



Parasha Sh'mini: Kosher or Kashrut, It's All About Life.

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Text: Torah: Sh'mini, VaYikra 11:1-47; Haftarah: Sh'mu'el Bet 6:1-7:17; Renewed

Covenant: Revelation 16:13; 18:2.

Theme: Torah dietary mitzvot show the way of reverence for Life.

I. Introduction.

In **chapter 11** instructions are given with regard to clean and unclean foods. These foods are also known as kosher or kashrut and non-kosher or non-kashrut. The word kashrut is used in the Yisra'eli community to designate a food that is right, proper, or fit to eat.

There are two kinds of kashrut observance: Scriptural and traditional. Scriptural kashrut observance involves a simple and clear-cut distinction between clean and unclean creatures for dietary purposes found directly in the Scriptures. This form of kashrut is much older than the Sinai Covenant. It is found in the Scriptures as early as the time of the Great Flood or Deluge, when YHVH told Noach how many clean and unclean animals to take on the Ark for later use as

korbanot (sacrifices) and later as food (**B'resheet 7:1-9**).

Traditional (or rabbinic) kashrut observance is much more complicated and has many different levels. It has evolved over many generations. The complex, highly evolved body of rabbinic rules and requirements for keeping kosher or kashrut regulates not only what one may eat, but also how it is prepared.

Kashrut is a difficult subject for people to grasp. Simply put, something non-kashrut is out of its place. YHVH commanded the Yisra'eli people to eat only certain kinds of animals and other foods.

Yisra'elim are to be very careful not to break Torah kashrut commandments. Therefore rabbis have designed oral laws to protect the Yisra'eli people from infractions of Torah kashrut. Among the oral law is the law not to mix meat and milk at our meals. The oral law tells how much time should be allowed between eating milk and meat. The time is different for eating milk first vs. eating meat first, because the digestive tract holds meat in the body longer than milk.

Although **halakhic law (the way to walk the oral or rabbinic law)** was designed by the rabbis to protect the Yisra'eli people it could become oppressive. What was intended for tov became one of many layers and layers of man-made burdens imposed by the oral law. Most traditional believers today do not comprehend what Rav Sha'ul meant when he said, **Galatians 2:4 "And that because of false brothers who came in secretly to spy out our liberty which we have in Mashiach Yahshua"** He was really talking about those who would attempt to bring liberated individuals (from the oral law) back under halakhic tradition and customs. Never did he say that we as Yisra'elim should break Torah. The real point of contention was the oral law.

II. The Mitzvot or Commands of Kashrut.

In **chapter 11** we have a description of the animals, birds, fish and insects that B'nei

Yisra'el was permitted to eat. Second, there are several examples describing when a person may be considered to have entered into a state of **tamei (ritual uncleanness)**. In English, **tamei** is often translated as: **unclean, impure, or contaminated**. In Hebrew, however, the word **tamei** can also mean **common**. The word **tahor** can be translated as **ritual cleanliness, clean, pure, uncontaminated** or **not common**. There really is no one English word that can do justice to the true meaning of these words.

Chapter 11 describes how a person may be rendered tamei, for example by eating any of the prohibited living things or by touching the carcass of a non-kosher creature. An object can also be rendered tamei by direct contact with any part of a dead creature. Along with describing what makes a person or object tamei or tahor, this chapter tells some of the process of how the tamei condition is changed to tahor.

III. The Purpose of Kashrut Teachings.

Through the centuries, many proposals have been given concerning the purposes for the teachings on kashrut. These include: so Yisra'el would not engage in the various pagan religious cults of the nations that surrounded her; as preventive measures to combat decay and disease caused by the Middle Eastern climate; or, for health reasons. The contention that YHVH gave these dietary laws in order to clarify for mankind what is healthy to eat and protect him from unhealthy things was first espoused popularly by Rambam and is one which is extremely popular among many believers today. As tempting as this proposal may sound, many of the Sages, reject it for a more fundamental and Scriptural statement of purpose.

The Kadosh One tells us the reason for such teachings. He says in **VaYikra 11:44-47**, **"...you are to sanctify (set-apart) yourselves and you are to become kadosh (set-apart), for I am Kadosh, and you shall not contaminate yourselves through any of the creeping things**

that swarm on the earth...." YHVH simply states He gave these teachings so that following them would enable us to accomplish two things:

1. Be Kadosh (Set-apart). By following them, Yisra'el would be distinguished from the rest of the nations. The reason for such a distinction was to show that the Elohim of Yisra'el was utterly different from the gods of the nations. If He was different, then His people would also be distinct. In addition, His people would have the privilege and responsibility of outwardly demonstrating this crucial distinction between that which is of YHVH and that which is not. **Nu (so)**, it appears that like the tzitzit, the mezuzah, and other similar items, food is an outward symbol of such separation.

