



# הַמִּזְרָחִי

# HAMIZRACHI

## PARSHA WEEKLY

PARSHAT SHEMINI 5783 • 2023










**ISRAEL**  
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
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# Four Qualities of Spiritual Greatness

## Teachings from the Types of Korbanot



**Rabbi Doron Perez**

Executive Chairman, World Mizrachi

At the heart of each of the four categories of korbanot lies a strong spiritual quality. To come close to G-d, which in Hebrew is the very meaning of the word “korban” – sacrifice – the spiritual quality must be internalized. To be successful in this most important of all spiritual endeavors, a spiritual curriculum must be established for success in all endeavors in life. What must a person do who wants to lead their life in the most inspiring and productive way? Let us take a look at these four categories of korbanot to see what each of them suggests.

It is interesting to note that at the beginning of this week's Parasha, Shemini, all four korbanot must be brought by the Cohen Gadol and the elders of the People. This is the culmination of the initiation process for the Kohanim, in which they bring the Korban Olah, Mincha, Chatat and Shelamim. All four categories must be brought at this critical point for the Presence of G-d to descend upon the participants and for them to be partners in bringing holiness to the world.

These are the very same categories of korbanot that we learn about in detail in the last two parshiot, both in the opening of Parashat Vayikra and Parashat Tzav. They are indeed the Korban Olah – the Elevation or Burnt Offering, the Korban Mincha – the Meal Offering, the Korban Chatat and

Asham – the Sin and Guilt Offerings which are closely related, and finally the Korban Shelamim – the Peace Offering.

### Korban Olah

As highlighted in previous weeks of *HaMizrachi Parsha Weekly*, the essence of the Korban Olah is that it is offered entirely to Hashem. It is the only sacrifice that is burned completely without any human involvement or benefit. It is offered completely to G-d. To be successful in spiritual endeavors, one must be fully committed. We must put our heart, body and soul into everything that is important – with grit, determination, self-sacrifice, perseverance and commitment. Nothing great in life is achieved without putting ourselves on the line and being fully invested. Relationships and or endeavors in which one is not fully committed cannot be successful, especially during the trying and challenging times. We must be fully passionately committed – 110% – everything we got and then some. This is the most foundational principle for spiritual success.

### Korban Mincha

The Meal Offering is also known as the poor person's offering. It is offered from the flour of wheat grains and is therefore also called the meal offering. Our Sages learn an important principle from the Korban Mincha. They state that whether we sacrifice an expensive bull that costs

a hundred times more, or a few cheap grains, they are worth the same in the eyes of G-d.

”אחד המרבה ואחד הממעט ובלבד שיכוון לבו לשמים”

“Whether one gives a lot or a little is not important, the main thing is the purity of one's motives and intentions.”

So many people are driven by their own unspoken agendas and approach their tasks without pure motives. G-d wants us to have a pure heart and to do the right thing for its own sake. We are not to use the cause to benefit ourselves, but to dedicate ourselves to benefit the cause. Society judges based on externalities whereas G-d's assessment is based on internal considerations – intent, purity of heart and motives.

### Korban Chatat v'Asham

The Sin and Guilt Sacrifices are similar and are related to taking personal responsibility for our shortcomings and mistakes. John C. Maxwell, one of the leading thinkers in the field of leadership, has written a book called “Failing Forward.” In this book, he says that the difference

between average people and great people is their attitude and reaction to failure. Leaders are tested not only in good times but especially in times of challenge.

What do they do when they make a mistake and fail? Do they shift the responsibility to others or do they take full personal responsibility for the issues at hand? Is responsibility devolved to others and we are unaccountable or are we also personally responsible and accountable. So much success in life and leadership has to do with taking full responsibility for our decisions. Being responsible not only for our successes but also for our failures ultimately brings us closer to G-d. For this reason, vidui (confession) and teshuvah are an essential part of serving G-d. When we can take ownership of all parts of our personality and actions, we can truly come close to G-d and lead our lives and those of our fellow human beings in the best possible way.

### Korban Shelamim

Successful people are not only people of truth but also people of “Shalom” – peace and harmony. This korban is known as the “Peace Offering” because everyone

participates in it. A portion is burned on the altar to Heaven, the Kohanim receive a portion, and the one who offers it receives a portion. Everyone is happy. Everyone participates in this offering and shares it. There is enough for everyone and one person's benefit does not need to come at the expense of another. In interpersonal relationships, it is always important to strive to find a peaceful solution and not to insist on principles and stand on ceremonies. When we put principles above people, truth above peace, we often destroy relationships. We must always combine our truth, as we see it, with the need to get along with others for the sake of the greater good. Hashem seems to care less about whether we are right in relationships and more about whether we are able to get on with other people.

In short, it seems clear that these four qualities are the keys to spiritual success: Wholehearted passionate commitment, pure intention and motives, taking personal responsibility for our failures and seeking peace and harmony in all relationships. May Hashem bless us all to merit these qualities and live in His presence constantly.




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PIRKEI AVOT

# The Significance of Three



**Rabbi Reuven Taragin**  
Educational Director, World Mizrahi  
Dean of Overseas Students, Yeshivat Hakotel

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הוא (שמעון הצדיק) היה אומר, על שלשה דברים העולם עומד, על התורה ועל העבודה ועל גמילות חסדים. (א:ב)

## An Existential Opening

After the first mishnah of Masechet Avot concludes its description of those who relayed the Torah from generation to generation by mentioning the *Anshei Knesset Hagedolah* (Men of the Great Assembly), *mishnah bet* presents a foundational statement of Shimon HaTzadik, who was “*mi'shyarei Knesset Hagedolah* (of the last members of the Great Assembly).”

Shimon HaTzadik's statement is critical for our general worldview. As opposed to most of Masechet Avot, which consists of directives for *how* to best live our lives, Shimon HaTzadik relates to the more basic question of *why* the world exists. He asserts that the world stands on three pillars; it exists to facilitate *Torah* (learning)<sup>1</sup>, *avodah* (service of Hashem), and *gemilut chasadim* (acts of kindness).

According to Shimon HaTzadik, the world's sustenance hinges upon human action and behavior. Because the world was created in order to offer humanity the opportunity to live meaningful lives, its continued existence hinges on us doing so.

The mishnah's *mefarshim* see the pillars as relating to different categories humans ought to develop. The Tiferet Yisrael saw the three as representative of the types of relationships we need to develop. Torah learning is how we enrich ourselves, *avodah* is how we ought to relate to Hashem,<sup>2</sup> and *gemilut chasadim* reflects our healthy relationship with other people.

The Rambam saw the three pillars as modes of personal development. Torah develops our intellectual ability, *gemilut chasadim* our character, and *avodah* our observance.<sup>3</sup>

Both interpretations agree that the pillars are important not just for the world, but also for ourselves. They teach us not just what the world needs to exist, but also what our existence is meant to be about. The world cannot learn, daven, or do acts of *chessed*, on its own. Its purpose is realized through our actions.

## Pillars of Diversity

The existence of *multiple* pillars helps us understand human diversity and the unique aspects of each of our identities and missions. The Alshich<sup>4</sup> uses our mishnah to explain why some people are drawn to *Torah*, others feel an affinity for *tzedakah*, while others focus on *gemilut chasadim*. People are created with different affinities because the world needs all these types.

Rashb"i (Rebbi Shimon Bar Yochai) and the Chassidim Haroshinim were excellent examples of this phenomenon. The Gemara<sup>5</sup> tells us that Rashb"i and his colleagues focused almost exclusively on Torah learning. They were excused from the responsibility to pray (the central form of *avodah* in their and our time). The *Chassidim Harishonim* were a stark contrast. They would spend *nine* hours — the vast majority of each day — praying.<sup>6</sup>

Which approach is right — Rashb"i's, Rav Yochanan's, or something in between? How could there be such a stark contrast?

Shimon HaTzadik's teaching helps us answer this question. The world's three pillars symbolize its multiple purposes. In order to fulfill each of these different goals, Hashem creates people who are drawn to each of them. Some are drawn to Torah, others to *avodah*, and a third group to *gemilut chasadim*.

## Shalom as Harmonic Integration

The Akeidat Yitzchak<sup>7</sup> and Rav Kook use this idea to explain the deeper meaning of *shalom*. The first perek of Avot concludes with a statement of Rashba"g (Rabban Shimon Ben Gamliel) that he patterned after the earlier statement of Shimon HaTzadik.

Like Shimon HaTzadik, Rashba"g describes three factors that the world's existence depends upon. As opposed to Shimon HaTzadik though who focused on the world's *purpose*, Rashbag identifies the three elements that *sustain* the world's healthy society — *din* (justice), *emet* (truth), and *shalom*.<sup>8</sup>

What does Rashbag mean by *shalom*? The Akeidat Yitzchak explains that *shalom* is more

than just the lack of hostility. It refers, rather, to people being able to work together in order to accomplish shared common goals.

Rav Kook<sup>9</sup> took this idea a step further and defined *shalom* as people appreciating and finding an appropriate role for each other's strengths. The example he gave sharpens the connection between Rashba"g's statement and that of Shimon HaTzadik. *Shalom*, explains Rav Kook, is the ability of those involved in *chessed* to appreciate and find the appropriate place for those involved in *avodah* and for the two of them to be able to integrate themselves with those focused upon Torah learning. The existence of people focused upon different pillars necessitates *shalom* — our successful integration of and with one another.

Our recognition of the world's multiple pillars should help us appreciate the existential importance of the efforts of those different from ourselves and should inspire us to seek to integrate our efforts with theirs.

## Internal Integration

Rav Kook<sup>10</sup> applied this integrative perspective to our internal mindset as well. People should appreciate the importance of their own involvement (at least on some level) in *all* aspects of the world's purpose.

The Gemara<sup>11</sup> tells us that Rava criticized Rav Hamnuna for devoting an inordinate amount of time to prayer. Rava felt that Rav Hamnuna was focused on praying for his needs in this world, as opposed to earning his place in the next one through Torah learning. The Gemara explains that Rav Hamnuna opinion was that “*zman tefillah lachud u'zman torah lachud* (both *tefillah* and Torah have their appropriate time).”<sup>12</sup>

Rav Kook understood Rav Hamnuna's response as reflective of a broad principle. He explains that the pasuk of “*b'chol derachecha da'eihu* (know Hashem in all your pursuits)” teaches us to appreciate and focus upon the avenue of *avodat Hashem* we are presently involved in without concern for other forms of worship.<sup>13</sup>

Continued on page 7

# From Pesach to Shavuot: Counting and Thanking



**Rabbanit Shani Taragin**  
Educational Director, World Mizrahi

On Pesach, as we fulfilled the Mishnaic dictum of “ודורש מארמי אבד אבי” we recited the declaration of Bikkurim accompanying the presentation of our first fruits (of the 7 species of Eretz Yisrael) to the Beit Hamikdash as appearing in Devarim 26: 5-10:

**‘A wandering Aramean was my father, and he went down into Egypt, and sojourned there, few in number; and he became there a nation, great, mighty, and populous.** And the Egyptians dealt ill with us, and afflicted us, and laid upon us hard bondage. And we cried unto HaShem, the G-d of our fathers, and HaShem heard our voice, and saw our affliction, and our toil, and our oppression. And HaShem brought us forth out of Egypt with a mighty hand, and with an outstretched arm, and with great terribleness, and with signs, and with wonders. And He hath brought us into this place, and hath given us this land, a land flowing with milk and honey. And now, behold, I have brought the first of the fruit of the land, which Thou, O HaShem, hast given me.’

ChaZa”L explain that “THE ARAMEAN” is a reference to Lavan the Aramean who sought to uproot the existence of my father, Yaakov; This in fact is the homiletical reading we incorporate in the recital of the Haggadah on the night of the Seder. In the context of the complete proclamation as written in the Torah, however, various commentators identify the Aramean otherwise:

The Rashbam maintains that “A wandering Aramean was my father” refers to “Our father Abraham originated from

Aram. He wandered in a state of exile from Aram, as it states: ‘Go forth from your land.’ Ibn Ezra suggests in grammatical context that “the Aramean is Yaakov, and the verses meaning is this. That when Yaakov was in Aram, he was an “oved” i.e. poor, penniless... and the point here is that I did not inherit the land from my father (Yaakov) for he was poverty stricken when he came to Aram. He was even a stranger in Egypt ...”

