

A better hope than Torah?

This weeks reading is from the opening chapters of Bamidbar / Numbers, *Parsahat Bamidbar (Bamidbar / Numbers 1:1-4:20)*. The Torah tells us the Lord God spoke to Moshe in the Ohel Moed commanding him to number the Children of Israel. The Lord said the Levites were not to be numbered because they are given to the service of the Lord in the Tabernacle (*1:47-50*). The Levites are instructed to camp around the Tabernacle so the wrath of God will not fall upon the congregation of Israel (*1:53*). The Lord tells Moshe that the first born in Israel, from man or beast, are His (*3:13*). The Torah portion ends with the mitzvot on what to do when the Tabernacle moves from one place to another and which house in the tribe of Levi is to carry the various items of the Tabernacle (*4:4-20*).

This week we are looking specifically at *Bamidbar / Numbers 3:5-10* with the question, “*has the Lord changed His mind concerning the Levitical priesthood?*”

ספר במדבר פרק ג *Bamidbar / Numbers 3:5-10*

ה וַיְדַבֵּר יְהוָה אֶל-מֹשֶׁה לֵאמֹר: וְהִקְרַב אֶת-מִטֵּה לְוִי וְהִעֲמַדְתָּ אֹתוֹ לְפָנַי אֶהְרֹן הַכֹּהֵן וְשָׂרְתוּ אִתּוֹ: ז וְשָׂמְרוּ אֶת-מִשְׁמֶרְתּוֹ וְאֶת-מִשְׁמֶרֶת כָּל-הָעֵדָה לְפָנַי אֶהְלֵ מוֹעֵד לַעֲבֹד אֶת-עֲבֹדַת הַמִּשְׁכָּן: ח וְשָׂמְרוּ אֶת-כָּל-כְּלֵי אֶהְלֵ מוֹעֵד וְאֶת-מִשְׁמֶרֶת בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל לַעֲבֹד אֶת-עֲבֹדַת הַמִּשְׁכָּן: ט וְנָתַתָּה אֶת-הַלְוִיִּם לְאַהֲרֹן וּלְבָנָיו נָתַתָּה נָם נָתוּנִים הֵמָּה לוֹ מֵאֵת בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל: י וְאֶת-אַהֲרֹן וְאֶת-בָּנָיו תִּפְקֹד וְשָׂמְרוּ אֶת-כְּהֻנָּתָם וְהִזָּר הַקָּרֵב יוּמָת:

3:5 Then the Lord spoke to Moses, saying, 3:6 ‘Bring the tribe of Levi near and set them before Aaron the priest, that they may serve him. 3:7 ‘They shall perform the duties for him and for the whole congregation before the tent of meeting, to do the service of the tabernacle. 3:8 ‘They shall also keep all the furnishings of the tent of meeting, along with the duties of the sons of Israel, to do the service of the tabernacle. 3:9 ‘You shall thus give the Levites to Aaron and to his sons; they are wholly given to him from among the sons of Israel. 3:10 ‘So you shall appoint Aaron and his sons that they may keep their priesthood, but the layman who comes near shall be put to death.’ (NASB)

According to the Torah, the tribe of Levi was brought before Aaron to serve Him (*Bamidbar / Numbers 3:6*). The Scriptures tell us that Aaron is the High Priest, and a specific tribe was chosen to perform the service unto the Lord in the Tabernacle and to provide service to the High Priest. Note the parallel in the Apostolic Writings on serving Yeshua our High Priest who stands before our Father in heaven.

Midrash Rabbah has the following to say concerning *Bamidbar / Numbers 3:6*.

