When the subject of kosher, *kashrut*, or the dietary instructions of the Torah or the Law of Moses, comes up in various contemporary Messianic settings, there can be a tendency for some strong emotions to arise. The broad Messianic spectrum represents a diversity of views on "kosher"—ranging from the dietary laws being abolished and only to be observed as a part of Jewish culture, to people advocating a strict adherence to many Orthodox Jewish rulings and practices, to a kosher-style diet where people mainly avoid pork and shellfish. At times, there has been an over-amount of attention given to the minutiae of keeping kosher, and not enough time given to some of the significant Biblical passages which either inform us about kosher, or have been traditionally interpreted to say that kosher has been abolished for the post-resurrection era. And more than anything else, maintaining an appropriate, Messiah-centric attitude toward all of this, is most imperative. There have been far too many extremes represented regarding the issue of the dietary laws, at times, and not enough reasoned discussion. Too many people have issued accusations against others, and not enough have tried to inquire of both the Holy Scriptures and the Holy Spirit, what is perhaps important about this issue. *Human beings have to all eat, after all!*

The *Messianic Kosher Helper* includes a wide breadth of material, addressing an array of topics associated with the Torah's dietary laws. This publication has been divided up into two main parts: *The Significance of Kosher* and *A Theology of Eating and Kosher*. You will be able to detect a progression of sorts, in our family's own approach to the subject matter, as some things are addressed first more generally and then more specifically. In our experience, we ourselves have certainly had to move from a more elementary view of the issue of kosher, to a more developed view, and we recognize how the Messianic community needs to do the same.

It is important to remember how Leviticus 11:44 says, "For I am the LORD your God. Sanctify yourselves therefore, and be holy; for I am holy" (WMB; cf. 1 Peter 1:16)—a concept which is directly connected to clean and unclean meats. But, if following this is not enjoined with a better appreciation and understanding of a steadfast mandate for all of us to have clean minds and hearts, imbued with the presence of God's Holy Spirit, demonstrating the love of Yeshua to all—then outward holiness will not have been joined with the more critical inward holiness. If, however, we learn how to separate external things which are clean and unclean—then perhaps we can also learn, with God's help, how to separate clean and unclean thoughts, ideas, and attitudes, being mature men and women in Him, *and* empowered on many different levels for service to His Kingdom!

MESSIANIC

KOSHER HELPER

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MESSIANIC APOLOGETICS
messianicapologetics.blog

Messianic Kosher Helper

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edited by Margaret McKee Huey, with J.K. McKee
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Abbreviations and Special Terms

The following is a list of abbreviations for reference works and special terms which are used in publications by Outreach Israel Ministries and Messianic Apologetics. Please familiarize yourself with them as the text may reference a Bible version, i.e., RSV for the Revised Standard Version, or a source such as *TWOT* for the *Theological Wordbook of the Old Testament*, solely by its abbreviation. Detailed listings of these sources are provided in the Bibliography.

ABD: *Anchor Bible Dictionary*

AMG: *Complete Word Study Dictionary: Old Testament, New Testament*

ANE: Ancient Near East(ern)

Apostolic Scriptures/Writings: the New Testament

Ara: Aramaic

ASV: American Standard Version (1901)

ATS: ArtScroll Tanach (1996)

b. Babylonian Talmud (*Talmud Bavli*)

B.C.E.: Before Common Era or B.C.

BDAG: *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature* (Bauer, Danker, Arndt, Gingrich)

BDB: *Brown-Driver-Briggs Hebrew and English Lexicon*

C.E.: Common Era or A.D.

CGEDNT: *Concise Greek-English Dictionary of New Testament Words* (Barclay M. Newman)

CGL: *Cambridge Greek Lexicon* (2021)

CHALOT: *Concise Hebrew and Aramaic Lexicon of the Old Testament* (Holladay)

CJB: Complete Jewish Bible (1998)

CJSB: Complete Jewish Study Bible (2016)

DRA: Douay-Rheims American Edition

DSS: Dead Sea Scrolls

EDB: *Eerdmans Dictionary of the Bible*

EJ: *Encylopaedia Judaica*

ESV: English Standard Version (2001)

Ger: German

GNT: Greek New Testament

Grk: Greek

HALOT: *Hebrew & Aramaic Lexicon of the Old Testament* (Koehler and Baumgartner)

HCSB: Holman Christian Standard Bible (2004)

Heb: Hebrew

HNV: Hebrew Names Version of the World English Bible

IDB: *Interpreter's Dictionary of the Bible*

IDBSup: *Interpreter's Dictionary of the Bible Supplement*

ISBE: *International Standard Bible Encyclopedia*

IVPBBC: *IVP Bible Background Commentary (Old & New Testament)*

Jastrow: *Dictionary of the Targumim, Talmud Bavli, Talmud Yerushalmi, and Midrashic Literature* (Marcus Jastrow)

