



# Oasis

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## Pigs Have Kosher Feet

By Moshe Morrison



**W**hen I was a small boy - probably about 4 or 5 years old, growing up in Baltimore - my uncle Sidney owned a small grocery store in a very poor, black section of town. My uncle and his family lived behind the store - the only Jews in the area. One of my earliest memories is connected to that place. Sitting on the meat counter in the back of the store was a large glass jar; in it were a bunch of pigs' feet floating in some kind of clear liquid. It was a very bizarre and disturbing sight to me.

Aside from the appearance, I just could not even remotely comprehend how someone could eat something like that. Although, as a side note, we would nibble on chicken feet that Bubby (grandmother) put in the soup. I expect many folks would consider this just as odious. Of course, chickens are kosher and pigs are not, so no matter how strange this may be to modern western pallets we could eat the former but not the latter.

### Clean and Unclean

What is it about pork? What is it about a pig that is so abhorrent to Jews? There are many things that are not kosher. Many animals are on the lists that God gave to us in the Torah regarding what we can and cannot eat. Yet somehow, the pig is the ultimate image of uncleanness. With all sorts of other forbidden things, why does the pig appear to surpass them all as a symbol of unclean foods?

While the rules for the priests were more restrictive than the restrictions for regular Israelites, all the people were called to be a holy nation and a royal priesthood (Ex. 19:6). Therefore holiness, purity and separation from all forms of defilement were woven into the daily life of Israel. The lifestyle ordained by God was also designed to teach. This is the basis of the word "Torah" - instruction.

The idea of clean and unclean animals goes back at least to Noah, long before the Torah was given at Mount Sinai. Noah brought two of every kind of animal on board the ship. But in regards to the clean animals, he brought seven so that there would be clean animals

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available for sacrifice. Obviously, even early in the history of mankind, there was an understood distinction between clean and unclean animals. Abel, son of Adam and Eve, brought a lamb as an offering and not a pig or camel or horse. I don't think that was just a coincidence.

## Why Eat Kosher?

Leviticus 11 deals with the whole issue of "kashrut" (what is fit to eat and what is not). A variety of explanations are given as to the basis for these laws. Foremost in the traditional Jewish perspective is that there is no inherent uncleanness in any of God's good creatures; the laws are imposed upon us as an opportunity to obey God without regard to any other added benefit. Nevertheless, explanations still abound as to why certain things are the way they are.

Some say that kosher laws are related to health issues. By not eating certain things we are safeguarding our physical well-being. That's probably true. But if so, it would seem that there should also be more instruction regarding how to eat a healthy diet. While it's forbidden to eat a pig, is it acceptable to eat like a pig? There are creatures that are not permitted to us because they refuse eaters. By abstaining from them we think we are doing well, while not recognizing that some of the stuff we put in our mouths is "garbage" and just as detrimental to our health.

Some say that these laws are specifically separation issues. Historically this has definitely been so. Jews were very limited in the extent of table fellowship they could have with Gentiles because of food issues. We know that it was a major point of controversy in the early believing community. This is why in Acts 15, two of the prohibitions given to Gentile believers dealt with eating in order to not repulse the Jewish believers. Much of what God gave Israel to do maintained the barrier between them and the carnality and uncleanness of the rest of the world. God has never changed His standards or goals for His people. We are still to be a royal priesthood and a holy nation (I Pet. 2:9).

## Animal Nature

I believe that there is an additional explanation, or at least another application of the laws of kashrut in our lives. There are lessons to be learned from the animals themselves – the very things that are seen in their nature, their characteristics, make them either clean or unclean.

It is written in Leviticus 11:3 that animals with split hooves that chew the cud are clean. While the split may seem obvious, it refers to a genuine full split and not "toes" like a camel. Chewing the cud relates to having multiple stomachs and the bringing up of partially digested food several times to be chewed again as an aid in the digestion process. If you watch goats or cattle or sheep happily munching away on their food you might see them swallow it, but then suddenly it comes back up again and their cheeks puff out, because they're still working on it.

