

LEVITICUS

Lesson 14 - Chapter 11

We ended last time with the proposition that to understand the Hebrew dietary laws (given to them by Yehoveh on Mt. Sinai) we must understand that in doing so God placed diet directly at the center of holiness and purity as He defines it. Food was a major issue since the time of Adam and Eve; in fact we find it wasn't until AFTER the Great Flood that the killing of animals for meat was even permitted by the Lord.

For sure the Jewish sages and Rabbis have expanded the dietary laws into such complexity that sometimes its hard to realize that God's rules in the Torah about food were few and basic.

But before we get to food, per se, let's first talk about holiness and purity, and their opposites. Holy is the opposite of common; just as clean is the opposite of unclean. Common means just what it says; common has neither special value nor position. It's typical and usual, it is NOT set apart; and the term applies to the largest group. That is, common means that there is more of *it* than of it's opposite. Holy on the other hand holds the highest position and carries the greatest value. Holy means something that is rare, unusual, set apart, and in context with the Biblical and current physical world Holy represents a minority that is set apart for service to God. Very little and precious few are holy; almost everything is common.

Therefore everything that is common is NOT holy; something cannot be holy and common at the same time. Nor can something be clean and unclean at the same time. For instance; Yehoveh deemed Israel as being holy and the rest of the world as common. Israel was not a somewhat common and somewhat holy. In fact, NOTHING can be a combination of holy and common. That is NOT a philosophy or an ideal; it is a hard, fast, fundamental axiom that rules the Universe. Everything in this current world since the fall of Adam and Eve BEGINS as something common; you, me, plants, animals, dirt, water, everything. In the negative we could say that nothing in this world that is in its natural state is Holy. Can something that begins as common become holy? Thank you Yeshua, YES! How does something common (like you and I) become Holy? It (we) must be sanctified.....that is, the Creator of the Universe must **declare** us holy. Once something is sanctified it is no longer common, because it is now holy. A common thing doesn't start out with a little holiness and then gets holier and holier over time with effort or merit; things (and people) are either holy or not holy. Once a common thing is sanctified and becomes holy, it leaves its state of common-ness behind.

Think on that Torah principle for a second; as Believers you and I are called "sanctified", are we not? The instant we place our trust in Yeshua HaMashiach God declares us sanctified, the Holy Spirit enters us, and so we shed the common and become the holy. Our Western Church way of saying it is that we leave the Old Self behind and become a New Person in Christ,

which is absolutely correct. But this is just a modern gentile way of re-expressing the ancient Torah concept of the common becoming holy at God's decision. It is so important for us to grasp that, just like the Israelites, once Yehoveh declares you holy, you are no longer common despite how you may still view yourself. As a Believer you are 100% holy in His eyes; non-Believers are 100% common. Believe it, trust it, and live it.

Let's peel this onion back one more layer. Common things can be subdivided into two separate and distinct groups: clean and unclean. ONLY **clean** common things are eligible to become sanctified....that is, only common things that are **also** clean can become Holy. Unclean common things cannot become holy. In Leviticus chapters 11 – 16 we're going to find God's lists of what denotes CLEAN common things, and what denotes unclean common things. Despite what modern church doctrine might say, the reality is that what constitutes clean and unclean, holy and common are NOT defined in the New Testament; for that we must turn to Torah.

Clean things can be polluted by contact with unclean things. But unclean things cannot be cleansed by contact with something clean: therefore, it's a one-way street. When something clean comes into contact with something unclean the result is ALWAYS that both things are now unclean.

We have a similar condition when dealing with the holy. The result of the holy coming into contact with the common is that the holy becomes defiled. However it NEVER happens that the common thing that touches holiness is allowed to become holy merely by means of contact. That said, certain incidents in the OT show that while it may be theoretically possible for holiness to be transmitted to something common or unclean by simple contact, the Lord interrupts the process by destroying that thing that has touched the holy; thus really making the whole question moot. This is another of those one-way streets.