JBK: New Jerusalem Bible-Koren (2000)

JETS: *Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society*

KJV: King James Version

Lattimore: The New Testament by Richmond Lattimore (1996)

LITV: *Literal Translation of the Holy Bible* by Jay P. Green (1986)

LES: *Lexham English Septuagint* (2019)

LS: *An Intermediate Greek-English Lexicon* (Liddell-Scott)

LSJM: *Greek-English Lexicon* (Liddell-Scott-Jones-McKenzie)

LXE: *Septuagint with Apocrypha* by Sir L.C.L. Brenton (1851)

LXX: Septuagint

m. Mishnah

MARV: Messianic Apologetics Revised Version*
MT: Masoretic Text
NASB: New American Standard Bible (1977)
NASU: New American Standard Update (1995)
NBCR: *New Bible Commentary: Revised*
NEB: New English Bible (1970)
Nelson: *Nelson's Expository Dictionary of Old Testament Words*
NETS: New English Translation of the Septuagint (2007)
NIB: *New Interpreter's Bible*
NIDB: *New International Dictionary of the Bible*
NIV: New International Version (1984)
NJB: New Jerusalem Bible-Catholic (1985)
NJPS: Tanakh, A New Translation of the Holy Scriptures (1999)
NKJV: New King James Version (1982)
NRSV: New Revised Standard Version (1989)
NLT: New Living Translation (1996)
NT: New Testament
OT: Old Testament
REB: Revised English Bible (1989)
RSV: Revised Standard Version (1952)
t. Tosefta
Tanach (Tanakh): the Old Testament
Thayer: *Thayer's Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament*
TDNT: *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*
TLV: Messianic Jewish Family Bible—Tree of Life Version (2014)
TNIV: Today's New International Version (2005)
TWOT: *Theological Wordbook of the Old Testament*
UBSHNT: United Bible Societies' 1991 Hebrew New Testament revised edition
v(s). verse(s)
Vine: *Vine's Complete Expository Dictionary of Old and New Testament Words*
Vul: Latin Vulgate
YLT: Young's Literal Translation (1862/1898)
WMB: World Messianic Bible (2020)

* This is a modified and adapted edition of the public domain World Messianic Bible (WMB).

Introduction

When the subject of kosher, *kashrut*, or the dietary instructions of the Torah or the Law of Moses come up in various contemporary Messianic settings, there can be a tendency for some strong emotions to arise. The broad Messianic spectrum represents a diversity of views on "kosher"—ranging from the dietary laws being abolished and only to be observed as a part of Jewish culture, to people advocating a strict adherence to many Orthodox Jewish rulings and practices, to a kosher-style diet where people mainly avoid pork and shellfish. At times, there has been an over-amount of attention given to the minutiae of keeping kosher, and not enough time given to some of the significant Biblical passages which either inform us about kosher, or have been traditionally interpreted to say that kosher has been abolished for the post-resurrection era. And more than anything else, maintaining an appropriate, Messiah-centric attitude toward all of this, is most imperative. There have been far too many extremes represented regarding the issue of the dietary laws, at times, and not enough reasoned discussion. Too many people have issued accusations against others, and not enough have tried to inquire of both the Holy Scriptures and the Holy Spirit, what is perhaps important about this issue. *Human beings have to all eat, after all!*

Our family has been a part of the Messianic movement since 1995, and we have been involved in full time Messianic ministry since 2003. We have very much seen the different currents and dynamics present within our faith community regarding the subject of eating, and how people on ***both*** the outside *and* inside have approached this issue. As a family of non-Jewish, evangelical Protestant Believers, who were steadily led to embrace things Messianic throughout the 1980s and into the 1990s—particularly as we were exposed to the significance of the Biblical holidays or appointed times—we were convicted by the Lord to change our eating in 1996, after about six months or so of being involved in a Messianic Jewish congregation. Much of this change occurred quite naturally, as we wanted to be very careful concerning what to bring to various fellowship and meal gatherings. The weekly bulletin on *Shabbat* included a message to only bring dishes which were "Biblically kosher," and so on a roadtrip in 1996, we investigated what the concept of "Biblically kosher" was, by a variety of Messianic articles and publications at our disposal. Upon returning

home, we pulled things out of the refrigerator and freezer which were considered, by the Torah, to be quantitatively "unclean."

