

WHY PORK IS FORBIDDEN IN ISLAM (PART 1 OF 2): OBEYING THE LAWS OF GOD

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Description: God allows us to enjoy all the good lawful things and forbids us to partake of those things that are harmful to our beliefs, health, well being, or morals.

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Islam is a holistic way of life, taking into account physical, spiritual, and emotional well-being, each a separate but overlapping part of the structure of a human being. God created us with a purpose; to worship Him, (**Quran 51:56**) but He did not abandon us to a world of instability and insecurity. He gave us a book of guidance, the Quran, and the example of Prophets and Messengers to explain that trusting in God was the way for us to achieve success in this life and in the hereafter.



. A Muslim spends his or her life endeavouring to please God by worshipping Him and obeying His laws, or rules. One of those rules is that the eating pork, or pork products is forbidden.

At first, one might wonder what harm could come from pork, a product eaten in many parts of the world, and the fact that pork contains parasites and diseases harmful to man may spring to mind as a justifiable reason for abstaining. However, when analysing why Muslims are forbidden to eat pork, this becomes a secondary reason. Muslims simply do not eat pork or pork products because God has prohibited it.

“He has forbidden you only dead animals, and blood, and the swine, and that which is slaughtered as a sacrifice for other than God.” (Quran 2:173)

Sometimes we may never know or understand why God has ordained some things and prohibited others. In the case of pork, no specific reason for the prohibition is given except in **Quran 6: 145** when God says, in reference to the flesh of swine (pig), **“for that surely is impure”**. A Muslim submits to God’s commands willingly, without needing to know the reason behind the divine rule. Moreover, God has expressly stated that a believer hears the words of his Lord and obeys them.

“‘We hear and we obey.’ And such are the successful (who will live forever in Paradise).” (Quran 24:51)

“When God and His Messenger have decreed a matter, they (the believers) should not have any option in their decision. And whoever disobeys God and His Messenger; he has indeed strayed into a plain error.” (Quran 33:36)

A believer understands that God is the Most Wise and the Most Just; therefore, His rules are designed to benefit us in our daily needs, be they physical, emotional, or spiritual. The Creator knows the best way for His creation to live in this world and prepare for the next. It is not permissible for a Muslim to consume pork under any circumstances except in cases of dire necessity, such as, if a person’s life depends on eating it. In cases of dire necessity, prohibited things are permitted.

God allows us to enjoy all the good lawful things and forbids us to partake of those things that may be harmful to our beliefs, health, well being, or morals.^[1] Consequently, Muslims are acutely aware of the dangers of eating things that are forbidden and therefore make concerted efforts to seek out permissible food, even if it involves extra effort or expense.

If a believer consumes pork unknowingly or by mistake, there is no sin of him or her. God does not punish anyone for lack of knowledge, nor for unintentional mistakes or forgetfulness. However if a believer is certain, or thinks that any pork, or pork products may be in his food, drinks or medicines then it is not permissible for him or her to consume it. If he has doubts then he must make an effort to inquire about the ingredients or ask for details.^[2] Nowadays knowledge about ingredients and the manufacturing process is readily available and the prohibition applies whether there is a small amount of pork or pork products, or a large amount.

The scholars of Islam differ over the issue of whether or not changing the form of the impurity (in this case pork products) lifts the prohibition. The Islamic Organisation for Medical Sciences is of the opinion that changing the form (for example, food, and medicine additives) so that it becomes something different, **does** lift the prohibition. However, there is no doubt and no difference of opinion that it is forbidden to consume meat derived from the pig, including ham and bacon.

The recent outbreak of swine flu in Mexico and North America led some countries to slaughter pigs en masse however there is ample scientific evidence to suggest that pigs harbour parasites that are harmful to humans and the pig has long been considered the ideal breeding ground for influenza.

Footnotes:

^[1] At Tabarani (classified as authentic by Sheikh al Albane).

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