LEVITICUS

Lesson 18 - Chapter 11 Conclusion

We're going to continue the very complex issue of clean and unclean, holy and common, and kosher and non-kosher diet today. I want to begin by stating that I don't pretend to have all the truth on these matters. Entire denominations and Jewish sects have been built around them, so widely varying are the beliefs. I am telling you what I think to be the case.

We looked at Mark 7 last week and I demonstrated to you that, as with all Scripture, one must put every verse within its proper context AND its proper cultural context for the time. To do otherwise is a complete waste of time and can create and perpetuate the most error-filled doctrines. The proper context for Mark 7 was not the eating of kosher food; rather it was all about the ritual hand washing that had been instituted by various Rabbis. This hand washing had nothing to do with sanitation; it had to do with making the hands the would touch the Kosher food ritually clean otherwise the uncleanness of the hands would transfer to the food and negate it's status as clean.

Now lets go to another place in the New Testament where it is said that uncleanness (at least of food) was abolished: Romans 14.

READ ROMANS CHAPTER 14 all

Now, this chapter....so typically Paul.....seems to muddy the waters even further about kosher eating: but there is some information here that can help us. But first let's get the context clear.....this chapter is speaking to Believers. In fact it is speaking primarily to **gentile** Believers in Rome; gentile Believers who live in a pagan culture and who know NOTHING of Torah, and especially of the Jewish purity laws that had been elaborated and expanded to the nth degree by Sages and Rabbis for centuries.

Let me repeat that because it is so key; just as the entire Old Testament and all but a small fraction of the New is speaking to Jews within a Jewish culture, there are a few places that speak to gentiles within a gentile culture. Romans, Corinthians, Galatians, Colossians, and Ephesians have sections devoted to gentiles, and use a clumsy gentile terminology (remember, Paul WAS a Jew) and Romans 14 is one of those sections.

This chapter opens by discussing two *kinds* of Believers (both gentile): those with weak trust, and those with strong trust. The idea is that weak Believers are easily swayed, easily offended, they are unsure and vacillate on spiritual matters and so are easily swept up in doubt that what they believe is true. More to the point, these weak Believers are some gentiles who have not

sufficiently matured in their new found faith, yet, to let go of deeply embedded Roman cultural customs that include Roman holy days (there were dozens of holy days because there were so many gods and goddesses), religious festivals to these gods AND to the Emperor, even so-called Sabbaths invoked by the Roman government.

Those gentiles who are identified as having strong trust are those who have (despite the family and social pressures) given up most of the Roman cultural customs that offend the principles within the Holy Scripture, and in the midst of this gentile world they live in adopted Torah principles. These so-called strong Believers are confident in their faith, they know why they do what they do, are understanding of others who practice their beliefs a little differently, and so can better resist people who might come along and question, or criticize, their own religious practices.

This was Paul's audience in the book of Romans. So he has to explain a lot of spiritual matters to a bunch of utterly ignorant gentiles with pagan backgrounds... and he also has to speak to yet a minority part of his audience consisting of tradition-based Jews (mostly Messianic Jews) who had long ago tossed aside most of the intended purpose and meaning of Torah. Most of these Jews had long ago migrated to the Roman Empire and so were thoroughly indoctrinated in Roman culture. Of course each these new Believers brought a lot of their old false beliefs and traditions, from whatever was their background, with them.....generally not even recognizing these deceptions for what they were because they were such an entrenched part of their lives......just as it is for us, today.

So Paul explains that food should never be an excuse for disharmony among Believers. All things should be done to honor the Lord. No one should be judgmental of a brother or sister in Christ who eats differently than they do. What is most important is not to eat, or to drink wine, or to do something in a manner that will cause your weaker brother to stumble. WHY? Because this is all about the Kingdom of God......of which spiritual Israel is a part. In this new spiritual reality while the clean and the unclean foods still exist, for Believers who make up true, spiritual Israel, ritual takes on a new light.

