

# LEVITICUS 11:1- 47

**Theme:** “Cleanliness is Godliness”

**Topic:** Clean and Unclean Animals

## Chapter 11 Outline

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## SCRIPTURE

**11:1-2 Intro:** “Now the Lord spoke to Moses and Aaron, saying to them, “Speak to the children of Israel, saying, ‘These are the animals which you may eat among all the animals that are on the earth:”

- The idea of clean and unclean animals was not a new concept. Noah knew the difference between clean and unclean animals, (Gen. 7:1-10).
- This was probably knowledge passed down from Adam, as from the beginning, mankind would have had to know which creatures were okay to eat and which ones were not.
- Clean” and “unclean” had nothing to do with the quality of the creature but were used to denote two things:
  1. God’s created purpose of the animal.
    - Is it meant for food? For service? For companionship?
  2. Is it healthy for humans to consume?
    - Will it harm the human in some way?
- Clean = created to be food, healthy to consume, okay for sacrifices.
- “If you will diligently listen to the voice of the Lord your God, and do that which is right in his eyes, and give ear to his commandments and **keep all his statutes**, I will put **none of the diseases** on you that I put on the Egyptians, for I am the Lord, your healer.” Exodus 15:26, ESV

**11:3-8 Land Mammals:** “Among the animals, whatever divides the hoof, having cloven hooves **and** chewing the cud [herbivores]—that you may eat. Nevertheless **these you shall not eat** among those that chew the cud or those that have cloven hooves: the camel, because it chews the cud but does not have cloven hooves, is unclean to you; the rock hyrax, because it chews the cud but does not have cloven hooves, is unclean to you; the hare, because it chews the cud but does not have cloven hooves, is unclean to you; and the **swine**, though it divides the hoof, having cloven hooves, yet does not chew the cud, is unclean to you. Their flesh you shall not eat, and their carcasses you shall not touch. **They are unclean to you.**”

### Cloven/Divided/Parted Hooves:

- Present in animals such as deer, cattle, and goats = CLEAN
- Horses have hooves but they are not divided = UNCLEAN (Service Animal)
- Camels do have divided feet, but they are not hooved. They are toes like ours = UNCLEAN (Service Animal)
- Rock Hyraxes [Coney] and Hares were thought to “chew the cud” but actually don’t. The way they move their mouths, it just looks like they do to the human eye, but they aren’t actually **ruminants**, which makes an animal clean or unclean. They also don’t have hooves, but toes instead = UNCLEAN

### Special Case: Swine / Pigs

- Pigs have cloven hooves So why aren’t they clean? Because it does not “chew the cud”. What does that mean?
- The phrase “chewing the cud” in the Hebrew is *’ālā gērā* (ah-law gay-law), and it is basically translated as **rumination**.
- "Animals that ruminate, also known as **ruminants**, include cattle, sheep, goats, deer, and antelopes, which are even-toed mammals that chew cud by chewing, swallowing, regurgitating, re-chewing, and re-swallowing their food. This process allows them to efficiently digest fibrous, plant-based diets." (Google AI)
- Ruminants have four-chambered stomachs. This allows them to filter the good stuff (vitamins, etc.) from the bad stuff (bacteria) which then gets absorbed into their bodies, making their meat nutrient-rich and healthy for humans to consume. Pigs only have one stomach so whatever they eat does not get filtered and both good and bad gets absorbed into their bodies, making their meat less healthy for humans.
- “The Jews consider it a defiled creature (Ps. 65-66, Proverbs 11:22) and the eating of pork was regarded as renouncing the Law, and as a sign of apostasy.” ~ Ellicott
- Pigs eat whatever is in front of them, even eating their own dead at times. It was thought to spread diseases like leprosy and in warm climates, its skin bred bacteria. Basically, whatever a pig eats or touches, transfers into its meat because it doesn’t have a filtering stomach like the others.
- If raised and prepared well, pork can be okay, which is why people eat it today. However, it is still unhealthy to eat in large amounts due to “its high levels of saturated fat and sodium (especially processed forms like bacon/sausage, raising heart disease/stroke risk), potential for parasitic infections (like tapeworms) if undercooked, and links to increased cancer risk, particularly with processed pork (WHO classifies it as Group 1 carcinogen).” (Google AI)

### Summary:

- Deer, cattle, sheep, and goats = CLEAN.
- All other land mammals = UNCLEAN.