These opinions reflect a close reading of the “peshat” of the pesukim as they relate to the theme of the declaration – the appreciation of a national identity through the Land of Israel. We thereby recount the days when our father (Avraham/Yaakov) was a wandering Aramean in contrast to his progeny who have merited settling in the Land as a fulfillment of Hashem’s promises for a permanent abode.

This in fact is one of the primary themes of Shavuot – “Chag HaBikkurim”(Bamidbar 28:26). It is a time when we bring the first fruits / wheat crop of our harvest as an expression of “Thanksgiving” for the Land of Israel. This is underscored through the “minchat shte halechem” sacrifice whereupon two loaves of wheat (chametz) are offered with two lambs, representing the transition of “sefirat haOmer” – the counting from the Omer (barley) offering to the wheat- “mincha chadasha”; Tefillah and anxiety followed by appreciation for the successful harvest (Seforno, Vayikra 23:10) .

The Ramban notes (Vayikra 23:17) that the loaves of Shavuot are brought from chametz as a “Todah offering”, expressing our

thanksgiving for our staples of existence – the Torah and the wheat of the Land. When we thank Hashem for the bounty of the present harvest, our future harvests are blessed as well (Rashi, Yirmiyahu 5:24)

The famous chassidic master Rabbi Yehudah Aryeh Leib Alter of Ger (known by the name of his magnum opus, Sfat Emet) explains that the two loaves offered on Shavuot symbolize the duality that we perceive in creation: one signified divine blessings, the other the product of man’s toil. On Shavuot, they were both waived in gratitude towards heaven as an acknowledgment that both come from Hashem. (Bamidbar Shavuot 5631, 5637)

Unfortunately, today we do not merit to bring our Bikkurim to the Mikdash and recite the verbal declaration of thanksgiving, nor do we bring the “mincha chadasha” as an expression of gratitude to Hashem for the wheat of the Land. We are not exempt, however, from thanking Hashem at this time for our national homeland. (Certain *minhagim* remind us of the above – The Aruch HaShulchan 494:5 explains the source of the custom to eat dairy on Shavuot to remember the “מנחה חדשה לה’ בשבועותיכם”, and according to Rav Kook to remind us of the unique blessings of our Land flowing with “MILK and honey”. According to the Rem”a s.494, we eat dairy to insure that we will have two separate meals with bread to remember the two loaves.) Chag HaBikkurim is in fact our Jewish “Thanksgiving” – after recounting our perpetual days of wandering and oppression on Pesach, we complete the proclamation of Bikkurim on Shavuot with gratitude to Hashem for our homecoming!

# Halachic Q&A



## Rabbi Yosef Zvi Rimon

Head, Mizrahi Rabbinic Council | Rabbi of the Gush Etzion Regional Council  
Rosh Yeshivah, Jerusalem College of Technology | Founder and Chairman, Sulamot and La'Ofek

**Question: A dairy, non ben-yomo ceramic plate was used to warm up parve fish. Accidentally, the fish was eaten while it was hot with meat ben-yomo silverware. Is there an issue with the plate, and if so, can it be kashered?**

Answer: One may, even lechatchilah, take fish was was cooked in a dairy ben yomo-vessel and place it on a meat, ben-yomo plate (assuming the fish was not fried with onion). Therefore, in this case everything is fine and this can even be done lechatchila (YD 95:2).

**Question: We are staying in a hotel this Shabbat and eating at our friends house for Friday night dinner. We will need to leave the hotel room early to get there. Can my wife light candles at our friend's home?**

Answer: It is best to light where you will be sleeping. However, if that is not possible, such as in your case, she can light where she is eating. It is preferable to leave some light on where you are sleeping l'chvod shabbat and to have them in mind when lighting candles. (For more on the topic, see Halacha Mimkorah Shabbat #3)

**Question: I have a closed matzah meal package from last year. Can I use it over Pesach?**

Answer: If it was in a clean spot – then it can be used. If it was together with chametz – it can be sold.

**Question: Our firstborn son was born through C-section. Does he need to fast for ta'anit bechorot? He is currently in the army and will not have access to a siyum masechet on erev Pesach.**

Answer: The Chok Yaakov brings up both sides of this case. On one hand, a firstborn through C-section is not considered a halachic firstborn both regarding laws of inheritance (SA CM 277) and regarding the pidyon haben (SA YD 305). Within this reasoning, he seemingly should not be considered a bechor for the fast as well. On the other hand, the essence of the fast is remembering the miracle, and because he is technically a firstborn son albeit not halachically, he may need to fast to remember the miracle. The Chok Yaakov leaves the question unanswered. The Kaf Hachayim paskins that he does not need to fast because this is a safek, and the basis of fasting comes from a minhag. Rav Shlomo Zalman Auerbach, on the other hand, paskins that he does need to fast.

In practice, he does not need to fast. However, if he could manage to finish even a small masechet of mishnayot with a commentary and make a siyum, that would be best (Rav Ovadya allows for this to count as a siyum, but only for himself. He cannot make the siyum and exempt others who are listening).

**Question: Can Ashkenazim eat thicker matzot?**

Answer: The Ashkenazic practice is not to eat thicker matzot, however there is no prohibition in doing so, even on seder night. Therefore, if it is difficult for somebody to eat the thin matzot, he has who to rely upon to use the thicker ones (assuming it has a proper hechsher).

**Question: I received wine which is kedushat shvi'it, but was told I need to finish it before Pesach. Is that true?**

Answer: No. You do not need to finish it before Pesach, but you do need to make it "Hefker" on erev Pesach (Pesach is zman biur for wine, see Mishnah Shvi'it 9:3).

Before Pesach, you bring it out of your home and ideally find 3 people (Chazon Ish). You announce "Acheinu Kol Beit Yisrael, Kol Harotze Litol Yavo Ve'yito" – Brothers of Israel, anybody who wants can come and take (Tosefta Shvi'it 8:2). You can bring it back into your home after that and keep it through and after Pesach.

**Question: Can a women be motzei a man in Birkot Hashachar?**

Answer: Due to all of the questions I am receiving, I will answer briefly.

Regarding Birkot Hashachar, a woman can be motzei a man except for the bracha of "shelo asani Isha." Regarding Birkot HaTorah, there is a machloket whether women have a biblical or rabbinic obligation. Therefore, ideally a man should be motzei another man. However, if a man is sick and his wife is davening with him, it seems that we can be lenient (see Shuclahn Aruch Harav, Mishnah Berurah, and Biur Halacha at the end of Siman 47).

● *Compiled by Yaakov Panitch.*

# דיון משפחתי: פרשת שמיני

הרבנית שרון רימון  
Tanach teacher and author



מתוך אובססיה; מתוך בריחה מהתמודדות נפשית אחרת, או מכל מניע אחר.

אדם הרוצה להוסיף על הקודש צריך להיעזר באנשים אחרים, ובעיקר בגדולים ממנו, על מנת לדייק ולבחון את כוונותיו ומתוך כך להגיע אל המעשה הנכון והראוי, באופן הראוי.

ולבסוף, חז"ל מצביעים במדויק על השורש והמניע הבעייתי של נדב ואביהו: לא רק שהם לא התייעצו עם משה ואהרן, אלא הרבה מעבר לכך: "אמרו נדב ואביהו אימתי ימותו שני זקנים הללו ואני ואתה ננהיג את הדור". אם אכן נדב ואביהו רצו להיות המנהיגים במקום משה ואהרן, מתברר שהכניסה אל הקודש לא הייתה רק ממניעים טהורים של רצון להתקרב אל ה', אלא מתוך רצון להיות בעלי הכה, הסמכות, המחליטים, המנהיגים. אם אכן כך הוא, הכניסה אל הקודש נעשתה לא רק מתוך קדושה אמיתית אלא הייתה מעורבת בה גם גאווה (בדומה לעוזהיה שגבה לבו ובעקבות זאת נכנס את המקדש להקטיר, למרות אזהרות הכהנים, כמתואר בדב"ב כ"ו, טז-יט).

במעשים של בני אדם פעמים רבות מעורבים מניעים גלויים ונסתרים, טובים ושליילים גם יחד. קשה מאד לאדם להפריד ולהבחין בעצמו במניעיו. אדם העומד לפני מעשה גדול במיוחד צריך לבחון היטב את מניעיו ולשקול את מעשיו בהירות, לא מתוך התלהבות יתירה אלא בשיקול דעת ומתוך מודעות בהירה (ככל האפשר) למניעים הנסתרים העומדים מאחורי הרצון שלו, וככל שיטהר את כוונותיו ויטייע עם אנשים אחרים גדולים ממנו, יוכל לדייק את מעשיו אל הקודש.

התחייבו מיתה בגלל שערערו על הסמכות של משה ואהרן. או יותר נכון – אם הם לא היו מערערים על סמכותם של משה ואהרן – כל זה לא היה קורה, הם לא היו נכנסים אל הקודש בצורה לא ראוייה, ולא היו מתים.

**דברי חז"ל מלמדים אותנו שלא להסתכל רק על החטא עצמו אלא לעיין היטב בשורשו. במניעים של האדם שהביאו אותו לחטא זה. לכל מעשה של אדם יש שורש, יש מניע נפשי שעומד מאחורי מעשיו. כאשר האדם מודע למניעים העומדים מאחורי מעשיו הוא יכול לדייק אותם ולכוונם בצורה טובה יותר.**

לפי דברי חז"ל, השורש של חטא נדב ואביהו הוא שלא התייעצו עם משה ואהרן, ועלינו להבין מדוע זה כל כך חמור?

קודם כל – עבודת הקודש היא בעלת כללים ברורים, שצריך להקפיד עליהם. כאשר אדם רוצה לעשות משהו שאין עליו ציווי מפורש, להתעלות בקדושה, זה לכאורה ראוי וטוב, אבל הוא צריך להתייעץ עם הגדולים ממנו בשנים, בחכמה, במנהיגות ובקרבת אלקים. בעזרתם הוא יבחן האם מעשה זה אכן ראוי ורצוי. אם הוא לא מתייעץ ועושה על דעת עצמו, הוא עלול לטעות בגדול, ולעשות מעשים שאפילו יחייבו אותו מיתה, או ירחיקו אותו מן הקדושה, או יפגמו באיזושהו אופן.

שנית – ההתלהבות והניסיון להתקרב אל הקודש יכולים להיות טובים, אך יכולים גם לנבוע ממניעים לא כל כך חיוביים: מרצון להתבלט, להיות שונה מכולם; מצורך למרוד, לעשות הפוך ממה שצווה;

וְיָקָחוּ בְנֵי אֶהֱרֹן נֹדֵב וְאָבִיהוּא אִישׁ מִחֶתְתָּו וַיִּתְּנוּ בָהֶן אֵשׁ וַיִּשְׂימוּ עָלֶיהָ קֶטֶרֶת וַיִּקְרִיבוּ לִפְנֵי ה' אֵשׁ זָרָה אֲשֶׁר לֹא צִוָּה אֱתָם: וַתֵּצֵא אֵשׁ מִלִּפְנֵי ה' וַתֹּאכַל אוֹתָם וַיָּמָתוּ לִפְנֵי ה': וַיֹּאמֶר מֹשֶׁה אֶל אֶהֱרֹן הוּא אֲשֶׁר דָּבַר ה' לֵאמֹר בְּקִרְבִי אֶקְדֹשׁ וְעַל פְּנֵי כָל הָעָם אֶפְגַּד וַיִּדַם אֶהֱרֹן: (ויקרא י', א-ג).

נדב ואביהו היו אנשי מעלה, הראויים לבוא אל הקודש. בראותם את השראת השכינה על המשכן הרגישו, ככל הנראה, התלהבות גדולה ורצון עז לקרבת אלקים, לחיבור אל הקודש והגברתו, ומתוך התלהבות זו טעו, והקריבו "אש זרה אֲשֶׁר לֹא צִוָּה אֱתָם" - עשו מעשה של קודש בצורה לא נכונה ולא מזדייקת. נדב ואביהו מתו מיד – הקרבה הגדולה אל השכינה שרפה אותם.

