

# SOURCEBOOK



## DISTINGUISHING KOSHER QUAIL FROM NON-CERTIFIED QUAIL

RABBI CHAIM LOIKE

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Shown above is the common kosher quail *Coturnix coturnix*.  
Below are species of quail which lack a tradition of permissibility.



Montezuma Quail  
(*Cyrtonyx montezumae*)



Black-breasted Wood-quail  
(*Odontophorus leucolaemus*)



Red-chested Button quail  
(*Turnix pyrrhorthorax*)



Tawny-faced Quail  
(*Rhynchortyx cinctus*)

## Introduction to Quail

There are more than four dozen avian species which are identified as quail. While some of these species are closely related, others have little in common. The anatomical structure of the button quail (*turnix*) is drastically different from that of the common European quail (*coturnix*). The crested mountain quail (*Oreortyx pictus*) doesn't resemble the *turnix* or the *coturnix*. Of all the species of quail, the only common denominator is size, and even in this regard they range from a few ounces to just under a pound.

The origin of many of the quail names is not clear. The most recent quail designates are the New World quail (known collectively as *Odontophoridae*) a family grouping which includes almost three dozen species. The New World quail were identified as such, when the European settlers were traveling through the Great Plains of the United States. These early settlers noticed small birds which were similar to the European quail (*Coturnix coturnix*) with which they were familiar. Infatuated with the idea of the manifest





Photograph by L. Shyamal

Pictured above is a species of quail known as the Barred Button quail or Common Bustard-Quail (*Turnix suscitator*). This button quail has a drastically different construction from the button quail (*Coturnix chinensis*) which are often sold in pet stores in the United States. To the right is a drawing of the mountain quail (*Oreortyx pictus*), below is a drawing of the starred wood-quail (*Odontophorus stellatus*). Although all of these birds are called quail, none of them are accepted as kosher.



Mountain Quail  
(*Oreortyx pictus*)

destiny, they called these birds quail. These settlers identified America as their promised land. They believed that just as the Jews were given quail to sustain them during their journey to Israel, so too would the settlers be given quail in their trek across the great plains.

The Latin name for the New World quail is *Odontophorine*, which is derived from the Greek word, *odonto*, teeth (Roberts, 1999). One of the major, and halachically significant, differences between the coturnix quail and the New World quail is the construction of the beak. While the beak of the coturnix quail is clean and smooth, the lower beak (known as the mandible) of the New World quail is serrated. The difference in the construction of these two beaks indicate that the eating habits of the New World quail is different from that of the European coturnix quail. As such these two can not be from the same species, and the New World quail can not be included with

the tradition of permissibility which exists for the kosher quail from Europe.

The multitude of species classified as quail, has made it impossible to identify the kosher quail by name alone. Many commercial strains of kosher quail share their name with species which are not accepted as kosher. As such the only way to identify the kosher quail is as dictated in the Talmud (Chullin 63) to learn from a rabbinic expert רבו וציד. The only quail which are known to be consumed among the Jewish people are the European *coturnix* quail. There are a number of strains of this bird which are accepted as kosher. However, not all *coturnix* quail have a tradition of permissibility. There are some species of *coturnix* quail, such as the Chinese painted quail (*Coturnix chinensis*) and the Harlequin quail (*Coturnix delegorguei*), which are similar in appearance to the kosher quail, but are not accepted as kosher. Both the Chinese painted quail (commonly sold





Pictured above are a pair of bobwhite quail (*Colinus virginianus*), the female is in the foreground the male is in back. These birds are indigenous to North America, where they are extensively raised to stock the various hunting ranges. Since these quail do not come from any lands which had a distinguished and historic Jewish community, there is no tradition of permissibility which would allow the consumption of these birds. The price of the bobwhite is often the same as that of a kosher coturnix quail. Additionally, many breeders will freely switch the eggs of the bobwhite with the eggs of the kosher coturnix quail. As a result a person who chooses to eat quail or quail eggs must be able to differentiate between the bobwhite and the kosher coturnix quail.

as button quail although not technically a button quail) and the Harlequin quail are sold as pets in the United States.

With the exception of the European kosher quail (*Coturnix coturnix*) and the bobwhite quail (*Colinus virginianus*), no other specie of quail is raised or harvested specifically for their meat. The bobwhite quail is of particular kashrus concern. It is approximately the same size as the kosher quail and costs about the same, depending on the season. Many breeders will freely substitute one for the other, as will the merchants at the meat market. Similar confusion surrounds the quail eggs, since the eggs of the bobwhite may be

substituted for those of the kosher quail. A person should not consume quail eggs or slaughter the birds unless they are able to differentiate between the kosher and non-accepted species.

On the following pages the quail will be identified both by name and picture. Unfortunately, due to the similarity between the kosher quail and those quail which are not accepted as kosher, the pictures should only serve as a guide. They should not be used to conclusively identify a specific bird. Although I am confident that the pictures depict the indicated specie, the difference between the quail can be slight and thus difficult to determine based on pictures alone.





Common European kosher quail

## European Quail



**Possible Biblical Name:** שלו  
**Yiddish Name:** וואַכטל, וואַכטלפּוֹיגלען  
**Scientific Name:** coturnix coturnix

**Also Known As:** Pharaoh quail, coturnix quail, bible quail, common quail, coturnix quail  
**Similar Permitted Species:** None  
**Similar Species of Questionable Status:** Bobwhite quail and painted quail.