The pig is an interesting creature. It so happens that a pig's anatomy, in terms of the size and shape of its internal organs, is relatively similar to a human being. If a pig liver, heart, kidney or any number of other organs could be genetically altered so that they could be successfully transplanted into a human, or human immunology made indifferent to the presence of animal organs, then the shortage of human organs could be quickly overcome.

Yet there's something about the fact that internally we are similar to pigs that is uncomfortable. Humans, of course, are closer to primates overall, but the very human characteristics of chimpanzees and other primates are endearing rather than repulsive.

## Clean Inside and Out

The ironic thing is that externally the pig appears to be kosher (aside from the issue of disgusting conduct – a pig is not as disgusting as a male goat, and goats are kosher). The pig has split hooves, but the unkosher reality is what is lacking on the inside. So in spite of outward appearances, a pig is just not clean. This is our challenge as human beings, servants of the Lord. Not just to look clean on the outside, but to be clean on the inside. Yeshua called it hypocrisy – appearing to be one thing in the eyes of men

(or acting religious outwardly) but not being righteous when not seen by others.

In all honesty, everyone struggles with hypocrisy; it is part of our life's warfare. Just read Romans 7. But real hypocrisy is a deliberate lie; an intention to hide the truth so as to create a good impression despite knowing it is false. Yeshua rebuked the Pharisees and religious leaders of His day, because He saw that they were like whitewashed tombs. The outside was clean and nice, but the inside was filled with dead men's bones. He said, "**You clean the outside of the cup but you neglect the inside.**" (Mat. 22:23-28) In the controversy over the issue of eating without ritual hand washing, He said that it's not what goes into a man that defiles but what comes out of the heart (Mark 7:1-23). I think the pig is abhorrent because it represents hypocrisy.

Leviticus 11:9-12 discusses the restrictions on sea and water creatures. It is only permissible to eat fish and only those with fins and scales. Continuing with the theme of creature characteristics as a source of teaching for us, there are two essential attributes of clean fish that we need in our journey through the ocean of life. Scales portray the protective covering of the Lord, while fins are His means of guidance. His protection and guidance are essential in keeping us clean. The sea creatures without one or both are generally garbage eaters (crabs, lobsters, etc) or highly predatory (sharks). These are features we do not want in our lives. Violent predatory animals like lions, wolves, etc. are also among unclean beasts and predatory birds are designated unclean as well. The crawling creatures of the earth, like those in the sea, are garbage eaters. (It's interesting that locusts and grasshoppers were listed as kosher - a concession from God to provide food when an infestation of the like were destroying crops.)

Determining why certain animals are clean and others are unclean is not an exact science. But the sure truth is, we are what we eat – not just in the physical realm, but in the spirit realm too. We are called to be holy inside and out. The more we partake of Him, His word, His presence, the more we will be transformed to be like Him (II Cor. 3:18). ☆

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### Our Vision:

**Tents of Mercy** - to participate in today's historic exodus by assisting Israel's returning exiles.

**No spectators in the Kingdom** - to be a worshiping, sharing community based in homes, equipping each one for service.

**Come back Yeshua** - to welcome Yeshua home to Israel, by restoring the Jewish roots of New Covenant faith.

# You Give Them Something To Eat

By Marty Shoub with Julia Mazurovsky

In the parable of “The Good Samaritan” Yeshua’s emphatic rejoinder, “**Go and do likewise**” (Luke 10:37) compels us to look out for those wounded and bleeding on the side of our road. It is not an easy command to obey. Wounded people are messy and to bind up their wounds takes time. It is just so much easier to put our heads down and look the other way.

Leon and Nina Mazin are not the sort of leaders that ignore hurting people and cross over to the other side. So when Shavei Tsion moved to Hadar, the old downtown core of Haifa, they found that their road was littered with many wounded people, knocked down by poverty, sickness, addiction and mental illness. Leon admits that at first he was hesitant to try and address these needs. Prior to planting the Haifa congregation he had been Tents of Mercy’s frontline humanitarian

worker. Leon found the job of dealing with hurting and often difficult people to be extremely wearing. So Leon poured himself into the Russian language *Oasis* magazine and was content that the daughter congregation in Nazareth was meeting humanitarian needs through their soup kitchen.