2. To Be Tahor. The second purpose is in order that a Yisrae'li may keep himself in a state of being **tahor (ritually clean)**. It is now time to define more clearly what tahor and tamei mean. Being tahor or tamei is a state of being rather than a description of one's physical or moral condition. When a person entered such a state of tamei, he did so because he came into personal contact with the realm of sin and death. Sometimes this may have been caused by his own personal sin. If so, then being rendered tamei meant that he had to bring a **korban (sacrifice)** in order to be forgiven. But most of the time, a tamei person did not sin; he merely came into personal contact with the realm of sin/death. Being in such a condition did not make the person unfit for society, dirty, or morally impure. Rather, it rendered him unable to participate in the public worship of YHVH in the **Mishkan (Tabernacle)**.

Being tahor, on the other hand, meant that the person left the status of being tamei and was declared by YHVH to be able to fully participate in the Mishkan services. To go from one status to the other, the person (or object) usually had to undergo immersion in water. The water itself did not change the status; it was a symbol of the cleansing work YHVH was doing to change the

status. If the person was tamei because of his sin then, in addition to an immersion, he also had to bring a korban, be separated from the camp or see a kohan, depending on his violation.

In all of this the Abba YHVH wants to emphasize the crucial distinction between the **Kingdom of Light and Life** and the **kingdom of darkness and death**. Nu, He designed the teachings of kashrut to be a visible picture and physical reminder of those two kingdoms.

However, according to rabbinic tradition, the kashrut statutes fall under the category of **chukkim (statutes)**, that is, statutes for which no specific reason is given. And it's true that nowhere in the Torah does YHVH fully or directly explain the reason for the kashrut statutes. Although, as you will see later, He makes the realms of **life** and death very clear. However, we are expected to obey simply because He said we should. No other reason is needed or even totally offered. We should do so because we love Him

IV. The Mashiach Keeps True Kashrut.

We need to remember Yahshua's attitude toward the Torah. This is clearly taught in **Mattityahu 5:17-19**. Undoubtedly, in these passages Yahshua is declaring His unequivocal allegiance to the Torah written down by Moshe. He states that none of it would be done away with in the **olam (world)** or **shamayim (heaven)** till all is done. In **chapters 5-7, Mattityahu** describes how Yahshua states His divine interpretation of the Torah as opposed to man's interpretations disseminated through the oral law.

When **Yochanan Mark** tells us in **Yochanan Mark 7:18, 19: And He said to them, "Are you also without understanding? Do you not perceive, that whatever enters a man from outside is unable to defile him, because it does not enter his heart but his stomach, and is eliminated, thus purging all the foods?"** What did He mean? From the outset of this chapter in **Yochanan Mark**, the issue was not foods, but ritual hand washing and its effect on the foods.

Verse two declares that this particular incident in Yahshua's ministry was a debate in the oral law. "**The traditions of the elders**" is a common designation for the **oral law**. These particular rabbis taught that if one ate food without washing one's hands according to their ritualistic traditions, then that food was **tamei, ritually impure**. Yahshua, however, sought to nullify the authority of that tradition. He declared that such foods, eaten without these rabbinic interpretations of oral law, are still kosher!

Nu, it is as R. Stern comments: "Since the beginning of the chapter the subject has been ritual purity as taught by the oral law. There is not the slightest hint anywhere that foods in this verse can be anything other than what the Scriptures allow Yisra'elim to eat, in other words, kosher foods." Remember, to a Yisra'eli anything considered or called food were those foods that were Torah approved.

In the end, Yahshua gave a clear teaching on what constituted real spiritual cleanness. Again R. Stern: "He teaches that **tahor (purity)** is not primarily ritual or physical, but spiritual..." It is critically important to note that in making this point, Yahshua certainly made no proclamation that the foods which Torah forbids Yisra'el to eat are now all of a sudden kosher! He did not say all things; He said foods with the Torah understanding that foods meant tahor according to Torah. His Yisra'eli listeners would have the same understanding as to what foods were tahor.

V. Life is in the Blood: The Importance of Life vs. Death.

As mentioned before, there is a foundational concept, in the Scriptures, of the **Kingdom of Light and Life** and the **kingdom of darkness and death**. There have always been two realms at work in the olam. **YHVH being the King of Light and Life and haSatan being the king of darkness and death**. There is to be no mixture between the two. YHVH has divided the animals

that He created into two categories: **Tahor (ritually clean – Kingdom of Light and Life) and Tamei (ritually unclean – kingdom of darkness and death)**. Now, am I saying that these creations of the Living YHVH are unclean? I am not saying that, He is! It is a real life picture used by YHVH in our everyday lives to help us understand the difference and very real presence of these two conflicting realms at work in the olam around us.

