Chumash Vayikra
The Book of Leviticus

Parshat Shemini

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Like the preceding parashah, Tzav, parashat Shemini covers two main subjects that appear to be unrelated. The first half of the parashah is historical: the account of the eighth and final day of the inauguration rites of the Tabernacle, which was the culmination of the seven preceding days described in the second half of parashat Tzav. The second half of the parashah is legal: which animals are permitted or forbidden for consumption—the basis of the laws of kashrut—and the laws of ritual impurity and defilement imparted by contact with forbidden animals.

Why are these two seemingly unrelated subjects treated in the same parashah? And why is the description of the eighth day of the inauguration rites separated—artificially, it would seem—from that of the preceding seven days?

The answer to these questions is alluded to in the name of this parashah, Shemini, which means “eighth,” referring, as we said, to the day following the seven days of the inauguration of the Tabernacle. The purpose of the Tabernacle was to draw the awareness of God into the lives of humanity in general and into the lives of the Jewish people in particular, but this goal was not achieved until the eighth day of the inauguration rituals. During the first seven days, Moses erected and dismantled the Tabernacle each day, as God instructed him to. Each day he offered all the sacrifices himself; Aaron and his sons were essentially passive during these rites, as Moses dressed them and anointed them. Yet during these first seven days of the Tabernacle’s operation, the Divine Presence did not descend and reveal itself: no fire descended from heaven to consume the sacrifices. During the first seven days, there was no open violation of the laws of nature, no miracle. Only on the eighth day did the Tabernacle start “working”: Moses did not dismantle it, Aaron began officiating as high priest and his sons as regular priests, and, most importantly, in the presence of the entire nation, Divine fire miraculously descended on the altar for the first time to consume the sacrifices.

The fact that the revelation of God occurred only on the eighth day reflects the notion that the number seven signifies the natural order, whereas the number eight signifies the miraculous transcendence of natural order.¹ For example, the world, which was designed to function according to the laws of nature, was created in seven days. The seven days of the week, the seven-day span of the holidays, the seven years of the sabbatical cycle, the

¹. See commentaries of Kli Yakar and Rabbeinu Bachye on the beginning of this parashah.
seven sabbatical cycles in each Jubilee-period, all reflect the natural order of creation into which we are bidden to infuse Divine consciousness.

The number eight, in contrast, is associated with the notion of surpassing the bounds of nature. Every male Jewish child is initiated into the covenant through circumcision on the eighth day following his birth, signifying the power granted to him to overcome his body’s natural drives. The day following the seven days of Sukot—the holiday of Shemini Atzeret—takes the theme and lessons of Sukot, which celebrates the brotherhood of all humanity, and focuses them on the Jewish people, as the chosen nation that transcends the natural goals of human civilization by disseminating Divine consciousness. The holiday of Chanukah—the commemoration of the miraculous victory of light over darkness—is celebrated for eight days.

Nevertheless, although there is a quantum difference between seven and eight, the fact that the eighth is called “the eighth” demonstrates that it is somehow a continuation of the preceding seven, that without the seven unmiraculous days of inauguration there cannot be a miraculous eighth day. This is because God made His miraculous intervention dependent upon us doing all that we can within the natural order to prepare it for such a revelation. True, God’s gesture of opening the gates to the unattainable is still considered an unearned Divine gift rather than a reciprocal response to our efforts, since our efforts can in no way compare to God’s supra-natural response. Nevertheless, without our prior, preparatory efforts, no supra-natural revelation can take place.

The ultimate transcendence of the natural order will occur in the messianic future. Thus, we are taught that in the messianic era, the Temple’s seven-stringed harp will be replaced by a harp of eight strings, indicating that the miraculous revelations of the future will be the result of our preparations now, during the era of natural order.

Nonetheless, the Divine vision that we will experience in the messianic era will surpass any that has ever occurred, even the prophetic revelations that the Jews experienced during the greatest spiritual moments of Jewish history: the splitting of the Red Sea, the Giving of the Torah, and, yes, the revelation of Divinity in the Tabernacle—which first took place in the events described in this parashah—and in the first two Temples. For in all these cases, the Divine revelation was indeed “miraculous”: it imposed itself from without on the natural order of reality. It was not, at these spiritual pinnacles, “natural” for the physical human eye to perceive Divinity; the eyes of the Jews who beheld these revelations were no different than our eyes, which see only physicality and are blind to the spiritual spectrum. The fact that they did see what they saw was therefore miraculous, overriding the natural order.

In the messianic future, however, the nature of reality will change, and with it, the nature of the physical eye: its “range of vision” will expand, enabling it to see Godliness “naturally.” The truth of God’s existence and His continual creation of reality will become obvious. Human consciousness will be the inverse of what it is today: today, materiality is obvious and Divinity—when we perceive it—seems anomalous; in the future, Divinity will be obvious and materiality (a realm of creation aware of itself and not of God) will seem anomalous.

Thus, the messianic era is the true blending of the seven and the eighth: nature (seven)
will take on the properties of the supra-natural (eight); what was formally supra-natural will become natural.

This explains why the account of the eighth day of the installation rites is juxtaposed not with the account of the seven days that preceded it but with the laws of permitted and forbidden animals and the defilement that the latter impart.

It is stated in the Midrash\(^3\) that one of the reasons God permitted us to eat certain animals and forbade us to eat others is in order to refine us. The basic refinement effected by observing these laws is the self-control we gain by submitting to limitations on what we may eat. From this perspective, there is nothing repugnant about the forbidden animals per se, physically or otherwise; the Jewish people are told to refrain from eating them simply because God decreed that they should not.

God’s division of the animal kingdom into the permitted and the forbidden—decreeing that certain animals defile us spiritually if we consume them and defile us ritually if we touch or carry them—automatically creates a part of creation that potentially opposes Divinity. The world itself, in contrast, makes no distinction between kosher and non-kosher animals; all types of creatures form a necessary and integral part of the natural, ecological order. By determining which animals are permitted (i.e., conducive to Divine consciousness) and which are forbidden (i.e., antithetical to Divine consciousness), the Torah transforms the world’s naturally undifferentiated assortment of animals into a school for human refinement. In so doing, it makes the natural world supra-natural; the “seven-world” becomes an expression of the Divine eight.

In this light, we can understand why the account of the eighth day of the installation rites of the Tabernacle is paired with the laws of kashrut and purity rather than with the account of the preceding seven days. Both—the account of the events of the eighth day and the laws following it—are expressions of the true purpose of creation: the revelation of supra-natural Divine consciousness within the natural, physical world.

The account of the final, eighth day of the installation rites, when the Divine Presence openly descended to earth, inspires us to yearn for the ultimate revelation of God’s Presence on earth: the final Redemption. The laws of permitted and forbidden animals, which express the ideal of transforming reality into a vehicle for Divine consciousness, give us both the tools to actualize this ideal as well as a foretaste of the true transformation of “nature” into Divine consciousness that will occur with the final Redemption.\(^4\)

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5 They went and took what Moses had commanded them to take to the front of the Tent of Meeting, and then, once again, the entire community approached the Tent of Meeting and stood before God.

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1 Aaron’s merit was superior to Moses’ own: The integration of Godliness into the physical world requires two complimentary and essential dynamics: Firstly, Godliness must “descend” into the world, meaning that it must be expressed in such a way that it can enter into created reality, which is not intrinsically receptive to Godliness. Secondly, the world must “ascend” to the notion of Godliness, meaning that it must be made receptive to it. The first dynamic is essential because we created beings could never achieve transcendent levels of Divine consciousness on our own, due to the innate limitations of our finite minds. The second dynamic is essential because without preparation and inspired readiness on our part, Divine revelation cannot be absorbed into our being, and therefore cannot elevate us in any lasting way.

The agent for the first dynamic was Moses. Being more of the higher, spiritual worlds than of this world, he was uniquely suited to transmitting God’s Torah to the people. The agent for the second dynamic was Aaron. Aaron labored to promote peace between friends and spouses, thereby making society more receptive to Godliness, and also worked directly to inspire the people to aspire to the spiritual life.

Although both dynamics are essential, the ultimate purpose of infusing the world with Divinity is our ascent to higher levels of Divine consciousness. Thus, in this context, Moses’ efforts were secondary to Aaron’s. It was therefore Aaron’s involvement in the consecration rites that made it possible, so to speak, for God to complete the process begun by Moses’ preparations and reveal His presence in the Tabernacle.

