



# The Marcos and Adina Katz YUTORAH IN PRINT

## Shemini 5780

### Lessons From the Birds

Mrs. Michal Horowitz

In this week's parsha, Parshas Shemini, we read of permitted and forbidden animals - those which we may consume, and those which we may not consume. The Torah sums up these directives by instructing us to be holy: *כִּי קָדוֹשׁ אֱנִי וְהַתְקִדְשֵׁם וְהִיִּתְּךָ קָדוֹשׁ* - *You are to sanctify yourselves and you shall be holy, for I am holy* (Vayikra 11:44 and see v.45 as well).

We must sanctify and hallow ourselves, as a holy nation to G-d, for just as G-d is Holy, so too we must be holy. So far reaching are the mitzvos of the Torah, that even what we eat, when we eat, how we eat, where we eat, and with whom we eat are all commanded to us (in various places in the Torah).

R' Soloveitchik zt'l teaches, "It is interesting to note that there is only one verse in the Torah that mentions prayer (Devarim 11:13 with Rashi/Taanis 2a), but there are many chapters that deal with dietary laws. It is easier for man to pray than to withdraw from food he desires. Man is ready to serve G-d spiritually, but resents an interference with his eating habits, or with the manner in which he gratifies his physical or carnal needs.

"Modern man is willing to worship G-d and participate in cultic performances and ceremonials. Modern man does not object to singing hymns or to visiting the sanctuary, and never complains about the cost of cultic performance. At the same time, he resents being told that there are laws which guide him concerning behavior not of the spirit, but of his body. The Torah is of the opinion, however, that it is impossible to hallow and inspire the spirit without disciplining the body.

"These mitzvos belong to the category of discipline of the body and its sanctification. What is forbidden here is overindulgence in satisfying human corporeal needs and drives. Judaism does not reject the body. The body is a part

of man and so is the spirit, the soul. But the body should not be that of a savage; it should be a disciplined body, one capable of refraining and retreating from certain actions that promise much corporeal pleasure. The body must be sanctified and elevated.

"We have existed for almost two thousand years without a sanctuary, and the absence of its service has not affected the integrity of our people. If a Jewish community would reject kashrus, however, it would become assimilated in a few generations" (Chumash Masores HaRav, Vayikra, p.74-75).

The lessons of forbidden and permitted foods are many, and each comes to teach us something else, ensuring our physical and spiritual survival through the ages.

In the list of birds forbidden for consumption is the *חסידה* (chasidah) (11:19). About the chasidah, Rashi comments: *לְפָמָה נִקְרָא שְׁמוֹ חֶסְדִּיה?* *שְׁעוֹשֶׂה חֶסְדִּיה* - And why is her name/why is she called Chasidah (from the root word *חסד* - kindness)? Because she does kindness with her friends with food (Rashi, ibid).

What is wrong with this bird? She performs chessed, acts of kindness, but only with her kind - to the exclusion of others who are not like her. This, the Torah tells us, is behavior not sanctioned by the Torah. For chessed is one of the pillars that holds up the world (Avos 1:2), and must be done to one and all.

R' Yisrael Meir Lau shlita, "Kindness is the purpose of creation and the basis of its construction. Our Sages teach that 'giving charity is greater than all sacrifices' (Succah 49b), and that 'kindness that we show each other is more beloved to G-d than the thousand burnt offerings of Shlomo' (Yalkut Shimoni) ...

"If a person does not perform deeds of kindness, he removes the sole justification for his existence. In the two

instances in the Torah where total destruction at the hand of heaven was decreed - the Flood and the destruction of Sodom and Amorah - the reason was the deterioration of kindness. ‘The judgement against the generation of the flood was only sealed when they engaged in theft’ (Sanhedrin 108a). Similarly, the inhabitants of Sodom and Amorah were condemned only after the outcry of those whom they had tormented rose to the heavens.

