

THE OLD TESTAMENT DIETARY LAWS WAS ABOLISHED ACCORDING TO MARK 7:19B?

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Abstract

Various essential discussions have been raised against Mark's parenthetical commentary in 7:19b, one of which is the discussion of eating from that statement. On the one hand, some take the text as a clear teaching of the Bible about the abolition of the food law in the Torah, as a result of which the law no longer binds both Jewish believers and Gentile believers. On the other hand, some consider it meaningless as the abolition of the food law in the Torah. Within this group, various meanings have been proposed. Historically, lexically, grammatically, and contextually it shows that Mark 7:19b is not a teaching of the abolition of the food law in the Torah, but a "guarantee" for the Gentile believers in Rome as Mark's gospel audience that there will be no unclean food for them because of contamination. or consumed with dirty hands (not washed), but the food is kept clean, so it cannot defile those who eat it. Therefore, Mark 7:19b will be of no significance to the reader if it is understood as teaching the abolition of the food law because they do not have binding laws on unclean and kosher food and need to be abolished, it is only given to the Jews. Therefore, for them, the food is kept clean. Even if the abolition of the food law in the Torah is done, it has nothing to do with Gentile believers.

Keywords: *Mark, Abolition, Food Law, Haram and Halal.*

INTRODUCTION

Eike Mueller in his dissertation stated that there are two perspectives of interpretation of the final statement of Mark 7:19b which reads: "Thus He declared all food clean," namely the interpretation which considers that this section is a statement of the abolition of food laws in the Old Testament, while the opposite interpretation is considered this

passage not to be an abolition of the Old Testament dietary laws.[1] The first interpretation is usually held by Christian groups who consider the Old Testament food laws not binding on believers, on the contrary, the second interpretation is held by Christians who still maintain the food laws, but this group is a minority.[2]

The first view that considers Mark 7:19b as a direct statement from the Lord Jesus about the abolition of the food law in the Old Testament appears in the majority of English translations and the passage is enclosed in brackets such as ESV, NAS, RSV, NRSV, NIV, NLT, NET, CJB, NCV, GWT, GNT, TEV, HCSB and also Indonesian translations such as ITB and BIS. Further confirmation is given in the AMP translation, "Thus He was making and declaring all foods [ceremonially] clean [that is, ceremonial distinctions of the Levitical Law]."

Two explanations are given in this translation, namely about food that is considered ceremonial food, and about lawfulness, namely the ceremonial distinction in the Levitical Law. This view is held by many scholars and interpreters of the Bible. Sprinkle cites Mark Mark 7:19 (also Acts 10:15 with 11:9; Rom. 14:14) as one of the texts in the New Testament that states the abolition of the dietary law. According to him, this abolition has deep theological significance, where the clean and unclean animals symbolize the separation between Jews and Gentiles. Thus, the abolition of the law on clean and unclean animals symbolizes the breaking down of the barrier between Jews and Gentiles.[3] Other theologians such as

James E. Edwards,[4] Hanna Stettler,[5] Ben Witherington III,[6] Adamczewski,[7] Moloney,[8] and others. John MacArthur considers that Mark's comments were influenced by Peter's own experience in Joppa (Acts 10:15; cf. 1 Tim. 4:3) considering there is an era relationship between Mark and the apostle Peter.[9]

The second view that Mark 7:19b is not a statement by Jesus (Mark, Mark's editor) to abolish the dietary laws of the Old Testament is held by the Christian minority. The Jubilee Bible 2000 translation captures this idea "Because it enters not into his heart, but into the belly, and the man goes out to the privy and purges all foods." Some English translations make it in the form of questions like KJV, Darby "purging all meats?" NKJV "thus purifying all foods?" and WEB "thus making all foods clean?" and does not contain the idea that Jesus (Mark, Mark's editor) abolished the Old Testament dietary laws. As Hegg says the KJV translation, in this case, is correct.[10] Winnail considers the previously mentioned English translation heretical.[11] Beer proposes three possible translations of Mark 7:19b, namely: (1) "Jesus confirmed that all clean food is indeed clean"; (2) "Thus, He shows that all halal food is still halal food"; (3) "He

asserts that kosher food always remains kosher." [12] In this case, Beer argues that this text does not state the abolition of the Old Testament food laws for both believing Jews and Gentiles. [13] Jiri Moskala thinks that modern translators often fail to reflect that Jesus refers to foods that are "*koinos*," i.e. contaminated by association (contact) in Mark's Gospel, and not to foods that are "*akathartos*" ('unclean' - haram), because the word "unclean" does not appear in the Mark 7 passage. [14] So the statement does not justify haram food but justifies contaminated halal food.

