

**MESSIANIC**  
KOSHER HELPER

## MESSIANIC HELPER series

*Moedim: The Appointed Times for Messianic Believers*

*Messianic Sabbath Helper*

*Shabbat: Sabbath for Messianic Believers*

***Messianic Kosher Helper***

*Kashrut: Kosher for Messianic Believers*

*Messianic Fall Holiday Helper*

*Messianic Winter Holiday Helper*

*Messianic Spring Holiday Helper*

*Messianic Torah Helper*

# MESSIANIC

KOSHER HELPER

edited by Margaret McKee Huey  
with J.K. McKee

**MESSIANIC APOLOGETICS**  
[messianicapologetics.net](http://messianicapologetics.net)

# Messianic Kosher Helper

© 2014 Messianic Apologetics

edited by Margaret McKee Huey, with J.K. McKee

All rights reserved.

No part of this book may be reproduced, stored in a retrieval system, or transmitted by any means, electronic, mechanical, photocopying, recording, or otherwise, without written permission from the author.

Cover imagery: Kaboompics.com/Pexels

---

Published by Messianic Apologetics, a division of Outreach Israel Ministries

P.O. Box 516

McKinney, Texas 75070

(407) 933-2002

[www.outreachisrael.net](http://www.outreachisrael.net)

[www.messianicapologetics.net](http://www.messianicapologetics.net)

---

Unless otherwise noted, Scripture quotations are from the *New American Standard, Updated Edition* (NASU), © 1995, The Lockman Foundation.

Unless otherwise noted, quotations from the Apocrypha are from the *Revised Standard Version* (RSV), © 1952, Division of Education of the National Council of the Churches of Christ in the United States of America.

# Table of Contents

Introduction.....xi

## PART I THE SIGNIFICANCE OF KOSHER

1 A Summarization of Jewish Kosher Traditions.....1

*by Margaret McKee Huey and J.K. McKee*

2 Why Do We Eat Biblically Kosher? ..... 19

*by J.K. McKee*

3 Kosher Living: More Than a Diet ..... 29

*by Mark Huey*

4 To Eat or Not to Eat? ..... 37

*by J.K. McKee*

5 Genesis 9:3-7: Why Meat? ..... 59

*by J.K. McKee*

7 How Do We Properly Keep Kosher?..... 73

*by J.K. McKee*

8 Our Family Experiences Going Kosher ..... 89

*by Margaret McKee Huey*

9 Biblically Kosher? Rabbinic Kosher? ..... 95

*by J.K. McKee*

10 Being Realistic About Kosher ..... 113

*by J.K. McKee*

11 Is Eating Kosher Really Healthier? ..... 131

*by Margaret McKee Huey and J.K. McKee*

FAQs on Kosher and Eating..... 155

Permitted Creatures and Animals.....183

Kosher and Non-Kosher Fish.....185

Hechsher Symbols.....191

## PART II A THEOLOGY OF EATING AND KOSHER

### Eating and Kosher in the Tanach .....195

*by J.K. McKee*

Genesis 1:29-30 .....	197
Genesis 2:16-17 .....	200
Genesis 7:1-2 .....	203
Genesis 9:2-4.....	206
Leviticus 11.....	209
Leviticus 17:10-16.....	226
Leviticus 20:22-26 .....	233
Deuteronomy 14:1-21.....	238
Exodus 23:19; 34:26.....	250
Genesis 18:1-15.....	257
Genesis 32:24-32.....	263
Leviticus 3:17; 7:22-27; 19:26 .....	270
Deuteronomy 12:15-24 .....	279
Isaiah 65:1-16 .....	287
Isaiah 66:15-17 .....	297
Ezekiel 4:9-17 .....	302
Ezekiel 8:5-13.....	310
Ezekiel 22:23-31.....	316
Ezekiel 44:23-24.....	323
Hosea 9:1-4.....	326
Daniel 1:8.....	331

