



TableTalk: Shmini

This week we uncover the nicest way to say "no."

In this week's parsha, *Shmini*, we are taught about kosher animals and non-kosher animals.

Remember the signs for a kosher animal?

The animal must chew its cud and have split hooves. See Chapter 11, verse 3.

The Torah then goes on to identify a few animals that are not kosher – the camel, rabbit and pig for example.

But look at how the Torah mentions their non-kosher status!

In each verse, 11: 4-7, G-d first states the sign they have that is good and might qualify them as kosher animals, but then the Torah says what they're missing.

Why say it like that? If it's unkosher, just say it's unkosher. Why state the kosher sign – it's not meaningful or relevant at all...is it? **What can be learned from that?**

Discuss...What do you think? (After all, the Torah never wastes words, right?)

A Midrash says that here is the Torah role modeling for us that even if you have to say something negative about something or someone and disqualify him/her or it, one should always make sure to isolate and stipulate the positive. There is a positive element in everything and everyone.

Just think about that... Give an example of something you don't like, but now name a redeeming quality.

Or think about someone you don't like or don't get along with (no need to state this example out loud!), and now think about a positive quality about him/her. Everything and everyone in G-d's world is good - even if he/she or it may not be good for/at everything.

Don't be too critical that you forget the good!

Shabbat Shalom!