

Clean vs Unclean Foods

Key Principle

The Torah makes a clear distinction between:

- Clean (טהור – tahor)
- Unclean (טמא – tamei)

“Unclean” does not mean evil or sinful.
It means not permitted for food.

Leviticus 11:44–47

YAHUAH says He makes a distinction between clean and unclean.

LAND ANIMALS

Leviticus 11:3

A land animal must meet **both conditions**:

What Does “Chews the Cud” Mean

Leviticus 11:3

“Chews the cud” refers to animals that:

- Eat grass or vegetation
- Swallow it
- Bring it back up
- Chew it again

This process is called **rumination**.

Animals that chew the cud have a specialized multi-chambered stomach designed for digesting plant matter slowly and thoroughly.

Examples:

- Cow
- Sheep
- Goat
- Deer

Simple Definition:

Chewing the cud means the animal re-chews its food after swallowing it.

What Does “Has a Split (Cloven) Hoof” Mean

A split or cloven hoof means:

- The hoof is divided into two distinct toes
- The hoof is fully separated
- It is not solid like a horse’s hoof

Examples of split hooves:

- Cow
- Sheep
- Goat
- Deer

Examples of NOT split hooves:

- Horse (solid hoof)
- Donkey
- Camel (does not have a true split hoof in Torah definition)

Simple Definition:

A cloven hoof is a hoof that is clearly divided into two separate parts.

Why Both Are Required

Leviticus 11:3

The Torah says the animal must:

Chew the cud
Have a split hoof

If it has only one sign, it is unclean.

Example:

- Pig have split hoof but does NOT chew cud
- Camel have chews cud but does NOT meet split hoof requirement

In the Torah, a clean land animal must both chew the cud and have a fully divided hoof—missing either sign makes it unclean for food.

Clean Land Animals

Examples:

- Cattle (cow, ox)
- Sheep
- Goat
- Deer
- Gazelle

Simple Rule:

Chews cud & split hoof is clean.

Unclean Land Animals

Leviticus 11:4–8

Examples:

- Pig (split hoof, does not chew cud)
- Camel (chews cud, no true split hoof)
- Rabbit / Hare
- Horse
- Donkey

Simple Rule:

Missing either sign is unclean.

WATER CREATURES

Leviticus 11:9

Must have **both**:

Fins
Scales

Clean Water Creatures

Examples:

- Salmon
- Tuna
- Cod
- Tilapia
- Sardines

Unclean Water Creatures

Leviticus 11:10–12

Examples:

- Shrimp
- Crab
- Lobster
- Clams
- Oysters
- Catfish (no true scales)
- Shark
- Eel

Simple Rule:

No fins AND scales is unclean.

(Both are required.)

BIRDS

Leviticus 11:13–19

The Torah lists birds that are unclean.

It does not list “clean birds” directly it lists forbidden ones.

Unclean Birds (Examples)

- Eagle
- Vulture
- Hawk
- Raven
- Owl
- Pelican
- Stork
- Heron

These are primarily birds of prey or scavengers.

Commonly Accepted Clean Birds

Since they are not listed as unclean:

- Chicken
- Turkey
- Duck
- Goose
- Quail
- Dove

Simple Rule:

If it is not on the unclean list, it is generally permitted.

INSECTS & CREEPING THINGS

Leviticus 11:20–23

Most insects are unclean.

Limited Exception

Only certain locust-type insects:

- Jointed legs
- Used for hopping

Examples:

- Locust
- Certain grasshoppers

Most people today do not rely on insect consumption for food.

CREEPING THINGS

Leviticus 11:29–30

Examples:

- Mice
- Rats
- Lizards
- Geckos
- Chameleons

These are not food.

Important Torah Principles

Clean is Righteous

Eating clean does not make someone spiritually superior.

Micah 6:8

Obedience includes justice, mercy, and humility.

Unclean is not Evil

Unclean animals serve their purpose in creation.

Genesis 1:31

They are simply not designated as food.

Distinction Teaches Discipline

The dietary laws train:

- Discernment
- Self-control
- Awareness
- Daily obedience

Leviticus 11:45

“Be set-apart, for I am set-apart.”

The Torah defines clean and unclean foods to teach discernment, discipline, and obedience in everyday life.