



## An Aquarium of the Soul

Have you ever sat and watched an aquarium? Whatever - or whenever - the source of the encounter, almost everyone agrees that aquariums are relaxing. The rippling of the water in and out of the tank, the waving of the fronds and little plants (real or not), the easy glide of the fish themselves, in and out of whatever cave or tunnel one dropped in, the swirl of colors, dappling through the spectrum as the bodies swish, a constant, rather random, motion - smooth movement for its own sake - all this calms the mind, eases tension and, according to studies, even lowers blood pressure.

Of course, we know that fish never sleep, never stop moving, never leave their environment. And they're prolific. Jewish teachings have made many references to fish, as metaphors, and analogies between fish and the Jewish people.

Perhaps the most famous analogy is that made by Rabbi Akiva. During the time following the destruction of the Second Temple, when the Roman persecution became so intense that study of Torah was forbidden upon pain of death, Rabbi Akiva, already the leading scholar of his day, continued to teach Torah openly, in defiance of the Roman decree. Some colleagues, friends, students came to him, concerned that if caught, as surely he would be if he continued, he would be executed.

In response he told them the following: a fox saw some fish swimming furiously downstream. He asked them why, and they said they were fleeing the fisherman's net. The fox invited them onto dry ground, where they'd be safe from the net and he'd protect them. They responded, "foolish fox, if in the water, which is our very life, we are not safe, can we survive out of it?" So, too, Rabbi Akiva said, Torah is our "water," our very life, and like fish we cannot survive out of it, even if there is danger in it.

It was a clever analogy on another level, for fish - all fish with fins and scales - are kosher, and Jews are a kosher people.

The Lubavitcher Rebbe finds another analogy, a spiritual or mystical lesson for the "kosher people" learned from the characteristics that make fish kosher.

Water, as already mentioned, is akin to Torah - the waters of life, the waters of the soul, the waters of holiness. What makes a fish kosher? Fins and scales. So we can say that the spiritual equivalent of fins and scales enable us to navigate these "waters of holiness."

That is, just as fins and scales enable a fish to survive - and be kosher - in water, so our spiritual "fins and scales" - whatever they are - enable us to navigate and survive the waters of Torah and holiness.

We mentioned that fish have to move constantly - otherwise, biologically, they drown. And their fins enable them to move. Similarly, then, in order to survive, to thrive in holiness, and navigate the Torah, we must be constantly moving, constantly learning, constantly searching for new understanding, new meaning.

And scales? Scales protect the fish, obviously. But, then, in the "waters of holiness" why would we need protection? And from what? They protect us - from not being us. Scales (like skin) define our being. They keep us pure by keeping us true to ourselves - keeping out elements that would corrupt us, make us "non-kosher."

"Ambition and Integrity": the "fins and scales" with which we survive in the aquarium of our soul.

(from <http://www.lchaimweekly.org/>)

## Parshas Pekudei's Positive Pride Preempts Previous Pernicious Pride

The Medrash says as follows on the words "*Eleh pekudei haMishkan*" (These are the reckonings of the Tabernacle) (Shemos 38:21). "At the time you made the Golden Calf and danced around it, you angered Me with the words "*Eleh Elohecha Yisrael* (This is your god O Israel) that brought you up from the Land of Egypt" (Shemos 32:4). Now that you made the Mishkan with the word *eleh*, my anger has been appeased, as this *eleh* atones for the earlier *eleh*."

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This is a Medrash that obviously requires some kind of an explanation. First of all, was the aveira (sin) of the *Eigel HaZahav* (Golden Calf) based on the fact that they used the word "*Eleh*"? The *aveira* was the fact that they made an *Eigel HaZahav* altogether, a pseudo *avodah zarah*. The expression "I was angered with the word *eleh*" seems a bit imprecise, to say the least. Also, what kind of atonement is it that they used the same word when building the *Mishkan*? Is this some type of *gezeirah shavah*? *eleh-eleh*?