David Wilber suggested another meaning of the statement. He explains: Grammatically, it makes more sense to read the last phrase in Mark 7:19b not as Mark's bracketed commentary on what Jesus did, but as a continuation of Jesus' own explanation of what the digestive system does. In keeping with the Jewish view of purity, Jesus said that a person's digestive system cleanses all the food eaten by processing it into feces. Jesus did not declare food that is Biblically unclean to be clean. [15] Others who hold this view are John van Maaren, [16] Sanders, [17] Frimpong, [18] Vic Lockman, [19] and others. Rudolph argues that the key to understanding Mark 7:19b is to look at Mark's audience, that is, Gentile

Christians. Therefore, this text is the basis for the exclusion of non-Jewish Christians from the Old Testament dietary laws, and therefore does not invalidate the dietary laws. [20]

Another much-talked-about debate from Mark 7:19b is whether the text is a direct statement of Jesus or a commentary from Mark or from Mark's later editors. However, this is not the purpose of this paper. The purpose of this article is to examine whether the text means the abolition of food laws in the Old Testament or not, where this issue has divided Christianity into two camps.

RESEARCH METHOD

The methodology used in this study is the exegesis method, which is based on a literal-grammatical-historical approach which is the most basic observation of the scriptures. [21] The exegesis study conducted on Mark 7:19b consists of lexical, grammatical-structural, contextual, and historical studies.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The Original Reader of Mark's Gospel

Agree with Rudolph that the key to understanding Mark 7:19b is to identify the original audience of Mark's Gospel. [22] Extrabiblical sources indicate that the

original readers of Mark's Gospel were Gentile Christians, in Rome. Carson and Moo assert that Mark's "readers" were almost certainly just that: Christians who were listening to Mark's Gospel were being read aloud to them.[23] Rodolph points out that the majority of interpreters agree that Gentile believers were in Mark's mind in Mark 7:19b. He gave three arguments about this, namely: First, Mark's editorial insertion in verse 3 is addressed to believers unfamiliar with Jewish customs.

This anticipates the second and only other insertion in the passage, v. 19b. Second, immediately after this passage, Jesus is described as going all over the Gentile lands and ministering to the Gentiles. Mark's "Gentile missionary motive", obviously. Third, Mark's Gospel includes seven Aramaic names/phrases written in Greek that Mark translated for his Gentile audience (3:17; 5:41; 7:11, 34; 14:26; 15:22, 34).[24]

So Mark 7:19b even the entire passage of this chapter is addressed to the Gentile believers in Rome. So the text was designed as Dunn put it, namely to be a reassurance to Mark's original readers that the Jewish dietary laws were not mandatory for them. And the orientation of this passage as a whole is underscored by the fact that Mark it refers to and clearly serves as an

introduction to the period of Jesus' ministry among the Gentiles (7:24-8:10).[25]

Hagner agrees that Mark 7:19b was shown to Jewish believers in Rome, but the problem is that he concludes that this text means Jesus' teaching about the abolition of kashrut, the dietary law in the Torah, and this has important meaning for non-believers. Jews.[26] This text: (1) does not mean the abolition of the dietary law in the Torah, because the reader is not a Jew, but a Gentile; (2) does not mean the abolition of the law of food in the Torah for the benefit of Gentile believers, because basically this law was not given to them, so without being abolished, they would never be bound by it; (3) the text is appropriate to understand it as a "guarantee" as proposed by Dunn above, that the food for non-Jewish believers will not be unclean, but everything is still lawful. Because there is no law for those who have forbidden it.