### Eating and Kosher in the Apostolic Scriptures ..... 339

*by J.K. McKee*

Matthew 5:17-19.....	342
Mark 7:1-23 .....	349
Acts 10:1-48 .....	370
Acts 11:1-18.....	398
Acts 15:19-21.....	404
Romans 14.....	433
I Corinthians 6:12-20.....	465
I Corinthians 8.....	484
I Corinthians 10:14-33.....	504
Galatians 2:11-14.....	530
Philippians 3:17-19 .....	551
Colossians 2:16-23 .....	559
I Timothy 4:1-5.....	579
Titus 1:14-16.....	595
Hebrews 9:8-10.....	601

Hebrews 13:9-10.....	613
1 Peter 1:14-16.....	625
<b>About the Editor.....</b>	<b>633</b>
<b>Bibliography.....</b>	<b>637</b>



## Abbreviation Chart and Special Terms

The following is a chart of abbreviations for reference works and special terms that are used in publications by Outreach Israel Ministries and Messianic Apologetics. Please familiarize yourself with them as the text may reference a Bible version, i.e., RSV for the Revised Standard Version, or a source such as *TWOT* for the *Theological Wordbook of the Old Testament*, solely by its abbreviation. Detailed listings of these sources are provided in the Bibliography.

Special terms that may be used have been provided in this chart:

ABD: <i>Anchor Bible Dictionary</i>	EXP: <i>Expositor's Bible Commentary</i>
AMG: <i>Complete Word Study Dictionary: Old Testament, New Testament</i>	Ger: German
ANE: Ancient Near East(ern)	GNT: Greek New Testament
Apostolic Scriptures/Writings: the New Testament	Grk: Greek
Ara: Aramaic	<i>halachah</i> : lit. "the way to walk," how the Torah is lived out in an individual's life or faith community
ATS: ArtScroll Tanach (1996)	HALOT: <i>Hebrew &amp; Aramaic Lexicon of the Old Testament</i> (Koehler and Baumgartner)
b. Babylonian Talmud ( <i>Talmud Bavli</i> )	HCSB: Holman Christian Standard Bible (2004)
B.C.E.: Before Common Era or B.C.	Heb: Hebrew
BDAG: <i>A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature</i> (Bauer, Danker, Arndt, Gingrich)	HNV: Hebrew Names Version of the World English Bible
BDB: <i>Brown-Driver-Briggs Hebrew and English Lexicon</i>	ICC: <i>International Critical Commentary</i>
BECNT: <i>Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament</i>	IDB: <i>Interpreter's Dictionary of the Bible</i>
BKCNT: <i>Bible Knowledge Commentary: New Testament</i>	IDBSup: <i>Interpreter's Dictionary of the Bible Supplement</i>
C.E.: Common Era or A.D.	ISBE: <i>International Standard Bible Encyclopedia</i>
CEV: Contemporary English Version (1995)	IVPBBC: <i>IVP Bible Background Commentary (Old &amp; New Testament)</i>
CGEDNT: <i>Concise Greek-English Dictionary of New Testament Words</i> (Barclay M. Newman)	Jastrow: <i>Dictionary of the Targumim, Talmud Bavli, Talmud Yerushalmi, and Midrashic Literature</i> (Marcus Jastrow)
CHALOT: <i>Concise Hebrew and Aramaic Lexicon of the Old Testament</i>	JBK: New Jerusalem Bible-Koren (2000)
CJB: Complete Jewish Bible (1998)	JETS: <i>Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society</i>
DRA: Douay-Rheims American Edition	KJV: King James Version
DSS: Dead Sea Scrolls	Lattimore: The New Testament by Richmond Lattimore (1996)
ECB: <i>Eerdmans Commentary on the Bible</i>	LITV: Literal Translation of the Holy Bible by Jay P. Green (1986)
EDB: <i>Eerdmans Dictionary of the Bible</i>	LS: <i>A Greek-English Lexicon</i> (Liddell & Scott)
eisegesis: "reading meaning into," or interjecting a preconceived or foreign meaning into a Biblical text	LXE: <i>Septuagint with Apocrypha</i> by Sir L.C.L. Brenton (1851)
EJ: <i>Encyclopaedia Judaica</i>	LXX: Septuagint
ESV: English Standard Version (2001)	m. Mishnah
exegesis: "drawing meaning out of," or the process of trying to understand what a Biblical text means on its own	

