

I Corinthians 10:14-33

“Eating Meat at an Idolater’s Private Home”

“Therefore, my beloved, flee from idolatry. I speak as to wise men; you judge what I say. Is not the cup of blessing which we bless a sharing in the blood of Messiah? Is not the bread which we break a sharing in the body of Messiah? Since there is one bread, we who are many are one body; for we all partake of the one bread. Look at the nation Israel; are not those who eat the sacrifices sharers in the altar? What do I mean then? That a thing sacrificed to idols is anything, or that an idol is anything? *No*, but *I say* that the things which the Gentiles sacrifice, they sacrifice to demons and not to God; and I do not want you to become sharers in demons. You cannot drink the cup of the Lord and the cup of demons; you cannot partake of the table of the Lord and the table of demons. Or do we provoke the Lord to jealousy? We are not stronger than He, are we? All things are lawful, but not all things are profitable. All things are lawful, but not all things edify. Let no one seek his own *good*, but that of his neighbor. Eat anything that is sold in the meat market without asking questions for conscience' sake; FOR THE EARTH IS THE LORD'S, AND ALL IT CONTAINS [Psalm 24:1; 50:12; 89:11]. If one of the unbelievers invites you and you want to go, eat anything that is set before you without asking questions for conscience' sake. But if anyone says to you, ‘This is meat sacrificed to idols,’ do not eat *it*, for the sake of the one who informed you, and for conscience' sake; I mean not your own conscience, but the other *man's*; for why is my freedom judged by another's conscience? If I partake with thankfulness, why am I slandered concerning that for which I give thanks? Whether, then, you eat or drink or whatever you do, do all to the glory of God. Give no offense either to Jews or to Greeks or to the [assembly] of God; just as I also please all men in all things, not seeking my own profit but the *profit* of the many, so that they may be saved.”

In 1 Corinthians 10:1-11 preceding, the Apostle Paul issued an important reminder to the Corinthians, specifically how what occurred to the Ancient Israelites in the past, took place as examples for Messiah followers to consider, with the expressed reason “so that we would not crave evil things as they also craved” (10:6).¹ Paul is clear to direct his audience, “Now these things happened to them as an example, and they were written for our instruction, upon whom the ends of the ages have come” (10:11). Given the fact that much of what the Torah says is to be understood as a “warning” (RSV), so that previous mistakes committed by God’s people, like fornication and idolatry, are not subsequently repeated (10:7-9)—Paul by no means should be considered as someone opposing the Law of Moses here. A major focus of his admonishment to the Corinthians is precisely so they can resist lawlessness, and in particular the idolatry present in their local community:

“No temptation has overtaken you but such as is common to man; and God is faithful, who will not allow you to be tempted beyond what you are able, but with the temptation will provide the way of escape also, so that you will be able to endure it” (10:13).

Having just appealed directly to the Tanach or Old Testament, specifically in the example of Ancient Israel’s worship of the golden calf (10:7; Exodus 32:4), and the Numbers 25 scene of sexual immorality (10:8), Paul moves forward in 1 Corinthians 10:14-33, in addressing something similar to what he had previously addressed in 1 Corinthians 8. In this passage, while the issue of eating meat that had been sacrificed to idols is discussed, the venue has changed to the private home of a non-Believer, not a public temple or shrine. Paul intends to appeal to the Corinthians’ good sense (10:15), as he addresses a hypothetical situation about what to do when a Corinthian Believer might be invited to dine at the home of a non-Believer (10:27), which would presumably be an opportunity to develop a relationship and share of the good news of Israel’s Messiah. What, specifically, was to be done, when potentially served meat that had been sacrificed to idols?

¹ This section has been adapted and expanded from the 1 Corinthians 10:23 entry appearing in *The New Testament Validates Torah* (2012) by J.K. McKee.

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Due to the repeated presence of the Corinthian slogan *panta exestin* (πάντα ἔξεστιν) or “Everything is permissible” (10:23, NIV [2x]) in this passage, it cannot go overlooked how there are some notable parallels between 1 Corinthians 10:14-33 and 6:18-20 preceding:²

1 CORINTHIANS 10:14-33

Therefore, my beloved, flee from idolatry (10:14).

Is not the cup of blessing which we bless a sharing in the blood of Messiah? Is not the bread which we break a sharing in the body of Messiah? Since there is one bread, we who are many are one body; for we all partake of the one bread (10:16-17).

“All things are lawful,” but not all things are helpful. “All things are lawful,” but not all things build up (10:23, RSV).

Whether, then, you eat or drink or whatever you do, do all to the glory of God (10:31).

1 CORINTHIANS 6:18-20

Flee immorality... (6:18).

Do you not know that your bodies are members of Messiah? Shall I then take away the members of Messiah and make them members of a prostitute? May it never be! Or do you not know that the one who joins himself to a prostitute is one body *with her*?...But the one who joins himself to the Lord is one spirit *with Him* (6:15-17).

“All things are lawful for me,” but not all things are helpful. “All things are lawful for me,” but I will not be enslaved by anything (6:12, RSV).

For you have been bought with a price: therefore glorify God in your body (6:20).

Previously, Paul was greatly concerned with presumed Corinthian “Believers” consorting with prostitutes. Here, Paul is concerned with the abuses present among those who think that “I am allowed to do anything” (NLT), which would clearly be problematic in light of the imperative of edifying other Believers, and/or those outside of the faith community.

While opposing any participation and fellowship in idolatry (10:14-23), what does it mean to edify one’s neighbor (10:24)? It could mean accepting the invitation to the home of a non-Believer for a meal (10:25-27a), and in the process having to eat whatever is served to oneself (10:27b). When it is discovered that the meat served had been sacrificed to idols, the meat is to then be refused (10:28-29a). All of the activities conducted by the redeemed in Yeshua are to be to the glory of God, and the concern of others who may be offended (10:31-33).

1 Corinthians 10:14-33, and its relationship to both eating and the kosher dietary laws, is without doubt a passage which tends to create a great deal of tension when it is brought up in a Messianic venue. Such tension not only concerns the First Century Corinthian setting of Paul’s writing, but its application for more modern times, particularly in settings of missionary evangelism and/or hospitality from others. 1 Corinthians 10:14-33 is a place where a number of Christian theologians think that the Apostle Paul has definitely “gone rogue” in terms of the Apostolic decree (Acts 15:20, 29), or has at least pushed the limits of prohibitions of the Apostolic decree, as far to the Left as they could go. Obviously, a reasonable examination of 1 Corinthians 10:14-33 should be in order, and with it an understanding of Paul’s overriding concern: “I try to accommodate everybody in everything, not looking for my own advantage, but for the advantage of everybody else, so that they may be saved” (10:33, New Jerusalem Bible).

² Cf. Garland, 474.

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10:14-17 Paul issues the imperative to the Corinthians, “Therefore, my dearly loved ones, flee from idolatry” (v. 14, TLV). With the scene of Exodus 32:1-6³ in view, of Ancient Israel’s worship of the golden calf (v. 7), the Phillips New Testament paraphrase of v. 14 is highly useful: “The lesson we must learn, my brothers, is at all costs to avoid worshipping a false god.”

As Paul proceeds to explain the great problem of fellowship with idolatry (vs. 16-22), he notes that “I speak to sensible people; judge for yourselves what I say” (v. 15, NIV). The term *phronimos* (φρόνιμος) is taken to be “in one’s right mind, in one’s senses,” and “wise, sensible, prudent” (LS).⁴ Elsewhere in his correspondence with the Corinthians (4:10; 2 Corinthians 11:19), *phronimos* is used a bit ironically or even mockingly—but that is not at all how we see it used in v. 15. Craig Blomberg interjects the appropriate thought, “Notwithstanding their divisions, [Paul] trusts that common sense will win out in this instance.”⁵

The Apostle Paul is very concerned about what various Corinthians have been participating in, referencing how at the Lord’s Supper multiple people partake of the wine and bread. Paul directs them, “The cup of blessing that we bless—isn’t it a sharing of Messiah’s blood? The bread which we break—isn’t it a sharing of Messiah’s body” (v. 16, TLV). A connection with the Last Supper meal between Yeshua and His Disciples (Matthew 26:27-28; Mark 14:23-24; Luke 22:20), and what it represents for those who have received Yeshua into their lives and are in communion with one another as fellow brothers and sisters, is significantly highlighted.

It has been, correctly, acknowledged by various examiners that some connection is present in v. 16 with the traditional Jewish blessing over the cup. In his commentary, Ben Witherington III describes how Paul “refers to the ‘cup of blessing,’ a technical term for the cup of wine drunk at the end of a Jewish meal and over which the thanksgiving or grace is said [b.*Sotah* 38b]...In the Passover meal this was the third cup of the four to be drunk. This was probably the cup Jesus identified as the cup of the new covenant in his blood at the Last Supper. The point is that this new covenant was enacted by Christ’s death.”⁶ The traditional blessing over the cup, as recorded in the Mishnah, is “Blessed are you, O Lord, our God, King of the Universe...Creator of the fruit of the vine” (m.*Berachot* 6:1).⁷ Today’s Messianic people are certainly familiar with the customary refrain, *Barukh atah Adonai, Eloheinu melekh ha’olam, borei p’ri ha’gafen* (בָּרוּךְ אַתָּה יְיָ אֱלֹהֵינוּ מֶלֶךְ הַעוֹלָם בּוֹרֵא פְרִי הַגֶּפֶן) (ברוךך אהיה).

