




# Talking Point Notes Common or Unclean?

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The vision Peter received, as related in Acts 10:1–20, has been frequently used by Christians as an argument for ignoring the food laws given by Yahweh to his people. But how do we know that their lawless interpretation is wrong?

- All Scripture must be interpreted in accordance with Scripture, meaning that any interpretation must not contradict the Scriptures, always allowing that there is a valid interpretation which does not contradict the Scriptures. There is a lawless and a lawful interpretation of Peter's vision, and the lawless one is ruled out by this principle.
- To abolish the extensive and important food laws which define what is food and what is not food fit for eating by Yahweh's people, would require far more than an equivocal and perplexing vision given to one man who could not understand its meaning at first. (See verse 17.)

- The true meaning of the dream becomes immediately obvious by the fact that the common and unclean animals were offered three times, and then immediately three Gentiles (classified as common by the contemporary Jewish customs) came to meet with Peter, and by the fact that this was specifically pointed out by the Holy Spirit.
  - The number 'three' (in 'three men') was deleted from some of the Greek manuscripts. The reason for this is not difficult to ascertain, given the immediately preceding point.
  - If the vision meant what some Christians want it to mean, then Peter would have suffered zero confusion, because the meaning should have been immediately plain (unless Yahweh is unable to properly explain himself).
  - Peter himself explains the meaning of the vision, and he does so more than once. See verse 28, 35, 11:4–12, 11:17 (in combination with the gift of the Holy Spirit).
  - The Greek specifically makes a distinction between 'common' and 'unclean' (κοινὸς and ἀκάθαρτος). See verse 14, for instance. They are not the same thing. According to the Jewish custom (not Scripture), Gentiles were considered 'common' or 'communicable' and *not unclean!* But the argument of Christians that it is permitted to eat unclean animals requires that the Gentiles were considered *unclean!* The argument is therefore incoherent.
  - Note that in verse 28, ἀθέμιτος means 'sanctioned' or 'forbidden' and not "unlawful" as many translations wrongly have it. It was not against Torah to associate with Gentiles, but against the Jewish customs and norms of the time.
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