

In the days of Moshiach, it will be normal for “our eyes of flesh to see G-d.” To achieve this, we must distinguish between the impure and pure, between “the animal that may be eaten and the animal that may not be eaten.” By making the distinction, by eating only kosher animals, we refine the physical. In so doing, we remove the coarseness that conceals G-dliness.

Of course, kashrus is only one of the mitzvos. But since the most common physical activity is eating, the laws of kosher animals provide the paradigm of how the world will be refined. These laws correspond to the dedication of Aaron and his sons. They have the same context: actions that accustom us to perceive G-dliness.

The Jewish people were given the mitzvos to refine the world, to bring it to a state of *Shemini*, the eighth, the days of Moshiach.

(Based on Likkutei Sichos 17:92-99)

IN LOVING MEMORY OF

Mrs. Alessa Bina bas Reb Leib ע"ה Wirberg

Passed away on 28 Nissan, 5778

ת. נ. צ. ב. ה.

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DEDICATED BY HER BROTHER-IN-LAW AND SISTER

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Reflections of Redemption

Essays on the Weekly Torah Reading and Moshiach,
Based on the talks of the
Lubavitcher Rebbe,
Rabbi Menachem M. Schneerson

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expressions of "the eighth." This shared affinity places them in the same Torah reading. It also overrides superficial similarities to other events, such as the seven-day dedication of the Tabernacle.

The seven day dedication was a preparation for the indwelling of the Divine Presence in the Tabernacle. This indwelling of the Divine Presence in the Tabernacle parallels and provides a foretaste of the revelation of G-dliness in the days of Moshiach. When the Divine Presence took up residence in the Tabernacle, so to speak, G-dliness, while still completely separated from creation and physicality, merged with elements of creation.

Aaron and his sons were consecrated on the eighth day, indicating the relation between kohanim and the days of Moshiach. The consecration of the kohanim completed the dedication of the Tabernacle, enabling and servicing the indwelling of the Divine Presence. Similarly, the Jewish people, a nation of kohanim, through mitzvos such as kashrus, bring down G-dliness as it will be revealed in the days of Moshiach. The Divine service of Aaron and his sons models that of the Jewish people. Most sacrifices were eaten. The sacrifice in the Tabernacle entailed the elevation of the animal; by eating only kosher, the Jewish people do the same in the world at large. Both forms of Divine service involve refining an animalistic nature, that within the human being and that of the world. Both involve self-discipline and self-sacrifice.

The world, seven, conceals the Divine Presence. *Shemini*, the eighth, reveals the Divine Light within the physical. Similarly, the impure beasts exist because the process of creation obscures the Divine Light. When we say, "I want what is not kosher, but what can I do? G-d has commanded me otherwise," we acknowledge the G-dliness that creates and sustains the world. The self-sacrifice of our mitzvos, controlling our desires and acting as G-d commanded us purifies the world. Eating kosher reveals the Divine Presence, as did the sacrifices in the Tabernacle.

The eighth reveals G-dliness in its fullest. Divine Light shines without limitations. The name of the Torah reading, *Shemini*, eighth, alludes to the true intent of creation, that the Infinite Divine Light should be drawn into and revealed within the finite physical realm. The world itself should be illuminated with G-dliness fully revealed. Creation itself, the world of seven, should be filled with G-dliness, a dimension higher than seven – the eighth.

The eighth, that which the seven days of creation lead to, is Moshiach. In many places throughout Rabbinic literature, the number eight alludes to Moshiach. For example, the harp of Moshiach will have eight strings, a clear allusion to the future transformation and elevation of existence.

In the days of Moshiach, perception will change. Now, we cannot discern the G-dliness that suffuses and sustains existence. But in the days of Moshiach, as Isaiah prophesies, “the glory of G-d will be revealed and all flesh will see.” The “glory of G-d” is categorically higher than creation – as the eighth day is categorically higher than the seven days. Nevertheless, in the days of Moshiach we will perceive G-dliness not as an extraordinary phenomenon, but as part of the physical world. Perceiving G-dliness will become a natural characteristic of our physical senses.

This clarifies the connection of the days of Moshiach with the number eight. The natural perception of G-dliness that will occur expresses the two dimensions mentioned earlier. On the one hand, the “glory of G-d” is categorically superior and differentiated from the seven days of creation. Nevertheless, in the days of Moshiach, we will intrinsically sense G-dliness, perceiving it naturally and tangibly.

Let’s return to our original observation: the concept of *Shemini* unites the consecration of the kohanim and the definition of kosher animals. Both the consecration and definition are bound to and

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by
Dovid Yisroel Ber Kaufmann

Shemini

KEEPING KOSHER BRINGS MOSHIACH

The name of a Torah reading reveals the inner connection of its contents. Both the dedication of the kohanim and the definition of kosher animals are connected by the concept of the “eighth.” Seven represents completion within the natural, physical world, while the “eighth” elevates that to a higher, spiritual realm. The “eighth” is associated with Moshiach.

Since the Torah is the “blueprint of the world,” everything in it teaches us something about the spiritual structure of creation. In particular, even the name of a Torah reading reveals some aspect of our Divine service, of how we are to transform the physical world into a dwelling place for G-dliness. The significance of the name applies to the whole Torah portion. It is the unifying factor and reveals the essence of that reading. At first glance, the beginning of a reading may *seem* to have more in common with the previous portion than with its own contents. But however diverse the inner content of a Torah reading, its name reveals the inner connection between all parts and aspects of a particular portion.

This week’s reading provides a good illustration. The name, *Shemini*, means “eighth.” The opening of the portion narrates the dedication of Aaron and his four sons as kohanim. This dedication took place after the seven-day ceremony consecrating the Tabernacle. The Torah reading begins, “On the eighth day.” Hence, it is called *Shemini*, eighth.

Later in the Torah reading, G-d defines the kosher animals, listing the requirements for beast, bird and fish. An animal must

have split hooves and chew its cud, a fish must have fins and scales, and all the non-kosher birds are enumerated.

At first glance, these two sections seem quite disparate. In fact, we might think the Torah reading should be structured differently. Why not put the narrative of dedicating the kohanim with the seven day consecration from the previous portion, and the laws of kashrus in a separate portion? After all, the Tabernacle’s consecration introduces and prepares the dedication of the kohanim. The seven days of consecration lead to the eighth day of dedication. On the other hand, what connection is there between dedicating the kohanim and defining the kosher animals?

Yet the fact that they are in the same Torah reading means they must share a common theme, express the same spiritual concept. The name of the Torah reading, *Shemini*, eighth, reveals that conceptual connection. In spiritual or mystical terms, the word “*Shemini*,” eighth, represents a stage categorically different from and superior to seven. Creation, the physical world, exists in terms of seven: the seven days of creation. Eight represents that which is higher than creation, that which is G-dly, beyond the boundaries of the world. The number seven refers to the G-dliness clothed within the world, concealed within the laws of nature. Eight refers to the Divine Light, higher than the process of concealment and materialization.

But *Shemini* means eighth. The eighth, while categorically different from one through seven, is not an independent number. It comes after and is connected to seven. The seven must precede and exist prior to the eighth. The eighth may be superior to the seven, but it depends on them. For this reason it can influence, complete and perfect the seven. More specifically, the seven days of creation become elevated and transformed, fulfill their purpose, when they culminate in an eighth day.