Shown above is a picture of the European quail, included in the זבחי כהן among the birds which were accepted as kosher by the Jewish community of Leghorn, Italy.

**Identification:**

**Bill:** Brown to black, may be pale or white depending on the color strain.

**Eyes:** Brown

**Feet:** Pale peach to white

**Weight:** Females 5 oz. (140 grams); males slightly less. There are meat strains which weigh as much as a pound.



An ancient carving from the grave of a pharaoh known as Khufu, depicting a bird which resembles the kosher quail.

### Early References to the Kosher Quail

The European or *coturnix* quail, the species of quail which is accepted as kosher, migrate annually from Africa to Europe and Asia and then back. Prior to their migration, the quail gather in great flocks, sometimes numbering in the millions. The birds are not very strong fliers and when they land, they are exhausted from the ardors of the journey. These small exhausted birds are easily collected, often unable to muster the energy to flee. In ancient times, the migration route led through Egypt, where the Egyptians would set nets and other devices to harvest these birds. The

quail were still harvested in Egypt as late as 1908, when it was recorded that 1,000,208 quail were harvested and exported to England, France and Germany. It is possible that many more quail were eaten locally or exported to other markets.

The symbol of the quail had special significance to the ancient Egyptians. A hieroglyphic element which approximated the letter w, was the quail. Similarly, there are a number of pictures found in the ancient pyramids, which clearly depict the quail. While most of these depictions are in stone, there are a few in full color, leaving little doubt as to the bird being depicted.





Shown above is a colored relief from an ancient Egyptian pyramid. The colors and the shape of the bird is more clearly shown to the right. From the pictures, it is almost certain that the bird depicted is the quail.



Archeologists think that the image of the quail shown to the left, was used in later hieroglyphics to represent the w sound.



The fact that the European quail was known to the ancient Egyptians of the biblical period, does not indicate that the quail were the birds consumed by the Jewish people. While the Torah twice (שמות 15:13 & במדבר 11:31-32) details the consumption of the *slav* שלו, the Talmud (Yoma 75b) explains that there are four different species of *slav* שלו. While it is now assumed that the *slav* שלו mentioned in the Torah is the European quail, this is not the view of רש"י, who identifies the *phisioni* פסיוני or partridge as the bird consumed by the Jews at the time of the exodus (YD 134:16 עיני יצחק).

### Mesorah for the Kosher Quail

The European quail, (*Coturnix coturnix*) are accepted as kosher in America, and have been served in a number of kosher restaurants. The considerable expense involved in cleaning the quail, combined with the miniscule amount of meat produced have generally forced the bird off the menu. Most of the quail slaughtered in America were certified by Rabbi Shlomo Zweigenhaft ז"ל. His family had slaughtered quail for various communities for the last one hundred and fifty years. In order to understand the scope of the tradition of permissibility, an OU delegation

went to visit Rabbi Zweigenhaft with a dozen varieties of kosher and non-certified quail, and a film was made of the methods through which the kosher quail could be distinguished from the non-certified variety. Although the video was destroyed (due to a technical error) a letter from Rabbi Zweigenhaft was obtained by Rabbi Weinberger and republished in his work A Practical Guide to the Mitzvah of Shiluach Hakan. In the letter, Rabbi Zweigenhaft testifies that the European quail were consumed in Radzin, Radomsk and other parts of Poland. Among the quail breeds presented and accepted were the Japanese, Tibetan (also known as the Brown), Tuxedo, and Pharaoh quail. Despite the exotic names, all of these quails are varieties or regional variations of the common European quail. Rabbi Zweigenhaft explained that the quail could be identified by its body structure as well as the feathers on the top of its head, which are distinct from those of other species of quail which are not accepted as kosher. There are additional breeds of quail which are pure white (they are similar to the more common Texas AM) quail and blond (sometimes called Manchurian quail). These have been raised and observed by the OU. There is no doubt that these are color strains of the permitted common European quail.

Statues: Certified



White strain of the European quail commonly called the AM Quail after Texas AM University where the strain was developed.

Marco Polo, a thirteenth century Venetian explorer, summed up the wildlife in Asia as compared to that of his native Italy. "Indeed throughout India, the beasts and the birds are very different from ours (meaning Italy), all except one bird and that is the quail. The quails here are certainly like ours but all the rest are very different." (Roberts, 1999). The similarity of the quail throughout their range, and the fact that their range encompassed most of the area of the Jewish diaspora, assured that the Talmudic tradition of permissibility survived. In addition to Poland, the bird was known to have been slaughtered and consumed by Jews living in Israel, France, England, Russia, Iran, Tunisia and Yemen. The quail are specifically permitted by

Rabbi Eliyahu Bakshi Daron (vol. 4 re. 40) and Shevet MiYehudah (YD 6). Based on these responsea the quail was accepted as kosher in Israel in modern times. The Zivchei Kohen documented the permissibility of the quail in Italy by the Italian name (*quaglia*) and in a picture. This tradition has been verified by two Italian rabbis, Chief Italian Rabbi Eliyahu Tuaf (p. 53; מזורן כשר מן חי) (p. 97) and Rabbi Riccardo di Segni of Rome (Guida alle regole alimentari ebraiche p. 30). Rabbi Moshe Borenstein slaughtered the quail in London. The permissibility of the quail was described in length in the work of Zohar Amar, מסורת העוף. He quotes the opinion of Rabbi Ernest Gugenheim published in the book Les portes de la loi, that the quail were permitted in France.