There is no uniform agreement in the contemporary Messianic movement about the issue of “the Lord’s Supper,” and whether it is to be observed in association with the annual Passover *seder*, or is it to be something that takes place more regularly.⁸ Christian debates are present as to whether or not there is even a Passover context to what is in view.⁹ Whether observed annually, monthly, weekly, bi-weekly, or even daily—as is witnessed across diverse Christian traditions, to be sure—Paul’s major point concerns what the participation of Believers in memorializing the bread and wine of the Last Supper meal signifies.

³ “Now when the people saw that Moses delayed to come down from the mountain, the people assembled about Aaron and said to him, ‘Come, make us a god who will go before us; as for this Moses, the man who brought us up from the land of Egypt, we do not know what has become of him.’ Aaron said to them, ‘Tear off the gold rings which are in the ears of your wives, your sons, and your daughters, and bring them to me.’ Then all the people tore off the gold rings which were in their ears and brought them to Aaron. He took this from their hand, and fashioned it with a graving tool and made it into a molten calf; and they said, ‘This is your god, O Israel, who brought you up from the land of Egypt.’ Now when Aaron saw this, he built an altar before it; and Aaron made a proclamation and said, ‘Tomorrow shall be a feast to the LORD.’ So the next day they rose early and offered burnt offerings, and brought peace offerings; and the people sat down to eat and to drink, and rose up to play” (Exodus 32:1-6).

⁴ LS, 872.

⁵ Blomberg, 193.

⁶ Witherington, *1&2 Corinthians*, 224.

⁷ Tzvee Zahavy and Alan J. Avery-Peck, trans., in Neusner, *Mishnah*, 9.

⁸ Cf. Stern, *Jewish New Testament Commentary*, 471.

⁹ Cf. Thiselton, pp 758-759; also Ciampa and Rosner, pp 474-475.

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Those who participate in the Lord's Supper or bread and wine, participate in remembering His sacrificial death and atonement, and subsequently also His attendant resurrection.¹⁰ The term *koinōnia* (κοινωνία) is critical, as it involves "communion, association, partnership, fellowship" (LS),¹¹ reflected in a variety of English versions as "sharing" (NASU, NRSV), "participation" (RSV/ESV, NIV), "fellowship" (YLT), or even "communion" (American Standard Version). The gravity of participation of Believers, in the body and blood of Yeshua, is expressed in Paul's word of Philippians 3:10: "that I may know Him and the power of His resurrection and the fellowship of His sufferings, being conformed to His death." The intention of Paul's statement is quite apparent: if Believers participate and fellowship one to another in covenant relationship with Yeshua the Messiah, then they have no business doing the same with idols (v. 21). As David Prior directs,

"The central ceremony of Christian, Jewish and pagan worship is more than mere words and actions. Those who take part in these ceremonies become actual 'partners'...The partnership acts in two ways: with one another as fellow-worshippers and with the god/gods/God whom they worship. The worshippers share together in the spiritual reality behind all that happens."¹²

In a way, in directing the Corinthians to consider *koinōnia*, Paul has co-opted some ancient pagan concepts. David E. Garland makes note of the words of Aelius Aristides, a Second Century C.E. Greek orator, who said of the god Serapis, "Men share in a special way the truest communion in the sacrifices to this god alone, as they invite [him] to the altar and appoint him as guest and host." In his estimation, "Paul is leading his readers to see that they can never eat idol food as neutral participants, just as they cannot partake of the Lord's Supper as detached observers. Partaking of anything offered to a deity makes them accessories to the sacrificial act and creates solidarity with the honored deity."¹³ Approaching the Lord's Supper improperly, was something witnessed by many of the Corinthians: "For this reason many among you are weak and sick, and a number sleep" (11:30).

10:17 The participation and interconnectivity of Believers to one another, and with the Lord, is emphasized by Paul in his detailing of the bread: "Because there is one bread, we who are many are one body, for all of us share that one bread" (HCSB). Certainly to be considered would be Yeshua as the Bread of Life (John 6:33-58), and Paul will discuss further in his letter what he intends by the redeemed composing the Body of Messiah (12:14-27). The analogy of Believers, composing the Body of Messiah, has the dual advantage of Paul's audience considering what Yeshua endured on their behalf in being sacrificed for human sin, as well as what they are to be doing as beneficiaries of His salvation. Gordon D. Fee indicates, "By common 'participation' in the single loaf, the 'body of Christ,' they affirm that they together make up the 'body of Christ,' which in turn implies that they may not likewise become partners in similar associations that honor demons."¹⁴

It is also to be remembered how the thrust of Exodus 12:43-48 is that commemoration of the Passover is to be a community affair. And, whether the Lord's Supper is remembered annually at the *seder*, or more frequently, it too is a community affair—as brothers and sisters in the Messiah are all "in it together," so speak. The interconnectivity, though, of Believers to one another *and* Believers with the Messiah, is something that can swing the other way if people are disloyal to the Lord. Roy E. Ciampa and Brian S. Rosner explain, "If all those who eat the bread together in the [assembly] are thereby made into one body, presumably all those who share food or drink which is associated with a pagan idol become one together through their joint sharing of that food."¹⁵

¹⁰ Consult the article "The Last Seder and Yeshua's Passover Chronology" by J.K. McKee, appearing in the *Messianic Spring Holiday Helper* by Messianic Apologetics.

¹¹ LS, pp 440-441.

¹² Prior, pp 172-173.

¹³ Garland, 477.

¹⁴ Fee, *1 Corinthians*, 470.

¹⁵ Ciampa and Rosner, 476.

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10:18 Before describing the dangers of sharing in the table of an idol (vs. 19-22), Paul makes a comparison, with the Tabernacle and Temple system, seen in the history of Ancient Israel, saying, “Observe Israel after the flesh: Are not those who eat of the sacrifices partakers of the altar?” (NKJV). As sacrifices were offered at the Tabernacle or Temple, a portion of the meat was available to be eaten by the Levitical priests mainly, but also others who would be in attendance as well (Leviticus 7:15; 8:31; Deuteronomy 12:17-18; 14:23-26). Whether the priests specifically, or other Israelites in attendance, those in the community of Ancient Israel were in fellowship with Israel’s God, and were very clearly benefitting from His grace, His goodness, and His blessing of them. Such a perspective of the sacrificial system is reflected in the works of the First Century figures Philo and Josephus:

“[B]ecause it is fitting that the sacrifices should not be stored up for food, but should be openly exposed, so as to afford a meal to all who are in need of it, for the sacrifice when once placed on the altar, is no longer the property of the person who has offered it, but belongs to that Being to whom the victim is sacrificed, who, being a beneficent and bounteous God, makes the whole company of those who offer the sacrifice, partakers at the altar and messmates, only admonishing them not to look upon it as their own feast, for they are but stewards of the feast” (Philo *Special Laws* 1.221).¹⁶

“When we offer sacrifices to him, we do it not in order to surfeit ourselves, or to be drunken; for such excesses are against the will of God, and would be an occasion of injuries and of luxury; but by keeping ourselves sober, orderly, and ready for our other occupations, and being more temperate than others. And for our duty at the sacrifices themselves, we ought, in the first place, to pray for the common welfare of all, and after that for our own; for we are made for fellowship one with another; and he who prefers the common good before what is peculiar to himself, is above all acceptable to God” (Josephus *Against Apion* 2.195-196).¹⁷

What would it mean for those who should be loyal to Israel’s God, who via their participation in the Lord’s Supper can fellowship with Him quantitatively indifferent from the Ancient Israelites at the Tabernacle or Temple—to fellowship with pagan gods and goddesses and their public sacrifices?

There is certainly a difference of approach, for v. 18, in how to view what Paul labels *ton Israēl kata sarka* (τὸν Ἰσραὴλ κατὰ σάρκα), rendered by the NASU as “the nation Israel,” but what is more literally something like “Israel according to the flesh” (LITV). Some look at an antithesis of flesh versus spirit intended, as Marion Soards thinks, “Paul is pointing here to the theologically correct practices of Israel in the context of the world (the present evil age) independent of the Christ event.”¹⁸ Others, approaching “Israel according to the flesh” more from a perspective of replacement theology than not, look to this group being contrasted to the so-called Church as a “spiritual Israel.”¹⁹ Making reference to Romans 8:5 and *kata sarka* (κατὰ σάρκα) or “according to the flesh,” Garland thinks that “the context that Paul has in mind [is] wilderness Israel, whose sinful example (10:1-11) serves as a warning to all,”²⁰ and actually thinks that idolatrous sacrifices, and the eating and drinking of Exodus 32:5-6, are what is being referenced. Noting some of the controversy, across the evangelical Christian spectrum at least, Fee directs readers, “One thing is certain: he intends to refer to the sacrificial meals in ancient Israel.”²¹

The REB probably goes a little too far in paraphrasing *ton Israēl kata sarka* with, “Consider Jewish practice...” Messianic versions like the CJB and TLV have, “physical Israel.” The Kingdom

¹⁶ *The Works of Philo: Complete and Unabridged*, 555.

¹⁷ *The Works of Josephus: Complete and Unabridged*, 806.

¹⁸ Soards, 212.

¹⁹ Cf. Ciampa and Rosner, pp 477-478.

²⁰ Garland, 478.

²¹ Fee, *1 Corinthians*, 470 fn#38.

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New Testament has “ethnic Israel.” Yet, if any paraphrase should be considered, it should probably just be the relatively neutral, “ancient Israel.”

For First Century purposes, *ton Israēl kata sarka* constituted the known physical descendants of Abraham, Isaac, or Jacob—the Jewish people. 1 Corinthians 10:18 does feature in some contemporary Messianic debates over ecclesiology, to be sure. In his 2009 book *Grafted In*, D. Thomas Lancaster has taken the reference to “Israel according to flesh,” and makes what he calls a distinction between “legal Israel” and “Kingdom Israel”:

“...[W]hen writing to the Corinthians—a community composed of both Jewish and Gentile believers—he says, ‘Consider Israel-according-to-the-flesh. Are not those who eat from the sacrifices part of the fellowship of the altar?’ (1 Corinthians 10:18, my translation).

