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SWINE IN OLD TESTAMENT TABOO

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AMONG the flesh-food that was barred from use by the Hebrews was that of *swine* (Lv. 11 7 and Dt. 14 8). The nominal ground for this prohibition was that they parted the hoof, were cloven-footed and did not chew the cud, and were unclean.

The attitude toward swine in the Old Testament is almost universally disdainful and derogatory. In Is. 65 the writer says of the rebellious, they are: "A people that provoke me to my face continually, sacrificing in gardens and burning incense upon bricks; that sit among graves, and stay over night in hidden places; that eat swine's flesh; and broth of abominable things is in their vessels" (vv. 3, 4). In the 66th chap. among the reprehensible offerings were those of a dog's life and swine's blood (v. 3), and eating swine's flesh (v. 17). The unclean habits of swine are set forth in Prov. 11 22: "As a ring of gold in a swine's snout, so is a fair woman who turns aside from discretion." The desecration of "the vine of Israel" is pictured by the psalmist thus: "The boar out of the wood doth ravage it, and the wild beasts of the field feed upon it" (80 14).

On turning to the New Testament we discover representations of swine similar to those of the Old Testament. In Matthew the demons, whose habitat was the demoniac, upon the appearance of Jesus, requested that upon expulsion they might enter a herd of swine, the despised animal of Israel,—the result of that transfer is well-known (Mt. 8 31 f.). When the prodigal son

was reduced to extremities, he fed hogs for a living, to a Jew the most disgraceful of employments (Lk. 15 15), and as a climax, to appease his hunger ate the rough feed of those hogs.

On what ground was the hog barred from the list of foods allowed the Israelites? It is interesting to note that the hog is the only animal excluded on the ground that it parted the hoof and did not chew the cud, and that *today* such a prohibition would not rule out the mule-foot hogs that are bred with such success in several countries. No other direct reason is assigned in the narrative of Leviticus and Deuteronomy against eating swine's flesh. The other references in the Old Testament emphasize the thought of that prohibition, and far more than that of any other flesh prohibited in the entire two lists.

Was the prohibition of swine-flesh based on hygienic or religious grounds? Some writers have gone to extreme lengths to find hygienic principles as the underlying reasons for the ban on pork; and some valid grounds they doubtless have, but were the grounds they have discovered those that were in the mind of the compiler of these restrictions? It was practically shown years ago (Smith, W. R., *Religion of the Semites*, pp. 201, 272, 232, 457) that the real reason for the ban was a religious one. Lucian, in *Dea Syria* 54, states that among Syrians swine's flesh was *taboo*, but whether because holy or because unclean was not clear; in "rules of holiness the motive is respect for the gods, in rules of uncleanness it is primarily fear of an unknown or hostile power" (W. R. S. 143), in Leviticus both seem to have come under divine ordinances.

"According to Al-Nadim the heathen Harranians sacrificed swine and ate swine's flesh once a year" (W. R. S. 272). This ceremony appeared yearly in Cyprus in connection with the worship of the Semitic Aphrodite and Adonis. In ordinary worship of Aphrodite swine were not admitted, but in Cyprus wild boars were sacrificed once a year on April 2 (Lydus, *De Mensibus*, Bonn. Ed. p. 80). Exceptional sacrifices of swine to Aphrodite took place at Argos, and in Thessaly, though these may have been purely Greek rites.

Isaiah the prophet in the passages already quoted (65 4; 66 3, 17) probably alludes to the same sacrifice, as an abomin-

ation, including two other unclean animals, the dog and the mouse.

That swine was especially sacred to Aphrodite or Astarte is affirmed by Antiphanes (*ap. Athen. III* 49). Among the Greeks the favorite piacular victims were sacred animals; *e. g.*, the swine of Demeter and the dog of Hecate; and the essential act of lustration consisted in the application of the blood of the offering to the guilty person (W. R. S. 332);—all reflected in the prophecy of Is. 66 3, 17.

To sum up the opinion of W. R. Smith (392 V. 1) "The piacular sacrifice of swine at Cyprus on April 2, represents the death of the god himself, not an act of vengeance for his death. Adonis, in short, is the Swine-god, and in this, as in many other cases, the sacred victim has been changed by false interpretation into the enemy of the god."

When we pass from these cases, to the evidence in early Babylonia we have a variety of testimony. Among the Babylonian deities we discover one called *Nin-shakh*, the second element in the name meaning "wildhog,"—a well-known animal that lived in the marshes and swamps of that great valley. Very early in Babylonian history this beast was domesticated, but was not allowed to feed on the fields and pastures as did the sheep, goats and cattle, for reasons we can well understand, but was kept in pens or permitted to run about the streets of the cities like dogs, and with them and vultures to act as scavengers, to rid the city of its garbage. Even this offensive method of feeding did not prevent the hog from being a house animal as seen in Hammurabi's laws (§ 8). "If a man steal ox or sheep, ass or pig, or boat—if it be from a god (temple) or a palace, he shall restore 30-fold; if it be from a freeman, he shall render 10-fold. If the thief have nothing wherewith to pay he shall be put to death."

It was used as food by the population with certain restrictions. On specified days of the Babylonian calendar, as 30th day of the fifth month, the flesh of this animal was not eaten, probably because this day was dedicated to the hog, as a remnant of some old religious feast. And at certain feasts it was roasted for the priestesses (*B. E.* 6, 1, 21, 5, 34, 10); and their

fat (lard), was used as an offering to the gods (*R. A.* 9, 101, IX, 12 ff.).

To the god Nin-shakh above mentioned, Rim-Sin built a temple in Erech, called his beloved residence, probably an old temple of the god restored or enlarged. More than this we cannot at present assert.

In spite of all the many references to the use of swine in offerings to divinities, and for priestesses, and prohibition on certain days, they were not clean beasts; on the other hand they were cheap and easily procurable. Their associations with demons which gladly seized upon them (as in *Mt.* 8 32; *C. T.* 17, 5, 43) gave them an ominous character. The figure of Labartu the child-slaying demon is represented with two sucking pigs, clinging one to each side of his body (*Z. A.* 16, 156, 26), as if they were nourished by the hideous character of that monster. Such associations indicate their classification in the minds of the Babylonians.

In pre-Israelitish Palestine swine were well-known. Macalister in his excavations at Gezer found among the bones of sacrifices at the high places, those of sheep, kine and camels, and among the bones in the great neolithic sanctuary he identified quantities of bones of hogs (*Q. S.* 1903, 321; 1904, 113). Why these were the special victims in the sacrifices we have no exact means of knowing. That they were immolated is beyond shadow of a doubt.

Since the hog was sacred to a divinity in Cyprus and Greece, to another god in Babylonia, was associated in myth and legend with demons and evil spirits, was used in feasts to certain priestesses and gods, and was sacrificed to divinities by the inhabitants of pre-Israelitish Palestine, there is abundant reason on religious grounds for classifying him in Hebrew legislation as unclean, and for prohibiting the use of his flesh as food among the worshippers of Jahweh.