

Ask The Rabbi – February 15, 2022

Question:

How are we to understand Colossians 2:16 where it says we are not to judge anyone as it pertains to Jewish festival, Rosh Hodesh (New Moon) or Shabbat?

Response:

Over the past two weeks we have addressed two passages specifically and how they have been used to promote a position for which the very Scriptures and the very author do not convey. The position that is framed is one that conveys a position against Kashrut, that is Biblical Kosher as outlined in Vayikra (Leviticus) 11 and D'varim (Deuteronomy) 14.

We first looked at 1 Corinthians 10:27,

1Co 10:27 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.

A single verse used to justify a position against that which Torah ascribes as not to consume certain types of animals as food. Yet this verse does not mention anything specifically about Kashrut (Kosher). What is disturbing is the isolation of a single verse to establish a doctrinal position when the very next verse provides the necessary context for this verse.

1Co 10:28 But if someone says to you, "This meat was offered as a sacrifice," then don't eat it, out of consideration for the person who pointed it out and also for conscience's sake—

1Co 10:29 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?"

And is in alignment with the beginning of this subject in 1 Corinthians 8:1 – 6

1Co 8:1 Now about food sacrificed to idols: we know that, as you say, "We all have knowledge." Yes, that is so, but "knowledge" puffs a person up with pride; whereas love builds up.

1Co 8:2 The person who thinks he "knows" something doesn't yet know in the way he ought to know.

1Co 8:3 However, if someone loves God, God knows him.

1Co 8:4 So, as for eating food sacrificed to idols, we "know" that, as you say, "An idol has no real existence in the world, and there is only one God."

1Co 8:5 For even if there are so-called "gods," either in heaven or on earth—as in fact there are "gods" and "lords" galore—

1Co 8:6 yet for us there is one God, the Father, from whom all things come and for whom we exist; and one Lord, Yeshua the Messiah, through whom were created all things and through whom we have our being.

The second passage we studied was Romans 14:1 – 14:23 as it pertains to the "weak in faith" and "the strong in faith". The key verses are v.2 and v.6

Rom 14:2 One person has the trust that will allow him to eat anything, while another whose trust is weak eats only vegetables.

This verse having to do with that which is eaten.

Rom 14:6 He who observes a day as special does so to honor the Lord. Also he who eats anything, eats to honor the Lord, since he gives thanks to God; likewise the abstainer abstains to honor the Lord, and he too gives thanks to God.

Verse 6 having to do with practices involving a day in which the Lord is honored as well as food.

Sha'ul, the author of both letters is addressing very specific issues residing within the community of believers. In Rome, there appears to be a rather significant issue (among others) with those that were considered to be weak in their faith and thus demonstrated such decisions as a result of that weakness. Yet this passage also addressed those who were strong in their faith and thus instructed not to look down upon those who were weaker.

Rom 14:10 You then, why do you pass judgment on your brother? Or why do you look down on your brother? For all of us will stand before God's judgment seat;

Thus, what you should come to recognize about Sha'ul's various letters and their intent is to...

1. Point out various issues that have come to his attention
2. Admonish and correct where needed
3. Encourage and uplift where appropriate

Sha'ul was at one time accused of going against the Torah of Moshe himself. I am sharing this point in order to expand upon the intent of his letters. This very premise, that he is teaching against Torah, specifically in relation to Gentiles is very prominent within the church today.

Act 21:19 After greeting them, Sha'ul described in detail each of the things God had done among the Gentiles through his efforts.

Act 21:20 On hearing it, they praised God; but they also said to him, "You see, brother, how many tens of thousands of believers there are among the Judeans, and they are all zealots for the Torah.

Act 21:21 Now what they have been told about you is that you are teaching all the Jews living among the Goyim to apostatize from Moshe, telling them not to have a b'rit-milah for their sons and not to follow the traditions.

He is accused of teaching the Jewish people, yet even his words written to a primarily Gentile audience does not even support such an accusation. This accusation was at a time when Sha'ul was with four other gentlemen who were completing a vow, for which I believe to be a Nazir vow in B'midbar (Numbers) 6:1 – 21.

Act 21:22 "What, then, is to be done? They will certainly hear that you have come.

Act 21:23 So do what we tell you. We have four men who are under a vow.

