

Gleanings from the Pentateuch

“To Eat or Not to Eat”
Dietary Laws and Holiness
(Leviticus 11)

Mosaic Covenant (Law)

Purpose:

- To define God’s people as a holy nation in which God uniquely dwells

“For I am Yahweh, who brought you up from the land of Egypt, to be your God; thus you shall be holy for I am holy.” – Leviticus 11:45

Mosaic Covenant (Law)

Purpose:

- To *typologically* define God’s people as a holy nation in which God uniquely dwells

The Law consists of outward forms or shadows pointing to a greater reality/fulfillment brought by Christ

Dietary Laws & Holiness

Overview

1. Clean and Unclean Animals

- Land Animals – only those that divide the hoof and chew the cud were clean
- Water Animals – only those that have fins and scales were clean
- Flying Animals – birds of prey and winged insects that walk were unclean

Dietary Laws & Holiness

Overview

2. Reason for the Classifications

- *Cleanness* symbolically corresponds to God’s perfect order of things (“normal”), and *uncleanness* to disorder or corruption
- Unclean animals in some way violate the created order or class to which they belong (“abnormal”)

Dietary Laws & Holiness

Purpose

- To distinguish Israel as uniquely belonging to God and to separate God’s people from the influences of pagan nations

Dietary Laws & Holiness

“...I am Yahweh your God, who has separated you from the peoples.

You are therefore to make distinction between the clean animal and the unclean, and between the unclean bird and the clean; you shall not make yourselves detestable by animal or by bird or by anything that creeps on the ground, which I have separated for you as unclean.

Thus you are to be holy to Me, for I Yahweh am holy; and I have set you apart from the peoples to be Mine.”

– Leviticus 20:24-26

Dietary Laws & Holiness

Purpose

1. Practical Function

- served as a constant barrier to developing ongoing relationships with other cultures
- helped keep Israel from assimilation with their pagan neighbors

Dietary Laws & Holiness

Purpose

2. Symbolic Function

- reminded the Israelites that God had separated them for Himself from the nations
- reminded the Israelites of their need to be separate from the “unclean” nations
- taught the Israelites of the need to conform to God’s holiness in every area of their life

Dietary Laws & Holiness

Principle

- *“You shall be holy for I am holy”*

The covenant people of God are required to imitate God’s holiness in every area of their lives

Dietary Laws & Holiness

“As obedient children, do not be conformed to the former lusts which were yours in your ignorance,

But like the Holy One who called you, be holy yourselves also in all your behavior,

Because it is written, ‘YOU SHALL BE HOLY, FOR I AM HOLY.’”

– 1 Peter 1:14-16