



Mixing Meat and Milk

... using context to understand God's word

As all Bible students know, the three keys to understanding any difficult scripture are 1) context, 2) context, and 3) context. We often say that somewhat jokingly, but it really is true. Context is the key to understanding what God is saying.

So what is context? The dictionary¹ describes context as:

“. . . the circumstances that form the setting for an event, statement, or idea, and in terms of which it can be fully understood and assessed.

- the parts of something written or spoken that immediately precede and follow a word or passage and clarify its meaning.”

From this definition, we see that context comprises more than just the text that precedes or follows a statement, but includes circumstances and events that may have preceded the statement. It is those circumstances and events that often ‘set the stage’ for what God is saying. In other words, it is the ‘culture’ in which the statement is made.

Seeing that context is more than just words preceding or following a statement, when we say “context, context, context” we are really talking about at least three different things: 1) the context of what God is doing or intends to do, 2) the context of the culture of the people to whom God is working with, and 3) the context or purpose of the scriptures immediately surrounding the scripture in question. Unless you consider all three of these contextual components, it is often difficult to come up with an accurate understanding of what a particular scripture is saying. To illustrate this point, let’s take a look at the passage in Genesis where Esau accused Jacob of stealing his birthright:

^{NKJ} **Genesis 27:36** And *Esau* said, "Is he not rightly named Jacob? For he has supplanted me these two times. He took away my birthright, and now look, he has taken away my blessing!"

This passage is where Esau, after following his father Isaac’s instructions to cook meat for him before receiving the blessing, accuses Jacob of stealing the birthright from him. If we were to only consider the immediate text, we would assume that:

- Jacob’s name means ‘supplanter’
- Jacob stole the birthright from Esau
- Jacob stole the blessing from Esau

But as we study the context, we discover that:

- Jacob’s name actually means “heal-holder” (Gen 25:26)
- Esau sold the birthright for a bowl of soup (Gen. 25:31-33)
- God always intended for Jacob to have both the birthright and the blessing (Gen. 25:23; 28:3-4)

Thus we can conclude that Esau was not being honest with his father. The context is what reveals the truth; it makes all the difference in understanding a word or phrase.

Another place where context plays a huge role in understanding a scripture is where God forbids the people to “seethe a kid in its mother’s milk”. This is a significant passage because it is the basis for the

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Jewish prohibition against mixing meat products and milk products at the same meal. This “oral tradition” is quite significant and leads some to establish in their homes separate kitchens - one for the storage and preparation of meat products and the other for milk products. Some even go as far as having separate sets of dishes, pots and pans. It is a very detailed process requiring a lot of forethought and determination in order to avoid 'contaminating' one part of your meal with another. To further complicate matters, there is no established rule as to how much time must elapse between the consumption of meat and milk products. Thus what may be acceptable to one family may not be considered “kosher” by another.

To illustrate how divisive and exacting this process can be, I'll share a personal experience with you.

My wife and I have hosted a Feast of Tabernacles site for a number of years beginning in 1999. About a year before our first festival, we become aware of this practice of separating meat and milk and knew that some who would be attending followed that practice. As part of our festival plans, we wanted to host a banquet type meal for the entire group (about 300 people). Knowing that for some the mere presence of milk products on the same table as meat products would “defile” the whole table and all the food on it, we planned for the meal to be completely “kosher” according to Jewish standards.

My wife worked very hard preparing a menu and working with the kitchen staff to make sure everything was properly prepared. When we discovered that the facility's chef used to be the head chef at a “kosher” restaurant, we were thrilled thinking everything would come together and our event would be a success.

That evening, as everyone began to file in and take their places, we noticed some commotion at one of the tables. A person had discovered that the servers had placed small cups of cream on each table for after dinner coffee. According to that person, that table was defiled and therefore he could not eat at it. This triggered others to search their table as well, and we quickly found that all the tables had creamer on them. For the majority of attendees who do not observe the meat/milk prohibition, the presence of the creamer was not a problem, but for those few who did observe the prohibition, we had to set up new tables just for them.