MT: Masoretic Text  
 NASB: New American Standard Bible (1977)  
 NASU: New American Standard Update (1995)  
 NBCR: *New Bible Commentary: Revised*  
 NEB: New English Bible (1970)  
 Nelson: *Nelson's Expository Dictionary of Old Testament Words*  
 NETS: New English Translation of the Septuagint (2007)  
 NIB: *New Interpreter's Bible*  
 NIGTC: *New International Greek Testament Commentary*  
 NICNT: *New International Commentary on the New Testament*  
 NIDB: *New International Dictionary of the Bible*  
 NIV: New International Version (1984)  
 NJB: New Jerusalem Bible-Catholic (1985)  
 NJPS: Tanakh, A New Translation of the Holy Scriptures (1999)  
 NKJV: New King James Version (1982)  
 NRSV: New Revised Standard Version (1989)  
 NLT: New Living Translation (1996)  
 NT: New Testament  
 orthopraxy: lit. "the right action," how the Bible or one's theology is lived out in the world  
 OT: Old Testament  
 PME: Practical Messianic Edition (author's rendering from *Practical Messianic commentary series*)  
 PreachC: *The Preacher's Commentary*  
 REB: Revised English Bible (1989)  
 RSV: Revised Standard Version (1952)  
 t. Tosefta  
 Tanach (Tanakh): the Old Testament  
 Thayer: *Thayer's Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament*  
 TDNT: *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*  
 TEV: Today's English Version (1976)  
 TLV: Tree of Life Messianic Family Bible—New Covenant (2011)  
 TNIV: Today's New International Version (2005)  
 TNTC: *Tyndale New Testament Commentaries*  
 TOTC: *Tyndale Old Testament Commentaries*  
 TWOT: *Theological Wordbook of the Old Testament*  
 UBSHNT: United Bible Societies' 1991 Hebrew New Testament revised edition  
 v(s). verse(s)  
 Vine: *Vine's Complete Expository Dictionary of Old and New Testament Words*  
 Vul: Latin Vulgate  
 WBC: *Word Biblical Commentary*  
 Yid: Yiddish  
 YLT: Young's Literal Translation (1862/1898)

# Introduction

When the subject of kosher, *kashrut*, or the dietary instructions of the Torah or the Law of Moses come up in various contemporary Messianic settings, there can be a tendency for some strong emotions to arise. The broad Messianic spectrum represents a diversity of views on “kosher”—ranging from the dietary laws being abolished and only to be observed as a part of Jewish culture, to people advocating a strict adherence to many Orthodox Jewish rulings and practices, to a kosher-style diet where people mainly avoid pork and shellfish. At times, there has been an over-amount of attention given to the minutiae of keeping kosher, and not enough time given to some of the significant Biblical passages which either inform us about kosher or have been traditionally interpreted to say that kosher has been abolished for the post-resurrection era. And more than anything else, maintaining an appropriate, Messiah-centric attitude toward all of this, is most imperative. There have been far too many extremes represented regarding the issue of the dietary laws, at times, and not enough reasoned discussion. Too many people have issued accusations against others, and not enough have tried to inquire of both the Holy Scriptures and the Holy Spirit, what is perhaps important about this issue. *Human beings have to all eat, after all!*

