

The contention is on the following Ahadeeth:

**"Were it not for Bani Israel, meat would not decay; and were it not for Eve, no woman would ever betray her husband."**

(Bukhari 60/72)

Hammam b. Munabbih said: These are some of the ahadith which Abu Huraira (Allah be pleased with him) narrated to us from Allah's Messenger (ﷺ), and one of these (this one): Allah's Messenger (ﷺ) said: **Had it not been for Bani Isra'il, food would not have become stale, and meat would not have gone bad;** and had it not been for Eve, a woman would never have acted unfaithfully toward her husband.

(Muslim 17/84)

The address to the latter part of the hadith, ie women betraying their husband, can be found in *Moral Arguments*

Nevertheless, let us explicate upon the true meaning of these Ahadeeth.

First, we dissect the claim about **meat spoiling**.

The claim is that apparently the hadith says that meat only began to spoil **after the children of Israel** but of course this is untrue, bacteria such as E.Coli, Salmonella, Clostridium perfringens, Staph. aureus etc have existed for millions of millions of years so meat spoiled from the very start..

However, the hadith is not in reference to this, and if the claimant against Islam actually decided to study the history of bani israeel and the context, as well as peering into the commentaries of these hadeeth, they would know immediately that this hadith isn't referring to the supposed beginning of meat decaying post Bani Israeel.

Imam Nawawi explains for the Hadith in Muslim:

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## المنهاج شرح صحيح مسلم بن الحجاج

قوله صلى الله عليه وسلم : ( لولا بنو إسرائيل لم يخبث الطعام ولم يخنز اللحم ) هو بفتح الياء والنون وبكسر النون ، والماضي منه ( خنز ) بكسر النون وفتحها ومصدره ( الخنز والخنوز ) ، وهو إذا تغير وأنتن . قال العلماء : معناه أن بني إسرائيل لما أنزل الله عليهم المن والسلوى نهوا عن ادخارهما فادخروا ففسد وأنتن واستمر من ذلك الوقت والله أعلم .

**“The meaning is that when Allah sent upon them the Mann and Salwa they were forbidden to store them - but they stored them anyway - and they spoiled and it (the habit of storing) persisted from that time.”**

Similarly in the Sharh of the Hadith in Musnad Ahmad:

## حاشية مسند الإمام أحمد بن حنبل (حاشية السندي على المسند)

قوله (لولا بنو إسرائيل): قيل: لولا أن بني إسرائيل سنوا  
ادخار اللحم حتى أنتن لما ادخر فلم ينتن وقيل: كانوا  
يدخرون للسبب وغيره فأنتن وقيل: إنهم ادخروا المن  
والسلوى وقد نهوا عنه فأنتن واستمر من ذلك الوقت.

“Weren’t it not for Bani Israeel storing their meat habitually ... they stored it .. and it persisted and it’s said: they stored the mann and salwa although they were forbidden to do so and that (habit) persisted from that time.”

Now, does this imply that people did not know how to store food before Bani Israeel? Of course not.

“Were it not for Bani Israel, meat would not decay”:

Explaining this phrase Mufti Taqi Usmani writes;

“It means that People of Israel were the first to keep food and meat until it would go bad and get rotten and if it was not for the People of Israel who **started this habit, people would not have kept food for so long till it goes bad.** This is how al-Abi (Abu Abdullah Muhammad al-Washtani al-Abi al-Maliki (d. 828 A.H.) For the referred passage see his work Ikmal Ikmal al-Muallim 4/101) and al-Hafiz (Ibn Hajar) explained it in al-Fath (Fath al-Bari 10/110). **However; it does not mean that for the people before the People of Israel food and meat never rotted even if they saved it. But the meaning in fact is that the habit of saving the food was not common before them. For the people used to eat and feed others and nothing decayed till the People of Israel came, and they kept saving it till it would get rotten.**”

So the meaning actually is that these were the **people of Israel who started the general practice of hoarding surplus food with them which used to rot and get wasted. Before them generally the people used to collect food only for their own selves. And when they had surplus they would share it with other people (either through charity or trade). So they were actually the people who started the general practice that led to wasting of food.**

And he then quotes the report telling us when it so happened;

“al-Aini narrated from Qatadah: "the Mann and Salwa used to fall upon the People of Israel, from dawn to the sunrise, like the ice falls. So they would take from it just enough for the day except Friday, when they had to gather for it and the next day (Saturday). **But if they exceeded (their need), it used to get spoiled. So their saving used to cause a food waste for them and others.**" (Takmilah Fath al-Mulhim, Darul Ahya al-Turath al-'Arabi Beirut 2006 vol.1 p.140)

The general notion is that people typically used to eat only fresh meat at the time, without storing it, but Banu Isra'il were the ones **who started the habit of storing meat till it rotted.** This is what Wahb ibn Munabbih and Abu Nu'aym Al-Asfahani say aswell.

