

Kosher Practice and Jewish Law



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Many Christians and non-Christians alike are unaware of the origination of the prohibition against eating fat and blood in the daily diet. This kosher practice is firmly based in the Jewish canon law. Before reading pertinent details and descriptions in the Mosaic account, we will consider an instruction given to Noah following his exit from the Ark after the Flood. God said the following:

“Every moving thing that liveth shall be meat for you; even as the green herb have I given you all things.

“But flesh with the life thereof, which is the blood thereof, shall ye not eat.” (Gen. 9:3,4)

At this time, it became permissible for mankind to eat flesh, but they could not eat flesh that contained blood. In other words, before meat could be consumed, the blood had to be drained.

In the Book of Leviticus, we read:

“It shall be a perpetual statute for your generations throughout all your dwellings, that ye eat neither fat nor blood.” (Lev. 3:17)

“And whatsoever man there be of the house of Israel, or of the strangers that sojourn among you, that eateth any manner of blood; I will even set my face against that soul that eateth blood, and will cut him off from among his people.

“For the life of the flesh is in the blood: and I have given it to you upon the altar to make an atonement for your souls: for it is the blood that maketh an atonement for the soul.

“Therefore I said unto the children of Israel, No soul of you shall eat blood, neither shall any stranger that sojourneth among you eat blood.

“And whatsoever man there be of the children of Israel, or of the strangers that sojourn among you, which hunteth and catcheth any beast or fowl that may be eaten; he shall even pour out the blood thereof, and cover it with dust.

“For it is the life of all flesh; the blood of it is for the life thereof: therefore I said unto the children of Israel, Ye shall eat the blood of no manner of flesh: for the life of all flesh is the blood thereof: whosoever eateth it shall be cut off.” (Lev. 17:10-14)

The severity of the punishment that was visited upon Israelites who disobeyed the injunction against eating blood strikingly rivets our attention on this subject. For anyone who infringed this law, the penalty was death. This law was valid not

only for sacrifices that were offered under the Tabernacle and Temple arrangements but also in the daily eating of ordinary animals. The blood had to be let out of *any flesh* that was eaten, and this act had to be performed kosher-style.

The law was given because of the symbolism involved; namely, *blood in the veins* is a symbol of *life*, but *blood outside the veins* represents *death*. In other words, this law pointed up a very important lesson to the nation of Israel and to those who were properly exercised: Without the shedding of blood, there is no remission of sins (Heb. 9:22). With sacrificial offerings in which the blood was used for *atonement* purposes, the lesson could be seen more clearly and was particularly applicable. When performing this practice outside of the Tabernacle sacrifices, that is, as required for their daily diet, the Israelites were reminded that they did not have the privilege of eating meat unless, first, the blood was drained.

But we inquire further, Why did the Mosaic Law contain such a strict prohibition against the partaking of blood? The flesh represents life, food. We eat flesh in order to live and thus perpetuate our life, but blood outside the veins indicates death. The antitypical lesson is that death was required in order to give the blessing of life and food to humanity. This lesson especially

applied in regard to the coming Redeemer, for a life had to be sacrificed before the human race could partake of the real food of life. By having a death penalty attached for disobedience, the commandment was repeatedly and forcefully impressed on the nation of Israel. Of course the Israelites did not understand the symbolism, but from a practical standpoint, they knew about the importance of the blood.

“Notwithstanding thou mayest kill and eat flesh in all thy gates, whatsoever thy soul lusteth after, according to the blessing of the LORD thy God which he hath given thee: the unclean and the clean may eat thereof, as of the roebuck, and as of the hart.

“Only ye shall not eat the blood; ye shall pour it upon the earth as water.” (Deut. 12:15,16)

Whether the Israelites themselves were ceremoniously clean or unclean, they could partake of the meat of clean animals—but only if the blood had been drained. Even when they hunted and captured animals and used them for food, the people were obliged to remove the blood. Moreover, the requirement to pour the blood “upon the earth as water” further emphasized the lesson that blood outside the veins represents death. Pouring out the blood upon the earth pictured Jesus pouring out his soul unto

death. He laid down his life in order to give the blessings of life to others.

“And the LORD spake unto Moses, saying,

“Speak unto the children of Israel, saying, Ye shall eat no manner of fat, of ox, or of sheep, or of goat.

“And the fat of the beast that dieth of itself, and the fat of that which is torn with beasts, may be used in any other use: but ye shall in no wise eat of it.”

(Lev. 7:22-24)

In addition to not partaking of the blood of the animal, the Israelites were forbidden to eat the fat. The prohibition applied even if one were to find an animal in the field that had died “of itself” or that had been slain by other beasts. Although the Israelites were not privileged to eat of the fat of that animal, they could use the fat for other purposes such as a lubricant, grease, or soap.

