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Discovering How to Explore the Deeper Things of G-d

Shemini **Eighth** **Separate Means Holy**

Torah: **Lev. 9:1-11:47.** Right after the priests are consecrated and the fire of the L-rd inaugurates the first sacrifices of the presence, the two sons of Aaron, Nadab and Abihu, offer strange fire and perish for this violation of protocol. Strange fire (violation of divine protocol) was a subtle shift to try and control and contain the presence, instead of being guided by it. Their bodies are removed and the first atonement sacrifices are offered without Aaron eating them (not a violation, but a permission to acknowledge his mourning). Then comes one of the cornerstones of Jewish spirituality: Kosher.

Kosher determines what kinds of animals are safe to eat and forbids the consumption of carrion (meat from dead animals which are found and not hunted). Three subsequent stipulations were added, along with a mention of being rendered impure by touching dead animals (except in the normal process of butchering) and this is a link to Shabbat Parah - the red heifer.

First, there are five categories of animals mentioned: those which walk, those which crawl, those which slither, those which fly and those which swim. **(1)** If it walks, it must have spilt hooves, which are separate and it must chew the cud (it must finish digesting its food). Walking carnivores or scavengers are not to be eaten. **(2)** If it crawls, it must jump (have jumping legs). **(3)** If it slithers, step on it – no belly sliders are safe to eat. **(4)** If it flies it cannot either be a predator or a scavenger and it must have feathers and if it has feathers, it must fly. **(5)** If it swims, it must have scales and fins (cat fish, sturgeon, shark, whales, seals, squid and bottom feeders are not to be eaten – shrimp, crabs, lobsters, oysters).

Three Stipulations:

(1) You cannot trim off the fat from an offering before you offer it and you cannot eat the fat of an offering – it must be burned (fat was a useful fuel, lubricant and could not be extracted for alternate use).

(2) You cannot eat blood, because the life is in the blood. Therefore, before you eat an animal, it must be killed – you are forbidden from trying to consume its life energy. Meat without any blood in it is called dust. Gravy is kosher.

(3) You should never boil a kid in its mother's milk (to get the life force of the kid and the sexual power of the mother). It is not unkosher to mix meat and dairy, but it is forbidden to try and use food to get spiritual power – spiritual power comes from faith and obedience, not from any form of magic behaviour or weird rituals.

Touching a dead animal, made you unclean until the evening, as well as eating a dead animal (one you have not killed yourself and has not been butchered).

Getting rid of ritual uncleanness in the touching of dead animals is dealt with here, touching dead people is dealt with in Numbers 19:1-22, which follows.

As a nation about to go to war, Israel was given instructions concerning the handling of dead

bodies and the portion in Numbers begins with a surprising statement: ***this is what is ordained by the Law which the L-rd prescribes*** (Lev. 19:2). Our whole lives (attitudes and habits – conduct and priorities) should be seen as fodder in order for us to apply the principles of G-d's Holy Law in every area of our lives. The stipulation of the Red Heifer was given so that people could be purified from the defilement which comes from contact with death.

Parah Adamah means Adam's cow and when it was burned in a clean place outside the camp, its ashes were stored and added to clean water (taken from a natural, free running source) and used for purifying people who have come into contact with human corpses. They were unclean for seven days and needed to be purified on the third and seventh day. Contact with a dead animal made the person unclean until evening and there is no indication that the ashes of the red heifer were needed to purify someone who only had contact with a dead animal.

For us, as messianic believers, the red heifer also represents our Messiah, who was made in the likeness of Adam's sinful flesh and whose death (and resurrection) cleanses us from the defilement of sin. We are forgiven by His shed blood and we are released from defilement by His defeat of sin and defilement in His own life.

Holiness means to be separate from anything which can defile us and it means only eating food that is safe to eat, so that we do not defile ourselves by contact with that which is unclean. The discussion as to whether Gentile believers in our midst should also keep kosher really belongs to a yeshiva discussion – but all believers are called to be holy and separate from sin (idolatry and fornication). I will go as far as to say that all that we do and eat needs to be an application of our commitment to holiness and to keeping the temple of our body from being defiled.

Haftarah: **Ezek. 36:16-38.** G-d dispersed our people because of their evil conduct, in order to sanctify His name. Once we repent, He will gather us, restore us to the land, and purify us from all of our defilement and give us a new heart of flesh to replace the heart of stone and He will put His Spirit in us. We will blush because of our horrible conduct and we will again rebuild the ruins and flocks of men shall again inhabit the earth.

