



Yeshivat Har Etzion – Israel Koschitzky VBM Parsha Digest, Year VII, #31 Parashat Shemini – Yom HaAtzma'ut 5785

Selected and Adapted by Rabbi Dov Karoll

Dedicated in commemoration of the Tenth Yahrzeit of Moreinu Harav Aharon Lichtenstein zt”l on Rosh Chodesh Iyyar

Quote from the Rosh Yeshiva

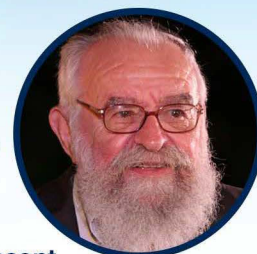
In one sense, the State was established in 5708 (1948), but in another sense it is re-established daily. Every single day God's handiwork is revealed anew. The continuing existence of “1 lamb among 70 wolves” – and today there are more than 70 – is a revelation of the work of God on a daily basis, renewed every morning. Ought we not be amazed by this and glorify in it?! “For thou, Lord, hast made me through thy work” (Tehillim 92:5). –Harav Aharon Lichtenstein zt”l

Translated from <https://etzion.org.il/he/node/27911> (translation from *Seeking His Presence*, p. 235)

Yom HaAtzma'ut: Sichot What Kind of Redemption Does Israel Represent?

Based on a sicha by Harav Yehuda Amital zt”l

Based on: <https://etzion.org.il/en/holidays/yom-haatzmaut/what-kind-redemption-does-israel-represent>



A. JOY AND TREPIDATION

“You shall say on that day: I will praise You, O God; although You were angry with me, Your anger is turned back and You comfort me” (Yeshayahu 12:1). We experienced this verse on the day the State of Israel was declared. The fifth of Iyar 5708 (May 14, 1948), was a day of God's anger, for we received the bitter news of the fall of Gush Etzion and the many victims who were slaughtered here. But it was also a day of God “turning back” and “comforting me.”

Although intellectually I understand the importance of our celebration today [in 2005], it is psychologically and emotionally difficult for me to rejoice. One reason for this difficulty concerns upcoming events in Gush Katif. One of the 48 traits by virtue of which the Torah is acquired is “sharing the yoke with one's neighbor.” In other words, one must not let the other person bear his burden alone; one must not stand by and observe from the side. Rather, one must feel existential partnership with his brother who is in distress, and help share his burden.

Along with my anxiety for the residents of Gush Katif, I also have grave concerns, which I shall not conceal, regarding the security situation following the Disengagement, and regarding the political results of the Disengagement process as well. My personal opinion is that until the coming of the Messiah, we will have problems with the Arab world; the question is just at what level.

Beyond these problems, there is another factor that clouds my joy: we are part of Religious Zionism, a movement that is in crisis.

For these reasons, it is difficult for me to speak. Yet it is important to emphasize that my difficulty is only emotional. From an ideological perspective, I have no problem rejoicing on Yom HaAtzma'ut this year. I danced and rejoiced on the fifth of Iyar 5708, when the State was declared without Gush Katif, without Jaffa, without Nahariya, and without the Old City of Jerusalem – so should I not rejoice today? We cannot deny that the current period is a bitter one, but then, too – when we heard about the fall of Gush Etzion – it was bitter, and nevertheless we rejoiced! Therefore the problem is more emotional than substantial.

This year we are hearing, for the first time, some voices from within the Religious Zionist camp calling on us not to celebrate Yom HaAtzma'ut and not to recite Hallel. Although several leading rabbis have denounced this call, the very fact that rabbis have come out with a statement that “We have no portion and inheritance in... Israel” must give rise to very serious questions. What is the origin of this confusion, which has completely reversed the attitude of many people towards the State?

It seems to me that the main problem stems from the fact that among various groups, doubts have begun to arise concerning the expression, “reishit tzemichat ge’ulateinu, the beginning of the flowering of our redemption.” What is the source of these doubts? They arise from the philosophy of a great man, Rav Zvi Yehuda ha-Kohen Kook zt”l, and principally from the philosophy of his students. Since I believe that most of Religious Zionism does not identify with the philosophy that I shall discuss shortly, and I count myself among that majority, I feel a need to express my opinion and to serve as their mouthpiece. I hope that you will listen to what I have to say, although this is not an opinion that is usually voiced.

