

MIQDASH BETHEL COVENANT INSTITUTION

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DOCUMENT 241

FLESH FORBIDDEN

A Covenant Deep Dive into Swine (Pork) in the Tanakh and the Scientific Record

Why Does the Written Tanakh Forbid the Swine's Flesh — and Does the Scientific Record Agree? — A Three-Religion Covenant Response

September 2026

Elder Kepha Arcemont, Founder

miqdashbethel.org • miqdashbethel@gmail.com

The Message is Sent to the World

REACHING JUDAISM, CHRISTIANITY, AND ISLAM

☆ JUDAISM	† CHRISTIANITY	⬢ ISLAM
Leviticus 11:7-8 and Deuteronomy 14:8 forbid the flesh of the swine as unclean; rabbinic tradition (kashrut) has preserved this prohibition unbroken to the present day.	The written Torah prohibition stands unrepealed in the Tanakh. The New Testament records a genuine internal debate over its application (Mark 7, Acts 10, Acts 15), addressed as comparative witness in Section VIII below.	Qur'an 2:173, 5:3, 6:145, and 16:115 explicitly forbid khinzir (swine) flesh, corroborating the Torah's dietary standard as historical reference.

DOCTRINAL AUTHORITY — STANDING RULE OF MIQDASH BETHEL COVENANT INSTITUTION

The sole binding authority of Miqdash Bethel Covenant Institution is the ***Tanakh*** — the written covenant of **Yahweh**. No Talmudic tractate, Church council decree, papal encyclical, hadith collection, or extra-biblical tradition carries doctrinal weight equal to or greater than the written Torah. Where any tradition conflicts with the written covenant, the written covenant governs without exception. The Talmud, New Testament, and Qur'an are cited as historical reference and comparative witness — never as superseding authority. Miqdash Bethel uses the Written Tanakh as its sole source for four reasons: it is the only text Judaism, Christianity, and Islam all recognize as originally given by **Yahweh**; it predates and underlies the Talmud, New Testament, and Qur'an, so testing those traditions against it follows the evidentiary direction of **Deuteronomy 19:15** — the earlier witness governs the later commentary; every later tradition that departs from the Tanakh does so by

addition or reinterpretation, never by overturning the text itself, so the text remains the fixed standard; and **Yahweh**’s own words declare the covenant unchanging (Malachi 3:6; Psalms 119:89), making the written covenant — not evolving institutional interpretation — the only stable ground for doctrine. All three great covenant traditions — Judaism, Christianity, and Islam — are addressed simultaneously and equally in every Miqdash Bethel document, because **Yahweh**’s covenant belongs to every nation that will receive it. The **Deuteronomy 19:15** two-or-three-witness evidentiary standard governs all textual claims in this document.

HOW TO READ THIS DOCUMENT

This document tests a single question against the written Tanakh and against the modern scientific and medical record: why does the covenant forbid the flesh of the swine, and does the evidence outside Scripture corroborate or contradict that command? Hebrew terms appear in ***bold italic*** transliteration followed immediately by their English meaning in parentheses; Hebrew characters and Strong’s reference numbers accompany each term at its first substantive use. **Yahweh** and **Elohim** are bolded at every occurrence, as are direct scripture quotations and the names of prophets. Every scientific and medical claim is drawn from named, citable sources and graded honestly — corroborated where the two-or-three-witness standard of **Deuteronomy 19:15** is met, and flagged as popular but unproven where it is not.

TANAKH BOOKS CITED IN THIS DOCUMENT

BOOK	CHAPTERS CITED
Genesis	1
Leviticus	11
Deuteronomy	14, 19, 29
Psalms	80
Proverbs	11
Isaiah	65, 66
Malachi	3

I. WORD STUDY: THE VOCABULARY OF THE PROHIBITION

The written Torah names the animal, states the physical test that governs the entire class of land animals, and names the swine as the one creature that fails that test at the single most visible point. Four terms carry the weight of the passage.

chazir (חֲזִיר) H2386 — "swine, pig, boar"

