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To Eat or Not to Eat

Archaeology and Bible

9

Mohr Siebeck

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Edited by

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To Eat or Not to Eat

Studies on the Biblical Dietary Prohibitions

Mohr Siebeck

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Preface

This volume is part of a larger Swiss National Science Foundation Sinergia Project entitled “The History of the Pentateuch: Combining Literary and Archaeological Approaches,” conducted by a number of scholars as a collaborative effort between the Universities of Zurich, Lausanne, and Tel Aviv. In this context, our research focused on a sub-area of study, the food laws of the Pentateuch. We wish to express our deepest gratitude to Konrad Schmid and Christophe Nihan: by inviting us to work together on this project, they set the foundation for a solid and long-term collaboration that has extended well beyond this specific area of study into a mutually-enriching friendship.

The present collection generally consists of essays that were conceived and composed by the stated author (the introduction, written by both of us, represents an exception), but which have received considerable feedback from the other person. As a result, the reader may at times detect variation and disagreement in points of view and with respect to the articulation of different interpretations. Yet we hope that the publication of these essays in the form of a co-written book provides an additional scholarly resource that might provoke further debate over underexplored areas of scholarship alongside new methodological frameworks.

This volume complements and extends our previous work on the topic of biblical dietary laws, especially the volumes *Banned Birds*, written by Peter Altmann, *Archaeology and Bible 1* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2019) and *Food Taboos and Biblical Prohibitions*, edited by Peter Altmann, Anna Angelini, and Abra Spiciarich, *Archaeology and Bible 2* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2020). We are grateful to the editors of the series *Archaeology and Bible*, Israel Finkelstein, Deirdre Fulton, Oded Lipschits, Christophe Nihan, Thomas Römer, and Konrad Schmid, for accepting these volumes.

Some of the essays were previously presented on different occasions. Earlier versions of the essay “Dietary Laws in the Second Temple Period: The Evidence from the Dead Sea Scrolls” were presented during the meeting “History of Pentateuch: Combining Literary and Archaeological Approaches” at the University of Tel Aviv in December 2016 and at the Göttingen-Lausanne workshop, held at the University of Göttingen in June 2017. The essays “Traditions and Texts: The ‘Origins’ of the Dietary Prohibitions of Lev 11 and Deut 14” and “A Table for Fortune: Abominable Food and Forbidden Cults in Isaiah 65–66” were presented during the SBL annual meeting in Denver in November 2022. The theology faculty of the University of Halle-Wittenberg graciously hosted a lecture of an earlier version of “Aquatic Creatures in the Dietary Laws: What the Biblical and

Ancient Eastern Contexts Contribute to Understanding Their Categorization” in 2019. Finally, “A Deeper Look at Deut 14:4–20 in the Context of Deuteronomy” was previously presented at the SBL annual meeting in San Diego in November 2019.

In his capacity as supervisor of the sub-project on the Food Laws of the Pentateuch, Christophe Nihan offered fruitful critique and generously provided suggestions throughout the project. His guidance has resulted in methodological rigor and numerous stimulating discussions.

Konrad Schmid provided ongoing encouragement to us to bring this project to completion even after the end of project funding and despite our far-flung geographical locations.

We are especially grateful to Julia Rhyder. She has critiqued, confirmed, and pursued many of the ideas presented in the volume in her own scholarship, which we receive as a wonderful honor. She was also instrumental in supporting an open access publication grant from the Swiss National Science Foundation for the volume.

Janling Fu greatly improved the readability of the volume through copyediting and also compiled the indices.

Additional colleagues graciously interacted with earlier versions of the essays. Our thanks go to George Brooke, Jonathan Greer, Ido Koch, Nathan MacDonald, Fabio Porzia, Alessandra Rolle, Jan Rückl, Harald Samuel, and Abra Spiciarich.

