

LEVITICUS

Lesson 16 - Chapter 11 Continued 2

Sometimes in order to make sense out of all we've been studying in Torah it's necessary to take the time to step back and from a broader view examine some things about the nature of Holy Scripture that are not so obvious. I discussed last week the concept of rational/logical thought styles versus analogic thought styles because the rational/logical is the current Western cultural style of thinking, but the culture and writers of the Bible thought and communicated in an analogic style.

In a nutshell rational/logical asks "why" and is the basis for our Scientific Method of discovery. It believes that history is a straight line, and that history has little to no inherent bearing on the present or future except in a linear, evolutionary fashion of the primitive leading to the more advanced. Now when I say that, don't get the wrong idea; there are many fields of study, like archeology, that study the past. The question for them is "what" happened and how it got to be that way. Weather researchers gather data to look at past weather events in order to create models to help predict future weather events. But they don't look for past weather as the CAUSE of future weather.

Analogic thinking doesn't ask "why", but "which". Analogic thinking views history NOT as a straight line, but rather as a series of repeating cycles. Analogic thought relies on accepted and established patterns and models. It searches for common truths that are shared between similar things; relationships and connections between things are important. The question of "which" pertains to which pattern or which model is the current circumstance operating within. Why that pattern or model is as it is, is secondary; and while at times it may be nice to know it is irrelevant in the decision making process. Once again this is ancient Hebrew thinking (actually it was the common style of thinking throughout the known world) and it is that style of thought that is expressed in the Bible.

Rational/logical thinking is NOT a wrong or evil thing; but if we're going to understand our Bibles then we need to grasp that to approach the study of Holy Scripture asking "why", or to try to structure and test (via the Scientific Method) ancient theological principles and laws that were written down in analogic thinking, it will lead to confusion and downright error; and indeed it has.

So as we look at the Torah, and currently Leviticus, what we need to be looking for is patterns and models. Let me say that again: what answers are available to us will only come through recognizing patterns established by Yehoveh. It's rational/logical thinking that seeks bottom line answers. Analogical thought seeks a familiar pattern. We have to be VERY careful of asking "why" individual laws and commands are as they are; and WHY the Kosher eating

requirements exist, and why some things Yehoveh created He calls clean and others unclean. That answer is **not** found by looking for scientific rational/logical reasons. The answers **are** found in the principles contained within the patterns that God created beginning in Genesis 1. The answers are NOT found in the reasoning of our minds, validated in proofs and results, cause and effect. The answers ARE found by trusting that Yehoveh created everything, that everything operates in a way that is unchanging, and that it all works in harmony. The reality is that our minds were simply not built to understand God's mind. That statement right there is in complete disharmony with rational/logical thinking. And, so, it has led to the worst sort of wrong-minded allegory being foisted on the Saints by determined and learned Bible translators and scholars; men who wanted most of all to validate their anti-Jewish agenda, and who felt they MUST have the "why" about things for which no "why" is offered in Holy Scripture. Why did they need to know why? Because "why" is the basis of Greek thinking. The search for "why" is at the heart of rational/logical thought. Yet, you won't find a theme of an ongoing search for "why" in the Bible. Except in the rarest of occasions, "why" was simply not a question people asked about God's laws and commands.

Let me tell you one other thing about "why": asking why is not compatible with having faith. If we could always find out "why", then where is faith? Faith is trusting and acting when the "why" is not available. Where was Job's faith if God informed Him WHY he was going through all the challenges that took everything from him? Yet, here was Job, largely content to simply accept his circumstances as God's will at the same time that a series of friends came by to offer their view of "why" these things must be happening to him. Of course every one of them simply caused him more pain and not one was correct.

Let's abandon that search for why and instead look at some of the most basic patterns and models that the Torah and Leviticus establish for us.

And since we are currently in Leviticus let's begin by looking at its central topic, sacrifice. Sacrifice entails the principles of God's creation and His ordained pattern of the universe. Everything about the system of sacrifice follows a model that we see established as early as the Garden of Eden, which then gets expanded and clearer at Mt. Sinai, and then expanded and clearer yet again with the Wilderness Tabernacle.