Bottom line – the meat/milk prohibition is difficult to observe and can easily create a stumbling block to fellowship and interaction.

So is mixing milk and meat the intent of God's word? I don't believe so. How then did the rabbis draw this understanding out of the phrase “sieve a kid in its mother's milk”? Is it a case of misinterpretation or a case of mistranslation? Based on the context of the scriptures, it appears to me to be a case of mistranslation. When the phrase is translated correctly, it makes sense.

In this study I hope to show that when properly translated, we will find the "do not seethe a kid in its mother's milk" passage to mean that God's people are not to delay in bringing their first-fruit offerings, specifically the firstborn of their herds and flocks, to the three Biblical festivals. I will do this by following the “context, context, context” process where we 1) discover God's mind toward the matter, 2) seek to understand the underlying culture behind the matter, then 3) see what the text immediately surrounding the text is really saying.

God's Mind on the Matter

Let's begin by finding the mind of God in regards to the matter of mixing meat and milk. Would God impose such a difficult practice on His people? I believe not. In fact, God says quite the opposite. He says that following His way is not difficult. He says -

^{ESV} **Deuteronomy 30:11** ". . . this commandment that I command you today is not too hard for you, neither is it far off. ¹² It is not in heaven, that you should say, 'Who will ascend to heaven for

us and bring it to us, that we may hear it and do it?' ¹³"Nor *is* it beyond the sea, that you should say, 'Who will go over the sea for us and bring it to us, that we may hear it and do it?' ¹⁴But the word is very near you. It is in your mouth and in your heart, so that you can do it.

So observing the Torah should not be a burdensome task. Yet some might take exception to that statement in today's society where most people are not Torah observant. Sabbath and Holy Day keepers often face challenges when it comes to keeping a job, going to school or college, and many other tasks were God's people have to mix with those who are not following His Torah. But we must remember that the Torah was given to Israel as a nation of people. The entire nation was to be governed by God's law and thus it is assumed that everyone would be Torah observant.

Yet if universal Torah observance were the case, the process of maintaining two kitchens or counting the minutes between the time you swallowed your last bite of meat and the time you can have a cup of coffee with cream is difficult and is not consistent with God's word that states the Torah is "not hard" and the Torah is "very near" to you.

Furthermore, the scripture gives us examples that show that separating meat products from milk products is not God's intent and desire. Abraham – the "Father of the Faithful" – had no issues with mixing meat and milk when he entertained his three guests (who we recognize to be representatives of YHVH). Genesis 18:1-8 shows us that when Abraham's guests appeared, he quickly prepared a meal that included meat, bread, butter, and milk. Obviously God would not have included those details in the story of Abraham's hospitality if mixing meat and milk was something He abhorred.

Thus the context of God's word showing that He never intended for the Torah to hard and difficult leads us to conclude that the prohibition of mixing meat and milk is not from God. It is out of character with the purpose of the Torah and the examples found within it.

Offering the Firstborn

As mentioned earlier, the meaning behind "do not sieve a kid in its mother's milk" has much to do with the offering of the firstborn at the festivals. So let's review the Torah instructions concerning this very special - but much overlooked – offering.

When God went about the process of removing the children of Israel from Egyptian slavery, He sent nine plagues. The plagues served a number of purposes, but their primary purpose was to reveal the greatness of the God of Abraham to the children of Israel and to the Egyptians. Speaking of Pharaoh and his unwillingness to heed Moses' instructions, God said:

^{NKJ} **Exodus 7:4-5** "But Pharaoh will not heed you, so that I may lay My hand on Egypt and bring My armies *and* My people, the children of Israel, out of the land of Egypt by great judgments.⁵
"And the Egyptians shall know that I *am* the LORD, when I stretch out My hand on Egypt and bring out the children of Israel from among them."

Of the nine initial plagues, only the first three affected the Israelites. Such was not the case with the tenth plague – the death of the firstborn. It was the game changer that would cause Pharaoh to not only release the Israelites, but to force them out quickly. It would apply to both the Israelites and the Egyptians, and if they failed to follow Moses' instructions to apply the blood of a firstborn male lamb to the doorposts and lintel of their houses, all the firstborn of their household would die.

