

THE CHABAD WEEKLY

Vol 6, # 26

Maintaining Spiritual Purity

In the Torah portion Shemini, we learn about spiritual impurity as it pertains to food. The Rambam explains that a number of conditions must be met before food becomes spiritually impure:

Regarding food in general: a) it must be specifically intended for human consumption; b) the food must first have been soaked in liquid.

Furthermore, plants can only become impure after they are uprooted; as long as they are attached, even if by only one thin root, and as long as that root serves to convey nourishment, they are incapable of becoming impure.

All Torah laws serve as lessons in man's Divine service, for besides the actual laws, there are spiritual lessons to be learned therein as well. How are we to understand the above laws in terms of our spiritual service?

The entire concept of spiritual impurity only exists in relation to holiness. Since the forces of unholiness receive only a minimal life-force from above, they constantly seek to increase their vitality. This is done by latching onto an individual who has a greater degree of holiness than they, and making that person sin. The individual's consequent descent into spiritual impurity and unholiness gives the dark forces an extra measure of life.

It thus follows that only food intended for human consumption can become spiritually impure. That is, only the spiritual aspects of man are subject to impurity. For, in a broader sense, "food" alludes to all of man's needs, and the true life of man is his soul, with its spiritual needs - its food - being Torah study and the performance of mitzvos.

Then comes the second condition: that even this spiritual level is not subject to impurity until it is "soaked in liquid."

How are we to understand this?

Liquid, with its propensity for flowing from on high, denotes beneficence, wherein he that is on a higher plane descends to one who is on a lower level. In spiritual terms, this refers to an individual who does not keep his spirituality to himself (i.e. he is not "arid"), but descends and shares with those on lower levels.

Thus, when "man's food," his Torah and mitzvos, display the characteristics of liquid and descend to his fellow so that his neighbor too can become more spiritual, this increases his own measure of holiness. As a result, unholiness tries even harder to secure nourishment from such a person.

But this would mean that the more a person seeks to spiritually benefit not only himself but also his environment, the more exposed he will become to the blandishments of unholiness! This seems patently unfair.

This complaint is removed by the third condition: Plants, as long as they are attached... are incapable of becoming impure. In spiritual terms, this means that, as long as a man's service remains attached to its source and root in his soul's essence, he cannot become impure.

All of a Jew's spiritual actions derive from their "root and source," the essence of his soul, from whence emanates his Jewishness, his unshakable faith in G-d and his capacity to serve Him with total self-sacrifice. At this level, it is impossible for a person to become impure.

Man's "food," i.e., his spiritual service, must thus be constantly connected to its "root," the essential aspect of his soul. It is not enough that the "root" remains whole; the faith and self-sacrifice stemming from it must permeate his spiritual activity.

When a Jew lives in this manner, even if all that remains is "one thin root" (i.e., all other roots have - Heaven forbid - been sundered), the person can rest assured that he will derive nourishment from his soul's essence. For, since this remaining root is attached to the soul's essence in a manner by which growth can be nurtured, the individual can be confident that he will remain unsullied and pure. Based on Likkutei Sichos, Vol. XXVII, pp. 74-78 (harabbi.com)

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This Shabbat we will bless the month of Nisan, the month in which the Jewish people left Egypt. Two weeks before the Exodus, on the first of Nisan, G-d spoke to Moses and Aaron and told them to instruct the Jews to get ready for the great event.

How were they supposed to prepare themselves? By accepting G-d's commandments even before the Torah was given, especially the main mitzva in which they were then involved, the Passover offering. On Rosh Chodesh (the first of Nisan), the Jewish people resolved to fulfill G-d's command. The redemption from Egypt came in the middle of the night on the 15th, at the height of their observance of the mitzva.

In every generation a person must consider himself as having gone out of Egypt. The Final Redemption with Moshiach will be similar to our forefather's redemption from Egypt. To prepare ourselves, we must follow our forefathers' example and accept even now, during these last few moments of exile, the totality of G-d's mitzvot and resolve to observe them joyfully.

Rosh Chodesh is literally "the head of the month." Just as in the physical body the head is in charge of the various limbs and organs, so too does Rosh Chodesh set the tone for the entire month to come. On the first of Nisan, the head of the tribe of Judah, Nachshon ben Aminadav, brought an offering in the Sanctuary. This Nachshon ben Aminadav was the same person who jumped into the sea when the Egyptians were in hot pursuit. No mere body of water would prevent him from advancing toward Mount Sinai! Without hesitation he jumped in, and it split in two.