Midrash Rabbah Bamidbar 3, Part 2

Another [explanation]: “Bring close the tribe of Levi, etc.” - this is [the meaning of] what is written (Psalms 65:5), “Happy is the one whom You have chosen and You have brought close”: Happy is the one whom the Holy One, blessed be He, has chosen, even though he has not brought him close. And happy is the man that He has brought close, even though He has not chosen him. And who is the one whom He has chosen? That is Avraham, as it is stated (Nehemiah 9:7), “You are He, Lord God, Who chose Avram.” But He did not bring him close, but rather he brought himself close. The Holy One, blessed be He, chose Yaakov, as it is stated (Psalms 135:4), “For Yaakov did the Lord choose.” And so [too] it says (Isaiah 41:8), “Yaakov whom You have chosen.” But He did not bring him close, but rather he brought himself close, as it is stated (Genesis 25:27), “Yaakov was a simple man that sat in tents.” He chose Moshe, as it is stated (Psalms 106:23), “were it not for Moshe, His chosen”; but He did not bring him close. Happy are those that the Holy One, blessed be He, chose, even though He did not bring them close. Come and see - the Holy One, blessed be He, brought Yitro close, but He did not choose him. He brought Rachav the prostitute close but He did not choose her. Happy are these that whom He brought close, even though He did not choose them. A [Roman] matron asked Rabbi Yose, “[Does] your God bring close whomever He wants (arbitrarily)?” [So] he brought a basket of figs in front of her and she would

choose a nice one, she would choose it and eat it. He said to her, "You know how to choose, [does] the Holy One, blessed be He not know how to choose? The one whom He sees has good deeds, He chooses him and brings him close." Rabbi Nechemiah [said] in the name of Rabbi Shmuel bar Rabbi Yitschak, "Not all who are close are close, and not all who are distant are distant. There is one who is chosen and pushed off and brought close, [and] there is one who is chosen and pushed off and not brought close. Aharon was chosen - (I Samuel 2:28) 'And I chose him from all the tribes of Israel for Me as a priest.' And he was pushed off - (Deuteronomy 9:20) 'And with Aharon did the Lord get angry.' And it is written [after the event that the last verse cited was referring to] (Exodus 28:1), 'And you should bring close to you Aharon your brother.' Shaul was chosen - (I Samuel 10:24) 'Have you seen the one that the Lord chose?' And he was pushed off - (ibid., 15:11) 'I have regretted that I have crowned Shaul, etc.' And he was not brought close [again] - (ibid., 16:1) 'And I have been disgusted with him from ruling over Israel.' David was chosen - (Psalms 78:70) 'And He chose David, His servant.' And he was pushed off - (II Samuel 15:16-17) 'And the king went out, and all of household on his heels,... and they stood in Beit Merchak.'" Rabbi Yehoshua ben Levi said, "They excommunicated him. Nonetheless, he accepted his excommunication. This is [the meaning] of that which is written, (II Samuel 15:30) 'and David went up to the Ascent of Olives, he went up and cried, and his head was covered.'" "And he was brought close [again]." Rabbi Yudan said, "Eira Hayairi, the teacher of David, brought him close. This is what David says (Psalms 119:79), 'Let those that fear You (yeirecha) return to me, and they that know Your testimonies' - ['they that know'] is written as 'he that knows,' [meaning that] Eira Hayairi was his teacher and brought [David] close." Rabbi Yehoshua of Sakhnin said in the name of Rabbi Levi, "There are six that were chosen: the priesthood; the order of Levi;

Israel; the monarchy of the house of David; Jerusalem; [and] the Temple. From where [do we know this about] the priesthood? Since it is written (I Samuel 2:28), 'And I chose him from all the tribes of Israel for Me as a priest.' From where [do we know this about] the order of Levi? As it is stated (Deuteronomy 18:5), 'As he was chosen by the Lord, your God.' From where [do we know this about] Israel? As it is stated (Ibid., 7:6), 'the Lord, your God, chose you.' From where [do we know this about] the monarchy of the house of David? As it is stated (Psalms 78:70), 'And He chose David, His servant.' From where [do we know this about] Jerusalem? As it is stated (I Kings 11:32), 'the city that you chose.' From where [do we know this about] the Temple? As it stated (II Chronicles 7:16), 'I have chosen and sanctified this house.'” David [meant to say in Psalms 65:5], “Happy is the one whom the Holy One, blessed be He, has chosen, and happy is the one that He has brought close. And who is the one who is doubly happy? The one that the Holy One, blessed be He, chose and brought close.” And who is that? That is Aharon and [the tribe of] Levi. From where [do we know this about] Aharon? Since it is written (I Samuel 2:28), “And I chose him from all the tribes of Israel for Me as a priest.” And from where [do we know] that He brought him close? As it is stated (Exodus 28:1), “And you should bring close to you Aharon your brother.” The Holy One, blessed be He chose Levi, as it is stated (Deuteronomy 18:5), “As he was chosen by the Lord, your God.” And from where [do we know] that He brought him close? As it is stated [here], “Bring close the tribe of Levi, and stand [it up].” And about them the verse (Psalms 65:5) says, “Happy is the one whom You have chosen and You have brought close, who dwells in your courtyards”; as you say (Numbers 3:7), “And they shall keep his charge, and the charge of the whole congregation, etc.” [The continuation of Psalms 65:5 is:] “let us be satiated from the good of Your house” - that thy would eat from the tithes that were brought to the [Temple], as you

would say (Numbers 18:21), “To the house of Levi, behold, I have given all tithe in Israel for an inheritance, etc.”

