

## Parshat Re'eh

I was recently asked, “Rabbi, you say Judaism is the only true religion, and the Christians say that Christianity is and the Moslems say that Islam is the true religion. How do you know you are right?”

I would like to add another dimension to the question. There are over 2 billion Christians, over 1.3 Billion Moslems in the world, and 2 billion 153.7 million people of assorted other religions. Then add to that the 1.1 billion who have no religion at all, who say we are all taking the opium for the masses. We the Jewish people number only a mere 14 million, a fraction of a percent. What are the chances that we are really the ones who have the one and only true religion?

When Hashem gave us the Torah, not only did He give us the prescription for how to live a most meaningful and wholesome life, he also gave us the most powerful proof to the truth of the Torah itself.

In this week’s portion we come across one such stunning proof, that only Hashem, the creator of the world and every creature in it, could have written the Torah. We will also see from this, beyond the shadow of a doubt, that the Oral Torah was given to Moshe together with the Written Torah, to explain it.

In this week’s parsha Moshe Rabbeinu reviews the laws of the kosher animals we are allowed to eat and singles out a few that we are not allowed to eat. As far as how to know which animals are kosher to eat, the Torah gives a formula. It must have a completely split hoof and it chews its cud.

ספר דברים פרק יד

(ד) זאת הבהמה אשר תאכלו שור שיה כשבים ושה עזים:

(ה) איל וצבי ונהמור ואקו ודישן ותאו וזמר:

(ו) וכל בהמה מפרסת פרסה ושסעת שסע שתי פרסות מעלת גרה בבהמה אתה תאכלו:

*4. These are the animals that you may eat - the ox, sheep, and goat:*

*5. The gazelle, deer, and the antelope, the ibex, chamois, the bison, and the giraffe:*

*6. And every animal that has a split hoof, which is completely separated in two hooves, that brings up its cud among animals -- it may you eat:*

The Talmud adds a few more signs, but before I cite those signs, I must first tell you about the Talmud.

The Talmud comprises the Oral Torah, the oral explanation of the commandments given by Hashem to Moshe along with the Written Torah. As Hashem instructed Moshe to write down each mitzvah, Hashem explained to Moshe every detail of how the mitzvah is to be performed. Moshe subsequently taught this to each and every member of the Jewish nation after he came down from Mount Sinai. The study of the Torah with the oral explanation is what occupied the Jewish people for the forty years in the desert, and hasn't stopped since. This is what is studied in Yeshivot around the world today. It was written down over 1500 years ago.

The Talmud adds the following extra signs.

Any animal that has a completely split hoof, also chews its cud. You do not need to investigate if it does or not. It is a fact, if it has split hooves, it chews its cud.

Any animal that chews its cud, has teeth only in the bottom jaw of its mouth. The upper jaw has no teeth at all.

Any animal that has horns, has split hooves. And, as we said before, once you know it has split hooves, you know it chews its cud. Only kosher animals have horns.

Only the milk of a kosher animal will solidify to make butter or cheese. You cannot make butter or cheese from the milk of a non-kosher animal.

So, if you were on a safari somewhere in Africa, and you caught an animal with split hooves and you had no way of knowing if it chews its cud or not, based on this formula, you could slaughter it and eat it no questions asked. It would also have horns, and no teeth in its upper jaw.

As far as fish are concerned the formula for determining which fish is kosher is if it has fins and scales. Once again, the Talmud teaches us, that any fish that has scales, has fins. If you see scales, you don't even have to look for the fins. But if it has fins, it does not mean it has scales.

As far as the birds that we are allowed to eat, the Torah does not give a specific formula. Rather, it lists twenty-one birds by name, and all the others are kosher.

Once I was learning this chapter in the Torah with someone, and after looking at the list of the forbidden birds, he exclaimed, "Wow! That's amazing!" I asked him what he was referring to and he said, "every single one of these birds impales its prey and eats it!" I asked him how he knew this and he answered "I am a bird watcher, I know every one of these birds!"

My friend knew from his birdwatching a fact that the sages tell us in the Talmud.

The common denominator in all the non-kosher birds listed is, that they are all vicious birds who kill other creatures and eat them.