A similar ruling is quoted in the name of Rabbi Kalfon Moshe Cohn of Tunisia (he identifies the quail in Arabic as *סממאן*) based on the tradition of the Jewish community in Tripoli. Rabbi Moshe Zarviv of Algeria identified the quail as permitted, he identified the quail in French as *caille* and in Arabic as the *סלואן*. Rabbi Amar also quotes numerous Ashkenaz Yerushalmi shochtim who had slaughtered the coturnix quail in Yerushaliam. Rabbi Levinger in *חיי מן החי* quotes the tradition of permissibility from Yemen where it was permitted by Rabbi Yosef Kapach.

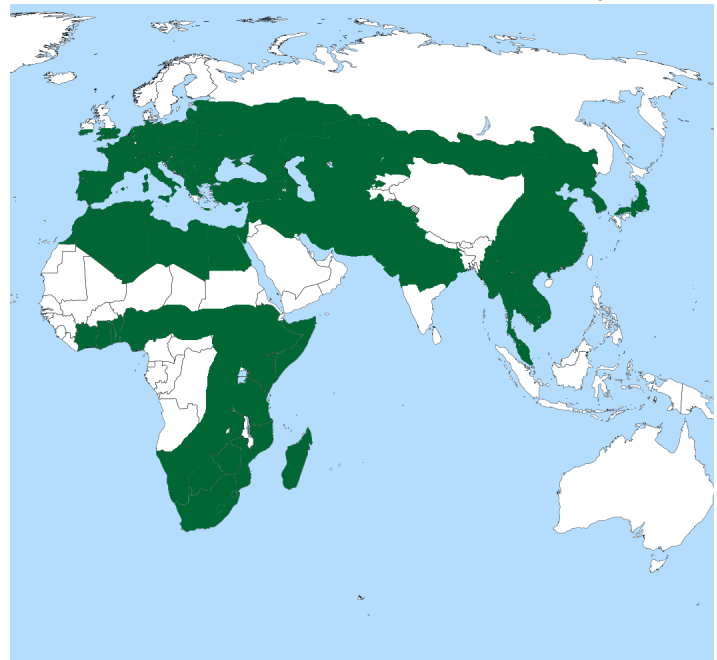
### Color Strains of the Kosher Quail

In her book, *Keeping Quail*, Katie Thear identifies almost a dozen strains of the common coturnix quail raised in England. The variety of quail available in the United States is not as extensive as that available in England, although most of the strains are also available in the United States and accepted as kosher.

The accepted understanding of the words of the רמ"א (YD 82) is to only consume species which have a tradition of permissibility. Two birds which have one anatomical difference, such as color, but are otherwise identical, are not generally regarded as separate specie and do not require their own tradition of permissibility. Thus, if the common quail would be bred in a hitherto unknown color, that quail would not require its own tradition of permissibility. This is only if the birds are able to hybridize. Perceived similarities are only superficial if the birds are so genetically dissimilar as to preclude any productive hybridization. It thus is prudent to be cautious with new strains of quail, since there are many similar species which are not able to breed with the accepted kosher quail. It is possible that a bird sold as a "new strain", may in fact be of a completely different specie.

### An Overview of the General Acceptance of the Strains of Quail

There are three recognized subspecies of the common coturnix quail. The European quail (*Coturnix coturnix coturnix*), the Eurasian quail (*Coturnix coturnix communis*) and the Japanese quail (*Coturnix coturnix japonica*). Presumably,



Highlighted in green in the map above, is the approximate natural distribution of the kosher quail. Quail are found in almost every country which had a large Jewish population.

all the subspecies are permitted although the Eurasian quail was never identified in the halachic literature as a distinct bird. The Japanese quail were a kosher concern when it was first commercially raised in Beer Tuvia, Israel. It was certified kosher by Rabbi Eliyahu Bakshi Daron (vol. 4 re. 40), who was then the Sefardi Chief Rabbi of Israel. At that time, the Orthodox Union was also certifying quail, and as such the issue was investigated. The Japanese quail were presented to Rabbi Zweigenhoft who said they were the quail actually consumed in Poland. Rabbi Yisroel Belsky in a response published in the Orthodox Union publication *Daf Hakashrus* (vol. 13:7 2005) permitted the Japanese quail based on this information and the fact that the Japanese quail is almost identical to the European quail and is able to successfully breed with them.

There were some who wanted to classify the Japanese and common European quail as separate species based on the difference in the call and song of the birds. Upon further investigation, it was discovered that the unique song of the Japanese quail is the result of selective breeding. While the rest of the world was raising quail for hunting, eggs or meat, the Japanese have been raising the quail specifically for their song since the 1500s (Roberts, 1999). It was for this purpose that they were selectively bred, and as such their

song is different from that of the other breeds.

