

Purpose of the Laws of Kashrut

Introduction

An Inexplicable Law

Vayikra 11 and Devarim 14 elaborate upon the dietary laws, dictating which foods are permitted and prohibited from consumption. The reasoning behind these restrictions is not stated explicitly and is not self-evident. As opposed to many laws instituted to ensure justice, improve man's character, commemorate a historical event, or connect man to Hashem, it is not clear what purpose the laws of Kashrut serve. Why does Hashem care which foods one eats or refrains from eating? Does consuming one type of animal or another make someone a better or worse person?

Significance of the Signs

The Torah provides signs to determine whether a food is permitted or prohibited. Kosher animals must both chew their cud and have split hooves, while fish must have fins and scales. Winged swarming insects (שָׂרָץ הָעוֹף) which move on four legs are prohibited, while those with jointed legs, "made to leap," are permitted. Swarms of the earth (שָׂרָץ הָאָרֶץ), in contrast, are all prohibited. Finally, the forbidden birds are simply listed by name.

- **Importance of the signs** – Is there any significance to the signs given? Why should it matter whether or not an animal chews its cud or what type of hoof it has? Are fish with scales and fins intrinsically different from those without? What, if any, is the common denominator that unites all the animals which contain these signs?
- **Vayikra vs. Devarim** – Why does Sefer Vayikra suffice with providing the signs of kosher animals, while Sefer Devarim also identifies them by name?
- **Sign vs. list** – Why, in both Vayikra and Devarim, are birds listed by name without the Torah providing any criteria?
- **Birds vs. animals, forbidden vs. permitted** – Why does the Torah in both Vayikra and Devarim opt to list the birds which are forbidden, while, when speaking of animals, Devarim lists the permitted ones?

Relationship to Context

The context of the dietary laws in Sefer Vayikra is the unit of laws dealing with impurity (including that caused by a corpse, *tzara'at*, bodily discharges, and child bearing), while the context in Devarim is a discussion of the abominations of foreign nations. How is Kashrut related to either of these? Why are foods designated as "pure" and "impure"? How does their status relate to the status of other "pure" or "impure" objects? In Devarim, the unit opens with the command, "לֹא תֹאכַל כָּל תוֹעֵבָה". What about the prohibited foods make them an abomination? Is there some foreign practice that is being opposed through the restrictions?

Additional Questions

- **"וְהִיִּיתֶם קְדָשִׁים"** – In both Vayikra and Devarim,¹ the dietary laws are explicitly connected to the nation's holy status. What about these laws engenders holiness?

- **"טמא הוא לָכֶם" vs. "שֶׁקֶץ הוא לָכֶם"** – Regarding the prohibited animals, Hashem says: "טמא הוא לָכֶם". In contrast, when referring to the birds and fish, He states, "שֶׁקֶץ הוא לָכֶם." Is there any significance to this distinction? Why is one group "impure" and the other "detestable"?
- **Relationship to other prohibitions** – How are the laws of Kashrut discussed here related to other food prohibitions, such as not eating blood, fat, milk and meat mixtures, or one's first fruits? Are the reasons for each of the prohibitions distinct, or is there one common explanation that can be given for all?

¹ See Vayikra 11:44, Vayikra 20:25-26, and Devarim 14:2.

Purpose of the Laws of Kashrut

Exegetical Approaches

Overview

Commentators debate whether the laws of Kashrut were instituted for their physical or spiritual benefits. Rashbam maintains that their purpose is purely utilitarian, and they serve to ensure the health of the nation. Akeidat Yitzchak vehemently disagrees that a commandment would be instituted for such mundane reasons, claiming that the laws must somehow elevate man. He, thus, asserts that Hashem forbade the eating of all predatory animals since ingesting such an animal can detrimentally affect the character of the consumer. Moreover, regardless of the nature of the forbidden foods, setting limits helps man to control his desires. A final approach suggests that the goal of the laws is to separate Israel from her neighbors. Having a unique diet distinguishes Israel from others, both minimizing contact and marking her as a "kingdom of priests."

Health Benefit

The laws of Kashrut were instituted in order to protect the health of the members of the nation.

