

Rabbi's Column

Back to Basics: In the books of Leviticus and Deuteronomy, the text lets us know which foods are acceptable to eat. Mammals must have completely split hooves and chew their cud. Sea creatures must have fins and scales. Some specific birds are off limits, but the rest are ok. Some locusts are ok (don't ask me which ones). There is a verse or two which indicates that any mammal you eat must be killed by a Priest. There is also a verse or two that describes what you do after hunting. These two groups of verses contradict each other, which might mean that they describe the practices of different communities, or the same community at different times.

Fair to middling: Next Sunday is the beginning of the month of Elul. In preparation for Rosh HaShanah, it is traditional to read 10 Psalms per day, so that by the time Rosh HaShanah hits, the book will have been read through twice. The Psalms were written by King David and others, and all of them are written from the viewpoint of somebody with a personal relationship with God. The Psalms reflect our emotions, and there is an appropriate Psalm to echo whatever you might be feeling. Some people continue reading 10 Psalms a day (except for Rosh HaShanah, Yom Kippur and the holy days of Sukkot), finishing up just before the last day of using the Lulav and Etrog, and then they read the entire book that last night. Somebody who is able to do all of this will have read through the entire book of Psalms four times, and the emotional connections which are realized can extend throughout the rest of the year.

Beyond the beyond: God is always helping us recharge our spiritual batteries, but sometimes we get our wires crossed. Mystically, there are ten channels through which God continually recharges living creatures. One of them, Malchut/Keter (kingdom/crown) is reserved for the system as a whole. The other nine are Chochmah (wisdom), Binah (understanding), Gedulah (greatness), Din (Law), Tiferet (adornment), Netzach (enduring), Hod (awesomeness), Yesod (foundation), Shechinah (God's presence). Everyone has a bit of all of these, yet there is often one which makes us feel the most energized.

Have a good week, everyone.