When the various breeds and species of quail were presented to Rabbi Zweigenhoft, he noted that although the colors of the kosher quail might be different, the feathering on the crown of the head was consistent. One of the quail presented was the Texas AM Quail which was white. This particular quail did have some brown feathers on the crown of its head. A strain has since been developed which does not have any brown feathers. These completely white quail, if known to be a white strain of the common kosher quail, would not be a halachic problem. Given the numerous species of quail and the incidence of breeders being able to breed almost every species white, one must be certain that these white quail are indeed the common kosher quail and not some other species of quail which has no tradition of permissibility.

Of less concern is the Italian or Manchurian quail, and the fawn quail. These lighter quail do not have any dark feathers but the pattern of the feathers provide a clear indication to their being a strain of the common kosher quail.

Tibetan quail, are darker than the common kosher quail. These birds were presented to Rabbi Zweigenhoft who permitted them. It was also discovered that these quail had been slaughtered in Israel, and was then considered a regular quail. The Tibetan quail is not from Tibet, but rather from Harrah, Oklahoma. The strain was developed by Bert and Dianne Turney at their farm, B&D Gamefarm. I spoke with the owners, who confirmed that they called the birds Tibetan quail as part of their overall marketing strategy to make the bird appear distinct and exotic. Similar strains are sold as brown quail. It should be noted, there is a quail in Australia called the brown quail which is not known to be commercially raised. Ornithologists are not certain if this brown quail is a subspecies of the common kosher coturnix quail or if it is a different species. This bird has never been presented for kosher certification. While the brown quail, which is clearly a color strain of the common kosher quail is permitted the status of the Australian (brown) quail is unknown.



**Tuxedo Quail: Kosher Certified**

Shown above is the Tuxedo quail presented to Rabbi Zweigenhoft. Below is the a strain of the kosher coturnix sold as the brown quail, also known as the Tibetan quail. Despite the similarity in the name, this bird is a different species than the Australian brown quail (*Coturnix ypsilophora*) which is not accepted as kosher.



**Brown or Tibetan Quail: Kosher Certified**





Status: Certified

Pictured above is the blond quail often sold as a Manchurian quail or Italian quail. It lacks the distinctive brown feathers found among the common kosher quail.

Shown to the immediate right is a range quail, a strain of the kosher coturnix quail. This kosher quail appears similar to brown quail (*Coturnix ypsilophora*) shown at the far right. The brown quail is not available in the United States and it has not been studied by the rabbinic authorities here. There are a number of ornithologists who



Range Quail: Certified

classify these quail as being of a different specie than the kosher quail. If they are different specie, the brown quail can not be consumed unless a suitable tradition of permissibility can be found.



Photograph by Peripitus.

(Australian) Brown Quail: Not Certified Kosher





Pictured above are a number of eggs, all of which were laid by kosher quail. As can be seen in the photograph there is a significant amount of color and pattern variation in each egg. This is often the case even if the eggs were all produced by the same hen.

### The Quail Egg

The Orthodox Union has raised Japanese, Italian, Texas AM, range, Pharaoh, Tuxedo and Tibetan quail. While the eggs do have unique patterns, they are similar in shape and coloration. It is important for one to be able to identify the kosher quail eggs, since they can often be confused and sold together with the eggs of the bobwhite quail. The bobwhite quail is not accepted as kosher by any Jewish community which follows the view of the א"ר (YD 82). The eggs of the bobwhite quail are not similar to the eggs of the kosher quail eggs, and can thus be differentiated with a minimal amount of experience.

In recent years, quail eggs have been sold in various specialty food stores. They do not carry any certification. Many of these eggs have been sent to me and they are always kosher quail eggs. Based on the information now available, it seems that for egg production the kosher quail is the only quail which is used. This issue should be monitored. At this point quail eggs should not be consumed unless it is possible to verify that the eggs are indeed those of a kosher quail species.



## Quail

**Pronunciation:** 'kweil

Albanian: shkurta;  
 Basque: galeper;  
 Belarusian: перапёлка: pierapiolka;  
 Breton: koailh;  
 Bulgarian: пъдпъдък: pâdpâdâk;  
 Catalan: guatlla;  
 Cornish: rynk;  
 Croatian: prepelica;  
 Czech: křepelka;  
 Danish: vagtel;  
 Dutch: kwartel, kwakkel;  
 Esperanto: koturno;  
 Estonian: vutt;  
 Faroese: vaktil;  
 Finnish: viiriäinen;  
 French: caille des blés;  
 Frisian: kwartel;  
 Friulian: cuaie;  
 Gallegan: paspallás;  
 German: wachtel;  
 Greek: ορτύκι: ortiki;  
 Hungarian: fűrj;  
 Icelandic: kornhæna;  
 Irish: gearg;  
 Italian: quaglia;  
 Ladin: caia;  
 Latvian: paipala;  
 Lithuanian: putpelė;  
 Macedonian: потполошка: potpološka;  
 Maltese: summiena;  
 Manx: quayl;  
 Norwegian: vaktel;  
 Occitan: catla;  
 Polish: przepiórka;  
 Portuguese: codorniz;  
 Romanian: prepeliță;  
 Romansh: quacra, quaiglia;  
 Romany: dropya;  
 Russian: обыкновенный перепел:  
 obyknovenyj perepel;  
 Sami: goaktil;  
 Sardinian: xřecchibi, trepotčs, cricchibě,  
 guǵgliulu, cualla;  
 Scottish: gearradh-gort;  
 Serbian: препелица: prepelica;  
 Slovak: prepelica;  
 Slovenian: prepelica;  
 Sorbian: pospula, pašpula;  
 Spanish: codorniz, guatla;  
 Swedish: vaktel;  
 Turkish: bıldırcın;  
 Ukrainian: перепел: perepel;  
 Welsh: sofliar;