Our family has been a part of the Messianic movement since 1995, and we have been involved in full time Messianic ministry since 2003. We have very much seen the different currents and dynamics present within our faith community regarding the subject of eating, and how people on *both* the outside *and* inside have approached this issue. As a family of non-Jewish, evangelical Christian Believers, who were steadily led to embrace their Hebraic Roots throughout the 1980s and into the 1990s—particularly as we were exposed to the Messianic significance of the Biblical holidays or appointed times—we were convicted by the Lord to change our eating in 1996, after about six months or so of being involved in a Messianic Jewish congregation. Much of this change occurred quite naturally, as we wanted to be very careful concerning what to bring to various fellowship and meal gatherings. The weekly bulletin on *Shabbat* included a message to only bring dishes which were “Biblically kosher,” and so on a roadtrip in 1996, we investigated what the concept of “Biblically kosher” was, by a variety of Messianic articles and publications at our disposal. Upon returning home we pulled things out of the refrigerator and freezer which were considered, by the Torah, to be quantitatively “unclean.”

*This was not exactly the easiest thing for some of us to do...* Our family has significant roots in the Deep South, where pork is a major part of both the diet and culture. Margaret McKee Huey was raised in Annapolis, Maryland on the Chesapeake Bay, where not only shellfish, but in particular the blue crab, are main staples of the cuisine. And, having grown up in the Greater Cincinnati-Northern Kentucky area, John McKee was raised around a significant amount of traditional German cuisine, most of which either features pork or includes pork as an ingredient. In eliminating things like pork or shellfish

## Messianic Kosher Helper

from our family's diet, we have not only made a significant commitment to further obedience to God's Instruction, but we have also demonstrated a willingness to recognize God's supremacy over our various human upbringings. We have had to make some sacrifices, not just in interacting with Jewish Believers who were widely raised with kosher, but in what we eat or do not eat when we interact with our own extended family.

Of course, it is one thing to be personally or family convicted regarding what is communicated in Torah passages like Leviticus 11 and Deuteronomy 14—to then be thrust later into full time Messianic ministry, where the issues regarding kosher implementation on the ground, often in mixed communities of Jewish and non-Jewish Believers, get rather interesting. It is one thing to have an internal conviction that the dietary laws of Scripture were not abolished by the work of the Messiah, but Messianic Believers obviously are going to be interacting with those who have conservative or hyper-conservative views of kosher, to those who have no view of kosher at all, to the bulk of people holding to some kind of mid-range level of observance. **How are all of today's Messianic Believers to come to some sort of fair-minded place regarding the topic of kosher?** Many questions have frequently gone unanswered or unaddressed regarding the continued validity of kosher, to its observance among those who keep it at various levels, to how to act and behave among those who think it is irrelevant for Messiah followers.

This publication, the *Messianic Kosher Helper*, has been a long time coming for our ministry. Internally, in both our family and ministry office, we have worked through the issues of the validity and relevance of the kosher dietary laws, what the Torah communicates about the issues of clean and unclean meats, and how to fairly implement these instructions in on-the-ground circumstances with real people out in the world. Externally in our ministry service, we have known that we have had to wait a little while, to let some other developments regarding kosher, eating, diet, and even health transpire<sup>1</sup>—so that when the time came to write about this issue, we could give it the “royal treatment,” so to speak, and release something which could aid all of us on many different levels.

We know that there are many details, regarding a wide variety of Bible passages, which need to be specifically considered and analyzed far more thoroughly than they ever have been in previous Messianic publications, regarding the subject matter of kosher. We also know of the unfair criticism of many loving Christian brothers and sisters who are claimed to have “bacon breath,” when the Messianic persons issuing the criticism are perhaps acting immorally and unethically in other, far more serious matters. And, in our experience, we have, in a few cases, witnessed some of the best, professionally-trained Messianic teachers blunder through questions asked of them in regard to kosher validity, when a little time and energy should have been expended in investigating what was being inquired a bit further, and there might not be any immediate plans on their part to do so.

