



פרשת בהעלותך
סיון תשע"ח

Shiur with Rabbi Ben Shimon

This week the Kollel hosted Rabbi Ben Shimon from Montreal for a special shiur.

Rabbi Ben Shimon who writes seforim explaining the writings of the Rogatchover Gaon gave a shiur to the Kollel Yungeleit on some of the fascinating Chakiras of the Rogatchover.

The shiur was peppered with stories and anecdotes and was highly enjoyed.

Shaalos Uteshuvos

After a break, the Shaalos Uteshuvos shiur resumes this week on Sunday morning, 9:30-10:15am in the Kollel Beis Medrash.

The topic of this weeks Teshuvah is "Dropping Daf Yomi to join a Halacha shiur".

Rabbi Chazzan returns to Melbourne

Many years ago, Rabbi Chazzan inspired our Yarchei Kallah crowds with his wonderful shiurim and broad Torah knowledge.

Rabbi Chazzan will be returning to Melbourne for Gimmel Tammuz and Kollel will be hosting a special shiur evening for the community.

Save the date

Wednesday evening Rosh
Chodesh Tammuz, June 13

For men and women in the
Goldhirsh Hall

Stay tuned for details of the topic
and starting time.



In this Edition

Why Jews eat fish before meat **P.1**

The custom of eating fish on Shabbos **P.2**

Why do Jews eat fish before eating meat?

It is an ancient Jewish custom to eat fish before eating meat. We do this on Shabbos, Yomtov and at Simchas.

There are many reasons offered for this custom. In the Chassidische Parsha on Behaalosecha, the Alter Rebbe offers the following fascinating explanation according to the teachings of Kabbalah;

In Parshas Behaalosecha Bnei Yisroel complained about having only Man to eat. They craved meat and asked "who will feed us meat"?

As punishment, Hashem told Moshe that He will give the people meat and that they will eat it for a full month until it comes out of their noses and nauseates them.

Moshe replied "the people who I am in their midst are 600,000 on foot and You say 'I will give them meat and they will eat it for an entire month'. If the sheep and cattle were slaughtered for them, would it suffice for them? If all of the fish of the sea were caught for them, would it suffice for them?"

It seems that Moshe was questioning where he would be able to obtain so much meat. But the Alter Rebbe explains the deeper meaning of Moshe's question.

The Jewish people asked for meat and Hashem told Moshe that he would give them meat. There was no request for fish. If so why then did Moshe mention fish?

Whenever we eat, we are engaging with the physicality of the world. Our engagement with physicality is for the purpose of elevating the world and refining it to be more holy. When we eat, the food we consume becomes part of us and gives us energy. Our Kavana when eating and channelling that energy into serving Hashem, is what effects this elevation.

By definition, for the Neshama to descend and involve itself with physicality entails a degree of spiritual descent. But not all foods are quite the same.

Meat is a very coarse food. Our sages teach that an Am Haaretz cannot eat meat. This is because someone who is on a lowly spiritual level lacks the spiritual strength to be able to elevate such a material food. Unable to elevate the meat, its coarse physicality would be liable to trap them in desire and bring them down spiritually.

A Talmid Chochom has the spiritual standing to be able to eat meat with the proper intentions and is able to elevate it and channel its energy into serving Hashem.

Even though Moshe was a Tzaddik of the highest calibre, for him, getting involved with such a coarse food, even with holy Kavanos, would be too great a descent from his spiritual level.

Moshe said that these are "the 600,000 people that I am in their midst". Moshe felt that his presence amongst Bnei Yisroel would have elevated them to his level. If so, how can I give them meat and bring them down to its level?

When Moshe said "If all of the sheep and cattle were slaughtered would it suffice for them" he uses the words ומצא להם. This can mean that the meat would pursue and 'find' them and pull them down.

Our sages teach that whatever exists on dryland has a counterpart under the sea. Fish are the meat of the sea.

In Chassidus, the sea and dry land represent two different 'worlds'. The dry land where everything is exposed represents *Alma d'isgalya*, the revealed created worlds. The sea, which is covered over by water, reflects *Alma D'iskasya*, the worlds which are hidden within the Divine reality.

Therefore, fish is considered to be more spiritually refined (*aidel*) and elevated than meat. Eating fish represents a lesser descent into physicality, but a descent none the less.