“Acts of kindness may be expressed in countless ways: financial aid, visiting the sick, helping people get married, attending a funeral, comforting mourners, pidyon she’vu’yim (redeeming captives), hachnasas orchim (hosting guests), giving helpful advice, offering words of encouragement, or simply smiling at others...

“Because the avenues of kindness are so numerous, the Torah simply mentions the general obligation to treat others with a generous spirit and an open hand, summing up the matter in the command to ‘love for your fellow what you love for yourself’ (Vayikra 19:18). Treat someone else with no less solicitude than you would desire for yourself. Help him, ease his burden, bring a ray of happiness into

his life. It is no wonder that R’ Akiva stated hu klal gadol baTorah - it is a great principle of Torah (ibid with Rashi), for an entire structure of halachos and caring for others is contained within its few words.

“In order to perform this mitzvah properly, a person must perfect his character. There can be no genuine kindness where jealousy rages, hatred festers, and the ego admires itself. These must be replaced with generosity, love and empathy.

“Thus, Rambam refers to the performance of kind deeds as ‘positive traits,’ for a person can perform kind deeds properly only if he has worked assiduously on his character, bringing to that work the same care that a jeweler brings to cutting a stone” (R’ Lau on Avos, Artscroll, p.25).

Let us ensure that the chessed we do for others is non-judgmental, accepting, and loving for all, for unlike the chassidah, our acts of kindness hold up the world. Let us recognize that all the laws of the Torah are meant to refine our personalities and perfect our characters, as we strive every day to become better people, and better Jews, holy in all that we do.

## My Sin is before Me Always

Rabbi Eliyahu Safran

We live at a time when even the most “humble” amongst us seems to have a blog, or a Twitter account, or a website or, or, or... or some other way or means for amplifying his voice, perspectives, “teachings”, etc. As you can imagine, if the humble is so quick to trumpet his gifts then the more prideful and powerful is certain to make sure we hew to his view of the world.

We are a prideful creation. Yet we know – from our teachings and our experience – that pride is a guaranteed prelude to a fall. How then to step away from our pride? The only way to become humble is to be honest about our experience, for experience is the only route we have to genuine humility.

Life is never lived in the theoretical, sacred ideal we aspire to; it is always lived in the complex, nitty-gritty of human experience.

There is a midrash that speaks of Aharon as he was looking at the mizbeiah. According to the midrash, as

Aharon gazed at the mizbeiah, it suddenly appeared to him as the Golden Calf. The image shook him to the core of his being and made him full of such fear that he could not approach it!

The scene the midrash depicts is mindboggling! Here we have the Kohen Gadol preparing to fulfill Avoda in the Mishkan itself and what image fills his mind? Not the fear and trembling we would suspect as he approached the centrality of all that was sacred to the Jews but rather the most profane and degrading symbol of the newly redeemed Jews, the egel hazahav.

That’s what fills the mind of our High Priest at such a moment? What can we make of such a moment?

Now, imagine a contemporary rabbi, a melamed living in the “real world”. As he stands before his class, teaching a blat Gemorah to his yeshiva students, he notes a student seemingly lost in a daydream.

“Yankel?” the rabbi asks, “what are you thinking about? Here I am, trying to explain this difficult Talmudic passage

about the ox that gored the cow and you ... you are someplace else? What are you thinking of?"

Imagine poor Yankel! His lack of attention is not due to a restless night or an earlier misunderstanding with a friend. Rather, his thoughts were on some "inappropriate" photographs he had seen online the evening before! How his cheeks burn in shame!

"Yankel?"

The poor student lowers his head. How can he possibly say what caused his distraction? But, isn't Yankel's distraction essentially the same as Aharon's? The High Priest was unable to focus on the mizbeach because he was "daydreaming" of the Golden Calf! Could Yankel have seen anything more profane or demeaning on the Internet than the image that filled Aharon's mind in that moment?

Perhaps the rabbi would be wise to recall this midrash and recognize that his talmid's distraction might be caused by his inability to find peace of mind. He needs help and support, not the inevitable rejection the student can expect.

