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Leviticus 11

(2019)

Bible House of Grace contains an easy to read New and Old Testament commentary full of spiritual treasures and pearls, complete with an insightful resource guide illuminating God's love and grace.



Although I believe my aim is pure and God's will perfect this document is still the product of a human man, as to such I neither claim perfect knowledge or perfect understanding.

Leviticus 11.

FOCUS: CLEAN AND UNCLEAN FOODS

Topics.

- The animals considered clean that the people of Israel could eat.
- Creatures in the sea and rivers that can be eaten and not eaten.
- Birds that cannot be eaten and are to be detestable.
- Swarming creatures that creep on the ground, that cannot be eaten.
- Laws for when an animal the people intended to eat dies.
- Do not eat what goes on its belly, or on all fours or has many feet.
- Swarming things swarm/creep on the ground, that cannot be eaten.
- I am the LORD, this is the law concerning every animal, bird and fish.

INTRODUCTION: the book of Leviticus is about ceremonial rules and civil laws that God gave to Moses after He had given him the Ten Commandments on Mount Sinai.

- These are the statutes and rules and laws that the LORD made between him and the people of Israel through Moses on Mount Sinai. (Lev. 26:46).

Either on Mount Sinai or when he met with him in the Tabernacle (also called the tent of meeting) when they were in the wilderness near the Mountain. Moses was to give these ceremonial laws to the Levitical priesthood, they embrace rules concerning sacrifices, offerings and worship; the ordination of Aaron and his sons and their ceremonial cleanness; the Day of Atonement; feasts and holy days and the Year of Jubilee. The civil and social laws and laws of justice he was to give to the government of Israel to implement within their society. The ceremonial and civil laws were not given to the secular world but are laws God gave to the nation of Israel. The central message is that God is holy and requires His people to be holy. The book also shows that God graciously provides atonement for sin through the shedding of blood. Most Jews and Christians recognise Moses as the author, writing sometime after the giving of the Law (about 1445 B.C.).

NOTE: for information concerning people, places and the meaning of words see Map Locations and People of the Bible, and Bible Dictionary on Website Menu.

The previous chapter: is focused upon events concerning Aaron's two eldest sons Nadab and Abihu, offering unauthorized fire before the LORD; fire from the LORD consuming them; Mishael and Elzaphan Aarons surviving sons carrying their two brothers out of the camp and Moses telling Aaron Eleazar and Ithamar, not to mourn lest they die. The chapter ends with some footnotes, covering, the recipe for incense; worship without knowledge and the altar of incense, of prayer, of faith of legalistic ritual and of the throne of God and Christ our mediator.

CLEAN ANIMALS

LEVITICUS 11:1-3

The Animals Considered Clean that the People of Israel could Eat.

- **Leviticus 11:1-8:** And the LORD spoke to Moses and Aaron, saying to them, ²"Speak to the people of Israel, saying, These are the living things that you may eat among all the animals that are on the earth. ³Whatever parts the hoof and is cloven-footed and chews the cud, among the animals, you may eat.

Genesis 1:29 gave Adam and Eve instructions to eat liberally from the plant foods lavishly provided in the Garden of Eden. However, after humanity's exodus from the Garden of Eden, the proteins unique to animal foods became increasingly important to a race now dependent on heavy labour, speed, and physical strength to survive. God approved animal protein sources for mankind to eat as recorded in the Old Testament. (Lev. 11) (Deut. 14). The previous chapters focused on the laws concerning the priests, in this chapter we now come to the laws that concern the people. The focus of this chapter is upon clean and unclean meats. God gives the people of Israel a list of all the animals, birds, fish and insects considered clean that they could eat on the entire earth. Those considered clean that could be eaten embrace every animal that: -

- Have hoofs that are parted.
- Is cloven-footed.
- Chews the cud.

Cloven: comes from the Hebrew word (shaca`) and in this context means to split. A cloven footed, cloven hoof, cleft hoof, divided hoof or split hoof is a hoof split into two toes. Examples of mammals that possess this type of hoof are cattle, deer, antelopes, gazelles, goats, and sheep.

Chew the cud: means to chew partly digested food. When animals such as cows or sheep chew the cud, they slowly chew their partly-digested food over and over again in their mouth before finally swallowing it.

The focus of the following chapters:

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- Chapter twelve, thirteen, fourteen and fifteen focuses upon unclean persons, garments and dwellings.
- Chapter seventeen focuses upon principal sacrifices and the atonement of all manner of uncleanness.
- Chapter eighteen focuses upon unclean marriages.
- Chapter nineteen is a repetition of sundry laws.
- Chapter twenty focuses on some greater aspects of uncleanness.