All the kosher animals, are also herbivorous and do not kill other creatures for their food.

Each statement made by the sages, has been scientifically verified over time. Every word they said is correct and accurate to a fault.

So here is the question. The Talmud was written in Babylon over 1500 years ago. Did the rabbis of the Talmud do expeditions to the jungles of the world to gather evidence for their ideas before they made them? Do you think any of them ever saw a chamois or a bison? So how could they make such general statements, which if they are not true, would cause someone to eat non-kosher? Actually, why make the statements at all? Why take a chance?

Another point. A kosher animal must have both signs at the same time, one will not do.

ספר דברים פרק יד

(ז) אֵד אֶת זֶה לֹא תֹאכְלוּ מִמַּעֲלֵי הַגֵּרָה וּמִמְפָּרְיֵי הַפְּרֹסָה הַשְּׂסוּעָה אֵת הַגִּמְלָה וְאֵת הָאֲרֻנָּבֶת וְאֵת הַשָּׁפָן כִּי מֵעֵלָה גֵּרָה הֵמָּה וּפְרֹסָה לֹא הִפְרִיסוּ טְמֵאִים הֵם לָכֶם:

(ח) וְאֵת הַחֲזִיר כִּי מִפְּרִיֵי פְרֹסָה הוּא וְלֹא גֵרָה טְמֵא הוּא לָכֶם מִבְּשָׂרָם לֹא תֹאכְלוּ וּבְנִבְלָתָם לֹא תִגְעוּ:

*7. But this shall you not eat from among those that bring up their cud or have a completely separated split hoof - the camel, the hare, and the hyrax, for they bring up their cud, but their hoof is not split -- they are unclean to you:*

*8. And the pig, for it has a split hoof, but not the cud -- it is unclean to you; from their flesh you shall not eat and you shall not touch their carcasses:*

The Talmud asks: How can you say, that when an animal has a split hoof, you can know for sure that it chews its cud. Just as the pig has a split hoof and doesn't chew its cud, maybe there are countless other animals like it?

The Talmud answers with the words of Rabbi Yishmael. "Hashem who made the world knows that there is only one animal in the whole world that has split hooves and doesn't chew its cud, and that is the pig." So as long as you know that what you have is not a pig, you can be sure that since it has split hooves it chews its cud.

תלמוד בבלי מסכת חולין דף נט/א

דתנא דבי ר' ישמעאל ואת החזיר כי מפריס פרסה הוא שליט בעולמו יודע שאין לך דבר שמפריס פרסה וטמא אלא חזיר לפיכך פרט בו הכתוב הוא

Similarly, the Talmud asks: How can you be sure from the fact that an animal has no upper teeth which indicates that it chews its cud, that it is a kosher animal? Just like a baby camel who does not yet have upper teeth, chews its cud and doesn't have a split hoof, maybe there are others out there like it? How can you be sure just because it chews its cud, it is kosher?

תלמוד בבלי מסכת חולין דף נט/א  
דתני דבי ר' ישמעאל ואת הגמל כי מעלה גרה הוא שליט בעולמו יודע שאין לך דבר מעלה גרה וטמא אלא  
גמל לפיכך פרט בו הכתוב הוא

Once again Rabbi Yishmael says, that Hashem who made the world knows that the only animals that chew their cud and don't have split hooves, are the camel, the hare and the hyrax.

Rabbi Yishmael deduced it from an extra word in the verse. The Torah says, "*It – the pig*" has a split hoof. "*It – the camel, the hyrax and the hare*" they bring up their cud, but no other in the world do.

From the time the Torah was given, until today no animal was ever found that had one of the two kosher signs other than the four mentioned in the Torah.

(3) ילקוט שמעוני דברים - פרק יד - רמז תתצא  
אמר רבי עקיבא וכי משה רבינו קניגי היה או בליסטרי הי ה, אלא מכאן תשובה לאומרים אין תורה מן  
השמים.

Rabbi Akiva said: Was Moshe a hunter or a zoologist? How could he make these statements? Did he explore every jungle in the world? This is proof that the Torah was given by Hashem the creator!

Rabbi Akiva is telling us, the only one who could know all these facts, is the Creator Himself, Hashem, and therefore this is proof to The Creator.