This insight is not merely of academic or historical interest. We all desire to feel God’s presence in our lives; a necessary preparation, then, is to follow the sages’ direction to “be of the students of Aaron: love peace and pursue peace; love your fellow creatures and bring them close to the Torah.” Doing so is not only good for others; it causes God’s presence to be felt in our lives.

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4 See “Inner Dimensions” on Exodus 2:10. 5 Numbers 20:29; on Deuteronomy 34:8. 6 See on Exodus 19:2. 7 See on Numbers 8:2. 8 Avot 1:12. 9 Likutei Sichot, vol. 7, pp. 298-299.
Conclusion of the Installation Rites

9:1 Throughout the previous seven days, there had been no Divine manifestation in response to the installation rites Moses performed on Aaron and his sons. The people were disheartened over this, and complained to Moses that all their efforts in donating the materials for the Tabernacle and constructing it were apparently for naught, inasmuch as God was evidently still angry at them over the incident of the Golden Calf. Moses responded that the Divine Presence would grace their work only after Aaron would begin officiating as high priest, inasmuch as his merit was superior to Moses’ own.1 Thus, on the eighth day of the installation rites, the 1st of Nisan, 2449, after erecting the Tabernacle and performing all the rites he was commanded to perform himself,2 Moses summoned Aaron, Aaron’s sons, and the elders of Israel, to inform them that now that he had completed the installation rites, God had commanded him to have Aaron enter the Tabernacle and perform the rest of the day’s rites, and that Aaron was not doing so on his own initiative.

2 He said to Aaron, “Take for yourself a calf in its second year as a sin-offering, and a ram as an ascent-offering, both of them unblemished, and bring them near before God. The calf will signify that God has forgiven you for your part in the incident of the Golden Calf.

3 You must speak to the Israelites, saying, ‘Take collectively a he-goat as a sin-offering; a calf and a lamb, both in their first year and both unblemished, as an ascent-offering;

4 an ox and a ram as peace-offerings, to slaughter before God; and a grain-offering kneaded with oil and baked as unleavened loaves,3 for today God is appearing to you by manifesting His presence in the Tabernacle you have built, but in order for this to happen, you must first perform these rites.’”

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<tr>
<th>Owner</th>
<th>Component</th>
<th>Purpose</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Aaron</td>
<td>calf</td>
<td>sin-offering</td>
<td>blood applied to diagonally opposite corners of Altar, remainder of blood poured onto base of Altar; fat burned up on Altar; flesh burned up outside camp</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>ram</td>
<td>ascent-offering</td>
<td>blood applied to diagonally opposite corners of Altar; fat and flesh burned up on Altar</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>he-goat</td>
<td>sin-offering</td>
<td>same as Aaron’s sin-offering</td>
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<tr>
<td>calf</td>
<td>ascent-offering</td>
<td>same as Aaron’s ascent-offering</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>lamb</td>
<td>ascent-offering</td>
<td>same as Aaron’s ascent-offering</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ox</td>
<td>peace-offering</td>
<td>blood applied to diagonally opposite corners of Altar; fat burned up on Altar; breast and thigh eaten by priests</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>ram</td>
<td>peace-offering</td>
<td>blood applied to diagonally opposite corners of Altar; fat burned up on Altar; breast and thigh eaten by priests</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>unleavened loaves</td>
<td>grain-offering “memorial portion” removed and burned up on Altar; remainder eaten by priests</td>
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Figure 1. The Offerings for the Eighth Day of the Installation Rites

sels, ready for application on the Altar, and he took it from them and dashed it upon the northwest and southeast corners of the Altar, such that the blood could
6 Moses said, “This—the following procedure—is what God has commanded you to do in order that the glory of God appear to you.”

7 Aaron, still cognizant of his role in the incident of the Golden Calf, was embarrassed and afraid to approach the Altar, so Moses said to Aaron, “Why are you embarrassed? You were chosen for this role! Approach the Altar and offer up the young calf as your sin-offering and the ram as your ascent-offering, atoning for yourself and for the people, and offer up the he-goat, the calf, and the lamb as the people’s sacrifice, atoning for them, as God has commanded.

8 So Aaron approached the Altar and slaughtered his sin-offering calf.

9 Aaron’s sons received the blood in a vessel and brought the blood to him. He dipped his finger into the blood, placing some on the protrusions of the Altar and pouring the rest of the blood onto the base of the Altar.

10 He burned up the fat, the kidneys, and the diaphragm, along with part of the liver from the sin-offering on the Altar, as God had commanded Moses.

11 As commanded, he burned the flesh and the hide in fire, outside the camp. This was an exception to the rule that only sin-offerings whose blood is applied to the Inner Altar must be burned up.

12 He slaughtered the ascent-offering. Aaron’s sons received its blood in a vessel and presented the blood to him in the vessel, ready for application on the Altar, and he took it from them and dashed it upon the northwest and southeast corners of the Altar, such that the blood could be considered to be encircling the Altar.

13 They also presented the ascent-offering to him cut into its prescribed pieces, ready for burning up, along with the head. He burned them up on the Altar.

14 He washed the innards and the legs, and burned them up on the Altar, on top of the burning fat parts of the ascent-offering.

15 He then brought forward the animals for the people’s sacrifice. He took the people’s sin-offering goat, slaughtered it, and performed all the procedures of a sin-offering on it, just like the first sacrifice he had offered up, his own sin-offering.

16 He brought forward the calf and the lamb for the ascent-offering and offered it up according to the regulation of a voluntary ascent-offering, for the procedures followed for voluntary and obligatory ascent-offerings are identical.

Second Reading 17 He brought forward the grain-offering, filled his palm with a fistful of it, and burned it up on the Altar. As commanded, he performed all these rites after the morning ascent-offering, which Moses had already offered up.

18 He slaughtered the ox and the ram as the people’s peace-offering. Aaron’s sons received their blood in vessels and presented the blood to him in these ves-
The Death of Nadav and Avihu

10:1 It has been recounted that Aaron's two eldest sons, Nadav and Avihu, had become liable to the death penalty at the Giving of the Torah. Now, ten months later, they became liable to the death penalty on two additional counts. First, they reasoned correctly that just as the revelation of the Divine Presence that accompanies the daily morning sacrifice is followed by offering up incense, so should the revelation of the Divine Presence that had just been witnessed be followed by an incense offering, as well. Although they were right, they stated the law (and acted...
be considered to be encircling the Altar,

19 and they also\textsuperscript{19} presented the fats and their associated parts from the ox and from the ram, including the tail (of the ram\textsuperscript{20}), the fat covering the innards, the kidneys, and the diaphragm with part of the liver.

20 After waving the fats, breasts, and legs—for which purpose the breasts and legs were on top of the fats—they flipped these parts of the animal into the hand of another priest, and thereby they placed the fats on top of the breasts, and Aaron burned up the fats on the Altar.

21 Before this, Aaron had already waved the breasts and the right thigh as a wave-offering before God, as Moses had commanded.

22 Having concluded the special rites for this day, Aaron, still standing atop the Altar,\textsuperscript{21} lifted up his hands toward the people and blessed them, applying the text of the priestly blessing (which, although it would only be given a month later,\textsuperscript{22} was already known\textsuperscript{23}) to the day’s unique circumstances: He said, “We know that God’s presence can only dwell in this Tabernacle if He has forgiven us for the incident of the Golden Calf.\textsuperscript{24} Since I played a pivotal role in this incident, His forgiveness for all of us is contingent upon His forgiving me. Therefore, in order to initiate the Tabernacle and its rites, it is not enough that I bless you—since until we know that He has forgiven me, I cannot elicit the erasure of this collective sin. Therefore, I must appeal to God Himself to bless you and watch over you. May God shine His face to you and grace you with His presence, as a result of His being partial toward you, forgiving you the sin of the Golden Calf, and thereby granting you peace.”\textsuperscript{25}

He then descended the Altar, after having offered up the sin-offering, the ascent-offering, and the peace-offering. But still no fire had descended from heaven to devour the sacrifices. Aaron felt that this was his fault, because God had not fully forgiven him for the role he played in the incident of the Golden Calf. He complained to Moses, “I did all this only because you told me to; did you intend to embarrass me like this?”

