
THE WEISS EDITION

שמיני

Shemini



No Instructions Necessary

Act Now, Perfect Later

Fins and Scales

A Fish's Tale

Light points

FROM THE TEACHINGS OF
THE LUBAVITCHER REBBE ON THE
WEEKLY TORAH PORTION

Lightpoints

לזכרון ולעילוי נשמת

הרה"ח הרה"ת הרה"ג ישעיהו זושא

ב"ר אברהם דוד ע"ה ווילהעלם

נלב"ע ביום ד' שבט התשפ"ב

תנצב"ה

שמיני

Shemini

10:1-2 | א-ב |

וַיִּקְחוּ בְנֵי אֶהֱרֹן נָדָב וַאֲבִיהוּא אֵישׁ מִחֶמְתּוֹ אֵישׁ מִחֶמְתּוֹ בְּהֵן אֵשׁ וַיִּשְׂימוּ
עָלֶיהָ קִטְוֶרֶת וַיִּקְרִיבוּ לְפָנָי ה' אֵשׁ זָרָה אֲשֶׁר לֹא צִוִּיתִי אֹתָם: וַתֵּצֵא
אֵשׁ מִלְּפָנָי ה' וַתֹּאכַל אוֹתָם וַיָּמָתוּ לְפָנָי ה' (ויקרא א-ב)

Aharon's sons, Nadav and Avihu, each took his pan, put fire in them, and placed incense upon it, and they brought before G-d foreign fire, which He had not commanded them. Fire went forth from before G-d and consumed them, and they died before G-d.

No Instructions Necessary

The deaths of Nadav and Avihu were not a *punishment* for their actions, according to one explanation suggested by the Ohr Hachaim.¹ Rather, they died by “Divine kiss,” in a manner akin to the deaths of Moshe and Aharon—i.e., they sensed

¹ Vayikra 16:1.

G-d's closeness to the point that their souls expired from sheer ecstasy.

According to this interpretation, the Torah's characterization of the incense offered by Nadav and Avihu as "foreign fire, which He had not commanded them" must be understood not as criticism of their offering, but as praise of its virtue. It is called "foreign" because it wholly *surpassed* the fixed service in the Mishkan, for unlike the sacrifices that Aharon offered upon G-d's explicit command, Nadav and Avihu offered their incense without requiring instruction. Their union with G-d was so deep and so much a part of them that they instinctively sensed G-d's desire and acted accordingly.

This explains why, after Aharon's sons' deaths, Moshe told him, "This is what G-d has said, 'I will be sanctified through those near to Me.'"² Based on the Midrash, Rashi explains that Moshe said to Aharon, "I knew that this House was to be sanctified through G-d's beloved ones, but I thought it would be either through me or through you. Now I see that they were greater than both of us!"³ Nadav and Avihu, through their profound union with G-d, elicited a Divine response even greater than the G-dly revelation elicited by the sacrifices that Moshe and Aharon offered. Their *instinctive* worship of G-d, without requiring instruction, caused "the House to be—truly and *inherently*—sanctified."

—*Likkutei Sichos, vol. 32, pp. 98-102*

2. Vayikra 10:3.

3. Rashi ad loc.

 11:17 | ז:א'

וְאֵת הַחֲזִיר כִּי מִפְּרִים פְּרָסָה הוּא וְשָׁסַע וְשָׁסַע
 פְּרָסָה וְהוּא גְרָה לֹא יִגַּר טָמֵא הוּא לָכֶם

And the pig, because it has a cloven hoof that is completely split, but will not regurgitate its cud; it is unclean for you.

Act Now, Perfect Later

In the future, says the Ohr Hachaim, the pig will regurgitate its cud and will thereby become a fully kosher animal (since it already has split hooves.) This is alluded to in the words of the verse above, “the pig [is unkosher] because it has a cloven hoof *but* will not regurgitate its cud,” which the Ohr Hachaim interprets to mean that it is unkosher only *so long as* it does not do so. Implied is that its nature and status is subject to change.⁴

Notably, the notion of a non-kosher animal being transformed in the future is unique to the pig, whose current “deficiency” is that it does not regurgitate its cud. Animals that regurgitate but lack split hooves will remain forbidden forever.

Why?

An animal that regurgitates its cud, thoroughly processing its food in order to make the food more digestible, symbolizes a person whose inner character is refined and up to par. In contrast, the pig does not process its food as thoroughly, but it bears the other sign of a kosher animal on the limbs with which it moves—it has split hooves. The pig thus represents a

4. This idea is mentioned in other Kabbalistic works as well. See Shnei Luchos Habris (Shaloh), Parshas Chayei Sarah; Me’orei Or, Ches, 6.

person whose inner character is unrefined but whose actions are nevertheless satisfactory.