We cannot escape our imagination and how it creates realities from that which troubles us. Our thoughts lead us to awkward places just as our troubled thoughts remain in turmoil as a result of the awkward places we visit!

Imagine if, rather than Yankel, Aharon was our modern-day yeshiva bocher. No doubt he would have been expelled from his yeshiva, just as poor Yankel undoubtedly would be. How dare he dwell on such profanities! "Have you nothing better to think about than the golden calf?! And in front of the mizbeach no less!"

Aharon could not escape that profanity. It was always there, lurking, shadowing his thoughts. He could not resolve the sheer "badness" of that moment. And so, the darkness remained.

It is the pride of the rabbi that would expel a student for such profanity but it is the experience of the profanity that bears the seed of ultimate resolution and humility!

It was because Aharon was unable to free himself of the image of the Golden Calf even before the holy mizbeach that convinced Moshe that he was the person to be the High Priest – l'kach nivecharta.

This understanding of avodas Hashem brings to bear two elements. Shame and reluctance to do God's work – "Who am I to do this sacred task ... ?" – and eager and strengthened to fulfill God's command. In short, that which is too often perceived as inhibition and insecurity is

viewed by Torah as being the exact prerequisite to genuine and true Avodas HaShem.

Our rebbe, Rav Asher Freund ZT'L, always emphasized that this is what Dovid Hamelech meant when he said, "For I recognize my transgressions, and my sin is before me always." (Tehilim 109:5)

To be able to see the beauty and sacredness of the world without forgetting one's own shortcomings, to see the world through the "spectacles of our shortcomings" so to speak, is the foundation upon which real accomplishment and human excellence can be built. The ability to recognize one's own deep shortcomings is the stuff of genuine humility. None of us should ever fool ourselves. Our transgressions are real and they are serious, whether we are rabbis or simple talmidim. None of us can claim to be above our humanity.

Rashi's comment on this posuk illuminates this idea. Because I am constantly aware and concerned about my sins, it seems to me that the sins are constantly before me. This is what caused Aharon to see the egel as he approached the mizbeach; it is what must color our own self-awareness.

At the consecration of the Mishkan, Moshe publicly proclaimed that Aharon had been divinely appointed as Kohen Gadol. Even so, Aharon remained reticent when the time came to discharge his duties as Kohen Gadol.

"Approach the altar," Moshe prompted, "and prepare your sin and burnt offerings."

Still, Aharon remained still. He understood his tasks. They had been assigned by HaShem Himself! It was not confusion that humbled Aharon. Rather, it was his own fear and trembling. Shehaya Aharon bosh ve'yare lageshet.

Yet Moshe urged Aharon on. But surely Moshe understood. After all, he himself tried to turn away from his calling at the Burning Bush. "I am not the speaker for this task!" he had protested. Why would he push his brother on when he knew precisely the feelings in his brother's heart?

In truth, it was because he understood that he was insistent that his brother act. "Approach the altar, for you were chosen. Embolden yourself and come do your priestly activities. The one endowed with true humility is best suited to serve G-d."

The Baal Shem Tov suggested that Moshe's counsel was essential to Aharon's role. "Why are you withdrawn, submissive and unassuming? LeKach nivecharta. It is

precisely because you possess these qualities that you were chosen to assume the most exalted religious position.

"Humility is the prerequisite for genuine spirituality."

The Baal Shem Tov taught that modesty, submission, self-abasement and meekness are true paths to G-dliness. These lead to our recognition of why we always need Him. Humility sharpens our focus on our fragile existence even as it prods our intimacy with G-d. Humility makes us prayerful. Indeed, that very humility which left Aharon inhibited, bosh and insecure is the very quality which prompted him to perform the Avoda so zealously. This bosh motivates Aharon in the next pasuk, "and Aharon went up to the altar."

The Talmud teaches that humility results in the "fear of sin." Unsurprisingly, it is pride and not humility that comes naturally to us. But true humility is not the opposite of pride. Rather, it is a fullness of the gentleness and piety that comes from a true fear of sin. Humility is not a single act but a stance, an approach to life which encompasses every aspect of human thought and behavior.

