

# Free

**Don't let this  
newsletter  
die! Pass it on  
to a friend.**

**Subscribe  
TODAY!**

Phone  
(956)  
905-5268

E-mail:

mail@  
healthreformer.org

## The Faith Reformer Newsletter

*Truth Is Precious!*  
[www.faithreformer.org](http://www.faithreformer.org)



# The Faith Reformer

## Most Christians Ignoring Bible Food Laws

Does God Care What We Eat? Are the Old Testament's strict food laws relevant for today's church? Absolutely, says Messianic Jewish author Hope Egan.

The petite, 5-foot-4 woman stepped up to the podium at a Chicago church and lowered the microphone; her auburn curls framed the gentle smile on her face. Hope Egan doesn't look like a revolutionary, but her recent book, *Holy Cow! Does God Care About What We Eat?*, and her passionate endorsement of Old Testament food laws for today's New Testament Christians have been stirring up discussion wherever she goes.

This crowd of 200 Christian women listened intently as Egan shared her struggles with compulsive eating, her discovery of a "biblically kosher" diet, and God's role in the journey.

"I was consumed with thoughts of food," she began. At work, she visited the candy machine several times a day. Though she sat at the same table when eating with others, she wasn't fully present. Instead, she fixated on the food, obsessing about something as simple as a plate of cookies: How many should I eat? We each get three, but I've already eaten my three; there won't be enough if I eat more. Why aren't they eating their share of the cookies? Don't they like these cookies? Will anyone notice if I eat just one more?

### Faith in food

Hope grew up in a secular Jewish community where faith was more cultural than religious. "When I was little, I remember asking my parents whether we were Jewish or Christian because I would forget," she says.

Like most of her Jewish girlfriends, she attended synagogue, took Hebrew lessons, and had a Bat Mitzvah. For Hope, the best part of synagogue was the location—across the street from Carson's Ribs, home of her favorite meal. While the family dabbled in celebrating religious holidays, Hope's memories are of the food, not the faith. "God just wasn't on our radar screen," she says.

Hope's food issues affected those who loved her. As a CPA, she was analytical about balancing input and output. Knowing that she could maintain her weight through compulsive exercise, she would forsake time with friends and family to spend it in the gym.

"If it was sweet, I couldn't have it in the house," she recalls. She didn't stop after one doughnut or cookie; she ate the whole box or bag. "I would throw food into the trash and then later pull it out and eat it." She learned to take drastic steps like pouring water on food before throwing it away.

Hope thought she was in control until a car accident left her unable to exercise. Frustrated by her food compulsions and fearful of gaining weight, she joined a 12-step program—Overeaters Anonymous. The first three steps involved admitting she was powerless over food, acknowledging a higher power, and giving Him control.

"I was leery but desperate," says Hope, who began attending meetings. "Didn't God have anything better to do than keep me from eating another chocolate chip cookie?" But the changed lives around her were compelling. "I began to dabble in the steps and think maybe God could change me."

On her knees, she accepted the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob as her own and gave Him control over her life. "I had been doing such a lousy job eating and managing my relationships, but after that moment they improved just enough for me to believe that God was real and active in my life."

### Rethinking Jesus

That Jesus was not the Messiah was a belief deeply entrenched in Hope's family history, but her newfound appreciation for God and His ability to work miracles caused her to reconsider. "If God could create the world in six days, maybe the Jesus stuff was true too," says Hope. She sought the truth with an open mind, discovering information about Jesus that contradicted her traditionally held beliefs. That truth eventually produced fruit in every area of her life. While her family didn't celebrate her choice, they were pleased to see the positive changes.

As a new believer, Hope was encouraged to read the whole Bible and to take it literally. She did, starting with Genesis. She quickly came upon some things that disturbed her new beliefs. "It seemed a lot of Jewish things that were in the Christian Bible weren't in Christianity." She was used to things adding up, and this one didn't. "I was shaken because the Bible didn't reconcile with the way I saw Christians practicing their faith."

For most of us, the connection between God and food is a loose one; maybe we pray before eating or meditate during Communion. But ordinarily, the God we serve has little to do with the food we serve.