Brit Chadashah: **Heb. 7:1-19.** Our Messiah is a priest according to Melchizedek and not according to the Aaronic or symbolic priesthood. He exercises a superior priesthood with the power of everlasting life (note from the rabbi: the L-rd twice promised that a descendant of the House of Aaron would always stand before Him – our Messiah descends both from the House of David and from the House of Aaron. He stands before the L-rd on behalf of both houses, but He fulfils His everlasting ministry as part of the House of David, exercising the priesthood of Melchizedek).

(Julie pp. 111, 113) **Ps. 128** Jewish Hero: Nathan Torah Carrier: Bernie

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Passage: "Now, we have not received the spirit of the world, but we have received the Spirit which comes from G-d in order that we might know the things which G-d has given to us by His grace. And we speak of this, not using words which are taught by human wisdom, but taught by the Spirit, using a spiritual language for spiritual things. But the natural man does not accept the things of the Spirit, because they are foolishness for Him and he cannot know them because they are spiritually discerned. On the other hand,

the one who is spiritual, discerns (judges) all things, but he himself is not judged by anyone (by any lesser standard), because: who has known the mind of the L-rd in order to instruct Him, but we have the mind of Messiah." (I Cor. 2:12-16)

I am reading through first Corinthians in my devotions and have really appreciated the first three chapters because they outline the difference between authentic spirituality and the carnal foolishness of the world. Over the centuries, many strange and bizarre people have claimed to have new and deep revelations from G-d which are not available to ordinary, run of the mill people and they want to impose their special revelation upon us.

They forget the one singular source of all authentic revelation and spiritual knowledge – the written Word. You see there are two levels of that which is carnal or fleshly and we have to avoid them both. There is first carnal knowledge and then there is carnal behaviour. You see we live in a universe which does not explain either where it came from or where it is headed and even though we may discover how it is put together and the principles by which it functions, this knowledge gives no direct clues to as to either origins or purpose (direction).

Many different religions and mythologies have come up with some sophisticated and intricate explanations of how we got here and where we are going, but the weirdest and most far-fetched relate to those disciples of the big bang theory and the equally foolish myth of evolution. You see what we can know about how the universe works, cannot contradict what we believe about origins and purpose and apart from authentic, direct revelation there is no residue from creation which we can analyze to discover where everything came from.

Great philosophers and scientists hit a wall of silence and even others who claim to have discovered the great mysteries of how the universe was formed are really just making it up as they go along because the kind of knowledge which both groups are seeking for is not available from any other source than the authentic revelation of G-d's word.

Those who mock or who doubt want more information (actual detail) than the Scriptures provide us with because they will never be happy until they know exactly how and when and why G-d brought the universe into being and the explanation has to satisfy their preconceived notions which exclude a personal creator with a definite purpose in mind. Our universe testifies to the kind of creator which the Scriptures proclaim, but the hidden knowledge which mystics and scientists are searching for is carnal and not spiritual. This is because they do not want to express awe and wonder at how marvellous the universe is – they want to gain power and somehow get control over creation and over its Creator for their own ends.

I use Deut. 29:29 not because I do not want to explore the natural wonders of our universe, I use this passage because the natural wonders of our universe should cause us to express awe and gratitude and not just to gain us an edge which we can use to acquire health, wealth or power. Instead of wanting to gain control and to be in charge, the wonder of the universe should cause us to want to know the One who is in charge and to discover the meaning and purpose which He wants us to build into our lives.

The heavens declare the glory of G-d, as do all the natural sciences, because both every aspect of the cosmos and every aspect of our own construction is fearfully and wonderfully put together. We are told very little about how and when, as it concerns the timing of when creation happened

and how the universe functions, but it is in His Word that we discover with clarity who He is and how He wants us to live in response to all that He has done.

The new mythology which claims to be science is just a new form of an old carnal knowledge which wants to discover the secrets of the universe and market them for profit and personal gain. Any explanation about the origin and the direction of our universe which is not derived from the Scriptures and which does not accept the limits to knowledge placed on mankind by the Scriptures is a foolish form of carnal knowledge which can never be used to explore the deeper things of G-d.

There are no secrets we can dig up or discover because even if we did, these details would not tell us how to live or for which purposes we were created to fulfil. People in pursuit of these secrets consider what the Bible says to be foolish and they cannot discern any of the declared (revealed) purposes of G-d or find any ultimate meaning in the life which we are called to live. We should not be drawn into their folly and we should not be threatened by their accusations against our use of revelation to understand how the universe came to be and for what purpose all things were made.

The Scriptures are clear on this point – all things are held together by the Word of His power and exist for His glory and when we discover the depths of His love and grace in how He deals with an undeserving humanity, we can have no lesser response than to worship Him and to praise Him for all that He has done and for the wonder of who He is.

