

Beit Hamidrash Hameir Laarets | Issue 101

Shemini | Body and Soul – Who Rules Over Who



MESILLOT

Pathways to the Soul

Illuminating teachings and insights on the weekly parasha
by **Rabbi Yoram Michael Abargel zt"l**

From the weekly lectures of his son,
Rabbi Israel Abargel shlita

...PATHWAYS TO THE SOUL...

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Parashat Shemini

The Challah

An eccentric person was Lieutenant Colonel R. It was during the First World War. The officers in the Austro-Hungarian army were terrified of him. He was harsh and strict and imposed his terror on everyone who got near him. Woe to the officer who was caught dressed untidily. Woe to the soldier who didn't salute properly. Any victim would receive blasphemies that could be heard from afar and severe punishment, which he didn't give up on. He was the terror of the battalion, especially to the officers of the battalion, whom he humiliated and disgraced before the common soldiers.

Not once did many try to use their influential acquaintances to lobby the authorities to act against Lt. Col. R. and save them from his punishments, but to no avail. Some officers despised the peaceful life of the home front and preferred to be sent to the

front lines just to get away from R's nonsense and sternness.

"The day will come," others consoled themselves. But that longed-for day didn't come for some reason until...

Until the affair with Michael-Hirsch. The famous affair in the battalion known as the "Lieutenant Colonel's Challah Affair."

Michael-Hirsch lived in one of the remote villages in Marmarosh. He was a simple man. Four years before the outbreak of the war, he got married and opened a grocery store, from which he made a good living and lived peacefully with his wife and two children until the war broke out and disrupted the peaceful life of his family.

As a reservist, he was drafted into the army and sent to the Russian front. He served at the

Parashat Shemini - The Challah

front lines for about a year and a half until he was wounded in the leg and hospitalized. After about two months, he was sent to recovery, and from there, he was returned to his battalion, which then returned from the front lines and was stationed in the city of B.

His comrades in the battalion, who finally met up with him again, were surprised to see that his military discipline had significantly weakened during his stay in the hospital. They warned him that he'd be doomed if the commander saw him dressed carelessly or if his shoes weren't polished. But he dismissed their warnings saying, "Nonsense. At the front, I didn't fear the Cossacks. I surely won't fear an officer, whoever it may be!"

His friends, who saw that there was no one to talk to, wished him good luck. He smiled and went on his way.

One winter day, Michael-Hirsch went to the synagogue as was his custom. After praying, he hurried to return to the camp to avoid missing the count. On his way, he passed by a bakery, and this

time, he couldn't contain himself. He entered and bought a fresh challah. As he walked out of the bakery, with the challah under his armpit, he tripped over the sidewalk, and in the process of falling, he hit a passer-by.

Michael-Hirsch, frightened by the fall, prepared to stand up and ask the passer-by's forgiveness. But to his dismay, he discovered that the victim was none other than his battalion commander, Lt. Col. R.

He couldn't get words out of his mouth...

He wished that the earth would swallow him. But that's not what happened. After Lt. Col. R. got up from the sidewalk and straightened his uniform and hat, he looked around angrily, and what did he see? In front of him stood a wretched private in messy clothes, his beard unkempt, his shoes dirty, and his whole being screamed sloppy! That private, who was supposed to be within the confines of the camp at that moment, was standing in front of him with a large challah tucked under his armpit...

Not a moment passed, and the whole street shook from the officer's roars. The curses flew out of his mouth one after the other. The private stood shaking like a frightened fish. His whole life flashed before his eyes. In his mind, he separated from his family members, for he felt that his life would end very soon. But in the midst of those gloomy thoughts, he heard the officer scream, "Which battalion do you belong to?!"

It was the only sentence Michael-Hirsch understood in the mixture of curses and blasphemies. He quickly identified himself according to military regulations. At that moment, when commander R. took a second to breathe, he decided it was a shame to waste so much energy on an idiot private on the street. Therefore, he demanded that he follow him to the camp, and there, he would take care of him...

Lt. Col. R. started towards the camp as Michael-Hirsch walked about 100 feet behind him, scared to death, thoughts running through his mind as to how he would be able to get out of the desperate situation

he found himself in. Suddenly, he noticed a cadet walking in front of him. That young soldier belonged to a group of veterans who earned the right to participate in an officer's course. They were called "volunteers." Noticing Lt. Col. R., the young soldier began to straighten his uniform, smoothed his forelock, and polished his shoes with the hem of his pants. The officer who noticed the efforts of the young volunteer was filled with joy and turned to Michael-Hirsch and shouted at him, "You see what a self-respecting soldier should look like? Not like you, sloppy and dirty!"

Michael-Hirsch hardly listened to the roars of commander R. In the flash of a moment, a brilliant idea brewed in his mind. When the young volunteer passed by his commander, Lt. Col. R., after saluting him, Michael-Hirsch whispered to him that he had to go do an errand for the commander, thus, if he would so kindly hold the challah for him in the meantime.

The young soldier willingly agreed to do him the small favor,

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and thus, Michael-Hirsch managed to disappear.

The young volunteer, who was ecstatic about the honor that fell to his lot to follow the commander and carry the challah that he thought was meant for him, hoped that Michael-Hirsch would delay in his errands, and he, the volunteer, would thus hand the commander the challah. Then, he would surely be noticed in a great light by the commander and thus be promoted. In the midst of these encouraging reflections, they arrived at the commander's office, who immediately called two lieutenants who stood still at the sound of his angry call.

Commander R. didn't waste much time on explanations. He angrily spoke about the importance of military discipline, order, and cleanliness in the appearance of the soldiers, and turning towards the frightened soldier, who didn't know what was going on, he screamed, "Which of you allowed this moron to leave the camp in sloppy clothing?!"

As the commander turned around, his tongue stopped

babbling in the middle of his words. He was surprised to discover the young volunteer, shaking like a leaf, with the big challah in his hand.

Lt. Col. R. recovered immediately. Someone like him couldn't lose his senses in such shameful moments. He didn't understand what happened here, but he controlled his anger, turned to the volunteer, and asked, "What are you doing here?"

