

These are the life forms that you may eat. (11:2)

Rashi explains that the word *chayah*, life, is related to the word *chaim*, life. Because *Klal Yisrael* are *davuk*, cleave, to Hashem, they are fit to be alive. He separated them from impurity and decreed commandments upon them in order to maintain their purity of soul, thus continuing their relationship with Hashem, which, consequently, grants them life. To put it simply: Our adherence to the laws of *kashrus* grants us “life” status. Our people have kept the laws of *kashrus* for thousands of years, ever since Hashem gave us the Torah. Hashem entered into a covenant with the Jewish People and gave them the Torah, which obligates each Jew to uphold and fulfill its commandments. The *kashrus* laws are part of that covenant. Kosher is covenantal food. *Kabbalah* teaches that non-kosher food impedes the soul’s spiritual potential. Last, as *Rashi* teaches: “We are alive if we keep kosher, since it makes us suitable to maintain our relationship with Hashem.” Thus, one who disregards the obligation to eat covenantal food severs his relationship with Hashem, the Source of life.

Bearing this in mind, when one attempts to reach out to our spiritually estranged brothers or sisters and finds that they simply do not “understand” what he/she is teaching, it could quite possibly be as a result of their “diet.” Obviously, I do not mean cholesterol, fat, etc. but non-kosher food prevents the soul from achieving its potential. We Jews are different. Our *neshamah* is delicate, and, as a result, it does not tolerate *devarim temaim*, impure/contaminated things entering our system.

Two *yeshivah* students would study together daily in one of the premier *yeshivos* in Bnei Brak. Chaim Leib and Efraim/Efi, spent every afternoon deeply ensconced in the sea of Torah. Suddenly, out of nowhere, Efi began to have difficulty understanding the *svaros*, logic, of the subject matter. Originally a fine *lamdan*, analytic Torah scholar, he seemed to slack off in his ability to understand – let alone initiate novellae. As the weeks passed, it became increasingly obvious that Efi had a problem, when he could not even navigate the *Talmud*. Since he was otherwise in perfect physical and emotional health, his cognitive skill seemingly unimpaired in anything other than Torah, Chaim Leib suggested that they go together to seek out the opinion of a spiritual advisor. Being in Bnei Brak, who better to speak with than *Horav Chaim Kanievsky, Shlita*?

Chaim Leib and Efraim visited *Rav Chaim*, and, after waiting in line for some time, they finally stood before the *gadol hador*, preeminent leader of the generation, and presented their dilemma. Chaim Leib asked the question, since Efi felt ill at ease asking *Rav Chaim* why he just could not understand a simple *svara*, logical statement. Chaim Leib described Efi’s total devotion to Torah, his diligence in study, and his G-d-fearing, ethical demeanor. What was the cause for his present spiritual remission?

Rav Chaim listened, took one look at Efi, and said, “Let your friend stop eating *bassar b’cholov*, meat and milk (which is a prohibited admixture), and he will feel fine.” Understandably, both Chaim Leib and Efi were floored. Efi was a *frum*, observant young man. The thought of him consuming

forbidden foods was preposterous. Nonetheless, *Rav* Chaim had spoken. He neither minced words, nor did he say anything that was not well thought-out and halachically supported. If *Rav* Chaim said that something was amiss, then something was amiss.

Efi denied any wrongdoing. Chaim Leib had difficulty believing him. After all, *Rav* Chaim had spoken. Back and forth went the accusations and denials, until finally Efi blurted out the truth: he had sinned, but it had not been his fault. He blamed Chaim Leib. “Me?” Chaim Leib screamed. “What did I do?” Efi now told his story (or, rather, his excuse), “One afternoon, I came to learn as usual, after having eaten a filling lunch in the *yeshivah*. That day the *yeshivah* had