Act 21:24 Take them with you, be purified with them, and pay the expenses connected with having their heads shaved. Then everyone will know that there is nothing to these rumors which they have heard about you; but that, on the contrary, you yourself stay in line and keep the Torah.

Act 21:25 "However, in regard to the Goyim who have come to trust in Yeshua, we all joined in writing them a letter with our decision that they should abstain from what had been sacrificed to idols, from blood, from what is strangled and from fornication."

Act 21:26 The next day Sha'ul took the men, purified himself along with them and entered the Temple to give notice of when the period of purification would be finished and the offering would have to be made for

each of them.

The only reason such perspectives are taught today when the context of Scripture is clear is that these origins extend back centuries in time and have not been corrected. These are all remnants of Replacement Theology.

So, when we look at today's verse, Colossians 2:16,

Col 2:16 So don't let anyone pass judgment on you in connection with eating and drinking, or in regard to a Jewish festival or Rosh-Hodesh or Shabbat.

Rather than correct the misunderstanding of the other passages, it is used as further confirmation supporting the position that Gentiles are not responsible for any aspects of Torah. This verse is also used against Messianic Jews, attempting to undermine our own practices and our following of Torah. Yet, what gets lost is just how integrated Gentiles are made within their relationship to Torah when they have come to reside directly with the Jewish people. Further, the New Covenant not only affirms this integration, but amplifies it further.

So, what are the issues that Sha'ul is addressing with the congregation at Colosae?

The community was experiencing challenges from two different fronts. One front was similar to that of Galatia and that being the issue of circumcision:

Col 2:11 Also it was in union with him that you were circumcised with a circumcision not done by human hands, but accomplished by stripping away the old nature's control over the body. In this circumcision done by the Messiah,

Col 2:12 you were buried along with him by being immersed; and in union with him, you were also raised up along with him by God's faithfulness that worked when he raised Yeshua from the dead.

Col 2:13 You were dead because of your sins, that is, because of your "foreskin," your old nature. But God made you alive along with the Messiah by forgiving you all your sins.

Col 2:14 He wiped away the bill of charges against us. Because of the regulations, it stood as a testimony against us; but he removed it by nailing it to the execution-stake.

Col 2:15 Stripping the rulers and authorities of their power, he made a public spectacle of them, triumphing over them by means of the stake.

The second is from a Gnostic perspective:

Gnosticism is the belief that **human beings contain a piece of God (the highest good or a divine spark) within themselves**, which has fallen from the immaterial world into the bodies of humans.

Various groups emphasised personal spiritual knowledge (*gnosis*) above the orthodox teachings, traditions, and authority of religious institutions. Viewing material existence as flawed or evil, Gnostic cosmogony generally presents a distinction between a supreme, hidden God and a malevolent lesser divinity who is responsible for creating the material universe.

Col 1:14 It is through his Son that we have redemption—that is, our sins have been forgiven.

Col 1:15 He is the visible image of the invisible God. He is supreme over all creation,

Col 1:16 because in connection with him were created all things—in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones, lordships, rulers or authorities—they have all been created through him and for him.

Col 1:17 He existed before all things, and he holds everything together.

Col 1:18 Also he is head of the Body, the Messianic Community—he is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead, so that he might hold first place in everything.

Col 1:19 For it pleased God to have his full being live in his Son

A third aspect in Sha'ul's response had to do with Jewish-sounding rules applied pointlessly to Gentiles and in a legalistic way which has no value at all in restraining people from indulging their old nature.

Thus Sha'ul is addressing these three influences in his letter here, specifically in chapter 2. My question, yet rhetorical, "Does anyone truly consider these contexts when they read Colossians?" "Is any context truly understood when reading Sha'ul's letters? Thus, it is important to go through chapter 2, leading up to verse 16 and thus concluding the entire chapter.

I have already shared with you verses 11 – 15 as it pertains to circumcision.

Col 2:1 For I want you to know how hard I work for you, for those in Laodicea, and for the rest of those who have not met me personally.

Col 2:2 My purpose is that they may be encouraged, that they may be joined together in love, and that they may have all the riches derived from being assured of **understanding and fully knowing God's secret truth, which is—the Messiah!**

Col 2:3 It is in him that all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge are hidden.

