

ROMANS 14 AND IMPURITY IN THE MISHNAH

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Introduction

Ever since Paul Minear proposed that Romans 14–15 reflects a conflict between the Jews and Gentiles in Rome,¹ scholarly debate has included a

1. Minear argued that the ‘weak’ in faith (Jewish Christians) condemned the ‘strong’ in faith within Rome, while those strong in faith (Gentile Christians) scorned and despised those weak in faith. See Paul S. Minear, *The Obedience of Faith: The Purposes of Paul in the Epistle to the Romans* (SBT, 19; London: SCM Press, 1971), pp. 8-23. This view ignited the debate over Romans 14–15, and many scholars have championed Minear’s view, but at the same time, many have opposed it. For the proponents of Minear’s view, see Wolfgang Wiefel, ‘Jewish Community in Ancient Rome and the Origins of Roman Christianity’, in Karl P. Donfried (ed.), *The Romans Debate* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1991), pp. 85-101; Günter Klein, ‘Paul’s Purpose in Writing the Epistle to the Romans’, in Donfried (ed.), *Romans Debate*, pp. 29-43; A.J.M. Wedderburn, *The Reasons for Romans* (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1988); James D.G. Dunn, *Romans 9–16* (WBC, 38B; Dallas: Word Books, 1988), p. 795; Francis Watson, ‘The Two Roman Congregations: Romans 14:1–15:13’, in Donfried (ed.), *Romans Debate*, pp. 203-15; *idem*, *Paul, Judaism, and the Gentiles: A Sociological Approach* (SNTSMS, 56; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986), p. 180; *idem*, *Paul, Judaism, and the Gentiles: Beyond the New Perspective* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, rev. edn, 2007); James R. Edwards, *Romans* (NIBCNT, 6; Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1992), pp. 317-19; Joseph A. Fitzmyer, *Romans: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary* (AB, 33; New York: Doubleday, 1993), pp. 686-88; James C. Walters, *Ethnic Issues in Paul’s Letter to the Romans: Changing Self-Definitions in Earliest Roman Christianity* (Valley Forge, PA: Trinity Press International, 1993), pp. 86-92; Peter Stuhlmacher, *Paul’s Letter to the Romans: A Commentary* (trans. Scott J. Hafemann; Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox, 1994), pp. 219-21; Anthony J. Guerra, *Romans and the Apologetic Tradition: The Purpose, Genre, and Audience of Paul’s*

discussion of the identity of the Roman congregation to which Paul was writing and an examination of the specific situation that prompted the letter.² In other words, scholars have attempted to answer questions as to who

Letter (SNTSMS, 81; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995); Douglas J. Moo, *The Epistle to the Romans* (NICNT; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1996), pp. 826-33; John M.G. Barclay, "'Do We Undermine the Law?'" A Study of Romans 14:1–15:6', in James D.G. Dunn (ed.), *Paul and the Mosaic Law: The Third Durham-Tübingen Research Symposium on Earliest Christianity and Judaism (Durham, September, 1994)* (Tubingen: J.C.B. Mohr, 1996), pp. 287-308; Mark D. Nanos, *The Mystery of Romans: The Jewish Context of Paul's Letter* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1996), pp. 75-85; *idem*, 'The Jewish Context of the Gentile Audience Addressed in Paul's Letter to the Romans', *CBQ* 61 (1999), pp. 283-304 (297-304); Thomas R. Schreiner, *Romans* (BECNT, 6; Grand Rapids: Baker, 1998), p. 705; Mark Reasoner, *The Strong and the Weak: Romans 14:1–15:13 in Context* (SNTSMS, 103; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999); Ben Witherington III and Darlene Hyatt, *Paul's Letter to the Romans: A Socio-Rhetorical Commentary* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2004), pp. 330-33; A. Andrew Das, *Paul and the Jews* (Library of Pauline Studies; Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 2003); *idem*, *Solving the Romans Debate* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2007); *idem*, "'Praise the Lord, All You Gentiles": The Encoded Audience of Romans 15:7-13', *JSNT* 34 (2011), pp. 90-110; Robert Jewett, *Romans: A Commentary* (Hermeneia; Minneapolis: Fortress, 2007), pp. 833-36; David G. Horrell, *Solidarity and Difference: A Contemporary Reading of Paul's Ethics* (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 2nd edn, 2016), pp. 182-89.

2. For the opponents of Minear's view, see Robert J. Karris, 'Rom 14:1–15:13 and the Occasion of Romans', *CBQ* 35 (1973), pp. 155-78; Junji Kinoshita, 'Romans, Two Writings Combined: A New Interpretation of the Body of Romans', *NovT* 7 (1965), pp. 258-77; Günther Bornkamm, 'Letter to the Romans as Paul's Last Will and Testament', in Karl P. Donfried (ed.), *The Romans Debate* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1991), pp. 29-43; J. Paul Sampley, 'The Weak and the Strong: Paul's Careful and Crafty Rhetorical Strategy in Romans 14:1–15:13', in L. Michael White and O. Larry Yarbrough (eds.), *The Social World of the First Christians* (Festschrift Wayne A. Meeks; Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1995), pp. 40-52; Wayne A. Meeks, 'Judgment and the Brothers: Romans 14:1–15:3', in Gerald F. Hawthorne (ed.), *Tradition and Interpretation in the New Testament: Essays in Honor of E. Earle Ellis for His 60th Birthday* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1987), pp. 290-300; Herman C. Waetjen, *The Letter to the Romans: Salvation as Justice and the Deconstruction of Law* (New Testament Monographs, 32; Sheffield: Sheffield Phoenix Press, 2011), pp. 315-16.

the weak and the strong were, what the social situation behind Romans 14–15 was and what Paul’s stance on the situation was.³ In this debate, scholars often arrive at three related conclusions: First, Romans 14–15 deals with dietary laws.⁴ Secondly, ‘the weak’ represents Jewish Christians while ‘the strong’ represents Gentile Christians.⁵ Thirdly, Paul presents the position that the Jewish dietary laws do not have efficacy anymore but have been abolished.⁶ These three conclusions presuppose an antagonistic tension between Jewish and Christian theology and argue that Paul diverged from his Jewish traditions.

3. These three areas of inquiry have been explored through a variety of methodological angles, including social-scientific approaches, intertextual studies, Jewish approaches and so on. For social-scientific approaches, see Watson, *Paul*, pp. 175-81; Philip Francis Esler, *Conflict and Identity in Romans: The Social Setting of Paul’s Letter* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2003), pp. 339-56; *idem*, *Community and Gospel in Luke–Acts: The Social and Political Motivations of Lucan Theology* (SNTSMS, 57; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987), pp. 65-70. For intertextual studies, see Karris, ‘Rom 14:1–15:13’, pp. 75-99; Meeks, ‘Judgment’, 290-300; Michael B. Thompson, *Clothed with Christ: The Example and Teaching of Jesus in Romans 12:1–15:13* (JSNTSup, 59; Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1991), pp. 188-93. For Jewish approaches, see Peter J. Tomson, *Paul and the Jewish Law: Halakha in the Letters of the Apostle to the Gentiles* (CRINT, 3; Assen: Van Gorcum, 1990), pp. 242-43; Jacob Milgrom, ‘The Dynamics of Purity in the Priestly System’, in M.J.H.M. Poorthuis and Joshua J. Schwartz (ed.), *Purity and Holiness: The Heritage of Leviticus* (Jewish and Christian Perspectives Series, 2; Leiden: Brill, 2000), pp. 27-32; Jonathan Klawans, ‘Notions of Gentile Impurity in Ancient Judaism’, *AJS Review* 20 (1995), pp. 285-312.

4. Joel Marcus, ‘The Circumcision and the Uncircumcision in Rome’, *NTS* 35 (1989), pp. 67-81; Barclay, ‘Do We Undermine’, p. 289; C.E.B. Cranfield, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Epistle to the Romans 9–16* (ICC, 24A; Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1979), pp. 690-98; Watson, *Paul*, pp. 88-98; Wedderburn, *Reasons*, pp. 30-35; Dunn, *Romans 9–16*, pp. 795-806.