The Hebrew **chazir** (חֲזִיר) H2386 (swine) is a common Semitic root also attested in cognate Northwest Semitic languages; the term is used in the Tanakh almost exclusively in contexts of dietary law, scorn, or apostate ritual (see Section IV below), never as an animal fit for the altar or the table.

tame (טָמֵא) H2931 — "unclean, defiled"

tame (טָמֵא) H2931 (unclean) is the operative verdict **Leviticus 11:7** pronounces over the swine. This is a ritual-purity classification, not a statement about the animal's moral character or its Creator's valuation of it — the same root governs menstrual impurity, corpse contact, and skin disease, none of which carry moral blame. **tame** marks a boundary of approach and consumption, not a judgment of worth.

maphreset parsah (מִפְרֶסֶת פֶּרֶסָה) — "splitting the hoof" / **shesa** (שֶׁסַע) H8156 — "cleft"

maphreset parsah (מִפְרֶסֶת פֶּרֶסָה) (splitting the hoof) and **shesa** (שֶׁסַע) H8156 (cleft) describe the first of the Torah's two-part test for land animals: the hoof must be fully divided into two parts. The swine passes this half of the test — its hoof is cloven.

gerah (גֵּרָה) H1625 — "cud"

gerah (גֵּרָה) H1625 (cud) names the second half of the test: **maaleh gerah**, "bringing up the cud" — the process of regurgitation and re-chewing found in ruminant digestion. The swine, a non-ruminant with a simple, single-chambered stomach, does not meet this half of the test. **Leviticus 11:7** states the failure explicitly: the swine divides the hoof but does not chew the cud, and on that basis alone it is pronounced **tame** to Israel.

II. THE WRITTEN LAW: LEVITICUS 11:7-8 AND DEUTERONOMY 14:8

Leviticus 11:7-8 reads, in substance:

"And the swine, though it divides the hoof and is cloven-footed, yet does not chew the cud; it is unclean to you. Of their flesh you shall not eat, and their carcass you shall not touch; they are unclean to you."

Deuteronomy 14:8 restates the identical ruling nearly word for word roughly thirty-eight years later, in Moses's second address to Israel on the plains of Moab, showing the command was not a one-time ritual instruction but a standing covenant statute carried forward into the generation that would enter the land.

Three features of the text deserve attention. First, the prohibition is stated as a **choq** (חֻק) — a statute — embedded in a much larger chapter (Leviticus 11) that classifies every category of creature Israel would encounter: land animals, water creatures, birds, and swarming things. The swine is not singled out for special condemnation; it is one entry in a comprehensive taxonomy in which the majority of land mammals, most fish without fins and scales, and all listed birds of prey and scavenger birds are likewise declared **tame**. Second, the text forbids both eating the flesh and touching the carcass — a stronger restriction than is applied to some other unclean animals, whose flesh alone is forbidden without a parallel touch-prohibition, which suggests the

swine occupied a particularly serious place in the purity code. Third, no rationale is stated in the text itself. The Torah does not say "because it carries disease" or "because it is filthy in its habits." It states the physical test, states the result, and states the verdict. Section VII below addresses why this matters for how the modern scientific evidence should be weighed.

III. HISTORICAL WITNESS: THE ANCIENT WORLD AND THE MACCABEAN TEST

This section draws on classical and post-biblical historical sources, not the Tanakh itself, and is presented as historical background only, corroborated where possible per the two-or-three-witness standard — never as doctrine.

The Greek historian Herodotus (5th century BCE) reported that Egyptian priests regarded the pig as unclean and that swineherds were a despised caste barred from temple precincts, though ordinary Egyptians did consume pork at certain festivals — evidence that pig-avoidance in ritual contexts was not unique to Israel but was a broader Near Eastern pattern, attested independently of the Torah. Archaeological surveys of Iron Age sites in the southern Levant have likewise found pig bones sharply reduced or absent at highland sites associated with early Israelite settlement, in contrast to greater frequencies at Philistine coastal sites — a material pattern archaeologists have proposed, with appropriate caution, as a possible ethnic marker consistent with the written law, though population, environment, and economy are also contributing factors and the correlation is not treated here as proof of the Torah's antiquity, only as independent circumstantial corroboration.