Stay with me; I realize that this is deep and technical for Western Believers to deal with because we've never been introduced to these Biblical realities (but we should have been when first we believed). What I'm trying to show you using mere words is some almost indescribable spiritual principles that Yehoveh has built-in to the entire Universe. Everything operates in accordance with these principles; nothing is exempt, there are no exceptions. If we're going to understand (even remotely) what Salvation actually IS and why it is so necessary....if we're going to understand HOW to live in the manner God expects of us..... then these are the core principles we MUST digest. And I'm sad to say that most Christians will NEVER in our entire church-lives encounter an explanation of these principles; but any 6 or 7 year old Jewish child who has gone to a typical Jewish school will know them by heart, even if they don't fully comprehend the significance.

So back to some more explanation. While everything in this world begins as common, most things also begin as clean. Clean and common is generally, but not entirely, the current natural state of the fallen world. What we see, therefore, is that on one extreme is the holy, and at the other extreme is the unclean. In between those two lay the common and clean as kind of a middle ground. The middle ground, clean, can be pulled in one of two directions: it can be made holy by means of sanctification; or, it can be made unclean by means of defilement.

Something holy can NEVER be allowed to come into contact with the unclean. The result is that the holy is temporarily defiled and the unclean thing is annihilated.

So here is the easiest rule for you to remember about all I've just described: common and clean is the natural and beginning state of most things, mankind included. Common and clean things CAN be elevated into something Holy, or common and clean things can be degraded into something unclean.

Now we'll hear a lot of the use of the words "clean" and "pure" in the Torah. They mean the same thing. For all practical purposes, clean and pure are synonymous.

With these basic rules of purity to go by, and understanding that these rules underlay the basic fabric of the entire Universe as we know it, then we can begin to see why there are barriers put up by God between His holy self and common man. Adam and Eve were unique because they were created in a holy state, and therefore could have almost unlimited contact with the holy Yehoveh. Yet after they rebelled they were no longer holy; they were now common. As such they could not have contact with His presence; that is why the Lord HAD to put them outside of the Garden of Eden, His earthy dwelling place. It was less a matter of punishment upon Adam and Eve and more a matter of protection of God's holiness and Adam and Eve's lives that a barrier be erected between the Lord and His two human creations. And that is the same state that mankind currently finds himself in.....on the outside looking in. God's Holiness MUST be protected. God will NOT allow Himself to be defiled.....He will protect His Holiness at all costs. Only something that is holy can come into contact with a holy God. Period. Do you see this?

Now here is a second rule that is made most clearly by the Torah and was in effect from the first day of Creation; and the rule is simply repeated in the New Testament. The rule is that the ONLY way something common can EVER become Holy is by means of God's grace. The church word for this process or event of the common becoming holy is sanctification...or, for the more evangelical, it's called being SAVED. In the era of Moses, and up until Christ's death, God granted His grace upon those who He called.....and whom He called was Israel. God granted His grace upon Israel contingent on them obeying the Torah rules and rituals that He ordained.

Today God's grace is available to ALL men.... **contingent** upon them trusting solely in the finished work of Yeshua HaMashiach, Jesus the Christ, the Son of God. This is also called grace because nothing man can do can GAIN this grace. But in either era, Moses' or Christ's, holiness was granted by means of God's grace.

Look; moderns tend to see the end game of Salvation as being forgiven, cleansed, from our sin. But, that's not really it. The REAL end game is being declared holy so that we can be in the presence of ultimate holiness.....the holy god Yehoveh....which is what He always desired. Salvation, forgiveness of sins, is the MEANS of our becoming holy. Therefore a man who is born common (which is all men), and who remains common all his life, and dies common, never becomes holy and therefore can never throughout all eternity come into the presence of holiness. But a man who is born common (again this all of mankind), but is declared holy by God by means of trust in Yeshua, lives his life in a holy state, dies in a holy state, and remains

in the presence of holiness for all eternity.

