

The Meat of Pigs

By Abu Atallah

Why did Allah prohibit eating of some food in the Torah and then allowed it in the *Injil* (the Arabic word for the Gospel) for example the eating of The Meat of Pigs?

Before we answer this question we need to know that there is no creature that is created unclean (*Najes*) in itself. The Bible states that when God created every living creature they were good, as we read in Genesis 1:24-25:

And God said, "Let the land produce living creatures according to their kinds: livestock, creatures that move along the ground, and wild animals, each according to its kind." And it was so. And God made the wild animals according to their kinds, the livestock according to their kinds, and all the creatures that move along the ground according to their kinds. And God saw that it was good.

Therefore we know that all creation was created good and not impure or defiled. Then the question is, why then did Allah forbid the eating of pig since pig's meat was not impure? To answer this question we need to read Leviticus 11:1-7:

The LORD said to Moses and Aaron, "Say to the Israelites: 'Of all the animals that live on land, these are the ones you may eat: You may eat any animal that has a split hoof completely divided and that chews the cud. There are some that only chew the cud or only have a split hoof, but you must not eat them.... And the pig, though it has a split hoof completely divided, does not chew the cud; it is unclean for you.'"

There are two criteria that are required for an animal to be considered clean. First a split hoof completely divided, second that the animal chews the cud. The book of Leviticus is concerned with the holiness of God and the holiness of God's people. This means that God is concerned that the behavior of the children of light (the believers) should be set apart and separate from the behavior of the children of darkness (the unbelievers). So what is the meaning of the above verses?

The hoof represents the separation between the dust of the ground and the foot of the animal and this symbolizes the separation of the behavior of believers from the behavior of unbelievers. The *Injil* states in 2 Corinthians 6:14: "Do not be yoked together with unbelievers. For what do righteousness and wickedness have in common? Or what fellowship can light have with darkness?" So the behavior of the children of light should be in drastic distinction from the behavior of the children of night.

The chewing of the cud (constant chewing) symbolizes that behavior is not enough. The children of light should chew on and digest the word of God on a continuing basis. Why both criteria? There are people who live a virtuous and good life but they have no personal relationship with God. Subsequent to the above question we ask, Why didn't the *Injil* (New Testament) continue the same principle as the Torah?

Clean and unclean also have a symbolic force. Unclean animals symbolize disorder, mixture, and untruth. Clean animals symbolize order, wholeness, integrity; these symbols point to God's holiness. Observance of the ritual purity laws internalizes these values deep in the national consciousness. It especially develops the people's awareness of the holiness of God, as people who believe in the Person of Christ as our savior and Lord and in what he has done for you and me by dying on the cross to pay for our sins. God's law will be written in our hearts as Hebrews 8:10 states: "This is the covenant I will make with the house of Israel after that time, declares the Lord. I will put my laws in their minds and write

them on their hearts. I will be their God, and they will be my people.”

Therefore we will not need to learn holiness through symbols from the lives of animals for we have the Spirit of God in us to show us. This is why all the foods are pure in the *Injil*, in the New Testament, as it is written in Romans 14:17: “For the kingdom of God is not a matter of eating and drinking, but of righteousness, peace and joy in the Holy Spirit.” The main reason for the laws concerning the clean and unclean is to preserve the sanctity of God’s holy people. God’s people’s holiness was to be expressed in every aspect of their life, to the extent that all of life had a certain ceremonial quality.

In the New Testament the great council of Jerusalem decided not to shackle converted people from other nations with keeping the dietary laws. Whereas the dietary laws distinguished the Jew from the Gentile (other nations), their abolishment means that the wall of separation has been broken down (Ephesians 2:11-21). Now all, Jew and Gentile, free and slave, male and female, are one in Christ, (Acts 15:13-21; Galatians 3:28). This abolishment is also grounded on Jesus’ teaching that what defiles a person is not the food that enters his body, but the passions that flow out of a defiled heart (Mark 7:14-23). Jesus freed his followers from observing endless rules.

Nevertheless, with freedom goes responsibility. A believer is free to eat any food, but one is not free to shake another’s faith by insensitive behavior (Romans 14:15). In genuine concern for a fellow believer, a believer is to avoid any offending food. Freedom is to be governed by considerate love. Abused freedom leads to lustful living and moral ignorance, but freedom practiced in love leads to devoted service of God in the giving of oneself to hurting people (I Peter 1:22).

I hope this will answer your question.