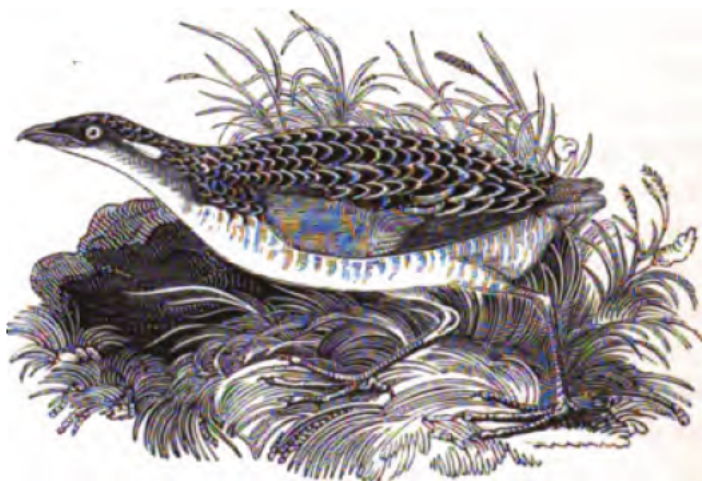
### Greek Note:

Ancient: ὄρτυξ: ortyx

Modern: ορτύκι: ortiki



Above is a woodcut of a quail published in 1831, on page 394 of the Ornithological Dictionary of British Birds by Colonel G. Montagu. It is identified as the *Coturnix major* in accordance with Brisson. It is alternatively identified on that page as *Perdix coturnix*, *Tetrao Coturnix*, and *Coturnix vulgaris*. The picture and the accompanying description leave no doubt that the bird is indeed the *Coturnix coturnix* which is accepted as kosher. Below is the woodcut of a bird called a rail found on page 286 of the same work. Although when viewed side by side the distinction between the birds is apparent, if viewed separately it would be difficult to determine which woodcut was depicting the kosher quail and which was depicting the rail, a bird for which there is no tradition of permissibility.



**Linguistic Notes:** The English name of quail is derived from quaille which is a corruption of the French caille. It is used to refer to many species, although the names collected here were most often used to refer to the common European quail which was accepted as kosher. The biblical name *slav* does not appear in any of the European languages.



# The Bobwhite Quail

## A bird with no tradition of permissibility



Above: Bobwhite  
Status: Not Certified Kosher

The bobwhite quail, which is native to North America and has no tradition of permissibility, is similar in appearance to the European quail.



Above: Bobwhite  
Status: Not Certified Kosher

Above is a picture of a bobwhite quail. It is similar to European quail in both size and color.



Above: Bobwhite  
Status: Not Certified Kosher

There are a number of different ways to tell the difference between the European and bobwhite quail. As can be seen above, the bobwhite has a black bill which is much shorter and thicker than that of the coturnix quail (shown below). Mature bobwhites, but not juveniles, will have the white coloration on the face which is much more pronounced than that of most coturnix.



Above: Range quail  
Status: Certified





Pictured above is a female button quail. Brown color strain.

## Button Quail

*Coturnix chinensis*

**Alternative Names:** King quail, blue-breasted quail, Asian blue quail, Chinese quail, painted quail.

Considered similar or conspecific with the blue quail of Africa, these quail range throughout most of the Old World tropics. Their preference for swamplands and marshes has generally resulted in the bird being somewhat removed from civilized areas. The size of the bird, slightly smaller than a sparrow, has further reduced any motivation which may have existed for the consumption of this species.

In the last few centuries these quail have been extensively bred in captivity. Although they are not tame, they will happily scurry around the bottom of their cage consuming discarded foodstuffs. In this regard the button quail have become invaluable to aviculturalists, who use them to eliminate food discarded by other species and aggressively hunt insects which may chance upon the bottom of the cage. With all the interest generated in these tiny birds, they have been widely raised. As is usually the case when birds are raised in captivity, the





Shown clockwise:

Normal sized kosher European quail egg, surrounded by four smaller button quail eggs.

Male button quail, wild or natural coloration, with the characteristic white bib, and bright feet.

Female button quail, wild or natural coloration. This button quail is almost identical to that of the kosher coturnix quail.

A silver button quail, a color strain of the common button quail.



button quail have been bred in a number of color strains, some of which give them the appearance of miniature kosher coturnix quail.

Genetically and anatomically the button quail is similar to the kosher coturnix quail. The most noticeable anatomical feature by which they are differentiated is the size, with the kosher quail being almost four times as large as the button quail. As previously mentioned, size alone is not an acceptable criteria to determine if two individual birds are of different species. However, the inability of the kosher coturnix quail and the button quail to hybridize, precludes the button quail from being included in the general tradition of permissibility which exists for the kosher coturnix quail. It is also evident that there is no tradition of permissibility for the button quail in their own right.

