



פרשת ראה
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HAKHEL IN THE PARSHA

One of the Parshios read by the king at Hakhel is the passage of Aser Te'aser in Parshas Re'eh. This passage discusses the Mitzvah of separating Maasros from the produce of the field, including Maaser Sheini and Maaser Ani.

The king would then skip to the Parsha of Vidui Maaser in Ki Savo, which shares a similar theme. (According to the Rambam, the king would not skip to Ki Savo, but would continue reading in order).

The Parshios at Hakhel, such as Devarim, Shema, Vehaya and the blessings and curses, were read because they serve to inspire the people in the fear of Heaven and observance of the Mitzvos. The passage of the king was read because Hakhel is a Mitzvah performed by the king.

But why were the passages of Maaser read?

Hakhel came immediately after the Shemittah year (which is also mentioned in Parshas Re'eh). During Shemittah, when no work was done in the field and the produce was Hefker, there was no separation of Terumah and Maaser. The Parshios of Maaser were read at Hakhel as the Jewish people would go back to their fields, so that they would not forget the laws of Maaser.



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When Pigs will Fly

One of the expressions in the rich and descriptive language of Yiddish is "Chazer Treif". It describes something which is absolutely and completely unkosher, not just regular Treif. The use of this description goes well beyond the kitchen and can be used to describe people, ideologies or anything completely beyond the pale.

But why does the Chazir (pig) get this distinction above all other non-kosher animals?

The Torah, in Parshas Shemini and Re'eh, identifies the two signs of a Kosher animal; מעלה גרה - it must chew its cud and מפרסת פרסה - it must have split hooves.

The Torah lists the four animals that possess only one of these two Simanei Kashrus. One Pasuk lists the Gamal, Arneves and Shafan (camel, hare and hyrax) which chew their cud but to not have split hooves. The Chazir, which has split hooves but does not chew its cud, is listed separately in the next verse.

Of these four, the status of the Chazir is a paradox. On one hand it is "Chazer-treif", the "most unkosher" of these animals. Yet, we find in Jewish tradition, that in the times of Moshiach, of all of the non-Kosher animals, only the Chazir will 'return' to become kosher. The Ohr Hachaim explains that the biology of the Chazir will physically change and it will chew its cud.

In a similar observation, the Tzemach Tzedek - the third Rebbe of Chabad, points out a contradiction.

In Kabbalah, the four animals that have one of the two signs of Kashrus, represent the four Kelipos - the forces of negativity that conceal and oppose G-dliness. The first three allude to the three absolutely impure Kelipos that cannot be redeemed. These are the source of everything that is forbidden and are represented by the Arneves, Shafan and Gamal.

The fourth Kelipah is Kelipas Nogah, literally a Kelipah that is light. Unlike the three absolutely impure Kelipos, Kelipas Nogah can be refined and elevated. Kelipas Nogah is the life-force of the 'neutral' mundane things in our world that are neither expressly holy or forbidden, that if used in the service of Hashem, can be elevated. Kelipas Nogah is represented by the Chazir. This suggests that the Chazir is not as "low" as the others.

At the same time, the Midrash teaches that these four animals represent the four Exiles of the Jewish people. The Gamal, Shafan and Arneves which chew their cud

but do not have split hooves, represent the Exiles of Bavel, Madai and Yavan. The Chazir represents Golus Edom, the Romans who destroyed the second Beis Hamikdash. It is recorded separately from the other animals because the Roman Exile is much longer than the others and equal to all of them.

So is the Chazir better or worse than the others?

One possible explanation is that whilst Kelipas Nogah is not as impure as the three impure Kelipos, it is the source from which the other Kelipos evolve and the entryway that leads a Jew astray into the depths of impurity. This is like the Chazir that outwardly projects its split hooves to deceive us that it is innocuous.

Drawing on these ideas, the Rebbe teaches us a profound lesson on the importance of action.

In a meta-halachic, philosophical understanding, chewing the cud and having split hooves are signs of Kashrus because they represent positive spiritual qualities. Chewing the cud to break-down and digest the food, represents the Avodah of Birurim, refinement, where one does not suffice with a singular refinement, but is constantly refining further and further.

The hoof represents action. In the Torah, this Siman is written in double-form מפרסת פרסה, describing a "doer" who is already thinking about their next step and next action and what more they can do.

Ideally, i.e. to be Kosher, one should have both qualities, to strive for personal, internal spiritual refinement and to be engaged outwardly in positive deeds and action. But if one only has one of these qualities, which is preferable?

The Shafan, Gamal and Arneves that chew their cud, represent a greater degree of refinement and elevation than the Chazir. But they lack the split hooves, representative of action and 'doing'.

A lack of internal refinement is Chazer Treif, but it can be transformed. What the Chazir lacks in internal refinement, it makes up for with its split hooves. Our sages teach *Hamaaseh Hu Haikar*, action is the main thing. Ultimately, with the arrival of Moshiach, the refinement will come and the Chazir will chew its cud. Without the motivation of action, the other three will not become pure. But with its split hooves and new-

Bloodspots in Eggs, Caged, Free-range and Fertilised

Rabbi Yonason Johnson

Checking eggs for bloodspots is one of the hallowed practises in the kosher kitchen. What exactly are we looking for and why?