5. C.K. Barrett, *A Commentary on the Epistle to the Romans* (BNTC; London: A. & C. Black, 1962), pp. 256-57; Cranfield, *Romans 9–16*, pp. 694-97; Dunn, *Romans 9–16*, pp. 792-802; Alan F. Segal, *Paul the Convert: The Apostolate and Apostasy of Saul the Pharisee* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1990), pp. 231-33; Tomson, *Paul*, pp. 236-58.

6. Stuhlmacher, *Romans*, p. 227; Schreiner, *Romans*, pp. 730-31; Barclay, ‘Do We Undermine’, pp. 287-308.

Although these conclusions are popular, the proposal that Paul stood against the Jewish law seems to be a hasty conclusion, given the other times Paul supported the law (i.e. Rom. 7.12-17).⁷ The picture, however, may have been more complex. A newer interpretive tendency among some scholars refuses a bifurcated view of the identity of the weak and the strong. This recent position objects that those who claim ‘the weak’ and ‘the strong’ represent the Jewish Christians and Gentile Christians, respectively, assume that Jewish Christians had already compromised their Jewish law regarding food regulations. Moreover, these scholars criticize the claim that Paul opposes the Torah and rejects the Jewish way of life in Romans 14–15.⁸

7. The conventional understanding of Romans 14, in which ‘the weak’ represents Jewish Christians while ‘the strong’ indicates Gentile Christians, presupposes that non-believing Jews had never had opportunities for table fellowship with Gentiles. See Neil Elliott, ‘Asceticism among the “Weak” and the “Strong” in Romans 14–15’, in Leif E. Vaage and Vincent L. Wimbush (eds.), *Asceticism and the New Testament* (New York: Routledge, 1999), pp. 231-54 (236).

8. For instance, Nanos avers that Romans 14–15 is not about Paul’s opposition to the Jewish law. Rather, Paul urges that both the weak and the strong should be respectful of each other because they have the same faith and the same God. Nanos views the weak in Romans 14–15 as non-believing Jews. In this way, Nanos avoids creating a division between Judaism and Christianity. See Nanos, *Mystery*, pp. 139-43. Also, Rudolph, by re-assessing Rom. 14.14, 20, argues that Paul is not antagonistic to the Jewish law. Instead, as a Second Temple Jew, Paul pronounced the food law to be binding on Jews, not on Gentiles. David J. Rudolph, ‘Paul and the Food Laws: A Reassessment of Romans 14:14, 20’, in Gabriele Boccaccini and Carlos A. Segovia (eds.), *Paul the Jew: Rereading the Apostle as a Figure of Second Temple Judaism* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2016), pp. 151-82. For more recent studies on the issue, see Paula Fredriksen, ‘How Later Contexts Affect Pauline Content, or: Retrospect is the Mother of Anachronism’, in Peter J. Tomson and Joshua Schwartz (eds.), *Jews and Christians in the First and Second Centuries: How to Write Their History* (CRINT, 13; Leiden: Brill, 2014), pp. 17-51; Steven D. Fraade, ‘Ascetical Aspects of Ancient Judaism’, in Arthur Green (ed.), *Jewish Spirituality: From the Bible through the Middle Ages* (World Spirituality; New York: Crossroad, 1986), pp. 253-88; Nanos, *Mystery*, p. 96 n. 3; Richard Valantasis, ‘A Theory of the Social Function of Asceticism’, in Vincent L. Wimbush and Richard Valantasis (eds.), *Asceticism* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1995), pp. 544-52; Elliott, ‘Asceticism’, pp. 231-51; Barclay, ‘Do We Undermine’, pp. 292-93.

The present paper likewise argues against a simplistic, bifurcated divide between Judaism and Christianity. Rather, this essay proposes an interpretation in which Paul deals with the dietary and purity matters in Romans 14 against a Jewish backdrop. Admittedly, there are limits to using a Jewish tradition approach. Throughout Jewish history, Judaism has not been a monolithic tradition but a dynamic and diverse one (e.g. the divergences between Rabbinic, Qumran and Hellenistic Judaism).⁹ The very definition of Judaism would be described differently depending on the region, culture and textual sources examined.¹⁰ The same complexity applies to Paul's

9. For a summary of the recent study of ancient Judaisms, see Stanley E. Porter's article. He rightly observes that 'Judaism' was defined differently over the years, even within modern Western scholarship. First, in the nineteenth and part of the twentieth century, scholars mostly equated the tradition with Rabbinic Judaism, which is Pharisee-centered and values the Hebrew Bible and oral tradition as normative. This picture of Judaism lumps together Diaspora and Palestinian Judaism. Later, scholars started to distinguish between Palestinian Judaism and Diaspora Judaism, acknowledging the regional differences on a larger scale. This is a movement toward a dynamic view of Judaism. Later still, there was a tendency to concentrate on the larger context, the Greco-Roman world, rather than on Palestinian Judaism alone. Finally, instead of an explicit separation between the two Judaism(s), some scholars suggest an interface of the two. This school of thought argues that Judaism in the Diaspora was a creative and robust form of Judaism that was influenced by Hellenism. For further explanation and references, see Stanley E. Porter, 'Was Paul a Good Jew? Fundamental Issues in a Current Debate', in Stanley E. Porter and Brook W.R. Pearson (eds.), *Christian-Jewish Relations Through the Centuries* (JSNTSup, 192; Roehampton Papers, 6; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 2000), pp. 148-74. Also see Bruce Chilton and Jacob Neusner, *Judaism in the New Testament: Practices and Beliefs* (London: Routledge, 1995), pp. 1-41; Peter J. Tomson and Joshua Schwartz (eds.), *Jews and Christians in the First and Second Centuries: How to Write Their History* (CRINT, 13; Leiden: Brill, 2014).

10. Yair Furstenberg explains that 'Second Temple halakhah is often described as consisting of two competing traditions: the Sadducean tradition shared by the Qumran *Yahad*, and the Pharisaic tradition later developed by the rabbis' (Yair Furstenberg, 'Outsider Impurity: Trajectories of Second Temple Separation Traditions in Tannaitic Literature', in Menahem Kister *et al.* [eds.], *Tradition, Transmission, and Transformation from Second Temple Literature through Judaism and Christianity in Late Antiquity: Proceedings of the Thirteenth International Symposium of the Orion Center for the Study of the Dead Sea Scrolls and Associated Literature, Jointly Sponsored by the Hebrew University Center for the Study of*

Jewish identity. Since E.P. Sanders's work, *Paul and Palestinian Judaism*, many scholars have reexamined the identity of Paul as a Jew. Yet none of the conclusions have reached anything close to a consensus, perhaps in part because scholars have been investigating different sources and arguing from different perspectives.¹¹ Therefore, it is impossible to propose a sole,

Christianity, 22–24 February, 2011 [STDJ, 113; Leiden: Brill, 2015], pp. 40-68 [68]).

