

Potomac Torah Study Center
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NOTE: Devrei Torah presented weekly in Loving Memory of Rabbi Leonard S. Cahan z"l, Rabbi Emeritus of Congregation Har Shalom, who started me on my road to learning 50 years ago and was our family Rebbe and close friend until his untimely death.

Devrei Torah are now Available for Download (normally by noon on Fridays) from www.PotomacTorah.org. Thanks to Bill Landau for hosting the Devrei Torah archives.

20th Annual Herbert Lieberman, z"l and Ruben D. Silverman, z"l Shabbaton at Congregation Beth Shalom in Potomac, MD. Guest scholar Rabbi Dr. Shmuly Yanklowitz will focus on Judaism and ethics, social change, and pluralism during a series of presentations over Shabbat.

Sefirah connects Pesach to Shavuot – the seven weeks in which we count each day and week. Rabbi Mordechai Rhine reminds us that we are to focus each day that we count the Omer on improving ourselves and thereby becoming ready to receive the Torah (on Shavuot). We need only count 49 days, because once our self improvement project during Sefirah becomes part of us (by day 49), the Omer completes the count for us. Sefirah has a long history of violence and death against our people – from the death of Akiva's students to the Crusades, pogroms, Warsaw ghetto, on through attacks and disasters in modern Israel. Perhaps we gain strength by surviving adverse times.

Personally, our family has seven yahrzeits during Nisan – then the deaths slow down for the rest of the year. Pesach Sheni, which comes this Sunday, is a second chance for those unable to attend the Korban Pesach. Pesach Sheni is a gift from Hashem for the people who wanted to participate but were tamei (ritually impure) on Pesach, most likely because they were in contact with a dead body (helping with a burial) during the previous week. Only those who wanted to but were unable to participate on Pesach, because they were tamei or too far to return in time, were eligible for this second chance. Anyone who could have been there but missed the Korban Pesach did not qualify for this second chance.

Pesach Sheni is a mid point in the transition from Pesach to Shavuot for my family. The next day, the 30th day of the Omer, is the yahrzeit of my beloved grandmother, Bella Fisher, Behla bat Shlomo, a"h, who passed away prematurely in 1993, when she was only 97 years old. Grandma was such a special part of our family that anything short of 120 years would have been losing her prematurely.

Turning to our parsha, the two primary themes of Emor concern laws of the Kohen and korbanot (ch. 21-22) and the calendar of holy days (ch. 23). As Rabbi David Fohrman has observed, the treatment of holy days actually continues at the beginning of chapter 24, because the next subject is the lighting of the Menorah (24:1-4). The first crisis for B'Nai Yisrael around and after the end of revelation was Purim, where the Torah readings about Amalek and Megillat Esther were obvious. The next crisis was Hanukkah. Where should the Jews look to decide how to observe this holiday? Right after the discussion of the Moadim, we read about lighting the Menorah with pure olive oil. What could work better?

Rabbi Haim Ovadia's insightful Dvar Torah (below) discusses the laws of Kohanim and, in particular, the Torah's requirement that a Kohen performing service in the Temple and any korban both be without blemish. Why may a Kohen with a deformity not participate? Rabbi Ovadia, after dismissing several opinions among chazal, speculates that some parents might otherwise deliberately maim their sons to guarantee them a role in the Temple. The horrific story of the

castrato in Baroque Italian opera demonstrates that maiming children has had an ugly history. (Look up “castrato” on the Internet for details.)

With respect to the Moadim, Rabbi Fohrman observes that Shabbat is the paradigm for all of the Yom Tovim during the year. All the holidays have a repeating pattern of one and seven. Pesach and Sukkot both last for seven days. Shavuot comes after we count the Omer for seven weeks of seven days each. The Torah calls Rosh Hashanah a Shabbaton and Yom Kippur Shabbat Shabbaton. Most of our holy days come during months one and seven.

Rabbi Lord Jonathan Sacks, z”l, observes that our calendar needs dedicated times to focus on things that give our lives meaning. Pesach marks the beginning of our nation (our national freedom). Shavuot marks when we received the Aseret Dibrot at Har Sinai. The High Holy Days indicate whether we shall live for another year and provide a process to make amends and seek forgiveness. Sukkot reminds us that we dwell on this planet thanks to a gift from Hashem, and that our time here is temporary.

Much of Sefer Vayikra discusses holiness in terms of place and personal observance. Emor extends holiness to the concept of time. When we seek a connection with Hashem, we must do so by observing mitzvot in terms of our speech, food, and body conditions. In Kedoshim, we learned that we must also go beyond the mitzvot to emulate Hashem in dedication to a higher purpose. Emor adds holiness in time to this equation. As we focus on dedication to Hashem and His values in all these characteristics, and as we speak to Hashem through our davening and special times set aside for religious study, we come as close as possible to Hashem. The Torah is an Etz Chaim, a Tree of Life, to those who cling to the mitzvot. My beloved Rebbe, Rabbi Leonard Cahan, z”l, started me studying my heritage half a century ago. I am still studying, hoping to help transfer these values to my grandchildren. As we approach the yahrzeit of my beloved Grandmother, may we connect the generations – both in my family and in yours.

Much of the inspiration for my weekly Dvar Torah message comes from the insights of Rabbi David Fohrman and his team of scholars at www.alephbeta.org. Please join me in supporting this wonderful organization, which has increased its scholarly work during the pandemic, despite many of its supporters having to cut back on their donations.

Please daven for a Refuah Shlemah for Yehoshua Mayer HaLevi ben Nechama Zelda, Leib Dovid ben Etel, Mordechai ben Chaya, Hershel Tzvi ben Chana, Uzi Yehuda ben Mirda Behla, David Moshe ben Raizel; Zvi ben Sara Chaya, Eliav Yerachmiel ben Sara Dina, Reuven ben Masha, Meir ben Sara, Oscar ben Simcha; Noa Shachar bat Avigael, Kayla bat Ester, and Malka bat Simcha, who need our prayers. Please contact me for any additions or subtractions. Thank you.

Shabbat Shalom,
Hannah & Alan

Dvar Torah: Emor: Seven Perfect Weeks (5756) by Rabbi Yosey Goldstein

“You shall then count seven “perfect” weeks after the day following the (Passover) Holiday when you brought the Omer as an offering, until the day after the seventh week, when there will be a total of fifty days.” (Vayikra / Leviticus 23:15)

Rabbi Chiya taught: “Seven perfect weeks” – When will they be perfect? When the Jews do the will of G-d (Medrash Rabbah 28:3). One could ask regarding this Medrash as follows. Why does the mitzvah or commandment of “Sefirah,” counting the Omer, depend on one’s doing the will of Hashem/G-D more so than any other commandment? Why isn’t the counting of the Omer by itself enough to make the seven weeks “perfect”?

There are two answers I would like to share with you.

The K’sav V’hakabala (Written by Rabbi Yaakov Tzvi Mecklenberg, Rov of Koenigsberg) explains the Medrash by first analyzing the exact wording of the verse and thru that analysis he shows that the words of the Medrash are the true meaning of the Posuk.

The K'sav V'hakabala's first question is: Why does the verse say, "count for yourselves ..." Why not say "Count on the day etc." What does G-d want to teach us by adding the extra word "lochem," for yourselves? He answers that it is to teach us that the commandment of counting the forty nine days between Pesach and Shavuuous is not just to count the days. There is a higher purpose in counting those days, and that purpose is to elevate oneself and perfect oneself. (As he puts it, the purpose is not quantitative but qualitative.) To understand this, he points out that all throughout the Torah whenever the term "for you" (lecho) is used it, connotes a purpose meant for you.

The first place we see this is in Parshas Lech Lecho, where G-d told Avrohom "Go for yourself." Rashi explains, "for you, for your own good." I will give you children in Israel, but here you can not merit having children." The same thought can be applied to most verses where the word "Lecho" (for you) is used. There is no benefit for G-d in the performance of the action, rather it is done only for the person or because he needs it done. Here too, the purpose in counting is not just to know when Shavuuous is coming, but rather to use those days to refine and purify oneself. The word used for counting, vesofarto (and you should count), connotes more than just counting. It connotes study and supervision. We are enjoined to count the days AND perfect ourselves. (Additionally sefirah has the same root as sapphire, a clear jewel. This is the time to "shine" and refine ourselves.

The Torah tells us to count seven "perfect" weeks. Rabbi Mecklenberg asks why does the aforementioned verse use the term "perfect," as opposed to the word "complete"? The seven weeks should be complete, a full forty-nine days. What does the Torah mean to tell us with the term perfect? With the Medrash we quoted earlier, and according to Rabbi Mecklenberg's translation of the beginning of the verse, we can understand the use of the word "perfect." If the entire purpose of counting is to perfect ourselves, and as Reb Chiya points out, they are not called "Perfect" unless we do the will of G-d, then everything is very clear. When we do the will of G-d, and we work on perfecting ourselves, then we have truly fulfilled the purpose of Counting the Omer, and the weeks can be called perfect.

Rabbi Yaakov Kranz, better known as the Dubno Maggid, gave the following explanation. Once there were two poor people who went from door to door collecting alms. They traveled together, begged together, and received equal donations from every person who was kind enough to help them. However, one of the poor people was industrious, and he scrimped and saved every penny he received, and spent as little as possible. Every time he saved a few pennies, he changed it into a nickel, his nickels into dimes and so on until he had dollar bills in his pocket. The other poor person was not as disciplined as his friend and he was constantly spending the money he collected. He was never able to gather enough pennies to change into nickels or dimes since he was constantly spending his money.

The same contrast can be made between a "Tzaddik," a righteous man, and a "Rosha," an irresponsible person. A Tzaddik makes every day count. Every day is full of meaningful activities. Each day is connected to the other in continuation of their service to G-d. That service ties days together making them a week. The goals accomplished over four weeks turn into an month of meaningful effort. The accomplishments of twelve months translate into a year, and so on. However, an irresponsible person does not have that continuity. He lacks a goal which connects one day to another. The "Rosha" truly lives from day to day. All he has is the present day. All the past days are lost! There is no continuity between the present, and the days which have past.

The same concept can be applied to the counting of the Omer. G-d commanded us to count forty-nine days between Passover and Shavuuous, because it was during that period of time that the Jews purified and elevated themselves in preparation for accepting the Torah on Mount Sinai. It is during this same period of time that we are also encouraged to prepare ourselves and use this time to elevate ourselves in preparation for the Shavuuous Holiday.

Therefore, just like the poor person who was able to take every single penny and combine it into a large sum of money, we are supposed to make use of every day of Counting the Omer to prepare for our acceptance and rededication to the Torah. We don't just "count" each day, we make each day "count." That is why the Medrash explains our period of counting can not be considered "perfect" unless we do the will of G-d and we make proper use of our time during these weeks.

Thanks, Joe Goldstein

Good Shabbos!

Sefira -- Counting to Fifty

by Rabbi Mordechai Rhine *

The days of sefira spanning the time between Pesach and Shavuot are special days linking freedom to a sense of using that freedom for a purpose. Each day we count one of the forty-nine days towards Shavuot, the day that the Torah was given.

Yet, more important than the technical counting of the days, is making sure that we are indeed taking mini-steps closer to living life with purpose. As my Rebbe in Yeshiva advised, "Don't just count the days; make sure the days count."

Curiously, although the Mitzva in the Torah is stated as, "Count fifty days," our tradition is that the Mitzva only requires us to count forty-nine days. It appears that the message of the Torah is that we should count forty-nine days, and that will — perforce — bring us to the fiftieth.

This is indeed one of the great principles of goal setting. Results are not really in our hands; but the process is. If the right process is put in place, then, almost inevitably, the goal will be realized.

"Process" is not something that happens in an instant, like crash studying for a test. "Process" is creating a system which is life altering. Implementing it day after day brings success.

The Torah does not expect us to go directly from Pesach to Shavuot in just a day. The Torah recognizes that directing freedom into purpose is a process. And the Torah teaches something amazing about a process. That is, once you put a process in place it is close to inevitable, or at least remarkably predictable, that it will continue. After counting forty-nine levels correctly, the fiftieth will naturally occur.

Great care should therefore be taken when choosing process, because process, quite reliably produces results. This is illustrated well by "farm smarts." As the saying goes: "He who plants tomatoes will get tomatoes; he who plants cucumbers will get cucumbers." If one plants tomatoes and hopes for cucumbers it is a certainty that they will be disappointed.

The process of Sefira may involve genuine growth in some area of your choice. Or it might be the very effort to become more aware of your strengths and weaknesses. Spending a few minutes a day recording one good thing and one thing that you think you can do better, may well be the invigorating and guiding activity that takes you to a place of success.

The process of counting Sefira can be compared to boarding a train bound for a destination. If you board a train in New York that is bound for Florida, you can say that you are on the "Florida Train" because — based on what you have done in buying a ticket and boarding the train on time — that is the predictable result.

The Torah states the process of transition from Pesach to Shavuot as a fifty-day count, but only requires actual counting of forty-nine days. In doing so, the Torah teaches us that when you stick to the process day after day, there is a certain number of days that you must count. But at a certain point you and the world around you have changed, and the fiftieth day is something you can count on.

Wishing you and yours a wonderful Shabbos!

Rabbi Mordechai Rhine is a certified mediator and coach with Rabbinic experience of over 20 years. Based in Maryland, he provides services internationally via Zoom. He is the Director of TEACH613: Building Torah Communities, One family at a Time, and the founder of CARE Mediation, focused on Marriage/ Shalom Bayis and personal coaching. To reach Rabbi Rhine, his websites are www.care-mediation.com and www.teach613.org; his email is RMRhine@gmail.com. **For information or to join any Torah613 classes, contact Rabbi Rhine.**

The "Nones" and Us: Thoughts for Parashat Emor

by Rabbi Marc D. Angel *

Several years ago, Professor Daniel C. Dennett of Tufts University published an article, "Why the Future of Religion is Bleak." He argued that religious institutions have survived historically by controlling what their adherents know, but today that is next to impossible. He pointed out that the influence of religion has been waning, especially in Europe and North America. In the United States, one out of six Americans identifies as a "None," a person without a religious affiliation. And the number of Nones is on the increase.

Bad news: Professor Dennett is right. The number of "Nones" in the world has grown rapidly during the past several decades.

Good news: Professor Dennett is wrong. The future of religion is not at all bleak. Human beings are spiritual beings, seeking transcendence and cosmic understanding. Even those who list themselves as "Nones" are generally not devoid of spiritual aspirations. They simply are not finding that their aspirations are being fulfilled within "establishment" religious contexts.

As people become more educated and as they depend less on clergy for information and truth, it is inevitable that there will be a change in how they approach religion. Among highly educated individuals whose minds have been shaped by secular universities and culture, there is surely a greater emphasis on self-reliance and individualism. There is a greater weight given to science than to metaphysics. There is less internal pressure to affiliate with a religious institution. The "Nones" are a natural result of an increasingly secular, science-based, and individualistic society.

Compounding the problem of current-day religion is the "success" of fundamentalism and authoritarianism within religious institutions. The more extreme groups in Judaism, Christianity and Islam are flourishing. Whereas the "Nones" choose to have few or no children, the "right wing" religionists have lots of children. Whereas the "Nones" are content to disconnect themselves from bastions of religious life, the "right wing" religionists flock to their religious centers. Whereas the "Nones" tend to rely on their own ability to make judgments, the "right wing" religionists line up behind charismatic and authoritarian religious figures.

If the future of religion is indeed problematic, it is not because of the increase of "Nones" but because of the root causes that drive thinking people away from religion. Too often, religion is identified with ignorance, superstition, and subservience to all-powerful authorities.

The hope for religion is the growth of religious institutions that actually take their parishioners seriously, that don't insult their intelligence, that speak to their spiritual needs. Educated people are not — or should not be — looking for a religion that depends on ignorance and subservience, or that fosters superstitious beliefs and practices. Serious people seek meaningful religious experience, not entertainment or commercialism, or vapid pontifications.

Fortunately, there are vibrant communities of highly educated, highly individualistic people who find great strength and happiness in their religious institutions and in their communities.

In this week's Torah portion we read: "And you shall keep My commandments and do them: I am the Lord. And you shall not profane My holy name; but I will be hallowed among the children of Israel; I am the Lord who hallows you, who brought you out of the land of Egypt to be your God; I am the Lord" (Vayikra 22:31-33).

In this passage, we read of the aspiration of living a holy, upright life; of avoiding behavior that profanes God's name. We are to live in a manner that reflects sanctity and spirituality, righteousness and goodness. But what do these things have to do with the fact that God took us out of the land of Egypt? Why is that fact included in the admonition to live a holy life?

The 16th century sage, Rabbi Moshe Cordovero, was among those who pointed out that the name of Egypt, "mitsrayim," is related to the word "tsar," narrow, constricted. The Torah's frequent mention of our Exodus from Egypt is a reminder for us to leave the narrowness and constriction of the enslaved lives we led while we were in ancient Egypt. The Exodus not only brought physical freedom, but also psychological, emotional, intellectual and spiritual freedom.

The commandment to be holy is not intended to stifle us, but to expand our horizons. We are to feel the liberation that comes with overcoming physical and psychological constraints. The Torah offers a religious vision which expands our lives, not one that constricts our lives. A religious personality lives in relationship with an Eternal God.

When religion is identified with ignorance, superstition, authoritarianism and commercialism, then it is no surprise that thinking people will be repelled by it. But when religion fulfills its true mission of elevating our souls and sanctifying our lives, then it is at the very source of human happiness and fulfillment.

* Founder and Director, Institute for Jewish Ideas and Ideals.

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<https://www.jewishideas.org/nones-and-us-thoughts-parashat-emor>

Second Chances: Thoughts for Pessah Sheni

by Rabbi Marc D. Angel *

One of my uncles, who was quite overweight, was told by his doctor that he must go on a strict diet. The doctor prescribed some pills for my uncle to take each day to help him in his weight loss program.

Several months passed and my uncle had not lost one pound. When I asked him about his diet, he replied that his doctor was a quack. "He prescribed pills for me but the pills didn't work at all. They killed my appetite."

No, I am not making up this story.

My uncle, like so many people, want to continue their lifestyles — even when unhealthy — rather than make serious changes that require self-sacrifice. My uncle wanted to take the pills to lose weight, but he didn't want to lose his appetite in the process. He wanted to eat fattening food but not get fat.

Many people know they ought to change one thing or another about themselves; but they want the change to happen without them having to alter their attitudes or behaviors.

When people fail, they want a second chance. But unless they are seriously ready to change, the second chance won't be of much use. Mark Twain once quipped: "It's easy to quit smoking; I've done it a hundred times."

The Torah includes a passage dealing with second chances. A group of Israelites had been unable to participate in the Paschal sacrifice because they had been ritually impure on the date of that ceremony. They came to Moses with a demand: they wanted a second chance. "Why are we prevented from bringing the offering of the Lord in its appointed season among the children of Israel?" (Bemidbar 9:7)

Moses was not sure how to answer them so he posed the question to God. God replied: if people were unable to participate in the Paschal offering because they were ritually impure or because they were too far away to get to the site of the offering, they could have a "Pessah sheini," a second opportunity a month later to participate in the Paschal offering. But, God added, if people had been ritually pure and near the site of the first Paschal sacrifice, and yet chose not to participate, then such people are guilty of a terrible sin and are not eligible to participate in the second Paschal sacrifice.

The lesson: if people sincerely want a second chance, they may have it. But if they are negligent in their duties, then they are not entitled to a second chance. In other words, if people genuinely want to do the right thing, then they may have a

second chance if they were originally unable to meet their goal. But if they think they can act negligently but still be entitled to the rewards of a virtuous life, they are mistaken.

An inevitable feature of human life is making mistakes. No one is always right; no one always makes the correct decisions. The sign of greatness is to recognize our mistakes and misjudgments and seek a second chance. Even if one's original error had been made with the best of intentions, one needs the strength to say: I was wrong; I need a second chance.

Not only should one admit to errors, one should actively undertake to correct those errors to the extent possible. One should realize that making changes is rarely a simple matter; it involves self-sacrifice and genuine commitment. Often, personal errors have had a negative impact on others...and one needs to seek a second chance to make things right again.

There are no magic "diet pills" that can help us achieve our goals without our own personal efforts.

