**Pork Consumption as an Identity Marker in Ancient Israel: The Textual Evidence**

A finding of pig remains has often been seen in Iron-Age archaeology as evidence of the group identity of the residents of the areas where such remains are found. This conclusion has been critiqued in recent years in several zooarchaeological studies, which showed that the archaeological record from the Iron Age is more complex than such a conclusion would assume, and that pig remains cannot serve as an identity marker. Yet it appears many studies still make assumptions regarding pig remains based on an anachronistic and monolithic approach to text that ignores the development of Biblical thought and the Biblical text. Considering the textual sources currently available and with the assistance of appropriate methodological emphases, I seek in this article to address the questions of when and why pork consumption became an identity marker and what the ramifications of this theological development were on the transmission of the Biblical text.

1. **A Short Description of the State of Archaeological Research**

In several studies written since the 1980s, many scholars noted the high frequency of findings of pig bones in settlements from the southern Levant coastal plain that were identified as Philistine settlements, in contrast with the low frequency or absence of such findings at highland sites. Following this finding, it became accepted to assume that a finding of pig bones can serve as a criterion for determining the identity of the residents in the areas where they are found.[[1]](#footnote-1) This assumption was based on the conclusion drawn from the above-mentioned studies that in all Israelite settlements one should not expect to find pig bones, and the absence of pig bones is an indication of an Israelite settlement. Some scholars even proposed that the practice of avoiding pork consumption developed in early Iron Age Israelite society based on the desire to differentiate from the Philistines.[[2]](#footnote-2)

However, zooarchaeological studies from recent years have shown that this argument is based on a circular assumption, and in fact the situation is more complex.[[3]](#footnote-3) First, avoidance of pork consumption has been observed in other places in the ancient Near East, and therefore not every site lacking pig bones can be considered Israelite.[[4]](#footnote-4) Second, even in Late Bronze Sites in the Levant before the Israelite period, it is evident that pig was not a common component of the local population’s diet.[[5]](#footnote-5) During this period, pig bones can be found primarily in Egyptian government centers.[[6]](#footnote-6) Third, there is no consistency among Philistine settlements regarding pig findings. In Iron Age I, pork consumption is evident at Philistine urban sites, but not at Philistine rural sites, which lack evidence of pork consumption, presumably for economic reasons.[[7]](#footnote-7) Moreover, there is a salient decrease in pork consumption during the Iron Age in Philistia, such that the dichotomy between Israelite and Philistine sites during this period almost disappears.[[8]](#footnote-8) Fourth, during Iron Age II, there is an evident increase in pork consumption in Northern Kingdom areas, compared to a small amount of pig bones found in Judea.[[9]](#footnote-9) Recently an additional finding has been made of pig bones indicating consumption in Jerusalem during the eighth century BCE, which updates the previous assumption and shows that even in eighth-century BCE Judea there was not a complete lack of pig bones.[[10]](#footnote-10) In any event, it arises from all this that there is not necessarily a correspondence between group identity and the consumption or non-consumption of pork.

Considering these reasonable points, the question arises: Why did the assumption ever arise in archaeological research that pork consumption was a marker of belonging to Iron Age Israelite culture? The archaeological research literature has clearly provided pig a special status it is not accorded in the Torah. Pig appears in the list of animals deemed in two Torah passages as impure and forbidden (Lev. 11; Deut. 14) along with several other animals, including camel, daman, and hare, without greater attention than the other animals in the list. The special status given to pig in the research literature appears, in fact, to be based on an approach that was accepted relatively later in the development of the faith of Israelite culture, which I will address later. Moreover, it appears that archaeological studies give little attention to consumption patterns of other impure animals. For example, only recently did Yonatan Adler and Omri Lernaub show that the consumption of scaleless fish, also considered impure by the Torah, was considered an accepted matter at Israelite sites throughout the Iron Age and Persian period.[[11]](#footnote-11) One might have expected that such findings would be added to the consideration of pig findings in assessing the cultural identity of Israelite or other sites.

