



הרב הראשי עיה"ק אלעד מרדכי מלכא שליט"א נשיא וראש מוסדות "אור המלך"

מחבר ספרי שו"ת דרך המלך, אמרי מרדכי, ודרכי המלך על המועדים ועוד
רשת מעונות, ורשת גנים, ת"ת פרי תואר, ובית יעקב פרי תואר, תיכון בית יעקב החדש, ת"ת מאור ישראל,
ישיבה קטנה ארחות יהודה, ביהמ"ד גבוה לרבנים ודיינים "לקח טוב" קופת "מפעל החסד" אלעד
Chief Rabbi of Elad, Israel MORDECHAI MALKA, Founder & President of Institutions "Or Hamelech"



עיר התורה שקרובה אליך

Parashat Shmini

A Jew's Torah Study Depends on the Kashrut of His Food

Questions:

- 1- In this week's *parashah*, when the Torah exhorts us not to eat rodents and the like, it states [11:43], "*Ve'lo titamu ba'hem ve'nitmeitem bam*, Do not contaminate yourselves with them and become contaminated by them." There appears to be a redundancy in the *pasuk*, for once the Torah has warned us not to contaminate ourselves by eating the forbidden creatures, it seems extraneous to write that we will "be contaminated by them."
- 2- In the following *pasuk* [ibid. 44] the Torah states the reason for this prohibition, "*Ki Ani Hashem Elokeichem ... ki kadosh Ani ve'lo titamu et nafshoteichem*, For I am Hashem your G-d ... for I am holy, and do not contaminate your souls." Is the Creator's holiness a reason to obligate man, dust from the earth, to also be holy and refrain from contaminating himself?

An Erroneous Perspective Regarding Kashrut

Many fine, upstanding individuals mistakenly believe that eating non-kosher food is simply forbidden and nothing more. Therefore they relate to *kashrut* as if it were not an absolute requirement, but, rather, a matter of extreme piety and beyond the letter of the law. This leads them to act leniently regarding *kashrut*. However, the Torah teaches us that these people are making a big mistake. This is so, because besides for the actual prohibition involved in eating forbidden food, such food also irreparably damage man's soul and intellect. Therefore, his desire to perform the mitzvot of the Torah is weakened tremendously if he eats them. Resultantly, to the extent that an individual raises his standard of *Kashrut*, his intellect is purified and his soul is sanctified. If there was a food that was suspected of being poison and harmful to the body, man would flee from it as if he were fleeing from fire. How much more so should an individual take care not to harm his soul, by permanently sully it with non-kosher foods [see the *Zohar* on *Parashat Shmini* pg. 35b].

Statements of our Sages Illustrating How Non-Kosher Food Contaminates the Heart

Our Sages [*Yoma* 39a] ask why the aforementioned *pasuk*, when describing the harmful effects of forbidden food states, "*ve'netmeitem bam*, and become contaminated by them," and spells *ve'netmeitem* without an *alef* [ונטמתם]. Our Sages explain that this hints to the fact that eating forbidden foods causes a barrier of spiritual impurity to be placed on the heart, and it renders the heart unable to absorb Torah wisdom. The *Sefer Hachinuch* [mitzvah 362] explains that spiritual contamination weakens the power of the intellect, as our Sages have stated above, and causes the wellsprings of the intellect to be sealed off by spiritual impurity. According to this we can answer the question we posed above, why the *pasuk* repeats the phrase, "Do not contaminate yourselves with them and become contaminated by them." The *pasuk* is referring to two different things: The first part of the phrase refers to the spiritual impurity that man absorbs by eating forbidden foods. The second part of the phrase [ונטמתם] refers to the fact that man's mind becomes sealed off from Torah knowledge as a result of eating the food. This also enables us to answer the second question: The *pasuk* stated "*ve'lo titamu et nafshoteichem*, and do not contaminate your souls," which implies that besides for contamination of the body, there is also contamination of the spiritual soul, a "portion of Hashem Above" [*Iyov* 31:2]. Therefore the Torah is teaching us that just as Hashem is holy, so too, we should take care not to contaminate the soul which is a *portion* of Hashem, as it were.

