

Nature in the Parasha

By Rebbetzin Chana Bracha Siegelbaum

Parashat Shemini – The Pig of Return

Finding Balance between Internal and External Expression

People have told me that I'm more New York than New York. What does that mean? Being a non-American, I wasn't sure. I was told that I'm so direct with people, sometimes even blatant. I make clear what I feel about this and that, even if it may not please everyone. As a child, I was never able to lie, not even a small white lie crossed my lips, and I never cared to be politically correct. True, I had to pay for this dearly, for example, when I wrote about dogs in my commentary to *Parashat Bo*, unfortunately some people were really offended. So, next year around I will have to modify. Perhaps I inherited this character trait of speaking my mind and heart from my grandmother, may she rest in peace. She would always make clear if she didn't like the boy or girl-friend of any of my sisters or cousins. No wonder, some of them were afraid to introduce their prospective to her. The American culture teaches you to be smooth and maintain a pleasant façade. When you walk into any kind of shop, the salesclerk will kindly wish you, "Have a nice day!" Here in Israel, you will not hear this kind of shallow well wishing. A born and bred Israeli is called a 'Sabra' – that is a kind of cactus that has stinging thorns on the outside but is super sweet on the inside. Israelis can be all elbows and thorns on the outside, yet when you really need them, they will be there for you, and you get a taste of their inner sweetness. While obviously, we all agree that it is not right for mature adults to, for example, tell a woman at the bus stop that she smells and needs to take a shower. On the other hand, who can stand a people-pleaser whose speech is always sugarcoated? What is the correct balance according to the Torah between speaking our mind and expressing our true feelings and being careful to keep an agreeable façade in order to please people around us? The laws about pure and impure animals, in *Parashat Shemini* about the kosher and non-kosher beasts, allude to the proper balance between our internal and external characteristics. The external kosher sign of a mammal is that it needs to have split hooves, whereas for the internal kosher sign, it must chew its cud (*Vayikra* 11:3).

Learning Integrity from the Swine

The pig has only the external sign of a kosher animal but not the internal:

אֶת הַחֲזִיר כִּי מִפְּרִיס פְּרָסָה הוּא וְשִׁסֵּעַ שִׁסֵּעַ פְּרָסָה וְהוּא גֵרָה לֹא יִגַּר טִמְאָה הוּא לָכֵם: (ספר ויקרא יא:ז)

"Although the swine has split hooves and is cloven-footed, it doesn't chew the cud. It is impure to you" (*Vayikra* 11:7).

We can learn about the proper way of serving Hashem from the pig that displays its split hooves to make-believe that it is kosher. This can be compared to a person who pretends on the outside with a smooth tongue to love and endear certain people, while in truth his heart is not with them, like the characteristic of the swine, which shows outwardly that it is good and kosher. However, the fact that the pig doesn't chew its cud is like a person, who speaks lovingly on the outside, but actually doesn't feel any love in his heart and soul. Rather, he feels only hatred inside (*Sefer Bat Ayin, Parashat*



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Shemini). The Torah praises a person who's "inside matches his outside." Rabbi Gamliel declared that unless a student's outside reflects his inside he would not be permitted to enter the *Beit Midrash* (study hall) (*Babylonian Talmud, Berachot 28a*). Likewise, from the discredit of Yosef's brothers we may infer something to their credit: Although "they hated him so that they were unable to speak peaceably to him" (*Bereishit 37:4*), they did not speak one thing with their lips having another thing quite different in their heart (Rashi). We see from all this how vital it is, according to the Torah, to avoid flattering and put up a façade that doesn't match the feelings in our heart. *Sefer Bat Ayin* even explains, "This matter is what deters the redemption, for, "the son of David doesn't come until the pig has become purified," meaning when it will start to chew its cud, and the insides of its heart will match what it shows on the outside (*Sefer Bat Ayin, Parashat Shemini*).

When the Pig Starts to Chew its Cud

Will the nature of the pig ever change so that it will begin to chew its cud? Actually, the Midrash teaches us that it will, and that is what originally intrigued me about the swine and made me chose to focus in on the pig rather than any of the many other animals mentioned in *Parashat Shemini*. "Why is it called חֲזִיר/*chazir* – pig because in the future it will לְהַחְזִיר//*hachzir* – return the greatness and the kingdom" (*Midrash Kohelet Rabbah 1:28*). This change in the nature of the pig will reflect the general change in all of reality during the time of redemption when all evil will cease from the earth as it states, "The sinners will disappear from the earth and the wicked will be no more" (*Tehillim 104:35*). Hashem will circumcise our hearts to desire only good (*Devarim 30:6*), and our will will become 100% in tune with the Divine Will. At the time of redemption when the whole earth will be filled with knowledge of Hashem (*Yesha'yahu 11:9*), no one will think an evil thought about anyone else. At that time, our insides will completely match our outsides, and we will be able to express all our feelings and thoughts outwardly without ever offending a soul. Until then, we need to work on purifying our insides, on feeling positive feelings towards others, see their good points and remove bad character traits such as jealousy and pettiness. It is this work that Rabbi Gamliel required of his Yeshiva students in order to enter the Beit Midrash.