Zurich and Reno, September 20th 2023

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Chapter 1

The Dietary Laws of Lev 11 and Deut 14: Introducing Their Ancient and Scholarly Contexts

(*Peter Altmann and Anna Angelini*)

In his essay “The Analytical Language of John Wilkins,” Jorge Luis Borges highlights the challenges or rather arbitrariness involved in classifying the animals of the world by pointing to a (fictional) “Chinese encyclopedia entitled *Celestial Empire of Benevolent Knowledge*.” He continues:

On those remote pages it is written that animals are divided into (a) those that belong to the Emperor, (b) embalmed ones, (c) those that are trained, (d) sucking pigs, (e) mermaids, (f) fabulous ones, (g) stray dogs, (h) those that are included in this classification, (i) those that tremble as if they were made, (j) innumerable ones, (k) those drawn with a very fine camel’s hair brush, (l) others, (m) those that have just broken a flower vase, (n) those that resemble flies from a distance.¹

While many ancient and modern interpreters of the (animal) world and its relationship with humanity have sought order in internal and external reality, the questionable logic of such attempts appears quite clearly in the range of interpretations given for the dietary prohibitions found in Lev 11 and Deut 14. Are such attempts – to use Borges’ terms – merely “arbitrary and conjectural”?² Such a question necessarily plunges each willing reader into the depths of philosophical inquiry without guaranteeing a uniform answer. Nonetheless, to continue with Borges, “But the impossibility of penetrating the divine scheme of the universe cannot dissuade us from outlining human schemes, even though we are aware that they are provisional.”³

Borges provides us with the philosophical underpinning for the following volume and this essay in particular. (1) The sections below outline the ways some interpreters have approached the biblical dietary prohibitions and attempted to classify them. (2) It also takes a step back to place these approaches within the broader perspectives on human-animal relations on display in the biblical texts.

¹ Jorge Luis Borges, “The Analytical Language of John Wilkins,” in *Other Inquisitions 1937–1952*, trans. Ruth L. C. Simms (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1964), 103.

² *Ibid.*, 104.

³ *Ibid.*

After these foundational discussions, (3) it then narrows in to focus first on the nature of alimentary restrictions in general (4) and then meat in particular. (5) The most extensive section provides an introduction to the guiding questions for the volume's remaining essays, (6) and the essay finally suggests some directions for further research.

1. A Methodological View of the History of Scholarship

When considering the biblical, ancient Near Eastern, and early Judean context for the dietary laws of Lev 11 and Deut 14, a brief look at the history of scholarship from this angle can provide an entrance into the conversation. The history of scholarship might be divided into epochs by the work of Mary Douglas.⁴ From this perspective, there were pre-Douglas approaches, the work of Mary Douglas beginning in 1966, and post-Douglas approaches. Within historical-critical scholarship, various composition-critical theories existed prior to the structuralist interpretation by Douglas. This diversity continues into the present, and such theories do not relate as directly to Douglas's work. Furthermore, interpreters had devised diverse explanations for the laws much earlier. Common directions included bans on the basis of hygiene (e.g., Maimonides), developments from taboos of sacred animals (W. Robertson-Smith); moral-symbolic interpretations of animals (even from the Hellenistic period, with the *Letter of Aristaeus*), as well as prohibitions due to the roles animals played in foreign cults (e.g., Origen, M. Noth, and R. de Vaux).⁵

Mary Douglas's *Purity and Danger* marks a watershed, though her own position subsequently changed over the years. Her seminal chapter on the dietary laws of Lev 11 in this volume offers a structural interpretation: in short, she argues that the meaning of dietary prohibitions consists of maintaining boundaries with regard to group identity. Specifically, she defines the unclean as dirt, or, to use other words, matter out of place.⁶ Based on her conclusion that dirt was something in the wrong place, she further contends that "Defilement is never an isolated event. It cannot occur except in view of a systematic ordering of ideas. Hence any piecemeal interpretation of the pollution rules of another

⁴ Especially Mary Douglas, *Purity and Danger: An Analysis of Concepts of Pollution and Taboo* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1966).

⁵ For helpful overviews and bibliography see Walter Houston, *Purity and Monotheism: Clean and Unclean Animals in Biblical Law*, JSOTSup 140 (Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1993), 69–81. It can also be insightful to relate these approaches to the broader human-animal categories of animism, totemism, naturalism, and analogy described by Philippe Descola, *Beyond Nature and Culture*, trans. Janet Lloyd (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2013), 233–42 for a summary.