The following verse shows that every creature God created was good:

- God saw everything that he had made, and behold, it was very good. And there was evening and there was morning, the sixth day. (Gen. 1:31).

Yet it pleased God to make a difference between the clean and the unclean, which he did in in part even prior to the flood as the following verse shows:

- Take with you seven pairs of all clean animals, the male and his mate, and of those that are not clean a pair, the male and his mate, (Gen. 7:2).

This shows that it was very likely that the distinction between clean and unclean creatures was observed, at some level among the descendants of Shem, from the time that Noah and his sons were permitted to eat animal food. Now, from this chapter onward God gives His people more detailed and specific directions on what is clean and what is unclean. Following are four reasons that have been suggest for these laws:

1. To test the people's obedience and teach them self-denial, obedience and submission to His will much like Adam was forbidden to eat of the tree of knowledge.

2. To keep the Israelites distinct and separate from other nations, since many of these forbidden animals were objects of superstition and idolatry to the heathen people dwelling in Canaan and prevent them becoming familiar with the inhabitants of the countries surrounding the land of Canaan, so that they would not fall into their corrupt practises and be contaminated with their vices.
3. To keep them as a separated, distinct and peculiar people for Himself.

The apostle Peter in the following verse clearly shows that during the Old Testament era the Jews were a separate people:

- You yourselves know how unlawful it is for a Jew to associate with or to visit anyone of another nation, but God has shown me that I should not call any person common or unclean. (Acts 10:28). 34).
4. To keep them nutritional healthy for the meat of many of the animals categorised unclean, was during this ancient era (especially in warm climates), far less healthy for food than those that could be eaten.

These dietary laws, begin with the land animals, both domesticated and wild. This is in accordance with the Hebrew division of the animal kingdom into the following four principal groups:

1. The land animals.
2. The water animals.
3. The birds of the air.
4. The swarming animals.

Though the land animals are not specified by name in this chapter the following verse does name ten of them:

- These are the animals you may eat: the ox, the sheep, the goat, ⁵the deer, the gazelle, the roebuck, the wild goat, the ibex, the antelope, and the mountain sheep. (Deuteronomy 14:4-5).

The LORD spoke to Moses and Aaron: (v1), these laws were not given to the Gentiles, but to the Jews only as part of their ceremonial law concerning sacrificial meats and drinks, which are now abolished; for it is not what goes into a person that defiles them, but what comes out of their mouth. (Matt. 15:11). Since those who lived during these early generations had no way of distinguishing by their senses what food was most wholesome and good for the body and what was not and since the people of Israel were a special people to the LORD, He gave them a list of foods that would be wholesome for their health. Though we are not required to follow these laws or suppose that health was the only reason God gave these laws to the children of Israel, they do show us what foods are most suitable to eat. The law not only forbid eating the unclean beasts, but also touching them, signifying that those in Christ should keep themselves from those who live a lifestyle of sin. While we enjoy Christian grace and are free from such burdensome laws concerning unclean and clean foods, we must be careful not to abuse God's grace in Christ, for the Lord has paid a great price to redeem us.

UNCLEAN ANIMALS

LEVITICUS 11:4-8

Do Not to Eat the Camel, the Rock Badger, the Hare and the Pig.

- **Leviticus 11:4-8:** Nevertheless, among those that chew the cud or part the hoof, you shall not eat these: The camel, because it chews the cud but does not part the hoof, is unclean to you. ⁵And the rock badger, because it chews the cud but does not part the hoof, is unclean to you. ⁶And the hare, because it chews the cud but does not part the hoof, is

unclean to you. ⁷And the pig, because it parts the hoof and is cloven-footed but does not chew the cud, is unclean to you. ⁸You shall not eat any of their flesh, and you shall not touch their carcasses; they are unclean to you.

Unclean: (v5) comes from the Hebrew word (*tame'*) and means to be foul in a religious, ceremonial or moral sense. It carries the idea of being defiled, contaminated and polluted. Those who were counted as being ceremonially unclean, could not go into the sanctuary or partake in any sacred duty or religious matter until they were declared clean. Among the animals that chew the cud or part the hoof, they were not to eat the following two animals because though they do chew the cud, they do not have parted hoofs.

1. The camel.
2. The hare.
3. The pig, (because though it does have a parted the hoof it does not chew the cud).

Not only were they not to eat these, but if they touched their dead bodies they would be counted as being unclean.

CLEAN WATER FOODS

LEVITICUS 11:9-12

Creatures in the Sea and Rivers that can be Eaten and not Eaten.