In addition, some of the previous studies focused on the question of when the taboo on pork consumption developed by assessing archaeological findings based on the assumption that this was an independent change that took place in Israelite society. Some studies, for example, proposed that the taboo on pork consumption developed in an attempt to separate from the Philistines,[[12]](#footnote-12) while others who saw the complexity of the Philistine record proposed that the taboo developed as an attempt to demarcate between Judahites and Israelites during the period the two kingdoms were establishing their statuses.[[13]](#footnote-13) Yet in fact the textual sources require a discussion of several stages of the development of the pig taboo, rather than of only one stage. The first stage may be very early and not necessarily connected to Israelite culture.[[14]](#footnote-14) This is because avoidance of eating or sacrificing pig meat was present in one form or another even in other cultures in the ancient Near East.[[15]](#footnote-15) Pig was not completely absent from diet and certain rituals in the ancient Near East, but its consumption was low compared to other animals, and the attitude towards pig was negative, as can be seen in a collection of Mesopotamian wisdom sayings written in the sixth year of the reign of Sargon II (716 BCE):

The pig (*šaḫû*) is unholy (*lā qašid*) [. . . . ] bespattering his backside,

Making the streets smell. polluting (*muṭannipū*) the houses.

The pig is not fit for a temple, lacks sense, is not allowed to tread on pavements,

An abomination (*ikkib*) to all the gods, an abhorrence [to (his) god,] accursed by Šamaš (VAT 8807, rev. III, 13–16).[[16]](#footnote-16)

Additionally, and better known, is Herodotus’s description of Egypt from the fifth century BCE:

Swine (ὗς) are held by the Egyptians to be unclean beasts. In the first place, if an Egyptian touches a hog in passing, he goes to the river and dips himself in it, clothed as he is; and in the second place, swineherds, though native born Egyptians, are alone of all men forbidden to enter any Egyptian temple; nor will any give a swineherd his daughter in marriage, nor take a wife from their women; but swineherds intermarry among themselves. [2] Nor do the Egyptians think it right to sacrifice swine to any god except the Moon and Dionysus; to these, they sacrifice their swine at the same time, in the same season of full moon; then they eat the meat. […] but they will not taste it on any other day. Poor men, with but slender means, mold swine out of dough, which they then take and sacrifice (Hdt. 2.47.1–3 [Godley]).[[17]](#footnote-17)

This taboo can be seen throughout a long period in this region: Even in the second century CE residents of several Syrian cities avoided eating and sacrificing pig, as, for example, the author of *Dea Syria* attests: “They sacrifice bulls and cows and goats and sheep. Only pigs do they consider unclean and neither sacrifice nor eat them. Yet others think them not unclean but sacred” (*Dea Syria* 54 [Lightfoot 278–279]).[[18]](#footnote-18) Regarding the question of the earliest source for the avoidance of pork consumption, answers can come from the fields of anthropology, sociology, or history that look at the periods before the Israelite period[[19]](#footnote-19) and pertain to issues not necessarily related to contact with Philistine groups or between Judahite and Northern/Israelite groups.

The second stage pertaining to the pork consumption taboo in ancient Israelite culture is the development of the texts in the Torah that forbid the consumption of several animals. Yet the archaeological findings cannot provide evidence to date these texts, because customs of avoiding the consumption or sacrifice of several animals may have predated the texts as local practices, and certainly the commonalities between these two sources in the Torah indicate that both are based on a common source prior to both, which was developed separately into two different passages before the Torah’s final redaction.[[20]](#footnote-20) In addition, the acceptance of these laws as a general prohibition obligatory on the entire population can only take place fully with the acceptance of the Torah as an obligatory document by which the entire population lives. This event, even according to the Biblical narrative (Nehemiah 8), did not take place before the mid-fifth century BCE, and in reality, only starting in the late Persian period and early Hellenistic period can one find significant signs of the acceptance of the Torah as an authoritative document obligatory upon all those who saw themselves as part of the Israelite group.[[21]](#footnote-21)