Mark's Relationship with Peter

Carson and Moo state that there is no compelling reason to reject the popular opinion (tradition) that Mark is based on Peter's sermon.[27] Testimony of Papias, bishop of Hierapolis in the early second century, as recorded in the Ecclesiastical History of Eusebius (Hist. eccl. 3.39.15–16, trans. Lake):

And the Presbyterian used to say this, “Mark became the interpreter of Peter” (*hermēneutēs*) and wrote accurately (*akribōs*) all that he remembered (*hosa emnēmoneusen*), not, indeed, in order (*ou mentoi taxei*), of the things said or done by God. Since he did not hear God, neither did he follow Him, but then, as I said, followed Peter, who used to give teaching as required but did not make, as it were, the arrangement of God's word (*syntaxin tōn kyriakōn logiōn*) so that Markus didn't make the mistake of writing down a point (*enia*) as he remembered it. For one thing, he pays attention, not to leave anything out of what he has heard, and not to make false statements (*pseusasthai ti*) in it.[28]

Previously, Eusebius had written this note (*Hist. eccl.* 2.15.1, trans. Lake): But a great religious light shone in the minds of Peter's listeners so that they were not content with a single unwritten hearing or teaching of the divine proclamation, but with every kind of counsel that Mark, whose Gospel still exists, saw that he was a follower (*akolouthon*) of Peter. , to leave them a written statement (*graphēs hypomnēma*, literally, 'remembering') the teaching (*didaskalias*) which was given to them orally, nor did they stop until they persuaded it, and became the cause of the Scriptures being called the Gospels

according to Mark.[29]

Justin Martyr's testimony refers possibly to Mark's Gospel as a “memoir” (*apomnēmoneumata*, *Dial.* 106.3).[30] The testimony of Clement of Alexandria, as recounted by Eusebius: When Peter preached the word publicly in Rome, and the Spirit preached the gospel, they were present, many of whom, advising Mark, as one who had followed him for a long time and remembered what was said, to record what was said (*anagrasai ta eirēmēna*); and he did this, and spread the Gospel among those who asked for it.[31]

The relationship between Mark and Peter is also recorded by Irenaeus, “while Peter and Paul preached in Rome, and laid the foundations of the Church. After their departure, Mark, Peter's disciple, and interpreter, also handed over to us in writing what Peter had preached.”[32]

Peter experienced two events before Mark wrote his Gospel, namely the vision at Joppa (*Acts* 10) and the congregation in Jerusalem (*Acts* 15). David B. Woods points out the meaning of Peter's vision well: There is no biblical evidence outside of the passage from *Acts* 10:1-11:18 that Peter's vision had multiple interpretations (regarding Gentiles and food), either elsewhere in *Acts* or throughout the New Testament. The Jewish believers described

in the New Testament and particularly in Acts attempted to keep the Mosaic Law, which shows that they understood Peter's vision to mean that the Jews had been purified, not unclean food. The contextual evidence presented provides supporting evidence for the conclusions reached in the textual analysis of the passage itself.[33]

Then about Peter interpreting his dream and explaining it at the Jerusalem congregation, Woods said: In addition, Peter's address to the congregation in 15:7-11 refers to God's acceptance of Cornelius' household without being under the Law, but Peter maintains a sharp distinction between "we" (Jewish believers) and "them" (Gentile believers). It would also be meaningless if the Law had been abolished. God "makes no difference" (15:9) in how Jews and Gentiles are saved, but Peter, in his address to the congregation in Jerusalem, made a distinction between Israel and the Gentiles, consistent with the rest of Scripture. [34]

Since Peter was standing behind Mark where his gospel depended on Peter's preaching, it can be concluded that it would be very unreasonable for Mark (7:19b) to try to overstep the understanding and even write something that contradicts the understanding and life of the apostle Peter who is the source alone. The point is that

Mark couldn't have written what Peter didn't mean. Therefore, the statement in Mark 7:19b is very well understood as a "guarantee" for Gentile believers that all food is still lawful for them because basically there is no law against it given to them.