The young volunteer, whose spirit returned to him little by little, began to stammer as he told his story about the turn of events with the private he met on his way.

Having no choice, the commander released the poor volunteer, and after consulting with his lieutenants, it was decided that the private's mischief shouldn't be taken lightly. He must be punished by the strictest of military law.

The next day, the entire battalion was called to stand at attention. The commander hoped he would run into the careless private from yesterday, and when he recognized him, he would receive what he deserved.

Michael-Hirsch, who knew what would happen to him if the commander recognized him, decided that he had to save his skin this time as well. Lt. Col. R. indeed called him a “moron,” but he was far from fitting that title.

Michael-Hirsch was a very clever young man. He worked hard to fix his appearance: he cleaned his uniform, polished his worn shoes, and brushed off his hat. Thus, he appeared clean and orderly as a groom on his wedding day.

The commander repeatedly surveyed the ranks of soldiers. Raging, he couldn't recognize the soldier he encountered yesterday, who put him in such an embarrassing situation. He had no choice but to convene his team of deputies and hold a quick meeting on the matter. They came to a decision. One of the lieutenants stood up and announced what happened yesterday with the private who left the camp without permission, and on top of that, his appearance was sloppy, and because of that, he must be punished according to the law. “Therefore, at

this moment, that private must report to the commander, and if he doesn't do so, his fate will be bitter as soon as he's caught.”

No response came to the call. Not a single private left the ranks. Seeing that the enraged commander's call made no impression, he decided to change plans. He announced that if, at that moment, the private decided to repent and identify himself, he promised that this time he'll go beyond the letter of the law and nullify his punishment.

Just then, everyone noticed a private leaving one of the ranks and standing in front of the commander. Michael-Hirsch, clean and combed, saluted respectfully and stood still. Lieutenant Colonel R. looked at him in disbelief. He didn't recognize him as the careless, dirty private from yesterday. But in order not to add to the shame he suffered from him yesterday, and also at that moment, he decided not to fuss too much about the matter.

He turned to Michael-Hirsch and told him that this time he would indeed not be punished, even

Parashat Shemini - People of Form

though he hadn't behaved properly, but he must maintain the honor of the army and, in the future, must behave according to the rules.

At the end of his speech, Lt. Col. R. turned and entered his office. All he wanted was to disappear from the soldiers and lieutenants. He felt that he had received more than enough humiliation.

The soldiers dispersed with a sense of relief. Everyone surrounded Michael-Hirsch and asked to hear again and again the funny story that happened to him. He became the star of the camp, with everyone congratulating him on his resourcefulness.

Lieutenant Colonel R., on the other hand, tried, from that day on, to be seen as little as possible inside the camp, to the joy of all the soldiers and officers

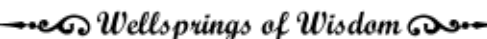
who breathed a sigh of relief. After some time, the rumor spread that he voluntarily moved to a different zone, further away.

That famous bakery, in whose merit occurred what had occurred, increased its profit considerably in light of the many purchases coming in from all directions. The camp's soldiers were also able to go there easily, without the watchful eye of Lt. Col. R., who was no longer there to impose his terror on them...¹

In this story, we met Lt. Col. R., a completely coarse character who couldn't perceive the reality of others at all, and thus lost his virtue and rank... In our parasha, we learn about the virtue of Am Israel, and about the Torah's commandment: Do not be materialistic and coarse ! Do not lose your virtue and rank !
Be people of form !

People of Form

Rabbi Yonatan ben Asmai sat in Rabbi Shimon bar and Rabbi Yehuda ben Gerim Yochai's (Rashbi's) Beit Midrash



1. Lehair Mitoch Chashecha (p. 143).

and learned together Masechet Nedarim.²

After a long day of learning, the time came for them to return home. Thus, they approached Rashbi to part from him. Rashbi blessed them and said goodbye with a smile.

They left his room and started walking home... However, they had to stay the night in the city for some reason (which isn't mentioned in the Gemara).

The next day, they again approached Rashbi and told him they were planning on returning home.

Rashbi looked at them in bewilderment, "Didn't you part from me last night? Why are you asking for permission again?"

They answered, "Our Rabbi! You taught us that a disciple who parts from his rabbi and sleeps in the same city must part from him again (the Gemara gives the source for this ruling). Since we spent the

night here, we came to part from our rabbi again."

They then went on their way.

After a few moments, Rabbi Elazar, Rashbi's son, arrived, and his father (Rashbi) turned to him and said, "Rabbi Yonatan ben Asmai and Rabbi Yehuda ben Gerim just left. Know that they're "people of form." Go get a blessing from them."

Rabbi Elazar hurried after them, and when he caught up to them, he said, "My father asked that you bless me."

They blessed him, "May it be Hashem's will that you shall sow and not reap, you shall bring in and not take out, you shall take out and not bring in, your house shall be destroyed and your inn shall be inhabited, your table shall become confused, and you shall not see a new year."

Intense dizziness attacked Rabbi Elazar. He returned to his father and complained, "It's not enough that they didn't bless me,

Parashat Shemini - People of Form

but they even cursed me! They said to me so and so...”

Rashbi smiled and said, “They blessed you with enormous blessings. I’ll explain to you what they meant...”

“**Sow** and not reap” – You shall bear children, and they shall not die.

“**You** shall bring in and not take out” – You shall bring brides (wives for your sons) into your home, and your sons shall not die, thus their wives won’t leave your house and return to their father’s house.

“**Take** out and not bring in” – You shall bear daughters who will leave to their husbands’ houses, and their husbands shall

not die, thus your daughters won’t have to return to you.

“**Your** house shall be destroyed and your inn shall be inhabited” – Your grave (your house) shall be destroyed and shall not be used and you shall merit a long life in this world (compared to an inn).

“**Your** table shall become confused” – You shall have many children who cause ruckus and confusion at your table.

“**You** shall not see a new year” – Your wife shall not die, thus you shall not have to marry another woman and follow the laws of the first year of marriage.”

