

**“Babeş-Bolyai” University, Cluj-Napoca  
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The “Pr. prof. dr. Isidor Todoran” Doctoral School**

**THE NOACHIDE LAW – “THE DIVINE  
DISPENSATION” – REGARDING FOOD**

**Doctoral Thesis**

**-Summary-**

**Coordinator:**

**Pr. Prof. Dr. IOAN CHIRILĂ**

**PhD candidate:**

**CRISTIAN-VASILE ONICA**

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## **KEY WORDS:**

Dispensation, Noah, food, Law, purity, serving

Ever since the beginning, the divine prevision regarding food is offered an important place, so that one can see that in the book of Genesis, chapters 1-11, when God first created the world, He forecasted that plants wearing leaves will be food for animals, and plants with seeds and fruits will be food for humans. Afterward, Adam and Eve are tested through food, as they were allowed to consume any fruit from the Garden of Eden, except the three of acknowledgement of good and evil, situated in the middle of the garden (Gen. 2, 9; 3, 3). After the Flood, people were also allowed to consume animals, as this stipulation appears especially in the tale of the Flood, presented in the 9<sup>th</sup> chapter of Genesis.

The research theme of this paper pleats on a field with a relatively small interest; it was never before approached in the Romanian theology, whereas the international researches were mainly based on providing socio-cultural answers. Thus, the theme was mainly approached through the angle of Biblical Archaeology.

Although the authors of the Old Testament brought into prominence the theme of food, modern biblical critique paid little to no attention to this subject. Neglecting this area of expertise is rather striking, if one is to analyze the importance of things, such land or

agriculture - a preoccupation mirrored in many studies. Land was given a high importance, but although it enjoyed a special interest from different ideologies regarding it and its possession, little interest was shown in the actual way in which the land was used. In the modern world, land can be used to satisfy a plentitude of purposes: residential, for sportive terrains, recreational parks, industrial parks. However, the most important purpose of land remains that of agriculture. In the biblical Israel, apart from one small portion used for settlements (villages and towns), land served only one purpose: to produce food. There are numerous reasons for which this subject was over passed, but for this exact reason further researches must be conducted.

First of all, in the books of the Old Testament, referrals to food are omnipresent. Rarely one can find a page or a chapter hidden in the Old Testament in which food is not mentioned. The difficulty of approaching such a subject emerges right from the fact that it is quite difficult to make research regarding a theme that is scattered across the Old Testament.

Secondly, food and drink are so common in the Old Testament and in our daily existence, that they do not seem to require a special attention or instigate to further studies. Food is a common necessity of one's physical nature, thus it might not seem to require any further comments or analyses. However, studying the Old Testament might

result in the appearance of certain problems raised by certain culinary customs, that have not yet found answer, and which draw the attention of researchers.

Thirdly, the Holy Bible is traditionally valorized for its moral and religious concepts. As a consequence, it has been observed that researchers focused their attention upon the understanding of the spiritual and intellectual lives of the ancient Israelites and not upon researching their physical needs.

In this paper we wish to underline certain aspects of the use of food in the biblical writings, since this subject had rarely conducted to a detailed analysis. This can also be affirmed through the fact that, in the majority of cases in which certain protagonists are depicted as participating to various events and consuming foods and drinks, these referrals have no immediate connection with the feeding of the body. Thus, these referrals have a more profound, a spiritual meaning. Although the analyzed subject is generous both from the angle of the numerous biblical passages that refer to food, as from the various approaches of this subject, the given paper cannot be considered exhaustive. There are still other aspects that can be approached for the use of biblical literature, as well as for the understanding of the context in which appeared the links to between food and the nourishment of the believers.



The first chapter is entitled *The Dispensation of God's Covenant with Noah after the Great Flood*, and shows the link between the Mosaic Law and the dispensation made between God and Noah, after the Great Flood.