That's what confused Hope. Most Christians ignored Old Testament food laws. This became a stumbling block as she tried to grow in her new faith.

"I took in the Christian beliefs about eating pork and shellfish through osmosis. Even when I got in and read the Bible, I continued to ignore the Scriptures because it was easy to go with the flow. People smarter than me were eating these things."

When Hope asked why Christians ate foods that were contrary to the guidelines in Leviticus 11, she received theological answers about why it was okay. The apostle Peter's dream in Acts 10 was often referenced. "It was the answer I wanted to hear," she admits. She continued to eat ribs.

### Sick of food

Later, however, a chronic illness forced Hope to revisit the food issue. The only cure was a strict diet that eliminated common foods and ingredients such as sugar and wheat. She could no longer eat out; she learned to cook healthy and tasty meals from scratch.

(Over, please)

"It was a huge blessing," she says. "My body healed, I lost a few pounds, and I began feeling better."

But a big question remained: How should she eat for the rest of her life?

Again, Hope turned to the Bible to see what God had to say. She sought the counsel of Christian doctors, scholars, and others who had done similar research. She was surprised to find an entire Christian subculture that followed biblical food laws, believing that the Hebrew Scriptures are still relevant. This gave her the confidence to study the food-related scriptures herself.

Brian, her husband, was concerned. He feared her questions had more to do with her Jewish heritage than her Christian faith. He adamantly quoted New Testament verses that seemed to promote eating pork.

"God had always been the glue that kept us together, but my husband was extremely opposed to the road I was going down."

A wedge formed between them, until Brian reluctantly studied the issues on his own. This became their turning point. "After he did his homework, he joined me on the journey," says Hope.

Together they learned that just as mothers have opinions on the foods their children should eat, God our Father cares about the foods we eat. From Genesis, Hope learned the importance of plant-based foods, such as fruits, nuts, vegetables, grains, and seeds. But other scriptures were confusing. Did God arbitrarily declare some animals clean and other animals unclean? Again, the CPA tried to reconcile things.

The 'clean/unclean' dilemma

Hope discovered that God's classification system wasn't as arbitrary as it seemed. On a surface read of Leviticus 11 it appeared that God randomly chose which animals were clean and which were unclean, but a closer look revealed that these distinctions were in place since the time of Noah.

Further investigation showed that the classification of clean and unclean animals was part of an intelligent plan. Clean mammals have a "split hoof" and "chew the cud." These animals are herbivores; in other words they eat plants. Herbivores avoid many of the diseases, parasites, and worms that meat-eating animals acquire, so they are a healthier food choice for humans. Herbivores, like the cow, process their food differently than other animals. As the food works its way through their multi-stomach digestive system, the food is purified before toxins are absorbed into the animals' bodies.

Compare the cow to an unclean animal such as a pig (which has a split hoof but doesn't chew the cud); a pig's food goes to the stomach where it is directly absorbed during the digestive process. When you consider that pigs are omnivores—they eat everything: plants, dead animals, small rodents, garbage, and even feces—this is an important difference. Animals like the cow, chicken, or tuna were designed as safe food sources, and God designated these animals as clean. Others, like pigs, catfish, and vultures, were created to be scavengers to clean the environment and were designated as unclean. Hope learned that God's commands regarding clean and unclean animals weren't arbitrary but rather an indication of His love for us.

When God's plan is ignored—like feeding ground-up cattle parts to cows to get them to grow faster—we end up with unintended effects, like Mad Cow Disease. Hope's study of God's food laws strengthened her faith as she saw His intelligent design.

Excited by what she learned, Hope stopped eating the meat of unclean animals, including ribs. She also increased the amount of fruit, vegetables, nuts, and seeds in her diet. Today, at 39, her health has never been better, nor her faith stronger.

While Hope has finally found the answers that "add up" for her, she acknowledges that not everyone is bothered by the same questions. "There are theologians who have drawn different conclusions," she says.

Her intention in writing her book wasn't to get everyone to stop eating pork and shellfish, but rather to encourage Christians to study the issue for themselves, just as she and Brian did. She hopes her testimony will inspire believers to improve both their physical and spiritual health. *By Jennifer Schuchmann, Christianity Today International/Today's Christian Magazine*

Can Protestants and Catholics agree on Mary?