“In this verse, Paul refers to Israel as a group distinct from the Corinthian assembly. He speaks as if the Corinthians are on the outside of the group. He also adds a qualifier to the term Israel: he calls it ‘Israel-according-to-flesh.’

“In 1 Corinthians 10:18, Israel-according-to-the-flesh is composed of those individuals who may eat of the holy sacrifices. In Paul’s day, that group consisted only of those who were halachically (legally) Jewish. Paul was defining Israel-according-to-the-flesh as those who were born Jewish or who had undergone a legal conversion to Judaism: ‘both Jews and converts to Judaism’ [Acts 2:11].

“Why did Paul feel it necessary to add the qualifier ‘according to the flesh’ when describing those who were legally Jewish? Why not just say ‘Israel’?

“The qualifier must have been necessary because the Corinthians also had an identity in the generic term Israel. If there is an ‘Israel-according-to-the-flesh,’ there must be an ‘Israel-not-according-to-the-flesh.’ The not-according-to-the-flesh version would have been the believers, including the Corinthians.”²²

One does not have to totally agree with all of Lancaster’s reasoning, to recognize the Biblical reality of how ultimately, *ton Israēl kata sarka* or “Israel according to the flesh,” is not as important as those who constitute the Commonwealth of Israel (Ephesians 2:11-13), Israel of God (Galatians 6:16), who are grafted-in as either wild *or* natural branches to Israel’s olive tree (Romans 11:16-24). Membership in a restored Kingdom of Israel, ruled by Messiah Yeshua, is imperative—and must come ultimately via a transformed heart. Membership in the Messianic Kingdom, while most imperatively intended for the physical descendants of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, is *also* very much intended for the nations of the world as well.²³

10:19 Paul directs his audience, “What am I saying then—that an idol sacrifice is anything, or that an idol is anything?” (TLV). Previously, Paul had to address the Corinthian slogan(s), “Hence, as to the eating of food offered to idols, we know that ‘an idol has no real existence,’ and that ‘there is no God but one’” (8:4, RSV). The One God of Israel, manifested in the Father as God and the Son as Lord (8:5-6, cf. Deuteronomy 6:4), is supreme. Paul is in agreement how idols are vain nothings, as the Tanach affirms. That does not mean, however, that even though idols are vain nothings, that they do not bear some significance to those who worship them, or eat of the sacrifices made to them.

The people who would have participated, in the animal sacrifices of the Temple in Jerusalem (v. 18), were persons who participated in useful, edifying exercises intending to honor God in some way. What of those who participated in sacrifices made to idols? While an idol may be made of gold, silver, stone, or wood—there is a definite spiritual presence that sits behind an idol—and those who participate in its veneration associate themselves with Satanic demons. Fee’s observations are quite accurate:

²² D. Thomas Lancaster, *Grafted In: Israel, Gentiles, and the Mystery of the Gospel* (Marshfield, MO: First Fruits of Zion, 2009), pp 2-3.

²³ For a further evaluation, consult the publication *Are Non-Jewish Believers Really a Part of Israel?* by J.K. McKee.

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"[A]n idol has no reality, in the sense that an idol does not in fact represent what might truly be called a 'god.' But what the Corinthians have failed to discern right along is that to say an idol is not a god does not mean that it does not represent supernatural powers. Indeed, it is quite the opposite..."²⁴

10:20 Paul testifies "that the things which the Gentiles sacrifice, they sacrifice to demons and not to God; and I do not want you to become sharers in demons" (NASU). V. 20 actually includes a Greek textual variant of importance, as the canonical *ha thuousin, daimoniois kai ou Theō [thousin]* (ἃ θύουσιν, δαιμονίουις καὶ οὐ θεῶ [θύουσιν]) actually reads, "that what they sacrifice, they sacrifice to demons and not to God" (HCSB). Most modern Bibles (RSV, NASU, NRSV, ESV, CJB, TLV) follow the textual variant *ha thousin ta ethnē* (ἃ θύουσιν τὰ ἔθνη), an ancient gloss intended to clarify that the sacrifices of the Jerusalem Temple are not somehow being referred to (v. 18). Still, there is discussion as to whether this variant is appropriate. As Philip W. Comfort summarizes in his *New Testament Text and Translation Commentary*,

"The difference among the variants pertains to the inclusion or exclusion of *τα εθνη* ('the Gentiles/the pagans'). Most likely it was added to clarify that it was not 'Israel' that Paul was speaking about (10:18), but that he had shifted to a new subject—the Gentiles. Had *τα εθνη* ('the Gentiles') been original, there is no good reason why it would have been deleted. Most English versions reflect the variant because they add the subject for the sake of clarity."²⁵

While there are many who prefer the reading "that what the pagans sacrifice," there are various examiners²⁶ who see no need for this gloss in a modern translation, and instead think that Deuteronomy 32:17 is being quoted: "They sacrificed to demons who were not God, to gods whom they have not known, new *gods* who came lately, whom your fathers did not dread." In the translation offered in his commentary, Anthony C. Thiselton renders v. 20 as, "Not that! But that when they sacrifice, 'they offer sacrifices to demons and not to God'" (*NIGTC*),²⁷ separating out Deuteronomy 32:17 as a quote. The challenge, of course, is how Deuteronomy 32:17 does notably speak of Israel in rebellion against the Lord, and not the pagans or nations at large worshipping and sacrificing to idols, and the demonic powers behind them.

There are others, such as Ciampa and Rosner, who see the gloss as "an accurate interpretation of Paul's meaning,"²⁸ and Messianic versions like the CJB and TLV read concurrent with this:

"No, what I am saying is that the things which pagans sacrifice, they sacrifice not to God but to demons; and I don't want you to become sharers of the demons!" (CJB).

"No, I'm saying that what the pagans sacrifice is to demons and not to God, and I don't want you to become partners with demons" (TLV).

Paul is very concerned that the Corinthians never become *koinōnous tōn daimoniōn* (κοινωνοὺς τῶν δαιμονίων), "participants with demons" (NIV) or "partakers with devils" (Wesley New Testament). Much of the result of participating in idolatry is seen in his later correspondence, as he would emote, "the god of this world has blinded the minds of the unbelieving so that they might not see the light of the gospel of the glory of Messiah, who is the image of God" (2 Corinthians 4:4). More immediate to be considered is how Paul has just addressed how those who join in sexual intercourse with a prostitute, are joined to a prostitute (6:15-17), and those who try to share their spiritual actions with both the God of Israel and other gods/goddesses/demons, are committing infidelity against Him. Certainly there are scenes, to be considered from Ancient Israel, where

²⁴ Fee, *1 Corinthians*, 471.

²⁵ Philip W. Comfort, *New Testament Text and Translation Commentary* (Carol Stream, IL: Tyndale House, 2008), 508.

²⁶ Thiselton, 775; Garland, 481.

²⁷ Thiselton, 750.

²⁸ Ciampa and Rosner, 479.

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participating in idolatry and feasting invoked dark spiritual powers and enraged the Lord against His own (Deuteronomy 32:16-21; Psalm 106:28; cf. Baruch 4:7; Revelation 9:20).

10:21-22 The Apostle Paul is insistent about the loyalty of the Corinthians to the One True God, in the strong assertion, "You cannot drink the cup of the Lord and the cup of demons; you cannot partake of the table of the Lord and the table of demons" (v. 21), as there can be no participation in open idolatry at a temple or shrine, such as was previously addressed in 1 Corinthians ch. 8. The Message paraphrase of v. 21 is actually fairly appropriate: "you can't have it both ways, banqueting with the Master one day and slumming with demons the next."

The Apostolic decree of Acts 15:19-21, 29 forbade the new, non-Jewish Believers from participating in idolatrous activities, and the Apostle Paul has just told the Corinthians why it is unacceptable. He has referenced the infamous scene of the golden calf (v. 7; cf. Exodus 32:4), as well as the Numbers 25 encounter of the Moabite prostitutes brought in by Balaam and consequent slaughter of the offenders (v. 8). The blight upon much of Greco-Roman paganism was worship of idols associated with gross sexual immorality. While some of the Corinthian "Believers" were **most unfortunately** involving themselves in these activities, others had probably just looked at them from a distance, perhaps feeling a pull from various family members and friends who did not recognize Yeshua.

The thrust of the Apostolic decree was that the new, non-Jewish Believers did not have to have the Torah's Instruction forced upon them; it was, rather, to see them severed from their old spheres of pagan social and religious influence, hence making them attach to a new social and religious community, where Moses' Teaching was being declared every week. Yet as Acts 18 testifies, the Messiah followers in Corinth were driven out of the Corinthian synagogue, and this certainly affected what they thought they could, and could not, do. *Could they be involved in some extra-God-of-Israel activities, at least from time to time?* Hence, Paul will have to address the Corinthian slogan, "All things are permitted," yet again (v. 23).