Of course people knew how to store meat. But rather, it was Banu Israeel who mass pervaded the habit and act of storing a surplus superfluous quantity of meat until it spoiled, and this habit was adopted i.e **the habit of mass storing excess amounts of meat and not finishing it** and was made popular to do from then.

This is a reflection of their **greed**. Bani Israel started this habit of **hoarding meat** and the meat obviously decayed. Since then, people **have continued this practice of hoarding excess amounts of meat, not being able to finish it all**, and meat keeps going bad because we continue this practice, which Bani Israel started. **If Bani Israel hadn't mass pervaded this practice, meat wouldn't have decayed - it would have been eaten while fresh, or all the meat that was stored would have been eaten and not left to rot.**

Al-Sa'di wrote:

كان الناس قبل ذلك يأكلون اللحم طرياً ولا يدخرونه، فلما حصل ادخاره من بني إسرائيل؛ كانوا أول من سنَّ للناس هذا الأمر  
لما وقع بنو إسرائيل في ادخاره؛ وقع الناس فيه  
بعدهم

"Before [Bani Israel], **people used to eat fresh meat and did not have the habit of storing meat. Bani Israel were the first to introduce this practice among the people and other nations followed them in this habit** [which resulted in their meat getting decayed]." (Majmu' Mu'allafat al-Shaikh Sa'di 21/53)

It does not mean that meat could not decay before Bani Israel. Al-Iraqi said:

فقال الحافظ العراقي في طرح التثريب في شرح التقریب (ج7/ص63): (يحتمل أن التغيير كان قديماً قبل وجود بني إسرائيل

"**The existence of meat decay most likely existed before the existence of Bani Israel.**" (Tarh al-tathrib fi Sharh al-Taqrīb 7/63)

It also does not rule out that some other extinct civilisations may have also practiced this habit before Bani Israel mass spread and reintroduced this practice in the Middle East.

Communities and societies may have done similar acts, but since they were not as influential or powerful as Bani Israeel, their actions were not made popular to emulate and follow. However, due to the magnitude of Bani Israel's power, communities started to emulate their practices and these practices were mass spread and reintroduced by Bani israeel popularizing them again to the world, and more particularly the Middle East.

So how exactly did their practices of mass storing meat begin?

Mann-o-Salwa is a type of food that was gifted to Bani Israel (people of Prophet Musa A.S). When Prophet Musa (AS) was living with Bani Israel in the field of Teeh at that time Prophet Musa (AS) asked Allah Almighty for the meal to fulfill the hunger of people who were with Him. Allah Almighty descended the two heavenly feasts for them from the sky on request of Prophet Musa (AS). One was "Mann" and the other was "Salwa".

Allah Almighty mentioned in Holy Quran: "O Children of Israel, We delivered you from your enemy, and We made an appointment with you at the right side of the mount, and We sent down to you manna and quails." (Quran, 20:80)

We all know that Mann-o-Salwa is the food of Jannah which was sent down by Allah Almighty for the people of Bani Israel. Allah Almighty commanded Prophet Musa (AS) **not to store this food for the next day as it will be sent on a daily basis.**

However, Bani Israeel **doubted Allah's promise that it would be sent on a daily basis, and went against His order not to store it;** Allah affirmed to them that they should not store and hoard the food and give it out to everyone, as there will be apt supply of it due to its being sent down daily. Bani Israeel disobeyed.

Thus, they began to **mass hoard this heavenly feast against their lord's command and since there was such an excess of it, they could not finish all the food that they had stored and it ended up spoiling,** even though Allah had told them to eat it daily and give it to everyone to eat. Thus, their act of **mass hoarding meat to an extent where they could not end up finishing it before it spoilt was mass adopted by other nations and civilisations and this habit became pervasive** unlike before.

Out of their impatience and greed, they stored meat during their 40 years in the wilderness, although they were forbidden by their prophet to do so.