Esav and the Peel of the Swine

The numerical value of the Hebrew word for swine – חֲזִיר/*chazir* equals 225. This is the same exact *gematria* (numerical value) of the Hebrew word for peel – קְלִיפָה/*klipah*. Since the pig shows an outward purity but hides its true impure nature, it identifies itself with its outside peel. Moreover, in the Hebrew word חֲזִיר/*chazir* there are four letters. The two inner letters: *yud* and *zayin* have the same *gematria* as the Hebrew word טוב/*tov*, which means 'good.' These inner letters are hidden and swallowed up within the 'peel' of each of its two outer letters. Since its goodness is absorbed within it, it makes sense that the swine, which hides its inside, is associated with the Evil (hidden) Eye. The Evil Eye is caused by negative thoughts and feelings mainly jealousy. Therefore, Esav is compared to the swine (Rashi, *Bereishit 26:34*). He pretended to be holy on the outside to his father Yitzchak by asking super 'frum' questions such as "how do you tithe salt?" (*Midrash Tanchuma, Toldot 8*). Esav also had an Evil Eye, this is why he brought 400 men with him to attack Ya'acov (*Bereishit 33:1*), as 400 has the same numerical value as רַע עֵין/*ra ayin* – Evil Eye (*Benayahu ben Yehoyada, Baba Kama 82b*).

Pig or Prophet

When the pig will return to chew its cud and its outside will match its inside “this is the aspect of truth the aspect of the letter *vav*” (*Sefer Bat Ayin, Parashat Shemini*). *Vav* is called the letter of truth (*Zohar* 169a), because *vav* is the letter, which connects heaven and earth – the inside with the outside. Just as the letter *vav* means ‘and’ and is used to connect different part of a sentence, the truth can always be verified by the facts to which it is connected, like the Hebrew word for truth אֱמֶת/*Emet*, which includes the first, last and middle letter of the Hebrew alphabet. Through our dedication to truth, we may achieve deliverance from evil thoughts (Rav Tzaddok of Lublin, *P’ri Zaddik, Rosh Chodesh Iyar* 2). Meanwhile, while we still sometimes harbor negative feelings on the inside, we have to be a bit like the pig, showing a different façade on the outside than what we really feel within. We are not yet ready to be totally truthful, and tell others what we really feel about them, as this could be rude and offensive. We still need to apply a filter in order to be sensitive to the feelings of others. Therefore, we won’t be so direct as to, for example, tell our neighbor that she is fat. Children and people suffering from dementia do not have this filter. They will say exactly what is on their mind. Perhaps this is why the Talmud states:

“מיום שחרב בית המקדש ניטלה נבואה מן הנביאים וניתנה לשוטים ולתינוקות” (בבא בתרא יב, ב)
 “Since the Temple was destroyed, prophecy has been taken from prophets and given to fools and children” (*Babylonian Talmud, Baba Batra* 12b).

Prophets are called נְבִיאֵי אֱמֶת/*nevi’ei emet* – “prophets of truth” (*Sefer HaChinuch, Mitzvah* 510, the prayer introducing the *Haftorah* reading), as they are a channel bringing down the ultimate Divine Truth to the world. Perhaps the reason we no longer have prophesy is that we cannot be truthful and allow our inside to be expressed on the outside as long as the internal feelings of our heart have not yet been purified, and we still have a *yetzer hara* (negative impulse). However, fools and children who speak their truth without realizing the offending impact of their words, still have a bit of prophetic spirit because their inside and their outside match. Complete prophesy will eventually return to Israel when our Temple will be rebuilt (Rambam, *Sefer Hamitzvot* Root 14), and our heart will be circumcised and purified. In the future, when the righteousness of Israel will be revealed, and the evil and negative impulse will be abolished from the world, then the impurity will also be eradicated from the animals. “The swine will in the future return to be permissible” as it was before the giving of the Torah (Rav Tzaddok of Lublin, *Machshavot Charutz* 11). At that time, the purity of our inner thoughts will spiral down to become manifested in our exterior deed. Even today, if we dig deeply enough into our innerness we can find the spark of pristine purity – the spark of Hashem that He imbued within us, which remains eternally pure. May we be able to tune into this spark in ourselves and others and manifest our internal goodness into the external world!