When those who profess exclusive loyalty to the One True God, begin to demonstrate anything but this, all they can do is provoke Him to anger. Specifically, Paul inquires, "Or do we provoke the Lord to jealousy? We are not stronger than He, are we?" (v. 22, TLV). As is witnessed throughout the record of the Tanach, the jealousy of the Lord toward His own is frequently aroused by idolatry committed against Him (Exodus 20:5; 34:14; Deuteronomy 4:24; 5:9; 6:14-15; Joshua 24:19-20; 1 Kings 14:22-23; Ezekiel 8:3; Nahum 1:2; Zephaniah 1:18; Psalm 78:58). **This is very serious for Paul.** "Are we trying to arouse the Lord's jealousy? Are we stronger than he?" (NIV). Of course, limited human mortals are not stronger than the Creator, and if they are unfaithful toward Him, then severe consequences will ensue. Prior astutely observes,

"Paul clearly believes in the reality of an unseen spirit-world, that idolatry is not just meaningless but positively evil. It is evil because it robs the true God of the glory due to him, and because such actions bring people not simply into contact with lower spiritual powers, but actually into subjection to them."²⁹

Certainly, the importance of the Lord, being a jealous God from the Tanach, and the Corinthians avoiding the mistakes of those in Ancient Israel, is present in Paul's remarks—the exclusive loyalty that Messiah followers were to demonstrate to the God of Israel, and how vital this was in light of the surrounding Greco-Roman polytheism, has to be recognized. Richard B. Hays' summary on how subversive the Jewish people and later followers of Israel's Messiah were, to the paganism surrounding them, is important to consider:

"Here the radically *exclusive* character of Israel's monotheistic faith becomes clear. In the ancient Mediterranean world, it was thoroughly commonplace to worship various gods and goddesses. Participating in cultic rites for one deity did not by any means preclude participating with equal piety in rites for another; the pantheon was infinitely inclusive. Indeed, it was probably a good bet

²⁹ Prior, 175.

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to worship several gods as a way of diversifying one's spiritual investments. The God of Israel, however, would tolerate none of this. Jews—and, later, Christians—puzzled and outraged their pagan neighbors by refusing, even for the sake of appearances, to venerate any God but one. The 'knowing' Corinthians were seeking to work out some sort of 'sensible' compromise on this matter, but Paul would have none of it."³⁰

10:23-24 1 Corinthians 10:23 repeats the slogan "Everything is permissible" (NIV) or *Panta exestin* (Πάντα ἔξεστιν), which Paul has refuted earlier in 1 Corinthians 6:11, chastising various Corinthians for thinking that they could get away with certain sinful activities, which he has said is something not at all profitable or useful. Later on in this letter, more has to be communicated, and it surely behooves a responsible Bible reader to view v. 23 in light of the wider context of 1 Corinthians 10.

The errant Corinthian slogan *Panta exestin* or "Everything is permitted" (TLV) could very well have been a statement hijacked from Paul's teaching to them, where he could have taught something like, "Many things are permitted..." What Paul will further address in vs. 25-33 involve a hypothetical invitation to the home of a non-Believer to share a meal, which would serve as an explanation regarding the responsible usage of a born again Believer's freedom or liberty, in the edification of another. To a figure like the Apostle Paul, many things are indeed permitted, which would have gone against various facets of his contemporary Jewish upbringing, or even various *halachic* norms—but things permitted in light of the overwhelmingly overriding nature of the good news. As Leon Morris puts it,

"Christian liberty is important, but there are some things that are not wise. They neither build the believer up in the faith, nor help other people...It is more important to avoid such actions than to assert one's rights."³¹

The slogan *Panta exestin* or "We are free to do anything" (NEB) once again has to be responded to by Paul, and could certainly have affected the thinking of many, as the lure of one's previous lifestyle in paganism was still present. As he counters this statement in v. 23 (NIV),

THE CORINTHIANS

THE APOSTLE PAUL

"Everything is permissible"

—*but not everything is beneficial.*

"Everything is permissible"

—*but not everything is constructive.*

While Paul has just upheld the authority of Israel's Scriptures for the instruction of born again Believers (vs. 1-13)—referencing examples of idolatry and sexual immorality—he still has to refute what various Corinthians have been saying. The statement, of 1 Corinthians 10:23a, is practically identical to what was asserted earlier in 1 Corinthians 6:12a, with Paul's response being *all' ou panta sumpherei* (ἀλλ' οὐ πάντα συμφέρει), "but not all things are helpful" (RSV). Repeating the slogan in 1 Corinthians 10:23b, Paul responds to "Everything is permissible" (NIV) with, *ou panta oikodomei* (οὐ πάντα οἰκοδομῶ), "but not all things edify" (NASU). In this second response, the verb *oikodomeō* (οἰκοδομῶ) is employed, mainly pertaining "to construct in a transcendent sense" or "to help improve ability to function in living responsibly and effectively, *strengthen, build up, make more able*" (BDAG).³² It should also key us into Yeshua's mission of coming to restore Israel (Matthew 16:18; cf. Jeremiah 33:7, LXX),³³ but as Thiselton indicates, "**building up** presupposes the logical

³⁰ Hays, *1 Corinthians*, 170.

³¹ Morris, *1 Corinthians*, 146.

³² BDAG, 696.

³³ Consult the article "When Did 'the Church' Begin?" by J.K. McKee, appearing in *Introduction to Things Messianic*.

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grammar of **building the community**.”³⁴ The edification of the faith community is a theme witnessed throughout Paul’s letters (14:3-5, 12, 17, 26; Romans 14:19; 15:2; 2 Corinthians 12:19; 13:10; 1 Thessalonians 5:11).

The Corinthians have been saying “Everything is permissible” (NIV), but it is quite obvious that not all things are at all edifying or “constructive” (NIV) for the Body of Messiah and its mission in the Earth. As Garland describes, “Paul’s command that one ‘not seek that which is one’s own’ leaves indefinite what they are not to seek. We can fill in the blank with words such as ‘advantage,’ ‘interest,’ ‘good,’ ‘ends,’ ‘enjoyment,’ ‘needs.’”³⁵

When people think that they are free to do whatever they want (as these Corinthians were), challenging such views frequently has to be done on logical grounds and not just Scriptural grounds. Paul does not agree that “Everything is permissible” (v. 23, NIV), because most frequently what people think that they can get away with will be to the detriment of Body of Messiah. Paul is quick to assert, “Let no one seek his own *good*, but that of his neighbor” (v. 24), a definite application of the Torah’s requirement to love neighbor (Leviticus 19:18). Does the Corinthians’ behavior help the Body of Messiah and its purposes, much less outsiders to the faith who need to see the power of the One God of Israel operating through them? Witherington’s comments are useful to consider here:

“Paul once again reports the Corinthians’ inevitable response to his argument: ‘Everything is permitted’ (v. 23). But not everything is useful or profitable or builds up the body of Christ, and in a deliberative argument it is critical to stress what is beneficial or advantageous. The Christian is one who does not seek his or her own advantage but rather that of others.”³⁶

10:25-26 With Paul having just asserted that Believers need to be highly concerned with the spiritual edification of others, what follows in 1 Corinthians 10:25-33 is a potential application of this for the Corinthians themselves. This section is admittedly difficult for many of today’s Messianics, who believe in the continued validity of the kosher dietary laws, to understand and deduce possible Twenty-First Century applications for. In fact, those who are highly *or* even hypersensitive about what they eat, frequently ignore this section of Paul’s letter, and may even at times cast doubt on what Paul has to say.

Has the Apostle Paul cast aside the commandments of *kashrut* and/or the Apostolic decree by writing, “Eat anything that is sold in the meat market without asking questions for conscience’ sake; FOR THE EARTH IS THE LORD’S, AND ALL IT CONTAINS [Psalm 24:1]” (vs. 25-26)? Many readers take this statement as meaning that, at the very least, Paul considers the kosher dietary laws to be a matter of *adiaphora*, something that really does not matter the way one views it, one way or another.

The *makellon* (μάκελλον) is noted by *Thayer* to actually be “a Latin word, *macellum*...a place where meat and other articles of food are sold, *meat-market, provision-market*.”³⁷ A customary view of “Eat anything sold in the meat market...” (NIV) present in evangelical Christianity, is that the Corinthians were permitted to eat anything being sold in a public place, because if the meat had once been sacrificed to idols, any religious significance had apparently been lost by it ending up in a commercial venue.³⁸ It is not difficult to find commentators who conclude that Paul’s statement is apparently reflective of him believing that the kosher dietary laws have been abrogated. As is frequently seen, among a selection of interpreters:

- F.F. Bruce: “that Paul should give Christians *carte blanche* to **eat whatever is sold** in a pagan market shows how completely emancipated he was from Jewish obligations in the matter of food and how loosely he sat to the food-restrictions of the Jerusalem decree.”³⁹

³⁴ Thiselton, 781; also Ciampa and Rosner, 485.

³⁵ Garland, 488.

³⁶ Witherington, *1 & 2 Corinthians*, 226.

³⁷ *Thayer*, 386.

³⁸ Cf. Garland, 492.

³⁹ Bruce, *1 and 2 Corinthians*, 98.