Each of the dispensations given by God to humanity is directed through a remarkable person, such as Adam (Gen. 1, 28-3, 6; 4, 1-8, 14), Noah (Gen. 8, 15-11, 32), Abraham (Gen. 12, 1- Ex. 18, 27) or Moses (Ex. 19, 3). Through each of these dispensations God requires certain responsibilities, and after the failure suffered from a human being, He emits a type of judgment. After the fall of man, God has tested the man through moral laws, or his capacity of discerning good from the evil. After the failure of our forefathers and the after world became wicked by the day, God decided to punish the entire humankind by means of the flood. Right after this moment, God makes a new dispensation with Noah and He tests him through his own human government, meaning that He commands Noah's offspring to scatter across the globe.

Given the fact that food is also a contributing element to the consolidation of the connections between people and nations, it is pertinent to suppose that this element can also be reported to the link between the human subject and divinity, as long as the believer feels that he is closer to God if he offers Him back as offerings and as a sign of gratitude, a part of the gifts that he had received,. Sacrificing

to the divinity a part of what he earned through his efforts in obtaining his daily food was closely governed by the given legislation and presented in detail in the book of Leviticus 1, 1-7, 38. In Gen. 9, 2-7 it is explained the meaning of the command of scattering and filling the earth has, presenting how the human can obey to the creation in the post-flood world. These verses practically refer to the way in which the man must report to God, to himself and to the animal world. Just as it can be observed through the Law and dispensation made by God with Adam, the received punishment as a result of disobeying was the harsh fructification of the land, requiring a supplementary effort from the man in order to obtain what it takes to make a living. In addition to the laws presented to Adam, what God reveals to Noah represents an entire different approach regarding the reign over the animal world. Thus man receives the authority of ruling over the animal world as well. This dispensation stated that the man will be in charge over the entire creation which carries life, but not at his disposal. Especially for this reason, it is forbidden the consumption of “meat with its life, meaning its blood” - אֲדָמָה בְּדָמָה (Gen. 9, 4). As an extension of this law made through the law given to Moses, the chosen people are forbidden to consume animals they did not breed, which were also considered inappropriate for consumption.

The second chapter, entitled *The Moral and Religious Value of the Laws Regarding the Nourishment of the Israelite Believer*, focuses upon the importance of food as seen in the terms of the religious and moral regulations, as well as a text analysis of Leviticus 11. Food is an unusually strong symbol that defines our identity, as the habits linked to it imply certain cultural components as well as and the acceptance of it as a symbol. On one hand, food is used as a means of expressing one's nature. On the other hand, food is seen as a means of presenting what we wish to become, promoting ourselves through it, in different groups, but also promoting our distance or proximity regarding certain practices of that group. By analyzing all the elements linked to the practicing habits of eating food, it can enlighten certain past life perspectives, with an extraordinary interest regarding the religious and moral existence. Analyzing the practices presented in Leviticus 11 regarding food, one can conclude that we are not only defined by what we eat, but we are also defined by the place where we eat, and with whom we eat.

The third chapter, *The Role of Noah's Dispensation in the development of the Israelite Sacrificial System* illustrates the meaning of food for the religious life, which can be observed through the fact that every activity deployed on the social ground and contains the elements of the needed food for humans, symbolically corresponds to the cultic life. This is also one of the reasons for

which food is seen as a divine gift. God is the one who placed the human in the middle of the Eden Garden where He harvested “all sorts of trees good at the eye and good for eating” (Gen. 2, 9).

In the beginning we showed that it is imperious to reveal the composition of the daily food of the Israelites, as the written proofs indicated that the food derived from two sources: from harvesting plants and trees and from breeding animals. The Israelite menu was strongly linked to the cultic practices, as the animals allowed to be given as offerings on the altar could have been also consumed in the daily diet, whereas other aliments were mainly used during cultic manifestations. Thus, they could not become a part of the custom diet. For Israelites, eating certain types of foods became a form of expressing one’s ethnic heritage, being among the first fundamental elements charged with a special symbolism, aimed to preserve the cultural identity and solidarity within the group. Although it is hard to find out exactly how strict were the regulations regarding the dietary laws respected, one must also take into consideration that self-defining was most probably the reason why some lists numbered different animals free to eat, while others were denied from consumption. Some taboos do not strictly refer to the source of the food, but more to the way it was cooked; for instance, the kid could not be cooked in its mother’s milk (Ex. 23, 18; 34, 26; Deut. 14, 21).