⁶ Douglas, *Purity and Danger*, 2. As a brief note on terminology, we use the terms clean/unclean and pure/impure and their derivatives interchangeably in this volume.

culture is bound to fail.”⁷ These two combined elements proved persuasive for large swaths of subsequent scholarship.

Embracing much of her approach, Jacob Milgrom develops it further with detailed biblical scholarship. He contributes several further elements. First, he sees biblical dietary laws as a “system” – thus following Douglas – that incorporates diachronic and synchronic elements, namely some earlier Priestly layers followed by later layers belonging to the more broadly communal and ethically-oriented Holiness School. He specifically proposes an ethical system that understands the rationale for the dietary laws as *imitatio Dei* in reverence for life.⁸

While they might modify the reason for the prohibitions or further refine Milgrom’s system, the majority of subsequent investigations continue to espouse the same approach.⁹ The structuralist approach has merit in that it integrates the study of the biblical dietary laws within the broader religious and cultural contexts from which they arise. However, this approach also encounters some limitations in that it considers the laws themselves as forming a coherent and comprehensive “system.” As we have demonstrated in detail elsewhere, such a view does not always find confirmation in the texts themselves.¹⁰

Walter Houston, who has undertaken the most sustained investigation of Lev 11 and Deut 14 in modern scholarship, represents a post-Douglas turn that varies in terms of methodology from Douglas and Milgrom. Houston’s presentation allows for different purposes of the laws at different times in different texts: within their *specific literary* contexts. In other words, he argues that the reasons for prohibitions diverge in the two collections: for Deuteronomy the

⁷ *Ibid.*, 41.

⁸ Note the very name of the article – Jacob Milgrom, “Biblical Diet Laws as an Ethical System,” *Int* 17 (1963): 288–301. See also his “Ethics and Ritual: The Foundations of the Biblical Dietary Laws,” in *Religion and Laws: Biblical, Judaic and Islamic Perspectives*, ed. Edwin B. Firmage, Bernard G. Weiss, and John W. Welch (Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 1990), 187; *Leviticus 1–16: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary*, AB 3 (New York: Doubleday, 1991), 733.

⁹ E.g., Jonathan Burnside, “At Wisdom’s Table: How Narrative Shapes the Biblical Food Laws and Their Social Function,” *JBL* 135 (2016): 223–45; Beate Ego, “Reinheit und Schöpfung: Zur Begründung der Speisegebote im Buch Leviticus,” *ZABR* 3 (1997): 131–44; Edwin B. Firmage, “The Biblical Dietary Laws and the Concept of Holiness,” in *Studies in the Pentateuch*, ed. John A. Emerton (Leiden: Brill, 1990), 177–208; Ronald S. Hendel, “Of Sacred Leopards and Abominable Pigs: How Common Practice Becomes Ritual Law,” *Bible Review* 16 (2000): 8; Thomas Hieke, *Leviticus*, HTKAT (Freiburg im Breisgau: Herder, 2014); Naphtali S. Meshel, “Food for Thought: Systems of Categorization in Leviticus 11,” *HTR* 101 (2008): 203–29; Naphtali S. Meshel, “Pure, Impure, Permitted, Prohibited: A Study of Classification Systems in P,” in *Perspectives on Purity and Purification in the Bible*, ed. Baruch J. Schwartz et al., LHBOTS 474 (New York: Bloomsbury, 2014), 32–42.

¹⁰ See Peter Altmann and Anna Angelini, “Purity, Taboo and Food in Antiquity. Theoretical and Methodological Issues,” in *Food Taboos and Biblical Prohibitions*, ed. Peter Altmann, Anna Angelini, and Abra Spiciarich, *Archaeology and Bible* 2 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2020), 9–13.

prohibitions arise based on “‘what self-respecting people do not touch’. In P [the Priestly writings of Lev 11] ... ‘the biblical assumption that man was originally a vegetarian.’”¹¹ In fact, he then goes on to combine *materialist* and *structuralist* points of view,¹² i. e., articulating ecological factors intertwined with cultural explanations, and concluding that there is no “one system.”¹³ This very insight proves essential for the studies that follow in our own work: While Houston does not argue – and nor do we – that an unending number of explanations necessarily comes into play for the dietary prohibitions, he posits (or returns to) the possibility of varied explanations within the diachronic developments and receptions of the texts of Lev 11 and Deut 14.