For Moshe, and hence for Bnei Yisroel who were under his influence, even fish would have been too great a descent. And so he said that not only meat but "even if all the fish of the sea were gathered", the fish too would pursue them and bring them down.

Hashem responded to Moshe "has Hashem's hand been shortened?" Hashem is capable of providing the experience of eating meat in a way that they will not be spiritually reduced.

And so Hashem gave the Jewish people quail. In Kabbalah, birds come from a higher spiritual source than both meat and fish. Whilst the quail was meat (physicality), it possessed a spiritual quality, represented by the fact that the quail was very fatty - oil represents spirituality.

Whilst we are not quite on the level of Moshe and his generation and hence we do eat both meat and fish, none the less, the Alter Rebbe adds a lesson for us as well.

For a Jew to descend straight down to engage with the coarse materialism of eating meat, even for the purpose of elevating it, would be too great a descent. It would *shlepp* him down into its coarseness.

So first we break the descent by first eating the more spiritually refined flesh of fish. Once we have successfully engaged with and elevated the meat of *Alma D'iskasya* and conditioned ourselves with a lesser degree of descent, we can then progress to the main course, to engage with the more material meat of *Alma D'isgalya* and successfully elevate it from coarse flesh into G-dly energy,

The custom of eating fish on Shabbos

Rabbi Yonason Johnson

On Shabbos there is a Mitzvah of Oneg Shabbos¹, to delight in Shabbos by eating enjoyable foods. Chaza"l² teach that one who takes delight in Shabbos will receive an unlimited inheritance, be freed from servitude to the nations and will be granted all of their heart's desires.

The Gemara³ gives the example of eating large fish, garlic and cooked beats. If one cannot afford such delicacies, Rav Pappa teaches that one can even serve *Kasa Deharsena* – a Talmudic dish of small fish fried in oil and flour.

In the famed story of Rabbi Yossi Mokir Shabbos⁴, Yosef found a treasure inside of a large fish that he bought in honour of Shabbos.

The Rishonim⁵ and Acharonim⁶ explain that whilst the Gemara lists certain foods, they are only examples of foods which were *Choshuv* in the times of the sages of the Gemara. One fulfils the Mitzvah by eating whatever is considered to be delicacies in their time and locale⁷.

The Alter Rebbe writes that unlike on Yomtov, on Shabbos there is no obligation to eat meat and drink wine. The Shulchan Aruch⁸ only writes that one should serve meat and wine because we assume that nowadays most people enjoy eating meat and good wine. Obviously someone who does not enjoy meat does not need to eat meat on Shabbos⁹.

So therefore, whilst Chaza"l give the example of eating fish on Shabbos, the Alter Rebbe states emphatically that there is no Halachic basis in Niglah (the Talmudic Halachic dimension of Torah) to eat fish on Shabbos¹⁰.

The Alter Rebbe's wording implies that whilst according to *Niglah* there is no basis, but from *Nistar*, the hidden Kabbalistic teachings, there are reasons for eating fish specifically on Shabbos¹¹. The Kitzur Shala"h writes that eating fish at each of the 3 Shabbos meals is an *Inyan Gadol* – a great matter.

The Magen Avraham quotes¹² from Tikunei Shabbos that one should eat fish at all 3 of the Shabbos meals. The Mishna Berura¹³ writes that this is a good practise.

The Alter Rebbe in the Siddur¹⁴ writes, that it is good to eat fish at the Shalosh Seudos meal more so than the other Shabbos meals. Kaf Hachaim¹⁵ writes that this is based on the Ariza"l and that if one only has a small amount of fish, it should be served for Shalosh Seudos and only a small amount should be eaten at the other Shabbos meals. The Ben Ish Chai also writes that it is a Mitzvah to eat fish at the Shalosh Seudos, even if just a small amount¹⁶.