- **Leviticus 11:9-11:** "These you may eat, of all that are in the waters. Everything in the waters that has fins and scales, whether in the seas or in the rivers, you may eat. ¹⁰But anything in the seas or the rivers that has not fins and scales, of the swarming creatures in the waters and of the living creatures that are in the waters, is detestable to you. ¹¹You shall regard them as detestable; you shall not eat any of their flesh, and you shall detest their carcasses. ¹²Everything in the waters that has not fins and scales is detestable to you.

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Fish in the sea and rivers that can be eaten:

- Everything in the waters that has fins and scales

Fish in the sea and rivers that cannot be eaten:

This is apart from fish that have no fins and scales previously mentioned it embraces all other inhabitants of the water, such as shell-fish, whether molluscs (snails, slugs, mussels, eels and octopuses etc.), or crustaceans (crabs, lobsters and shrimps and such like things), or cetaceous (whales, dolphins and porpoises etc.).

Lobsters and shellfish: there are no health concerns with eating fresh or canned lobster and shellfish meat in moderation and both provide various sources of protein, vitamins and minerals, but one cup serving of lobster has seventy-one percent of an entire day's upper recommendation of cholesterol and thirty one percent of the sodium. Shellfish are highly perishable and pathogenic bacteria love to eat this, so it spoils very quickly and easily and can then produce toxins that can affect the human nervous system and can be very serious if ingested in large amounts. For our modern world today with sophisticated refrigerated storage and transport this is not an issue, but for those living during the ancient early era, it is almost certain many who made these creatures their daily diet would be in danger of suffering some level of illness.

UNCLEAN BIRDS

LEVITICUS 11:13-19

Birds and that Cannot be Eaten and are to be Detestable.

- **Leviticus 11:13-19:** "And these you shall detest among the birds; they shall not be eaten; they are detestable: the eagle, the bearded vulture, the black vulture, ¹⁴the kite, the falcon of any kind, ¹⁵every raven of any kind, ¹⁶the ostrich, the nighthawk, the sea gull, the hawk of any kind, ¹⁷the little owl, the cormorant, the short-eared owl, ¹⁸the barn owl, the tawny owl, the carrion vulture, ¹⁹the stork, the heron of any kind, the hoopoe, and the bat.

Birds that cannot be Eaten.

- The eagle, the bearded vulture, the black vulture and the kite.
- The falcon of any kind, every raven of any kind and the ostrich.
- The nighthawk, the sea gull, the hawk of any kind and the little owl.
- The cormorant, the short-eared owl, the barn owl and the tawny owl.
- The carrion vulture, the stork, the heron of any kind, the hoopoe and the bat.

CLEAN AND UNCLEAR INSECTS

LEVITICUS 11:20-25

Winged Creatures that Can be Eaten and Cannot be Eaten.

- **Leviticus 11:20-25:** "All winged insects that go on all fours are detestable to you. ²¹Yet among the winged insects that go on all fours you may eat those that have jointed legs above their feet, with which to hop on the ground. ²²Of them you may eat: the locust of any kind, the bald locust of any kind, the cricket of any kind, and the grasshopper of any kind. ²³But all other winged insects that have four feet are detestable to you. ²⁴"And by these you shall become unclean. Whoever touches their carcass shall be unclean until the evening, ²⁵and whoever carries any part of their carcass shall wash his clothes and be unclean until the evening.

Winged creatures that cannot be Eaten.

- All winged insects that have four feet and go on all four feet.

Winged creatures that can be Eaten.

- Those that have jointed legs above their feet, with which to hop on the ground.
- The locust of any kind and the bald locust of any kind.
- The cricket of any kind and the grasshopper of any kind.

Whoever touches the carcass of these creatures was to wash their clothes and be counted unclean until the evening. Locust were lawful food to the Israelites and eaten by the Arabs, who sprinkle them with salt and fry them in olive oil or smoke them. They are said to taste like red herrings. The following verses show that they were eaten by John the Baptist:

- Now John wore a garment of camel's hair and a leather belt around his waist, and his food was locusts and wild honey. (Matt. 3:4).
- Now John was clothed with camel's hair and wore a leather belt around his waist and ate locusts and wild honey. (Mark 1:6).

UNCLEAN ANIMALS

LEVITICUS 11:26-28

Animals that Cannot be Eaten.

- **Leviticus 11:26-28:** Every animal that parts the hoof but is not cloven-footed or does not chew the cud is unclean to you. Everyone who touches them shall be unclean. ²⁷And all that walk on their paws, among the animals that go on all fours, are unclean to you. Whoever touches their carcass shall be unclean until the evening, ²⁸and he who carries their carcass shall wash his clothes and be unclean until the evening; they are unclean to you.

