

Understanding the Biblical Food Laws

How we understand the original practice of the food laws versus added man-made food laws can help us sort out what is biblical or non-biblical. Also obviously, we are to seek the original meaning of the biblical text regarding the entire Bible. Most New Testament believers do not trust God concerning His food laws. Observant Jewish people at least seem partly unified on observing the food laws except where extra laws have been added. The Karaite Jews do not observe the extra food laws and the same is true for some Messianic Jews.

There is a long-term disagreement in Protestant circles whether the food laws are still valid. Some say that the OT (Old Testament) no longer applies to NT (New Testament) followers or that the food laws only apply to Israel. Other NT scholars say that the food laws still apply. For the sake of brevity, I am not going to address in detail how Yeshua (Yeshua is Jesus' actual name) and Rabbi Shaul (Paul) addressed the food laws except to say there is no doubt historically that they kept them. I am writing this so believers in God can better trust God. We will need to examine the purpose of some of the meanings of the text. I would hope that this short work will help us to trust in God more.

The Food Laws are Relevant

After coming to a possible original meaning of NT (New Testament) sayings and writings, it is almost certain that early NT believers also believed that the Old Testament food laws were for all believers in the true God for all time. As I've said many times, the Bible is a Jewish book and must be understood in that context. When we look further into the accounts where Yeshua (Jesus) talks about food, it is the extra man-made laws that Yeshua is confronting them on and it is a misunderstanding to think that He is saying that they are allowed eat pork or just anything they want. No one in His time would have taken Yeshua seriously if He was telling them to disobey God's commands.

We could actually say the same for Shaul (Paul). No one would have taken him seriously either if he was telling his fellow Jews not to obey the Torah. All the early believers were Jews and the short list of commands for the Gentiles in Acts 15 is just that, an abbreviated short list for beginners. A new believer has to begin somewhere. The Jewish sage Hillel told new believers follow the golden rule, "That which is hateful to you, do not do to your fellow. That is the whole Torah; the rest is the explanation; go and learn."¹ He obviously intended that new believers learn and observe the whole Torah. An often-overlooked verse in Acts 15 tells us that the early Gentile believers in the Jewish Messiah were to learn the Torah and practice it. "For from the earliest times, Moshe has had in every city those who proclaim him, with his words being read **in the synagogues every Shabbat**;" Acts 15:21 CJB. The context is about new Gentile believers.

It is clear that Gentiles were to observe the Torah and anyone who says otherwise simply misunderstands the NT (New Testament portion). One of the reasons we misunderstand Shaul's letters is that we only know half the story he is addressing. Also, the epistles should be read with the understanding that they were followers of the whole Torah. Some laws that only apply to Israel and the sacrificial law had changed because some changes occurred with the coming of the Messiah. NT believers understand that Yeshua was the final sacrifice necessary for sin. Perhaps the biggest reason people misunderstand Shaul is because they do not understand the context that relates to understanding the scriptures. Biblical context can also include any pertinent source that helps us to understand the original meaning of what was written in the scriptures. This can include culture, expressions, outside influences of that time period, historical information, and so forth. All of these can help us understand the biblical context.

¹ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Hillel_the_Elder

I am not going to address individual misunderstandings at this time (see the addendums for examples), but in Acts 21:20 CJB we see that for Messianic believers there is no apparent deviation from the Torah: “On hearing it, they praised God; but² they also said to him, ‘You see, brother, how many tens of thousands³ of believers there are among the Judeans, and they are all zealots for the Torah.’” Shaul’s imprisonment in Judea began at this time in about 58 AD. That means that some 28 years had gone by for believers in Yeshua with no apparent deviation from Jewish practice. By that time if there was to be change, they would have done it. People often twist this verse to match their false theology.

Believers in Yeshua receive the Holy Spirit when they believe in the Messiah Yeshua and they begin being led by the Holy Spirit. God gave us the Holy Spirit so we don’t have to make up man-made laws and to help us better follow the Torah. It is interesting to note that ten of thousands of believers were being helped and led by the Holy Spirit to zealously follow the law, the Torah. Also, at that time there was no doubt tension regarding Gentiles being added to Judaism. This tension was probably due to their ignorance of the Torah that they needed to learn and practice.

