

Romans 14

Evidence for Sunday law and making all things clean?

The book of Romans is considered the most profound of Paul's contribution to the New Testament writings. In fact, William Tyndale prefaces his edition of the Holy Bible with the Apostle's epistles, positing his letters give insight and understanding into the Old Testament which viewed from the perspective of the New, enhances our appreciation of historical events.

Frequently, appeal is made to Romans 14 as evidence the Fourth Commandment mandating observance of the 7th day Sabbath has been rescinded, the Apostle Paul credited with providing a basis for the change of the Sabbath from Saturday to Sunday. Not only are his writings relied upon to uphold Sunday as the New Testament day of worship, but some go so far as to say his writings nullified Yahweh's Law; that obedience is no longer obligated to the Ten Commandments. This, in spite of the Roman Catholic Church as well as its sister denominations owning the change from 7th day Sabbath worship to the 1st day.

Examining Paul's Letter

Paul begins chapter 14, urging his readers' patience with those who have not apprehended/comprehended the rudiments of the faith in Yahshua and in the Scriptures, neither arguing nor contending with those who are nursing the sincere milk of the Word (1 Pet. 2:2). Their understanding is yet subject to being increased, as it is further written: *Him that is weak in the faith receive ye, [but] not to doubtful disputations. For one believeth that he may eat all things: another, who is weak, eateth herbs,* Romans 14:1-2.

The content of chapter 14 makes no mention of the Sabbath, nor of any of the Scriptural appointed times but is instead, a treatise on eating and fasting. Verses 1 and 2 would seem to associate "weak faith" with one's preference toward a vegetable and fruit diet, but one's choice not to eat flesh might well have been based on a concern that perhaps the animal carcass might not have been properly drained of blood as was enjoined Israel (Lev. 17:10-14), or that animal flesh might have been dedicated to a pagan deity(ies). The latter was a concern the Apostle addressed in 1 Corinthians 8:4-7.

Judgment Forbidden

Different food preferences and days individually selected for fasting are the principal issues of chapter 14, with judgment of another's practice forbidden. *Let not him that eateth [flesh] despise him that eateth not; and let not him which eateth not [flesh] judge him that eateth: for Yahweh hath received him. Who are thou that judgest another man's servant? for Yahweh is able to make him stand,* Romans 14:3-4.

Food for Thought

Living a clean life on this polluted planet is expected and required, if we are to be Holy as He is Holy (1 Pet. 1:15). We are to think clean, live clean, eat clean, and be clean. Eating food specifically proscribed, as carnivorous animals, places one in jeopardy of judgment. Generally, grain and grass eating creatures are acceptable for human consumption. (See Leviticus 11 and Deuteronomy 14:3-21).

Now some may rebut our postulations here, citing 1 Timothy 4:4-5: *For every creature of Yahweh [is] good, and nothing to be refused, if it be received with thanksgiving: for it is sanctified by the Word of Yahweh and prayer* to which we reply, "None can sanctify by his prayer what has not first been sanctified by His Word."

The Apostle Paul never taught that any and every creature is acceptable for human consumption. The clean food laws still apply.

Some, however, seeking to be contentious, will persist, pointing to the Apostle Peter's vision in Acts 10:11-20 as a rescission of the *Torah* proscriptions. They are quite ignoring the context and the fulfillment of the time spoken in Yahshua's directive in Acts 1:8. Now was the season it should be manifested, Yahweh is not a respecter of persons but whosoever, in every nation that should fear Yahweh, and work righteousness, would be accepted of Him (Acts 10:34-35).

To Fast or not to Fast? That is the Question

Scholars believe verse 5 refers to fasting. Judaism traditionally held that the second and fifth days of the week (Monday and Thursday) were reserved for fasting. However, there is not one ordinance in Scripture dictating any particular day on which to fast, except for Yom Kippur (the Day of Atonement, the 10th of the seventh Biblical month, Tishri). Indeed, Yahshua related to scribe and Pharisee who raised the question of His disciples fasting, that when once the Bridegroom was taken away, then would the children of the bride chamber fast in those days (Matt. 9:14-15). Raising the specter, moreover, that except His disciples both then and now, prayed and fasted, they and we should neither do, nor exceed the works which He did (Matt. 17:21; John 14:12).

While one may elect the time or season for fasting, the weekly Sabbath and six of the annual Sabbaths (excluding the Day of Atonement) should be excepted, because the Sabbath was made for man to delight himself in Yahweh, His Word and fellowship with His People.

