

Sabbath Sermon: Eating and Drinking, Part 1

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First Fruits Ministries, an affiliate of Corner Fringe Ministries

Torah Portion: Sh'mini (Eighth): Leviticus 9:1-11:47; 2 Samuel 6:1-7:17; Ezekiel 45:16-46:18; Luke 22:1-13; 2 Corinthians 6:14-7:1; Hebrews 7:1-19: <https://tinyurl.com/yjkakub3>.



Shabbat Shalom, brothers and sisters. Please turn to your neighbors with a hug or a handshake and say good morning with the love of our LORD Yeshua in your heart. —[pause, title screen]— I have a few stories I want to share with you before we get into today's message. First off, some of you know that I have Italian heritage, among some other nations—German, Polish and Jewish, to be exact—and if you didn't know, now you do. Now I know genealogies aren't supposed to be something we dwell on here at church, according to the apostles, and don't worry, that's not why I bring this up. My point for today's message is that I really enjoy cooking (and eating) Italian food, and it comes from growing up enjoying it often at my Nana and Nanu Manuse's table, and my Mom picked up some of Nana's recipes, too. Then, when I was a little older, I worked as a sous chef at an Italian restaurant in Lewiston, NY, and I learned a whole lot about cooking myself. I started cooking for Mom and Dad, and then Dad got excited about some of the meals he enjoyed growing up and asked his mom for the recipes. We took turns making new delicacies every night, and learning from one another, as my Nana coached us from the nursing home. The beef stew recipe that I used for our Oneg celebration today comes from my Italian grandmother, just to whet your appetite a bit. I hope you stay with us and enjoy it. For the record: this recipe does not include a wine reduction, but a lot of my Italian recipes do. On Wednesday night, I was preparing a Pasta Figioli, which called for some chablis in the reduction, but before I splashed the Carlo Rossi Chablis I usually use into the pan, I remembered something a brother in the LORD from Texas told me a few weeks ago. You see, during a conversation with him, I had explained to Him that pizza dough is often made with dough softeners—L-Cysteine is the chemical name—and dough softeners sometimes use swine bristles or even human hair as a base amino acid ingredient, but not always. Sometimes it's duck feathers or corn husks. It's all gross, except for the corn husks! The good news is I found a pizza joint nearby that uses a dough softener made from corn husks, and I'm calling that a win. Anyway, my friend did not know about this, and so he spent some time digging into his pizza sources to make sure his food was clean in the eyes of our God, and I think he decided to cut some of his pizza sources out. At the same time, he wanted to make sure I got back a little of what I dished out—all in love, of course—and so he told me about a website that explained which wines were made using unclean ingredients (barnivore.com—another website has more holistic details: theisraelofgodrc.com). Now, before this time, I had always wondered why there was kosher wine, and since I don't really drink the stuff, I always assumed it was made without yeast for Passover or something of that nature, but I stood corrected. Upon taking the time to research this, I found that Carlo Rossi and many other wine makers use gelatin, usually from pork, and proteins from animal and fish products to clarify their wine. Now, I don't drink Budweiser, for the record, but I also discovered while researching the wines that Budweiser has clam juice in it. Did you know that? Ugh! Anyway, with sadness in my heart that I had been unknowingly eating pork in my wine reductions for several years, I asked God to forgive me and I poured the two open gallons of cooking wine that I had down the drain. Thankfully, I also had a bottle of Holland House white cooking wine in the pantry, and found that Holland House makes their white and marsala cooking wines with clean ingredients, so dinner was served! Thank you Kristopher, and thank

you Yeshua for letting me know about this. I am ordering some new Kosher certified cooking wines for the next culinary experience. Over the past few years, I've discovered that many foods are like this, and so I've become a label reader, not because of legalism, but because I want to please God, slowly but surely cutting unclean things out as I find them and adding new clean foods in to replace them.