Col 2:4 I say this so that no one will fool you with plausible but specious arguments.

Col 2:5 For although I am away from you physically, I am with you in spirit, rejoicing as I see the disciplined and resolute firmness of your trust in the Messiah.

Verse 2 emphasizes the Gnostic influence Sha'ul is to address and thus the influence of his audience. These influences are not in alignment with Torah. We have seen Sha'ul interact with these type of people previously.

Act 17:16 While Sha'ul was waiting for them in Athens, his spirit within him was disturbed at the sight of the city full of idols.

Act 17:17 So he began holding discussions in the synagogue with the Jews and the "God-fearers," and in the market square every day with the people who happened to be there.

Act 17:18 Also a group of Epicurean and Stoic philosophers started meeting with him. Some asked, "What is this babbler trying to say?" Others, because he proclaimed the Good News about Yeshua and the resurrection, said, "He sounds like a propagandist for foreign gods."

Thus, Sha'ul is addressing a specific type of mindsets here. Mindsets that are not Jewish minds, but worldly minds. Minds strangers to the very wisdom of God. Thus, he must first start where they are at, in order to get them to where he needs to get them to.

Col 2:6 Therefore, just as you received the Messiah Yeshua as Lord, keep living your life united with him.

Col 2:7 Remain deeply rooted in him; continue being built up in him and confirmed in your trust, the way you were taught, so that you overflow in thanksgiving.

Col 2:8 **Watch out, so that no one will take you captive by means of philosophy and empty deceit, following human tradition which accords with the elemental spirits of the world but does not accord with the Messiah.**

Col 2:9 For in him, bodily, lives the fullness of all that God is.

Col 2:10 And it is in union with him that you have been made full—he is the head of every rule and authority.

The key verse of this passage is verse 8 in relation to our verse of the evening, verse 16.

Philosophy. Here the word stands for the heretical Gnostic or pre-Gnostic alternative to the true understanding of who the Messiah is.

Human tradition here is pagan tradition, because it goes along with **the elemental spirits of the world.**

Thus, when we continue with verse 16, now knowing that the judgement is not based on that of Torah, but based on human tradition, philosophy, empty deceit, elemental spirits...none align with Messiah. Now that we know the context Sha'ul is applying, we can now understand verse 16 and the remaining part of chapter two as was intended by the author.

Col 2:16 So don't let anyone pass judgment on you in connection with eating and drinking, or in regard to a Jewish festival or Rosh-Hodesh or Shabbat.

Col 2:17 These are a shadow of things that are coming, but the body is of the Messiah.

Col 2:18 Don't let anyone deny you the prize by insisting that you engage in self-mortification or angel-worship. Such people are always going on about some vision they have had, and they vainly puff themselves up by their worldly outlook.

Col 2:19 They fail to hold to the Head, from whom the whole Body, receiving supply and being held together by its joints and ligaments, grows as God makes it grow.

Col 2:20 If, along with the Messiah, you died to the elemental spirits of the world, then why, as if you still belonged to the world, are you letting yourselves be bothered by its rules?—

Col 2:21 "Don't touch this!" "Don't eat that!" "Don't handle the other!"

Col 2:22 Such prohibitions are concerned with things meant to perish by being used [*not by being avoided!*], and they are based on man-made rules and teachings.

Col 2:23 They do indeed have the outward appearance of wisdom, with their self-imposed religious observances, false humility and asceticism; but they have no value at all in restraining people from indulging their old nature.

Verse 22 emphasizes "man-made" rules while verse 23 references "self-imposed" religious observances. In both cases neither apply to Torah because Torah is neither "man-made" nor "self-imposed" if as Sha'ul conveys "along with Messiah, you have died to the elemental spirits." then verse 16 does not involve what Torah outlines as it pertains to Jewish Feasts, Rosh Hodesh and Shabbat.

Verse 17 conveys, **These are a shadow of things that are coming**, meaning the good things that will happen when Yeshua returns; or, alternatively, "These are a shadow of things which were yet to come," meaning the good things that happened when Yeshua came the first time but were still in the future when *kashrut* and the festivals were commanded. Thus, if these represent the good things to come, why would people consider them to be unimportant or unnecessary when we have studied in the Prophets that these times will be active when Yeshua returns and establishes His throne.