SOURCES: Rashbam, Rambam,¹ Ramban #2,² Sefer HaChinukh³

Why these animals? According to this approach, all the prohibited animals are unhealthy, while the permitted animals are not. Rambam notes that pigs are particularly unhygienic,⁴ and if they were permitted to be eaten, they would introduce filth into the community, spreading disease.⁵

The signs – Rambam maintains that there is nothing intrinsic in the signs which provide a health benefit to the animal. They are necessary only so as to differentiate between the various animals.⁶

Validity of health benefit claims – Many commentators question the above claims:

- Akeidat Yitzchak⁷ argues that this position is not supported by empirical evidence, as many non-Jews eat the forbidden foods with no harmful consequences.⁸
- Abarbanel further notes that if the Torah's goal was to keep the nation healthy, one would expect it to include a complete list of damaging foods. Yet, there are many other foods which are detrimental to the body that are not mentioned.

Sefer HaChinukh defends this position, claiming that Israel can trust Hashem to know better than any scientist which foods are healthy and which are not.

Can laws be utilitarian in nature? Akeidat Yitzchak and Abarbanel further question this position, pointing out that the purpose of Torah is not to teach medicine but rather to instill good character and deeds. As such, it does not make sense that the laws of Kashrut would have been instituted for their health advantages. These sources would argue that Akeidat Yitzchak's fundamental assumption, that laws cannot be utilitarian in nature, is simply wrong. Rambam, for example, gives practical explanations for several commandments, including Shemittah and the Incense Altar.⁹

Why is the purpose not stated? Sefer HaChinukh claims that had the health benefits been made explicit, individuals would assume that they have enough knowledge to decide for themselves what is healthy and what is not, rather than relying on Hashem's list. R. D"Z Hoffmann argues against this logic, asserting that since people tend to want to observe commandments which are beneficial to them, making the reasoning for the ordinance explicit would have increased observance, not diminished it.¹⁰

Context in Vayikra: laws of purity – Though, at first glance, it is difficult to find a common denominator between this understanding of the laws of Kashrut and the other laws of impurity, it is possible that this approach might view all forms of impurity as related to disease. See, for example, Ralbag on Tzara'at.

Context in Devarim: תועבות הגויים – In Devarim, the laws of impure animals follow laws that relate to the abominations of other nations. If the commandment is health-related it is difficult to see how the two sets of laws are connected and why they appear together. This approach might suggest that the directives really are unrelated, and no significance should be read into their juxtaposition.¹¹

"והייתם קדושים" – The conclusion of "והייתם קדושים" (Vayikra 11:44-45) suggests that Kashrut laws enable the nation to become holy. However, if the purpose of the laws is simply utilitarian (good health), it is not clear why, of all laws, these should be said to promote "holiness". This approach could suggest that the verse is not related specifically to the laws of Kashrut, but rather to the general observance of Hashem's ordinances.¹²

Comparison to laws of other prohibited foods – The Rambam explicitly writes that the same reasoning applies to the similar prohibitions of eating an unslaughtered animal (נבילה), a torn beast of prey (טריפה), and the fat of the animal (חלב), pointing out that they are all difficult to digest.¹³ Sefer HaChinukh, following Ramban, also notes that the fact that the animal became a "טריפה" proves that the animal was sick and has the potential to transmit disease to any who eat of it.¹⁴ Ramban suggests that the prohibition to eat of the fruit of a tree in its first three years might also be related to health concerns (See Purpose of Orlah).

Polemical motivations? Rashbam prefaces his explanation of the laws of Kashrut by writing: "ולפי פשוטו של מקרא ותשובת המינים," suggesting that his words are a response to non-believers. M. Lockshin¹⁵ explains that Christian claims that dietary restrictions were unnecessary¹⁶ are what led Rashbam to defend them and point to their utility. This might have also motivated him to offer an explanation that displays the laws' universal benefit, rather than one limited exclusively to Jews.¹⁷



Spiritual Benefit

The prohibition helps man perfect his character and elevate his soul. This approach subdivides regarding the specific benefit received and how this is achieved:

You Are What You Eat

Since what we eat affects who we are, Hashem forbade Israel from consuming animals with negative traits. The laws of Kashrut thereby serve to both purify the soul and prevent men from becoming cruel.