---

<sup>1</sup> Some of the main Messianic books released on the topic of kosher, to date, include: Gordon S. Tessler, *The Genesis Diet: The Biblical Foundation for Optimum Nutrition* (Raleigh, NC: Be Well Publications, 1996); Hope Egan, *Holy Cow! Does God Care About What We Eat?* (Shelbyville, TN: Heart of Wisdom, 2012); Aaron Eby, *Biblically Kosher: A Messianic Jewish Perspective on Kashrut* (Marshfield, MO: First Fruits of Zion, 2012).

One may also wish to consult various thoughts and perspectives offered in David H. Stern, *Jewish New Testament Commentary* (Clarksville, MD: Jewish New Testament Publications, 1995).

As you prepare to read the *Messianic Kosher Helper*, you will see that the material has been divided up into two main parts: **The Significance of Kosher** and **A Theology of Eating and Kosher**. You will be able to detect, among some of the chapters (years noted), a progression of sorts in our family's own approach to the subject matter, as some things are addressed first more generally and then more specifically, with a repetition of some points in various places. We ourselves have certainly had to move from a more elementary view of the issue of kosher, to a more developed view. We have had to fine-tune our approach to various passages, and be a bit more engaged with their interpretation, per both Hebrew and Greek issues, as well as various views present in more technical theological resources and commentaries. And most of all, like many, we certainly have had to moderate our own approaches and attitudes at times over the years.

It is important to remember how Leviticus 11:44 says, "For I am the LORD your God. Consecrate yourselves therefore, and be holy, for I am holy" (cf. 1 Peter 1:16)—a concept which is directly connected to clean and unclean meats. But, if following this is not enjoined with a better appreciation and understanding of a **steadfast mandate** for all of us to have clean minds and hearts, imbued with the presence of God's Holy Spirit, demonstrating the love of Yeshua to all—then outward holiness will not have been joined with the more critical inward holiness. If, however, we learn how to separate external things which are clean and unclean—then perhaps we can also learn, with God's help, how to separate clean and unclean thoughts, ideas, and attitudes, being mature men and women in Him, *and* empowered on many different levels for service to His Kingdom!

**Do not let the size of this book intimidate you!** Part I is actually the size of our *Messianic Winter Holiday Helper*, and Part II is only slightly larger than *The New Testament Validates Torah*. While we could have taken Part II and released it as a second book, we could not run the risk of readers not having a fuller view of the issues and Bible passages requiring analysis. While this does not represent the "final word" on the topics of kosher and diet for Messianic people, the *Messianic Kosher Helper* may be said to be an encyclopedic volume, to aid both Messianic families and those in Messianic congregations, on many of the aspects involving kosher.

*Margaret McKee Huey*  
*with J.K. McKee*



THE SIGNIFICANCE  
OF KOSHER

PART I



-1-

# A Summarization of Jewish Kosher Traditions 2013

*Margaret McKee Huey and J.K. McKee*

To most outsiders who encounter the Messianic Jewish movement, when hearing something about kosher or *kashrut*, what they mostly think about are instructions within the Torah or Law of Moses which prohibit the consumption of unclean meats such as pork or shellfish. Much of the Messianic community has promoted what it considers to be “Biblically kosher,” which primarily begins and ends at not eating pork and shellfish. In traditional Judaism, however, what it means to be kosher is much more involved than observant Jews not eating certain meats labeled to be “unclean.” *Kashrut* involves classification of unclean meats to be sure, but also involves some significant traditions regarding the butchering of animals, how meat is to be prepared, what can and cannot be eaten together, separation of utensils and cookware—as well as a variety of theological and philosophical reasons proposed for the institution of these Biblical instructions, and their subsequent interpretation and application over the centuries by Jewish religious authorities and diverse Jewish communities.

