

Parsha Thought

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לזכר נשמת מלכה בת יהושע - משה צבי בן גדליה

לזכר נשמת דוד בן אברהם

SHEMINI

This week's parsha informs us about which animals, birds and fish we can and cannot eat. When delineating the few animals that have one kosher sign but not the other, the posuk tells us את הגמל כי לא יפריס, the camel for it brings up its cud, but its hoof is not split. The Torah starts telling us about the single sign of purity for it's imperative that we put the positive virtue before the negative. Based on this, Reb Elimelech of Lizhensk would always say, how great it would be if we all just saw the positive traits of our friends and not the negative. When someone goes to visit a friend, he should look for something positive, praise the person for it and then start his visit.

The Kli Yakar, however, has a different opinion. He says the posuk should have first said, but its hoof is not split, because that is the reason it's impure and the reason it's being mentioned at all. Same question exists for all the animals, even the pig who has the opposite issue, that the hooves are split but doesn't chew its cud, the Torah mentions the hooves first. Why does the Torah mention the sign of purity first? He answers that the sign of purity isn't a good thing, just the opposite. It adds to their impurity. As it says by Eisav who is compared to the pig, who sticks out its hooves to show everyone he's kosher, when his insides are full of deceit. This teaches that anyone whose inside isn't like his outside, is not as he portrays himself, and therefore is much worse than the evil person who is thoroughly evil and everyone knows it.

There were two Chassidim who were looking for a new rebbi. During their travels, they ended up at the town of Reb Meir of Premishlan. It was Friday afternoon, so they decided to stay there for Shabbos. After davening, they went to the gabbai to ask him if there was any place they could eat the Shabbos meals. He was happy to help and paired each one of them up with a different host. Both hosts were wealthy men whose tables were full of everything good, to honor Shabbos. However, even so, both men at the end of the meal were just as hungry as when they came in.

The first host sat at the table and, as each dish came in, took for himself a big portion but neglected to offer the guest anything. Not feeling comfortable just taking, the man barely ate anything. The second host did the opposite. He filled his guest's plate and told him to eat as much as he wanted. However, the host himself took almost no food. The guest didn't feel comfortable eating while his host didn't, so he ate almost nothing. The next morning after davening they were paired up with the same hosts and the same thing happened. They were not happy. They spoke amongst themselves and decided that this town is not for them since they don't know how to treat guests. However, one said to the other for the third meal everyone eats together in shul with the rebbi. The other one said, "but with our luck, even there we won't get anything, so why should we embarrass ourselves and stand by the door like beggars? So, they stayed outside in the courtyard.

Reb Meir was sitting at the table with all the Chassidim around him when he stopped, turned to the gabbai and said, "go outside and bring those two men in and tell them we will take care of them". When the men came in, Reb Meir said "we all know the two signs for an animal to be kosher, split hooves and chews its cud. These are also the signs of a good host, split hooves, that the host splits his food with the guest, and chews its cud, that the host eats together with the guest. Combining these two things makes a guest feel comfortable eating, but one without the other doesn't work. We can learn a lot of things from the wording of the pesukim, what it says and in what order. It seems these pesukim of the one kosher sign animals, are teaching us numerous things. First, always look for the positive in people. Second, don't be fooled by the people who pretend to be pious but are all a show. Third, when we do good things, do it all the way. Go the extra mile and make sure you're doing it right. Let's take the opportunity to help one another and always look at the positive!