The Jewish Context of Scripture

It may be confusing to hear that we must understand the New Testament in its Jewish context. We assume that we understand the translation merely from the words we see in English, but Yeshua (Jesus) came to a Jewish nation and He is the Jewish Messiah. The culture that surrounded Yeshua was a Jewish culture and everyone who believed on Him initially and the writers of the NT were Jewish by culture. There have been a tremendous number of misunderstandings of the Bible due to this. We live in a totally different culture with different expressions, different ideas and ideals, and so forth. On page 5 of his 515 page book on the customs, habits, and modes of thought of the middle east, James Freeman says, “The Bible ... represents the modes of thought and the peculiar customs of a people who, in their habits, widely differ from us.” ... “Knowledge of Oriental customs is essential to a right understanding of numerous Scripture passages.”⁴

Not only that, we must understand the specifics of Jewish culture and their modes of thought and expression. For example, something that I learned from Professor Rabbi Chai Cherry years ago was that when a rabbi is asked a question, in Jewish culture, the rabbi often gives two answers. Although not a believer in Yeshua he easily identified Yeshua’s response to love God and your neighbor as a typical two-part rabbinical response. He went on to talk about several places in the Tanakh where the Torah was summarized in this way by what we might call, short lists.

Lists in the Bible are most often not all-inclusive lists just like Yeshua’s summary. We see this in Shaul’s list of sins. He lists some sins, but obviously does not tell us every sin we need to avoid in every list. He expects us to study and learn what is right and wrong. He says about the Tanakh in 1 Timothy 3:16-17 CJB: “All Scripture is God-breathed and is valuable for teaching the truth, convicting of sin, correcting faults and training in right living; thus anyone who belongs to God may be fully equipped for every good work.” There was no NT at the time. It is ironic that the very scriptures that this is talking about, the Old Testament portion, are often avoided by NT believers. I have seen misunderstandings about lists mistakenly applied to scriptures over and over; it is truly shameful practice by some.

² In the Greek there is no word “but.” It simply reads “both said.”

³ The translation is correct, “tens of thousands.” Perhaps the translators being Gentiles wanted to downplay the numbers of Jews who believed in the Messiah by using “myriads” instead in other translations. There are some traditions that make Yeshua out to be a Gentile messiah instead of what He actually was, a Jewish messiah that came to save the whole world from their wrong behaviors that keep destroying them.

⁴ James M. Freeman, Manners and Customs of the Bible. (Plainfield, NJ: 1972), p. 5.

The Jewish people in Yeshua's time were a society that struggled to put the true God in proper perspective and so were a God centered community of people. There is more than culture involved with understanding "Jewish context." Their lives encompassed a God centered view in contrast to a pagan societal view. The way Israel lived was centered on living for the true God. No other society in history lived like they tried to live. It may be confusing that we must understand the Bible in its Jewish context, but we have to do that if we truly want to understand its intent.

The extra laws about food were also an attempt to live within this God centered context, but as we know, not all the extra laws are helpful and even sometimes, they can contradict the Torah or be an extra unnecessary burden. **Unbelievers** in the true God are not required to keep the food laws, but it would probably be good for them if they did. **Believers are required to keep the food laws.**

Trusting God

There is a long list of foods that are forbidden to be eaten in the Bible. The problem with thinking that the laws regarding eating these forbidden foods are done away with is that there are so many species to be avoided. Some say that these foods had a pagan practice associated with them. It is an absolute improbability that there is a pagan association with all these foods. That the food laws should be done away with by some flippant explanation is bad biblical exposition. The foods listed in the Bible actually are mostly scavengers that carry diseases and viruses.

The Bible says that God gave man the commands in the Bible to bless us. It makes sense therefore that the food laws were intended for all believers in the true God. Deut. 6:24 CJB: "ADONAI ordered us to observe all these laws, to fear ADONAI our God, **always for our own good.**" Why is it so hard for man to trust God? Why is it so hard to trust God regarding the food laws?

Some Jews and believers in the Jewish messiah Yeshua (Jesus) believe that it is wrong to eat these forbidden foods. Perhaps it is ironic that the sin in the garden is most often compared to eating something forbidden. Man continues to rebel against God and just wants to do what they want to do.