Rosh Chodesh Nisan, the first of the month of redemption, teaches us how to prepare for the Final Redemption with Moshiach. Like Nachshon, we will not be deterred by circumstances or difficulties. Instead, we will do exactly what G-d requires and asks of us, joyfully and willingly. (LChaim 5760, #613) – lchaimweekly.org

Reality Follows The Law

1) Fatted Geese for Passover

In Europe it was the custom to fatten up geese in the months preceding Passover, since many families refrained from using any oil other than goose fat. For six to eight weeks the geese would be fed a full bucket of corn twice a day, so that by the time the holiday arrived they would be so huge they could barely waddle.

Two religious giants of the early nineteenth century, the Chasam Sofer and the Yismach Moshe, differed in their rulings as to whether the practice of force-feeding rendered the geese not kosher. The question revolved around whether or not the sharp corn grains which were forced down the throats of the birds would damage the esophagus, thus making the birds treife (i.e., unable to live another year, and therefore not kosher to eat).

The Chasam Sofer held that the esophagus would not necessarily be damaged, and so he ruled the practice permissible. (Of course, the geese had to be carefully checked before being consumed to prove that they were kosher by the process described later.) His contemporary, the Yismach Moshe felt that since the corn kernels were sharp, the likelihood was that the birds would be rendered treife by the force feedings. He ruled that geese fed in this manner would not be permissible.

The two corresponded back and forth, each presenting learned arguments to prove his point, their dispute purely "for the sake of heaven." Finally, the Chasam Sofer suggested that instead of theorizing, they should put their rulings to a practical test. Each was to take ten geese and fatten them up. Then, they would slaughter them, fill the esophagi with air and float them in a full tub of water. If the esophagus was damaged air bubbles would escape into the water, thus proving that the bird was treife. If no bubbles were seen, the bird would be kosher.

When the birds were duly fattened and slaughtered, an amazing thing took place. All the birds from the household of the Chasam Sofer proved to be kosher, whereas all the birds of the Yismach Moshe tested treife!

So it was seen that the legal rulings of these two great giants dominated the physical reality, proving the axiom that the rulings of true Torah authorities determine the actuality of a physical situation. [Adapted by Yrachmiel Tilles from L'Chaim #217] – www.ascentofsafed.com

The chassid, R. Mordechai Horodoker, related: The first aphorism we heard from the Alter Rebbe when we arrived in Lyozna was: What is forbidden is forbidden, and what is permitted is unnecessary. For some three or four years we labored with this until we integrated this manner (of service) into the various aspects of our lives. Only then did we enter into yechidus, to ask for a path in avoda. (From Rebbe's Hayom yom 25 adar II).

When the Holy Temple was in existence, the Altar atoned for Israel; today, a person's table atones for him
— Talmud, Berachot 55a.

PARTICIPATE IN DAILY CLASSES

<u>Sunday</u>	8:00 AM	Gemara-Tractate Rosh Hashana (men)
<u>Monday</u>	8:00 PM	Chumash (men and women)
<u>Tuesday</u>	8:00 PM	Gemara-Tractate Makos (men)
<u>Wednesday</u>	8:30 PM	Halacha and Tanya (women)
<u>Thursday</u>	10:00 AM	Chassidus (women)
	8:00 PM	Class for Beverly Hills Highschool Students
<u>Daily</u>	6:45 to 7:15 AM	Chassidus
	Between Mincha and Maariv	Halacha

There will be no class next week on Wednesday, April 2.

DAILY MINYONIM:

Shacharit: Mon-Fri 6:00 AM and 7:30 AM
Sunday 9:00 AM
Mincha/Maariv: 6:10 PM

SHABBOS PARSHAS SHEMINI

Parshas Hachodesh

Shabbos Mevorachim

March 28, 2003

Candlelighting:(Los Angeles) 5:53 PM
Friday Mincha: 6:10 PM

LATEST TIME FOR SHEMA: 8:51 AM

SHABBAT MORNING

- ***Tehillim*** **8:00 AM**
- ***Shacharit*** **9:30 AM followed by Kiddush, Cholent & Farbrengen**
- ***Hagada*** **5:00 PM**
- ***Mincha*** **5:45 PM followed by Seuda Shlishit**
- ***Shabbat ends*** **6:53 PM**

Yartzheits: Dave Gross – Nissan 1

Happy Birthday to Yitzchok Einstein, Dovid Einstein & Binyomin Einstein.

GOOD SHABBOS!