



Parshas Shemini 2021, the food we sacrifice

The Parsha Perspective is sponsored by the Hess family. May G-d bless them with much health, success, and happiness!

Our parsha begins on the eighth day of its inauguration; Aaron and his sons began to serve as Kohanim in the Mishkan. G-d's fire consumed the sacrifices they had brought, signaling the divine presence dwelling in G-d's physical home.

Amid all the excitement, Aaron's two eldest sons, Nadav and Avihu, brought an incense offering they were not told to offer. Immediately a heavenly fire came down and consumed them, killing them instantly. Moshe quickly ordered his cousins to remove Nadav and Avihu's bodies from the Mishkan. G-d then commands Aaron and all future Kohanim never to drink alcohol while working in the Mishkan or the Beis Hamikdash.

The Parsha concludes with the signs that distinguish between kosher and non-kosher animals. Kosher animals must chew their cud seven times and have split hooves. A kosher fish must have both fins and scales.

While the Torah lists which birds are not kosher, it does not say what signs make a bird kosher. The Shulchan Aruch (Code of Jewish law) writes that it can not be a bird of prey; it must have an extra toe behind and above the other toes and have a gizzard that can be peeled by hand.

However, a question comes to mind: Why are the rules of what makes a kosher animal right after the Mishkan's initiation? What is the connection between the laws of Kosher and the inauguration of the Mishkan?!

Furthermore, at the end of the section on kosher animals, the Torah concludes with a statement. (11:42-45) *“For I am your G-d, you shall sanctify yourselves and be holy, for I am holy. You shall not make yourselves unclean through any swarming thing that moves upon the earth. For I brought you up from the land of Egypt to be your G-d, you shall be holy, for I am holy.”* Why does G-d specifically tell us to be holy at the end of these laws?!

The Ramban (*Rav Moshe Ben Nachman*) explains that the Torah details these specific laws after the Mishkan’s initiation because these animals would be brought as sacrifices in the Mishkan. Since many people would bring sacrifices in the Mishkan, the Jewish people had to know which animals were kosher and which were not.

However, the Ibn Ezra (*the famous Spanish Rabbi, Avraham Ben Meir Ibn Ezra*) gives a deeper and more powerful explanation. He quotes the Gemara in Brachos (10b) that we learn from Elisha, Eliyahu HaNavi’s successor, that a table is like an altar. This is why there are many laws regarding how to act when sitting for a meal.

The Ibn Ezra explains that because we do not have a Mishkan or Beis Hamikdash to bring sacrifices in, our kosher diet and food on our tables are our sacrifices.

Consequently, the Torah details the kosher laws right after the Mishkan's initiation. Since our food gives us energy and becomes part of us, keeping a restrictive and kosher diet is how we can sacrifice to G-d today.

The Ibn Ezra continues that this is why G-d commands us at the end of this section to be holy like **Him**. True holiness is not only achieved in the Mishkan or Beis Hamikdash, but can also be obtained through self-control and discipline.

In fact, the Rambam puts the laws of kosher and slaughtering animals in Sefer Kedushah, the book of holiness. The word Kadosh in Hebrew means holiness; however, the profound translation is separation and distinctiveness.

G-d is telling the Jewish nation to keep a kosher, prohibitive and limited diet to distinguish itself from the other nations of the world, thus becoming holy.

In our daily life, it is imperative that we realize that self-discipline is one of the most essential qualities we must cultivate if we want to achieve real success.

Whether you're aiming to build a successful business, create a happy family, or simply improve yourself, self-discipline is the key to unlocking your potential.

It takes a great deal of self-control to maintain a long-term perspective and work towards your goals. To start with, self-discipline means taking responsibility for your actions and making sure that you're always doing what's best for you in the long run.

It involves setting goals and making plans to achieve them, then following through with those plans even when it's difficult or inconvenient. Whether it's waking up early to hit the gym, or staying up late to finish a project, self-discipline requires you to put in the effort and stay committed to your objectives.

In addition, self-discipline means being honest with yourself about your strengths and weaknesses, and taking steps to address them. It means recognizing when you're tempted to procrastinate or give up, and finding ways to overcome those challenges.

Self-discipline involves developing a strong sense of self-awareness and taking time to reflect on your actions and choices. This can involve simply taking a few minutes each day to check in with yourself and think about how you're doing. By cultivating a deeper understanding of your own thoughts and feelings, you can learn to make better decisions and stay true to your goals.

The true definition of self-discipline means learning to embrace discomfort and push yourself beyond your comfort zone. It means taking on challenges that scare you, and persevering through difficult times even when you feel like giving up.

With enough practice, you can develop the resilience and inner strength to tackle any obstacle that comes your way, and achieve success in whatever you set your mind to.

“The first and best victory is to conquer yourself.”

*Have a meaningful Shabbos,
Rabbi Sholom Yemini*