Then Paul says something in the midst of chapter 14 that I think brings us to the crux of the matter when it comes to the question of dietary laws: he says, in the last half of verse 14 that " if a person considers something unclean, then for him it is unclean", and later in verse 22 "the belief you hold about such things, keep between yourself and God......but the doubter comes under condemnation if he eats, because his action is NOT based on trust. And anything not based on trust is sin". He also points out that **nothing is unclean of itself.....** that is, a hawk, or a pig, for example, wasn't created physically unclean. It is not a matter of hygienic or nutritious verses unhealthy. It's a designation Yehoveh gave to certain things; I'm not sure of all the reasons for His choices, but what I am certain of is that Yehoveh did NOT create several species of defective animals. And, I'm also certain that this all has to do with teaching mankind about spiritual principles in a way we can be taught.

While much of the church has decided that the statement "nothing is unclean of itself" means the laws of Kosher eating no longer apply, other elements of the church use it to say that homosexuality, bestiality, even adultery are also no longer applicable. They say that Paul's statement validates the concept of moral relativism whereby as it says a little later in Romans

14, "What is important is for each to be convinced in his own mind".

Now some of you may scoff at this and say how can segments of the church say that those two statements together establish moral relativism as a God-ordained principle? Well, that is what it says, isn't it? If one declares that unclean has been completely done away with, and that we can just run around deciding what is clean and unclean for ourselves, then why would you argue against the formerly unclean act of having sex with animals as now being perfectly fine in God's eyes? Or that since **everything** has been declared clean then the unclean act of prostitution must also be perfectly fine. Look; I'm not giving you hypothetical situations; this has been happening for centuries within the church. Do you see where this sort of thinking leads?

Folks is just isn't possible to (on the one hand) have Christ declare during the Sermon on the Mount that not one iota of the Torah has He set aside, and that anyone who teaches such a thing shall be considered the least in the Kingdom of Heaven; but on the other say that He HAS abolished the laws of clean and unclean. So, what is it that we are missing here?

We all inherently know that bestiality and prostitution have not been declared as acceptable to God. So to remedy this conundrum some pick and choose where unclean has been abolished (food being the favored target) and at other times unclean still exists. One reason Paul is so studied, and often vilified, is because it SEEMS he will contradict himself from one epistle to the next or (like here) even within the same verse. I think I have, thankfully, gained some insight into this misunderstanding that I'd like to share with you.

What Paul is getting at when he says that each has to make up his own mind about some things concerning ritual cleanliness is this: I have stated on numerous occasions that sometimes we need to be a little more respectful and understanding of Jewish Traditions because more often than not they are simply an honest attempt to fill in some very substantial blanks left in the laws and regulations in the Torah. There are so many broad principles that are laid out in the Bible but when it comes to the details of exactly HOW to institute them, we have precious little (if any) solid Scriptural direction. The Hebrews had been dealing with this issue for centuries and the result was the voluminous Jewish Traditions, some of which really went off the deep end. Yet, there were hundreds of legitimate issues that had to be decided by somebody; among the Jews this was an already accomplished task. But, among the gentiles of Rome (these new Believers) they were just now beginning to deal with these matters and Paul was explaining that they were NOT obligated to always do things as the Jews had decided to do them. Therefore as they stumbled across these many difficult issues, they were to use what they had learned to establish their own solutions. And that is exactly what has happened within the gentile church; each of the several thousand denominations has come up with their own solutions to fill in the blanks. And, we usually sit around and snipe at one another because our solution is God-ordained but yours isn't. Paul is telling these gentile Believers of Rome NOT to do that.

There is no doubt that anyone who has been a Christian for more than a few weeks soon finds that the Holy Scriptures gives us principles and commands which often times puts us in a bind. That is we find ourselves in situations whereby we have a hard time knowing what to do to

obey Yehoveh, because two or more Godly principles that apply to our situation seem to be at odds with each other; if we obey one, we may well be disobeying another.

This situation of what to do when rules collide was an everyday matter among Jews in Jesus' day and it remains so. The method used by Rabbis to settle these issues involved a technique called, in Hebrew, kal v'homer (call vom-air); literally meaning "light and heavy". The idea was that when it was not possible to follow all the Torah rules that might apply to a situation because they conflicted, the solution was to decide which rule carried the most weight...thus, light and heavy. In other words, just like in our law system, whereby two or more laws might come into play in a given matter, the Judge's duty is to decide which of these laws is preeminent for this certain case. That's the essence of kal v'homer (call vom-air).