This brings me to the second characteristic of the carnality we are called to avoid – carnal behaviour. Carnal knowledge is the futile attempt to discover the secrets of the universe and somehow use them for profit and personal gain. Carnal behaviour an extension of carnal knowledge which says that all that I do, I do to please myself and can use anyone and anything for my advantage by whatever means I can – lying, cheating, beating, stealing, because my will and my desires are the highest purpose, the only purpose in life.

Authentic, biblical spirituality wants to learn how to live in such a way as to foster the fruit of the spirit and reflect the moral nature of G-d – full of mercy, compassion and love, ready to forgive and restore. Carnal behaviour fosters arguments and violence and opens the door to all the works of the flesh and Paul is trying to show us that this kind of carnal behaviour has no place among believers, any more than carnal knowledge does.

The Corinthian church was infected with both kinds of carnality and we should do our best to make sure that neither kind of carnality is allowed to take root in our midst. As a shul, we want to seek for the deeper things of G-d as we grow in knowledge of what the Scriptures teach and discover how to apply the principles the Bible teaches to every area of our lives.

Some people will seek for hidden secret knowledge and want to access mystical power to perform all kinds of miracles and gain all kinds of advantages. The blessing of the L-rd and the manifestation of His power will always come in response to His Word when communities have learned how to prevent both carnal knowledge and carnal behaviour from gaining control in their midst.

We accept the limits of the Scriptures when it comes to both the spiritual knowledge the L-rd makes available to us and to the kind of spiritual behaviour He wants us adopt as we learn to

walk together in harmony and peace.

The deeper things of G-d are not hidden mysteries which He wants to reveal to us so that we can become like powerful magicians, leaping tall buildings at a single bound.

The deeper things of G-d increase our desire to worship and praise the King and learn how to express our love for Him and for each other, as we learn to live in peace and harmony together in Him.

Anyone who claims special knowledge or special spiritual power must first demonstrate this power by manifesting the fruit of the Spirit and a strong desire to dig into the Word and learn more about praise and worship (and peace and love).

As we grow in the L-rd, we need to learn to discern when carnal knowledge is trying to take root in our midst to tell us things about creation and the universe which the Word does not support. We also need to learn to discern when carnal behaviour is trying to take control of our community through strife, immorality and disputes which set us against each other instead of showing us how to work things out and reconcile.

All things should lead us to praise and worship and to love and harmony (with forgiveness, restoration, and mercy). Paul was about to outline some radical discipline so that all forms of carnality were removed from the midst of a community which had an authentic desire for the deeper things of G-d, but which also had no real idea about what plunging into the depths of G-d meant.

Spiritual knowledge, which is biblical knowledge and spiritual behaviour, which is biblical behaviour, remain the only two true keys to delving into the true deeper things of G-d and an increase in praise and worship and love and harmony will always be the only true sign that an authentic pursuit of the true deeper things of G-d is actually underway.

What kind of knowledge are we pursuing? What kind of behaviour are we manifesting?

Until these two aspects of spirituality are both active and present, we will never be able to access the deeper things of G-d, no matter how many seminars we attend or how many books, or videos we swallow.

In our annual lead up to the season of Passover, may we grow in the authentic deeper things of G-d and never be taken in by any carnal counterfeits, no matter how good they try to look and no matter how powerful they try to act.

The carnal man will always mock the things of the Spirit, because he is looking for power and advantage instead of faith and obedience. The carnal man will try to dominate, separate, split and scatter, whereas the spiritual man will endeavour to heal, to love, make peace and seek joy.

We need to do our homework and understand the difference between carnal knowledge and spiritual knowledge and accept the limits which the scriptures place upon knowledge.

We need to do our homework and understand the difference between carnal behaviour and spiritual behaviour so that we do not bite and devour one another and play some sad version of "I'm the king of the castle, you're the dirty rascal".

The experience of Corinth can be ours, either in the form which the apostle Paul had to take apart, heal and remake or in the form which he describes as the goal and objective of all believers and all healthy spiritual communities.

Shabbat Parah teaches us the need for cleansing and for wholeness and we have to avoid all and any forms of spiritual defilement in our lives – carnal knowledge and carnal behaviour being the two biggest offenders.

I am going deep in the things of the L-rd. Our shul is geared to go deep into the deeper things of G-d.

Join us as we discern what this means and how to have it manifest abundantly in our midst. May your spiritual knowledge and your spiritual behaviour overcome all and any attempts for carnality to take up residence in our lives or in our shul.

Shabbat shalom.