

PORTION	DATE	HEB DATE	TORAH	NEVIIM	KETUVIM
Sh'mini	30 Mar., 2019	23 Adar II 5779	Lev. 9:1-11:47	Eze. 36:16-38	John 11:47-57

This week's Torah portion Sh'mini, the Torah discusses the laws of the pure and impure animals which we will focus on today. The portion starts on the eighth day of the Tabernacle. For the past seven days, Moshe erected the Tabernacle and performed offerings for inauguration of Aharon as a High Priest and his sons as priests. The climax reached the eighth day as Aharon becomes a High Priest (Ch. 9). The sons of Aharon (Nadab and Abihu) brought "strange fire before YHWH" and they were killed (Ch. 10). Their sins were explained in detail previous year. Chapter 11 list prohibitions of eating and touching unclean animals, remedy for "any wooden object or garment or skin or sack, any object in which work is done" after coming in contact with an unclean animal. (Lev. 11:32) At the end, the Torah says that if a person touches an impure being, he must immerse himself in a mikveh (ritual bath) to purify himself. YHWH then reminds Yisraelites for the reason of His prohibitions.

Chapter 11 lists prohibition of eating unclean animals, fowls, and insets as well as not to touch its carcass. We are commanded to eat specific animals, birds, specific type of grasshoppers, and fish that has scales and fins (Deut. 14). The skeptics use this chapter whether the Torah is the Divine or not. Let's start with fish. There are thousands of fish living in the water. We are to eat ONLY the fish that has scales and fins. If a fish has scales, then it has to have fins. There are sea creatures that have fins but they do not have scales, i.e. eels, shrimps, belt fish, sharks, whales, etc. Some critics say that we are allowed to eat clams because the Torah does not list them. But their argument is false as a sea creature they do not have scales, thus they are prohibited for consumption. As of this day, the scientists have not discovered any sea creatures that have scales without fins.

As for land animals, we are commanded not to consume pigs, camel, rabbit, and hare. Then there is a general prohibition of not consuming any land animals that does not meet specific criteria. The four animals mentioned above has a split hoof, but they do not chew the cud. The land animals that we can consume MUST HAVE a split hoof and chew the cud. Now, a critic can argue, what if you are in an island and there are only wild boars and no edible fruits or vegetables. We are permitted to eat boars as our survival depended on it. Hashem values our life more than anything else. The sages recognized the Will of Hashem that if a person cut himself and a drop of blood comes from his finger, it is considered as a life-threatening and the person is permitted to seek for medical assistance.

The sages explain that eating prohibited animals have negative spiritual effect as these animals were designed for eating wastes leftover by people or animals. Let us say that a person's spiritual level is 100. Because an unclean animal has negative spirits, it will lower your spiritual level. In other words, that person will become more secular and unbelieving in Hashem despite their declaration to Hashem. The side effect is so substantial, Hashem commanded us that we should not come into contact with impurity.

Whereas, the animals permitted to eat, such as bull, sheep, goat, or doves has positive spiritual effect. As the *kohanim* brought offerings to Hashem and elevated the offerings that is "a sweet fragrance" to Hashem. Because He is not just elevating a person, but His creations as well from an inanimate object to plants, to animals, and to people. Thus, a person's spiritual level of faith in Hashem will also increase for him to be closer to Hashem.

Let us test now whether the Torah is Divine or not. The four animals listed in the Torah, the camel, the rabbit, the hare, and the pigs have only one sign. And that is these animals have a split hoof. But they do

not chew the cud. Therefore, they are considered as ritually impure, meaning they are not fit for consumption. The Torah could have said, “three” or “five” animals. The Torah lists only four types of animals, not three or five. They are the only animals that have a split hoof and does not chew cud. Only the Creator knows which animals have a split hoof and do not chew the cud.

The fish that are ritually clean must have scales and fins. If a fish does not have scales but has fins, it is considered ritually impure and not fit for human consumption. Of all the fishes in the water, only the Creator of the world knows this. Thus, it is proving that the Torah is Divine.

The clean and unclean animals have been known since the time of Noach as said in Genesis 7:2, “Of all the clean beasts take with you seven pairs, a male and his female; and of the beasts that are unclean two, a male and his female.” Paul said in 1 Corinthians 10:31, “Therefore, whether you eat or drink, or whatever you do, do all to the esteem of Elohim.” Paul observed all the laws of *kashrut* as he himself declared that he was a pharisee of pharisee. So, when he says, “whether you eat,” he is referring to animals that was consumed per Torah. He did not say we can eat anything we want. Because our bodies are does not just belong to us. It belongs to Hashem. Therefore we are to glorify Hashem in our body and in spirit. (1Cor. 6:19-20) Thus we are to be *kadosh* (set apart).

What could happen when a person does not set-apart by consuming prohibited animals? Isaiah 66:15-17 says, “For Look, YHWH comes with fire and with His chariots, like a whirlwind, to render His displeasure with burning, and His rebuke with flames of fire. For by fire and by His sword YHWH shall judge all flesh, and the slain of YHWH shall be many – those who set themselves apart and cleanse themselves at the gardens after ‘one’ in the midst, eating flesh of pigs and the abomination and the mouse, are snatched away, together,” declares YHWH.”