Much of the broad Messianic movement<sup>1</sup> considers kosher to just involve not eating pork or shellfish, yet it is clear even from a reading of instructions in the Torah, that this is a rather simplistic and under-developed approach to this issue. Likewise, even with a diverse number of internal Messianic views on the theological aspects of the Torah’s dietary laws—but ones which are more positive than not regarding their continued validity in the post-resurrection era—there is not a huge amount of understanding for what it means to be *kosher* in much of traditional Judaism. Even if many Messianic people, for example, do not think that it is necessary to separate meat and dairy, or have multiple sets of dishes or utensils, or that most food items that they purchase have an *hechsher* or official symbol of kosher approval—they still, as members of a movement with an explicit mandate to declare the good news of Israel’s Messiah to the Jewish people, need to know a few things about Jewish kosher traditions and observance. Given

---

<sup>1</sup> When we mention the broad Messianic movement, our ministry is primarily considering it to involve Messianic Judaism, the One Law/One Torah sub-movement, the Two-House sub-movement, and various Hebrew/Hebraic Roots persuasions. We interact with individual people all over this spectrum in our ministry activities.

## Messianic Kosher Helper

the importance of the kosher dietary laws for Judaism and the Jewish people throughout the centuries, every Messianic person, Jewish and non-Jewish alike, should have a familiarity with how the Torah's dietary laws have been interpreted and applied over the centuries.

*How are any of us to understand how the kosher dietary laws have been approached by Judaism?* George Robinson offers the significant thought of how, "One area of Jewish law and ritual that is probably...the most problematical for many contemporary Jews is the dietary laws."<sup>2</sup> This is, as one should see, true for any number of reasons. Orthodox Jewish interpretation and application of the Torah's dietary laws, is highly restrictive when it comes to interactions with the outside world, as Orthodox Jews will have to be widely constrained to their own communities to find food items and products which have been prepared according to their standards. On the exact opposite side of this is a Reform Jewish community, which makes up the majority Jewish population in the United States, thinking that the dietary laws were only important for Ancient Israel and today communicate no significant sense of holiness for Jewish people—and a majority of Reform Jews today do not keep any degree of kosher. There are other, more graded levels of kosher observance present in other branches of Judaism, such as the Conservative movement, allowing for more flexibility than the Orthodox. There are Jews who keep kosher for cultural, not Biblical reasons, and those who keep kosher for ecological, health, or some other personally preferred reasons.<sup>3</sup>

Given the diversity of approaches, both communal to various branches of the Synagogue *and* personal to individual Jewish people, it might not be possible for any one of us to understand all Jewish kosher traditions. But, it is very possible for us to have a better understanding and appreciation for how kosher has been widely followed and approached by the Jewish people at large. For, whether today's Messianic community is aware of it or not—a great many Jewish kosher traditions are observed by those who claim to *only* be following Holy Scripture! Many significant interpretations and applications of the Torah's dietary instructions, as actually instituted by the Rabbinical authorities, are observed by those who even just avoid pork and shellfish in their eating habits.

## Clean and Unclean

A significant component of understanding what "kosher" involves, surrounds the terms "**clean**" and "**unclean**." While "clean" and "unclean" are logically to be associated with different meats regarded in the Torah as acceptable and unacceptable for eating, these same terms are also associated with a wide degree of human activities which render a person physically or spiritually contaminated, defiled, or engrossed in some sort of immoral or sinful behavior. A significant Jewish book written on the topic of kosher,

---

<sup>2</sup> George Robinson, *Essential Judaism: A Complete Guide to Beliefs, Customs, and Rituals* (New York: Pocket Books, 2000), 247.

<sup>3</sup> A number of important Jewish resources on the subject of kosher include, but are not limited to: Samuel H. Dresner, *The Jewish Dietary Laws: Their Meaning for Our Time* (New York: The Rabbinical Assembly of America, 1982); Yacov Lipschutz, *Kashruth: A comprehensive background and reference guide to the principles of Kashruth* (Brooklyn: Mesorah Publications, Ltd, 1989); Lisë Stern, *How to Keep Kosher: A Comprehensive Guide to Understanding Jewish Dietary Laws* (New York: William Morrow, 2004).

