

## Ask The Rabbi – February 8, 2022

### Question:

How do you respond to someone who uses Romans 14:2 in support of justifying that people don't need to adhere to Torah and Kashrut (Kosher)?

What about Romans 14:6 and that of “special days”?

### Response:

Last week we looked at 1 Corinthians 10:27 and how it was understood and thus applied. What we discovered was that the understanding of the verse was in stark contrast to the context and thus intent of the author.

**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.

The context of this verse is part of a much larger passage of Scripture beginning with Chapter 8 and verse 1. The context as to this one verse is...

**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."

The reference to food has everything to do with that which has been sacrificed to idols and nothing to do with Kashrut (Kosher) We also see this referenced in verse 28...

**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—

Thus the context is clear. Unfortunately, many do not appear to consider context to be important or merely ignore the context because the focus of understanding Scripture is verse by verse. Unfortunately, verse by verse tends to lead to ignoring other verses, even a verse that immediately follows a verse, such as verse 28 which provides context to verse 27.

I share this summary with you because 1 Corinthians 10:27 is not an isolated occurrence. There are many verses used to support a specific position while ignoring the very context the verse is written in.

Context is important for answering our questions tonight and thus we will start with Romans 14:1 - 12

**Rom 14:1** Now as for a person whose trust is weak, welcome him—but not to get into arguments over opinions.

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

**Rom 14:3** The one who eats anything must not look down on the one who abstains; and the abstainer must not pass judgment on the one who eats anything, because God has accepted him—

**Rom 14:4** who are you to pass judgment on someone else's servant? It is before his own master that he will stand or fall; and the fact is that he will stand, because the Lord is able to make him stand.

**Rom 14:5** One person considers some days more holy than others, while someone else regards them as being all alike. What is important is for each to be fully convinced in his own mind.

**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.

**Rom 14:7** For none of us lives only in relation to himself, and none of us dies only in relation to himself;

**Rom 14:8** for if we live, we live in relation to the Lord; and if we die, we die in relation to the Lord. So whether we live or die, we belong to the Lord—

**Rom 14:9** indeed, it was for this very reason that the Messiah died and came back to life, so that he might be Lord of both the dead and the living.

I want to stop here for a moment and basically give away the ending though there is still much more to go through.

Emphasizing on verse 8 & 9, "we live in relation to the Lord" is an important point that should be made and thus should be understood. Consider these verses...

**Mar 2:27** Then he said to them, "Shabbat was made for mankind, not mankind for Shabbat;

**Mar 2:28** So the Son of Man is Lord even of Shabbat."

Thus if we are living unto the Lord and the Lord is Lord of Shabbat, then these verses have nothing to do with Shabbat, nor do they have anything to do with Adonai's Moadim (appointed times.)

**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;

**Rom 14:11** since it is written in the Tanakh, "As I live, says Adonai, every knee will bend before me, and every tongue will publicly acknowledge God."

**Rom 14:12** So then, every one of us will have to give an account of himself to God.

The two most challenging verses of this passage are v. 2 as it pertains to food and v. 6 as it pertains to special days.

What is Sha'ul actually addressing here. I don't believe it has anything to do with Kashrut (kosher) or the Moadim (appointed times) but that of an individual and whether their faith / trust is strong or weak. Like that of Corinth, I believe the issue with pagan practices is being addressed in these verses.

*Among believers there are two groups, those with "strong trust" and those with "weak trust." The latter are depicted in this passage as feeling they must abstain from meat or wine and/or observe certain days as holy, while the former feel no such compunctions.*

*On the basis of this passage Messianic Jews are sometimes asked by Gentile Christians to stop observing Jewish holidays or keeping kosher. Or they are criticized as having "weak faith" if they adhere to Jewish practices. But the specifics of the passage are clearly in a Gentile cultural and religious context, not a Jewish one. It does not teach that following Jewish practices is a sign of "weak faith." Rather, it exhorts believers, Jewish or Gentile, whose trust is "strong" not to look down on those whose trust they consider "weak"-precisely the opposite of the behavior described above.*

*The passage also teaches the "weak" not to pass judgment on the "strong" for failing to observe practices the "weak" consider important, since all believers are equal before the God who has delivered them. Invidious distinctions and disputes should give way to caring for one another and mutual upbuilding, in imitation of the Messiah. The rabbis too teach that the gifted, the rich and the learned should not boast against those who have not received those blessings from God. They too teach against having a "holier-than-thou" attitude.*

*They too teach that all in Israel should care for each other and build up the community.*

*The problem in the passage does not come from the behavior it teaches but from identifying precisely who are the "strong" and the "weak" and drawing out the implications. The four most frequently offered candidates are these*