למרות שהחטא לכאורה ברור, והעונש הוא תוצאה ישירה של המעשה, חז"ל ראו צורך להעמיק בהבנת החטא:

שעשו שלא ברשות, אמרו אעפ"י שירדה אש מן השמים מצוה להביא מן ההדיוט... מלמד שלא חלקו כבוד למשה ולאהרן... ר' אליעזר אומר לא נתחייבו בני אהרן מיתה, אלא על שהורו הלכה בפני משה רבן, שכל המורה הלכה בפני רבו חייב מיתה... וכבר היו משה ואהרן מהלכים בדרך, ונדב ואביהו היו מהלכים אחריהם, אמרו נדב ואביהו אימתי ימותו שני זקנים הללו ואני ואתה ננהיג את הדור... (מדרש אגדה ויקרא י', א).

חז"ל מבינים, שהכניסה אל הקודש איננה עיקר הבעיה. לפי דבריהם, לכאורה נדב ואביהו לא היו מתחייבים מיתה רק על כניסה אל הקודש, אלא

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Rav Kook uses Shimon HaTzadik's pillars to present this idea. Though Torah learning may be the most important activity, when one is involved in *tefillah*, he should not think about the need to learn Torah (or perform *gemilut chasadim*). Similarly, when involved in Torah learning, one should not be distracted by the need to *daven* or do *chessed*. *Z'man tefillah lachud u'zman torah lachud*.

May Shimon HaTzadik's teaching focus us on accomplishing what the world and we were created for.

May the multiple pillars help us appreciate the importance of those whose focus differs from our own and help us develop all the

necessary aspects of our own *avodah* and personalities.

● Summarized by Yedidyah Rosenwasser

1. Though the word "Torah" often refers to Torah observance, as the continuation of this mishnah mentions examples of observance, the commentaries understood that the "Torah" in this mishnah refers to Torah learning.
2. Rav Kook saw Torah as our entry into Hashem's world to study His wisdom and *tefillah* as our bringing the issues of our world to Hashem.
3. Similarly, Rabbeinu Bachaye sees Torah learning as employing the mouth, *avodah* (prayer) as the work of the heart, and *gemilut chasadim* as the realm of action. The Maharal (Netivot Olam, Netiv Ha'avodah) explains that Torah is how we use our *sechel* (intellect), *avodah* is how we use our *regesh* (emotions), and *gemilut chasadim* is a form of our *ma'asim* (actions).

4. Alshich on Sefer Vayikra, Perek 9.
5. Shabbat 11a.
6. Berachot 30b. The Gemara tells us that Rabbi Yochanan went even further and exclaimed that, ideally, people should *daven* all day (!).
7. Parshat Naso, Sha'ar 74.
8. Avot 1:18.
9. Orot Hateshuvah, Ma'amar Shalom Bashem.
10. Mussar Avichav, pg. 39.
11. Shabbat 10a.
12. The Rokeiach (brought by the Be'er Heitev Orach Chayim 89:17) deemed the learning of one who skips *tefillah* in order to learn as worthless.
13. Similarly, the Chovot Halevavot quotes someone (with bitachon) who exclaimed that he "never got up in the morning involved in one important thing while desiring and thinking about something else."

# A Little Spoon and Ten Messages for Yom HaShoah



**Sivan Rahav Meir and Yedidya Meir**  
World Mizrahi Scholars-in-Residence

Last year, on the day prior to Yom HaShoah (Holocaust Remembrance Day), I received a precious gift, courtesy of the daughter of a recently deceased Holocaust survivor:

“Shalom Sivan, My name is Dina Womzer. This year we celebrated our first Seder night without my father, Yaakov Yehoshua, and today we will mark the first Yom HaShoah without him.

In the Bergen-Belsen camp, father was very hungry. He found a little silver spoon with the name 'Rudy,' that of a Jewish child who apparently had not survived, engraved upon it. Father kept the spoon and each day after they finished apportioning the murky soup to the prisoners, he would take the spoon and scrape the bottom of the pot with it. He would do this with all his strength in order to be rewarded with one extra drop of food.

Each year this spoon would be the focus of our Seder night. Father would tell his story and when we sang “VeHaKadosh baruch Hu matzileinu mi'yadam” (And the Holy One blessed be He saves us from their hand) he would wave the spoon and recall how he himself was saved. This year on Seder night we displayed the spoon and continued to tell the story ourselves for the generations to come.

Father left us another precious gift. On his 90th birthday that we celebrated only a few months ago, he formulated for us ten messages, a kind of 'Ten Commandments' you might say. As a Holocaust survivor and as someone who built his life anew, he left behind a guide for his descendants, how we should conduct ourselves in the world. We read his words together on Seder night, and on this Yom

HaShoah, we would like to share them with the wider public.

1. “Who is rich? He who is happy with his portion.” It cannot be that “his portion” refers to his material possessions since a person continually worries that he will lose his property or that it will be stolen, and it is even written in Pirkei Avot: “Increasing possessions increases worry.” Rather “his portion” refers to his spiritual portion, the money that he gives to tzedakah. This is a portion that can never be taken from him and in which he can rejoice and be happy!

2. When we pray and ask for a good friend, Pirkei Avot suggests: “Acquire a friend,” meaning we need to check his qualities as we would anything else before acquiring it. We do not, heaven forbid, want to absorb others' bad habits since friends can have a dramatic influence on us.

3. In the business world, we need to check the truthfulness and reliability of the people with whom we do business. We need to play it safe: “Respect him but suspect him.” Check with whom you are “dealing” -- in both senses of the word.

4. Closeness to G-d or cleaving to HaShem is achieved through Torah study. Therefore, learning must be a daily constant. Otherwise, heaven forbid, there can be an interruption in our connection with HaShem.

5. We should examine the words of our prayers intently in order that we do not recite them like chirping birds, but rather with deep focus and concentration, and pay close attention to the words that come from our mouths so that they should also come from our hearts. Similarly, in the

words of praise to HaShem, we must understand and carefully focus on every quality ascribed to Him.

6. Family unity is created by treating each child the same, without favoring one over another, in order not to repeat what happened with Yosef and his brothers.

7. Not everything is good -- but everything is for the best! Our task is to remember that in the all-inclusive Divine accounting, what happens is for the good of ourselves, our family, the nation, and the world, even if we do not see it with eyes of flesh.

8. Purim -- Megillat Esther -- is a wonderful example of the previous point -- how, in the end, everything flipped and turned out for the best.

9. “HaShem knows what he is doing. He does not punish anyone for no reason, his judgment is just.” These are words from a song that Fannie Ehrenreich z”l taught during the Holocaust. They resemble “He is a G-d of faith, without wrongdoing, He is righteous and upright,” and “The judgments of HaShem are true, they are righteous altogether.”

10. A human being should know that life has a purpose. And its true purpose is complete redemption! As long as we have not gotten there, we are still on the road and cannot rest on our laurels! And so redemption becomes an inseparable part of our thoughts, words, and actions!”



נשלחו אליי המון סיפורים אישיים ומרגשים כדי לפרסם אותם ביום השואה, אבל נראה לי חשוב לשתף היום גם כמה פרטים קרים ויבשים. הנה שש עובדות היסטוריות, רשימה שלדברי הפילוסוף

*Continued on next page*



# For the Shabbat Table



**Rabbi Danny Mirvis**

Deputy CEO, World Mizrachi

Rabbi of Ohel Moshe Synagogue, Herzliya Pituach

“E xcept this you shall not eat from those that bring up their cud or have split hooves: The CAMEL, for it brings up its cud but its hoof is not split - it is unclean to you. And the HYRAX, for it brings up its cud but its hoof is not split - it is unclean to you. And the HARE, for it brings up its cud but its hoof is not split - it is unclean to you. And the PIG, for its hoof is split, its hoof is completely separated, but it does not chew its cud - it is unclean to you” (Vayikra 11:4-7).

At the beginning of this week's Parsha's laws of Kashrut, we are informed that animals need to have completely split hooves and to bring up the cud in order to be Kosher. We then read about four animals which are non-Kosher because they only have one of the two Kosher signs - the camel, the hyrax, the hare and the pig.

The Kli Yakar (Vayikra 11:4) asks: We already know that an animal needs both split hooves and to chew the cud in order to be Kosher. Therefore, the Torah only

needed to include the non-Kosher sign of each animal and we would have known that it is not Kosher. e.g. It could have simply written, “The camel/hyrax/hare, for its hoof is not split”, or, “the pig, for it does not chew the cud”. Why are we repeatedly informed of the Kosher signs of each of these non-Kosher animals, and why are the Kosher signs placed first?

The Kli Yakar answers with a crucial message: “Their pure signs add impurity onto their impurity”.

The fact that these animals have some Kosher elements make them more impure than animals that are entirely non-Kosher, for they can be deceptive and mistaken for being Kosher. It is for this reason that Esav are compared to pigs, for they go around waving their split hooves and apparent external purity, but are internally and inherently impure. We are informed of the “Kosher” signs of these four animals and their “Kosher” signs are specifically placed first because in reality, these are not signs of purity, but signs of impurity.

Kabbala teaches us that there is nothing in the Universe that does not contain a Divine spark. Any idea that is pure falsehood cannot exist but will collapse. Only if it maintains an element of truth will the falsehood be able to survive. Therefore, no idea is totally devoid of at least a trace of truth.

On one hand, we must be sensitive to the sparks of truth that exist, even within the greatest lies. There are truths to be learnt, even within the words of those who we believe to be entirely wrong. At the same time, we should not be blinded by these truths, for falsehood that wears the cloak of truth can be a greater danger than pure falsehood alone.

Kashrut must be both internal and external.

Shabbat Shalom!

*Continued from previous page*

פעולה עם האויב, גירוש או המרת דת. המוות היה האופציה היחידה שציפתה להם.

מול אנטישמיות, מול הכחשת שואה, מול בורות ושכחה - כדאי לזכור. ידע הוא כוח.

לרשימה הזו, פרופ' שלום רוזנברג הוסיף שאלה: הרוע המוחלט של זמננו, גרמניה הנאצית, סימן לעצמו את היהדות ואת היהודים כאויב המוחלט. לא זכינו לראות את אלוקים יורד על הר סיני ומכריז: "אתם אהוביי", אבל זכינו בדורנו לראות את השטן מכריז עלינו: "אתם אויביי". לכן צריך כל יהודי לשאול את עצמו תמיד: במה אני אויבו של הרוע?

המשיכו "לבזבז" אנרגיה על מפעל ההשמדה של היהודים.

4. הם לא היו משוגעים - הרוצחים היו אנשי משפחה, בעלי מקצועות, משכילים ושפויים. אנשים רגילים, מן השורה, הצטרפו לפרויקט ההשמדה הענק הזה.

5. המחנות לא הופצו - מפעלי ההרג המשיכו לפעול בלי שמישהו מבחוץ יפסיק זאת, בלי שצבא בעלות הברית יתערב, בעוד שמפעלי תחמושת כן הופצו.

6. אין בחירה - בניגוד לגזירות ורדיפות אחרות בעבר, כאן לא הייתה ליהודים אפשרות של שיתוף

פרופ' יוסף בן-שלמה צריך לדעת ולשנן: למה השואה הייתה אירוע יוצא דופן? למה אין להשוות אותה לשום דבר?

1. "יודנריין" - לראשונה בתולדות העמים, היה עם ששאף להשמדה מוחלטת של עם אחר, שרובו כלל לא חי איתו באותו שטח.

2. אין מתנגדים - בוועידת ואנזה הוחלט פה אחד על יישום "הפתרון הסופי", בלי התנגדות אחת. פורום נרחב ומכובד מקבל את ההחלטה, ואף אחד לא קם כנגדה.

3. הגרמנים פעלו נגד האינטרס שלהם - גרמניה הלכה והפסידה במלחמה, אבל פעלה באופן לא רציונלי: במקום להשקיע בלחימה הגרמנים

# The Dangers of Enthusiasm



Rabbi Lord Jonathan Sacks zt"l

**E**xcavating the history of words can sometimes be as revealing as excavating the ruins of an ancient city. Take the English word “enthusiasm”. Today we see this as something positive. One dictionary defines it as “a feeling of energetic interest in a particular subject or activity and an eagerness to be involved in it.” People with enthusiasm have passion, zest, and excitement, and this can be contagious. It is one of the gifts of a great teacher or leader. People follow people of passion. If you want to influence others, cultivate enthusiasm.

