

“Outside You”

G-d tells the Jewish people how they can know whether or not an animal is kosher. G-d said that if an animal has split hooves and brings up its own cud, then it's kosher and can be eaten. However, if any animal has either hooves that aren't split or it doesn't bring up its cud, then the animal isn't kosher and cannot be eaten. Of all the animals in the world, G-d tells the Jews that there's one animal that has split hooves but doesn't chew its own cud. It is:

"...the pig, for its hoof is split and it's hoof is completely separated, but it does not chew its cud...." (Lev. 11:7)

A LIFE LESSON

G-d clearly spells out that in order for an animal to be kosher, it must have both split hooves and chew its own cud. When an animal has split hooves, it appears from the outside - and certainly to all who look at the animal - that it's kosher. But only by knowing what's going on inside can one know for certain if an animal is kosher or not. The pig - the universal symbol of a non-kosher animal - appears to all who look at it that it is in fact a kosher animal. But only by knowing what's happening inside the animal - that it doesn't chew its own cud - can one know that the pig is completely non-kosher.

This teaches a very valuable lesson about us. A person could show all of the external signs and traits of being one kind of person, but inside, like the pig, is actually someone completely different.

One of the most important foundations someone needs to have in order for him to feel good about himself and have high self-esteem is to be consistent with who he is both externally and internally. Just like for an animal to be kosher it must have the proper signs on both its outside and inside, we must strive to do the same.

Sadly, people tend to act one way when the world is watching and another way altogether in private. Doing this can never make someone feel good about himself because he's a fake. If you show the world one "you", but are really someone much different, then you can never have a strong self-image or be truly happy.

However, there are times when you should act a little differently than who you normally are. For example, on a first date or job interview your manners might be better than they usually are. But if you present yourself as someone completely different than who you really are, then this is just like the pig. A great sight for all who look at it, but inside is secretly the exact opposite. Acting better in certain surroundings is fine, but being a completely different person makes you a fraud.

So, which is the real person: the public one or the private one? The lesson that G-d is teaching us is that it's who the person is on the inside - when he or she is outside of public view - that largely determines the real "you." And when you refine the character of that person - the one the outside world rarely sees - then you'll never be living a life of deception. Try for one day to live your entire day as though everything you do - both in public and private - is being shown on a huge screen in Times Square for the whole world to see. And as the inside "you" begins to transform into the outside "you", you'll begin feeling so much happier because you won't be living a life of deceit but rather one of honesty, growth, and truth. (*Rabbi A. Lieberman*)