Now, I don't want to gross you out, but I have one more story that I told my family in brief last night to help them understand Leviticus 11, which is in our Torah portion this week. But first, consider this: you've heard me talk about our relationship with Yeshua as a type of courtship, and Scripture often references this metaphor for how we ought to think of the LORD. Israel, of which we are members in Yeshua, is the bride of Yeshua, and Yeshua is the bridegroom. On the Last Day, the bridegroom is coming to lift up His bride and bring her home to dwell in His Kingdom forever, and as for me and my house, I desire to be among the people who are lifted up to be with Him, and we will serve the LORD with all faith and reliance upon His grace. In the meantime, as we live here in our temporary dwellings, this body of flesh that will be cast off, Yeshua instructed us to purify ourselves, which is to keep His commandments on account of His grace. He said Himself, "Be perfect, as your Heavenly Father is perfect," referring here specifically to the love we ought to have toward both our neighbor as well as our enemy. In this verse, He quoted Leviticus 11:44, wherein the LORD instructed Moses regarding the food laws we read in the chapter. Yahweh told Moses: "I am the LORD your God. You shall therefore consecrate yourselves, and you shall be holy; for I am holy." To eat the foods the LORD desires, and to refrain from the foods He calls "abominations," this is part of what sets us apart as His beautiful bride. Love is not just self-sacrifice for our neighbor or our enemy by allowing them to slap us twice, giving them our tunic to wear or walking the extra mile, but it is also understanding the reason why our enemy might want to insult or persecute us in this way. In most cases, it is because we stand by the commandments of God and do them, but not only this, we also teach them to everyone who has ears to hear. Some people don't like that. I can tell you this: it is very difficult for me to say which commandment has garnered more hate, keeping the Sabbath or keeping the food laws of Leviticus 11, but both have brought about a cost in my relationships. I've counted the cost, and it's worth it. It is love of God to keep His commandments (John 14:15), and it is love of both our neighbor and our enemy to teach God's commandments—with gentleness, of course. Consider then this story: You're young, you're single, you're dating, and you're going out to dinner with a man or woman you hope to marry. As the two of you look over the menus, your loved one explains that spaghetti grosses them out because it looks like worms crawling through the mud. They even go so far as to explain that even seeing it on a plate makes them gag. Now, whether or not this aversion to spaghetti is something you can handle is not the point here. You love this person and want to marry them. When your eyes catch the spaghetti and meatballs on the menu, do you order it? Picture yourself ordering the spaghetti and then slurping really loud as you suck each noodle into your mouth, looking at your love with a twinkle in your eye as you do. Or what about ordering spaghetti for the rehearsal dinner behind your loved one's back? It may seem like a small deal to you, but as someone who loves eating fish—with fins and scales—I don't think I've ever cooked it in my house in the 18 years of marriage to my beautiful bride who can't stand the smell. I may have grilled it outside a few times, but even that I limit to once in a great while or when she's been away from home on a business trip without me. How does this apply to you and me and our Torah reading today?

Yeshua said in Leviticus 11, pork and shellfish, cats and dogs, sharks and swordfish, vultures and owls, even ostrich and rabbits, not to mention worms and frogs and rats and mice—these things ought to be considered abominable to you and me; they are unclean and these animals make us unclean when we

eat them. The LORD said, “You shall not make yourselves abominable ... nor shall you make yourselves unclean with them, lest you be defiled by them. For I am the LORD your God. You shall therefore consecrate yourselves and you shall be holy, for I am holy.” The word “abomination” or “abominable” comes from the Hebrew “shakatz (שָׁקַץ),” which, besides “abominable,” means “utterly detestable,” “abhorred,” “filthy,” or “loathed.” “Shakatz” just sounds like a yucky word. Unclean is “ta-may (טָמֵא)” in Hebrew, and the word has synonyms such as “defiled,” “polluted,” “made foul,” or “contaminated.” These adjectives are not appetizing to be sure, but it’s much more than this. The LORD said He does not want us to make ourselves abominable or unclean in His presence, and the LORD is not just an earthly sweetheart whom we can go out and replace with someone else who agrees with our own tastes—though by the way so many people live today, it’s clear many people make the assumption He can be replaced with anything we fancy. The Truth is: He cannot. He is our eternal King, our eternal spouse, the one who has the power to kill and make alive, to wound and to heal, and there is no one who can deliver from His hand (Deuteronomy 32:39). He wants us to want Him, if you will, and He gives us the freedom to choose whether or not we do things His way. But ultimately, just like you and me, He desires a spouse who loves Him and cares for the things that He cares about. We are made in His image, and so, He desires our desire. He wants us to consecrate ourselves, which is “kadash (קָדַשׁ),” and be holy, which is “kadosh (קָדוֹשׁ),” because He is “kadosh, kadosh, kadosh.” To come into His presence, we must become more and more like Him. He wants us “set apart,” “consecrated,” “saintly,” “pure” and “good,” so that we are a bride that is ready for Him. The LORD has saved us by His blood through His sacrifice for us on the cross, and He rose up into eternal life to show us the way to go so we can be with Him. Eating clean does not save us, the grace of our LORD saves us. But how can we say that we love Him if we do not do the things that please Him? Let me put it this way: If we truly love the guy or gal who is wooing us to become our husband or wife, shouldn’t we woo him or her back?

The LORD commanded us to have no other god before Him in Exodus 20, to put Him first in our lives and to seek Him with all of our hearts, souls, mind as well as our strength—our words and actions. This kind of love is what we want from Him, for sure, so why wouldn’t He want the same from us? I know far too many who say they love Him but won’t even give up their bacon or their shrimp cocktail. What is more important? To build a lasting relationship with the Creator of Heaven and Earth and everything in it, or to eat food that the world has called a delicacy and gives some people a temporary pleasure but the LORD calls detestable? Don’t feel condemned if you’re not there yet, but take note. There is no greater pleasure than the intimate relationship we can have with Yeshua, and to build on what we already have. The LORD desires that we set ourselves apart for Him. The Apostle Paul writes, relatedly, “Not that I have already attained, or am already perfected; but I press on, that I may lay hold of that for which Messiah Yeshua has also laid hold of me. Brethren, I do not count myself to have apprehended; but one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind and reaching forward to those things which are ahead, I press toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Messiah Yeshua” (Philippians 3:12-14). It’s not that we’re perfect now, but we ought to desire to be. It’s not that we’re living out the commandments without error, or even that we’re teaching them with 100 percent accuracy, and this is why we must remain humble, but we ought to be men and women who desire to please the LORD more and more with each passing day. We ought to be growing closer to Him, by walking in the way He walked, and also eating in the way He commanded us to eat, because we love Him.

