong with the meat in question.

Galatians 2:11-14

Paul's confrontation with Peter is quite interesting from several angles. Remember in our review of the issues addressed in Acts 10 that Peter had previously struggled with his own prejudice against gentiles based on the man-made traditions that created a strong barrier against any form of table fellowship or interactions with them. This bias was so strong that God had to repeat the vision of Acts 10 to Peter three times and after that, he was still puzzled by it.

At the time of this incident in Antioch, there was still in existence a strong and influential “party of the circumcision” within the struggling Messianic community in Jerusalem. This group was apparently still holding to the man-made traditions of the rabbis that insisted that gentiles had to undergo the ritual conversion ceremony, including circumcision, to “become Jews” in order to be saved. This is the backdrop for the story of Peter here in Antioch. This question was not resolved until the Jerusalem council in Acts 15. That council repudiated this legalism but in no way separated gentiles from torah observance. That was not the issue. Acts 15:1 clearly states what the issue was that they addressed and resolved.

Paul states in the text of Galatians 2, “But when Peter came to Antioch, I resisted him to his face, because he stood condemned. For before **some people came from Jacob**, he ate with the Gentiles. But when they came, he drew back and separated himself, **fearing those who were of the circumcision**. And the rest of the Jewish believers joined him in his **hypocrisy** so that even Barnabas was carried away with their **hypocrisy**. But when I saw that they didn’t walk uprightly according to the truth of the Good News, I said to Peter before them all, “If you, being a Jew, live as the Gentiles do, and not as the Jews do, why do you compel the Gentiles to live as the Jews do?”

We see here the full measure of how the man-made tradition of separating Jews and gentiles causes so much damage to the body of the Messiah. Paul openly and publicly rebuked Peter because his actions were a public denial of the truth of the gospel message.

I find it interesting that we have recorded this major error by Peter and its subsequent correction by Paul. If, as the Roman Catholic church teaches, Peter was the first “Pope” whose pronouncements on “faith and morals” are “infallible” and “irreformable”, then how does that apply here? Peter was clearly not in charge. Actually, Ya’akov, aka Jacob, the Lord’s brother, was the leader of the Jerusalem assembly, not Peter. Peter was clearly wrong in his theology regarding gentiles. He was still in

bondage to the traditions of men and acted out of fear to the party of the circumcision who had arrived from Jerusalem.

Paul describes this as hypocrisy and says that “even Barnabas was carried away with their hypocrisy”. He understood the importance of table fellowship between Jews and gentiles. He likely reflected on Yeshua’s words when referring to gentiles in Matthew 8:11, “I tell you that many will come from the east and the west, and will sit down with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob in the Kingdom of Heaven.” It is important to note that this future Messianic banquet will contain Jews and gentiles sitting with each other. There will be one table. There will be one menu and it will be Biblically kosher.

Romans 14

This chapter in Romans is another portion of Scripture frequently cited as “the end of the argument” to show that the food laws of Leviticus 11 have been done away with. Aside from the obvious mistake that would be in light of what Messiah said regarding the Torah in Matthew 5:17-19, let us examine the text piece by piece to learn exactly what Paul is teaching here.

Romans 14:1-4 states, “Now accept one who is **weak in faith**, but not for **disputes over opinions**. One man has faith to eat **all things**, but he who is weak eats **only vegetables**. Don’t let him who eats despise him who doesn’t eat. Don’t let

him who doesn't eat judge him who eats, for God has accepted him. Who are you who judge another's servant? To his own lord he stands or falls. Yes, he will be made to stand, for God has power to make him stand."

The first observation is that Paul is referring to "disputes over opinions". That is a telling characterization. Paul is a staunch supporter of the authority of the Torah. All of his teachings and arguments are based upon it. Would the Apostle Paul refer to the Torah of God as "opinions"? Of course not. For Paul, the Torah is absolute and settled. There is no room for challenges there. Paul's "issue" that he was dealing with were "opinions", not settled theology like the Torah.

