



BE A *MENTSCH*



Is it Kosher?

פְּרִשֵׁת שְׁמִינִי

Be a Mensch means being honest towards Hashem, ourselves and to other people. This Mitzvah commands us to stay far away from lies, מְדַבֵּר שֶׁקֶר תִּרְחֶק. Also, וְשָׁלְמָה הַמְלֶךְ, סִפְרֵי מִשְׁלֵי (כג: כג), “Buy honesty and never sell it” אַמֶּת קָנָה וְאַל תִּמְכֹּר. This means we should always be honest and genuine. Never sell or discard it. In order to be honest, we have to start when we’re young to ***think the truth***, so that we can ***say and live the truth***. The main idea is that ultimately, only good things come from saying the truth; we can learn to trust ourselves. Hashem and people will also ***trust*** us. Sometimes, being honest maybe embarrassing or even painful, but it makes our lives better.

In this week’s parsha, שְׁמִינִי, the Torah gives us the signs how we can pick Kosher and non-Kosher animals. The pig looks like a kosher animal on the outside. "Look, I have split hooves, just like a kosher animal should!" But what lies hidden behind that kosher outside is a non-kosher inside: it doesn't chew its food as a cud. Cud means taking food in and chewing it a bit, swallowing it, bringing it back up and chewing a bit more, over and over. The cow does this, but not the pig. The Torah considers the חֲזִיר to be the symbol of dishonesty because it puts out its hooves to fool people into thinking it is a Kosher animal.

This is the true meaning of the question, “Is it Kosher?” We are not only concerned with the external appearance of a situation or a food, but we also want ascertain that behind the wrapper everything has been done properly and is as it should be. The Midrash Rabbah (בראשית) compares עֵשָׂו to the חֲזִיר because he tried to trick his father by acting like a Tzaddik on the outside when in fact he was not. Unlike עֵשָׂו, we must aspire to be honest on both the inside and the outside. Furthermore, let’s be genuine with our parents, ***Be A Mensch*** and act with integrity!

Have a Great Shabbos!