

To distinguish between the contaminated and the pure, and between the creature that may be eaten and the creature that may not be eaten. (11:47)

Being knowledgeable about Jewish law is not just a privilege; it is a critical obligation for every Jew to develop proficiency in *halachah*. This applies not only in the abstract, but in its practical application. It is at least incumbent upon us to be acutely aware of what is a *shailah*, *halachic* question. We are a nation of law; brooking no compromise to illiteracy. One must learn in order to know. *Rashi* explains the above *pasuk* as applying to making the delicate and often difficult decision, whereby we must distinguish between things that appear kosher, appear similar, but are not. Distinguishing between purity and contamination is, at times, difficult. Discerning the fraction of an inch which distinguishes between a kosher slaughter and an improper one demands meticulous, delicate insight and application of the law.

The difference between a proper slaughter, an animal whose windpipe was cut fifty-one percent, to one cut fifty percent is difficult. One percent is a miniscule measure. Yet, this one percent differentiates between kosher and non-kosher. An entire meal, an entire kitchen, can be rendered unkosher due to this “one” percent. This teaches us, explains **Horav Moshe Schwab, zl**, *Mashgiach* of Gateshead, the overriding significance of the smallest measure: a minute, a second. To the average secular mind, it is inconsequential. Not so to the cardiovascular surgeon; the neurosurgeon, who measures in digitized fractions of inches; the radiologist, whose therapy does not allow any deviation, whose laser must be perfectly aligned to the correct spot. Why should *avodas Hashem*, service to the Almighty, be any different?

A moment can be the difference between *chol*, weekday/mundane/profane, and *kodesh*, holy. One minute it is still Friday afternoon – the next, it is *Shabbos Kodesh*. One moment bread is permissible – the next it is *chametz*. One minute we may eat – the next, it is *Yom Kippur*. Likewise, there is a difference between the spiritual plateau of people. We look at two people, and we see that one is clearly righteous, while the other one is evil. If we were to be able to “split hairs,” to discern “digital” spiritual variances among people, we would see much more. How often does one throw up his hands in depression, declaring, “What will be from me? What value does my service have? I am not achieving much.” If, however, he could see the minute changes he has made and the incredible effect they have in the spiritual dimension, he would realize that he has truly succeeded. If we could see the effect of every *Amen*, *Yehei Shmei rabbah mevarach*, how we literally are elevated, transformed, spiritually modified to a completely new self – we would value every *Amen*. It is the subtle, little changes which we think are little and subtle that are neither.