SOURCES: Philo #2,¹⁸ Ibn Ezra, R. Yosef Bekhor Shor, Ramban #1,¹⁹ Sefer HaChinukh,²⁰ Ralbag,²¹ Akeidat Yitzchak #2,²² Abarbanel, Sforno, Netziv,

Why these animals? These sources offer several reasons why these particular animals were selected:

- **Invite cruelty** – Almost all of the animals²³ and birds²⁴ which are forbidden are predatory.²⁵ Since people's characters are influenced by what they eat,²⁶ Hashem prohibited these carnivores to ensure that humans don't similarly become beasts of prey.²⁷
- **Defile the soul / intellect** – Ramban and Ralbag²⁸ assert that Hashem further prohibited repulsive animals whose material make-up affects the soul and intellect negatively. They explain that animals who are "עב החומר" (lit. of thick material) tarnish the soul / intellect, making it difficult to attain holiness and comprehend Hashem.²⁹
- **Used for idolatrous rites** – Abarbanel additionally suggests that the prohibited animals were eaten by idolaters as part of their worship of foreign gods.³⁰ As such, Hashem distanced the practice from Israel.

The signs – The signs of the animals are indicative of their nature:³¹

- **"מַפְרָסֶת פֶּרֶסָה וְשִׁסְעַת שִׁסְעַת"**³² – Split hooves signify that an animal is herbivorous. Carnivores, instead, have claws used for killing their prey.
- **"מַעֲלַת גֶּרֶה"** – This, too, is a sign of an herbivore. Since plants are not easy to digest, such animals regurgitate their food so as to chew it a second time.
- **"סִנְפִּיר וְקִשְׁקֶשֶׁת"** – As many scaled fish are still carnivorous, the permitted status of such fish is somewhat inconsistent with this approach.³³

Can laws be utilitarian in nature? Akeidat Yitzchak and Abarbanel reject utilitarian understandings of the dietary laws, claiming that the Torah's purpose is to perfect man's nature. As such, they claim that the restrictions must provide a spiritual benefit to the nation.

"וְהִיִּיתֶם קְדוֹשִׁים" / "וְלֹא תִטְמְאוּ אֶת נַפְשֵׁיכֶם" – Akeidat Yitzchak and Abarbanel³⁴ assert that the verses use the language of "holiness" and "purity" rather than "healthy" and "unhealthy" because they speak of a spiritual state rather than a physical one. Hence, too, the emphasis on the law's effects on the soul: **"וְלֹא תִטְמְאוּ אֶת נַפְשֵׁיכֶם"**.

Context in Vayikra: laws of impurity – These sources offer two different explanations to understand the placement of the unit:

- **Sub-unit of impurity laws** – R"Y Bekhor Shor and Sforno³⁵ view the laws of Kashrut as a sub-unit of the other laws of purity and holiness discussed in the surrounding chapters. R"Y Bekhor Shor asserts that all the laws delineate those who are not worthy of approaching Hashem due to their contaminated state. Since eating "detested" species defiles the soul, a person who does not abide by the laws of Kashrut has a status similar to that of other impure people.
- **Tangential unit** – Ramban explains that the laws of Kashrut appear here only tangentially. The main focus of the chapter is the ordinances dealing with the status of those who come in contact with impure animals³⁶ (which are clearly related to the surrounding discussions of impurity), while the laws regarding Kashrut are only secondary.³⁷

Laws necessary only after the Sin of the Golden Calf – According to Sforno, the laws of Kashrut were introduced only in the aftermath of the Sin of the Golden Calf. After the sin, Hashem initially no longer

wanted His presence to reside among the nation at all. However, when Moshe's prayers achieved a compromise which allowed for Hashem's presence to dwell in the Mishkan,³⁸ it was necessary that the people elevate their souls to be worthy of it.³⁹ Thus, Hashem introduced the laws of Kashrut to purify the people (and the laws of emissions and a birthing mother to purify their seed).⁴⁰

Context in Devarim: תועבות הגויים – Ramban points out that the verse states: "לֹא תֹאכַל קֵל תְּעֻבָּה" because impure animals are an abomination for the soul. As such, their placement immediately following a discussion of other "abominations" is fitting. According to Abarbanel who associates the non-kosher animals with idolatrous rites, the juxtaposition of the two sets of laws is even more understandable.