There’s much to clarify,³ but we’re going to focus on one point,

Wellsprings of Wisdom

3. In the eulogy delivered by Rabbi Baruch Shraga shlita at Rabbi Ben Tzion Abba Shaul zt”l’s funeral, he said the following...

Rabbi Ben Tzion zt”l, with all his greatness in the Torah and his immense genius, behaved with great simplicity. His modesty was remarkable. Even when he blessed someone, he would say to the recipient, “Go to Rabbi Yehuda Tzadka so that he’ll bless you as well,”

and he would ascribe the fulfillment of the blessing to Rabbi Tzadka zt”l.

Because of his modesty and humility, all his blessings were fulfilled.

This foundation is based on the incident in the Gemara (Moed Katan 9a), where Rashbi sent his son to receive a blessing from the two “people of form.”

The commentators ask three questions regarding this incident...

Parashat Shemini - Matter and Form

the explanation of the words “people of form” (which is why Rashbi sent his son to receive

a blessing from them), and in order to explain, we’ll need an introduction...

Matter and Form

Rabbi Pinchas Eliyahu of Vilna zt”l writes⁴ that every

creation in the world has matter and form.

~ Wellsprings of Wisdom ~

1. Rashbi knew that a student who sleeps in the same city as his rabbi has to part from his rabbi again. After all, he’s the one that taught that to them? Why then did he ask them why they returned?

2. What was the night different from the morning? Why only in the morning did Rashbi see that they were people of form and their blessings get fulfilled?

3. Why did they bless Rabbi Elazar in a way that sounded like curses?

They answered as follows...

The rule that Rashbi taught them that they must return to their rabbi again was only if they “sleep in the same city,” but if they learned Torah all night, it’s considered one long day, and thus they don’t have to return to their rabbi. And in truth, they learned all night. Rashbi knew that with his *Ruach HaKodesh*. Therefore, he asked them why they returned, for only if they slept did they have to return. They were exempt from returning.

They answered that the rule indeed applied to them because they slept that night.

Rashbi saw that they were modest about their good deeds, so he told his son to go ask them for a blessing, for whoever walks humbly before Hashem, merits their blessings be fulfilled.

But their modesty was so genuine, that’s why they blessed him with blessings that sounded like curses. They didn’t want to ascribe the fulfillment of the blessings to themselves. Thus, they blessed him in a hidden way, so that Rashbi would have to interpret the blessings to his son, and when the blessings would be fulfilled, they would ascribe their fulfillment to Rashbi, who interpreted them with his holy mouth.

But in truth, the blessings were fulfilled in their merit, because of their genuine modesty!

From here, we will learn the virtue of true modesty. Blessed is the one who merits to taste from its light...

- Tiferet Tzion (p. 472).

4. Sefer HaBrit (Introduction).

Parashat Shemini - Matter and Form

Matter is the thing that is perceived by our senses... Sight, touch, etc...

Form is that thing's purpose.

Let's take a knife for example. Its matter is the metal, and its form, that is, its purpose, is to cut things. Therefore, when the knife has become dull to the point that it no longer cuts, it's no longer a "knife," rather it's "metal," matter on its own.

Another example... A flower that grows in the ground. Its matter is what it's made of, and its form is the power to grow and reproduce (more flowers), and this power is called "*Nefesh HaTzomeach*." Thus, as soon as we pluck the flower from the ground, even though it still looks

exactly the same as it did a moment ago, it's no longer a "*tzemach*," rather only a "flower."

One more example... An animal. Its matter is what is perceived by our senses, sight, touch, etc., and its form is the "*Nefesh HaChai*." Therefore, as soon as the *Nefesh HaChai* is removed, it's no longer an "animal," but simply "meat."

Now let's move on to a gentile.

Their matter is their body, and their form, their purpose, is to behave towards others with *derech erez* and to lead their life with knowledge and intellect.

A human who loses their power of intellect and behaves towards others like an animal,⁵ is no longer a "human," but simply "matter!"

...*~* Wellsprings of Wisdom *~*...

5. There are also those who go beyond the letter of the law and behave towards others worse than animals! Even an animal doesn't harm those who give it food, yet they do!

HaRav Yoram Michael Abargel zt"l once said the following...

"חומר" (*chomer* – matter) comes from the word "חמור" (*chamor* – donkey), although the

donkey has virtues, such as, for example, it can bear heavy loads on its back because it has strong bones, it nevertheless has many shortcomings. It's stubborn, a big fool, and is very attached to the materiality of this world. So much so that it's said in chassidut that the donkey has never seen the sky. Its field of view only sees its food. Therefore, the donkey's only connection with the environment is through its food.

Summary: a “person of form” is a person who fulfills the seven commandments given to the descendants of Noach, and behaves with *derech erez* and intellect.

A “person of matter” is a person whose “form” has been

removed from them, walks the world with no faith in one G-d, and acts recklessly and coarsely.

Admittedly, all of this is true only for gentiles. Whereas for Jews, these concepts change entirely...

~ Wellsprings of Wisdom ~

The donkey recognizes the one who gives it food, as it says, “An ox knows its owner, and a donkey the feeding trough of its master” (Yeshayahu 1:3). It won’t bite the one who gives it food, but the one who doesn’t let it eat, it will instantly rebel...

But man can be more material than a donkey! There are people who you help, yet suddenly, you discover that you’ve been dealing with a den of snakes and scorpions... The first chance they get, they’ll rebel!

On a side note... Any son or daughter who’s able to rebel against their parents, no matter the reason at all, whether it’s a spiritual reason or a physical reason, should know that they’re a big donkey!

Every Jew must do everything in their ability to be in contact with their parents, even if many reasons prevent this. A Jew must know that all their physical and spiritual abundance flows to them from heaven through the conduit of their parents, and if, *chas*

v’shalom, they cut off the connection with their parents, they’re cutting themselves off from all of Hashem’s abundance, and in the end, they’ll deteriorate to the abyss, and if not them, then their children or grandchildren will.

