



לעילוי נשמת ר' יחזקל שרגא בן ר' יהודה ז"ל - this week sponsored

## Food for the Soul

The laws of *kashrus* were given first to Moshe and Aharon, in accordance with their positions in the nation. Moshe is the transmitter and teacher of Torah, whereas Aharon is the educator for fulfillment of the mitzvos. Moshe's mission addresses the nation's knowledge; Aharon's mission addresses its spirit. Both depend on the observance of these laws. Through them, the nation's foundation is laid for a second time—on a higher level.

Rosh Chodesh and Pesach created the body of the nation. Parshas Mishpatim arranged its social life. From Parshas Terumah until Chapter 11 in Parshas Shemini, the Mishkan was established. The aim is that the entire people become "a kingdom of priests and a holy nation." It is not enough for this to be symbolized; it must become a reality. The community camped around the Mishkan must be worthy of the call: *kedoshim tihyu*.

But a plan must be followed to produce people who can live for the sacred ideal of the Torah. This regimen is laid down by God in Shemini, Tazria, Metzora, and Acharei Mos—the chapters leading up to "*kedoshim tihyu*."

The Torah says about the forbidden foods that they are *temeios*, *sheketz*; eating them leads to *shikutz nefesh*, *tumah*, and *timyon*, and conscientious avoidance of them leads to *hiskadshus*. Experience shows that food should be chosen based on moral values. The body exerts great influence on the soul. The lie of materialism is that it presumes that the spirit and will are merely attributes of the physical, that they have no reality independent of it.

But in view of the basic truth—that the body does influence the spirit—how understandable, then, is the Torah's concern about food. The Torah views the physical as a tool to perform the work of the soul. The spirit's existence transcends materialism, yet it depends on it.

It is understandable, then, that we are bound to a strict diet. The soul's tool is constantly renewed by food, so we must provide it with those materials that sustain its ability to serve. We must make it easier for the spirit to control and use this tool to fulfill its mission.

One does not become holy simply by keeping kosher, but it certainly makes it easier. Moreover, one takes *kashrus* lightly commits an offense against his own body, which belongs to G-d, and denies the purpose of *yetzias Mitzrayim*. As the Sages say, *chamurim sheratzim shekol hamodeh b'mitzvas sheratzim modeh b'yetzias Mitzrayim, v'kol hakofer b'mitzvas sheratzim kofer b'yetzias Mitzrayim*.

The observance of *kashrus* gives one the ability to attain holiness, but one cannot actually attain it unless he recognizes the task for which this ability has been given to him.

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*This Gem of the Week, is based on excerpts from Rav Shamshon Raphael Hirsch zt"l's commentary on Chumash, with publishers permission.*