

Rav Pinchas Friedman

Parshas Shmos

Spice of Shabbos

Eating fish on Shabbos – a wonderful lesson for the mitzvah of learning Torah

In honor of Shabbos Kodesh, we can add a little spice to our Shabbos by learning another reason to eat fish on Shabbos. Last week we learned, the טור (OC 290) quoting the Medrash,

“אמרה תורה לפני הקב"ה, רבוננו של עולם כשיכנסו ישראל לארץ, זה רץ לכרמו וזה רץ לשדהו ואני מה תהא עלי, אמר לה, יש לי זוג שאני מזווג לך ושבת שמו, שהם בטלים ממלאכתם ויכולין לעסוק בך”.

The Torah asked Hashem, When the Jews go into Eretz Yisroel, and will have fields and vineyards to work in, what will happen to me? Hashem answered, I will give a mate called Shabbos, when the people will not work so they will learn Torah.

We all know that the purpose of learning Torah is not just how to know how to do the Mitzvos of Hashem, because even if you know the halacha, and how to do the Mitzva, there is still a Mitzva to learn about it. And that is why we even have to learn about mitzvos that do not apply in our times.

We can learn this important concept from the fish. The Torah (Vayikra 11:9) teaches what fish are kosher to eat:

“את זה תאכלו מכל אשר במים כל אשר לו סנפיר וקשקשת במים ובנחלים א ותם תאכלו, וכל אשר אין לו סנפיר וקשקשת בימים ובנחלים מכל שרץ המים ומכל נפש החיה אשר במים שקץ הם לכם”.

From everything on the water, we may only eat it if it has fins and scales; if it does not have both fins and scales it is an abomination to us.

The Mishna in נדה נא; says “כל שיש לו קשקשת יש לו סנפיר, ויש שיש לו סנפיר ואין לו קשקשת” if it has scales it will also have fins, but there are creatures in the water that have fins but do not have scales. The Gemara asks if anything that has scales also has fins, why does the Torah need to tell us that we may eat anything in the water that has fins and scales; it would have been enough to tell us that we may eat anything that has scales?

Rabbis Avuhu and Yishmoel both answer יגדיל תורה ויאדיר - so that the Torah will be made great and glorious.

This gives us such a sweet reason to eat fish on Shabbos. Hashem promised the Torah that we will have time to learn Torah on Shabbos, but perhaps people will think that since they know all the halachos or even if they are not sure about something, they could ask a Rav, so they don't have to learn Torah. But that is wrong. We eat fish on Shabbos, just as the Torah gave us 2 signs for kosher fish, even though we only need one, to glorify the Torah, similarly Hashem wants us to learn all aspects of Torah even though they don't necessarily pertain to us.

This Shabbos as we enjoy the fish we should think that it is also a reminder to us to learn Torah so we can get the physical and spiritual benefits of Shabbos.