TIM PERRY'S *MARY FOR EVANGELICALS* (published in Downers Grove, Ill., by Inter-Varsity Press, 2006) hints at its provocative thesis in its subtitle: *Toward an Understanding of the Mother of Our Lord*. This unusual volume from a historically evangelical publishing house is comprehensive in its scope of research and examines perceptions of Mary from the Gospel writers to the current time.

The author, an associate professor of theology at Providence College, Otterburne, Manitoba, Canada, divides the book into three parts: "Mary in Holy Scripture"; "Mary in the History of Christian Thought"; and "Toward an Evangelical Mariology."

Since the general Roman Catholic Church council known as Vatican II (1962-1965), there have been progressive developments in ecumenical understanding between Roman Catholics and Protestant evangelicals. But until recently, Mariology (the study of and theology of Mary) has remained a point of special contention. Tim Perry's book seeks to bridge the gap in order to further the ecumenical dialogue, and, he says, to provide a biblical, historical, and dogmatic account of the place of Mary in the faith of the church. Perry admits to a "preoccupation with Mary" (p. 13), and notes that North American Protestant theologians are also developing an interest in Mary as evidenced by cover stories in *Christianity Today*, *Christian Century*, and *even Time* (p. 15).

In writing the book, Perry states, "I have followed a simple method rooted in my own theological and ecclesial convictions: Scripture, tradition, and reason" (p. 17). The three-part outline of the book tracks these three sources.

As Bible students well know, there is very little said in the New Testament about Mary. In fact, everything we know about her from Scripture would fill no more than one page in a standard edition of the Bible. Accordingly, Perry notes after first reviewing the writings of Paul (who wrote more than half of the New Testament): "Having completed a close reading of texts in Paul, we are left with very little direct information about Mary" (p. 29). He adds, "Paul indirectly mentions Mary [not by name] only with respect to her role as Christ's mother. He says nothing regarding Christ's miraculous conception" (p. 30).

During the centuries following the apostolic era the Roman Church developed Marian theology from simply asserting the truthfulness of the "virgin birth" to proclaiming that she herself was "ever virgin." Catholic dogma relative to Mary states: "Mary was a virgin at the time of Christ's conception (virginity ante partum), remained a virgin in the act of giving birth (virginity in partu), and persisted in virginity thereafter (virginity post partum)" (p. 281). To his credit, in his review of the biblical data, Perry acknowledges that "the continued virginity of Mary is not a concern of the New Testament authors" (p. 40). The great contemporary emphasis on Mary as "the blessed virgin mother of God" evolved during more than 1,800 years of tradition and interpretation by the Roman Catholic Church. This trend reached a climax of sorts in the "Marian Century"—1850-1950 (p. 240). That 100-year span included two papal decrees or dogmas—infallible papal statements—about Mary's place in the life of the Roman Catholic Church and many Marian visions, some of which have been "officially approved" by the church. In 1854 Pope Pius IX, invoking apostolic authority, wrote: "We . . . DECLARE, AND PRONOUNCE, AND DEFINE, that the doctrine which holds that the Blessed Virgin Mary, in the first instance of her Conception, has been, by a special grace and privilege of Almighty God, and in view of the merits of Jesus Christ, the Saviour of the human race, preserved and exempted from every stain of original sin, is revealed by God, and consequently is to be believed firmly and inviolably by all the faithful" (p. 232). This dogma is known as the "Immaculate Conception" and states that Mary, like her divine Son, is exempt from original sin. Nearly 100 years later in 1950, Pope Pius XII decreed: "By the authority of our Lord Jesus Christ, of the Blessed Apostles Peter and Paul, and by Our own authority, We pronounce, declare, and define it to be a divinely revealed dogma: that the Immaculate Mother of God, the ever-virgin Mary, having completed the course of her earthly life, was assumed body and soul into heavenly glory" (p. 244). This dogma is known as the "Bodily Assumption." In language sure to chill many Protestant hearts, Perry concludes: "As a

(Over, please)

result of this history, talking about Mary's intercession, mediation, and coredeemption is fraught with difficulty. But it is not impossible [emphasis supplied]. There is sufficient groundwork in place to offer a biblically sound, theologically constructive, and ecumenically sensitive understanding of each of these issues, which while certainly not undoing Protestant reservations, can at least move us beyond the recitation of polemics" (p. 299).

