

## Shechitah Part 3 Section II

Based on a Naaleh.com shiur by Dayan Shlomo Cohen

In 1976, Levinger examined blood flow in animals after *shechita* and found little or none to the brain and very little to the other organs. This means the animal loses consciousness after slaughter. Although the heart may continue to beat for a few minutes, it can no longer experience pain as it is unconscious. In 1994, it was observed that although there was a reflex defense reaction of pain in cows after ear tagging, there was no such reflex after *shechita*. The opponents of *shechita* claim that after 30 seconds, the animal is still breathing. However, this doesn't mean anything because the animal is unconscious. Muscular spasms can occur after *shechita*, but it doesn't mean the animal is suffering. Just as we know that someone who is under anesthesia feels nothing, so too an animal after *shechita* will feel nothing. There's no way to measure or prove pain. All we can do is watch reactions. There's no flinching after *shechita* and what happens later on is not a proof because the animal is no longer conscious.

One can test electrical activity in the brain

through EEG or ECG. Some tests showed that there was an EEG up to 3 seconds after *shechita*. Other tests found an ECG up to 25 seconds after *shechita*. There can be electrical activity in the brain up to 30 seconds after the cut. This is not in contradiction to what was mentioned earlier, that the animal becomes unconscious within two seconds. A patient who has been anesthetized will have electrical activity in his brain although he feels nothing. Even a severed head can have electrical activity.

Experiments made by Mitchell revealed large stress responses by animals who were stunned by a stun gun. Another way of stunning is an electrical shock to the head that paralyzes the respiratory system. Scientists think this may be very painful. Another way is to have them breathe carbon dioxide which scientists have discovered also causes great suffering.

To sum up, there's no conclusive evidence that *shechita* is less humane than other ways of

killing an animal. And in fact, there is proof that it may be more humane. Those who oppose *shechita*, such as the RSPCA, admit that their whole argument is based on giving the benefit of the doubt to the animal. We say, let's give the benefit of the doubt to the Jews who have been employing this humane way of slaughtering for thousands of years. It may not be aesthetic. Pre-stunning may involve less blood. But it is unacceptable that such superficial considerations should cloud the argument. We care about the suffering of animals. No slaughterhouse looks good. The question should be- Is the animal suffering? The Jewish people cared about animals long before any other society ever did. Causing animals to suffer is a prohibition in the Torah. There are so many *mitzvot* that warn us and instruct us to be careful about this. Our method of *shechita* is the most humane way to dispatch an animal as it becomes unconscious within a few seconds. Any other measures made are irrelevant to the argument.

## Elul in the Midst of Summer Part II

Based on a Naaleh.com shiur by Rebbetzin Tziporah Heller

*Teshuva* requires shedding one's old garments and donning new ones. And we're afraid, mainly because we've tried and failed before. Doing *teshuva* seems unreal. It doesn't seem like a shoe we can wear. It's liking have a size 8 foot and trying to put on a size 9 shoe. You think you're too small for your role. In reality, if you put the shoe on, Hashem will help you grow into it.

You have to believe that Hashem is waiting for you, with your *yetzer hara*, your history of failure. He is waiting for you to open the door, because in His eyes, no matter how far you've fallen, you are still His sister, His dove, His beloved, His perfect one.

One of the practices that open the door to *teshuva* is *zedakah*. The body has an iron grip on the soul which says, "Don't move." Giving money to charity breaks this bond. Nobody really likes money in and of itself. We like what it can buy, a spacious apartment, good food, nice clothing... Experientially, when you give *zedaka* what you're saying is, "There's something I like more than money," and that can break down every barrier.

You might want to give more *zedakah* but you don't have more money. No one's giving you an Elul raise. So, if you can't give more, give better. The Rambam lists the levels of *zedakah*. The lowest rung is giving face to face. In your mind there's still the big I whose giving and the small you whose receiving. But you can move it up a notch if you're nice to the person. Make a remark about the weather. Smile... ask how they are. It builds bridges. The highest rung is helping someone take care of themselves. If you find someone struggling and teach him how to write a resume, how to get an interview, how to talk to HR, how to find positions in the area he's looking for, that is the greatest level.