While the kosher coturnix quail are raised for both meat and eggs, the button quail are raised for aviaries and pet stores. The size of the button quail, will probably preclude them from the meat market. However, the relatively large button quail eggs, are already the subject of research. Despite the drastic differences in size between the button quail and the kosher coturnix quail, the eggs are almost the same size. These eggs are patterned in a manner which is similar to that of the kosher quail, and are the same shape. Currently there is no known market for the consumption of button quail eggs, but the matter should be monitored. Similarly, if one purchases quail eggs from a hobby farm, they should check to see if the quail producing the eggs are the kosher coturnix quail, not the button quail.





Shown above are the kosher European quail (*Coturnix coturnix*)

## רש"י according to שלו The Biblical Quail

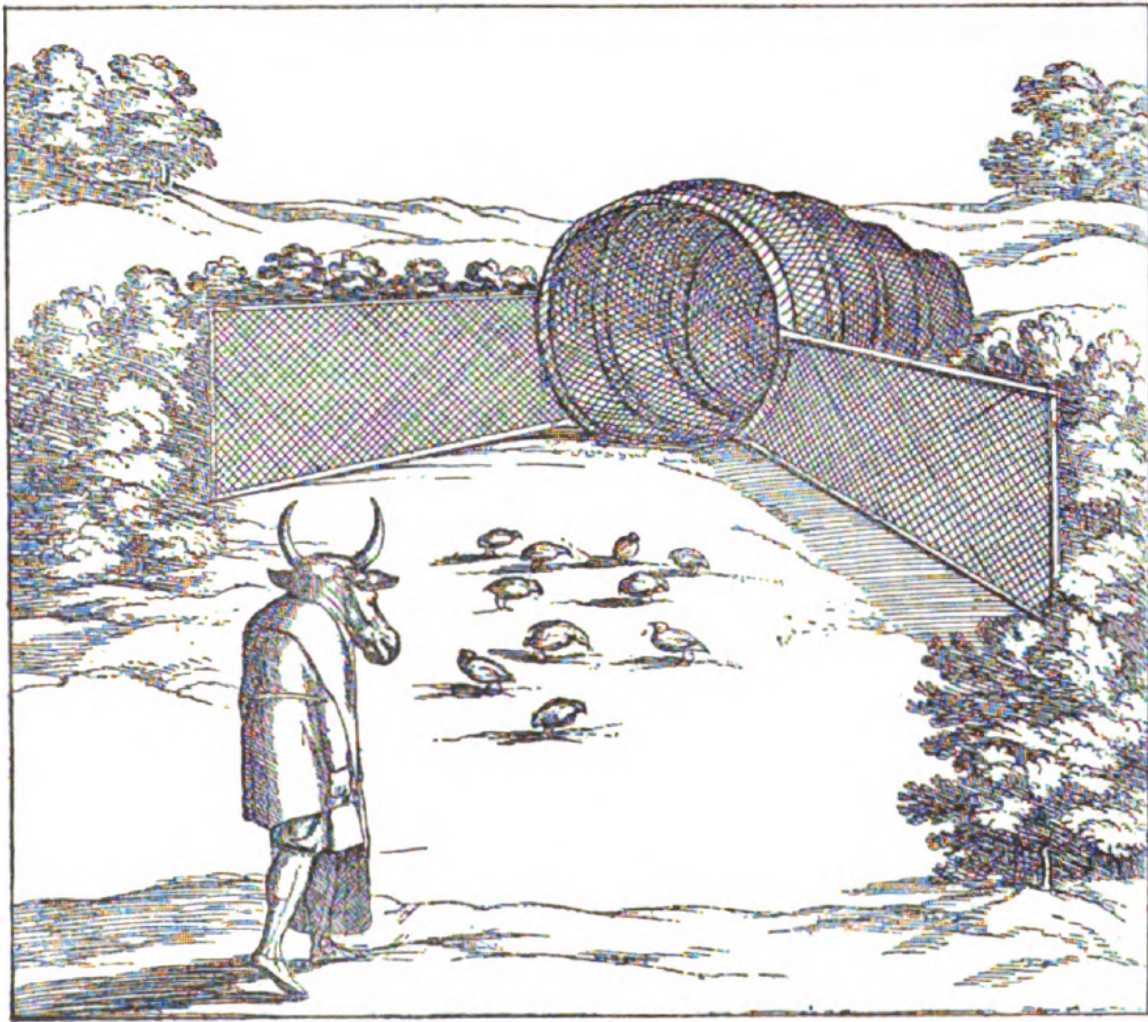
Twice, during the 40 year sojourn of the Jewish people in the Sinai Desert, the Torah records that the people were able to feast on a bird called *slav* שלו (שמות 15:13 & במדבר 11:31-32). In both narratives the Torah relates how great numbers of the *slav* שלו descended on the Jewish encampment. They were collected, and the Jewish people feasted on their flesh.

