



TORAH WEEKLY

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Parshas Shemini

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A Taste of Torah You Are What You Eat

by Rabbi Dov Holczer

It is one of the most well-known, yet least understood, areas of Judaism. For one to be considered an observant Jew, it's one of the basic areas that are kept. In this week's parsha, Hashem commands the Bnai Yisrael about the laws of keeping kosher. What is the great importance attached to eating kosher? Conversely, why is eating non-kosher food such a terrible problem?

The commentators explain that the food a person eats affects him spiritually. When one eats the meat of an animal, that animal becomes a part of the person, and along with that come the spiritual qualities of the animal. Thus, the Torah forbids eating any animal that will bring negative spiritual traits into the person. Hashem allows us to eat only animals that chew their cud and have split hooves, as these animals do not have an adverse effect upon one who consumes them. It should therefore come as no surprise that there are no predatory animals that are kosher; imbibing the character traits of such a creature would have a negative effect upon the spiritual stature of a person.

The Ramban (Shemini 11:13) says that the most effective way to determine whether a particular bird is kosher or not is by identifying if it is a predator; if the bird displays any predatory traits, it is certainly not kosher. However, if it does not show any such characteristics, then there's a good chance it is a kosher bird.

The Torah provides a listing of non-kosher animals that have one of the two kosher signs – they have only split hooves or only chew their cud. The

Kli Yakar (Rabbi Shlomo Ephraim Lunschitz; 1550-1619) points out that when referring to these non-kosher animals, the Torah first states that it possesses one of the kosher signs and only subsequently says that it's missing the second requirement. This is strange, as it would seem to be sufficient to just tell us that the animal lacks one of the kosher signs; why the need to discuss its one kosher sign? Furthermore, its non-kosher sign should be mentioned first, as it is the reason for its non-kosher status.

The Kli Yakar explains that one would expect that an animal with one of the two kosher requirements would be better than an animal with none. However, says the Kli Yakar, the opposite is true. An animal that shows some symbol of purity but is still not kosher is worse than the animal that has none. Something that seems good but is really bad can be much more dangerous than something whose evil nature is easily recognizable, as a person may well connect with such a being, thinking that there is nothing wrong with it. In interpersonal relationships, a person who is known to be a wicked individual will be avoided by others, for they realize clearly that they must stay away. On the other hand, a person who is rotten at the core but puts on a façade of goodness can attract people and influence them with his evil ways. Therefore, says the Kli Yakar, the Torah spells out the kosher sign of these animals at the outset, and then notes its non-kosher quality to stress that it is the kosher trait in combination with the non-

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Stories for the Soul

Meal Mix-Up

A wagon driver once visited the Alexander Rebbe, Rabbi Yerachmiel Yisrael Yitzchak Dancyger (1853-1910), and complained that although he placed the best oats and hay before his horse, the animal simply refused to eat.

"If this continues," cried the man, "the animal will die, and my livelihood will perish with it!"

The Rebbe asked the wagon driver to describe his own eating habits.

The wagon driver responded that every morning, after completing the morning prayers, he would wash his hands for bread. He would take a sandwich and depart in his wagon, eating the sandwich at some point during his travels. He would snack when he could find time throughout the day, and, before retiring at night, he would recite *birchas hamazon* (the blessings after eating).

"There's the problem," said the Rebbe. "You eat like an animal, grazing all day, without taking care to recite the blessings properly in their time and place. So your animal, seeing its human master eating like an animal, wants to eat like a human! It has no interest in oats and hay."

"Go back to eating like a human, and your animal shall return to eating its oats and hay."

The Torah teaches the laws of kosher in this week's parsha, and concludes with a commandment "And you shall sanctify yourselves, and you shall be holy." (Shemini 11:44) The deeper lesson of keeping kosher is that one's eating should be sanctified.