Paul continues, urging us to have the “same mind” as him, rather than of those who are in the world, and he explains a contrast here. Listen closely, for his point is important: “Brethren, join in following my

example, and note those who so walk, as you have us for a pattern. For many walk, of whom I have told you often, and now tell you even weeping, that they are the enemies of the cross of Messiah: whose end is destruction, whose god is their belly, and whose glory is in their shame—who set their mind on earthly things. For our citizenship is in heaven, from which we also eagerly wait for the Savior, the Lord Messiah Yeshua, who will transform our lowly body that it may be conformed to His glorious body, according to the working by which He is able even to subdue all things to Himself” (Philippians 3:17-21). If we can’t give up abominable or unclean food that the LORD detests to please Him, how can we say that we love Him and seek Him with all of our heart? Haven’t we made a god out of the things that we believe taste good—that which is yummy in our tummy? Note this: There are other ways to make a god out of our belly. Perhaps we cause strife against those who have not yet reached the point of understanding on these points, and that is the other side of the equation of how we might make a god out of earthly things. Ought we not love our brothers and sisters who haven’t yet obeyed the LORD in this area, patiently showing them by our example what the LORD has instructed His people to do? Might we make a god out of our belly by insisting on being vegan or vegetarian, while accusing those who choose to eat meat? Might we make a god out of our belly by instigating those who eat only vegetables? Might we be building earthly religion into our lives if we hold ourselves up as holy by eating clean, or fasting every week, or fasting one day instead of another? Shouldn’t we rather obey the Word of the LORD and humbly teach others to do the same, knowing that we too have fallen short? (Romans 14 references).

Yeshua gave us a parable at the end of Matthew 24 that might help us in this arena. He said, “Who then is a faithful and wise servant, whom his master made ruler over his household, to give them food in due season? Blessed is that servant whom his master, when he comes, will find so doing. Assuredly, I say to you that he will make him ruler over all his goods. But if that evil servant says in his heart, ‘My master is delaying his coming,’ and begins to beat his fellow servants, and to eat and drink with the drunkards, the master of that servant will come on a day when he is not looking for him and at an hour that he is not aware of, and will cut him in two and appoint him his portion with the hypocrites. There shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth” (Matthew 24:45-51). In this section, Yeshua wasn’t necessarily speaking about literal food here. The faithful and wise servant who gives food in due season is the Christian who has matured enough to bear fruit in the Kingdom of God; this is the one who knows the Word and can go out and teach it to others. The food is Truth that comes from reading the Word of God, with the help of the Holy Spirit, and this food is what the faithful servant offers to others in the right season. But look at the evil servant. He or she is the one who beats his fellow servants while eating and drinking with the drunkards. In other words, this person is not eating and drinking according to the law of God, both literally and figuratively, and he or she is belittling and criticizing the LORD’s servants who are following and teaching His Word more accurately. This type of person does not faithfully follow the Word of the LORD, but they practice lawlessness brazenly, with pride in their hearts. They are confident that the LORD will overlook both their sin and their poor treatment of others who are living righteously, but this confidence is misplaced. The LORD considers folks hypocrites who do not both trust in His grace and also follow His commandments.

In 1 Peter 1:13-16, the Apostle wrote the following as if directed toward those today who say they love Jesus, but do not do what He has asked His people to do. We read: “Therefore gird up the loins of your mind, be sober, and rest your hope fully upon the grace that is to be brought to you at the revelation of Messiah Yeshua; as obedient children, not conforming yourselves to the former lusts, as in your ignorance; but as He who called you is holy, you also be holy in all your conduct, because it is written,

“Be holy, for I am holy.” Our former lusts, whether food, drink, drugs, sex, or raunchy music, must be cast away from us when we want to draw in near to our LORD and Savior Yeshua. Our minds must dwell on Him, not on our former way of living, we must be sober both physically and spiritually. While resting in the grace we have in the salvation He has offered us, we ought to throw off the days of ignorance when we lived for worldly things, and instead be holy in our conduct, doing what the LORD has explained to us is holy. Is eating clean a big deal? Yes, I believe that it is. It’s not that we’re going to lose our salvation for accidentally eating swine bristles in our pizza crust or gelatin in our cooking wine, but if our heart is not to recognize such abominable things and work to throw off our desire for what the LORD says is detestable, let’s just say, I would not want to be in that position. Like I said, I dumped the porky wine and I picked the right pizza place. We bring our own turkey pepperoni in to ensure our pizzas come home clean, and the owner is happy to help us out. We read labels. It’s not hard, it’s just intentional to do these little things that the LORD desires, because we love Him. And here’s the other thing. In making these moves, I don’t feel sorrow that I can’t have something to eat that I might have wanted in a former day. I actually feel sorrow that I had previously eaten something that the LORD, my LORD and my God, said is detestable to Him. There’s a difference, and Paul articulates it plainly in 2 Corinthians 7:10. He wrote, “godly sorrow produces repentance leading to salvation, not to be regretted; but the sorrow of the world produces death.” When we feel sorry for doing something displeasing to the LORD, and seek His forgiveness and then walk rightly, He forgives us. This is godly sorrow. But when we feel sorrow about something we have to give up because the LORD said so, this is worldly sorrow. God doesn’t want us to do what He says blindly out of fear of death, for this very thing leads to death. God wants us to desire to please Him, because that desire exhibits our love for Him and what He has said is good, and this desire builds a loving relationship that continues on forever. We ought to feel sorrow for hurting God. We ought not feel sorrow thinking God is keeping us from something that we desire. God doesn’t keep us from anything good. He has told us what is good, and He desires that we do what is just, what is merciful and that we walk humbly before Him, knowing and fully trusting that what He has commanded is good for us (Micah 6:8).