^{NKJ} **Exodus 12:3-7** ³ "Speak to all the congregation of Israel, saying: 'On the tenth *day* of this month every man shall take for himself a lamb, according to the house of *his* father, a lamb for a household . . . ⁵ 'Your lamb shall be without blemish, a male of the first year. You may take *it* from the sheep or from the goats. ⁶ 'Now you shall keep it until the fourteenth day of the same month. Then the whole assembly of the congregation of Israel shall kill it at twilight. ⁷ 'And they shall take

some of the blood and put *it* on the two doorposts and on the lintel of the houses where they eat it.

With these instructions, God began to re-establish² the concept that the death of a lamb can preserve the life of the firstborn. To make that concept crystal clear, He gave these instructions.

^{NKJ} **Exodus 13:2; 11-15** . . . ² "Consecrate to Me all the firstborn, whatever opens the womb among the children of Israel, *both* of man and beast; it is Mine." . . . ¹¹ " And it shall be, when the LORD brings you into the land . . . ¹² "that you shall set apart to the LORD all that open the womb, that is, every firstborn that comes from an animal which you have; the males *shall be* the LORD's. ¹³ . . . all the firstborn of man among your sons you shall redeem. ¹⁴ "So it shall be, when your son asks you in time to come, saying, 'What *is* this?' that you shall say to him, 'By strength of hand the LORD brought us out of Egypt, out of the house of bondage. ¹⁵ 'And it came to pass, when Pharaoh was stubborn about letting us go, that the LORD killed all the firstborn in the land of Egypt, both the firstborn of man and the firstborn of beast. Therefore I sacrifice to the LORD all males that open the womb, but all the firstborn of my sons I redeem.'

What God is saying is that the firstborn male child of every Israelite woman and the first-born male of the female livestock belonged to God. If that animal was a 'clean'³ animal, it was to be dedicated to God for sacrifice, but if the animal was 'unclean' it was to be redeemed since unclean animals could not be used for sacrifice. In regards to a male child, he was to be redeemed since God forbids child sacrifice.⁴

God continued to clarify this later on in the book of Exodus:

^{NKJ} **Exodus 34:19-20** ¹⁹ "All that open the womb *are* Mine, and every male firstborn among your livestock, *whether* ox or sheep. ²⁰ "But the firstborn of a donkey you shall redeem with a lamb. And if you will not redeem *him*, then you shall break his neck. All the firstborn of your sons you shall redeem. And none shall appear before Me empty-handed.

In this passage God made a distinction between the clean and unclean animals and gave clear instructions that an unclean animal must be redeemed with a clean animal (a lamb), or it must be killed. Firstborn sons were to be redeemed. Both the firstborn of the clean animals and the redemption animals for the unclean animals along with any redemption money was to be taken before YHVH at the festivals as seen by the statement "none shall appear before Me empty-handed".

It is not clear what the redemption price for sons was to be, but it appears that it was set at five shekels of silver as can be seen in regards to vows.

^{NKJ} **Leviticus 27:1-6** Now the LORD spoke to Moses, saying, ² "Speak to the children of Israel, and say to them: 'When a man consecrates by a vow certain persons to the LORD, according to your valuation, ³ 'if your valuation is of a male from twenty years old . . . ⁶ 'and if from a month old up to five years old, then your valuation for a male shall be five shekels of silver . . .

This applies to a situation where you might dedicate your son to the service of God, such as the case with Samuel. Here we see that the five shekel valuation for one month-old sons seems to be consistent with the valuation placed on a firstborn when God exchanged the firstborn for the Levites.

^{NKJ} **Numbers 3:40-48** ⁴⁰ Then the LORD said to Moses: "Number all the firstborn males of the children of Israel from a month old and above . . . ⁴¹ "And you shall take the Levites for Me -- I

² The concept began when God killed an animal to provide coverings for Adam and Eve and was clearly established when a ram was exchanged for the life of Isaac.