Humility is only achieved through experience. It is the necessary result of an awareness of our profound imperfection. Though we are created in the image of G-d,

we are also formed from the clay of the earth. Whatever we do, wherever we turn, sin, error and failure await us.

Aharon stood as the Kohen Gadol and yet, he would forever remain humbled by his crushing failure at the altar of the Golden Calf. A powerful sin indeed! Yet, it was precisely because of his remembrance of his dreadful sin that he was most worthy to stand in the service of G-d. That remembrance inspired the humility which made him great.

Only the truly humble can be made great. And only he who has sinned can know humility. Maharitz teaches that it was because he sinned that Aharon was Divinely ordained to serve as Kohen Gadol. Otherwise, how would it be possible for him to personally identify with the humbled sinner's need for atonement without having personally experienced the humbling need for forgiveness?

"Why are you ashamed of the golden calf?" Moshe asked Aharon. Lekach nivecharta. "You were granted the humbling opportunity to sin, so that you would then be able to atone for all sinners."

As Mishlei teaches us, Humility raises up, while pride only serves to bring down.

## The Holiness of the Mundane

Rabbi Jonathan Ziring

**A**fter the tragic deaths of Nadav and Avihu, the children of Aharon, G-d issues a command to Aharon: "Do not drink wine, nor intoxicating drink (alt. wine which is intoxicating, see Keritut 13b), you or your children, when you enter the Tent of Meeting, so you do not die; this is an eternal decree throughout your generations. To distinguish between the sacred and non-sacred, and between the impure and the pure. And [so] you may instruct the Children of Israel in all the decrees that G-d has spoken through Moshe." (Vayikra 10:9-11)

It is not immediately clear why this law is presented here. Rashi (*ibid.* 10:2, see also *Vayikra Rabbah* 12:1) cites the position of Rabbi Yishmael, who suggests that the sin of Nadav and Avihu was that they were drunk when they entered the Mishkan. Even if this was not their sin, their deaths do highlight the seriousness of service in the

Mishkan, an idea captured by the law that one must not serve when one's mind has been clouded by alcohol, or one has even had a revi'it of wine.

While the former half of this text is clear, the latter half is not. What does "distinguish between the sacred and non-sacred" and "instruct the Children of Israel" refer to? Rabbi Avraham Ibn Ezra suggests that these verses also refer to roles of Aharon, the Kohen Gadol. As part of serving in the Mishkan, he must be able to distinguish between the holy places and non-holy places, holy days and non-holy days, what events make one impure and require sacrifices, and the like. The final verse refers to the priests' role in defining people as having tzaraat, which requires a detailed process of purification culminating in the Temple. (*Devarim* 24:8)

Most commentators (see Rashi, Rashbam, Ramban, for

example), however, follow the Talmud (Keritut 12a-14a) in seeing a second command in these verses – a prohibition against making halachic rulings while inebriated. Though serving in the Mishkan or Beit HaMikdash while drunk carries the death penalty, and issuing legal rulings while drunk does not, the Talmud still understands the two violations as stemming from the same principle. Rambam (Lo Taaseh 73) and Sefer haChinuch (152) include them within the same biblical mitzvah.

What is the connection between the two commands? Sefer haChinuch argues that “the root of this commandment is known. For it is not proper to be involved in precious things, the epitome of preciousness, such as issues of the Temple or words of Torah, except at a time when a person’s mind is collected and he is directed in all his deeds.” Though Sefer haChinuch writes “there is no need to write at length about things which are obvious,” his words do reveal something which is not apparent. There is a temptation to think of life in the Temple as holy, and daily life, even a life filled with Torah and mitzvot, as mundane. However, this mitzvah teaches that even learning about the smallest minutia of halachah is, at some level, as holy as the bringing a sacrifice in the House of G-d. Specifically, the process of p’sak, of deciding how G-d’s word should be understood and implemented in this world, demands no

less attention than serving G-d in the Temple. Our sages even claim that “from the day the Temple was destroyed, the Holy one Blessed be He only has in this world the four cubits of halachah alone.” (Berachot 8a) While the ideal is to have the Temple as well as our daily lives of halachah, when necessary, the latter can fill the place of the former.