However, social anthropology provides a further impulse for overcoming both the traditional structuralist approach to the study of dietary laws and a rigid opposition between materialistic and cultural explanations. In this field of study, new paradigms have emerged to analyze the interactions between humans and animals: such paradigms challenge traditional Western anthropocentrism and promote a repositioning of the relationship between humans and non-humans within specific environmental contexts. As such, they have the potential to bring methodological renovation in related fields as well and deserve attention. We will now turn to consider these.

2. Human-Animal Relationships in Ancient Israel

A surprising omission when it comes to Hebrew Bible scholarship on the dietary laws is the overlap between studies on animals in the Hebrew Bible more broadly and the dietary prohibitions. For example, the prominent studies of Peter Riede (2002), Annette Schellenberg (2011), and Ken Stone (2018) hardly mention Lev 11 or Deut 14:3–20.¹⁴ Instead, the dietary laws largely find their place solely in discussions of animals in religion, especially related to sacrifice. We embrace the

¹¹ Houston, *Purity and Monotheism*, 76–77. For the formulation of P, Houston is quoting Milgrom, “Biblical Diet Laws as an Ethical System,” 288.

¹² *Ibid.*, 20. He states, “Theological and legal systems such as that of the Priestly Code do not emerge out of a void; they must be seen in the context of the social realities of their time; and these realities cannot necessarily be read off from the system itself.” See *ibid.*, 23, “With dietary customs, it would be surprising if material factors such as ecology had nothing to do with them.”

¹³ Contra Milgrom. Instead, he compares the lists to language, suggesting that study of the history of the language is essential to understanding such matters as why a dog is called “dog” (Houston, *Purity and Monotheism*, 24.)

¹⁴ Peter Riede, *Im Spiegel der Tiere: Studien zum Verhältnis von Mensch und Tier im alten Israel*, OBO 187 (Fribourg; Göttingen: Academic Press Fribourg; Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2002); Annette Schellenberg, *Der Mensch, das Bild Gottes? Zum Gedanken einer Sonderstellung des Menschen im Alten Testament und in weiteren altorientalischen Quellen*, ATANT 101 (Zurich: TVZ, 2011); Ken Stone, *Reading the Hebrew Bible with Animal Studies* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2018).

importance of the latter, but perhaps the former – the broader context of human-animal relations – can also provide insight?

The rise of human-animal studies or the “animal turn” in recent decades has highlighted how many societies do not construe the relationship between “nature” and “culture” in the same way as Western culture. Such studies rely on so-called “post-structuralist” approaches,¹⁵ such as those developed especially by the anthropologists Philippe Descola and Eduardo Viveiros de Castro. These approaches show that some cultural contexts do not conceive of the relationship between “nature” and “culture” as a radical division, but as a continuum in which humans do not always hold a distinctive position.

In this regard, Descola lays out four basic categories: animism, totemism, analogism, and naturalism. While naturalism asserts that humans share the same physicality of animals but differ in their interiority, animism instead proposes that humans and non-human animals share the same interiority but differ in their physical materiality. Totemism’s groupings do not follow either of these binaries, but it instead connects some humans with some animals on the basis of specific, identifiable characteristics. Analogism, finally, links all entities together through multiple connections separated by small, graduated distinctions.¹⁶

Viveiros de Castro challenges the traditional divide between nature and culture in his theories of perspectivism and multinaturalism.¹⁷ He shows how the Western world conceives of the relationship between nature and culture as a substantial unity of nature (based on the universality and stability of the objects) *versus* a multiplicity of cultures (derived from the diversity and singularity of the subjects). On the contrary, Amerindian societies conceive this relationship in inverted terms, hence implying a relationship between multiple natures and a single culture. While the works of Descola and Viveiros de Castro on the relations between the human and non-human world consider the whole biosphere, they bear a specific impact when it comes to the hierarchical understanding of the relationship between humans and animals.