When a person is connected to their parents and has a good relationship with them, in the merit of the peace of mind they give them, Hashem pours down on them abundance of blessing, success, and heavenly help in everything they do. Because what a parent’s prayer can do for their child, even the prayers of all the *Gedolei HaDor* cannot, even if their parents aren’t so righteous...

Therefore, it’s forbidden for a rabbi to advise a *baal teshuva* to sever ties with their parents, even if they aren’t Torah observant at all. Parents should always be given the feeling that they are loved. One should be in daily contact with them and bring them closer with love and affection. One should always hold their parents in the highest regard, regardless of what they do...

Matter and Form of a Jew

The body of a Jew is different from the body of a gentile. The body of a gentile is made up of the four elements: fire, wind, water, and earth. In contrast, the body of the Jew consists of the spiritual parts of the four elements ! Because of this, the body of a Jew contains immense holiness. Therefore, from the Jew's very matter, good *middot* are already engraved within them, as the Gemara says,⁶ "There are three distinctive signs of this nation... They're merciful, shamefaced, and they perform acts of kindness."

However, the form of a Jew, is something completely different. Concepts that no gentile has any awareness of !

The form of a Jew is an inner manifestation of thirteen feelings of *kedusha*, which emerge from the ten *sefirot*...

From the *sefira* of *Keter*: *Emuna* (faith), *ta'anug* (pleasure), and *ratzon* (desire).

From the *sefira* of *Chochma*: *Bitul* (nullification).

From the *sefira* of *Binah*: *Simcha* (joy).

From the *sefira* of *Daat* (which is the external *keter*, i.e., *keter* and *daat* are one *sefira*): *D'vekut* (cleaving to Hashem).

From the *sefira* of *Chesed*: *Ahava* (love). Love of Hashem, love of Torah, and love of Am Israel.

From the *sefira* of *Gevura*: *Yirah* (awe).

From the *sefira* of *Tiferet*: *Rachamim* (mercy).

From the *sefira* of *Netzach*: *Bitachon* (trust).

From the *sefira* of *Hod*: *Temimut* (wholeheartedness; innocence).

From the *sefira* of *Yesod*: *Emet* (truth).

From the *sefira* of *Malchut*: *Shiflut* (lowliness from the side of *kedusha*).

One more detail must be added...

Feelings of Holiness

Feelings descend from the ten *sefirot*.

We'll explain...

There are four general worlds (from lowest to highest): *Asiyah*, *Yetzirah*, *Beriyah*, and *Atzilut*.

In each world there are ten *sefirot*... Ten *sefirot* of *Asiyah*, ten *sefirot* of *Yetzirah*, ten *sefirot* of *Beriyah*, and ten *sefirot* of *Atzilut*.

In each world, the feelings are revealed in a different intensity. The higher the world, the more powerful the feelings are...

A Jew who merits sensing the feelings revealed in the world of *Asiyah* (although this is the lowest world, one needs much merit to sense them) is called a *Baal Nefesh*, that is, they merited completing their *nefesh* (the lowest part of the soul).

Whoever merits receiving the *ruach* – merits the revelation of feelings from the world of *Yetzirah*.

Whoever merits receiving the *neschama* – merits the revelation of feelings from the world of *Beriyah*.

Whoever merits receiving the *chaya* – merits the revelation of feelings from the world of *Atzilut*.

We find that when it comes to the revelation of feelings of holiness, no Jew is equal to another, every person according to their deeds, merits, and intentions.

Summary: The matter of a Jew in and of itself contains mercy, modesty, and benevolence. The form of a Jew is a manifestation of feelings of holiness.

Now, let's move on to the explanation of what Rashbi said...

Three Levels

Rashbi turned to his son and said, "Those people who were here are "people of form." Go ask them for a blessing."

Within his words we find that there are three general levels (from lowest to highest)...

Parashat Shemini - The Choice Being

1. Matter without form. 2. Matter with form. 3. Form without matter. We'll explain...

The first level:

“Matter without form” – This is a Jew who behaves with *derech erez*, is modest, humble, and merciful, and does kindness with others. However, their heart is impenetrable, sealed. No manifestation of feelings of holiness is revealed within them.

Of course, as in all spiritual matters, there are endless levels in this too. There are Jews who, although they haven't merited any such feelings, sometimes merit feelings of holiness during prayer, alternatively, there are those who merit them more often, and yet, there are those who don't merit them at all.

The second level:

“Matter with form” – This is a Jew who, in addition to the

previous level, also merited the revelation of feelings of holiness. However, since they are still connected to their physical body, sometimes, the physicality of the body obscures the light of the feelings, and at that moment, they disappear.

The third level:

“Form without matter” – This is a Jew who merited refining the physicality of their body to such an extent that their body doesn't interfere at all with the manifestation of feelings of holiness, and they illuminate within them perpetually and in a revealed fashion.

This is what Rashbi revealed to his son, “Those are people of form without matter!”

Before we move on to this week's parasha, we'll need another introduction...

The Choice Being

The entire world was created in six days, including angels, galaxies, stars, living life, rain, and all the magnificent beings we see today.

Out of all of them, the choice being and crown of creation, is man.

The reason that man is the choice being is because he's the

only creation that unites two different creations within him, the lofty spiritual soul and the lowly physical body, spirit and matter.

The soul of a Jew, the spirituality within him, is “Hashem’s candle,” a spark of infinite light. Hashem created man “in the image of Elokim,” blew into him from Himself, and gave him of His wisdom.

This lofty spark within the Jew burns in his heart throughout his life, igniting within him the longing for a spiritual existence and a higher purpose, a life of holiness and purity... Certainly, if a Jew were to fulfill his role correctly, he would safeguard that spark entrusted to him, lest its light be extinguished...

When a Jew merits to follow their soul that was hewn from on high, from the pure, exalted,

eternal source, in which there’s no blemish nor sin, and learns Torah and fulfills mitzvot, their deeds have the power to awaken divine holiness, which then rests upon and sanctifies them.

However, when a Jew follows the physical desires of their body, transgresses the higher instructions of the Torah, and holds on to negative *middot*, the power of their deeds cause the spirit of impurity to awaken in the world of the *kelipot*, which then rests upon and endlessly impurifies them...