Some authorities thought that only certain types of law, such as ritual law or the adjudication of capital offenses were rarified enough to be included in the same category as service in the Temple, and the prohibition against ruling while intoxicated. (Tosafot Sanhedrin 42a s.v. ha’oskim, cited as possibility in Shulchan Aruch Choshen Mishpat 7:5) However, others either excluded civil law only due to a technicality (Netivot HaMishpat 7:6), or didn’t mention any exclusion at all (Rama Yoreh Deah 242:13), or explicitly rejected such an exclusion (Shut HaBach 41). For these authorities, the study, adjudication, or practice of every detail of halachah, from the most major to the most minute, is imbued with the highest level of sanctity and importance.

As we live in a generation without the Temple, remembering that G-d’s presence can and should be found in our lives lived according to His will is a most comforting thought - but one that demands that we not shirk our responsibilities.

## The Mishkan: Opening Day

Rabbi Jesse Horn

The “Yom HaShmini,” (Eighth Day) immediately following the Shvat Yimay HaMiluim (the seven days of Mishkan preparation), is the Mishkan’s “Opening Day” and it surfaces three times in the Chumash. The first time this day appears is in the end of Shemot (Perek 40), then a second time in our Parsha, Parshas Shmini (Vayikra 9), and lastly in Bamidbar (Perek 7). What is surprising is that there is absolutely no overlap in the Chumash’s three descriptions of this day. This Eighths Day’s portrayal is entirely different each time. In nowhere but in Shemot, does the Torah describe how Hashem’s Shachena (presence) filled the Mishkan to the point that Moshe could not enter. Similarly, in Vayikra alone the Chumash tells the narrative of Nadav and Avihu’s tragic death along with inauguration of the Kohanim. And

similarly, only in Bamidbar does the Torah record the twelve Nasieim (princes) giving gifts.

Why is that? In none of the three presentations is there any overlap in content. Surely something as powerful as Nadav and Avihu being consumed miraculously by a heavenly fire (Vayikra 9:24) could have been mentioned in Shemot’s or Bamidbar’s presentation. Why not repeat details? And if there is some agenda of not repeating anything, chose one of the three places and include everything necessary there. Why divide the day’s happenings into three sections and spread them out in three different books of the Chumash?

Perhaps different elements of the Eighths Day’s inauguration were selected to accomplish different purposes. Each presentation fits the book it is found in. In

other words, each book mentions the Mishkan's "Opening Day" for a different reason. The Torah includes only the pertinent aspects of the day that assist in achieving whatever goal is trying to be achieved by that particular book.

What then is the theme of each of the three books, Shemot, Vayikra and Bamidbar, and how do the three presentations match the motifs of each of the books?

Shemot, as spelled out by the Ramban (Introduction to Shemot), captures the transition from Bnei Yisrael (the Jewish People) being an enslaved nation to a freed one; one where Hashem dwells among them in the Mishkan. Shemot is really divided into two halves with the first half dealing with Bnei Yisrael's slavery and the second with Hashem living amongst them in the Mishkan. Based on that objective, Shemot describes the Mishkan as a place where Hashem's presence was concentrated to the point that Moshe could not even enter. Precisely this angle, the density of Shachena in the Mishkan, captures the successful conclusion of Shemot. Bnei Yisrael's liberation from slavery climaxed with a strong intensity of Shachena; exactly the theme of the second half of Shemot.

The first half of Bamidbar is about the nation at large, their preparations toward Eretz Israel (the land of Israel), and failures that kept them from immediately entering. The gifts presented by the Nasieim on the inauguration

day fall under this category and are therefore included in Bamidbar's description of this day.