And so, as it pertains to the food we eat, what does the LORD say is good. In Genesis 1:29, He said to Adam, “See, I have given you every herb that yields seed which is on the face of all the earth, and every tree whose fruit yields seed; to you it shall be for food.” It can be said that from the beginning, God made us vegetarians. Even the animals. We read in the very next verse: “Also, to every beast of the earth, to every bird of the air, and to everything that creeps on the earth, in which there is life, I have given every green herb for food.” There is a very specific reason for this articulated diet. In God’s good creation, before the fall of Adam and Eve in disobedience, there was no such thing as death. God did not create it, and nor did He even conceive of it in His heart. Death, which is eternal separation from God, was only something that the disobedient would experience. God is holy, and our holy God cannot dwell with anything unholy, for that would make Him unholy, and He is holy. Thus, anything unholy must be separated from Him, and this separation from God is death. We know that God Himself came in the flesh to die for us to solve this problem, so that all who trust in Yeshua would be imparted holiness on account of His sacrifice. In our obedience to His will, we can walk again with God in the world today, and in His coming Kingdom, forever and ever. As much as I give thanks and praise to God for this reality, I don’t want to go off on a tangent about the wonderful story of our redemption today. Let’s go back to the beginning and contemplate for just another moment this powerful Truth: In the beginning, there was no death, and in the end there will be no death again. The LORD showed John the Revelator this Truth directly, as we read in Revelation 21:4: “There will no longer be any death.” That being said, it’s

reasonable to propose that our diet will return to herbs, seeds and fruits in the Kingdom of Heaven. For the meat lovers out there, myself included, I can't imagine our loving, limitless God creating an eternity that lacks in any good thing, and in this we need to trust Him. So with the fall, came death, and with death, came sacrifices and offerings and eventually the consumption of meat, but meat didn't enter our diet until after the flood, and again, the explanation and interpretation is straightforward.

After Noah, his three sons and their wives—eight people—walked off the ark into the post-flood world for the first time, God blessed Noah and his sons, and said to them: "Be fruitful and multiply, and fill the earth. And the fear of you and the dread of you shall be on every beast of the earth, on every bird of the air, on all that move on the earth, and on all the fish of the sea. They are given into your hand. Every moving thing that lives shall be food for you. I have given you all things, even as the green herbs. But you shall not eat flesh with its life, that is, its blood. Surely for your lifeblood I will demand a reckoning; from the hand of every beast I will require it, and from the hand of man. From the hand of every man's brother I will require the life of man" (Genesis 9:1-5). Does this mean that God allowed Noah to eat rats, lizards, pigs, cats and maybe even dinosaurs? No! After the flood, potentially due to major ecological changes, God allowed man to eat clean meats, which He defined both before and after this statement. The word "clean" is not present here in this verse, but it is implied by both the context and logic. The whole Earth had just flooded. There were no crops to eat, no fields ready to plant, and an ice age was on the horizon. Clean meat was the only thing readily available to eat. Not only that, the climate had changed drastically, environmental factors were different, and men needed the nutrients from meat to thrive, and I personally believe we still do.

But why clean meats, and not all meats? If you turn back just a few chapters, we can see that Noah brought seven pairs of clean animals on the ark, and only two unclean animals. We read in Genesis 7:1-3, "Then the Lord said to Noah, 'Come into the ark, you and all your household, because I have seen that you are righteous before Me in this generation. You shall take with you seven each of every clean animal, a male and his female; two each of animals that are unclean, a male and his female; also seven each of birds of the air, male and female, to keep the species alive on the face of all the earth.'" Besides the use of the words "clean" and "unclean" here, which are certainly relevant, the LORD also made it clear that the purpose of this ark was to keep each species alive on the face of all the earth. The LORD desired His creation to persist, though in a new, reset world without the abominations of the world that had perished. Logically, I pose the following question to you first: If Noah or his sons were to suddenly slay an unclean animal for food when he came off of the ark, isn't it certain that the species would go extinct? There were only two unclean animals, a male and its female. Conceivably, no pun intended, killing either one of them would severely impede the LORD's goal to preserve each species. This could not be what God desired, and nor can it be what He permitted. On the contrary, when God told Noah to bring seven pairs of clean animals on the ark, He knew that He was going to allow man to eat from this meat after the flood subsided. Later in Scripture, in more than two places, God identified specifically for all of His people what He meant by food when it comes to eating meat. But Noah also knew what God meant. How could that be, one might ask, if the law given to Moses did not yet exist? I think the answer is straightforward. In Hebrews 13:8, we read: "Messiah Yeshua is the same yesterday, today, and forever." And according to the written account of Genesis 6:9, we read: "Noah was a righteous man, blameless even, and he walked with God." In other words, Noah walked with Yeshua. He knew the LORD personally—intimately even—and the LORD taught him what was clean and unclean, just like He taught Moses. The Scripture doesn't say this specifically, but this truth is certainly visible