“For whosoever eateth the fat of the beast, of which men offer an offering made by fire unto the LORD, even the soul that eateth it shall be cut off from his people.” (Lev. 7:25)

In connection with Tabernacle or Temple worship, the fat of animals was dedicated to God. The reason for the prohibition

against partaking of the fat is the symbolism portrayed in the antitypical lesson. The fat of the animal that was offered to the Lord aptly represents *zeal*, for fat burns furiously and quickly in the fire. We are reminded of the prophetic words when Jesus cleansed the Temple of the money changers: “The *zeal* of thine house hath eaten me up [*consumed me*]” (Psa. 69:9; John 2:17).

When the Israelites made an offering to the Lord back in Moses’ day, very often the worshipper himself could partake of the animal. In some instances, a portion of the animal was offered to the Lord, some of it was given to the Levites, and the rest was eaten by the offerer as a feast. However, the fat could not be eaten, for it pertained to the honor, the service, and the dedication that the individual offerer had within himself. Therefore, the fat was to be given solely to God. The principle is that we should love the Lord our God with all our heart, soul, mind, and strength (Deut. 6:5; Mark 12:30). As prefigured in the fat of the animal, our zeal in its highest form—our dedication and deference—is a prerogative *only of Divinity*, for we should not honor others inordinately. We should love them affectionately and loyally, but inordinate love, that is, this high degree of zeal, belongs only to God Himself. Accordingly, the Scriptures speak of fat as God’s “food” or meat (Lev. 3:16). The fat is *His* offering; it is what *He* accepts.

The Scriptures sometimes speak of the fat burning on the altar as a “sweet savour unto the LORD” (Lev. 4:31; 17:6). When Jehovah smelled such an offering, the sweet aroma entered His nostrils, as it were. Just as today when meat being roasted in the oven gives off a pleasant aroma, so our zeal and joy in serving the Lord are pleasing to Him. The fat, which burned quickly and furiously back in the type, symbolically pictured our zeal, and thus the fat was the particular part of the animal that pleased God. If the offering was pure, that is, if the animal was not lame or sick either literally or spiritually speaking, God accepted it and the offering was a sweet savor. If the offering was not accepted, it became a stench in His nostrils and was rejected. Again the penalty for disobedience was death, for anyone who ate the fat was to be “cut off from his people.”

“Moreover ye shall eat no manner of blood, whether it be of fowl or of beast, in any of your dwellings.

“Whatsoever soul it be that eateth any manner of blood, even that soul shall be cut off from his people.” (Lev. 7:26,27)

Because of the symbolic importance of blood, there was a prohibition against eating it, and the severe penalty for disobedience was repeated. Keeping the type of the Tabernacle service

pure helped to keep the antitype, the symbolism prefigured by the type, likewise pure. God is very zealous in regard to His written Word. There are to be no additions or subtractions (Deut. 4:2; 12:32; Rev. 22:18,19).

The flesh is sometimes represented by bread. For example, Jesus said, “I am the bread of life,” and the bread that he gave for humanity was his flesh (John 6:35). “The bread that I will give is my flesh, which I will give for the life of the world” (John 6:51). Jesus’ flesh represents the staff or food of life that mankind will enjoy in the future, for he, by the grace of God, tasted death so that all will have an opportunity of life in the resurrection (Heb. 2:9). Those who hearken to the voice of Messiah during his millennial reign over the earth will be rewarded with everlasting life. However, before gaining this inheritance, mankind will be given instructional lessons and will receive retribution for willful sins committed during the present life. In other words, there will be no *carte blanche* forgiveness for willful sins. As the Scriptures say, “Some men’s sins are open *beforehand*, going *before* to judgment; and some men[’s sins] they follow *after*” (1 Tim. 5:24). Mankind should not be deceived, for the wages of sin, if persisted in, are *everlasting* death—not torture but the negation or absence of life (Rom. 6:23; Gal. 6:7). In the future (and soon-to-come) Kingdom, sinners will be treated with mercy, forgiveness, and a

measure of tolerance, but these qualities will be blended with firm justice and the due process of law and order (Matt. 6:10). Jesus will rule with a rod of iron as well as shepherd the nations in that day (Rev. 2:27; 19:15).

Considering the prohibition in the Jewish Law against eating blood, we should not be surprised at the disciples' reaction when the Master said that unless men ate his flesh and drank his blood, there would be no life in them (John 6:53). This was indeed a very, very strong statement for the disciples to accept. From that day onward, many left Messiah and would no longer hear his message (John 6:66). They stumbled at this hard lesson.

As stated earlier, the reason for keeping this prohibition in a strict fashion was to preserve the antitypical lesson that without the shedding of blood there is no remission of sins—and hence no opportunity of life either in the present age or in the future. When Jesus came at his First Advent and fulfilled the Law perfectly, those who accepted him were under a new arrangement and, therefore, not obliged to keep the *letter* of the Law in all of its requirements. Now, instead, they were to fulfill the *spirit* of the Law (Rom. 7:6; 2 Cor. 3:6).