## Nina and Friends Take Action

But as Nina looked around Hadar she started to ask questions about the community. She met with locals and social workers that worked in Hadar. Her research convinced her (and her husband) that there were people in Hadar who needed the same sort of help they were providing in Nazareth. Nina developed a needs assessment checklist to ensure help got to the right people and Leon hired Aleksey, a talented cook and caterer and by March 2008

the Hadar soup kitchen was up and running. Leon dedicated himself to setting up the Hadar kitchen with the same sort of energy he lends to every project. Because Aleksey and Nina were looking after the hands on duties, Leon could concentrate on what he does best. Leon admitted, “I have learned from experience, some people are better at on the front line, running programs and others (like Leon) are better at managing them behind the scenes.”

So across the street from the Shavei Tsion congregation there is a little storefront kitchen with no sign above the door. Five days a week you will see Aleksey there preparing hot meals for people who truly need them. Aleksey is perfectly suited for the job. He is a hard worker, dedicated and patient. He is also unflappable, which is a real asset when dealing directly with troubled folks. Aleksey understands that creating the proper atmosphere is almost as



A pensioner receives a hot meal

Aleksey in the kitchen



Downtown Haifa

**“Your light shall break forth like the morning...And your righteousness shall go before you.” (Isaiah 58:8)**

Helping the poor and needy is known throughout the Jewish community as *Tzedakah*, the Hebrew word for righteousness. In Christian circles the practical definition of righteousness leans towards moral purity. The Jewish tradition emphasizes care for those in need. The Prophets declared that righteousness is more than right living and personal holiness; it is in undoing the heavy burdens and sharing our bread with the needy that our righteousness goes before us (Isaiah 58:8). As Jacob, the Lord’s brother reminded us, true religion is both keeping ourselves **“unspotted from the world”** and **“to visit orphans and widows in their trouble.”** (James 1:27).

Shavei Tzion and the whole Tents of Mercy network are committed to both dimensions of righteous living. To that end Shavei Tzion is looking to expand their food program. Leon hopes to build a shelter for the homeless next year and envisions enlarging the kitchen to serve breakfast and dinner as well.

When the disciples were overwhelmed by a multitude of thousands requiring to be fed, Yeshua told them: **“You give them something to eat.”** (Matthew 14:16; Mark 6:37; Luke 9:13) Two thousand years later, Shavei Tzion Congregation is taking that challenge seriously on the streets of Haifa. ✡

important as the quality of the food, “Some people are embarrassed because they need help. When they come to the kitchen they feel hopeless and humiliated. We make an effort to be kind to them, to smile and lend an encouraging word. When they realize there is a friendly atmosphere here they no longer feel ashamed.”

The kitchen produces 1,700 hot meals a month. Several volunteers help Aleksey at the kitchen. One volunteer, Kostya, is a man who knows what it is to face hard times. He has built friendships with the most debilitated street people and takes them hot meals – they are in such a state that they would probably never come to the kitchen by themselves. “I deliver food to the homeless. They wait for me impatiently every day in the same place, on a central street in Haifa. Some of them are in such bad condition that they fall asleep right on the sidewalk. I just leave their meals in front of them. Believe me, these people are desperate. When I handed a food tray to one young man he started to cry; he explained to me that he had not eaten a chicken dinner in years.” Frank and Carol attend another congregation in Haifa but they too have joined the team to help out at the kitchen. “We deliver meals to handicapped and elderly people. They are always excited to see us!

Preparing food might seem like an easy task when you are healthy but for some elderly people it is a difficult chore. Some older folks do not have any relatives in Israel to help them. These meals are their only opportunity to have a warm and tasty lunch.”

Leon is very careful to ensure that the kitchen offers help based on biblical principles. Just as Moses instructed Israel in Leviticus 19:9 to leave the corners of the fields for the poor, so the Hadar kitchen program puts together 100 boxes of dry food to distribute to folks who need a bit of a hand but are capable of cooking their own food. As resources are limited, recipients must meet strict criteria to ensure that the help they receive serves as a “hand up” not just a “hand out.” Sometimes due to illness or family crisis people need aid on a temporary basis. Nina conducts periodic evaluations to determine if aid should continue or terminate.



Nina and Alexey