“Katharizoo” Word Study (Declaring Halal)

The word 'halal' in Mark 7:19b is translated from the Greek word "καθαρίζω" (*katharizoon*), i.e. 'to make something clean'[35] can be translated as "to cleanse, to cleanse, to purify, to declare ritually acceptable." [36] This word can be used in a physical, ethical/moral sense, and ceremonial.[37] Mounce explains it thus:

First, it can refer to the general sense of "making something physically clean." Jesus spoke of the Pharisees who made the outside of a cup or plate "clean" (Matt. 23:25, 26; Luke 11:39). Second, in the sense of 'curing' diseases that have made a person ceremonially unclean, especially leprosy. In this context, purification is similar to healing... Third, purification through ritual cleansing. Here the Old Testament meaning of clean and unclean animals is given a new meaning in Acts 10:15 "lawful." [38]

The adjective *katharizoo* is *katharos* in the physical idea of contrast with

rhyparos (dirty), in the idea of being free, without anything hindering the contrast with pleres or mestos (full), and in the religious idea contrasting with akathartos (unclean).[39] The syntax for the word “καθαρίζων” in Mark 7:19 is awkward due to the use of a participle that has no subject. So this word is often interpreted in two senses, namely referring to the “cleansing” of normal digestion or the abolition of the law of food in the Torah.[40] The first meaning is usually held by the group who considers Mark 7:19b not a statement of the abolition of the food law in the Old Testament, on the contrary, the latter meaning is held by the group who considers it a teaching of the abolition of the law.

Wallace inserts the word “καθαρίζων” in Mark 7:19b. This is an example of an absolute nominative participle, which is a substantive participle that fits the case description of nominativus pendens. The point is that absolute nominative participles are always substantive.[41] Therefore, a very important syntax debate in this word is about the “substantive” that the word contains. Stein nicely explains this:

The participle clause ‘cleared (“καθαρίζων”) all food’ (7:19c) corresponds to “he [Jesus] of 7:18 in number and case (nominative singular). It is

best to understand it as Mark's interpretive commentary on the implications of Jesus' words in 7:15 and 18b-19 “Thus Jesus [by means of these words] is now cleansed, that is, declared to be 'clean' of all food).[42] Earle by case the word “καθαρίζων” is masculine, not neutral, in all of the earliest Greek manuscripts. So cannot modify “ἀφεδρῶνα” (latrine),[43] on the other hand different cases exclude this,[44] but it refers to Christ. The Greek church fathers interpreted the word “καθαρίζων” as grammatically dependent on “καὶ λέγει αὐτοῖς” (v. 18), where the word “καθαρίζων” agrees with the subject “λέγει”,[45] which is Jesus.

The Disputed Nature of Food Impurity

The important question for Mark 7:19b is whether the food (“τὰ βρώματα”) Mark is referring to is unclean (animal) food (akathartos), which is forbidden by the Torah. Or were the scribes, Pharisees, and Jesus arguing over unclean food (“akathartos”) in the passage from Mark 7:1-23? This question is very important to see what is meant by “πάντα” “τὰ” “βρώματα” (all food) which has been cleaned (“καθαρίζων”) by the Lord Jesus based on Mark's interpretation.

Lane is very good at understanding verse 19's relationship in this context: Mark

does not linger on this insight but develops Jesus' explanation to the point where he has placed emphasis on the heart as the center of all inner life and the source of human action. The structure of the exposition follows the pattern of verses 18-19 where the substance of verse 15a is repeated (v. 18b) and then explained (v. 19a). Similarly, the substance of verse 15b is repeated in verse 20, followed by an explanation (vv. 21-23).[46] So verse 19b is Mark's own conclusion about Jesus' statement in 15a, which is then repeated in 18b, and explained in 19a. These texts read thus:

Verse 15a Anything from outside, which enters a person, cannot defile him.

Verse 18b Don't you know that anything from outside that enters a person cannot defile him.

Verse 19a Because it doesn't go into the heart but into the stomach and is thrown into the latrine.

Verse 19b Thus He declared all food clean.

