

Parshat Re’eh

The Signs of Kashrut

This week's parsha discusses the signs that make an animal kosher—split hooves and chewed cud. This Sicha analyses the spiritual significance of these two signs.

Parshat Re’eh discusses the various animals that are permissible to eat and those that are forbidden to eat. When the verse tells the signs that make an animal kosher, the verse states:

Text 1

These are the animals that you may eat... And every animal that has a split hoof and has a hoof cloven into two hoof sections, [and] chews the cud among the animals that you may eat.

Devarim 14:4-6

In general when the Torah says signs for specific things, there are two ways to understand the signs:

- 1) Signs that *cause* and are a reason for the thing. Concerning kosher animals that would mean, that *because* the animal has split-hooves and chews its cud, *therefore* it is kosher.
- 2) Signs that are an indicator. Meaning to say that the sign does not *make* the animal kosher, but rather indicates its status. The animal is kosher even *without* the signs, but the signs are there so that *we* can know their status.

While it would seem that according to the second way of understanding the signs to kosher animals that there is no meaning behind the signs, Chassidus presents another perspective.

Chassidus teaches that nothing is happenstance and that there is always a connection between an allegory and what is being allegorized. When there is an allegory for an idea, it is because spiritually they have the same source.

With this perspective it is understood that even when the signs serve as an indicator and it seems that there is no connection between the sign and the idea that it is conveying, in truth it is not coincidental.

The reason why something serves as a sign, is because there is a spiritual connection between the two things.

It is therefore understood that there is a spiritual connection in split-hooves and chewing of cuds to the idea of kashrus.

The idea of eating

When a person eats something, they take an object and transform it from mineral, vegetative or living to become a part of themselves. When a person consumes food in a *proper* spiritual manner, he transforms the physical and *uplifts* it—making it a part of man.

In man too, there are matters within him where he is akin to a beast or even lower. This is expressed in the Talmud’s statement:

Text 2

Six things are said of human beings: in regard to three, they are like the ministering angels, and in regard to three, they are like beasts. 'In regard to three, they are like the ministering angels': they have understanding like the ministering angels; and they walk erect like the ministering angels; and they can talk in the holy tongue like the ministering angels. 'In regard to three, they are like beasts': they eat and drink like beasts; and they propagate like beasts, and they relieve themselves like beasts.

Talmud, Chagiga 16a

In the same vein that the ultimate purpose of food is transforming the minerals, vegetables and animals into man, so too is in man himself. He as well must elevate the matters within him that are expressive of lower life forms and raise them to a higher level.

The parts within him in which he is similar to a beast are not man's ultimate purpose.

The definitive purpose of man is to transform those parts within himself in which he is similar to an animal that they too should be congruous to the part that makes him a man.

Just as the purpose of everything in man is that he uplifts all the parts of himself to the level of "man," so too with food in general that the purpose of food is that not only that man eats it, but that it he use food for the part of himself that makes him a man.

Rather than his *human* side serving his *animalistic* side, his beast should instead be completely congruous with the human element.

What is man

The true idea of man is that he is compared to the Almighty.

Text 3

Not for nothing is Israel referred to as Adam (Talmud, Yevamot 61a). For, although it is derivative of earth (*adama*) and is expressive that he comes from earth, it is nevertheless also from the word similar (*adame*)...as expressed in the verse (Yeshaya 14:14) "I will liken myself to the Most High."

Shnei Luchot HaBrit, Torah Ohr Bereishit

When man fulfills his purpose he becomes similar, so to speak to G-d, who is referred to as Man and becomes enveloped in the Almighty's presence.

The manner in which a person becomes included in G-dliness is in a systematic fashion. A person begins by becoming enveloped in a lower level until ultimately he is able to affect within himself that he becomes completely included in Supernal Man.

Text 4

You shall follow the Lord, your God, fear Him, keep His commandments, heed His voice, worship Him, and cleave to Him.

Devarim 13:5

When a person initially begins his service of G-d he can be compared to what it says in the verse that he is *following* G-d from behind Him. Eventually he is able to reach the point that he is actually cleaving to G-d.

A person eventually can eventually reach a point where has no personal identity whatsoever and is completely an extension of G-d—so to speak.

This is similar to Moshe Rabbeinu who was able to say “And I will give grass in your field,” though a person’s livelihood actually comes from G-d. When a person completely cleaves to G-d—like Moshe—his statements are a direct extension of G-d.

Just as with man, the ultimate expression of him animalistic characters becoming enveloped in his character of man, is that they become integrated in the true Man—G-d—so too is it with the actual physical matters that a person consumes. There are ultimate purpose is that they too become included in G-dliness and supernal-man.