The Wilderness Tabernacle provides for a physical model of holiness that humans can see and comprehend and even interact with. The Tabernacle is split into 3 zones of different degrees of holiness: the Holy of Holies is the innermost part where God's presence resides. Only Yehoveh and His appointed servant, the High Priest, can enter that place of the Highest Holiness. A barrier, a curtain, divides this holiest place from another zone called the Holy Place, a zone of lesser holiness. The common priests may go there. This is as close to the presence of God as they are allowed. Finally, outside another barrier that the Bible calls "the door" into the tent is a 3rd zone of holiness, the courtyard that surrounds the Tabernacle. Into this courtyard the ordinary people of God, Israel, are welcome to enter in order to bring their sacrifices to Yehoveh. ONLY Israelites are permitted in this area.....absolutely NO gentiles.....because by definition a gentile has not been declared holy by the Lord. While this 3rd zone (the Courtyard) is the zone of least holiness, it is holy nonetheless.

This manmade structure, the Tabernacle, was constructed according to a blueprint given to Moses by Yehoveh Himself. And, of course, it simply modeled that which was already in existence: Mt. Sinai. The hand of God, not human hands, built Mt. Sinai and it too consists of 3 zones of holiness. The summit was the zone where God's presence rested and ONLY Moses was allowed there. This was the HOLIEST place not only on Mt. Sinai but also on planet earth. The next holiest zone was the slope on the side of the mountain. Only Aaron and his sons, the future High Priest and common priests (and on occasion the 70 elders who were the government of Israel), were allowed in this Holy zone. At the bottom of the mountain was a barrier.....a rock wall.....which separated the Holiest and the Holy zones from the area of least holiness at the bottom of Mt. Sinai where God's people....the ordinary Israelites..... could congregate and worship.

Outside of these 3 zones, the holiness of space ends. We have spoken in previous lessons about sacred time and space (1 dimension of time and 3 dimensions of space....length, width, and height....are the 4 dimensions that form our Universe); there is some space that Yehoveh has set apart and reserved as holy; all other space is just common. The first designated holy space on earth was the Garden of Eden. Later that holy space would be Mt. Sinai. After that, holy space on earth would be embodied in that portable Tabernacle that could go wherever God's people went. And then finally holy space became the Temple that was built at the God-designated location of Mt. Moriah in Jerusalem. So the pattern for sacred space is Most Holy, a place reserved for Yehoveh's presence and the High Priest. Holy, a place reserved for Yehoveh's Common Priests. Least Holy, a place reserved for Yehoveh's set-apart people. That is why the term "Outside the Camp" is so important to grasp. Outside the camp means outside of sacred space, outside of the 3 zones of holiness.

Notice a characteristic of this pattern: Most Holy is either the uppermost (the highest point of Mt. Sinai) or the innermost (the Holy of Holies). Holy is intermediary, a middle zone or a buffer zone, if you would (the slope of the mountain, or the room of the tent which borders the Holy of Holies on one side and the outer courtyard of least holiness on the other). Least Holy is either outermost (the outer courtyard of the Tabernacle) or lowermost (the base of Mt. Sinai). Beyond the area where the Israelites are is outside the camp, and therefore common, and therefore not sanctified, and therefore not holy.

Now that's not too hard to see. But this pattern carries on a little further as it also applies (rather predictably, I think) to the structure of the Priesthood. The High Priest is the Most Holy, and therefore may be in God's presence (once a year). The Common Priests are Holy, and act as intermediaries and a buffer between God's people and God.....though they may not enter into God's presence. The Levites (who are NOT priests but are God's lesser servants) serve in the outermost zone.....the Tabernacle courtyard. They may not enter either the Holy zone or the Most Holy zone. The Levites serve God's people and they serve Yehoveh's Priests..... but again, only in that 3rd zone, the courtyard, the space of least holiness. So the Priesthood also reflects the 3 levels of holiness pattern. A person outside of the Priesthood cannot perform any of the tasks reserved only for priests and Levites.

