

## Spotlight on...Abominations!

### Background:

Parashat Re'eh contains a reiteration of the laws of kosher and unkosher animals. In chapter 14 pasuk 3 this topic is introduced with the following warning:

לֹא תֹאכַל כָּל־תּוֹעֵבָה:

*You shall not eat anything abhorrent.*

The word תועבה appears multiple times in the Torah to describe a variety of objects or actions that God finds abhorrent (totally disgusting, off limits, etc.) So the question is - why introduce the list of kosher and unkosher animals with this statement? The mefarshim offer multiple interpretations:

**Rashi:** a תועבה does not refer to an objective category of animal, but rather to a list of circumstances that render an animal a תועבה. For example, if a person purposely made a small blemish on an animal so that it couldn't be offered as a sacrifice then that is a תועבה, even if the animal is a kosher animal.

**Seforno:** Until now, Hashem had permitted the Israelites to eat all animals - which means that the concept of animals that are off-limits was not introduced until now. That is why the Torah only calls it a תועבה here - because until this point, there were no animals that were unkosher.

**Ibn Ezra:** The Torah uses the word תועבה to convey that any pure person should find unkosher animals, like animals that crawl on the ground, abhorrent.

### Questions:

1. Each of these three opinions frames unkosher animals and the practice of eating them in very different ways. According to each opinion, how are we supposed to relate to unkosher animals? Why aren't we allowed to eat them?
2. What other explanations can you think of for what תועבה means in this context?