



With Ability Comes Responsibility

"How was school today, Avi?"

"Great, Abba!"

"I am so happy to hear that, Avi. Tell me something that you learned."

"The Rebbe sent us home with a *kasha* (question). What was the sin of Nadav and Avihu that caused them to die?"

"That is a very deep *kasha*, Avi. Many *meforshim* answer it in many different ways. Some say that they entered the Mishkan after drinking wine, or that they did not wash their hands and feet properly. Some claim that they were not wearing all of the *Bigdei Kehuna* (Priestly Garments). Some say that they died because they decided *halacha* in front of Moshe Rabbeinu, and others explain that they were jealous of him and Aharon. Some even say that their death was a punishment for the *Chet Ha'egel* (Sin of the Golden Calf)."

"That sure is a wide variety of answers, Abba."

"Yes, Avi. This shows that their sin was so fine that it is barely recognizable in our eyes. If the Rabbinical geniuses of the past 3000 years do not clearly agree to their sin, then it must have been something that appears very slight to us."

"Abba, why were they so severely punished for something so subtle?"

"That is an even deeper *kasha*, Avi. People still puzzle over that question in our days, when they see righteous people suffering. The Avi Ezer has a very practical answer."

"Please tell me, Abba."

"The greater a person is, the more Hashem expects from him. Hashem blesses a person with great *seichel* (common sense). Therefore, He wants him to use that *seichel* to make the correct decisions. What is right in one situation may be wrong in another case."

"That is a frightening thought, Abba. There are so many complicated decisions in life. How can we know what is the right choice?"

"The Avi Ezer explains, Avi. If a person will always fuse *seichel*, holiness, and fear of Hashem together when making decisions, he will never go wrong. Hashem created the person with a 'straight head'. His *seichel* works perfectly. It is man's job to guard it. Our fear of sin should motivate us to stay away from impure influences that corrupt our *seichel*. Then it will stay as straight as the day we were born."

"Abba, why were these righteous people punished?"

"The Avi Ezer relates that their *seichel* and righteousness were so great, that they were capable of achieving the highest levels of closeness to Hashem. Therefore, even the slightest mistake (in our eyes) was punished. That is why the verse states, 'I will be sanctified through those

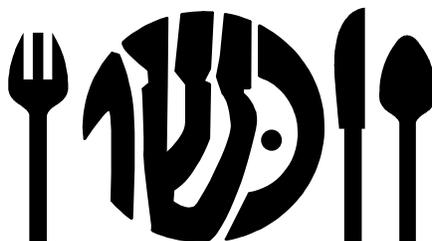
who are nearest to Me' (Vayikra 10:3). Hashem is strictest with those who are closest to Him."

"I see, Abba. Hashem never gives us a test that is too difficult. If He presents us with a complicated problem, then He must give us the *seichel* to make the right decision."

"Correct, Avi. Sometimes the right decision involves asking someone who is older and wiser than you are. Do not worry. If you fear Hashem, and guard your holiness, He will always steer you in the right direction."

Kinderlach . . .

Hashem has given you a wonderful gift – seichel. Guard it with purity and fear of Hashem. Use it. Don't be lazy. When Hashem presents you with a difficult challenge, do your best to analyze it with your seichel. If the answer is not clear, then seek the help of older and wiser people. B'ezras Hashem you will rise to higher and higher madraygas (spiritual levels), and become very close to The Holy One.



Eat to Live

"Is there any food left in the bag?"

"Let's see. No, it's all gone."

"That's too bad. I'm starved."

"Me too. Let's keep driving on this highway until we come to a rest stop. There will surely be food over there."

And so, the young couple continues driving. In a few minutes they come to a rest stop. They pull in and park the car.

"Here is a little snack bar. Let's see what they have."

The couple looks over the selection of packaged foods. They all look good. They begin looking for a familiar hechsher (Kashrus certification).

"That package of crackers looks good. Does it have a *hechsher*?"

"No."

"How about that candy?"

"No."

"Here is a package of potato chips with a *hechsher*."

"I don't recognize that *hechsher*. I have never seen it before in my life."

"Neither have I, but it's only potato chips. Just potatoes, oil, and salt. What could be unkosher about it?"

"Let's look at the ingredients."

The young couple examines the package and sees a list of fifteen ingredients in-

cluding artificial coloring, flavoring, fillers, and preservatives.

"This is a bit more complicated than I thought. Let's think a minute. These potato chips were made in a factory. Each one of these ingredients was probably purchased from a supplier who made it in his factory. Therefore there are really fifteen *hechsherim* required for these fifteen different ingredients. There are 138 chapters in *Shulchan Aruch Yoreh Deah* dealing with the laws of *kashrus*. These include tens of thousands of *halachos*. The *Kashrus* organization must be very dedicated and organized to keep track of all of the details necessary to certify this little bag of potato chips. How can we even think about eating these chips if we do not know about the *hechsher*?"

"True, however, it is only food. How harmful can it be?"

"We all know that unhealthy food can damage the body and make a person sick. Many diseases are the result of poor diet. In a similar way, unkosher food damages the soul. It clouds the ability to think clearly, thereby distancing a person from reality. It drags the *neshama* down to a low level, far away from Hashem."

"You are right, my dear. Even though we are hungry, we would never eat poison. Therefore, how can we eat something that might spiritually poison us? Let us keep looking."

The couple finds a very tasty looking cake in a package. They turn over the package and find . . . a top grade hechsher!

"Baruch Hashem! He is watching over us!"

"As always. He is just testing us."

"This was a worthwhile test. I learned an important lesson about *Kashrus*."

"May we always merit keeping our minds and bodies pure, amen."

Kinderlach . . .

*Parashas Shemini lists the animals that are tahor (pure) and tomei (impure). This is an important foundation of *kashrus*. *Kashrus* has many facets. Choosing a reliable hechsher, keeping an organized kitchen, and learning the *halachos* are all very important. There is another aspect. We must be prepared to say, "No," if the food is not up to standard. Keeping a proper level of *kashrus* requires *mesirus nefesh* (self-sacrifice). In order to keep your *guf* (body) and *neshama* (soul) pure, you must be prepared to sacrifice. Listen to stories of people who kept kosher under the most difficult circumstances. They will inspire you. What a holy nation we are! We do not live to eat. We eat to live!*

Parasha Questions

- Which *korbonos* did Aharon and his sons bring? (9:2-4)
- Why did Moshe enter the *Ohel Moed* along with Aharon? (Rashi 9:23)
- Which word marks the middle of the Torah? (10:16)
- What are the signs of permissible fish? (11:9)