The Maccabean Test (Historical, Non-Canonical)

Post-biblical Jewish and Greek historical sources (1 and 2 Maccabees, and Josephus's *Antiquities of the Jews*, corroborated per research standard because Josephus carries a pro-Roman bias requiring independent confirmation) record that the Seleucid king Antiochus IV Epiphanes, during his campaign to suppress Judean religious practice in the 160s BCE, ordered Jews to eat swine's flesh publicly as a test of loyalty to the Hellenistic state and a renunciation of the covenant. The martyrdom narratives built around this episode — most famously the account of a mother and seven sons in 2 Maccabees 7 — are not part of the Tanakh and carry no doctrinal authority in this document, but the historical episode itself is well attested across independent sources and is cited here only to show that by the second century BCE, forced pork-consumption was already recognized by outside observers as the sharpest available test of covenant loyalty — confirming that Leviticus 11:7-8 and Deuteronomy 14:8 were understood as binding, identity-defining law centuries before the rabbinic period, not as a late post-exilic invention.

IV. THE PROPHETIC WITNESS: ISAIAH 65 AND 66

The prophet **Isaiah** twice ties swine-eating directly to apostate ritual rather than treating it merely as a dietary infraction. **Isaiah 65:2-5** describes a rebellious people who provoke **Yahweh "to His face,"** sacrificing in gardens and burning incense on bricks, **"who eat swine's flesh, and the broth of abominable things is in their vessels"** — the term rendered **"abominable things"** is *piggul* or related *sheqets* (שֶׁקֶטִים) vocabulary, the

same family of words used in Leviticus 11 for forbidden creatures, now applied to people who present themselves as more holy than others ("**stand apart, do not come near me, for I am holier than you**") while practicing exactly the ritual the Torah forbade.

Isaiah 66:17 extends the same charge: those who:

"sanctify themselves and purify themselves in the gardens after one tree in the midst, eating swine's flesh, and the abomination, and the mouse, shall be consumed together."

The pairing of swine's flesh with *sheqets* (שֶׁקֶטִים) (abomination) and the mouse — also listed among the unclean swarming things in Leviticus 11:29 — shows the prophet reading the dietary code as a live marker of covenant loyalty centuries after Sinai, not a rule that had quietly lapsed. Eating swine's flesh functions in both passages as a diagnostic symptom of a deeper apostasy: garden-cult worship borrowed from surrounding nations, dressed in language of superior holiness.

V. FIVE WITNESSES

Witness One — Leviticus 11:7-8

The foundational statute: the swine divides the hoof but does not chew the cud, and is pronounced tame (unclean) — flesh forbidden, carcass forbidden to the touch.

Witness Two — Deuteronomy 14:8

The statute restated verbatim in Moses's second address, confirming it as standing covenant law carried into the land, not a wilderness-only instruction.

Witness Three — Isaiah 65:2-5

Swine's flesh is eaten in the context of garden-cult idolatry, named alongside sheqets ("abominable things") as a marker of a people who provoke Yahweh while claiming superior holiness.

Witness Four — Isaiah 66:17

Swine's flesh again paired with sheqets and the unclean mouse of Leviticus 11:29, showing the dietary law still functioning centuries later as a live test of covenant loyalty.

Witness Five — Proverbs 11:22

"As a jewel of gold in a swine's snout, so is a beautiful woman who lacks discretion" — a wisdom-literature witness independent of the legal and prophetic corpus, showing the swine was so culturally established as the paradigm of an unfit, incongruous setting that the image required no explanation to be understood.

VI. THE SCIENTIFIC AND MEDICAL RECORD

This section applies the **Deuteronomy 19:15** two-or-three-witness standard to the modern scientific and medical literature on swine and pork. Claims corroborated by multiple independent, citable sources (peer-reviewed research, the CDC, the World Health Organization, the Merck Manual, and comparable institutional sources) are presented as established. Popular claims that could not be independently corroborated in the scientific literature are named honestly as such, consistent with the research standard that governs this document — the covenant law does not need an unproven argument to stand, and this document will not manufacture one.