23 So Moses and Aaron went into the Tent of Meeting, firstly so Moses could instruct Aaron how to perform the rite of the incense,\textsuperscript{26} but also to pray that God manifest His presence by sending fire down from heaven to devour the sacrifices, thereby showing that He accepted them. Then they came out and blessed the people, first referring to their own performance of the installation rites during the past week, saying “May the pleasantness of the Lord, our God—His presence—rest upon us in all that we have done.”\textsuperscript{27} Then, addressing the people directly, they concluded, “And through Aaron’s performance of these rites, may the Divine Presence rest upon your handiwork, the Tabernacle.”\textsuperscript{28}

After they finished praying and blessing the people, the glory of God finally appeared to all the people, as follows:

\begin{itemize}
  \item Third Reading 24 Fire went forth from heaven, descending from before God, and consumed the ascent-offering and the fats upon the Altar. All the people saw this, sang praises, and fell upon their faces, prostrating themselves before God.
\end{itemize}

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{19} Likutei Sichot, vol. 32, p. 57.
\item \textsuperscript{20} Above, 3:6, 9.
\item \textsuperscript{21} Likutei Sichot, vol. 22, pp. 44-45.
\item \textsuperscript{22} Numbers 6:22-27.
\item \textsuperscript{23} See Genesis 26:5, etc.
\item \textsuperscript{24} Above, vv. 1-2.
\item \textsuperscript{25} Likutei Sichot, vol. 22, pp. 39-44.
\item \textsuperscript{26} Exodus 30:34-38.
\item \textsuperscript{27} Psalms 90:17 (this Psalm is ascribed to Moses).
\item \textsuperscript{28} Likutei Sichot, vol. 22, pp. 43-44; vol. 11, p. 172.
\end{itemize}
are required to—or when we are not required to—evinces our identification with His will, the substitution of His agenda for ours. (The first is a greater sacrifice; the second a greater achievement of Divine consciousness.)

It was to this level of Divine consciousness that Nadav and Avihu ascended on the eighth day of the installation rites. Thus, their incense offering was one “that He had not commanded,” for they intuited its necessity even before God disclosed it.

Moreover, their incense offering was an expression of their conscious unification with God. Incense is offered up on the Inner Altar, which parallels the inner dimension of the heart—i.e., our Divine soul, which is constantly bound to its Divine source—and serves to reveal and intensify this bond. In contrast, the sacrifices offered up on the Outer Altar are designed to elevate the outer dimension of the heart—our human/animal soul—to Divinity. Thus, the Hebrew word for “sacrifice” (קרבן) means “to come close,” implying that the offerer is not yet close, and that through the sacrifice he comes close but does not necessarily become one with God. In contrast, the Hebrew word for “incense” (חדרת) means “bound,” implying that through the incense, the offerer binds himself with his Divine source, becoming one with it.

Aaron’s son’s incense offering therefore completed the rites performed by Moses and Aaron and sanctified the Tabernacle. Although the Divine Presence had already descended upon the Tabernacle, it did not permeate it; the Tabernacle and the Divine Presence remained separate entities. This dichotomy mirrored the Divine consciousness that Aaron had evinced in performing his rites: he had done all that he was commanded, but had stopped short of ascending to the level where commandments become superfluous.

Therefore, the Tabernacle’s sanctification, the achievement of oneness with God, required an “alien fire,” one that was different than any rite that had yet been performed, by virtue of having originated in consummate Divine consciousness. Nadav and Avihu’s incense satisfied this requirement, and therefore elicited a fire from God that surpassed the fire that descended through Aaron’s sacrificial service, permeating the Tabernacle with holiness rather than just manifesting holiness in it.

Nadav and Avihu’s elevated Divine consciousness led them to lose all sense of their physicality, until their souls left their bodies. As Rabbi Chaim ibn Attar explains, in their intense desire to cleave to God, they continued to rise through spiritual heights even as they felt their souls leaving them. From this perspective, their death was not a punishment; they died in the same way that Moses and Aaron would later die: by the Divine kiss.

Nevertheless, their behavior was acceptable only as an ad hoc measure required for the purposes of that special day. Therefore, we are not intended to emulate their example; on the contrary, we are expressly forbidden to pursue such suicidal spiritual rapture. Although it is necessary to seek inspiration and renew it constantly, the purpose of reaching increasingly higher planes of Divine consciousness is to bring the acquired consciousness down into the world, thereby making the world increasingly more conscious of God and transforming it into His home.

This duality of seeking inspiration by transcending the limitations of the physical world and then applying the inspiration gained to elevating the physical world is but one reflection of the oscillation that characterizes all life. In the words of the prophet Ezekiel, “the living beings were running and returning,” which is interpreted to mean that “all life exhibits running and returning motion.” Physically, this oscillation is manifest in the inhalation and exhalation of the lungs as well as in the systole and diastole of the heart. In spiritual terms, the health of the soul requires periodic oscillation between world-forsaking flights of inspiration and world-affirming dedication to our Divine mission. Inasmuch as the purpose of creation is to make the

Leviticus 10:2

on it) before giving Moses a chance to do so. Since Nadav and Avihu’s spiritual stature was second only to that of Moses and Aaron, they should have certainly known not to preempt Moses in this way, and they therefore incurred the death penalty.

From a second perspective, Nadav and Avihu sought to enhance the ecstasy of the moment by drinking wine; in this inebriated state, they offered up their incense. Inasmuch as performing sacrificial rites while drunk had not yet been forbidden, they did not technically transgress any prohibition; therefore, their incense did elicit Divine revelation. However, due to their exalted spiritual stature, they should have intuited that God does not want His priests to officiate while drunk. It was in this sense that their incense was “an unauthorized fire that God had not commanded them to offer up.” They therefore thereby incurred the death penalty.

Thus, Aaron’s sons, Nadav and Avihu, each took a pan, put coals that were on fire in it, placed incense upon the fire, and thus brought before God (i.e., on the Inner Altar) a fire that was foreign—i.e., unauthorized—as far as they were concerned, inasmuch as He had not commanded them to offer it up (or offer it up in this way), although He had indeed commanded Moses to offer it up.

This incense offering did, indeed, elicit a revelation of the Divine Presence similar to the one that had just occurred: fire went forth from before God. However, in this case, because Nadav and Avihu had offered the incense improperly, the fire issued in the form of two pairs of flames that entered their nostrils and consumed them—i.e., their souls, leaving their bodies and clothing intact—and thus they died there, before God.

1 Liable to the death penalty: From a deeper perspective, Aaron’s sons did not sin, nor was their death a punishment. It was not only in full accordance with God’s will that they offer up their incense before Moses could command it, it was a vital conclusion to the consecration rites.

The innate consciousness of our Divine soul is its awareness of being bound to God, being one with Him. Normally, this awareness is obfuscated by the self-awareness of our human/animal souls, but we have seen how drinking wine can, under the proper circumstances, allow the Divine soul to overtake our consciousness. In the words of the Talmudic sages: “When wine enters, secrets emerge”—the ultimate “secret” being our unity with God. Wine is also a metaphor for the inner dimension of the Torah, the study of which also aids the Divine soul in manifesting itself in our consciousness.

This is why Aaron’s sons drank wine—in order to open their minds and reveal their Divine souls. At the same time they drank wine literally, they also drank “wine” metaphorically: by allowing their Divine souls to overtake their consciousness, their minds became simultaneously flooded with profound insights into the Torah’s inner dimension, increasing their sense of oneness with God.

When this sense of oneness with God overtakes our conscious mind sufficiently, we gain an intuitive knowledge of God’s will. At this level of consciousness, there is no need for God to articulate His commandments to us explicitly, since we already know what He wants of us. (There are advantages both in waiting to fulfill God’s will until He expresses it and in intuiting His will before it is expressed—or fulfilling it beyond how it is expressed. On the one hand, submitting to God’s express will evinces our devotion to it, our willingness to override our own agendas in favor of His. Thus, the sages teach us that “one who performs [a Divine commandment] having been commanded [to do so] is greater than one who performs [such a deed] though not having been commanded [to do so].” On the other hand, intuiting His will before it is expressed and/or fulfilling it before we

6 Moses said to Aaron and to his sons Eleazar and Itamar, “Those mourning the death of close relatives—even priests—must let their hair grow uncut for at least 30 days and rend their garments, as an expression of mourning. The high priest, however, must not observe these practices. Inasmuch as all three of you are being installed as priests and are thereby participating in the inauguration of God’s Tabernacle, it is not appropriate for any of you to dampen the joy of the celebration by observing mourning practices. For this reason, the stringencies that normally apply only to the high priest apply today to all three of you. Therefore, do not let your head’s hair grow and do not rend your garments, so that you not die—for doing so will be accounted a capital offense—and lest He be angry with the entire community. Rather, let your brothers, the entire house of Israel, bewail the conflagration that God has burned, i.e., the death of your family members, in your stead and on your behalf. This will also serve as a precedent, that the community must participate in the sorrow of its leaders when they are in mourning.