Fasting, as the abstention from food and drink, will produce an appreciation for Yahweh's provision of "the fruit of the earth" (Deut. 26:2), as well as His supply of all one's needs according to His riches in glory by Yahshua the Messiah (Phil. 4:19).

With all the emphasis on abstention from "meats for the belly" (1 Cor. 6:13), however, we ought not to neglect Yahweh's "Chosen Fast" spoken in the 58th chapter of Isaiah, verses 6-7, and referenced again by Yahshua in Matthew 25:34-36: "...to loose the bands of wickedness, to undo the heavy burdens, and to let the oppressed go free, and that ye break every yoke ... to deal thy bread to the hungry, and that thou bring the poor that are cast out to thy house ... the naked, that thou cover him; and that thou hide not thyself from thine own flesh."

Faithfulness in Fasting

Moreover when ye fast, be not, as the hypocrites, of a sad countenance: for they disfigure their faces, that they may appear unto men to fast. Verily I say unto you, they have their reward. But thou, when thou fastest, anoint thine head, and wash thy face: that thou appear not unto men to fast, but unto thy Father which is in secret: and thy Father, which seeth in secret, shall reward thee openly, Matthew 6:16-18.

Fasting is an exercise we assume upon ourselves. It is between ourselves and Yahweh and for a purpose, not unlike Yahshua's experience as preparatory to inaugurating His Ministry (Matt. 4:1-10) or Cornelius' fast, that should precede His having become "accepted in the Beloved" (Acts 10) ... and not something, to be publicized to gain the attention of others.

Offending Not: Beyond Food and Fasting

Some, perhaps well-intentioned, others, maybe not so, will elevate private interpretations—whether one should restrict his diet to herbs, or expand it to include all flesh (Rom. 14:2-3); whether one should fast or not fast, and if so, how frequently, whether one should esteem one day above another, or every day alike (Rom. 14:5-6)—and think to make their points of view, issues toward Salvation.

The principal theme in Romans 14 is therefore briefly comprehended by the following: *Let us not therefore judge one another any more: but judge this rather, that no man put a stumbling block or an occasion to fall in [his] brother's way. I know and am persuaded by the Master Yahshua, there there is nothing unclean of itself: but to him that esteemeth any thing to be unclean, to him it is unclean. But if thy brother be grieved with thy meat, now walkest thou not charitably. Destroy not him with thy meat, for whom Messiah died... For the Kingdom of Yahweh is not meat and drink; but righteousness, and peace, and joy in the Holy Spirit. For he that in these things serveth Messiah is acceptable to Yahweh, and approved of men. Let us therefore follow after the things which make for peace, and things wherewith one may edify another. For meat destroy not the work of Yahweh. All things indeed are pure; but it is evil for that man who eateth with offence. It is good neither to eat flesh, nor to drink wine, nor any thing whereby thy brother stumbleth, or is offended, or is made weak, Romans 14:13-15, 17-21.*

To corroborate Paul's teaching here, we reference the following excerpt from 1 Corinthians 8:4-7: *As concerning therefore the eating of those things that are offered in sacrifice unto idols, we know that an idol is nothing in the world, and that [there is] none other Elohim but one. For though there be that are called elohim, whether in heaven or in earth, (as there be elohim many, and masters many,) but to us [there is but] one Elohim, the Father, of Whom are all things, and we by Him. Howbeit [there is] not in every man that knowledge: for some with conscience of the idol unto this hour eat it as a thing offered unto an idol; and their conscience being weak is defiled. But meat commendeth us not to Yahweh: for neither, if we eat, are we the better; neither, if we eat not, are we the worse. But take heed lest by any means this liberty of your's become a stumbling block to them that are weak.*

Conclusion

Romans, chapter 14, addresses the following concerns:

- Either esteeming one day above another for worship and the practice of fasting, or regarding every day alike;
- Either restricting one's diet to the consumption of fruits, nuts and vegetables, or an expanding one's diet to eating of fruits, nuts, vegetables and clean animal flesh, as distinguished from unclean flesh;
- They which are strong in faith, and to whom "all things are lawful"—howbeit, "all things are not expedient" (1 Cor. 6:12)—ought not to wound the consciences of them which are weak in faith;
- To judge no man whom Yahshua has received, but this rather: that one man's liberty-by-faith doesn't become a stumbling block or an occasion by which another falls.

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