Comparison to other prohibited foods – Other foods are similarly understood to be prohibited to ensure spiritual health:

- **The original prohibition to eat meat** – Several commentators⁴¹ assume that before the Flood, all meat was prohibited⁴² because its consumption has deleterious effects on man's moral fiber.⁴³ After the Flood, Hashem made concessions to human nature, allowing them to eat meat, but He nonetheless limited its consumption to the least harmful of species.
- **Prohibition of milk and meat** – This approach could follow the Rambam who suggests that the practice of cooking a goat in its mother's milk has idolatrous roots and was thus forbidden. Alternatively, it could agree with R. Bachya who asserts that the combination of meat and milk fats muddles the heart and introduces coarseness into the soul.⁴⁴
- **Prohibition of blood** – Sefer HaChinukh explains that eating the life-source of an animal tarnishes a person and leads to cruelty.⁴⁵



Limits Inculcate Self Control

The dietary laws limit the number of animals one can eat in order to train people to control their desires.

SOURCES: 4 Maccabees, Philo #1,⁴⁶ Rambam,⁴⁷ R. Bachya,⁴⁸ Akeidat Yitzchak #1,⁴⁹ Shadal #2,⁵⁰

Why these animals and signs? These sources disagree regarding whether or not there is significance to the list of animals chosen and the signs which identify them:

- **Significant** – Philo notes that swine is considered to be the "nicest of all meats", and fish which lack scales are the "most delicate" of fish, suggesting that Hashem chose to prohibit the most desired of animals. The signs are perhaps indicative of how palatable the food is.⁵¹
- **Insignificant** – Alternatively, Shadal suggests that there is nothing unique about the animals selected to be prohibited,⁵² and it would not have mattered if others had been listed in their stead; the purpose was simply to have some be off-limits for consumption.⁵³
- **Dual goal** – Rambam, who suggests that there are also health benefits in observing the laws of prohibited foods, might suggest that though Hashem could have accomplished the goal of limiting desire by proscribing the eating of any animal, He purposefully forbade those which were unhealthy, thereby accomplishing two goals at once..

"וְהָיָה קִדְּשִׁים" – R. Bachya maintains that being holy entails controlling one's desires and curbing one's appetite.⁵⁴ The root "קדש" means to separate,⁵⁵ expressed here by abstaining from certain foods. Practicing

abstinence and setting limits enables people to strengthen the rational mind so it can override one's natural sensual cravings and impulse to sin.⁵⁶ Moreover, such limits make one constantly think of Hashem, instilling fear of Heaven and wariness from transgression.⁵⁷

Why not prohibit all meat? Philo and Rambam claim that Hashem looked to find "a middle path," being neither overly strict in His restrictions nor excessive in what He permits.

Context in Vayikra: laws of purity – The laws of impurity serve a similar function to the laws of Kashrut, as they, too, set certain objects to be off-limits, restricting contact with defiled objects and prohibiting the defiled from entering certain areas.

Similar prohibitions

- Rambam and R. Bachya assert that other laws, such as fast days and prohibited sexual relations, similarly serve to curb man's desires.⁵⁸
- Akeidat Yitzchak goes a step further to suggest that all laws whose reason is unclear (such as the prohibition to wear linen and wool together) need have no other purpose other than the fact that they restrict man.⁵⁹ The very existence of guiding laws forces man to control himself and recognize that he is meant to live according to Hashem's desires and not his own.⁶⁰



Separation

The laws of Kashrut are intended to distinguish and distance Israel from the other nations.

SOURCES: Shadal #1,⁶¹

"והייתם קדושים" – This phrase expresses the purpose of the mitzvah – that Israel should be separate from others, by virtue of its special relationship to Hashem. Vayikra 20:25-26 says even more explicitly: "והייתם לי, קדושים כי קדוש אני יי ואבדל אתכם מן העמים להיות לי".

Context in Devarim – The introductory verses to the unit in Sefer Devarim similarly emphasize Israel's distinct status: "בְּךָ בָּחַר יי לְהִיּוֹת לוֹ לְעַם סְגֻלָּה מִכָּל הָעַמִּים", further supporting this reading of the purpose of the commandment.