Let me give you a simplistic, but real-life, example. During WWII, Corrie Ten-Boom hid Jews destined to be arrested and exterminated, from the Nazis. She was confronted on many occasions by local authorities, asking if she knew the whereabouts of such and such a Jewish person, and of course, her answer was always "no, she didn't know where they were". Now, the Scriptures make it perfectly clear that lying is sinful, under any circumstance; there is no such thing as "righteous lying". Should Corrie Ten-Boom have told the truth, even if it meant giving up those Jews to the Nazis, and leaving it to God's providence to decide their fate? After all, in addition to lying, she was also violating the duly applied laws of the society in which she lived. And, are we not told to submit to the authority of our human governments because the hand of God creates all government?

On the other hand, the Bible makes it clear that every human life is precious to Yehoveh. And that murder, unjustified killing, is a terrible sin. And that Jewish human life is in a certain sense even MORE important to Yehoveh because they are His chosen people, the apple of His eye.

As we have learned from studying Torah sins are indeed classified and some are worse than others. And the Rabbi's realized that relied on that fact....otherwise there would be absolutely no reasonable way to resolve any matter whereby two commands collide......because there would be no "weight"......no light and heavy, no better or worse, no more important or less important. Everything would be stalemated.

Christians tend to deal with matters like this in a haphazard fashion....we often make knee-jerk moral judgments usually based on our feelings at the time and often whatever is currently politically correct. We really haven't developed a good way to take issues like this head-on; sometimes they are simply avoided. At other times, we find ourselves on the defensive when non-Christians, correctly, say that such and such a Biblical rule conflicts with another such and such Biblical rule in certain cases. But the Hebrews had no such worry. They were well aware that people would have to make such choices and judgments concerning Gods laws and commands, and it was a normal and daily matter. So, here, in my example of Corrie Ten-Boom, we have several Biblical rules or principles colliding. Kal v'homer (call vom-air) looks at this and says, while all the rules that apply are valid and true, the one regarding the importance of human life trumps the commandment not to lie, and therefore also carries more weight than the commandment to submit to the demands of human government. Yet, lying, under any circumstance, and defiance against your civil authorities, remains an affront to God.

Unfortunately, this is simply the human condition since the fall. Avoidance of sin is nearly impossible. And, that is the reason that what Christ did for us is so important.

Jesus invoked the kal v'homer (call vom-air) approach on several occasions. One which most of us easily remembers occurs in the book of Luke, chapter 13, when Yeshua was told that he was breaking the Law by healing a woman on the Sabbath.....healing was considered by the Rabbis to be work. Here, Jesus explained in typical kal v'homer (call vom-air) style that while indeed both the rule concerning working on the Sabbath, and the rule concerning healing were valid, the rule concerning healing trumped the rule of the Sabbath. And this lines up perfectly with Yeshua's explanation in Mark 2:27 that the Sabbath was made for man, not man for the Sabbath. Did Jesus hereby do away with the rules of Sabbath? Heavens no! In fact, He really didn't even argue as to whether healing qualified as being work. He simply declared that in that situation being merciful and healing that person was more important in God's eyes than breaking a Sabbath rule.

The lesson here is that although the Law, the Torah, still exists, and that clean and unclean designations still exist, in certain situations the need to put the rules about love and mercy and shalom above those rules carry more weight. Love and mercy and shalom TRUMP the Laws of Kashrut...WHEN, in certain situations, the two run headlong into each other. But, let me be clear: it is not OUR typically human idea of love, mercy, and shalom that is to be upheld, but God's. Our sympathetic approach to people is not relevant. Biblical love and mercy is not about being "nice", or enjoying our warm fuzzy emotions, or pleasing the other person. We must understand what love, mercy, and shalom IS, in God's eyes, in order to apply it. Even more, the fact that love, mercy and shalom do, in some instances, trump the kosher eating rules (and other rules about clean and unclean) does not mean they do in all cases, nor that those rules are now abolished.

This is what allows Paul to say that "if it is UNCLEAN for you, then it is unclean". And, that the "belief you hold about such things (such as dietary laws) keep between yourself and God". By the way, that doesn't mean to keep things secret. This is about a personal relationship with Yehoveh, via Christ. This is about your obedience to God, and doing what He tells you to do, or not to do, verses some kind of group think….or doing what everybody else does.

I will tell you, quite honestly, that if I had not personally experienced what it is that Paul is saying here, it would probably be even harder than it already is to communicate.