11. Alan Segal (*Paul the Convert*) approaches the study of Paul and Judaism from the perspective of Second Temple Judaism as context and an apocalyptic Paul as his focus. He investigates the terms Paul uses and asserts that Paul employs concepts and vocabulary similar to those that Jewish mystics used. Segal argues that Paul was a convert, but his conversion is not an inter-religious conversion but intra-religious, from Pharisaic Jew to apocalyptic Jew. See Segal, *Paul the Convert*, pp. 6-7. John Barclay, on the other hand, attempts to trace Paul's identity using a sociological approach. Through sociological categories such as assimilation, acculturation and accommodation, Barclay claims that Paul displays dual loyalties to Judaism and Christianity simultaneously. Because of the dual loyalties, he is an anomalous Jew in the sense that he attempted to redefine a Judaism without ethnicity and nationalism, and in that sense Paul is an apostate in the eyes of other Jews. John M.G. Barclay, 'Paul among Diaspora Jews: Anomaly or Apostate', *JSNT* 60 (1995), pp. 89-120. Christopher Stanley asserts that Paul did not divide Christianity from Judaism but forged a new identity for believers in Christ. He argues that 'Paul's references to "Jews" and "Greeks" must be viewed against the backdrop of a history of interethnic (not inter-religious) conflict between people who defined themselves as "Jews" and "Greeks" in the cities of the eastern Mediterranean basin' (Christopher D. Stanley, 'Neither Jew nor Greek: Ethnic Conflict in Graeco-Roman Society', *JSNT* 64 [1996], pp. 101-24). James Dunn tries to explain and determine the identity of Paul via a terminological approach. He explores the terms Jew, Judaism, Hebrew and Israel. Based on Paul's use of the term 'Jew', Dunn asserts that Paul appreciates Jews and thought of himself as a Jew. Nevertheless, Paul does not maintain the concept of being a Jew in a strictly ethnic sense. In terms of 'Judaism', Dunn argues that what we are talking about regarding Judaism is generally Second Temple Judaism, but the Judaism to which Paul refers in his writings is mostly rabbinic Judaism, which emphasizes the law of Israel and the Jewish way of life. In conclusion, Dunn defines Paul as a Jew in a limited sense, such that Paul was not within Judaism by the time he wrote his letters but was, of course, still a Hebrew and an Israelite. James D.G. Dunn, 'Who Did Paul Think He Was? A Study of Jewish-Christian Identity', *NTS* 45 (1999), pp. 174-93. Shaye Cohen's chapter is also a helpful resource for defining these terms. See Shaye J.D. Cohen, 'Religion,

normative notion of Judaism regarding Jewish purification and dietary issues because of the immense diversity of textual sources and views within those sources.¹²

Having said that, the present work will limit the scope to rabbinic sources in order to propose a plausible interpretation of how Paul sees the food laws and purity issues in the church of Rome against his Jewish backdrop, and will suggest the likely implications of Paul's exhortation to the

Ethnicity and "Hellenism" in the Emergence of Jewish Identity in Maccabean Palestine', in Per Bilde (ed.), *Religion and Religious Practice in the Seleucid Kingdom* (Studies in Hellenistic Judaism, 1; Aarhus: Aarhus University Press, 1990), pp. 204-23. Also, for more on the debate about Paul's Jewishness, see James E. Davidson, 'The Patterns of Salvation in Paul and in Palestinian Judaism', *JReIS* 15 (1989), pp. 99-118; W.D. Davies, 'Paul: From the Jewish Point of View', *CHJ*, III, pp. 678-730 (680-91).

12. For example, through exploring the relevant works of Marcobius, Philo, Seneca and Josephus, Barclay concludes that, even if Paul does not denounce the Torah or Jewish tradition, he relativizes the significance of both. In other words, Paul subverts the absoluteness of Jewish laws, not the Torah per se. In that sense, Paul effectively undermines the social integrity of the law-observant Christians in Rome. Barclay, 'Do We Undermine', pp. 294-308. On the other hand, Elliott surveys the Mishnah and claims that the issue at stake in Romans 14–15 is a matter of asceticism. He proposes that Paul's primary concern is not food laws but the matter of impurity. Elliott suggests that Paul respects the asceticism of both the law-observant and non-observant. In other words, for the law-observant, the expression of asceticism is to abstain from some foods but to keep *kashrut* (dietary law), and for the non-observant, asceticism means the freedom to eat everything and yet the attitude of judging their fellows who do not feel this freedom. Elliott, 'Asceticism', pp. 236-43. David J. Rudolph argues that the term *κοινός* in Rom. 14.14 does not relate to a food problem but impurity. Using texts from Second Temple Judaism and the Mishnah, he argues that an impure status is a subjective matter. That is, an individual's decisions and mindset make something impure to that individual. Thus, impurity depends on a personal sense of purification, and impurity is not a static or normative regulation for every Jew. He concludes that 'the weak' in Romans 14 refers to those who regard certain foods as ontologically impure (in and of themselves). In light of this, Rudolph investigates Second Temple Judaism and Pharisaic Judaism to identify Paul's stance on the issue in Romans 14–15. Rudolph, 'Food Laws', pp. 154-62.

church in Rome.¹³ In terms of his Jewish setting, this essay will argue that the Mishnaic tradition contains three relevant features regarding Jewish purity laws. First, the Mishnah does not delineate that the object itself is pure or impure. Rather, the impurity of objects is determined by the primary and the secondary source of the impurity. Secondly, human intention is a determinative factor of purity. Thirdly, Gentiles are not affected by Jewish purity laws, as the laws are only concerned with Jews. With these features in mind, the present essay will argue that Paul does not subvert or dismiss Judaism, but rather presents a view similar to rabbinic tradition regarding purity matters. In particular, Paul's statement that 'Nothing is unclean in itself except to the one who considers something to be unclean, then it is unclean' (Rom. 14.14)¹⁴ is not the perspective of a convert but is derived from his Jewish background. However, Paul's view is not confined by Judaism but includes a modified outlook that, in Christ, food does not matter to the kingdom of God. The unity of the community does matter. Put differently, Paul, in line with the perspective of Pharisaic Judaism, explains that the food itself is not unclean. However, through a reconfigured outlook from his knowledge of Jesus, Paul attempts to enact reconciliation between the two groups in question, regardless of their different backgrounds. Therefore, regardless of who the weak and the strong are in Romans 14, what Paul writes is an exhortation to the two people groups in the church of Rome to love one another and build their unity as a congregation.

Regardless of the exact identity of 'the weak' and 'the strong', the issue in Romans 14–15 is primarily about the broken relationship between two

13. It cannot be emphasized strongly enough that what Paul addresses to his interlocutors about the law and Jewish tradition relates to his Jewish background and the behaviors encouraged or discouraged by it for Jewish life. According to Tomson, 'Halakah may be described as the tradition of formulated rules of conduct regulating life in Judaism. It has a literary, a legal and a social aspect. Halakah is a classic literary genre of Rabbinic literature, and it is also a legal system which is distinct from other systems. It is a tradition because it is the creation of a community of scholars who were in many ways ordinary members of society, and for centuries they transmitted their tradition orally' (Tomson, *Paul*, p. 19). Therefore, we may say that halakah is a legal system which is concerned with the behavior of its own Jewish community. This is the reason that halakah could be a source by which to glimpse Paul's perspective on Jewish behaviors and the legal concepts of his variety of Judaism.

14. All translations are the author's unless otherwise noted.

people groups.¹⁵ One group of people eats only vegetables, while the other group has the faith to eat any food. Paul labels those who eat only vegetables as ‘the weak’ (ἡ ἀσθενής) and the other as ‘the strong’ (οἱ δυνατοί) or ‘the one who believes’ (ὁς πιστεύει). Confronting the issue, Paul unequivocally states his view on food, that nothing is ‘unclean’ (κοινός) by itself, but it is unclean to the one who reckons it as unclean (Rom. 14.14). Through Paul’s statements, we may assume that Paul is dealing with some sort of food and purity issue in Romans 14.¹⁶ In this regard, the following section will explore how the Mishnah describes such issues in order to shed light on Paul’s assessment of the situation.

Food Laws and Impurity in the Mishnah

Of course, a question may be raised about whether the Mishnah adequately reflects Pharisaic Judaism. Strictly speaking, the Pharisees represent a religious group of Jews from late Second Temple Judaism, pre-70 CE, while the Mishnah is the literature of the rabbinic tradition post-70 CE. Nevertheless,

15. To pinpoint the identity of ‘the weak’ and ‘the strong’ has long been a concern for academic study of Romans 14–15. Nevertheless, this paper leaves that debate for another time and instead focuses on how Paul sees purity and dietary issues through his Jewish background and how he deals with the issues with a blend of tradition and innovation.

