



## Parashat Shemini

מתוך "ליקוטי שמואל"

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# Guarding Against Feeling Too Good About Oneself

Parshas [Shemini](#)

Rabbi Yissocher Frand

In this week's Parsha we have the culmination of the Seven Days of Consecration, used to dedicate the Mishkan. On the eighth day, Moshe called Aharon and told him which offerings to bring to finish off the process of consecration. After they did everything, Moshe said: "This is the matter you shall do so that the Glory of G-d will appear upon you." [Vayikra 9:6]

The Yalkut on this pasuk [verse] interprets these words to mean "That Evil Inclination you should remove from your hearts." What specific Evil Inclination (Yetzer Hara) is Moshe referring to over here?

(Several years ago, we offered an interpretation from the Netziv on this question. This year we will be giving different insight, found in the Drash V'Yun, by the Reisher Rav.)

The pasuk in Koheles says, "There is no righteous person in the world who does (only) good, and does no evil" [Koheles 7:20]. The Reisher Rav says that perhaps the pasuk means that even when a person does a mitzvah, there is always the chance that in the mitzvah itself, he will come to do some kind of a sin.

A person can give Tzedakah and feel good about himself, but the Evil Inclination can creep in, and he'll feel too good about himself and become haughty. So, the pasuk means that even when a person does a great act, it can be tainted by the wrong emotions or by feelings of gayvah or the like.

It was at this time, says the Drash V'Yun, that Klal Yisroel were susceptible to such an Evil Inclination. Imagine the feeling. Here

they were, a people who had just come out of slavery, and now they built this beautiful edifice, with beautiful vessels. There was a very real worry that they would feel too good about themselves. There was the chance that they would succumb to the emotions of “my strength and the power of my hand made all this might” [Devorim 8:17] — it was our power, it was our money, it was our dedication, etc., etc.

It was at this juncture that Moshe tells them, “That famous Yetzer Hara” — the Evil Inclination of feeling too good about doing a Mitzvah, too smug and too satisfied about oneself — is what you have to watch out for at this moment of erecting the Mishkan.

## A Story Stressing The Reward For Meticulous Kashrus Observance

Parshas [Shemini](#)

Rabbi Yissocher Frand

The pasuk at the conclusion of the section of forbidden foods listed at the end of the parsha says: “For I am Hashem Who brings you up from the land of Egypt to be a G-d unto you; you shall be holy for I am holy.” [Vayikra 11:45] Rashi cites the teaching of the House of Rav Yishmael that the pasuk means to say, had I not brought Israel out of Egypt for any reason other than that they do not make themselves impure through eating the forbidden foods as do the other nations, it would have been sufficient cause for them to have been redeemed.

It is difficult to OVERSTATE the importance of the laws of Kashrus. It is likewise difficult to UNDERSTATE the great harm done to a Jewish soul by the consumption of forbidden foods. I once heard Rabbi Berel Wein quote a statistic published by the

Jewish National Fund that today 80% of their money comes from only 10% of the Jewish population. Despite the fact that Jews have a reputation for being generous, that may have been the case 40, 50, 60, or 80 years ago. Today, the eating of pig, shellfish, crab, and improperly slaughtered meat that the Jewish people have been consuming over the past 50 years has taken a toll on the Jewish soul. The “Yiddishe neshama” is not what it used to be because of the corrosive effect of forbidden food entities.

That having been said, I read the following story that was written by Rabbi Yosef Chaim Sonnenfeld, a disciple of the Kesav Sofer. The Kesav Sofer, in turn, was the son of the Chasam Sofer who told this story in the name of his teacher, Rav Nosson Adler. The story took place in the late 1700s or the early 1800s.