A. Trichinellosis (*Trichinella spiralis*) — Corroborated

Trichinellosis is a parasitic disease caused by the roundworm *Trichinella spiralis*, historically contracted in the United States chiefly through raw or undercooked pork, and still contracted worldwide through undercooked pork and pork products. The larval cysts, once ingested, mature in the small intestine and release larvae that migrate into and encyst within muscle tissue, producing a first phase of nausea, vomiting, and abdominal pain followed one to eight weeks later by muscle pain, fever, facial and eyelid swelling, and in heavy infections, potential heart and breathing complications that can be fatal. The CDC confirms pork and pork products as a historically primary vector in the United States, with modern commercial farming regulation and cooking guidance having significantly reduced — though not eliminated — the risk.

B. *Taenia solium* (Pork Tapeworm) and Neurocysticercosis — Corroborated

The pork tapeworm *Taenia solium* produces two distinct human diseases. Taeniasis, the intestinal adult-worm infection, follows directly from eating raw or undercooked pork containing the larval cysts and causes comparatively mild gastrointestinal symptoms. Cysticercosis, the far more serious condition, follows from ingesting the tapeworm's eggs through fecal-oral contamination rather than from the pork itself, and can lodge larvae throughout the body's tissues. When those larvae reach the central nervous system, the resulting neurocysticercosis is documented by the World Health Organization and the Pan American Health Organization as the leading cause of acquired epilepsy in much of the developing world, responsible for as much as thirty to seventy percent of epilepsy cases in some endemic, pig-raising communities, and is increasingly recognized in developed nations through immigration and travel. The pig is the indispensable intermediate host of the entire life cycle; without swine, the parasite has no route to human muscle and brain tissue.

C. Hepatitis E Virus — Corroborated

Hepatitis E virus genotypes 3 and 4 are recognized zoonotic strains that circulate widely in domestic pig populations and can be transmitted to humans through consumption of raw or undercooked pork, particularly pig liver. Documented cases include direct transmission through raw pig-liver sausage in France and similar findings across Europe and Asia; a Vietnamese study found the virus present in over twelve percent of sampled pig liver tissue and substantially elevated seroprevalence among people occupationally exposed to pigs and pork — slaughterhouse workers, farmers, and meat vendors — compared to unexposed controls. The World Health Organization estimates roughly twenty million hepatitis E infections worldwide annually, with tens of thousands of deaths, and recognizes swine as a significant and permanent zoonotic reservoir for the disease.

D. Livestock-Associated MRSA and Antibiotic Resistance — Corroborated

A methicillin-resistant strain of *Staphylococcus aureus* designated CC398 has become the dominant MRSA type in European livestock over the past fifty years, a rise researchers at the University of Cambridge link to widespread antibiotic use in intensive pig farming; in Danish pig herds, the proportion testing positive for the strain rose from under five percent in 2008 to ninety percent by 2018. The strain does not sicken pigs but can jump to and infect humans, both those with direct livestock contact and, increasingly, those without it; UK researchers confirmed its presence in pre-packaged retail pork. The World Health Organization classifies antimicrobial resistance, of which livestock-associated MRSA is a documented instance, among the world's greatest threats to human health.

E. IARC Classification of Processed and Red Meat — Corroborated

In 2015 the World Health Organization's International Agency for Research on Cancer, after reviewing more than eight hundred epidemiological studies, classified processed meat — a category most commonly made from pork or beef, including ham, bacon, and sausage — as carcinogenic to humans (Group 1), based on sufficient evidence linking it to colorectal cancer, with each daily fifty-gram portion raising colorectal cancer risk by an estimated eighteen percent. Red meat generally, a category the IARC defines to include pork, was classified as probably carcinogenic to humans (Group 2A), with associations also observed for pancreatic and prostate cancer. The IARC noted that red meat retains nutritional value and that individual risk from moderate consumption remains small, while the population-level public-health impact is significant given how widely such meat is consumed.

