

# Pulse OF Emunah

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life

LESSONS

## AHEAD OF OUR TIME

Modern science has taught us that there is more to the physical world than we can see, but scientists were not always so knowledgeable. Take the case of Ignaz Semmelweiss, a German physician in the mid-19th century who noticed that patients seemed to contract deadly diseases after being examined by doctors who had handled cadavers. Semmelweiss insisted that medical interns wash their hands after performing autopsies. The result was an immediate sharp decline in fatal illnesses among their patients.

Semmelweiss's colleagues, however, refused to accept his explanation for the transmission of disease. Medical science had yet to recognize the existence of germs too small for the eye to see, and doctors felt that diseases could be attributed to a variety of factors. Physicians took umbrage at the suggestion that they were somehow transferring diseases due to the failure to wash their hands, and Semmelweiss was ridiculed, lost his position, and was ultimately confined to an asylum, where he died. Years later, medical science recognized that Semmelweiss had actually been ahead of his time.

As Jews, we should be well aware of the fact that far more exists in the world than our physical eyes can see. The Ramban speaks of "the accursed Greek and his wicked students, who believe only in what their eyes see." We must recognize that what is visible to us is only a tiny fraction of what actually exists—and just as the physical world itself contains many microscopic elements that we cannot observe, there is also a vast spiritual dimension that is beyond our ability to perceive.

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gem

OF THE WEEK

## SETTING BOUNDARIES

*By Rabbi Moshe Pogrow*

All fruit trees are similar, watered by rain and producing leaves and blossoms. Almond trees are unique because they blossom even before growing leaves. They are called *shkeidim*, from the *shoresh* of zeal and devotion. While its brothers are still making up their minds, it has already completed the work—the whole purpose of the blossom is to produce fruit.

This is a perfect depiction of the spirit of Levi. Only the Leviim responded to the call of "*Mi laHashem eila?*" (Shemos 32:26) and gathered around Moshe, and this spirit was inherited by the elite of the family—Aharon and his sons.

At the same time, a promise is expressed here. The almond tree only precedes the others in blossoming and producing fruit—it leads the way, but the other trees eventually follow its example. Similarly, the Leviim and *kohanim* lead the way in spiritual development, and the rest of the tribes are called upon to follow their example and attain the same level.

Just as the *luchos* attest to the Divine origin of the Torah, Aharon's staff attests to the Divine origin of his role: only on the basis of Hashem's choice

*continued on reverse side*

powerful  
PRAYER

TEFILLAH:  
STANDING BEFORE G-D



When the great Tanna Rebbi Eliezer was about to die, his students came to visit him. They said to him, "Rebbi, teach us the ways of life through which we will merit to live in Olam Haba." He told them three things. One of them was, "When you are davening, know before Whom you stand."

This phrase, which is now inscribed above many an *aron kodesh* in shuls around the world, encapsulates the essence of davening: to remember that you stand before Hashem, and He is listening to your *tefillos*.

*Adapted from Emunah in the Classroom*

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## SEPARATED TO BE MINE

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

As we approach the month of Tammuz, it is important to bear in mind that whenever the Jewish people strayed from the way of Torah, it was usually due to the influence of the surrounding nations, and their desire to partake of the gentile lifestyle.

The Torah commands us to separate ourselves from the nations of the world, avoiding any influence from them: “You shall be holy to Me, for I, Hashem am holy. I separated you from the nations to be Mine.” Rashi quotes Chazal: “I separated you from the nations to be Mine. If you are separated from them, you are Mine. If not, you will belong to Nevuchadnetzar and his ilk.”

So writes the Rambam as well: “We must not go in the ways of the idol worshippers, nor may we be similar to them—not in clothing, hairstyle or other such things. For it says, ‘Do not go in the ways of the nations’ and ‘do not go in their traditions.’ All of this means the same idea: it commands us not to be like them. Rather, a Jewish person shall be separate from them and known by his clothing and his other deeds, just as he is separated from them in his attitudes and personality traits. As it says, ‘I separated you from the nations.’”

The Torah instructs us to remember the lessons of the past. Should we fail to do so, we will repeat their mistakes and fall into the same traps that they did. Hence the Torah commands, “Remember the days of old, the years of generation upon generation. Ask your father and he will tell you; your elders, and they will say it to you.”

The Torah warns us time and time again that mingling with the nations will corrupt us. Not only were we commanded to drive them out when we arrive in Eretz Yisrael, but even as we crossed the Jordan River, we were reminded that our entry to the holy land was conditional upon our driving out the nations. The Gemara details the story: “While they were still standing in the Jordan, Yehoshua said to them, ‘Know that you are passing through the Jordan on condition that you drive out the inhabitants of the land before you...If you do so, it will be good. If not, the waters will come and drown you!’”

In our current *galus*, it is difficult to remain completely aloof from the gentiles. We live among them and must interact with them in many ways. With Hashem’s help, however, we will muster up the strength to conduct our lives with minimal influence, as did our ancestors in previous generations.

*Excerpted from Rabbi Sapirman’s forthcoming book on the importance of maintaining our separation from the nations of the world.*

do he and his descendants serve as *kohanim*. His staff was placed beside the *luchos*, and from this we learn its significance: the sons of Aharon are chosen from the Leviim, the Leviim from the people, and the people are kept at a distance from the Sanctuary, a continuation of the *hagbalah* first mentioned at Matan Torah, when the *luchos* were given.

This *hagbalah* demonstrated that the Torah came to the people and did not develop from within them—it is eternal, immutable, and inviolable. But the same *hagbalah* is continued by the fact that the *kohanim* and the Leviim camp around the Sanctuary, while the people are kept at a distance.

One day, the gap between the Torah’s ideal and its realization amidst the people will close, and the presumptuousness in Korach’s claim—*ki kol ha’eidah kulam kedoshim ubesocham Hashem*—will gradually diminish. The more this ideal is realized, the more we have to fear that man might rebel and deny the Torah’s Divine origin, considering it a creation of the human mind.

For this reason boundaries were given, applying for all time. They keep the people at a distance from the *edus* by means of the Leviim and the *kohanim*, and it warns even the greatest Torah sages, who are constantly preoccupied with the love of Torah, that they, too, must grasp the Torah in absolute objectivity.

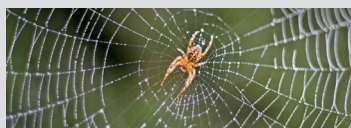
For the Torah is Divine and unapproachable, and even the *kohanim* may approach the *edus* of the Torah only in the vestments symbolic of their service and only after *kiddush yadayim v’raglayim*. Throughout the centuries, the warning of *hagbalah* issues from Sinai.

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



## wonder WORLD

### CREEPY CRAWLIES



*Why are spiders not considered insects?*

Spiders are eight-legged creatures, well-known for their silk webs. They are found all over the world, on every continent except Antarctica. There are about 40,000 different species of spiders, and all of them produce silk. Silk starts off as a liquid, but hardens upon contact with air.

Most spiders are nearsighted and cannot clearly see distant objects. Their other senses, like touch, compensate for their poor vision. Interestingly, spiders are not technically considered insects, since they have eight legs and do not have antennae. Instead, they belong to the arachnid family, which also includes scorpions and ticks.

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