But the word did not always have a favourable connotation. Originally it referred to someone possessed by a spirit or demon. In the seventeenth century in England, it came to refer to extreme and revolutionary Protestant sects, and more generally to the Puritans who fought the English Civil War. It became a synonym for religious extremism, zealotry, and fanaticism. It was looked on as irrational, volatile, and dangerous.

David Hume (1711–1776), the Scottish philosopher, wrote a fascinating essay on the subject.<sup>1</sup> He begins by noting that “the corruption of the best things produces the worst,” and that is especially true of religion. There are, he says, two ways in which religion can go wrong: through superstition and through enthusiasm. These are quite different phenomena. Superstition is driven by ignorance and fear. We can sometimes have irrational anxieties and terrors, and we deal with them by resorting to equally irrational remedies. Enthusiasm is the opposite. It is the result of over-confidence. The enthusiasts, in a state of high religious rapture, come to believe that they are being inspired by G-d Himself, and are

thus empowered to disregard reason and restraint.

Enthusiasm “thinks itself sufficiently qualified to approach the Divinity, without any human mediator.”<sup>2</sup> The person in its grip is so full of what they take to be holy rapture that they feel able to override the rules by which priestly conduct is normally governed. “The fanatic consecrates himself and bestows on his own person a sacred character, much superior to what forms and ceremonious institutions can confer on any other.”<sup>3</sup> Rules and regulations, thinks the enthusiast, are for ordinary people, not for us. We, inspired by G-d, know better. That, said Hume, can be very dangerous indeed.

We now have a precise description of the sin for which Nadav and Avihu, the two elder sons of Aaron, died. Clearly the Torah regards their death as highly significant because it refers to it on no less than four occasions (Lev. 10:1–2, Lev. 16:1; Num. 3:4, Num. 26:61). It was a shocking tragedy, occurring as it did on the day of the inauguration of the service of the Mishkan, a moment that should have been one of the great celebrations in Jewish history.

The Sages themselves were puzzled by the episode. The text itself merely says that “they offered unauthorised fire [esh zara] before the Lord, that He had not commanded. So fire came out from the presence of the Lord and consumed them, and they died before the Lord” (Lev. 10:1–2). Evidently the Sages felt that there must have been something else, some further sin or character flaw, to justify so dire and drastic a punishment.

Putting together clues in the biblical text, some speculated that they were guilty of entering the Holy of Holies;<sup>4</sup> that they had given a ruling of their own accord without

consulting Moses or Aaron; that they had become intoxicated; that they were not properly robed; that they had not purified themselves with water from the laver; that they were so self-important that they had not married, thinking no woman was good enough for them; or that they were impatient for Moses and Aaron to die so they could become the leaders of Israel.

Some speculated that the sin for which they were punished did not happen on that day at all. It had occurred months earlier at Mount Sinai. The text says that Nadav and Avihu along with seventy elders ascended the mountain and “saw the G-d of Israel.” G-d “did not raise His hand against the leaders of the Israelites; they saw G-d, and they ate and drank” (Ex. 24:10–11). The implication is that they deserved punishment then for not averting their eyes, or for eating and drinking at so sacred an encounter. But G-d delayed the punishment so as not to cause grief on the day He made a covenant with the people.<sup>5</sup>

These are all midrashic interpretations: true, valid, and important but not the plain sense of the verse. The text is clear. On each of the three occasions where their death is mentioned, the Torah says merely that they offered “unauthorised fire.” The sin was that they did something that had not been commanded. They did so, surely, for the highest motives. Moses said to Aaron immediately after they died that this is what G-d had meant when He said, “Among those who are near Me I will be sanctified” (Lev. 10:3). A Midrash says that Moses was comforting his brother by saying, “They were closer to G-d than you or I.”<sup>6</sup> The history of the word “enthusiasm,” though, helps us understand the episode.

Nadav and Avihu were “enthusiasts,” not in the contemporary sense but in the sense in which the word was used in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. Enthusiasts were people who, full of religious passion, believed that G-d was inspiring them to do deeds in defiance of law and convention. They were very holy but they were also potentially very dangerous. David Hume in particular saw that enthusiasm in this sense is diametrically opposed to the mindset of priesthood. In his words, “All enthusiasts have been free from the yoke of ecclesiastics and have expressed great independence of devotion; with a contempt of forms, ceremonies, and traditions.”

Priests understand the power, and thus the potential danger, of the sacred. That is why holy places, times, and rituals must be guarded with rules, the way a nuclear power station must be protected by the most careful insulation. Think of the accidents that have occurred when this has failed: Chernobyl, for example, or Fukushima in Japan in 2011. The results can be devastating and lasting.

To bring unauthorised fire to the Tabernacle might seem a small offence, but a single unauthorised act in the realm of the holy causes a breach in the laws around the sacred that can grow in time to a gaping hole. Enthusiasm, harmless though it might be in some of its manifestations, can quickly become extremism, fanaticism, and religiously motivated violence. That is what happened in Europe during the wars of religion in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, and it is happening in some religions today. As



**Precisely because it gives rise to such intense passions, religious life in particular needs the constraints of law and ritual, the entire intricate minuet of worship, so that the fire of faith is contained, giving light and a glimpse of the glory of G-d.**

David Hume observed: “Human reason and even morality are rejected [by enthusiasts] as fallacious guides, and the fanatic madman delivers himself over blindly” to what he believes to be divine inspiration, but what may in fact be overheated self-importance or frenzied rage.

We now understand in detail that the human brain contains two different systems, what Daniel Kahneman calls “thinking fast and slow.” The fast brain, the limbic system, gives rise to emotions, particularly in response to fear. The slow brain, the prefrontal cortex, is rational, deliberative, and capable of thinking through the long-term consequences of alternative courses of action. It is no accident that we have both systems. Without instinctive responses triggered by danger we would not survive. But without the slower, deliberative brain we would find ourselves time and again engaging in destructive and self-destructive behaviour. Individual happiness and the

survival of civilisation depend on striking a delicate balance between the two.

Precisely because it gives rise to such intense passions, religious life in particular needs the constraints of law and ritual, the entire intricate minuet of worship, so that the fire of faith is contained, giving light and a glimpse of the glory of G-d. Otherwise it can eventually become a raging inferno, spreading destruction and claiming lives. After many centuries in the West, we have tamed enthusiasm to the point where we can think of it as a positive force. We should never forget, however, that it was not always so. That is why Judaism contains so many laws and so much attention to detail – and the closer we come to G-d, the more we need.

#### AROUND THE SHABBAT TABLE:

- Have you ever seen enthusiasm taken too far?
- How do the laws of Judaism contain and regulate religious enthusiasm?
- Is there room in Judaism, beyond halachah, for religious enthusiasm?

1. David Hume, “Of Superstition and Enthusiasm,” in *Essays Moral, Political, and Literary* (1742–1754).

2. Ibid.

3. Ibid.

4. This is based on the statement in Leviticus 16:1, that the two sons of Aaron died when “they drew near before the Lord,” implying that they had come too close, i.e., they had entered the Holy of Holies.

5. The seventy elders were punished later. See Rashi on Exodus 24:10.

6. *Midrash Aggada* (Buber) ad loc.

# Simanei Taharah



**Rabbi Hershel Schachter**

Rosh Yeshivah, Rabbi Isaac Elchanan Theological Seminary of Yeshiva University

**T**he Gemara in Bechoros (6a-6b) records a Beraisa that discusses the case of an animal of one species that, as a result of a mutation, bears an offspring resembling another species. We follow the opinion of the Chachamim that “a camel that was born from a cow” – that is, an offspring resembling a nonkosher animal born from a kosher animal – is kosher, even though it is missing the *simanei taharah* (the characteristics of a kosher animal) of *mafreses parsah* (split hooves) and *ma’alas geirah* (chewing its cud).

Apparently, we view the *simanim* as necessary only to be *kovei’a* the *min* (species) as a *min kasher*. In other words, the recognition of *simanim* is critical in a particular animal only if we were to be presented with a species that is not yet identified as a kosher species. In a situation in which the animal is definitely the product of a recognized *min tahor*, it is kosher even without those *simanim*.

The requirement of fins and scales for kosher fish is similar. As the Gemara in Avodah Zarah (39a) teaches, a fish that does not presently have fins and scales, but is destined to grow them when it develops to maturity, is kosher even before the *simanim* develop. Clearly, it is not the checking for the presence of *simanim* that is *matir* (permits) the consumption of the fish; rather, the *simanim* are used to be *kovei’a* a certain species of fish as being kosher.

The Darchei Teshuvah (Yoreh De’ah 79:1, 83:1) elaborates on this idea in reference to the Sefer HaChinuch’s contention (mitzvah 153; see Minchas Chinuch) that there is an obligatory *mitzvas aseh* of *bedikas simanim*. The Chinuch writes that if one consumed an animal based on only one of the two *simanei taharah*, he has failed

to fulfill the mitzvah of *bedikas simanim*, even if the animal did, in fact, possess the second *siman*. The Darchei Teshuvah explains that the mitzvah that the Chinuch describes only applies to a fish that is not recognized as belonging to a *min tahor*. Before one partakes of a fish of an unidentified species, there is a mitzvah to check for its *simanim*, but this does not apply to a fish known to belong to a kosher species. Similarly, a *shochet* may perform *shechitah* on an animal without first checking its *simanei taharah*, as long as he recognizes the animal as belonging to a kosher species.

Some authorities disputed the permissibility of canned tuna fish based on the requirement of *bedikas simanim*. They argued that since in the factory in Puerto Rico, only non-Jewish workers check each fish, we lack the *matir* of *bedikah*. However, this argument is incorrect. As we have seen, *bedikas simanim* is necessary only to establish a particular species as a *min tahor*. Once a species is recognized to be a *min tahor*, a fish from that species is permissible, even without examination of its *simanim*. [See Ginas Egoz, p. 61.]

The Beraisa in Bechoros also discusses the opposite case – that of an offspring resembling a kosher animal that was born from a non-kosher animal. We derive that this animal is forbidden for consumption from the passuk, “But this you shall not eat from among those that chew their cud and that have split hooves” (Vayikra 11:4). Applying an additional level of interpretation to this passuk, Chazal understand that there may exist an animal that chews its cud and that has split hooves, but which is forbidden nonetheless.

It is unclear, however, whether such an animal, which possesses *simanei taharah* but which was born from a non-kosher

animal, is treated like its mother in all areas of Halachah. The Pischei Teshuvah (Yoreh De’ah 79:2) quotes the Yad Eliyahu (*siman* 2), who deliberates the question of whether the animal is considered a *beheimah teme’ah*, like its mother, or that the *gezeiras hakasuv* merely forbids it for *achilah*, but that it is treated as a *beheimah tehovah* in other contexts by virtue of its *simanei taharah*.

On the one hand, as we have seen, the purpose of checking for *simanei taharah* is merely to be *kovei’a* whether a *min* is kosher or not. Thus, in this case, it may be argued that the presence of *simanei taharah* in the animal is inconsequential, since we know based on its mother that it certainly belongs to a *min tamei*.

Alternatively, the Yad Eliyahu suggests, perhaps there are two ways in which an animal can attain kosher status – either by belonging to a *min beheimah tehovah* or by possessing *simanei taharah*. In other words, *simanim* may confer the status of *beheimah tehovah* on an animal, even if the animal is not a member of a kosher species. Such an animal is certainly *assur b’achilah*, as the Beraisa teaches, but this may be due to an extraneous consideration – the fact that the animal was produced by a non-kosher animal. The Gemara in Chullin (64b) derives from the phrase, *וְאִתּוֹ בֵּת הַיְעֵנָה* – “and the ‘daughter’ of the ostrich” (Vayikra 11:16), that the egg of a non-kosher bird is prohibited. This serves as the source for the general principle that *הַיּוֹצֵא מִן הָאֲסוּר אֲסוּר* – the product of that which is forbidden is forbidden. Accordingly, just as milk or eggs that are produced by a *min tamei* are forbidden, the offspring of a non-kosher animal is no different.

● Adapted from Rav Schachter on the Parsha II.

# Putting It In The Back Pocket



**Rabbi Yisroel Reisman**  
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Probably the most famous line in the Parsha is וַיִּדַם, אָהֳרֹן – ‘And Aharon was silent.’ In the face of the awful tragedy of the death of two of his great children, Aharon remained silent.

