

SHEMINI (LEVITICUS 9:1-11:47)

What Lovely Kosher Pig's Feet You Have!

2004 · Rabbi Yerachmiel Sepowitz

What is as *Treif* as a pig?

Everyone knows that religious Jews don't eat pork. Even those who are not aware of the intricacies of Kosher Law know that the pig is not Kosher. It is the quintessential "unclean" animal. (For the record, the vernacular "*Treif*" is actually inaccurate. The word "*Treif*" refers to a Kosher animal (such as a cow, chicken, giraffe, etc. that was killed improperly or is diseased.)

The problem is that the pig lacks one of the two requirements for Kosher mammals:

... *You may eat whatever has split hooves and chews its cud...*The pig will be unclean to you although it has a split hoof, since it does not chew its cud. (Leviticus, 11:3,7)

The Midrash points out that there are some people who are like pigs. When a pig sits on its haunches it stretches out its forelegs. "Look at me," it seems to be saying. "I have split hooves! I'm kosher!"

When people go out of their way to tell you how "Kosher" they are, one is tempted to ask what it is that they are trying to hide. This message is especially true during a political season. Every candidate makes it a point to tell us how wonderful he is. (DISCLAIMER: This should not be taken as an indictment or endorsement of any particular candidate. It is an observation about human nature in general.) The 9/11 hearings are more of the same.

"Look at me," says the pig. "I have split hooves! I'm kosher!" The Torah tells us not to be misled by superficial appearances. Sure, he LOOKS kosher. He's got split hooves. But look on the inside. He doesn't chew his cud. He's a phony!

He doesn't re-chew and swallow his words. Neither should you!

The Ohr Hachaim says that the non-kosher status of the pig is only temporary. He sees the Torah's explanation of "... *since it does not chew its cud*" as the reason that the pig is CURRENTLY non-Kosher. However, he says, the pig (whose Hebrew name, "*Chazir*," literally means "return") will someday change to a cud-chewing animal whose meat will be permitted on the kosher table.

“Ridiculous!” you may say. Preposterous! Is G-d really going to miraculously change the whole digestive system of a pig?! How likely is it that a pig will actually change the way that it eats?!

At least as likely as the chance that a politician will change the way that he speaks! :-)

Have a great Shabbos.

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