

Near the end of this week's *Parashah*, the Torah teaches us which animals, fowl, and fish are kosher, and which are not kosher. R' Yosef Konvitz z"l (1878-1944; rabbi in Newark, NJ; President of the Agudath HaRabonim of the United States and Canada) writes: Our Torah is the Torah of truth, and it has no blemishes; there is not even one letter in the Torah that does not serve a purpose. Accordingly, we must ask why the Torah (in chapter 11) says repeatedly about the non-kosher species, "They are impure to you." Could not the Torah say simply, "They are impure"?

He explains: All of the natural traits that are found in animals are found in humans as well. It is the task of man, the choicest of creatures, to employ his Divine intellect and his free will to choose the good among those traits and to reject the bad, as it is written (*Iyov* 35:11), "He teaches us from the beasts of the land; He makes us wise from the birds of the heaven." In this vein, the *Gemara* (*Eruvin* 100b) says: "If we had not received the Torah, we would learn *Tzniut* from cats, not stealing from ants, marital fidelity from doves, and etiquette from chickens."

It appears, continues R' Konvitz, that this is what the Torah is alluding to when it tells us that each of the non-kosher animals is impure "to you." It is telling us that a Jew has an obligation to look at and delve into each animal's nature and to learn from it an entire "Torah" of life lessons; in particular, that each of us should avoid those traits of each animal that are impure "to us." (*Divrei Yosef*)

Shabbat

Rabbi Yitzchak said: After the Torah says (*Bereishit* 1:31), "And *Elokim* saw all that He had made, and behold it was very good," why must the Torah say further (2:1), "*Vy'chulu*" (ויכלו) / "And they were completed"? Rabbi Berachiah answered: It is an expression of pining, as in the verse (*Tehilim* 84:3), "My soul yearns, indeed *Kaltah* (כלתה) / it pines for the courtyards of *Hashem*." Thus, "*Vy'chulu*" is teaching that once Creation was completed, all who saw it yearned and pined for it because of its perfection.

Rav Huna offered another explanation: It was the day that caused *Hashem* to yearn, so-to-speak, for the heavens and the earth, which is another way of saying that His creations found favor in His eyes. Because of *Hashem's* pleasure at His creation, *Shabbat* was a day of restfulness and holiness, and He established it for all generations. [Until here is paraphrased from *Zohar Chadash: Bereishit* 29a.]

R' Shmuel Berezovsky *shlita* (*Slonimer Rebbe* in Yerushalayim) writes: At first glance, the first paragraph above focuses on Creation's perfection and has nothing to do with *Shabbat*. However, there is a basis to say that what made Creation perfect was the holiness of *Shabbat* that followed immediately upon Creation's completion. How so?

The *Zohar* teaches that at the end of the Six Days of Creation, a "*Sukkat Shalom*" / "canopy of wholesomeness" spread over Creation. What is that *Sukkat Shalom*? It is the holiness of *Shabbat*! The *Slonimer Rebbe* explains that when *Shabbat* begins, the heavens and earth and everything in them are filled with the glow of *Shabbat's* holiness, which causes everything in Creation to take on a different character than it had during the workweek. That is what puts the stamp of wholesomeness on Creation.

(*Zohar Ha'Shabbat* 1:1)

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Pirkei Avot

Yehoshua ben Perachyah says: “Accept a teacher upon yourself, acquire a friend for yourself, and judge everyone favorably.” (1:6)

R' Yaakov Moshe Charlap z"l (1882-1951; rabbi of Yerushalayim's Sha'arei Chessed neighborhood and *Rosh Yeshiva* of Yeshivat Mercas Harav) writes: The bad feelings or suspicions that one person has towards another inevitably reflect the character defects or bad behaviors that the first person himself has, at least to some degree. Therefore, the way to achieve the ability to judge others favorably is to work on oneself.

(Mei Marom II p.52)

R' Chaim Druckman z"l (1932-2022; rabbi, Rosh Yeshiva, and Knesset member) elaborates: We read in *Sefer Shmuel* that Nachash, king of Amon, died and was succeeded by his son Chanun. Nachash had done a kindness for King David, so David sent a delegation to offer condolences to Chanun. However, Chanun's advisors poisoned the new king's mind, saying (*Shmuel II* 10:3), “Do you think that David sent consolers to you to honor your father in your eyes? Is it not in order to explore the city, to spy it out and overthrow it that David has sent his servants to you?”

