

Now Available at
Our Website:
parshagrowth.com



GROWTH

At The

SHABBAT TABLE

BS"D
By Michael Sionov
5784

PARSHAT SHEMINI

Countering Insanity

R' Joey Haber shared an astounding thought. At the end of this week's Parsha, we read about the prohibition of consuming snakes or other reptiles: "You shall not eat, among all things that swarm upon the earth, anything that crawls on its belly, anything that walks on fours, or anything that has many legs, for they are an abomination. You shall not draw abomination upon yourselves through anything that swarms; you shall not make yourselves impure through them... for I am Hashem, your G-d; you shall sanctify yourselves and be holy, for I am holy. You shall not make yourselves impure through any swarming thing that moves upon the earth." (Vayikra 11:42-44)

This seems astonishing. The way we're becoming holy is by not eating reptiles or creeping insects? Understandably, through studying Torah and praying, one elevates himself and becomes holy; how does avoiding the consumption of worms and lizards necessarily bring holiness? And if that isn't perplexing enough, the next pasuk continues, "For I, Hashem, am the One who brought you up from the land of Egypt..." and Rashi quotes R' Yishmael teaching that "had Hashem brought Bnei Yisrael out of Egypt just to uphold this mitzvah alone, of elevating themselves through not eating reptiles, it would have been worthwhile enough." This begs for explanation; what is it about this commandment that is so elevating – so much so that this alone stands out from all the other 612 mitzvot?

The Gemara in Eruvin relates that there was a unique student in Yavneh that was able to come up with 150 different reasons and logical arguments as to why reptiles should be pure. The Gemara in Sanhedrin states that in order for a rabbi to join the High Court, he would have to have the ability to come up with logics that would indicate that reptiles should be pure. Tosafot ask why this was necessary – this seems to be completely pointless, considering that we know that the Torah sets forth that reptiles are impure! End of story! Why did the student bother coming up with 150 ways to hypothetically purify them, and why is this capability a requirement for judges of the Sanhedrin? They answer that this displays that if a person wants to twist his brain, he can come up with anything – even an exorbitant amount of compelling reasons for something as ridiculous as making a snake kosher. People who want to play around with their own brains can come up with anything – literally, anything – to concoct and mess around with, and judges sitting on the High Court need to know that and have the ability to counteract any perversion that comes their way.

At this point, many of us are aware of the downward spiral that the world is in. Technological innovations may be advancing, but the mindset of society around us is more crooked than ever and continues to twist with each passing day. There are enough examples to fill up a whole megillah, and the list of the crazy indoctrinations that today's society tries shoving down everyone's throats just doesn't seem to end. It used to be that the world tried pushing foreign beliefs, like polytheism, and even temptations, like immodest and immoral ideologies; now, they try to completely overlook and erase the *facts*, where everything known to be true is now up for debate, and they pressure everyone else to subscribe to their nonsense. Interestingly, the madness of society today was predicted two thousand years ago when the rabbis were trained to find 150 ways to purify insects, thereby conditioning themselves to overcome any distortion promoted by twisted heads.

What's frightening, though, is that while the previous generations living today may be somewhat oblivious to what's happening in the world, and as we watch everything unfold and are unsure whether to laugh or cry, what's going to be with our children?

The solution can be hinted from the beginning of the parsha, where the Mishkan is inaugurated on the 8th day. As is famously taught, the number 7 represents the natural order of the world – the plane of existence in which the *goyim* reside. The number 8, however, resembles what's above nature and transcends the world's mentality and limitations. The Jews live in the realm of the supernatural 8, where we think, talk, act, and live different. It doesn't matter when society has people's brains twisting into their shoes; we, as Am Yisrael, have ourselves grounded firm in the straight and just path of the Torah. What the rest of the world idolizes and what they abominate is irrelevant to us, because they live in the reality of 7, whereas we are in the world of 8, living with Hashem's word. That is why the mitzvah of not eating reptiles was single-handedly worthy of an exodus. Despite over a hundred compelling reasons that indicate otherwise, we still don't eat snakes or insects – simply because of our Creator's word. And Hashem says: *If you just keep this law – just because I said so – you're already elevated and holy.* Even if it's the easiest law in the book, when we keep it solely because the Torah said so, we connect our own minds to the Torah – Hashem's mind – which is eternal and can never be cancelled. That is why the Sanhedrin would convene in a semicircle – to signify that Hashem would fill the rest of the circle, and that they wouldn't allow their minds to go wild because they would attach it to what Hashem wants. Our Sages explain that on the first day of his creation, Adam sinned – not because he was tempted, but because the snake came up with reasons why it's "kosher." That was the first example of the snake coming with several reasons why something non-kosher was pure – and that's why the snake was considered the most deceiving creature. And in fact, that sin led to Adam's mortality, limiting his life span to 1000 years. However, he only lived until 930, because he "gave" 70 years to the future David HaMelech who would come to repent for and fix the mistake of Adam through the hardships in his life as well as his accomplishments, among which was his composition of the timeless Sefer Tehillim – which contains 150 chapters. Once more, the number 150 comes to symbolize liberation from the world's distortions and the embrace of the eternally profound mindset of the Torah. *How fortunate is our lot...*

Refuah Sheleimah, b'toch she'ar cholei Yisrael:

Ariel Ben Frida Rahamim Ben Shifra Frida Bat Yaffa Chana Bat Malka Miriam Bat Bakol Yitzchak Ben Naama Meir Tzvi Ben Sara

*"Failure is the tuition
you pay for success."*