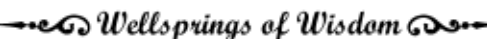
In our parasha, the Torah begs, “Take good care of the divine soul entrusted to you, lest its light be extinguished!”

The Torah then continues and teaches us how we can preserve it, how we can merit the divine form to shine within us, and this is through the *avodah* of eating...

Food

HaRav Yoram Michael Abargel zt”l writes...⁷

A significant part of our parasha deals with the holy *avodah*



7. Imrei Noam (Shemini, Maamar 2-3).

that Aharon HaKohen and his sons did on the 1st of Nissan, the day the Mishkan was erected, as well as the manifestation of the Shechina in the Mishkan, as it says, “The glory of Hashem appeared to all the people” (Vayikra 9:23).

Towards the end of the parasha, the Torah speaks about the sanctity of foods, and specifies which animals are permitted to eat and which animals are forbidden, and ends this matter by saying, “You shall sanctify yourselves and you shall be holy, for I am Holy, and you shall not impurify yourselves with any creeping creature that crawls on the earth: For I am Hashem, who brought you up from the land of Egypt” (Vayikra 11:44-45).

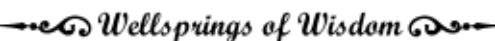
The combination of these two matters, the manifestation of the Shechina in the Mishkan and the sanctity of foods, in the same parasha, comes to teach us that anyone who wants to merit having the Holy Shechina rest upon them as it rested in the Mishkan, must be

very careful with all their strength in the matter of the sanctity of the foods they put in their mouth.

The reason for this is that the Holy Shechina rests upon a person according to the level of the holiness of their limbs, and the holiness of a person’s limbs depends greatly on the holiness of the foods they eat, “for all the food or drink that a person digests immediately turns into blood and flesh.”⁸ When a person is careful to eat only kosher foods, refine, holy blood and flesh are formed within their body. The blood that flows through their veins is full of *Elokut*, and inevitably, the Shechina is willing to rest upon them and never leaves them.

On the other hand, a person who also eats foods that aren’t kosher, the divine knowledge that Hashem gave to humans departs from them, and they remain coarse and detested...

Rabbi Moshe Chaim Luzzatto zt”l, the Ramchal, writes⁹ that



8. Tanya - Likutei Amarim (Ch. 8).

9. Mesillat Yesharim (Ch. 11).

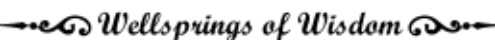
forbidden foods bring impurity into a person's heart and soul to the point that Hashem's *kedusha* departs and distances from them... causing the true knowledge and spirit of wisdom that Hashem bestows to the pious, as it says, "For Hashem grants wisdom" (Mishlei 2:6) to depart from them. Thus, they're left animalistic and materialistic, sunk in the coarseness of this world. Forbidden foods are worse in this regard than all other sins since they literally enter a person's body and become their flesh.

Thus, *chazal* say,¹⁰ "Anyone who resides outside of Eretz Israel is considered as though they worship idols." For outside of Eretz Israel, it's very difficult to keep kosher. Unfortunately, eighty percent of Jews outside of Israel eat non-kosher foods. Even those who try very hard to keep kosher inside their home fail to do so when eating outside. Thus, Hashem's *kedusha* and the true knowledge depart from them (as

the Ramchal said above), and they're considered idol worshippers.

Shlomo HaMelech says, "One who guards their mouth and tongue, guards their soul from troubles" (Mishlei 21:23). The Ibn Ezra and Rabbeinu Yona explain the redundancy of the words "their mouth and tongue" that the mouth must be guarded from forbidden foods, and the tongue must be guarded from forbidden speech, and whoever guards both "guards their soul from troubles."

Furthermore, the initials of the words "שִׁמֹר פִּי וּלְשׁוֹנוֹ" (guards their mouth and tongue) have the same gematria¹¹ as the word "שְׁכִינָה" (Shechina) to imply that a person who guards their mouth from forbidden foods and their tongue from forbidden speech, merits having the Shechina rest upon them. Therefore, anyone who truly sanctifies themselves in the matter of food, fear and terror fall upon all their enemies and those who seek them



10. Ketubot 110b.

11. Including the *kolel*, meaning, plus another 1 for the actual word.

Parashat Shemini - Food

harm. No person can stand before them because of the intensity of the Shechina that rests upon them.

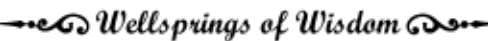
Even carnivorous animals, such as lions and tigers, if they encounter a person who truly sanctifies themselves in the matter of food, they'll immediately be terrified of them and won't be able to harm them in any way.

This is what *chazal* were referring to when they said,¹² "A wild animal has no power over a person until they appear to it as an animal." That is, when a person impurifies themselves with non-kosher foods, the "image of G-d" given to them on the day of their birth departs from them, and in its place, the image of an animal is seen upon their face. At that time, a wild animal has the ability to overpower them because they appear to it as an animal. But when a person truly sanctifies themselves in the

matter of food, inevitably, the "image of G-d" isn't removed from them, and therefore, terror falls upon any wild animal that encounters them because of the "image of G-d" that is seen upon their face.

When King Darius decreed that anyone who prayed to Hashem would be thrown into the lions' den, they caught Daniel praying to Hashem in his home and threw him into the den with starving lions.¹³ Hashem performed an immense miracle for him by closing the lions' mouths, and they didn't harm him at all, and thus his life was saved.¹⁴

Daniel was worthy of the above because he truly sanctified himself in the matter of food. During all the years that he stayed in the king's palace, from the time he was a child, he guarded his mouth lest he be impurified by forbidden foods that were served to him there. The only thing he ate was legumes,¹⁵



12. Shabbat 151b.

13. The Yalkut Shimoni (Tehillim, Remez 787) says that there were 1,464 lions in that den !

14. See The Book of Daniel (Ch. 6).

15. See The Book of Daniel (Ch. 1).

therefore, the Holy Shechina didn't leave him for a moment, and the "image of G-d" never parted from his face. Thus, when the lions saw him, terror fell upon them...