3 Seeing that they died, Moses said to Aaron, comforting him, “This is evidently what God spoke about when He said, ‘I will be sanctified through the example I will make of those whom I have chosen to be nearest to Me, and in this same way I will be honored before all the people.’” I assumed this meant that when the Tabernacle would be inaugurated, either you or I would die in punishment for some misdeed, in order to demonstrate how seriously the service of God must be taken—after all, if God punishes preeminently righteous people, He will certainly punish those who are less righteous. But apparently, your two eldest sons were more righteous than either of us, and for that reason God chose to teach the people this crucial lesson by making an example of them rather than of us. In fact, your two remaining sons are also apparently more righteous than we are, since all four of your sons had been sentenced to die as your punishment for your role in the incident of the Golden Calf, and my prayers at that time commuted this punishment by half. The fact that Nadav and Avihu died this way indicates that Eleazar and Itamar were slated to die similarly.”

Aaron and his sons were silent, accepting God’s decree and Moses’ consolation.

4 Moses summoned his cousins Mishael and Eltzafan, the sons of his and Aaron’s uncle Uziel, and said to them, “In order not to allow the sadness of this tragedy to mitigate our joy over the dedication of God’s Tabernacle, draw near and carry your dead kinsmen from before the Sanctuary to outside of the camp. True, it would seem that since you are Levites, you should not ritually defile yourselves today, because doing so will prevent you from participating further in the celebration of the inauguration of the Tabernacle; but inasmuch as the bodies must be removed in order for the celebration to continue, removing them can be considered an essential part of the celebration itself, and it is therefore fitting that you be the ones to do this, specifically because you are Levites, the officiants of the Tabernacle. And yes, God Himself disrupted the celebration by punishing your relatives immediately rather than waiting until another day, but for our part, we must do our best not to allow the mood to be dampened any more than He has deemed necessary.

This being the case, I would ordinarily have asked Eleazar and Itamar to tend to their dead brothers, since they are obligated to do so. But they have been specifically commanded not to leave the Tabernacle precincts today, and therefore cannot remove them.”

5 So Mishael and Eltzafan approached and carried Nadav and Avihu, who were still dressed in their intact, priestly tunics, to outside the camp, as Moses had spoken.

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CHASIDIC INSIGHTS

By so doing, we ensure that we will sense the pre-eminence of the “return” over the “run,” and thereby be protected from the sort of unchecked “run” that results in total departure from this world. In this context, Nadav and Avihu’s “sin” consisted of emphasizing the “run” at the expense of the...
offerings, part of which were also to be eaten by the priests, \(^59\) so the same question applied to Nachshon's grain-offering.

**Moses spoke as follows to Aaron and his surviving sons, Eleazar and Itamar:**

"Even though only a high priest is permitted and required to eat his sacrifices on the day his close relatives die, \(^60\) all three of you—in this respect, too\(^61\)—are subject to the stringencies of the high priest. You must therefore all eat the portions of the installation grain-offering\(^62\) and of the dedication grain-offering of Nachshon the son of Aminadav that are designated to be eaten by the priests. Thus, **take the portion of the grain-offerings left over** after their 'memorial portions' \(^63\) were burned up as **God's fire-offerings and eat them as unleavened loaves**. You must eat these grain-offerings **near the Altar**, i.e., within the Tabernacle precincts, **for they are sacrifices of superior holiness**.\(^64\)

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Officiating in the Temple while Intoxicated

8 God addressed the following legal passage to Aaron directly—rather than through Moses—in reward for his having accepted God’s punishment of his sons without protest.55 God spoke to Aaron, saying,

9 “Do not drink wine in such a way that will lead to intoxication, neither you nor your sons with you, neither when you enter the Tent of Meeting nor when you approach the Outer Altar, so that you not die, for doing so is a capital offense. This is an eternal statute for your generations.

10 Only when you are sober is there any reason to distinguish between which actions render the sacrifices you offer up holy and which disqualify them, rendering them profane; and between priests who are ritually defiled and therefore unfit for service and those who are not ritually defiled and therefore fit for service—whereas if you are intoxicated, whatever sacrificial rites you perform are automatically disqualified, even if you performed them correctly and were undefiled when you performed them.

11 Similarly, only a sober person is fit to instruct the Israelites regarding all the statutes that God has spoken to them through Moses; an intoxicated person is unfit to teach. Nevertheless, a sage who does render a legal decision while intoxicated is not subject to the death penalty, as are priests who officiate while intoxicated.”

The Aftermath of the Death of Nadav and Avihu

◆ Fourth Reading 12 Once the bodies of Nadav and Avihu were removed from the Tabernacle, the installation ceremonies could resume, so Aaron offered up the additional sacrifices for the first of the month.56 Once all the sacrifices had been offered up, the question arose as to whether the portions of the sacrifices designated to be eaten by the priests should indeed be eaten by Aaron and his two remaining sons, since they were in mourning.

As will be recounted later,57 the princes of the 12 tribes donated dedication offerings for the inauguration of the Altar, and God told Moses to offer up one of these each day during the first 12 days of the full functioning of the Tabernacle. The first one to be offered up, on the 1st of Nisan, was that of Nachshon the son of Aminadav, prince of the tribe of Judah. These dedication offerings included grain-

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“return,” and pursuing the “run” for its own sake, rather than as a prelude to the subsequent “return.” Therefore, after this incident, God forbade drinking wine to intoxication, i.e., “drinking” the inner dimensions of the Torah in a way that leads to the rapturous expiration of the soul and the abandonment of our Divine mission.58

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Moses, however, assumed the opposite. Since God had told him that neither Aaron nor his sons should observe mourning practices that day so as not to dampen the celebratory mood, he reasoned that this was the motivation behind the directive he heard from God with regard to the two grain-offerings. Since this concern would preclude observing mourning practices in any fashion, this directive should rightly apply to all the sacrifices offered up that day, without exception. Moses inquired about the sin-offering he-goat for the first of the month when he noticed that Aaron and his sons were not eating it, and discovered that it had been burned up. Wondering if Aaron and his sons had decided that being in mourning precluded...
You must eat them in a holy place, i.e., the Tabernacle precincts, because they are sacrifices of superior holiness, and for this same reason, the priests’ portions are only your portion and your sons’ portion from God’s fire-offerings but not your wives’ or daughters’ portions. Eleazar and Itamar must eat them, even though their brothers died today, for so have I been commanded by God, that today is an exception to the rule.

You must also eat your portions of the installation peace-offerings; however, you do not have to do so within the Tabernacle precincts, for, being peace-offerings, they are sacrifices of lesser holiness. Therefore, you must only take care to eat the breast used as the wave-offering and the thigh used as the raised-offering in an undefiled place, i.e., anywhere within the borders of the Israelite camp. Furthermore, you may eat your portions of these sacrifices together with your sons and your daughters, for although they have been given only as your portion and your sons’ portion from the peace-offerings of the Israelites—i.e., only male priests receive portions—you and your sons may share your portions with the female members of your families.

As explained previously with regard to all peace-offerings, the priests must bring the thigh used as the raised-offering and the breast used as the wave-offering placed on top of the fats used as fire-offerings in order to wave them as a wave-offering before God. It will belong to you and to your sons with you as an eternal entitlement, as God has commanded.”

Fifth Reading Based on Moses’ instructions, Aaron and his sons ate their portions of the sacrifices that were prescribed for that day: the installation grain-offering, the installation sin-offering, the installation peace-offerings, and Nachshon’s sin- and grain-offerings. There was, however, another offering of superior holiness that they would normally have been required to eat: the goat brought as the sin-offering accompanying the additional ascent-offerings for the first of the month. However, unlike the other offerings, this one was not an exceptional offering prescribed specifically for that day, but a regular offering that was to be brought every month. Since Moses, when he informed Aaron and his sons that God had instructed them to eat their portions of the sacrifices even though they were mourning their close relatives, had only mentioned the two grain-offerings that were prescribed solely for that day, they assumed that this directive only applied to such sacrifices and not to regular sacrifices that were prescribed for all time. The regular rule, they reasoned, still applied to regular sacrifices, meaning that they were forbidden to eat the meat of this goat. (Waiting until the next day to eat it—when they would no longer be in mourning—was not an option, since sacrifices of superior holiness may not be eaten beyond the day they are offered up and the following night.) Therefore, instead of eating their portion of the sin-offering goat brought on the first of the month, they burned it up, as should be done with any sacrifice that cannot be eaten within its prescribed time.