In Parshas Re'eh we read about the Torah's prohibition on eating blood. Contrary to popular opinion, the problem of bloodspots on eggs has nothing to do with this prohibition of eating blood.

The concern is that the bloodspot is the beginning of the development of a chick. Until a chick hatches, it is Biblically forbidden as a Sheretz (crawling creatures forbidden by the Torah). This concern only applies to an egg that is fertilised.

A fertilised egg develops over a period of 21 days. It begins as a small bloodspot that starts to spread, ultimately developing into a chick. If the bloodspot is due to fertilisation, the entire egg is forbidden.

If the bloodspot is not due to the forming of a chick, the egg, including the blood itself, is permitted on the Biblical level. Blood from an egg is not forbidden, just like the blood of a fish. The Shulchan Aruch¹ rules that the bloodspot itself is nonetheless Rabbincally forbidden because of Maris Ayin. The bloodspot may be removed and the rest of the egg may be consumed.

How to tell if the bloodspot is due to fertilisation or not?

The Shulchan Aruch gives signs how to tell whether the bloodspot in an egg is indicative of fertilisation. According to the Mechaber, only a bloodspot found on the yolk is a sign of a fertilised egg. A bloodspot on the albumen (the white) does not signify a fertilised egg.

The Ram"o² brings an opinion stating the opposite, that egg on the albumen is problematic. He concludes that we must act stringently both ways. Whether the blood is found in the yolk or the albumen the entire egg must be discarded.

All of the above pertains to eggs which may have been fertilised by a rooster. In previous times when eggs were taken from farms where roosters and chickens freely roam, this Halacha concern was very real. The same would apply today when buying eggs directly from a farm or roadside farm-stall.

Caged or Battery Eggs

In the latter half of the previous century, eggs began to be produced 'industrially', where the chickens are kept in cages in large warehouse-type structures. In caged or battery egg farming there are no roosters present and therefore there is no possibility of fertilisation.

Since there is no concern of the eggs being fertilised, technically a bloodspot found in a caged egg may be removed and the rest of the egg may be used. It makes no difference where the bloodspot is found. This is a commonly held view by Poskim, including Harav Ovadiah Yosef³.

The Igros Moshe⁴ writes that nonetheless one should preserve the minhag of throwing out the entire egg. His logic is that eggs are not expensive and we don't want the Minhag to become forgotten. Furthermore there is always a slight chance that an egg from another source may have become mixed in.

Another Halachic difference would be in a case where a bloodspot was found in an egg after it was cooked.

If there is concern that the egg could have been fertilised, the food would be forbidden and the pot would need to be Kasherred. For a cage-egg, only the blood that was noticed would need to be discarded. The rest of the food would be fine and the Keilim would remain kosher.

The Free-Range Phenomenon

With growing influence from animal rights movements and a general move to more organic foods, free-range eggs are becoming widely available and more common and grocery stores are phasing-out the sale of 'cage-eggs'.

So how does this new development change our status quo in Halacha? The question really depends on what qualifies as a free-range egg.

In Australian Consumer Law, a free-range egg is defined where the chickens have "meaningful and regular access to the outdoors" and that outdoor stocking densities are no more than 10,000 birds per hectare.

Eggs produced in these conditions still do not have the possibility of being fertilised and would be treated the same as caged-eggs in Halacha.

But some supermarkets and organic stores sell completely free-range eggs. These come from

small boutique producers and farms where roosters and hens roam together. Usually this will be labelled on the box and will certainly be reflected in the price.

The presence of blood in these types of eggs is potentially due to fertilisation and will be subject to the stricter Halachos discussed above.

Fertilised Eggs for Sale

In a very recent phenomenon, one can even find fertilised eggs being sold for consumption. Whilst broadly refuted as myth, proponents claim that they are healthier and tastier. Eggs that are known to be fertilised are clearly forbidden.

Checking

In truth, for both caged and free-range eggs there is no technical Halachic requirement to check for blood. This is because the majority of eggs do not have blood. The Torah only requires us to check in for commonly occurring problems. The concern of bloodspots is even less today, as the eggs are screened to remove any that may have bloodspots before they are packaged.

Nonetheless the Shulchan Aruch rules that the established Minhag is to check eggs when cooking. However in cases where this would not be practical e.g. when no light is available or when boiling or roasting whole eggs, one need not check⁵.

For this reason we may also allow a child to check egg, provided that they understand what they are looking for.

Some Poskim are lenient and do not require checking when very large quantities are being used e.g. catering or factory production settings although accepted practise is to check all eggs.

Note: Only red or black spots present a problem in either type of egg. Brown or deep orange/yellow spots are kosher,

1. Y.D. 61:1 and 61"7
2. ibid
3. Yabia Omer 3 Y.D. 2
4. Igros Moshe Y.D. 1:36
5. Many Gedolei Yisroel would still check

hardboiled eggs for bloodspots. Rav Moshe Feinstein would still open hard-boiled eggs to check the surface of the yolk for bloodspots.