



# A Taste of Torah

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## פרשת שמיני תשפ"ב

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In Parshat Shmini we find the Torah discussing the various types of creatures that we are permitted to eat and those we are not. In פרק י"א פסוק מ"ג it says "do not make your soul disgusting (by eating all these types of forbidden foods) and do not become impure with them, using the word "וְנִטְמָתָם" which is missing an aleph. The Gemara comments in מסכת יומא דף לט, that this apparent misspelled word is really coming to teach us a very important idea. It is hinting to us that we shouldn't read the Passuk that we will become impure if we consume foods which are not kosher, rather we should read the word without the Aleph, which means clogged up. The Passuk is really teaching us someone who eats non kosher foods will become clogged up and desensitized to his action, and won't even realize the ill effects of ingesting these forbidden things.

The Chofetz Chaim gives an example of this of someone who owns a perfume store. All day he's working in a pleasant environment with beautiful scents. One day he walks into a tannery where they work with harsh chemicals that give off a strong unpleasant aroma. He can't

stand the stench and he runs out after a moment because he's unaccustomed to such odors. After a while his perfume shop goes out of business, and he has to find new work. He has no choice but to purchase a tannery. In only a short time, the smell that he used to be repulsed by no longer has any effect on him. He doesn't even smell it anymore. Why? He got used to it, because he is working there all day. So too it is with forbidden foods. One who eats forbidden things and becomes used to it causes his heart to become so "clogged up", he doesn't even realize that he's doing something wrong. Therefore the Torah commands us to separate ourselves completely from forbidden foods, as it is so difficult to extricate ourselves once we become used to it, because we won't even see the ill effects. We will think that our improper actions are totally ok.

This idea of becoming accustomed to something inappropriate, and then it being extremely difficult to pull ourselves out, does not only apply to nonkosher. It surely applies to all the pulls and temptations of society that are so very anti Torah, and in today's

day and age anti-normal. Habit is such a powerful force, as it is one of the most difficult things to overcome, especially, as the Chofetz Chaim teaches us, because we end up thinking that it's not even problematic once we develop an acclimation. Our children are especially vulnerable to the allure of the world's culture, as they oftentimes cannot see the dangerous short- and long-term consequences. Once they develop a connection to things like social media and they are exposed to so many spiritually harmful things, they can quickly become desensitized, and it will be so hard to pull themselves out. We must do everything in our power to keep them out of these types of things, firstly and foremostly by developing strong loving relationships with them and explaining in an age appropriate way why these things are harmful. May Hashem grant us the wisdom and the protection to raise our children in a Torah true way, and may we only see nachat from our families.