The truth of the matter is that the Peirush Marzu on the bottom of the Medrash interprets this Medrash: The word *eleh* has a certain connotation. It has the connotation of "I am proud of this!" How do we know that? The Marzu writes that another Medrash says: Rav Yitzchak said, at the time of Creation, it is written "*Eleh toldos hashamayim v'ha'aretz* (These are the products of the heaven and the earth) when they were created on the day that Hashem, G-d made earth and heaven." (Bereshis 2:4). The Creator praises them. He says, as it were, "Look! Look at My world. Look at what I have created." The Creator praises the work of His Hands. This is the connotation of using the word *eleh* – Look at my accomplishment!

Now we can begin to understand the above-cited Medrash. Of course, it is horrible that they built an *Eigel HaZahav*. But it added insult to injury when they proclaimed "*Eleh Elohecha Yisrael asher he'e'lucha m'Eretz Mitzrayim*" as if they were proud of what they did. The Gemara (Berochos 19a) says "If someone sees a Torah scholar commit an *aveira* at night, don't suspect him the next day – for he has certainly already done *teshuva* for his *aveira* of the previous night."

We all slip up. If someone sees a *talmid chochom* who did an *aveira* at night, he clearly feels bad about it. Without a doubt, by the next morning, he has already done *teshuva*. A *talmid chochom* may have been momentarily grasped by his *Yetzer HaRah*, but he immediately makes amends and goes on with his life. On the other hand, the *pasuk* says "(Why do You stand aloof) when the wicked man glories in his personal desire and the robber praises himself that he has blasphemed Hashem?" (Tehillim 10:3). The *rasha* is proud of what he did. He regrets it not, but rather he brags about his wicked deeds.

This is the difference. Of course, the *Eigel haZahav* was wrong, but dancing around the *Eigel* and proudly saying "*Eleh Elohecha Yisrael*" really angered the *Ribono shel Olam*.

They were desperate. They thought they lost their leader and they did not know who would lead them. Fine. They made an *Eigel haZahav*. Very Bad. But at least there would have been some extenuating circumstances to find some justification for their succumbing to their sense of desperation. But when they danced around it and pointed to it (*eleh*) with glee – that showed that there was no regret whatsoever. That is what angered the Almighty.

*Eleh pekudei haMishkan* shows that they were proud of having built the *Mishkan*. The money contributed, and the effort put into all the work of construction was something about which they felt very good, and they wanted to brag about it. That was the atonement for the *aveira* of the *Eigel*.

(by Rabbi Yissocher Frand from Project Genesis at [www.torah.org](http://www.torah.org))

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DAVENING AND SHIURIM SCHEDULE	
<b>Friday, 3/28 — 28 Adar</b> Shacharit — 7:00 a.m. Minchah / Ma'ariv — 7:00 p.m.  <b>Shabbat, 3/29 — 29 Adar</b> Shacharit — 9:00 a.m. Sof Z'man Kriat Shema — 10:01 a.m. Minchah — 6:55 p.m. Shiur — after Minchah — Cancelled this Week Shkiah — 7:28 p.m. Ma'ariv — 8:10 p.m.  <b>Sunday — Rosh Chodesh Nissan, 3/30 — 1 Nissan</b> Shacharit — 8:00 Minchah / Maariv — 7:15 p.m.  <b>Monday, 3/31 — 2 Nissan</b> Shacharit — 6:50 a.m. Minchah / Ma'ariv — 7:15 p.m.	<b>Tuesday, 4/1 — 3 Nissan</b> Shacharit — 7:00 a.m.. Minchah / Ma'ariv — 7:15 p.m.  <b>Wednesday, 4/2 — 4 Nissan</b> Shacharit — 7:00 a.m. Minchah / Ma'ariv — 7:15 p.m. Tanya Shiur: 2 <sup>nd</sup> part of Tanya Shaar HaYichud V'Emunah which deals w/the nature of creation and the unity of Hashem — 8:00 p.m.  <b>Thursday, 4/3 — 5 Nissan</b> Shacharit — 6:50 a.m. Minchah / Ma'ariv — 7:15 p.m.  <b>Friday, 4/4 — 6 Nissan</b> Shacharit — 7:00 a.m. Shabbat Candles — 7:15 p.m. Minchah / Ma'ariv — 7:00 p.m.