The *slav* שלו is generally understood to be a quail, specifically the European Quail *coturnix coturnix* (shown above is a brown variety). This species of quail is known to form great flocks and migrate across the Sinai on its way to Europe and then again on its return to Africa. As recently as the 1900s, birds gathered in flocks numbering in the millions while migrating. The quail are not strong fliers, and occasionally overexert themselves. They then land completely exhausted whereupon they are easily collected by the local human popu-

lation. It is thus likely, that the quail the Jews consumed in the desert was indeed the European quail. The רוח, wind, recorded in

ויהי דלרב ותפעל השליו ותבס את המנה ובפקר הקנה שקבת השל סביב למנה: שמות פרק ט"ז פסוק י"ג  
ורוח נסע | מאת יקוק וגנן שליו מרהם ויטש על המנה כדור יום זה וכדור יום זה סביבות המנה וכאמתיים על פני הארץ. וגם העם כל היום הוא וכל הלילה וכל יום המחרת ונאספו את השליו הממליט אסר עשרה המרים וישטחו להם שטוח סביבות המנה: במדבר פרק י"א פסוקים ל"א-ל"ב  
במדבר, might have disoriented the birds causing them to overexert themselves. Exhausted from their flight they landed around the camp of the Jews, and were easily collected. While this narrative accords with many authorities, this is not the view of רש"י. The *slav* שלו according to רש"י was a bird which is known to neither form great flocks, nor is it known to migrate across the Sinai. If the *slav* שלו were the European quail, the miracle was well within the natural order, if the *slav* שלו was the bird identified by רש"י the miracle was above the natural order.





A woodcut for the late 1800s, of partridges being harvested. In this woodcut, they are slowly being herded into a tunnel trap.

אמר ר"ל כאן שנה רבי: תרגומל טווס ופסיוני  
כלאים זה בזה.  
רש"י ד"ס פסיוני: מין שליו שקורין פירדי"ץ.  
בבא קמא דף נ"ה א

אמר רב חנין בר רבא ארבעה מיני שליו הן  
ואלו הן שיכלי וקובלי ופסיוני, ושלי. מעליא  
דכולהו שיכלי גריעא דכולהו שליו.  
יובא דף ע"ה ב

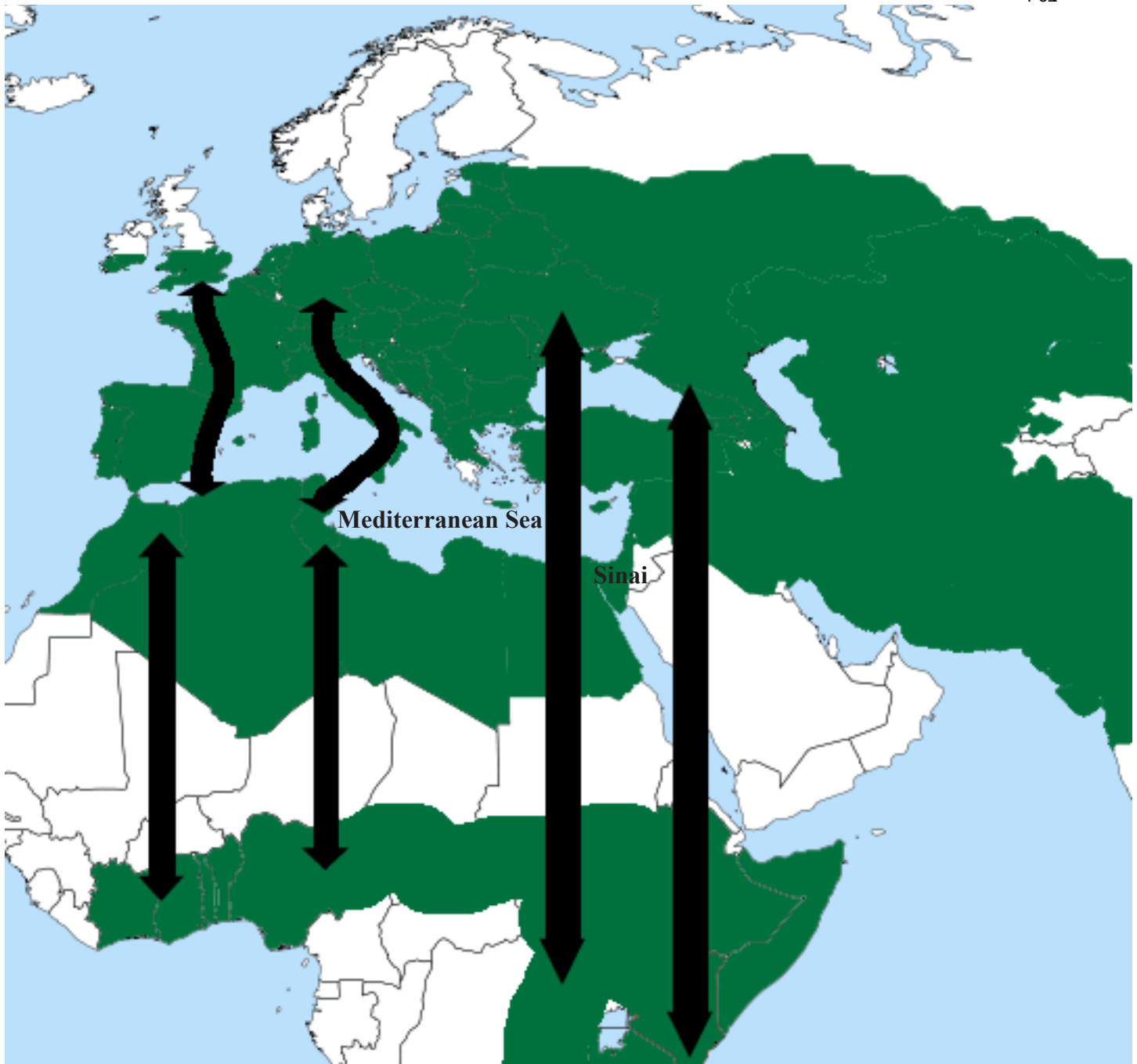
תני אבימי בריה דרבי אבהו: יש מאכיל לאביו  
פסיוני ומורדו מן העולם:  
רש"י ד"ס פסיוני: טוף חסוד ושמן מין שליו שרד  
במדבר.