## A Summarization of Jewish Kosher Traditions

*Kosher Living*, by Conservative Rabbi Ron Isaacs (San Francisco, CA: John Wiley & Sons, 2005), actually has as its sub-title: *It's More Than Just the Food*. Being "kosher," as it were, extends far beyond what is considered to be an acceptable diet for God's people in the Torah; it also involves their behavior, attitudes, and actions. For presumably, as people learn how to separate things in their diet, they are trained and disciplined to likewise learn how to separate their thoughts, and make more well-informed and conscious decisions about their lives.<sup>4</sup>

Some of the main Hebrew terms employed in the Tanach for "clean" include the verb *taheir* (טָהַר), widely regarding "to be clean" (Qal stem) or "to cleanse, purify" (Piel stem); the adjective *tahor* (טָהוֹר), "pure" or "ceremonially clean" or "ethically clean"; and the noun *tahorah* (טְהוּרָה), "(ceremonial) cleanness," "establishment of ceremonial cleanness," "cleansing, purifying" (*HALOT*).<sup>5</sup> As summarized by *IDB*,

"The basic root for conveying the idea of 'cleanness' is טָהַר (active, 'to be clean' [Lev. 15:13; 22:4]; intensive, 'to cleanse' [Lev. 16:30; Num. 8:6]; causative reflexive, 'to cleanse oneself' [Num. 8:7; Josh. 22:17]; derived nouns טְהוּר, 'cleanness' [Exod. 24:10] or 'purifying' [Lev. 12:4], and טְהוּרָה, 'cleansing' [Lev. 13:7; Num. 6:9]; adjective, טָהוֹר, 'clean' [Gen. 7:2; Lev. 11:47]). In...Ezekiel...the intensive and causative forms of the verb 'to sin' (חָטָא) are used of purification rituals, and are normally translated 'to cleanse' (Lev. 14:52; Num 19:19; Ezek. 43:20) and 'to cleanse oneself' (Num. 19:12-13, 20). The fact that the verb forms in question should mean 'offer a sin offering for' indicates the close relationship in OT thought between SIN and uncleanness; both represent a contamination of the true nature by an alien element."<sup>6</sup>

Some of the main Hebrew terms employed in the Tanach for "unclean" include the verb *tamei* (טָמֵא), widely regarding "to become ceremonially unclean" (Qal stem) or "to defile" or "to declare unclean" (Piel stem); the adjective *tamei* (טָמֵא), "unclean" or "ceremonially unclean"; and the noun *tumeah* (טְמֵאוֹת), "state of ceremonial uncleanness" (*HALOT*).<sup>7</sup> *IDB* further details,

"The idea of 'uncleanness' is expressed by derivatives of the root טָמֵא, the direct opposite of טָהַר. The verb (טָמֵא) means 'to be unclean' (Lev. 15:32; 22:6), the passive form of 'to defile oneself' (Lev. 11:43; Num. 5:13), the intensive form 'to make or declare unclean' (Lev. 13:3, 8, 11, 15; Num. 35:34), the causative reflexive form 'to defile oneself' (Lev. 11:43; Ezek. 14:11). The noun (טְמֵאוֹת) means 'uncleanness' or 'filthiness' (Lev. 5:3; 7:20; Num. 19:13; Ezek. 22:15), and the adjective (טָמֵא) means 'unclean' (Lev. 11:35; Isa. 64:6; Ezek. 4:13)."<sup>8</sup>

---

<sup>4</sup> This is discussed in further detail in Chapter 3, "Kosher Living: More Than a Diet," by Mark Huey.

<sup>5</sup> Ludwig Koehler and Walter Baumgartner, eds., *The Hebrew & Aramaic Lexicon of the Old Testament*, 2 vols. (Leiden, the Netherlands: Brill, 2001), 1:369, 370.