Kollel Happenings

KOLLEL CLASSES CONTINUE VIA ZOOM MEETING

The Kollel is continuing many of its classes and offering new classes via Zoom Meeting. You can tune in to live classes online or call in on a phone. For a full schedule and the links and phone numbers to access this treasure trove of Torah, visit www.denverkollel.org or email info@denverkollel.org.

BUILD YOUR LEGACY AND SECURE THE FUTURE OF TORAH WITH LIVE ON/LIFE & LEGACY

The Kollel is one of 28 local organizations selected to be part of Rose Community Foundation's Live On/LIFE & LEGACY program, which focuses on creating financial stability for the future through planned giving. Think it's not for you? Think again! Anyone can make a planned gift, no matter the amount. Visit www.denverkollel.org, email rmh@denverkollel.org or call 303-820-2855 for more information.

HELP BUILD THE FUTURE OF TORAH IN DENVER

Claim your part in building the future of Torah in Denver! The Kollel is in the midst of a capital campaign to build a three-story, state-of-the-art Torah Center that will serve the entire Denver Jewish community. To contribute, or for dedication opportunities and details on the building, visit denverkollel.org or email info@denverkollel.org.

Parsha Quizzers

Parsha Quizzers are based upon the Torah reading of the first day (Shemos 12:21-51) and last day (Shemos 13:17-15:26) of Pesach. Can you figure out where they are?

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| 1) It's all my fault | 4) Holiday purification |
| 2) Half off | 5) Bat |
| 3) Show-and-tell | 6) Centipede |

Lives of Our Torah Leaders

Rabbi Meir Simcha HaKohen of Dvinsk - Part XXI

Reb Meir Simcha had one daughter who never married. He thus has no descendants.

Reb Meir Simcha passed away in 1926. His death occurred in the city of Riga, and the Jewish community of Riga wanted him to be buried in their city, since he had died there. However, the Jewish community of Dvinsk demanded that his body be returned to Dvinsk, where he had served as the rabbi of the city for so many years. The rabbi of Riga, Rabbi Menachem Mendel Zak, ruled that the body be returned to Dvinsk for burial.

Eulogies were held in Riga before the body returned to Dvinsk via train. At every stop during the train's journey,

Jews turned out to pay their final respects to one of the greatest Torah personalities of the generation.

Many decades later, a yeshiva for *ba'alei teshuva* (returnees to observant Judaism) was founded in Jerusalem in 1970, and was given the name Ohr Samayach in 1973 memory of Reb Meir Simcha.

In concluding the biography of one of the great Torah giants of a most tumultuous era, one must note that Reb Meir Simcha's greatness lay in the fact that he was not only a Torah scholar of towering stature and great piety, but that he also cared for his flock and for the Jewish People as a whole.

A Taste of Torah

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kosher one that makes these animals a whole new level of non-kosher.

It is noteworthy that the paradigm of a non-kosher animal, both in the teachings of our Sages as well as in the world at large, is the pig. The pig is the sole animal whose one kosher symbol is displayed externally, as it has split hooves, while the other one-kosher-sign animals, such as the camel, lack the external trait of split hooves and possess the internal sign of chewing their cud. Since the pig's resemblance to a kosher animal is much more

noticeable, its level of impurity is much more pronounced and is thus seen as the epitome of something not kosher.

The Torah thus teaches us the importance of keeping out negative influences, not just when eating, but in life in general. One must be extra cautious for seemingly positive influences that are, in fact, much worse than that which is clearly evil. Allowing only truly kosher influences through will help ensure a person's spiritual standing will not be dragged down.

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| 1) It's all my fault 9:23 s.v. <i>vayavo</i> | 4) Holiday purification 11:8 s.v. <i>umtulasam</i> |
| 2) Half off 10:12 s.v. <i>hamosartim</i> | 5) Bat 11:18 s.v. <i>hatimshemes</i> |
| 3) Show-and-tell 11:2 s.v. <i>zos</i> | 6) Centipede 11:42 s.v. <i>marbeh</i> |

Parsha Quizzers - Answers