Melissa Briggs MA,
Hebrew University of Jerusalem,

Melissa is an experienced Hebrew teacher with a desire to make the rich language of the Scriptures accessible to Christians.

Glory כָּבוֹד

PART 2

Part 1 was published in issue 191 which is available on the CFI-UK website

God is worthy of all *kavod*. In Part 1 we explored the Hebrew word family around *kavod* and defined it as the public demonstration of God's awesome greatness. It is God's amazing character, beauty, weightiness, and power made visible and known. Jesus is the perfect reflection of God's *kavod*.

Amazingly, the Scriptures also indicate the ability for mankind, and indeed all of creation to reflect God's *kavod* too. What a privilege and responsibility!

How can creation reflect God's kavod?

Creation displays the *kavod* of the Lord in the amazing beauty and intricate systems God has put into place. Consider, for example, the precisely balanced food chains, the marvels of the water cycle, and the miracle of the body's ability to grow and heal. God perfectly designs, orchestrates, and sustains the wonders of the created order.

The visible order and beauty speak of the ingenuity and wisdom of the Creator and display God's greatness in a public way for all to see. No one can say the Creator God did not show himself (*see Romans 1:20-21*).

Though creation is fallen because of sin, it is still capable of reflecting God's glory and making him known: *"The heavens declare the **kavod** of God; and the firmament shows his handiwork… There is no speech nor language where their voice is not heard. Their line has gone out through all the earth, and their words to the end of the world"* (Psalm 19:1-4).

How can mankind reflect God's kavod?

The Lord bought our bodies with a price, and now we can be vessels through which his life, character, and power shine forth for his glory (*see 1 Corinthians 6:20; Galatians 2:20*). We are created in his image after all. When we accept praise or attention for ourselves, then we place the recognition and acclaim in the wrong direction (*see Proverbs 25:6-7*). Our Creator deserves the credit for all our beauty, goodness, gifts and talents (*see 1 Thessalonians 2:12*). Are we willing to let our lives be mirrors where God can exhibit his *kavod*? (*see 2 Corinthians 3:18*).

God's good plan involves using mankind to reflect his *kavod*. When we show the world how satisfied we are in him—expressing that God is more fulfilling and better than all this world has to offer—then God is beautifully glorified through our lives.

A practical example of a Hebraic worldview

In Part 1 we asked the question: What would it look like to eat and drink to the *kavod* of God? (*see 1 Corinthians 10:31*).

Traditionally, Greek thought emphasises the separation between the holy and the mundane. And what is more 'mundane' than food? But the Hebrew Scriptures describe a God who cares about every aspect of the lives of mankind. He is not a controlling dictator, but a caring Father. When God gave his life-giving instruction to the Jewish people, he lovingly trained them on everything from bathing, to dressing, to bodily functions, to tattoos, to sexuality, to employment, to finances, to farming, to family life, and yes — to food. (Interestingly, the very first sin in the Bible involved food!)

As a mother I care about what my children eat because I love them and I want the best for them. I know firsthand that their mood, concentration, energy levels and overall health for the day — and for the long term — will fare better if they eat things like scrambled eggs, porridge and bananas for breakfast, rather than a bowl of sweeties! But do I love them any less if they choose Coco-Pops for breakfast at a hotel buffet, rather than a fruit salad? Of course not! This parental instinct gives us a taste of God's viewpoint on our diet.

God is the one who made food, created our need and appetite for it, and continually provides it (*see Psalm 136:25*). God created food for the good of mankind (*see Genesis 1:29-31*). The array of colours, tastes, textures, and flavours of food are unmistakably a gift from the generous and creative hand of God. He did not have to create us with taste buds, but thankfully he did! God designed food to be enjoyed.

Let us stop and acknowledge how abundantly blessed we are to have food, especially when so many around the world struggle with famines and starvation. So often we take food for granted when food is meant to make us turn to God in praise and thanksgiving. We are meant to be generous with our food, to share it, and to look after the poor, not to be wasteful or selfish.

We glorify God in our daily lives

When we view and use food according to the way that God intended, following the example of Jesus, we glorify God in our daily lives as we point to him as the Creator, Sustainer, and Provider. God designed proper interaction with food to inherently bring him glory!