Now back to our Parsha to see how the Nadav and Avihu story contributes to the book of Vayikra. The Ramban (Introduction to Vayikra) explains that Vayikra is a book of instructions for a lifestyle where Hashem dwells among Bnei Yisrael in the Mishkan. Therefore the book of Vayikra follows Shemot and includes Karbanot (sacrifices), Tumah V'Taharah (Laws of purity and impurity), and sins that could cause the Shachena to leave etc. Being that the focus is proper usage and misusage of the Mishkan, the Nadav and Avihu story is a perfect fit and naturally mentioned in Vayikra. Nadav and Avihu's bringing of an "Aish Zara Lifnay Hashem" (foreign fire before Hashem) captures the inappropriate lack of boundaries that they had for the Mishkan. Although they had incredible religious motivation in bringing the Karban and themselves closer to Hashem, it was unwelcome. Therefore it is specifically these details which are mentioned in Vayikra.

The take home message from Vayikra's presentation of the Eight Day and the Nadav and Avihu narrative is control. Unregulated emotional outpour is dangerous, especially around the Mishkan and other religiously sensitive areas. We should aspire towards maintaining emotional drive but control it with proper intellectual navigation.

## Let's Table the Discussion

Rabbi Dr. Jonathan Schwartz

You know the excitement of watching funny phrases get translated by Google translate.

Well, some of the original translation errors made by computers are equally as funny.

In the early 1960s, an apocryphal tale went around about a computer that the CIA had built to translate between English and Russian: to test the machine, the programmers decided to have it translate a phrase into Russian and then translate the result back into English, to see if they'd get the same words they started with. The director of the CIA was invited to do the honors; the programmers all gathered expectantly around the console

to watch as the director typed in the test words: "Out of sight, out of mind."

The computer silently ground through its calculations. Hours passed. Then, suddenly, magnetic tapes whirred, lights blinked, and a printer clattered out the result: "Invisible insanity."

In a series of Sichos Mussar that he gave during the 6 day war, Rav Chaim Shmuellevitz ztl. identified the danger of assuming that the war was "out of sight, out of mind." Citing the horrific challenges that made Yocheved leave her child in the Nile (See Ibn Ezra to Shemos 2:3) and Hagar cast her child far away from her as he lay dying, Rav

Chaim notes that the distance helps create a false sense of numbness and a false sense of freedom from the pain associated with challenge.

The only thing created when we distance ourselves from the needs of our fellow Jews is a sense of falseness. It is a true example of “invisible insanity”. For the pains are real and the Tzaaros are real as well. However, by separating oneself from the community, one loses the perspective necessary in order to help the community weather the storm and perhaps even find a solution to its situation. This was the castigation of Elimelech who took his family with him to avoid the cries and the famine of the people of Eretz Yisrael. The Talmud notes (Taanis 11a) that if one separates oneself from the community in the time of crisis does not merit to be with the community in the time of salvation. That could be our own fate if we fail to appreciate the challenges of our greater Jewish family.

When the children of Aharon, Nadav and Avihu, lost

their lives, Moshe consoled Aharon by noting that Acheinu Kol Beis Yisrael Yivku Es HaSereifa Asher Saraf Hashem – that the entire nation will mourn the tragedy that Hashem took. Pri Megadim (OC 574) notes that crying WITH the Tzibbur – DAVENING with the Tzibbur – allows and reminds the person that s/he is a part of something bigger and better than even oneself, one’s family or even his or her immediate community. When one subscribes to a philosophy that Israel’s needs are “Out of Sight, Out of Mind” that is true invisible insanity.

As we lovingly recall the holy souls who lost their lives in the Shoah – and those Kedoshim who never forgot them when rebuilding their own ... And as we approach the day of Yom Hazikaron when we recall the brave men and women who gave their lives for Am Yisrael, Eretz Yisrael and Medinat Yisrael (whether prepared to do so as soldiers or merely victims of terror) let us fulfill OUR responsibilities to Achdut Yisrael.