* Founder and Director, Institute for Jewish Ideas and Ideals.

<https://www.jewishideas.org/second-chances-thoughts-pessah-sheni>

Emor – Of Priests and Princes

by Rabbi Yehoshua Singer *

This week's parsha opens with the unique laws of the Kohanim, the priests. They have specific laws regarding marriage, regarding purity and impurity, certain laws are repeated for them, and of course the unique laws regarding their service in the Temple. They are expected to live with unique and perhaps greater bond and connection with G-d. They would appear to be the elite of our nation, somehow elevated above the rest.

However, when we study carefully the laws of the Kohein, we find that there is more depth and subtlety to this concept – as is true with all of Torah. Towards the beginning of the parsha we are taught that the laws of the Kohein, and even the holiness which the Kohein must maintain, are the responsibility of the rest of the nation. Hashem instructs us, "And you shall make him holy, for he brings (on the altar) the bread of your G-d, holy he shall be for you, for holy am I, G-d, Who makes you holy." (Vayikra 21:8) Not only is Hashem requiring us to make the Kohein holy, but Hashem is explaining that we must make him holy because of our own holiness.

The Ohr Hachaim (ibid.) explains that the holiness of the Kohanim is not for their own sake. Rather, their holiness stems from the fact that they serve as the conduit between G-d and the rest of the nation. G-d has made the entire nation holy through our connection with Him. This connection, collectively for the entire nation as well as individually for every Jew, is enhanced and fulfilled through the service in the Temple. The Kohein serves in the Temple and accepts our sacrifices and offers them before G-d, enabling us to fulfill our potential and achieve the holiness G-d intends for us. It is only because the Kohein serves as a conduit for our holiness, helping to fulfill G-d's dreams for us, that the Kohein is elevated. His holiness is only because of us.

This is precisely what the verse is telling us. The Kohein's holiness is our responsibility, because it is only for our honor that he is holy. It is because he brings our sacrifices, connecting us with G-d - Who is holy and Who has made us holy – that the Kohein is holy.

We find a similar idea in the way our Rabbis historically viewed the monarchy. When discussing one who was relieved of the responsibilities of the monarchy, the rabbis refer to him as having been freed from servitude. The elevated roles within the community are there for the purpose of the greater community. Anyone in such a role bears great responsibility to the community to carry out that role for the betterment of the community. This is so fundamental to the Torah's view of leadership, and certainly of monarchy, that a king is viewed as a servant of the nation. Though he is technically the most powerful man in the nation, he is in fact the greatest servant in the nation, for he is the servant of each and every member of the nation. (See Vayikra Rabba 26:7 and Eitz Yosef.)

This concept is found with regards to prophecy, as well. In Devarim, when Moshe is giving an overview of the forty years in the desert, Moshe has two ways of expressing G-d's communication with him. After mentioning the sin of the spies, Moshe uses the phrase, "And Hashem said to me." When he reaches the point when all those of that generation who were part of the sin had died, he then uses the phrase, "And G-d spoke to me." Rash"i explains that "saying" refers to a general communication, something shared, almost as if it was presented with whoever was present to pass on the message. "Speaking" refers to a focused communication, intended for the recipient with love and respect for the recipient. So long as those who did not merit to enter the land of Israel were still alive, Moshe was not given clear prophecy. It was only when the entire nation was worthy, that Moshe was again given prophecy of respect and love. Moshe's prophecy was only in our merit. (Rash"i Devarim 2:17)

The true nobility and dignity of priests, kings and prophets, lies in the nobility and dignity of the individual Jew. Their honor is only in their role of enabling us. We are therefore responsible for their honor, for in truth we are only honoring ourselves. The most significant holiness before G-d is the holiness of the individual Jew.

* Rabbi, Am HaTorah Congregation, Bethesda, MD.

Emor – Haman's Great Righteousness

by Rabbi Yehoshua Singer * © 2021

Our Rabbis teach us that the mitzvos are gifts which enable us to emulate G-d, to elevate ourselves and develop a deep and meaningful relationship with G-d. Mitzvos guide us in character development, to develop and maintain our awareness of G-d, and to understand G-d and His relationship with us. Among the many ways in which mitzvos guide us in character development is in training us to be merciful and compassionate, to see through the eyes of another and to care for their concerns. The Medrash Rabbah in this week's parsha illustrates the importance and value of developing this character trait with a powerful contrast.

Commenting on the mitzvos that one should not slaughter a calf within its first week of life and that one should not slaughter a cow and its calf on the same day, Rabbi Berachya in the name of Rabbi Levi quotes the verse from Mishlei: "The righteous one knows the soul of his animal, and the mercies of the wicked are cruelty." (Mishlei 12:10) Rabbi Levi explains that "The Righteous One" refers to G-d, Who instructs us to learn the traits of mercy, compassion and empathy through our treatment of animals. "The wicked" refers to Haman who was cruel rather than merciful and decreed to "destroy, murder and annihilate" our entire nation, adults, seniors, children and newborn infants, all on one day. (Esther 3:13)

This Medrash teaches us a powerful lesson in the value of constant growth and self development. If we follow the guidance of Torah and mitzvos, we can reach sublime heights of emulating and connecting with G-d. If, however, we choose to abandon G-d, by not following the Torah lifestyle and forgoing the opportunities which mitzvos provide us, we can potentially sink to the depths of moral depravity. Such is the dichotomy of the human spirit. We can rise to great heights or fall to great depths. The choice is ours.

If we consider this Medrash carefully, though, there is a message of indescribable hope and inspiration hidden in its words. The verse in Mishlei tells us that "the mercies of the wicked are cruelty." The Maharz"u explains that this means the wicked one has utilized cruelty where he should have expressed his attribute of mercy. This implies that the wicked one the verse is referring to has an active attribute of mercy which he is pushing aside and choosing to act with cruelty instead.

Rabbi Levi's interpretation, applying this verse to Haman, is then quite difficult to understand. Haman, a descendent of Amalek, the arch-enemy of our nation, was determined to commit genocide against our nation simply because one man refused to bow down to him. He was willing to pay the king 10,000 talents of silver (over \$200,000,000 by today's prices) for the right to send out the decree. He was ruthless in his rage over one man's acts and deeply committed to his indescribable evil. Rabbi Levi is telling us that at this very moment, Haman should have expressed an attribute of mercy in sparing the newborns and killing the children on a different day than the adults! How could we expect such refinement from a man of such evil?

The very first words the Torah teaches us about the human being is that the very plan for the creation of the human being is that we be designed in the image of G-d. (Bereishis 1:26) Rabbi Levi is teaching us that this design is not only a goal which we can achieve. Rather, this design is part of the very essence of what it means to be human. There is an indestructible G-dliness, a nobility and moral greatness, inherent in every human being. We can choose to ignore it and override it, but we can't remove it. Even Haman had stirrings of mercy which pushed him to murder in a more merciful way. Even Haman still had this greatness within.

If this is true of Haman at the height of his wickedness, then this greatness is certainly within us. When we choose to follow the path of Torah and mitzvos, we are reinforcing the essence of our identity. Torah and mitzvos are not there to inhibit us. On the contrary, Torah is the means to become who we truly are.

* Rabbi, Am HaTorah Congregation, Bethesda, MD.

The Torah's Disability Act

By Rabbi Haim Ovadia *

"Any man with a blemish...will not serve as a Kohen." This statement of the Torah, that a man who is not physically wholesome is not allowed to serve at the temple and offer sacrifices, has always been for me a pet peeve, and the attempts of the commentators to explain it did not help much. I felt very uncomfortable with the thought that the Torah discriminates against people with disabilities, especially since my grandfather Hakham Shaul Fetaya, taught me the opposite.

In the late 1970's my mother Simha, who worked with Bituah Leumi, the Israeli equivalent of the Social Security, was appalled by the way IDF veterans and people with disabilities were treated by her co-workers and the establishment in general. She had long conversations about that with her father, feeling frustrated at being unable to change that behavior. Eventually, she quit her job, and with my grandfather and Dr. Hannah and Israel Openheimer, Holocaust survivors, launched a new initiative. That initiative was an occupational habilitation center, in which people with physical and mental disabilities learned new skills or revived old ones, in order to integrate into the regular work market. My grandfather's motto was the verse from Job (31:15): *"His maker made me as well, and we were formed on one womb,"* and he truly lived by it. The center, in which I was drafted to volunteer since I was 11, became his sole focus, and he rejoiced with every person who left the center for a "regular" position. The center is now defunct, but it has survived for decades against all odds, and even became a model for official centers created by Israel's Ministry of Health. It helped countless people, who were engaged in real work, operating machinery and producing books and garments, at a time when the establishment sought to isolate, marginalize, and hospitalize them.

It is no wonder that with this upbringing I felt troubled by the exclusion of Kohanim with blemishes from service. What did the commentators have to say? I am starting my search. First is R. Moshe ben Nahman, aka Ramban or Nahmanides (Spain 1194-1270):

There was no need to warn Aaron regarding blemishes, because he was sanctified by God, all handsome without a blemish. The warning is for his descendants.

According to Nahmanides, sanctity, beauty, and physical wholesomeness are the same. Does he suggest that ugliness or a physical blemish indicate lesser spiritual level? I cannot accept this correlation, let me keep searching. Here is R. Moshe Al-Sheikh (Turkey-Safed 1507-1593):

It is customary that a man who is not wholesome is not allowed to serve at a human royal court, and it is therefore obvious that the same will be true regarding the service of the Eternal God, as the prophet Malachi (1:8), says regarding a sacrifice.

The reference to Malachi is to a section where the prophet rebukes the Israelites for offering blemished animals as a sacrifice, and he challenges them to bring such animals to a prince or an administrator. It is very hard to accept the analogy Rabbi Al-Sheikh suggests. There is an essential difference between a sacrifice or a gift to a prince, where what measured is monetary values, and between spiritual or ritualistic service where the intention is what counts. How can we

say that the service of a blind or a hunchback Cohen is not as good as that of any other Cohen? Such an analogy shames humanity. Let us move to the next one, R Shelomo Ephraim of Lunschitz, Keli Yakar (Poland 1540-1619):

I say that the ancient sages were able to predict future handicaps before they occurred based on one's sins. For example, they knew that a judge who accepts bribes will lose his eyesight, and one who walks arrogantly will break his feet...

The Keli Yakar suggests that physical handicaps are a result of spiritual ones or of transgression. It seems as if with every generation that passes the commentaries become more difficult to comprehend. This is the kind of religious fanaticism which blames the victims and sees in every disease or handicap a divine punishment. Not only does this approach not help people who are struggling with disabilities, it puts them down by telling them that God wanted them to be that way, because of their actions or thoughts. No, this commentary will not do, I must continue looking. Maybe I will find solace in the writings of R Samson Raphael Hirsch (Germany 1808-1888):

The physical perfection required for both (Cohen and sacrifice) expresses the totality of our devotion, as well as the perfection of life we will merit when we are close to God. The altar was not built for the broken and distraught, the blind and lame, the handicapped, the depressed and the plagued. The altar was not built for the exhausted person to crawl on its steps and find comfort for his sorrow or elixirs for his disease... life and rigor, and not death and weakness, dwell at the altar of God... a man who is not physically wholesome cannot represent those who are close to God...

I would have liked to give Rabbi Hirsch the credit and say that perhaps he meant that ideally, a life of Torah can bring humanity to perfection, both spiritually and physically, and one could also argue that the meaning of his words was lost in translation from the original German, but I will not deny that reading these words sent chills down my spine. A religious Jewish text written in Germany praises the physical perfection and says that the House of God is not a place for the weak of mind or frail of body. This is too much. I must come with my own interpretation to soothe my soul and to help me ascertain the eternity of the Torah and its divine origin.

The solution, in my opinion, is the possibility that in the ancient world, people with physical disabilities were sometimes considered holy or having special spiritual abilities. Maybe they believed that the just as the loss of sight sharpens other senses, the loss of certain physical faculties contributes to the development of spiritual ones. In the bible, there are several hints at that possibility. Moshe is described as having a speech impediment, and God tells him: *"who gives man a mouth? And who creates the deaf and the mute and the seeing and the blind? It is I, God!"* (Ex. 4:11). In chapter 5 of II Samuel we read of the animosity of David towards the lame and blind people, who seem to have prophesied that he will not be able to conquer the fortress of Yevus. According to the theory suggested here, they could have been pagan priests or prophets.

The prophet Isaiah, after attacking paganism, states (42:19): *"Who is blind but my servant, deaf as the messenger I will send? Who is blind as my perfect one -- blind as the servant of God?"* Isaiah seems to suggest that imperfection makes one closer to God. Much later, Rabbenu Gershom (Germany, 960-1028), writes in his commentary on the Talmud (Menahot 109:2), that Rav Yosef and Rav Sheshat blinded themselves to achieve the spiritual level of their master. Today, many people believe that autistic children are clairvoyants or prophets.

If this was a prevalent belief in antiquity, then it is also possible that parents would have maimed their children to guarantee them a life of holiness or service at the temple. In order to prevent that from happening, the Torah barred all people with disabilities from serving at the temple. In that manner, it discouraged parents from causing harm to their children, even though the rule would affect also those who were born that way. That was done because it would have been very hard to discern at the age of twenty, in which the Kohanim started serving at the temple, which disability was there from birth and which was acquired later in life.

A support for this idea can be found in the Midrash Halakha on Leviticus, which says that the prohibition should have logically applied only to disabilities acquired later in life. This confirms my suggestion that the Torah wanted to deter parents from maiming their children.

It might seem preposterous to some of us that parents might cause harm to their children in the belief that it is good for them, but we can cite the Chinese practice of foot-binding, done to create beautiful, small feet, at the cost of excruciating pain. Not only that, it was done to young girls by mothers who suffered through the same process at childhood. This practice was almost banished in the early 1900's, but parents find new ways to hurt their children in their (the parents') quest for success, and here's is one example: between 1990 and 2005, an estimated 425,900 children from 6 to 17 years of age were treated for gymnastics-related injuries in U.S. emergency departments.

I have been asked by people to whom I have presented this theory, whether today we are more knowledgeable than the early commentators cited above. My answer is that we are, in many senses, more knowledgeable and more sensitive. Life has changed so much and our knowledge of the world and humanity has grown immensely. Medieval Europe, as well as Rabbi Hirsch's Germany, are worlds away from us, and there is no reason to believe that if Nahmanides, Rabbi Al-Sheikh, and Rabbi Hirsch would have lived today, they would have stuck to their interpretations. I am sure that they would have studied the new world and its understanding that one should not be discriminated against because of gender, race, or physical conditions, and would have adjusted their interpretation of the Torah to the new reality, because they were great scholars.

May we continue to grow spiritually and emotionally, and to be attentive and sensitive to the needs and difficulties of others.

Shabbat Shalom,

Rabbi Haim Ovadia.

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Emor: The Ben Ish Mitzri and Halakha

By Rabbi Jason Goldstein *

Sefer Vayikra is a book of laws. However, there are two short narrative sections in the sefer. This sparsity of narrative easily lends itself to a comparison of the two stories. Through an analysis of these stories, we can shed light on the halakhot of Sefer Vayikra in particular, and on the import of Jewish Law in general.

Towards the end of Parshat Emor, we encounter a short enigmatic story. A certain individual, the son of an Israelite mother and an Egyptian father, gets into a physical altercation with a full Israelite. During their struggle, the ben ish Mitzri, the son of the Egyptian, blasphemes the name of God. His ultimate punishment is to be put to death (Lev. 24:10-12, 23).

The book's other narrative recounts the fate of Nadav and Avihu, who brought an extraneous fire offering, and were consequently consumed by fire (Lev 10: 1-2). Nadav and Avihu were the ultimate insiders, eldest sons of the Kohen Gadol. Conversely, the ben ish Mitzri, who remains nameless, was on the periphery of Israelite society, the son of an Egyptian man and a wayward Israelite woman. Nadav and Avihu's only sin was engaging in overly ecstatic service of HaShem, while the ben ish Mitzri rejected HaShem out of hand. These stories are opposites, of two extremes. Yet both Nadav and Avihu and the ben ish Mitzri suffer the same consequence.

These stories serve as a framing mechanism for Sefer Vayikra as a whole. Both Aaron's sons and the ben ish Mitzri took extreme actions, the type of actions which our tradition teaches that we should avoid. Rambam writes that avoiding extremes and taking the derech yeshara, the middle path, is the surest way to follow in HaShem's ways.

Sefer Vayikra presents two cautionary tales, but its primary concern is with the antidote.

We may often get lost in the details and sheer volume of the laws presented in Sefer Vayikra, to say nothing of the much larger corpus of halakha compiled over the generations.

The placement of these two short stories in a law book underscores that halakha can be a guide for us, to avoid destructive extremes and lead us down an enlightened path.

Shabbat Shalom.

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<https://library.yct Torah.org/2022/05/kedoshim22>

Does Every Rabbi Enjoy Talking?

By Rabbi Moshe Rube *

"Why did you become a rabbi, Rabbi Rube?"

I get asked this question a lot, and while my motivations for doing so are multifaceted, I would say that one of my reasons is one I share with every person who decided to become a rabbi.

I enjoy talking.

It's one of life's greatest pleasures. I sometimes talk to myself for hours on end, and I'm so clever that I don't even understand what I'm saying. (Thank you Oscar Wilde for that quote.)

Whether others enjoy hearing me talk is another story. I can't vouch that every sermon or class I've given has caused pleasurable endorphins to surge in my audience's brains. But once in a while someone will come up to me and relate that they remembered an idea I spoke about. I then smile and grow an inch taller. Wouldn't you feel the same way?

This happened to me a few years ago when an old rabbinic classmate of mine emailed me saying he remembered a practice sermon I gave in a sermon class we took in Yeshiva University together. He wanted to get a copy of it. Needless to say, I was flattered.

I don't have the entire sermon on me right now but I do remember the gist of it. It was on our portion of Behar focusing on the mitzvah of shemittah or letting the land of Israel lie fallow for one full year out of every seven years. My analysis focused on how the Torah's language presents this mitzvah in a way that asks us to treat the land of Israel like we would treat another person.

Just like it's immoral for us to treat a person like our possession that we can use at will, so too the land must be given its space every now and then. Our attitude should be that letting the land rest is for the land's benefit, not ours.

For some reason, that message resonated with my old classmate enough to contact me about it, and I've always wondered why.

While motivations are multifaceted, perhaps it's worth looking at this idea now that this parsha has rolled around again for its yearly due. But don't worry. Now that I'm more aware of my enjoyment of speaking a lot, I will experiment and limit this exploration to a paragraph (or two).

While we like to think that we are "islands of self" as we go about in the world, the truth is we are not. We exist in a series of dynamic relationships both to the people around us and our possessions. As our surroundings shift and change, we learn new reactions, and we change as well. It's the difference between walking on a treadmill or walking out in nature. The experience of the latter requires more vigilance and us reacting to unexpected turns or small rocks in our way.

Maybe that contributes to that feeling of invigoration after a good walk outside (or meeting someone new). Not for nothing did our Sages say that if you want to change your fortune, change your place.

Recognizing this relationship we have with our environment, our Torah mandates respect not just for the land of Israel, but for our possessions. The Torah has a mandate against wanton destruction of objects called "Bal Tashchit" and the Talmud says that one who breaks an object in a fit of rage can be compared to an idolater. Our forefather Jacob was called righteous because he traveled back to get small jars that he forgot on his way back to Israel. The righteous recognize and appreciate that not only the people in their life but all of their possessions are to be treated as gifts, with the utmost respect and care. (Though I'm sure an exception can be made for a punching bag.)

So in one perspective we relate to the world as an extension of ourselves that we can use in whichever way we wish. But another perspective is to treat the world and all that's in it as an entity that we must relate to as we would another person.

Now I'm not going to join a commune anytime soon. Nor will I take anything you own because it's not really "yours." I trust that you know in what sense I'm talking here.

I also speak here not in a tone of hard and fast rules. It is up to us in our own lives to balance these two perspectives. Indeed, the Talmud says that it's good every now and then to say "The world was created for me." We all need to show respect for the world, but we also must recognize that our wills matter. Being too precious with our environment may not always be an expedient strategy at every time.

But performing this "balancing perspectives" act in our daily lives is something that I can't talk about for you. You need to talk to yourself for that. And who knows? Maybe you'll find yourself saying something so clever that you won't know what you're talking about.