within the context of the whole counsel of God. How else would Noah know what animals were clean, and which unclean? Did he read Moses's book before it was written? Yes, for the Word of the LORD is eternal and stands firm in the heavens, we read in Psalm 119:89. What about a different idea?: Did Moses go back and write the law into Noah's story? I don't believe the Scripture allows for this interpretation. When we read, "these are the records of the generations of Noah," this clause literally means that Noah's sons recorded their father's history in a book and passed it on down through their generations. My conclusion is that Noah knew the law of God because he knew God; he walked with Him, according to His Word, and he or his sons wrote down exactly what happened so we would know it, and be able to learn from him.

There's more to the verse in context with the whole counsel of God that needs to be drawn out before we continue. Regarding Genesis 9:3, when we read, "Every moving thing that lives shall be food for you. I have given you all things, even as the green herbs," we have to be careful not to practice "isolational analysis," as Pastor Daniel Joseph of Corner Fringe Ministries likes to say. Poor exegesis takes a single verse out of context and attributes meaning to it that is not intended by the surrounding text. This eisegesis tends to happen when men read what their own hearts want to hear in the Word, rather than what God is trying to communicate. How do we parse this. We know an interpretation is wrong when it benefits only our flesh, and not our Spirit, or when it contradicts other Scripture. So, let's compare Genesis 9:3 with a verse in Deuteronomy 12:15, and note that this time God is speaking directly to Israel, the same Israel to whom He gave His food laws in Leviticus 11, which Moses repeated in Deuteronomy 14. Here we read: "You may slaughter and eat meat within all your gates, whatever your heart desires, according to the blessing of the LORD your God which He has given you; the unclean and the clean may eat of it, of the gazelle and the deer alike." Wait! ... Whatever your heart desires? So, in Leviticus 11 and Deuteronomy 14, God expressly commands Israel to eat only clean meat, but in Deuteronomy 12, God contradicts Himself and says they can eat anything that moves? Certainly NOT! In fact, the LORD made clear, Israel may eat whatever their hearts desire "according to the blessing of the LORD your God which He has given you." In fact, whether a person is clean or unclean, they may eat clean meat, the gazelle and the deer alike. Both the gazelle and the deer are clean animals. It is clear within the context that the LORD intends to communicate the same message in both passages. Both Noah and his sons and Moses and all of Israel may now eat meat, but they ought to eat only the meat that the LORD has blessed them with and identified as clean and holy. Similarly, Paul writes in Romans 14: "For one believes he may eat all things, but he who is weak eats only vegetables." When Paul says "all things," he does not make room for unclean meat. The controversy of the first century was between the Nazarenes who ate both clean meat and vegetables and the Essenes who ate only vegetables. Paul said not to make a big deal about this difference, but rather to put love for Messiah Yeshua first. The Apostle would not have even dreamed that followers of Yeshua would consider eating anything unclean, because God's commandments are clear.

And so Moses, particularly in Leviticus 11, but also in Deuteronomy 14 later, recorded for posterity the eternal law of God that was known and practiced by Noah, the children of Israel, Yeshua and the Apostle Paul, as well as everyone who loved God in between and afterward. He told us what is good. He said, "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. ... 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 ... these you may eat of every flying insect that creeps on all

fours: those which have jointed legs above their feet with which to leap on the earth.” (Leviticus 11:2-3, 9, 21) Regarding the birds, the LORD explained what kind of birds we cannot eat, presumably including all the birds He doesn’t mention in verses 13-19. Outside telling us what is good, the LORD also gave a long list of animals that we cannot eat, which included swine, shellfish, the abomination and the mouse. When John later wrote in 1 John 5:3, “for this is the love of God, that we keep His commandments, and His commandments are not burdensome,” I agree with him. The LORD really does spell it all out for us here. It’s not difficult to keep the food laws, and in fact, keeping them is for our own good. I want to remind you, the LORD said at the end of Leviticus 11: “I am the LORD your God. You shall therefore consecrate yourselves, and you shall be holy; for I am holy” (Leviticus 11:44a). He also said, “This is the law of the animals and the birds and every living creature that moves in the waters, and of every creature that creeps on the earth, to distinguish between the unclean and the clean, and between the animal that may be eaten and the animal that may not be eaten.” (Leviticus 11:46-47). This is a simple thing. There are two things that moved my heart to accept this law’s application in my life and to reject the tradition of the elders in the Christian churches around us that rejected these laws, and there was a third thing that sealed the deal. First, there is Messianic prophesy that explains how the LORD is going to take the food laws seriously at the End of Days, and this passage shocked me. Second, good teachers have properly explained the New Testament verses that bad teachers incorrectly used to explain away the food laws, and this brought clarity for me. And third, my love for the LORD as I began to pursue Him in all of His ways drew me in to do things His way instead of my own way. Today, my growing relationship with the LORD that results from pursuing Him like this as His Holy Spirit sanctifies me drives me forward toward the perfection toward which He is calling me. Every moment of the journey gives me peace and joy. I desire this for everyone who comes to know Yeshua. As we move into the last section of today’s message, I want to briefly cover these three topics, and perhaps someday in the future we can cover them more extensively.