He discovered that it had been burned up: Moses’ and Aaron’s reasonings with regard to the difference between the special sacrifices of the day and those that would be offered up on a regular basis reflect their respective visions of humanity’s relationship with God. As we saw above, Moses’ life was devoted to transmitting God’s Torah to the people, whereas Aaron’s life was devoted to elevating the people to the Torah. If we imagine the relationship between God and the Jewish people as a marriage, it is Moses who escorts the Heavenly Groom to the canopy and Aaron who escorts the earthly bride.

The Torah is objective and unchanging truth, whereas human beings are subjective and constantly changing. Therefore, Moses sees the Torah’s truth as being uniformly applicable in all situations, in contradistinction to Aaron, who realizes that each situation must be assessed individually in order to know how to apply the Torah’s immutable truth effectively. Aaron sees that an ad hoc sacrifice is different than a permanent one, that God’s truth can be reflected differently on different levels.

In our own lives, we must evince both Moses’ and Aaron’s perspectives. For ourselves, we must aspire to be like Moses, devoted to the Torah’s truth absolutely and unchangingly. But when dealing with others, we must take into account their moods and inclinations, and draw them to the Torah with forgiving love, as did Aaron.
them from eating any sacrifices other than the two grain-offerings that had been mentioned explicitly, Moses inquired about the other sacrifices and found that they had been eaten. So he became angry with Aaron for his seemingly careless attitude toward God’s instructions. But out of respect for Aaron, he instead accosted Eleazar and Itamar, Aaron’s surviving sons, demanding a response to his question,

17 “Why did you not eat the sin-offering for the first of the month? Was it, perhaps, at any time not in the holy place, i.e., the Tabernacle precincts, thereby being rendered unfit for consumption—for it is a sacrifice of superior holiness, which becomes disqualified if taken out of the Tabernacle precincts?” They answered, “No, it was not.” “If so,” Moses continued, “why did you not eat it as required? God has given it to you to eat in order to thereby gain forgiveness for the sin of the community—in case anyone unknowingly entered the Tabernacle or ate sacrifices while either they or the sacrifices were in a state of defilement—to effect their atonement before God! The atonement of the community is dependent upon your eating the sacrifices, so even if you wished to be more stringent than was required of you—by refraining from eating them because of your state of mourning—you had no right to be!

18 Behold, its blood was not brought into the Sanctuary, which would also have necessitated burning it, so you should have surely eaten it within holy precincts, even though your brothers died today, as I commanded you with regard to the grain-offering, which, like the sin-offering, is a sacrifice of superior holiness and which therefore can be taken as a precedent for the sin-offering!” Moses then continued to interrogate them: “Did you apply the blood to the Altar yourselves, which would also have invalidated the sacrifice—and you would have therefore been required to burn the sacrifice?”

19 Although Eleazar and Itamar could have responded conclusively to Moses, they felt it would not be respectful to Aaron, their father, to speak in his presence, nor would it be respectful to contradict Moses, their teacher. So they remained silent and waited for Aaron to respond. Seeing this, Aaron said harshly to Moses, “Did they offer up their sin-offering or their ascent-offering today before God? It was I who sacrificed these offerings, and this is permitted for I am the high priest, who, as you have taught us, is permitted to perform sacrificial rites even on the day his close relative dies. So the sin-offering goat was not burned up because it had become invalid. It was burned up because you have no justification for applying the leniency you heard from God regarding eating the special sacrifices prescribed for today to sacrifices that will also be offered up on a regular basis from now on. You argue that God does not want us to dampen the mood by observing the laws of mourning. Perhaps this is true only with regard to the sacrificial rites themselves, which must take place next to the Altar—the focus of the celebration—and I did indeed offer up all the sacrifices there, including the sin-offering for the first

be referred to as spiritual defilement. (There is some overlap between these two categories in that some entities impart both ritual defilement if touched and spiritual defilement if eaten, as will be seen.)

As to permitted and prohibited foods: until now, you have been subsisting on the matzos you took with you when you left Egypt, and then on the manna and quails with which God later provided you. These miraculous sources of sustenance will cease once we enter the Land of Israel, and even before this, we may encounter itinerant merchants who may offer to sell us animals to eat, or you may want to eat some of the animals we brought with us from Egypt. We will therefore now detail these laws.

Since animals preceded humans in the order of creation, we will first discuss which animals you are permitted to eat and the types of defilement they convey; only afterward will we discuss the varieties of defilement human beings can convey.96

But first you must be made aware that the following restrictions on your diet are meant for your spiritual benefit. It is specifically because God has endowed you with an additional, Divine soul,97 which renders you sensitive to transcendent Divinity, that He imposes these restrictions on you, for they are designed to enhance this soul's health. In contrast, since the rest of humanity possesses only a human/animal soul, which is sensitive only to the Divinity immanent within creation, it would be meaningless and ineffectual for them to observe these restrictions; therefore, these laws do not apply to them.

The following are the creatures that you may eat.” As Moses (and in turn, Aaron, his sons, and the princes) mentioned specific animals, he showed them specimens of each. “Among all the land-animals:
of the month, as required. But since eating the sacrifices need not take place next to the Altar (just somewhere within the Tabernacle precincts), observing the laws of mourning with regard to eating the sacrifices cannot be construed as dampening the celebratory mood of the day. Therefore, the fact that God only explicitly allowed us to eat today’s special sacrifices implies that this leniency applies only to them, because they are an intrinsic part of today’s installation ceremonies. If so, this leniency cannot be applied to sacrifices that will also be offered up on a regular basis from now on. Therefore, inasmuch as tragic events like these befell me, and I am in mourning, if I had eaten a regular sin-offering today, would it have pleased God? He Himself has taught us that mourners may not eat sacrificial meat!”

20 Moses heard and understood this explanation, and accepted it. It pleased him so much that he was not embarrassed to admit that Aaron’s argument was superior to his, and he let it be known that he accepted Aaron’s conclusion even though he only heard it from him, not from God. In his anger, what was obvious to Aaron eluded him.

Alternatively, Aaron and his sons burned up the sin-offering of the first of the month because it had become defiled through contact with some defiled creature. Since it could no longer be eaten, they burned it up immediately. When Moses heard that this was the case, he agreed with what they did; there was no argument over the proper course of action.

Animals Permitted and Prohibited for Consumption

Sixth Reading 11:1 The Torah has previously described the manner in which Moses taught God’s instructions to the people: Moses, Aaron, and Aaron’s sons all addressed the people, in turn. The following laws were no exception, but God explicitly mentioned the role of Aaron and his sons in transmitting His message here as a reward for their silent and loving acceptance of His decree regarding Nadav and Avihu. Thus, God spoke to Moses, instructing him to convey His words to Aaron, so that he, in turn, should say to his sons Eleazar and Itamar:

2 Speak, the two of you, to the Israelites, saying: “In the laws of sacrifices just given, reference has been made to defilement and its consequences. There are two types of defilement: the first type renders you unfit to enter certain areas (i.e., the Tabernacle or one or both of the two camps surrounding it into which you will be organized next month) or eat consecrated food (sacrifices, terumah, or the second tithe) until undergoing some purification rite. This type of defilement is contracted through various physical conditions or types of contact with various entities; it will be referred to as ritual defilement. The second type of defilement does not render you unfit to enter any specified area; it is rather a desensitization to spirituality and can only be removed through an appropriate process of repentance. This type of defilement is contracted through eating various entities; it will

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SIXTH READING

A CLOSER LOOK

2 The following are the creatures: Although many of the names of the animals in the following lists (and in the list in Deuteronomy 14:4-18) may be considered precise translations of the Hebrew, others are only educated guesses. For this reason, the only animals permitted for consumption nowadays are those for which there is an established tradition of their being so.

3 any whose feet are not only partially cloven but completely split into at least two sub-feet, and that regurgitates its cud. The prohibition against eating animals that do not meet these requirements, couched later as a restrictive commandment, is here also subject to an active commandment: You must only eat such animals. If there is a fetus inside such an animal, once you slaughter the mother you may eat the fetus without having to slaughter it separately; even if it could survive on its own, you may kill it without ritual slaughter.

4 But you must not eat—of those animals that regurgitate the cud or have split feet—the camel, because it regurgitates its cud but does not have completely cloven feet; eating it renders you spiritually defiled,
The hyrax; the hare: The hyrax has not been observed to chew its cud. However, its digestive system is somewhat similar to that of ruminants; the time it takes to digest food is similar to that of ruminants; it can digest fiber, as ruminants can; it chews laterally and even when not grazing, as ruminants do; and it possibly regurgitates and re-chews some of its food.