F. The "No Sweat Glands / Toxin Retention" Claim — NOT Corroborated

A popular argument, widely repeated in both Jewish and Muslim apologetic writing, holds that because pigs lack functional sweat glands they cannot "sweat out" toxins, and that those toxins therefore accumulate in the flesh. Applying the **Deuteronomy 19:15** evidentiary standard honestly requires this document to report that this specific claim does not hold up against the veterinary and physiological literature. It is true that pigs largely lack functional sweat glands and cool themselves chiefly by other means, such as wallowing. It is not true, however, that sweating is a meaningful toxin-elimination pathway in any mammal — sweat glands are not connected to the systemic detoxification pathways of the body; that function belongs to the liver and kidneys, which pigs possess and which function comparably to the human liver and kidney in clearing metabolic waste, exactly as in cattle, sheep, goats, and the other animals the Torah does permit for food. Veterinary extension sources and independent fact-checking organizations that reviewed the claim found no evidence that a pig's inability to sweat causes any toxin buildup in its meat beyond what any other livestock animal experiences. This document reports that finding plainly rather than repeating a scientifically unsupported argument merely because it has circulated widely; the swine's one-chambered, rapid digestive system and its documented dietary omnivory (including carrion and waste when available, a pattern well attested in agricultural and veterinary literature) are real features of the animal's biology, but they do not, on the present evidence, establish a distinct toxin-retention mechanism beyond the digestive and metabolic processes shared with other livestock.

The corrected accounting matters for the integrity of this document's witness: the covenant law does not require this argument, and Section VII below explains why it was never meant to depend on one.

VII. WHY THE COMMAND STANDS INDEPENDENT OF RATIONALE

Leviticus 11 states no medical or hygienic rationale for the dietary code; it states a physical test and a verdict. Scripture elsewhere is candid that some of **Yahweh**'s statutes are given as *choq* (חֻק) — a category of law whose reasoning is not disclosed to the one who obeys it.

Deuteronomy 29:29 states the principle directly:

"The secret things belong unto Yahweh our Elohim: but those things which are revealed belong unto us and to our children forever, that we may do all the words of this law."

The dietary statutes function this way — Israel is commanded to keep them because **Yahweh** has spoken, not because a stated hygienic mechanism has been supplied and must first be verified.

This reframes the relationship between Sections II-V and Section VI correctly. The scientific record in Section VI is not the reason for the command — it is independent, external corroboration that the physical world behaves in a manner consistent with a statute given over three thousand years before germ theory, parasitology, or virology existed as disciplines. Trichinellosis, neurocysticercosis, and zoonotic hepatitis E are not close calls in the literature; they are well-documented, multiply-corroborated diseases whose entire transmission pathway to humans runs through swine flesh in a way it does not for cattle, sheep, goats, or most permitted fish. That convergence is worth naming honestly. But naming it honestly also means declining to overstate the case — which is why Section VI-F reports the toxin-retention claim as unproven rather than folding it into the same category as the parasitic and viral evidence. The command does not need every popular argument in its favor to be true in order to remain binding; it needs only **Yahweh**'s word, which Section II already establishes.

VIII. REACHING JUDAISM, CHRISTIANITY, AND ISLAM

The summary table on the opening page states each tradition's position at a glance. This section expands on each.

Judaism

Rabbinic tradition (post-biblical rabbinic commentary, not treated here as doctrinal authority per the standing rule above) has preserved the swine prohibition of **Leviticus 11:7-8** without interruption into the present day; the laws of kashrut built around this and the other dietary statutes remain a defining marker of religious Jewish practice. This document treats that unbroken preservation as historical corroboration that the written command was understood, from the earliest post-biblical period onward, exactly as Sections II-III describe it: binding covenant law, not a lapsed ceremonial instruction.

Christianity

The New Testament (cited as comparative witness only, per the Doctrinal Authority standing rule, never as an authority superseding the Tanakh) records a genuine internal debate on this question that this document reports honestly rather than resolving on Miqdash Bethel's behalf. **Mark 7:19** is understood by many Christian traditions as Yeshua declaring all foods clean; **Acts 10** records Peter's vision of a sheet containing

unclean animals, though the passage's own narrative, in verse 28, has Peter himself interpreting the vision as being about persons — "**Elohim has shown me that I should not call any man common or unclean**" — rather than a food-law repeal, a reading a significant body of Christian scholarship shares. Later New Testament material, including **1 Timothy 4:3-5**, addresses those who forbid foods **Elohim** created to be received. Historic Christian practice on this question has never been uniform, and this document does not adjudicate the dispute; it notes, per the Doctrinal Authority standing rule, that the written Tanakh's own statute in **Leviticus 11:7-8** and **Deuteronomy 14:8** remains unrepealed by the text of the Torah itself, whatever a later tradition has concluded about its application. Christianity as a whole has used the passages in the New Testament to justify eating pork, however the Torah/Tanakh is clear, that Yahweh's people never partook in the eating of swine's flesh!