There were two successful Jewish merchants who lived in Pressburg, the city of the Chasam Sofer. They had their own fleet of boats, in which they used to travel the world in pursuit of their import/export business. These merchants were once arrested by Spanish authorities off the coast of Spain with their ship full of merchandise. At that particular point in time, piracy was rampant in the Mediterranean Sea, and therefore, smuggling and piracy were common. The Jews and their merchandise were detained because of the (false) suspicion that their goods were pirated or smuggled.

They were brought into the port of Barcelona to be held in custody while the investigation proceeded as to whether their cargo was legitimate. They were lucky, however, in that at that time, the Spanish Government had very good relations with the Austro-Hungarian Empire and its Emperor, Franz-Yosef. Based on the good diplomatic relations, the Jews were not thrown into jail. They were treated very respectfully while they were being detained. They were assigned to two customs officials, who would take care

of them while the investigation proceeded. Each was taken home by one of the customs officials to relax and be served lunch.

There was only one problem. Despite the fact that this story took place between two and three hundred years after the Inquisition, the Inquisition was still alive and well in Spain. Under the terms of the Inquisition, any person in Spain suspected of being Jewish was given the choice of either converting to Catholicism or being burned in the town square. The merchants realized that if their Jewish identities were revealed, they would face this horrible choice.

Therefore, the Jews disguised themselves so that they would look like Gentiles. As mentioned before, each merchant was assigned to a different customs agent. The customs agent had his servant serve them lunch, consisting of chicken and wine. The customs agent noticed that his guest turned white as a ghost. He then told his guest to follow him to the attic. When they got to the attic, he told him, "I know that something is wrong. You turned white as a ghost when my servant brought you your food. You are Jewish, aren't you?" Before the guest had a chance to answer, the customs agent told him, "So am I." It just so happened that this customs agent was a descendant of the Marranos, who outwardly converted to avoid expulsion from Spain, but secretly tried to maintain their Jewish identity and Jewish traditions. To prove his point, he closed the door of the attic, pulled up a floor board and took out a shiny and sharp knife used in ritual slaughter ('chalif'). He told his guest, "The chicken we are about to eat, I personally slaughtered it!" Kosher LMehadrin!

The Jewish merchant was flabbergasted at the personal Divine Providence (Hashgocha Pratis) that sent him specifically to this man's house! He ate his meal, the investigation concluded that there was no problem with their merchandise, and both

merchants were released. The Jew met up with his partner and asked him about his experiences. The second Jew was very distraught. He admitted that he had to eat non-Kosher meat to preserve his appearance as a non-Jew. He had ruled for himself that this was a matter of life and death, and in such situations, one is not required to be a martyr to eat only kosher food. The first Jew told his friend, “The same thing happened to me, but I had the unbelievable fortune of being hosted by a secret Jew who was a Shochet, and I was able to eat kosher.”

The man who had to eat the non-Kosher meat was beside himself when he heard this story. “What was my sin, what was my iniquity that caused G-d to lead my partner to a secret observant Jew, and I was forced to eat nevilah?” When he got back to Pressburg, he went to his holy Rebbi, the Chasam Sofer, and told him the story. “What”, he asked his teacher, “did I do wrong in my life that I was put into a situation that I had to eat non-Kosher?”

The Chasam Sofer responded, “I have a tradition from my teacher, the holy Gaon Rav Nosson Adler, that any person who never put anything in his mouth that had the slightest question of being forbidden, the Almighty guarantees that this person will never come into a situation which would force him to eat something that is prohibited. If you are so careful that you never put anything questionable into your mouth, the ‘measure for measure’ reward is that the Almighty will see to it that you, in fact, never have to eat anything prohibited.”

The Chasam Sofer concluded, “It must be that some time in your past, you must have eaten something forbidden or something about which there was at least a doubt that it might be forbidden.” The merchant responded, “Rebbi, it cannot be. It is not true!” The Chasam Sofer insisted: “Think hard.” Finally, the merchant admitted, “There was one incident. When I was first married, my

wife made chicken for us. She brought me the chicken after she got it from the slaughterer and showed me a 'shaylah' [question] she had about the chicken. I was a young newlywed. I was ashamed to tell my wife that I did not know and that she should ask the Rabbi. I did have Semicha. I learned the laws of Shechita and of Tereifos. I looked at the chicken. I saw the shaylah. I said 'kosher.'