Now, it is said, “A fountain or a cistern wherein is a gathering of water shall be clean.” (Lev. 11:36) In Hebrew, יהיה טהור, מקנה-מים, ובור מעין (Ach *ma'yan* u-*vor mik-veh*-ma-yim, yih-yeh ta-hor). The highlighted are related to water. *Ma'yan* is a fountain of living waters, a spring. *Vor* is a pit that the rainwater enters. And *mik-veh* is in general an ingathering of water, like ocean and lakes.

If we add (gematria) the three words that the Torah uses for the *mikveh*, the combined value of these 3 words is 529, which is a perfect square. It's 23 squared. It equals the word *ta'anug* (תענוג) (pleasure.) Why does water purify? Because, the water represents and symbolizes Divine pleasure. If a person is impure, meaning sorrow, or hardship, or anxiety, or depression. Such person must enter into a body of pure water that covers his whole body. Thereby, the inherent pleasure aspect of the water purifies his impurity.

Let us return to the beginning of the *parasha* and explain the reason behind *sh'mini*. For seven days Moshe pleaded to Hashem that He should send someone else to Mitzrayim (Egypt) because of his speech impediment. (Exo. 4:16) Thus Hashem chose Aharon in place of Moshe. These seven days of the Dedication of the Tabernacle are equivalent to the seven days Moshe had to erect the Tabernacle with offerings for Aharon to become a *kohen* (priest) instead of Moshe. On the eighth day, Aharon became a *kohen* whereas Moshe became a Levite. As this was not the initial intent of Hashem, Moshe who was a *kohen* had to relinquish his authority through seven days of offering and at the same time sin offerings were made for Aharon in preparation of changing his status from a Levite to a *kohen*.

In verse 9:7 says, “Moshe said to Aharon: come near to the altar.” Moshe said this because Aharon was hesitant and fearful of approaching the altar. But Moshe remembered how he was hesitant and the

punishment he received. Therefore, he urged his brother not to repeat the same mistake he had made. So, he said, "Come near to the altar." Meaning, Moshe is saying, "Do it quickly without hesitation because you were selected instead of me because of my hesitation."

Another layer of understanding the Torah lies on the forgiveness: The sin of the Golden Calf was forgiven and once again Hashem would dwell in their midst as He had at Sinai. Moshe said to Aharon, "Take for yourself a young bull as a sin offering." (9:2) which we can understand easily that this was for the sin of the Golden Calf. Then in verse 3, Moshe said, "Take a male goat as a sin offering." The sages taught "a male goat" refers to the sale of Yosef (Genesis 37) where the brothers dipped his coat in the goat's blood. Rashi concludes that the betrayal of Yosef had to be healed as the Golden Calf for Hashem to dwell with the Yisraelites.

While it was wrong for Aharon to make a Golden Calf, his intentions were good. He thought that by telling the people to bring the gold, he hoped he would buy more time for Moshe to return. Therefore, Aharon needed only for his actions and for this he brought a sin offering. The burnt-offering was a gift which is customary for one to give when one is pardoned. (Zevachim 7b)

In verse 10:16 says, "And Moshe diligently looked for the goat of the sin offering." In transliteration of Hebrew is *Ve'-et se'-ir ha-chat-tat, da-rosh da-rash mo-sheh* (וְאֶת שְׁעִיר הַחֲטָאֹת, דָּרֹשׁ דָּרֹשׁ מֹשֶׁה). The highlighted words mean 'diligently' or 'inquire insistently.' Between these two Hebrew words, many *chumashim* places a mark to indicate we are half way done with the Torah. It also means we have reached a point where we understand half of the Torah and much more to learn that had not yet been learned. The sages use the Red Heifer to make the case.

Moshe could not understand how the ash of a Red Heifer could be used to purify a *kohen* who came in contact with the dead body. If it was sprinkled on a *kohen* who is pure, he becomes impure. He asked Hashem how this could be. Hashem did not reply to him and remained silent. Later on, Hashem gave us *chukim* (decrees) in parashat *chukat*. As explained before the *chukim* is beyond our moral understanding. When the *chukim* was given, Moshe understood the meaning of Red Heifer. King Shlomo (Solomon), being the wisest of all men understood 3,000 levels of each mitzvah. But he couldn't understand the laws of the Red Heifer. Thus he said, "I thought I was wise, but this one is beyond me." (Eccl. 7:23)

As this Shabbat falls with Shabbat *Parah*, we are to read from Bemidbar (Numbers) 19:1-22 as a special reading (*maftir*) in preparation for Pesach. The *parah adumah* (red heifer) is a manner which the *kohanim* and the Children of Yisrael purified themselves so that they would be ready (pure) to sacrifice the *korban* Pesach. The Shabbat *Parah* is read on the Shabbat before Shabbat *HaChodesh* (New Moon) in preparation of Pesach.