Rashi explains that the reward Aharon received for his silence was that a Nevua, specifically the command for someone who has drunk wine to not enter the Beit Hamikdash, was given to him alone. Just him. When did he receive this Nevua? The Ramban, at the beginning of Acharei Mos, tells us that it was told to Aharon the day after his sons died. The Ramban explains that the day that the sons died Aharon was an Onein, and the Shechina does not rest on somebody at a moment of tragedy and sadness. The Nevuah therefore waited until the next morning.

Still, we are amazed that Aharon Hakohen, the next day after he lost two sons, could receive Nevua. We know that the Shechina only rests on a person through Simcha. The great Elisha Hanavi, when he got upset at the sins of the Melech Yisrael, instructed instruments to be brought to him so that he could be cheered up in order to receive Nevuah. Only a person in a state of Simcha is a receptacle for Nevuah. Aharon, the day after the deaths of his sons, was apparently in a state of Simcha that he could get Nevua. How could this be?!

Rav Simcha Avrohom HaKohen said the following. What is the connection of the Nevua to Aharon not to drink wine to his silence? The nature of a person is



**You have to sometimes be able to take a challenge, a difficulty, something that upsets you and put it in your back pocket.**

that when a person has problems, the problems take hold of him. The mourning, the sadness, or any difficulty takes over. Whatever degree of difficulty a person has, a person gets totally absorbed in his problems. The nature of a person is that drinking wine is something that people do to forget their difficulties. Aharon HaKohen had a terrible difficulty, the loss, not only of two sons, but of two absolutely great children. His level of keeping quiet is not just simply being quiet, but being in control of his feelings. His mourning and difficulty didn't fill him up. He felt the pain, he felt the Aveilus and he was saddened, but it didn't fill him. He was in control. He was able to get Nevua, even though the Shechina only rests on someone through Simcha, because he had that aspect, that inner strength, that self-control. It is therefore very appropriate that the Nevua that came to him was a Nevua not to drink wine. People drink wine for many reasons, one of which is to drink wine when a person has terrible difficulty and he drinks to forget his difficulties. Aharon HaKohen taught that a person is capable of separating his feelings by being able to go on and put his feelings aside.

This lesson is a very important lesson. While we may not be on the level of Aharon HaKohen and, G-d forbid, someone who would have this type of difficulty couldn't just put it aside. But our challenge is with lesser difficulties and challenges, with things that disturb us on a smaller level. At least there we could try to learn a lesson from Aharon HaKohen.

Rav Schwab puts it this way. A Malach can only do one Shlichus at a time, can only focus on one thing at a time. A human being has to be able to focus on more than one thing at a time. When a human being is upset about one thing, it shouldn't fill him up and make him upset about everything.

The way I like to put it is that you have to have a big back pocket. You have to sometimes be able to take a challenge, a difficulty, something that upsets you and put it in your back pocket. Put it away for a little while. Go out among people and behave the way you should behave. Nobody likes a complainer, people who are always upset. You need that big back pocket to put it aside. That is the strength of the personality of Aharon HaKohen, the lesson of וַיִּדַם, אָהֳרֹן. To be able to separate things in order to live a life to its fullest and not let a challenge in life overcome the person.

● Edited by Yehuda Kaufold and Josh Harris.

# Spiritual Eating



**Chief Rabbi Warren Goldstein**  
Chief Rabbi of South Africa

Is there something intrinsically wrong with non-kosher food? Is it simply unhealthy? Rav Yitzchak Don Abarvanel, one of our great sages, argues forcefully that kashrut has nothing to do with health. He explains that the Torah is a book of Divine wisdom, not a health manual. Furthermore, he says, there is no indication that non-Jews who eat non-kosher foods are any less healthy than Jews, and also, that there are a number of unhealthy foods and even toxic substances not even mentioned in the Torah as being unkosher.

According to the Abarvanel, and many other sources, keeping kosher is about spiritual health. The Maharal of Prague has a particular perspective and maintains that this doesn't mean there is anything bad intrinsically, whether spiritually or physically, with non-kosher food. Rabbi Azriel Chaim Goldfein cites the halachic ruling that if you have three indistinguishable pieces of meat, two of which you know for certain are kosher, and they become mixed up, you are in fact permitted to eat all three, since the two kosher cuts are in the majority, and the non-kosher cut gets subsumed into them. (If you have a question of this nature, you should consult a competent halachic authority just to clarify all the details and make sure that the halacha is being properly applied.) If there were something intrinsically wrong with the non-kosher meat, then how could this principle of nullification in the majority apply?

So, what is the distinction between kosher and non-kosher? The Maharal explains that the Torah is the spiritual blueprint of the world. He says that keeping kosher, as with all the other mitzvot, aligns us with this spiritual blueprint, and helps us actualise our latent spiritual potential. And so, the laws of kosher follow the framework

of spiritual principles that God created. And that framework exists external to the food itself. Eating kosher is living in harmony and in sync with the spiritual blueprint of the universe, and not doing so is departing from that framework, and that is spiritually damaging.

To illustrate this, the Maharal cites the Midrash, which describes kashrut as a way "to purify people". This purification takes place through the connection of a person's soul to the ultimate spiritual blueprint of the world, which was created by God. But, it is not about the intrinsic nature of the food itself. He cites another Midrash which says: "A person should not say I do not want pork... but rather I would like it, but what can I do that my Father in Heaven has decreed upon me [not to have it]." (Torat Kohanim Kedoshim) So the laws of kashrut follow a framework of God-given spiritual principles embedded in the Torah - a framework that exists external to the food itself.

Rabbeinu Bechaye shares a different perspective on kosher. In his commentary on this week's parsha, he refers to the verse that concludes the section dealing with the laws of kashrut: "And you shall sanctify yourselves and you shall be holy, for I am holy." (Vayikra 11:44) Rabbeinu Bechaye says that we see from this verse that keeping kosher helps us to live a life of holiness.

There are two primary components to the human being - the physical and the spiritual. These two components are naturally in conflict with one another, and the fact that they co-exist in a single organism is itself something wondrous. But to help us navigate this power struggle and ensure the spiritual force within us ultimately frames and guides our physical drives, the Torah provides for the expression

and fulfilment of these physical desires within a spiritually and ethically enriching framework. This framework helps us infuse meaning into even the most mundane, basic activities such as eating. It is in this context that the laws of kosher need to be seen.

Rabbeinu Bechaye says the more immediate physical needs of the body can easily overwhelm our spiritual selves. This natural predominance of the physical over the spiritual is rooted in the fact that human beings are physical before we are spiritual; as children we are consumed by our physical wants and needs, and only later do we develop a spiritual muscle, a capacity to reflect and to channel, to exercise self-restraint. There's also the fact that the world we inhabit is very much a physical, material one; the soul is a stranger in this world.

And so, we need all the help we can get to transcend this material world, and our physical selves, and become truly elevated, spiritual beings. Keeping kosher does this because it places a spiritual framework around what we eat. We can't just eat whatever we want. We learn self-restraint. And we immerse ourselves in this holy framework from a young age. The Sforno says the laws of kosher help us achieve Godliness, even holiness, in this world.

Kosher fits into a broader philosophy of food and of eating, one that is saturated with holiness, spirituality and meaning. We have in the Torah the mitzvah of Birkat Hamazon - Grace after Meals - in terms of which we give thanks to God after eating, that the process of eating is not just one of self-gratification, but also one connected to gratitude. The sages of the Talmud added to that, and formulated blessings to be said before eating food to acknowledge where it comes from. It is

*Continued on next page*

# Declaration of Impurity Requires an Understanding of the Past, Present and Future



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The Torah in Parshat *Shmini* describes **three** animals that have one of the signs of being kosher – they chew their cud but are lacking the other kosher characteristics. (Vayikra 11: 4-6)

When referring to a camel the Torah states: ופרסה איננו מפריס, its hoof **is** not split, in the **present** tense. With respect to the shafan (hyrax), the Torah uses the phrase: ופרסה לא יפריס, its hoof **will** not split, in the **future** tense. While describing the arnevet (hare) the Torah dictates: ופרסה לא הפריסה, its hoof **has** not been split, in the **past** tense. Each of these three phrases ends with a common statement of טמא הוא לכם – it is *tamei* (impure) to you. Why does the Torah utilize three different tenses when citing similar characteristics in these non-kosher animals?

Rav Yisrael Salanter derives a beautiful lesson from the different tenses used in these *pesukim*. The Torah is cautioning us that before we judge another individual as being “*tamei*” or transgressing, one has to understand their past, present and future. If one is not familiar with everything



**Why does the Torah utilize three different tenses when citing similar characteristics in these non-kosher animals?**

about the subject or object that one is about to criticize, don't be so quick to rule that it is *tamei*.

Rav Frand in his sefer *The Power of a Vort*, cites a story very much on point. There was a married couple that survived the Holocaust and the husband, after observing all the horrors, dropped all religious observance. The wife was able to retain her faith despite the tragedy and pleaded with her husband to join her in shul each Shabbat. Her husband refused. After weeks of arguing, the wife begged her husband to just sit in the back of the shul and read a newspaper to appease her, to which he agreed. For years he would come to shul and read a newspaper cover to cover during davening.

Most people witnessing such a scene would likely think to themselves: “what nerve, he comes to shul to read a paper! Not once did he open a *siddur* or even wear a *tallit*. Such disrespect. He should just stay home to read his paper.” To the credit of the congregants of this shul, not only didn't they chastise him, they befriended him. They invited him to kiddush and sincerely greeted him each week. Within a few years he started davening daily at the shul and eventually became the president!

Plenty of people would have been quick to pronounce “*tamei hu lachem*” with respect to this individual, not realizing that he was not reading the paper as a sign of defiance but rather to please his wife despite his own disgruntled view of religion after all he had experienced during the war.

This is why the Torah stresses “*mafris, yafris, hifrisa*.” We can never declare anyone or anything to be *tamei* until we fully comprehend its past, present and future.

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part of acknowledging that this world and everything in it belongs to God, and that, when we take from it, we express our gratitude.

We don't just consume. We stop. We give thanks to God, we give thought to whether or not the food is kosher. We acknowledge the source of the food and give thanks for its tastiness, its nourishing goodness.

Eating becomes a more refined, uplifting and meaningful experience in this way.

# Parshas Shemini: Living Higher



**Michal Horowitz**  
Judaic Studies Teacher

In this week's *parsha*, *Parshas Shemini*, we are commanded regarding *ma'achalos mutaros* and *ma'achalos asuros* – permitted and forbidden foodstuffs. And Hashem spoke to Moshe and to Aharon, to say to them: speak to the Children of Israel saying: These are the life forms that you may eat from among all the animals that are upon the earth (Vayikra 11:1-2).

Any animal that has a completely split hoof and brings up its cud, this we may eat (v.3). As for fish, those that have fins and scales in the water, in the seas, and in the streams, those we may eat (v.9). In regard to birds, the Torah lists the specific birds that are forbidden to us (v.13-19).

As the chapter on forbidden and permitted closes, the *pasuk* says: For I am Hashem, Who brings you up from the land of Egypt to be a G-d unto you; you shall be holy for I am holy (v.45).

Rashi (ibid) teaches: On the condition that you accept My commandments, I brought you up (from the land of Egypt). Another explanation is: Had I not brought Israel out of Egypt for any reason other than that they do not make themselves impure through creeping things as do the other nations, it would have been sufficient cause for them to have been redeemed, and abstaining (from forbidden foods) is an elevation for them, hence the verse uses the term *הַמַּעֲלֶה*, Who brings you up.

To the nations of the world, the laws of *Kashrus* – one of the foundations and tenets of our faith – seem outdated, archaic and senseless. Should not man be master over himself, skeptics wonder? Does it really matter if the fish has fins and scales or only one, or neither? Can one not fill the desires of one's physical self as he wishes, without the laws of Torah and *halacha* guiding ones every move?

And to these challenges and more, we know with certainty that it is these very laws that enlighten, ennoble and elevate us from mere physical beings to physical-spiritual beings living to fulfill the will of G-d.

Rabbi Dr. Abraham J. Twerski z'l writes, "Yiddishkeit stresses the importance of *mesiras nefesh*. This term is often understood to mean sacrificing one's life for Hashem. That is the extreme of *mesiras nefesh*, which has a broad spectrum. Anytime a person denies himself a personal desire for the sake of *avodas Hashem*, that is *mesiras nefesh*... Whenever one sets aside one's will and desire in order to do something for someone else, that constitutes *mesiras nefesh*" (Growing Up, p.26-27).