In any event, in the laws of forbidden foods in the Torah, pig is mentioned as one of the impure animals that are not to be eaten, alongside a long list of other impure animals like the hare, the daman, and the camel (Lev. 11:7; Deut. 14:8). Pig is not described as special or differentiated from the other impure animals. Pig is mentioned again in later Biblical passages in third Isaiah, which are possibly from the late Persian period or the early Hellenistic period, but it is unclear whether these writings refer specifically to Torah prohibitions. In the first instance, the prophet admonishes those who participate in a particular death cult that he sees as illegitimate and describes a ceremony in which they eat pork “Who sit inside tombs and pass the night in secret places; Who eat the flesh of swine, with broth of unclean things in their bowls” (Isaiah 65:4, trans. JPS, Sefaria.org). In the next passage, he appears to decry similar forbidden cult practices that involved eating pig and other animals: “As for those who slaughter oxen and slay humans, who sacrifice sheep and immolate [*Lit. “break the necks of.”*] dogs, who present as oblation the blood of swine, who offer [c*Heb. mazkir refers to giving the “token portion” (’azkarah); cf. Lev. 2.2, etc.*] incense and worship false gods—Just as they have chosen their ways and take pleasure in their abominations” (ibid., 17, trans. and comments ibid.).[[22]](#footnote-22)

Pig received a special status different from that of the other forbidden foods, and the prohibition on its consumption became a principle of equal value to the observance of the entire Torah, only in sources from the Hasmonean and later periods. According to 1 Maccabees, Antiochus Epiphanes made a series of decrees on the residents of Judea, including ceasing sacrifices in the temple, violating the sabbaths and festivals, “Set up altars, and groves, and chapels of idols, and sacrifice swine’s flesh, and unclean beasts” (οἰκοδομῆσαι βωμοὺς καὶ τεμένη καὶ εἰδώλια καὶ θύειν ὕεια καὶ κτήνη κοινὰ, 1 Macc 1:47, trans. Brenton's Septuagint, Sefaria.org). Pig is the only animal mentioned specifically, while the rest of the impure animals are mentioned in general. The story of the decrees appears differently in 2 Maccabees, where an old man from Athens is sent from the king to force the Jews to abandon their fathers’ Torah (2 Maccabees 6). According to the text, the Judeans were commanded to desecrate the Temple and celebrate the feast of Dionysus; two women were accused on circumcising their sons and others were punished for observing the Sabbath in secret. Later, much attention is given in 2 Maccabees to two stories of martyrs who preferred to die rather than eat pork. The first was Eleazar, one of the first scribes (τις τῶν πρωτευόντων γραμματέων), who did not agree even to pretend to taste the pork and thus be saved from death (2 Mac. 6:18–31). Afterwards, the mother and her seven sons who were forced to eat pork and faced a series of harsh acts of torture described in great detail, and thus found their deaths because they refused to taste the meat (2 Mac. 2:7). 4 Maccabees follows 2 Maccabees while going into greater depth and dedicates the majority of the book to the stories of the martyrs who preferred to die rather than eat pork. In this version, it is not an old man from Athens, but rather Antiochus himself who forces Eleazar to eat from the pig sacrifice; first in attempts at convincing him and afterwards in harsh acts of torture (4 Mac. 5–7). Antiochus, called here “the tyrant” (τύραννος), is the one who also tortures the mother and her seven sons after failing in the torture of Eleazar (4 Mac. 8–18). A version of these stories also appears to have been transmitted later on to Diodorus according to the testimony of Photius (*Bibliotheca Historica*, 34.1.4 = Photius, *Bibl*. 379b).[[23]](#footnote-23) According to this version, Antiochus himself sacrificed pig in the Temple, sprinkled from its blood on the altar, spilled from the broth of the pig meat that he prepared on the sanctified books, and afterwards forced the priests to eat the meat. A story of similar characteristics to the martyr stories, from the writings of Philo of Alexandria, describes how hundreds of years later in riots in Alexandria in 38 CE, mobs held Jewish women and forced them to eat pork (*In Flaccum* 95–96).