The hare has also not been observed to chew its cud. However, in order to fully digest its food, it often reingests some of it in the form of specialized pellets that it excretes for this purpose (this process is called “cecotrophy”), and its chewing habits also resemble those of ruminants.

These characteristics can be considered sufficient to include these animals in the Torah’s description of “chewing the cud.” It is also possible that the Hebrew terms refer to animals that are no longer extant.
SHEMINI

Leviticus 11:5-9

5 the hyrax (see Figure 3), because it regurgitates its cud but does not have completely cloven feet; eating it renders you spiritually defiled,

6 and the hare (see Figure 4), because it regurgitates its cud but does not have completely cloven feet; eating it renders you spiritually defiled,

7 and the pig, because it has cloven feet that are completely split but does not regurgitate its cud; eating it renders you spiritually defiled.

8 You must not eat them, because they exhibit only one of the two signs of permitted animals. Similarly, you must not eat other animals that exhibit only one of the two signs, and certainly not animals that exhibit neither of the two signs. Nonetheless, you transgress the prohibition against eating such animals only by eating of their flesh, not of their bones, sinews, horns, or hooves. If you eat these, you transgress only the active commandment\textsuperscript{109} to only eat permitted animals.

In contrast to eating these animals, which renders you spiritually defiled, touching or carrying the carcasses of these animals renders you ritually defiled, as will be seen presently.\textsuperscript{110} Contracting ritual defilement requires you to ritually purify yourself before entering the Tabernacle precincts or eating consecrated food. Although you are not allowed to spiritually defile yourselves by eating these animals, you are allowed to ritually defile yourselves by touching or carrying their carcasses (as long as you understand the ramifications of doing so\textsuperscript{111}). The only exception to this is the pilgrim festivals, during which you must not touch their carcasses, because doing so renders you ritually defiled, and if you happen to have been ritually defiled before the festival or you happen to become ritually defiled during the festival, you must purify yourself in honor of the festival. For, as you have been taught,\textsuperscript{112} you must celebrate the pilgrim festivals by wearing fine clothes and eating and drinking special foods—and you can only consecrate these days through such mundane acts if you do so in a state of ritual purity. These obligations apply whether or not you actually plan on entering the Tabernacle precincts, and even when the Tabernacle is not standing.\textsuperscript{113}

Fish Permitted and Prohibited for Consumption

9 Among all creatures that live in the water, you may eat these: Any creature in the water that has fins and scales. Among the creatures that live in the seas, rivers, or any other body of non-stagnant water, you may eat only these.

\textsuperscript{109} Above, v. 3. \textsuperscript{110} Below, v. 24 ff. \textsuperscript{111} Cf. below, v. 35. \textsuperscript{112} Exodus 12:16. \textsuperscript{113} Likutei Sichot, vol. 32, pp. 58-64.
.FileNotFoundException
10 But if it lives in the seas, rivers, or any other body of non-stagnant water, then among all the crawling creatures in the water and among all living creatures that live in the water, you must consider loathsome — and therefore not eat — whatever does not have fins and scales.

11 You must consider them so loathsome that you will not even eat other food with which they were cooked or pickled if their taste is still recognizable in it. If their taste is not recognizable, however, you may eat the other food. You may not eat of their flesh; however, you may eat their bones and fins, if they have any.

With regard to creatures that live in stagnant water, you may consume them along with the water they live in, even if they do not possess fins and scales and even if they are still alive. But you must consider their carcasses loathsome — and therefore not eat them — once they leave or are removed from their native water.116

12 With regard to fish that shed their fins or scales when they leave the water, you must consider loathsome — and therefore not eat — only any creature that does not have fins and scales when it is in the water. If it has fins and scales while in the water but loses them when it leaves the water, it remains permitted for consumption.

Fowl Permitted and Prohibited for Consumption

13 Among fowl, you must consider the following loathsome and not eat them. And not only must you not eat them yourselves, they must also not be eaten by others — e.g., minors — through your agency, for they are to be considered so loathsome that you will not even feed them to your young children, even though they are technically exempt from keeping the Torah’s laws until they reach majority.

The griffon vulture, the bearded vulture, the osprey (see Figures 6-8),

14 the various other species of vulture (see Figure 9),

15 every type of species of crow (see Figure 10),

16 the ostrich, the cuckoo, the gull, the various species of sparrow hawk (see Figures 11-14),

The sages describe this bird as a nocturnal, egg-laying fowl that also nurses its young. There is no flying creature known today that fits this description.

**All other fowl:** Thus, once the identities of prohibited fowl are known, all other fowl are theoretically permitted. However, since, as stated above, not all the translations of the names of prohibited fowl are known to be precise, this rule can no longer be reliably applied. Therefore, the only fowl permitted for consumption are those for which there is an established tradition of their being so. Among such fowl are the chicken, sparrow, pigeon, dove, duck, turkey, and certain types of quail, geese, and pheasant.

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17 the screech owl, the cormorant, the barn owl (see Figures 15-17),
18 the bat, the pelican, the magpie (see Figures 18-20),
19 the stork, the various species of heron, the hoopoe (see Figures 21-23), and the ataleif. All other fowl are permitted for consumption.

Flying Crawling Creatures Permitted and Prohibited for Consumption

20 You must consider loathsome—and therefore not eat—any crawling creature that also flies and walks on four legs—such as flies, wasps, mosquitoes, and forbidden species of grasshopper.

17 The cormorant: The belief in Divine providence is a fundamental precept of Judaism. However, there are different schools of thought regarding the extent of God’s involvement in the intricacies and minutiae of nature. According to some classic Jewish philosophers, God merely supervises the special survival of each vegetative and animal life form; His direct, detailed involvement in every aspect of
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וְכָל דְּיִטּוֹל מִנְּבִלְתְּהוֹן
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עַל יְדוֹהִי בְּכָל חֵיוְתָא דִּמְהַלְּכָא
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סְדִיקָא פַרְסְתָא וְטִלְפִין לֵיתָהָא
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SIXTH READING

Figure 24. Red Locust

Figure 25. Yellow Locust
However, among all the flying crawling creatures that walk on four legs, you may eat from those (a) that have jointed leg-like extensions above their regular legs, close to their necks, with which they hop on the ground; (b) that have four wings; and (c) whose wings cover the greater part of their bodies.\footnote{Chulin 3:7 (59a).}

From among those that satisfy these criteria, you may eat the following: the red locust and all varieties of its species, the yellow locust and all varieties of its species (see Figures 24-25), the spotted gray locust and all varieties of its species, and the white locust and all varieties of its species.\footnote{Sifra; commentary of Rabbi Avraham ben David ad loc.}

Nonetheless, it is only any four-legged flying crawling creature that does not satisfy these criteria that you must consider loathsome. You may, however, eat five-legged flying crawling creatures that do not satisfy these criteria, as long as they are members of the four above-named species of locust.\footnote{Below, vv. 41-45 (or -23).}

Additional laws concerning animals prohibited for consumption will be given presently.\footnote{Above, 11:1-8 (or -23).}

Defilement Contracted by Contact with Animals Prohibited for Consumption

Through contact with the following animals, you will become ritually defiled. Anyone who touches their carcass will be ritually defiled until he immerses himself in a mikveh during the day and then waits until evening.

but anyone who carries their carcass must also immerse his garments in a mikveh, besides becoming ritually defiled himself until he immerses himself in a mikveh and then waits until evening.

You must consider any animal whose feet are partially cloven but not completely split into at least two sub-feet, and that does not regurgitate its cud, to be ritually defiled, meaning that anyone who touches it will become ritually defiled. An example of such an animal is the camel. The same rules apply to any animal that is forbidden for consumption.\footnote{Above, 11:1-8 (or -23).}

You must consider, among all the animals that walk on four legs, any animal that walks on its paws to be ritually defiled, meaning that anyone who touches their carcass will be ritually defiled until he immerses himself in a mikveh and then waits until evening. This includes dogs, bears, and cats. Anyone who carries their carcass must immerse his garments in a mikveh, besides becoming ritually defiled himself until he immerses himself in a mikveh and then waits until evening. You must consider them ritually defiled in this respect, as well.
All the aforementioned animals do not only impart ritual defilement to you: if any of these dead creatures falls upon anything, it will also become ritually defiled, i.e., prohibited from being brought into precincts that are off-limits to ritually defiled people, and disqualified for holding consecrated food. This rule applies whether the object be any wooden vessel, garment, hide, or sack—in fact, any implement with which work is done. In order to purge it of its ritual defilement, it must be immersed in the water of a mikveh, but even after that, it will remain ritually defiled until evening, after which it will be rid of this defilement.