Ah. But this same holiness pattern goes even further. It is even projected upon the body of the sacrificial animal itself. This is where all those hours we have spent together studying just

HOW the animal is sacrificed, and exactly which parts of the animal are used, and in what ORDER they are used comes into play. The body of the sacrificial animal is also divided into 3 holiness zones. Even the way the pieces of the body of the sacrificial animal are laid onto the Burnt Altar is done in an order reflecting these 3 holiness zones.

Back in the first chapter of Leviticus we are told that the 'Olah, the burnt offering, must put the animal parts onto the Altar fire in a specific order: first, the head, then the fat, then the entrails. Thus we have a pile of sacrificial animal parts placed on the Altar: at the summit is the entrails, under that is the fat, and under that is the head.

Briefly, we see that at the top of the pile are the innermost parts of the animal. Anatomically speaking what surrounds the specific entrails that the Bible calls out to be put onto the Altar is a thick layer of fat called Helev. This is the kind of fat the people cannot eat because is holy for Yehoveh. Recall that there is a second type of fat that exists within the flesh, or meat, of the animal, which we are all familiar with and can see under those cellophane wrappers at the meat counter. That type of fat CAN be eaten. The Helev fat surrounds and encases the particular entrails used for sacrifice. In fact the layer of fat surrounding those organs is so complete you really can't even see them until the fat is removed. The head is the part of the sacrificial animal's body that is farthest away from the entrails, the innermost parts.

So, we have the innermost parts as the Most Holy; the Helev fat which is a barrier and middle zone which separates the entrails from the rest of the body as Holy; and the head which is the furthest away from the innermost parts, outside the barrier of the Helev fat, as the least holy.

Going back to the earlier part of this lesson we see that the sacrificial animal, as an illustration of holiness, is described in a pattern that is repeated for the Tabernacle, the Holy Mountain, the Priesthood, and even though I didn't have a chance to get there, the Garden of Eden. Therefore "WHY" are the laws of the precise use of the parts of the sacrificial animal organized as they are? Because they conform to the pattern of the rules of the ordering of the Priesthood. Why are the laws concerning the ordering of the Priesthood designed as they are? Because they conform to the pattern of the rules of the structure of the Wilderness Tabernacle. Why are the laws concerning the structure of the Tabernacle ordained as they are? Because they conform to the rules of the holy zones on Mt. Sinai....and so on, and so on. The answer to why is always "which pattern" applies.

This is analogic thinking. This is the thinking style of the Hebrews. The answer to WHY is because it all conforms to God's ordained patterns. With this knowledge let's now dive in to trying to understand the Torah's rules concerning food.

And what I'm going to show you is that the dietary laws were put there, primarily, to continue the "holiness" pattern that we have been discussing.

If one looks at OT writings of the great Hebrew sages the subject of Kashrut, kosher eating, dominates their thoughts. Inevitably if there is any gentile scholar who dares venture into the Torah once they get to Leviticus (chapter 11 in particular), and the laws of diet, they usually wind up frustrated because they approach it searching for "why".

In the end, these great scholars generally come to one of two major doctrinal conclusions concerning the dietary laws of Leviticus: 1) that the laws and rituals of Kashrut are irrational, arbitrary, and reflect nothing but superstitions of that era.....and therefore interpretation and meaning is impossible; or 2) that these laws and regulations are nothing more than allegorical representations of hygiene, or food value and safety, or perhaps even morals, ethics, vices and virtues.

Let me say that again: the general scholarly belief, reflected in almost all commentaries, is that the Kosher eating laws are either pure fantasy and gobbledy-gook, of NO value whatsoever to modern man, or they are to be treated as no more than symbolism.

One of the most common takes on Kosher eating, today, particularly since the birth of the Hebrew Roots movement, adopts the approach that Maimonides, a great Jewish sage from the 12th century, espouses; and it is that Kosher eating is a formula for a healthy diet. The clean foods are nutritious foods, and the unclean foods are harmful foods to the human body in the longer term. That Maimonides was a physician undoubtedly colored his viewpoint. It is true that a Pig does not have 4 stomachs in its digestive tract, as do cattle, sheep, and goats. And it is also true that shellfish, lobsters, and shrimp are bottom feeders and tend to eat floating or partially buried organic material, including waste and decomposing flesh. Yet this view on the issue of WHY certain foods are permitted and others are not is really culturally oriented and is based on progressive thought; that is it comes from a rational/logical thinking style. It most certainly does NOT represent a pattern, nor does it explain holiness.