³ Leviticus 11:2-44

⁴ see my article "Yeshua – a Sacrifice, or Not! (<http://www.amiyisrael.org/articles/Yeshua-SacrificeOrNot.html>)

am the LORD -- instead of all the firstborn among the children of Israel . . . ⁴² So Moses numbered all the firstborn among the children of Israel . . . ⁴⁶ "And for the redemption of the two hundred and seventy-three of the firstborn of the children of Israel, who are more than the number of the Levites, ⁴⁷ "you shall take five shekels for each one individually . . . ⁴⁸ "And you shall give the money, with which the excess number of them is redeemed, to Aaron and his sons."

So what do you do with the firstborn of the animals and the five shekel redemption money for sons? You take them to the festivals and present them to God. The instructions pertaining to this seem to have changed with the golden calf incident. Before the sin of the golden calf it appears that the firstborn were to be offered by each family at the festivals.

^{NKJ} **Exodus 23:17-19** ¹⁷ "Three times in the year all your males shall appear before the Lord GOD. ¹⁸ "You shall not offer the blood of My sacrifice with leavened bread; nor shall the fat of My sacrifice remain until morning. ¹⁹ "The first of the firstfruits of your land you shall bring into the house of the LORD your God.

This appears to be in reference to the firstfruits as well as the firstborn. The requirement to offer the sacrifice with unleavened bread seems to tie it to the Passover event and was likely the offering of the first-born. The Hebrew words for 'firstfruits' and 'firstborn' both come from the root word 'bekowr' (בְּכוֹר – Strong's 1060) which means 'firstborn'. This implies that you are to bring any "first" that is set apart for sacrifice. In regards to the 'first' of the firstfruits, the Hebrew word from which we get 'first' is 'reshiyth' (רִאשִׁית – 7225). This word is first used in Genesis 1:1 where it is usually translated "beginning", but it can also mean "first, best, or chief. So Exodus 23:19 could read like this – "the beginning, the firstborn of the land you shall bring . . ."

Though the 'bekowrim' (plural of 'bekowr') could be offered at any of the festivals, we will see that it was appropriate to offer it at the nearest festival after it turned a month old.

The law pertaining to the firstborn changed after the sin of the golden calf because God exchanged the firstborn for the Levites signifying that the priesthood had been taken from the firstborn. From that point forward, the firstborn were given to the priests. Speaking to Aaron, God gives these instructions -

^{NKJ} **Numbers 18:12-18** ¹² "All the best of the oil, all the best of the new wine and the grain, their firstfruits which they offer to the LORD, I have given them to you. ¹³ "Whatever first ripe fruit is in their land, which they bring to the LORD, shall be yours. Everyone who is clean in your house may eat it. ¹⁴ "Every devoted thing in Israel shall be yours. ¹⁵ "Everything that first opens the womb of all flesh, which they bring to the LORD, whether man or beast, shall be yours; nevertheless the firstborn of man you shall surely redeem, and the firstborn of unclean animals

Exchanging the Firstborn Levites

The exchange of the Levites for the firstborn was a one-time event that came about as a result of the sin of the golden calf. It did not negate the obligation to redeem the firstborn. This event, along with the instruction that all sacrifices were to be taken to "the place where the LORD your God chooses to make His name abide" ¹, simply changed the location of the sacrifices and to whom the sacrifices and redemption money would be given.

Though it is unclear, it appears that before the exchange, the first-born were to be devoted and set apart at 8-days old, then taken to upcoming festival (Passover, Shavuot, or Sukkot.) after they were a month old. They were eaten by the family that brought it and the redemption money was to be used to pay festival expenses.

After the exchange, the best of the sacrifices were given to and consumed by the priests at the festivals. The others were sacrificed and consumed by the offerer and his family. The same applied to the redemption money.

you shall redeem. ¹⁶ "And those redeemed of the devoted things you shall redeem when one month old, according to your valuation, for five shekels of silver, according to the shekel of the sanctuary, which is twenty GERAHs. ¹⁷ "But the firstborn of a cow, the firstborn of a sheep, or the firstborn of a goat you shall not redeem; they are holy. You shall sprinkle their blood on the altar, and burn their fat as an offering made by fire for a sweet aroma to the LORD. ¹⁸ "And their flesh shall be yours, just as the wave breast and the right thigh are yours.