This was not exactly the easiest thing for some of us to do... Our family has significant roots in the Deep South, where pork is a major part of both the diet and culture. Margaret McKee Huey was raised in Annapolis, Maryland on the Chesapeake Bay, where not only shellfish, but in particular the blue crab, are main staples of the cuisine. And, having grown up in the Greater Cincinnati-Northern Kentucky area, John McKee was raised around a significant amount of traditional German cuisine, most of which either features pork or includes pork as an ingredient. In eliminating things like pork or shellfish from our family's diet, we have not only made a significant commitment in further obedience to God's Instruction, but we have also demonstrated a willingness to recognize God's supremacy over our various human upbringings and traditions. We have had to make some sacrifices, not just in interacting with Jewish Believers who were widely raised with kosher, but in what we eat or do not eat when we interact with our own extended family.

Of course, it is one thing to be personally or familily convicted regarding what is communicated in Torah passages like Leviticus 11 and Deuteronomy 14—to then be thrust later into full time Messianic ministry, where the issues regarding kosher implementation on the ground, often in mixed communities of Jewish and non-Jewish Believers, get rather interesting. It is one thing to have an internal conviction that the dietary laws of Scripture were not abolished by the work of the Messiah. But, Messianic people are obviously going to be interacting with those who have conservative or hyper-conservative views of kosher, to those who have no view of kosher at all, to the bulk of people holding to some kind of mid-range level of observance. **How are all of today's Messianic people to come to some sort of fair-minded place regarding the topic of kosher?** Many questions have frequently gone unanswered or unaddressed regarding the continued validity of kosher, to its observance among those who keep it at various levels, to how to act and behave among those who think it is irrelevant for Messiah followers.

This publication, the *Messianic Kosher Helper*, has been a long time coming for our ministry. Internally, in both our family and ministry office, we have worked through the issues of the validity and relevance of the kosher dietary laws, what the Torah communicates about the issues of clean and unclean meats, and how to fairly implement these instructions in on-the-ground circumstances with real people out in the world. Externally in our ministry service, we have known that we have had to wait a little while, to let some other developments regarding kosher, eating,

diet, and even health transpire[ii]—so that when the time came to write about this issue, we could give it the "royal treatment," so to speak, and release something which could aid all of us on many different levels.

We know that there are many details, regarding a wide variety of Bible passages, which need to be specifically considered and analyzed far more thoroughly than they ever have been in previous Messianic publications, regarding the subject matter of kosher. We also know of the unfair criticism, directed toward many loving evangelical Christian brothers and sisters who are claimed to have "bacon breath"—when those issuing the criticism are perhaps acting immorally and unethically in other, far more serious matters. And, in our experience, we have, in a few cases, witnessed some of the best, professionally-trained Messianic teachers, blunder through questions asked of them in regard to kosher validity, when a little time and energy should have been expelled in investigating what was being inquired.

As you prepare to read the *Messianic Kosher Helper*, you will see that the material has been divided up into two main parts: **The Significance of Kosher** and **A Theology of Eating and Kosher.** You will be able to detect, among some of the chapters, a progression of sorts in our family's own approach to the subject matter, as some things are addressed first more generally and then more specifically, with a repetition of some points in various places. We ourselves have certainly had to move from a more elementary view of the issue of kosher, to a more developed view. We have had to fine-tune our approach to various passages, and be a bit more engaged with their interpretation, per both Hebrew and Greek issues, as well as various views present in more technical theological resources and commentaries. And most of all, like many, we certainly have had to moderate our own approaches and attitudes at times over the years.

It is important to remember how Leviticus 11:44 says, "For I am the LORD your God. Sanctify yourselves therefore, and be holy; for I am holy" (WMB; cf. 1 Peter 1:16)—a concept which is directly connected to clean and unclean meats. But, if following this is not enjoined with a better appreciation and understanding of **a steadfast mandate** for all of us to have clean minds and hearts, imbued with the presence of God's Holy Spirit, demonstrating the love of Yeshua to all—then outward holiness will not have been joined with the more critical inward holiness. If, however, we learn how to separate external things which are clean and unclean—then perhaps we can also learn, with God's help, how to separate clean and

[ii] Some of the main Messianic books released on the topic of kosher, to date, include: Gordon S. Tessler, *The Genesis Diet: The Biblical Foundation for Optimum Nutrition* (Raleigh, NC: Be Well Publications, 1996); Aaron Eby, *Biblically Kosher: A Messianic Jewish Perspective on Kashrut* (Marshfield, MO: First Fruits of Zion, 2012); Hope Egan, *Holy Cow! Does God Care About What We Eat?*, Fourth Edition (Biblical Eating Press, 2024).

unclean thoughts, ideas, and attitudes, being mature men and women in Him, *and* empowered on many different levels for service to His Kingdom!