16. Most scholars agree that the general occasion of Romans 14 relates to Jewish food laws and purity. Rudolph sets the issue as the food laws, yet he points out the difficulties of determining the precise situation. He says, ‘studies on Romans 14 often do not make a distinction between the Torah’s dietary laws that define clean/unclean animals and purity legislation’ (Rudolph, ‘Food Laws’, p. 172 n. 3). Elliott observes that the issue in Rom. 14.1–15.13 is not about eating food offered to idols as in the letter to the Corinthians but rather about eating ‘common’ (κοινός, Rom. 14.14), profane foods. Elliott, ‘Asceticism’, pp. 232–33. Sanders understands Romans 14 as addressing ‘divergent practices about food and days’ (E.P. Sanders, *Paul, the Law, and the Jewish People* [Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1983], p. 101). Barclay claims that ‘Rom 14 is concerned with the practice of the Jewish Torah, especially the rules of kashrut concerning “clean” and “unclean” food (14:1–2, 14, 20), the honoring of the Sabbath (14:5–6), and (perhaps) Jewish anxieties concerning idol-dedicated wine (14:21)’. John M.G. Barclay, ‘Faith and Self-Detachment from Cultural Norms: A Study in Romans 14–15’, *ZNW* 104 (2013), pp. 192–208 (192).

in the continuation of Jewish tradition and its historical development, we may claim that there are no decisive differences between Pharisaic Judaism and rabbinic literature, because the outlook of the Pharisees constituted the only major position on Jewish life that continued after 70 CE. Jacob Neusner explains the sense of continuity that the rabbis believed their teachings to have with previous Jewish texts and traditions, especially the work of the Pharisees:

Written and oral Torah was revealed at Sinai to Moses, passed on from him to Joshua, then to the Judges, the Prophets, the Men of the Great Assembly, the scribes, the sages of Second Temple Pharisaism, and finally, to the rabbis, who wrote it all down in the Mishnah, the Tosefta, the two Gemarot, Babylonian and Palestinian, and related compilations—all containing the revelation of Sinai. Since the Talmudic rabbis saw as rabbis, all their predecessors, beginning with Moses ‘our rabbi’, it was natural to regard their immediate antecedents as no different from themselves.¹⁷

Purity System in the Mishnah

Unlike in the Qumran community, the purity system in the Mishnah is associated with ontological rather than moral holiness, according to Neusner and Bruce Chilton.¹⁸ In other words, one’s holiness is not determined by what one has done but by one’s degree of holiness based on their sacred state in society and the world. The more sacred person is more susceptible to being unclean compared to another who is less holy. Therefore, one’s uncleanness represents a state of lesser holiness rather than any moral sinfulness. By asserting so, Neusner and Chilton divorce morality from purity.¹⁹

17. Jacob Neusner, ‘Pharisaic-Rabbinic Judaism: A Clarification’, *History of Religions* 12 (1973), pp. 250-70 (250). For the detailed distinction between Pharisees and rabbis and its history, refer to Neusner, ‘Pharisaic-Rabbinic Judaism’, pp. 250-70.

18. Jacob Neusner and Bruce D. Chilton, ‘Uncleanness: A Moral or an Ontological Category in the Early Centuries A.D.’, *BBR* 1 (1991), pp. 63-88 (65).

19. To support their view, they provide the example of *m. Soṭ.* 9.15. It says, ‘Heedfulness leads to physical cleanliness, cleanliness to levitical purity, purity to separateness, separateness to holiness, holiness to humility, humility to the shunning of sin, shunning of sin to saintliness, saintliness to the Holy Spirit, the Holy Spirit to the resurrection of the dead’.

Jonathan Klawans also distinguishes between moral and ritual impurity. While ritual impurity (e.g. defiled food, contact with a dead body or bodily discharges) resulted in an impermanent and removable consequence, moral impurity (e.g. defiling acts such as murder, sexual sins and cultic sins) was punishable. According to his categorical classification, Klawans claims that Second Temple Judaism banned Jewish participation in the practices of the morally impure behaviors of the Gentiles.²⁰

Jacob Milgrom suggests two different layers in the purity system. He argues that the antonym of uncleanness is holiness. He explains that purity is a normative state, and all Israelites are commanded to avoid impurity. The way of addressing impurity is the purification process effected through ritual ceremonies.²¹ That is, the state of impurity is temporary until ritual ceremonies purify the person or the holy space that was defiled.

M. Hagigah 2.5-7 is one of the earliest halakic examples of literature that presents the Pharisaic notion of impurity. Through this passage, the hierarchical layering of purity that was discussed above is quite evident, as is the contagious nature of impurity:

(2.5) One must wash his hands for unconsecrated foods, tithes and heave offerings, but immerse them for hallowed things. With regard to [the preparation of the] purification waters, if his hands have been defiled, his whole body is defiled.

(2.6) He who immerses for unconsecrated food, and is 'held' for unconsecrated food, may not touch tithes. He who immerses for tithes, and is 'held' for tithes, may not touch the heave-offering. He who immerses for the heave-offering, and is 'held' for the heave-offering, may not touch hallowed things. He who immerses for hallowed things, and is 'held' for hallowed things, may not touch purification waters. He who immerses for the higher sanctity is allowed to touch what is on a lower sanctity. If he immersed without being 'held', it is as though he had not immersed at all.

20. Klawans provides Jewish literature of the Greco-Roman period to support the view that purity terms were used to refer to Gentile behaviors and to prohibit Jews from joining such activity. See Klawans, 'Notions', pp. 293-96. He asserts that the Gentiles were not welcomed to the holy place of the Jews. On the other hand, he admits that some Jews may have considered the Gentiles to be ritually impure, not just morally impure.

21. Milgrom, 'Dynamics', p. 30.

(2.7) The clothes of an ‘am ha-’aresò (עַם הָאָרֶץ) [people of the land, the Jew] carry midras impurity for Pharisees. The clothes of Pharisees carry midras impurity for priests eating heave offerings. The clothes of heave-offering eaters carry midras impurity for hallowed things. Yose b. Yoezer was the most pious of the priesthood, yet his apron carried midras impurity for hallowed things. Yoḥanan b. Gudgada always ate in accordance with the purity of hallowed things, yet his apron counted as carrying midras impurity with respect to purification waters.²²

Interpreting the passage, Furstenberg asserts that the Hebrew word הוֹחֹזֵק translated as ‘held’ in 2.6 refers to the social status or public image of a person as reckoned by others.²³ In this case, in *m. Hag.* 2.6 it would be understood that someone’s purity must be ratified by public recognition of their state. Moreover, Furstenberg argues that early Rabbinic Judaism presented the same notion of Gentile impurity as did Essene Judaism, namely, the notion of a separation between the inner group and outsiders.²⁴ In *m. Hag.* 2.7, there are three different people groups: ‘the people of the land’, the Pharisees and the priests. Any interaction between two groups would negatively affect the holier group. In other words, holier people are more capable of becoming impure than others, because holier people are more susceptible to uncleanness.²⁵ Therefore, in order to remain pure, the people of a higher level of purity should be cautious not to come into contact with the lower-level group. Contact—physical touch—is very important for much of the purity system.²⁶

This purity system is also applied to Jew and Gentile real estate elsewhere in the Mishnah:

One who buys a field in Syria next to the Land of Israel, if he can enter it in purity, it is pure and it is obligated in tithes and in [the laws

22. Translated by Yair Furstenberg. For the original source and the Hebrew, see Furstenberg, ‘Outsider Impurity’, pp. 48-49.

23. Furstenberg, ‘Outsider Impurity’, p. 50.

24. According to the survey of Furstenberg, however, the early and the later Mishnah do not present identical viewpoints regarding purity. The later Mishnah is a revised version. Furstenberg, ‘Outsider Impurity’, pp. 40-68.