Philo, another great Hebrew commentator who lived during the time of Yeshua, believes that the kosher eating rules were to be taken allegorically and symbolically. In fact he goes so far as to say that **“.....fish with their fins and scales (clean animals) symbolize endurance and self-control.....while the forbidden (sea creatures) are swept away by the current, unable to resist the force of the stream. Reptiles who slither along on their bellies signify people who give in to their every greedy desire and passions.....”** Christian teaching has pretty much followed Philo’s lead by adopting allegory as their prime weapon in explaining what seems to be the otherwise unexplainable.

For example, we’ll find this footnote as commentary in the margins of the Westminster Bible: **“.....Hoof divided and cheweth the cud. The dividing of hoof and chewing on the cud signify discretion between good and evil.....”**

And I think its fair to say that WHATEVER form of allegorizing that one might take in trying to explain certain parts of Holy Scripture (and especially as it concerns kosher eating), that form inevitably takes the rational/logical view that in the end it MUST be all about good and evil. Let’s face it, whether we say it out loud or not, the thoughts that first come into our minds when we speak of clean versus unclean foods is good vs. bad, right versus wrong, sin versus righteousness, healthy versus unhealthy, or some such parallel idea.

Another rather typical scholarly approach (still employing the allegorical theme of Scripture interpretation) is that the laws of Kashrut, though generally arbitrary, were put there as a kind of protection for Israel; that is these strange food laws helped to isolate Israel from pagan

influence by specifically outlawing foods that were much enjoyed in the many Middle Eastern cultures that surrounded them.

Every one of these allegorical views comes from rational/logical thinking, and every one of these views ultimately sets one off on a path that leads to nowhere. These are wonderful sounding, even pious appearing, explanations for the mysterious food laws of Leviticus 11..... but in reality every one of these academic and theological approaches is so flawed as to be unworthy of attributing them to Yehoveh. People in cultures which eat some of the sea creatures classified as UNCLEAN in Leviticus are often found to have EXTENDED life spans and better than usual health over their lifetimes. The idea that the unclean foods were inherently “evil” also doesn’t wash because there was no stringent penalty laid upon the person who dared to eat them. Being made “unclean” from eating an unclean food was a condition that usually only lasted until sundown, and then perhaps required little more than a ritual washing for the defilement to be purified. That is far from what we see in the laws concerning specified sinful behaviors (which we studied in earlier chapters of Leviticus) that prescribed a wide variety of penalties for behavioral sins of all kinds, up to, and including, death. Further, to allow ourselves to think that Yehoveh, who is always depicted as a god who never changes, and who ordains order, not chaos, would just arbitrarily pick some foods and name some clean and others unclean....kind of like flipping a celestial coin....simply does not square with the rest of Scripture nor His holy nature. Moreover, the allegorical solutions often offered to explain Leviticus 11 are, as far as I’m concerned, little more than an attempt to make the allegorizer appear scholarly, knowledgeable and greatly pious; for the very nature of allegory relies on the seemingly unlimited ability of men’s minds to create fanciful relationships that don’t exist in reality.

So, then, what **are** we to make of those strange laws of ritual purity as it concerns the diet of the Hebrews? Well, at least the BEGINNING of an answer comes in verse 44 of Leviticus 11: ***“...For I am Yehoveh your God; therefore, consecrate yourselves and be holy, for I am holy; do NOT defile yourselves.....”*** And, then in verse 47: ***“Its purpose is to distinguish between the clean and the unclean, and between the creatures that may be eaten and those that many not be eaten”***.

Holiness is the primary purpose for Yehoveh’s establishment of the laws of Kashrut. If we look carefully, we see that there is NOTHING in any of the verses of Leviticus 11 that says the dietary laws are symbolic. Neither do we read that one will become ill from eating something designated as unclean (if that was the case why weren’t many toxic plants black-listed?)); nor do we read that life will be shortened, or that designated “clean” food is inherently healthier for you than those foods designated as “unclean”. And.....this is important.....there is nothing that says that, of itself, there is something about a particular unclean animal that is inherently evil or unhealthy.