Another thing you can do in Elul is to think about the barriers between you and other people. You might say, "Why should I be the one to tear down the wall? I don't like that person." If Hashem sees all of what we are and can still say to you, "My beloved one, my perfect one," you can do the same. That person's soul is as perfect as yours. We have all sorts of thoughts. So does the other person. What you're thinking may be expressed in

what you say and do. This person may be trapped in their negative thinking. Who will bring down the walls? You have to do it. You have to search your own thoughts, speech, and action and do what you have to do to make things right again.

There's a custom to recite Psalm 27, *L'David Hashem ori* from Rosh Chodesh Elul through *Shemini Atzeret*. Some communities say it at Shachrit and Mincha and some at Maariv. The psalm begins, "Hashem is my light." There's light. I can see how things truly are, if I want to. "Who shall I fear?" Think about all the things you're afraid of, losing your job, something bad happening to your family, rejection, poverty, ill health, losing your reputation. Of course, there's what to fear about. But if you believe that Hashem is your light, you have a different set of questions. The question isn't, "Do I like my situation or not?" The question is, "Could I still be what I could be in this situation? Could I still be in touch with my perfect soul and accomplish what I was meant to." And the answer follows, "Place your hope in Hashem. Strengthen yourself and He will instill courage in your heart."

## Elul Through Yom Kippur: 40 Days of Recreating Our Reality Part II

Based on a Naaleh.com shiur by Rebbetzin Leah Kohn

Rosh Hashana celebrates the creation of man and the completion of creation. It's when Hashem defines the spiritual gifts He will give us in the current year. How much holiness will he bestow upon us? How much Divine help will we get to accomplish our mission? Hashem gives us spiritual gifts in order that we will be able to fulfill our mission. The way we develop it, is via actions in the physical sense. The first day of Rosh Hashana Hashem defines our spiritual gifts. On this basis, the second day defines what physical gifts we will receive for the year to accomplish our spiritual goals. Rosh Hashana has the nature of the Exodus, the Splitting of the Sea, and the giving of the *Torah*. It's the time when Hashem grant gifts. But while then it was given freely to us, Hashem wants us to earn it now. The Jews sinned with the Golden Calf because they weren't completely worthy to receive the gifts. Hashem now gives us the opportunity to correct it. He gives us the entire month of Elul to work on ourselves and do teshuva so that on Rosh Hashana we are ready to receive His spiritual gifts and use it in the proper way.

In *Shir Hashirim*, Elul is described as, "*Ani l'dodi v'dodi li*- First I am to my beloved and

then my beloved is to me." Based on the work I invested in Elul, that is how much I'll receive on Rosh Hashana which leads to Yom Kippur and the receiving of the second set of *luchot*. The first *luchot* were a complete gift, while the second *luchot* were earned. This indicates to us the *sheleimut* (completion) of *kabalat haTorah* on Yom Kippur. Whereas on Shavuot it was a gift, on Yom Kippur it came from us. This is why Yom Kippur is followed by Simchat Torah, the culmination of a year's worth of investment and accomplishment must result in ultimate joy.

In *Mizmor L'toda* we say, "*Hu asanu v'lo anachnu*." The word "Lo" is written with a lamed, vav and read with a lamed, aleph. If we combine the two, we get the word Elul. The Chidushei Harim explains, to the extent that we realize *lo anachnu*, it's not us, to that extent will we recognize we are His. That is the definition of Elul. We want to invest in Elul so that we might then appreciate and preserve the gifts Hashem presents us during the High Holy days. In order that we will deserve what we receive, Hashem put us in a physical reality which has the potential to remove us from Him. Nature appears like cause and effect. Eating and sleeping immerse a person in

physicality. Overcoming the test is recognizing that physicality is only a means to an end which is building a relationship with Hashem and coming close to Him.

The Sefas Emes explains two verses in Tehilim based on a Midrash. "*Yasichu yoshvei shaar u'neginot shotei shachar*-People sit at the gate and talk about me and those who are drunk and sing, speak about me." The verse that follows is, "*V'ani tefilati lecha Hashem eit ratzon* - I pray to Hashem at the opportune time." What is the connection between the two verses? The Midrash says, the first verse refers to the nations who eat and drink and become drunk, mocking Hashem and the Jewish people. In contrast, when the Jewish people eat and drink and the time comes for *tefilah*, they get up and pray. The Sefas Emes says, when the nations pray to Hashem, they want to get what they want. The Jewish people are different. Of course, we must pray for what we need as Hashem is the source of everything. But what we are truly looking for is the *eit ratzon*, the closeness.