

WHAT IF PIGS WERE KOSHER?

...and the swine; although it has true hoofs, with the hoofs cleft through, it does not chew the cud... ("v'hu gerah lo yigar," literally: "It has a cud, it does not...") ---Lev. 11:7

In the time to come, the pig will again be permitted...not because the Torah will change, God forbid, but because the nature of the pig will change, and it will chew its cud. This is what the text alludes to in saying "It has a cud, it does not..." as if to say that the matter depends: as long as it does not chew its cud, it is permitted, but when its nature changes and it will do so, it will be permitted. --- **Or Ha-chayyim**, Rabbi Chayyim ben Attar, 18th c., Italy/Jerusalem)

Rabbi Elazar ben Azariah taught: How do we know that a person should not say, "I cannot bear to eat pork," "I cannot bear to commit a sexually immoral act," but should rather say: "I do desire it, but what can I do, for my Father in Heaven has decreed this for me"? Because we learn (Lev. 20:26): *I have separated you from among the nations to be mine*, meaning, to be separated from transgression, and to accept the kingdom of Heaven. --- **Sifra** on **Kedoshim**, 9:12

The first purpose of the law is to restrain desire...Isaiah says about this, *They who sanctify and purify themselves to enter the groves...eating the flesh of the swine...* (Isa. 66:17) He says: they purify and sanctify themselves in the open and public places, and afterwards, when alone in their homes, they are engaged in acts of disobedience; that is, in their unbridled license in eating forbidden food... --- Maimonides, **Guide for the Perplexed**, III, ch. 33. Note that the verse from Isaiah is in a context of idolatrous worship; thus, Maimonides is also identifying the eating of pork with idolatry.

There was Eleazar, one of the leading teachers of the law, a man of great age and distinguished bearing. He was being forced to open his mouth and eat pork, but preferring an honorable death to an unclean life, he spat it out and voluntarily submitted to the flogging... --- II Maccabees 6:18f.

Is “kosher bacon”--that is, kosher food manufactured to look and taste like bacon--kosher? It involves no offense against the dietary laws, since the meat itself is kosher. Whether it is desirable or not is another matter. It can be argued that it is undignified for a Jew to eat anything resembling the abhorrent animal. If “kosher bacon” is eaten, care must be taken that people who witness it should know that the food is kosher...It is wrong to give the impression of wrongdoing even though one is innocent of it. --- Rabbi Louis Jacobs, The Book of Jewish Practice, p. 70

There are four kinds of (land) animals lacking the signs required in order to be kosher for consumption (cloven hoofs, chewing the cud). Rabbi Shmuel bar Nachman taught: All the prophets foresaw the kingdoms (who would subjugate Israel), as it says: *A river flows from Eden to water the garden, which would flow into four streams* (Gen. 2:10). Rabbi Tanchuma, and some say it was Rabbi Menachama, said in the name of Rabbi Yehoshua ben Levi: the Holy Blessed One prepared the future punishment which these nations would provide to Israel. *A river flows from Eden; “from Eden” (mei-Eden)* (can be extended to read as **min ad din**, “the place from which judgment flows”), *which would flow into four streams*: (the word **yipared**, flow, can also suggest separation, hence the separation of Israel from their land;) referring to the four kingdoms that enslaved us. They are Babylonia, Persia/Media, the Greeks, and the Romans.

Edom (code language for Rome) is compared to the swine, to teach you that just as this swine, while it wallows (in the mud) on its back, it lifts its hooves and says, “See, I am fit,” so too this evil empire acts arrogantly, raiding and pillaging, while presenting itself as just.

--- Midrash Vayikra Rabbah 13:5