25. Neusner and Chilton, ‘Uncleanness’, p. 66.

26. See *m. Neg.* 13.10, which has a similar notion of purity and contamination by contact.

of] the Sabbatical year. If he cannot enter it in purity, it is impure and it is obligated in tithes and in [the laws of] the Sabbatical year. The dwelling places of non-Jews are impure. How long must they live there to [make the place] require checking? Forty days, even if a woman is not with him. If there was a slave or a woman watching it, it does not need checking. (*m. Ohol.* 18.7)

According to *m. Ohol.* 18.7, there is a separation between the land of Israel and what lies outside of Israel. Up until a forty-day purification process is completed, foreign land is not considered pure. Though ‘inner’ people of the Gentiles ratify one’s cleanness, the contact between Gentiles and Jews would defile Jews. Also, *m. Toh.* 5.8 says that all the spittle in a town with non-Jewish women or Samaritan women is impure.²⁷ Many places in the Mishnah present the same stance, that Gentiles are defiled, and that contact with Gentiles makes one impure.²⁸ Despite this ethnic dichotomy, there is some complexity in the rabbinic view of how moral and ritual impurity relate.

M. Hagigah 3.6, for example, says that ‘Tax collectors who entered the house, as well as thieves who returned the stolen vessels—are deemed trustworthy if they say: we have not touched. In Jerusalem, they are trustworthy regarding hallowed foods, and during the festival even regarding the heave-offering.’ Here, we see a different point of view from *m. Hag.* 2.5-7. For early Rabbinic Judaism, the visitation of tax collectors or invasion by thieves would affect the cleanness of the house. According to *m. Hag.* 3.6, however, although tax collectors and thieves—deemed as unclean people—might stir up the house, the vessels from the house are not impure if these people testify that they have not touched the vessels.

27. ‘If there was even one shotah in the town, or a non-Jewish woman, or a Samaritan woman, all spit [found] in the town is impure. Someone whose clothes were stepped on by a woman, or if she sat with him in a boat, if she knows that he is one who eats terumah [a heave-offering, and therefore he has to be careful to remain pure, then] his clothes are pure; but if not, he must ask her [if she is undergoing her period, in order to determine whether or not his clothes have become impure]’

שוטה אחת בעיר. או כנענית או כותית. כל הרוקים שבעיר טמאין. מי שדרסה אשה על בגדיו או שישבה עמו בספינה. אם מכירתו שהוא אוכל בתרומה. כליו טהורין. ואם לאו ישאלנה:

28. *m. Kel.* 1.8-9; *m. Toh.* 7.6; *m. Nid.* 4.3; and so on.

Then there are other texts that seem to portray that an ontological rather than moral or subjective contamination is possible: The halakah of *m. Toh.* 2.2-7, for example, discusses the levels of purity with regard to food.²⁹ The point is made clear in 2.2:

Rabbi Eliezer says: One who eats foods of a first degree [level of impurity] is [himself rendered] of a first degree; [if he eats] foods of a second degree, [he is rendered] of a second degree; foods of a third degree, [he is rendered] of a third degree. Rabbi Yehoshua says: One who eats foods of a first degree or of a second degree is [rendered] of a second degree; [one who eats foods] of a third degree, [he is rendered] of second degree for sanctified foods, but not for terumah, [and this applies] with non-sacred food prepared with the purity stringency of terumah [since regular non-sacred foods do not have third degree impurity]. (2.2)³⁰

In *m. Toh.* 2.2-7, the degree of purity refers to the sequence of contact with the primary source of uncleanness or objects touched after that initial contact. If objects made of metal, wood, leather, bone or cloth touch a corpse, a leper or an unclean body, the objects become the primary source of uncleanness. When certain foods come into contact with the primary source of uncleanness, they are contaminated and have the first degree of uncleanness. If that food touches vessels that have come in contact with the primary source of uncleanness, it becomes unclean to the second degree. If food contacts the second-degree unclean vessel, it will become food of the third degree of uncleanness. An interesting point in this system, however, is that, without contact with either primary or secondary sources of contamination, the food itself is not impure. Only when food touches something unclean directly would it be rendered as unclean.³¹

29. [*m. Neg.* 13.10] If he was standing inside and he extended his hand outside and his rings were in his hands, if he remained there long enough to eat half a loaf of bread, they are impure.

30. Terumah is the heave-offering, which is the food raised up for priestly use only. It is a portion of a crop given to a Kohen (priest) which becomes holy upon separation and can only be consumed by Kohanim (priests) or their household. For the entire tractate of *Tohorot*, see Jacob Neusner, *The Halakhah: An Encyclopaedia of the Law of Judaism* (5 vols.; BRLA, 5; Leiden: Brill, 2000), V, pp. 200-201.

31. Neusner and Chilton, 'Uncleanness', p. 74.

Even if some differences exist in terms of the issue of Jewish purity, there are two features in common regarding purity issues in the Mishnah. First, there is a distinction of degree with regard to purity. On one level, there is a distinction between Gentiles and Jews. Beyond that, there also exists a distinction among the Jews between male, female, Pharisee and priests. The holier group is, perhaps paradoxically, more susceptible to being impure. Secondly, purity is a matter of contagious spread by contact. If an unclean person touches something, that object would become unclean. Before contact between the unclean person/object and the second object, however, it would be hardly determinable whether a given food itself is clean or not.

Purity and Human Intention in the Mishnah

Another noticeable feature of the Mishnah regarding purity is its occasional dependence on human intention. Eric Ottenheijm explains that, unlike the Shammai tradition, Hillelite Pharisees relate impurity to ‘the human will of the individual’.³² By providing the example of the late rabbinic tradition on Raban Johanan ben Zakkai, he asserts that ‘the Hillelite rationalized halakhic logic presupposes that impurity is not an external, objective force’.³³ *M. Makširin* is the eighth tractate in *Tohorot*, and it deals with the purity of moistened food. The regulation originates from Lev. 11.34, 37-38. In this literature, we may find the relation between human intention and impurity of food (*m. Makš.* 1.2-3):

[If] one shakes a tree in order to detach food from it, or to dislodge an impure object, that does not achieve BeKhi Yutan.³⁴ [If one acts] to detach liquids, Beit Shammai say: What emerges from it and what [remains] in it [which subsequently falls] achieve BeKhi Yutan. Beit Hillel say: What emerges from it achieves BeKhi Yutan, but what [remains] in it does not achieve BeKhi Yutan, because he intends that all [the water] should emerge from it [the tree].

32. Eric Ottenheijm, ‘Impurity between Intention and Deed: Purity Disputes in First Century Judaism and in the New Testament’, in M.J.H.M. Poorthuis and J. Schwartz (eds.), *Purity and Holiness: The Heritage of Leviticus* (Jewish and Christian Perspectives Series, 2; Leiden: Brill, 2000), pp. 129-47 (131).

33. Ottenheijm, ‘Impurity’, p. 132.

34. BeKhi Yutan (בכּי יוּתַן) is a state where liquid put upon food makes it susceptible to impurity.

[If] one shakes a tree and it falls on its neighbor [another tree] or if one shakes its branch and it falls on its neighbor, and beneath them are seeds or vegetables that are [still] attached to the ground, Beit Shammai say: This achieves BeKhi Yutan, but Beit Hillel say: This does not achieve BeKhi Yutan. Rabbi Yehoshua said in the name of Abba Yose Choli Kafri, a man from Tiv'on: Marvel at yourself if there is, according to the Torah, any impure liquid [that is, that makes food susceptible to impurity] unless he [the owner] intends to place it [on the food], as it states, 'And if water be placed over a seed' (Vayikra [Lev.] 11.38).

According to *m. Makš.* 1.2, since one's intention was not to bring water, but food down from the tree, the water that falls does not produce impurity. The person who shakes the tree does not necessarily want the water to fall. Furthermore, in the case that one dislodges liquid from the tree, Shammai concludes that even though one's intention is not fulfilled, the water still defiles food. However, Hillel argues that since the person in question intended to dislodge all the water, the remaining water is not impure. Also, *m. Makš.* 1.3 says that the food is tainted only when one intentionally puts the liquid on it.