I first want to share with you the verse that shocked me. Let’s explore Isaiah 66:12-17. I have it up on the screen, so please follow along. I’m going to interject commentary along the way. As you first take a look at the verse, note that it has two bookends that specify this prophesy is one singular Word of the LORD. In the beginning, the prophet Isaiah writes, “For thus says the LORD,” and at the end, we read “says the LORD.” Everything in between these statements is a full and intentional prophesy about the End of Days, and it comes directly from the LORD. During that time, to Israel, the LORD said: “I will extend peace to her like a river,” and to the nations, the LORD says, “and the glory of the Gentiles like a flowing stream.” In that time, both Jews and Gentiles will feed on the eternal food that the LORD provides, like manna from Heaven, which is the Word who became flesh, namely Messiah Yeshua. How do I know this? The LORD said He will comfort both Israel and the nations, like a mother who dandles a child on her knees, in Jerusalem. He Himself said he longed to gather his people like a mother hen gathers her chicks under her wings (Matthew 23:37), and so this prophesy was not fulfilled with Yeshua’s first coming. Those believers who ultimately see this will rejoice in their hearts, and our bones will flourish like grass, we read. This is an analogous prophesy to Ezekiel’s Word in Ezekiel 37, where the LORD says to the prophet, “Prophesy to these dry bones and say to them ... My people, I am going to open your graves and bring you up from them; I will bring you back to the land of Israel. Then you, my people, will know that I am the LORD, when I open your graves and bring you up from them. I will put my Spirit in you and you will live, and I will settle you in your own land.” In Isaiah 66, the LORD says, “the hand of the LORD shall be known to His servants, and His indignation to His enemies. For behold, the LORD will come with fire and with His chariots, like a whirlwind, to render His anger with fury, and

His rebuke with flames of fire. For by fire and by His sword the LORD will judge all flesh; and the slain of the LORD shall be many." In John 5:28-29, Yeshua said to His disciples, "Do not marvel at this; for the hour is coming in which all who are in the graves will hear His voice and come forth— those who have done good, to the resurrection of life, and those who have done evil, to the resurrection of condemnation." Clearly, the right hand of the LORD is Yeshua, who will come to judge the living and the dead. He will be known to His servants, for His sheep know His voice and will go to Him, while He will utterly destroy His enemies. This is similar to so many prophecies in Old Testament and New Testament alike. Before we move on, I also want to point out Revelation 22:12-15, where we read the LORD say, "Look, I am coming soon! My reward is with me, and I will give to each person according to what they have done. I am the Alpha and the Omega, the First and the Last, the Beginning and the End. Blessed are those who wash their robes, that they may have the right to the tree of life and may go through the gates into the city. Outside are the dogs, those who practice magic arts, the sexually immoral, the murderers, the idolaters and everyone who loves and practices falsehood." We want to be inside the gates of the city, for this is where we will be with the LORD, and to be there we have to wash our robes through the grace He offers us and by following Him in righteousness. Outside is where all of the lawless ones will be judged by fire and the sword of the LORD, which is the Word of God. They are literally judged by the Truth of God's Word for the falsehood they practice, which is disobedience to the LORD's commandments. 2 Peter 3:9-11 speaks about this day, also. The Apostle wrote: "The LORD is ... long-suffering toward us, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance. But the day of the LORD will come as a thief in the night, in which the heavens will pass away with a great noise, and the elements will melt with fervent heat; both the earth and the works that are in it will be burned up. Therefore, since all these things will be dissolved, what manner of persons ought you to be in holy conduct and godliness." (2 Peter 3:9-11). The parallels in these verses are unmistakable, and there are many more that align with Isaiah 66, indicating it refers to the same prophetic timeframe. And these parallel verses are what make the last part of Isaiah's prophecy the most alarming. We read as the prophecy concludes, "Those who sanctify themselves and purify themselves, to go to the gardens after an idol in the midst, eating swine's flesh and the abomination and the mouse, shall be consumed together," says the Lord." In other words, those who come into God's church attempting to be sanctified by His Holy Spirit, but they eat swine's flesh and other unclean foods, these will be consumed in the fire of God that is coming to destroy the lawless ones. Is this a certain prophecy? Is the LORD going to be lenient or strict on this? I can't judge on these points. I leave it to God to judge. All I can tell you is that this passage convicted me to obey the law of God pertaining to clean foods, but it did more than this. With today's pharmaceutical companies offering drugs made using the abomination of human fetal tissue and the lab rat, I am terrified for those who are caught up in the trappings of our modern pharmaceutical industry. Many drugs today are made with swine's flesh also, so take note. In Revelation 18, the prophet John writes about Babylon the great falling at the hand of the LORD and His angels. The voice from heaven shouts out, "Come out of her, my people, lest you share in her sins, and lest you receive of her plagues." This is a warning for us to take seriously the sins that Babylon, which represents the predominant worldly system at the end of days, and walk away from them. Among the many things listed here about Babylon, John writes in verse 23, "The light of a lamp shall not shine in you anymore, and the voice of the bridegroom and the bride shall not be heard in you anymore. For your merchants were the great men of the earth, for by your sorcery all the nations were deceived" (Revelation 18:23). The word sorcery here is "pharmakeia," a Greek word that speaks to the use of medicine, drugs or spells. I believe we ought to take these warnings seriously, for they are all saying the same thing. We cannot put our lives in the hands of the worldly system, but rather we must trust in God. Nor can we trust in our