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- Richard B. Hays: "Presumably the weak at Corinth were arguing for the position almost universally held elsewhere in orthodox Christianity and in Judaism: such meat was still idol meat, and it must be forbidden. At this point, however, Paul emphatically declares his agreement with the strong: you can eat anything sold in the market."⁴⁰
- Ben Witherington III: "He no longer felt it necessary to keep kosher since all creatures and thus all meat are the Lord's and thus one may freely share in it."⁴¹

Christian readers have customarily read v. 25 as the Apostle Paul, for certain, giving permission to the Corinthians to purchase meat that had been butchered in the pagan marketplace, regardless of whether or not it had been sacrificed to idols. In the Mishnah, one notably sees the ancient Jewish view that meat brought into an idol, presumably before an animal would have been sacrificed, would have been acceptable for eating if taken away before its death and slaughtered elsewhere. Yet, the meat that comes out of a pagan sacrifice is prohibited. It is stated, "Meat which is being brought into an idol is permitted. But that which comes out is prohibited, because it is like *sacrifices of the dead* (Ps. 106:28),' the words of R. Aqiba" (m.*Avodah Zarah* 2:3).⁴² Regardless of the prior circumstances, which saw the meat arrive in the Corinthian marketplace, Paul is pushing things by stating, "Eat whatever is sold in the meat market..." (CJB). Noting the widespread Jewish position on meat sacrificed to idols, the thought of Fee is that,

"Paul takes a decidedly 'liberal' stance on this issue. If the Jewish law allowed one to eat meat *before* it was offered to idols but not afterward, Paul contended that its ultimate source was God himself (v. 26) and that it was therefore irrelevant whether it had been sacrificed or not.... Thus he tells the Corinthians, to 'buy and eat' and to do 'without raising questions of conscience.' Apparently it was possible in some cases, indeed it was required of the Jews, to investigate whether the meat in the *macellum* had been previously sacrificed; so Paul is telling the Corinthians not to conduct such inquiries. Meat is meat; buy and eat."⁴³

From this common conclusion, the issue of concern is necessarily raised, regarding how the Apostolic decree forbade the non-Jewish Believers from eating things strangled and blood, and from idolatry. Does this now no longer matter?

On the one hand, it could possibly be argued that if in a metropolitan area like Ancient Corinth there were ever significant food shortages—that eating whatever was sold in the meat market was preferable to starving.⁴⁴ This would fit with the ancient Jewish principle of *Pikku'ach Nefesh* or regard for human life, where unclean things could be consumed in order to maintain or extend life. Ciampa and Rosner at least interject the thought, "To ask questions and refuse to eat food which is explicitly identified as idol food would seriously reduce the food options available."⁴⁵ That there could be extenuating circumstances which might require the Corinthians to eat unacceptable meat, does need to be recognized.

It also needs to be recognized that while there was a high possibility of meat being sold in the *macellum* of originating from animals once offered in pagan sacrifice, that this did not have to be the case of all meat. In his commentary, Thiselton makes note of a study by M. Isenberg, who "argues on the basis of a first century text, *Vita Aesopi*, that sacrificial and nonsacrificial meats were readily distinguishable, since the sacrificial meat would be valued more highly."⁴⁶ In the later period of the Second Century C.E., Pliny the Younger, does at least provide a clue that meat offered

⁴⁰ Hays, *1 Corinthians*, 175.

⁴¹ Witherington, *1&2 Corinthians*, 227.

⁴² Neusner, *Mishnah*, 663.

⁴³ Fee, *1 Corinthians*, 481.

⁴⁴ Cf. Thiselton, 783 on "food shortages."

⁴⁵ Ciampa and Rosner, pp 487-488.

⁴⁶ Thiselton, 783.

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in sacrifice, and meat that had not been involved in religious rites, was sold together in the market, and both were identifiable as such:

“It is any rate certain that temples which were almost abandoned have begun to be crowded, and the solemn rites which for long had been suspended are being restored. The flesh of the victims, for which up to now only a very occasional buyer was found, is now on sale in many places” (Pliny *Letter to Trajan* 10.96.10).⁴⁷

Because most of the emerging Christian community in the Roman Empire, would not purchase meat involved in idol sacrifices, apparently merchants selling meat needed to provide an alternative. Tertullian would state, “How in all the world can that be the case with people who are living among you, eating the same food, wearing the same attire, having the same habits, under the same necessities of existence?” (*Apologetic* 42).⁴⁸ If these Believers would be making use of the same basic marketplace as non-Believers, then this can be taken as an indication that non-idol meat was available in many places of commerce.⁴⁹

Of course, these factors cannot be held rigidly, but do need to be taken into consideration. Not all meat in the Corinthian marketplace of v. 25 had to be tainted by idolatry.

One has to assume when encountering v. 25, though, that the considerable bulk of the meat in the Corinthian marketplace had probably been involved with idolatry. So is it accurate to assume, for the Corinthian Believers, as Fee would say, “Meat is meat; buy and eat”?⁵⁰ The argument that the Corinthians were to “buy and eat” whatever they pleased is one which has been eisegested into the text. The clause *Pan to en makellō pōloumenon* (Πάν τὸ ἐν μακέλλῳ πωλούμενον) notably includes the present passive participle *pōloumenon*,⁵¹ and is better rendered with “Eat everything **being sold** in a meat market. . .” (LITV), with the passive voice “being sold” also represented by the Brown and Comfort⁵² and Marshall⁵³ interlinear editions.

The Apostle Paul does not say in v. 25, “Purchase and eat anything being sold in the meat market”; his instruction is only to eat what is being sold. And, in light of accepting or not accepting the invitation of a Corinthian non-Believer (v. 27a), are the Corinthian Believers even those who would actually be purchasing the meat in view? Thiselton is at least willing to recognize, “Paul is not necessarily addressing only those who make the actual purchases rather than also those for whom others may have made the purchases.”⁵⁴ The Corinthian non-Believers being those who purchase the meat from the marketplace, who then might serve it as hosts, to Believers they have invited into their homes, is probably the better way to take Paul’s word, “Eat anything that is being sold in the meat market, without asking questions for conscience’ sake” (v. 25, my translation).

The presence of Paul’s quoting Psalm 24:1 in v. 26, “The earth is the LORD’s, and all it contains, the world, and those who dwell in it,” does beg a number of questions, which tend to be uncomfortable for many kosher-friendly Messianics.

The flesh of the animals being sold is certainly made by the Creator God, and all creatures are inherently “good” to some degree or another. Likewise, the scene of various festal gatherings at the local shrine or pagan temple in Corinth is certainly not in view. Bruce is right to conclude, “Even if the meat did come from a sacrificed animal, they are not going to eat it as part of an idolatrous feast or in company where they risk becoming ‘partners with demons’.”⁵⁵ The challenge is that

⁴⁷ Pliny the Younger: *Pliny the Younger: Complete Letters*, trans. P.G. Walsh (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006), 296.

⁴⁸ [BibleWorks 9.0: Schaff, Early Church Fathers](#).

⁴⁹ Garland, 491.

⁵⁰ Fee, *1 Corinthians*, 481.

⁵¹ The verb *pōleō* (πωλέω) means “to exchange or barter goods, to sell or offer for sale” (LS, 713).

⁵² Brown and Comfort, 602.

⁵³ Marshall, *Interlinear KJV-NIV Parallel New Testament in Greek and English*, 505.

⁵⁴ Thiselton, 783.

⁵⁵ Bruce, *1 and 2 Corinthians*, 98.

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Psalm 24:1 was often invoked to thank God for one's food in traditional Jewish blessing, as witnessed in both the Tosefta and Talmud:

"One must not taste anything until he has [first] recited a benediction [over it], as Scripture states, *The earth is the Lord's and all that it contains* (Ps. 24:1)" (t.*Berachot* 4:1).⁵⁶

"Said R. Judah said Samuel, 'Whoever derives benefit in this world without reciting a blessing is as if he derived benefit from Holy Things that belong to Heaven [and so has committed sacrilege]. 'For it is said, "The earth belongs to the Lord, and everything that fills it" (Psa. 24: 1)'" (b.*Berachot* 35a).⁵⁷

"For said R. Hiyya bar Abba, 'One time I was received as a guest in the home of a householder in Laodicea, and they brought before me a table of gold borne by sixteen men; there were sixteen silver chains fixed to it, with plates, goblets, pitchers, and flaxes set thereon, and on it there were all kinds of food, dainties and spices. When they set it down, they cited the verse, "The earth is the Lord's and the fullness thereof" (Psa. 24: 1), and when they took it away after the meal they recited, "The heavens are the heavens of the Lord but the earth he has given to the children of men" (Psa. 115:16). I said to him, "My son, through what deeds do you enjoy the merit of enjoying such comfort?" He said to me, "I was a butcher, and out of every fine beast I said, May this be for the Sabbath." I said to him, 'Happy are you that you have attained such merit, and blessed is the Omnipresent, who has accorded you such merit'" (b.*Shabbat* 119a).⁵⁸

Here, given the direction, "Eat everything being sold in a meat market, examining nothing because of conscience" (v. 25, LITV), coupled with the traditional Jewish blessing of Psalm 24:1—should the Corinthians have ever been *served* meat sacrificed to idols, in a particular setting (v. 27), their default action was apparently to just ask God to bless what they were eating, and then consume it. Fee states, "it is hard to imagine anything more un-Jewish in the apostle than this."⁵⁹ Garland, however, argues that Fee's statement is exaggerated, urging some temperance in the words. He instead thinks, "It is more accurate to say that he is nowhere more un-Pharisaic, since Pharisees spent considerable effort inquiring into the background and preparation of food."⁶⁰

10:27 Is the real reason why Paul has just stated to eat whatever is being sold in the meat market (v. 25), so that the Corinthian Believers can disregard the Apostolic decree? Readers who are careful to work through Paul's correspondence should note the specific conditions which are further stated to be in place, specifically as it concerns accepting an invitation to visit a non-Believer's home and being served a meal:

"If an unbeliever invites you over and you want to go, eat whatever is set before you, without raising questions of conscience" (TLV).

A commentator like Fee is correct to assert, "Paul has absolutely forbidden attendance at temple meals," but the scene or venue here is dining "in a pagan home."⁶¹ If a non-Believer wants to demonstrate his hospitality to one of the Corinthian Believers—and it might especially be a chance to testify of Yeshua the Messiah—then Paul's instruction is to go and eat what is served. Such Corinthian non-Believers would have been those who frequented the local meat market, purchasing fare to serve their guests that may have come from idolatrous sacrifices. Hays, who does think that the Corinthians can purchase whatever meat they want in the market (v. 25, previously addressed), goes on to connect this with v. 27, detailing, "he tells them they can eat whatever is served to them in the home of an unbeliever without conducting any inquiries about the

⁵⁶ Tzvee Zahavy, trans., in Neusner, *Tosefta*, 1:21.