**11:9-12 Water Creatures:** *“These you may eat of all that are in the water: whatever in the water has **fins and scales**, whether in the **seas or in the rivers**—that you may eat. But all in the seas or in the rivers that do not have fins and scales, all that move in the water or any living thing which is in the water, they are an abomination to you. They shall be an abomination to you; you shall not eat their flesh, but you shall regard their carcasses as an abomination. Whatever in the water does not have fins or scales—that shall be an abomination to you.”*

- **Seas / Saltwater**

- Tuna, Flounder, Sea Bass, Snapper, Mahi-Mahi, Halibut, etc. = CLEAN

- **Rivers / Freshwater**

- Trout, Salmon, Bass, Perch, Tilapia, etc. = CLEAN

- **Must have Fins AND Scales**

- No Shellfish (Crab, Lobster, Clams, etc.)
- No Eels / Sea Snakes (no fins)
- No Catfish/Shark/Swordfish/Blowfish/Anglers (no scales)
- Why? “Scaleless fish often live on the bottom, scavenging on decaying matter, feces, and dead organisms, making them more likely to harbor toxins or cause illness.” (Google AI)

UNCLEAN

**11:13-19 Birds:** *“And these you shall regard as an abomination among the birds; they shall not be eaten, they are an abomination: the eagle, the vulture, the buzzard, the kite, and the falcon after its kind; every raven after its kind, the ostrich, the short-eared owl, the sea gull, and the hawk after its kind; the little owl, the fisher owl, and the screech owl; the white owl, the [desert owl], and the [Egyptian] vulture; the stork, the heron after its kind, the hoopoe\*, and the bat.”* (\* The Hoopoe is the national bird of Israel)

- Summary:

- UNCLEAN = Carnivorous birds of prey (Owls, Hawks, Vultures, Storks, Ostriches, etc.), disease-carrying flying creatures like bats.
- CLEAN = Domesticated species like chickens, doves, ducks, geese, pigeons, turkeys, quail, and sparrows.

**11:20-23 Flying Insects:** *“All flying insects that creep on [the ground] shall be an abomination to you. Yet these you may eat of every flying insect that creeps on [the ground] : those which have jointed legs above their feet with which to leap on the earth. These you may eat: the locust after its kind, the destroying locust after its kind, the cricket after its kind, and the grasshopper after its kind. But all other flying insects which [also creep] shall be an abomination to you.”*

- Summary:

- CLEAN: locusts, katydids, crickets, and grasshoppers.
- UNCLEAN: All other insects.
- This is those that creep AND fly (like beetles, bees, etc.), insects that just creep will be discussed later.
- Some translations use the phrase “on all fours” to identify creepers, but that is misleading since most insects have six legs.

**11:24-28 Carcasses:** *“By these you shall become unclean; whoever touches the carcass of any of them shall be unclean until evening; whoever carries part of the carcass of any of them shall wash his clothes and be unclean until evening: The carcass of any animal which divides the foot, but is not cloven-hoofed or does not chew the cud, is unclean to you. Everyone who touches it shall be unclean. And whatever goes on its paws, among all kinds of animals that go on all fours, those are unclean to you. Whoever touches any such carcass shall be unclean until evening. Whoever carries any such carcass shall wash his clothes and be unclean until evening. It is unclean to you.”*

- **Bottom Line:** You can only touch the dead body of animals that are **clean** for you to eat or sacrifice. This is practical – for preparation needs. You are **unclean** if you touch the carcass of an unclean land mammal. However, you can touch them when they are alive (petting dogs, etc.).

**11:29-40 Rodents and Reptiles:** *“These also shall be unclean to you among the creeping things that creep on the earth: [mice, rats, weasels, moles,] and the large lizard after its kind; the gecko, the monitor lizard, the sand reptile, the sand lizard, and the chameleon. These are unclean to you among all that creep. Whoever touches them when they are dead shall be unclean until evening. Anything on which any of them falls, when they are dead shall be unclean, whether it is any item of wood or clothing or skin or sack, whatever item it is, in which any work is done, it must be put in water. And it shall be unclean until evening; then it shall be clean. Any earthen vessel into which any of them falls you shall break; and whatever is in it shall be unclean: in such a vessel, any edible food upon which water falls becomes unclean, and any drink that may be drunk from it becomes unclean. And everything on which a part of any such carcass falls shall be unclean; whether it is an oven or cooking stove, it shall be broken down; for they are unclean, and shall be unclean to you. Nevertheless a spring or a cistern, in which there is plenty of water, shall be clean, but whatever touches any such carcass becomes unclean. And if a part of any such carcass falls on any planting seed which is to be sown, it remains clean. But if water is put on the seed, and if a part of any such carcass falls on it, it becomes unclean to you. And if any animal which you may eat dies, he who touches its carcass shall be unclean until evening. He who eats of its carcass shall wash his clothes and be unclean until evening. He also who carries its carcass shall wash his clothes and be unclean until evening.”*

Summary:

- All rodents and reptiles are unclean – you cannot eat them ever, and you cannot touch them when they are dead. If anything comes into contact with them, it is unclean and often must be tossed out.
- Can you have them as pets? Probably not, because they still transfer disease easily.