own righteousness by eating whatever we'd like or putting every new invention into our bodies. Paul wrote in 1 Corinthians 3:16-17, "Do you not know that you are the temple of God, and that the Spirit of God dwells in you? If anyone defiles the temple of God, God will destroy him. For the temple of God is holy, which temple you are." Does this not speak precisely to the LORD's declaration at the end of Leviticus 11 in verse 45: "You therefore be holy, for I am holy." We cannot go into the gardens, into the place where God dwells, into our churches or places of worship and defy the Word of the LORD. Rather, we ought to turn toward the LORD and all of His ways and seek Him first. I'm not sure if this verse in Isaiah 66 shocks you as it did me, but I will leave you with this. After reading this prophesy, I turned my heart to obey the LORD's food laws, and unlike the rabbis who make exceptions for medicines, I've applied Leviticus 11 to every area of my life, because I love Yeshua. Thank God the LORD continues to help me move away from what is unclean and abominable, and I pray He helps you also.

As we move into the second of my final three points, I want to turn to Acts 15. What's interesting about this section is that most mainstream Christian pastors use Acts 15 to show that we no longer have to keep the laws of Moses, but only perform these four things, but the chapter actually teaches exactly the opposite of this. There is a question at the beginning of the chapter pertaining to Gentiles coming into the faith that the chapter answers. It is a question relative to conversion. The Messianic Pharisees asked the Jerusalem Council of Apostles: "It is necessary to circumcise them, and to command them to keep the law of Moses." I'm not going to cover this in detail today. The answer to the first question is "no," or perhaps "not necessarily," and the answer to the second one is "yes," and the rest of the chapter bears this out. Do Gentiles need to be circumcised in order to be recognized as saved followers of Yeshua? Absolutely not! Following the Maccabean revolt against Antiochus Epiphanies IV, the Jews developed a detailed conversion ritual designed to separate faithful Jews from the turncoats who had supported the invading Assyrian forces, and circumcision was part of that, but it wasn't part of God's plan. And so in the First Century, these Messianic Pharisees were attempting to apply their tradition on converting Gentiles, but the council ruled against this. Instead, James, who gave the final decision for the council said this: "Known to God from eternity are all His works. 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" (Acts 15:18-21). In reading this, I ask: 'Are the Christians you know even doing these four things?' That aside, let's analyze these four prohibitions that new Gentile converts into Christianity must do immediately. Sexual immorality was something that Gentiles engaged in at their temples to worship pagan gods. They practiced cult prostitution and other disgusting sexual depravity, and the council ruled that they must stop doing those things immediately when they became Christian, because our God is a jealous God who will not share our affections. The other three prohibitions are related. The Gentiles becoming followers of Messiah Yeshua must abstain from things polluted by idols, things strangled and from consuming blood. As we read in Genesis 9 and in Leviticus 11, blood defiles clean meat, and so does strangling the animals for food, because such a practice causes the blood to coagulate before being fully drained. Additionally, sacrificing animals to idols pollutes otherwise clean meat. All three of these prohibitions makes clean meat into unclean meat, thus implied within the very passage is a requirement that Gentiles eat clean meat as God commanded. But I don't have to rely on a word study to show this, for the rest of the passage makes this clear. James said, "known to God from eternity are all His works." In other words, the law of God and everything God has made, done or asked of His people is known to all. Paul said the same thing in Romans 1, when he wrote: "what may be known of

God is manifest in [all men], for God has shown it to them. For since the creation of the world His invisible attributes are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even His eternal power and Godhead, so that they are without excuse" (Romans 1:19-20). Now James explains that the Word of God is available for converting Gentiles to read and adopt. As if to add a bookend to this statement in Acts, James also said at the end of his decision, "For Moses has had throughout many generations those who preach him in every city, being read in the synagogues every Sabbath." In other words, these Gentiles must stop polluting the foods they eat and their bodies, and they ought to cleanse their temple as soon as they come in to the faith. God dwells within our bodies, and we must cleanse our bodies by repenting of our sins and walking in the newness of life in Messiah Yeshua in order to welcome His Holy Spirit. To cleanse our bodies, it is essential that we not only eat what God said is good in His Word, but we must also avoid defiling ourselves or anything that is clean. And then, with clean hands and pure hearts, we can turn toward learning the rest of Torah and putting it into practice as we grow in our faith. Each Sabbath day, all Christians ought to hear the Torah preached, which will convict those who are truly following after Yeshua to repent and walk with Him.