⁵⁷ *The Babylonian Talmud: A Translation and Commentary*.

⁵⁸ *Ibid.*

⁵⁹ Fee, *1 Corinthians*, 482.

⁶⁰ Garland, 490.

⁶¹ Fee, *1 Corinthians*, 483.

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source of the meat.”⁶² J. Paul Sampley makes the appropriate linguistic connections between 1 Corinthians 10:25, 27, which serves to support that it is the Corinthian non-Believers, and not the Believers, who purchase what is being sold at the meat market:

“[T]he same wording used in 10:25 (πάντα ἐσθίετε *pan...esthiete*, ‘eat everything’—with the ‘everything’ placed first for emphasis—without any problems for your moral consciousness) urges the believer to feel conscience-free to eat whatever is placed before him or her.”⁶³

The *TDNT* entry on *makellon* or “meat market” (v. 25), notably associates what is being sold to the Believer visiting with a pagan:

“This term means ‘enclosure,’ then ‘market.’ Markets are rectangular courts with a dome-shaped roof, a fountain in the middle, booths at the side, and perhaps a room for sacrificial repasts. In 1 Cor. 10:25 Paul uses the word when he tells the Christians at Corinth how to act relative to meat sold on the market, which might well come from pagan temples but might also be the only meat readily available. Paul’s advice is that one is to eat without asking questions, for everything is the Lord’s. Only when unbelievers say that the meat has been offered in pagan sacrifice should one refrain for their sake.”⁶⁴

Thiselton properly indicates, “The meat almost certainly *will* be what had been offered in a temple, especially since the host serves good quality fare.”⁶⁵ But how might it be made known to the Corinthian Believer visiting a pagan home, if the meat had indeed been sacrificed to an idol? There are a number of options, but specifically inquiring of one’s host about the meat is not one of them. More than likely, some blessing, accolade, or toast to a pagan deity could have been witnessed during the preparation of the meal, or overheard as the meal was being served (discussed further).⁶⁶ Enough clues could be dropped regarding the source of meat being offered by one’s host.

When one sees Paul’s word, “If some unbeliever invites you to a meal, and you want to go, eat whatever is put in front of you without raising questions of conscience” (CJB), there should be little doubting the fact that he is pushing the envelope of much First Century Jewish convention. While Paul is favorable toward Believers accepting an invitation to dine at a non-Believer’s private home, many of Paul’s Jewish contemporaries would often turn down invitations to eat at a Greek or Roman’s home. In the view of Craig S. Keener, in his *IVPBBC*,

“[When] people were...invited to banquets in wealthy homes...they could not be certain of the meat’s source. Jewish people who avoided impure foods (like pork) were virtually excluded from...banquets, but they did not look down on *Gentiles who ate pork as long as they abstained from idols. Jewish people had sometimes faced martyrdom to avoid eating impure foods, and they would expect Gentiles who claimed to believe in God at least to avoid food that had certainly been offered to idols.”⁶⁷

Keener’s further thought, as seen in his 1&2 Corinthians commentary, is that in accepting an invitation to dine at a non-Believer’s home, “What they did not know would not hurt them (10:25, 27); indeed, even scrupulous Jewish teachers considered inadvertent sins comparatively ‘light’ (although they might not have adopted Paul’s ‘Don’t ask, don’t tell’ approach).”⁶⁸ Passively eating of meat, that had been involved in idolatry, was a far less crime than murder or fornication, presumably being at the same level such as eating the flesh of an animal that had been mauled (Leviticus 20:22-26), a Torah infraction which did not merit capital punishment. The overriding issue, per the intention of the Apostolic decree of severing the new, non-Jewish Believers from their previous spheres of social and religious influence (Acts 15:19-21), is that interaction with the

⁶² Hays, *1 Corinthians*, 176.

⁶³ Sampley, in *NIB*, 10:921.

⁶⁴ J. Schneider, “*makellon*,” in *TDNT*, 549.

⁶⁵ Thiselton, 786.

⁶⁶ Cf. Garland, pp 494-495 for a review of possibilities.

⁶⁷ Craig S. Keener, *The IVP Bible Background Commentary: New Testament* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 1993), 475.

⁶⁸ Keener, *1&2 Corinthians*, 89.

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larger Greco-Roman world **was not going away**, as demonstrated by what to do when invited to a pagan home to eat. Garland does interject, "Paul's advice reveals that he had no intention of cutting [Believers] off entirely from their pagan family, neighbors, and associates (cf. 5:9-13; cf. Luke 10:8)...Paul does not expect his readers to cut themselves off completely from the fabric of all social relationships."⁶⁹ Relationships of some kind have to be established, in order for the good news of Israel's Messiah to be declared and received.

The hypothetical scene of v. 27, "If a pagan asks you to dinner and you want to go..." (Phillips New Testament), goes beyond the Acts 10 encounter of the Apostle Peter having eaten with the centurion Cornelius. The Apostle Paul is detailing the acceptance of an invitation to eat at a pagan home; Cornelius had been a God-fearer, associated to some degree with the Jewish Synagogue, and would not have served meat sacrificed to idols. *What Paul is describing goes beyond the controversy that Peter stirred (Acts 11:1-18) when eating with the uncircumcised.* In the estimation of Morris, "When invited by a pagan a Christian is at liberty to accept, and to eat whatever is provided without asking where it came from. That is his host's business."⁷⁰ What can often get overlooked, is how speaking hypothetically, Paul does not require it of the Corinthians to *always accept* an invitation to eat at a pagan home. Noting his view of 9:20-22 preceding, Fee draws the conclusion, "the acceptance of such invitations is perfectly legitimate (another place where he would be treating on sacred Jewish traditions [t.*Avodah Zarah* 4:6]); it depends on whether 'you want to go.'"⁷¹ There would certainly be occasions, if an invitation was issued, where it would not at all be advantageous for a Corinthian Believer to go dine at a non-Believer's home. Yet, unlike many of his Jewish contemporaries, because of the interests of the good news being declared to all, Paul is broadly dismissing sentiments like those of *Jubilees* 22:16:

"And you also, my son, Jacob, remember my words, and keep the commandments of Abraham, your father. Separate yourself from the gentiles, and do not eat with them, and do not perform deeds like theirs. And do not become associates of theirs. Because their deeds are defiled, and all of their ways are contaminated, and despicable, and abominable."⁷²

It can at least be recognized how there was a permissive stance in terms of eating meat in the possession of a non-Jew, among some in Paul's contemporary Judaism. As the Tosefta records, "Meat which is found in the possession of a gentile is permitted for gain. [If it is found] in the possession of a *min*, it is prohibited for gain. That which goes forth from a pagan temple, lo, it is deemed to be meat from the sacrifices of corpses" (t.*Chullin* 2:20).⁷³ Paul sits in a parallel course to this, as Believers may eat from what is served them, not asking about where it came from.

A bigger issue, especially in light of how Paul has just asked his audience whether or not they intend to arouse the Lord to jealousy, is whether or not he was treading on violating the tenor of Exodus 34:15, "otherwise you might make a covenant with the inhabitants of the land and they would play the harlot with their gods and sacrifice to their gods, and someone might invite you to eat of his sacrifice." This is where the venue of a private home, and being inadvertently served idol meat at a mealtime, has to be differentiated from going to a local temple or shrine, and knowingly partaking of meat that had been sacrificed to an idol. Yet, in v. 27 it may be observed how Paul has pushed the Apostolic decree and Torah prohibitions as far as they can go, without willful and conscious involvement in idolatry being present. In their summary on what is being discussed, Ciampa and Rosner conclude that Paul's approach in accepting an invitation to dine at a non-Believer's home, is consistent with the spirit of the Exodus 34:15 instruction, albeit being to the Left of how most of his fellow Jews would have read it:

⁶⁹ Garland, 493.

⁷⁰ Morris, *1 Corinthians*, 146.

⁷¹ Fee, *1 Corinthians*, 482.

⁷² O.S. Wintermute, "Jubilees," in James H. Charlesworth, ed., *The Old Testament Pseudepigrapha*, Vol 2 (New York: Doubleday, 1985), 98.

⁷³ Neusner, *Tosefta*, 2:1379.

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"Paul's more detailed instructions (vv. 28-30) suggest that he has a simple dinner invitation in mind, and that the believer was to be careful to avoid eating any food that was explicitly identified as having been offered to an idol. This clearly does not follow the Jewish tradition...but may still be understood as a more 'liberal' approach to avoiding association with pagan sacrifices (and thus in the spirit of Exod. 34:15) while still allowing believers to maintain and develop social relationships with their non-believing neighbors."⁷⁴

10:28-30 While the Corinthian Believer is not to inquire of the source of the meat, when eating at a pagan home, the source of the meat may very well be publicly stated during the meal. Paul directs, "But if anyone says to you, 'This is from an idol sacrifice,' do not eat it, for the sake of the one who informed you, and for the sake of conscience" (v. 28, TLV). Here, in the words *ean de tis humin eipē* (ἐὰν δέ τις ὑμῖν εἴπῃ), *eipē* (εἴπῃ) notably being an aorist active subjunctive, Paul is speaking widely in hypothetical terms. Paul is presenting a scenario where the edification of others and mission of the Body of Messiah are in play. As Witherington concludes, "we have *ean* ('if perhaps') with a subjunctive verb: 'But if perhaps anyone may say...'. Here Paul is dealing with a hypothetical possibility, one that his audience has not asked about."⁷⁵

The Corinthian Believers, as a matter of respect to the host, are simply not supposed to ask about what they are served. While the main issue regarding the source of the meat served would be whether it was sacrificed to idols or not, animals employed in Greco-Roman sacrifice, while involving technically clean animals like cattle, sheep, goats, or various fowl, could notably have also involved unclean animals like swine. Eating what is served before oneself would also pertain to various meat ingredients possibly used in side dishes.

