

Shmini

"And these are for you unclean."¹

The *Midrash* comments, "The conversations of the servants of our Patriarchs are more attractive than the Torah of their children. This we learn from the portion of the Torah that relates the discussions of Eliezer, the servant of Abraham, when he went to acquire a wife for Isaac. This is detailed in two or three pages whereas the stringent laws that enunciate the *Tuma* of a *Sheretz* are derived from an additional word."²

From each word or letter of the Torah we can derive a veritable treasure of laws and teachings. Nevertheless, the seemingly mundane discourses of Eliezer are given such extended elaboration, thus exalting the eminence of so-called ordinary conversation of the messenger of Abraham.

What an individual says, and how he says it, is as important if not more important in Torah teaching as are the stringent and complex laws of *Tuma*.

This important ethical teaching puts the lie to the historical falsehood of our historical adversaries who charged that Jewish practitioners were more concerned with what goes into the mouth than what comes out.

All the Dietary laws are represented by five or six negative and positive commandments in the Torah. On the other hand the Sainted *Chofetz Chaim* in his great ethical and Halachic Treatise, "*Shmiras Halashon*," lists more than thirty Biblical commandments and prohibitions that deal exclusively with our faculty of speech. Outlining the laws and disciplines that guide our daily conversation, pronouncements and verbal judgments. Malicious gossip, evil mongering, vulgarity, are not only social ills but they violate the basic precepts of G-d's laws.

The Torah sets the record straight: What goes into our mouths can critically effect what comes out. In Parshas *Mishpatim*³

the Torah concludes Chapter 22 with the words, "And ye shall be a holy people unto me, and Ye shall not eat any flesh that is torn of beasts of the field," which is followed by the verse in the 23rd Chapter, "Thou shalt not utter a false report."

These are the two vital aspects of the Torah's definitions of a Holy people, not to put *Trefa* into our mouth and not to have falsehood ultimately emanate from our mouths.

The *Shulchan Aruch*⁴ includes two important sections, the dietary laws and the law of oaths and bans, although in the organization of the Mishna these laws are found in diverse portions of the Mishna, the authors of the *Shulchan Aruch* set them in the same Tractate, *The Yore Deah*.

The laws of Kashrut and the laws concerning our verbal pronouncements are indivisible. Representing a spiritual unity they are joined together in an indispensable ethical and ritual harmony to enable us to truly become G-d's holy people.

FOOTNOTES

1. Vayikra 11:29
2. Bereishith Rabba 60:11
3. Shmos Chapters 22 and 23
4. Yore-Deah