Hence, when we live our lives according to the laws of *kashrus*, especially at times when it may perhaps be difficult for us, that is an act of *mesiras nefesh* that elevates us to a higher realm and brings us closer to G-d. Whether we understand *why* certain animals are permitted and others are forbidden is irrelevant. What is relevant is that we live according to the word of G-d.

On living a meaningful and committed Jewish life, one that is lived with the ever-present awareness that we are 'lifnei Hashem,' before G-d, Rabbi Dr. Norman Lamm z'l teaches, "Someone learns that you are an Observant Jew, and he clucks his tongue in sympathy, feeling genuinely sorry for you, and responds in a half-admiring and half-pitying tone: 'You observe the Sabbath, with all its restrictions? You cannot smoke or travel or write?' And we explain: Sabbath is for us not a day of gloom and restriction, but one of *oneg*, unadulterated joy, when an ordinary observant Jew can experience a *neshama yeseira*, the 'additional soul' that comes from a day of pure rest and re-creation,

when we feel liberated from the tyranny of all the pettiness that surrounds us during the week.

"Or someone discovers that you believe in and practice the laws of family purity. And again the incredulous reaction, with a mixture of pity and admiration: 'You really practice these ascetic regulations denying your basic drives?' And we patiently explain: No, it is not asceticism, but a healthy and vital self-discipline, which ennoble the animal within us and purifies and sublimates it, and makes marriage a dream, not a nightmare.

"So, too, we observe *kashrut* and we expect no awards and want no sympathy for it. It simply is part of our life of *kedusha*, of holiness, the practical program of Jewish holiness and differentness. And the very fact of observance of *kashrut* away from home, with all the minor inconveniences it entails, by itself gives us the feeling of being at home everywhere!

"Indeed in every area of life, the outsider sees only size and number rather than content and quality, the conventional rather than that which is indeed dignified, opinions rather than ideas. Such a person beholds a synagogue and can see only the membership and budget and activities and aesthetics. But that individual lacks that which the insider knows in the depths of his being: the heights of joy, the touch of mystery and grandeur, the whisper of the echo of the sound of the voice of G-d. Within the Sanctuary, we are welling up with hope and courage.

"For 'lifnei Hashem' means that in this society which suffers such solitude we do not experience that oppressive loneliness, for even if others abandon and neglect us, we know that G-d is with us...

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# What Did Nadav and Avihu Do Wrong?



**Rabbi Menachem Leibtag**

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There is a very simple reason why there are so many different opinions concerning Nadav and Avihu's sin: the Torah only tells us what they did and that they were punished, but it does **not** explain why. Therefore, to uncover that reason, the various commentators find clues either within that pasuk itself, or in the 'neighboring' psukim.

Our approach is based on the Torah's emphasis (and repetition) of the phrase: "ka'asher tzivah Hashem" [as G-d has **commanded**] not only in the pasuk that describes Nadav and Avihu's sin, but also at almost every step in the Torah's description of the building of the Mishkan, the seven day "miluim" ceremony, and the Yom HaShmini dedication ceremony.

Let's begin by noting this key phrase in Moshe Rabbeinu's opening explanation of the special korbanot on Yom HaShmini: "And Moshe said: **Zeh HaDavar** - **This** is what G-d has **commanded** that you do [in order] that His **kavod** [Glory] can appear upon you [once again]..."

Carefully note how Moshe declares this statement in front of the entire "eydah" [congregation] that has gathered to watch this ceremony.

But this was not the first time that Moshe had made such a declaration. Seven days earlier, as the seven day "miluim" ceremony was about to begin, Moshe had made an almost identical statement to Bnei Yisrael: "And Moshe said to the entire **eydah** [gathered at the Ohel Moed] - **Zeh HaDavar** - This is what **G-d has commanded** to do..."

Why must Moshe, prior to offering these special korbanot, first explain the details of these procedures to the entire congregation who have gathered to watch?

Furthermore, throughout every step of both the seven day miluim **and** the Yom HaShmini korbanot, the Torah emphasizes over and over again this very same phrase "ka'asher tzivah Hashem et Moshe"!

The Torah goes out of its way to inform us that Moshe gathers the entire **eydah** together to explain the **precise** details of what they must follow ["zeh ha'davar asher tzivah Hashem..."] **before** each and every one of the three key events the Mishkan, i.e. before:

- 1) Its original construction (in Vayakhel/Pekudei);
- 2) The seven day **Miluim** ceremony (in Parshat Tzav);
- 3) The **Yom HaShmini** dedication ceremony (in Shmini). Afterward, the Torah also informs us how Bnei Yisrael indeed follow each command - "ka'asher tzivah..."! Clearly, the Torah is sending a very strong message that in regard to the Mishkan, G-d demands that man must act precisely in accordance to His command - without changing even one minute detail.

With this background, we can better understand why Nadav and Avihu are punished on Yom HaShmini when they decide (on their own) to offer k'toret. Note the Torah's description of their sin: "And Nadav and Avihu each took their firepan, put in it fire and added k'toret, and they brought an alien fire in front of G-d which He **had not commanded them** ['asher lo tzivah']..."

Their fire is considered "aish zarah" [alien] simply because G-d 'did not command them' to offer it. Nadav and Avihu may have had the purest intentions, but they made one critical mistake - they did not act according to the precise protocol which G-d had prescribed for that day. Considering that the entire **eydah** gathered at the Ohel Mo'ed recognize that Nadav and Avihu have strayed from protocol, they must be punished, for the lesson of that day was exactly this point - that in the Mishkan man must meticulously follow every detail of G-d's command.

From a thematic perspective, their punishment under these circumstances is quite understandable. Recall the theological dilemma created by a Mishkan - a physical representation (or symbol) of a transcendental G-d. Once a physical object is used to represent G-d, the danger exists that man may treat that object [and then possibly another object] as a G-d itself. On the other hand, without a physical representation of any sort, it is very difficult for man to relate to G-d at all. Therefore, G-d allows a Mishkan - a symbol of His Presence - but at the same time, He must emphasize that He can only be worshiped according to the precise manner "as G-d had commanded Moshe."

This specific problem of 'following G-d's command' in relation to the Mishkan takes on extra meaning on Yom HaShmini.

Aharon had sincere intentions at the incident of Chet Ha'Egel, i.e. he wanted to provide Bnei Yisrael with a physical symbol of G-d which they could worship. Despite Aharon's good intentions, his actions led to a disaster, and, because of Chet Ha'Egel, **K'vod Hashem** [G-d's Glory / Sh'china]

*Continued on page 18*

# Caring for Our Sacred Soul



**Rabbi Eli Mansour**

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In Parashat Shemini, the Torah presents the basic guidelines regarding Kashrut, outlining which creatures are permissible and forbidden for consumption. This section begins with the words, “Zot Ha’haya Asher Tochelu” – “These are the animals which you may eat” (11:3).

Rashi, citing the Midrash, writes that the word “Haya” in this verse actually means “Hayim” – “life.” He explains: “Since Yisrael are attached to the Almighty, and worthy of being alive, therefore, He separated them from impurity...” We have been elevated to a special spiritual status, whereby we are capable of “being alive” – meaning, earning eternal life in the next world. Therefore, G-d assigned us special laws which protect our souls from defilement. Rashi proceeds to reference the Midrash’s analogy to two patients suffering from the same condition who come to a doctor. The doctor tells one patient that he can eat anything he wants, but prescribes a strict diet for the second. He explains to the second patient that the first patient in any event will not recover from his condition, so he may eat anything he wishes, but the second can recover if he cares for his wellbeing.

Similarly, the Midrash says, Am Yisrael has been granted a special soul which can be deserving of eternal life in the next world, and we must therefore guard and care for that soul by avoiding spiritually harmful foods.

Rav Eliyahu Bakshi-Doron (1941-2020), former Sephardic Chief Rabbi of the State of Israel, added that this explains the connection between this section, the laws of forbidden foods, and the other topics discussed in Parashat Shemini. This Parasha begins with a description of the events that took place on the day the Mishkan was inaugurated, when G-d took residence among the Jewish Nation. This marked the fulfillment of G-d’s promise back in the Book of Shemot (25:8), “They shall make for Me a sanctuary, and I shall reside in their midst.” The Shechina’s residence among Am Yisrael testifies to their elevated soul, to their special stature, on account of which G-d seeks to dwell among them.

Later in the Parasha, G-d presents the command forbidding the Kohanim from drinking wine before entering the Mishkan to serve. Rav Bakshi-Doron explains that this command was presented here

as an introduction, of sorts, to the laws of forbidden foods. The effect that alcohol has upon a person’s mind and conduct demonstrates that food and beverages can impact a person not only physically, but also spiritually. At first, we might have wondered why a special dietary code is necessary for our spiritual wellbeing. After all, eating is a physical act, which affects only the body. Why do we need to refrain from certain foods to protect our soul? The Torah preempted this question by introducing the section of forbidden foods with the law prohibiting drinking wine before entering the Mishkan to serve. The fact that alcohol impairs a person’s judgment and leads him to act differently than he normally does, shows that food has an effect not only on the body, but also on the soul. And thus G-d gave us special restrictions on which foods we are allowed to ingest, to ensure that we carefully guard and protect our most precious and important possession – our sacred soul.

May we all remain cognizant at all times of this most precious asset, and see to it that we protect it, nurture it and cultivate it by devoting ourselves each day to Torah and Mivnot, to the very best of our ability.

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which had appeared to Bnei Yisrael at Har Sinai was taken away.

Due to Moshe’s intervention, G-d finally allows His Sh’china to return to the Mishkan which Bnei Yisrael built. Now, on the very day of its dedication, just as the Sh’china is about to return to the Mishkan, Nadav and Avihu make a ‘mistake’ very similar to Aharon’s original error at Chet Ha’Egel.

Finally, this interpretation can help us understand Moshe’s statement to Aharon: “This is what G-d had spoken – **b’krovai akadeish...**”. Recall the parallel, which we have discussed many times, between Har Sinai and the Mishkan. At Har Sinai, Bnei Yisrael **and** the Kohanim were forewarned: “And G-d told Moshe: Go down and **warn** the people that they must not break through [the barrier surrounding] Har Sinai, lest they gaze at Hashem and perish. The **Kohanim** also, who **come**

**near Hashem**, must sanctify themselves, lest G-d punish them.”

As this inaugural ceremony parallels the events of Har Sinai, G-d’s original warning concerning approaching Har Sinai, even for the **Kohanim**, now applies to the Mishkan as well. Therefore, extra caution is necessary, no matter how good one’s intentions may be.

# Yiddishkeit for Every Jew



**Rabbi Moshe Weinberger**  
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**B**ecause the bringing of a “foreign fire which He had not commanded them” (ibid. 10:1) does not seem to fully explain the severity of Nadav and Avihu’s punishment, Chazal and the commentaries struggle to offer a number of explanations for the fire from Heaven which consumed them. According to some, it was because they make halachic decisions in Moshe’s presence and according to others, it was because they drank wine excessively before entering the Holy of Holies (Rashi on ibid. 2). According to them, the root cause of their deaths was not the fact that Nadav and Avihu each “took his fire-pan, put fire in them and placed incense upon it” (Vayikra 10:1). Rather, they were killed because of some unrelated sin.

But the Rashbam and Chizkuni explain that their sin was bringing their own fire before Hashem “had the chance” to cause a Heavenly fire to descend and consume the sacrifices. But these commentaries do not explain the rest of the pasuk in which the Torah explains their sin. Each one “took his fire-pan, put fire in them and placed incense upon it.” Their explanation accounts for why it was a problem for Nadav and Avihu to bring a human fire before the revelation of Hashem’s fire. But they do not explain the Torah’s emphasis on the fact that they placed incense on this fire. Let us first understand more about the nature of this eighth day on which the kohanim brought sacrifices to Hashem and then we can suggest an approach which will explain the significance of the incense.