Transforming the beast

This concept that one can take an animal whose natural attribute is as the verse (Kohelet 3:21) states: “the spirit of the beast is that which descends below to the earth,” is supremely difficult.

This is because this is opposite the natural trait of the beast to lust corporeality. Instead one causes the animal to first “follow G-d” and eventually cleave to Him.

In order for man to embark on this long and arduous journey of transforming beast into G-dliness he was give two signs that clarify to the individual if he is serving G-d in the proper manner.

The purpose of these indicators are so that an individual can know if he is involved in corporeality for the sake of heaven—then being able to transform them into the G-dly—or merely because his nature and temperament is to act in the way he does.

If it is the latter, then the Torah prohibits him from being involved in these matters and tells

him “Do not consume” or participate in these actions.

Opposites

The Talmud recounts the following regarding Rabbi Chaninia b. Teradion:

Text 5

Our Rabbis taught: When R. Yosi b. Kisma was ill, R. Chanina b. Teradion went to visit him. He said to him: ‘My brother Chanina, Don’t you know that it is Heaven that has ordained this [Roman] nation to reign? For though she laid waste His House, burnt His Temple, slew His pious ones and caused His best ones to perish, still is she firmly established! Yet, I have heard about you that you sit and occupy yourself with the Torah, publicly gather assemblies, and keep a scroll [of the Law] in your bosom!’

He replied, ‘Heaven will show mercy.’ — ‘I,’ he remonstrated, ‘am telling you plain facts, and you say “Heaven will show mercy”! It will surprise me if they do not burn both you and the scroll of the Law with fire.’

‘Rabbi,’ said the other, ‘How do I stand with regard to the world to come?’ — ‘Is there any particular act that you have done?’ he enquired.

He replied: ‘I once mistook Purim-money for ordinary charity-money, and I distributed [of my own] to the poor.’ ‘Well then,’ he said, ‘I wish that your portion were my portion and your lot my lot.’

Talmud, Avoda Zara 18a

What is curious about this story is that although indeed he was burned with a Torah scroll in his bosom on account of his teaching Torah, he was unsure that he would merit the world to come

were he not to have been generous with charity—how can this be?

Chassidic thought explains though that these two actions prove that his service of G-d was not merely a natural expression of his character, but that he was actually serving G-d.¹

Were his service of G-d to have been merely an expression of his personality, he would be unable to have two conflicting expressions—of severity and generosity.

Only because it is an expression of service of G-d and not natural can these two expressions co-exist in one person.

This is as well expressed in the Torah when Avraham was tested with bringing his son, Yitzchak to the altar:

Text 6

And he said, "Do not stretch forth your hand to the lad, nor do the slightest thing to him, for now I know that you are a God fearing man, and you did not withhold your son, your only one, from Me."

Bereishit 22:12

Only when Avraham was able to negate his natural tendency for kindness and was prepared to slaughter his son did it become clear that his service of G-d was not merely an extension of his natural character traits.

The signs of kashrut

This is the sign that the Torah imparts in split hooves. Allegorically, a single hoof is expressive that one's manner of service is only in one path.

However, the sign of Kashrut—as expressed above—is when an individual has two conflicting traits. Only when a person transcends his nature and fulfills the mission that G-d placed upon him, rather than express his own personality, can he truly be considered kosher.

Concerning the split hooves, Rashi explains that it must be in the following manner:

Text 7

Cloven [into two hoof sections]: [Hooves] cloven into two "nails," for there are [animals with hooves] split but not entirely cloven into [two] nails; such animals are unclean.

Rashi, Devarim 14:6

The manner in which he dedicates to dichotomous manners of serving G-d cannot be merely superficial, rather he must completely dedicate himself to these two conflicting manners of G-dly service. Only then can it truly be said that he is serving G-d.

This is what is expressed in split hooves. What is expressed in chewing the cud is that one must continuously reflect and inspect one's service.

A person cannot nonchalantly and imperturbably assume that he is serving G-d correctly. As he is a human, corporeal individual he is prone to error. Rather, he must constantly contemplate and digest whether or not he is indeed properly serving G-d.

¹ Torah Ohr, Bereishit 19b.

The lesson is clear:

Just as pertaining to food a person must inspect whether or not the animal is fit for consumption, so too with all matters of G-dly service.

A person should not rely on one's self but instead inspect everything and ensure that all his actions are truly done to serve G-d.

(Based on Likutei Sichos 2, Re'eh, reworked by Rabbi Dovid Markel. To see other projects and to partner in our work, see: www.Neirot.com.)