טעמו וראו

A taste of the Rebbe's teachings

Parshat Shemini

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Behind the Kosher Scenes

Fins and scales, split hooves and chewing cud.
How is it relevant to me?

לעילוי נשמת

הרה"ח השליח ר' **חיים** ב"ר **שמואל גרשון ניסן** ע"ה

גורביץ

נפטר ביום ג' פ' ויקרא בעיצומו של "מבצע מצה"

ג' ניסן שנת ה'תשפ"א

נתרם ע"י בנו

הרה"ת ר' **רפאל דובער** וזוגתו מרת **רבקה ומשפחתם** שיחיו

A. Kosher Basics

Source 1 Leviticus 11:1-12

וַיְדַבֵּר ה׳ אֶל־מֹשֶׁה וְאֶל־אַהֲרֹן לֵאמֹר אֲלֵהֶם: דַּבְּרוּ אֶל־בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל לֵאמֹר

זֹאת הַחַיָּה אֲשֶׁר תֹּאכְלוּ מִכָּל־הַבְּהֵמָה אֲשֶׁר עַל־הָאָרֶץ: כֹּל מַפְרֶסֶת פַּרְסָה וְשֹׁסַעַת שֶׁסַע פְּרָסֹת מַעֲלַת גֵּרָה בַּבְּהֵמָה אֹתָהּ תֹּאכֵלוּ:

אַךְ אֶת־זֶה לֹא תֹאכְלוּ מִמַּעֲלֵי הַגֵּרָה וּמִמַּפְרִיסֵי הַפַּרְסָה אֶת־הַגָּמָל כִּי־מַעֲלֵה גֵרָה הוּא וּפַרְסָה אֵינֶנּוּ מַפְרִיס טָמֵא הוּא לָכֶם: וְאֶת־הַשָּׁפָן כִּי־מַעֲלֵה גֵרָה הוּא וּפַרְסָה לֹא יַפְרִיס טָמֵא הוּא לָכֶם: וְאֶת־הָאַרְנֶבֶת כִּי־מַעֲלַת גֵּרָה הִוא וּפַרְסָה לֹא הִפְרִיסָה טְמֵאָה הִוא לָכֶם: וְאֶת־הַחֲזִיר כִּי־מַפְרִיס פַּרְסָה הוּא וְשֹׁסַע שֶׁסַע פַּרְסָה וְהוּא גֵּרָה לֹא־יִגָּר טָמֵא הוּא לָכֶם: מִבְּשָׂרָם לֹא תֹאכֵלוּ וּבְנִבְלָתָם לֹא תִגָּעוּ טְמֵאִים הֵם לָכֶם:

Of all the animals in the world, these are the ones that you may eat: Among mammals, you may eat any that has split hooves and that chews its cud.

However, among the cud-chewing, hoofed animals, these are the ones that you may not eat: The camel shall be unclean to you although it chews its cud, since it does not have split hooves. The hyrax shall be unclean to you although it chews its cud, since it does not have split hooves. The hare shall be unclean to you although it chews its cud, since it does not have split hooves. The pig shall be unclean to you although it has split hooves, since it does not chew its cud. Do not eat their flesh nor touch their carcasses, since they are unclean to you.

אֶת־זֶה תֹּאכְלוּ מִכֹּל אֲשֶׁר בַּמָּיִם כֹּל אֲשֶׁר־לוֹ סְנַפִּיר וְקַשְׂקֶשֶׂת בַּמַּיִם בַּיַּמִּים וּבַנְּחָלִים אֹתָם תֹּאכֵלוּ: וְכֹל אֲשֶׁר אֵין־לוֹ סְנַפִּיר וְקַשְׂקֶשֶׂת בַּיַּמִּים וּבַנְּחָלִים מִכֹּל שֶׁרֶץ הַמַּיִם וּמִכֹּל נֶפֶשׁ הַחַיָּה אֲשֶׁר בַּמָּיִם שֶׁקֶץ הֵם לָכֶם: וְשֶׁקֶץ יִהְיוּ לָכֶם מִבְּשָׂרָם לֹא תֹאכֵלוּ וְאֶת־נִבְלָתָם תְּשַׁקֵּצוּ: כֹּל אֲשֶׁר אֵין־לוֹ סְנַפִּיר וְקַשְׂקֶשֶׂת בַּמָּיִם שֶׁקֶץ הוּא לָכֶם:

This is what you may eat of all that is in the water: You may eat any creature in the water, whether in seas or rivers, that has fins and scales. Any creature in the seas and rivers that does not have fins and scales, whether swarming creatures or any creatures of the water—they are an abomination for you, and an abomination they shall remain. Do not eat their flesh, and shun their carcass. Every aquatic creature without fins and scales must be shunned by you.