Several points are given from the context of Mark 7:1-23, which are as follows: First, 'anything/everything from without that enters a person' (vv. 15a; 18b) refers to "food," because that is what is being debated by the Pharisees and scribes

to Jesus were His disciples eating food with unclean hands (v. 5). Second, the law disputed by the scribes and Pharisees was the 'customs of their fathers' ("τὴν" "παράδοσιν" "τῶν" "πρεσβυτέρων", v. 3, 5), "inheritance" (v. 5). Therefore, the issues debated by the scribes and Pharisees to Jesus were as follows: (1) when you want to eat you must use clean hands (not unclean), meaning that your hands have been washed (Vv. 2-3); (2) when they want to eat, they must wash (bath) first if the person comes from the market (v. 4); (3) they must wash (clean) the cup, jug and copper utensils, which is a matter of their customs, not the Old Testament Law. As Josefus clarifies:

For now, I just want to explain that the Pharisees had given the people certain rules that were passed down by previous generations and were not recorded in the Mosaic Law, therefore these rules were rejected by the Sadduceans (Sadukes), who argue that only written rules (in the Scriptures) should be considered valid and that rules handed down by previous generations need not be obeyed. And regarding this the two groups became a serious controversy and difference, the Saydki had the trust of only the rich, while the Pharisees had the support of the people.[47]

It is also emphasized how Jesus himself regarded them as 'man's commandments' ("ἐντάλματα" "ἀνθρώπων", v. 7), 'human customs' ("τῆν" "παράδοσιν" "τῶν" "ἀνθρώπων", v. 8), 'the customs of the Jews themselves' ("τῆν" "παράδοσιν" "ὑμῶν", v. 9), or 'the customs that the Jews follow' ("τῆν" "παραδόσει" "ὑμῶν" "ἣν" "παρεδώκατε", v. 13) From the answers and explanations given by the Lord Jesus in verses 15, 18, and 19a it shows that this custom states that people who eat with their hands not washed, do not bathe when they come home from the market, and wash the utensils used. can defile the person who eats it.

In the time of Jesus, the Jews communicated the traditions of their ancestors orally from generation to generation. Around AD 200, the rabbis completed this compilation into the Mishnah, which forms the basis of the Talmud (c. 425 AD). The Pharisees used to wash themselves after visiting the market, to rid themselves of the ceremonial impurities produced by contact with the Gentiles. Most Jews consider breaking this tradition a sin.[48]

From these facts it shows that: First, the debate that the scribes and Pharisees were discussing with Jesus was not the issue of "unclean food" (*akathartos*) which the

Torah forbids; Second, contamination of 'clean food' with unclean media, such as unwashed hands, contaminated bodies in the market, and unclean utensils used. Here it is referred to as "clean food," because what the scribes and Pharisees were concerned about was not the question of whether the food of the disciples of Jesus was unclean or lawful, but the problem of contamination of the food with all media that had not been cleaned (unclean), and of course food that was contaminated with food. the disciples ate was halal food, not haram (*akathartos*) which was forbidden by the Torah, because as Jews at that time it was not possible for them to consume unclean food (*akathartos*) which had been forbidden by their Torah.

So the meaning of Mark's additional comment in verse 19b, "Thus he declared all food clean" is in this context. Mark concludes that 'all clean food is clean and will never become unclean even if it is contaminated with media deemed unclean by Jewish custom. Therefore, this is not an abolition of the food law in the Torah but is a denial of the Jewish custom that considers food unclean by contamination with media that are considered unclean can defile people who will eat it.

Third, Jesus gave a natural argument why even food contaminated with unclean

media cannot defile people, namely because the food does not enter the "heart" or does not affect a person's "morality, will, desire", but only ended up in the latrine. So, according to Jesus what can defile people is something that 'goes out (not what 'enters') into a person's heart, because it affects his morality, will, and desires.

CONCLUSION

Several points can be made for conclusions from the contextual, grammatical, lexical, and historical analysis of Mark's additional comments in 7:19b, which are as follows: First, the crux of the debate between the scribes and Pharisees about Jesus was unclean food that was contaminated and eaten with unclean or unwashed hands, so it wasn't a matter of the disciples consuming unclean food (*akathartos*) which was forbidden by the law.