There is typically some reason people have for practicing the food laws or not practicing them. Some believe it is wrong to disobey the Bible; others just believe these forbidden foods may be bad for your body since a lot of them refer to scavengers. **It is interesting to note that in our present day we have all kinds of suggestions on what we should and should not eat from our society,** yet people in general seem more interested in what society has to say than obeying the commands that God gives in the Bible.

Leviticus 11 and Deuteronomy 14 gives us guidelines on what we are allowed to eat and not to eat. Also, you can go to the Web and find lists of foods that we can or can't eat regarding this subject. Here is a good site to go to: <http://www.biblestudy.org/cleanfood.html>. Rather than talk about these foods I would like to talk about a couple of problematic areas regarding these foods.

Pork is a Trigger Point

Some Gentiles push their belief to eat pork as though it is a sin not to eat pork. This seems strange since the Bible says not to eat pig. Part of the reason that Gentiles disregard the food laws is because it is part of their teaching tradition that has been passed down to them. They just don't understand that the Torah was given by God for their own good. Instead, they take verses from the NT out of biblical context and often out of the immediate context in the NT portion to prove their faulty tradition.

Also, in the past, Jews were forced to convert to Christianity and then forced to eat pork. So, there is a special aversion that some Jews have to pork because persecution has become associated with it. The Temple in Jerusalem was desecrated with pig. Disrespect for their food laws can remind Jews of their previous persecutions. It is always a good thing to show respect and be sensitive to others; why not show that in regards to a little thing like food.

There is also some confusion about the names for pork because it comes packaged in various ways. Bacon, ham, Canadian bacon, pork chops, pork roast, pepperoni, sausage, hot dogs, and salami are all different varieties of pork, unless specified as not pork. For example, Beef salami, turkey bacon, veggie bacon, beef hot dogs, and turkey pepperoni are not pork.

Eating Meat with Dairy Law Explained

Also, another problematic practice is the long time Jewish tradition to not eat dairy with meat. Observant Jews and some former observant Jews who believe in Yeshua (Jesus) observe this extra food law and as well as the other food laws described in the Bible.

The rabbis try to understand why you should not boil a goat in its mother's milk because it is repeated. It is just repeated and doesn't mean we add an extra law because it is repeated. The rabbis are very smart and often helpful in regard to biblical observance, but there is actually no law not to mix eating dairy with meat in the Bible. It has come to be understood that boiling a goat in its mother's milk was actually a pagan fertility practice. Here is the scripture: "You are not to eat any animal that dies naturally; although you may let a stranger staying with you eat it, or sell it to a foreigner; because you are a holy people for ADONAI your God. You are not to boil a young animal in its mother's milk." Deut. 14:21 CJB.

The law about not boiling a goat in its mother's milk was obviously a command for Israel because of the pagan Canaanite practice; the law actually has nothing to do with not eating dairy with meat. It implies though that all believers in the true God should not emulate pagan practice. It is interesting that the verse says that it was okay for Gentiles to eat an animal that died naturally. The fact that this is mentioned possibly demonstrates that the food laws were also good for the Gentiles to keep. It also says in the verse that being a holy person requires only eating what God would have us eat. If you want to be a holy person, keep God's food laws. Being holy is to separate yourself from what is worldly by following God's commandments. The food laws are commandments from God.

Some Jews recognize the incorrect interpretation of the dietary law of not mixing milk with meat. They see it as an extra incorrectly applied law and they don't observe it. Nonetheless, those who practice this law consider it abhorrent to mix meat with milk. It is my practice and the Bible's command not to put "stumbling blocks" in front of people that could cause them to incur guilt even when there is nothing to feel guilty about.⁵ The command not to put a stumbling block in front of others means to not to cause another person to fail or sin. Would we push an alcoholic to have a drink? Absolutely not. Be thoughtful and sensitive.

⁵ "Make this one judgment - not to put a stumbling block or a snare in a brother's way;" Romans 14:13 CJB. The context of this chapter is about those who eat only vegetables because the kosher meat may have come from a pagan temple. Yeshua seems to disdain the practice of eating meat from pagan temples. "Nevertheless, I have a few things against you: you have some people who hold to the teaching of Bil'am, who taught Balak to set a trap for the people of Isra'el, so that they would eat food that had been sacrificed to idols and commit sexual sin;" Revelation 2:14 CJB. Most likely Yeshua is talking about people committing sexual sin in regards to meat that comes from pagan temples – it sounds like they are engaging in this practice. It is doubtful that Shaul (Paul) is contradicting Yeshua. We know that Daniel refused to eat meat in Babylon because their meat was offered to idols.