Elisha ben Abuya Left the Torah Path Because of Forbidden Food

Just how serious eating, and even **smelling**, forbidden foods is can be learned from the Yerushalmi [*Chagigah* 2:15]. When the mother of Elisha ben Abuya was expecting, she passed by an idolatrous sacrificial offering. She smelled it and ate it. She was actually permitted to do so, as our Sages teach [*Yoma* 82] that if a pregnant woman smells food and is enticed by it, she is fed the food even on Yom Kippur. Nevertheless, the non-kosher animal simmered inside of her like a serpent. Elisha was eventually born and grew to become very great in Torah, and



הרב הראשי עיה"ק אלעד מרדכי מלכא שליט"א נשיא וראש מוסדות "אור המלך"

מחבר ספרי שו"ת דרך המלך, אמרי מרדכי, ודרכי המלך על המועדים ועוד
רשת מעונות, ורשת גנים, ת"ת פרי תואר, ובית יעקב פרי תואר, תיכון בית יעקב החדש, ת"ת מאור ישראל,
ישיבה קטנה ארחות יהודה, ביהמ"ד גבוה לרבנים ודיינים "לקח טוב" קופת "מפעל החסד" אלעד
Chief Rabbi of Elad, Israel MORDECHAI MALKA, Founder & President of Institutions "Or Hamelech"



עיר התורה שקרובה אליך

was even the teacher of Rebbi Meir. Nevertheless the venom imbibed from eating the forbidden food remained inside of Elisha and was instrumental in causing him to sin until he became "Acher."

Additionally the *Pri Chadash* [Yoreh De'ah siman 81, s"v 26] writes that even though if a young child is eating *neveilot* it is not required to prevent him from doing so, that is only according to the strict letter of the law. Nevertheless, he states, you *should* prevent him, because the non-kosher food will harm him in his old age. It will cause him to have a wicked nature, and he will eventually stray from the Torah path. He then writes **"And since in our generation, individuals are not careful about these matters, most of the children stray from Torah and mitzvot. Most of them are brazen and lacking in Heavenly fear, and even if you rebuke them, they will not accept words of mussar."**

Eating Non-Kosher Caused Heresy in the Rambam's Generation

Rav Chaim of Brisk zt"l [cited in the manuscripts of the *Maggid* of Ritova, Rav Yissacher Ber zt"l] relates an amazing story that occurred in the time of the Rambam. When the Rambam was in Yemen, he became acquainted with one of the Torah giants of the time. When the Rambam returned home, this Rav would continuously send him questions and answers on Torah topics. The Rambam once received a letter from the Rav which contained a very deep philosophical question. The Rambam read the question and was astounded. Holding his head, he remarked that he could not believe that such a question in faith could ever occur to a Jew, and that it was only possible if the one posing the question possessed an impure soul. He therefore refrained from answering the question. Over the next number of days, the man continued to send several more letters. The Rambam felt impelled to answer and, therefore, responded, but writing only, "Go and examine the *shochtim* and examine your congregation." Upon receiving the letter, the Rav followed the Rambam's instruction. He subsequently discovered that for the last 13 years the *shochtim* had been feeding both him and the entire city *neveilot* and *treifot*. This had contaminated his soul to the extent that even a Torah genius like himself had come to pose heretical questions.

An Incident that Occurred with Rav Chaim Kanievsky shlita

There was an *avreich*, a *kollel* fellow, who used to study Torah with a *bachur*, a young man, each day to help him in his studies. They were learning wonderfully, but, one day, the *bachur* suddenly did not understand the gemara they were learning, and as much as he tried, he was unsuccessful. So the *avreich* said to him, "Let's go to Rav Chaim Kanievsky to receive his advice and *bracha*." When Rav Chaim was asked about the *bachur's* difficulty, he looked at the *bachur*, and told him to be careful about eating forbidden foods, because he sees the image of an undomesticated animal on the boy's forehead. The boy was broken and admitted to the *avreich* that when he had come to his home to learn with him, the *avreich's* wife had baked a dairy cake which smelled delicious and enticed the *bachur*. She served a slice to her husband and then asked the *bachur* if he had eaten meat in the last six hours. Even though he had, he nevertheless responded "no," because he craved the cake. Unable to withstand the temptation, he ate the dairy despite the fact that he had previously eaten meat. This situation repeated itself several times, and he was therefore now unable to understand the gemara. He undertook to repent for what he did, and the situation improved.

Words of Mussar

We have learned from all that was stated above just how much success in one's Torah learning and Heavenly fear, as well as the *chinuch* of his children is all dependent on the degree that he is stringent in his standards of *kashrut*. He should not simply rely on every available *hechsher*, because the matter will affect his soul as well as the souls of his offspring. Therefore *Maran HaChida* in *Birkei Yosef* [Orach Chaim 157:1:1] quotes Rav Yaakov Tzemach who writes that an individual should exert himself to have the proper *kavanot*, intentions while eating, and that he should not to eat like an animal. He writes that the Heaven fearing man will always consider what our Sages state [and *Tosafot* cites in *Ketubot* 104] that "Until a person prays that Torah should enter his body, let him pray that delicacies not enter into his body."

Shabbat Shalom, Rav Mordechai Malka