B. THE SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STATE

In fact, the concept of the “beginning of the redemption” (atchalta de-geula) was spoken about long before the establishment of the State. The students of the Vilna Gaon and the students of the Ba’al Shem Tov who made aliya to Eretz Yisrael decided that they were living at the time of the “beginning of the redemption.” The son-in-law of R. Yehoshua of Kutno brought a letter from Rav Eliyahu Guttmacher, a leading disciple of R. Akiva Eiger, written in the year 5634 (1874), in which he asserts that if 130 families would be working the land in Eretz Yisrael, this would be considered the “beginning of the redemption.”

Before the founding of the State, Rav Avraham Yitzchak ha-Kohen Kook zt”l decided that it was the time of the “beginning of the redemption” on the basis of the well-known Gemara (Sanhedrin 98a):

Rabbi Abba said: There is no more revealed sign of the redemption than that which is written: “And you, O mountains of Israel – you shall give forth your branches and bear fruit for My nation, Israel” (Yechezkel 36:8).

His son, Rav Zvi Yehuda, also spoke about this – but in his time the State was already established. And so, the question arose: what was so special about the establishment of the State? If the land began to give its fruit to the Nation of Israel before the creation of the State, and the “beginning of the redemption” was already upon us, then what great change came about with the State’s birth?

The students of Rav Zvi Yehuda had an answer to this question: indeed, the establishment of the State brought about something new. In light of the Ramban’s teaching in his comments on Rambam’s Sefer Ha-mitzvot, they explained that the “beginning of the redemption” refers not to the Jewish nation dwelling in the Land of Israel, but rather to the absolute sovereignty of the Jewish nation over all parts of Eretz Yisrael. I heard this for the first time many years ago, and I was astounded to discover that they believed that a major component of the significance of the State was that it facilitated the fulfillment of the command to dwell in the Land of Israel and to conquer it, in accordance with the teaching of the Ramban. According to this understanding, if a major aspect of the purpose of the State is the fulfillment of the command to exercise sovereignty over Eretz Yisrael, then a State that hands over territories betrays its purpose, and we must question whether it is still “the beginning of the flowering of our redemption.” According to this view, the State is invested with significance by virtue of its exercising sovereignty over all areas of the land. To my mind, this is the source of the doubts among the Religious Zionist public today concerning the significance of the State.

I do not believe in this approach. I can testify about myself that I recited the blessing of “She’hechiyanu” and I danced on the 29th of November 1947, at Be’erot Yitzchak, even though the U.N. had partitioned the land, and likewise in 1948. Our feeling was one of elation; it was as though there was an intoxicating drug in the air – Israeli independence. We weren’t rejoicing because of what the Ramban taught, but rather because of the fulfillment of Herzl’s vision. At that time, Rav Zvi Yehuda recounted: “I could not go out and participate in the festivities... for indeed, God’s word – ‘They have divided My land’ (Yoel 4:2) – was being fulfilled... In that condition – my whole body shaken, wounded all over, cut up into pieces – I could not rejoice” (excerpt from “Eretz Ha-Zvi”). We – the simple Jews among whom I regard myself – weren’t thinking about the Ramban. We knew that there was Israeli independence, Jewish sovereignty in our land – and we rejoiced over that.

C. JEWISH SOVEREIGNTY

I didn’t invent this approach. In the previous generation, there were Rabbis who spoke about the “beginning of the redemption,” the “revealed end,” the “footsteps of the Messiah” – & a few years later came the greatest Holocaust that ever happened in all of Jewish history. Anyone who thought that he was witnessing signs of the complete redemption was proved wrong in the Holocaust.

When the State was established, some of the greatest Torah Sages in the world – some of whom I was fortunate to know – declared that although we are not living in the time of the “revealed end” of the “footsteps of the Mashiach,” there is still great importance to the political freedom of establishing a State. Rambam writes that 1 reason for the festival of Chanuka is that “Jewish sovereignty was restored for more than 200 years” during the period of the Chashmonaim (Hil. Chanuka 3:1) – even though we know the low moral standing of the many members of the Hasmonean dynasty. The Mishna teaches that on Yom Kippur, the Kohen Gadol

would recite 8 blessings, 1 of which is “Upon Israel” (Yoma 68b). The Gemara explains that this blessing is “Upon Your nation, Israel, who need to be saved” (70a). Rambam elaborates: “Its theme is that God should save Israel, & not let them be left without a king” (Hil. Avodat Yom Kippur 3:11). Again, while we know what type of kings ruled during the Second Temple period, & we know how deficient was their moral and religious level, Rambam nevertheless asserts that the “salvation of Israel” is expressed in sovereignty, royalty.