B. The Personal Significance

Source 2 >> Split Hooves and Chewing Cud

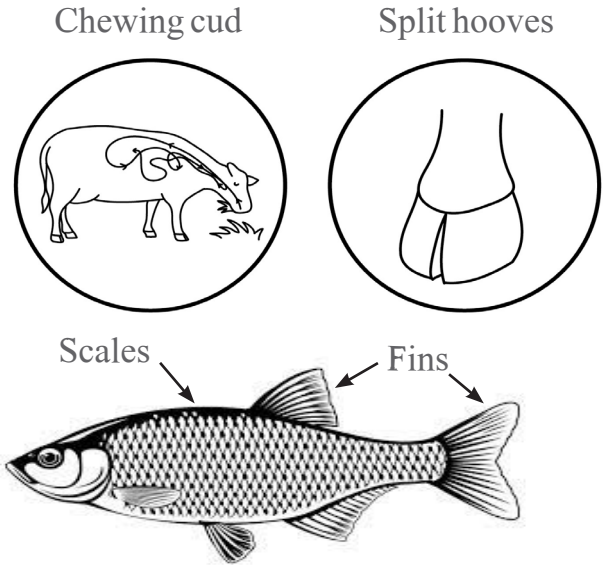
The Rebbe, Lekutei Sichos vol. 1 pg. 225-6

The kosher animal has split hooves. In other words, our approach to earthly matters should be split into two: we embrace the good and distance the bad.

...However, "split hooves" is not enough. We must also "chew the cud." Before engaging in any material pursuit, we must "chew our cud" again and again, to evaluate if and how we should approach it. Only then is our "animal" kosher.

...הפרסה חלוקה לשתים, ומשמעות הדבר שההליכה על גבי הארץ, המגע עם העניינים הארציים, צריכה להיות בשני כיוונים: ימין מקרבת ושמאל דוחה...

הסימן של "מפרסת פרסה" אינו מספיק, ודרוש סימן נוסף של "מעלה גרה". לפני כל פעולה גשמית שאדם עומד לעשות דרושה "לעיסה" ודיון היטב, לברר פעם ופעמיים אם לעשות הדבר וכיצד לעשותו. רק אז טהורה ה"בהמה".



Source 3 >> Fins and Scales

Likutei Levi Yitzchak, Igrot Kodesh, 397-8

Fins represent the Torah, which help the individual navigate the waters. We "go" with Torah, as the verse says, "If you go in my Commandments," which refers to Torah study. Scales represent the mitzvot, which are generally represented by the mitzvah of charity. As the verse says, "He donned charity like a coat of chain-mail," which is an armor made of [metal] scales.

Whoever has scales, has fins too. For, without Torah, how does he know to perform mitzvot? Only Torah study can bring about the resulting action. Therefore, if someone has mitzvot, he clearly has Torah as well. However, you could have fins without scales. The Mishnah speaks of individuals who assume they could study Torah alone...

אם כן סנפיר הוא תורה שבהם הוא שט על פני המים, כי על ידי תורה הוא הליכה, כמו שכתוב אם בחקתי תלכו, שתהיו עמלים בתורה, ההולכים בתורת ה'. וקשקשת מעשה המצות שכללותם צדקה, שכתוב בה וילבש צדקה כשריון, שהוא שריון קשקשים.

וכל שיש לו קשקשת יש לו סנפיר, כי אם לא הי' תורה מנין לו מעשה המצות, ותלמוד מביא לידי מעשה, אם כן, כשיש מעשה על כרחך שהי' תלמוד. מה שאין כן סנפיר בלא קשקשת יכול להיות, על דרך האומר אין לי אלא תורה כו', והלומד ואינו עושה...

C. Torah's Eternal Truth

Source 4 Nachmanidies, Leviticus 11:3

Any that has split hooves and that chews its cud. This verse means that you may eat animals which have both signs, but not animals which have only one sign. He could have stated the law in general terms, but he singled out the camel, hyrax and rabbit—who only chew their cud—and the pig—who only has split hooves—because no other animal in existence has only one sign.

כל מפרסת פרסה ושוסעת שסע פרסות מעלת גרה. טעם הכתוב הזה, שכל בהמה שיהיו בה שני הסימנין הללו תאכלו, אבל לא תאכלו באחד מהם. והיה ראוי שיאמר כן בדרך כלל, אלא שפרט הגמל והשפן והארנבת בגרה והחזיר בפרסה, מפני שאין אחרים בעולם בסימן האחד לבדו

Source 5 Talmud, Tractate Chullin 66b

The Rabbis taught: Any fish that has scales certainly has fins, but there are fish that have fins and do not have scales. Any fish that has scales and fins is kosher. If it has fins but no scales, it is a not kosher.

Now, if we rely only on scales, let G-d write only "scales" and leave out "fins" altogether?

Rabbi Abbahu said—and it was also said in the study hall of Rabbi Yishmael: [G-d included extra passages] "to make Torah great and glorious."