Chapter IV – *The role of Animals in the Daily Life of the Israelites* develops the role of the post-Noah dispensation in response to the Hebrew sacrificial system. The majority of the Judaic literature from the medieval era describes Noah as the keeper of an ante-flood tradition which claimed that all first born males were dedicated to the fulfillment of sacerdotal functions. According to this conception, Noah is seen as a shepherd and sender of this tradition to the latter generations: “Cain brought God offerings from the land’s fruits, so did Abel. These people experienced a big sacrament regarding the sacrifices and offerings, just like Noah did.” In another train of thoughts, it was considered that ever since the creation of the world, the first born used to bring offerings, also keeping the hierarchy. Thus, when Cain killed Abel, the hierarchy accrued to Seth, so that after to accrue to Noah (Num. Rab. 4:8). We are told in the book of Zohar that Noah discovered what makes the world go round, that he knew this was kept through the use of offerings, and that “if they did not exist, there would not have been the ones above and the ones beneath” (Zoh. 1. 58)

In order to discern the implications the divine dispensation regarding food had upon the human, one must take into consideration the fact that the first commandment given by God to the humans redounded upon their capacity of bringing into prominence the spiritual qualities with which they were gifted at the Creation, to

refrain their turns regarding their nature; in other words, to manifest abstinence. Thus, the fifth chapter of the given thesis is entitled *Fasting and ministry*.

Although the origins of fasting fade into time, there are numerous theories claiming that fasting appeared as a spiritual preparing for the participation to a sacred feast, as a method of reaching a sensation of wistfulness or as a means of achieving virility after a period of infertility. Falling into the sin of the first humans was, first of all, an infringement of the divine command which denied the consumption of the fruits of a certain tree; thus, the first sin was caused by the infringement of a dietary restriction. Of course, this only represents the material side on which the divine command was concentered, which was, in fact, the testing of our First Parents' moral capacities. According to this, N. Sarna considers that the man was called by God to exercise his own limits and self-discipline regarding the fulfillment of his turns and desires. Because the man was not able to commit to this refrain from culinary cravings, the interdiction from Gen. 2, 16 will work as a paradigm for future legislations, which will especially centre on these dietary restrictions.

The sixth chapter, entitled *The Dietary Laws Reflected in the New Testament*, analyzes the divine dispensation and the laws referring to food through the eyes of the law of the New Testament. Often enough, theology occurred to a food hermeneutics throughout

which the theologian is slightly changed by what he “consumes”. Some signs of this “consumption” are already given by the particular way in which the theologian approaches his research: through culture, language, and traditions. This feeding process is also crowned by an endless process of observation, accumulation and submission towards imagination and inspiration. Thus, the analogy between theology and food does not lack content, because food becomes part of our bodies, just like actions and contexts become part of the theological praxis. From an orthodox point of view, one can affirm that the questions raised by human food are strongly linked to Housel, meaning that the vitality and intimacy of common feeding are augmented by the communion with the God’s Holy Flesh and Blood. Housel represents a vital and intimate action of the most sublime feeding a human can be part of: starvation for the food and drink which alleviates our body is followed by the feeding with God as bread, a thankful sacramental celebration to God accomplished by the community gathered in the presence of the Holy Spirit. From this perspective, Housel is the one transforming hunger into satiety and individualism into the common participation to the sky’s divine feast. In the same time, as the paradigm of a culinary symbol, Housel can share numerous interpretations which can transit from one symbol to another, so that the absence of Christ turns into a living presence through the symbols of bread and wine, representing His blood and

flesh, which also represent the Church. In terms of food, some of the customs that characterized Judeans was the kosher law, first rescinded by our God Jesus Christ (Mc. 7, 19), and then by the Primary Church (Acts, 10, 14-16; I Cor. 10, 23-27). In the book The Acts of the Apostles, Peter's vision regarding the unclean foods which came from the sky (Acts 10, 9-15) works as a reference of the equal accede in the Church of Christ (Acts 10, 28-29; 34). Passing from a restraining law to a permissive one symbolizes for God's apprentices a change in their belonging, from one exclusivist Judaic group to one which included other people too (Acts 10, 28; 15, 23-29). The longest blessing preached by Paul the Apostle to the Corinthians bases on dietary elements, more precisely on the consumption of meats dedicated to idols (I Cor. 8; 10). This problem, along with the one regarding God's Supper's foods of the participants had great repercussions inside the community. The food that someone consumes acts like an identifying element towards the belonging of a certain group. Thus, it also fulfills an important social tare.