Moreover, we may find similar connections between human intention and the Mishnaic perception of impurity in *m. Tohorot* and its Tosefta:

And what is the doubt concerning creeping things which the sages declare clean? This is a matter of doubt concerning things which are thrown. And he who eats heave-offering which is suspended is clean. And anyone whose matter of doubt is deemed clean—a matter of doubt concerning its offspring is clean. Anything the matter of doubt concerning which is unclean, a matter of doubt concerning its offspring likewise is unclean. (*t. Toh.* 5.8)³⁵

35. Neusner, *Halakhah*, V, p. 208. The Tosefta is a redaction, arrangement and organization of the Mishnah. According to Neusner, more than two-thirds of Tosefta constitutes Mishnah's first gemara, which is a corpus of supplements, comments, clarifications and expansions of the Mishnah. In the Mishnah, the Tosefta serves as a commentary. Roughly 60 per cent of tractate Tohorot, 66 per cent of Kelim, 3 per cent of Oholot, 59 per cent of Negaim and 70 per cent of Parah are the Tosefta commentary. Jacob Neusner, *A History of the Mishnaic Law of Purities* (22 vols.; SJLA, 6; Leiden: Brill, 1974), XII, p. 91.

A matter of doubt in respect to liquids—in what concerns food, it is unclean, and in what concerns utensils, it is clean. How so? Two jars, one is unclean and one is clean—and one made dough [with water] from one of them—it is a matter of doubt whether he made it from the unclean or whether he made it from the clean—This is [the matter of which it is said]: A matter of doubt concerning liquids—if it has to do with foods, it is deemed unclean, and if it has to do with utensils, it is deemed clean. (*m. Ṭoh.* 4.10)

As we see above in the Mishnah and its Tosefta, when there is uncertainty as to whether something is clean or unclean, the matter of doubt would decisively affect its cleanness. Put differently, human intention, not the food itself, makes the food impure. For these rabbis, there is no normative or fixed law in terms of the impurity of food. This notion of food and purity has some affinity with Paul's remark that 'nothing is unclean in itself. But, if anyone regards something as unclean, then for that person it is unclean' (Rom. 14.14).

According to David Rudolph, though non-halakic Jews of the time considered some foods impure, halakic Jews did not regard the food as ontologically unclean but epistemologically so. Thus, when Paul states that nothing is unclean in itself (Rom. 14.14), he arguably addresses his audiences from a halakic perspective on ritual purity that already had a degree of acceptance in the wider Jewish Diaspora.³⁶ If Rudolph's assertion is correct, Paul, as a halakic Jew, presents his stance on the matter in Romans 14, positing that 'the weak' do not have the knowledge that the food is not ontologically impure. Therefore, Paul, like the Mishnah, concludes that the individual's ignorance and overly sensitive conscience make foods unclean.

The Gentile and Jewish Purity Laws

Finally, how does the Mishnah deal with Gentile purity? It is noticeable that the Mishnah restricts the validity of purity laws only to Jews. In other words, the Gentile is not affected by or accountable to the ritual purity system.³⁷ At the same time, however, religious purity is more complicated.

36. Rudolph, 'Food Laws', pp. 151-81.

37. Klawans, 'Notions', p. 303. Other scholars also conclude that in both the Old Testament and in halakic tradition, Gentiles do not necessarily need to observe the food laws and purity regulations in a strict way because they are accountable to the laws of ritual purity. Rudolph, 'Food Laws', p. 154; E.P. Sanders, 'Jewish

Klawans asserts that though the Mishnah has many passages stating that Gentiles are defiled and that contact with them makes Jews impure, this is only the case with unconverted Gentiles. That is, when a Gentile converted to being a Jew religiously, only then would the impurity system be applied to that Gentile. Apart from religious conversion, purity laws are not valid for the Gentile.³⁸ Many passages from different tractates demonstrate that Jewish purity regulations are not relevant to Gentiles:³⁹

One should not leave cattle in the inns of non-Jews, for they are suspect regarding bestiality. A woman should not be alone with them for they are suspect regarding fornication. A man should not be alone with them, for they are suspect regarding the spilling of blood. A Jewess should not be a midwife to a non-Jewish woman, for she is birthing one for [a life of] idolatry. But a non-Jewish woman may be a midwife to a Jewess. A Jewess may not suckle a child of a non-Jewish woman, but a non-Jewish woman may suckle the child of a Jewess, within her domain. (*m. 'Avod. Zar.* 2.1)

Rabbi Shimon son of Gamaliel says: Enough time for him to open it, put in a new seal, and allow it to dry. One who leaves a non-Jew in his store, even if he is entering and exiting it is permitted. If he let him know that he was going away, [they are prohibited] if there elapsed enough time for him to puncture [the seal], patch it, and dry it. Rabbi Shimon son of Gamaliel says: Enough time for him to open it, put in a new seal, and allow it to dry. (*m. 'Avod. Zar.* 5.4-5)

Here, we find an interesting set of texts. In the first passage, impurity is possibly at stake in only one direction, though contact between Gentiles and the Jews is permissible in limited circumstances. The reason that a Jewish

Association with Gentiles and Galatians 2:11-14', in Robert T. Fortna and Beverly R. Gaventa (eds.), *Conversation Continues: Studies in Paul and John* (Festschrift J. Louis Martyn; Nashville: Abingdon, 1990), pp. 170-88 (176).

38. Klawans, 'Notions', p. 305. He even contends that 'no passage in the Mishnah was concerned with Gentile *midras*-impurity'. Klawans, 'Notions', p. 308. Italics original.

39. For Gentile impurity with respect to Mishnaic tradition, see Klawans, 'Notions', pp. 302-11. In this article, he provides exemplary passages from the Mishnah, Tosefta and Talmud. Also see Jonathan Klawans, 'The Impurity of Immorality in Ancient Judaism', *JJS* 48 (1997), pp. 1-16 (11-14).

woman should not be a midwife for a Gentile is a matter of idolatry. By contrast, a non-Jewish woman could be a midwife and enter the house of a Jewish woman to feed her baby. In addition to this, according to *m. 'Abod. Zar.* 5.4-5, the Gentile's entering and even staying in the house of the Jew is not prohibited. Here are more examples of these two standards:

Everyone is made impure by negaim (נגעים) [plague spots] except for the non-Jews and a Ger Toshav [resident alien].⁴⁰ (*m. Neg.* 3.1)

All clothes can become impure from negaim except those of non-Jews ... one [i.e. a Jew] who purchases clothes from non-Jews should examine, if it [is] in the beginning of the nega. If one attached them, which grows in the ground, even a thread or even a string or anything which can become impure, is impure. (*m. Neg.* 11.1)

All houses become impure from negaim except those of non-Jews. (*m. Neg.* 12.1)

The term *nega'im* (נגעים) refers to plague spots or blemishes, and the tractate *Nega'im* is about diseases, such as leprosy or mold, that affect people and their houses. Such diseases were a serious issue for purity in terms of the Levitical tradition of the Old Testament (Lev. 13). Nevertheless, *m. Nega'im* says that non-Jews need not be concerned with the Jewish purity regulations. Only when a Jew purchases clothes or houses from non-Jews should the Jew examine whether the products are contaminated by these blemishes or not. Here, again, we find that the responsibility is upon the Jew, not the non-Jew.

Likewise, a Gentile is not susceptible to becoming impure because of a genital discharge (*m. Zab.* 2.1). If a Gentile woman discharges semen from a Jew, it is impure for the Jew. By contrast, if a Jewish woman discharges semen from a Gentile, she is reckoned as pure (*m. Miq.* 8.4). *M. Niddah* 7.3 says that if menstrual blood comes from a Gentile, it is pure. But, if the blood comes from an Israelite or a Samaritan, Rabbi Meir regards them as impure; yet the sages regard them as pure, for they are not defiled with regard to their stains. Based on these cases, we may conclude that ritual impurity regulations have nothing to do with Gentiles but apply only to Jews.