So we must take an entirely different approach if we want to comprehend these Kosher eating requirements; and we can begin by adopting the mind of the Hebrew Biblical writer, which means that our only hope is to search for WHICH God-ordained PATTERN applies to foods.....**a pattern** (or patterns) that connects to the Lord’s clean and unclean designations.

We already have an established one pattern that Yehoveh created for mankind; and this pattern was created by employing one of the most basic governing dynamics God uses for dealing with His Creation: division, election, and separation. Let me digress for just a moment: perhaps the greatest hue and cry within the Christian community is the constant call for "UNITY". Practically every pastor calls for unity within his congregation, and at times uses it as an excuse for asking someone to leave who it is felt is causing "dis-unity". So when I stand here and tell you that the God of Creation actually moves forward using division and separation that can be a little uncomfortable for some of you. The term "unity" is only found in 7 instances in the entire Bible; 5 of them are in the NT. In Hebrew, the word being translated as "unity" is **echad**.....and it means one-ness; it is in reference to God's character and essence, and to Man's ideal relationship WITH God. As such the concept of **echad**, unity, really needs to be applied more in a spiritual context than in a physical context.

In the NT the Greek word used for this same concept of unity is "henotes", and indeed it means unity.....but more in the sense of a unanimous agreement rather than "one-ness". The Hebrew concept of unity, **echad**, brings with it the idea of joining together organically.....literally growing together thus creating an inseparable union that completes and creates wholeness.....which is perhaps the chief attribute of holiness. There doesn't appear to be a word in Greek that properly translates the uniquely Hebrew concept of "echad"; **henotes** is close, but no cigar. That said the Hebrew principal of **echad**, one-ness, is undoubtedly what it's trying for. Now in context EVERY instance in the NT whereby unity is called for is in regards to man's relationship with Christ.....not with other men. Any sense of unity among men as regards the concept of echad is about each individual's union with Yeshua. So the unity flows from man to Jesus, not man to man; and whatever ever unity there is between men MUST flow through Christ. Yeshua is like the hub of a spoked wheel; He is the common point. If men are to the spokes, we must note that the spokes of a hubbed wheel never touch one another. Any unity among the spokes is by means of the hub. So the Biblical concept of unity, **echad**, is not about men coming to unanimous agreements on various issues with one another.....which is the Greek rational/logical thought; rather it is about our coming into union with the mind and person of Christ.....our one-ness with Christ.....echad. This is a classic case of the Greek mindset misunderstanding the Hebrew mindset. And it has caused many a church split and much disharmony and hurt within the body of Christ. Folks hear me: disagreement among church or synagogue members is NOT Biblical disunity. There is plenty of room in God's house for differing views especially on the more challenging (and often vague) principles we can find in Scripture.

Back on track: from a perspective of Holiness as concerns the eating of animals, we have clean animals, which are animals that **can** be eaten by God's people.....and therefore they **can** be in the camp of Israel. Unclean animals, which are animals that **cannot** be eaten by Israel, are animals that must remain OUTSIDE THE CAMP of Israel (for food purposes). And sacrificial animals are those that may be presented to Yehoveh by the priests as sacrifices of atonement....therefore they are not only considered as qualified to be inside the camp of Israel, but they can even be sanctified if they meet all the requirements for use as a sacrifice and allowed inside the Holy zones of the Tabernacle.

If we look a little deeper, we also see kind of a sub-pattern that follows Yehoveh's instruction

that “you (Israel) are to be holy for I am holy” on yet another level: and that pattern is that the animals which can be sacrificed on the Altar for atonement come from the same exact group of animals.... **Behemah**... domesticated land animals, from which Israel can eat. So we can say that Yehoveh partakes SPIRITUALLY of the same animals as do the Israelites PHYSICALLY.

Now the relationship of holiness between mankind and the sacrificial animals extends even further. Let me read the commandment, right out of what we call the 10 Commandments, to you concerning the Sabbath.