¹⁵ When using this label, one should keep in mind several methodological *caveats*. First, different from structuralism, none of the authors who are considered the initiators of a “post-structuralist” line of thinking ever applied this term to their work. On the views of the early proponents of post-structuralistic approaches, such as Bourdieu, Foucault, and others, see Craig Lundy, “From Structuralism to Poststructuralism,” in *The Edinburgh Companion to Poststructuralism*, ed. by Benoît Dillet, Iain MacKenzie, and Robert Porter (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2013), 69–92. Moreover, post-structuralist approaches do not stand necessarily in opposition to structuralist approaches. Rather, they often pursue structuralist methods to an extreme end. On Philippe Descola’s dependence on Claude Lévi-Strauss see, e.g., Philippe Descola, “Sur Lévi-Strauss, le structuralisme et l’anthropologie de la nature. Entretien avec Marcel Hénaff,” *Philosophie* 98 (2008): 8–36.

¹⁶ For a clear overview, see Descola, *Beyond Nature and Culture*, e.g., 201.

¹⁷ Eduardo Viveiros de Castro, “Perspectivisme et multinaturalisme en Amérique indigène,” *Journal des anthropologues* (2014): 138–39, consulted on April 30th 2019.

In this regard, the new epistemological frameworks introduced by social anthropology have impacted other fields of research, including archaeology and more specifically zooarchaeology, in several ways.¹⁸ These disciplines are renewing their way of thinking about central topics such as domestication, offering stimuli to revise the fundamental distinction between the categories of “wild” and “domestic.”¹⁹ This distinction also plays a large role in the analysis of the biblical food prohibitions, which neither necessarily nor always match the modern divide between these two notions. Moreover, by adopting an integrative approach that combines zooarchaeological analysis with concerns related to social, symbolic, and ritual dimensions, zooarchaeologists have identified food prohibitions as one of the most promising areas of study in which such an integrative approach can and should be pursued.²⁰ It is, indeed, even more surprising that this aspect has hardly garnered any attention to date, especially in light of the popularity exerted by the “animal turn” in Hebrew Bible studies,²¹ as well as the broad interest in the topic of “nature” in biblical research.²²

Given this new theoretical vista, it becomes necessary to consider whether the presupposition of the distinction between nature and culture remains justified as a conceptual framework for the dietary prohibitions in the Hebrew Bible, or if, perhaps, different perspectives can illuminate the biblical texts. Biblical studies, largely a modern, Western discipline, has generally adopted the nature–culture dichotomy.²³ In fact, the emerging discipline of human-animal studies often sees this dichotomy as growing out of a biblical foundation in the biblical creation narratives.²⁴ One could even say that biblical texts have contributed in several ways to construct the opposition between “human culture” and “animal nature.”

However a number of studies emphasize the closer and variegated relationships between humans and animals in antiquity as a whole and in biblical texts

¹⁸ Nick J. Overton and Yannis Hamilakis, “A Manifesto for a Social Zooarchaeology. Swans and Other Beings in the Mesolithic,” *Archaeological Dialogues* 20 (2013): 111–36; Benjamin Alberti, “Archaeologies of Ontology,” *Annual Review of Anthropology* 45 (2016): 163–79; Brian Boyd, “Archaeology and Human–Animal Relations: Thinking through Anthropocentrism,” *Annual Review of Anthropology* 46 (2017): 299–316.

¹⁹ See, e.g., Boyd, “Archaeology and Human–Animal Relations,” 305–7.

²⁰ Overton and Hamilakis, “Manifesto for Social Zooarchaeology,” 116–17; Boyd “Archaeology and Human–Animal Relations,” 305.

²¹ See, for an assessment, Phillip Sherman, “The Hebrew Bible and the Animal Turn,” *CurrBR* 19 (2020): 36–63.

²² See, for example, the project *Dictionary of Nature Imagery in the Bible* lead by Dalit Rom Shiloni at the University of Tel Aviv (<https://dni.tau.ac.il>).