It is clear that the prohibition on pig in the sources that describe the time of Antiochus and afterwards attained a special status in comparison to other forbidden foods, as the prohibition on eating and sacrificing pig leads to acts of martyrdom or the Maccabee rebellion. In later sources, pig itself, and not only the act of avoiding eating it, receives symbolic meaning, and its impurity leads to destruction. For example, this can be seen in the following legend that describes a conflict between the Hasmonean brothers that took place in the first century BCE:

**The Sages taught** that this decree came about as a result of the following incident: **When the kings of the Hasmonean monarchy besieged each other** in their civil war, [**Hyrcanus**](/topics/horkenos) **was outside of** Jerusalem, besieging it, **and Aristoblus was inside. On each and every day they would lower dinars in a box** from inside the city, **and** those on the outside **would send up** animals for them to bring the **daily offerings** in the Temple. **A certain Elder was there,** in Jerusalem, **who was familiar with Greek wisdom. He communicated to** those on the outside **by** means of **Greek wisdom,** using words understood only by those proficient in Greek wisdom. **He said to them: As long as they are engaged in the** Temple **service, they will not be delivered into your hands.** Upon hearing this, **on the following day,** when **they lowered dinars in a box, they sent up a pig to them. Once** the pig **reached halfway** up the **wall, it inserted its hooves** into the wall and **Eretz Yisrael shuddered four hundred parasangs.** When the Sages saw this, **they said** at **that time: Cursed is the person who raises pigs, and cursed is the person who teaches his son Greek wisdom** (B Sotah 49b, trans. Koren, Sefaria.org, emphasis in translation)**.**[[24]](#footnote-24)

In the more historical version of this story, in the writings of Josephus (*Antiquities* 14:19–28), the story ends with the two sides contacting the Romans, who intervene in the siege, and as a result the conditions are created later on for the conquest of Palestine as a whole by Pompey in 63 BCE, as Josephus describes, “Now the occasions of this misery which came upon Jerusalem were Hyrcanus and Aristobulus, by raising a sedition one against the other; for now we lost our liberty, and became subject to the Romans” (*Antiquities* 14:77 [369], trans. Whitson, Wikisource.org). In the story in B Sotah, it is the pig who shakes the country, and therefore scholars have proposed that the pig here has a symbolic meaning that represents the Romans who conquered the country and later destroyed the Temple.[[25]](#footnote-25) Pig has a similar meaning in several legends that explain the destruction of the Second Temple in connection with a pig. For example, a legend in Avot of Rabbi Natan (A4, 69–73; B7, 3–11) describes how Vespasian besieged Jerusalem until he succeeded in projecting a pig’s head through war machines onto the altar, thus impurifying it. This, according to the story’s assumption, apparently led to the destruction of the Temple.[[26]](#footnote-26)

The transformation of pig into a symbol of the desecration of the Torah appears to have taken place no earlier than the Hasmonean period, since in sources from the early Hellenistic period pig is not described differently from other forbidden foods. Daniel, which was apparently written no later than the mid-second century BCE, opens with the story of the education of Daniel and his friends Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah in the court of the Babylonian king, where they are given “from the king’s food and from the wine he drank” (1:5, trans. JPS, Sefaria.org), but they preferred to eat legumes and drink water. In this story, the chief officer tests the children, but there are no signs of the stories of the martyrs who avoid eating pig like the stories mentioned above, nor is there a mention of pig, but rather a general reference to all the impure foods.[[27]](#footnote-27) The letter of Aristas, dated generally to the second century BCE, gives a broad overview to the forbidden foods in the response by Eleazar the High Priest to the question of why certain animals are impure and others are not (*Letter* 128–169).[[28]](#footnote-28) Although the list details several types of animals, it does not mention pig at all. It is possible that pig was removed from the overview from apologetic reasons, but if the author attributed unique impurity to pig like is seen in 1, 2, and 4 Maccabees and the other later sources mentioned above, he certainly would have mentioned pig, with one justification of another, like in the writings of Philo of Alexandria.[[29]](#footnote-29) It appears, then, in light of these sources and the earlier sources that clearly mention pig, that pig received a special status in the Jewish texts compared to the other impure animals only starting in the late second century BCE.