NIV Exodus 20:10 “ but the seventh day is a Sabbath to the LORD your God. On it you shall not do any work, neither you, nor your son or daughter, nor your manservant or maidservant, nor your animals, nor the alien within your gates.”

it is interesting enough if we just notice that the Sabbath includes animals as well as man, don't you think? But hidden within the original Hebrew words and mindset of this passage of Scripture is a meaning that is completely obscured by Greek and English translations; because the common translation of the word “animals” in this verse is well off the mark. Some of your Bibles will, instead, say “cattle” instead of animals. Well that's a little closer, but still a bit off. The Hebrew word is “behemah”. Sound familiar? It means domesticated land animals. Cows, sheep, goats.....animals suited for eating AND for sacrifice. A rather select group of animals, wouldn't you say?

Does it surprise you that Yehoveh would form a covenant relationship with animals? Actually He did exactly that in Noah's day. Listen to Genesis 9:8-11 NIV **Genesis 9:8 “Then God said to Noah and to his sons with him: 9 “I now establish my covenant with you and with your descendants after you 10 and with every living creature that was with you-- the birds, the livestock and all the wild animals, all those that came out of the ark with you-- every living creature on earth. 11 I establish my covenant with you: Never again will all life be cut off by the waters of a flood; never again will there be a flood to destroy the earth.”**

God greatly values His living creatures, and so He made a covenant with **all** living creatures.....in the case of Noah never to destroy them again with a Flood. And right there in the midst of the 10 Commandments He makes a covenant with the animals that they shall receive also receive a Sabbath rest. Ah, but unlike the Noachide covenant, I want to repeat the significant point that it is ONLY the Behemah, the domesticated land animals, the ones that the Hebrews may eat, the same ones that may be offered in sacrifice on the Altar, that this applies to.

Here we get an interesting clue about the choice of clean and unclean land animals; animals that ARE or CAN BE domesticated are clean (with the criteria that they must chew the cud and have a cloven hoof). But inherently WILD land animals (animals incapable of being domesticated) are outside of this.

Now, before anyone gets the wrong idea of what I'm about to say, I guess it's necessary in this sound-byte world we live in for me to state that while there is a parallel pattern between man and animals in a covenant relationship to Yehoveh, Man is above the animals. Man has

the ability to be the Temple of God's Holy Spirit.....all other living creatures do not. Man, therefore, was placed in dominion over all other living creatures. But it is much too easy for us to dismiss the great love Yehoveh has for everything He created, especially those things He calls Living Creatures (animals included) for into them He placed the breath of life, separating them from all other parts of His Creation.

So, here is another pattern that emerges: Yehoveh is in dominion over man, just as Man is in dominion over ALL the other living creatures. Yehoveh sets apart certain men for holiness just as He also sets apart certain animals for holiness.....those specified sacrificial animals. Yehoveh watches over and cares for His set apart people just as Man is commanded to watch over and care for those set-apart living creatures that are so important and loved by our Creator. You see, that segment of mankind which refuses to come under the submission of the Lord God (those who remain outside the camp of Israel) equates in the animal kingdom to the **unclean wild animals**. Wild animals are DEFINED, Biblically, as animals that refuse to come under the submission of man (animals that cannot be successfully domesticated) so they must remain outside the camp of Israel just as men who refuse to come under Yehoveh's submission must remain outside the camp of Israel. Only animals that **allow** mankind to care for them, those we call domestic animals, are eligible for holiness. Only men who allow the Creator to care for them are suitable for holiness. Is this starting to make sense to you.....this concept of patterns that connect everything in God's Universe?

Let's take this a little further: Yehoveh is a REAL Lord and King over us. He quite literally protects His own. He will fight for us; He will allow nothing to take us from His hand. Man is specifically instructed by God to protect those animals that He has put under their care...domestic, clean animals. Shepherds protect their flocks with their very lives.....and they are supposed to.

Thus, the purity of the Sanctuary (the Tabernacle) and the holiness of Yehoveh are protected by only permitting sanctified men and sanctified animals in His holy presence.

And so when we ask "Why" the rules for clean and unclean **animals** are as they are, the answer is that it is because those rules conform to the clean and unclean rules for **mankind**. |And, this is because it ALL conforms to the pattern of holiness laid down by Yehoveh.

Next week we'll explore the relationship between ritual purity and sin.