Being a newlywed, his wife did not trust him. She took the chicken to a Rav. She told the Rav, "My husband has Semicha, he learned the laws of Tereifa, and he says the chicken is Kosher. Is he right about that?" The Rav looked at the chicken, and it was not such a simple question, but he did not want to second-guess the newlywed husband, so he said, "Okay, your husband says it is kosher; you can rely on his opinion." The merchant told the Chasam Sofer, "I ate that chicken."

The Chasam Sofer exclaimed, "That is it! You put in your mouth something that had a possibility of being prohibited. That is why you forfeited the guarantee mentioned by Rav Noson Adler. The other merchant must have never put anything with a doubt of prohibition in his mouth. He had the guarantee from the Almighty that he would be protected from ever eating non-kosher food." But this is just an example of how careful we must be regarding putting something non-kosher into our mouths. Meticulous care in this matter yields fulfillment of the promise of the Almighty that we will never come to put something forbidden into our mouths.

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Written by Rabbi Moshe Kormornick

Someone once confessed to the Dubna Maggid that he does not feel Hashem's love at all. In fact, despite performing mitzvos and making time to learn Torah regularly, he does not feel *any* real connection to Him. The Dubna Maggid sensed that although this man kept many mitzvos, he also transgressed many more. "I'll explain your predicament in the following parable: A village man once found himself in a large city for the first time. He passed by a suit store and decided that he would buy a suit — his first ever. He walks in, and the storekeeper gives him a suit, telling him it's his size, and the man goes to try it on. A few minutes later, he walks out of the changing room. "Are you making fun of me?" the man demands of the storekeeper, "My size? It's far too small, I could only get the pants and jacket on, and I can barely move in them!" By now, the storekeeper is laughing, which only incenses the man further. "Let me explain," says the storekeeper after regaining his composure, "The suit fits you perfectly, I am sure of it, but you need to *remove* your old clothes *before* putting the new suit on. If you don't, then of course it will not fit!" The Dubna Maggid then explained that the same is true with our connection to Hashem. The more "old clothes" we are wearing — the more transgressions we are holding on to — the less room we have to put on a "new suit" to connect to Hashem.

This concept is found in the Gemara, which states that whenever someone transgresses a mitzvah, he creates a spiritual blockage in his heart, stifling his connection with Hashem (*timtum halev*).<sup>[1]</sup> This applies to every transgression; however, the Ramchal explains that *timtum halev* associated with eating non-kosher food is much more severe.<sup>[2]</sup>

Since eating non-kosher food is not one of the "worst" sins one can do (for instance, one is not required to give up one's life to avoid eating non-kosher food, unlike some other mitzvos), why is the spiritual blockage so serious? The Ramchal answers that by eating non-kosher food, or even "kosher food" prepared in a non-kosher manner, one is not only causing a blockage between him and his Creator in a spiritual sense, but by digesting such food, he is literally making the cause of this blockage a part of his physical being; essentially, bringing the cause of a stifled relationship with Hashem into his nature.

Therefore, when we are careful with our kashrus standards, we are not only preventing ourselves from erecting a barrier between Hashem and us, but we are showing that, despite a situation being easier, cheaper, or tastier, nothing compares to the importance of our relationship with Hashem!

[1] *Yoma* 39a. See also the *Maharal's Nesivos Olam, Netziv Tzedaka* 82.

[2] *Mesillas Yesharim*, ch. 11.