The Midrash opens with comparison of the one whom the Lord brings close and the one who is not brought close. In both cases, such people are happy before the Lord God. The persons singled out whom the Lord brought close are Abraham and Isaac, but the rabbis also say that they brought themselves close. Note there is a connection to our striving to draw near and the Lord working in our hearts to have that desire to do so. The Midrash goes back and forth with the discussion on the one whom the Lord brings close and who He does not bring close. The conclusion of the Midrash is in relation to the priesthood, we know the Lord brought them close by reason of what Scripture states, ה' וַיְדַבֵּר יְהוָה אֶל-מֹשֶׁה לֵאמֹר: וְהִקְרַב אֶת-מִטֵּה לְוִי וְהִעֲמַדְתָּ אֹתוֹ לְפָנַי אֶהְרֹן הַכֹּהֵן וְשָׂרְתוּ אִתּוֹ: *3:5 Then the Lord spoke to Moses, saying, 3:6 ‘Bring the tribe of Levi near and set them before Aaron the priest, that they may serve him. (NASB)* Based upon the midrash, there are a number of Scriptures that come to mind concerning the one’s whom the Lord brings close.

Shemot / Exodus 19:5-6

19:5 ‘Now then, if you will indeed obey My voice and keep My covenant, then you shall be My own possession among all the peoples, for all the earth is Mine; 19:6 and you shall be to Me a kingdom of priests and a holy nation.’ These are the words that you shall speak to the sons of Israel.” (NASB)

Devarim / Deuteronomy 4:20

4:20 “But the LORD has taken you and brought you out of the iron furnace, from Egypt, to be a people for His own possession, as today. (NASB)

Devarim / Deuteronomy 7:6

7:6 “For you are a holy people to the LORD your God; the LORD your God has chosen you to be a people for His own possession out of all the peoples who are on the face of the earth. (NASB)

Devarim / Deuteronomy 10:15

10:15 “Yet on your fathers did the LORD set His affection to love them, and He chose their descendants after them, even you above all peoples, as it is this day. (NASB)

Devarim / Deuteronomy 14:2

14:2 “For you are a holy people to the LORD your God, and the LORD has chosen you to be a people for His own possession out of all the peoples who are on the face of the earth. (NASB)

Devarim / Deuteronomy 26:18-19

26:18 “The LORD has today declared you to be His people, a treasured possession, as He promised you, and that you should keep all His commandments; 26:19 and that He will set you high above all nations which He has made, for praise, fame, and honor; and that you shall be a consecrated people to the LORD your God, as He has spoken.” (NASB)

1 Samuel 12:22

12:22 “For the LORD will not abandon His people on account of His great name, because the LORD has been pleased to make you a people for Himself. (NASB)

1 Peter 2:9

2:9 But you are A CHOSEN RACE, A royal PRIESTHOOD, A HOLY NATION, A PEOPLE FOR God’s OWN POSSESSION, so that you may proclaim the excellencies of Him who has called you out of darkness into His marvelous light; (NASB)

Revelation 1:5-6

1:5 and from Jesus Christ, the faithful witness, the first-born of the dead, and the ruler of the kings of the earth. To Him who loves us and released us from our sins by His

blood 1:6 and He has made us to be a kingdom, priests to His God and Father to Him be the glory and the dominion forever and ever. Amen. (NASB)

Note the parallel here to the Lord drawing us near by calling all of Israel a special and treasured people whom He has chosen and drawn near. In the Apostolic Writings, we are called a royal priesthood and kings. As we read in the Torah, the people are all called a nation of priests. When the Lord calls all of the people a nation of priests, this does not do away with the Levitical Priesthood. Remember in the history of Israel, Jeroboam the son of Nebat, his sin was that anyone who brought a number of bulls for a sacrifice and wanted to become a priest could be appointed a priest before the gold calves that He setup for the northern kingdom of Israel in Bethel and Dan. Jeroboam had made the gold calves to be Israel's gods (*1 Kings 12:28*) and he made priests of anyone who could provide their own sacrifices. Jeroboam specifically turned the Levites away as priests as we are told in *2 Chronicles 11:14-15*.