Seventh Reading 33 In contrast, no earthenware vessel becomes ritually defiled unless any of these animals fall into its interior, but not if they merely touch its external surface. If they do fall into it or are suspended inside it, however, whatever food or drink (as will be specified presently) is inside it will become ritually defiled, even if the defiling creature did not touch the vessel or the entity inside it. Moreover, you must shatter the vessel itself, for earthenware vessels are not freed of ritual defilement any other way; immersing them in a mikveh does not purge them of ritual defilement.
Leviticus 11:29-33

29 Although all crawling creatures (except the types of locusts mentioned above) are prohibited for consumption (since none of them satisfy the requirements for permitted animals), only the carcasses of eight types of them impart ritual defilement. You must consider the following ritually defiled among crawling creatures that crawl on the ground: the weasel, the mouse, the toad and all varieties of its species (see Figures 26-28),

30 the hedgehog, the chameleon, the lizard, the snail, and the mole (see Figures 29-33).

31 These are the ones among all crawling creatures that you must consider ritually defiled, in that anyone who touches them when they are dead will be ritually defiled until he immerses himself in a mikveh and then waits until evening. A piece of the carcass of one of these creatures imparts ritual defilement only if its volume is equal to or greater than that of a lentil.

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<A CLOSER LOOK

[36] Mikveh: In order for water to purify someone or something from ritual defilement, it must be part of a natural body of water, such as an ocean, lake, permanent river, or spring, or it must be directed from a natural source (such as a natural body of water, rain, or snow) into a cistern. Inasmuch as the entire body must be immersed at once, the minimum volume of a mikveh is determined to be that held by a paralleliped 3 cubits long, 1 cubit wide, and 1 cubit deep,136 which in turn is roughly 40 seah.136 (approximately 332 liters or 88 gallons). There are many additional rules governing the construction of a mikveh, what type of water may be used to fill it, how the water must be directed into the cistern, and so on.137

As to the types of food and drink that are susceptible to ritual defilement: Any portion of food that is usually eaten—and, if it is a fruit or vegetable, upon which water has fallen once it was plucked from the ground or its tree—can become ritually defiled. In addition, any of seven specific beverages that can be drunk in any vessel—water, wine, olive oil, blood, milk, dew, and bee honey—can become ritually defiled.

Not only contact with water, but also contact with any of the other just-mentioned beverages that can be drunk in any vessel will render plucked food susceptible to becoming ritually defiled, even if the food had already dried off at the time of defilement.

Thus, you see that ritual defilement can be contracted indirectly, i.e., through a medium that itself is not inherently defiled (in this case, the earthenware vessel), but only contracted defilement from an original source (in this case, the defiling creature). However, only food and drink contract ritual defilement indirectly; people and implements do not.

An article of food that has contracted ritual defilement directly (e.g., through contact with a dead creature) only conveys ritual defilement to other food (by touching it) if its own volume is at least that of an egg (approximately 57 ml or 2 oz).

Anything upon which any part of the carcasses of these aforementioned animals falls will become ritually defiled. Thus, a portable earthenware oven or stove, once they have become ritually defiled as described above, must be demolished—similar to the case of the earthenware vessel described previously—and their pieces reassembled into a new oven or stove if you wish to use them to prepare ritually undefiled food. If, however, you want to use them to prepare ritually defiled food, which you may eat as long as you understand the restrictions that doing so places upon you, you may keep them intact for use in their defiled state.

In contrast, an immovable oven or stove that is built into the ground does not contract ritual defilement, even if it is earthenware.

It was just mentioned that water contained in a vessel can become defiled if the carcass of a defiling creature falls into it. But a spring, cistern, or a gathering of water (mikveh) that is built into or hewn out of the ground remains undefiled, even if a defiling carcass falls into it. Furthermore, a ritually defiled person who immerses himself or herself in a spring, cistern, or gathering of water that is built into or hewn out of the ground becomes rid of this defilement, either totally or partially, depending upon the situation. Nevertheless, even someone who is inside such a mikveh when he or she touches the carcass of these creatures will become defiled. In order to be rid of defilement, the person must separate from the carcass and immerse himself again.

Regarding the role of liquids in rendering plant-derived foods susceptible to ritual defilement, the rule is as follows: If any part of the carcass of any of these aforementioned animals falls upon any sown plant while it is still sown, i.e., before it has been uprooted, it remains undefiled

וְכְאוֹכֵל. וְאֵין קָרוּי "שֶׁרֶץ", אֶלָּא דָּבָר נָמוּךְ קְצַר הַבְּלִיעָה. אִם כֵּן, מַה תַּלְמוּד לְוֹמַר: "הָאֹכֵל"? לִתֵּן בַּאֲכִילָתָהּ בְּלֹא מַשָּׂא, כְּגוֹן אִם תְּחָבָהּ לוֹ חֲבֵרוֹ בְּבֵית בְּגָדִים בַּאֲכִילָתָהּ וְאֵין נִבְלַת בְּהֵמָה מְטַמְּאָה בְּגָדִים עַל הָאָרֶץ, אֶלָּא בְּתוֹךְ הָאֹכֶל. אֲבָל מִשֶּׁיָּצְאוּ לָאֲוִיר וְשֶׁבַּפּוֹלִין, וְאֶת הַזִּיזִין שֶׁבַּעֲדָשִׁים, שֶׁהֲרֵי לֹא שָׁרְצוּ לְהוֹצִיא אֶת הַיַּתּוּשִׁין שֶׁבַּכְּלִיסִין אַף עַל פִּי שֶׁטָּבַל, צָרִיךְ הֶעֱרֵב שֶׁמֶשׁ: לְחַיֵּב עַל הַמַּאֲכִיל וְטָמֵא וְכָל רִחֲשָׁא דְּרָחֵשׁ עַל אַרְעָא לְבוּשׁוֹהִי וִיהֵי מְסָאָב עַד רַמְשָׁא: עד רַמְשָׁא וּדְיִטּוֹל יָת נְבִלְתַּה יְצַבַּע מִנְּנֵלְבָּתַּה יְצַבַּע לְבוּשׁוֹהִי וִיהֵי מְסָאָב וּדְיֵיכוּל הִיא לְכוֹן לְמֵיכָל דְּיִקְרַב בִּנְבִלְתַּה וַאֲרֵי יְמוּת מִן בְּעִירָא דִּי

choice, and concomitantly any reward for our resistance to evil.

In the imagery of Kabbalah, the forces of evil subsist on a very meager amount of Divine life force; they therefore persistently seek to siphon off Divine energy from holiness by dragging people into sin; thus, the holier the person or setting, the greater the effort these forces exert to corrupt them.

This does not mean, of course, that we should shun spiritual growth in order to be “safe” from the dangers inherent in the climb toward holiness—there could be no greater victory for evil than that! It only means that we must be sure to take the required precautions.

This dynamic is reflected in the three conditions for ritual defilement just mentioned:

- **Food for humans:** “Human” food, in this context, refers to activities that nourish the Divine soul, whereas “animal” food refers to activities that sustain the human/animal soul. The Divine soul’s “food” is the study of the Torah and the performance of the commandments. The purpose of studying the Torah and fulfilling its commandments is, of course, to bring us closer to God, but, as just mentioned, the closer we get to God, the greater the forces of evil try to divert, delay, or derail us.

- **Liquid:** “Liquidity” in this context means (a) the nature of liquid to flow downward, alluding to our ability to bring holiness to the lowest spiritual levels; (b) the fluidity that distributes the nutrients derived from the food we eat throughout the body, alluding to our ability to properly integrate the spirituality of the Torah and its commandments into our very being; and (c) the viscosity liquids, alluding to our ability to make Jewishness “infectious” to others. These are all qualities that we should aspire to in our relationship with God, but, here again, the more we evoke them, the more the forces of evil exert themselves against us.