Shabbat Shalom,

Rabbi Moshe Rube

P.S. I said I'd keep it to two paragraphs but it looks like I wrote six. Pretty fly for a rabbi.

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Rav Kook Torah Emor: Agents of Holiness

The Talmud in Nedarim 35b describes the kohanim as sheluchei didan, our agents. When they perform the Temple service, the kohanim act as our emissaries.

Yet this idea — that the kohanim act as agents for the Jewish people — appears to violate the legal definition of a shaliach. An agent acts on behalf of the one sending him (the principal), executing his wishes. The agent, however, can only do that which the principal himself is authorized to do.

So how can the kohanim perform the Temple service on our behalf, when we as non-kohanim are not permitted to serve there?

Potential vs. Actual

The parashah opens with a set of special directives for kohanim: "God spoke to Moses: Tell the kohanim, the sons of Aaron..." (Lev. 21:1). The text appears repetitive — "the kohanim, the sons of Aaron." Why does the text need to emphasize that the kohanim are descendants of Aaron?

These two terms — "kohanim" and "sons of Aaron" -- indicate two different aspects of the special sanctity of kohanim. The first is an intrinsic holiness, passed down from father to son. The phrase "sons of Aaron" refers to this inherent holiness.

The second aspect is an additional layer of holiness as expressed by a kohen's actual service in the Temple. This aspect is designated by the term "kohanim." The verb le-khahein means "to serve," so the word "kohanim" refers to their actual service in the Temple. Thus the term "sons of Aaron" refers to the kohanim's inherited potential, while "kohanim" refers to their actualized state of priestly service.

The Chalal

Usually a kohen will have both potential and actual kohanic-holiness. Yet there are certain situations that allow us to distinguish between the two.

A kohen is forbidden to marry a divorced woman. Should he nonetheless marry a divorcee, his son falls into a special category. He is called a chalal, from the word chilul, "to defile holiness." Despite his lineage as the son of a kohen, a chalal may not serve in the Temple.

Yet if a chalal went ahead and offered a korban, his offerings are accepted after the fact (Maimonides, Bi'at Mikdash 6:10). This is quite surprising. In general, a chalal has the legal status of a non-kohen. If a non-kohen brought an offering, his service would be disqualified. Why are a chalal's offerings accepted?

The distinction between potential and actual kohanic status, between "sons of Aaron" and "kohanim," allows us to understand the unusual status of a chalal. Due to the fact that he is the son of a divorcee, he has lost the actualized sanctity of a functioning kohen. But he still retains the inherited sanctity as a "son of Aaron." ¹ This intrinsic sanctity cannot be revoked. Therefore, while a chalal should not serve in the Temple, his offerings are accepted after the fact.

The Sages derived this ruling from Moses' blessing of the tribe of Levi:

"May God bless his strength (cheilo), and favor the acts of his hands" (Deut. 33:11).

Even the acts of those who are chulin, who have lost part of their kohanic sanctity, are still acceptable to God (Kiddushin 66b).

Our Agents

We may now understand the description of kohanim as sheluchei didan, "our agents." How can they be our emissaries in their Temple service when we ourselves are forbidden to perform this service?

In fact, the Torah speaks of the entire Jewish people as "a kingdom of kohanim" (Ex. 19:6). And Isaiah foresaw a future time in which "You will be called God's kohanim. They will speak of you as the ministers of our God" (Isaiah 61:6).

Non-kohanim may not serve in the Temple, for they lack the holiness of actual priesthood. Yet every Jew has the quality of potential kohanic holiness. Because this inner holiness will be revealed in the future, the entire people of Israel are called "God's kohanim." And it is due to this potential holiness that the kohanim are able to serve as our agents and perform the Temple service on our behalf.

Israel's Future Holiness

This understanding of the role of kohanim sheds a new light on the ceremony of Birkat Kohanim, the special priestly benediction (as described in Num. 6:23-27). The purpose of their blessing is to awaken the latent kohanic holiness that resides within each member of the Jewish people. As the kohanim extend their arms to bless the people, they reach out toward Israel's future state of holiness. Their outstretched arms — their zero'a netuyah — point to a future era, whose seeds (zera) are planted in the present.

"Via the established sanctity of kohanim in the nation, the entire nation will come to be a complete kingdom of kohanim and a holy people" (Olat Re'iyah vol. I, p. 61).

(Sapphire from the Land of Israel. Adapted from Shemuot HaRe'iyah, Emor (1930).)

1 That a chalal falls under the category of “the sons of Aaron” but not “kohanim” is seen in the Midrash Halachah quoted by Rashi: “One might think that chalalim are included. Therefore the verse says, ‘the kohanim’ — excluding chalalim [from the special laws of kohanim].”

<http://www.ravkooktorah.org/EMOR-71.htm>

In the Diary (Emor 5778)

By Lord Rabbi Jonathan Sacks, z”l, Former Chief Rabbi of the U.K.*

Time management is more than management and larger than time. It is about life itself. God gives us one thing above all: life itself. And He gives it to us all on equal terms. However rich we are, there are still only 24 hours in a day, 7 days in a week, and a span of years that, however long, is still all too short. Whoever we are, whatever we do, whatever gifts we have, the single most important fact about our life, on which all else depends, is how we spend our time.[1]

“The span of our life is seventy years, or if we are strong, eighty years,” says Psalm 90, and despite the massive reduction of premature deaths in the past century, the average life expectancy around the world, according to the most recent United Nations figures (2010-2015) is 71.5 years.[2] So, concludes the Psalm, “Teach us to number our days that we may get a heart of wisdom,” reminding us that time management is not simply a productivity tool. It is, in fact, a spiritual exercise.

Hence the following life-changing idea, which sounds simple, but isn’t. Do not rely exclusively on To Do lists. Use a diary. The most successful people schedule their most important tasks in their diary.[3] They know that if it isn’t in there, it won’t get done. To Do lists are useful, but not sufficient. They remind us of what we have to do but not when. They fail to distinguish between what is important and what is merely urgent. They clutter the mind with trivia and distract us when we ought to be focusing on the things that matter most in the long run. Only a diary connects what with when. And what applies to individuals applies to communities and cultures as a whole.

That is what the Jewish calendar is about. It is why chapter 23, in this week’s parsha, is so fundamental to the continued vitality of the Jewish people. It sets out a weekly, monthly and yearly schedule of sacred times. This is continued and extended in Parshat Behar to seven- and fifty-year schedules. The Torah forces us to remember what contemporary culture regularly forgets: that our lives must have dedicated times when we focus on the things that give life a meaning. And because we are social animals, the most important times are the ones we share. The Jewish calendar is precisely that: a structure of shared time.

We all need an identity, and every identity comes with a story. So we need a time when we remind ourselves of the story of where we came from and why we are who we are. That happens on Pesach, when we re-enact the founding moment of our people as they began their long walk to freedom.

We need a moral code, an internalised satellite navigation system to guide us through the wilderness of time. That is what we celebrate on Shavuot when we relive the moment when our ancestors stood at Sinai, made their covenant with God, and heard Heaven declare the Ten Commandments.

We need a regular reminder of the brevity of life itself, and hence the need to use time wisely. That is what we do on Rosh Hashanah as we stand before God in judgment and pray to be written in the Book of Life.

We need a time when we confront our faults, apologise for the wrong we have done, make amends, resolve to change, and ask for forgiveness. That is the work of Yom Kippur.

We need to remind ourselves that we are on a journey, that we are “strangers and sojourners” on earth, and that where we live is only a temporary dwelling. That is what we experience on Succot.

And we need, from time to time, to step back from the ceaseless pressures of work and find the rest in which we can celebrate our blessings, renew our relationships, and recover the full vigour of body and mind. That is Shabbat.

Doubtless, most people – at least, most reflective people – know that these things are important. But knowing is not enough. These are elements of a life that become real when we live them, not just when we know them. That is why they have to be in the diary, not just on a To Do list.

As Alain de Botton points out in his *Religion for Atheists*, we all know that it is important to mend broken relationships. But without Yom Kippur, there are psychological pressures that can make us endlessly delay such mending.[4] If we are the offended party, we may not want to show other people our hurt. It makes us look fragile, vulnerable. And if we are the offending party, it can be hard to admit our guilt, not least because we feel so guilty. As he puts it: “We can be so sorry that we find ourselves incapable of saying sorry.” The fact that Yom Kippur exists means that there is a day in the diary on which we have to do the mending – and this is made easier by the knowledge that everyone else is doing so likewise. In his words:

It is the day itself that is making us sit here and talk about the peculiar incident six months ago when you lied and I blustered and you accused me of insincerity and I made you cry, an incident that neither of us can quite forget but that we can't quite mention either and which has been slowly corroding the trust and love we once had for one another. It is the day that has given us the opportunity, indeed the responsibility, to stop talking of our usual business and to reopen a case we pretended to have put out of our minds. We are not satisfying ourselves, we are obeying the rules.[5] Exactly so: we are obeying the rules. We are following the Jewish calendar, which takes many of the most important truths about our lives and, instead of putting them on a To Do list, writes them in the diary.

What happens when you do not have that kind of diary? Contemporary Western secular society is a case-study in the consequences. People no longer tell the story of the nation. Hence national identities, especially in Europe, are almost a thing of the past –one reason for the return of the Far Right in countries like Austria, Holland and France.

People no longer share a moral code, which is why students in universities seek to ban speakers with whose views they disagree. When there is no shared code, there can be no reasoned argument, only the use of force.

As for remembering the brevity of life, Roman Krznaric reminds us that modern society is “geared to distract us from death. Advertising creates a world where everyone is forever young. We shunt the elderly away in care homes, out of sight and mind.” Death has become “a topic as taboo as sex was during the Victorian era.”[6]

Atonement and forgiveness have been driven out of public life, to be replaced by public shaming, courtesy of the social media. As for Shabbat, almost everywhere in the West the day of rest has been replaced by the sacred day of shopping, and rest itself replaced by the relentless tyranny of smartphones.

Fifty years ago, the most widespread prediction was that by now almost everything would have been automated. The work week would be down to 20 hours and our biggest problem would be what to do with all our leisure. Instead, most people today find themselves working harder than ever with less and less time to pursue the things that make life meaningful. As Leon Kass recently put it, people “still hope to find meaning in their lives,” but they are increasingly confused about “what a worthy life might look like, and about how they might be able to live one.”[7]

Hence the life-changing magic of the Jewish calendar. Philosophy seeks timeless truths. Judaism, by contrast, takes truths and translates them into time in the form of sacred, shared moments when we experience the great truths by living them. So: whatever you want to achieve, write it in the diary or it will not happen. And live by the Jewish calendar if you want to experience, not just occasionally think about, the things that give life a meaning.

FOOTNOTES:

[1] For an excellent recent book about the way our behaviour is governed by time, see Daniel Pink, *When: The Scientific Secrets of Perfect Timing*, Riverhead Books, 2018.

[2] https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List_of_countries_by_life_expectancy.

[3] See Kevin Kruse, *15 Secrets Successful People Know about Time Management*, 2017.

[4] Of course, Yom Kippur atones only for sins between us and God, not for those between us and our fellows. But it is a day when, traditionally, we seek to make amends for the latter also. Indeed most of the sins we confess in the long list, Al Cheit, are sins between humans and other humans.[5] Alain De Botton, Religion for Atheists, Hamish Hamilton, 2012, 55 – 56.

[6] Roman Krznaric, Carpe Diem Regained, Unbound, 2017, 22.

[7] Leon Kass, Leading a Worthy Life: Finding Meaning in Modern Times, Encounter Books, 2018, 9.

<https://www.rabbisacks.org/covenant-conversation/emor/in-the-diary/>

The Quest for Perfection: An Essay on Parshat Emor

By Adin Even-Israel, z"l (Steinsaltz)* © Chabad 2022

In the third section of Parshat Emor, we read about physical defects. From a halachic standpoint, the laws of defects apply both to the korbanot and the people who bring them; both the korban and the Priest must be free of physical defect, according to the principle that “any defect that disqualifies a man disqualifies an animal as well.”¹

But there is another law of this kind that adds substance to our topic, and that is that judges, at least in the Sanhedrin, must be free of physical defects: “Just as the court must be clean in respect of righteousness, so must they be clear of all physical defects.”² A person with a physical defect can be one of the greatest sages of Israel, but to be a judge he cannot have a defect.

This law applies not only to a defect that would interfere with one’s ability to function as a judge, but also to a defect that would not necessarily interfere with his work. A hunchback, even if he is one of the greatest sages of Israel, and however erudite he may be, cannot be a judge.

The term mufla appears in several talmudic sources in the context of the court system,³ but the meaning of the term is unclear. Margaliyot HaYam⁴ proposes that it refers to a great sage who, for a technical reason, cannot be a member of the court. For example, upon reaching a certain age, one is disqualified from being a member of the Sanhedrin that rules in capital cases. Also excluded is someone who is childless. Such a person could be the generation’s leading Torah scholar, but he cannot be a member of the Sanhedrin. According to this interpretation, all sorts of people acted as adjuncts to the Sanhedrin, people who for technical reasons could not be members.

In the case of the Temple, at least, there is logic in the law that a korban must be without defect, and the same logic would explain why the Priest, too, must be without defect. This is the idea of “Try presenting [a defective animal as an offering] to your governor. Will he be pleased with you or show you favor?”⁵ Many other factors can disqualify a korban, beyond those featured on the list of actual defects. For example, an old or foul-smelling animal is disqualified from being a korban, even though it may have no physical defect. Clearly, the reason for this is that it is not proper to present such a thing to G d. Since bringing a korban has an aspect of ceremony – “For I am a great King, says the G d of Hosts, and My Name is feared among the nations”⁶ – clearly it is an affront to the King if He is brought a defective korban. So, too, the King’s servants must be pleasant in appearance, because if they are not, it is a defect in the King’s honor.

In the Temple as well, there is an aspect of splendor. It is not a shtiebel where anyone can go in and act however he wants. It is a place that one enters with awe and reverence, which also includes external appearance. Hence, when a korban is brought, it must be free of any defect. The same goes for other features of the Temple; they must be the very best, because we are dealing here with the honor of G d Himself. Because of this, the Temple vessels were made of gold. Can’t G d use iron vessels? Rather, gold vessels are used because this is the place of G d’s kingship, and kingship goes together with splendor.

All the vessels used in the dwelling of the Divine Presence must be perfect. Hence, if the Altar has a defect – even as slight as a notch that disqualifies a slaughtering knife, a notch that only a fingernail can detect – the Altar is unfit for use.⁷ The Priest’s garments must be perfect as well, for the same reason.

To be sure, there is also the aspect of humility and lowliness in approaching G d, as we read, “A heartbroken and crushed, O L rd, You will not scorn,”⁸ but the Temple of the King is not the place for it. It could be that a wretched person is precious in the eyes of G d, but since externally he is full of defects, he may not enter the Temple and face the Divine Presence.

This explanation makes sense regarding the Temple, which is, in essence, the Sanctuary of the King, but why does the same rule apply to judges? Judges are generally esteemed for their wisdom, justness, and integrity – must they be pleasant in appearance as well?

A new mother once approached a certain rebbe in tears, holding her infant son who was born with crooked legs. The rebbe instructed her to relax, saying, “Don’t worry, he will have a straight head.” Indeed, the boy grew up to be a great rabbi, crooked legs and all.

The Shechina does not dwell in a defective place

We never know whether something that appears good is truly good. As it says, “Man sees what is visible, but G d sees into the heart.”⁹ The ability to see inwardly, into a person’s heart, belongs to G d alone.

Here, apparently, G d requires of those who do His will a level of completeness, and not only from a spiritual standpoint. We might think that spiritual perfection is all that is important in the service of G d, but it turns out that G d expects perfection in all areas from His servants. This does not mean that someone who is not perfect in every way is worthless in G d’s eyes. Rather, there are concentric circles of closeness to the Divine Presence, and in the innermost circle G d requires vessels that are whole, as it says in the Zohar, “The Shechina does not dwell in a defective place.”¹⁰ On a related note, what are the qualities required of a prophet? He must be “strong, wealthy, wise, and humble.”¹¹ That he is wise and humble is not sufficient; he must also be strong and wealthy. Why should the two latter qualities make a difference? Let us say that a person is not strong; he is a small, withered creature. Does that interfere with his heart and soul, or with his ability to serve as a prophet?! Troubled with its implication, Maimonides reinterprets this talmudic statement, explaining that “wealthy” refers to one who rejoices in his portion and “strong” refers to one who overcomes his evil inclination.¹² But this is obviously not the simple meaning of the talmudic text; it seems clear that the Talmud is actually talking about someone who is physically strong and wealthy in the monetary sense. Thus, the Talmud requires of a prophet – a vessel for receiving the Divine Presence – things that seem to be external qualities. He cannot receive the Divine Presence without these qualities because the “vessel” would then be incomplete.

The Talmud cites an interpretation that bears an incredible resemblance to a hasidic tale:

The court declared: “Today is Rosh HaShanah.” The Holy One, Blessed Be He, then told the ministering angels: “Set up a platform and let the advocates and accusers step up, for my children have announced that today is Rosh HaShanah.” The court then decided instead to put off [Rosh HaShanah] till the next day. The Holy One, Blessed Be He, then told the ministering angels: “Remove the platform and let the advocates and accusers go away, for my children have put off [the holiday] till tomorrow.” What is the source for this? “For it is a law for Israel, Judgment [Day] of the G d of Jacob.”¹³ If it is not law for Israel, then, as it were, it is not Judgment [Day] of the G d of Jacob.¹⁴

The point of this midrash is that the court’s power derives not only from the fact that the judges are Torah scholars but due to the fact that they become a kind of instrument for the Divine Presence. What they decide is an expression of G d’s will; it has an effect both above and below.

Because they have this power, judges are required to be worthy instruments. This clearly does not mean that the scholar who sits in court is a kind of prophet, but he must have some form of divine power in order to voice G d’s will in deciding Jewish law. A session of the court involves an aspect of the dwelling of G d’s presence, and therefore the court is also called *elohim*.¹⁵ For this reason, the ordination of Torah sages must be done specifically in the Land of Israel,¹⁶ and their full authority can be exercised only in the Stone Hall inside the Temple, and not when they leave it.

Inclination with creation

If we take all of these laws not just in their halachic context but also as the expression of G d’s true will, we may infer that He requires that those who approach Him be crowned in all forms of perfection.

In detailing the laws of blemished animals, the Torah says, "That which is crushed or mangled, torn or cut, you shall not offer to God, neither shall you do thus in your land."¹⁷ There are people whose whole approach to religious life is to be crushed and mangled, torn and cut. These people feel that the more they are downtrodden and oppressed, the more exalted and holy they become, and the greater their ability becomes to draw close to G d. In the above verse, G d says that the opposite is true; not only should such an animal not be offered to G d, but "neither shall you do thus in your land." G d does not want the crushed and mangled – neither inside nor outside.

We read in Psalms that "a heart broken and crushed, O L rd, You will not scorn."¹⁸ What is the relation between the "crushed and mangled" – of which it says "you shall not do thus in your land" – and "a heart broken and crushed"?

A broken heart is a person's self-evaluation, in relation to others and in relation to G d, and the result is the feeling that there is still much to accomplish. The opposite of a broken heart is what is called "obtuseness of the heart," as in the verse, "You grew fat, thick, and gross"¹⁹ ; it is the feeling of self-satisfaction, that everything is okay in one's life.

"Crushed and mangled" is someone who suppresses his drives – and along with them his ambition and creativity – which sometimes happens because of misplaced piety. Early Christian monks would often castrate themselves for this same reason – the desire to achieve holiness. Instead of struggling with one's evil inclination – a protracted struggle that can continue for years, in which one can never be certain that he is truly rid of the inclination – one simply removes the inclination entirely. One would think that this should be considered an exemplary act; it is certainly good-intentioned behavior. To be sure, there are inclinations that cannot be so easily cut off. Jealousy and honor, for example, are traits that cannot be eliminated from a person's consciousness. But if a safe, minor operation can solve the problem of sexual temptation forever, it would seem like the perfect solution to this problem.

Here, however, the verse teaches us not only that if a korban is bruised or crushed, it is then unfit to be brought before the King inside the Temple, but also that this approach should be taken in all areas of spiritual life.