Holiness, purity, and cleanness are the fundamental issues that all Believers should be concerning ourselves with at all times. The Hebrews of the Biblical times were obsessed with purity and cleanness issues for good reason: their status of being holy could be lost. See the typical Hebrew marched up and down a spiritual ladder with holiness at the top and uncleanness at the bottom. If they broke the Law.....they sinned.....they disobeyed one of the commandments given to them by Moses, their holiness was put into a state of suspension (so to speak). Disobedience to the Torah commands degraded them down to a common state from their former holy state. But, even worse, they could commit acts that made them UNCLEAN. Let me say that again: disobedience to most Torah commands brought them to a temporary state of being **common** but (typically) **clean**. Clean and common.....but no longer holy. Yet there were other acts they could commit.....such as touching a dead body.... which not only degraded them to a common state, but also made them **unclean**. Unclean and common. So the first thing an unclean person had to do was to become clean again....they had to get back to what we might call a neutral state, which is common and clean. That's the purpose of the ritual purity laws. And remember that part of the process of an unclean person becoming ritually pure again was bathing in a Mikvah (a ritual bath).

Once a person who was unclean, for whatever reason, was made clean again.....**then** they could go to the sacrificial system and perform the appropriate sacrifice to regain their status as holy. So the ritual purity provisions were for bringing a person from an unclean state back into a clean state. The sacrificial system was to bring a person in a clean (and common) state BACK into a state of acceptable holiness. The term used to describe this process of regaining the holy status that had been put on hold is atonement. Atonement had to be made in the form of a specific animal sacrifice in order to elevate a person who is common and clean BACK into a state of holiness. I keep repeating BACK into a state of holiness because a person who has never been declared holy (by God) cannot make himself holy simply by performing the purity and atonement rituals.

So the typical Hebrew was on this constantly moving elevator...up and down the holiness scale. Is it any wonder that Paul and other Torah observant Jews who understood and accepted what Christ did for them were so excited to explain it to their Jewish friends? No more up and down the ladder of holiness. No more in Yehoveh's presence one day, and barred from it the next. Christ's sacrifice of atonement put the Believer into a PERMANENT state of holiness.....never again to be common.

One final comment and we'll read chapter 11. Of all the great quests undertaken by Rabbis, sages, and Bible scholars.....ancient or recent.....Jewish or Gentile, few subjects have been so challenging as to comprehensively identify the underlying meaning of the term "holiness". What, exactly, does God mean by this term? What did MOSES mean by this term? It is understood by Jew and Christian alike that one attribute of holiness is separateness; that is something or someone is separated apart from others for service to Yehoveh. Yet that somehow seems incomplete and inadequate; Leviticus shows us there is far more involved than that simplistic statement. For instance what is the NATURE of holiness. How is holiness different from all other possible states? What is the **chief** characteristic of holiness? Of all the

explanations I have come across the one that best brings it together for me...the one that seems most true to the Word of God, blending the spiritual with the physical, is this: the chief nature of holiness is **whole-ness and complete-ness**. Nothing lacking. Without imperfection. After we read chapter 11 we'll take that a further look at holiness and more its characteristics.

READ LEVITICUS CHAPTER 11 all

In verse 1 we find Yehoveh speaking, presumably audibly, to BOTH Moses and Aaron. And He tells them that they are to teach Israel what He is about to pronounce to them. God's first important instruction is that Israel may freely eat living-creatures. This is a milestone. This is the first time that Yehoveh was giving a listing of exactly which animals could be eaten with His blessing. Oh, yes, men had been eating meat for a long time; but never before had there been limits on the species of animal other than the limit NOT to eat the blood of a living creature.

In the beginning living creatures (animals) were to be a companion for mankind. After the fall they were to be killed and used strictly for the purpose of sacrificing to Yehoveh, so that mankind could atone for his sin with the animals' blood. After the Flood, God told Noah how an animal was to be properly killed and eaten, but He did NOT specify some animals as acceptable and others as off-limits.

CJB Genesis 9:1 God blessed Noah and his sons and said to them, "Be fruitful, multiply and fill the earth. 2 The fear and dread of you will be upon every wild animal, every bird in the air, every creature populating the ground, and all the fish in the sea; they have been handed over to you. 3 Every moving thing that lives will be food for you; just as I gave you green plants before, so now I give you everything- 4 only flesh with its life, which is its blood, you are not to eat.

Now in Leviticus 11 the Lord was allowing men to eat living creatures but only of certain types. Interestingly some time after Yeshua comes again animals will no longer be permitted for food.

