

פרשת שמיני

Parshat Shmini

אשרינו | Ashreinu

Enhancing your Study of the Weekly Torah Portion



Being Kosher

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The Torah teaches us that a kosher animal can be identified by its two characteristics: (1) that it chews its cud, and (2) that it has

split hooves. There is a debate whether these two signs are inherent signs of purity and thus cause the animal to be kosher, or whether they are signs that merely serve as indicators to identify kosher animals.

There are multiple indications in Jewish law that the signs themselves are inherent signs of purity and cause the animal to be kosher. Additionally, there is an indication for this premise in the text of this week's Torah portion as well.

The Torah says that a camel may not be eaten: **את הָגָמֵל כִּי מַעֲלָה גְּרָה הֵוָא וְפַרְסָה אֵינָנוּ מִפְרִיס טְמֵא** “because it chews it cud but it does not have a completely split hoof.” The wording in the verse—“because”—indicates that the lack of the split hoof is the reason and the cause for its impurity and as a result it is not kosher for consumption. In contrast, there is a third sign that the Torah does not mention, which merely indicates that an animal is kosher, and that is when the animal has two horns, one on each side of the head.

What lesson can we learn from the fact that the two signs mentioned in the Torah are not merely indicators, but are causes of purity?

The Torah commands the Jewish people to be a holy people; perhaps by implementing these signs in our lives we can obtain purity and holiness. To do this, we must understand the inner meaning of these signs.

First, let us examine the characteristics of the split hoof. According to Jewish law, the split in the hoof must be all the way through, from the top of the hoof to the bottom. Accordingly, this split allows something that is on top of the animal's foot to seep through its foot and reach the ground.

The ground represents our worldly matters: making a living, pursuing a career, etc. Our foot represents the means we use to obtain our livelihood and our other worldly and material matters (Our foot is the body part that has a direct connection with the ground). To have a "split hoof" means to leave a gap to allow Godliness and Torah, the loftier matters in our life, to enter the mundanity of our lives. Godliness and Torah should not be left in Shul or the Beit Midrash, rather it should accompany us as we deal with our physical matters as well. But unlike the animal, we are not born with this characteristic. Hashem requires us to earn this characteristic on our own. Accordingly, we must take conscious steps to bring Torah and Godliness into the ordinary and worldly aspects of our lives.

Now let us examine what it means to chew our cud. For an animal to chew its cud means that it chews its food, swallows it, regurgitates it, chews it, swallows it again, and repeats this process several times. When approaching our food—our physical and worldly necessities and pursuits—we must constantly check and ask ourselves questions like: Is this an appropriate pursuit? Will this action strengthen my connection with Hashem or perhaps weaken it? Asking ourselves these sorts of questions once is not enough. We must chew our cud—we must ask ourselves these questions repeatedly.

Good Shabbos!

Parsha Points

Abby Eichner ('24)

In this week's parsha, Parshat Shmini, the ko-

hanim put *korbanot* onto the new *mizbeach* that had just been placed into the Mishkan. We see that when this happened, Hashem performed a *neis*. Fire came down from *shamayim* and burned all the *korbanot*. After this happened, B'nei Yisrael were so happy. The *neis* that occurred showed B'nei Yisrael that Hashem liked the Mishkan that they built for Him, and because He liked it, He sent a fire down.

Later on in the parsha, two new people are introduced: Nadav and Avihu, Aharon's sons. They had an idea to give their own present to God, so they went into the holiest of rooms, the Kodesh HaKodashim. They burned spices as a gift to Hashem, but they didn't get permission from Hashem to bring this sacrifice. Therefore, they got punished instead of rewarded and Hashem decided to kill them because of what they did. When Aharon saw what happened to his sons, he did not complain to Hashem. Instead he accepted Hashem's decree by remaining silent. After Aharon accepted what Hashem did, Hashem went to Moshe to explain how great of a tzaddik Aharon was because he didn't complain, earning him a great reward.