Many baalei teshuvah face this very problem. They observe that since they have become observant, they have lost all of their creativity. When they were sinners, whether big or small, they were full of vitality and creativity. Afterward, when they accepted upon themselves the yoke of God's kingship, they became truly "crushed and mangled, torn and cut," with all the accompanying ramifications. They may have a much less powerful evil inclination, but they have rendered themselves impotent in terms of creating good in the world.

When a brilliant mathematician, artist, or writer decides to apply his mind to Torah study, we hope that he maintains his ability to produce wonderful things, as he did in the past. But if he adopts the religious attitude of being "crushed and mangled," his brilliance amounts to nothing. He becomes a kind of insignificant, lowly creature who wanders through the alleyways. This is true not only of baalei teshuvah, but also of those who merely decide to fill their hearts with pure religious devotion. They often begin to act crushed and stooped, small and broken.

What happened to willpower, volition, and desire? These traits can serve as tools for the evil inclination, but they can also be tools for creativity.

In this verse, G d answers, as it were, the question of whether it is advisable for a person to remove his evil inclination if it means simultaneously removing his creativity. "That which is crushed or mangled, torn or cut, you shall not offer to G d, neither shall you do thus in your land." This verse is also the source for the Torah's prohibition on castration, another indication that it is better to live with one's inclination rather than sacrifice one's creativity, whether in the Temple or elsewhere.

If a non-Jew wants to remove his evil inclination, we do not discourage him from doing so; neither is castration prohibited for non-Jews.²⁰ But for Jews, this is completely unacceptable. Similarly, a non-Jew's personal korban is only disqualified if it bears a significant defect, but for a Jew, any defect renders the korban unfit.

The Talmud states, "Neither shall you do thus in your land" – even to castrate a dog is forbidden.²¹ Not only is it forbidden to castrate an exalted personality of Israel, but even a dog – an insignificant, lowly creature that wanders around eating carcasses in the street – may not be castrated, because the yoke of G d's kingship does not mean being submissive, "crushed and mangled," even for one's animals.

One must constantly scrutinize where one is acting, where one is creating, and where one is living. In this parshah, G d pronounces that He wants only sound, healthy people to join Him in His house – the more whole and upright the better. Judges, too, must be free of both moral and physical defects. G d instructed Noah to take only healthy animals into the ark, and the same is true elsewhere as well. “Fortunate is the one You choose and bring near”²² ; G d wants those He chooses and brings near to be healthy and physically sound.

On the verse, “You are children of G d your L rd. Do not mutilate yourselves and do not make a bald patch in the middle of your head because of the dead,”²³ Rashi explains: “For you are children of the Omnipresent, and you should therefore be comely and not mutilated with hair torn out.” G d says that He wants His children to be beautiful, not full of cuts and marks. But isn’t inner beauty more important to G d than external beauty?

The truth is that we do not know the true reckoning of what is dearest to G d. What we do know is that He wants people who are crowned in perfection, inside and out; and the finer this perfection is, the better.

The requirement of perfection

The requirement that the members of the Sanhedrin be well versed in all fields and disciplines is not connected to their professional work. The Talmud describes R. Yochanan b. Zakkai as the consummate man; there was nothing that he did not study: “Great matters and small matters – ‘great matters’ refers to Maaseh Merkavah²⁴ ; ‘small matters’ refers to the discussions of Abaye and Rava, washermen’s tales and fox fables.”²⁵ That he studied Maaseh Merkavah and the discussions of Abaye and Rava is understandable, but why was it praiseworthy that he studied washermen’s tales – the jokes and stories that washermen tell while they work – and fox fables? Because the definition of perfection is “You shall be holy, for I am holy.”²⁶ Just as G d is crowned in all forms of perfection, He also wants those who do His will to be crowned in all forms of perfection.

The same requirements cannot be demanded of everyone; not everyone can be wise like Solomon, a prophet like Moses, or strong like Samson. But it is not too much to ask that everyone avoid being “crushed and mangled...blind, scabbed, or with scurvy.”²⁷

An ox that has two broken legs and limps is a lot less dangerous than a big, healthy ox. As a result, it may seem that this limping ox is more of a tzaddik; he is physically unable to commit the same acts of violence of which his healthier counterpart is capable. It stands to reason, then, that we should go further: Let us remove both of his eyes and perform a few other operations on him, so that he cannot cause any damage whatsoever. Why should such a tzaddik of an ox not be brought as a korban? But this is twisted thinking: Is this ox really an appropriate gift for G d?

Here we see what G d wants and what He does not want. He wants things that are physically sound, with all the risks that this entails. An ox that has not been castrated is incomparably more dangerous and much more difficult to harness. But G d does not want the castrated tzaddik; He wants the ox that is closest to perfection in all ways. If such an ox is dangerous – even murderous, at times – G d is willing to take this risk.

Incidentally, this does not mean that halachah condones bringing as a korban an animal that has acted violently or otherwise inappropriately. An animal that had relations with a person, or that was worshiped, or that was condemned to be stoned, is unfit to be offered. If an ox actually used its power to commit some kind of offense, it is disqualified. But only an ox that is healthy enough to do such things in the first place can be brought as a korban, unlike the limping ox with the broken legs.

We read in Psalms: “Ascribe to G d, O children of the mighty, ascribe to G d glory and strength.”²⁸ It is precisely the children of the mighty, the great and powerful people, the children of princes, who must ascribe glory to G d, because “the voice of G d comes in power, the voice of G d comes in majesty.”²⁹ Majesty and power demand a vessel that is capable of receiving them; broken vessels cannot bear them. That is the meaning of the verse, “the mighty in strength who do His bidding, hearkening unto the sound of His words.”³⁰

To be a korban and to be a Priest, one must be physically sound, along with the danger that this entails. For an animal to gore, to damage, or to have relations with a person is forbidden, but these despicable acts must be part of the whole range of possibilities. Only with the possibility of reaching what is truly evil can one fully achieve what is truly good.

The ramification, therefore, for the service of G d – how one should see himself – is this: When we walk “mournfully before G d,”³¹ when we live with excessive fear of heaven, we are essentially heaping defects upon ourselves. The Torah does not vilify such a person. If it is necessary to transport burdens upon him, he will hold up; if he is needed for slaughtering, he is still fit to be eaten. Here, however, whether the meat is kosher is not the issue; here the issue is holiness. For ordinary consumption, we are not required to procure only the choicest meat; neither is it necessary to find the perfect ox for work in the field. But when it comes to holiness, there is a different standard.

We do not have a Temple, we do not have the service of the Sanctuary, and we do not have a Sanhedrin. But we still have G d, and He remains the same: “I am G d – I have not changed.”³² He has not changed, and He still wants the same things.

FOOTNOTES:

1. Bechorot 43a.
2. Yevamot 101a.
3. E.g., Horayot 4b.
4. Sanhedrin 3b.
5. Mal. 1:8.
6. Mal. 1:14
7. Chullin 18a.
8. Ps. 51:19.
9. I Sam. 16:7.
10. Vayechi 216b.
11. Nedarim 38a.
12. Shemoneh Perakim, ch. 7.
13. Ps. 81:5
14. Y. Rosh HaShanah 1:3.
15. Sanhedrin 56b.
16. Sanhedrin 14a.
17. Lev. 22:24
18. Ps. 51:19.
19. Deut. 32:15.
20. Sanhedrin 56b.
21. Chagiga 14b.

22. Ps. 65:5.

23. Deut. 14:1

24. The workings of the divine chariot.

25. Sukka 28a.

26. Lev. 19:2.

27. Lev. 22:24.

28. Ps. 29:1.

29. Ps. 29:4.

30. Ps. 103:20.

31. Mal. 3:14.

32. Mal. 3:6.

* Rabbi Adin Even-Israel, z"l, (Steinsaltz) (1937-2020), one of the leading rabbis of this century and author of many books, was best known for his monumental translation of and commentary on the Talmud. © Chabad 2022.

https://www.chabad.org/parshah/article_cdo/aid/5106124/jewish/The-Quest-for-Perfection.htm

Emor: The Gentle Way to Educate
by Rabbi Moshe Wisniefsky * © Chabad 2022

G d spoke to Moses, saying, "Speak to Aaron." Leviticus 21:16-17

The Torah mainly uses two Hebrew words for "speaking." The first (dibur) is reserved for "hard speech," the straightforward, accurate delivery of the message. The second (amirah) is "soft speech," i.e., tailoring the message to its intended recipient in order to ensure that it is indeed received and clearly understood.

The first part of this section of the Torah, which contains the laws regarding the priests' duty to educate their children in the responsibilities of the priesthood, is couched exclusively in "soft speech." It is only when G d returns to the other laws concerning the priests that He once again uses "hard speech."

This teaches us that we must educate primarily with "soft speech." In order to be effective, educators must relate fully to their students and tailor their style of delivery accordingly.

G d's imperative regarding how the priests educate their youth applies to us all.

Whenever we see in someone a behavior or attitude that is in need of inspiration or correction, we are immediately cast by Divine providence in the role of educator.

In all such cases, we must remember G d's instruction to make exclusive use of "soft speech."

* — from *Daily Wisdom*

Gut Shabbos,

Rabbi Yosef B. Friedman

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Covenant and Conversation

Rabbi Jonathan Sacks, z"l

Radical Uncertainty

There is something very strange about the festival of Succot, of which our parsha is the primary source. On the one hand, it is the festival supremely associated with joy. It is the only festival in our parsha that mentions rejoicing: "And you shall rejoice before the Lord your God seven days" (Lev. 23:40). In the Torah as a whole, joy is mentioned not at all in relation to Rosh Hashanah, Yom Kippur or Pesach, once in connection with Shavuot and three times in connection with Succot. Hence its name: z'man simchatenu, the festival of our joy.

Yet what it recalls is one of the more negative elements of the wilderness years: "You shall live in booths seven days; all citizens in Israel shall live in booths, so that future generations may know that I made the Israelites live in booths when I brought them out of the land of Egypt, I the Lord your God." (Lev. 23:42-43)

For forty years, the Israelites lived without permanent homes, often on the move. They were in the wilderness, in no man's land, where it is hard to know what to expect and what dangers lie in wait along the way. To be sure, the people lived under Divine protection. But they could never be sure in advance whether it would be forthcoming and what form this protection might take. It was a prolonged period of insecurity.

How then are we to understand the fact that Succot of all festivals is called z'man simchatenu, the festival of our joy? It would have made sense to call Pesach – freedom's birthday – the festival of joy. It would have made sense to call Shavuot – the day of revelation at Sinai – the festival of joy. But why give that title to a festival that commemorates forty years of exposure to the heat, cold, wind and rain. Remembering that, why should we feel joy?

Besides which, what was the miracle? Pesach and Shavuot recall miracles. But travelling through the wilderness with only temporary homes was neither miraculous nor unique. That is what people who travel through the wilderness do. They must. They are on a journey. They can only have a temporary dwelling. In this respect there was nothing special about the Israelites' experience.

It was this consideration that led Rabbi Eliezer[1] to suggest that the succah represents the Clouds of Glory, ananei kavod, that accompanied the Israelites during those years, sheltering them from heat and cold, protecting

them from their enemies, and guiding them on the way. This is a beautiful and imaginative solution to the problem. It identifies a miracle and explains why a festival should be dedicated to remembering it. That is why Rashi and Ramban take it as the plain sense of the verse.

But it is difficult, nonetheless. A succah looks nothing like the Clouds of Glory. It would be hard to imagine anything less like the Clouds of Glory. The connection between a succah and Clouds of Glory comes not from the Torah but from the book of Isaiah, referring not to the past but to the future:

Then the Lord will create over all of Mount Zion and over those who assemble there a cloud of smoke by day and a glow of flaming fire by night; over everything the glory will be a canopy. It will be a succah for shade from heat by day, and a shelter and hiding place from the storm and rain. (Is. 4:5-6)

Rabbi Akiva dissents from Rabbi Eliezer's view and says that a succah is what it says it is: a hut, a booth, a temporary dwelling.[2] What, according to Rabbi Akiva, was the miracle? There is no way of knowing the answer. But we can guess.

If a succah represents the Clouds of Glory – the view of Rabbi Eliezer – then it celebrates God's miracle. If it represents nothing other than a succah itself – Rabbi Akiva's view – then it celebrates the human miracle of which Jeremiah spoke when he said: "Thus said the Lord, 'I remember the devotion of your youth, how as a bride you loved Me and followed Me in the wilderness, through a land not sown'" (Jer. 2:2).

The Israelites may have complained and rebelled. But they followed God. They kept going. Like Abraham and Sarah, they were prepared to journey into the unknown.

If we understand this to be the miracle, we can infer a deep truth about faith itself. Faith is not certainty. Faith is the courage to live with uncertainty. Almost every phase of the exodus was fraught with difficulties, real or imagined. That is what makes the Torah so powerful. It does not pretend that life is any easier than it is. The road is not straight and the journey is long. Unexpected things happen. Crises suddenly appear. It becomes important to embed in a people's memory the knowledge that we can handle the unknown. God is with us, giving us the courage we need.

Each Succot it is as if God were reminding us: don't think you need solid walls to make you

feel safe. I led your ancestors through the desert so that they would never forget the journey they had to make and the obstacles they had to overcome to get to this land. He said, "I made the Israelites live in booths when I brought them out of the land of Egypt." (Lev. 23:43) In those booths, fragile and open to the elements, the Israelites learnt the courage to live with uncertainty.

Other nations told stories that celebrated their strength. They built palaces and castles as expressions of invincibility. The Jewish people was different. They carried with them a story about the uncertainties and hazards of history. They spoke of their ancestors' journey through the wilderness without homes, houses, protection against the elements. It is a story of spiritual strength, not military strength.

Succot is a testament to the Jewish people's survival. Even if it loses its land and is cast again into the wilderness, it will lose neither heart nor hope. It will remember that it spent its early years as a nation living in a succah, a temporary dwelling exposed to the elements. It will know that in the wilderness, no encampment is permanent. It will keep travelling until once again it reaches the promised land: Israel, home.

It is no accident that the Jewish people is the only one to have survived 2,000 years of exile and dispersion, its identity intact and energy unabated. It is the only people who can live in a shack with leaves as a roof and yet feel surrounded by clouds of glory. It is the only people who can live in a temporary dwelling and yet rejoice.

Economist John Kay and former Governor of the Bank of England Mervyn King published a book, Radical Uncertainty.[3] In it they make the distinction between risk, which is calculable, and uncertainty, which is not. They argue that people have relied too much on calculations of probability while neglecting the fact that danger may appear from a completely unexpected source. The sudden appearance of the Coronavirus just as their book appeared proved their point. People knew there was a possibility of a pandemic. But no one knew what it would be like, where it would come from, how rapidly it would spread, and what toll it would take.

More important than the calculation of probabilities, they say, is understanding the

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situation, answering the question, “What is going on?”[4] This, they say, is never answered by statistics or predictions but rather by narrative, by telling a story.

That is exactly what Succot is about. It is a story about uncertainty. It tells us that we can know everything else, but we will never know what tomorrow will bring. Time is a journey across a wilderness.

On Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur we pray to be written into the Book of Life. On Succot we rejoice because we believe we have received a positive answer to our prayer. But as we turn to face the coming year, we acknowledge at the outset that life is fragile, vulnerable in a dozen different ways. We do not know what our health will be, what our career or livelihood will be, or what will happen to society and to the world. We cannot escape exposure to risk. That is what life is.

The succah symbolises living with unpredictability. Succot is the festival of radical uncertainty. But it places it within the framework of a narrative, exactly as Kay and King suggest. It tells us that though we journey through a wilderness, we as a people will reach our destination. If we see life through the eyes of faith, we will know we are surrounded by clouds of glory. Amid uncertainty we will find ourselves able to rejoice. We need no castles for protection or palaces for glory. A humble succah will do, for when we sit within it, we sit beneath what the Zohar calls “the shade of faith.”

I believe that the experience of leaving the protection of a house and entering the exposure of the succah is a way of taming our fear of the unknown. It says: We have been here before. We are all travellers on a journey. The Divine Presence is with us. We need not be afraid. That is a source of the resilience we need in our interconnected, hazardous, radically uncertain world.

[1] Succah 11b.

[2] Succah 11b.

[3] John Kay and Mervyn King, *Radical Uncertainty*, Bridge Street Press, 2020.

[4] The authors derive this idea from Richard Rumelt, *Good Strategy/Bad Strategy*, Crown, 2011.

The Person in the Parsha **Rabbi Dr. Tzvi Hersh Weinreb**

Like All Other Boys

The custom is fairly prevalent nowadays, but it was not a common practice thirty years ago when my friend raised his sons. He would seek out especially pious rabbis, generally quite elderly ones, to request that they bless his children.

In keeping with tradition, these rabbis would place a hand upon the head of the little boy, perhaps quote a biblical verse or two expressing blessing, and then say something like, “May he grow up to be a talmid chacham, an excellent Torah student.” Sometimes, they

would say, “May he grow up to be an ehrliche yid, a righteous Jew.”

But I will never forget the day that my friend and his young son encountered Rabbi Israel Gustman, of blessed memory, and requested a blessing from him. I will remember that day because my friend came to me just moments after he received the blessing and asked me what I thought the old rabbi meant by it.

For, you see, the rabbi gave a blessing which was unprecedented and unexpected. He did place his hand upon my friend’s son’s head, and did utter an appropriate biblical verse. But then he said something quite puzzling: “May he grow up to be a boy like all other boys.”

I don’t know why my friend considered me an expert on rabbinic blessings. And I must confess to you, dear reader, as I confessed to him, that I hadn’t a clue as to what the old revered rabbi meant and why he would deliver such an unusual blessing instead of a more traditional one. I also must admit that it took me quite a while until I became convinced that I understood the meaning of the rabbi’s mysterious message.

Understanding that message required the knowledge of a verse in this week’s Torah portion, Emor (Leviticus 21:1-24:23). It also required knowing something about Rabbi Gustman’s tragic life.

The verse to which I refer reads, “You shall not profane My holy name, that I may be sanctified in the midst of the Israelite people...” (Leviticus 22:32). This verse is the source text for two opposing concepts which lie at the core of Jewish belief. One concept, the negative one, is chillul Hashem, the profanation of God’s name, behavior which disgraces the Divine reputation. The opposite concept is kiddush Hashem, behavior which sanctifies God’s name and thus brings prestige and honor to Him.

Before providing illustrations of the types of behavior that might either profane or sanctify God, let me give you a brief sketch of Rabbi Gustman’s biography. He was a brilliant Talmud student in the yeshiva he attended. As a very young man, he was betrothed to the daughter of the rabbi of one of the small suburbs of the great prewar Jewish metropolis of Vilna. Soon after his marriage, his father-in-law died, leaving the position of rabbi of that community to his son-in-law, Rabbi Israel.

The towering rabbinic figure in Vilna in those immediate prewar years was Rabbi Chaim Ozer Grodzenski. Rabbi Chaim Ozer was so impressed by this young man that, despite his age, he included him in his rabbinic court. Soon afterwards, the war broke out. Rabbi Gustman managed to survive by hiding in an array of unimaginable circumstances—in the forest, in a cave, in a pig pen, and in the abandoned ghetto of Vilna. In the course of his

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flight and evasion of the Nazis, his little son was murdered in front of his eyes. He would recount the story of how he witnessed his son’s murder and of how he was forced to take his dead son’s shoes and sell them for food.

Rabbi Gustman survived the Holocaust, emigrated to the United States, and eventually settled in Israel. There, he lived and taught in a small yeshiva in Jerusalem and experienced the various wars of those years. He carefully and compassionately made it his business to comfort the bereaved parents of fallen soldiers by sharing with them his grief over his own fallen son.

He was overheard telling a particular bereaved father that in a certain sense, his soldier son was superior to the rabbi’s own son. “Both your boy and mine,” he said, “sanctified God’s name by their death. They were both killed because they were Jews. But in the synagogue in heaven, where they both reside now, my son is sitting in the pews. Your son is the shaliach tzibbur, the prayer leader. This is because my son died as a passive victim, whereas your son died as a hero, leading a group of soldiers in defense of our land and our people.”

