



## ***Parshas Re'eh 2022, fins & scales***

*This week's Parsha Perspective is in honor of the Refuah Shlema of HaRav Amitai Ben Shoshanna, Leah Mintche Bas Gittel, Dalit Bas Shoshanna and Shaul Ben Berta.*

*This week's Parsha Perspective is in loving memory of Yirachmiel Daniel Ben Gedalia, Edward Ben Efraim, and Shlomo Ben Edward, whose birthday is the 28th of Av. May their souls be uplifted and their memories a blessing for their families.*

*This week's Parsha Perspective is sponsored by Yoram, and Yael Cohen. May G-d bless them and their family with much health, success & happiness!*

This Shabbos is Rosh Chodesh Elul, the beginning of the month of Elul. We must take advantage of the spirituality and holiness evident during this month as we quickly approach the high holidays. It begins with three small steps, giving extra charity, adding to our Torah study, and daily gratitude to G-d for our blessings.

Our Parsha continues Moshe's final address to the Jewish people. He informs the nation that depending on their actions, they can be beneficiaries of blessings or curses. The blessings will come if they obey G-d's commandments.

However, if they defy G-d's laws, they will feel the depth of His anger. Moshe commands that they proclaim these blessings and curses on Mt. Gerizim and Eval as they enter the land of Israel.

Moshe then repeats many laws and commandments, the laws of Maser Sheni, the laws of Shmita, a list of Kosher birds, fish, and mammals, and various Kosher laws. The laws of a False Prophet, the Mitzvah of charity, and many laws concerning the holidays of Pesach and Sukkos.

However, a question comes to mind: The Parsha repeats the signs that make a fish kosher, fins, and scales. But what do fins and scales symbolize that makes the fish kosher? Why are these the signs of a kosher fish?!

Furthermore, the Talmud (*Niddah 51b*) writes that fish that fins do not necessarily have scales. But all fish that have scales have fins as well. So why doesn't the Torah just write that the sign of a kosher fish is their scales? What is the purpose of saying fins as well?!

The Rabbeinu Bachya (*Rav Bachya Ben Asher, a Spanish commentary*) gives an interesting explanation. He quotes the Ramban (*Rav Moshe Ben Nachman*) that fins and scales help a fish retain heat, similar to wool on mammals. Hence, most fish with those features usually habitat in the upper parts of the ocean.

The Rabbeinu Bachya explains that the lower part of the ocean is dark, cold, and murky, representing a lack of G-d. Meaning, that the closer we are to the rays of G-dliness, the more inspired, enthusiastic, and connected we are to G-d. Therefore, we only eat fish that are similarly impacted by the sun's heat, as it portrays our relationship with G-d.

However, the Lubavitcher Rebbe gives a deeper and more profound explanation. He writes that fins and scales represent two different character traits we need.

The scales are like armor that protects the fish from harm, symbolizing honesty and integrity. When people do what's right and maintain their values, they are protected from the unseen pitfalls of life. They avoid hazards and see the obstacles in their path.

The fins are like wings that propel and move the fish to its desired location representing ambition and drive.

The Lubavitcher Rebbe explains that a person should have armor that protects their values but an ambition to grow and succeed. This is why fins and scales are necessary for a fish to be kosher, as they symbolize both attributes we must possess. **A strong fortitude to do what's right and a desire to grow and fulfill our potential.**

The Rebbe's incredible lesson is appropriate as we enter the month of Elul. Because Elul is an immensely spiritual time designated for self-reflection and contemplation as we prepare for the high holidays.

We must analyze the past year to recognize our accomplishments, mistakes, and errors. Then our unique path begins to take shape, and we just need to jump on the moving train.

In our daily life, we must realize that we are not created to stay stagnant but rather to continually grow and improve. To better ourselves and develop our unique identity each day.

Just like we continually look for opportunities to grow and achieve more success. Once we improve an aspect of ourselves, we should also strive to refine other elements of our character traits.

**"Life is a journey, not a destination.  
We should consistently set ourselves new challenges to  
take us out of our comfort zone.  
For the definition of life is growth."**

*-Rabbi Lord Jonathan Sacks*

*Have a meaningful Shabbos,  
Rabbi Sholom Yemini*