So, as we develop a personal relationship with Yeshua, we're going to find our Lord telling us things to do, or not to do....one on one, personal. Yet, nothing He tells us will EVER be outside of the spiritual principles laid down in Holy Scripture. And, what he tells you will have everything to do with where you are in your personal walk with Him, and your purpose in God's Kingdom.

Now, here's the thing to keep in mind; none of what I'm discussing with you.....the Kosher eating laws.....clean and unclean....has ANY bearing whatsoever on your Salvation. Christ and Christ alone saves. You and I do not ascend the ladder of holiness, only to fall off when we

commit a sin.....and then begin the long climb back up to holy status again. But, that IS what happened to the Hebrews before Christ.

What we see upon the advent of Yeshua is the completion of a great circle. The Torah, as given to Moses in stone, and all of its requirements and rules and commands and rituals are physical representations of spiritual principles....spiritual principles that have always existed in heaven. The spiritual principles of Heaven were brought to mankind in the form of the written Torah. Over the centuries, those spiritual principles were played out, and practiced, and taught to each following generation of Hebrews by means of the rules and rituals laid down in the Torah. The Tabernacle, the Priesthood, the sacrificial animals, the dietary laws all played roles in explaining and practicing holiness, the core spiritual principle, to Israel. But, as Yehoveh foreknew would happen in time, man could not resist slowly forgetting the spiritual purpose of Torah, and eventually turning His commands and rituals into nothing but a series of robotic do's and don'ts and harsh manmade doctrines; taking the blessing of Torah and turning it into a burden of doctrine. Torah ALWAYS had to be based on trust and faith in Yehoveh, or it was meaningless. Torah was AWAYS for an already redeemed people, it was not a MEANS to redemption; God redeemed His people, Israel, from Egypt BEFORE He gave them the Torah; Torah has no function for those who are not redeemed. That is why Torah is utterly worthless for the seeker, but it is critical for the redeemed.

Jesus came onto the scene to not only *restore* the spiritual meaning of Torah.....or as He put it, to "fill it full with meaning"..... but to take it back to it's heavenly, eternal purpose. Paul therefore says that if you perform ritual and rule just because they are rituals and rules, then they are worthless. Add trust in Christ to the mix and NOW you have meaning.

As regards clean and unclean; in my opinion, generally speaking, it is impossible for one who continues to trust in Yeshua to become *unclean*. Yet, we are cautioned over and over to stay apart from unclean things. Why must we stay away from unclean things if they present no danger to us? Because even though we don't lose our holiness, we can become relatively unusable because of our disobedience; and, while obedience brings blessing, disobedience curtails blessing. One well known example in first Corinthians is our being told never to commit the unclean act of joining ourselves to a prostitute, an unclean person.....let's say that for exactly what it means.....don't have sex with a prostitute BECAUSE it is incompatible with holiness for a sanctified person to be physically joined in sexual intercourse with an unclean person. *What we unite ourselves with identifies who we are.* Since we are united with Christ, we are identified with Christ. Therefore, because of our holy status we must NEVER come into contact with the unclean. Yet, we will NOT lose our Holy status, nor will we become unclean if we do touch uncleanness. I'll say it again: we must never violate the divine pattern of holiness whereby the holy are commanded to stay separate from uncleanness.

Now, how can it be that there remain clean and unclean foods, the same ones as always; and yet a Believer doesn't *contract* uncleanness if he partakes in that unclean food? Christ's attribute of being living water is that powerful. It's almost as though the Lord knows that we're about to indulge in something unclean, and purification for us is made the instant before our contact with an uncleanness that would defile us. It's like we're purified the instant before the impurity occurs. It's somewhat like being made immune to a disease; it's not that the disease

no longer exists, it's that you've been inoculated against it. That said, Paul says if something is "unclean for you, then it is unclean." What does that mean? I believe it is telling us that in a mysterious way that is only possible by the indwelling of the Holy Spirit, as you draw closer to the Lord, then He will teach each of us about what is uncleanWHEN WE CAN HEAR IT.