These two boys performed the mitzvah of kiddush Hashem by virtue of their death. But that is only one way to perform that mitzvah. There is another way to perform the mitzvah of kiddush Hashem, and that is by sanctifying God’s name not in death, but in life, by living one’s daily life in a meritorious fashion.

The Talmud, for example, tells us of one great sage who felt that had he purchased meat in a butcher store on credit, without paying immediately, he would be guilty of profaning God’s name. By simply paying his bills immediately, not allowing anyone to suspect that he was taking advantage of his rabbinical position, he was performing the mitzvah of kiddush Hashem.

The Mishnah in the tractate of Megilah teaches us that when a Jew simply attends the synagogue and participates in the recitation of the devarim shebekedusha, the sacred passages of our liturgy, he is fulfilling the mitzvah referred to in our verse, sanctifying God through his prayers.

Thus, there are ways to sanctify God not by suffering a martyr’s death, but by living an ethical and spiritual life. The Talmud says that should others comment favorably on a person’s behavior, complimenting his parents for having raised him in the path of the Torah, that person has sanctified and glorified God’s name.

Now we are in a position to understand the seemingly strange blessing which Rabbi Gustman gave my friend’s little boy. “I bless you”, he was saying, “that you just be like other boys, like boys in peaceful times. I bless you that you not suffer times of persecution and that you never need to experience the

battlefield. I bless you that you sanctify God in your ordinary life, in life and not, God forbid, in tragic death.”

In his blessing, he envisioned a time when little boys would not have to grow up to be soldiers and would not be hunted down and shot as his son was. He foresaw a time when this boy could be like other boys, living an ordinary life, full of living acts of kiddush Hashem.

During the past several weeks, Jewish people have commemorated the kiddush Hashem of Rabbi Gustman’s son, a Holocaust victim, by observing Yom HaShoah. We also commemorated the kiddush Hashem of the young soldier whose bereaved father Rabbi Gustman so poignantly consoled by observing Yom HaZikaron.

We all pray for the time when boys will not be forced to perform the mitzvah of kiddush Hashem by giving up their lives, but will be able to do so by living their lives; a time when “boys will just be like other boys,” allowed to emerge from their childhood alive and well, entering adulthood in a world at peace, able to sanctify God in their faith and in their noble accomplishments.

Torah.Org: Rabbi Yissocher Frand

The Zohar Reveals the Blasphemer's Identity

At the end of Parshas Emor, there is a very peculiar story of the son of a Jewish woman, whose father was an Egyptian, getting into a fight with another Jew. In the course of the argument, the son of the Jewish woman blasphemed (Megadef) the name of G-d and was brought before Moshe. The Torah says that the name of the mother of this blasphemer was Shlomis bas Divri from the Tribe of Dan. The man was put in jail until they would hear from the Ribono shel Olam what to do in such a case.

Who was this fellow, and why, when he got into a fight with this other Jew, did he curse the Almighty? We might expect him to curse the fellow he was fighting with, but why did he suddenly curse the Shem HaShem? What is going on here?

Rabbeinu Bachaye and other commentaries as well (all based on the Zohar) explain that the history of this fellow goes all the way back to the days of Egyptian bondage. We are familiar with the Biblical personage of Dasan (as in Dasan and Aviram – troublemakers from way back). An Egyptian taskmaster entered Dasan’s tent early one morning to rouse him to get out of bed and go to work. This Egyptian laid eyes on Dasan’s sleeping wife. He pretends that he is her husband, and climbs into bed with her in the pitch-black tent. She became pregnant from that episode.

Dasan returned to the tent and found the Egyptian in bed with his wife. The two got into

a serious altercation and the Egyptian was about to kill Dasan, because he didn’t want anyone to find out what he did. The young Moshe passed by and saw what was happening. Moshe rescued Dasan by killing the Egyptian. This is the famous incident in Chapter 2 of the Book of Shemos.

Chazal say that Moshe used the Shem HaMeforash (the Explicit Divine Name) to kill the Egyptian. Fast forward quite a few years, to the period of the Wilderness. This fellow who blasphemed the name of Hashem was the product of that early morning union between the Egyptian and Dasan’s wife. He knows he has an Egyptian father, and he knows he has a Jewish mother. He meets another Jew. Who is this other Jew? The Zohar says that this other Jew is now married to Shlomis bas Divri – i.e., the present husband of this Blasphemer’s mother!

This second husband tells Shlomis’ son, “You know how your father (the Egyptian) died? Moshe cursed him with the Shem HaShem!” The son is astonished: “Moshe Rabbeinu killed my father with the Name of Hashem? I, then, am going to curse the Name of Hashem!”

That is how this incident transpired! That is the history behind the story of the Megadef! How does the Torah describe the resolution of this incident?

“Remove the blasphemer to the outside of the camp, and all those who heard shall lean their hands upon his head: The entire assembly shall stone him.” [Vayikra 24:14] Then the Torah launches into what appears to be a superfluous discussion of Halachos that are not even relevant to the incident at hand. It says what to do with a person who blasphemes. Then it says if someone kills someone, he needs to be put to death; if someone kills someone’s animal, he must pay monetary compensation. If a person wounds another person, he must pay compensation. This digression continues for several pesukim and then concludes with the words “Ki ani Hashem Elokeichem” (for I, Hashem, am your G-d) [Vayikra 24:22].

Most of this is superfluous. It is not needed here, and we also know it already. All that we need to know here is what the punishment is for a person who blasphemes the name of Hashem. Why does the Torah need to repeat the laws of murder and of property damage and of wounding someone?

On top of that, what is the point of the final pasuk, “There shall be one law for you, it shall be for convert and native alike, for I, Hashem, am your G-d”? There are 36 times in the Torah where the Torah equates the Ger (convert) and the Ezrach (citizen). Every one of those times, the point is explicitly made because there was some reason to think that this rule would not apply in that specific instance. Why should there be any difference between native Jew and

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convert in the matters mentioned in the prior five pesukim [Vayikra 24:17-21]?

The sefer Mor U’Ketzia suggests an interesting interpretation of what is happening here: After saying “When you curse My Name, you shall be put to death”, the Torah wishes to establish that the Almighty is not only particular about His own honor. “I care about the honor and wellbeing of every Jew!” Therefore, when the Torah metes out the punishment of a person who blasphemes the name of HaShem, the Ribono shel Olam says “I want you to know that it is not just because I am G-d and you are merely human beings.” No, the Torah needs to emphasize over here, once again, that human beings are also Tzelem Elokim (made in the Image of the Ribono shel Olam). “An attack on another human being is really an attack on Me.”

Indeed, the Talmud states: Whoever slaps the cheek of a fellow man, it is as if he slapped the cheek of the Shechina [Bava Kama 90a]. Everyone is G-d-like. Therefore, if you kill someone, you need to pay for it with your life. If you hurt someone, you need to pay for it. If you even damage the property of someone, you need to pay for it. With the Almighty, the consideration is “B’Zelem Elokim asa es haAdam.” [Bereshis 9:6] And “One who slaps the cheek of his fellow man is as if he slapped the Shechina.”

Rav Moshe Feinstein, in his sefer, Darash Moshe, deals with the same question but has somewhat of a different take on the matter: The Torah says that a man is to death. Before taking such a harsh step, a person needs to carefully review the laws of what it means to be a human being. Before executing a Jew, a person needs to remind himself that life is precious. Taking a human life – which is necessary in some situations – needs to be done with the greatest Koved Rosh and the greatest seriousness. Under normal circumstances, if you kill someone, you should be put to death and if you hurt someone, you should be punished. If you even hurt his property, you should be punished. In the situation of blasphemy, this person needs to be killed, but minimizing the Tzelem Elokim of another person should never be taken lightly.

Rabbi Mordechai Kamenetsky cites a very interesting idea that echoes this thought:

Rav Yehoshua Leib Diskin was one of the first Rabbonim of the city of Brisk. He had a custom that before he would sit down to his meal Friday night, he would review all of Maseches Shabbos. Maseches Shabbos has 156 blatt! I am sure he did not need to take out a Gemara and turn all the pages. What did he do? He sat there and mentally reviewed page after page. He was about to begin Shabbos. There are innumerable laws with intricate detail. So he chazered Maseches Shabbos each and every week before beginning his Seudas Shabbos.

One time, he was taking a little longer than usual (Perhaps he got stuck on a Tosfos or something). The Rebbetzin came into him and said, “Rebbe, the guests are hungry. They are sitting at the table. They are not reviewing Maseches Shabbos. Can’t you for once forgo your custom and not review the whole Masechta before starting the Seuda?”

He heard what his wife said and then started mumbling again. He told her, “If this is something I have always been doing and now you are asking me to stop—it becomes a shaylah of Nedarim (vows). I need to review Maseches Nedarim now to see if I am allowed to suspend my Minhag!”

We see from this story that when someone is about to begin Shabbos, he needs to remind himself about the severity of the halachos of Shabbos, and when someone is about to cancel a minhag, he needs to remind himself about the severity of the laws of Nedarim. The Torah says here: You are going to take a human life; you need to remind yourself of the severity of any loss of human life or property. Human life should never be taken lightly!

Dvar Torah

Chief Rabbi Ephraim Mirvis

Where do we have a mitzvah to count? In Parshat Emor (Vayikra 23:15) the Torah tells us, “Usfartem lachem,” – “Count for yourselves,” meaning that from the second day of Pesach until the festival of Shavuot we must count forty nine days. Why do we have such an imperative within the 613 mitzvot of the Torah?

Number our days - believe that we can provide an answer from Psalm 90:12 which states,

“Limnot yameinu kein hoda,” – “Teach us, Hashem, to number our days,” indicating that when we look at our lives we shouldn’t consider ourselves to be a certain number of years old but rather, a certain number of days old.

This was certainly the outlook of the founder of our faith, Avraham Avinu. In Parshat Chayei Sara (Bereishit 24:1), the Torah tells us, “V’avraham zakain, ba b’yamin,” – “Abraham was old, having lived for many days.”

It was in similar fashion that Pharaoh noticed that this was the key characteristic of Yaakov Avinu, Jacob our Patriarch, and so Pharaoh said to him (Bereishit 27:8), “Kama yemei sh’nei chayeicha?” – “How many are the days of the years of your life?”

Wise hearted - Avraham, Yitzchak and Yaakov utilised every single day advantageously. How can we make the most of every single moment? The answer comes in the

continuation of the verse of Psalm 90:12, “Limnot yameinu kein hoda,” – “Teach us to number our days,” “V’navi levav chochma,” – “in order that we should become wise hearted.”

In all other languages either you are wise with your mind or compassionate with your heart, but in our tradition we strive to become wise hearted, fusing together the finest capacities of thought and compassion so that we can believe with feeling, and become a blessing to the world.

That is what the tefillin represent. We have a ‘tefillin shel rosh’ on top of our heads and a ‘tefillin shel yad’ on our hand, which faces the heart.

During this period of the Omer we recall what the Talmud tells us about the students of Rabbi Akiva who were brilliant in their minds and yet not sufficiently compassionate in their hearts. That is why we mourn throughout this period. Therefore Hashem gives us a mitzvah to count days in order to make the most of every single one, so that we should become wise hearted and a blessing to our environment, teaching us that if we count our days, we can make our days count.

Rabbi Dr. Nachum Amsel **Encyclopedia of Jewish Values***

Jewish Attitude to Animals

In discussing the sacrifices, the Tora in this week’s Parsha forbids slaughtering a cow or a sheep, along with its offspring on the very same day (Leviticus 22:28). What is the idea behind this seemingly strange Halacha-Jewish law? The Tiferet Yehonatan commentary quotes the famous poet Kalir as explaining that God commanded this as a measure of mercy for the cow. What is this mercy? Possibly the greatest torture the Nazis inflicted was forcing a child to watch his or her parents being killed, or force parents watch the death of their children. This is one of the most horrible and painful experiences a person could go through. In a comparable manner, the Torah forbids the slaughter of an animal and its offspring on the same day. Since animals that were to be slaughtered on a particular day were all taken together at the same time, the Torah effectively prevented either the child seeing the parent killed, or vice versa, by prohibiting slaughter of parent and offspring on the same day. Can this really be a reason for this Mitzvah? Do animals really have feelings and is Judaism sensitive to these feelings? How does traditional Judaism view animal in general?

One of the ways in which man knows how to behave and feel is to imitate the actions and “feelings” of God Himself (Deuteronomy 28:9 and Maimonides, Mishne Torah, Hilchot De’ot 1:6). There are many verses that reflect God’s special sensitivity to animals. The verse in the Psalms (Psalms 145:9) says that God is good to all things and has mercy upon all His creatures.

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God promises beautiful crops not only for man but also for the animals to eat (Psalms 145:9). When Bilaam hit his donkey for refusing to move, the angel (God’s agent) got angry at him for striking the animal (Numbers 22:32). Therefore, we can see a specific benevolent, merciful, and caring attitude by God to animals. Like God, man should possess a similar attitude. In fact, the Proverbs describes a righteous person as understanding the “soul” (the feelings?) of his animals (Proverbs 12:10). Thus, even if animal does not possess feelings similar to man’s, the Torah wants Jews to develop a special sensitivity to animals.

However, Judaism does not merely believe in nice feelings and attitudes. These attitudes must be reflected in a Jew’s actions. Therefore, the Torah also commands the Jew to perform other Mitzvot (in addition to not slaughtering both on the same day) that teach the sensitivity towards animals. For example, this attitude is clearly translated into action as the Torah places the feeding of animals before the feeding of man (Deuteronomy 11:15). The Talmud says that this order teaches us that the Jew is to feed his animals before he even feeds himself (Gittin 62a). This statement in the Talmud is adopted into actual practice in Judaism (Maimonides, Hilchot Avadim 9:8 and Magen Avraham, Shulchan Aruch, Orach Chaim 167:18). According to the Jerusalem Talmud (Jerusalem Talmud, Yevamot 78a), a person may not even buy an animal unless food preparation for that animal has been arranged in advance.

Like the commandment in our Parsha about slaughtering, the commandment to send away the mother bird before taking the eggs in the nest (Deuteronomy 22:6-7) sends a message to man to have mercy on a mother bird and not let her see her eggs being taken from her. Two different animals from distinct species are not permitted to be used to plow at the same time (Deuteronomy 22:10). According to the implication of Sefer Hachinuch (Chinuch, Mitzvah 550), since different species of animals plow at different rates, putting two different species together will inevitably cause pain for the animals. It is for this reason that it is forbidden.

It also seems that the needs of an animal, even a stranger’s animal, comes before a person’s own feelings. The Torah commands a Jew to help an animal that has a burden, whether helping to load the animal or unload the animal (Exodus 23:5). Since an animal already carrying a burden is in more pain, the Mitzvah is to help unload an animal takes precedence over helping to load an animal (Maimonides, Hilchot Rotze’ach 13:13).

Animals Are Treated Like People - The Torah shows compassion for animals in a manner similar to the compassion it shows for human beings. In fact, there are number of Mitzvot that seem to apply equally to animals and to man. For example, a worker who works in the field collecting food may not be deprived of food as he or she works and may eat freely while

working (if he does not put any away to eat later). The Torah understood that a person cannot be asked to be around food all day and then deprive him or her from partaking of that food (Deuteronomy 23:25). In an analogous manner, an animal that works in the field around food may not be muzzled so that he is deprived of eating food (Deuteronomy 25:4). Just as the Jew is commanded to rest on the Sabbath, the Torah goes out of its way to state that an animal must also rest on the Shabbat, to equate the animals, in this aspect of Shabbat, with man (Exodus 20:9-10 in the Ten Commandments and again in Deuteronomy 5:13).

How Then is Man Allowed to Use and Eat Animals? - If the Torah is indeed so sensitive to the feelings and needs of animals, then shouldn't it have prohibited the use of animals for any human activity altogether, and certainly not permitted the eating of animals? In the very first commandment to man, the Torah clearly establishes the general relationship between man and animal (Genesis 1:28). Man is to rule over and dominate the fish, birds, and all animals in the world. This implies that man can certainly use animals for his benefit. Later, the Torah gives man permission to eat animals (Genesis 9:3). On the one hand, we see an overwhelming sensitivity for the concerns and even the feelings of animals. On the other hand, man can use animals as he sees fit, without any thought for the animal. It is precisely both these attitudes that combine to form the Torah's view towards animals. Although man has the right to use animals for legitimate purposes, he must, at the same time, never lose his sensitivity to animals. Man must care about the animal and show his care by using the animals only when necessary. Even when it is necessary to cause pain to the animal, it must be done in the least painful way possible.

Tzar Baalei Chaim - The Torah view, which balances the right of man to use animals for legitimate human need while retaining a proper sensitivity to animals, leads to a general prohibition called Tzar Baalei Chaim which prohibits man from needlessly causing an animal pain. Some of the commandments previously mentioned explicitly demonstrate this concept of avoiding needless pain of the animal. These include the prohibition of working together two different species in the field, the intricate laws of the slaughtering process and the need to help an animal load and unload. Sefer HaChinuch says the reason the Torah forbids crossbreeding animals is to eliminate the pain the caused to the breeding animals (Sefer HaChinuch, Mitzvah 550). However, the purview of this concept extends far beyond the specific commandments mentioned in the Torah. Anytime a human being needlessly hurts an animal or hurts an animal more than necessary, he or she violates this principle (Bava Metzia 32a).

So, then, Do Animals Have Feelings? - Psychologists continue to debate to this very day if animals have true feelings and emotions as do

human beings, or do animals just seem to react emotionally out a basic instinct. This has not been resolved in the secular world. In the Jewish world, the same controversy can also be found. One source says that animals have no evil inclination (Avot DeRabbi Natan 15). This seems to imply that an animal cannot have the same type of feelings and emotions as a person, since many human feelings relate to man's ability to do good and evil. On the other hand, all the previous concepts discussed also seem to imply that an animal does feel psychological pain as well as physical pain (for example, a mother bird not watching her eggs being taken or an animal not seeing offspring being killed, etc.). If animals have feelings, we can understand the underlying Torah reason for these commandments. However, if animals do not feel the pain of losing a child, for example, why did God command these Mitzvot?

Sefer HaChinuch answers this question by saying that how we treat animals trains man to treat his fellow human being with more sensitivity (Sefer HaChinuch, Mitzvot 80 and 596). The purpose of sending away the mother is to instill the quality of mercy in ourselves, and remove cruelty from ourselves (Sefer Hachinuch, Mitzvah 294). If man will treat an animal with care, compassion and tenderness, man will certainly treat his fellow human being at least equally well. Sefer HaChinuch also says that keeping the Mitzvot regarding animals will also cause man to appreciate God more and come closer to Him (Sefer Hachinuch, Mitzvah 545). The reverse is also true. The Talmud states that for a man who has mercy upon animals, God will show special mercy upon him (Shabbat 151b). Therefore, even if animals do not have true "human" feelings, treating them with human compassion (as if they had feelings) benefits man.

The debate whether animals have real feelings may be the focus of an argument in the Talmud (Megillah 25a). The Mishna states that one may not say that God has mercy on the bird. The Talmudic passage debates why this is prohibited. One opinion says the reason is that if we are to single out the bird as the object of God's mercy, all other creatures will be jealous. The other opinion explains that we cannot give reasons for commandments -- they are commands without meaning. If we adopt the jealousy argument, we can deduce that animals do have feelings such as jealousy, etc. The second argument, however, may presuppose animals have no feelings. In either case, performance of Mitzvot relating to animals should have great meaning for human beings.

***This column has been adapted from a series of volumes written by Rabbi Dr. Nachum Amsel "The Encyclopedia of Jewish Values" available from Urim and Amazon. For the full article or to review all the footnotes in the original, contact the author at nachum@jewishdestiny.com**

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Ohr Torah Stone Dvar Torah

Process and Produce: Making Meaning from Grain - Sara Tillinger Wolkenfeld

One of the most profound stories about pedagogy in the Talmud appears in Bava Metzia (85b), in the form of an argument between Rabbi Chanina and Rabbi Chiya about who is the greater teacher of Torah. "Were Torah to be forgotten from all of Israel, Rabbi Chanina says, "I would be able to reconstruct it through my own intellectual acumen." Rabbi Chiya responds with a piercing rejoinder: "I am ensuring that Torah will never be forgotten from Israel." The Gemara describes his methodology: Step by painstaking step, Rabbi Chiya plants seeds that grow into plants that provide fiber for nets. With the nets, he captures deer, whose hides may be used for creating parchment. This allows him to distribute the books, teach them to children, and empower them to pass that knowledge on to others. R. Chanina holds the finished product entirely in his mind, while Rabbi Chiya creates an engaging experience that ensures that the Torah is continuously disseminated.