The Hebrew word for "living creature" is **hayyah**....a very generic term for any type of living creature, but not plant life. And the first group of living creatures from which men may kill and eat are, in Hebrew, **Behemah**. **Behemah** denotes two characteristics: they are **land** animals (as opposed to sea creatures or animals that fly), and these are animals that currently ARE (or can be) domesticated.....like cattle, sheep, or goats.

We're going to see that Yehoveh will show men they can kill and eat animals that inhabit 3 different "spheres" of the earth.....that is, 3 different types of earthly environment.....water, air, and land. This has much spiritual meaning, which we'll get into a little later.

Of the **behemah**, the land animals that Israel may freely kill and eat are declared to be CLEAN. Why are they clean, and others aren't? Again, we'll go into depth on that matter sometime in the next few weeks. For now the primary notion to hang on to is that they are clean because God chose them to be clean. But note this: until Israel was elected, dived, and separated from all other nations by the Lord, all people on earth were of the same status in God's eyes: common. Once God took Israel and set them apart as His chosen people and

redeemed them, suddenly the world became divided into two distinct groups of people with different status: those who were holy and everybody else; or more to the point, Israel and everybody else (the everybody else are called gentiles). Now that He has separated Israel out to be holy, He begins to separate animals into clean and unclean; the few suitable for food and sacrifice, and the rest NOT suitable.

Yehoveh lays down a visible means for Israel to discern which of the many kinds of **behemah** He approves for use as food. Physical characteristic number one is that an approved **behemah** must have a cloven hoof. Physical characteristic number two is that it must chew the cud. So what is a cloven hoof? Basically it means the hoof is split such that at some point it separates into two completely separate parts..... like two toes. Many animals like horses have hooves that split at one end, but they don't COMPLETELY separate, front and back, to form two separate pieces. Therefore horses have uncloven hooves, and are deemed unfit to eat; in the Biblical way of speaking they are unclean.

Chewing the cud, for you non-farmers or ranchers, is a bit on the gross side. But, for you city slickers I need to explain it so that the term is well understood. Basically it means that the animal only partially chews its food, swallows it, and then brings it back up later when its more convenient, and chews it some more before it swallows it again.

Technically animals with this characteristic are called Ruminants, animals whose stomachs usually consist of four compartments. So chewing the cud is basically a description of how a certain animal's digestive system is designed.

Thus far, we have four necessary characteristics of a clean and edible **behemah**: 1) it's a land animal, 2) it's a domesticated animal (as opposed to a wild animal), 3) it must have a fully cloven hoof, and 4) it must chew the cud.

In verse 4 Yehoveh gives some examples of common animals that were typically used for food in that era but were off-limits for Israel; and He explains just WHY they are off limits. The Camel, for instance, chews the cud, but it doesn't have a cloven hoof. The Hyrax also chews the cud but doesn't have a cloven hoof (nor a hoof at all to be more correct). The Hare chews the cud but doesn't have hooves, cloven or otherwise. And now for perhaps the best known symbol of animal uncleanness in the Bible, the Pig. It indeed DOES have a cleft hoof but it does NOT chew the cud.

To be clear, these are not the ONLY unclean animals, they are just the illustrations used in the Torah. Perhaps it's also good for us to learn the Hebrew word that is translated as "unclean" because we'll run into it time and again in the Torah. That word is **tamei**. Let's be very clear about this term, "**tamei**", unclean: it has NOTHING to do with hygiene or whether it is inherently edible by humans. Rather it is a spiritual matter; for Yehoveh has, for His own good reasons, declared by fiat that certain animals are NOT to be eaten by anyone considered to be one of His people.

Verse 8 gives us another important piece of information. Yehoveh instructs that unclean animals may NOT be eaten AND an Israelite cannot touch the dead carcass of one, either. What this means is that if for some reason you stumble over a dead animal or have to kill one

for some purpose, you can't even touch it. HOWEVER as we'll find out in later chapters there is no prohibition against touching a LIVE unclean animal. Therefore a Hare could be a pet or a Camel could be ridden or used for a beast of burden by an Israelite.....no problem. You just can't eat one or touch a dead one.

