



Parashat Shemini

27 Adar II 5784 – April 6, 2024

What is kosher all about? The term itself is used in secular vernacular as something correct or proper. With that in mind, not kosher means improper or incorrect. When it comes to food kosher it is a major commandment.

For fish to be kosher, they must have fins and scales. The Gemara teaches that any fish that has scales, of course, has fins. The question then is, why are both fins and scales mentioned? There seems to be a redundancy. Rashi comments that there aren't any redundancies in the Torah.

Rabbi Abahu responds that (what we see as a redundant word) “fins” is included to glorify the Torah. Similar to Rashi and Rabbi Yishmael, Rabbi Abahu is clear that there aren't any words in the Torah that do not belong because The Torah is the word of HaShem.

What can be learned from the word fins? Rabbi Schwab intimates that it would be connected to the end of days when the “fin” of a great sea creature would be used to slaughter a great ox. The “fin” is so sharp as to slaughter the great ox kosher and the righteous will eat of it. They will eat of the knowledge of HaShem basking in the wisdom of the secrets of creation. The word for “Fin” in the Torah hints at the future of deep insight in the Torah. It is this insight that will make the world a better place.

Good Shabbos!

Rabbi Nathan W. Langer