<sup>6</sup> L.E. Toombs, "Clean and unclean," in George Buttrick, ed. et. al., *The Interpreter's Dictionary of the Bible*, 4 vols. (Nashville: Abingdon, 1962), 1:642.

<sup>7</sup> *HALOT*, 1:375, 376.

<sup>8</sup> Toombs, "Clean and unclean," in *IDB*, 1:642.

## Messianic Kosher Helper

The main Hebrew terms for “clean,” *tahor* (טָהוֹר), and “unclean,” *tamei* (טָמֵא), are obviously different from the term *kosher*, which is seldom seen in the Bible itself. The *Jewish Study Bible* summarizes some of the main points regarding the term kosher, and how Judaism has approached much of it:

**kosher** (Heb ‘fit’ or ‘proper’) a general term used in postbiblical texts for dietary laws; usually applied to food, but also to other ritual objects and practices. Most dietary laws apply to meat: It may not be consumed with blood in it, certain kinds of internal fat are not to be eaten, it may not be consumed along with dairy products, and some meats (e.g., pork), sea creatures (e.g., shellfish), and “creeping things” (e.g., snails) are not permitted.<sup>9</sup>

A term more specific than *kosher* (כֹּשֶׁר), and which does carry with it some significant theological ramifications, is *kashrut* (כַּשְׁרוּת), “fitness, worthiness, legitimacy” (Jastrow).<sup>10</sup> In her book *How to Keep Kosher*, Lisë Stern describes the significance of the terms *kosher* and *kashrut* for much of Judaism:

“Let’s start with the word itself, *kosher*. It debuted in Webster’s English-language dictionary in 1851, which traces its etymology to Yiddish and Hebrew. Indeed, *kosher* is a Hebrew word and goes back much further than the nineteenth century, though not as far back as one might think.

“In Hebrew most words are variations based on a three-letter root. The Hebrew root *kaf-shin-resh* (*K.Sh.R* [כֶּשֶׁר]) is the basis for both the words *kashrut* and *kosher*, which literally mean ‘fit,’ ‘proper,’ or ‘worthy.’

“The word *kosher* is used to refer to a variety of concerns in Jewish laws, anything that has to be made or done according to certain halachic regulations, such as the proper way to tie the fringes when making a *tallit* (prayer shawl), or the correct production of *tefillin* (phylacteries, worn during weekday prayers), or the way a Torah scroll is written. If the object or activity meets specific halachic specifications, it is fit, proper for use, kosher.

“While kosher *can* refer to more than just food, in general, the laws of *kashrut* refer specifically to the dietary laws. When people talk about keeping kosher, they are usually talking about food.

“Surprisingly, however, the word *kosher* does not appear in the Torah, in the Five Books of Moses, where the Jewish dietary laws are introduced. A word using the *K.Sh.R* root appears just three times in later biblical texts, but not in reference to food: twice in the Book of Ecclesiastes, where it means ‘succeed’; and once in the Book of Esther, where it means ‘appropriate’—close to the current meaning.”<sup>11</sup>

Widely in extra-Biblical Jewish materials, the term *kasheir* (כֶּשֶׁיר) involves what is “fit, esp. *kasher*, ritually permitted, legal,” not only involving clean and unclean meats, but also involving things that are “worthy, honest, of noble conduct” (Jastrow).<sup>12</sup> The verb

---

<sup>9</sup> Adele Berlin and Marc Zvi Brettler, eds., *The Jewish Study Bible* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004), pp 2132-2133.

<sup>10</sup> Marcus Jastrow, *Dictionary of the Targumim, Talmud Bavli, Talmud Yerushalmi, and Midrashic Literature* (New York: Judaica Treasury, 2004), 678.

<sup>11</sup> Stern, *How to Keep Kosher*, 18.

<sup>12</sup> Jastrow, 677.