

Dvar Torah for Parshat Shemini

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A rendering of Likutey Halakhot, Tolaim 1 (abridged)

“And every creeping thing that creeps on the earth shall be an abomination; it shall not be eaten” (Leviticus 11:41).

WARNING! YOU MAY NOT WANT TO READ THIS WHILE YOU ARE EATING.

Worms, insects and vermin manifest the essence of the Serpent's poison and filth. They are the poison and filth. This is why they have height, even as animals have. They have no feet. They crawl on the ground—"on your belly you will go" (Genesis 3:14). More than any other creature they are mired in the dirt, the Serpent's element. Their prohibition is so severe and they are forbidden a few times over because they are so disgusting and filthy, literally the Serpent's scum. They horribly infect the soul because they are the reverse of the soul's holiness.

Because they are so disgusting and vile worms and vermin find their way into every sort of food and drink. They imbed themselves deeply and stick and stick and stick. It's pure Serpent scum infesting all that's sacred. They spoil whatever they enter, bringing decay and rot wherever they visit, to anything insufficiently unprotected. They are the lowest form of that sleazy lowlife, the damn fool Evil Inclination, his poison and filth. He swarms and infests anything holy, weighing a person down with depression and lethargy. Look how slow and heavy their motion is, how little vitality they have!

You have to be very careful to not let them get to your soul. They way this Evil Inclination swarms, sticks and infests—"Good Lord! There's still more of them!"—makes it seem invincible. It's not so. With a bit of foresight and strategy, attentiveness and initiative, it can be easily defeated. It's weak, remember? At first, because they teem, it seems an impossible task, but just stay alert. The key is to nip them in the bud, to not let that first thought of laziness or apathy attach itself to your interest in a mitzvah, prayer or Torah study. One burst of energy to do—or think or say—a mitzvah will kill thousands and thousands of Evil Inclination vermin.

Ah, but what if your mind has already begun to spoil, if the

rot of despairing thoughts or the decay of lazy sentiment always make the first move, have become the “fruit” of your mind? REBUKE THEM! Don’t give them room to grow. Don’t give them any outward expression. In its incipient stage it’s much easier to change a bad thought into good one. The trick is to not let it fester.

The prophet Elisha was so holy a fly never came to his table (Berakhot 10b). To benefit from his holiness, learn from the Shunamite woman.

Make an “attic” for the tzaddik, a place for him in your mind. The more the refined, holy tzaddik occupies your mind, the less abominable, sleazy scummy vermin will.

agutn Shabbos!

Shabbat Shalom!

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