Animals that cannot be eaten.

- Every animal that parts the hoof but is not cloven-footed or does not chew the cud.
- All animals that walk on four paws

Whoever touches the carcass of these animals was to wash their clothes and be counted unclean until the evening.

UNCLEAN SWARMING/CREEPING THINGS

LEVITICUS 11:29-38

Unclean Swarming things that Swarm on the Ground.

- **Leviticus 11:29-38:** "And these are unclean to you among the swarming (creeping) things that swarm (creep) on the ground: the mole rat, the mouse, the great lizard of any kind, ³⁰the gecko, the monitor lizard, the lizard, the sand lizard, and the chameleon. ³¹These are unclean to you among all that swarm. Whoever touches them when they are dead shall be unclean until the evening. ³²And anything on which any of them falls when they are dead shall be unclean, whether it is an article of wood or a garment or a skin or a sack, any article that is used for any purpose. It must be put into water, and it shall be unclean until the evening; then it shall be clean. ³³And if any of them falls into any earthenware vessel, all that is in it shall be unclean, and you shall break it. ³⁴Any food in it that could be eaten, on which water comes, shall be unclean. And all drink that could be drunk from every such vessel shall be unclean. ³⁵And everything on which any part of their carcass falls shall be unclean. Whether oven or stove, it shall be broken in pieces. They are unclean and shall remain unclean for you. ³⁶Nevertheless, a spring or a cistern holding water shall be clean, but whoever touches a carcass in them shall be unclean. ³⁷And if any part of their carcass falls upon any seed grain that is to be sown, it is clean, ³⁸but if water is put on the seed and any part of their carcass falls on it, it is unclean to you.

Swarming/creeping creatures that creep on the ground that cannot be eaten.

- The mole rat, the mouse, the great lizard of any kind and the gecko.
- The monitor lizard, the lizard, the sand lizard and the chameleon.

Whoever touched their dead bodies were to wash and be counted unclean until the evening and if any of their dead bodies:

- Fell on a garment or any article that was used for any purpose it was counted unclean and was to be put into water and counted clean in the evening.
- Fell into any earthenware vessel, all that was in it was counted to be unclean. The vase was to be broken and all food or drink in it was counted unclean.
- Fell on an oven or stove, they were to be broken in pieces.
- Fell into a spring or a cistern holding water, though the water was counted clean whoever touched a carcass in them would be unclean.

- Fell upon any seed grain that was to be sown, was clean, but if water is put on the carcass and the seed it would be unclean.

Summary: everything upon which any part of swarming/creeping carcass fell was to be counted unclean.

UNCLEAN ANIMALS

LEVITICUS 11:39-40

Laws for when an Animal the People Intended to Eat Dies.

- **Leviticus 11:39-40:** "And if any animal which you may eat dies, whoever touches its carcass shall be unclean until the evening,⁴⁰ and whoever eats of its carcass shall wash his clothes and be unclean until the evening. And whoever carries the carcass shall wash his clothes and be unclean until the evening.

If any animal which you may eat dies: refers to a clean animal, which has not been properly slaughtered, having died from an accident, of itself or by being killed by some wild beast, in which cases the blood is not poured forth, as it should be under the law when they were killed by men, either for food or sacrifice.

- Every person who eats what dies of itself or what is torn by beasts, whether he is a native or a sojourner, shall wash his clothes and bathe himself in water and be unclean until the evening; then he shall be clean. (Lev. 17:15).

Whoever ate, touched or carried the dead body of an animal that died in such a manner was to wash their clothes and be counted unclean until evening.

UNCLEAN SWARMING THINGS

LEVITICUS 11:41-44

Do Not Eat what goes on its Belly, or on all Fours or Has Many Feet.

- **Leviticus 11:41-44:** "Every swarming (creeping in KJV) thing that swarms (creeps) on the ground is detestable; it shall not be eaten.⁴² Whatever goes on its belly, and whatever goes on all fours, or whatever has many feet, any swarming (creeping in KJV) thing that swarms (creepeth in KJV), on the ground, you shall not eat, for they are detestable.⁴³ You shall not make yourselves detestable with any swarming (creeping in KJV) thing that swarms (creeps in KJV), and you shall not defile yourselves with them, and become unclean through them.⁴⁴ For I am the LORD your God. Consecrate yourselves therefore, and be holy, for I am holy. You shall not defile yourselves with any swarming (creeping in KJV) thing that crawls on the ground.

Swarming things that swarm/creeps on the ground, that cannot be eaten.