- 1. **The weak are Gentile Christians who abstain from what has been sacrificed to idols, as in 1 Corinthians 8 and 10. But Sha'ul does not deal here with idol-worship as a problem, even though there are at least a dozen parallels between this passage and that one.***
- 2. **The weak are legalists, either Gentile or Jewish believers, either Judaizers ([Gal 2:14](#)) or of some other stripe, who believe they earn a righteous status before God by their works. But a major point of the book of Romans is precisely that such persons are not merely "weak" in trust but utterly lacking in it, unbelievers not believers; whereas here the weak in trust are clearly portrayed as believers.***
- 3. **Messianic Jews Who Still Observe Kashrut and the Moadim** - Many interpreters bring to this passage a presupposition that the New Testament abrogates the ceremonial and ritual details of the Jewish Law, such as kashrut and the Jewish holidays. They see the weak as Messianic Jews who still observe these "Jewish details" because they have not yet realized that there is no longer any need to do so. According to this understanding Gentile Christians, along with Jewish believers who have "freed themselves from the Law," are not to look down on their "weaker brothers" for abstaining from pork, celebrating Passover or fasting on Yom-Kippur. On the other hand, Messianic Jews who do practice these customs have no ground for a "holier-than-thou" attitude toward those who do not. Quite the contrary: not only have they a direct command not to pass judgment on their brothers who do not keep the Law, but there is implicit in this interpretation an indirect, subliminal message to aspire to the "strong faith" that will "free them from the Law."*
- 4. **The weak are believers, either Gentile or Jewish, who have not yet grown sufficiently in their faith to have given up attachment to various ascetic practices and calendar observances.** Their tie to these activities, however, is not supported by a rational though mistaken ideology, as with the legalists of (2) above. Rather, it is irrational and emotional, linked to psychological needs, social pressures or superstition, or it may simply be a matter of habit. When their activities in these areas are questioned in "arguments over opinions" ([Rom 14:1](#)), they are not "fully convinced in their own minds" ([Rom 14:5](#)), not "free of self-doubt" ([Rom 14:22](#)), but rather easily "upset" or even "destroyed" ([Rom 14:15](#)) and thus able to "fall away" or "stumble" ([Rom 14:20-21](#)). This is why Sha'ul calls them "weak."*

*At least four distinct groups of people fit the description as being "weak":*

*(a) First are Gentiles who, as in (1), want to avoid the appearance of evil by maintaining physical and emotional distance from anything that reminds them of their previous idolatrous practices. In this category should also be included anyone, Jewish or Gentile, who wants to avoid the trappings of his former sinful way of life.*

*(b) Second are Gentiles who adopted elements of Jewish practice as part of their faith along with believing in Yeshua. They have, as it were, bought what they considered a whole package and have not yet unwrapped it and decided what is really important for them. In the first century the phenomenon was common enough to require considerable attention in the New Testament (Acts 15 and the whole book of Galatians, for starters). Today it rarely happens in relation to Jewish practices, but it is very common for someone to accept Yeshua in a particular Christian setting and only afterwards discover that some of the practices he has picked up in that setting are not essential to his faith.*

*(c) Third are Gentiles or Jews who have brought into their faith practices found in other religions with which*

*they are familiar. These practices often appeal to their religiosity but are irrelevant or even contrary to the Gospel. Such an example would be people saved out of New Age religions who continued yoga-style meditation until they realized it was harmful.*

*(d) Fourth are Messianic Jews who have not grasped how the incorporation of the New Covenant into God's Torah and the presence of the Holy Spirit in themselves alters the way in which the Torah is to be applied. They therefore feel a compulsiveness about observing ceremonial and ritual details. When their faith grows stronger they will be free not from the Law but from this compulsiveness.*

*But "weak" is the wrong word for Messianic Jews who have decided out of conviction to observe the Law as interpreted by the rabbis in the same way as a non-Messianic Jew would, except for such parts of it as they believe might conflict with the Gospel. Their reasons might be, for example, in order to strengthen their sense of Jewish identity, or to demonstrate that believing in Yeshua does not turn a Jew into a Gentile, or to help preserve the Jewish community by upholding its distinctives publicly. Or they might simply be satisfied that in most instances the rabbinic directives and principles adequately express God's will. So long as they do not impose their pattern on others but uphold the unity of Jews and Gentiles in the Body of the Messiah, neither passing judgment nor looking down on those who behave or believe differently, they are among the "strong in trust," not "weaker brothers." (Jewish New Testament Commentary – David Stern)*

I reiterate this which I shared last week. Anything that has been "done away with" must have been substantiated by God, this includes Yeshua. Thus when it comes to the very things that believers tend to teach as it pertains to whether it is applicable or not as part of their daily lives as believers in the Jewish Messiah, we need look no further than Yeshua's own words.