2 Chronicles 11:14-15

11:14 For the Levites left their pasture lands and their property and came to Judah and Jerusalem, for Jeroboam and his sons had excluded them from serving as priests to the Lord. 11:15 He set up priests of his own for the high places, for the satyrs and for the calves which he had made. (NASB)

This does beg the question of whether the Levites would have served under the two golden calves, or whether they would have stood for God's Torah demanding Jeroboam to tear them down and turn to Jerusalem to worship and serve the Lord God in heaven?

A major doctrine found both in the Roman Catholic Church and the Protestant Church, based upon the book of Hebrews, states that Yeshua is our High Priest in heaven for the New Covenant. In addition, we are also told that those who believe in Yeshua are priests and kings (*Revelation 1:6*). By this reason, it is believed that he (Yeshua) did away with the Levitical priesthood on earth. But is this really what Yeshua did and is this the best way to interpret the book of Hebrews? This leads to the question

of what kind of Priesthood Yeshua has taken (described in Hebrews) as compared to the priesthood that is spoken of in *Bamidbar / Numbers 3:5-10*. In discussions within the church on the levitical priesthood and of the priesthood of Yeshua, we are generally led to *Hebrews 7:1-19* as a proof text that the levitical priesthood has been done away with.

Hebrews 7:1-19

7:1 For this Melchizedek, king of Salem, priest of the Most High God, who met Abraham as he was returning from the slaughter of the kings and blessed him, 7:2 to whom also Abraham apportioned a tenth part of all the spoils was first of all, by the translation of his name king of righteousness, and then also king of Salem, which is king of peace. 7:3 Without father, without mother, without genealogy, having neither beginning of days nor end of life, but made like the Son of God, he remains a priest perpetually. 7:4 Now observe how great this man was to whom Abraham, the patriarch, gave a tenth of the choicest spoils. 7:5 And those indeed of the sons of Levi who receive the priest's office have commandment in the Law to collect a tenth from the people, that is, from their brethren, although these are descended from Abraham. 7:6 But the one whose genealogy is not traced from them collected a tenth from Abraham and blessed the one who had the promises. 7:7 But without any dispute the lesser is blessed by the greater. 7:8 In this case mortal men receive tithes, but in that case one receives them of whom it is witnessed that he lives on. 7:9 And, so to speak, through Abraham even Levi, who received tithes, paid tithes, 7:10 for he was still in the loins of his father when Melchizedek met him. 7:11 Now if perfection was through the Levitical priesthood (for on the basis of it the people received the Law), what further need was there for another priest to arise according to the order of Melchizedek, and not be designated according to the order of Aaron? 7:12 For when the priesthood is changed, of necessity there takes place a change of law also. 7:13 For the one concerning whom these things are spoken belongs

to another tribe, from which no one has officiated at the altar. 7:14 For it is evident that our Lord was descended from Judah, a tribe with reference to which Moses spoke nothing concerning priests. 7:15 And this is clearer still, if another priest arises according to the likeness of Melchizedek, 7:16 who has become such not on the basis of a law of physical requirement, but according to the power of an indestructible life. 7:17 For it is attested of Him 'You are a priest forever According to the order of Melchizedek.' 7:18 For, on the one hand, there is a setting aside of a former commandment because of its weakness and uselessness 7:19 (for the Law made nothing perfect), and on the other hand there is a bringing in of a better hope, through which we draw near to God. (NASB)

