

# Pulse OF Emunah

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life

LESSONS

## GOOD NEIGHBORS III

A high school rebbi who occasionally takes his students on camping trips once remarked to me, “Every time that I go on an overnight trip with my *bachurim*, the park rangers always catch us committing some small infraction. I always wondered how they managed to find out about every violation of the rules, no matter how trivial it was. Did they have hidden video cameras monitoring every square inch of the park?”

“Finally, I realized that there were no cameras at all. Instead, it was all the other visitors to the park, who cared deeply about the state of the park and were bothered enough to report any violation of the rules to the park rangers, no matter how small it was.”

To us, the things that concern our neighbors in *galus* may seem unimportant. Nevertheless, we must respect their feelings, and we must recognize that they might consider us rude or even destructive when we do not abide by their rules.

In Tefillas Haderech, we ask Hashem to give us “grace, kindness, and mercy in Your Eyes and in the eyes of all who see us.” Today, more than ever, we must daven for this with the greatest possible intensity. Every time we set foot outside our homes and our communities, we must remember that every one of our actions may be seen by more people than we could ever imagine.

Let us hope that we will never do anything, *chas v’shalom*, that tarnishes Hashem’s honor even for a moment.

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gem

OF THE WEEK

## FOOD FOR THE SOUL

*By Rabbi Moshe Pogrow*

The laws of *kashrus* were given first to Moshe and Aharon, in accordance with their positions in the nation. Moshe is the transmitter and teacher of Torah, whereas Aharon is the educator for fulfillment of the *mitzvos*. Moshe’s mission addresses the nation’s knowledge; Aharon’s mission addresses its spirit. Both depend on the observance of these laws. Through them, the nation’s foundation is laid for a second time—on a higher level.

Rosh Chodesh and Pesach created the body of the nation. Parshas Mishpatim arranged its social life. From Parshas Terumah until Chapter 11 in Parshas Shemini, the Mishkan was established. The aim is that the entire people become “a kingdom of priests and a holy nation.” It is not enough for this to be symbolized; it must become a reality. The community camped around the Mishkan must be worthy of the call: *kedoshim tiyu*.

But a plan must be followed to produce people who can live for the sacred ideal of the Torah. This regimen is laid down by G-d in Shemini, Tazria, Metzorah, and Acharei Mos—the chapters leading up to “*kedoshim tiyu*.”

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powerful  
PRAYER

SHEMONE ESREI:  
THE PRESENCE OF HASHEM



Chazal tell us that when we daven Shemone Esrei, the Shechina is directly opposite us. Many of the *halachos* of Shemone Esrei derive from this idea. When we speak to Hashem, we cannot move around, but must stay in our place. We do not interrupt the conversation, even for Kaddish or Kedusha. We bow periodically. Before beginning, we take three steps forward, entering Hashem’s “office” for our private audience. When we finish, we take three steps back, leaving His presence. We would show utmost respect when speaking to a human ruler—how much more so when we speak to Hashem!

*Adapted from Emunah in the Classroom*

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## TIPPING THE SCALES

*By Rabbi Dovid Sapirman, Dean, Ani Maamin Foundation*

In these times of distress, many of us feel helpless. Eretz Yisrael is at war and in mortal danger, antisemitism rises to levels not seen in our lifetimes, hatred is fomented against *shomrei Torah*, families are impoverished. What can we do to make a difference?

As human beings, we have no way to comprehend Hashem's plans, especially in chaotic times such as these. On the one hand, there is so much suffering. On the other, we have seen undeniable miracles.

We need not despair. Every one of us can play a part, albeit not always a tangible and measurable one. A little *emunah* is what is needed here.

Let's go back to basics. Heaven keeps a scale for every individual, every community, every country—indeed for the whole world. Rabbi Yochanan would cry when he read *pesukim* that described this: “Woe to us! The *pasuk* weighs the lighter sins just as the heavier ones.” *Mesilas Yesharim* explains that of course not every sin is punished equally.

But just as more severe sins are placed on the heavenly scale, so too are all the lesser ones. This is true of every person, every country, and the world as a whole. The Gemara advises us to view ourselves as standing perfectly balanced, fifty-fifty, such that our next action will be the one to tip the scale. So, too, should we view the world. Whatever we do will make the difference—salvation or destruction.

Today, all of our Torah learning, *tefillah*, *chesed* and *tzedakah* have all been placed on their rightful side of the scale. *Hatzalah*, *Bikur Cholim* and *Tomchei Shabbos* are there too. The sacrifices we make to afford our lives as *frum* people does not go unseen.

But the other side of the scale remains weighted, too. *Tefillos* and *brachos* without *kavanah*. *Chillul Shabbos*. *Chillul Hashem*, *sinas chinam*, desecration of holy places. Here, too, nothing is overlooked. Were our *mitzvos* accompanied by thoughts of Hashem? Did we feel passion and enthusiasm?

There is always something we can do to make a difference: each one of us can do our part to tip the scales. We can invest greater feeling into our *tefillos*. We can make our greatest effort to catch every opportunity for *mitzvos*. And hopefully, we will soon see great *yeshuos*.

The Torah says about the forbidden foods that they are *temeios*, *sheketz*; eating them leads to *shikutz nefesh*, *tumah*, and *timyon*, and conscientious avoidance of them leads to *hiskadshus*. Experience shows that food should be chosen based on moral values. The body exerts great influence on the soul. The lie of materialism is that it presumes that the spirit and will are merely attributes of the physical, that they have no reality independent of it.

But in view of the basic truth—that the body does influence the spirit—how understandable, then, is the Torah's concern about food. The Torah views the physical as a tool to perform the work of the soul. The spirit's existence transcends materialism, yet it depends on it.

It is understandable, then, that we are bound to a strict diet. The soul's tool is constantly renewed by food, so we must provide it with those materials that sustain its ability to serve. We must make it easier for the spirit to control and use this tool to fulfill its mission.

One does not become holy simply by keeping kosher, but it certainly makes it easier. Moreover, one takes *kashrus* lightly commits an offense against his own body, which belongs to G-d, and denies the purpose of *yetzias Mitzrayim*. As the Sages say, *chamurim sheratzim shekol hamodeh b'mitzvas sheratzim modeh b'yetzias Mitzrayim, v'kol hakofer b'mitzvas sheratzim kofer b'yetzias Mitzrayim*.

The observance of *kashrus* gives one the ability to attain holiness, but one cannot actually attain it unless he recognizes the task for which this ability has been given to him.

*Based on the commentary of Rav Shamshon Raphael Hirsch zt"l on Chumash, with permission from the publisher.*



## wonder WORLD

### A SPACE FOR HEALTH



#### Why do sick people quarantine?

In Parshas Tazria-Metzorah, we learn that someone with *tzaraas* must stay outside the camp in a kind of spiritual quarantine until Hashem heals them. Today, in physical illnesses, we find a similar idea. When someone is sick with a contagious disease, bacteria or viruses can spread through the air, touch, or shared objects. If the sick person stays close to others, the illness can spread quickly. By keeping some distance, the germs have fewer chances to move from person to person. This helps stop outbreaks before they grow. Hospitals and doctors still use isolation today to protect patients and communities. Separation, when used carefully, is not about pushing people away—it's about keeping everyone healthy.

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