Though this indicates that the firstborn were given to the priests, it appears that during the festival, the offerers were entitled to keep some of them – especially the inferior ones - for their own consumption. In a list of instructions that pertain to all Israel, Moses said -

^{NKJ} **Deuteronomy 14:22-23** ²² " You shall truly tithe all the increase of your grain that the field produces year by year. ²³ "And you shall eat before the LORD your God, in the place where He chooses to make His name abide, the tithe of your grain and your new wine and your oil, of the firstborn of your herds and your flocks, that you may learn to fear the LORD your God always.

Whether they were consumed by the priests or the offerer, it is clear that the firstborn were to be brought to the festivals and offered in sacrifice. Thus we see that a firstborn animal could be at most 6 months old (the time span between Sukkot and Passover) before it was sacrificed, but usually it was much sooner. What's more, the animals were to be dedicated much earlier at 8 days old.

^{NKJ} **Leviticus 22:27** "When a bull or a sheep or a goat is born, it shall be seven days with its mother; and from the eighth day and thereafter it shall be accepted as an offering made by fire to the LORD.

Here we see that God expects the shepherd or herdsman to make a clear distinction between the firstborn clean male animals and the rest of his herd or flock. These animals could mingle among the rest of the herd for seven days, but on the eighth day he would be separated from them. This is made even clearer in Deuteronomy -

^{NKJ} **Deuteronomy 15:19** "All the firstborn males that come from your herd and your flock you shall sanctify to the LORD your God; you shall do no work with the firstborn of your herd, nor shear the firstborn of your flock.

In other words, the herdsman could not receive any profit or use from the animal. It was totally dedicated to sacrifice. The importance of the dedication of the firstborn was so important to God that He considered it a curse of sorts to in any way delay their dedication.

^{NKJ} **Exodus 22:29-30** ²⁹ " You shall not delay to offer the first of your ripe produce and your juices. The firstborn of your sons you shall give to Me. ³⁰ "Likewise you shall do with your oxen and your sheep. It shall be with its mother seven days; on the eighth day you shall give it to Me.

This passage is part of a list of grievous sins that include bestiality, idol worship, and afflicting the widow or the orphan – a sin where God says He will come after you with a sword. Therefore, we see that the prompt dedication of the firstborn was very important to God. You should not hesitate in any way to make the dedication of, or pay the redemption for your firstborn. Why? Because they are all reminders of God's Passover sacrifice and the redemption of His people. They should remind us of the freedom we have as part of God's people and it should bring us great joy as we acknowledge our redemption and our blessings as we attend God's pilgrimage festivals –

^{NKJ} **Deuteronomy 12:5-7** ". . . you shall seek the place where the LORD your God chooses, out of all your tribes, to put His name for His dwelling place; and there you shall go. ⁶ "There you shall take your burnt offerings, your sacrifices, your tithes, the heave offerings of your hand, your vowed offerings, your freewill offerings, and the firstborn of your herds and flocks. ⁷ "And there

you shall eat before the LORD your God, and you shall rejoice in all to which you have put your hand, you and your households, in which the LORD your God has blessed you.

Thus we see the importance of the firstborn offerings to God, and that we should not delay to give that offering.

What Does the Text Really Say?

With that background and the clear understanding that the first-born were to be brought to God as soon as possible, we are now ready to look at the three scriptural passages from which the rabbis draw the conclusion that a person should not mix meat and milk. They are Exodus 23:19, Exodus 34:26, and Deuteronomy 14: 23. To avoid the error many make in trying to understand these passages, we're going to include the context with each passages -

NKJ Exodus 23:17-19 ¹⁷ "Three times in the year all your males shall appear before the Lord GOD. ¹⁸ "You shall not offer the blood of My sacrifice with leavened bread; nor shall the fat of My sacrifice remain until morning. ¹⁹ "The first of the firstfruits of your land you shall bring into the house of the LORD your God. **You shall not boil a young goat in its mother's milk.**