²³ As noted recently by Stone, *Reading*, 4.

²⁴ Margo DeMello, *Animals and Society: An Introduction to Human-Animal Studies* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2012), 302–3, interprets these texts as declaring humans and animals “separate creations” and, in the wake of Augustine, belonging to “different ontological levels.”

in particular.²⁵ These suggest that there is no such thing as “the biblical view” of human-animal relations; rather, a broad diversity of approaches is reflected in the Hebrew Bible. In this regard, the priority given to the creation account of Gen 1 should not lead to a hasty dismissal of such diversity. For example, following traditions in ancient Near Eastern cultures at large, some biblical texts mirror the threatening nature of, e. g., lions and bears that contributed to human’s respect for them (2 Sam 17:10; Amos 5:19). This respect appears despite prohibitions against consuming them. This category of fear/respect does not line up exactly with the prohibitions in Lev 11/Deut 14, though, because the same view appears for the wild ox (Deut 33:17), which Israelites were permitted to consume. Thus, a different way of constructing the relationship between nature and culture already appears at the foundation of the supposed system.

Another divergence from the views of Gen 1–2 appears in, for example, Eccl 3:19–21, which presents humans and animals with equal status by according them both the same breath and the shared fate of death.²⁶ Humans and animals also share ethical responsibility for the destructive flood according to Gen 6:12: כל בשר, “every flesh,” has corrupted itself.²⁷ Likewise, God concludes the “Noahic” covenant in Gen 9:9–17 with Noah and his sons, and also בעוף בבהמה ובכל חית הארץ, “with the birds, with the beasts, and with all the living creatures of the earth.” This animistic tendency also appears most blatantly in the tale of Balaam and his jenny, to which Num 22:28–29 accords both speech and logical reasoning. While these elements can be read through naturalism to classify this narrative and Gen 3 as fictional fables,²⁸ both talking animals also are able to perceive knowledge of the divine realm that humans in the narratives cannot. Slightly different in focus is Ps 104, which decenters humanity and places it on the same level as other created entities. Such a view culminates in Job 38–41: This text represents an animated cosmos which escapes human understanding and in which humans play no role. In this regard, it stands at the opposite pole to Gen 1.²⁹

These diverse approaches to animals within the texts of the Hebrew Bible broaden the possible interpretive stances of underlying origins of the prohibition of consumption of various animals in Lev 11/Deut 14 and subsequent readings and appropriations of these prohibitions in the early history of their reception.

²⁵ Riede, *Im Spiegel der Tiere*, 2; Schellenberg, *Mensch*, 22.

²⁶ Schellenberg, *Mensch*, 317.

²⁷ This expression includes humans and animals here, and also in Gen 6:13, 17; 7:21; 9:11, 15, but not elsewhere as noted by Schellenberg, *Mensch*, 40 n. 39.

²⁸ As noted by Stone, *Reading*, 96.

²⁹ Schellenberg, *Mensch*, 308–9.

3. The Hebrew Bible Context of Food and Drink Restrictions

With this short discussion of methodology in the history of scholarship in hand, a broad view of the various texts addressing dietary concerns in the Hebrew Bible can provide further context before turning to the focus on the meat of animals that is the focus of the texts of Lev 11 and Deut 14. The Hebrew Bible puts forth a number of distinctions with regard to food consumption. One level of differentiation in food consumption occurs in terms of the continuum of common versus elite consumption.³⁰ In ancient Israel and the presentation of the Hebrew Bible, differences often concern the presence or lack of food, its quantity, and the quality of food, especially meat.³¹