Taqi Usmani also goes onto say:

**Meat going off only became a (mass spread habit and) problem once the Children of Israel left the path of abstinence (zuhd) and started to hoard meat, not that meat never used to go off before their time.** [Takmilat Fath al-Mulhim, Muhammad Taqi Usmani]

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Another interpretation is that the phrase 'meat would not spoil' is not in reference to **how meat came to be physically spoilt** but rather **the wisdom behind why Allah allowed meat to be spoilt by these bacteria in the first place.**

The meaning of 'meat would not spoil' is that if Allah had not decreed for meat to spoil or decay naturally, **the rich and powerful would have hoarded it all for themselves at the expense of the poor.**

Ibn Hajar writes:

قال وهب بن منبه في بعض الكتب لولا أنني كنتُ الفسَادَ عَلَى الطَّعَامِ لَخَزَنَهُ الْأَغْنِيَاءُ عَنِ الْفُقَرَاءِ

Wahb ibn Munabbih said: It is written in some divine books that **had I (Allah) not decreed that meat would spoil, the rich would have hoarded it from the poor.**

Source: Fath al-Bārī 3152

And so this interpretation suggests that Bani Israeel are used as a **microcosm** to represent the greedy nature of civilisations; since Bani Israeel's power and greed are described in the quran as

[2.122] O children of Israel, call to mind My favor which I bestowed on you and that I made you excel the nations.

[2.40] O Children of Israel! Remember My favour wherewith I favoured you, and fulfil your [part of the] covenant, I shall fulfil My [part of the] covenant, and fear Me.

[2.47] O Children of Israel! Remember My favour wherewith I favoured you and how I preferred you to [all] creatures.

[2.211] Ask the Israelites how many a clear sign have We given them; and whoever changes the favor of Allah after it has come to him, then surely Allah is severe in requiting (evil).

[10.93] And certainly We lodged the children of Israel in a goodly abode and We provided them with good things; but they did not disagree until the knowledge had come to them; surely your Lord will judge between them on the resurrection day concerning that in which they disagreed.

[16.118] And for those who were Jews We prohibited what We have related to you already, and We did them no injustice, but they were unjust to themselves.

[9:34] O you who believe! most surely many of the doctors of law [rabbis] and the monks eat away the property of men falsely, and turn (them) from Allah's way; and (as for) those who hoard up gold and silver and do not spend it in Allah's way, announce to them a painful chastisement....

children of Israel: You shall not serve any but Allah and (you shall do) good to (your) parents, and to the near of kin and to the orphans and the needy, and you shall speak to men good words and keep up prayer and pay the poor-rate. Then you turned back except a few of you and (now too) you turn aside.

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This interpretation says that the **wisdom behind Allah causing meat to naturally decay is due to the greed of people who would hoard it away from the poor**, causing unjust famine and suffering in the earth. Thus, ***Bani Israeel, the epitome and apogee of greed and corruption, were used as a microcosm*** to truly emblematised the height of the notion of greed, and to ***demonstrate that Allah causes meat to naturally decay due to excessive greed with them as a pivotal example.***

We know greed / hoarding away food is a major sin in islam regardless:

Umar ibn al-Khattab reported: The Messenger of Allah, peace and blessings be upon him, said:

مَنْ اخْتَكَرَ عَلَى الْمُسْلِمِينَ طَعَامًا ضَرَبَهُ اللَّهُ بِالْجُدَامِ وَالْإِفْلَاسِ

Whoever hoards food away from the Muslims, then Allah will afflict him with leprosy and poverty.

Source: Sunan Ibn Mājah 2155

Hoarding food from others is a grave sin and the fact that meat spoils naturally prevents people from doing so with greater ease.

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Both interpretations are valid and regardless, actually looking into exegetical hadith commentary by scholars over a millennia ago who explicated upon these reports is integral in understanding what they actually mean. These scholars with little understanding and insight into science, and particularly the existence of bacteria, could have very well said that meat naturally decaying began only after the punishment of Bani israeel, which we see is the minority opinion (only a few scholars had this opinion and they did not explicate or dissect the reports in detail - they simply mentioned their view briefly that the hadith was literal) - after all, they knew know better about the scientific explanation of things - but no, they establish the true meaning of these reports.

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But one would naturally ask: *“why are these two interpretations valid and the Occam's Razor interpretation that meat didn't spoil at all before Bani Israeel invalid?”*

It is by the consensus of *ijmaa'* that the scholars agreed upon and elucidated the true nuances of what this hadith was actually saying. Which authenticated contemporary scholar or muhaddith with references to the quran and sunnah actually says that Bani Israeel were the reason that meat started to **ACTUALLY** decay in the first place?

I challenge you to find a number of authenticated contemporary scholars in which their quantity underpins their arguments as the majority opinion. We see that there is practically no Ikhtilaaf when it comes to the notion that meat did indeed decay naturally prior to Bani Israeel, and all the differences in opinion stem from teleological reasoning.

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