Moshe told the entire Jewish people (ibid. 9:6), “This is the thing that Hashem has commanded you to do and the glory of Hashem will appear to you.” The purpose of the day was (ibid. 4) “today Hashem is appearing to you.” The last time Hashem

appeared to the entire Jewish people was at Sinai, when the pasuk (Shmos 24:17) says, “And the appearance of the glory of Hashem was like a consuming fire at the top of the mountain before the eyes of the Jewish people.” The Ramban (on ibid. 25:1) says that the purpose of the Mishkan, and later, the Beis Hamikdash, is to continue the Sinai experience throughout the generations. And the heroes of the Sinai experience, who led the Jewish people to the mountain, were Moshe, Aharon, Nadav, and Avihu (Shmos 24:1): “And He said to Moshe: ‘Ascend to Hashem, you, Aharon, Nadav, Avihu, and the seventy of the elders of Israel...’” Why were Aharon’s sons chosen for this special honor of going closer to Sinai than the rest of the Jewish people? Because they were destined to be inaugurated into the service in the Mishkan, the purpose of which is to continue to bring Hashem’s presence into the Jewish people just like on Sinai.

The pasuk says regarding Nadav, Avihu and the other elders (Shmos 24:10-11), “And they perceived the G-d of Israel... and upon the nobles of Israel He did not lay a hand and they saw G-d...” But they were not the only ones who perceived Hashem at Sinai. As we quoted earlier: “And the appearance of the glory of Hashem was like a consuming fire at the top of the mountain before the eyes of the Jewish people.” The rest of the Jewish people also experienced a revelation of G-d.

It may not have occurred to Nadav and Avihu that the “proletariat,” the average Jews, the “riff raff,” were capable or worthy of receiving Hashem’s presence. It could be that when the whole Jewish people witnessed Hashem’s revelation through the fire on the altar (Vayikra 9:24), “the entire nation saw, sang praises, and fell on their faces,” Nadav and Avihu might have seen this as extremely problematic.

Perhaps that is why, in the next verse (ibid. 10:1), they ran to bring incense into the Holy of Holies.

Whenever there is a direct Divine revelation, Hashem commands us to create a cloud around that revelation using incense, as the pasuk (Vayikra 16:2) says, “in a cloud [of incense] I will appear above the [ark] cover.” The smoke created by the burning of the incense creates a fog around Hashem’s revelation, obscuring it as an expression of modesty.

Nadav and Avihu could not imagine that the entire Jewish people were actually supposed to experience that which the pasuk says, “the entire nation saw, sang praises, and fell on their faces.” They therefore ran to burn incense to create a cloud of concealment around that direct revelation to prevent those they thought were not worthy of experiencing it further. They may have viewed that direct revelation as a lack of honor toward Heaven.

But this was a mistake. That is why Moshe explained to Aharon after Nadav and Avihu’s deaths (Vayikra 10:3): “This is what Hashem spoke [when He said], ‘I will be sanctified through those close to Me and before the entire nation I will be glorified.’” A direct relationship and revelation of Hashem is not only for the “nobles of Israel” and “those close to Me” like Moshe, Aharon, Nadav, and Avihu. It is for “the entire nation.” Yiddishkeit is not a spectator’s sport in which we watch the tzadikim from afar and gaze in awe at how close they are to Hashem. We value the tzadikim and scholars, drink up every word they teach, and follow their leadership, but they do not have a monopoly on closeness with Hashem. Yiddishkeit and connection is for every Jew. No one should write themselves or other Jews off as beyond the pale of Yiddishkeit.

# What is Kosher?



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It seems nothing more than a question of syntax. But the sages across the generations understood that what appears as a flaw in biblical syntax and grammar contains invaluable insight into the human condition.

In this week's portion, we learn of the identifying signs of a kosher land-animal: it must chew its cud (meaning it ruminates and its partially digested food returns to its mouth for further chewing and digesting), and it must have split hooves. Hence the cow, sheep, goat, deer, gazelle, and even giraffe, are kosher. The donkey and the horse, on the other hand, lack both of these features, and are not-kosher.

The Torah then lists four animals which possess only one of these signs, and are deemed not kosher. They are: the camel, the hyrax, the hare and the pig. The camel, hyrax and hare while chewing their cud, do not have split feet, and the pig while having split feet does not chew its cud. These animals are classified as *temeim*, non-kosher.

There are two important questions here. First, why does the Torah single out these four one-signed animals as non-kosher? Second, when the Torah presents the reason for these animals not being kosher, it does so in a very strange fashion, mentioning its kosher factor as the primary cause for its non-kosher status: "But these animals you shall not eat... the camel, because it brings up its cud, and does not have a cloven hoof... And the pig, because it has a hoof that is completely split, and does not regurgitate its cud." We would expect the Torah to state it differently: "The camel because it does not have a cloven hoof, even though it chews its cud... the pig because it doesn't chew its cud, even though it has split hooves.

If you would want to explain to someone why he is not an American citizen, you would not say: "You are not a citizen of this country because your parents were born here, but you were not." The proper way of saying it would be: "You're not a citizen because you were not born here, even though your parents were born here."

Yet in our case, the Torah does the exact opposite, stating that the camel or pig are not kosher because they possess one kosher sign, and are devoid of the second kosher sign.

It was the Keli Yakar who deduced from this an astonishing message. It is not only what these animals lack which deemed them un-kosher, but also that which they do have, the one kosher sign, that made them non-kosher. The camel is *treif* because it chews its cud (and lacks split hooves); the pig is *treif* because it has split hooves (and does not chew its cud).

Why? Because possessing one kosher sign allows these animals, symbolically speaking, to deceive themselves and others that they are kosher by "showing off" the single kosher sign. So the Torah is telling us: Don't eat "the camel, because it brings up its cud, and does not have a cloven hoof... And the pig, because it has a hoof that is completely split, and does not regurgitate its cud." It is also—and primarily—the single deceptive kosher sign which deems these animals unsuitable for Jewish consumption.

And that is why the Torah specifies these four animals, not including them with all other animals who lack both of the kosher signs: All animals lacking both signs are not kosher because of what they lack; with these four animals, it is not only what they lack, but also what they have which deems them un-kosher.

Each of us must struggle against various unhealthy and immoral, non-kosher instincts, appetites, habits, addictions and cravings. But there is something which can at times be more lethal for our well-being: dishonesty about who we really are.

What causes me to become un-kosher is not so much that I am not-kosher, as much as it is me deceiving myself and making believe that I am kosher. The greatest enemy of true religion, of any authentic relationship with G-d, is to be dishonest about my identity.

In many communities and schools, people feel the pressure to always say and feel the "right things;" they are frightened to be vulnerable about their genuine emotions and struggles. They feel the need to live the lie that they are perfectly "kosher," even if that means that they need to cover up a part of themselves.

Nothing can be further than the truth: the foundation of a moral and meaningful life is that I can be real and "naked" with G-d, with myself and with my close friends; that I can expose myself without facades. When religion is based on lies, it loses its purpose. In the world of Torah, the ugly truth is superior to the beautiful lie.

This does not mean that I must fall prey to every struggle, and surrender to every appetite. Often I must subdue my cravings to live up to my true calling and essence. I need to confront and battle my addictions and bad habits. But I must never deny who I am and what I am dealing with. I must show up to G-d with my entire self, not with a psychologically mutilated sense of existence.

There is no spirituality without full honesty.

# Shemini: Full Immersion



**Rabbi Judah Mischel**

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The *heilige* Ribnitzer Rebbe, Reb Chaim Zanvil Abramowitz, zy'a, was an extraordinary tzadik and a legendary baal avodah, whose sacrifice for Yidishkeit and holiness engulfed all the different places he lived — Russia, Romania, Eretz Yisrael, Los Angeles and Monsey — bringing down blessings for petitioners across the globe. Describing the Ribnitzer's righteousness, Reb Shlomo Freifeld, zt'l, Rosh Yeshivah of Shor Yoshuv, said meeting him was like meeting a tzadik from the days of the Baal Shem Tov.

The Ribnitzer was known for his other worldly ascetic ways, fasting often and dedicated with *mesirus nefesh* to *taharah*, ritual purity. One Motzaei Shabbos while on a mid-winter trip to Eretz Yisrael, the Rebbe expressed his desire to *toivel*, to immerse in the mikvah. However, he was suffering from a bad cold, it was raining and late at night, and the nearest mikvah was a considerable distance away. Acknowledging the physical circumstances, yet determined to attain the highest levels of purity, he instructed the small group of chassidim accompanying him to stand together, hold hands and form a tight circle. He then entered the human ring and proceeded to crouch down then rise up several times, 'immersing himself' in their midst. The Rebbe finally recited the words *Mikveh Yisrael Hashem* (*Mishnah Yoma*, 8:9), literally "The hope of Israel is Hashem," and interpreted in different ways, including "Hashem longs for His children," "*HaKadosh Baruch Hu* purifies Yisrael," and *Mikveh Yisrael*, "a mikveh of Yidden"....

Having immersed in the luminous pool of pure Jewish souls, the Ribnitzer was joyous, and ready to continue on his way.



Our sedra addresses an array of elements required to live a life of holiness, including the uplifting and restorative power of a mikvah. The name and opening of our

sedra refers to the consecration of the Mishkan — itself an experience representing *tikun* and spiritual rejuvenation:

*Vayehi bayom ha-shemini*..., "On the eighth day" following seven days of inauguration of the Mishkan, Aharon haKohein and his sons begin to offer Korbanos, and the Shechinah, the Divine Presence dwelled in the Sanctuary....

וַיָּבֵא מֹשֶׁה וְאַהֲרֹן אֶל אֱהֹל מוֹעֵד וַיִּצְאוּ וַיְבָרְכוּ  
אֶת־הָעָם וַיֵּרָא כְבוֹד ה' אֶל כָּל הָעָם:

And Moshe and Aharon went into the Ohel Moed, then came out and blessed the people, and the Glory of Hashem appeared to the Nation.(9:23)

Rashi expands on the particular blessings they offered on this most special occasion: ויצאו ויברכו את העם: אמרו ויהי נועם ה' אלינו — עלינו, יהי רצון שתשרה שכניה במעשה ידיכם — "May the pleasantness of Hashem be upon us; may it be God's will that the Shechinah rest on the work of your hands...."

Rashi explains that throughout all seven days of the *milu'im*, the ceremonial investitures of the Mishkan, Moshe performed the *avodah*, effortfully erecting and then dismantling the structure daily. During that week, continues Rashi, the Divine Presence was not revealed. The painful lack of the *Shechinah's* presence was 'humiliating', and the Jews cried out to Moshe:

כל הטורח שטרחנו, שתשרה שכניה  
בינינו ונדע שנתכפר לנו עון העגל

"All the efforts we have taken were so that the Shechinah should dwell among us, so that we would know that we have been forgiven for the sin of the Golden Calf!"

Following the shameful episode of *Cheit haEigel*, a perceptual 'distance' and a state of 'impurity' had come between the People the Holy One, Blessed is He. Moshe led the nation in *teshuvah* and ascended to the upper worlds to petition Hashem in prayer. Midrash (*Pesikta Rabbasi*, 14) tells us that

there, Moshe found the Ribbono shel Olam 'learning' the *parsha* of the *Parah Adumah: Zos chukas haTorah*, "This is the law of the Torah which transcends logic...." Acknowledging Moshe, Hashem said, *Eini osef elah b'taharasan shel Yisrael*, "My only job is dealing with the purification of Israel." The completion of the Mishkan signaled the next stage of our peoplehood, the formal and public expression that our collective *teshuvah* had been accepted.

The day of the consecration of the Mishkan "was as joyous to the Ribbono Shel Olam as the day on which heaven and earth were created" (*Megillah*, 10b). It was a day when the *K'vod Hashem*, the honor and glory of God, was once again expressed in a revealed way through the Nation of Israel. The Divine Presence had 'returned', and 'entered' the Mishkan of Yisrael, 'immersing' as it were, in their midst — 'In the *mikveh Yisrael: Hashem*.' And then the Ribbono shel Olam was joyous and ready to 'continue on His way'.

There is no greater purifying force, no other way to ensure blessing or to reveal the Shechinah, than Jews coming together in *teshuvah*. May we draw down the purifying power of *Mikveh Yisrael*, and together, celebrate the consecration of the Temple!