Why were Chanun's advisors unable to accept David's delegation at face value? R' Druckman asks. He answers: Because they were not the type of people who would themselves offer condolences to a mourner. They would have taken advantage of a neighboring king's death and the transition to a new king to try to harm the neighboring kingdom, so that is how they interpreted David's overture.

R' Druckman continues with an example closer to home: When a person is prone to anger, he tends to notice other people's anger. On the other hand, when a person is in control of his own temper and gets angry only for a very good reason, he will likewise assume that someone else who lost his temper had a very good reason for doing so. A person cannot help but to judge others based on his own value system; thus, one who corrects his own value system will judge others favorably.

R' Druckman adds: Judging others favorably does not mean being naive. Some people will try to take advantage of our good natures, and it is proper to be aware of that possibility and to take reasonable precautions. Nevertheless, our default attitude toward other people should be to assume the best about them. Some may try to take advantage of us, and sometimes they will even succeed, but our *Mishnah* is teaching that is not an excuse to assume the worst of others as a general rule.

(Hakdamah L'Shir Ha'shirim p.57-58)

“Moshe said to Aharon, ‘Approach the Altar and perform the service of your Chatat-offering . . .’” (9:7)

Rashi z"l writes: Aharon Hakohen was shy about approaching the altar. Moshe said to him, “Why are you shy? You were chosen for this!”

R' Moshe ben Nachman z"l (*Ramban*; 1194-1270; Spain and *Eretz Yisrael*) explains Moshe's words as follows: “My brother! Why were you chosen to be the *Kohen Gadol*? Was it not to minister before *Hashem*? Embolden yourself and come do your priestly duties.”

R' Eliyahu Meir Bloch z"l (1894-1955; co-founder and *Rosh Yeshiva* of the Telshe Yeshiva in Cleveland, Ohio) writes: There is an important lesson here--namely, that when a person has a responsibility to carry out, it is not a time for humility. When a person must act boldly, he is required to embolden himself. This is the meaning of the prophet Shmuel's rebuke to King Shaul (*Shmuel I* 16:17), “Though you are small in your own eyes, you are the head of the tribes of *Yisrael*, and *Hashem* has anointed you to be king over *Yisrael*.”

R' Bloch continues: The *Gemara* (*Pesachim* 66a) relates that *Erev Pesach* once fell on *Shabbat*, and the sons of Beteira, the spiritual leaders of the Jewish People at the time, did not know whether it was permitted to offer the *Korban Pesach* on *Shabbat*. The people told them that there was a scholar named Hillel the Babylonian--the now famous Hillel, who is praised in the Talmud for his humility--who studied under the great sages of the previous generation and would surely know the *Halachah*. Hillel did know the *Halachah*--i.e., that the *Korban Pesach* may be offered on *Shabbat*--and he was appointed as the new *Nasi* / leader. Immediately, relates the *Gemara*, Hillel berated the sons of Beteira: “Why am I the *Nasi*? Because you were lazy and did not study under the great sages of the previous generation.” [Until here from the *Gemara*]

How are we to understand Hillel's behavior, which seems inconsistent with his famous humility? The answer, writes R' Bloch, is as mentioned above: As the *Nasi*, Hillel had a responsibility to raise the level of Torah learning among the Jewish People. Fulfilling that responsibility called for boldness, not meekness, so that is the trait Hillel employed. Such behavior is not inconsistent with humility.

(Peninei Da'at)

One of R' Bloch's leading students, R' Gedaliah Anemer z"l (1932-2010; *Rosh Yeshiva* of the Yeshiva of Greater Washington and rabbi in Silver Spring, Maryland), applied the above lesson when speaking of R' Moshe Feinstein z"l (1895-1986; rabbi in Lyuban, Russia and *Rosh Yeshiva* of Mesivtha Tifereth Jerusalem in New York). R' Feinstein was well known for his humility. At the same time, he was the foremost *Halachic* authority in the United States in the 20th century, boldly tackling many novel *Halachic* questions arising from new technologies, changes in society, and more. R' Anemer noted that R' Feinstein's humility did not cause him to shy away from his responsibility to use his unique talents for this purpose. R' Feinstein was aware of his own abilities and of his responsibility, and he acted accordingly. (Heard from R' Anemer)