Hashem rewarded Daniel measure for measure. Just as Daniel closed his mouth and didn't eat forbidden foods, Hashem also closed the mouths of the lions and didn't let them devour Daniel.

The Ramchal ends his words concerning the caution one must take regarding the food they eat, saying¹⁶ that any person with a brain in their head should consider forbidden food as poison or food that has been mixed with poison. For in such a circumstance, would a person be lenient on themselves to eat from such food if there were even the slightest possibility that it may be poisonous?! Certainly, they wouldn't be lenient! And if they were lenient, they would be considered a complete fool! Forbidden food, as we explained,

is literally poison to the heart and soul. If so, who, if they possess common sense, would allow themselves to be lenient in a circumstance where the food might be forbidden? About this it is said, "Put a knife in your maw if you are a glutton" (Mishlei 23:2).

Therefore, when a person buys meat, they should buy the meat with the best *kashrut* (kosher supervision) without making any compromises or leniencies. They shouldn't trust all kinds of questionable *hechsherim* (kosher certifications). Although it will cost them a little more, it's worth it, for those who are very careful about kosher food will never have problems with their children. If you see a family that was very successful in educating their children, know that it's because they were very careful about eating kosher foods. Therefore, with regard to kosher food, it's not worth being lenient in any way, for this is the foundation of the Jewish home.¹⁷

~*~* Wellsprings of Wisdom *~*~

16. Mesillat Yesharim (Ch. 11).
 17. **HaRav** Yoram continues, saying...
The foundation of Am Israel's holiness depends on the *kashrut* of the food they eat.

Therefore, the verse specifically states, "For I am Hashem, who **brought you up** from the land of Egypt" (Vayikra 11:45) – A term of elevation. Whereas, in all other

Parashat Shemini - Food

Therefore, immediately after the Torah speaks of the sanctity of foods comes parashat Tazria, which opens with the verse speaking about the birth of children, as it says, “A woman who conceives and gives birth to a son” (Vayikra 12:2). This is to imply that according to the extent of the parents’ caution and sanctification in the matter of foods, so will be the magnitude of the holiness of the children that will be born to them.

If, *chas v’shalom*, parents disregard this and eat wherever they want without questioning the *kashrut* of the restaurant, they thus cause a massive spiritual downfall in their precious children. Such children lose all excitement in matters of holiness

and spirituality, and in place of a passionate drive to serve Hashem, apathy and coldness take hold.

Therefore, any heartfelt person who is concerned about their own spiritual welfare and the spiritual welfare of their children shouldn’t eat at every place, nor at every meal that happens to be in front of them... Rather they should always check carefully what they eat, and also with whom they eat.

There are people who keep kosher at home, yet when they go out to eat in a restaurant, they don’t think about what they’re eating. Some say, “I’m eating a **beef** steak!” But they don’t think about the fact that the cow wasn’t

~ Wellsprings of Wisdom ~

places, the Torah uses the term, “Who has **taken you out** of the land of Egypt” (Vayikra 19:36.), “Who **brought you out** of the land of Egypt” (Vayikra 22:33), indicating that the spiritual elevation of Am Israel is dependent upon the sanctity of their food.

Similarly, *chazal* say (Bava Metzia 61b): Hashem said, “Had I brought up Am Israel from Egypt only so that they wouldn’t

become impure by consuming creeping creatures, it would be sufficient for Me.” Rashi comments that Am Israel is elevated because they don’t eat creeping creatures. Therefore, the term “bring up” is used, demonstrating their great superiority.

The virtue of Am Israel over all other nations is the holiness of their food. They don’t defile their soul with the eating of bugs, insects, and other impure animals...

Parashat Shemini - Remain Silent

slaughtered according to Halacha, and what about the butter that was spread on the steak while on the grill? Some say, "I'm only eating fish!" But they don't think about the non-kosher oils poured on the fish, nor about the pork chop that was just cooked on that same grill or in that same oven. Some say, "You're right that it's not a kosher restaurant, but it's a vegan restaurant!" But they don't think about all the tiny insects and worms in their lettuce and other vegetables that weren't washed according to Halacha, and each insect consumed is the same thing as eating pork (even worse)!¹⁸

If a person stops at a gas station to buy a hot drink or a sandwich, etc., they should make sure that there's no *chalav nochri* mixed in

the drink and that there's no non-kosher meat in the sandwich, for unfortunately, such things are also sold at gas stations in Israel, and one should be alert to this.

Likewise, if a person is flying internationally, and for whatever reason, it's not possible to arrange a kosher meal on the flight, they should prepare kosher food to take along in advance and not partake in the questionable or non-kosher food being offered onboard...

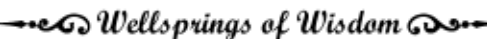
May Hashem bless us with holy children...

Now what's left is to seek a *tikkun* for those who've already fallen in the past and have eaten forbidden foods...

Remain Silent

The complete *tikkun* for anyone who, in the past, ate non-kosher foods, is to be shamed

and yet remain silent. For being embarrassed or insulted and remaining absolutely silent has the



18. With every piece of pork a person eats, *chas v'shalom*, they transgress one Torah prohibition. However, every insect that a person eats, *chas v'shalom*, if it comes from the water, they transgress

four Torah prohibitions, if it comes from the ground, they transgress five Torah prohibitions, and if it flies in the air, they transgress six Torah prohibitions. One insect is like eating pork 4-6 times!

Parashat Shemini - David Melech Israel

power to purify the soul from all the impurity of forbidden foods.

The reason for this is that the food that a person eats becomes their blood and flesh afterward, thus, the blood created from a person who ate forbidden foods

is impure and blemished. Their *tikkun* is thus that their impure blood be shed by being shamed and remaining quiet, and then being filled back up with clean, pure blood.

We'll elaborate...

David Melech Israel

On the sixth day of creation, Adam HaRishon was created. He was given an enormous soul, which included all the souls of Am Israel.

