



Balak

Kosher on the inside?

How is it possible that we name one of the key portions of the Torah, after the evil king of the Moabites, Balak?

It is in the Parsha of Balak, that we come across two foes of the Jewish people, Balak and Bilam, but there was a significant difference between the two.

With Bilam what you saw was not what you got. Bilam presented himself as a man of God, a great spiritual giant, a prophet, a person who is there always to do the right thing.

A good individual, but deep down he was corrupt and that is what we find out as the story unfolds within the Parsha.

Balak however, was very different.

Balak was upfront, everybody knew he hated the Jewish people, he wanted to wipe us out, that is why he hired the services of Bilam.

With Balak, you knew where you stood with him and that was a tiny redeeming feature of an outrightly evil person.

I've always been fascinated by the fact that the archetypal treif food, is swine.

If you want to identify something that is most definitely non-kosher, it is food which comes from a pig.

But it is fascinating because actually, the pig scores 50% in the test of Kashrut, because

there are two requirements in the Torah, for an animal to be kosher.

The pig has one of the requirements, it has cloven hooves, however it does not chew the cud.

So you see outwardly, the pig expresses to the world: 'I am kosher, everything's ok about me', but inwardly it is outrightly treif.

That is dangerous. That is hypocrisy, which is totally unacceptable and that is why swine is the worst of all treif foods in our minds.

In Parshat Terumah we're taught that the aron, the ark, which was in the sanctuary and later the Temple, was laden with gold, both on the inside and the outside, in order to teach us the lesson of 'Tocho kebaro', your values internally, need to match the persona you have externally.

So therefore, from the title of the Sedra, we are reminded that unlike Balak, we should be as good as gold, both inside and out.

Shabbat Shalom.