Here are the extra unnecessary food laws concerning meat and dairy in a “nutshell.” First, fish is considered more like dairy (it is considered neutral – parve) so fish and meat are not to be combined. After eating meat, there is a six-hour waiting period before eating dairy. After drinking milk, there is a two-hour waiting period (as I recall) before eating meat; after harder dairy like cheese there is a six-hour waiting period before eating meat; after fish there is a six hour waiting period to eat meat. Traditions vary for the time allotments concerning meat and dairy. Prescriptions and prescribed vitamins are not restricted under Jewish food laws. Vitamins in general are considered food.

I do not practice the not eating meat with dairy law, but I understand and respect the feelings of those who do. If a person has been raised that way, they believe it is wrong to mix meat with dairy and so tempting them could result in a guilty conscience. So even if our values are different, we should respect their beliefs. We should be careful though not to add any extra laws. The Torah commands us not to, “You shall not add to the word which I command you, nor take from it, that you may keep the commandments of the Lord your God which I command you;” Deuteronomy 4:2 NKJV.

Be Considerate

There are possibly other food issues regarding the scriptures, but I will not address those here. Consider this, Noah used clean animals for his sacrifice so he also knew the food laws regarding clean and unclean animals. That was way before Israel became a nation.⁶ Those that want to be God’s holy people are not to eat anything that God has told us not to eat. Although there is division on whether or not they are to be kept it seems clear that Yeshua (Jesus), Shaul (Paul) and early NT believers kept the food laws. Misunderstandings have arisen because of incorrect interpretations of the Jewish context of the biblical. While I didn’t address most scriptural misunderstandings here, I believe there is enough evidence for true believers to follow the food laws merely based on the fact that **they should trust God**.

With regards to the more charged issue of eating pork or the dairy and meat law, we must remember that the people who practice not eating certain foods or not combining dairy with meat are living by their values and beliefs and they are not merely opinions to them. They are sacred values to them that are part of their relationship with God. They are trying to make God the center of their life and live as a true believer so sensitivity should be of utmost importance regarding these biblical issues. I believe in the food laws except for the dairy and meat law. I think it is insensitive to not be inconsiderate.

I remember these two Gentiles sucking on their shrimp in front of a rabbi once. I couldn’t believe they would be so callous. We do not allow pork or shell fish in our home and I would find it insensitive that an adult would influence my child to eat these things. You may not agree with me. Trusting God is at the very basis of our relationship with God. Yeshua said, “You are my friends, if you do what I command you.” John 15:14 CJB.

Yeshua Gave us the Food Laws

Finally, if you believe that Yeshua (Jesus) is God, He also gave us the food laws. There is little argument as to whether God gave Moshe the Torah, but since Yeshua is God, Yeshua as God gave Moshe the Torah. We believe that it is important to understand that Yeshua as God came into the world as a man. We may mistakenly assume that Yeshua had some starting point because God chose to come and live among us, but in fact He didn’t have a starting point. He didn’t become God, but God came to redeem us and help us.

⁶ “Noah built an altar to ADONAI. Then he took from every clean animal and every clean bird, and he offered burnt offerings on the altar;” Genesis 8:20 CJB.

Rabbi Shaul (Paul) says that Yeshua humbled Himself and took on the form of a man. Philippians 2:6-8 CJB says, "Though he was in the form of God, he did not regard equality with God something to be possessed by force. On the contrary, he emptied himself, in that he took the form of a slave by becoming like human beings are. And when he appeared as a human being, he humbled himself still more by becoming obedient even to death - death on a stake as a criminal!"