When we choose **life (D'varim 30:19)** by resolving to walk in obedience to YHVH's **teaching and instruction, the Torah**, all aspects of our **life** come under His subjection. This would certainly include our diet, the means with which YHVH maintains our physical bodies while we are on earth. Our diet is no small thing to Him, He created it for a purpose, to keep us **alive** and witness to His **Light and Life** concerns! Nu, I do propose that we consciously submit all areas to His Authority and Will; this is the place of His **B'rukhot (Blessings)**.

VaYikra 11:1-2 YHVH spoke to Moshe and to Aharon, saying to them. Speak to B'nei Yisra'el, saying: These are the creatures that you may eat from among all the animals that are upon the earth.

In the above passage, YHVH distinguishes two classifications of animals: the creatures that you may eat and the animals that are upon the earth. The distinction is much more evident and clear when examining the Hebrew meanings. **R. Messer** shares that the Hebrew word that is translated as **creatures** is **chay (khah'ee)**, meaning **living, alive; relatives; life; living thing, animal; community**. This word is a beautiful word! Most of the meanings listed above are divided into definitions that are more specific. For instance, under **living** and **alive** in the Brown Driver Briggs Hebrew Lexicon, one would find the sub-definitions: **1a) green (of vegetation); 1b) flowing, fresh (of water); 1c) lively, active (of man); 1d) reviving (of the springtime)**. What a vivid picture of **LIFE**! In fact, you will see this Hebrew word **chaim** simply **life** designed

into a great deal of Hebraic jewelry, artwork and the like. It has come to identify the Jewish people as much as a Menorah or Star of David. (Can't you just hear Rev Tevia singing **L'Chaim!**) Furthermore, under **living thing, animal**, which is the definition that is most applicable to our quoted verse, we find the following: **4a) animal; 4b) life; 4c) appetite; 4d) revival, renewal**. What's that? Animal and revival there together? What's does that suggest?

The Hebrew word translated as **animal** is **behemah (be'hay'maw)**, meaning **beasts; cattle, livestock (of domestic animals); wild beasts**. This appears to be a common term used for a wide variety of animals.

However, the majority of the time, **chay (khah'ee)** is speaking of **life**. What is the point that YHVH is trying to get across to us here? He is making the clear and definitive statement that to choose His Way is to choose **LIFE!** I could go into countless scientific and medical studies that have been conducted over the years that empirically show the benefits of eating a Scriptural diet. I could go into lengthy explanations and arguments as to how the kashrut diet was never done away with in the Renewed Covenant. But, that is for another time. Edible creatures have already been set-apart in **VaYikra 11** and **D'varim 14**. No other creatures are **sanctified (set-apart)** by the Word of YHVH. In general, these two chapters teach us that we are not to eat animals that live in the realm of death such as carnivores (flesh killers and eaters) like cats, lions, eagles, etc. and those that eat garbage such as swine, dogs, shellfish, vultures, and crows, etc.

Torah (YHVH's teaching and instruction) was given to His People to enable us to walk out our **lives** on the earth in the Kingdom of **YHVH/Light/Life**, and to also receive and walk in His Kingdom B'rukhot. Nu, today Moshe' words are exhorting us as Natzaret believers in Yahshua to choose the realm of **Life** over death! **D'varim 30:19-20 I call shamayim (heaven) and earth as witnesses today against you, that I have set before you life and death,**

blessing and cursing; therefore choose life, that both you and your descendants may live; to love YHVH, your Elohim, to listen to His Voice and to cleave to Him, for He is your life and the length of your days, to dwell upon the land that YHVH swore to your forefathers, to Avraham, to Yitz'chak, and to Ya'akov, to give them.

VaYikra 11:44 Sanctify yourself and be Kadosh, for I am Kadosh."

Our YHVH is Kadosh. What does it mean? There is no foreign mixture in YHVH. He is separated from whatever is not Himself. He only is Kadosh, whatever comes out of Him is Kadosh, and He only can approach Him. Only through Yahshua, YHVH's own Son, the fullness of YHVH Himself manifested in the flesh, and only by YHVH's Kadosh Ruach can we approach the Kadosh YHVH.