For these reasons, the Chief Rabbis, including Rav Herzog zt”l, ruled that the establishment of the State of Israel is “the beginning of the flowering of our redemption.” A situation in which Am Yisrael has “a king” (sovereignty) and freedom is a harbinger of redemption. We have no previous accounts; following the Holocaust, any previous accounts are hidden away. We do not know what is supposed to happen, what is destined to take place, but there is no doubt that the establishment of the State of Israel is of great significance in its own right.

After the Oslo Accords, when Israel transferred a few cities to Palestinian control, I participated in a panel discussion in New York with some other Israeli rabbis. One question raised was whether it was still possible to speak of the “beginning of the flowering of our redemption,” following the handing over of territories to the Palestinians. One speaker answered that if Rav Kook spoke about the “beginning of the flowering of our redemption” in his time, we can certainly speak in such terms in our own times. In response, I said that, with all due respect to the teachings of Rav Kook, a Holocaust had happened in the meantime. Hence, I would not talk about drawing inferences from Rav Kook’s time to ours. Rather, I would say that if we believed in “the beginning of the flowering of our redemption” in 1948, then we could certainly still use this term after the Oslo Accords.

When Rav Herzog spoke of “the beginning of the flowering of our redemption,” he did not mean the messianic redemption; rather, he meant the simple redemption consisting of Jewish sovereignty in the land. The Chatam Sofer (Parashat Shoftim, p. 37) comments that several times during the course of history, the Holy One wanted to redeem Israel with an incomplete redemption – as during the period of the Second Temple – but the nation of Israel refused, for we have no desire for an incomplete redemption, without Mashiach. The Chatam Sofer wrote this prior to the Holocaust, but after that terrible period during which people sailed aimlessly in boats, with no home, we understand that there was never any chillul Ha-Shem – desecration of God’s Name – like the Holocaust, nor any kiddush Ha-Shem – sanctification of God’s Name – like the establishment of the State. There can be no doubt that praise and thanks should be offered for the establishment of the State, even if it is not a messianic redemption, the “revealed end.”

Indeed, in 1948 we did not speak of the Mashiach. We prayed for malkhut Yisrael, and sufficed with sovereignty comparable to that of the Second Temple period. There is no doubt that we attained at least that much. During Ezra’s time, very few people came back to Israel; in our time – thank God, we have reached 5-6 million [as of 2005; now over 7 -ed.]. We never had such numbers here!

The messianic feeling, the sense of the “revealed end,” started after the Six-Day War. In realistic terms, it was difficult to understand how we had managed to defeat 7 Arab armies with such ease. Admittedly, there were Torah giants who thought otherwise. In his typically resolute fashion, Rav Shlomo Goren z”l said immediately after the war, in a speech at Mossad ha-Rav Kook, that all the events of that war were not miraculous. As proof, he brought the verse, “And it was, when Pharaoh sent out the nation, that God did not lead them by way of the land of the Philistines... for God said, ‘Lest the nation regret [leaving] when they see war [approaching], and return to Egypt’” (Shemot 13:17). Could God then not perform miracles for Israel in the war to conquer the land, as He did for them in Egypt? What Rav Goren wanted to say was that this was proof that wars of conquest of Eretz Yisrael are not carried out through miracles, but rather through human means. Hence, since the Six-Day War was a war for Eretz Yisrael, it could not be miraculous. Admittedly, this approach remains an uncommon one. For a large sector of the public, the Six-Day War actually strengthened the view that the significance of the State of Israel is bound up with ruling over Eretz Yisrael, rather than with the actual fact of Jewish sovereignty, autonomy and freedom. These people regarded the war as a revealed miracle, and as proof of the imminent messianic redemption.

D. MAINTAINING THE JEWISH MAJORITY

At the same time, after the Six-Day War, some Jews – both religious and secular – stood up and said that the partition of the land that had been forced upon us by the U.N. during the British mandate should be nullified. One of these people was Prof. Yisrael Eldad, who said to me: “We’re finished with the partition; let’s get back to the Greater Land of Israel.”

These people began to speak about a vision of the complete Eretz Yisrael, but they didn’t notice the Arabs living within the borders of that “Whole Land of Israel.” At the time of the establishment of the State, the Arab population within the borders of the country was relatively small, & there was a chance that the Jewish nation would remain the majority for the long term. Today, after our conquest of Judea, Samaria & Gaza, there arises a risk that the State will not remain Jewish. When the government agreed that marriage & divorce

would be handled in this country in accordance with religious principles, and that public institutions would observe kashrut, this flowed from the sense that this is a Jewish country. But in a Jewish country there must be a Jewish majority, and this is diminishing with time.