The author of Hebrews leads with the Torah portion, Parashat Lech Lecha on *Bereshit / Genesis 14*, Abraham meets Melchizedek (*king of righteousness*), king of Salem, priest of the Most High God. The author of Hebrews points out, according to the Torah portion, that the Torah speaks of Melchizedek and does not mention a mother or father, no genealogy, and no beginning of days or end of life. This person (Melchizedek) entered into the story line and then was never mentioned again. Based upon a lack of information on Melchizedek, the author in Hebrews is able to midrashically parallel Yeshua to Melchizedek. For example, in typical rabbinic style, the author of Hebrews is giving a midrash on these verses when he says that Levi was in the loins of Abraham when Abraham gave the 10% tithe (*Hebrews 7:10*), and therefore, the levitical priesthood also paid tithes to Melchizedek. The author of Hebrews use of a short midrash draws everything into the context of Malchizedek (*all of Israel in the loins of Abraham, and taking John 8, all believers, 'children of Abraham,' by faith in Yeshua the Messiah as well*). Malchizedek has a unique priesthood, being priest of the Most High God, and having no beginning and no end. The book of Hebrews speaks of something changing in the priesthood and the corresponding change in the Torah also. He says that Yeshua descended from Judah, a tribe of whom Moshe did not speak concerning priests. Yeshua was raised after the order of Melchizedek, in the sense that He is officiating something different, something new, and something

that has changed from the Torah in the sense that He is not a Levite and is not dealing with earthly rituals in the earthly Temple / Tabernacle, but instead he has entered into the heavenly holy of holies with his own blood. Understanding this distinction and what the author is trying to say is very important. *Hebrews 7:18-19* states, *7:18 For, on the one hand, there is a setting aside of a former commandment because of its weakness and uselessness 7:19 (for the Law made nothing perfect), and on the other hand there is a bringing in of a better hope, through which we draw near to God. (NASB)* The text appears to say that in Yeshua, the former command has been set aside, the mitzvot in the Torah, are set aside because they are weak and useless. Thus, we find the Christian interpretation that He (Yeshua) has done away with the Torah command, for the purpose of making way for something better, what the author calls “*a better hope through which we draw near to God.*” What exactly is this “*better hope*” through which we are able to draw near to the Lord? What was it about the Torah command that is lacking (weak and useless) that causes the hope of drawing near to the Lord to fall short? These are very important questions and so let’s try to understand these verses by an example taken from Mark chapter 7.

The key to understanding these verses from the book of Hebrews is to understand this idea of a better hope that is brought in the Messiah Yeshua as opposed to the command given in the Torah. This better hope may be illustrated in Mark chapter 7. The Gospel of Mark is a discussion on the washing of hands and food between Yeshua, the disciples, and the Pharisees.

Context of Mark 7

Mark 7:1-23

7:1 The Pharisees and some of the scribes gathered around Him when they had come from Jerusalem, 7:2 and had seen that some of His disciples were eating their bread with impure hands, that is, unwashed. 7:3 (For the Pharisees and all the Jews do not eat unless they carefully wash their hands, thus observing the traditions of the elders; 7:4 and when they come from the market place, they do not eat unless they cleanse themselves; and there are many other

things which they have received in order to observe, such as the washing of cups and pitchers and copper pots.) 7:5 The Pharisees and the scribes asked Him, 'Why do Your disciples not walk according to the tradition of the elders, but eat their bread with impure hands?' 7:6 And He said to them, 'Rightly did Isaiah prophesy of you hypocrites, as it is written: 'This people honors Me with their lips, But their heart is far away from Me. 7:7 'But in vain do they worship Me, Teaching as doctrines the precepts of men.' 7:8 'Neglecting the commandment of God, you hold to the tradition of men.' 7:9 He was also saying to them, 'You are experts at setting aside the commandment of God in order to keep your tradition. 7:10 'For Moses said, 'Honor your father and your mother'; and, 'He who speaks evil of father or mother, is to be put to death'; 7:11 but you say, 'If a man says to his father or his mother, whatever I have that would help you is Corban (that is to say, given to God , ' 7:12 you no longer permit him to do anything for his father or his mother; 7:13 thus invalidating the word of God by your tradition which you have handed down; and you do many things such as that.' 7:14 After He called the crowd to Him again, He began saying to them, 'Listen to Me, all of you, and understand: 7:15 there is nothing outside the man which can defile him if it goes into him; but the things which proceed out of the man are what defile the man. 7:16 ['If anyone has ears to hear, let him hear.'] 7:17 When he had left the crowd and entered the house, His disciples questioned Him about the parable. 7:18 And He said to them, 'Are you so lacking in understanding also? Do you not understand that whatever goes into the man from outside cannot defile him, 7:19 because it does not go into his heart, but into his stomach, and is eliminated?' (Thus He declared all foods clean.) 7:20 And He was saying, 'That which proceeds out of the man, that is what defiles the man. 7:21 'For from within, out of the heart of men, proceed the evil thoughts, fornications, thefts, murders, adulteries, 7:22 deeds of coveting and wickedness, as well

