

Torah On One Foot

Rabbi Matthew Berger



Milchik & Fleishik

This week's Torah portion is *Sh'mini*, meaning "on the eighth day." It includes a number of the *mitzvot* that speak to *kashrut* – the laws of eating. In Judaism, eating is considered a holy action. All of us are concerned with what we eat. Food fuels our body, but in Jewish terms, it can also fuel our soul. Rabbi Adin Steinsaltz teaches that *kashrut* "is based on the principle that we cannot live a higher, nobler life of the spirit without having the body undergo some suitable preparation for it."

In other words, there is a mind-body connection at work. What we eat can influence our emotions, how we respond to events, and prepares us to interact with what we experience in the world. Traditional Jews follow the laws of *kashrut* with precision. There is a distinct separation between *milchik* (dairy) and *fleishik* (meat) foods. In the Reform movement, the choice of what we observe is up to each of us. The point of it all is to elevate a simple, mundane activity to a spiritual act.