# ◆ ז' - שְׁמִינִי

Written by Anonymous

The sedra is called shemini; meaning ‘the 8th.’ The Maharal points out that the number 7 represents the natural world. There are 7 colors in the spectrum (rainbow) and 7 days of the week, representing filling the dimensions of time and space of our natural world. And the number 8 means being above nature. This is why the bris milah is on the 8th day; for that is the showing of our supernatural connection to HaShem. And the supernatural Chaunkah miracle was eight days too, as were there eight days to the inauguration of the mishkan; the supernatural means of ‘housing’ HaShem in this world.

# דג - סולם - פִּינָה

Written by Anonymous

We can learn deep meanings from everything that is written in the Torah. What can we learn from the criteria that make a fish kosher – ie, fins and scales? Rav Kuppitz shlit”a explains that the FINS cause the fish to swim in the right direction and guide its path and the SCALES act as a protection and filter system (ie, so that the nutrients etc., become absorbed in the fish and the waste and negative elements of its environment do not). So too every Jew needs FINS and SCALES to guide them and help them stay in the right direction and protect them from the harm and dangers that are found in every

environment. This may be best achieved through teachers, rebbes, good friends, Torah learning, and mussar.

## Humor

### **wrong way**

Shmerel was just driving down the one-way highway when his wife called him: "Shmerel, be careful. I heard there was a maniac in a car driving the wrong way." "One person?" asks shmerel in astonishment, everyone is driving the wrong way."

### **World War III**

The commanding officer at the Russian military academy (the equivalent of a 4-star general in the U.S.) gave a lecture on Potential Problems and Military Strategy. At the end of the lecture, he asked if there were any questions.

An officer stood up and asked, "Will there be a third world war? And, will Russia take part in it?"

The general answered both questions in the affirmative.

Another officer asked, "Who will be the enemy?"

The general replied, "All indications point to China."

Everyone in the audience was shocked.

A third officer remarked, "General, we are a nation of only 150 million, compared to the 1.5 billion Chinese. Can we win at all, or even survive?"

The general answered, "Just think about this for a moment: In modern warfare, it is not the quantity of soldiers that matters, but the quality of an army's capabilities. For example, in the Middle East, we have had a few wars recently where 5 million Jews fought against 150 million Arabs, and Israel was always victorious."

After a small pause, yet another officer, from the back of the auditorium, asked, "Do we have enough Jews?"

## Yes, Sir!

Three-year-old Moishie Rubinstein had been told several times to get ready for bed. The last time his mother told him, she was very insistent. His response was, "Yes, sir!"

Correcting him, Moishie's mother said, "You would say, 'yes, sir,' to a man. I am a lady, so you would say 'yes, ma'am,' to a lady." To quiz him on this lesson, she then asked him, "What would you say to Abba?"

"Yes, sir!" came the reply.

"Then what would you say to Mommy?"

"Yes, ma'am!" he proudly answered.

"Good job! Now, what would you say to Bubbie?"

Little Moishie lit up and said, "Can I have a cookie?"

## You Are What You Eat

An old Jew lives in an apartment building in an otherwise Catholic neighborhood where all adhere to the restriction of eating only fish on Fridays. Every Friday afternoon, however, the Jew bakes chicken for his Shabbos meal.

The tantalizing aroma week after week is too much for his Catholic neighbors. They convince the local priest to deliver an ultimatum to the Jew: either he convert to Catholicism and eat only fish on Fridays, or he has to move. The Jew agrees to convert. Three times the priest sprinkles holy water on him declaring: "Born a Jew, raised a Jew, now a Catholic."

The ex-Jew's first Friday night as a Catholic comes around -- and the perfume of baking chicken wafts through the neighborhood. A neighborhood mob charges into the old man's apartment demanding,

"What's with the chicken? You're a Catholic now!"

He says, pointing to the roaster on the table, "That's no chicken; that's a fish."

"Who are you kidding!" they protest. "It's a chicken!"

The ex-Jew walks over to the sink, wets his hands, approaches the table and sprinkles the chicken three times, saying, "Born a chicken, raised a chicken, now a fish!"