We need to have a proper biblical understanding of who Yeshua is. In Grudem's Systematic Theology page 226 Grudem says,

"When we think of God as eternal, omnipresent, omnipotent, and so forth, we may have a tendency to think only of God the Father in connection with these attributes. But the biblical teaching on the Trinity tells us that all of God's attributes are true of all three persons, for each is fully God. Thus, God the Son and God the Holy Spirit are also eternal, omnipresent, omnipotent, infinitely wise, infinitely holy, infinitely loving, omniscient, and so forth."⁷

Rabbi Yochanan alludes to this at the beginning of John, "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was with God in the beginning. All things came to be through him, and without him nothing made had being. In him was life, and the life was the light of mankind;" John 1:1-4 CJB. Then in John 1:14 CJB he says, "The Word became a human being and lived with us, and we saw his Sh'khinah, the Sh'khinah of the Father's only Son, full of grace and truth." We know the Son of God that became flesh as Yeshua (Jesus). He was in the beginning with God and is God.

Yeshua said He always did the will of the Father. This makes perfect sense since He is God. In the context of John 5 and in verse 25, Yeshua says He will raise from the dead those who believe in Him. John 5:18-20, 25. Only God can do that. Since Yeshua is God, Yeshua gave Moshe the commandments at Mt. Sinai. In fact, when Moshe saw the angel (angels look like young men) in the burning bush it says that God spoke to Moshe from the bush (Ex. 3:2-4). We understand this as one of the many pre-incarnate appearances of Yeshua. Moshe may have given us the Torah, but it was God who gave Moshe the Torah. God gave Moshe the Torah and Yeshua is God.

Messianic believers believe that the Messiah is God just as Jews believed He would be in antiquity. Abraham meets with God (יהוה - Yehováh) who is in the form of a man. It says in Genesis, "ADONAI went on his way as soon as he had finished speaking to Avraham, and Avraham returned to his place;" Genesis 18:33 CJB. Our other patriarchs met with God; the Jews of antiquity expected God to come in the flesh, Yeshua being God gave us the scriptures and the food laws. So, what makes people think that the food laws are outdated? Also, the Bible says the Messiah would be God in Jeremiah 23:5-6.⁸

I hope that even if you don't agree with me that you will respect those who trying to work out their relationship with God regarding the food laws. They have an honest desire to seek Him as we all should. Keeping God's food laws demonstrate our trust in God no matter what diet we believe in. There are various diets that are thought to be beneficial, but first and foremost, trusting God about what we should or should not eat is what's most important.

⁷ Wayne Grudem, Systematic Theology. (Grand Rapids, MI: 2000), p. 226.

⁸ "Behold, the days are coming, says the Lord, That I will raise to David a Branch of righteousness; A King shall reign and prosper, and execute judgment and righteousness in the earth. In His days Judah will be saved, and Israel will dwell safely; Now this is His name by which He will be called: THE LORD OUR RIGHTEOUSNESS;" Jeremiah 23:5-6 NKJV. The word LORD in caps is the exclusive name for God (יהוה). The Messiah will come from the line of David and will be God.

Addendum A – Some Incorrect Interpretations of Scripture

Incorrect Applications of the Immediate Context

Colossians 2:16

The meaning of Colossians 2:16 is not apparent until we read a little further. This scripture if taken out of context sounds like it goes completely contrary to the Torah. We wouldn't expect what we see in verse 16, especially after applying the understanding of biblical context to this scripture which is, they absolutely kept the Torah.

The answer is in the immediate context. "So don't let anyone pass judgment on you in connection with eating and drinking, or in regard to a Jewish festival or Rosh-Hodesh or Shabbat."⁹ Col. 2:16 CJB. **Then in 2:22 we read**, "Such prohibitions are concerned with things meant to perish by being used [not by being avoided!], and **they are based on man-made rules and teachings.**"

Shaul (Paul) was doing nothing different than what Yeshua did (was doing in Mark 7:18-19 – see Addendum B for an explanation). Yeshua (Jesus) was against the extra rules imposed on believers in the true God and so was Shaul. Apparently here in Colossians, people were judging others **by man made rules**. Shaul says don't let others pass judgment on you about man-made rules. Shaul is not saying that we shouldn't observe Shabbat or the food laws, etcetera. How ridiculous are some people's shallow interpretations. The context here helps clarify what Shaul means. They were not to pass judgment on others regarding **man made rules**.