The thought of eating Jesus' flesh and drinking his blood was abhorrent to many Jews because they took the statement

literally. God uses the same method to deal with and test His people, and Jesus spoke the words that the Father gave him (John 12:49,50). In our Christian walk, we have the same experience that the disciples had. As we become religiously inclined, start to study God's Word, and learn to love the Master and the principles laid down in that Word, certain hard truths come up from time to time where we need to be awakened along lines and subjects we are not prone to accept. If we are not in the proper heart condition or mental attitude to understand particular statements in Holy Writ because of previous training, personal prejudice, or some other reason, we can stumble over them and not see the divine wisdom, reason, and purpose in making the statements. In such a period of crisis, *only faith* in the *already tried* Word can bridge us over the dilemma until our eyes and our heart are opened to understand. We can be sure that God will teach His people in due time. And we know the apostles got over their hurdle with Jesus' words about eating his flesh and drinking his blood, and they continued to follow him. In later life, they could understand the signification of his statement.

**“No meat [meal, that is, *cereal*] offering, which ye shall bring unto the LORD, shall be made with leaven: for ye shall burn no leaven, nor any honey, in any offering of the LORD made by fire.”
(Lev. 2:11)**

From God, the Creator of the universe, cometh every good and perfect gift for man (James 1:17). While our highest desires, worship, reverence, praise, and thanks belong primarily to Him and then to Jesus, yet because we have come underneath God's law in following the teachings of the Bible, we must be careful that our closeness to the Father and the Son does not make us think we have a license to sin. The Apostle Paul reasoned: "What shall we say then? Shall we continue in sin, that grace may abound? *God forbid*. How shall we, that are dead to sin, live any longer therein?" (Rom. 6:1,2).

An interesting and helpful prohibition was added in the type that when an offering was made to God by fire, no leaven or honey could accompany it. Either ingredient was obnoxious to the Lord, but why? Leaven represents sin. "Know ye not that a little leaven leaveneth the whole lump?" (1 Cor. 5:6; Gal. 5:9). Sin has an insidious nature with its little beginnings, which gradually become cumulative in effect and eventually lead to abnormal practices or presumptuous sin. Thus the Jewish Law teaches the principle that we are to beware of a leavened spirit in our heart and life.

Honey pictures flattery. The Lord is not flattered by our praise; that is, we are not to unduly worship Him with the praise

of our lips. We cannot prejudice God's opinion of us by offering Him meaningless flattery and praise. He searches the deeds of our heart to know whether or not we are sincerely worshipping Him. Therefore, in our worship, we must be careful of the leaven of sin and avoid flattery, which is quite different from *heartfelt* praise to Jehovah for His kindness to us. However, we are also to avoid the opposite extreme and not think that in our worship or prayer life, we can go to the Lord and be perfectly sinless. In fact, the Apostle John wrote, "If we say that we have not sinned, we make him [God] a liar, and his word is not in us" (1 John 1:10). But as long as we strive against sin and our heart is loyal to the Heavenly Father, we are comforted by the same apostle, who said, "If any man sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous," and we are counseled to come to the throne of grace for forgiveness (1 John 2:1). Thus we are cleansed of our sins.

It is one thing to enter prayer in a heart attitude of repentance, wanting to change and reform our life so that we are more pleasing to the Master, or to go to God with our griefs and sorrows and for cleansing from our sins, but it is another thing to commit various sins and think that because we can go to the throne of grace, we will be forgiven right away with no due regard to our sinful practice(s). For example, one cannot be

forgiven just by going to Mass. Forgiveness is not that easy, and it must be accompanied with repentance and change.

The Lord is very displeased with hypocrisy, and we must be careful not to be hypocrites in our personal life. In order to be faithful and loyal sons and daughters of Zion in the spiritual sense, we must keep a close watch over our thoughts, words, and conduct. The ordinances in the Old Testament point up inconsistencies in our life in a vivid fashion and teach us to search our heart daily. Christians who are unaware of these lessons in the Old Testament are deprived of the very source of blessing that might make them “meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light” (Col. 1:12). We are not to shun the Bible and its counsel but are to look to the Scriptures for the *cleansing* streams of water of *truth* and the *blood of salvation* as found in the Cross of Christ. The lessons are designed to drive us to the Cross for a change in our life and not to frighten us away so that we become alienated or estranged from God and go back into worldliness, sin, and destruction. Hear the words of the following hymn:

I want a principle within of jealous, godly fear;
A sensibility of sin, a pain to feel it near;
I want the first approach to feel of pride or fond desire;
To catch the wand'ring of my will and quench the
 kindling fire.

From Thee that I no more may part, no more Thy goodness
grieve,
The filial awe, the loving heart, the tender conscience give.
Quick as the apple of an eye, O God, my conscience make;
Awake my soul when sin is nigh, and keep it still awake.

If to the right or left I stray, that moment, Lord, reprove;
And let Thy goodness chase away all hindrance to Thy
love.

O may the least omission pain my well-instructed soul,
And send me to the blood again, which makes and keeps
me whole.

Frank Shallieu