Verse 9 begins to deal with living creatures from the "water sphere" of plant earth.....sea creatures, fresh or saltwater. And the most visible characteristic of an approved-for-eating sea creature is that it must have fins and scales. So any sea creature that has BOTH fins and scales is clean; clean, another important Biblical term, is in Hebrew **tahor**. **Tamei** is **unclean**; **tahor** is clean.

Unclean sea creatures are ones that the Bible calls "swarming". The Hebrew being translated "swarming" is **sharats** and it carries with it the idea of crawling as well as swarming. Now exactly what swarming means is a little harder to decipher. It seems to carry with it the idea of randomness.....something that both tends to stay in a group, and something that unpredictably darts about. It does NOT refer to fishes that school. The chief characteristic of the unclean sea creature is that rather than swim through the water (using fins) it either crawls on the bottom or slithers about like a snake. So, for instance, shellfish are considered **tamei**, unclean. Lobsters and crabs are also off limits as are eels and sea snakes.

In verse 10 a kind of SUPER category of unclean animals is introduced; something described as **shekets** in Hebrew. Typically **shekets** is translated as "detestable" or "an abomination". It is something to be avoided at all costs. Just as we've seen sin categorized, and then sacrificial rituals requiring a hierarchy of animals, from the least to the most valuable, to be used according to the nature and seriousness of the sin.....from the least serious to the most.....we see that UNCLEAN things seem to have some kind of classification as well, based on the less unclean and the more unclean. The term "**shekets**", detestable, an abomination, is reserved for describing the MOST serious category of unclean thing. A good thing to know as we go through the Bible, because we can all probably think of a verse or two in which Yehoveh calls something an abomination. An abomination is the worst sort of sin or uncleanness in God's eyes.

The Torah moves quickly, now, to creatures that inhabit the "air sphere".....that is, creatures that fly. And since there are several types of creatures that fly the first category dealt with is the most obvious.....birds. And, interestingly, in a deviation from previous practice rather than describe the characteristics of the CLEAN and therefore edible bird, it describes the characteristics of the UNCLEAN; with the idea that all other varieties of birds are to be considered clean and therefore an approved food source. So we get a list of birds that are held "**shekets**"; not just UNCLEAN, but HIGHLY unclean, an abomination. The eagle, vulture, kite and falcon are named first, followed by a couple types of owls, the pelican, and stork, even a bat. (Yes, I know that technically a bat is not a bird....but by tradition Hebrews and Arabs consider bats to be in the "bird" category). The common attribute of all these birds is that they are either birds of prey, which kill and eat other living creatures, or, as with vultures, they eat carrion. HOWEVER please note that the Scriptures do NOT specifically say that the attribute of eating other living creatures is what makes the birds on this list UNCLEAN. Certain other birds, like Chickens, will eat virtually anything, including rodents; and Chickens were NOT considered

unclean. So we need to be a little cautious about assigning a reason for this list of unclean birds being unclean, when the Bible doesn't specifically give us one.

Next in verse 20 we get another category of living creature that resides in the "air sphere": flying insects. What in the world are insects doing in a listing of foods that are kosher...or not? Insects were a normal and everyday part of diet in most societies of this era. And so Yehoveh tells the Israelites WHICH insects they could eat.

He does so by giving a broad and sweeping category of insects that are detestable, **shekets**, and then listing the exceptions to the rule.....those that would be acceptable, clean, **tahor**. All insects with wings, and that swarm, and that have 4 legs are prohibited..... EXCEPT for 4 kinds of locusts or grasshoppers. What is different about these? They have jointed legs. That is their legs were designed to bend and operate with a springing action so that they can jump or hop. As part of a further discussion of holiness and purity after we've gone through chapter 11 we'll delve into the possible reason why this particular characteristic, hopping on all 4's, made these insects clean for eating.

