



BAXTER, THE PIG WHO WANTED TO BE KOSHER

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Upon hearing of the joys and sweetness of Shabbat and, especially, of Shabbat dinner, Baxter the Pig sets out to understand what it means to be kosher.

While the Jewish precept of *hachnasat orchim* (welcoming guests) is generally practiced among humans, the message is clear that Baxter the Pig needs some gentle kindness from someone! Baxter's story is an excellent reminder that being misunderstood is not a happy state of affairs. Action based on appearances and stereotypes is a recipe for sadness and isolation. It is important for children to learn to put themselves in others' shoes in order to feel empathy. Enter Baxter, misunderstood and wanting to be kosher. As a pig, Baxter will never attain kosher status, but this need not exclude him from sharing the sweet traditions and welcoming features of *Shabbat*.

Encourage *hachnasat orchim* in your family. Talk with your children about showing kindness toward those left out because of shyness, an unusual appearance, being new, or any other reason. Share the fact that everyone eventually feels different from others in some way. Encourage your children to leave a welcome card on a new child's desk at school or tape an original drawing to a neighbor's mailbox; ask your children to accompany you to the door when guests arrive at your home.

KASHRUT

Kashrut refers to Jewish dietary laws, the source of which is the Torah (the first five books of the Bible). Among other topics, the comprehensive instructions of *kashrut* deal with what foods may and may not be eaten, in what combinations, and how foods are to be prepared. Whether or not your family adheres to these rules, many people find the exploration of *kashrut* to be fascinating; there are many online sources as well as books from which to learn. The term kosher, which in English has come to mean anything that is appropriate and acceptable, is derived from the Hebrew word *kasher*, meaning fit or proper (such as Baxter's invitation by a friendly rabbi to share her *Shabbat* evening). Pj

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