



THE MAIN THING

פרשת שמיני



After detailing the animals, fish and birds which are or are not Kosher, the Parsha concludes, explaining the basis for this Mitzvah: "For I am Hashem who **elevated** you from the land of Egypt." Rashi explains that the purpose of *Yetziyas Mitzrayim* was so that His people would accept His commandments. In the words of Rashi, "Had I **elevated** you from Egypt only so that you would not defile yourselves by consuming creeping creatures, it would have been enough".

This statement is quite puzzling! How great is the sacrifice for a Jew not to eat ants, rodents or bugs? We naturally find them repulsive. Why then is Hashem satisfied (so to speak) with such a minimal commitment? The *Ksav Sofer* explains Rashi's point. Hashem wants His people not to ingest insects, not simply because they are disgusting, but rather because this is His will (רצון ה'). This is consistent with Rashi's quote at the end of *Parshas Kedoshim*: "Do not say 'I cannot stand pig meat'! Rather you should say, 'I would love pig meat but what can I do, Hashem forbade it'. Accordingly, our nation's greatness is shown, and we are thus **elevated**, when our sole motivation not to eat bugs is so that we not violate our Creator's will and not because we find them repugnant.

Following the רצון ה' throughout our daily routine – in and out of our homes – can be challenging at times. Rabbi Berel Wein recounts that in the beginning of his career he worked in the same office as Rabbi Alexander Rosenberg ז"ל, the founding head of the Kashrus Division of the O.U. (and the father of the late Dr. Naomi Baumgarten ע"ייה). People would come with all kinds of elaborate (and sometimes shady) proposals to enhance their own status or that of the O.U. Invariably Rabbi Rosenberg's response would be the same four words: "Und Vos Zugt G-tt?" (and what does G-d say?)

The main thing in our lives is to keep those four words, "front and center", parallel to Dovid Hamelech's four words: שויתיה ה' - I always place Hashem before me. If we can accomplish this we can guarantee that our internal "compasses" will more likely be calibrated correctly.



It isn't always easy to decide which is the correct path to follow in life. It is for this reason that we have our עיני העדה ("eyes" of the congregation) – our *chochamim* who help us determine what is the רצון ה'. Such was the dilemma in which Rav Hirsch Diskind זצ"ל, Dean Emeritus of Bais Yaakov Baltimore found himself. It was in the early years of the school when there was only one other Jewish alternative for a girl in Baltimore. The other school had a Bas Mitzvah ceremony, at which time the girls would be "confirmed" upon reaching the age of twelve. One

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Heard from Rabbi Avraham Chaim Feuer

of the ladies involved in the school approached Rav Diskind and asked why Bais Yaakov could not do the same. Rav Diskind's immediate reaction was politely negative, saying that we do not celebrate Bas Mitzvahs. The woman however, was not satisfied, and persisted. Knowing that this lady would respect and not challenge the decision of his illustrious father-in-law, Rav Yaakov Kamenetzky זצ"ל, Rav Diskind decided to speak to him. He was quite certain that Rav Yaakov would agree with him. To the

total amazement of Rav Diskind, Rav Yaakov felt that it was truly important to celebrate the occasion of a Jewish girl turning twelve. This was an important milestone in a girl's life. Rav Diskind then retorted to his father-in-law that if Bais Yaakov followed the lead of the other school, the next step would be to issue Bas Mitzvah certificates, just like the other school did. To the continued amazement of Rav Diskind, Rav Yaakov said that was absolutely an excellent idea. Rav Yaakov explained that numerous problems, relating to the writing of *gittin* (divorce) were surfacing when young ladies did not know their correct Hebrew or Jewish names. He felt that if an accurate certificate was issued when a girl became Bas Mitzvah, this problem would be alleviated.

The *Gadol Hador* clarified the רצון ה'. To this day, we, at Bais Yaakov Baltimore have a mother-daughter Bas Mitzvah dinner, at which time a certificate is issued to each girl with her correct Hebrew or Jewish name. Following the רצון ה' sends ripples which can be felt for generations to come.

Point of Discussion
Your friend disregarded your need for help. What would רצון ה' dictate if the next day you had an opportunity to help her?