Second, several texts indicate that the *place* and *time* of consumption can render it appropriate or inappropriate. The first consideration in this regard again has to do with the consumption of meat, specifically whether it can be consumed away from a/the Yahwistic sanctuary.³² Some variance exists among the pentateuchal legal texts about whether the meat of animals, and of which animals, may be consumed outside of sanctuary precincts. Leviticus 17:1–9, ostensibly addressed to the Israelite camp at Sinai, requires the people to slaughter those animals that could be sacrificial feasts (זֶבַח; of cattle, sheep, and goats) at Yhwh’s sanctuary, thereby making them into sacrificial feasts for Yhwh. Verse 3 states: “If anyone of the house of Israel slaughters an ox or a lamb or a goat in the camp, or slaughters it outside the camp ...” The danger named by the text is that the Israelites might otherwise celebrate these feasts in honor of other deities (v. 7: to the goat-demons). Although Lev 17:9 designates this practice as a permanent ordinance, Deut 12:15, 21–22 (presumably at least the former is an earlier text) allows the consumption of the same animals within the gates of Israelite settlements, in the same manner that the meat from wild animals (which were unacceptable for offerings) would be eaten. On the level of the narrative, there is a different ordinance while on the move as the camp of Yhwh versus when settled in the land given as an inheritance by Yhwh.

³⁰ For example, in Late Bronze Age (1500–1200 BCE) Egypt, commoners ate goose (as apparently did elites in Canaan), though the elite of Egypt avoided it. See Ido Koch, “Goose Keeping, Elite Emulation and Egyptianized Feasting at Late Bronze Lachish,” *TA* 41 (2014): 161–79. Regardless of the tension between elite and common consumption, however, the notion that the ability to choose to reject various edible substances *generally* assumes that there is enough acceptable food available (at least in the short term).

³¹ For detailed discussions, see Peter Altmann, “Feast and Famine – Lack as a Backdrop for Plenty,” in *Feasting in the Archaeology and Texts of the Hebrew Bible and Ancient Near East*, ed. Peter Altmann and Janling Fu (Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 2014), 149–78; idem, “Meat: I. Ancient Near East and Hebrew Bible/Old Testament,” *EBR* 18:251–52.

³² These elements also emerge as important for the produce from newly planted trees, which can only be consumed in the fourth year as part of a celebration and then in mundane consumption in year five according to Lev 19:23–25.

Another issue with regard to time and place is the question of what one might consume when in a foreign land. Hosea 9:3–5 connects Israel’s unfaithfulness as a cause for the impending consequence of eating impure food in Assyria. Hosea compares this consumption with mourners who eat when they should be fasting.³³ This issue also appears in Daniel and his friends’ request to dine solely on vegetables and water in Dan 1:8–16, and this tension may arise from their aversion to meat offered to Babylonian deities.³⁴ While generally speaking it was the *ingredients* of a meal that rendered it clean or unclean in the OT, there are several texts that indicate that the *method of preparation* could also make a difference.³⁵ Within the chapters focused on the dietary prohibitions there is the prohibition of Deut 14:21b, not to boil a kid in/by its mother’s milk, which also appears twice in Exodus. Ezekiel protests God’s command to cook a barley cake over human excrement saying: “My person was never defiled ...” (Ezek 4:14).³⁶

Turning to the ingredients themselves, while less prominent in the Hebrew Bible discourse as a whole, there is a tension surrounding the consumption of meat in general, such that a strand of quasi vegetarian thinking appears in various texts of the Primeval History of Genesis (esp. Gen 1; 2–3; 9) and also implied in Isa 11:1–9 (and 65:25).³⁷ Only in Gen 9:1–7 does the essential relationship between humans and animals change.³⁸ After reaffirming the cultural mandate from 1:28, Gen 9:2–3 proclaims that animals now become afraid of humans, who receive the freedom to eat *any* animal. The sole stipulation is that humans not eat animal blood (9:4), which this text equates with the animal’s life. The prohibition against the consumption of blood separates Israel at least from its Mesopotamian neighbors. Also important about this stipulation is its placement in the context of a narrative concerning Noah and his children, that is, the entirety of

³³ Hosea intertwines the unclean nature of this food with the lack of the exiles ability to bring offerings to a Yahwistic sanctuary, especially to the inability to pour out drink (wine) offerings and bring meat sacrifices for communal consumption (זבחים). These two elements – meat and wine – were the quintessential ingredients for festive enjoyment. Hosea may, then, have viewed it as inappropriate to partake in (cultic) celebration in a foreign land, given that the exile was instead viewed as a place and time of mourning (cf. Ps 137; Zech 7:1–3; 8:19).