- **Uprooted:** However, as long as the plant is connected to the ground, none of these factors are relevant. Spiritually, this means the one precaution we can take to immunize ourselves against the machinations of evil is to remain rooted to our source—to the essence of our Divine soul. The essence of our soul never becomes defiled, for it is constantly united with God. When the essence of our soul is roused from its dormancy and is manifest in all of our thoughts, words, and deeds, we are immune to defilement.143
38 **But if water** or any of the other six aforementioned liquids is **put upon sown plants** that have been uprooted, or the uprooted plant falls into any of these seven liquids, and then, even after they have subsequently dried off, **any of their carcasses falls on them, they become ritually defiled for you.**

**Defilement Contracted by Contact with Animals Permitted for Consumption**

39 **If an animal that you** are permitted to eat dies by any means other than proper ritual slaughter, **one who touches its carcass will be ritually defiled** until he immerses himself in a mikveh and then waits until evening, just as in the case of one who touches the carcass of a forbidden animal. In contrast, touching such an animal’s bones, sinews, horns, hooves, or hide does not render a person ritually defiled. If the animal was properly ritually slaughtered, its carcass does not impart ritually defilement, even if the animal is found to have been suffering from a fatal disease or injury.138

40 One who carries a part of the carcass of a permitted animal whose volume is equivalent to the volume that **one who eats of the same carcass** would have to ingest in order to be culpable for punishment for doing so, i.e., the volume of an egg (approximately 57 ml or 2 oz) or more, **must immerse his garments in a mikveh, besides being ritually defiled** himself until he immerses himself in a mikveh and waits until evening. Thus, **one who carries the carcass of a permitted animal must purify himself exactly as one who carries the carcass of a forbidden animal.**139 **he must immerse his garments in a mikveh, and he himself will remain ritually defiled** until he immerses himself in a mikveh and then waits until evening.

**Crawling Creatures Prohibited for Consumption**

41 We discussed previously140 which flying crawling creatures are permitted and prohibited for consumption. Any non-flying **crawling creature that crawls on the ground is considered loathsome**, and you must therefore not eat it. Furthermore, **it must not be eaten** by others—e.g., minors—through your agency. In contrast, a non-flying crawling creature that began its life inside a fruit or vegetable and has not yet crawled on the ground (or emerged from the fruit or vegetable in any other way) is not forbidden for consumption.

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der it spiritually sluggish or “hardened”—much as when any vessel is full, it “solidifies” and becomes unreceptive. Therefore, in order for the heart to be spiritually inspired, it must be emptied of material influences; it must become once again a heart of flesh, rather than of stone.

The sages offer several tactics in restoring a dulled heart to its former pliability and receptivity:

It is taught in the Zohar: “If a log does not catch fire, it should be splintered until [the fire] shines [from it]; if the body does not catch fire from the light of the soul, it should be crushed, and then the light of the soul will shine [in it].”149 Rabbi Shneur Zalman of Liadi explains that this means that there are times when a stone heart can only be shattered by a serious lecture to oneself. First, an honest appraisal is needed. We must examine how we spend our time: Are we seriously working toward achieving our higher goals? Are we devoting our energies and resources in accordance with our priorities? If we find that we are favoring the material over the spiritual, we should ponder how, then, do we differ from an animal. (True, a cow eats hay and straw while we prefer other delicacies, but are our material desires ultimately so different?) Such an honest appraisal and the resulting distress over our shortcomings

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**Leviticus 11:42-46**

42 Among all crawling creatures that only crawl on the ground, you may not eat the snake, who moves about bent over and then falls on its belly; any creature that moves about only on its belly, such as a worm; the scorpion, who walks on four legs; and any creature that walks on more than four legs, such as a beetle, including any type of centipede or other creature that has many legs. **144** You may not eat these, for they, too, must be considered loathsome.

43 You must not make yourselves loathsome by eating any crawling creature that only crawls on the ground. You must not spiritually defile yourselves by eating them, for if you do, you will remain spiritually defiled in the afterlife through having eaten them in this life, unless you properly repent beforehand."

44 God instructed Moses to tell Aaron to tell his sons**145** to conclude this section by saying in His Name, “For I am God, your God, and therefore, just as your God is holy, so must you sanctify yourselves; then you will also be holy in the afterlife, just as I am holy.

As stated, you must not defile yourselves by eating any crawling creature that crawls on the ground. I am repeating this prohibition in order to make you liable to multiple punishments if you transgress it—subject to what kind of forbidden creature you eat.

◆ **Maftir** 45 You must obey these commandments because I am God, who brought you up from Egypt on the condition that I be your God and you submit to My decrees. Thus, you must be holy in this respect, because I am holy and command you to be so. But in any case, you should appreciate these restrictions; in fact, if I would have taken you out of Egypt solely in order to forbid you to eat these creatures—which the Egyptians and others do eat—you should have considered it a significant enough spiritual elevation for you to thank Me.

46 The above section is the law regarding the permissibility of eating animals, fowl, all living creatures that move in water, and all creatures that creep on the ground, as well as the ritual impurity contracted by contact with them.

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**CHASIDIC INSIGHTS**

42 The snake, who moves about bent over: The Zohar compares the snake to the evil inclination (the yetzer hora).**146** The evil inclination is smarter than to immediately suggest that we “crawl on our belly” and bury ourselves in earthliness. It begins by suggesting that we walk with a lowered head, that we forget God who is above us, as well as the higher purposes of life. This eventually leads us to forget our purpose altogether.

The antidote to the snake’s schemes is to immerse ourselves in the study of the Torah, especially the inner dimension of Torah, which lifts us into a realm that the snake cannot enter.**147**

43 You will remain spiritually defiled through them: The Hebrew word for this phrase (משחת), is written without the expected alef (מותחת), such that it can be read “lest you become dulled.” The Talmud adduces this altered spelling to assert that consuming non-kosher foods causes the heart to grow spiritually dull.**148**

It is the heart’s nature to be influenced by the mind. Intellectual recognition of God’s greatness, or understanding of His wisdom and His Torah, should logically lead to an emotional swell of love and awe. Unfortunately, however, this sometimes does not happen. We see, study, and understand, but remain uninspired.

This dullness of heart is attributable to the heart’s overstuffing with material indulgences, which ren-

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**Footnotes:**

final verse of the parashah, we are bidden to draw upon the lesson of its first verse: On the eighth day. As mentioned in the Overview, the number eight signifies transcendent Divinity, which is beyond the normal, natural cycle of seven. When we are attuned to Divine consciousness, to the “eight,” we instinctively know what is defiled and what is not; the rational mind cannot run circles around us and convince us that dark is light and bitter is sweet.\(^{154}\)
Further Requirements for Animals Permitted for Consumption

With regard to animals that are permitted for consumption, you must additionally be proficient and practiced in the laws of ritual slaughter as well as expert in identifying the signs of fatal diseases or injuries for which you must inspect the animal after slaughtering it. Specifically, you must be easily able to distinguish between improper ritual slaughter, which causes the animal’s carcass to be ritually defiled,150 and proper ritual slaughter, which leaves the dead animal ritually undefiled. For example, if its trachea was cut only halfway, the slaughter is invalid and you will become ritually defiled if you touch the animal’s carcass, whereas if its trachea was cut even slightly more than halfway, the slaughter was valid and the dead animal does not impart ritual defilement. The difference between these two cases is very slight, so you must learn how to distinguish between them.

Similarly, when you examine an animal after it was properly ritually slaughtered, you must be able to distinguish between an animal that is allowed to be eaten and an animal that may not be eaten. Specifically, if there are indications that the animal had been suffering from a fatal disease or injury, it is forbidden for consumption—despite it having been proper ritually slaughtered; however, if it does show signs of disease or injury but only of one that is not fatal, it is permitted for consumption. The difference between these two cases can be very slight, so you must learn how to distinguish between them.151

The Haftarah for parashat Shemini is on p. 241.
If it is Shabbat Parah, the Maftir and Haftarah for Shabbat Parah (p. 276) are read instead of the Maftir and Haftarah for parashat Shemini.
If it is Shabbat HaChodesh, the Maftir and Haftarah for Shabbat HaChodesh (p. 281) are read instead of the Maftir and Haftarah for parashat Shemini.
If it is the 29th of Nisan, the Haftarah on p. 263 is read instead of the Haftarah for parashat Shemini.

deflates our material drives, enabling us to more easily achieve true spiritual joy and ecstasy.152

Another strategy is to “artificially” help the mind overpower the heart. When we meditate constantly about lofty spiritual concepts, their light will eventually break through even the thickest barrier, illuminating the heart as well.

Finally, it is possible to soften the heart by taking advantage of the intrinsic holiness of the letters of the Torah. Even simple repetition of those holy letters or recitation of passages of the Torah draws their spirituality into the person reciting them, and ultimately even a heart of stone will melt before them.153

To distinguish between the defiled and the undefiled: Allegorically, this injunction also refers to making the moral distinction between what is acceptable behavior and what is not. This distinction is easy enough when matters are clear and obvious. But all too often, the distinction is blurred, and the defiled can easily be mistaken for the undefiled. Therefore, in order to fulfill the mandate of this

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Dedicated in honor of our children

Nathan, Yitzchok,
Moshe Lev,
and Gilana

May you continue to grow in the ways of our holy Torah

Yuri and Deana Pikover