**B. Why in the Hasmonean Period?**

The stories from the period detailing religious persecution, or the stories that present the pig as imposing destruction or leading to the destruction of the Temple, include legendary, typological, and paradigmatic elements, and it is hard to conclude from them an exact description of the events of the period.[[30]](#footnote-30) Yet the archaeological findings, as shown in brief by Hesse and Wapnish and additional scholars, point to an increase in the presence of pig bones in Hellenistic settlements in Palestine, such as Ashqelon and Tel Anefah, and evidence of the prospering of the pig market in the region (not only in Hellenistic settlements) after hundreds of years of low pork consumption in the region.[[31]](#footnote-31) The textual sources also show that in the Greek world, in contrast with ancient Near East cultures, pig meat was very common as a legitimate sacrifice. Although pig meat was not completely lacking in ritual texts or from sacrifices in the ancient Near East, the use of pig was limited and took place in unique contexts. In Mesopotamia and Hati, for example, pig was used primarily in rituals compared to the gods of the realm of the dead, or nocturnal rituals.[[32]](#footnote-32) In Egypt as well the mention of pig sacrifices was limited, and findings of pig bones come primarily from rural areas, which supports the description by Herodotus (II 47).[[33]](#footnote-33) In the Greek world, in contrast, the use of pig was more common in routine sacrifices and in meals that took place alongside the sacrifice.[[34]](#footnote-34) A living and richly detailed description of pig sacrifice in the Greek world appears already in Homer, in the famous description of Eumaios, the pig shepherd who slaughters a fat pig (ὗς) in honor of his friend Odysseus (*Od*. 14.418–438).

In the Roman world, pig meat was even more popular as a food and as a sacrifice.[[35]](#footnote-35) For example, Varro, in the late first century BCE, says in his text on agriculture: “For who of our people cultivates a farm without keeping swine? And who has not heard that our fathers called him lazy and extravagant who hung in his larder a flitch of bacon which he had purchased from the butcher rather than got from his own farm?” (*Agr*.2.4.3). Cicero, during approximately the same period, in his statement about the benefit animals provide people, praises mules and asses, but “As for the pig, it can only furnish food; indeed Chrysippus actually says that its soul was given it to serve as salt and keep it from putrefaction; and because this animal was fitted for the food of man, nature made it the most prolific of all her offspring” (*Nat.d.* 2.160). Pig also often served as a sacrifice in the Roman world. For example, in one of the important Roman festivals, Suovetaurilia, pig, lamb, and ox would be sacrifice to the god Mars in a ceremony documented in many writings and in visual representations.[[36]](#footnote-36)

