



## The Young Kashrut Observer Parshas Shmini

I gazed upon the child and the look in his eyes revealed spiritual intensity. I knew he was not just a child. We sat at a *Bris* ceremony on the last day of Pesach, Jews from all walks of society were in attendance.

He made a strong impression on me. I followed him with my gaze, and saw he was very careful about everything he ate. He asked the host: "Did you add paprika to this? Is there vinegar in this? Is the kitchen kosher for Pesach?" These were not mere questions, these issues really bothered him.

He made an exceptional impression. "What is your name?", I inquired. "Eliyahu", he answered shyly. Where do you study? "At the local school", he replied. I felt a sense of disappointment. He was almost of Bar Mitzvah age – why was he not studying Torah?

"Who is your father?" He pointed to a man wearing an awkward Kippah which looked as if it was placed on his head just for this occasion. I approached him, and he stood up. I asked him about his well being. I then told him that I believe that his son is in possession of a high spirit and should be in the world of Torah and sanctity. He responded loudly, stating: "Rabbi, this is so true." Everyone fell silent, and Moshe, the father, told his amazing story which had taken place thirteen years earlier.

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The delighted couple expected their first born. The doctors diagnosed he would suffer from various ailments. The mother thought of forgoing the entire ordeal, but the father Moshe tried to discourage her, but she seemed to have made her final decision.

"I approached **you**, Rabbi", Moshe told his astounded listeners. "You sat in our home, talked to us and did your best to console us. You further promised that if my wife began to keep Kosher our son would be born healthy, despite the doctors bleak predictions."

"Here he is Rabbi. He's yours. His name is Eliyahu, as you advised us to name him after Eliyahu the prophet. Your promise materialized."

At that moment it all came back to me. It was a Friday in the summer. I had received an urgent phone call from one of the town residents, asking to come immediately. It was an irregular call for Friday afternoon right before Shabbos. I sensed the emergency and came. It was a simple home of immigrants.

I heard the mother's weeping and had to do something. I remembered the words of the prophet Eliyahu: "Rather than one pray that one internalizes Torah, one should pray that he may not ingest non-Kosher foods."<sup>1</sup>

I had heard in my childhood from my rabbi, Rabbi Aryeh Levin, the explanation of these words. The food in the body is dispersed throughout the entire body via the bloodstream, which enables the limbs to operate properly. "The blood is the soul." When one ingests non-Kosher foods the blood that flows through his entire body is non-Kosher. This blood inhibits the ability to receive the Torah. Such blood influences an individual negatively and disables his capability to come closer to G-d.



In our weekly parsha we learn the laws of Kashrus. At the conclusion of the list of laws the Torah states the following: "For I am the Lord your G-d, and you shall sanctify yourselves and be holy, because I am holy, and you shall not defile yourselves through any creeping creature that crawls on the ground."<sup>2</sup> We learn that he who observes the laws of Kashrus is sanctified in an ethereal sanctity, "because I am holy."

The holy Ohr Hachayim explains: "If you sanctify yourselves I will sanctify you, ensuring that you do not eat anything impure. This is alluded to in the Talmud: "If the Holy One, Blessed be He, would not permit the animals owned by the righteous to sin in error, how much less the righteous themselves!"<sup>3</sup>. Tosafos explained that this statement relates to G-d protecting one from non-Kosher foods entering his body."

We have not only a promise regarding the foods – we have a further promise that those who observe the laws of Kashrus will know no harm. "And you shall not defile yourselves – I will safeguard you not only from things you refrain from, but I further assure you that no harm will come to you."

When I saw the broken family I knew the secret. I told her to observe the laws of Kashrus and in that merit no harm would come to her or her child.

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Eliyahu, named after Eliyahu Hanavi, grew to become a healthy and intelligent child, who was very much involved with the laws of Kashrus. He would check the parameters of everything he ate.

Eliyahu entered a Yeshiva immediately when the holiday came to an end.

<sup>1</sup> Tanah Debei Eliyahu, 26.

<sup>2</sup> Vayikra 11, 44.

<sup>3</sup> Tractate Chulin 5b.