**11:41-44 Creeping Things:** *“And every creeping thing that creeps on the earth shall be an abomination. It shall not be eaten. Whatever crawls on its belly, whatever [creeps], or whatever has many feet among all creeping things that creep on the earth—these you shall not eat, for they are an abomination. You shall not make yourselves abominable with any creeping thing that creeps; nor shall you make yourselves unclean with them, lest you be defiled by them. For I am the LORD your God. You shall therefore consecrate yourselves, and you shall be holy; for I am holy. Neither shall you defile yourselves with any creeping thing that creeps on the earth.”*

- Creeping things: worms/maggots, snails/slugs (no escargot!), snakes, pedes of any kind (milli, centi, etc.), caterpillars, spiders, scorpions, etc. = UNCLEAR

## CONCLUSION

**11:45-47** *“For I am the LORD who brings you up out of the land of Egypt, to be your God. You shall therefore be holy, for I am holy. ‘This is the law of the animals and the birds and every living creature that moves in the waters, and of every creature that creeps on the earth, to distinguish between the unclean and the clean, and between the animal that may be eaten and the animal that may not be eaten.’ ”*

- It wasn’t completely about food. It was about knowing God’s word, respecting it, and obeying it. It was about being set apart as God’s people.
- Clean animals were safe for both sacrificing and eating. Unclean animals were not to be used for either.
- "The basis of the obligation to maintain the distinction was the call of the Hebrews to be the special people of Yahweh. It was to be something in their daily life to remind them of the covenant which distinguished them from the nations of the world. By Jesus Christ it was revealed Matthew 15:11 to the elect people that they were no longer to be tied by the letter of the Law in regard to their food, but were to be left to the exercise of a regenerated judgment. They were to learn that the kingdom of God is not eating, or abstaining from, meats and drinks; but righteousness, and truth, and peace, and joy in the Holy Spirit.” ~ Barnes
- Matthew 15:11 – *“What goes into someone’s mouth does not defile them, but what comes out of their mouth, that is what defiles them.”*

## SIDENOTE

### **What about Peter’s vision? (Acts 10:9-16)**

- *“The next day as Cornelius’s messengers were nearing the town, Peter went up on the flat roof to pray. It was about noon, and he was hungry. But while a meal was being prepared, he fell into a trance. He saw the sky open, and something like a large sheet was let down by its four corners. In the sheet were all sorts of animals, reptiles, and birds. Then a voice said to him, “Get up, Peter; kill and eat them.” “No, Lord,” Peter declared. “I have never eaten anything that our Jewish laws have declared impure and unclean.” But the voice spoke again: “Do not call something unclean if God has made it clean.” The same vision was repeated three times. Then the sheet was suddenly pulled up to heaven.”*
- Does this mean our liberty in Christ means we can eat whatever we want??? Well, of course you have the free will to put anything in your body you wish, but remember what 1 Corinthians 10:23 says, *“You say, “I am allowed to do anything”—but not everything is good for you. You say, “I am allowed to do anything”—but not everything is beneficial.”*
- Remember that God determined things clean and unclean for two reasons: Purpose and Health. If God is omniscient, should we really be questioning His wisdom on why He identified certain things as unhealthy? Notice what the Corinthians passage also says:
  - *“So you may eat any meat that is sold in the marketplace without raising questions of conscience. For “the earth is the LORD’s, and everything in it.” (1 Corinthians 10:25-26)*

- Know that there is a reason certain things are easier to get at the market than others. Use your wisdom. Do research on why certain foods are declared clean and unclean in the Scriptures.
- Also, remember that we get the reason for Peter's vision later on in the story:
  - *"Peter told them, 'You know it is against our laws for a Jewish man to enter a Gentile home like this or to associate with you. But God has shown me that I should no longer think of anyone as impure or unclean.'" (Acts 10:28)*
  - Remember how some stories and instances in the Bible are occasional? They are given for a specific purpose or occasion. Peter personally struggled with this, God had to break him of this discrimination against non-Jews. It wasn't about food, it was about people.
  - We can apply this today not to dietary choices but to how we gatekeep the Gospel. Are we sharing with everyone? Or only those that we feel deserve God's love? Who are we to determine that?
  - Acts 11:17-18 *"If then God gave the same gift to them as he gave to us when we believed in the Lord Jesus Christ, who was I that I could stand in God's way?" <sup>18</sup> When they heard these things they fell silent. And they glorified God, saying, "Then to the Gentiles also God has granted repentance that leads to life."*

### DISCUSSION

1. Did any of the animals listed surprise you? Which ones and why?
2. Are any of your favorite foods listed as 'unclean'? How will that affect your diet moving forward?
3. Besides health, what was the point of God identifying certain foods as clean and unclean?
4. How can we apply Peter's vision and learned truth to our own lives?

# PETER and CORNELIUS

Acts 10:1 - 11:18