Those of us with children and grandchildren have learned that it is useless, even counterproductive, to try and teach them something that they are not yet mature enough to hear and accept. And, that determination is made on a child-by-child basis; no two grow and mature at the same rate. I think it is similar when it comes to God identifying to each of us what is unclean for us. Yet, all these things that are identified in Leviticus as unclean are still unclean. It will never be different for us than what is unclean in the Scripture. So, if you know in your spirit that the Lord has spoken to you and He has pointed out that something is unclean for you, then it is unclean and you need to avoid it. He has told you because at this time in your life you CAN hear it, and in His perfect timing and judgment you are ready to understand and obey. If you respond to His call, then you are trusting and obedient.

Has the Lord laid it on your heart that some Biblically defined unclean food is unclean for you? Then follow that, based on trust.....not on rule or ritual or what your friends think. Don't use Leviticus as a cookbook, and don't worry about what others think; in fact you aren't even obligated to divulge to others what God has shown you. And, of critical importance, do NOT judge other Believers concerning kosher eating. As a person who eats Kosher, you have nothing to brag about or to say to someone who doesn't. And, as a person who sees *no* foods as unclean, you have nothing to defend yourself about....but neither are you to criticize someone who eats Kosher, is some form or another.

We could go on indefinitely with this discussion, but I think it is time to wrap it up and continue our study in Leviticus. Next up, Leviticus 12 and uncleanness as regards menstruation and childbirth.

READ LEVITICUS CHAPTER 12 all

The next several chapters are going to deal with some additional aspects of clean and unclean; and as we have learned, clean and unclean are two terms that have great importance in explaining holiness, and in demonstrating the entire God-ordained pattern of holiness. We spent months in the first few chapters of Leviticus which discuss the various types of sacrifices, because each type addressed a different facet of sin and purity......from the fact that our very nature is infused with sin, to acts of disobedience against Yehoveh as sin, to sins intended and unintended, to unjust dealing with our fellow man which is also sin.....and that sin is classified in a number of ways. What I want for you to take from all this studying we're doing on ritual purity is that there are many facets to clean and unclean, pure and impure....and that in general unclean and impure is not the same thing as sin. Yehoveh spends so much time teaching this to us, it cannot be that it doesn't matter.

Now, among the many challenging aspects of what I have been teaching you, is that the clean and unclean designations of things.....whether the THINGS be people, animals, food, or

whatever....is NOT a result of some inherent abnormal physical or biological feature; that is, for example, pigs are NOT unclean because they are defective or inherently wicked. Or that a lobster tail, another forbidden food, is bad for you but a lamb chop is healthy. God did not create ANYTHING abnormal, nor did some normal animal species somehow evolve into something abnormal after the Fall of Man. Rather, clean and unclean are designations that Yehoveh assigned certain things for the ultimate purpose of teaching mankind important spiritual principles; it was a way of demonstrating that which is of the spirit world (it is invisible to men) in a manner we CAN see and comprehend. I cannot possibly tell you what Yehoveh's rationale was for choosing those specific animals and foods to be unclean; the Bible in no ways makes an attempt to tell us.

One question that I answered for you is this: are the designations of clean and unclean still in existence....should they matter to us... or did Christ abolish them? My answer is **most definitely** that clean and unclean things still exist. I know some of you have a hard time with that, so we carefully went through Mark 7 where Jesus supposedly did away with kosher eating. But that is NOT what was happening; it was rather about Yeshua explaining that the manmade traditions about ritual hand washing were not valid.

I can assure you this was Yeshua's purpose and intent because we get exactly the same story in Matthew. The Synoptic Gospels are called "synoptic" because they tell essentially the same story but from different viewpoints.....the viewpoints of the specific authors.

Turn to Matthew 15 in your Bibles. Matthew 15 is synoptic with Mark 7; that is, it is the same story told by two different authors. Let's read from verse 1-20. I'll be reading from the CJB.

READ MATTHEW 15:1-20

So, here we get more specific about what it was Yeshua was addressingthe ambiguity of Mark 7 is cleared up. In NO WAY did Jesus declare all foods unclean here, did He? Just as we discussed earlier, this entire story was about the manmade ritual of hand washing, and to a degree all manmade traditions...Yeshua was not abolishing a former Biblical command about food.