NKJ Exodus 34:19-26 ¹⁸ " The Feast of Unleavened Bread you shall keep. Seven days you shall eat unleavened bread, as I commanded you, in the appointed time of the month of Abib; for in the month of Abib you came out from Egypt. ¹⁹ "All that open the womb *are* Mine, and every male firstborn among your livestock, *whether* ox or sheep. ²⁰ "But the firstborn of a donkey you shall redeem with a lamb. And if you will not redeem *him*, then you shall break his neck. All the firstborn of your sons you shall redeem. And none shall appear before Me empty-handed. ²¹ " Six days you shall work, but on the seventh day you shall rest; in plowing time and in harvest you shall rest. ²² "And you shall observe the Feast of Weeks, of the firstfruits of wheat harvest, and the Feast of Ingathering at the year's end. ²³ "Three times in the year all your men shall appear before the Lord, the LORD God of Israel. ²⁴ "For I will cast out the nations before you and enlarge your borders; neither will any man covet your land when you go up to appear before the LORD your God three times in the year. ²⁵ " You shall not offer the blood of My sacrifice with leaven, nor shall the sacrifice of the Feast of the Passover be left until morning. ²⁶ "The first of the firstfruits of your land you shall bring to the house of the LORD your God. **You shall not boil a young goat in its mother's milk."**

NKJ Deuteronomy 14:21-23 ²¹ " You shall not eat anything that dies *of itself*; you may give it to the alien who *is* within your gates, that he may eat it, or you may sell it to a foreigner; for you *are* a holy people to the LORD your God. **You shall not boil a young goat in its mother's milk.** ²² " You shall truly tithe all the increase of your grain that the field produces year by year. ²³ "And you shall eat before the LORD your God, in the place where He chooses to make His name abide, the tithe of your grain and your new wine and your oil, of the firstborn of your herds and your flocks, that you may learn to fear the LORD your God always.

You will notice that all three passages pertain to the Biblical festivals and to bringing your offerings to God. This may be a little difficult to see in the Deuteronomy passage because of the way the sentence is constructed, but we must remember that in Hebrew there is no punctuation, thus Deuteronomy 14:21 can (and should) be split since the second half begins a new "festival" thought. Within the festival theme, God makes the statement "You shall not boil a young goat in its mother's milk.". Because boiling a kid in its mother's milk seems to have nothing to do with the festivals, the rabbis take it completely out of context in the Exodus passages and make a stand-alone mitzvah (law) based on that statement alone. On the other hand, in the Deuteronomy passage they tie the mitzvah to the statement to not eat meat that has died of itself claiming that both are negative commandments that pertain to food. They completely disregard the fact that in Deuteronomy, the commandment can just as easily be tied to the festival context

that follows just as it is tied to the preceding context in the Exodus passages. Do they think that it is just a coincidence that each time the phrase “You shall not boil a young goat in its mother's milk.” appears in the Torah, it is always attached to a festival theme?

So what does boiling an animal in milk have to do with the festivals? Is God telling us to not mix meat and milk at the festivals? Is He telling us to not participate in a pagan cult practice as some claim? What is He trying to tell us? We can discover the truth by taking note of the similarities in each passage and by taking a deeper look at the meaning of the Hebrew words in the text, especially the word “boil”.

You will notice that each passage pertains to the festivals and to the commandment to bring the firstfruits and/or the firstlings. As was mentioned before, the Hebrew behind these words (firstfruits, firstlings) is basically the same. Each passage also contains the Hebrew word ‘basha’ (בָּשָׂא – Strong’s 1310) which is translated ‘seethe’ or ‘boil’. ‘Basha’ is a root word that oftentimes means “to boil, cook, bake, and roast” and is translated that way most often. But is ‘boil’ the primary meaning of ‘basha’? Not necessarily. To find the primary meaning we need to use the “Law of First Mention”, an important hermeneutical tool that states that the first time a word or concept is used in scripture is where you will find its most accurate meaning. In the case of ‘basha’, the first use of the word is in the story of Joseph interpreting the dreams of the butler and the baker..

