

## Shmini - Rabbi Lerner - April 15, 2012

### The Concept of Kashrus

Perek 11: Why begin this pasuk that includes an address to Aharon as well as Moshe?

**Rashi:** The simple peshat is that Hashem spoke separately to Aharon and Moshe independently; but Toras Kohanim says that Hashem only spoke to Moshe in this instance, and he was then told to transmit the message to Aharon. **Sifsai Chachamim:** there are 13 places in the Torah where we find this construct of Hashem speaking to Moshe and Aharon together; there are also 13 places where it seems to exclude talking to the two of them together; this would seem to indicate that Hashem never spoke directly to Aharon in these instances, but always to Moshe to transmit to Aharon. We have some idea of this at the beginning of Vayikra, 1:1, where **Rashi** says that the word *Eilav* was to exclude Aharon; there are 13 places where it says Moshe and Aharon, and 13 places that it excludes him - examples are when the word *Eilav* or *Ito* are used - this tells us that Hashem never spoke directly to Aharon when the messages had to go to both of them. The reason this had to be the case is because we know from the **Rambam** that the quality of the prophecy to Moshe was different than any one else in history, and Aharon could not be receiving Nevuah simultaneous with Aharon in the same manner. So, this major topic of Kashrus had to be clearly given to Moshe at his high level, who then explained it to Aharon.

**Ramban:** the reason why Aharon was included in this message was because it was the job of Kohanim to teach Bnei Yisrael all about kashrus, and that is why it was taught to both of them; but maybe it was taught directly to Moshe only, who then transmitted it to Aharon.

**Abarbanel:** This was taught to the two of them together, simultaneously.

**Ramban:** Why is Aharon included here? These mitzvos applied to Bnei Yisrael and Kohanim, but more so to Kohanim who are involved with not just whether something can be eaten, but also the concept of Tumah. An improperly slaughtered animal cannot be eaten, but also can make people tamai. While this might not be a major issue to most of Bnei Yisrael, a kohen who becomes tamai has a major issue of not being able to do Avodah in the Mishkan. The kohen must always be tahor, so they must get special instructions about kashrus. They are the teachers of kashrus to Bnei Yisrael.

**Rav Nissan Alpert:** the first mitzvah taught to Aharon and his children was also the first one given to mankind - just as the first mitzvah given to Adam, to eat from all foods in Gan Eden except the "traif" one from Etz Hadas, likewise here they are told what they can eat and what they cannot eat. Why were these the first laws given to the kohanim to teach Bnei Yisrael? Hashem sustains all life with His kindness, as we say in the second bracha of Shmoneh Esrei - "*He gives us food and will bring the dead back to life*" - if you don't eat or drink, your energy is sapped and you will ultimately die - food is the source of energy that bring us back to life. Therefore, one has to be very careful of what kind of foods are eaten, which are off-limits, and which are not, which are harmful and which are not.

**Abarbanel:** the prohibition about certain categories of food are believed by some to be all about health issues, what will keep one healthy, what will bring harm - this is said by the **Ramban**. Even more explicitly, the **Rambam** in Moreh Nevuchim develops this idea very strongly, that the nonkosher foods are sources of disease. But, the **Abarbanel** does not like this idea - if that was the case, that traif foods make you sick, then it would be relegating Hashem's Holy Torah to a minor book of health advice. Furthermore, if this was true, the goyim who eat all of these foods would be dying early and would be unhealthy - just the opposite, they certainly are

quite healthy. Kashrus has nothing to do with physical health - it is all about health of the soul. These nonkosher foods harm the soul, "plug up" and block the connection to Hashem. In 11:43 it says not to make our souls abominable by means of these foods, we are not to become contaminated through them - *Venitmaiseim*. But this word is missing an aleph. The reason is that it comes from Timtum, getting plugged up - it will mess up our character, our refinement. As an example, all of the birds forbidden to us are the predators, the birds of prey. The kosher animals have to chew their cuds because they don't have large devouring teeth that can tear and eat other animals; they have cloven hooves rather than claws - they also are not predators. We too should not be predators; these foods turn us into beasts, into predators.

11:1: It says *leyemor aleyhem* - to say to them. To whom is the them in this pasuk referring? Maybe to Aharon's children. **Kli Yakar**: this doesn't make sense because it would only use pronouns like this after first saying the names of the people earlier - but the Torah doesn't say the names of Elazar and Itamar before this pasuk. Therefore, it means direct these laws to the Jews to the exclusion of the goyim. There are those who thought kashrus is all about physical health, but as the **Abarbanel** says the goyim are obviously in good health despite what they eat; it is all about health of neshamos. Only the Jews have these type of Neshamos - that is why it says *Aleyhem*.

**Rev Nissan Alpert** - so why give this as the first mitzvah to the kohanim? Because they are the spiritual doctors. That is why the Jews go to the kohanim whenever there is a question about the disease of Tzaraas - the kohanim are the experts. If you want to keep your spiritual health intact, you must eat the right foods. Similarly, if you are going to bring in a nonJewish woman to nurse a newborn, she must eat only the kosher foods in your home so as to nourish the baby's neshamah properly. The Jews must be on the correct spiritual diet for their spiritual health.

11:2: These are the animals you should eat. **Sforno**: what was God's original plan regarding the Mishkan? We know that **Rashi** says the mishkan was necessary only because of the Egel, whereas the **Ramban** says it was always the plan to build one. The **Sforno** says that when Hashem gave us the Torah, there was no intention to have us build a mishkan, because Hashem wanted the shechina to rest in each and everyone of the Jews. That is the meaning of the pasuk at the end of Yisro in 2:21 - *Wherever My name is mentioned, there you will find Me*. Hashem does not need a central place to find Him; there was never an initial plan to build a Mishkan; after the sin of the Egel it was clear that we needed a central "home" for Hashem for us to relate to Him. Hashem did not want an intermediary - this is how it will be in the end of time - Hashem will place His mishkan within us. After the sin of the Egel Hashem "was sick of us, wanted to vomit us out." So we built the Mishkan and ultimately Hashem forgave the nation. Now that we had exhibited this tremendous weakness forcing Hashem to be with us in a limited way in the Mishkan, we had to make changes to perpetuate this new arrangements - Hashem had to correct our weaknesses by telling us what foods to eat and what Arayos are to be avoided. All of these forbidden foods and relations pollute our souls with bad thoughts; they plug up the heart and soul; the entire concept of kashrus was born out of the sin of the Egel; there would not have been any restrictions if not for the sin; we need this kashrus help to stay balanced. In this section of the Torah, after kashrus comes the laws of childbirth and tumah, and then tzaraas and then Nidah and Zav - all are part of the same thing - it was the Tikun of the food and the Tikun of the body. The body was supposed to be the sanctuary of God, and now we have to keep it more healthy to achieve any close contact with God. All of these laws and restrictions were due to the sin of the Egel that we brought upon ourselves.