

Havdalah means 'separation'. For example, Havdalah over wine after Shabbos separates and distinguishes the holy from the secular.

'Havdalah' is also in this week's sedra, to distinguish between kosher and non-kosher animals. 'Lehavdil bein hatamei uvein hatahor' – to separate between what is pure and impure'. This requires us to delve and establish the kashrus of animals. The Netsiv (Rav Naftoli Zvi Yehudah Berlin zt'l) writes (11:47):

"It is a positive commandment to contemplate and to examine any doubtful creature as to whether it is 'pure or impure'."

The Netsiv is therefore telling us that we are performing a mitzvah by going to the zoo, to seek to identify which animals are kosher and which are not kosher. We are encouraged to investigate and debate the status of these animals.

For example, we may ask whether the shafan and arneves are really a 'rock-badger and hare', as assumed by many translations. Do they chew the cud but not part the hoof? Rav Hirsch zt'l suggests this cannot be a correct translation, as they don't seem to chew the cud at all. Some 900 years ago, Daas Zekenim Mibaalei Hatosfos questioned the identity of these animals (11:27). Rav Yechiel Yaakov Weinberg zt'l (SE2:64) examines various opinions. Rav Meyer Lubin explains they are a llama and another type of camel. It is a worthy task to investigate, probe, and examine these species. Take a close-up view of each animal's characteristics, and you are fulfilling a mitzvah. Where else do we find the concept of 'Havdalah'? Turn to the end of Parshas Kedoshim, which refers to the forbidden marriages and rules of immorality. There, however, it does not use the same expression of 'lehavdil bein hatamei uvein hatahor'. There is no mitzvah there for us to delve and debate. Instead, Hashem says "I have separated you from amongst the nations" (20:24), and "I will separate you from amongst the nations" (20:26). We are not being asked to probe it - Hashem is doing the 'separation' for us.

Between those verses (v25), it recalls "And you shall distinguish between the pure and impure animal; the pure and impure bird". Why is the kashrus of animals brought again in Kedoshim, as if to contrast the Havdalah of animals against the Havdalah of immorality?

My Rosh Yeshiva, Rav Meir Schlesinger Shlita, explains that whilst it is important to research what is kosher to eat, you must not try to investigate the nature and detail of immorality. Examining animals will not result in temptation. But if one enters the den of immorality for 'research', one will easily be seized upon a very slippery slope. By then it will be too late. Thus, Hashem says – do the Havdalah and analysis with the animals.

But as for Havdalah on establishing what is immorality, keep well away from it. I will do the Havdalah for you – just leave it to Me!

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