One can assume that pork consumption or participation in pig sacrifice became more common among Jews as well during the Hellenistic period. This appears to be what made what made specifically the consumption of pig, among all the impure animals listed in the Torah, a clear sign of the violation of the Torah’s precents from the Hasmonean period and onwards.[[37]](#footnote-37) During the Roman period as well this marker strengthened and also became a marker for the Romans, who mention the Jews’ avoidance of pig, alongside their observance of the Sabbath and circumcision, as one of the characteristics of the Jews. In several cases, such as in the writings of Tacitus (Tac. *Hist*. 5.4.1–2), the description is of an ethnographic character and is similar to the descriptions of other groups, but in the writings of other authors such as Juvenal and Petronius, the Jews’ avoidance of pig is described derisively (; Juv. *Sat*. 6. 157-169; 14.98-99; Petron. F 37; cf. Plut. *Quaest. Conv.* 4.5; Macr. *Sat.* 2.4.11; Erotianus F 33).[[38]](#footnote-38) Given these later mentions and other similar mentions, several scholars have emphasized the foreignness of this Jewish practice to the Romans, but it should be emphasized that the Hellenistic and Roman populations knew of other groups in the Hellenistic Near East who avoided sacrificing or eating pig, and it appears to me that the matter of pig consumption served as a clear identity marker primarily through the Jewish prism that describes its identity in comparison to the Greco-Roman environment.[[39]](#footnote-39) This approach is reflected, for example, in the description of Gaius’s mission, as described by Philo, the Caesar asked the mission “Why do you avoid pork?”—a question that sparked laughter by those opposing the Jews, but which was answered by the Jews with a reply that led to understanding by the Caesar that “every nation’s laws are different” and that there are additional nations that avoid various animals. Yet Philo’s choice to describe this episode indicates the importance of the matter for Jewish authors. In any event, it is clear from all the sources I have provided here that in this period—from the Hasmonean period and certainly from the Roman period, pig avoidance became a clear marker of Jewish identity that distinguished Jews from the surrounding society, alongside practices such as circumcision and Sabbath observance.

**C. A Change in Faith Affects the Transmission of the Text**

This change in the Jewish faith also seems to explain the disappearance of three passages that mention pig in the books of Samuel and Kings.

 Three times in the Samuel-Kings continuum (or the books of Kingdoms in the Septuagint), the Septuagint text refers to חזירים (“swine”), references that are all missing from those places in the Masoretic text. While most scholars have not connected between these passages and have not regarded their omission as one textual phenomenon, Alexander Rofé has suggested in a brief paragraph that the MT version in these places underwent a “nomistic correction.” The following may support Rofé’s direction by adding to the discussion several ancient Near Eastern texts and putting the textual phenomena within the larger historical context.

The longest textual difference appears in the story of Absalom’s rebellion against David, described in 2 Sam. 17. Hushai the Archite, who is Absalom’s advisor after Ahitophel, says, according to the Masoretic text in 2 Samuel 17:8: אתה ידעת את אביך ואת אנשיו כי גִבֹּרִים המה ומרי נפש המה כְּדֹב שַׁכּוּל בשדה ואביך איש מלחמה ולא ילין את העם: (“You know that your father and his men are warriors, and that they are enraged, like a bereaved bear in the field. Besides, your father is expert in war; he will not spend the night with the troops.”) In the Septuagint there is another phrase after the image כדב שכול בשדה (“like a bereaved bear in the field”): καὶ ὡς ὗς τραχεῖα ἐν τῷ πεδίῳ, (“and as a savage sow in the plain” NETS) which can be retroverted into Hebrew as something like וכחזירה איתנה בבקעה.[[40]](#footnote-40)

References to swine appear twice more: in the famous prophecy of Elijah to Ahab at the end of the story of the theft of Naboth’s vineyard (in 1 Kings 21:19) and in the fulfillment of that prophecy (in 1 Kings 22:38), in the Septuagint version of each. In the version with which we are familiar from the Masoretic text, Elijah says: הרצחת וגם ירשת ... במקום אשר לקקו הכלבים את דם נבות ילקו הכלבים את דמך גם אתה: (“…Have you killed, and also taken possession?... In the place where dogs licked up the blood of Naboth, dogs will also lick up your blood.”). In the Septuagint, however, in both the prophecy and its fulfillment, we find not just כלבים but the pair αἱ ὕες καὶ οἱ κύνες, i.e., “swine and dogs“.[[41]](#footnote-41) One might claim that the word “swine” was added here by a later scribe in order to accentuate the nature of the curse upon Ahab, but that pair, “dogs and swine,” is common in contemporary Assyrian inscriptions in similar contexts. So, for example, among the curses found in Essarhadon’s vassal treaty for one who violates the treaty is the threat “dogs and swine will consume your flesh” (line 451)and “dogs and swine will drag your corpses in open squares of Ashur. The earth will not receive them. Instead, the bellies of dogs and swine will be your burial places” (lines 482–484). Given that the pair “dogs and swine” appears in a similar context in other contemporary writings as well as later sources (for example, Matt. 7:6; 2 Pet. 2:22; B Shabbat 155b), it is not unthinkable that the Septuagint preserves here an expression that was common in such a context in ancient Near Eastern literature, as well as in Hebrew, and that the word חזיר (“pig/swine”) was deleted by a later scribe from the prophecy of doom pronounced for Ahab and from the narrative of its fulfillment. In the story of David and Absalom as well, there is no reason to assume that the image of the pig was added at a later stage. It seems, therefore, that there too the word “swine” was deliberately deleted, and with it the whole phrase around it (καὶ ὡς ὗς τραχεῖα ἐν τῷ πεδίῳ, “and as a savage sow in the plain”), in the stages of transmission that are now reflected in the Masoretic version.