קידושין דף ל"א א

The Talmud (Yoma 75b) explains that the biblical word *slav* שליו is used to denote four different species of bird. These are identified as, *sicli* שיכלי, *kibli* קיבלי, *phisioni* פסיוני, and *slav* שליו. Despite the linguistic similarities between the שליו mentioned in the Torah and the שליו identified in the Talmud, רש"י (Kiddushin 31a) identifies the *phisioni* פסיוני as the species which the Jewish people consumed in the desert. The *phisioni* פסיוני is translated into old French by רש"י (Bava Kama 55a) as the פירדי"ץ or *Perdix* which is the name for partridge. Although it is not certain if רש"י was identifying the Hungarian or one of the *lectoris* partridges as the bird consumed by the Jews in the desert, it is certain

that according to רש"י the biblical שליו was not a quail but rather a partridge. רש"י may be based on a much older tradition of תרגום יונתן who identifies the שליו *slav* which was consumed in the desert as *phisionin* פיסיוני. Although רש"י is clear that the *phisioni* פסיוני is the partridge, Rabbi Natan Ben Yechiel (ערוך: Kiddushin 31a; Yoma 75b; Baba Kama 55a) translates the *phisioni* פסיוני into the *פזאנו* of לע"ר. Presumably this לע"ר was in Italian in which case *fazziano*, refers to the pheasant. This translation of Rabbi Natan was used by Rabbi Dovid Tzvi Hoffman (vol. 2 YD 16) and Rabbi Ratzabi (עני יצחק YD 134:16) to prove the permissibility of the pheasant.





Shown above, indicated by black arrows, are the migration routes of the common kosher European quail (*Coturnix coturnix*). The range of these quail is highlighted in green. Despite their small wings (rarely exceed 14 inches), these birds are capable of migrating up to 2,400 miles. Such migration requires the birds to traverse large expanses of water, including the Mediterranean Sea an exhausting task. The Torah records (ויגזו שלווים מן הים 11:31 במדבר) “and the *slav* plucked from the sea” (see ירמיה: רש"י 7:29). These migrating birds could have been disoriented by the wind and thus been driven from the sea to the Jewish encampments in Sinai.

It is debatable whether the תוספות (Kiddushin 31a: ד"ה יש) identify the partridge as the שלו which the Jews ate in their desert sojourn. While תוספות identify the פסיוני as a species of שלו which is in the מדבר (desert), רש"י on the page identifies the פסיוני as the species of שלו which came down (implying for the Jews) in the מדבר (desert). The תוספות might be identifying the habitat of the פסיוני, without any direct connection with the שלו mentioned in the Torah. In contrast, רש"י is clear that

the פסיוני, which he identifies as the partridge, is the שלו which is mentioned in the Torah.

It should be noted that אונקלוס translates the שלו as שליו. This does not indicate that אונקלוס argues with the תרגום יונתן, as תרומת הדשן (re. 233) notes writing שלו or שליו is generic, not indicative of specific species identification.

When the tradition of permissibility was being



A pheasant which might be the biblical שליו according to the ערוך. Shown above is the ring neck pheasant, the specie of pheasant which is most common in Europe and America. It is not known to live in Israel, although it is found on the eastern parts of the Arabian Peninsula.

researched for the kosher coturnix quail (*coturnix coturnix*), the older shoachim who had slaughtered the quail in Europe before the Holocaust, identified the quail as the שליו. Younger shoachim, perhaps influenced by the quail being called שליו in modern Hebrew, also identified the quail as the שליו. Perhaps the basis for the quail being called שליו is based on the Talmudic name for the bird שליו, not the biblical name. The Talmud (Yoma 75b) identifies the four species of שליו, that the inferior of the four species of the שליו is the bird called שליו. The Talmudic narrative identifies the שליו as כציפורתא והוי כשירא and it is like a song bird. While partridges, and pheasants, are able to call to each

other, the quail are the only birds which actually sing. In fact, there is a breed of Japanese quail (*Coturnix coturnix japonica*) which was raised in Japan specifically for its beautiful song.

All of the recent translations of the Torah, including Rabbi Hirsch,\* Mossad Harav Kook, and Artscroll have identified the biblical שליו as the quail. The basis of these translations is baffling since I have not found any such view among the ראשונים.

\* Although the translation of the Torah identifies the שליו as the quail, the explanatory notes do note that we are not able to conclusively identify the bird. Below is an excerpt from the explanatory note of Rabbi Hirsch on שמות 16:13, translated by Isaac Levy (2nd ed.): "In Yoma 75b, the Talmud reckons up four kinds of שליו, amongst them פסניי (sic.) probably pheasants. שליו is described as the commonest kind and as an extremely fat bird. It is taken to be a kind of quail."