*as deceit, sensuality, envy, slander, pride and foolishness.
7:23 'All these evil things proceed from within and defile
the man.'* (NASB)

Reading through Mark chapter 7, we are presented with a number of questions. *“What exactly did He mean by saying that ‘there is nothing outside the man which can defile him if it goes into him?’”* (7:18 καὶ λέγει αὐτοῖς, Οὕτως καὶ ὑμεῖς ἀσύνετοί ἐστε; οὐ νοεῖτε ὅτι πᾶν τὸ ἐξῴθεν εἰσπορευόμενον εἰς τὸν ἄνθρωπον οὐ δύναται αὐτὸν κοινῶσαι.) In the Greek text, the word *“defile”* is koinowsai (κοινῶσαι), from the stem koinow (κοινῶ meaning, *1. to make common 1a. to make ‘Leviticallly’ unclean, render unhallowed, defile, profane 1b. to declare or count unclean*). This is the verbal basis for the noun, koinos, *“common,”* defined as that which was not set apart for ritual purity, or something that is not set apart for the Lord. What Yeshua is saying here is straightforward, food does not contract ritual uncleanness to make one ritually unclean. You can’t make a clean food *“common”* or *“unclean”* by touching it. The cultural context of *Mark 7* is the Jews were careful enough to observe the ritual of netilat yadayim, therefore they would be careful to only eat food that was clean (*Vayikra / Leviticus 11 and 19*, e.g. naturally excluding pork). The discussion is not centered on whether God has done away with the food laws in Parashat Kedoshim (*Vayikra / Leviticus 19*). The point Yeshua was making is that food coming into their bodies did not contract ritual uncleanness by contact with our hands leading to defilement to make one ritually unclean. However, in the process of elimination, that which comes out, feces, does convey ritual impurity. Notice how Yeshua is using our physical functions, eating and defecating to teach a spiritual non-physical reality on the source of uncleanness. The concept that is put forward based upon Yeshua’s words, ritually pure foods do not contract impurity to make one unclean when eating, whereas the pharisees taught that if one had unwashed hands, the clean food itself would become unclean and consequentially one would also become unclean before God.

The Peshat meaning of what Yeshua is saying is that eating *“treif”* (טרײף) is not at the center of uncleanness before God. What makes one unclean comes from the heart which is the source of disobedience to the command. It is the *“act”* of eating treif (טרײף), in wilful disobedience to the command, that causes one to sin before God. Disobedience to the

mitzvah (command) is the definition of sin, and there are commands in the Torah against eating unclean foods.

The point Yeshua is making is that there is a clear difference between ritual impurity and sin. The Pharisees were placing their emphasis upon the ritual purity or impurity as opposed to disobedience to the command and sin. The Pharisees in this instance were neglecting to consider obedience and/or disobedience to the command, where it is not disobedience (not a sin) to become ritually unclean. Many examples may be given to illustrate this point, a woman does not sin by becoming ritually unclean through her monthly cycle. The only sin that is related to ritual impurity was to enter the court of the Tabernacle or the Temple while knowing that one was ritually unclean or for a man and wife to have sex during the period of niddah.

All of the mitzvot in the Torah that are related to ritual purity, are given to reveal symbolically a very important lesson for us today, that one must have one's life and heart purified before the Lord God in heaven (*before our Father in heaven*) if one wants to enjoy His presence. Yeshua was actually raising the bar on purity before God. He was not doing away with the command. The point Yeshua was making was that the Pharisees were concerned primarily with one's hands (the physical) which they believed could convey ritual impurity to food that is being eaten, and consequentially would effect one's relationship with God. Yeshua's point was that eating kosher food (*note the cultural context here*), ritual impurity from the hands did not make the food non-kosher. Note also that there are no ritual purification laws, in the Torah, for food to make unclean food clean. In Parashat Kedoshim, the Torah classifies foods as either "*clean*" which is something that may be eaten or "*unclean*" something that may not be eaten. From a Torah context regarding foods, those foods labeled as "*clean*" the Lord tells us that we are allowed to eat, and those foods labeled as "*unclean*" is a reference to those foods that are forbidden to be eaten. We are called to set ourselves apart from the world in this manner because God has sanctified and made us holy, therefore, we too are to live sanctified and holy lives and doing so according to the command.

