

The camel, for it brings up its cud, but its hoof is not split, the hyrax, for it brings up its cud but its hoof is not split..., and the hare, for it brings up its cud and its hoof is not split. (11:4, 5, 6)

The *Torah* identifies those animals that have only one *siman*, sign, of *kashrus*. Interestingly, the *Torah* seems to employ the three tenses concerning the lack of split hooves in describing the animals: past, present, and future. The *Torah* says, "einanu mafris" -- "it does not have split hooves," in the present; "ufarsa lo yafris" -- "it will not have split hooves," the future; "ufarsa lo hifrisa" -- "it's hooves were never split," in the past. What is the significance of these three expressions? **Ma'ayanah shel Torah** cites one of the *gedolei ha'mussar*, who infer a noteworthy lesson from this *pasuk*. When one is about to declare an individual or an organization *tamei*, spiritually unclean, it is imperative that we take everything into account--not simply the present situation. All too often we are quick to pass judgment, criticize, and perceive the present negativity of an individual.

The *Torah* exhorts us to view people and issues in a total context. Let us look at the past! Do certain factors in one's past mitigate his present status? Is he merely a victim of circumstances, or did his past influence his present behavior? Even if the past looks bleak, if we cannot ameliorate his present activities by looking back at his past, then we should look to the future in order to ascertain whether one still exists. Perhaps sometime in the future, this individual will perform *teshuvah*, repentance. Before rendering a decision of *tumah*, we should confirm that all hope has been lost.

We may add that in dealing with circumstances involving a person's life, it is imperative that we be aware of all of the issues. Just because an individual did not do well in the past in a specific scenario--school, teacher, home, or community, we should not accept this as a definitive indication for the future. We should not smugly pass judgment upon a student simply because we have not been a successful teacher. Perhaps we are not the best teacher for that student. Others might have succeeded where we have failed.

This writer once heard a fascinating thought from **Horav N.Z. Dessler, Shlita**, who related it in the name of **Horav Leib Chasman, zl**. A carpenter works with wood. Consequently, during the course of the day, wood chips will fall to the ground. As he walks around his shop or work-site, the carpenter will be stepping upon wood. Thus, the glazier, who works with glass, will be stepping upon glass. A *mechanech*, *Torah* teacher, works with *Yiddishe neshamos*, Jewish souls. If he is not careful, he will step upon the *neshamos* that fall by the wayside! As transmitters of *Torah* from one generation to the next, we must reflect upon our awesome task and its overwhelming component responsibilities.