

In this week's *Parashah*, the Torah teaches which animals may be eaten and which may not. Commentaries note that we seem to find conflicting attitudes within the Torah itself, and also in the words of our Sages, towards eating meat. Before the Flood, mankind was forbidden to eat animals. After the Flood, mankind was permitted to eat animals. After the Torah was given, we are permitted to eat some animals, but not others. Even regarding animals that may be eaten, the *Gemara (Bava Metzia 85a)* relates that the Sage Rabbi Yehuda Ha'nasi, the editor of the *Mishnah*, was punished with intestinal disease for saying to a calf, "You were created to be slaughtered as food!"

R' Yaakov Filber *shlita* (Yeshivat Merkaz Ha'rav in Yerushalayim) writes: R' Yosef Albo z"l (Spain; 1380-1444) explains that killing animals has a negative influence on man's character; therefore, it was prohibited originally. However, mankind misunderstood and thought that eating meat was prohibited because mankind is no better, no more significant in the big picture, than animals. This mistaken attitude led mankind to abandon its lofty calling, which, in turn, led to the Flood. To correct this, *Hashem* permitted mankind to eat meat after the Flood. After the Torah was given, the Torah elevates us so we will not think that we are no better than animals, so some animals were again prohibited to us.

Why, then, are all animals not prohibited? R' Filber quotes R' Avraham Yitzchak Hakohen Kook z"l (1865-1935; first *Ashkenazic* Chief Rabbi of *Eretz Yisrael*) who explains: Until mankind has perfected itself, until individuals no longer engage in petty fights with their relatives, until nations no longer seek to destroy each other, we have enough work to do without worrying about "animals' rights." One who thinks he has time to focus on the morality of eating animals is overlooking the need to tackle more serious and urgent character failings. (*Chemdat Ha'yamim*)

Bitachon

This year--a Shemittah year--we will iy"H devote this space to discussing the related subject of Bitachon / placing one's trust in Hashem.

Rabbeinu Bachya ibn Pekudah z"l (Saragossa, Spain; early 11th century) lists ten benefits of Bitachon. The seventh of these benefits is as follows:

Having *Bitachon* saves a person from feeling a need to travel to distant places, which exhausts the body and hastens a person's end.

R' Bachya continues: It is told that a certain pious man traveled to a distant land in his youth in search of his sustenance. There, he met an idolator, and he remarked to the idolator, "How misguided and ignorant are your ways!"

The idolator asked him, "Whom do you serve?"

The pious man answered, "I serve the Creator, Who is all-capable, and Who sustains all, like no other."

The idolator retorted, "Your actions contradict your words."

"How so?" asked the pious man.

The idolator answered, "If what you say is true, your G-d would sustain you at home just as He does here, and you would not trouble yourself to travel to this distant land in search of sustenance."

The pious man acknowledged the correctness of this argument and went home, and he never left his town again.

(*Chovot Ha'levavot: Sha'ar Ha'bitachon*, Introduction)

R' Yaakov Niman z"l (*Rosh Yeshiva* of Yeshivat Ohr Yisrael in Lida, Poland and Petach Tikvah, Israel; died 1983) asks: Perhaps it was decreed that a person wander far from his home as an atonement for his sins, and he does not deserve to receive his sustenance at home?!

He answers: When a person who has *Bitachon* sees that he is having trouble earning a living at home, he considers the possibility that it is because of his sins. Then, he undertakes a full repentance and obviates the need to wander in exile as an atonement.

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Thirty Days Before Pesach . . .

R' Leib Mintzberg z"l (1943-2018; rabbi and *Rosh Yeshiva* in Yerushalayim and Bet Shemesh, Israel) writes: We find *Pesach* described in two different ways in the Torah. Some passages focus on the day of the Exodus--for example (*Shmot* 12:14-18):

"This day shall be a remembrance for you and you shall celebrate it as a festival for Hashem . . . On the first day shall be a Mikra Kodesh / holy convocation and on the seventh day shall be a Mikra Kodesh for you . . . You shall observe this day for your generations as an eternal decree. On the first day, on the fourteenth day of the month in the evening shall you eat Matzot, until the twenty-first day of the month in the evening."