This relationship between the value of the finished product and the effort involved in processing raw materials is an important thread in Parashat Emor. The Netziv uses the dialogue between Rabbi Chiya and Rabbi Chanina as an analogy to explain the verse that introduces the instructions for the lechem hapanim (showbread). These twelve loaves, which are to be laid out weekly in the Mishkan, were first introduced in the book of Exodus, in Parashat Teruma, but are only fully described here in Vayikra. The verse begins by instructing: "You shall take choice flour and bake of it twelve loaves (Leviticus 24:5)." Netziv responds to an implicit question: Why begin with the flour? He answers that although the essence of the mitzvah is in creating and presenting the loaves, the process is also important. "This is the rule with matters of holiness," explains Netziv. The more steps in the process, the more holiness ultimately imbues the finished product. The story of Rabbi Chiya is an example. In that case, the finished product is the Torah, whose unbounded holiness is enhanced by the work invested in it at every step in the creative process.

In the case of the lechem hapanim, the finished product is the twelve loaves, which the priests eat every Shabbat. According to Rabbinic tradition, it was a very impressive product; though the exact shape of it is debated in the Gemara, the Mishnah (Menachot 11:4) says that it was called lechem hapanim because it had so many "faces," or sides. In addition, the Gemara (Menachot 29a) lists this bread as one of the miracles of the Temple, because it stayed fresh from one Shabbat to the next, despite being left out on the table all that time. Netziv explains that a mere olive's worth (k'zayit) of this special food was as filling as a complete meal, and that the loaves represented

a blessing to all of Israel that lasted an entire week (Netziv on Leviticus 24:8).

This trajectory from ingredients to finished product echoes the parsha's broader theme of the transformation from grain to bread. Chapter 23 opens with information about Shabbat and the holidays. In verse 10, we are introduced to the idea of the korban haomer, the barley offering that is incumbent upon the Jewish people after entering the Land of Israel. Until that barley is harvested from the first of the crop, all of the grain crop is off-limits for consumption. This offering is to be brought on the second day of Passover, after which we are instructed to count fifty days, and then bring "mincha chadashah" – an offering of new grain. Although this sacrifice begins with grain, the offering itself is of two loaves of leavened bread, which function as "bikkurim," or first-fruits, given to God. This is presented as part of a description of the holiday we call Shavuot.

Before continuing the list of holidays and their observances, the Torah then reminds us of the mitzvah of peah, which entails leaving the corners of our fields unharvested so that the poor may come and take what they need (Leviticus 23:22). This mitzvah was already presented just a few chapters ago, in Parashat Kedoshim. Netziv, like many of the commentators, picks up on this brief interruption in the descriptions of holidays. He explains that the theme of this section is mitzvot that bring about "abundant blessings." In other words, process matters. The grains that are processed and allowed to rise, to be offered on Shavuot, must begin as sheaves in a field that is part of an ethical system of harvesting. Care for others is literally baked into the process, culminating in this offering, just as the holiness of the showbread begins with selecting the finest flour.

When read through the lens of process, Parashat Emor tells a story about the sanctity that is achieved when we deeply invest in the labors that lead to a finished product. Rabbi Chiya proved that even a book as meaningful as the Torah becomes more powerful when learners are involved in every step along the way. Our own process right now is to count the omer, one day at a time, until we reach Shavuot, the celebration of receiving the Torah. By naming each day and pausing to consider the steps on the journey to revelation, we ensure that the Torah that is ultimately received is that much more a part of our selves.

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The Kohen Today*

In an important essay published not too long ago, Dr. Samuel Belkin, President of Yeshiva University, presented a creative insight into the understanding of the commandments of the Torah. There is a great literature on ta'amei hamitzvot, the reasons for the commandments. What Dr. Belkin proposed is a fundamental distinction between the "reason" for a mitzva

and the "purpose" of the commandment. The reason is historical, it is something about which man may speculate and conjecture; but ultimately it is known with certainty only to God Himself. Actually, the reason for legislating a mitzva does not make too much difference – it is of little consequence to us. What is of importance, however, is the purpose of the mitzva. Here we must always ask ourselves: What is it the Torah wants me to accomplish as a result of performing this mitzva? The reason for a mitzva remains the same through all eternity, although it may always remain unknown to man. The purpose may change from generation to generation, from culture to culture, from society to society. While the reason is divine, the purpose is human – and, therefore, while all of us observe the same mitzvot in the same manner, each observance may mean something subtly different for each individual person. Hence, while it may be fruitless to inquire into the reason for a mitzva, it is most worthwhile to investigate the purpose of the mitzvot.

It is in this spirit that we may ask a fundamental question about the teachings of this morning's sidra. That is, what is the purpose of the institution of kehuna, the hereditary priesthood, for modern Jews living in a free and democratic society? Centuries ago, in the days of the Temple, the priest was a most important functionary in the religious life of the country. It was he who officiated at the sacrificial rites in the Temple. He was supported by an elaborate system of tithes and so forth. Today, the kohanim, descendants of Aaron, the brother of Moses, are distinguished from other Jews by only a few laws, such as: they are honored with the reading of the first portion of the Torah, they may not defile themselves by contact with the dead, they are limited in their choice of a mate by certain marital regulations, and they officiate at the blessing of the congregation on the holidays. Now, in what manner can this residual priesthood be relevant to our lives and times? Once again, we do not ask for the reason, we do not demand that the Torah justify its claim upon us. We shall observe whether our limited intellectual faculties fully understand or not. But what specific purposes, what special nuances of meaningfulness lie within this biblical legislation?

There are many answers. Those that we shall mention this morning are culled especially from the commentary on the prayer book, Olat Re'iyah, by the late Chief Rabbi of the Holy Land, Rabbi Abraham Isaac Kook.

At the very beginning, we must understand that kehuna in Jewish life was never meant as a ministry of magic. The kohen never waved a wand or performed miracles. Rather, as we discover from a reading of the Bible, the priesthood, with all its hierarchical and hereditary features, was intimately connected with the concept of teaching, especially Torah. Thus, Ezekiel, in this morning's haftara,

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defines the function of the kohen as, "And they shall teach My people to distinguish between the sacred and the profane" (44:23). Malachi proclaimed, "And the lips of the priest shall keep knowledge, they shall seek Torah from his mouth" (2:7). In assigning kehuna to the tribe of Levi, Moses declared, "They shall teach Your laws to Jacob and Your Torah to Israel" (Deuteronomy 33:10). Kehuna, therefore, is a ministry of hora'a, of teaching, of education and edification.

An important aspect of our daily morning service thereby becomes more significant. At the very beginning of the service, one of the first things we recite is the birkhot haTorah, the blessings over the study of Torah. After we thank God for giving us the Torah, we immediately proceed to perform the mitzva – we study Torah. And what passage of the Bible is it that we choose to recite as part of the study of Torah? The birkat kohanim, the blessing that is recited by the priests, "The Lord should bless you and keep you."

Why, of all the sublime passages in the Torah, do we choose the priestly blessing as the one over which to thank God for Torah? Obviously it must be because of the fact that the priests themselves are teachers of Torah or, indirectly, by their very presence in our midst they remind us and challenge us to study the Torah of the Lord.

The great medieval Spanish rabbi Abudarham observed that the priestly blessing consists of three verses. The first verse, "The Lord should bless you and keep you," contains three Hebrew words. The second verse contains five words, and the third – seven words. Abudarham remarks that the birkat kohanim is thus equivalent to the reading of the Torah, for on weekdays we have three aliyot, on holidays five aliyot, and on Saturdays a minimum of seven.

Rav Kook, however, goes beyond a mere arithmetical equivalence and finds deep significance in this relationship of birkat kohanim to birkhot haTorah, of priesthood to the teaching of Torah. Kehuna, after all, is not an anachronism. It indicates to us that there are amongst us Jews a family, descended from Aaron, who possess, as Rav Kook calls it, a "segula kelalit haba'a biyerusha," a general talent or predisposition that is bequeathed by heredity. From the very earliest days of the history of our people until today, the kehuna has come down from father to son – a whole family, throughout all these many centuries, has been distinguished by a mandate from the Almighty that its sons be the Ministers of God in the midst of Israel, that they be charged with the function of hora'a, of teaching the Children of Israel, so that "they shall seek Torah from his mouth." Now the very presence amongst us of this family who is marked by these characteristics reminds us that all of us Jews, non-kohanim as well as kohanim, possess a more general and precious segula kelalit

haba'a biyerusha, a heritage of inclination for the study of Torah. God not only gave us a Torah from above, but implanted within us a readiness to love it and a willingness to obey and follow it. There is in every Jew, by virtue of his being a Jew, this element of spirituality. Every Jew wears the crown of Torah, even as the descendants of Aaron wear the crown of priesthood.

This does not mean that every Jew is born a full-fledged lover of Torah, a mature spiritual personality – by no means. Rather, it means that each Jew has within himself the potential for these lofty ends, that if the effort is put in, he can attain them, for they are part and parcel of the national cultural heritage of our people.

Here too Rav Kook offers a comment of great insight. When the kohanim bless the congregation, they accompany their verbal blessing with nesi'at kapayim, the raising of their hands with fingers extended. To Rav Kook this is a profound symbol. It is a pointing to the future, an aspiration for transcendence, a reaching out for what is beyond, a stretching of the self to greater heights. Rav Kook reminds us that the rights and the privileges of the kohen to bless his fellow Israelites derive not from his own actual religious excellence, for not every kohen who blesses the congregation is necessarily a holy man. Rather, it derives from the charge placed upon him to be holy. Because the kohen is expected by the Torah to attain a greater measure of sanctity, because he was given the hereditary injunction to reach higher than others, because he was endowed with the predisposition for a great spiritual gestalt, therefore the mitzva of blessing the congregation devolves upon the kohen. The prerogative of blessing derives not from the actuality but from the potentiality of the kohen – not from his religious character at the present, but from that which he could attain were he to strive for it with sufficient effort and exertion. That is why the kohen raises his hand in the nesi'at kapayim – he is pointing to the future, to the realization of the potential within him. His extended arms are a bridge, which he is bidden to cross, from promise to fulfillment, from small beginnings to great achievements, from what he is to what he can and ought to be.

And this is true of all Jews with regard to Torah. At the foot of Sinai, when we were given the Torah, we were designated mamleket kohanim – a kingdom in which all citizens are priests. We are kohanim of Torah to all of mankind. Hence, we are different from others not because of what we are, but because of what we can and ought to be. Religious life in Judaism is not a matter only of being holy, but of becoming holier. The hands of the kohen raised in benediction are for every Jew the symbol of the study of Torah – constant progress, unceasing intellectual ferment, never-ending spiritual development. The kohen in our midst teaches us something about our own character and what we ought to do with it.

He tells us, as Yehuda haLevi taught in the Kuzari, that Israel is caught up in the “inyan Eloki,” marked with the indelible traces of the encounter with God. He reminds us, as the great founder of the Habad School of Hasidism taught in his Tanya, that every Jew is born with a “nefesh haElokit,” with a divine soul, which contains within it an “ahava tivit” or “ahava mesuteret,” a natural love for God and Torah which is hidden and unaroused. Just as a descendant of Aaron is naturally a kohen, a status from which he cannot resign at will, so is every Jew by nature a homo religiosus, a spiritual creature. Whether he knows it or not – indeed, whether he wants it or not – every Jew has a religious potential within him, the seed of spirituality, the embryo of kedusha. But from the kohen each Jew must learn that blessing can come only when, as the extended fingers symbolize, he is willing to actualize his potential, make the seed grow, develop one's embryonic talent, express one's hidden, natural resources of Torah.

So the hereditary kehuna certainly does have a relevant purpose for our lives. It teaches us that Judaism was not superimposed upon Jews. Rather, it is natural and preexistent in the Jewish soul. Torah may have been given from Heaven, but the receptivity of it already existed in the Jewish heart. All that Jews need to do in order to achieve blessing, for themselves and for all mankind, is to arouse and express the spirituality which lies dormant within.

It is for that reason that we loyal Jews ought to accept with great skepticism and with a sense of humor the predictions of many of our secular and non-observant co-religionists who periodically produce from amongst themselves modern nevi'ei sheker, false prophets, who proclaim the end of classical, traditional Judaism in Jewish life. For us it is unthinkable to imagine Jews without Judaism. Even if Torah should be forgotten for a century, it must return to its former eminence amongst Jews, for there is in us what Rav Kook called, “segula kelalit haba'a biyerusha,” a hereditary predisposition for the spirituality of Torah; or, as the author of the Tanya called it, “ahava tivit,” a natural love hidden in the divine soul in every Jew; or, as haLevi termed it, the “inyan Eloki.” When we see before our eyes a kohen, a direct descendant of Aaron, the first High Priest, when we behold the physical continuity of ancient Israel and its survival into modern times, then we are seized with a great optimism and hope for the survival and ultimate triumph of the spiritual character of Israel in the future.

This is an exhilarating thought, for it encourages us never to despair of any single Jew. Within every Jewish bosom, every Jewish heart, there lies this latent love, this silent passion, this unconscious aspiration. Our sacred duty is to bring it out into the open, activate it and actualize it, to make this love

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conscious, so that all Israel will return to God and bring with them all of mankind.

In the words of David (Psalms 119:48), “I shall raise my hands unto Your commandments which I love, and I shall dwell upon Your laws.” When we shall accept the symbol of the priestly blessing, the raising of the hands and the pointing to the future, the transition from potential to real, when we shall take that love for the mitzvot and actualize it by raising our hands – then we, and all Israel, will dwell upon the laws of God and become, once again, a glorious people of Torah. *[Excerpted from Rabbi Dr. Norman J. Lamm's Derashot Ledorot: A Commentary for the Ages – Leviticus, co-published by OU Press, Maggid Books, and YU Press; edited by Stuart W. Halpern]*
*May 12, 1962

Dvar Torah: TorahWeb.Org

Rabbi Yakov Haber

Kiddush Hashem, Chilul Hashem and the Human "I"

"And you shall not desecrate My holy name, and I shall be sanctified among the children of Israel; I am Hashem Who sanctifies you" (Vayikra 22:32). With this verse, the Torah prohibits chilul Hashem, profanation of Hashem's name and charges us to sanctify it. The reward for kiddush Hashem is of enormous magnitude (see Pesachim 50a and Rambam, Hilchos Yesodei Hatorah 5:11), and, by contrast, the punishment for desecration of G-d's name is also greatly magnified by our Sages.

Both willful and unwitting desecration of Hashem's name is punishable (Avos 4:4). In the hierarchy of sins, Rambam (Hilchos Teshuva 1:4), based on Yoma (86a), places chilul Hashem on the highest level recording that one who violates this sin requires repentance, Yom Kippur, suffering and death to achieve atonement.

Rambam (Mitzvos Lo Ta'aseh 63, Hilchos Yesodei Hatorah 5:4,10-11) enumerates three different types of chilul Hashem. The first entails violating one of the fundamental sins of the Torah even under threat of life or transgressing any sin in a time of religious persecution (she'as hashemad) in similar circumstances. The second consists of a prominent Torah scholar known for his piety acting not in accordance with a high standard of morality even where that activity is not formally prohibited. But the Rambam also lists another category. In the Rambam's own words (ibid. 5:10):

Whoever consciously transgresses one of the mitzvot related in the Torah, without being forced to, in a spirit of derision (בשאת נפש), to arouse [Divine] anger (להכזיב), desecrates [G-d's] name. Therefore, [Leviticus 19:12] states, regarding [taking] an oath in vain: "[for] you are desecrating the name of your Lord; I am G-d." If he transgresses amidst ten Jews, he desecrates [G-d's] name in public.[1]

The simple reading of the Rambam's words implies that a sin only matches this categorization if the transgressor performs it to "spite" the Almighty. Any other motivation - although not justifying the sin itself and clearly its violator would be liable to Divine punishment - would not qualify the act as one of chilul Hashem. Yet, several authorities expand this type of chilul Hashem focusing on the phrase bish'at nefesh. Rambam himself in enumerating the negative commandment of chilul Hashem (Mitzvos lo ta'aseh 63) writes: "The second type...is when a person performs a sin concerning which he has no desire for or benefit from but intends with his action [an act of] rebellion and rejection of the yoke of the reign of Heaven." This formulation implies that the sin need not be done specifically to "arouse Divine anger" but rather that the motivation for sinning comprises a rejection of the "yoke of the reign of Heaven". Indeed, the halacha recognizes two types of an aveira l'hachis - literally translated as a sin to anger G-d. The first is where the sinner deliberately chooses to violate the sin rather than availing himself of an equally accessible permissible activity. The second is where the sinner does not specifically choose to sin, but sinning and not sinning are exactly equivalent in his eyes. Violation of that particular Word of G-d is of no consequence to him, and he will equivalently choose an object of sin or a permissible one.[2] The Rambam's formulation in his Sefer HaMitzvos implies that both types of sin - even the less severe one whereby the sin is of no consequence to him, but he does not specifically choose to rebel against Hashem's will - are included in the additional prohibition of chilul Hashem.

Chafetz Chaim (introduction, Negative Commandments, 6) interprets Rambam's and Sefer Yere'im's respective formulations in exactly this way and applies this interpretation to the speaking of lashon hara. Since no tangible benefit accrues to the speaker, the motivation clearly is at least that this commandment is of no consequence to him and consequently the speaker violates chilul Hashem in addition to the specific prohibition of "לא תלך רכיל בעמך". Interestingly, Chazon Ish is quoted as saying that the Chafetz Chaim never tasted the lure of lashon hara; otherwise, he would not have categorized lashon hara as not being rooted in some human drive other than rejection of the Divine Will! The Dirshu edition quotes the Chafetz Chaim's son's biography of his father which records that in his youth, Rav Yisrael Meir Kagan, witnessed a horrible dispute in Radin, and he carefully noted all the psychological motivations and excuses behind the slander uttered during the argument. It was this event which motivated him to write his now famous work on lashon hara. It is reasonable to theorize that from this episode too, he concluded that the motivation is not one of personal benefit but shirking one's loyalty to the devar Hashem. My esteemed chavrusa, Rav Mordechai Bruckman נ"י, questioned why this natural human desire to be

free from commandments in general or from a specific commandment is not also considered "rooted in desire" and therefore should also not violate chilul Hashem. Does not the Talmud (Nedarim 91b and elsewhere) teach us based on the passage in Mishlei (9:17), "מים גורבים, מים גורבים" - "stolen waters are sweeter" - namely, the desire to be free from the Divine yoke of commandments serves as a powerful influence in human behavior! He suggested two approaches, one of which I wish to elaborate upon here with profound implications for an understanding of our very sense of self. [3]

In a situation where the motivation for violation of a mitzvah is external to the fact that it is mitzvah such as desire, pursuit of glory, envy, hatred, and the like, then one does not violate chilul Hashem. But where the motivation lies purely in the fact that he is commanded and does not wish to be bound by that commandment, then that exactly is the definition of chilul Hashem. Rambam defines kiddush Hashem (Mitzvos asei 9) as "l'farseim ha'emunah hazot ha'amitis ba'olam" - "to publicize this true belief in the world". Chilul Hashem then can be defined as the opposite: "to lessen this true belief". A person whose motivation to sin is the apparent "sweetness" that sin itself presents is professing that he does not wish to spread even within himself "this true belief" system. Consequently, he is guilty of chilul, or evacuating and emptying Hashem's very presence in his life.