40. *Ger Toshav* refers to non-Jewish residents in Jewish land, Gentiles who accept the seven Noahide laws.

Though both Gentiles and Jews share contact, only the Jew is understood to be affected, particularly when the Jew is male. We may understand this in the same sense as the first feature of the impurity system noted above. Since the degree of purity is different between the Gentile and the Jew, purity issues would be raised when the Jew contacts the Gentile. In contrast, since the Gentile lives at the lower level of purity than the Jew, they are not affected by the Jewish regulations.

The Implication of Paul's Statement in Romans 14: A Viable Suggestion

Based on the tractates of the Mishnah cited above, we can observe three features of Jewish purity traditions. First, there are different degrees of purity in the Mishnah. One's purity would be determined by contact between higher and lower levels of purity. Objects are not unclean in and of themselves. Instead, the impurity of objects is determined by the primary and the secondary source of the impurity. Secondly, human intention is a factor in purity, at least in Hillelite teachings. Thirdly, Gentiles are not affected by Jewish purity laws, as the laws are only concerned with Jewish purity or impurity.

Returning to Romans 14, how are we to understand Paul's admonition? If the weak and the strong are Jewish Christians and Gentile Christians respectively, what the Jewish Christians are doing in judging the Gentile meat-eaters does not correspond to rabbinic tradition. After all, it would be unnecessary to blame Gentiles for their dietary choices, because Gentiles are not affected by Jewish laws of this sort. If both the weak and the strong are Jewish, however, or even if each group is a mix of Jews and God-fearing Gentiles, Paul's statement in Rom. 14.14 is valid in light of the Jewish purity laws.⁴¹ This is because, at least in the Mishnah, food itself is not impure but only becomes so when it comes into contact with a primary source of impurity. Furthermore, according to the Mishnah, human intention is one of the determinative factors in whether the food is clean or unclean. Therefore, Paul's exhortation is justified by the rabbinic tradition when he teaches that no one—whether the Gentile, the Jew, the law-observant Gentile or the Jewish Christian—should criticize others because of food.

41. 'Nothing is unclean in itself except to the one who considers something to be unclean, then it is unclean' (οὐδὲν κοινὸν δι' ἑαυτοῦ, εἰ μὴ τῷ λογιζομένῳ τι κοινὸν εἶναι, ἐκείνῳ κοινόν) (Rom. 14.14).

There is a significant aspect of Paul's argument that one should not neglect, however. Specifically, although one may understand Paul's stance on food laws and purity issues in accordance with rabbinic tradition, Paul addresses the food issue with a concern for a broken unity in the community of Christians in Rome. Due to this concern, Paul does not adhere to the Jewish, rabbinic perspective exactly. Rather, he admonishes his readers using a reconfigured comprehension of the Jewish tradition. If we examine how he admonishes his readers, this becomes clearer.

Paul unequivocally addresses his interlocutors to strive for peace and edification (*οἰκοδομή*) with each other, so as not to destroy (*καταλύω*) the work of God (Rom. 14.15-19). In other words, Paul exhorts both to build up harmony and unity in the church.⁴² This can be identified through Paul's choice of language in Romans 14. First, the cohesion of participants is noteworthy.⁴³ Through his language, Paul denotes that there are at least two types of groups in the church of Rome: the ones who have faith (*οἱ πιστεύοντες*) to eat everything and the ones who eat only *λάχανον* (vegetables)—the weak (*ὁ ἀσθενῶν*) in faith, so to speak. The participants *ὁ ἀσθενῶν* and *οἱ πιστεύοντες* appear throughout Rom. 14.1–15.13. Besides those terms, Paul repeatedly uses words such as *κρίνειν* and *προσλαμβάνειν*, denoting a plausible situation in which some members of the community judge and despise each other.

Secondly, Paul uses words in the same semantic domains. Those words are *ἀλλήλων* (each other), *εἷς* (one), *πᾶς* (all) and *ἕκαστος* (each), denoting reciprocal relationships. According to L&N, *πᾶς* (all) and *εἷς* (one) are in the domain of whole, unite, part and divide (L&N 63).⁴⁴ Also, *πᾶς* (all) and *ἕκαστος* (each) are in the same domain of Quantity (L&N 59).⁴⁵ The word *ἕκαστος* appears four times in Romans 12–15. The word is used a total of five times in Romans, but four of them are in this section (80 per cent).

42. Dunn, *Romans 9–16*, p. 825.

43. Semantic domains are groups of words that each have semantic affinities. Semantic domains of the Greek New Testament can be found in L&N. As Westfall elucidates, an author tends to employ words that are closely associated to create links within a unit. Cynthia Long Westfall, *A Discourse Analysis of the Letter to the Hebrews: The Relationship between Form and Meaning* (LNTS, 297; London: T. & T. Clark, 2005), p. 49.

44. I will use L&N as an abbreviation for Louw and Nida's semantic domains.

45. L&N, pp. 597, 613-14.

Similarly, the word ἀλλήλων appears frequently in this section and indicates a reciprocal relationship. Ἀλλήλων is employed thirteen times in Romans and nine times in the exhortation section (70 per cent). Alongside these, there are other semantic domains recurring in Rom. 14.1–15.13 such as Attitude and Emotions (L&N 25, six times),⁴⁶ Moral and Ethical (L&N 88, seven times),⁴⁷ Whole and Unite (L&N 63, eight times),⁴⁸ Association (L&N 34, four times),⁴⁹ Court and Legal (L&N 56, eight times),⁵⁰ and Linear Movement (L&N 15, five times).⁵¹ In other words, Paul's lexical choices convey an overall topic which is an exhortation for unity.

Thirdly, the predicate elements are noteworthy, since the verbal mood system in Greek refers to the author's stances and attitudes. Overall, in Rom. 14.1–15.13, Paul is directive of his interlocutors. Paul uses prohibitions to both groups, using negation and imperatives that his audience should not despise (μὴ ἐξουθενεῖτω) and criticize (μὴ κρίνῃτω), respectively. In Rom. 14.10, then, Paul employs the second-person pronoun to rebuke their behaviors (κρίνειν and ἐξουθενεῖν). The imperative mood appears in fourteen clauses out of seventy-eight finite clauses. Not only imperatives, but also hortatory subjunctives function as directives to 'exhort his audience to join him in the doing of an action'.⁵² Lastly, in Rom. 15.5, Paul uses an optative form to express his wish that his interlocutors would live in harmony through Christ Jesus. The grammatical form of the optative may not

46. L&N, pp. 288-320.

47. L&N, pp. 742-76.

48. L&N, pp. 613-17.

49. L&N, pp. 446-58.

50. L&N, pp. 552-58.

51. L&N, pp. 181-212.

52. Ernest DeWitt Burton, *Syntax of the Moods and Tenses in New Testament Greek* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1906), p. 74. Robertson explains that 'in principle, the hortatory subjunctive is the same as the prohibitive use. It was a necessity for the first person since the imperative was deficient there' (A.T. Robertson, *A Grammar of the Greek New Testament in the Light of Historical Research* [New York: Hodder & Stoughton, 1914], p. 931). Porter also explains that 'For first-person commands and prohibitions, where no imperative form is available, the subjunctive is used for both the present and the aorist tense-forms' (Stanley E. Porter, *Idioms of the Greek New Testament* [Biblical Languages: Greek, 2; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1995], p. 222).

directly relate to the semantics of commands or prohibitions.⁵³ However, it probably functions as a reminder of the command expressed by the imperative in Rom. 15.2.