Hashem said to him, “Adam, you’re located here in the “divine zone.” Here everything is clean and pure, sanctified and exalted. I want to command of you only one thing: Do not eat forbidden foods.”

Adam HaRishon asked, “What food is forbidden?”

Hashem replied, “The fruits of the tree of knowledge of good and evil are forbidden foods.”

Adam HaRishon sat in Gan Eden, and the light of the Shechina (the highest level of the Shechina) shone through his refined body. All the creatures around

him were dazzled by the power of the light that shone through him. They stood around him and said, “*Kadosh ! Kadosh !...*”

Adam HaRishon was shocked, “What are you guys doing ? ! I’m a created being like you ! Let’s gather and sing to the Creator of the world !”

All the creatures joined in song. All but one...

The snake stood on the side and readied the poison... Ultimately, it succeeded in causing Adam HaRishon to transgress Hashem’s command of not eating forbidden food...

Adam’s massive soul shattered into pieces. A part flew upwards, a part remained within him (for in the

Parashat Shemini - David Melech Israel

end, he remained alive), and a part fell into the *kelipot's* abyss...

One of the souls that fell into the *kelipot's* abyss was the soul of David HaMelech. Since it was an enormous soul, the *kelipot* devoutly guarded it so that it wouldn't come to this world...

Many years passed with David's soul still in the confinement of the *kelipot*... Then, finally, the time came for him to leave captivity...

In the year 2854, from the creation of the world, a baby was born to Ishai and Nitzevet bat Adel, and they called him David.

David merited that from his childhood, he received innumerable humiliations and experienced all possible hardships and troubles: loneliness, rejection, embarrassment, harassment, defamation, etc... But the most horrible feeling of them all was, "No one loves me!"¹⁹

~ Wellsprings of Wisdom ~

19. Ishai, David's father, was a holy tzaddik, as the Gemara (Shabbat 55b) testifies that he was one of four people in history who all their life, from the moment of their birth to the moment of their death, didn't sin even once!

Ishai married Nitzevet by Adel and had seven sons. One day, he sat and studied the verse, "Neither an Ammonite nor a Moavite may enter the congregation of Hashem" (Devarim 23:4). He was shocked, "My grandmother, Rut, is a Moavite! According to this, it turns out that my sons aren't fit to enter the congregation..."

(This isn't correct according to Halacha, for the Torah prohibited specifically the males and not the females, as the Gemara says (Yevamot 76b), "An Ammonite man is forbidden from entering the congregation, **but not an Ammonite woman**. Likewise, a **Moavite man** is forbidden from

entering the congregation, **but not a Moavite woman**." Rut was a Moavite woman convert who married a Jewish man, thus, all her descendants are fit to enter the congregation without any doubt. However, in Ishai's generation, this Halacha wasn't yet clarified, therefore, Ishai feared that his descendants might be forbidden to enter the congregation).

He wanted at least one of his sons to be permitted to marry a pure Jewish girl without uncertainties. Thus, he designated for himself a maidservant and thought to free her later on, which would cause their child to be fit to enter the congregation.

Ishai called his maidservant and said, "My daughter, prepare yourself to receive a bill of emancipation..."

His maidservant went and told Nitzevet, Ishai's wife, what Ishai's plans were. Nitzevet replied, "What can I do? It's been

Parashat Shemini - David Melech Israel

three years since he separated himself from me.” The maidservant answered, “Go adorn yourself. Then you enter, and I’ll sneak out...” Ishai’s wife conceived...

Rabbi Eliyahu Kitov writes that after about three months, his sons saw that their mother was pregnant, and they said to their father Ishai, “Look, our mother is pregnant after committing an act of adultery. We want to kill her! Her and her fetus!” Ishai’s heart was filled with sorrow. He then said to his sons, “Let her give birth so that others don’t spread false rumors about your genealogy. As for the child, he’ll be detested and a slave to you.”

Even though they didn’t make his “invalidity” public, he told them that the child would be “detested and a slave” so that he wouldn’t enter the congregation, for they thought he was a *mamzer*...

While David laid in his cradle, his mother whispered in his ears, “You are pure, my son, holy from birth, and so is your mother. Please, don’t break when the suffering that awaits you arrives. Accept them with love and take refuge in Hashem. Don’t ever be ashamed...” David heard every word...

He grew up and perceived the division between him and all his brothers. He knew what had happened. But he received it with *emuna*...

They distanced him, and he knew why, but he knew they were doing it for the sake of heaven. He loved them secretly in his heart, for he said to himself, “They don’t abhor me, rather the sin, and the sin is abominable in my eyes just the same.”

Since there wasn’t a person in the entire nation who knew why David was being distanced by his entire family, they let their hearts assume many false things about him and gathered many accusations against him. At first, they did so with uncertainty. But since there was no one to deny their accusations, their uncertainty became certain, and every Jew “knew” that David was “wicked.” No longer was anyone afraid to harm David’s honor, for everyone said, “The shame of David is the honor of the house of Ishai. The people that know him the best hate him, how much more so should we!”

David grew up, and then his father and brothers called him over and said, “Take the sheep, and go graze them in the Judean desert!” They intended that while he wandered in the Judean desert, some wild animal would come and finish the job...

One night, David was walking with his sheep in the Judean desert when suddenly, he saw yellow eyes staring at him in the darkness, and as if shot from a bow, four hungry lions pounced on him... That was his first encounter with wild animals. Later, a furious bear and her cubs also arrived...

But they didn’t hurt David, on the contrary, David killed them, as it says, “Also the lion, also the bear, your servant has killed” (Shmuel I 17:36).

And David’s life of shame continued... When he would return to his parent’s house, two tables would be set, one for all the family members and one for David. There, in the corner of the house, he sat alone and ate his meals. This is

Even after he was anointed king, people continued to shame and slander him, as he himself testified, “More numerous than the hairs of my head are those who hate me for no reason. Many are my enemies who want to destroy me because of their falsehood. Thus, I must return (as a bribe) that which I never stole” (Tehillim 69:5).