What meaning does this new volume have for Bible-believing Christians...? There are several serious problems that cannot be overlooked, even in the name of respectful relationships with persons of other faiths. First, we must remember that all "Mariology" is based on nonscriptural sources and is based on unbiblical teachings such as the natural immortality of the soul. In fact, ...the two primary constituent elements of spiritualism—the natural immortality of the soul and communication with the spirits of the dead (Mary and "the saints")—are both present in Mariology and in Marian theology.

The ever-adapting nature of the spiritualist challenge to biblical Christianity requires that we pay special attention when these two elements combine in the heart of a powerful and widespread teaching of another Christian denomination. Just as predicted, and in fulfillment of prophecy, spiritualism is the adhesive that is bringing Protestantism and Catholicism into both closer contact and greater agreement in advancing unbiblical ideas. *By G. Edward Reid*

### Popular church doctrine leads many to commit suicide

Suicide is a tragic and potentially preventable public health problem. In 2000, suicide was the 11th leading cause of death in the U.S ...

Suicide deaths outnumber homicide deaths by five to three. It has been estimated that there may be from eight to 25 attempted suicides per every one suicide death.

The alarming numbers of suicide deaths and attempts emphasize the need for carefully designed prevention efforts. —National Institute of Mental Health

Now well-known risk factors for suicide are chronic depression, drug abuse, and physical or sexual abuse. But did you know that a popular church doctrine is also a culprit?

The fact is that many churches teach that at death people are immediately transported to the abodes of bliss in heaven (the doctrine of the immortality of the soul). People who commit self-murder are commonly eulogized by their friends and the minister, and carried directly to heaven at their death. This teaching about the state of the dead has led many to commit suicide.

The false belief of rejoining someone who has died when one commits suicide is a predisposing factor in both youth and elderly suicides. Fortunately, not all churches teach this doctrine.

Here is what a faith reformer has to say about this kind of theology: "This is Satan's own doctrine, and it does his work effectually. Should we be surprised that, with such instruction, wickedness abounds? ...If it were true that the souls of all men passed directly to heaven at the hour of dissolution, then we might well covet death rather than life. Many have been led by this belief to put an end to their existence. When overwhelmed with trouble, perplexity, and disappointment, it seems an easy thing to break the brittle thread of life and soar away into the bliss of the eternal world." *The Great Controversy*, pp. 538, 539

© 2003 HealthReformer.Org. All rights reserved

### Are Christian churches partly responsible for the alcohol epidemic raging in America today?

Alcoholic beverages have become America's number one public health problem, costing over \$117 billion a year and claiming at least 100,000 lives per year, 25 times as many as all illegal drugs combined.

Christian churches are partly responsible for the alcohol epidemic raging in America today, because since the repeal of Prohibition in 1933, most of them have abandoned their stand for total abstinence, encouraging instead moderation in drinking.

Moderation has led millions to become immoderate drinkers. The gradual abandonment of total abstinence by many well-meaning Christians has been encouraged by the belief that the Bible sanctions a

moderate use of alcoholic beverages. This belief has provided millions of Christians with an alleged biblical justification for drinking alcohol.

...

In his book, *WINE IN THE BIBLE*, Dr. Samuele Bacchiocchi boldly challenges prevailing thinking and scholarship. His painstaking research compellingly shows that the Bible consistently teaches total abstinence as a divine imperative. This teaching has been obscured by many modern Bible versions which mistranslate as "temperance" or "sobriety" some of the clearest biblical admonitions to "abstinence."

A thoughtful reading of this book may well provoke a revolution in the attitude of many Christians toward alcoholic beverages. To learn more about Dr. Bacchiocchi's book, please visit the following link:

<http://www.biblicalperspectives.com/>



Visit us on the web at [www.FaithReformer.org](http://www.FaithReformer.org)  
for FREE bumper stickers, FREE literature,  
FREE subscription and MUCH MORE!