There are several other verses in the New Testament I could bring up for discussion in this topic, but it will have to wait for another time. Next week, you will hear me discuss the story of Cornelius in another context—namely, how the story shows that Gentiles were being grafted-in to Israel through faith in the Messiah Yeshua, but that story also relates to this topic indirectly. Many have misinterpreted Peter's vision of unclean animals coming down in a sheet as a sign from God that we can now eat unclean foods, but as you will see, the story has absolutely nothing to do with what we eat. We already touched on Romans 14, and how it discusses the disagreement between vegetarians and those who ate clean meats. And then there's the controversy in Mathew 15 and Mark 7, which within context we can see was specifically about eating bread with unwashed hands. In fact, in those sections, Yeshua made it clear that He held obedience to God's commandments in much higher esteem than keeping the traditions of the elders. He wouldn't then teach us to violate them in the same lesson. God has commanded that His people eat certain foods, and so we ought to do it. Finally, in 1 Timothy 4, Paul writes that "in the latter times some will depart from the faith, giving heed to deceiving spirits and doctrines of demons, speaking lies in hypocrisy, having their own consciences seared with a hot iron, forbidding to marry 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 refused if it is received with thanksgiving; for it is sanctified by the word of God and prayer." I'm going to spend a minute or two here before we close. The first question: Who are those who speak lies in hypocrisy, whose consciences are seared with a hot iron? Could Paul possibly be writing about those Christians who obey the commandments of God? To have your conscience seared means that you no longer have any sensitivity to lawlessness. You can steal and not think anything of it. You can add commandments to the Word of God or take commandments away and not think twice. You can commit adultery as a pastor or even have relations with your father's wife, as we see spelled out in 1 Corinthians 5, and think it's OK to show up at church the next week. These are the ones who have seared consciences and speak with hypocrisy. The hypocrites are the lawless ones, those who say they have faith in Yeshua but then don't do anything He commanded us to do. The controversy here relative to food then relates to the same controversy in Romans 14. Some Christians were commanding other Christians to eat only vegetables, and in fact, they taught that it was sin to eat meat. We weren't talking about pork or horse meat here. These were vegetarians who were accusing Christians who ate clean meat, for only clean meat is "sanctified by the Word of God and prayer," as Paul explained to Timothy. The Word of God does not

sanctify unclean meat, but rather calls it an abomination. Only someone with a seared conscience could say it's OK to defile our bodies with what God has called unclean. Every creature of God is good, and a creature of God that is good to eat is one that God has said is good to eat. Paul is simply explaining for the second time that Christians should not fight about vegetarianism versus the consumption of clean meat, and the vegetarians or vegans who think that God has commanded their practices are deceived.

Now, if you're a vegan or a vegetarian, Paul also explains that we who eat clean meat ought to say nothing against you. He writes in Romans 14:1-4: "Receive one who is weak in the faith, but not to disputes over doubtful things. For one believes he may eat all things, but he who is weak eats only vegetables. Let not him who eats despise him who does not eat, and let not him who does not eat judge him who eats; for God has received him. Who are you to judge another's servant? To his own master he stands or falls. Indeed, he will be made to stand, for God is able to make him stand." Why are these doubtful things? We've covered this. In the beginning, God absolutely commanded us to eat only vegetables, but after Noah departed from the ark, he permitted us to eat clean meat, and so it comes down to this: "let each of us give account of [ourselves] to God. ... Let us not judge one another anymore, but rather resolve this, not to put a stumbling block or a cause to fall in our brother's way." I truly believe this verse speaks to my third point. It is for the love of God that we decide to eat the foods He said are clean and to avoid those that are abominable. If one brother interprets these verses differently than another, so be it. This is between them and God. We're not talking about pork or shellfish here, mind you, but vegetables and clean meats. That being said, we have to be mindful of the deception that has been taught about these verses and the others that we'll get to another time. It is critical that we teach about foods with gentleness, not pushing our way on others, but leading by example and love. If we aren't obeying the LORD's commandments out of love for Him, then we're not obeying them at all. We don't obey God to lord our obedience over anyone, because we are all saved by grace through faith so none of us can boast. If there is anything to boast in, it is the LORD, for He has prepared the good works for us to do beforehand, and it is our great pleasure to have the opportunity to walk in them (Ephesians 2:8-10). Obedience to the LORD with the motivation of love brings peace and joy and a closer relationship with Yeshua, but without His grace there isn't a single one of us who will make it into His kingdom. And so, brothers and sisters, as we prepare to head downstairs and eat with one another, let us remember that "the kingdom of God is not eating and drinking, but righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Spirit" (Romans 14:17). Shabbat shalom!