**Mat 5:17** "Don't think that I have come to abolish the Torah or the Prophets. I have come not to abolish but to complete.

**Mat 5:18** Yes indeed! I tell you that until heaven and earth pass away, not so much as a yud ( ך ) or a stroke will pass from the Torah—not until everything that must happen has happened.

**Mat 5:19** So whoever disobeys the least of these mitzvot and teaches others to do so will be called the least in the Kingdom of Heaven. But whoever obeys them and so teaches will be called great in the Kingdom of Heaven.

**Mat 5:20** For I tell you that unless your righteousness is far greater than that of the Torah-teachers and P'rushim, you will certainly not enter the Kingdom of Heaven!

And thus we need look no further still as it pertains to Adonai's instructions given to Israel when He brought them out of Egypt. There were foreigners residing in and amongst the people of Israel. They chose to reside with them and as such Adonai made provision for them too. I have included several verses that speak of the "foreigner staying with you"

**Exo 12:48** If a **foreigner staying** with you wants to observe Adonai's Pesach, all his males must be circumcised. Then he may take part and observe it; he will be like a citizen of the land. But no uncircumcised person is to eat it.

**Exo 20:10** but the seventh day is a Shabbat for Adonai your God. On it, you are not to do any kind of work—not you, your son or your daughter, not your male or female slave, not your livestock, and not the **foreigner staying** with you inside the gates to your property.

**Lev 19:34** Rather, treat the **foreigner staying** with you like the native-born among you—you are to love him as yourself, for you were foreigners in the land of Egypt; I am Adonai your God.

**Num 9:14** If a **foreigner** is **staying** with you and wants to observe Pesach for Adonai, he is to do it according to the regulations and rules of Pesach—you are to have the same law for the **foreigner** as for the citizen of the land.' "

[Num 15:26](#) The whole community of the people of Isra'el will be forgiven, likewise the **foreigner staying** with them; because for all the people it was a mistake.

[Num 19:10](#) The one who collected the ashes of the heifer is to wash his clothes and be unclean until evening. For the people of Isra'el and for the **foreigner staying** with them this will be a permanent regulation.

[Deu 5:14](#) but the seventh day is a Shabbat for Adonai your God. On it you are not to do any kind of work—not you, your son or your daughter, not your male or female slave, not your ox, your donkey or any of your other livestock, and not the **foreigner staying** with you inside the gates to your property—so that your male and female servants can rest just as you do.

[Deu 14:21](#) "You are not to eat any animal that dies naturally; although you may let a stranger **staying** with you eat it, or sell it to a **foreigner**; because you are a holy people for Adonai your God. "You are not to boil a young animal in its mother's milk.

[Deu 26:12](#) "After you have separated a tenth of the crops yielded in the third year, the year of separating a tenth, and have given it to the Levi, the **foreigner**, the orphan and the widow, so that they can have enough food to satisfy them while **staying** with you;

Thus I want to conclude with the second part of Sha'ul's observation when it comes to how we are to conduct ourselves towards one another..

[Rom 14:13](#) Therefore, let's stop passing judgment on each other! Instead, make this one judgment—not to put a stumbling block or a snare in a brother's way.

[Rom 14:14](#) I know—that is, I have been persuaded by the Lord Yeshua the Messiah—that nothing is unclean in itself. But if a person considers something unclean, then for him it is unclean;

[Rom 14:15](#) and if your brother is being upset by the food you eat, your life is no longer one of love. Do not, by your eating habits, destroy someone for whom the Messiah died!

[Rom 14:16](#) Do not let what you know to be good, be spoken of as bad;

[Rom 14:17](#) for the Kingdom of God is not eating and drinking, but righteousness, shalom and joy in the Ruach HaKodesh.

[Rom 14:18](#) Anyone who serves the Messiah in this fashion both pleases God and wins the approval of other people.

[Rom 14:19](#) So then, let us pursue the things that make for shalom and mutual upbuilding.

[Rom 14:20](#) Don't tear down God's work for the sake of food. True enough, all things are clean; but it is wrong for anybody by his eating to cause someone to fall away.

[Rom 14:21](#) What is good is not to eat meat or drink wine or do anything that causes your brother to stumble.

[Rom 14:22](#) The belief you hold about such things, keep between yourself and God. Happy the person who is free of self-condemnation when he approves of something!

[Rom 14:23](#) But the doubter comes under condemnation if he eats, because his action is not based on trust. And anything not based on trust is a sin.