He wasn’t just isolated here in this world, but was also isolated from the upper worlds! *Chazal* say²⁰ that David slept only during the first half of the night and only for a few minutes,

and even during this “nap,” he would have many nightmares...²¹

Then, at the age of 48, the famous incident with Bat Sheva occurred, and from that time, *Ruach HaKodesh* departed from him until the day of his death! Each and every day, he would shed tears and eat bread dipped in ashes.²²

Not only that, but for 13 years, David was terribly ill and bedridden, and every day, seven pillows were changed under him because of the amount of pus that exited his body...²³

And the suffering and persecutions continued...

Shimi ben Gera

David HaMelech was reaching the end of his life at 67 years old (David lived 70 years) when his son, Avshalom, rebelled against him. In a quick, brilliant

operation, he conquered the palace and sat on the royal throne!

David HaMelech fled with a handful of his loyalists...

~ Wellsprings of Wisdom ~

how David described his feelings, “I’ve become a stranger to my brothers, an alien to my mother’s children” (Tehillim 69:9)... In my parents’ house, I was vile and despised, disgraced and detestable...

- Sefer HaToda’ah (Ch. 29).

20. Brachot 4a.

21. See Brachot 55b.

22. Tanna Devei Eliyahu Rabbah (Ch. 2).

23. Reshit Chochma (Shaar HaTeshuva, Ch. 3).

Then, during the escape, they passed by the house of an eminent man... Shimi ben Gera. He walked towards them and began to debase and humiliate David...

The Zohar²⁴ reveals that although David HaMelech was accustomed to being shamed and having enemies, he had never felt such sorrow as the sorrow he felt in his heart from the insults of Shimi...

“Avishai ben Tzeruyah said to the king: Why should this dead dog curse my master, the king? Let me go over there and remove his head” (Shmuel II 16:9).

David’s answer was then engraved throughout all the worlds, “And the king said: What does my matter have to do with you, son of Tzeruyah? He is cursing me

because Hashem said to him: Curse David” (Shmuel II 16:10)!

Rabbi Shneur Zalman of Liadi zt”l explains...²⁵

“That thought that transpired in Shimi’s heart and mind (to curse David in front of all his people) came down from Hashem, and the breath of His mouth, which animates all the hosts [of heaven], animated the spirit of Shimi at the time he spoke those words to David. For if the breath of Hashem’s mouth were to depart, even for a moment, from the spirit of Shimi, he wouldn’t have been able to speak at all.”

Since David believed with complete *emuna* that Shimi was merely Hashem’s messenger, he forgave him wholeheartedly...²⁶

—*~* Wellsprings of Wisdom *~*—

24. Zohar HaKadosh (Mishpatim 107b).

25. Tanya - Iggeret HaKodesh (Epistle 25).

26. **The** Sefer HaChinuch writes (Mitzvah 241)...

“You shall not take revenge or bear a grudge against your people” (Vayikra 19:18). It’s from the foundation of the mitzvah that one knows in their heart

that everything that happens to them, whether good or bad, is from Hashem. No person can do anything to them without Hashem willing it. Therefore, when another person causes them sorrow or hurts them, one should know that their own sins caused it, and that Hashem is the One who ordained this for them. Thus, one shouldn’t think of taking revenge against them, for they’re

At that moment, the heavens proclaimed that David HaMelech would be the fourth leg of the *Merkava* (Divine Chariot)!

On a side note... The Zohar asks, “Shimi ben Gera was a great talmid chacham (in terms of the Zohar!). If so, how did he behave in such a manner?”

To which the Zohar answers, “This matter, that Hashem placed in his heart to do such a thing, descended from a very lofty place in heaven, and all of this was for David’s benefit. For Shimi caused him to do to complete teshuva, totally breaking his heart, and he shed many tears out of the sorrow of his heart before Hashem...”

What's It Got to Do with You ?

A Jew who desires to cleanse themselves of all the forbidden foods they have eaten, must accept embarrassments with love !

Shame causes their face to turn pale and their blood to be shed... When they accept the embarrassment or insult out of complete *emuna* and submission, Hashem considers it as if they had sacrificed themselves on the supreme altar – The altar of *emuna* !

When a person accepts the shame caused to them by their wife or husband, they should close

their eyes and repeat (not in front of them in arrogance, rather on the side, by oneself, in submission and humility before Hashem... “And the king said: **What does my matter have to do with you, son of Tzeruyah ? He is cursing me because Hashem said to him: Curse David... !**”

“**What** does my matter have to do with you” – They (their spouse) aren’t associated with what’s going on at all. They aren’t even a participant in the incident !

Hashem Himself is shouting at me through them, to cleanse

~ Wellsprings of Wisdom ~

not the cause of their pain, rather the sin is the cause, as David said, “Leave him alone and let him curse, for Hashem

told him [to curse me]” (Shmuel II 16:11), he attributed the incident to his own sin, and not to Shimi ben Gera...

me of my sins, iniquities, and transgressions. To cleanse me of all the forbidden foods I ate.

“What does my matter have to do with you” – Only I am to blame for everything. I need to fix myself. I need to make more of an effort to serve Hashem.

Then, by virtue of the *emuna* that Hashem, the Supreme King, watches over them with Divine Providence and personal supervision to purify and cleanse them, their heart will be filled with refined joy, and from their heart will burst forth song...

Shabbat Shalom !





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Shemini

24th of Nissan, 5783



City	Candle Lighting	Shabbat Ends	Rabbeinu Tam
New York	7:16 pm	8:18 pm	8:48 pm
Miami	7:25 pm	8:20 pm	8:56 pm
Los Angeles	7:05 pm	8:03 pm	8:37 pm
Montreal	7:21 pm	8:27 pm	8:53 pm
Toronto	7:41 pm	8:46 pm	9:13 pm
London	7:39 pm	8:51 pm	9:09 pm
Jerusalem	6:52 pm	7:42 pm	8:31 pm
Tel Aviv	6:49 pm	7:40 pm	8:27 pm
Haifa	6:49 pm	7:39 pm	8:27 pm
Be'er Sheva	6:48 pm	7:39 pm	8:26 pm

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HaRav Yoram Abargel zt"l*

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