Hashem then taught Moshe which animals to eat and not to eat, which are kosher and which are not. He said there are two things that make an animal kosher. One is that it has split hooves and secondly that it chews its cud. This means that the animal swallows its food and then brings it up again to its mouth. It then chews it once more and continues to do this multiple times. If you want to eat fish, it has to have fins and scales, and only a few birds are kosher. Insects and bugs are never kosher.

Shabbat Shalom!

Inside Out
Ariella Herschberg ('23)

In this week's parsha, Parshat Shmini, Hashem tells Bnei Yisrael how to identify which animals

are kosher or non-kosher. Hashem said that if the animal has split hooves and chews its cud, it is kosher and can be eaten. However, if an animal doesn't have split hooves or doesn't chew its cud, it can't be eaten and it is not kosher. Out of all of the animals in the world, there is one animal that Hashem identifies as having split hooves but doesn't chew its cud: a pig. If you were to look at a pig, it would appear to be kosher because of its split hooves. But once you investigate what is happening inside of the animal and realize that it doesn't chew its cud, you know it is not halachically a kosher animal.

This highlights the idea that a person can show and portray themselves a certain way on the outside, but their inside might be completely different. What defines a person is who they are both inside and out. The same goes for a kosher animal – both the inside and the outside need to have the proper signs to be kosher.

A pig, kosher-looking on the outside, is determined to be non-kosher by its inner characteristics. The lesson that Hashem is teaching us is that who you are on the inside is what primarily determines who you really are. The inner talents that Hashem gave you and who you ultimately strive to be is your essence. When you strengthen your *neshama* and who you are on the inside, then you can ultimately start to reflect externally and show people who you truly are.

Facing Fear

Gavi Kahn ('22)

וַיֹּאמֶר מֹשֶׁה אֶל־אַהֲרֹן קְרֵב אֵלֶיךָ בְּמִזְבֵּחַ

"Moshe said to Aharon: come near to the altar..." (Vayikra 9:7).

Rashi comments on this pasuk that Moshe had to say this because Aharon was afraid to accept the position of kohen. What does this teach us? To answer this question, we must ask another question: why was Moshe the acting Kohen Gadol for seven days until Aharon took over on the 8th day?

The reason for this is because for seven days at the burning bush, Hashem tried to get Moshe to speak to Pharaoh, and ultimately Aharon went before Pharaoh on the eighth day. Therefore, Aharon got the position of Kohen Gadol on the eighth day because he accepted the role of Hashem's messenger on the eighth day. This also shows that the *kehuna* would have been Moshe's if he would have listened to Hashem and gone to talk to Pharaoh.

Now that we understand this, let's delve into Moshe's comment to Aharon in the pasuk above. Moshe saw that Aharon was hesitant and scared to take the position of kohen. He encouraged Aharon to come close to the altar, meaning that he should accept his job and not make the same mistake that Moshe made of giving into his fear. Moshe is telling Aharon to take the job, despite his fear.

This is similar to a rabbi who once told his student to go become a rabbi of a community, but the student didn't want to because he was scared. The rabbi told him that it was natural for him to be scared, but it also could be beneficial to help keep him focused and determined to not make mistakes. Moshe was giving Aharon this same message, and as the Torah is a timeless guide for humanity, Moshe was speaking to us as well. We must not back away from things due to our fear, but instead we must sometimes face it or use it to help us complete the task that we feel is overwhelming.

Sharing is Caring

Yonah Greenberg ('25)

In this week's parsha, Parshat Shmini, the Torah lists some kosher and non-kosher birds. As the Ramban tells us, the non-kosher birds were all predatory. One bird the Torah talks about is the *chasida*, or the stork, which translates to, "pious or generous one". Rashi tells us that this bird is

kind and generous to its friends and it shares its food with them. So why would it be non-kosher?

The Chidushei HaRim answers that the *chasida* only does acts of kindness towards its fellow storks and not towards other birds. True chesed is stepping out of your comfort zone and being able to be kind and hospitable to everyone, not just your friends. The fact that the *chasida* is listed as non-kosher teaches us that it is important to step out of our comfort zones and be kind to everyone we encounter, not just our friends.



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