

WORDS OF WISDOM FROM RABBI YITZI

לרפואה שלימה ליוסף יצחק בן ברכה

PARSHAT SHEMINI

Split Hooves & Chewing The Cud

In this week's parsha, Shemini, there are the laws of kosher animals. When it comes to land animals, there are two signs that tell us that they are kosher: cloven hooves, or in the common vernacular, split hooves, and that it is a ruminant, it chews its cud.

The common domesticated animals that we eat are cattle, sheep, and goats, but a lot of animals in the wild are kosher, including all kinds of deer, antelope, moose, buffalo, bison, wildebeest, giraffe, and many more. All of them are herbivores, and none of them are animals of prey. These animals don't have upper teeth and chew their food in a side-to-side motion.

There is a discussion about these signs. The question is: Are they what causes the animal to be kosher, or are these animals kosher for

other reasons, just that Hashem gave them these signs so we can identify them as kosher?

It seems from the verse, "because it chews its cud," that it is what causes the animal to be kosher. But even if it's not, the fact that

Hashem gave us these signs to differentiate between kosher and non-kosher animals means that we can learn from them how to know if the animal part of us, the body and the animal soul, is acting in a kosher manner or not.

Being that the Torah tells us about both kosher and non-kosher animals, it is a message to us that the animal part of us could possibly be

acting in a non-kosher way. And even if we go through the motions of keeping the Torah, we could still be acting in a non-kosher way. As we see when it comes to law, sometimes using the law, one can do terrible things and make people's lives miserable, but it is legal. The same is possible with Torah. One can follow the letter of the law and, at the same time, not be a good person. And that is not kosher.

Let us see what we can learn from the kosher signs that will act as a litmus test as to whether the animal part of us is kosher or not.

Animals, like humans, have their heads and hearts separated from the ground; it is only their legs that touch the ground, and even they, are separated from the ground by hooves. This means that we should not have our higher faculties, our heads and hearts, our thoughts and emotions, invested in earthly pursuits, just the lower faculties of action, our arms and legs, and even they should have a separation, meaning only as much as necessary.

The hooves have to be split, meaning that even in our earthly pursuits, Hashem should be able to come through and permeate them, making the physical G-dly.

The law is that the hooves have to be split through and through. This means that when they walk, with every step, they connect to the ground with both a right and left hoof. Meaning, that when we deal with earthly matters, we should always have the balance of drawing good closer with the right (the stronger hand), and pushing bad away with the left (the weaker hand). Good is what is in line with the Torah, and bad is what is not. There has to be a constant effort to keep

SERVING G-D IS ABOUT CONSCIOUSLY PURSUING THE BALANCE OF LOVE AND DISCIPLINE.



on the right path, not to veer to the right or the left.

This is especially important when making an effort to bring someone closer to Hashem. Some, with their kind hearts, make the mistake of watering down Judaism in the hope that this will get them involved. This is wrong because it is a slippery slope, and eventually, it is not Judaism anymore. The right way is to keep Torah what it is and bring them closer to it. However, one shouldn't change the Torah to fit another's lifestyle.

Others, in their zealousness, make the mistake of being too strict when it is uncalled for, pushing people away from Judaism.

The same is true for every one of us. There is a fine line that has to be held; veering left or right just a small amount, can get us totally lost.

Nobody ever got lost all of a sudden. First, he was on the correct path. Then he veered just a little bit off the path, then a bit more and a bit more. Until he found himself totally lost.

There is one more thing to do to keep the animal part of us kosher, and that is learned from chewing the cud. After the animal swallows its food, it regurgitates it and chews on it again. This means that all that was mentioned above is not enough. Even with all those strategies in place, when it comes to earthly pursuits, we have to constantly reevaluate our situation and make certain that we are on the right path.

We can also learn if we are serving Hashem properly by applying these kosher signs to evaluate it.

Generally, love and fear are opposites, but when it comes to serving Hashem, both work together. It is a split hoof, love on the right and fear on the left, and with each step, they go together.

Most of us, by nature, serve Hashem in one of these two ways. Some of us through love, and others through fear. For example, some of us might love to do acts of kindness, but when it comes to things that take discipline, we are not so involved. Others love discipline but are not

so involved in doing acts of kindness. But if we only do what comes naturally to us, how do we know that it is truly for Hashem? Maybe we are doing it because it is our nature. When we serve Hashem through only one of these two ways, it is like one solid hoof; it's not kosher. When we go against our nature and serve with both love and fear, a split hoof, then we know that it is kosher.

It has to be split through and through. Meaning, that you shouldn't just be going through the motions of love and fear superficially, but it should truly affect you through and through. You have to be real.

And again, one must "chew his cud," constantly reevaluating himself to see if he is on the right path.

May we learn to be real and true through and through and serve Hashem with both love and fear. This will surely keep us on the right path, the path that leads us to the coming of Moshiach. May he come soon.

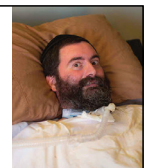
"Dear Rabbi Yitzi,

Hashem has blessed you with so much love - it is keeping you alive! I am so sorry you have this illness and praying for a miracle! You are a miracle man!"

- @MishAmerica, New York

RABBI YITZI WOULD LOVE TO HEAR FROM YOU! SEND YOUR MESSAGE TO:
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Despite facing one of life's most difficult challenges, Rabbi Yitzi Hurwitz continues to spread joy and faith to thousands around the globe. Diagnosed in 2012 with ALS, Rabbi Yitzi is now 95% paralyzed and no longer able to speak or breath on his own. Thanks to the miracle of technology, Rabbi Yitzi continues to spread his wisdom through his eyes, focusing on each and every letter of these Torah articles. Rabbi Yitzi, his wife Dina and their seven children are the Rebbe's Shluchim to Temecula, California.



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