 Why did a scribe see fit to delete the word חזיר from these three texts in Samuel and Kings? The deletion seems to be connected to the Hellenistic-period theological development I described above. As I mentioned, in the Pentateuch, the pig is mentioned as one of the impure animals that must not be eaten, together with a long list of other impure animals such as the hare, the hyrax, and the camel (Lev. 11:7; Deut. 14:4), and nothing in particular makes the pig stand out among all the other forbidden foods listed in the Pentateuch passages. From the textual evidence it seems that only from the Hasmonean period onward was pig perceived as a horrid abomination and even as a symbol of the violation of the Torah as a whole. It seems, then, that a scribe working at a time when even the mention of the word חזיר was considered a serious taboo, a symbol of the violation of the Torah *in toto*, found this image applied to David in his manuscript to be an intolerable insult and refrained from copying it. Thus, the original text with the pig reference was eliminated from the Hebrew text that has made its way to us. Even the mention of the pig in the text describing Ahab was deleted, perhaps to keep the idea that pigs ran loose in Ancient Israel’s cities out of the mind of the reader. It appears, then, that the text reflected in the Masoretic version in the places I have just mentioned reflects the Hasmonean period or later, after the word “pig” itself became taboo, while the Septuagint, in those places, preserves an earlier reading.

**D. Conclusion**

This study has pointed out the development of various approaches in archaeological research to pork consumption. Several scholars still hold the opinion that the lack of pig bones in the Iron Age is an identity marker that indicates a site’s residents were Israelite and have even proposed that the taboo on pig stemmed from the Israelites’ encounter with the Philistines, who consumed pork. Yet this claim does not meet the test of the archaeological and textual findings. The avoidance of pork consumption does not necessarily indicate Israelite settlement, and moreover, the assumption that it does is based on a later development in Israelite/Jewish theology—the belief that pork consumption or pig itself has a special status compared to other impure foods mentioned in the Torah. Pig is mentioned in the Torah alongside additional impure foods and is not accorded special impurity compared to those other foods. All the textual sources indicate that pig received a special status only in the Greco-Roman period, and apparently not before the late second century BCE. At this stage the consumption or sacrifice of pig became considered very impure, equivalent to the desecration of the entire Torah. The avoidance of pig consumption and sacrifice became a clear identity marker for Jews who lived in the Greco-Roman world (according to their descriptions), generally alongside additional signs like circumcision, the Sabbath, and observance of the Torah in general, apparently specifically because of the special fondness for sacrificing and eating pig prevalent in the Greco-Roman world. At a certain stage even pig itself became a symbol of special impurity that can cause national destruction merely in its essence. And as I have shown in the last section of the article, during this period even the word pig became taboo in certain instances. According to the proposal in this section, the word חזיר (pig) appeared in the older version of three passages in the books of Samuel and Kings but was erased by scribes who copied the text as it moved into the Masoretic text. The Septuagint in these instances maintained, in fact, an additional unique piece of evidence of processes in theological developments pertaining to the relationship to pig in the ancient Jewish world.

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