If Jesus indeed HAD meant that all reference to unclean things was now obsolete....that uncleanness simply no longer existed.... then we've got a *real problem* with a number of NT scriptures, not the least of which was Christ's words of Matthew 5:17-20 where He said about as forthrightly as one can that He did *not* come to abolish the Torah, that not ONE jot or title has been done away with, and heaven help the person who says it has. Then, there is Paul's statement in Romans 14 that if a person thinks it unclean, then it is unclean for him. For Paul was anything but a compromiser......there is no way, some 2 decades or so *after* Yeshua's death, that he would tell someone something directly against what Jesus pronounced. If he did, then we need to immediately throw away about half of our NT because Paul would be a heretic of the worst sort. Paul would not say that if it is unclean for you then it is unclean, if there WAS no such thing anymore as unclean according to Yeshua. Further, listen to Paul in another of his letters:

KJV Ephesians 5:5 For this ye know, that no whoremonger, <u>nor unclean person</u>, nor covetous man, who is an idolater, hath any inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and of God.

But, that's not the ONLY place in the NT where we find "unclean" continuing to exist. Listen to Paul in RSV 2 Corinthians 6:15 What accord has Christ with Belial? Or what has a believer in common with an unbeliever? 16 What agreement has the temple of God with idols? For we are the temple of the living God; as God said, "I will live in them and move among them, and I will be their God, and they shall be my people. 17 Therefore come out from them, and be separate from them, says the Lord, and touch nothing unclean; then I will welcome you, 18 and I will be a father to you, and you shall be my sons and daughters, says the Lord Almighty." Obviously, the distinction between clean and unclean still exists on Earth because here Paul is quoting Yehoveh as saying that He will welcome you into His Kingdom IF you 1) come out from them (the ungodly), 2) separate yourselves from them, and 3) touch nothing unclean.

Now, let's hear what the Apostle John had to say in the last book of Scripture to be written....some 30 years or so after the first of Paul's letters, and 50 or so years after Christ's crucifixion. RSV Revelation 21:22 And I saw no temple in the city, for its temple is the Lord God the Almighty and the Lamb. 23 And the city has no need of sun or moon to shine upon it, for the glory of God is its light, and its lamp is the Lamb. 24 By its light shall the nations walk; and the kings of the earth shall bring their glory into it, 25 and its gates shall never be shut by day -- and there shall be no night there; 26 they shall bring into it the glory and the honor of the nations. 27 But nothing unclean shall enter it, nor any one who practices abomination or falsehood, but only those who are written in the Lamb's book of life.

John says that no unclean person has any inheritance in the kingdom of God, and that God's people are to separate themselves from unbelievers and to touch NO *Thing* that is unclean. John basically reiterates it. Here we have NT examples of believers being cautioned against involving themselves with unclean things. Obviously, there remains, even at the end of days (which Revelation 21 is talking about) unclean PEOPLE and unclean THINGS.

Further, as we have discussed on a number of occasions, we live in a parallel universe that I have dubbed the Reality of Duality....that is, the universe consists of dual realities that exist simultaneously: the spiritual and the physical. If there is holy in the physical world, there must be holy in the spiritual world. If there is evil in the physical world, there must be evil in the spiritual world. And......if there is unclean in the physical world, there must be unclean in the spiritual world. Here is but a tiny sampling of scriptures telling us of unclean things still existing NOT ONLY in the physical world, but in the spiritual world AFTER the coming of Jesus: RSV Matthew 10:1 And he called to him his twelve disciples and gave them authority over unclean spirits, to cast them out, and to heal every disease and every infirmity.

RSV Mark 1:23 And immediately there was in their synagogue a man with an unclean spirit;

RSV Acts 5:16 The people also gathered from the towns around Jerusalem, bringing the sick and those afflicted with unclean spirits, and they were all healed.

RSV Acts 8:7 For unclean spirits came out of many who were possessed, crying with a loud voice; and many who were paralyzed or lame were healed.

So, the NT scriptures speak clearly that unclean still exists in both the physical and the spiritual world. Goodness, if there WAS no such thing anymore as unclean, why are the Apostles warning us to stay away from what doesn't even exist? Answer: of COURSE it still exists. Clean *things* are all things that have not been specifically designated as unclean. And, I've got news for you: you and I don't get to rewrite the Biblical lists of unclean things according to our own desires. The Holy Spirit is not going to give you a new unclean thing that didn't exist before, nor delete an unclean thing. We don't get to change God's Word.....and the ONLY source of info of what is clean and unclean is the Torah.

We'll continue chapter 12 next time.