Attaining priesthood – Shadal points out that in abiding by the laws of Kashrut, the nation elevates itself and becomes "a kingdom of priests". In other cultures, too, the priests had certain individual restrictions which distinguished them from laymen. Israel, being the priest among the nations, thus, has the same.

Relationship to other laws of impurity – If these laws are a means of transforming the whole nation into priests, the placement of the unit in Sefer Vayikra (תורת כהנים) among other laws dealing with purity, holiness, and entry into the Mikdash, is easily understandable.⁶²

How does Kashrut serve to separate? The very fact that Israelites have a unique diet, not shared by their neighbors, marks them as different. In addition, from a practical perspective, the dietary restrictions make it more difficult to socialize and celebrate with Gentiles, as many aspects of people's interactions revolve around food.

Why these animals and signs?

- **No significance** – According to Shadal, there is nothing intrinsic in the choice of animals or their signs which led to their being forbidden or permitted. Any animals that would have been chosen could have achieved the same goal of differentiating the people.
- **Unworthy of priests** – Alternatively, since the nation is a "kingdom of priests," it is possible that only those animals which are worthy of being sacrificed were also permitted to be eaten.⁶³ This would explain the choice to refer to these animals as "pure" and "impure" rather than "permitted" and "forbidden".⁶⁴ The forbidden birds and fish, on the other hand, might instead be prohibited since "שֶׁקֶץ הֵם לָכֶם"; they are "detestable" and, thus, unworthy of those of higher stature.⁶⁵

¹ Elsewhere, as discussed below, Rambam also points to the spiritual benefits of the laws, suggesting that the prohibition comes to teach man limits and to control his desires. That purpose alone, though, would not account for why Hashem decided which specific foods were to be prohibited. This might be what prompts Rambam to note that there are health benefits in not eating those very foods which are proscribed.

² Ramban also points to the spiritual benefits of the laws, as discussed below.

³ Sefer HaChinukh combines this approach with the one below which speaks of the spiritual benefits of observing the laws of Kashrut. He claims that the prohibited foods harm the body, but since the body is the platform for the soul, when the body is harmed, the soul is affected as well.

⁴ See Bavli Kiddushin which claims, "עשרה קבים נגעים ירדו לעולם ט' נטלו חזירים".

⁵ See also Bavli Shabbat 86b which states: "דאכלין שקצים ורמשים חביל גופייהו".

⁶ This is consistent with Rambam's tendency to view the details of laws as not necessarily having intrinsic significance. For instance, he suggests that there might not be any reason why a specific sacrifice necessitates a lamb and another a ram, or why one holiday is one day long and another lasts for seven days. See his discussion in Moreh Nevukhim 3:26: "שכלל המצוה יש לה סיבה בהכרח ומפני תועלת אחת צווה בה" "אבל חלקיה הם אשר נאמר בהם שהם למצוה לבד".

⁷ See also Abarbanel who follows him on this point.

⁸ Shadal even notes that the camel's meat is known to be very healthy.

⁹ See also Ralbag's understanding of the laws of Tzara'at.

¹⁰ As such, he brings the lack of an explicitly stated reason as a proof against this understanding of the commandment.

¹¹ However, the fact that the unit opens by calling the prohibited foods an abomination ("לֹא תֹעֲבָה") would suggest that there is, nonetheless, some connection.

¹² See R. Yosef Kara who explains the verse this way.

¹³ Rambam also notes that combining meat and milk results in heavy and filling food, not ideal for the best health.

¹⁴ Despite these examples, these commentators are not consistent in explaining **all** prohibited foods in this manner. For instance, Rashbam explains the prohibition of cooking a goat in its mother's milk to be related to eliminating gluttony and cruelty, while Rambam associates it with idolatrous practices. [For more about this prohibition, see Lo Tevashel Gedi.]

¹⁵ See his edition of Rashbam's commentary (Jerusalem, 2004) and his notes on Vayikra 13:3.

¹⁶ See, for instance, Matthew 15:10-11, "Listen and understand. What goes into someone's mouth does not defile them, but what comes out of their mouth, that is what defiles them."