In his current state, this person is deficient. In the future era of Moshiach, however, the entire universe will be elevated and refined, including the individual. Therefore, combined with his ample good deeds, this person will bear both spiritual qualities represented by the kosher signs, as is evidenced by the pig becoming fully kosher. Animals that only regurgitate their cud, however, will remain non-kosher even in the era of Moshiach, symbolizing that even exceptional inner refinement (such as that which the coming of Moshiach will bring) cannot compensate for a dearth of actual mitzvos performed and practical good accomplished.

—*Sefer Hasichos 5751, vol. 1, pp. 162–163, fn. 78*

 11:9 | ט:א'

אֵת זֶה תֹאכְלוּ מִכָּל אֲשֶׁר בַּמַּיִם כֹּל אֲשֶׁר לוֹ סַנְפִּיר
 וְקַשְׂקֶשֶׁת בַּמַּיִם בַּיַּמִּים וּבַנְּחָלִים אֲתֵם תֹאכְלוּ

From all that are in the water, you may eat any (living creature) that has fins and scales, whether it lives in the waters, seas or rivers; you may eat only these.

Fins and Scales

Two external features identify a kosher fish: a layer of scales that protect its body, and a set of fins that it uses to swim.

Fish symbolize Torah scholars. Like fish, which are always underwater, scholars are constantly immersed in the life-giving waters of the Torah.⁵ As such, the identifying features of a kosher fish also represent two qualities that are required of a Torah scholar, even when the “body” of his scholarship is undisputed.

The fish uses its fins to propel itself forward, quickly moving from one location to another. This represents the scholar’s obligation to expound upon the Torah knowledge that he has received from others, to discover new layers of Torah interpretation and to explore novel approaches to its application.

But fins are only one of the requisite signs of a kosher fish; it must also be covered by a protective layer of scales. The Talmud compares the fear of G-d to a preservative, without which one’s Torah study can spoil.⁶ Similarly, the protective scales that identify a kosher fish represent the fear of G-d that must accompany one’s Torah study.

5. See Berachos 61b.

6. Shabbos 31a.

This explains the spiritual significance of the Mishnah's statement that the presence of scales on a fish is an automatic proof that it is kosher, even though fins alone do not provide such proof. In the Mishnah's words, "Every fish that has scales also has fins, though there are some fish that have fins but have no scales."⁷ This means that fear of G-d not only saves your Torah scholarship from spoilage and ensures that it will have the desired effect on your life; it also guarantees that you will ultimately make your own contribution to the chain of authentic Torah wisdom.

—*Reshimos, no. 39*

7. Niddah 6:9.

 11:17 | י"א:ז

וְאֶת הַכּוֹס וְאֶת הַשְּׁלֶךְ וְאֶת הַיִּנְשׁוּף

The owl, the shalach and the little owl.

A Fish's Tale

What type of bird is the *shalach*, listed here among the non-kosher fowl?

“Our rabbis explained,” says Rashi, “that it draws up fish from the sea.” Its name, *shalach*, is similar to the Hebrew word for drawing out, *sholeh*, indicating that the manner in which this bird “draws out” is exceptional—it extracts its prey from deep within the water.

Rashi’s words also hint to something else that the *shalach* extracts from the sea in addition to its prey.

The Talmud⁸ relates that upon seeing a *shalach*, Rabbi Yochanan would proclaim, “Your judgments are vast depths!”⁹ The commentaries explain that Rabbi Yochanan was referring to G-d’s “judgment *in* the vast depths of the sea,” whereby He sends the *shalach* to kill those fish whose time has come to die. This Talmudic passage supports the Baal Shem Tov’s teaching that G-d’s providence is not limited to humans; it extends to all wildlife, plant life, and even inanimate creations.

This extraordinary concept is hinted to in Rashi’s words regarding the *shalach*. The Divine Providence that dictates every detail of creation hides beneath the veil of nature, like the vast and complex marine world that hides beneath the surface of the ocean. But Rabbi Yochanan’s statement teach-

8. Chullin 63a.

9. Tehillim 36:7.

es us that the workings of nature are neither random nor spontaneous; even the lives and behavior patterns of fish and birds are precisely coordinated by Divine plan. Hence, what “our rabbis explained”—Rabbi Yochanan’s insight about the *shalach* setting upon its prey as an emissary to carry out G-d’s judgment—“draws up” what is hidden beneath the analogical “sea,” extracting the Divine Providence found in the details of creation from beneath its veil.

—*Likkutei Sichos*, vol. 7, pp. 60–64



לעילוי נשמת
מרת ג'ואר
בת ר' יהודה ע"ה
עברי

נפטרה ערב ר"ח אייר 'יום כיפור קטן' ה'תשפ"ג
תנצב"ה

•

נדבת בני משפחתם שיחיו



THE LIGHTPOINTS PROJECT WAS MADE POSSIBLE
THROUGH THE GENEROUS SUPPORT of
Rabbi Moshe Aaron Tzvi and Mrs. Ruty Weiss