## Kashrut: Of Labels Permanent and Transient

Rabbi Mordechai Torczyner

Twenty years ago, a student asked me, “If G-d made a cow, and G-d made a pig, then why am I allowed to eat a cow, but not a pig?” The student was not asking about kashrut as a whole; he wanted to know how our Torah portion could identify particular creations of G-d as permanently impure and off-limits, while marking other Divine creations as pure and permitted. It’s a very old question, and its answer may provide insight into a deep message regarding human nature.

One classic answer is that G-d created certain animals for a purpose other than consumption; eating them would actually harm us. (Yoma 39a, Moreh haNevuchim 3:48) The danger may be physical, or metaphysical; we might even absorb moral character from the permitted and prohibited beasts. (Horeb 454) Each prohibited creature harbours an intrinsic threat.

Another traditional approach suggests that the creatures G-d formed are neither toxic nor beneficial. Nonetheless, G-d provided detailed dietary rules in order to improve our discipline. (Bereishit Rabbah 44:1; Moreh haNevuchim 3:26) Among the benefits of this discipline may be to

perpetually recall Divine Truth (Ramban to Devarim 22:6) or to draw closer to G-d. (Maharal, Tiferet Yisrael<sup>7</sup>) Each instruction further envelops the Jew in an all-encompassing life of law.

We might suggest a third idea, based on the Torah’s emphasis on distinguishing between kosher and non-kosher creatures (Vayikra 11:47), and the Talmud’s explanation of two verses in the book of Iyov. Iyov complained to G-d, “If You wished [to make it so], I would not sin; but none can save from Your Hand.” (Iyov 10:7) The sage Rava expands, “Iyov sought to exempt the entire world from judgment. He said before G-d: Master of the Universe! You created the ox with split hooves and You created the donkey with sealed hooves! You created Gan Eden and You created Gehennom! You created righteous people and You created wicked people! Who can stop You?” (Bava Batra 16a) In other words, Iyov claimed that Man is like the beast, lacking the freedom to choose between the paths of good and evil. Just as a donkey’s sealed hooves mark it as non-kosher for life, so certain people are created as wicked, and they cannot shift their

steps from the road to Gehennom. We enter this world bearing the label under which we depart.

With his mention of the ox and the donkey, Iyov identified a critical lesson of the Torah's division of animals between kosher and non-kosher: the legitimacy of permanent labels. As our Torah portion states in summing up this division, "You are to distinguish between impure and pure, between the beast which may be consumed and the beast which may not be consumed." (Vayikra 11:47) Every time she decides what to eat, the Jew is warned that there are permanent labels in this world. G-d created the good, and G-d created the malignant, and you are tasked – not only in eating but in life – with identifying the malignant and steering clear of its influence. Do not permit shifting cultural mores and claims of progress to sway your good judgment; among animals and among ideas, there is good which is timeless, and there is evil which is eternally so, and some labels never change.

However, the permanent labels of the animal kingdom are alien to human beings; it is an offense to G-d and Man to typecast any human being for life. As the Talmud interprets the response of Iyov's visitor Eliphaz, "You would nullify reverence and reduce the study of

Torah[sichah] before G-d!" (Iyov 15:4) Yes, human beings exhibit natural weakness, but G-d has provided the influence of Torah to rescue the human being from any depth to which she may sink. Our labels are as transient as we wish them to be.

We might add that the transient label even exists in the world of kashrut, when the human hand intervenes. All animals are non-kosher, until they undergo the shechitah rite of kosher slaughter. Then again, one can transform kosher meat to non-kosher by combining it with milk. Humanity is empowered to alter certain labels.

This may answer the question I was asked twenty years ago. The laws of kashrut teach that there are permanent labels and judgments in our world. However, these laws also demonstrate that labels of the descendants of Adam and Chavah are transient; it is possible for a human being, via Torah, to change her own label from non-kosher to kosher and back. Determining which labels should be transient, and how to alter them, is challenging, but may this moral lesson, which the Talmud sees in Iyov's dialogue with Eliphaz, inspire us to examine, and alter where appropriate, the labels in our lives.