¹⁷ Cf. 105-121:(ח) (תשס"ח) "טעמי המצוות: אקטואליה ופולמוס דתי בתקופת הרנסנס", טללי אורות י"ד (תשס"ח) 105-121, who suggests that Sforino's explanation of the prohibition is similarly motivated. He, too, looked to provide a rational reasoning for keeping the dietary laws (claiming that they impart cruelty) in an effort to combat Christian claims.

¹⁸ Philo combines this approach with the position that the animals were restricted in order to control man's sensual desires.

¹⁹ Ramban also mentions the health benefits of observing Kashrut, as discussed above.

²⁰ Sefer HaChinukh combines this approach with the one above which speaks of the physical benefits of observing the laws of Kashrut. He claims that the prohibited foods harm the body, but as the body is the platform for the soul, if it is harmed the soul will be affected as well.

²¹ Ralbag also assumes that some of the prohibited foods might be bad for the body and not just the soul.

²² See below that he also speaks of the laws' role in setting limits and controlling desire.

²³ Abarbanel notes that even though pigs, camels, and hares are herbivores (or omnivores), they have a negative nature, and, thus, they, too, are prohibited.

²⁴ See Mishnah Chulin.

²⁵ See Philo who points out that Hashem permitted herbivorous animals since their nature is tame and they feed on gentle food.

²⁶ See the words of R. Yitzchak Arama: "ומכל מקום נתבאר מה שכווננו אליו מהתפעלות האדם מהדברים אשר גדלו" "עליהם אל תאותו ואל דעותיו עד שהיו המזונות עקר גדול באיכות האנשים".

²⁷ R. Bachya points to Yirmeyahu 49:22 where the prophet compares the wicked and cruel to impure birds.

²⁸ See also Akeidat Yitzchak and Abarbanel.

²⁹ Ramban writes, "המאכלים האסורים גסים יולידו עובי ואטימות בנפש". Ralbag says similarly: "מה שהיה עב החומר". "הוא נותן עכירות לשכל ומכבה אורו".

³⁰ He does not elaborate on the point, saying only, "ובארצות אחרות אוכלות מאכלות אסורות מפני עבודת אלהיהם", "ולכך נקראו המאכלים האלה תועב' כמו שנקראת הע"א תועבה".

³¹ See Abarbanel who speaks about this at length. See also several modern scholars such as L. Landau, Olam HaTanakh Devarim (Tel Aviv, 1994): 124, and R"E Samet "פרשת שמיני – בין החיה הנאכלת ובין החיה אשר" who further develop the idea.

³² Bavli Chulin 59a-b adds two additional signs that are shared by all the kosher animals: lack of upper front teeth and the presence of horns. Being herbivores, their teeth are adapted for grinding rather than tearing prey. Instead of claws and sharp teeth, they have horns used to defend themselves against their attackers.

³³ Ralbag asserts that these signs relate to a different set of criteria; as fins help the fish swim, they are an indicator that the fish moves a lot, which correlates with a "thin material make-up". This is more compatible with man's nature and intellect and thus more appropriate for consumption.

Cf. L. Landau (cited above) who attempts to account for all the exceptions to the "predator" understanding of the signs (fish, camels, hare, badger, and pigs) by suggesting that a second set of criteria apply to these: any species which is "abnormal" is prohibited. Thus, fish lacking fins and scales are exceptional and prohibited. Similarly, those non-predatory animals with but one of the two usual signs are also forbidden.

³⁴ See also Sforino.

³⁵ For an elaboration of his specific position, see the next point.

³⁶ It was necessary to distinguish between pure and impure animals for these laws.

³⁷ If so, this could explain why Vayikra suffices with giving the signs of kosher animals but does not list them individually as does Devarim (whose main focus is in the prohibitions of consumption). In addition, this explains why the command is addressed to both Moshe and Aharon. As contact impurity is in the realm of the priesthood, Aharon is involved in relaying the directives as well.

³⁸ See Purpose of the Mishkan for elaboration.

³⁹ For elaboration on Sforno's position, see Purpose of the Mishkan and Purpose of the Sacrifices and his מאמר כוונות התורה.

⁴⁰ He uses this idea to explain the ordering of Sefer Vayikra, which begins with laws related to the holiness of the Mishkan, and then moves into those dealing with the holiness of the nation. According to him, the laws of virtually the entire book were necessary only due to the sin.