Hashem revealed these facts to Moshe when he gave him the laws of the Kosher animals as part of the Oral Torah. These facts were part of the Oral Torah that were passed down from teacher to student all the way from Moshe Rabbeinu, who heard these facts from the manufacturer. Of course, Hashem who made every creature on the planet knows each creature and its properties very intimately. Only Hashem could have come up with these formulas and facts.

This information also deals a fatal blow to evolutionary thinking which contends that all understanding of The Creator of all creatures on the planet.

There is no way to refute this proof. Who could know that only the milk of a kosher animal makes butter? It would take decades to test the milk of every animal and come up with such a conclusion. And who would have thought to even do the experiment?

Hashem has provided us with empirical proof to the truth of the Torah.

There is yet another very important message in the laws of kosher that I would like to share.

When we think of the laws of kosher we tend to place them in the category of an edict, a קח, which is a law that we cannot understand: one that we fulfill on faith alone.

However, upon careful examination of the text in the Torah we can discover a deeper understanding of this most important commandment.

It starts with what seems to be a misspelled word in the Torah. When instructing us not to eat of the creatures that creep that are not permissible to us, the Torah tells us:

ספר ויקרא פרק יא

(מג) אל תשקצו את נפשתיכם בכל השרץ השרץ ולא תטמאו בהם **ונטמתם** בהם:

*43. Do not make yourselves abominable by means of any teeming thing; do not (spiritually) contaminate yourselves through them lest you become (spiritually) contaminated through them.*

The word used in the Torah for spiritually contaminated is טמא. In the second occurrence in the verse (in bold) it is missing the letter “א”. Because of the vowels under the letters, it reads the same without the “א” as it would with the “א” and therefore it is translated to mean *spiritually contaminated*. Reading the word without the vowels, takes on a completely different meaning. The word without the “א” reads ונטמתם from the root word טמם which connotes an impediment or a blockage in something, preventing it from going forward.

There are no mistakes in the Torah, so the “*misspelled*” word is taken for its meaning as it is written without the vowels. The lesson is, that eating foods that are not kosher, create an impediment and a blockage to spiritual progress.

How are we to understand this idea?

In today’s world, with so much emphasis in the origin and quality of the food we eat, this is a no-brainer. As the saying that goes; “You are what you eat.” This is why people want to eat healthy.

Since the food that we eat is broken down and used to form the very cells that comprise our bodies, the healthier the food we consume, the healthier the body.

We learn in Genesis that G-d created man from the dust of the earth and then breathed into him the breath of life, his soul. Thus, the human being is a miraculous synthesis between an earthy material body and a completely spiritual soul. The physical body serves as the host for the spiritual soul.

We can compare the relationship of the soul to the body to that of an electric current running through a copper wire. In the same way that the copper wire serves as a host or conductor for the electric current, so too the human body as the host for the soul, serves as the conductor for the spiritual soul. It is only through being in a body that the

soul is able to remain in this world. When a body is no longer able to function, the soul must leave the body.

All wire is coated in rubber or plastic, because rubber or plastic do not conduct electricity. Rather, they block the electric current flowing through the wire from reaching the person holding it, so he doesn't get a shock or worse, get electrocuted. There are many substances that conduct electricity with varying degrees of impedance to the electric current running through them. Copper is the metal of choice because it strikes the right balance between cost and the speed of the current that flows through them. Today, there are materials called "superconductors" which don't impede the flow of the electricity through them at all.

The Torah is teaching us here, that since we are what we eat, and our bodies need to be the host for the holy soul within, we must consume only foods that are spiritually conducive to the flow of spirituality. G-d the creator of man, and the creator of all foods, has revealed to us in the Torah, which foods will allow our bodies to be superconductors, and which will be like rubber in our systems, and will create a blockage in the progress of souls, and will prevent them from any spiritual growth.

All kosher foods are conducive to spirituality, and all non-kosher foods create a blockage in our system and prevents us from reaching our spiritual goals.

The laws of kosher provide us with empirical proof that Hashem created us and everything in the world. Therefore, it follows that we accept what He is telling us about how the food we eat affect our bodies as well. Of course, only He knows!