- Whatever crawls on its belly (worms and snakes and such like things).
- Whatever goes on all fours (spiders, toads and scorpions etc.).
- Whatever has many feet (caterpillars).
- Any swarming/creeping thing that swarms/creeps on the ground.
- Any swarming/creeping thing that crawls on the ground.

All of these are to be considered unclean and detestable anyone touching them would become unclean.

LEVITICUS 11:45-47

You shall Make a Distinction Between the Unclean and the Clean.

- **Leviticus 11:45-47:** For I am the LORD who brought you up out of the land of Egypt to be your God. You shall therefore be holy, for I am holy." ⁴⁶This is the law about beast and bird and every living creature that moves through the waters and every creature that swarms (creeps in KJV) on the ground, ⁴⁷to make a distinction between the unclean and the clean and between the living creature that may be eaten and the living creature that may not be eaten.

God delivered them Israel from the land of bondage to be a peculiar people for Himself.

- Who is like your people Israel, the one nation on earth whom God went to redeem to be his people, making himself a name and doing for them great and awesome things by driving out before your people, whom you redeemed for yourself from Egypt, a nation and its gods? (2 Sam. 7:23).

The Holy One of Israel had a special claim upon His redeemed people that they should obey His laws and keep themselves holy as He is holy. This chapter sets forth the spiritual ground on which the distinction between clean and unclean is based so that the people of Israel would be a holy people for the LORD.

- You are to distinguish between the holy and the common, and between the unclean and the clean. (Lev. 10:10).
- You shall therefore separate the clean beast from the unclean, and the unclean bird from the clean. You shall not make yourselves detestable by beast or by bird or by anything with which the ground crawls, which I have set apart for you to hold unclean. ²⁶You shall be holy to me, for I the LORD am holy and have separated you from the peoples, that you should be mine. (Lev. 20:25-26).
- As he who called you is holy, you also be holy in all your conduct, ¹⁶since it is written, "You shall be holy, for I am holy." (1 Peter 1:15-16).

The basis of the obligation to maintain the distinction was the call of the Hebrews to be the special people of the LORD. It was to be something in their daily life that would remind them of the covenant which distinguished them from all other nations of the world. Today there are no foods that can make a Christian spiritually or ceremonially unclean.

Jesus said:

- It is not what goes into the mouth that defiles a person, but what comes out of the mouth; this defiles a person. (Matt. 15:11).

When Peter fell into a trance, he saw something like a great sheet descending from heaven, being let down with all kinds of animals and reptiles and birds of the air in it and then heard a voice saying:

- Rise, Peter; kill and eat. ¹⁴But Peter said, "By no means, Lord; for I have never eaten anything that is common or unclean." ¹⁵And the voice came to him again a second time, "What God has made clean, do not call common." ¹⁶This happened three times, and the thing was taken up at once to heaven. (Acts 10:10-16).

Peter later tells us:

- You yourselves know how unlawful it is for a Jew to associate with or to visit anyone of another nation, but God has shown me that I should not call any person common or unclean. (Acts 10:28). Truly I understand that God shows no partiality, but in every nation anyone who fears him and does what is right is acceptable to him. (Acts 10:33-34).

Believers today are no longer bound by the letter of the Law regarding their food. Today the Kingdom of God is not eating, or abstaining from meats and drinks; but righteousness, and truth, and peace, and joy in the Holy Spirit.

- For the kingdom of God is not a matter of eating and drinking but of righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Spirit. (Rom. 14:17).
- For everything created by God is good, and nothing is to be rejected if it is received with thanksgiving. (1 Tim. 4:4).

Since holiness is Gods nature, it is the call of those who are His house and family to life a lifestyle that honour God and brings a good testimony the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and the Christian faith. All, of these laws were given to the people that God brought up out of the land of Egypt, meaning they are only enforced upon Israel not the Gentiles. These laws cover every living creature (animals, birds, fish and insects). They are given to Israel to make a distinction:

- Between the unclean and the clean.
- Between living creatures that may be eaten and that may not be eaten.

Though suddenly enforcing the limitation of what Israel could and could not eat would have often caused annoyance and separated the people from many heathen pagan practises, Jordan S Rubin, known as America's Biblical Health Coach, and a New York Times best-selling author, TV personality, motivational speaker, organic farmer and founder of Garden of Life, Beyond Organic and Get REAL Nutrition, shows in his book titled: "The Makers Diet," that they were extremely beneficial to their health

As the founder of Bible House of Grace, I would like to thank the many Christian scholars, commentators and theologians who have gone before me, and the many today, who have freely made available their works to enhance the knowledge of the Bible to all people worldwide. It is only with the help of these faithful writers that much of Bible House of Grace exists as it does today.