The discerning of kadosh and not kadosh, clean and unclean is vital for a kohan as we are called to be (note last week's teaching). Nu, two kinds of things are pointed out here, kadosh and not kadosh, clean and unclean. If we understand the meaning of these, it will help us to keep ourselves kadosh and pure before YHVH.

The question of kadosh and not kadosh does not touch upon the matter of sin and uncleanness. Rather it is the matter of belonging to YHVH. Whatever came from YHVH, was produced by YHVH, is directed toward YHVH according to His Will, all that is made **kadosh (set-apart)** by Himself as His Own.

Note the **Most Kadosh Offering (Kodesh Kadashim)** that was to be eaten in the Kadosh place by Aharon's sons. Why is this Korban for sin called Most Kadosh? Because **Kodesh Kadashim** was an image of the **Korban (Sacrifice)** of YHVH's Son on the Tree for the lost sheep of the House of Yisra'el and the cleansing of our sins. It pointed us toward the Kadosh YHVH Himself. That Korban was a shadow of His **Kadoshim (Set-apartness)**. It is the meat of

this Korban that the kohanim were to eat in the Kadosh place as the Most Kadosh.

The statutes concerning any clean animal (which was not considered kodesh) differ from the mitzvot regarding the kadosh. The meat of any clean animal could be eaten anywhere by anybody on one term: the **blood** was to be shed on the ground for the meat to be kasher.

What is termed by YHVH as a clean animal?

For example, **VaYikra 11:3 "Whatsoever parts the hoof, and is cloven footed, and chews the cud, among the beasts, that shall you eat."** Amein! All these statutes are beneficial for the body. Yet the spiritual meaning of these words is much more special.

The clean animals have many tov characteristics; they are usually friendly toward each other and meek. When I look out our back glass door I often see non-predator birds of many species all eating together next to one another. Or, I think of a waterhole in Africa with many clean animals of different species drinking next to each other.

The predator and garbage collector are more aggressive seeking blood and meat, are unclean, and therefore forbidden for food, and they are different. Several features of their character reflect the traits of haSatan's personality. That is, the uncleanness here points to the traits of sin or death, the uncleanness of the enemy's character. The following words express this character: **VaYikra 11:43 "You shall not make yourselves abominable with any creeping thing that creeps, neither shall you make yourselves unclean with them, that you should be defiled thereby."**

The creeping things speak of the enemy that was represented in **Gan Eden (the Garden of Eden)** by the snake. The uncleanness, contamination spoken of here touches not only the body, but the **nefesh (soul)** as well. The physical food can't influence the nefesh, which is not something material, yet the sin that results out of temptation by the snake, damages the nefesh.

The nefesh is contaminated by sin. The man that receives something from the snake, becomes unclean before YHVH.

Whatever died is also unclean. Whoever touches the corpse, becomes unclean. Death points to the enemy, **life** points to the Creator. HaSatan first sinned by his rebellion against YHVH. Because of his sin, haSatan was cut off from the only source of **life** in the creation, the Kadosh YHVH. HaSatan became a dead ruach.

Nu, the word unclean relates to anything and everything related to the enemy and not separated from him. Whatever does not have in it haSatan's part is clean. Just being clean does not mean kadoshim yet. Being kadosh means to belong to YHVH, to be separated to Him, to be possessed of YHVH, **live** for YHVH, filled with YHVH and serve YHVH by following His Torah.

YHVH calls his people to be kadosh, **VaYikra 11:44-47: 44 ‘For I am YHVH your Elohim, and you shall set yourselves apart. And you shall be kadosh, for I am Kadosh. And do not defile yourselves with any creeping creature that creeps on the earth. 45 ‘For I am YHVH who is bringing you up out of the land of Mitzrayim, to be your Elohim. And you shall be kadosh, for I am Kadosh. 46 ‘This is the Torah of the beasts and the birds and every living creature that moves in the waters, and of every creature that creeps on the earth, 47 to make a distinction between the unclean and the clean, and between the living creature that is eaten and the living creature that is not eaten.’ ”**

YHVH wants us not only to keep our nefesh from the uncleanness of sin or whatever comes from the enemy, but to be kadosh. YHVH called us to be His kadosh people that shows His perfection to all the creation. For this we need to be filled with Himself, through abiding in His

Word, being filled with His Kadosh Ruach and transformed into His Likeness. Then He will be our kadoshim, because He only is Kadosh. Nu, we choose **life** because He is **Life**.

Remember, the basic laws of kosher and non-kosher animals, fish, and fowl are recorded in the Scriptures. R. Tandler states: "The basic laws of purity and impurity are recorded. It is important to clarify that the Torah does not associate **Tummah (impurity)** and **Taharah (purity)** with tov and bad. The entire process involves the concept of **life** and death and the symbolic emphasis that the Torah places on serving YHVH with optimism and vigor. So long as there is **life** there is the opportunity to grow in our relationship with YHVH."