Reasons why we eat fish on Shabbos

A number of reasons for eating fish on Shabbos have been given;

- The Ariza"l teaches that the Neshamos of Tzaddikim are reincarnated in fish.
- The Bnei Yissaschar¹⁷ writes that fish were blessed by Hashem on the 5th day of Creation. Man was blessed by Hashem on the 6th day of Creation and the Shabbos day itself was blessed by Hashem on the 7th day. When a Jew eats fish on Shabbos there is a threefold blessing.
- Mateh Moshe writes that the Shabbos meal is a taste of the Seudah which will be served to the Tzaddikim when Moshiach comes where we will eat from the Leviason fish.
- Minchas Yaakov writes that fish do not have eyelids and so their eyes are constantly open. This alludes to the fact that Hashem's eyes are always open to look after those who fear Him, with great mercy. Based on this some Tzaddikim would eat from the eyes of the fish.
- Ben Isha Chai¹⁸ writes that whereas the animals were created from the earth, fish were created from the water. Water is the loftiest of the four elements. Since on Shabbos we receive sustenance from the highest spiritual levels, it is better to eat fish on Shabbos than meat.
- He offers another explanation based on our Parsha. Whilst meat requires Shechitah, fish do not need to be slaughtered to render them kosher. We learn this from Moshe's words "if all of the sheep and cattle were slaughtered... if all of the fish of the sea were gathered would it suffice for them?" Fish only require gathering. Unlike meat which requires an action of Melacha to prepare it, on Shabbos the Tikun is effected with requiring any Melacha, like fish which do not require Shechitah.
- Another source is also brought from the fact that the fish were not destroyed during the Mabul as they had not sinned.

The Sefer Otzar Yad Chaim records that the custom of old was to first eat meat and afterwards to eat the fish. This is alluded to in the Zemiro of Shabbos בִּשְׂרָ וּדְגִים וְכָל מִטְעָמִים, to eat meat, fish and all types of delicacies. However based on the Rambam¹⁹ that one should eat more easily digested foods before heavier foods, one should eat the fish before meat. The Alter Rebbe in Likutei Torah²⁰ explains that according to Kabbalah fish should always be eaten before meat. See overleaf for a summary of the explanation.

Response to price gouging

The Magen Avraham²¹ writes that if the non-Jews deliberately raise the price of fish, the community should make a Takanah that no one should buy fish. The Alter Rebbe explains that even if only some people will not be able to afford fish, the Takanah should be made forbidding anyone from buying fish (so that the merchants will be forced to lower their prices).

The Baer Heitev quotes Beis Hillel²² that this only applies if the price is raised by more than a third. If the price gouge is a third or less, then one must still buy fish for Shabbos as it is a Mitzvah and the Halacha is that one must spend up to a third extra for Hiddur Mitzvah.

In Kuntres Acharon²³, the Alter Rebbe writes that the Beis Hillel's opinion is based on his view that eating fish on Shabbos is Biblically required. The Alter Rebbe questions this as the Torah does not mention eating fish. Even Rabbinically there is no source in Niglah that one must eat fish on Shabbos. Even though the Gemara mentions eating fish, this is going beyond the letter of the law and one can always fulfil the Mitzvah of Oneg Shabbos with other foods. Therefore no comparison can be made to the requirement of spending up to a third extra for Hiddur Mitzvah²⁴.

According to the Alter Rebbe, the Takanah can (should) be made even in the event of lower price rises. This is also the position of Elya Rabbah and Pri Megadim and Mishna Berura.

1. Whilst there are opinions that Oneg Shabbos is *Mideoraisa*, it is accepted by most of the Poskim and Rishonim that Oneg Shabbos is a Mitzvah from the *Nevim*.
2. Shabbos 118a
3. Shabbos 118b
4. Shabbos 119a
5. See Rashi 118b שומין ראשי שומין
6. Shulchan Aruch Harav 242:2 and Mishna Berura 242:1
7. Shulchan Aruch Harav *ibid* quoting the *Levush*. See also Rambam *Hilchos Shabbos* 30:7
8. OC 250
9. See also Mishna Berura *ibid*
10. Shulchan Aruch Harav 242 Kuntres Acharon 4
11. See Likutei Sichos Volum 31 p 192 footnote 15
12. 242:1
13. 242:2
14. See Shaar Hakollel 17:25
15. 242:10
16. Vayeira section 2, 18
17. Maamarei Shabbasos 3:16
18. *ibid*
19. *Hilchos Deios*
20. *Parshas Behaalosecha*
21. *ibid*
22. YD siman 218
23. *ibid*
24. 242:2