⁴¹ See the opinions of Ibn Kaspi, R"Y Albo, and Tzeror HaMor in Permission to Eat Meat.

⁴² They assert that originally man was meant to be vegetarian and that only in the aftermath of the flood was meat permitted.

⁴³ They assert both that the act of killing an animal for its meat leads man to become cruel and that the very consumption of animals tarnishes the soul and intellect.

⁴⁴ These sources could also maintain, like Shemot 23:19bn Ezra, that the practice is cruel.

⁴⁵ In contrast, R"Y Bekhor Shor distinguishes the reasoning for this prohibition from the explanations given for Kashrut. While non-kosher animals are forbidden due to their impure status, blood and fat, in contrast, are banned for the exact opposite reason; they are "too" holy. Since they are sacrificed on the altar, a regular layman cannot partake of them.

⁴⁶ Philo also mentions the idea that the animals might be forbidden because of their carnivorous and cruel nature.

⁴⁷ Elsewhere, as discussed above, Rambam also notes the health benefits of observing the laws of Kashrut. As the suggestion that the prohibition comes to teach man limits and to control his desires does not sufficiently explain why Hashem decided which specific foods were to be prohibited, Rambam might have been prompted to look for another reason for the law, noting that there are health benefits in not eating those very foods which are proscribed.

⁴⁸ In his discussion of forbidden birds, R. Bachya mentions also the aspect of disassociating one's self from cruelty.

⁴⁹ See above that he also notes that abiding by the laws will improve man's moral character.

⁵⁰ See below that he also speaks of the role that Kashrut plays in distinguishing Israel from other nations.

⁵¹ He states this explicitly only with regards to the signs of fish, but the idea could theoretically be applied to animals and birds as well. That said, it is difficult to see why an animal with split hooves and who chews its cud should be less tasty than one without these signs.

⁵² The signs, too, are simply a convenient way to choose a category of animals to be permitted or prohibited.

⁵³ He writes, "כי מה איכפת לנו אם המאכל האסור יהיה זה או זה, אחרי שהמכון הכללי הוא שיהיו קצת המאכלות אסורות".

⁵⁴ It is, thus, not surprising that the same term introduces the list of forbidden sexual relations in Vayikra 20.

⁵⁵ See the Sifra: "כשם שאני קדוש כך אתם קדושים. כשם שאני פרוש כך אתם פרושים."

⁵⁶ See also 4 Maccabees who points out that practicing the laws of Kashrut trains one's "reason" to "rule over appetites."

⁵⁷ See Shadal who elaborates on this point.

⁵⁸ R. Bachya also says that prayer, charity, and other acts of kindness further curb one's lust. Perhaps the act of giving counters the desire to consume.

⁵⁹ Even if one can find no innate value in the law, the very fact that it is limiting gives it value. This might be the meaning behind the statement in Bereshit Rabbah: "לא נתנו המצוות אלא לצרופ בהן את הבריות".

⁶⁰ See Shadal who similarly notes that having many commandments accustoms man to rule over his spirit.

⁶¹ Shadal notes that this explains the need for the laws only when the rest of the world is idolatrous; had all believed in Hashem, there would be no need for separation. Therefore, Shadal adds that there is another purpose to the laws, to teach man his limits and constantly remind him of Hashem who commanded them. [See approach above.]

⁶² It would also explain why Aharon is explicitly addressed in the opening verse and charged, together with Moshe, to relay the laws.

⁶³ See R. D"Z Hoffmann in his introduction to Vayikra 11.

⁶⁴ If so, one might suggest that when Noach is told to distinguish between "pure" and "impure" animals, the verse is not implying that the laws of Kashrut were known, but that society had already distinguished between animals fit and unfit for sacrificing. Noach was told to take more of those to be sacrificed.

⁶⁵ This theory would explain why it is only by animals that the verse emphasizes "טְמֵאִים הֵם לָכֶם", whereas, by birds and fish, it states, "שֶׁקֶץ הֵם לָכֶם". Devarim, however, speaks of all of the categories in terms of "pure" and "impure" rather than "detestable", weakening the argument.