The food consumed by the disciples at that time was clean food but was considered unclean by the scribes and Pharisees because it was contaminated with unclean hands so they thought it could defile the person who consumed it. Therefore, verse 19b cannot be understood as abolishing the food law in the Torah, because the point of the debate is not this issue.

Second, then "all food" in verse 19b

must be understood as 'all clean food which later becomes unclean because it is contaminated and consumed with unclean hands' according to Jewish custom as argued in the context, and from Jesus' response and explanation of it, Mark concludes that the food will remain clean (*καθαρίζων*) even though it has been contaminated and consumed with unclean hands and will never defile people.

Third, the original readers of Mark's Gospel were Gentile believers in Rome, so verse 19b, if it is considered as the abolition of the food law in the Torah, means nothing to them, because basically they do not have the law that needs to be abolished, even if the law is not abolished, they will never be bound to it. In this case, the food remains halal for them. Therefore, verse 19b should be understood as a "guarantee" for Gentile believers that none of the food will be unclean, but that everything will remain clean.

Fourth, because Peter stood behind Mark, then verse 19b is not understood as abolishing the food law in the Torah, because Mark could not have crossed the understanding and contrasted with Peter who still maintained and considered the food law in the Torah for Jews not abolished.

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- [39] H. G. Link and J. Schattenmann, "Pure," in *The New International Dictionary of New Testament Theology (NIDNT)* by Colin Brown (ed.), Vol. 3, 6th Printing, (Grand Rapids: Zondervan publishing House, 1981), 102.
- [40] Donald A. Hagner, *The New Testament*, 181. For views that regard the text as referring to the normal "cleansing" of digestion, see Cornelius A Lapide, *The Commentary of Cornelius A Lapide: S Matthew's Gospel 22-28 and S. Mark's Gospel Complete*, translated by Thomas W. Mossman, First Edition, (Edinburgh: John Grant, 1908), 335 (pdf pages); David E. Garland, *The NIV Application Commentary: Mark*, (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1998), 296 (pdf pages). Garland argues that a good reading variant is katharizon (neutral nomnative participle), not masculine, therefore the purification in question is cleansing through the process from the stomach to the latrine.
- [41] Daniel B. Wallace, *Greek Grammar Beyond the Basics*, (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1996), 654.
- [42] Robert H. Stein, "Mark," in *Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament (BECNT)* by Robert W. Yarbrough and Robert H. Stein (ed.), (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2008), 345- 346. In this case the phrase 'καθαρίζων' is referred to as Mark's parentetic declaration, see James R. Edwards, "The Gospel to Mark," in *The Pillar New Testament Commentary (PNTC)* by D. A. Carson (ed.), (Grand Rapids: Wm. B Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2002), 250-251 (pdf pages).
- [43] Ralph Earle, *Word Meanings in the New Testament, One-volume Edition*, (Kansas City: Beacon Hill Press, 1987), 92-93 (pdf pages).
- [44] Camille Focant, *The Gospel according to Marks: A Commentary*, (Eugene: Pickwick Publication, 2012), 291.
- [45] C. E. B. Cranfield, "The Gospel According to St. Mark," in *The Cambridge Greek Testament Commentary* by C. F. D. Moule (ed.), (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1959), 241.
- [46] William L. Lane, "The Gospel of Mark," in *The New International Commentary on the New Testament (NICNT)* by Ned D. Stonehouse, F. F. Bruce, and Gordon D. Fee (ed.), (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1974), 215 (pdf pages).
- [47] Adela Yarbro Collins, "Mark: A Commentary," in *Hermeneia - A Critical and Historical Commentary on the Bible*, (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2007), 347. Although the concept of "impurity" (κοινός, vv. 2, 5) comes from the Levitical law of purification (Lev. 15:11) as proposed by F. G. Untergassmair, "κοινός," in the

Exegetical Dictionary of the New Testament by Horst Balz and Gerhard Schneider (ed.), (Grand Rapids: Wm. B Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1990), 2:302.

[48] Thomas L. Constable, Notes on Mark, (2022 Edition), 156.