Other verses seem to focus on the season and do not even mention the day of the Exodus--for example (*Devarim* 16:1, 8):

"You shall observe the month of springtime and perform the Pesach-offering to Hashem, your Elokim, for in the month of springtime, Hashem, your Elokim, took you out of Egypt at night. . . For a six-day period you shall eat Matzot and on the seventh day shall be an assembly to Hashem, your Elokim; you shall not perform any labor."

R' Mintzberg explains: There are two different aspects to *Pesach*. On the one hand, *Pesach* commemorates the miracle of the Exodus. That miracle occurred on a specific day, and it therefore is commemorated on a specific day. Thus, the above passage from *Shmot* focuses on the first day of *Pesach*. (The verses also mention the seventh day to teach that the miracle was so great that it should be commemorated for seven days.) On the other hand, *Pesach* commemorates our state of being free. A state of being is not connected with a specific day; it is ongoing. Therefore, the passage from *Devarim* focuses on the season and does not even mention the first day of *Pesach*. Instead, the Torah mentions the seventh day of *Pesach*, which is the climax of our celebration of our freedom.

R' Mintzberg notes that this explains a difference between how our Sages discuss Chanukah and Purim. Regarding Chanukah, which commemorates a very open miracle, our Sages use the phrase, "They were established as days of praise and thanksgiving." Since a specific miracle can be identified, the celebration can be limited to specific days. In contrast, Purim commemorates a hidden miracle, a series of events that one could attribute to political machinations and intrigue. Thus, we find that the Purim celebration encompasses not just a day, but a "season," as in the statement: "When *Adar* arrives, we increase our joy," and as *Megillat Esther* says, "The month that turned from sorrow to joy."

(*Ben Melech: Yemei Ha'Purim* No.1)

"But this is what you shall not eat from among those that bring up their cud or that have split hooves: the camel, for it brings up its cud, but its hoof is not split--it is unclean to you; and the hyrax, for it brings up its cud, but its hoof is not split [literally, 'It will not split']--it is unclean to you; and the hare, for it brings up its cud, but its hoof is not split [literally, 'It did not split']--it is unclean to you." (11:4-6)

Regarding the camel, the Torah uses the present tense ("its hoof is not split"); regarding the hyrax, the verse uses the future tense ("its hoof it will not split"); and, regarding the hare, the it uses the past tense ("its hoof it did not split"). Why?

R' Chaim Kanievsky z"l (1928-2022; Bnei Brak, Israel) explains: *Midrash Rabbah* states that the four non-kosher animals mentioned in the Torah--these three, plus the pig--represent the four primary nations that oppressed the Jewish People: Babylon (camel), Persia (hyrax), Greece (hare), and Rome (pig). A careful study of the verses of the Prophets and related teachings of our Sages reveals that the kingdom of Bavel (Babylon) existed as a world power only for the short time that it oppressed the Jewish People; thus, the verse alludes to it in the present tense. (It existed only for a brief "present.") Greece was a significant nation long before it expressed the Jewish People, but not for very long afterward; thus, it is alluded to in the past tense. (Its past was longer than its "present" or its "future.") Persia had almost no past before it oppressed the Jewish People, but it will continue to play a role in the world until *Mashiach* comes; thus, it is alluded to in the future tense. (*Ta'ama D'kra*)

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R' Niman continues in the name of his teacher, R' Nosson Zvi Finkel z"l (1849-1927; the *Alter* of Slabodka): When a person goes outdoors and is uncomfortable in the sun and heat, he gets upset. He is right to be upset. *Hashem* wants man to be comfortable and happy, and it is only because of the sin of Adam Ha'rishon [and our continuing sins] that we experience discomfort. [Until here from the *Alter* of Slobodka.]

R' Niman concludes: If we would purify our hearts and come closer to *Hashem*, we would not suffer from everyday nuisances, as the *Mishnah* (*Avot* 3:5) teaches, "If one takes upon himself the yoke of the Torah, the yoke of government and the yoke of worldly concerns are removed from him." On the other hand, if a person does not correct his ways, yet he tells himself that *Hashem* will give him whatever he wants because he has *Bitachon*, he is misguided. In fact, *Hashem* will be doing him a favor by not fulfilling his desires, so that he will receive an atonement.

(*Darhei Mussar* p.351)