For this reason, since the Six-Day War, no government of Israel has dreamed of annexing Judea, Samaria and Gaza as part of the State of Israel. We annexed the Golan Heights, where there are no Arabs, and Jerusalem – based on the view that we could deal with the number of Arabs living there. But annexing Judea, Samaria and Gaza? How long could we hold on without giving the Arabs the right to vote? Even those on the far left admit that the Arabs should not be granted the “right of return,” for this would destroy the Jewishness of the State.

Two approaches were proposed to deal with the problem of how to retain the entire land despite the demographic issue. One, led by Rechavam Ze’evi Hy”d and fundamentally secular, claimed that the solution was a “transfer” of the Arabs. Aside from the moral problem involved, no Arab state agrees to take in these Arabs. Still, the “transfer” approach arose from logical reasoning: if we want to annex the entire Eretz Yisrael, we must find a solution to the demographic problem.

A second approach, whose proponents included religious people with a zealous vision of a Greater Eretz Yisrael, claimed that the solution would be found with the coming of the Mashiach, and since the Mashiach is already knocking at the door, there is no need to worry about the pragmatic, actual ramifications of our actions. This messianic thinking – which perceived the Mashiach as already lurking somewhere in the Jerusalem mountains and soon to be revealed to us – is what led to this view.

To my sorrow, I have not merited Divine inspiration. I have never met a prophet based on all the Rambam’s identifying criteria, who told me that the Mashiach is already on the way. When we built the Yeshiva, the architect who thought up the shape of the beit midrash planned it without windows. I told her about the tzaddik in whose town a shofar blast was once heard, and the whole community thought that the Mashiach had arrived. The tzaddik poked his nose out of the window, sniffed gently, and said: “No. When the Mashiach comes, it will be possible to sense it in the air.” A beit midrash needs windows, in order to be able to sense when the Mashiach is coming. If I haven’t yet sensed the Mashiach’s footsteps – it is a sign that the Mashiach hasn’t yet come...

In any event, we must rejoice today just as we rejoiced in 1948. We must recognize that just as the Holocaust was a gargantuan chillul Ha-Shem, so the State of Israel is the greatest kiddush Ha-Shem. We are troubled by giving away parts of Eretz Yisrael, but let us look at what the Holy One has done for us! We have an independent State, we are a prosperous country, and we are militarily strong. True, there is poverty and there are plenty of other problems, but it is difficult to conceive of the magnitude of the change that has been wrought in our condition over the past 60 years.

We are permitted to rejoice wholeheartedly on Yom HaAtzma’ut. Despite our pain, we must follow Rashi’s words, “At a time of mourning – one mourns; at a time of joy – one rejoices” (Bereishit 6:6). This is “a time of joy,” and therefore let us declare without reservation, “This day – God has made; let us celebrate and rejoice in it!” (Tehillim 118:24).

[This sicha was delivered on Yom HaAtzma’ut 5765 (2005). It was adapted by Shaul Barth with Reuven Ziegler and translated by Kaeren Fish.]

Parashat Shemini

The Laws of Kashrut (Part 1)

By Rav Michael Hattin

Based on: <https://etzion.org.il/en/tanakh/torah/sefer-vayikra/parashat-shemini/shemini-laws-kashrut-1>



INTRODUCTION

Parashat Shemini begins with the service of the Eighth Day that marks the completion of the week-long sacrificial ceremonies associated with the dedication of the Mishkan, or Tabernacle. The unfortunate and untimely demise of Aharon’s 2 eldest sons, who presented an unauthorized offering of incense before God, is then described, followed by a Divine injunction proscribing the consumption of intoxicants by the ministering priests. Some details of sacrificial law, made pertinent by Aharon’s state of mourning, are then spelled out, before the Torah moves on to introduce the laws of permitted animals, birds, and fish (11:1-47).