Secondly, the text informs us that this issue was between people who had faith to eat **all things**, versus those who eat **only vegetables**. This was an issue between the meat eaters and the vegetarians. In fact, these vegetarians were characterized as being "weak in faith". This phrase has been incorrectly applied to believers who eat according to the food laws of Leviticus 11, such as Messianic Jews and Torah-observant gentiles. This is wrong. The people described are vegetarians and there is nothing in the Torah that requires a vegetarian diet. When it comes to the "disputes over opinions" regarding meat eating versus vegetarianism, Paul's counsel is to not be judgmental but to proceed with grace and tolerance. Good advice!

When we reconcile Paul's words with the rest of the Bible, we avoid "going off page" and twisting Paul's words into something he did not say. If Paul were giving the okay to eat unclean food, it would not be in line with the rest of his teaching or with the end-time prophecy of Isaiah 65 and 66 which relates to God's future judgment on those defiant swine eaters. I guess God cares about Leviticus 11 after all!

The text continues in Romans 14:5,6, "One man esteems **one day as more important**. Another esteems **every day alike**. Let each man be fully assured in his own mind. He who observes the day, observes it to the Lord; and he who does not observe the day, to the Lord he does not observe it. He who eats, eats to the Lord, for he gives God thanks. He who doesn't eat, to the Lord he doesn't eat, and gives God thanks."

These verses have sometimes been misused to try to show that the weekly Shabbat is no longer an issue, that, in fact, it doesn't matter if you keep any of the holy days listed in Leviticus 23. This can hardly be the case since Paul is not referring to the Shabbat. It is not mentioned in the text. Also, that interpretation is impossible in light of Exodus 31:16,17 which states, "Therefore the children of Israel shall keep the Sabbath, to observe the Sabbath **throughout their generations**, for a **perpetual covenant**. It is a sign between me and the children of Israel **forever**;"

What Paul is most likely referring to, based on verse 6, is which day to fast on, something that can be a matter of opinion, but not specified in the Torah.

Paul provides a clear example of grace in dealing with these “disputes over opinions” in Romans 14:13, “Therefore let’s not judge one another anymore, but judge this rather, that no man put a stumbling block in his brother’s way, or an occasion for falling.” This is consistent with Paul’s appeal for graciousness in 1 Corinthians 10.

The next verse has also been misunderstood and twisted into an argument against Leviticus 11. Romans 14:14 states, “I know and am persuaded in the Lord Yeshua that **nothing is unclean of itself**; except that to him who considers anything to be unclean, to him it is unclean.” Did Paul really mean when saying “nothing is unclean of itself” that there are no unclean foods? Some people say, “Absolutely! That is the end of the argument. No foods are unclean.”

One of the problems with Bible translators, as we have seen, is bias. The actual Greek word in the text is “koinos” which means “common”, not “unclean”. It is a mistranslation to write the text using the word “unclean”. That would require the Greek word “akathartos”. In the Septuagint, the Greek translation of the Tanach, the word “akathartos” is used when translating the

Hebrew word “tamei” which means “unclean”. This is the word used to describe the “unclean” foods of Leviticus 11.

In saying “nothing is common”, Paul is not referring to what the Torah has declared as non-food. He is saying that “nothing is common”, meaning otherwise Biblically fit food is not rendered unfit for consumption simply by being offered to idols or polluted by idols. This is consistent with his teaching in 1 Corinthians 10.

Concluding Thoughts

In our quest to follow Yeshua in all things and Paul who charged us as well to “imitate me as I imitate Messiah, we should embrace the full weight of Messiah’s words in Matthew 5:17-19, “Don’t think that I came to destroy the Torah or the Prophets. I didn’t come to destroy but to fulfill. For most certainly, I tell you, until heaven and earth pass away, not even one smallest letter or one tiny pen stroke shall in any way pass away from the Torah until all things are accomplished. Therefore, whoever shall break one of these least commandments and teach others to do so, shall be called least in the Kingdom of Heaven; but whoever shall do and teach them shall be called great in the Kingdom of Heaven.”

1. This extra-Biblical tradition of men was previously discussed in the chapter on Judaisms.