The question of "Why are we commanded to keep kosher?" is alluded to in **VaYikra 11:44-47**. To keep kashrut is to emulate YHVH's **Kedusha**. **Kedusha** means being **set-apart and different**. Just as YHVH is Set-apart from all things and divine in every way, so too are Y'hudah and Efrayim to be set-apart from all other nations and be different in the manner of our eating and **living**.

The following are a few of the texts that emphasize **life** and the blood.

B'reshet 9:4 But flesh with the life thereof, which is the blood thereof, shall you not eat.

VaYikra 17:14 For it is the life of all flesh; the blood of it is for the life thereof: therefore I said unto B'nei Yisra'el, You shall eat the blood of no manner of flesh: for the life of all flesh is the blood thereof: whosoever eats it shall be cut off.

Sh'mot 30:10 And Aharon shall make a kapparah upon the horns of it once in a year with the blood of the sin offering of kapparat: once in the year shall he make kapparah upon it throughout your generations: it is Most Kadosh unto YHVH.

VaYikra 17:11 For the life of the flesh is in the blood and I have given it to you upon the altar to make a kapparah for your nefeshim: for it is the blood that makes a kapparah for the nefesh.

D'varim 12:23 Only be sure that you eat not the blood for the blood is the life; and you may not eat the life with the flesh.

Yochanan 6:53, 54 53 Then Yahahua said unto them, Verily, verily, I say unto you, Except you eat the flesh of the Son of man, and drink his blood you have no life in you. 54 Whoso eats my flesh, and drinks my blood has eternal life and I will raise him up at the last day.

Ivrim 9:22 And almost all things are by the Torah purged with blood and without the shedding of blood is no remission.

VII. Conclusion and Application.

We have already seen that the Torah distinction between clean and unclean creatures did not originate with the Mosaic Covenant and they and the Mosaic Covenant did not fade away when the Renewed Covenant was added. Moreover, Moshe, under the inspiration of the Ruach HaKodesh, amplified and clarified that distinction for dietary purposes. Remember **VaYikra 11:46-47: 46 ‘This is the Torah of the beasts and the birds and every living creature that moves in the waters, and of every creature that creeps on the earth, 47 to make a distinction between the unclean and the clean, and between the living creature that is eaten and the living creature that is not eaten.’ ”**

R. Hedrick writes: “Adam was the first zoologist. He studied and classified the animals, and gave them their names. Adam was also a vegetarian (**B'reshet. 2:5,9,16**), so he was not concerned about the question of which animals were approved for human consumption. In fact, he probably would have thought it rather odd that humans wished to eat other living creatures.

However, Adam and his descendants would have known which animals were clean and which ones were unclean for sacrificial purposes. Generations later, at the time of the Flood, men began to eat meat (probably out of necessity, because they couldn't grow crops during or immediately after the Flood while the ground was still waterlogged).”

As it turned out, the animals that were acceptable for dietary purposes were the same ones that were acceptable for sacrificial purposes. After all, it would not be much of a korban if a person offered YHVH an animal that one couldn't use for food anyway!

The Renewed Covenant does not dwell on the kashrut statutes, because it assumes we know they are still in effect. Animals that were not suitable for human consumption in the Torah are still not suitable for human consumption in the Renewed Covenant. At the very end of the Renewed Covenant, in fact, the frog is still said to be unclean (in agreement with **VaYikra 11:10**), and there are still unclean birds.

Revelation 16:13 And I saw coming out of the mouth of the dragon, and out of the mouth of the beast, and out of the mouth of the false prophet, three unclean spirits, as frogs,

Revelation 18:2 And he cried with a mighty voice, saying, “Bavel the great is fallen, is fallen, and has become a dwelling place of demons, a haunt for every unclean spirit, and a haunt for every unclean and hated bird,

Nu, here is further proof that the distinction between creatures that are **clean (intended for food)** and **unclean (not intended for food)** was not done away with in the Renewed Covenant.

Sometimes people point out that the Scriptures say everything YHVH made was tov (**B'reshet 1:31**). Yes, this is true; but it doesn't say everything He made is food. Do you see the difference? Everything YHVH made is tov and has a purpose. But not everything He made is

intended to be food for us.

Choose that which is **tahor (clean)**! Choose that which is **kadosh (set-apart)**! Choose YHVH! Choose **Life**! Nu, along with Rev Tevia let us say, **L'Chaim**!