The difficult thing for today's Messianics to consider is that with v. 27 in view, the meat could have been from animals listed as clean or unclean on the lists of Leviticus 11 and Deuteronomy 14, when served to a Corinthian Believer by a local pagan in his home. If served meat that was technically clean or unclean, it was to be eaten; it was not to be refused **unless publicly known to be sacrificed to an idol**. In the event that if a Corinthian Messiah follower went to the home of a pagan friend, or even family member, and discovered out that meat served was presented before idols, then Paul is clear that for conscience's sake he or she was to refuse the meal. Morris draws the interesting conclusion,

"This is in sharp contrast to the Jewish approach. Jews were very scrupulous and made searching inquiries before they would eat meat. Paul's attitude was revolutionary. He took seriously the truth that an idol is nothing...He discouraged over-scrupulousness."⁷⁶

There was a point, where the presumed "knowledgeable" addressed in ch. 8 would be correct, where the power of the One True God was overwhelmingly superior to any idols, and certainly superior to the flesh of animals created by Him (v. 24), whether clean or unclean. This power did not permit participation and eating in a local temple or shrine. This power may permit eating at the private home of a non-Believer. Yet, while being overly-scrupulous in such a setting was something that Paul discouraged, a Corinthian Believer might have found other ways to eat, especially in thinking how any meat items had likely once been pagan sacrifices. Ciampa and Rosner summarize the possibilities,

"Paul is probably assuming...that the meal (as would be typical) might be one in which many different food choices were being passed around...the Christian would not have to go without food altogether but could choose from those items that had not been explicitly associated with an idol. If the Christian could not simply choose strategically from the food offered at the dinner, they might feel the need from time to time excuse him- or herself from the dinner."⁷⁷

⁷⁴ Ciampa and Rosner, 490.

⁷⁵ Witherington, *1&2 Corinthians*, 227.

⁷⁶ Morris, *1 Corinthians*, 146.

⁷⁷ Ciampa and Rosner, pp 491-492.

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When circumstances arose, where it was public knowledge at the meal that the meat had once been sacrificed to idols, it was to be refused. Paul interjects, though, how it is “not [for] your own conscience, I mean, but [for] the other person’s” (v. 29a, TLV). Some Believers, in finding out that meat served at someone’s private home had been sacrificed to idols, would realize that the God of Israel is all-powerful, and that willful participation in idolatry is not occurring. Yet at the same time, if Messiah followers discover that they are served meat sacrificed to idols, it is to be refused on account of what it communicates to others. Witherington rightly says, “if one would go ahead and eat, then the host would see that as a violation of one’s own religion. It would be a bad witness to that person.”⁷⁸ Here, the errant Corinthian slogan in action, “All things are permitted,” could certainly backfire if a Corinthian Believer continued eating once knowledge of where meat originated was stated. Fellowship with the Corinthian non-Believers had some definite risks, as pagans might think that willful participation in *their religion* was occurring on the part of the Believers.

It is not agreed among interpreters how the statements following in vs. 29b-30 should be approached: “For why is my freedom judged by another’s conscience? If I partake with thankfulness, why am I denounced because of something I give thanks for?” (TLV). Surely, if many things, at least, are permitted for Messiah followers, then accepting the hospitality of a Greek or Roman non-Believer to dine, should not be something that one is slandered or condemned for. There is disagreement whether vs. 29b-30 are words that Paul is employing to speak for how he himself has eaten idol meat in a pagan home before, and is having to defend himself, *or* if the “I” being referred to is an emphatic “I” or a usage of impersonization as a hypothetical “I” (similar to the “I” sinner of Romans 7), *or* even if vs. 29b-30 is a quotation or reference from the Corinthians’ correspondence to Paul.

Garland summarizes his view that the “I” who speaks in vs. 29b-30 is not the Apostle Paul having to defend past actions, but is instead an emphatic usage. Garland does not believe that Paul would have ever knowingly eaten meat sacrificed to idols, and that “I” should not necessarily be thought to refer to Paul directly:

“Some take these questions to reflect Paul’s self-defense of his own past actions, perhaps in Corinth, and claim that he anticipates some Corinthians challenging his own inconsistency in condemning them for eating idol food in temples while he ate the same idol food sold in the meat market...I am convinced that Paul never ate idol food that was known to be idol food and so would have no need to defend himself. Paul may have used the ‘I’ for the sake of vividness when a more universal application is in view...thus presenting himself as a paradigmatic example for his readers.”⁷⁹

Garland makes reference to Daniel B. Wallace’s massive resource, *Greek Grammar Beyond the Basics*, which describes,

“On a rare occasion, the first person singular may be used for the sake of vividness when a more universal application is in view. Normally such a usage is inclusive of the first person (thus, ‘I’ would mean something like ‘all of us’), but apparently it can also be used in an exclusive way (‘I’ would mean ‘others, but not myself’).”⁸⁰

To an extent, this approach is reflected in the Thiselton rendering, of vs. 29b-30, “For why [you ask] is my freedom being subjected to another person’s self-awareness? Well, if I take part in a meal with thanksgiving, why should I suffer defamation of character over that for which I, at least, give thanks” (*NIGTC*).⁸¹

A significant alternative to the “I” of vs. 29b-30, involving some form of impersonization, is to take these statements as being quotations or references to things that the Corinthians have asked

⁷⁸ Witherington, *1&2 Corinthians*, 227.

⁷⁹ Garland, pp 497-498.

⁸⁰ Daniel B. Wallace, *Greek Grammar Beyond the Basics* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1996), 391.

⁸¹ Thiselton, 779.

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of Paul, perhaps even being a continuation of the slogan "All things are permitted" from v. 23. This is the view that Witherington proposes:

"[This] is again the objection of the Corinthians, as in v. 23a, and does not represent Paul's own view...Paul himself has just argued that he *does* limit his freedom, and the Corinthians ought to limit theirs precisely because of someone's else's conscience. Thus v. 30 would also be a further hypothetical rhetorical question from the Corinthians to Paul...Paul's answer is: because it is not just a matter of one's relationship with God; it is not purely a vertical matter. There are also the horizontal relationships, that is, the effect one's eating has on others."⁸²

Interestingly enough, the renderings seen in the CJB, REB, and the God's New Covenant edition by Heinz Cassirer, reflects the view that vs. 29b-30 might be correspondence being quoted from Paul:

"however, I don't mean your conscience but that of the other person. You say, 'Why should my freedom be determined by someone else's conscience? If I participate with thankfulness, why am I criticized over something for which I myself bless God?'" (vs. 29-30, CJB).

"not your conscience, I mean, but his. 'What?' you say. 'Is my freedom to be called in question by another's conscience? If I partake with thankfulness, why am I blamed for eating food over which I have said grace?'" (vs. 29-30, REB).

"by his own conscience, I mean, not yours. 'What,' you say, 'is my freedom of action to be called in question by another's conscience? If it is with thanksgiving that I partake of such food, why should I incur reproach over that for which I give thanks?'" (vs. 29-30, God's New Covenant-Cassirer).

Both the employment of vs. 29b-30 as impersonization via a hypothetical "I," with Paul addressing why a Believer has to be careful with his or her liberty, or a quotation or reference to what the Corinthians had been communicating to Paul, certainly lessen the potential problems that exist if Paul himself had been blatantly caught violating the principles of the Apostolic decree. Still, even with vs. 29b-30 possibly separated out in English translation in quotation marks " ", Paul might have been stating something that was only in the minds of those Corinthians who incorrectly believed "All things are permitted."

10:31-33 Born again Believers cannot just do anything, as Paul makes it clear, "Whether, then, you eat or drink or whatever you do, do all to the glory of God" (v. 31). Living fully for God is the thrust of the Deuteronomy 6:4-5 *Shema*, and as David exclaims in Psalm 63:1, "O God, You are my God; I shall seek You earnestly; my soul thirsts for You, my flesh yearns for You, in a dry and weary land where there is no water." With *doxan Theou* (δόξαν θεοῦ) in view, there are obviously limits as to how far one can go with fellowshiping or interacting with non-Believers. In many cases, while the invitation to eat at the home of a non-Believer's table would be good, as one could share the gospel, the chance that it would negatively affect others, could require it to be turned down.

When born again Believers conduct themselves in a manner that brings glory to God, then it is conducted with the prime example of Yeshua the Messiah, particularly as the Suffering Servant (Isaiah 53:11-12), in conscious attention. Eating or drinking or performing any other actions take place, with care for others' needs and edification being imperative (Romans 15:1-6; 2 Corinthians 5:14-21; Philippians 2:1-22). Noting the presence of "glory" or *doxa* in v. 31, Thiselton further elaborates,

"In this epistle Paul at times uses the word δόξα, **glory**, in its Hebrew sense (LXX translation of כבוד *kabod*) as that which makes something *impressive*, *weighty*, or *radiant with splendor* (1 Cor 15:40, 41, 43)...Yet for Paul, as for John, that which most startlingly displays God's impressive splendor is precisely his self-giving in which the Lord of glory is crucified (2:8). The biblical

⁸² Witherington, *1&2 Corinthians*, 228.