To investigate this idea further, it would appear that the desire to be free of commandments is rooted in our very sense of self. All human beings, arguably in contrast to animals, have a deep-seated sense of "I am, I exist". That sense of self naturally rebels against having someone else control what they do, how they think, or what they say.[4] Even if a person chooses to follow a Divine rule or l'havdil a societal law, he naturally wishes to do so because he wishes to do so, not because he was commanded.[5] To counteract this natural tendency, Hashem Yisbarach demands of us to be mekabeil ol malchus shamayim, to accept the yoke of the rule of Heaven. This does not merely consist of performing the mitzvos; it entails, in the language of Rav Y. D. Soloveitchik zt"l, "surrender" of our free will to G-d. My Rebbe, Rav Chaim Ya'akov Goldwicht zt"l, former Rosh Hayeshiva of Yeshivat Kerem B'Yavneh, would often elaborate on a similar idea based on the teaching in Pirkei Avos (2:4) of עשה "רצונו כרצוני" - "make His will your will" and "בטל רצונך מפני רצוני" - "nullify your will before His". Mori v'Rabi Rav Aharon Lichtenstein zt"l in an essay objected to the seemingly positive expression, popular among Israeli religious youth: "אני מתחבר לזה" - "I connect to this!" referring to mitzvos. He noted that this statement lacks the important concept of kabbalas ol - whether or not one "connects" to mitzvos, he is bound to accept the Divine plan for him and ultimately the world.[6]

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On a simple level, in order that we fulfill our mission in the world and ultimately connect to our Source of Life eternally, Hashem commands us notwithstanding our sense of "I am" to surrender and accept the ol mitzvos. However, Rav Menachem Mendel Schneerson zt"l presented a deeper understanding of this requirement to "surrender" to the Divine will. Man's very sense of self is rooted in his "tzelem Elokim", his being created in the "image of G-d". Without this endowment, a human being would have no greater sense of self than a rock, a plant, or an animal. If so, a human being's sense of "I am" is an echo of an echo of the ultimate "I am" - "אנכי ד' אלקיך". Thus, the very source of man's desire to rebel against the authority of G-d, rejecting His commandments as binding him to perform or avoid certain activities, is rooted in the very fact that he was endowed by his Creator with this sense of self. Therefore, "chasing" G-d or His Will away from his consciousness is ultimately a self-contradiction. Hashem commands us to recognize that precisely because of our very sense of self, being rooted in the formation of man by his Creator, we should submit to His will, our ultimate purpose of being created. Perhaps this is exactly why activity rooted in the desire not to be bound by G-d's will is characterized as blatant chilul Hashem and is not mitigated by being rooted in some external desire. The very internal desire to shirk Divinely imposed responsibility based on the sense of self is an attempt to deny one's very basic connection to the Source of tselem Elokim and hence constitutes a chilul Hashem. This approach seems directly implied by the above-quoted verse delineating the prohibition of chilul Hashem and the commandment of kiddush Hashem: "And you shall not desecrate My holy name, and I shall be sanctified among the children of Israel; I am Hashem Who sanctifies you" - because I, Hashem, have sanctified you and endowed you with your tselem Elokim and sense of self, you should realize that you should channel it for My service and not for precisely the opposite.

The above-quoted Rambam concludes that a form of kiddush Hashem is fulfilling His commandments for no other reason other than that it comprises His will:

Conversely, anyone who refrains from committing a sin or performs a mitzvah for no ulterior motive, neither out of fear or dread, nor to seek honor, but for the sake of the Creator, blessed be He - as Joseph held himself back from his master's wife - sanctifies G-d's name name.[7]

This expresses the full internalization that man was formed to "heed his Master's call", was endowed with a miniature of G-d's very sense of self, kiv'yachol, precisely in order to recognize His Creator and align himself with the Divine blueprint of the world. Here man utilizes his free will to choose to submit to Hashem's will fully cognizant that this represents his true will as well.[8] In the beautiful words of Rav Yehuda HaLevi, עבדי,

"הזמן, עבדי עבדים הם; עבד ד' הוא לבד חפשי" - "the servants of time are slaves of slaves; only a servant of Hashem is truly free!" May Hashem grant us the ability to constantly perform His will selflessly unencumbered with ulterior motives and to constantly "publicize this true belief" to ourselves, our families, and the world.

[1] Translation courtesy of www.chabad.org from Rav Eliyahu Touger's translation of Mishne Torah, published and copyright by Moznaim Publications.
[2] See Shulchan Aruch (Y.D. Hilchos Shechita 2:5).
[3] The second suggests that if the benefit comes from the act itself with no consideration of the disastrous consequences, the primary focus of the sin of lashon hara, then this constitutes chilul Hashem since the root of the sin, namely, its consequences, does not in any way grant him any benefit. See other approaches in the Dirshu edition.

[4] This is expressed succinctly in the Declaration of Independence of the United States: "Every man has an inalienable right to ... liberty". Natan Sharansky, in order to preserve his sense of independence from Soviet attempts to enslave his mind, would always do the opposite of what he was told, including, when he was freed and told to just walk across the bridge, zigzagging across it instead!

[5] This serves as the foundation of natural or scientific morality as opposed to Divine morality. See Sefer Ikkarim (Ma'amar 1) at length.

[6] See Y'tzias Mitzrayim: The Source of Kabbalas Ol Malchus Shamayim" where the Avudraham is cited who utilizes this concept to explain the purpose of a reciting a blessing before performing a commandment. Of course, this is also the root of the commandment of the twice daily recital of krias shema.

[7] See footnote 1.

[8] See Gur Aryeh (Shemos 20:22) that obligatory mitzvos are sometimes commanded with the word "im" or "if" implying they are discretionary and not obligatory in order to highlight the fact that the person chooses to serve his Creator; only this can be called "service". I believe this presents no contradiction to the notion of kabbals ol - the person chooses to surrender his will to his Creator's will.

Torah.Org Dvar Torah

by Rabbi Label Lam

Leadership By Example

And HASHEM said to Moshe: 'Say to the Kohanim, the sons of Aaron, and you shall say to them: "To a (dead) person he shall not become impure among his people..."'
(Vayikra 21:1)

Say to the Kohanim...and you shall say to them: The Torah uses the double expression of "say" followed by "and you shall say" to caution the adults with regard to the minors. (Rashi)

The Kohanim-The Priestly cast are to play an important role as living examples of holiness and purity for the entire nations. Where is the manual for success in relating this sublime message from one generation to the next?

Rabbi Yaakov Kaminetsky ztl. Had made an important distinction between two important words in the realm of raising children; Chinuch – Education and Hashpah – Influence. Education is a form of direct teaching. The

teacher fills up the cup of the child with valuable information and important knowledge. Hashpah comes from a root word Shefa which means abundance. Hashpah is when fills his cup and what overflows washes over and influences those in one's immediate surroundings. Which is most effective?

I have had many parents brag to me over the years, "Rabbi, I push my children!" They think I will be impressed. While I am sure they mean well, my response is, "Don't push! Pull!" I explain, "When someone honks their horn behind you, do you feel like going faster or slower? However, when a car goes racing by, we all have an urge to speed up. Teach you child primarily by example!

Children are studying their parents in ways the parents may never imagine and they will naturally imitate their behavior. One day I opened the food cabinet at home and an avalanche of 2ounce applesauce snack containers came crashing down. As I gazed at the pileup on the floor below a great truth dawned upon me, "The applesauce doesn't fall far from the pantry!" The parents who unfortunately talk in Shul are raising the next generation of Shul talkers. Those who remain focused on the business of Davening invariably raise children who Daven.

One clever child told his parents, "Your actions are so loud, I can't hear what you are saying!" The story is told about a principal who called a father at his work to discuss his child's behavior. While the principal was demanding a face to face meeting the father insisted to be told the reason for the call.

So, the principal told him straight, "It seems your child has been stealing pencils from the other children in school." The father was righteously indignant and replied to the principal, "Why in the world would my child steal pencils from the other children? I bring home all the pencils he needs from the office!"

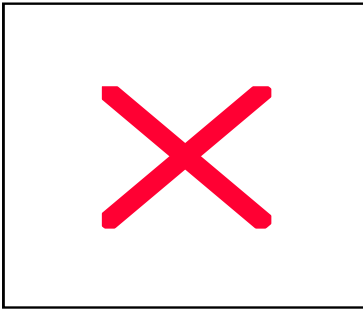
One of my teachers was happily skipping home on Simchas Torah with his then young family. They were singing a lively tune to the words, "Olam Haba is a gute zach... Learning Torah is a besser zach..." (The next world is a good thing... Learning Torah is a better thing...) His four-year old daughter interrupted the parade and asked her father in all earnest, "Abba, what's Olam Haba?"

He knew he had to address her question on a level she could comprehend. He asked her what the most delicious thing in the world was, thinking that if she said chocolate, then he would tell her it's tons of chocolate and if she said marshmallows then he'd tell her how many marshmallows. She gave a most surprising answer, though. "Davening!" He asked her where she had learned that. She was not yet in school and all she said was, "Mommy!"

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How had she learned this? He realized that after the morning rush, when all the older brothers and sisters are sent off to school the mother and daughter sit down to eat some breakfast. The mother has her coffee and a muffin and the daughter has her sweet raisin bran. Afterwards, the mother approaches a blank wall, siddur in hand and prays. The child notices the look of sublime joy on her mother's face. Intuitively she compares it to the sweetness of the breakfast goodies and naturally concludes one experience must be far sweeter than the other. Davening must be that delicious.

That's the power of Hashpa, the highest form of leadership – by example.



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subject: Rabbi Mordechai Willig - Body and Soul
Rabbi Mordechai Willig
Body and Soul

I
Parshas Emor begins with the laws of the kohanim. The Maharal (Avos 4:14) links the three crowns of Torah, kehuna, and malchus to three parts of a person: Torah connects to the intellect (sechel), kehuna relates to the body since it stems biologically from the father, and kingdom, which, like Torah, is not inherited, corresponds to the soul (nefesh) which serves as the king (i.e. leader) of the body.

The Maharal explains that since the sanctity of the kohein is that of the body, a blemish (mum), which is a shortcoming of the body, disqualifies a kohein from the service in the Beis Hamikdash (Vayikra 21:17). The first kohein was Avraham Avinu (Nedarim 32b, Tehilim 110:4). The gematria of his name is 248 which represents the 248 limbs of the body, the part of the

person sanctified by the Kehuna. Rav Yehoshua Hartman (footnote 1240) asks: elsewhere (Kiddushin 70b) the Maharal links the kohein, who is holy and pure, to the neshama, not to the body. He answers that here the kohein is linked not to the body itself but to the kedusha of the body, while there the kohein is not related to the soul itself but to the brain and the forehead ("mo'ach im hametzach") where the pure neshama is found. The sanctity of the Kehuna is the connection between, the meeting point of, the body and the soul.

In his works on Chanuka (Ner Mitzvah) and Purim (Or Chodosh) the Maharal notes that kohein in gematria is 75. Since 7 represents nature and 8 represents the supernatural, 75, the midpoint between 70 and 80, corresponds to the role of a kohein, to combine the physical and the spiritual. He sanctifies the mundane act of eating by doing so "before Hashem", in the Beis Hamikdash itself (Vayikra 6:9, Zevachim 53a).

Rashi (Bereishis 28:17) states that the midpoint of the ladder in Yaakov Avinu's dream was directly over the location of the Beis Hamikdash, where he slept. The Maharal asks, what is the significance of the midpoint? In his answer he cites the gemara (Kesubos 5a, see Maharal there at greater length) that the Beis Hamikdash is built with Hashem's two hands (Shemos 15:17), and thus is greater than the heavens and earth which Hashem made with his right and left hand, respectively (Yeshaya 48:13). Hashem created the spiritual Heaven separate from the physical earth. The deeds of tzadikim are, as it were, greater, as they combine both in the Beis Hamikdash where kohanim serve.

The midpoint of Yaakov Avinu's ladder, located above the Beis Hamikdash, parallels the numerical value of the kohein, 75, the midpoint between the natural, represented by 7, and the supernatural, represented by 8.

II

The parsha begins (Vayikra 21:1) by identifying the kohanim specifically as benei Aharon, the biological sons of Aharon, but earlier (Shemos 19:6) Hashem speaks to all of Benei Yisrael and says, "You shall be for me a kingdom of kohanim and a holy nation." The Ba'al Haturim resolves this contradiction as follows: if Yisrael would have merited it, they would all be kohanim gedolim, and so it shall be at the end of days as it says, "You will be called the kohanim of Hashem" (Yeshaya 61:6.) The source of this is the Mechilta (Hachodesh 2), which states that all of Yisrael was worthy to eat kodshim until they made the eigel hazahav, at which point it was taken from them and given to the kohanim. The Ba'al Haturim suggests that the exalted state of Am Yisrael which existed before the eigel hazahav will be restored in the eschatological era.

The Seforno explains that the nation of kohanim is the segula (treasure) of all the nations (Shemos 19:5), there to teach all of humanity to serve Hashem. This will be our role at the end of days. As a holy nation, we achieve eternity. All the good of the eschatological era would have been given to us by Hashem at matan Torah if not for our sin of the eigel hazahav. Now it must wait until the end of days, when we will all be kohanim to teach knowledge of Hashem to all the nations.

Elsewhere (Shemos 24:18, 25:8, Vayikra 26:12) the Seforno comments that Hashem's original plan was to "come to us" wherever we serve Him (Shemos 20:21); we could've experienced the Divine Presence (Shechina) everywhere, offered sacrifices in backyard bamos, with our firstborn performing the avoda; we would need neither kohanim nor a Mishkan or Beis Hamikdash. All of this ended with the cheit Hha'eigel. Hashem's original plan, at creation and at matan Torah, will be fulfilled at the end of days - "I will walk among you" (Vayikra 26:12), not in one place such as the Mishkan and Mikdash, but wherever you are My Glory will be seen.

III

The Seforno adds that even nowadays Hashem's presence dwells wherever the righteous of the generation (tzadikim) reside. They represent Hashem's purpose in creation, as the Beis Hamikdash did in its time, and as all of Am Yisrael will in the end of days (footnote 50 in Be'ur Sforno, Oz Vehadar edition).

The ability to combine body and soul, demonstrated most prominently by the kohanim, is unique to Am Yisrael. Other nations can serve Hashem only in a purely spiritual way. As such, when a non-Jew sanctifies a shelamim, a korban which is eaten by Jews, it is offered as an olah, a korban which is totally burned (Menachos 73b). The gemara explains: his heart is to Hashem (libo lashamayim). The concept of eating before Hashem is a contradiction for the nations. Only Am Yisrael, the kingdom of kohanim, can do it. “You shall eat (ma’aser sheni) there, before Hashem (in Yerushalayim), and rejoice, you and your household” (Devarim 14:26). All Jewish families, not just kohanim, can, and must, do so, and thereby learn to fear Hashem all their days (14:23). Witnessing the avoda in the Beis Hamikdash (Rashbam) and the Sanhedrin (Seforno) would inspire pilgrims to learn more Torah (Sifrei, see Tosfos, Bava Basra 21a). Eating before Hashem led to greater yiras Shamayim and spirituality.

This, then, is the mission of every member of Am Yisrael, to sanctify the mundane. All of our worldly actions should be sublimated in the service of Hashem. In the worlds of the Rambam (Hilchos De’os 3:3) one’s business dealings and married life should be conducted to serve Hashem. Even sleep, if it is done to preserve one’s health in order to serve Hashem, is included in “All your actions should be for the sake of Hashem” (Avos 2:17).

In the absence of the Beis Hamikdash, all Jews are equally charged with this holy mission. We are all members of the kingdom of kohanim, and all of us have the potential to become tzadikim, the repository of the Shechina in our times. May we all live up to this challenge and thereby merit the restoration of the service of the kohanim, sons of Aharon in the Beis Hamikdash.

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from: **Rabbi Yissocher Frand** <ryfrand@torah.org>reply-to: do-not-reply@torah.orgto: ravfrand@torah.orgdate: May 11, 2022, 5:02 PMsubject: Rav Frand - The Priest Does Not Perform 'Last Rites' in Judaism
Rav FrandBy Rabbi Yissocher FrandTo Dedicate an Article click here
Parshas EmorThe Priest Does Not Perform 'Last Rites' in Judaismprint
These divrei Torah were adapted from the hashkafa portion of Rabbi Yissocher Frand’s Commuter Chavrusah Tapes on the weekly portion: #1203 – Mesiras Nefesh Challenges From Biblical Times Through the twentieth century. Good Shabbos!Note: Readers in Eretz Yisroel, who are a parsha ahead, can access a shiur from a prior year by using the archives at <https://torah.org/series/ravfrand/>.

Parshas Emor begins with the admonition to the Kohanim not to come into contact—or even to be in the same room—with a dead person, with the exception of his seven immediate blood relatives. Other than that, a Kohen can have nothing to do with death or dead people. The sefer HaKesav v’HaKabbala advances an interesting theory regarding this halacha: Catholic priests (and perhaps priests or ministers from other denominations as well) play an important role in death. The priest administers the “Last Rites.” When a person is on his deathbed, or even after a person has expired, the priest will inevitably be summoned to administer these “Last Rites.” The theory behind this religious ritual is that somehow the priest can get the dying or deceased individual into Heaven. If someone has this ceremony performed upon him he is, so to speak, “guaranteed to be a son of the World-to-Come.” This means that a person could have lived a life of sin, but as long as he receives the Last Rites, he does not need to worry about “burning in eternal damnation.”

In Judaism, there is no religious functionary who can get anyone into Gan Eden or Olam HaBah – neither a Rav nor a Kohen. The Kohen can bring a Korban for a person, and he can do other things to help a person fulfill certain aspects of Divine Service during his lifetime, but after a person dies, the Kohen has no power to get him into Olam HaBah. Therefore, says the HaKesav v’HaKabbala, the Torah insists on distancing Kohanim from any aspect of death.

In Yiddishkeit, the only person who will get you into Gan Eden or Olam HaBah is you yourself, and you need to earn it while you are alive. After death, it is too late. That is why the Torah placed this fence and obstacle between Kehunah and Tumas HaMes – in order that no one should think that when the time comes, “he’ll get me in.”

The Symbolism of Showing the Show Bread

I found the following thought in the sefer Imrei Baruch from Rabbi Baruch Simon (a rebbe in Yeshivas Rabbeinu Yitzchak Elchanon, Yeshiva University).

This week’s parsha repeats the mitzvah of the Lechem HaPanim, the twelve loaves of ‘Showbread’ that were on the Shulchan in the Mishkan and later in the Beis haMikdash. The Gemara states (Chagiga 26b) that at the end of the three Pilgrimage Festivals when Jews came from all of Eretz Yisrael to the Beis HaMikdash, when they were about to leave, the Kohanim lifted the Shulchan to show the Lechem HaPanim to those who came up for the Regalim.

When they showed the Lechem HaPanim, the Kohanim would say, “See how precious you are before the Almighty – the Lechem HaPanim is still as fresh and warm now when we’re removing it from the Shulchan, a week after being baked, as it was when it was first placed on the Shulchan.” This was a great miracle that occurred week after week with the Lechem HaPanim. It remained warm a week after it was baked!

This was the parting message that the Kohanim delivered to the Pilgrims as they were about to return home after spending the Shalosh Regalim in the proximity of the Beis HaMikdash. Rabbi Baruch Simon comments that there were many miracles that the Ribono shel Olam performed in the Beis HaMikdash. Why was specifically this miracle pointed out and shown off to those who came up to Yerushalayim for the Regalim?

He cites an idea from the Pri Tzadik, Rav Tzadok haKohen of Lublin, that the warmth of the Lechem HaPanim was indicative of how the Ribono shel Olam loves Klal Yisrael. There were twelve Lechem HaPanim, corresponding to the twelve Tribes. When the Almighty kept the twelve Lechem HaPanim warm, He was making the statement “I love you. Our relationship is still warm. It has not dissipated over the past week. And I love all twelve of the Tribes of Israel.”

There is a universal minhag, based in Halacha, that a Beis Knesses has twelve windows. The reason for this practice is that each Tribe has its own “pathway” to the Ribono shel Olam. Contrary to what some people may think, Klal Yisrael is not monolithic. We are not a one-size-fits-all religion where just a single approach to Divine Service is appropriate for all Jews. Every Shevet had its own path to the Almighty, and this was signified in the Beis HaMikdash, where there were twelve windows, and so too it is signified in every shul, which also has twelve windows.

The approach of Shevet Reuven is different from the approach of Shevet Shimon, and the approach of Shevet Gad is different from the approach of Shevet Dan. But, the Lechem HaPanim of all those twelve Tribes is still warm a week after having been taken out of the oven, because the Ribono shel Olam loves the approaches advanced by each of the Tribes. Of course, this is predicated on the fact that they are all done k’Das u’k’Din – based on Torah and Halacha. But there are nuances and differences. We all know that. There is Nussach Sfard and Nussach Ashkenaz. There are Chassidim and Misnagdim. There are different approaches. Every Tribe has its own approach, and they are all dear to the Almighty.