^{NKJ} **Genesis 40:9** Then the chief butler told his dream to Joseph, and said to him, "Behold, in my dream a vine was before me, ¹⁰and in the vine were three branches; it was as though it budded, its blossoms shot forth, and its clusters brought forth ripe (basha) grapes . . .”

Here we see ‘basha’ translated as ‘ripe’; the grapes had come to full maturity. This passage in the English Standard Version makes it even clearer –

^{ESV} **Genesis 40:10** and on the vine there were three branches. As soon as it budded, its blossoms shot forth, and the clusters ripened (basha) into grapes.

So if (based on the “Law of First Mention”) the Hebrew word ‘basha’ primarily means ‘to ripen’, and we replace the word “boil” with “ripen”, what does it mean in the three “ripen a kid” passages? It simply means that you do not want to ‘ripen’ the kid on its mother’s milk, i.e. - bring the animal to full maturity or wait until it is weaned – before bringing or dedicating it to God. He does not want us to hesitate or delay in bringing the sacrifice of the firstlings. He does not want us to wait until it is weaned, he wants it brought as quickly as practical.

The natural weaning time for a lamb is from four to six months, but except for the period between Sukkot and Passover, the time frame between the festivals is much less. God is simply reminding His people to not wait until the animal is weaned to bring him to the festival for sacrifice, but dedicate him as a sacrifice at 8 days old and bring him to the next festival in the series. This fits perfectly within the context of each passage.

To further solidify this explanation, we should also look at the Hebrew word for ‘kid’. In each of the three passages, the Hebrew word is ‘ghediy’ (גְּדִיָּהּ – Strong’s 1423). A ‘ghediy’ is a male goat whereas a female goat is an ‘ez’ (אֵז – Strong’s 5795). In most places in the Torah where reference is made to a young goat, both ‘ghediy’ and ‘ez’ are used together indicating that the gender of the animal is irrelevant; but in only three places is ‘ghediy’ used alone⁵. Those three passages are those pertaining to ‘ripening a kid in its mother’s milk’. This shows that the gender of the kid is relevant because the offering of the firstborn only pertains to the males. If the rabbis were correct and this passage were about mixing meat and milk,

⁵ Gen. 38:17 is another, but as the story continues (vs. 20), we find that ‘ez’ is included, making the gender of the animal irrelevant to the context.

then they should be more specific and say that you should not mix meat from a male animal with milk since God is very specific in regards to the gender of the animal. Obviously, this would cause even more confusion and greatly increase the difficulty for those who follow this presumed mandate.

With what we've seen so far, we can translate the phrase in question to read "You shall not bring to maturity a male kid of the goats in his mother's milk." This seems to make sense and fits the context of the surrounding scripture, but what about the preposition "in"? Would it not be more proper to say "on" his mother's milk? Yes it would, and the text supports that as well. The Hebrew transliterated text for "in his mother's milk" is "bahalev immo" (בְּהֵלֶב אִמּוֹ) and reads "in milk his mother". The preposition "in" is derived from the letter "bet" which precedes the word "milk" (halev). In most cases, the "bet" preposition is translated as "in, at, by, with, among" and so on, but it can also be translated as "on" as is the case where God set apart the Sabbath –

^{NKJ} **Genesis 2:2** And on the seventh day God ended His work which He had done, and He rested on the seventh day from all His work which He had done.

In this verse, the "bet" preposition is attached to the word "day" in both instances. Thus we see that our passage could very well read "You shall not bring to maturity a male kid of the goats on his mother's milk."

Now that we know that the passage can easily be translated to forbid any delay in bringing the firstlings to God, and that by doing so, the passage fits perfectly into the "festival" context of the surrounding scriptures, it is clear that we have a gross translation error. If it were not for the context - 1) the fact that God does not want His ways to be hard, 2) that the offering of the firstborn was to be a constant reminder of our redemption through Messiah Yeshua, and 3) that God is very specific with His use of words - we would have not seen the translation error.

Context, Context, Context! It makes all the difference.

Shalom