תנן התם: כל שיש לו קשקשת, יש לו סנפיר. ויש שיש לו סנפיר, ואין לו קשקשת. יש לו קשקשת ויש לו סנפיר: דג טהור. יש לו סנפיר ואין לו קשקשת: דג טמא.

מכדי: אקשקשת קא סמכינן! ליכתוב רחמנא קשקשת ולא ליכתוב סנפיר?

. . אמר רבי אבהו וכן תנא דבי ר' ישמעאל: יגדיל תורה ויאדיר.

Source 6 Maimonides, Laws of Forbidden Foods 3:1, 12-13

כָּל מַאֲכָל הַיוֹצֵא מִמִּין מִן הַמִּינִין הָאֲסוּרִין שֶׁלּוֹקִין עַל אֲכִילָתָן, הֲרֵי אוֹתוֹ הַמַּאֲכָל אָסוּר בַּאֲכִילָה מִן הַתּוֹרָה. כְּגוֹן חֲלֵב בְּהֵמָה וְחַיָּה הַטְּמֵאִים וּבֵיצֵי עוֹף וְדָג הַטְּמֵאִים..

If Jewish law imposes lashes for partaking in a forbidden food, that indicates that it is a biblical prohibition. For example, milk from a non-kosher animal or eggs of a non-kosher birds or fish.

חֲלֵב בְּהֵמָה טְמֵאָה אֵינוֹ נִקְפֶּה וְעוֹמֵד כַּחֲלֵב הַטְּהוֹרָה. וְאִם נִתְעָרֵב חֲלֵב טְמֵאָה בַּחֲלֵב בְּהֵמָה טְהוֹרָה כְּשֶׁתַּעֲמִיד אוֹתוֹ יַעֲמוֹד חֲלֵב הַטְּהוֹרָה וְיֵצֵא חֲלֵב הַטְּמֵאָה עִם הַקּוֹם שֶׁל גְּבִינָה:

Non-kosher milk will not congeal and solidify as kosher milk. If a mixture of non-kosher milk and kosher milk is made into cheese, the kosher milk will solidify and the non-kosher milk will be expelled together with the whey of the cheese.

וּמִפְּנֵי זֶה יִתֵּן הַדִּין שֶׁכָּל חָלָב הַנִּמְצָא בְּיַד עַכּוּ"ם אָסוּר שֶׁמָּא עֵרֵב בּוֹ חֲלֵב בְּהֵמָה טְמֵאָה. וּגְבִינַת הָעַכּוּ"ם מֻתֶּרֶת שֶׁאֵין חֲלֵב בְּהֵמָה טְמֵאָה מִתְגַּבֵּן.

Accordingly, logic would dictate that a gentile's milk should be forbidden, lest he mixed non-kosher milk with it, but a gentile's cheese should be permitted, for non-kosher milk will not form cheese.

>> The Rebbe

Torah's Eternal Nature

The laws in Maimonides regarding kosher food teach us a general lesson about the truth of Torah.

These laws describe the kosher signs for all creatures: domestic animals, wild animals, birds, and fish. Obviously, these signs are aspects of the animal's physical features. Here we see a demonstration of the truthfulness of the Torah. Throughout the world, not a single animal has been discovered that contradicts those classifications.

For example:

Maimonides states regarding the signs for animals: “Every animal that chews the cud has split hoofs…Every animal that has split hoofs chews the cud…” with four exceptions: the camel, pig, hyrax and rabbit, who each have just one of those signs.

Regarding fish, the Talmud tells us, “Any fish with scales will have fins.” In fact, the Talmud poses the question: “Why didn't G-d simply list scales and leave out fins,” if it is impossible to have scales without fins. It answers simply, “to make Torah great and glorious…”

Regarding milk, Maimonides writes, “Non-kosher milk will not congeal and solidify as kosher milk. If a mixture of non-kosher milk and kosher milk is made into cheese, the kosher milk will solidify and the non-kosher milk will be expelled together with the whey of the cheese.”

This is an amazing phenomenon.

Countless never-before-seen species have been discovered since the time we received the Torah, since the Mishna and Talmud were compiled and even since Maimonides wrote his work. This is especially true since the discovery of the Americas, Australia, and other remote islands; they contain countless unique species which did not exist in the lands of the sages of the Mishna and Talmud and of Maimonides.

Nevertheless, the rules about animals written in the Mishna and Talmud and cited by Maimonides continue to hold true regarding all the new animals discovered throughout the generations. Until today, not a single animal has been discovered that contradicts those principles.

This serves as one of the clear demonstration of Torah’s truth, and demonstrates G-d’s glory (in the words of our sages in Ethics of our Fathers, “Everything G-d created in his world, He created only for his glory”). All living creatures conform to the rules of the Torah—because their entire existence comes from Torah. As stated in the Zohar, “G-d looked into Torah and created the world.”

Shabbat Parshat Balak 1983
Toras Menachem 5743 vol. 4. pg. 2565.