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background is enhanced by the prominence of the categories of honor and shame which characterized Corinthian culture and the Graeco-Roman world.”⁸³

Paul is concerned with the Corinthians not unnecessarily offending anyone, directing them, “Give no offense either to Jewish or Greek people or to God’s community” (v. 32, TLV). He recognizes for himself, how “I try to please everyone in everything I do, not seeking my own advantage, but that of many, so that they may be saved” (v. 33, NRSV), showing them appropriate honor (cf. Romans 12:10), a resource which is too frequently not shown to one’s fellow human beings. But even while a level of self-identification with a potential audience is good (cf. 9:19-23), it is obviously something that has to be kept within appropriate boundaries. Everything that one does in terms of seeing people brought to salvation must be done via the rubric of imitating Yeshua (11:1). In the estimation of a commentator like Witherington,

“Paul strives to fit in with everyone...not for his own benefit so that things will go smoothly for himself, but in order to save many for Christ. He is not trying to be a people-pleaser in a way that would amount to compromising the gospel, but in indifferent matters such as food he is more than happy to be socially easy to get along with.”⁸⁴

To a figure like the Apostle Paul, not causing unnecessary offense meant eating what was served to oneself, after having accepted an optional invitation, to eat at the home of a non-Believer (v. 27). No questions were to be asked as to where the meat served originated, which meant that it could very well have been sacrificed to idols (or been from unclean animals). Only when it became public knowledge, was meat to be refused (v. 28). If any temporary infraction of the Torah’s dietary code took place, then it was because of the much higher issue of demonstrating gratitude to one’s pagan host, as Paul says, “I don’t just do what is best for me; I do what is best for others so that many may be saved” (v. 33, NLT).

1 Corinthians 10:14-33 application In my family’s experience in being involved in the Messianic movement since 1995, and being involved in full time ministry since 2002, one would think that among all the passages surrounding the topic of “kosher,” Mark 7:1-23 or Acts 10:1-48 or Colossians 2:16-23 or 1 Timothy 4:1-5 would have witnessed the most controversy. Actually, the one statement that has witnessed more tension than any other has been Paul’s assertion of 1 Corinthians 10:27, “If one of the unbelievers invites you and you want to go, eat anything that is set before you without asking questions for conscience’ sake.” This is not only true of what it meant for Paul’s ancient readers, but most especially for how it is to be, or at least can be, applied in a Twenty-First Century context.

Yeshua the Messiah Himself directed His ancient followers, “Whatever city you enter and they receive you, eat what is set before you” (Luke 10:8). When His followers would travel around the countryside, declaring the good news of the Kingdom, they would have often been at the mercy of others for beneficence. In being welcomed into various homes, they needed to be very grateful for whatever hospitality was shown them. And so Yeshua said, “Stay in that house, eating and drinking what they give you; for the laborer is worthy of his wages” (Luke 10:7a). These homes, however, would have been Jewish homes, where the Torah’s dietary code would have been honored.

The Apostle Paul’s words in 1 Corinthians 10:25-33, concerning a responsible exercise of a Believer’s liberty, were delivered with a similar intention. The acceptance of an invitation to a non-Believer’s home to dine was so that some kind of a relationship could be developed, with the specific intention of seeing others brought to saving faith in Israel’s Messiah.

In discussing my personal evaluation that when Paul says “eat anything that is set before you without asking questions” (1 Corinthians 10:27), that this would mean that when served meat sacrificed to idols, the Corinthians would have to eat it—including beef, lamb, goat, various fowl, or pork—I can tell you that I have been criticized a few times from rigid adherents to a One Law/One

⁸³ Thiselton, 793.

⁸⁴ Witherington, *1&2 Corinthians*, pp 228-229.

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Torah ideology. They have retorted to me that the issue is exclusively meat sacrificed to idols, and not one of clean and unclean. They are right to point out how many of the animals involved in Greco-Roman sacrifice would have been listed as “clean” in Leviticus 11 and Deuteronomy 14. They seemingly forget, though, that swine were used in such religious practices as well (cf. 1 Maccabees 1:47). These Believers were not to directly inquire as to the source of the meat served them, meaning they were not to inquire *what meat* it would be either. Sometimes beef, lamb, goat, or pork is visibly indistinguishable when cooked—and depending on how it is cooked, can be indistinguishable to the taste of many palates. Claiming that only eating the flesh of animals classified as clean, yet had been sacrificed to idols, but not eating the flesh of animals classified as unclean, makes little sense when these Believers would be served something from their pagan host, which they were not to ask questions about.

Quite contrary to this, I have had much better discussions with various Messianic Jewish colleagues, particularly those who have been involved in missionary outreaches to under-developed countries and regions. These are people who do keep a kosher-style of diet, and they do not believe that the Torah’s code of clean and unclean meats has been abrogated in the post-resurrection era. Yet, these people, in recognizing the hospitality that a non-Believer—perhaps still engrossed in a tribal paganism—would have in presenting a meal to a foreign guest with a foreign religion, eat what is set on his or her plate by the host. Whether it be pork, shellfish, or insects, the fare is eaten with no questions asked. This does not mean that the missionary asks for more. Nor does it mean that if the missionary has the option of choosing what to eat and what not to eat, that obviously unclean things are consumed. And with 1 Corinthians 10:14-33 recognized, when it is discovered that the meat was involved with a pagan ritual, it is then refused as a high violation of Biblical directives.

Obviously, for some in the Messianic community, eating unclean things served by one’s host, with particular circumstances in play and as a matter of respecting another’s hospitality, is something entirely unacceptable. These persons would apparently have an issue with the tenor of Paul’s instructions in 1 Corinthians 10, where the venue of eating a meal at the home of a non-Believer is in view, and the need to develop relationships for another’s potential salvation would be imperative. Fare is only to be refused, according to Paul, when it becomes publicly known that meat was once an idol sacrifice.

Others in the Messianic community, while not at all “looking for loopholes” around eating kosher—similar to the Corinthian Believers eating in a pagan home—find it necessary to just eat whatever their host sets before them out of accepting their genuine hospitality. Temporarily suspending things like kosher eating, for the needs of the moment, may be necessary.

It is tactful to recognize that Paul’s word, “eat anything that is set before you without asking questions for conscience’ sake” (10:27), would sit to the Left of Center of the stipulations of the Apostolic decree (Acts 15:20, 29). But, this is a far cry from the ancient Corinthians participating in sins such as idolatry, to the point of eating any kind of meat that was knowingly sacrificed to idols, which was to Paul unacceptable. **It was a bad witness to non-Believers** once a Believer found out the meat originated from the pagan temple. Many of us today, however, when visiting the home of a non-Believer we are trying to get to know, might have pork or shellfish served to us on a plate. While some might choose to eat around the meat, and may actually be able to say that “This disagrees with our stomach,” a situational prudence as a matter of gratitude to one’s host, might require some to simply eat without complaining.

Such a thought—that *Messianic Believers* if served *unkosher fare* might have to eat it—does run contrary to the sentiments of many in today’s Messianic movement, for whom keeping the kosher dietary laws is sometimes put on par with basic morality and love for neighbor. Nowhere did the Apostle Paul allow for the Corinthians to participate in idolatry, which is a capital offense in the Torah. Eating unclean things is *not* a capital offense, however, as the Lord only says, “You shall not

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eat any abomination” (Deuteronomy 14:3, ATS), ultimately placing one’s being “abhorrent” (NJPS)⁸⁵ as a personal condition. Eating unclean things set before oneself is considered by the Scriptures themselves to be on a different level than committing idolatry and denying the God of Israel. At the very most, would any Corinthians be served unclean things, the worst thing they would really experience could be indigestion, and a state of temporary uncleanness—the same as any of us today.

The Torah does not classify what one eats at the level of high offenses like idolatry, sexual immorality, or murder. And, unless one holds to an impossibly rigid application of Moses’ Teaching, there are life exceptions to the rules of *kashrut*, as indicated by the conditional invitation of Corinthian Believers being asked to the home of a non-Believer (10:27-28)—an invitation which *could* have been turned down by many of them. **Nowhere** in 1 Corinthians 10 does Paul uphold the slogan “All things are permitted” (10:23), because he certainly does not allow—once it is discovered—for the Corinthians to eat meat sacrificed to idols. Unfortunately in much of contemporary Christianity, the maxim of “All things are permitted” now includes much, much more than what one might be served at a non-Believer’s dinner table.

My family has kept a Biblically kosher or kosher-style of diet since 1996, eliminating pork and shellfish from what we eat, as well as being sensitive to various Messianic Jewish concerns.⁸⁶ In our two decades of eating this way, we have, like many Messianic people, undoubtedly been served things at a family member’s or friend’s house or at some other social gathering, which has had pork or shellfish as an unknown ingredient. *By far, the bulk of Messianic people eating something unclean takes place because it is unknown.* Only on a small handful of occasions, normally in the home of an unreligious person—who would not understand the kosher dietary laws for any man or woman of faith—have I eaten pork, when it has been served to me. Like Paul would direct, I thank the Lord for His bounty (10:26), and I do not ask questions (10:27), **but** I do not seek seconds. To make too much of an issue about what I am eating, could be taken by one’s hosts to be ungrateful for the time and effort they have spent in providing a meal for me. And which is worse: for *me* to be concerned about *my* eating, or not being concerned about the honor **they** deserve as human beings? While it behooves one who emulates Yeshua (11:1) to obey the Father’s Instruction—the command to love neighbor (Leviticus 19:18) has a higher priority than *kashrut*.

Perhaps in the future as relationships are developed, *your* eating preferences can be discussed, along with a whole range of other Biblical issues. But, for a short moment, **the other person’s** hospitality has to be respected.

⁸⁵ Heb. *toei’vah* (תועיבה).

⁸⁶ This has been addressed previously in Chapter 7, “Our Family Experiences Going Kosher” by Margaret McKee Huey.