OBSERVING KASHRUT IRRESPECTIVE OF ITS RATIONALE

These latter laws, known in the vernacular as the rules of “Kashrut,” have henceforth occupied a central position in Jewish ritual observance and have become to this day a defining mark of a traditional Jewish home. Surprisingly, though, the text of the Torah itself provides scant if any rationale for the performance of these laws, and is content to simply state them as a Divine fiat. This week, we will consider some attempts of the early commentaries to comprehend these provisions. But as we do so, we must bear in mind the

following sensible caveat: though many streams in our tradition encourage the exercise of human intelligence and wisdom in the worthy attempt to plumb the profundity of the Divine laws of the Torah, none of them make one's OBSERVANCE of the laws conditional upon one's UNDERSTANDING of the laws. Observance is a function of one's spiritual commitment to God's commands that ultimately stands independent of any humanly assigned rational content. In other words, I observe Kashrut – though I may legitimately seek and perhaps even be enjoined to understand that observance – because the Torah demands it, not because I have ascertained through the exercise of my mind that it is reasonable.

When one discusses the rationale of the mitzvot, one must begin with the Rambam. Perhaps more than any other scholar, the Rambam stressed the central role of human reason in forging a connection with the Creator and in the attendant fostering of one's spiritual development. He also went farther than any other traditional thinker in applying the logic of the mind to the matter of the mitzvot, sometimes arriving at conclusions that were not only novel but quite often controversial. His noble attempt to wed the Torah's provisions with classic Aristotelian constructs aroused admiration in some Jewish circles but enmity and antipathy in others. Nevertheless, in retrospect, no serious discussion of the rationale of the mitzvot can begin from any other point of reference, because the influence of the Rambam on all subsequent discussion was profound. All those that came after him either adopted and amplified his theories or else consciously reacted against and rejected them.

A BRIEF OUTLINE

Before we consider the words of the Rambam, let us briefly outline the laws of forbidden foods as the Torah describes. We may divide the matter of forbidden foods into a few sub-categories. The land animals, in order to be fit for consumption, must possess 2 qualities: they must have wholly split hooves and they must chew their cud. These 2 provisions effectively limit the matter to herbivores, for they alone have the complex, multi-chambered stomach that allows for rumination. There are, however, 4 notable exceptions to this rule, 4 creatures that the Torah singles out as possessing 1 but not both of these qualities and hence forbidden for consumption: the camel, rock badger and hare that chew their cud but do not possess split hooves, and the pig that possesses split hooves but does not chew its cud.

With respect to sea creatures, only those that have fins and scales may be eaten. This effectively limits the matter to certain species of fish and excludes all of the shelled creatures, the aquatic mammals, and the cartilaginous species such as sharks.

Concerning the birds, the Torah spells out 20 specific kinds that may not be consumed. The common denominator of them all is that they are birds of prey. Based upon this list, the Oral Tradition attempted to provide a series of features that could be said to characterize the permitted kosher birds, namely that they possess an extra talon above the others, a crop, and a gizzard whose skin can be easily peeled off (Mishna Chullin 3:6).

As for the insects, while the Torah permits a limited number of species from the grasshopper/locust family, they are generally eschewed by most Jews due to uncertainties concerning their proper identification.

THE FORMULATION OF THE RAMBAM

It is in his philosophic Guide of the Perplexed that the Rambam sets out his views concerning Kashrut (3:46):

I would say that all of those things that the Torah forbade us to consume are nutritionally harmful. Only the pig and the fats may be imagined to not be detrimental, but this is not so. The flesh of the pig is more humid than is beneficial and contains much superfluous matter. But even more than that, the Torah abhorred its consumption because of its great filth and because it feeds on filthy things. You are well aware of the Torah's strictness concerning the visibility of filth even during the period of the wilderness encampments (see Devarim 23:10-15), all the more so within the cities. If we would raise pigs for consumption, then the marketplaces and even the houses would become filthier than the latrine, as may be seen at present in the lands of the Franks. You are well aware of the Sages' statement that "the snout of the pig is like walking excrement." Similarly, the fat of the intestines is overfilling and difficult to digest, producing cold and thick blood. It is therefore much better to burn it (upon the altar). Blood on the one hand and carcasses of dead animals on the other, are difficult to digest and nutritionally poor, and it is well known that a beast possessing a congenital defect is akin to a carcass.

Therefore, concerning the signs that mark a permitted animal – chewing the cud and split hooves for the land animals, and fins and scales for the fish – REALIZE THAT THEIR EXISTENCE IS NOT THE REASON FOR THEIR PERMITTED STATUS, NOR THEIR ABSENCE THE REASON FOR THEIR FORBIDDEN STATUS. RATHER, THEY ARE SIGNS BY WHICH ONE MAY DISTINGUISH THE HEALTHY SPECIES FROM THE UNHEALTHY SPECIES.