## **Conclusions**

The purpose of the given paper is to analyze the role of God's dispensation through Noah regarding the food, as well as penetrating the essence of Judaic specific dietary laws, starting from the text of the Genesis 9 book.

The society in which we live claims itself as postmodern and full of information, though, no matter what we are struggling to achieve, we realize that the richest asset we own for our wellbeing continues to remain the unrestricted access to information. The last decades' breakthroughs led mankind towards new horizons, which were hardly even dreamt of in the past. However, today's Man is harassed by all these sources of information and the lack of a pertinent, well-conceived system, and can easily lend himself to all sorts of religiously-spiritual temptations that are easily spread.

Postmodernism, as we consider it, assumes that everything Man gained throughout millenniums of hard work should be left aside, while he surrenders towards science and takes for granted only what science can prove. The biblical thought of the Old Testament did not required logical reasoning in order to guide itself through time and society; it was mainly based on previous experiences. Thus, we can assume that the Man received all that was necessary for him

to live a good life under all its aspects, through divine revelation. Only by obeying to these divine rules could have led him to the moment “when the time arrived” (Gal. 4, 4), when the divine promise could have been fully accomplished through our Savior, Jesus Christ.

Ever since the beginning food occupied an important role in the biblical beliefs, so that one can easily notice that in Genesis, 1-11, when God first created the world, determined that all plants with leaves should become food for the animals, while those with seeds and fruits should become food for people. More recently, Adam and Eve were also tested through the means of food, as they were allowed to consume any fruit from Eden except the tree of knowing good and evil, which was located in the middle of the Garden (Gen. 2, 9; 3, 3). After the Flood people were allowed to also eat animals, this certain disclaim being present especially in the tale of the Flood, narrated in Genesis, chapter 9.

The present inquire enfolds in a quite scattered area, far from presenting too much interest. Moreover, the present theme was never before approached in the Romanian theological space, while the international researches in the field mainly reached across offering socio-cultural answers. A simple look into the matter may claim that the only notable thing one should bear in mind is paradise’s interdiction of consuming a certain fruit, and then the interdiction of

consuming pork. Thus, the value of the present research does not only rely on its relevance towards Biblical Theology and the possibility of developing it in the future, but also towards adjacent domains, such as sociologic or historical studies. Although the approach of this theme was mainly conducted by using the text from the Old Testament, while also taking into consideration that the Old Testament is an integrated part of the Holy Scripture, it is important to stress the dietary laws by the authors of the New Testament. Thus, the fulfillment of the divine promise in the person of our Savior, Jesus Christ, could not have been accomplished without the reflection upon all the aspects of life, including food and the customs of eating in the New Testament.

As it was previously recalled, the access to ancient cultures and civilizations is facilitated by a small series of written springs, which, where present, have the tendency of mirroring the accomplishments of the social, economical and political elites. These reflections are mainly subjective, favoring their own image in the detriment of others. Under these circumstances, even the foods consumed by these elites were built in a favorable matter for such encounters, especially because the eaten foods were an integrated part of social and cultural manifestations. Thus, food can make for an important social marker in respect of both social and morally-religious life aspects. This can be easily illustrated through the instauration of the Israelite sacrificial

system along with the enouncement of the dietary laws from Leviticus 11. The given possibilities offered by the enouncement of these mosaic laws also required the evaluation of the problem through the eyes of foods in the Roman world, so that later the meanings of food in the context of Christian rituals can be revealed. Many of the Christians converted in the first centuries linked food to the existing social contexts which were dominated by the Roman conceptions. The converted Jews considered the Mosaic Law superior, abstaining from the consumption of the same dishes like the rest. Based on these affirmations, one can easily conclude that, just like the laws flanged upon food defined the identity of Jews as a distinct kind from their contemporary neighbors, so is the appointed housel by the Savior at the Last Supper essentially defining the group who followed Him from the rest of the society.

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