אָמַר רַבִּי עֲקִיבָא אֲשֶׁר־יְכַסּוּ יִשְׂרָאֵל.  
לִפְנֵי מִי אַתֶּם מְטַהְרִין וּמִי מְטַהֵר אֶתְכֶם?  
אֲבִיכֶם שְׁבַשְׁמַיִם שְׁנֵאמַר, זֹרְקִתִי  
עֲלֵיכֶם מִים טְהוּרִים וְטַהַרְתֶּם.  
וְאָמַר מִקּוּהַ יִשְׂרָאֵל ה'  
מִה מְקוּהַ מְטַהֵר אֶת הַטְּמְאִים אִף הַקְּדוֹשׁ  
בְּרוּךְ הוּא מְטַהֵר אֶת יִשְׂרָאֵל.

Rabbi Akiva said: How fortunate are you, Israel; before Whom are you purified, and Who purifies you? It is your Father in Heaven, as it is stated: "And I will sprinkle purifying water upon you, and you shall be purified" (*Yechezkel*, 36:25). And it says: "The mikveh of Israel is Hashem" (*Yirmiyahu*, 17:13). Just as a ritual bath purifies the impure, so too, the Holy One, Blessed be He, purifies Israel.

# The Will of Hashem

**Mrs. Shira Smiles**

International lecturer and curriculum developer

The long-awaited day had finally arrived; the Mishkan was ready for inauguration and the nation awaited the descent of Hashem's glory. To prepare for this experience, Moshe Rabbeinu instructs the people, "This is the thing which Hashem has commanded to do" (Vayikra 9;6). The Midrash explains this enigmatic statement in the following way. Moshe was instructing Am Yisrael to remove their evil inclination from within them. The commentators are troubled, what evil inclination is this referring to? What was it they were to accomplish at this time?

Rav Weinberger in Shem Hatov quotes the Brisker Rav and explains that this is the yetzer hara that affects the 'lishmah' aspect of doing a mitzvah. Moshe Rabbeinu was cautioning Am Yisrael, be sure that your intentions in bringing the proscribed sacrifices are focused on fulfilling Hashem's command. Although you desire to see the revelation of Hashem's Presence, that is not the target. It is easy to get caught up in the fervor and excitement of doing a mitzvah and forget that the principal objective is to do the will of Hashem. Hence, notes Rav Weinberger, one says a brachah before the performance of a mitzvah, as a reminder that the mitzvah is a fulfillment of the will of Hashem. Rav



**Our challenge is to constantly reiterate to ourselves when we do a mitzvah that it is solely because Hashem commanded us to do it that fuels our action.**

Goldvicht in Asufot Marachot adds that this is reflected in Chazal's statement, "nullify your will to the will of Hashem" (Avot 2;4). This includes even in the act of doing a mitzvah.

Rav Goldstein in Shaarei Chayim extends this idea to all our mitzvah observance. To be worthy of having the Shechinah rest on the mitzvot we perform we must be totally focused on doing mitzvot because Hashem commanded us to do them. The yetzer hara we all encounter tries to convince us to do a mitzvah because we feel good when we do it or because it makes sense to us. Our challenge is to constantly reiterate to ourselves when we do a mitzvah that it is solely because Hashem commanded us to do it that fuels our action. Such a mindset allows us to have the appropriate humility which then allows the Shechinah to reside in our what we do.

Indeed, the Ketav Sofer warns that often the yetzer hara encourages a person to feel pride in his actions and to boast to his friends of his accomplishments. One must be mindful of this pitfall and work hard to avoid it.

Rav Kotler in Mishnat Rav Aaron notes that one who does mitzvot out of habit lacks this angle of doing Hashem's will. A mitzvah in essence connects one to Hashem with love and joy. Moshe Rabbeinu is teaching us to remove the yetzer hara of mindlessness in serving Hashem, thereby becoming worthy of continuously feeling connected and invigorated in our service.

Rav Reiss in Merosh Tzurim understands the yetzer hara here in a much more personal fashion. He quotes the Imrei Emes who teaches that every person in this world is created to fulfill a particular task. Wherever the yetzer hara challenges us most is an indication that this is the area in which we need to work hardest, for this is why we were created. Moshe Rabbeinu is teaching each one of us to battle with our personal yetzer hara, fulfilling our individual mission, thereby bringing G-dliness to this world..

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It means that we have a function in the Divine economy and a purpose of life. This indeed is the secret and reward of a genuine Jewish life!" (Derashot Ledorot, Leviticus, p.37-38).

May our *shemiras ha'mitzvos* – from Shabbos, to family purity, to the foods that we eat and those that we refrain from eating – bring us ever closer to G-d, with the awareness that in everything we do and all that we say, *we are always lifnei Hashem*

– *before the Almighty. In all your ways you shall know Him, and He will straighten your paths* (Mishlei 3:6).

# Mimouna, Emunah, Marriage



**Rabbanit Yemima Mizrachi**  
Popular Torah teacher and author

**M**imouna (a traditional Maghrebi Jewish celebration dinner, held the day after Pesach, marking the return to eating chametz) is the holiday of Emunah. When I ask people about this seemingly simple concept, no one can tell me what Emunah is. Is it a belief in things that have happened, like the details in the 13 Principles of Faith (our past – the Exodus from Egypt, the giving of the Torah, and the creation of the world)? Does Emunah refer to the future, to what I will receive, what will happen to me?

A few days ago I was at a Mimouna celebration for singles. There I said that the Emunah for the relationship that will come is embodied in the holiday of Mimouna and has two aspects. The first: knock on the door of someone you do not know. And this requires enormous courage. You do not know if you will be well received, you do not know if this is the door where you really want to be and stay. It's a big

gamble. “Hark, my beloved knocks! Let me in, my own, my darling, my faultless dove!” – My goodness, knock! And that's the first thing they do in the Mimouna.

And the second aspect of the Mimouna that Emunah embodies in the relationship: should I open the door? “I had taken off my robe – Was I to don it again?” – do I even deserve to be someone's home? A home for children? Am I tasteful, will I know how to welcome a guest whose guests are so different from mine?

These are all the vegetables that are usually eaten with salt, and during the Mimouna they are made into jam: Zucchini, carrots, tomatoes – will I be able to sweeten everything?

How much Emunah is needed? To open the door when he comes requires enormous courage, it is an enormous faith. And the key is the ability to knock again and try again, to arrange a house and another date,

and on the other hand, when he comes, to know how to open a door and say hello and welcome, hello to the universe.

I was told that at the funeral, Leo Dee shared that they were reading Shir HaShirim on the night of the Seder, and he wondered why the beloved was knocking so long, and said, “She should be preparing herself. She is getting ready, and he has been knocking all the time.” Then he said, “I promise you, Lucy, I will keep knocking and knocking and knocking until you finish all your preparations and open the door for me.”

Sometimes you can not leave the door. You must keep knocking on the door of heaven until it opens.

I believe that is the Emunah of partnership. The courage to knock on someone else's door, and the courage to say, I have something to offer, I'll open the door. Let us win.



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# Hebrew Language in the Parsha



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**P**arashat Shemini lists the unkosher birds. Included among them is the stork – תְּסִיָּה: וְאֵת הַתְּסִיָּה הַזֵּה וְהַיָּבִיטָה לְמִינָה...  
“The stork; herons of every variety; the hoopoe, and the bat.” (Vayikra 11:19)  
Rashi, quoting Hullin 63a, comments:

“Why is it called תְּסִיָּה? Because it acts kindly (שְׁעוּשָׁה חֲסִידוּת) with its fellows in respect to food.”

The midrash connects the תְּסִיָּה to the root טוּחַ, meaning “kindness” or “mercy.” This approach finds support among modern linguists, who claim the word תְּסִיָּה originally meant “pious bird” in allusion to its love for its young.

While these two explanations might seem similar, is “kindness” really equivalent to “piety”?

Both senses are found in the Hebrew root טוּחַ and its derivatives, such as תְּסִיָּה and חֲסִידוּת. Generally, תְּסִיָּה is defined as “kindness” (or an act of kindness), “grace”, or “mercy”. The related חֲסִידוּת literally means

“one who does תְּסִיָּה”, but usually indicates a pious, devout, or devoted individual.

Scholars vary in their explanations as to the development of these words. One theory is that the original meaning of טוּחַ was “to love, desire.” This “desire” comes to mean “zeal” or “love” for anyone – expressing itself in kindness or mercy. In other contexts, it can reflect piety (towards G-d) or the grace of G-d toward humans. That sense of grace is expanded, in some cases, to beauty in general (as in Esther 2:9,17).

A different opinion says that the root originally meant “grace,” defined as something “beyond the requirement of the law, not done out of obligation but because of love.” This explains the dedication of the חֲסִידוּת.

A third suggestion is that the root טוּחַ means “diligent.” When diligent in the positive sense, that can lead to generosity, kindness, love, and devotion. Perhaps this sense of devotion can explain how חֲסִידוּת came to mean someone devoted to G-d (i.e.,

devout, pious) more than just someone who is kind.

So far, all the appearances of the root טוּחַ have been positive. But there are a few cases where it has a negative meaning: in Vayikra 20:17 it means “disgrace” and in Mishlei (14:34, 25:10) it means “disgrace.” These are difficult occurrences to explain. Some linguists say they actually derive from a different root than the טוּחַ we’ve seen so far.

Others, however, say they come from the same root, but express opposite expressions of the same emotion. For example, the same “eager zeal or desire” which led to kindness, can also lead to envy, shame, and reproach. This tension is conveyed by a well-known challenge to the midrash quoted by Rashi above. If the stork is so kind, why is it included in the list of non-kosher birds? The answer given is that it is devoted only to its own kind. That may be a sign of piety, but it is not a sign of kindness – and so the stork is not kosher.

## Parsha Riddle



**Reb Leor Broh**

Mizrachi Melbourne

Generally, I am described in the feminine gender, but in Parshat Shemini there is a verse in which I am described in both the masculine and feminine gender. What am I ?

### Answer to the Parsha Riddle

Answer = דְּבַר – the animal is described with both genders in verse 11:39  
(על:א) וְאֵת הַתְּסִיָּה הַזֵּה וְהַיָּבִיטָה לְמִינָה...:א  
“If an animal that you may eat has died, anyone who touches its carcass shall be impure until evening.”  
The word “מִינָה” and “לְמִינָה” are in the feminine gender.  
Rabbeinu Bechaye remarks that the Torah should have used the expression מִינָה, (feminine form of “it will die”) seeing that the noun מִינָה is feminine.  
But, had the Torah written the word “מִינָה” we would have concluded that such a carcass can confer ritual impurity only when it is whole, but that sections of it could not confer impurity. By using the masculine “מִינָה” we infer that any part of it (masculine) is capable of conferring ritual impurity through contact with it.  
The expressions “מִינָה” must be understood as part of the beast, “not as “any of certain categories called מִינָה.” The expression matches the words מִינָה in that verse is carcass falls, etc.” Seeing that the word מִינָה which is the subject in that verse is feminine, the Torah could also have been expected to write מִינָה instead of מִינָה. Seeing that it did not, it is logical to suggest that the same considerations which prompted the use of the masculine form in verse 39 also prompted the use of the masculine form in verse 37.

## DUST AND STARS THIS WEEK in Jewish History

- April 15, 1945:** The British army liberated Bergen Belsen and its remaining 60,000 inmates. Approximately 50,000 men, women and children were murdered there.
- Nissan 25, 2448 (1312 BCE):** The Jews of the Exodus arrived at Elim in the desert, where they discovered 12 springs (Exodus 15:27).
- Nissan 26, 2515 (1245 BCE):** Death of Yehoshua (Megillat Ta’anit 1), Moshe’s disciple and successor, who led the Israelites during the conquest of Canaan.
- Nissan 27:** Yom HaShoah—memorializing the 6 million Jews murdered by the Nazis, and commemorating the bravery of the Jews that resisted the Nazis.
- April 19, 1943:** The Warsaw Ghetto uprising began, holding off the final liquidation of the ghetto until May 16—longer than some European countries with armies.
- April 20, 1799:** Napoleon issued a proclamation to the Jews of Palestine promising the “reestablishment of ancient Jerusalem,” coupled with a plea for their support.
- Nissan 30, 5380 (1620):** Yahrzeit of Rabbi Chaim Vital, author of *Etz Chaim*, kabbalist, the primary disciple of the Arizal and the transcriber of his teachings.

The above is an abridged weekly version of *Dust & Stars*. To receive a free comprehensive post every day about the events and remarkable Jews who have changed the world, please subscribe: <https://dustandstars.substack.com/subscribe>





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