Do not let the size of this book intimidate you! Part I is actually the size of our *Messianic Winter Holiday Helper*, and Part II is only slightly larger than *The New Testament Validates Torah*. While we could have taken Part II and released it as a second book, we could not run the risk of readers not having a fuller view of the issues and Bible passages requiring analysis. While this does not represent the "final word" on the topics of kosher and diet for Messianic people, the *Messianic Kosher Helper* may be said to be an encyclopedic volume, to aid both Messianic families and those in Messianic congregations, on many of the aspects involving kosher.

Margaret McKee Huey
with J.K. McKee

THE SIGNIFICANCE OF KOSHER

PART I

-1-

A Summarization of Jewish Kosher Traditions

Margaret McKee Huey and J.K. McKee

To most outsiders who encounter the Messianic Jewish movement, when hearing something about kosher or *kashrut*, what they mostly think about are instructions within the Torah or Law of Moses, which prohibit the consumption of unclean meats such as pork or shellfish. Much of the Messianic community has promoted what it considers to be "Biblically kosher," which primarily begins and ends at not eating pork and shellfish. In traditional Judaism, however, what it means to be **kosher,** is much more involved than observant Jews not eating certain meats labeled to be "unclean." *Kashrut* involves classification of unclean meats to be sure, but also involves some significant traditions regarding the butchering of animals, how meat is to be prepared, what can and cannot be eaten together, and separation of utensils and cookware. It also involves a variety of theological and philosophical reasons proposed for the institution of these Biblical instructions, and their subsequent interpretation and application over the centuries, by Jewish religious authorities and diverse Jewish communities.

Much of the broad Messianic movement considers kosher to just involve not eating pork or shellfish, yet it is clear even from a reading of instructions in the Torah, that this is a rather simplistic and under-developed approach to this issue. Likewise, even with a diverse number of internal Messianic views on the theological aspects of the Torah's dietary laws—but ones which are more positive than not regarding their continued validity in the post-resurrection era—there is not a huge amount of

understanding for what it means to be ***kosher*** in much of traditional Judaism. Even if many Messianic people, for example, do not think that it is necessary to separate meat and dairy, or have multiple sets of dishes or utensils, or that most food items they purchase have an *hechsher* or official symbol of kosher approval—they still, as members of a movement, with an explicit mandate to declare the good news of Israel's Messiah to the Jewish people, need to know a few things about Jewish kosher traditions and observance. Given the importance of the kosher dietary laws for Judaism and the Jewish people throughout the centuries, every Messianic person, Jewish and non-Jewish alike, should have a familiarity with how the Torah's dietary laws have been interpreted and applied over the centuries.

How are any of us to understand how the kosher dietary laws have been approached by Judaism? It has been noted how many contemporary Jewish people, actually can struggle with the dietary laws.[1] This is, as one should see, true for any number of reasons. Orthodox Jewish interpretation and application of the Torah's dietary laws, is highly restrictive when it comes to interactions with the outside world, as Orthodox Jews will have to be widely constrained to their own communities, to find food items and products which have been prepared according to their standards. On the exact opposite side of this is a Reform Jewish community, which makes up the majority Jewish population in the United States, thinking that the dietary laws were only important for Ancient Israel and today communicate no significant sense of holiness for Jewish people—and a majority of Reform Jews today do not keep any degree of kosher. There are other, more graded levels of kosher observance, present in other branches of Judaism, such as the Conservative movement, allowing for more flexibility than the Orthodox. There are Jews who keep kosher for cultural, not Biblical reasons, and those who keep kosher for ecological, health, or some other personally preferred reasons.[2]

Given the diversity of approaches, both communal to various branches of the Synagogue *and* personal to individual Jewish people, it might not be possible for any one of us to understand all Jewish kosher traditions. But, it is very possible for us to have a better understanding and appreciation for how kosher has been widely followed and approached by the Jewish

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[1] George Robinson, *Essential Judaism: A Complete Guide to Beliefs, Customs, and Rituals* (New York: Pocket Books, 2000), 247.

[2] A number of important Jewish resources on the subject of kosher include, but are not limited to: Samuel H. Dresner, *The Jewish Dietary Laws: Their Meaning for Our Time* (New York: The Rabbinical Assembly of America, 1982); Yacov Lipschutz, *Kashruth: A comprehensive background and reference guide to the principles of Kashruth* (Brooklyn: Mesorah Publications, Ltd, 1989); Lisë Stern, *How to Keep Kosher: A Comprehensive Guide to Understanding Jewish Dietary Laws* (New York: William Morrow, 2004).