119 MINISTRIES

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Does God's Law Prohibit Cheeseburgers?

Cheeseburgers!

Yes, believe it or not, in some circles, cheeseburgers are forbidden. Such understanding comes from mainstream orthodox Judaism in misunderstanding a verse in Deuteronomy 14.

Deuteronomy 14:21

> "You shall not boil a young goat in its mother's milk.

Really, the debate is not just about cheeseburgers, but really any food or dish in which meat and cheese are cooked together.

Jewish rabbis, including highly influential Rabbi Rashi, came to these conclusions based on this verse and the one like it in Exodus:

1) *the prohibition against cooking and a mixture of milk and meat*
2) *the prohibition against eating a cooked mixture of milk and meat*
3) *the prohibition against deriving any benefit from a cooked mixture of milk and meat.*

Most English translations translate the verse referencing a goat, whereas modern orthodox Jewish interpretation has generalized the commandment to be inclusive of all meats.

Rashi, one of the most prominent Talmudic commentators, argued that the term in question must actually have a more generalized meaning, including calves and lambs, in addition to young goats.

Rashi also argued that the meaning is still narrow enough to exclude birds, all the undomesticated kosher animals (for example, chevrotains and antelope), and all the non-kosher animals.

The Talmudic writers had a similar analysis, but believed that since domesticated kosher animals (sheep,

goats, and cattle) have similar meat to birds and to the non-domestic kosher land-animals, they should prohibit these latter meats too, creating a general prohibition against mixing milk & meat from any kosher animal, excepting fish.

But here are the two problems with such interpretations.

- The commandment specifically mentions the milk of the mother, not just milk in general.
- The commandment specifically mentions goats, not other animals.

Something more specific is going on here.

The statistical chances of the dairy from the mother, the meat from the young of the very same mother, and then those two products making it to the same distributor, then the same store, and then to the same customer is nearly impossible.

Despite the musings of ancient Jewish rabbis, multiple times our Creator used the Hebrew word for a young goat and it is that young goat that is not to be boiled in its own mother's milk. It is quite a specific commandment, and yet esteemed Jewish Talmudic commentators have chosen to broaden the commandment not only in relation to the meat, but also the source of the milk.

If our Creator meant the generic form of meat, then there is a word that would have been used to refer specifically to generic meat. Meaning this, common Jewish interpretations of this commandment actually adds to the intent and purpose of the commandment, thus violating Deuteronomy 4:2 by adding to the Word of God through their interpretation. Sadly, this interpretational mistake is not uncommon in the Jewish Talmud or oral law. In the first century, Yeshua referred to these oral laws as the "traditions of your fathers" when criticizing the Pharisees in Mark 7.

Who would even consider boiling an animal in its own mother's milk?

Some have suggested that it may have been a pagan practice related to idolatry and the worship of false gods.

That is certainly possible. However, we have not found any evidence of such a pagan practice. And still, the commandment in such an interpretation still appears out of context and random.

If mixing dairy with beef is an offense to YHWH, then Abraham made a rather serious blunder when offering such to the visiting three men.

Genesis 18:6-8

> And Abraham went quickly into the tent to Sarah and said, "Quick! Three seahs of fine flour! Knead it, and make cakes." And Abraham ran to the herd and took a calf, tender and good, and gave it to a young man, who prepared it quickly. Then he took curds and milk and the calf that he had prepared, and set it before them. And he stood by them under the tree while they ate.

So, how do we better understand this commandment?

The answer to the riddle of this commandment is similar to other misunderstood commandments. The answer is in the context itself.

Because of this verse, as we already mentioned, Jewish oral law literally forbids the mixture of milk and meat, and consequently many refuse to eat cheeseburgers.

However, the physical application of this verse may actually be quite simple when examined in context.

In Avigdor Bonchek's book, Studying the Torah: A Guide to in-Depth Interpretation, Bonchek explains it like this:

First let's read the Scripture:

Exodus 23:19

> "The best of the firstfruits of your ground you shall bring into the house of the Lord (YHWH) your God. "You shall not boil (or seethe) a young goat in its mother's milk.

And he (Avigdor Bonchek) says as follows:

> *"This injunction forbidding seething a kid in its mother's milk is the biblical basis for the laws of Kashruth requiring the separation of meat and milk. See how the following Plain Sense interpretation, based on the Contiguity Principle, completely divests this clause of that familiar meaning. At first glance, we have here two unrelated clauses within the same sentence.*
>
> *Not so, according to the early commentator Joseph Bekhor Shor. He points out that the word Bashail, regularly translated here as "seethe," (or boil) really means "to become ripe or mature." The phrase then means "Thou shalt not allow a kid to become mature with its mother's milk," that is, you should not allow the kid to mature, rather bring it as a sacrifice in the Temple. In this way, both clauses of the sentence are related: Bring your first fruits as an offering and likewise bring your first—young—animals as offerings to God."*

To summarize, the common Jewish oral law of this commandment fails best apply a particular translation the Hebrew word normally translated as "boil" or "seethe" in English.

A better translation would be:

Exodus 23:19

> "You shall not "mature" a young goat in its mother's milk.

In in the preceding context of the firstfruits offering, this would make so much more sense. The first part of the verse is about bringing in your firstfruits of the land as an offering to YHWH. The second part of the verse is about bringing in your first, or young, animals as offerings to YHWH. Why? Because one might be tempted to only offer YHWH the older and less preferable animals to YHWH. YHWH does not want us to offer our least preferable, he wants our hearts to desire to offer Him our best.

In properly applying the Hebrew in context, all of verse 19 seamlessly flows together. Whereas the more common translation of Exodus 23:19 (and also repeated in Exodus 34:26) use an interpretation that causes the commandment to be not only really out of place and random, but also quite absurd and awkward.

Deuteronomy 14:21 also repeats the same commandment of Exodus 23:19 and Exodus 34:26, and what

do we discover? It also precedes the similar context of offering your best to YHWH in offerings to Him.

So, Exodus 23:19, Exodus 34:26, and Deuteronomy 14:21 appears to have nothing to do with cooking a goat, or actually any meat, with the mother's milk, or any milk in general. The physical application has to do with us offering our preferred young animals to YHWH instead of trying to keep the best for ourselves.

In this we hope that this explanation offers you a more contextually and linguistically accurate physical application.

We hope that this teaching has blessed you. Remember, continue to test everything.

Shalom

For more on this and other teachings, please visit us at www.testeverything.net

Shalom, and may Yahweh bless you in walking in the whole Word of God.

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