OK. Ready for a surprise? This pretty much **concludes** the SCRIPTURAL commandments as regards kosher foods. Oh we'll get a detail added from time to time outside of this chapter, but these 23 verses are pretty much it. Deuteronomy 14 more or less repeats what we just read. I point this out because Judaism has evolved these few Scriptural laws into an enormous manmade system of dietary rules and regulations, complete with ritual hand washing and the prohibition against eating in the presence of gentiles who might touch your food and therefore defile it. Later as part of what we'll discuss at the end of chapter 11 we'll get into the famous story of Jesus saying that its not what goes into your mouth that makes you unclean, it's what comes out of it. In a couple more weeks we'll be better equipped to understand exactly what issue Yeshua was dealing with. And let me preview it by saying that, like most things He got into arguments with the Jewish religious leadership over, it revolved around His revulsion of manmade traditions.... those things that had become the doctrines of Judaism.... not Holy Scripture.

Verse 24 brings into play the concept we discussed in the previous lesson of the unclean polluting the clean simply by contact. To remind you, the notion is that when something that is UNCLEAN touches.....meaning simple physical contact.....something that is clean the clean thing is degraded and becomes unclean. **Never** is the result of something clean touching something unclean, that cleanness is transferred to the unclean, thereby making the unclean clean. The ONLY result of clean contacting unclean is that both things take on uncleanness.....it is a one-way street.

So beginning in verse 24 we get a list of unclean things that, if one comes into contact with one of these, one will become ritually impure. And there are basically 3 kinds of contact discussed here: touching, carrying, and containing.....containing refers to containers like bowls and pots. So from here through about verse 40, we're going to deal with how uncleanness gets transferred from one thing to another.

Basically the rule is that whoever touches the carcass of some categories of dead animals will

be considered unclean, but only in a very limited way. They are unclean until sundown that day. Why is sundown the time limit? Because sundown ends the current day and starts a NEW day.....remember the Hebrew day starts and ends at sundown. Another part of the rule is that anyone who CARRIES the carcass of one of the prohibited dead animals is also unclean until sundown PLUS there is the added requirement that they must wash their clothing. The list of animals that are clean and unclean is pretty much the same as the list that applies to kosher eating; animals without cleft hooves and animals that do not chew the cud are unclean when they're dead. But, a new category is also now discussed: animals that have PAWS.....like cats or dogs. These are considered unclean.....both for eating (of course) and for touching if they're dead. Once again it **is** OK to touch one of these if they are alive. And the result is the same as if someone touched a dead animal that didn't have a cloven hoof or didn't chew the cud.

Notice something interesting about the contamination of an unclean dead thing: it cannot only be transmitted to a person, a living human.....it's uncleanness can also be transmitted to inanimate things like clothing.

Verse 29 discusses the transmission of uncleanness from a different category of living creatures.....those described as "swarming".....animals that dart about rather haphazardly. And the list includes mice, rats, lizards, even crocodiles and presumably alligators. You can add all those to the list of unclean things that cannot be touched after they're dead. As with the previous list of unclean dead things anyone who touches one contracts uncleanness until the start of a new day, which is at the end of evening. Please notice that we are being taught that death, in general, is unclean. Why is this so? Because death is abnormal; we're not supposed to die. Mice, birds, fish, are not supposed to die. Death is a condition that was NOT present when the world was created. The world became polluted by sin and then things became abnormal; abnormality is detestable to Yehoveh. Death is **the** MOST abnormal condition that exists. At the end of chapter 11 when we discuss more about purity and holiness we'll also talk about what is normal and abnormal, and how it has much to do with what Yehoveh has declared clean and unclean.

Beginning in verse 32, another angle concerning uncleanness is stated: it is that whatever an unclean dead creature FALLS on becomes unclean. Actually, the English translation kind of obscures the real Hebrew meaning of this sentence; what it says is that whatever an unclean dead creature falls ONTO becomes unclean, AND, whatever an unclean dead creature falls INTO becomes unclean. So, if a mouse dies and falls on top of your sandal that is one condition; and if a mouse dies and falls INTO a water pot or cooking pot, that is another condition. Of course, one has to do with a less serious type of uncleanness, that of clothing, and the other has to do with a more serious type of uncleanness because it concerns the preparation of food.

Now that HOW things become unclean has been presented, the next thing is to discuss how to remedy the situation. We'll do that next week.