Hebrews 9:10

In the context of Hebrews 9:10 we learn that **the sacrificial law for sin has been reshaped. It has nothing to do with the dietary law**. Let's also look at the context in Hebrews. "For they involve only food and drink and various ceremonial washings - regulations concerning the outward life, imposed until the time for God to reshape the whole **structure**," Hebrews 9:10 CJB.

What was reshaped? It was the OT **structure**. Let's look at the context: Verse 1, "Regulations for worship;" verse 2, "tent" and "holy place;" verse 4, "ark" and "tablets;" verse 7, the Cohen enters one time a year. **The immediate context tells us that the sacrificial law was reshaped**. We also find out in others passages in the book of Hebrews that Yeshua (Jesus) is the final sacrifice for sin. It's not saying in Hebrews 9:10 that God has changed the food laws. Remember, we are to be holy because God is holy and obeying God's commandments regarding food is part of being a holy separate person. Deuteronomy says in the context of keeping His food laws; we are to keep them because, "You are a holy people for ADONAI your God;" Deuteronomy 14:21 CJB.

Hebrews 13:9-10

Here is a scripture that when taken out of context completely changes the meaning of what is being said. People were making sacrifices with foods and perhaps doing strange things. "Do not be carried away by various strange teachings; for what is good is for the heart to be strengthened by grace, not by foods. People who have made these the focus of their lives have not benefited thereby. We have an altar from which those who serve in the Tent are not permitted to eat." Hebrews 13:9-10 CJB.

Let's look at the context again: Verse 10, "Tent;" verse 11, sin offering by Cohen at the tent; verse 12, Yeshua's sacrifice; verse 13, go to Yeshua (Jesus). It is quite apparent from the context that some were

⁹ The word "Shabbat" in the Greek is plural suggesting that not only was Shabbat practiced, but also the other days of rest associated with the feasts.

making food offerings for sin when they should have just relied on the sacrifice of Yeshua. That's the context. "So too Yeshua suffered death outside the gate, **in order to make the people holy through his own blood.**" Hebrews 13:12 CJB. It is not about the dietary laws, but Yeshua's sacrifice for our sins.

Incorrect Application of Cultural Context

Romans 14:17-19

For the sake of brevity, the context of Romans 14 is about arguments over eating meat that was being offered to idols at pagan temples. Some obviously didn't like that some were eating meat that may have come from pagan temples and were causing some to fall or stumble over what they ate. We have to understand these scriptures from the cultural context. The butchers of that time in pagan cities were pagan priests and the meat that the believers had available may have come from pagan temples. The key here apparently is that some only ate vegetables (Rom. 14:2) while others didn't. Why would they eat just vegetables? That's because the meat could have come from pagan temples. The interpretation of the verses 14:17-19 comes from its cultural context that injects its meaning into the message Shaul (Paul) is giving. Romans 14:17-19 CJB:

"For the Kingdom of God is not eating and drinking, but righteousness, shalom and joy in the Ruach HaKodesh. Anyone who serves the Messiah in this fashion both pleases God and wins the approval of other people. So then, let us pursue the things that make for shalom and mutual upbuilding."

When we ignore the context about these verses it seems to be saying that we can eat anything we want – wrong! That is not what it is saying and that is not what is happening. Shaul didn't want them squabbling over eating or not eating meat; instead pursue peace he says and don't be a stumbling block and cause some to fall. If it could be proven that the meat came from a pagan temple, it would **never** be okay to eat. In our own culture, it is wrong to eat meat approved only by Muslims because they have pagan practices.

Addendum B – Understanding Context

Relative Context

We can use a term such as "relative context" to mean any pertinent source that helps us to understand the original meaning of what was written in the scriptures. This can include culture, expressions, outside influences of that time period, historical information, and so forth. All these things are forms of context. It is never okay to take the Bible out of the context of what it meant to the people at the time it was written.

One of the problems associated with ignoring relative context is seen by how New Testament believers usually interpret the Bible within the framework of the New Testament **only**. The problem with that is the NT (New Testament) writer's frame of reference had biblical and cultural influences. Also, there was no New Testament at that time and misunderstandings of the New Testament can occur if we only rely on the NT. It helps to understand the relative context to what is written in both the OT and NT.

