



Early Christianity

Session 7

April 15, 2024

Opening Prayer:

- I. Let us pray: Loving and Eternal God, we thank you for bringing us together to learn, discuss, and reflect on how our faith tradition evolved over the centuries. Help us to remain humble as we learn how human development, social and political volatility, and technology has used and abused the message of Jesus, struggled to reform the Church, and discern divine Truth. Inspire us to accept the past, acknowledge the present, and have hope in the future. We ask this through Jesus Christ, our Lord. Amen.

II. Kosher:

- a. Introduction
 - i. The Rabbis of the Talmudic and later periods were content in classifying dietary laws as *chukim*, mandatory statutes, which must be obeyed even though the reason for them is beyond humankind's understanding.
 - ii. Note: The Talmud is the primary source of Jewish Law called *Halakah*. It is an accumulation of Jewish theology (the rules). It is different from *Haggadah* which means "telling" in Hebrew, is a written guide to the [Passover seder](#), which commemorates the Israelites' Exodus from Egypt. The Haggadah includes various prayers, blessings, rituals, fables, songs and information for how the rituals should be performed.
- b. Holiness in Leviticus
 - i. It is thought that these laws train us to master our appetites; to accustom us to restrain our desires; and to avoid considering the pleasure of eating and drinking as the goal of human existence.
 - ii. Holiness is the only reason given for observance of the dietary laws.
 - iii. "Holiness" in Hebrew is *kedusha*, from the word *kadosh*, meaning separated. Whatever is holy was something set apart.
 - iv. The Talmud points out that if Jews are not permitted to eat with their neighbors, they will not socialize with them. And, if they do not socialize, there will be less intermarriage, preserving the survival of the Jewish people.
- c. Defining kosher
 - i. "Kosher" is the anglicization of the Hebrew word *kasher*, which means "good" and "proper." Later it referred to ritual objects and meant "fit for ritual use." It is also used to describe witnesses who are "fit" and "proper" to testify.



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ii. Food:

1. Kosher animals are only those with split hooves and that chew cud. There are certain fish and fowl that are kosher, as well.
2. *Terafya* is food that is ‘torn’ and describes any food that is not kosher. “You shall not eat any flesh that is torn of beasts (animals killed in the field by other animals). All animals killed in this manner is forbidden. *Terafya* has been extended to include any food that is not prepared in accordance with the dietary laws.
3. Hunting is discouraged. Animals killed by hunters are considered *terafya*. If a kosher animal, such as a deer, is trapped but not injured, the flesh may be eaten if the animal is slaughtered by a *shochet* in the prescribed ritual manner. A *shochet* is a trained ritual slaughterer. He is well-versed in the laws of kosher slaughtering, and uses a knife called a *challef*, to sever the jugular vein in one stroke.
4. Rabbi Akiba ruled that it is forbidden to take the life of a wild animal without giving it a fair trial before a court of twenty-three judges, the same a human being. It was not meant to be taken literally, but emphasized the sanctity and importance of all living creatures. Hunting for sport is considered as cruelty to animals.
5. Animals must be ritually slaughtered. Blood may not be consumed because it is considered the very essence of life. So, when an animal is slaughtered, care must be taken to drain as much of the blood as possible from the meat.
6. When an animal is slaughtered, the jugular vein is severed, the animal dies instantaneously, and the maximum amount of blood leaves the body. In order to even draw out more blood from the meat, additional rules of *kashrut* must be followed.
7. The *kashering* process involves washing the meat with water. After it is washed, the meat is placed in a large receptacle filled with water and is soaked for 30 minutes to soften it so that it will absorb salt. The water must cover all of the surfaces of the meat. It is then placed on a flat, grooved board, set on an incline, so liquid can drain off. The meat is then salted thoroughly on all sides and remains on the board for another hour. They use coarse salt because it absorbs a good percentage of the blood from the meat. Then it is rinsed off twice.



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8. It is improper to leave meat *unkasbered* for more than three days because the blood congeals and is harder to release – unless it is broiled over an open fire.
 9. A liver can never be *kasbered*. The only way to make it kosher is to broil it over the open fire, then fried, or sauteed.
 10. It is not permissible to dip fowl in hot water to remove its feathers because the scalding will cause blood to coagulate when it cools. It will be considered *terayfa*.
 11. Out of fear that the milk of a nonkosher animal might have been mixed with the milk of a kosher animal, many ultra-orthodox Jews are very careful to ensure the source of the milk they drink. They will drink the milk of an animal only if a Jew was present at the milking and bottling. This type of milk is called *calav Yisrael*, meaning the “milk of the Jews.”
 12. Fish do not need to be *kasbered* because Leviticus mentions only meat, and fish have a minimal amount of blood.
 13. All crustaceans are considered non-kosher. “These fish you may eat of all that are in the waters: whatsoever has fins and scales may you eat; and whatsoever has no fins or scales, yu may not eat; it is unclean to you.” Some fish such as swordfish and sturgeon shed their scales and are not permitted.
 14. Some wines are considered kosher and others are not. The Talmud indicates that wine is often used in idol worship. It even includes any wine that has been touched by Gentiles. Today, it is generally accepted that Christians and Muslims are not idolaters, and wine handled by them is acceptable. Some Orthodox Jews require the wine to be preboiled, because pagan worship prohibited any wine that had been boiled. This applies to grape wine only. Wine from other fruits are permitted even if made by non-Jews.
- iii. Neutral food
1. Foods that are neither meat (*fleishig* in Yiddish) nor dairy (*milchig* in Yiddish) products nor derivatives of such products are called *pareve* (Yiddish for “neutral”). They may be used when preparing or serving meat or dairy meals. *Pareve* products include all fish, all foods that



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included are nonanimal food products such as nondairy creamers and artificial sweeteners.

2. Gelatin can be considered neutral. It may contain substances from bones, hoofs, and animal tissue of nonkosher animals. That would make it *terafya*. Others consider it kosher because the substances used have had a significant change of nature in the process, and make them inert.
 3. All nonmeat and nondairy products, such as salt sugar, and coffee do not require kosher certification. Nonetheless, many food manufacturers print the symbol of *pareve* on their products. They do so, in all likelihood, to assure Jews that the product is kosher to encourage them to purchase them.
- iv. Cooking
1. Since glass dishes are not absorbent, they can be used for both meat and dairy. However, most authorities forbid such use and consider it inappropriate to employ the same dishes on a routine basis.
 2. Dishes may be washed in a dishwasher, as long as the meat and dairy dishes are washed separately.

III. **Reflection: How do our faith traditions set ourselves apart? How do we believe that we holy, and what do we do to live into our holiness?**

IV. **Reflection: We know that Jesus and his family were practicing Jews. He honored the Holy Days and the traditions. Yet, he seemed to be a threat. What do you think may have been the perspective of Jesus of Nazareth, our Messiah?**

V. Note: The information above is taken, whether in part or in whole, from *The Jewish Book of Why* by Alfred J. Kolatch.