God intends food to give us nourishment, energy, sustenance and nutrition. When we consistently eat foods that neglect to accomplish those aims (such as highly-processed, refined foods that drain energy and lack nutrition), then we miss out on the opportunity to live out God's good plan for the watching world to see. How often do we eat unhealthy food that diminishes our body's health rather than optimise it? Do we eat in light of the truth that our body is a temple for the Holy Spirit? (*see 1 Corinthians 6:19-20*).

What else did God intend food to do? God designed food to foster fellowship. He intended eating to be an opportunity to receive good gifts from the Father with thankfulness. Food and drink are to be a tangible way we can show God's generosity to others *(see Matthew 10:42; John 6:9).* Mealtimes can foreshadow the Marriage Supper of the Lamb, and can be a time to remember that Jesus gave his body and blood for the redemption of mankind *(see 1 Corinthians 11:24).* Hunger is a physical pang in our body for sustenance which mirrors our spiritual need for 'daily bread' from the Lord *(see Psalm 42:1-2).*

How did Jesus interact with food as he daily came into contact with it? He thanked God for it. He provided it for hungry people. He fasted. He knew that man could not live

on bread alone. He ate when others expected him to fast. He blessed it. He cooked for others and invited them to eat. He believed God could multiply it. He shared it. In following Jesus' example we can glorify God in our eating and drinking.

God's provision for our food does not start at the supermarket, or on the day we eat it. Amazingly, it starts months or years beforehand when the potatoes were planted in Ireland, or a farmer in Spain sowed the tomato seeds and reaped the harvest after months of labour. Perhaps the chickens were laid as eggs at a local farm and lovingly reared, fed and watered by a farmer; or a cow was conceived, born, and reared for two years as it grew to full maturity. Every plate of food tells a story of provision, growth, and love. How awe inspiring to contemplate the thought, time and care God has put into my 'daily bread'!

We are graciously given so much freedom in our food choices (*see 1 Corinthians 10:23-27*). But does God care more about our heart attitude or about what we actually eat? Health fanatics may eat only organic 'superfoods', and yet perhaps it is all about their own glory in having the 'perfect body'? (Though eating mostly whole, natural foods means that we are sticking to God's original design for that food, where nutrients and the equilibrium of things like fibre and amino acids are kept in balance). Two people might eat exactly the same foods for a week, but one could do it for God's glory with a thankful heart, and one could do it with a self-obsessed attitude. Daniel's attitude towards food is certainly worth studying.

God loves to be in daily conversation with us. Would he rather we eat a slice of cake with gratitude from the hand of someone who lovingly prepared it, than to offend someone for the sake of never eating a spoonful of sugar? Ask him! (*see 1 Timothy 4:1-4*).

Many people treat physical urges as irresistible, but we are to be ruled by the Spirit, not our flesh (*see Galatians 5:15, 22-24*). In the book of Genesis, God gave mankind dominion over creation — including fruits, vegetables, plants and animals — not creation dominion over mankind. Therefore, we do not need to be dominated by things in creation like the sugar cane plant, or the cocoa plant, or the tobacco plant, or potatoes (vodka), or grapes (wine).

We display God's *kavod* when we keep things in their rightful, God-given place. It is so easy to make an idol out of food by giving it roles and responsibilities it was never intended to bear, or by placing an inordinate emphasis or affection on food. **God did not design food to be our Saviour and Comforter. He intended Jesus and the Holy Spirit to fulfil those roles**. Eating in order to numb our emotions, or because we feel angry, stressed, scared, or bored fails to bring glory to God. Looking to God for help in all of these scenarios brings him glory. *"I will be fully satisfied* [in God] *as with the richest of foods; with singing lips my mouth will praise you"* (Psalm 63:5).

Thankfully we are not left alone to navigate our interaction with food (*see John 14:26*). We can ask God for help one meal at a time. *"So whether you eat or drink, or whatever you do, do it all for the* ***kavod*** *of God"* (1 Corinthians 10:31), because God certainly deserves all the glory!

Learn Hebrew with Melissa at: www.explorehebrew.co.uk