In addition to this, Paul's language provides hints that he has reshaped his view on purity in Christ. Put differently, though Paul does not subvert Jewish food traditions, he proposes his view of purity and food tradition in the light of the person and life of Christ. Paul exhibits what he has known and has been persuaded regarding the food in Christ, not in Jewish tradition, that nothing is unclean itself. Here, as Porter explains, the language of Paul is asseverative. Paul employs the perfect tense form, 'I know and am convinced in the Lord' (οἶδα καὶ πέπεισμαι ἐν κυρίῳ), which carries semantic prominence in the discourse.⁵⁴

In Rom. 14.15, Paul states that walking according to love and not discouraging others are more important than staying pure by not eating some foods, because brothers and sisters in the community are the ones for whom Christ died. Romans 14.15 has four clauses and has noteworthy linguistic features. First, in the conditional clause complex (εἰ γὰρ διὰ βρῶμα ὁ ἀδελφὸς σου λυπεῖται, οὐκέτι κατὰ ἀγάπην περιπατεῖς, 'for if your brother is grieved by food, you are no longer walking in love') Paul uses the indicative form, which conveys the first-class conditional clause. It is the most frequently used kind of conditional clause in the New Testament, and 'it makes an assertion for the sake of argument'.⁵⁵ Thus, Paul lays the foundation of what comes next, rather than positing a potential situation that has not yet happened. In other words, Paul employs the indicative form in the conditional clause complex to command his readers not to destroy (μὴ ... ἀπόλλυε) the one for whom Christ died. Moreover, Paul uses the present tense form in the conditional clause complex to express his perspective on

53. It takes a similar function with the subjunctive and future tense-forms of Greek in that it expresses the author's projection and expectation. Robertson, *Grammar*, p. 937; Porter, *Idioms*, pp. 59-60. However, as Moulton suggests, in Mk 11.14, the optative is used functionally as a prohibition (James Hope Moulton, *A Grammar of New Testament Greek* [Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 3rd edn, 1908], p. 165).

54. Stanley E. Porter, *The Letter to the Romans: A Linguistic and Literary Commentary* (New Testament Monographs, 37; Sheffield: Sheffield Phoenix Press, 2015), p. 263.

55. Porter, *Idioms*, p. 256.

what his interlocutors are doing.⁵⁶ This allows Paul to describe the conflict occurring in the Roman church, and only then does his language turn directive to instruct his interlocutors. Lastly, Paul maintains a sense of communal identity by using repeated lexemes and themes such as ἀδελφός ('brothers [and sisters]') and unity in χριστός ('Christ'). In this regard, to Paul, the dietary tradition is not the primary concern. Rather, the primary focus must be love in Christ and edification for the community that is like a family ('brothers [and sisters]'). It is conceivable to say that, though Paul does not present an antagonistic stance to Jewish tradition regarding purity and food, he reconfigures and reshapes his understanding in light of Christ. He expresses his reconfiguration of purity issues through his instructive and directive language.

Even earlier, back in Rom. 14.6-8, Paul brings up various behaviors related to Jewish traditions, such as observing religious days and eating certain foods. However, Paul evaluates those traditions in relation to the new realities enacted by the Lord Jesus Christ. To this end, Paul's primary concern is not whether one regards a day as more special than other days or esteems every day equally, whether one eats or abstains from certain foods or whether one lives or dies. Paul declares that everyone is ontologically equal in Christ, and so there should not be partisan Christian living among his audience. Therefore, Paul, through his reconfigured perception of his own Jewish heritage, attempts to motivate reconciliation between the two groups in question, regardless of their different backgrounds in Rome.

As we have seen, in the Jewish purity system there is a distinction in purity between the non-law-observant and law-observant. Paul, however, through his admonition, neutralizes the divide between the two for the sake of something more important than purity. For him, the unity of the church and the reconciliation of its groups in conflict is the more important priority compared to purity regulations or food laws.⁵⁷ Segal aptly states, 'Paul has

56. Porter, *Idioms*, pp. 29-35. This view is related to Greek verbal aspect. Verbal aspect theory proposes that Greek tenses do not present temporal details about when the event actually happened, whether in the past, present or future. Instead, the tense form is grammaticalized by the author/speaker to express a perspective on an action. For an exhaustive explanation of verbal aspect, see Stanley E. Porter, *Verbal Aspect in the Greek of the New Testament with Reference to Tense and Mood* (Studies in Biblical Greek, 1; New York: Peter Lang, 1989), pp. 75-110.

57. Moo, *Romans*, p. 859.

brought his Pharisaic sensibility into an entirely new environment, where the issue has become acute as a communal problem, rather than an issue for an individual Jew as he or she pursues his or her livelihood'.⁵⁸ This is an important notion about Paul regarding his Jewish tradition. Paul does not subvert Judaism or Jewish food or purity laws. However, Paul does not adopt the Jewish tradition without creative flexibility. Indeed, he understands and applies it via a reconfigured perspective in Christ.

This may be seen in his statement that 'the kingdom of God is not a matter of eating and drinking, but of righteousness, peace and joy in the Holy Spirit' (Rom. 14.17). Though the kingdom of God does not frequently appear in Pauline texts, he employs the theme of the kingdom of God to propose a new community that Jesus-believers in Rome must pursue.⁵⁹ As Dunn explains, 'Paul uses an inextricable link between kingdom and Spirit as a principle of discrimination on both fronts on which he was engaged: against those too much influenced by Hellenistic ideas of wisdom; and against those too much dependent on the traditional customs of Judaism'.⁶⁰ That is, no matter what traditional setting they have, whether Jewish abstention or Hellenistic asceticism, Paul draws both of them into the kingdom of God. If the weak and the strong are Jews and Gentiles respectively, Paul proposes God's kingdom as a new community which can embrace both. If instead both groups are Jews of different schools of thought, Paul offers them a modified rabbinic perspective that makes unity in Christ the aim and makes human intention a partial criterion for purity ('faith/doubt'). Therefore, regardless who the weak and the strong are, Paul makes an exhortation in Romans 14 to the two groups to love one another and to build the unity of the church in Rome.⁶¹

Conclusion

The present paper has examined Romans 14 from within Judaism, mainly based on the rabbinic literature preserved in the Mishnah. Though this method has its limitations, discussing Paul's Jewish background and the

58. Segal, *Paul the Convert*, p. 234.

59. Jewett, *Romans*, p. 862; Dunn, *Romans 9–16*, p. 822; Moo, *Romans*, p. 857; Barrett, *Romans*, p. 264.

60. Dunn, *Romans 9–16*, p. 823.

61. Porter, *Romans*, pp. 258-59.

wider textual context of Jewish literature is still worthwhile. Since Paul is a Pharisaic Jew, according to his self-description (i.e. Phil. 3.5-6), halakah may be a relevant source that influenced his treatment of dietary and purity laws. The Mishnah is a representative source containing halakic teachings. According to the Mishnah, there are several features to note about the purity system. Objects are not unclean inherently, but they are defiled by contact with primary or secondary sources of defilement. Also, human intention is a significant factor in the purity system, at least for the school of thought of Hillel and his disciples. When a person encounters a food which is not identified unambiguously as pure or impure, the person's intention determines its purity. Finally, Gentiles are not affected by Jewish purity laws, as the laws are only concerned with the purity of Jews.

Therefore, when Paul says that 'nothing is unclean (*κοινόν*) in itself. But, if anyone regards something as unclean, then for that person it is unclean' (Rom. 14.14; cf. Rom. 14.20), it is not a novel notion that Paul invented after his conversion to following Jesus. Rather, by asserting that 'the kingdom of God is not eating and drinking, but righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Spirit ... It is better not to eat meat or drink wine or to do anything else that will cause your brother or sister to fall' (Rom. 14.17, 21), Paul suggests a modified view, which is still in keeping with certain streams of rabbinic thought, that food does not matter to the kingdom of God as much as the unity of the religious community matters. Therefore, Paul does not subvert or dismiss Judaism, but against his Jewish, Pharisaic backdrop, Paul proposes a new moral standard for the Christian community in Rome that values the unity of their religious community.