Relative context is not difficult to understand and here is a simple example. We make relative conclusions about our understanding of the Bible all the time. We understand the relation between יהוה (God) and the capitalized words ADONAI or LORD in the written print in our Bibles. Every time we see the word ADONAI or LORD in all capital letters in some Bibles it is talking about יהוה (Yehováh), the special name for God.¹⁰

¹⁰ God's true name was stopped being used around the 2nd century AD because of persecution. The decision to do that should have been reversed instead of making ungodly rules to not say the name of the true God, Yehováh. Exodus 3:15 NKJV says, "This is My name forever."

Due to ignoring these simple factors of context that should be accounted for, uniformed readers of the scriptures often make incorrect conclusions. Perhaps they are basing what they are reading on their own culture instead of the culture of the Bible. Because they are using the wrong context to form conclusions their doctrine can be absolutely wrong. Kefa (Peter) talks about those who are teaching people that it is okay to sin, "These are wells without water, clouds carried by a tempest, for whom is reserved the blackness of darkness forever;" 2 Peter 2:17 NKJV. Don't be partners with them.

Mark 7:18-19

Bear with my repetitions as I share about a commonly incorrect context that is associated with Mark 7:18-19 when Yeshua (Jesus) talks about eating foods. No doubt, the correct biblical context is that **a Jewish squabble is taking place** over "kosher" foods. Scholars always maintain that the correct understanding of the biblical text is to be understood how it was originally intended. Biblical context is one example of context. People who are ignorant of applying context to the scriptures sometimes take these scriptures in Mark and try to prove something that it is not saying.

First, Yeshua and all those in these scriptures in Mark have frames of reference from the Tanakh (the Old Testament). Assume that they scrupulously kept the dietary laws. Next, consider the fact that if Yeshua didn't keep them no one would have taken him seriously. So, what is going on here in Mark? Reading incorrectly only within the framework of the New Testament we might think it is saying that it is okay to eat anything we want. "Don't you see that nothing going into a person from outside can make him unclean? For it doesn't go into his heart but into his stomach, and it passes out into the latrine. "(Thus he declared all foods **ritually clean**.)" Mark 7:18-19 CJB.

Since we know that they followed the food laws of the Torah scrupulously, what could this conversation be talking about? We have to assume that from Yeshua's frame of reference that He **was not saying** that it is okay to eat just anything. As we surmised by immediately identifying the proper context, the issue then must be foods they were allowed to eat, but some were saying they weren't allowed to eat them. **It was a squabble over biblical law**. It doesn't say in the Bible that we can't eat kosher foods (edible food). This is how context works. It allows us to accurately interpret what is going on in Mark.

Some were saying that "kosher" food was not to be eaten. Note the words in the scripture, "**ritually clean**" in these passages that I bolded. Aha, we have our answer! It was an extra ritual that was being argued about. It was an argument over something that is not in the Torah. "Don't you see that nothing going into a person from outside can make him unclean? For it doesn't go into his heart but into his stomach, and it passes out into the latrine. '(Thus he declared all foods **ritually clean**.)'" Mark 7:18-19 CJB. **Yeshua declared all foods that were kosher, clean.**

The wrong application of the text (that it is okay to eat anything we want) comes from the wrong relational conclusion drawn from a limited scope of understanding. We can't make a wrong relative factor right. If we allow shallow and unfounded interpretations of the text, where does this lead our understanding?

Through other external writings **we substantiate our findings in this case**. We find that during that time period, some were saying that if someone touched something unclean and then touched the "kosher" food without washing their hands, the food was then unclean. Yeshua (Jesus) is saying in Mark that this extra law of making "kosher" food ritually wrong to eat was incorrect. **As we deduced**, the text is only concerned with a Jewish squabble over "kosher" food. **It has nothing to do with eating anything that God says we should not eat**. It has nothing to do with allowing people to eat pork or any other food deemed unfit for consumption.

In this example, some New Testament believers often make an incorrect conclusion and say that Yeshua is saying it is okay to eat anything they want when that is not the argument. If we want to understand the Bible and how it was intended to be understood, we have to use the correct context or we will be believing and teaching fiction. It's not rocket science; we just have to make sure we don't overcomplicate things and let the Bible speak for itself without reading between the lines, **use the correct contextual understanding**, and understand the immediate context and genre.