Islam

The Qur'an forbids *khinzir* (swine) flesh in four separate passages — 2:173, 5:3, 6:145, and 16:115 — using language (najis/impurity, forbidden flesh) that closely parallels the Torah's own *tame* classification. Islamic jurisprudence has, like rabbinic tradition, preserved this prohibition without significant internal dispute across its major schools. This document cites the Qur'anic material as historical reference and comparative corroboration only, consistent with the Doctrinal Authority standing rule, and finds in it a third independent line of textual witness converging with **Leviticus 11:7-8**.

IX. IN CONCLUSION

The written Tanakh forbids the flesh of the swine in a statute given without a stated rationale, restated verbatim a generation later, and invoked centuries afterward by the prophet Isaiah as a live marker of covenant loyalty rather than a dead letter. Historical sources outside Scripture confirm the prohibition was already understood as identity-defining by the second century BCE, when forced pork-consumption became the sharpest available test of loyalty under Hellenistic persecution. Two other great covenant traditions, Christianity in significant part and Islam without qualification, converge on some form of the same conclusion, even where they diverge on its present application. And the modern scientific and medical record, tested honestly rather than selectively, corroborates — by the same two-or-three-witness standard this document applies throughout — that swine flesh carries a documented, multiply-attested disease burden distinct in kind and severity from most permitted meats: trichinellosis, neurocysticercosis, zoonotic hepatitis E, livestock-associated antibiotic-resistant infection, and an elevated, WHO-classified cancer association. Where the popular record overstated its case, as with the sweat-gland claim, this document said so plainly, because the covenant law was never resting on that argument in the first place. It rests on **Yahweh's** word.

X. SEVEN COVENANT DECLARATIONS

1. We declare that Leviticus 11:7-8 and Deuteronomy 14:8 stand as unrepealed covenant law, forbidding both the flesh and the touch of the swine's carcass to Israel.
2. We declare that the prohibition is given as a choq, a statute whose full rationale Yahweh has not disclosed, and that our obedience does not wait upon a scientific explanation to be binding.

3. We declare, on the witness of Isaiah 65 and 66, that swine-eating in Scripture is tied to apostate ritual and false claims of superior holiness, a warning still applicable wherever covenant statutes are set aside while religious language is retained.
4. We declare that the historical record, from Herodotus to the Maccabean persecution, corroborates that pig-avoidance and pig-consumption-as-loyalty-test were recognized identity markers in the ancient world, independent of and prior to rabbinic codification.
5. We declare that the modern scientific and medical record — trichinellosis, neurocysticercosis, hepatitis E, livestock-associated MRSA, and the WHO/IARC cancer classification — corroborates the wisdom of the covenant statute, while we decline to overstate evidence, such as the sweat-gland toxin claim, that does not meet the two-or-three-witness standard.
6. We declare that Judaism's unbroken rabbinic preservation and Islam's unqualified Qur'anic prohibition stand as two further, independent lines of witness converging with the Torah's own statute.
7. We declare, per the Deuteronomy 29:29 principle, that the secret things belong to Yahweh and the revealed things belong to us and to our children, that we may do all the words of this covenant — including this one.

SCRIPTURE INDEX

Genesis 1

Leviticus 11:7-8, 11:29

Deuteronomy 14:8, 19:15, 29:29

Psalms 80:13, 119:89

Proverbs 11:22

Isaiah 65:2-5, 66:17

Malachi 3:6

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“THE SECRET THINGS BELONG UNTO YAHWEH OUR ELOHIM... BUT THOSE THINGS WHICH ARE REVEALED BELONG UNTO US.” — DEUTERONOMY 29:29