³⁴ Cf., perhaps, Tob 1:10–11. See below Angelini, “A Table for Fortune,” 149–50.

³⁵ A comparable concern for preparation appears in a Hittite text, CTH 264, translated by Jörg Klinger, “Instruktion für Tempelbedienstete,” *TUAT Erg.*, 73–81 (here 74): “Ferner sollen die, die das tägliche Dickbrot bereiten, sauber sein. ... Wenn sie es nicht sind, lasst sie es nicht bereiten. ... Ferner darf ein Schwein und ein Hund nicht an die Tür der Küche kommen.”

³⁶ As an example of a famine food eaten in a city under siege.

³⁷ While Isa 11:1–9 does not directly address *human* eating, it expounds an image of peace by envisioning a fundamental change in the animal world: carnivorous animals will eat grass and straw like their herbivore prey. The implication is that meat consumption is equated with violence. The same theme reappears in Isa 65:25, which like Isa 11:1–9 details a vision of a peaceful eschatological world.

³⁸ According to Gen 1:29–30 (implicit also perhaps in Gen 2), humans and land animals were originally created as vegetarians. This logic continues through the canonical narrative until after the Flood.

humanity alive at that point. This narrative setting suggests that it should be in effect for *all* humanity, not only for Israel. The broad audience contrasts sharply with the context for Lev 11 and especially Deut 14, which differentiate between the Israelites and other peoples.³⁹

Returning to the topic of plant consumption, most biblical texts concerning dietary prohibitions focus on meat (including fowl, fish, and insect) consumption, leaving aside any mention of prohibited plant material.⁴⁰ The Garden of Eden where the Tree of Knowledge is forbidden presents one exception, but this ordinance is motivated by a different polarity (life and death, rather than clean and unclean). A second exception of a prohibition of plant consumption makes an appearance in a discourse using the categories of clean and unclean in Deut 26:14, which displays clear connections with a cult of the dead. Finally, Lev 19:23–25 forbids the consumption of the fruit of newly planted trees in the land for three years.⁴¹ Their fruit transitions to the sanctuary (and its personnel) in year four in that it may be consumed as part of a sacred celebration. In year five and onwards it becomes available for common consumption.

In addition to the broad focus on the regulated consumption of meat in the dietary laws, wine (or more generally, alcohol) consumption understandably received some attention as well, though notably less than meat. Its primary significance comes as an identity marker for the Rechabites, on-duty priests, and those taking a Nazirite vow.

The refusal of fermented drinks by the Rechabites appears in Jer 35, which serves as an acceptable practice that the prophet uses as a comparison. Jeremiah offers the Rechabites wine, knowing that they are bound by the practice of their clan to deny it. They refuse (35:6–7) out of respect for their ancestor, who commanded them, among other things, to abstain from wine. Abstinence is, therefore, only one of several identity markers for the group, all of which fit with a nomadic way of life. However, in this particular situation, the clan is residing in Jerusalem out of fear of Nebuchadnezzar and the Babylonian army. There are, then, circumstances under which the Rechabites were willing to abandon part of the stipulations of group affiliation – yet a simple offer of wine by the prophet Jeremiah was hardly enough to lead them to give up their abstinence from

³⁹ However, the prohibition on blood is also found in connection to offerings, tied specifically to blood's connection with the animal's life (Lev 17:10–16); it may not be consumed by anyone living among the Israelite community (including foreigners in v.12, thus keeping with the prohibition of Gen 9:4).

⁴⁰ This distinction has been pointed out by Erhard S. Gerstenberger, "Speisetabus (Lev 11; Dtn 14): Ängste und Hoffnungen," in *Essen und Trinken in der Bibel: Ein literarisches Festmahl für Rainer Kessler zum 65. Geburtstag*, ed. Michaela Geiger, Christl M. Maier, and Uta Schmidt (Gütersloh: Gütersloher Verlagshaus, 2009), 180.

⁴¹ For discussion of the difficult philological issues in these verses see Jacob Milgrom, *Leviticus 17–22: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary*, AB 3A (New York: Doubleday, 2000), 1677–84.

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