THE CENTRALITY OF PHYSICAL HEALTH

In essence, Rambam understands that the rationale that stands behind the Torah's involved legislation concerning consumption is the physical health of the human body. Many foods are wholesome, some are harmful, but all of the various species proscribed by the Torah are nutritionally poor and deleterious to human health. The various signs that the Torah provides that effectively allow us to separate those species that we may eat from those that we may not, are just that: signs. There are no magic qualities associated with split hooves and rumination or else fins and scales, as if creatures possessed of these things are permitted to us BECAUSE of them. Actually, these features are meant to provide us with a convenient mechanism for readily recognizing those species that are good for us physically, while avoiding those creatures whose consumption is liable to bring us harm.

The advantages of the Rambam's thesis are apparent. First, it is eminently reasonable. Living as we do in health-conscious times, who could argue that physical health is an important matter that deserves Divine attention as much as anything else? After all, in the case of most people only a healthy body can sustain and nurture a healthy mind. As the Rambam himself points out elsewhere: "when a person is preoccupied in this world with illness, warfare, or hunger, then he cannot devote himself to the acquisition of wisdom and to the performance of the mitzvot by which one merits life everlasting in the world to come" (Hilkhos Teshuva 9:1).

Second of all, Rambam's theory can explain the entire gamut of Kashrut laws with a single, underlying principle. Whether we are speaking of the non-kosher species of animals, fish and birds, whether we are addressing some constituents of the permitted animal species such as their blood and their intestinal fat, or whether we are considering even kosher animals in various states of decline ("tereifa" – congenital defect) or decay ("neveila" – carcass), the rationale for the proscription of all of them is the same: they are unhealthy and therefore injurious to our physical well-being.

At the same time, the primary drawback of the Rambam's explanation is a function of this very reasonableness. If it is the case that the non-kosher species are curtailed because they are deleterious to our physical health, then such effects ought to be easily demonstrable in the laboratory. It should be obvious to all and empirically verifiable that those individuals that are attentive to the dictates of Kashrut are physically healthier than those that are not, yet as we all know SUCH IS NOT NECESSARILY THE CASE. Numerous are those that do not subscribe to the constraints of Kashrut and yet are physically healthy, active and fit. Surely as well there are those who are punctilious in their observance of these laws and yet suffer from physical infirmity and illness.

RESCUING THE RAMBAM

It is the Sefer HaChinukh, a champion of reason and of the Rambam, that comes to the latter's defense. Discussing the matter from a perspective that was clearly drawn from the Rambam's theory, the Sefer HaChinukh relates (Mitzva #73):

At the foundation of this mitzva is to realize that the body is an instrument for the soul, for through its agency the soul can execute its mission, & in its absence its objective can never be completed. After all, truly the soul entered the body for its benefit & not for its detriment, for God does good to all...if the body is deficient in any respect, then the ability of the mind to fulfill its task is curtailed to a corresponding degree, & therefore the Torah distanced us from all things that bring the body ruin. We may claim that, on a simple approach, this is the underlying rationale for all of the forbidden foods. But if there are some things among these laws whose detrimental effects are not known to us or to the physicians, do not be perturbed, FOR THE FAITHFUL PHYSICIAN WHO FORBADE THEM TO US IS WISER THAN EITHER US OR THEM. HOW FOOLISH IS THE ONE WHO THINKS THAT A THING'S INJURIOUS OR BENEFICIAL QUALITIES ARE A FUNCTION SOLELY OF WHAT HE UNDERSTANDS ABOUT THEM!

In other words, the fact that Rambam's thesis may not be demonstrable need not unnerve us. If THE Physician (i.e., God) indicates to us that certain foods are injurious to our health, then we can rely on His assessment more than on that of any mortal doctor. After all, God's laws are given from His absolute perspective. Our human view, though it may be sharply focused by great & perceptive minds, cannot hope to match the Divine Mind for acuity. As an illustration of this premise, one need not look any farther than the various remedies, cures & diets that were once regarded by medical science as healthy & yet now may be considered to be otherwise. Hasn't the ubiquitous Food Pyramid, for example, evolved over the decades, not only as a function of the various agricultural lobbies that underwrote its development but also as a function of updated data? It was not that the opinion of the medical practitioners abruptly and inexplicably changed, but rather that new information and knowledge brought new insight and understanding to the discussion.

We will continue by considering the views of those who disputed the Rambam, seeking the meaning of these laws elsewhere. We will then consider the matter from a more general perspective that should help us arrive at a more profound appreciation of Kashrut.

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