Now the major point here is related to our understanding the book of Hebrews, on ritual impurity being related to the body, and when one would go to the Tabernacle, a person could be ritually clean physically, and still have unconfessed sin in their heart. This is why the author of

Hebrews speaks of the gifts and sacrifices offered in the Tabernacle or Temple related to *“food and drink and various washings, regulations for the body imposed until a time of reformation,”* could not *“cleanse the conscience”* (*Hebrews 9:8-10*). The point that he is making is that ritual purity which was brought by the sacrifice in the Temple was not a means for cleansing the conscience or dealing with sin in one’s heart as he says in *Hebrews 10:4* *For it is impossible for the blood of bulls and goats to take away sins. (NASB)* (Note the ritual service of the thank offering where both the worshiper and the priest are allowed to eat, or in the Passover lamb, the blood was poured out first, on the door posts (mezuzot) or upon the altar before eating.)

The Torah does not give commands or make statements that eating non-kosher food makes one ritually unclean. It is the act of disobedience to the command that causes sin. It is also important to note the biblical definition of kosher foods as opposed to the rabbinic definition of kosher foods, in order to differentiate between the two and to not place our focus upon making something more difficult from something that is very easy. Or as Yeshua said in *Mark 7*, placing more emphasis upon the external things as opposed to the internal uncleanness due to sin.

Yeshua’s statements in *Mark 7* was that one’s hands do not make kosher foods non-kosher and do not make one ritually impure. Thus, by eating with unwashed hands, one is not by that reason eating non-kosher foods and thus sinning by violating the Torah commands regarding food. In a similar manner, through the ritually cleaning of one’s hands (netilat yadayim), this does not take care of the impurity in one’s heart. The ritual washing of the hands also does not deal with sin in one’s life. This is the key to understanding what Yeshua has done for us regarding the words of the book of Hebrews (*Hebrews 7:1-19*). Confessing one’s sins, seeking God’s forgiveness by faith in the promised Messiah and His Sacrifice for sin is the only way to deal with the internal issue of impurity. Note that there are no commands in the Torah that deal with the internal issue of impurity. Yeshua’s priesthood is different in the sense that He stands in heaven before our Father God, and by his blood, we have atonement, we are able to seek forgiveness, the Lord hears us because our sins are forgiven, and our conscience - our hearts - are cleansed from impurity and sin. This was the point Yeshua was making in *Mark 7*, that one can polish the outside of the cup, but still have filth on the inside, *7:21 ‘For*

from within, out of the heart of men, proceed the evil thoughts, fornications, thefts, murders, adulteries, 7:22 deeds of coveting and wickedness, as well as deceit, sensuality, envy, slander, pride and foolishness. 7:23 'All these evil things proceed from within and defile the man.' (NASB). One can polish the outside of the cup but still harbor sin in the heart. In addition, the earthly priests could not judge the heart, they could only enforce the regulations for the body (the external ritual impurities) whereas Yeshua knows the thoughts and intention of the heart (the internal impurities from within). Therefore, we have in and through Yeshua what the author Hebrews calls *“a better hope through which we draw near to God.”* This is how the Torah command is lacking (weak and useless) and causes the hope of drawing near to the Lord to fall short. The author of Hebrews is not saying that the Torah command is done away with, he is actually illustrating the significance of what Yeshua has done for us and the importance of believing upon Him for our salvation.

So the question did Yeshua do away with the priesthood in the Torah? What Yeshua did upon the cross, and by His blood did not do away with the Torah command of the Tabernacle or the Temple services and the sacrifices. If the Temple was built today, it would be a sin to go up unto the Temple and not follow the command God had given to Moshe at Sinai. In addition, based upon this analysis, the Korbanot (sacrifices) do not replace what Yeshua had done upon the cross. The Korbanot are brought purely by reason of the requirements of the covenant, the Torah, and obedience to God's Word. What Yeshua did was something greater, in that as our high priest in heaven, we have a spiritual cleansing, and an internal purification that was not possible through the physical command. Praise the Lord because most assuredly in Christ the Messiah we have *“a better hope through which we draw near to God!”*