What better message can be imparted to Klal Yisroel as they head back home to their communities where they live together with people who are different, and who may have different approaches. Their approaches are as valid as your approach. That is what will keep us together as a unified nation. When everyone has the affirmation that the approach of each Tribe – as long as it is done k’Din u’k’Das – is precious to the Almighty, then we will have greater Achdus in Klal Yisrael. This is the message that the Olei Regalim are left with as they head back home to their local communities.

This is an important message to keep in mind during the weeks of Sefirah when we observe partial laws of mourning because of the disciples of Rabbi Akiva who died during the period because they did not show proper honor and respect for their fellow Jews. No one should disparage the legitimate approach of his fellow member of Klal Yisrael just because he does things somewhat differently.

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Technical Assistance by Dovid Hoffman; Baltimore, MD

dhoffman@torah.org This week's write-up is adapted from the hashkafa portion of Rabbi Yissochar Frand's Commuter Chavrusah Series on the weekly Torah portion. A complete catalogue can be ordered from the Yad Yechiel Institute, PO Box 511, Owings Mills MD 21117-0511. Call (410) 358-0416 or e-mail tapes@yadyechiel.org or visit <http://www.yadyechiel.org/> for further information. Rav Frand © 2020 by Torah.org. Project Genesis, Inc. 2833 Smith Ave., Suite 225 Baltimore, MD 21209 <http://www.torah.org/learn@torah.org> (410) 602-1350

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subject: Sanctifying the Name (Emor)

COVENANT & CONVERSATION

Sanctifying the Name

EMOR

With thanks to Wohl Legacy for their generous sponsorship of Covenant & Conversation. Maurice was a visionary philanthropist. Vivienne was a woman of the deepest humility. Together, they were a unique partnership of dedication and grace, for whom living was giving.

In recent years we have often felt plagued by reports of Israeli and Jewish leaders whose immoral actions had been exposed. A President guilty of sexual abuse. A Prime Minister indicted on charges of corruption and bribery. Rabbis in several countries accused of financial impropriety, sexual harassment and child abuse. That such things happen testifies to a profound malaise in contemporary Jewish life.

More is at stake than simply morality. Morality is universal. Bribery, corruption, and the misuse of power are wrong, and wrong equally, whoever is guilty of them. When, though, the guilty are leaders, something more is involved - the principles introduced in our parsha of Kiddush Hashem and Chillul Hashem:

"Do not profane My holy Name, that I may be sanctified in the midst of the Israelites. I am the Lord, who makes you holy..." (Lev. 22:32)

The concepts of Kiddush and Chillul Hashem have a history. Though they are timeless and eternal, their unfolding occurred through the course of time.

In our parsha, according to Ibn Ezra, the verse has a narrow and localised sense. The chapter in which it occurs has been speaking about the special duties of the priesthood and the extreme care they must take in serving God within the Sanctuary. All of Israel is holy, but the Priests are a holy elite within the nation. It was their task to preserve the purity and glory of the Sanctuary as God's symbolic home in the midst of the nation. So the commands are a special charge to the Priests to take exemplary care as guardians of the holy.

Another dimension was disclosed by the Prophets, who used the phrase Chillul Hashem to describe immoral conduct that brings dishonour to God's law as a code of justice and compassion. Amos speaks of people who "trample on the heads of the poor as on the dust of the ground, and deny justice to the oppressed... and so profane My Holy Name." (See Amos 2:7) Jeremiah invokes Chillul Hashem to describe those who circumvent the law by emancipating their slaves only to recapture and re-enslave them (Jer. 34:16). Malachi, last of the Prophets, says of the corrupt Priests of his day: "From where the sun rises to where it sets, My Name is honoured among the nations... but you profane it." (Mal. 1:11-12)

The Sages[1] suggested that Abraham was referring to the same idea when he challenged God on His plan to destroy Sodom and Gomorrah if this meant punishing the righteous as well as the wicked:

"Far be it from You [chalilah lecha] to do such a thing."

God, and the people of God, must be associated with justice. Failure to do so constitutes a Chillul Hashem.

A third dimension appears in the book of Ezekiel. The Jewish people, or at least a significant part of it, had been forced into exile in Babylon. The nation had suffered defeat. The Temple lay in ruins. For the exiles this was a human tragedy. They had lost their home, freedom, and independence. It was also a spiritual tragedy: "How can we sing the Lord's song in a strange land?" [2] But Ezekiel saw it as a tragedy for God as well:

Son of man, when the people of Israel were living in their own land, they defiled it by their conduct and their actions... I dispersed them among the nations, and they were scattered through the countries; I judged them according to their conduct and their actions. And wherever they went among the nations they profaned My holy Name, for it was said of them, 'These are the Lord's people, and yet they had to leave His land.' (Ez. 36:17-20) Exile was a desecration of God's Name because the fact that He had punished His people by letting them be conquered was interpreted by the other nations as showing that God was unable to protect them. This recalls Moses' prayer after the Golden Calf:

"Why, O Lord, unleash Your anger against Your people, whom You brought out of Egypt with such vast power and mighty force? Why should the Egyptians be able to say that You brought them out with evil intent, to kill them in the mountains and purge them from the face of the earth? Turn from Your fierce anger and relent from bringing disaster to Your people." (Ex 32:11-12)

This is part of the Divine pathos. Having chosen to identify His Name with the people of Israel, God is, as it were, caught between the demands of justice on the one hand, and public perception on the other. What looks like retribution to the Israelites looks like weakness to the world. In the eyes of the nations, for whom national gods were identified with power, the exile of Israel could not but be interpreted as the powerlessness of Israel's God. That, says Ezekiel, is a Chillul Hashem, a desecration of God's Name.

A fourth sense became clear in the late Second Temple period. Israel had returned to its land and rebuilt the Temple, but they came under attack first from the Seleucid Greeks in the reign of Antiochus IV, then from the Romans, both of whom attempted to outlaw Jewish practice. For the first time martyrdom became a significant feature in Jewish life. The question arose: under what circumstances were Jews to sacrifice their lives rather than transgress Jewish law?

The Sages understood the verse "You shall keep My decrees and laws which a person shall keep and live by them" (Lev. 18:5) to imply "and not die by them." [3] Saving life takes precedence over most of the commands. But there are three exceptions: the prohibitions against murder, forbidden sexual relations, and idolatry, where the Sages ruled that it was necessary to die rather than transgress. They also said that "at a time of persecution" one should resist at the cost of death even a demand "to change one's shoelaces," that is, performing any act that could be construed as going over to the enemy, betraying and demoralising those who remained true to the faith. It was at this time that the phrase Kiddush Hashem was used to mean the willingness to die as a martyr.

One of the most poignant of all collective responses on the part of the Jewish people was to categorise all the victims of the Holocaust as "those who died al kiddush Hashem," that is, for the sake of sanctifying God's Name. This was not a foregone conclusion. Martyrdom in the past meant choosing to die for the sake of God. One of the demonic aspects of the Nazi genocide was that Jews were not given the choice. By calling them, in retrospect, martyrs, Jews gave the victims the dignity in death of which they were so brutally robbed in life. [4]

There is a fifth dimension. This is how Maimonides sums it up:

There are other deeds which are also included in the desecration of God's Name. When a person of great Torah stature, renowned for his piety, does deeds which, although they are not transgressions, cause people to speak disparagingly of him, this is also a desecration of God's Name... All this depends on the stature of the Sage...[5]

People looked up to as role-models must act as role-models. Piety in relation to God must be accompanied by exemplary behaviour in relation to one's fellow humans. When people associate religiosity with integrity, decency, humility, and compassion, God's Name is sanctified. When they come to associate it with contempt for others and for the law, the result is a desecration of God's Name.

Common to all five dimensions of meaning is the radical idea, central to Jewish self-definition, that God has risked His reputation in the world, His Name," by choosing to associate it with a single and singular people. God is the God of all humanity. But God has chosen Israel to be His "witnesses," His ambassadors, to the world. When we fail in this role, it is as if God's standing in the eyes of the world has been damaged.

For almost two thousand years the Jewish people was without a home, a land, civil rights, security, and the ability to shape its destiny and fate. It was cast in the role of what Max Weber called "a pariah people." By definition a pariah cannot be a positive role model. That is when Kiddush Hashem took on its tragic dimension as the willingness to die for one's faith. That is no longer the case. Today, for the first time in history, Jews have both sovereignty and independence in Israel, and freedom and equality elsewhere. Kiddush Hashem must therefore be restored to its positive sense of exemplary decency in the moral life.

That is what led the Hittites to call Abraham "a prince of God in our midst." It is what leads Israel to be admired when it engages in international rescue and relief. The concepts of kiddush and Chillul Hashem forge an indissoluble connection between the holy and the good. Lose that and we betray our mission as "a holy nation."

The conviction that being a Jew involves the pursuit of justice and the practice of compassion is what led our ancestors to stay loyal to Judaism despite all the pressures to abandon it. It would be the ultimate tragedy if we lost that connection now, at the very moment that we are able to face the world on equal terms. Long ago we were called on to show the world that religion and morality go hand in hand. Never was that more needed than in an age riven by religiously-motivated violence in some countries, rampant secularity in others. To be a Jew is to be dedicated to the proposition that loving God means loving His image, humankind. There is no greater challenge, nor, in the twenty-first century, is there a more urgent one.

[1] Bereishit Rabbah 49:9.

[2] Psalm 137:4.

[3] Yoma 85b.

[4] There was a precedent. In the Av ha-Rachamim prayer (See the Authorised Daily Prayer Book, p. 426), composed after the massacre of Jews during the Crusades, the victims were described as those "who sacrificed their lives al kedushat Hashem." Though some of the victims went to their deaths voluntarily, not all of them did.

[5] Mishneh Torah, Hilchot Yesodei HaTorah 5:11.

From: Torah Musings <newsletter@torahmusings.com> date: May 12, 2022, : Torah Musings Daily Digest for 05/12/2022

Why Reversal of Roe v. Wade is Welcome
by **Rav J. David Bleich**

The brouhaha surrounding the report of a forthcoming United States Supreme Court decision reversing its seminal decision in Roe v. Wade has subsided and with it a perceived institutional need prompting issuance of ill-conceived reactive statements. The actual decision that will assuredly spark further reaction and even more intense hand-wringing has yet to be announced. Perhaps this is the time during which calm reflection upon relevant teachings of Judaism is warranted.

There are two entirely separate and unlinked sets of issues to be pondered, one constitutional and the other moral. I am not a constitutional law specialist – but neither am I entirely ignorant of U.S. constitutional law and its history. I seldom find myself in agreement with Justice Alito – but that does not mean that he is always wrong. In my opinion, as a matter of law, Roe v. Wade was incorrectly decided. The right to privacy announced in Griswold v. Connecticut in no way compels a finding that a woman's right to privacy entails an untrammelled right to dispose of a fetus as she may desire. That is not – and, arguably, never was – a matter solely between a woman and her physician. There is a conflicting age-old principle of at least quasi-constitutional standing, viz., that the sovereign has a compelling interest in preservation of the life of each and every one of his subjects. There are no grounds to exclude unborn subjects from that interest.

In Roe v. Wade the Court astutely acknowledged that it could not determine the moment at which human life begins. Of course not! Human life begins in germ plasm within the sperm and continues until decomposition in the grave. How the human organism is to be treated at any point along that continuum is a legal, moral and theological question not necessarily related to any scientific or empirical phenomenon. But instead of candidly recognizing that ignorance does not justify feticide, the Supreme Court did precisely the opposite. It found itself powerless to protect a merely possible homo sapiens. Imagine that one day intelligent, moral and peace-loving Martians land on Earth seeking to establish fraternal inter-planetary relations with earthlings. A debate might break out with regard to whether they are "persons" entitled to the protections and immunities guaranteed by the U.S. constitution. There is no cogent legal precedent that might be invoked to determine whether they are human. Since we do not know whether or not they are "persons," can we conclude that they may be exterminated with impunity? A hunter hiking through the woods catches sight of an apparition. He cannot determine whether what he sees is a bear or a human being. He shoots and to his chagrin discovers that he has killed a man. Is he guilty of negligent manslaughter or worse?

The Gemara debates the moment of ensoulment. The question has profound ontological implications but no bearing whatsoever upon the halakhic status of the fetus. True, over a period of centuries, halakhic decisors have disagreed with regard to that matter. But Rambam, Noda bi-Yehuda, R. Chaim Soloveichik and R. Moshe Feinstein (and, at least in one pronouncement, the Israeli Chief Rabbinate as well) – and that list is far from exhaustive – unequivocally found feticide to be a non-capital form of homicide justifiable only if the fetus itself poses a threat to the mother. Rabbi Feinstein was an extremely pleasant, sweet, mild-mannered and tolerant person. Yet, when confronted by a much more permissive responsum of a respected rabbinic figure he did not hesitate to write in response, "May his Master forgive him."

As far as non-Jews are concerned, there is not even a scintilla of controversy. Abortion is an even more grievous offense under the provisions of the Noachide Code. For non-Jews, abortion is a capital offense. Is it conceivable that Jews and Jewish organizations now criticize the Supreme Court for acknowledging that there is no right to abortion on demand? Jews are charged to serve as a beacon unto the nations, not to urge and abet transgression of the Seven Commandments of the sons of Noah. Elsewhere, I have marshalled sources demonstrating that falsification of the Sinaitic tradition is tantamount to idolatry.

Judaism owes a debt of gratitude to the Catholic church for filling a lacuna we have allowed to develop. Rambam questioned why the Holy One, blessed be He, allows Christianity to flourish. His answer was that the Church has kept alive and given wide currency to belief in the Messiah. Were Rambam alive today, I am fully confident that he would acknowledge that such a role is now being fulfilled by others and would have offered a different answer to his question. Today, he would respond that the Church deserves accolades for preserving recognition of the sanctity of human life in all of its phases as manifest in categorization of feticide as homicide. Jews were charged with

promulgating that teaching by deed and by word. To our eternal shame, Divine Providence found other ways to do so.

The argument that the lives of Jewish women will be endangered by rejection of Roe v. Wade is specious – and fully known to be so by those who advance it. Pregnant women had no constitutional difficulties in procuring medical abortions before Roe v. Wade and will face no constitutional barrier after its repeal. True, it is possible, albeit unlikely, that some few states might enact a blanket prohibition against abortion; it is even more unlikely that such a prohibition would survive constitutional challenge. Craven political correctness is no defense for the indefensible. We should not seek to curry favor with, or the approbation of, the so-called intelligentsia. I daresay that no Jewish woman died as a result of legal restraints prior to Roe v. Wade. No Jewish woman is likely to die in the wake of its repeal. Abortion for medical need will continue to be available in most, and probably all, jurisdictions. If any lives are lost it will be because of inability to afford the expense of travel, not because of constitutional impediment. What should the Jewish response be? It should be two-fold. One, the establishment of a fund to defray the cost of travel to a jurisdiction in which a life-threatening pregnancy can be terminated, such a stipend to be limited to women who produce a statement signed by a recognized posek attesting to the halakhic propriety of the procedure. Two, a second, far larger fund to provide for care of pregnant women who carry their babies to term but feel compelled to surrender them for adoption. That is the response of rachamanim bnei rachamanim.

from: Parsha@torahinaction.comto: Parsha@torahinaction.comdate: May 13, 2022,subject: From the Meshech Chochma - Behar - 5782 **Jacob Solomon**
FROM THE MESHECH CHOCHMA - BEHAR - 5782

When you come into the Land... the land shall observe a Sabbath rest... For six years you shall sow your field, prune your vineyard, and gather in the crops, but in the seventh year the land shall completely rest, as a Sabbath for G-d. You shall not sow your field, and you shall not prune your vineyard... (25:2-4)

The Torah guarantees that the Shmitta observance, against the rhythm of nature and indeed logic, will be a faith-supporting experience: If you say: "What shall we eat in the seventh year?" ... I will command My blessing for you in the sixth year, and it will yield a crop sufficient for the three year period. You will sow in the eighth year... but you will eat from the old crop until the ninth year. (25:20-22)

The Hatam Sofer comments that such a promise must come from G-d. (No human being would be foolhardy enough to make such a prediction.) Indeed, Shmitta demands singular acts of emuna and bitachon, faith and trust: putting one's very livelihood on the line with the assurance of G-d's declaration that there will be His Blessing for sufficient food after a whole year's period of agricultural rest. That epitomizes the Israelites' accepting the Torah as an absolute act of emuna and bitachon; when they declared na'aseh ve-nishma "we will do and we will listen" (Ex. 24:8).

Both the Meshech Chochma and the Kli Yakar develop the emuna-building nature of the mitzvah of shmitta. "For six years you shall sow your field... and gather in the crops". That in itself is a miracle. Normally, a field is sown for two years and then left fallow in the third year to prevent soil nutrient exhaustion. But the Torah implies that the soil of Eretz Israel will continue to yield for six consecutive years. And G-d, emphasizes the Meshech Chochma, gets great pleasure in supporting Am Yisrael's efforts in farming His Own Country who follow His Teachings during those six years. He makes sure that the farming is abundantly successful. As Malachi puts it: "Won't I open the widows of the heavens and pour down even more prosperity that you can enjoy? ... And all the nations shall praise you, for you will be a desirable land" (Malachi 3:10-12). That is a miracle in itself. And it is that miracle should strengthen faith for the next miracle, that there will be enough to eat during the period of Shmitta and its aftermath.

In addition, the Kli Yakar also observes that in Eretz Yisrael the field is "your field" during the first six years only. However, in the seventh year it is no longer "your field", but it is in the state of "Sabbath for G-d". The land returns to G-d every seventh year, and all may access it free of charge as G-d's guests (implied in Rashi to 25:7).

A main reason is "For you are strangers and sojourners with Me" (25:23). The Kli Yakar distinguishes homilectically between a stranger and a sojourner. A stranger is a newcomer, not being there for any prolonged period of time. A sojourner is there as a fixture, as a regular. A person's relationship with this world should be as a stranger. "A generation goes, a generation comes, but the world remains forever" (Eccl. 1:4). We are here on the planet for an extremely short time. G-d, the Creator and Owner, is there forever. We are required to make the most of our time here. Nevertheless, our relationship with our worldly possessions of real estate is only temporary. Landowners need to be duly reminded every six years through the mitzvah of shmitta, when the land returns to the Owner. In contrast, the eternal nature of the individual's soul is permanent. It is in that realm, as sojourners, that we are constantly connected to G-d. Only in the World to Come is a person permanently with G-d, which is acquired through mitzvot rather than through worldly possessions: "Do not fear when a man becomes rich... he can't take his wealth with him when he dies" (Psalms 49:17-18).

<https://www.jewishpress.com/judaism/parsha/counting-steps-to-greatness/2022/05/12/>

Counting Steps To Greatness

By **Rabbi Dovid Goldwasser** - 12 Iyyar 5782 – May 12, 2022

"You shall count for yourselves from the morrow of the rest day ..." (Vayikra 23:15)

Our sages tell us that the mitzvah of sefiras ha'omer does not begin on Sunday, as the Sadducees erroneously concluded, but we begin to count the omer the day following the first day of Pesach, i.e., the second day.

The Nesivos Shalom asks: Why indeed is it written this way in the Torah, instead of stating clearly when we begin the count? Moreover, what does the expression "count for yourselves" imply? We are merely counting the days between Pesach and Shavuos.

The Sifrei Chassidus teaches us that these words indicate the essence of the mitzvah. The Sefer HaChinuch explains that the objective of leaving Mitzrayim was in order to attain the Torah. The mitzvah of sefiras ha'omer serves to bridge the gap between the tumah (impurities) of Mitzrayim and the highest level of kedusha (holiness) that we experienced at Har Sinai with Matan Torah. When we left Mitzrayim we had sunk to the 49th level of impurity and were so entrenched that Hashem had to redeem us, "taking for Himself a nation from among the nations" (Devarim 4:34), because the angels were unable to discern the difference between the Jewish nation and the Egyptians. Thus, there is a distinct difference in the spiritual service of Pesach and Shavuos.

Pesach involves the search and complete removal of chametz. On Shavuos, not only is chametz permitted, but the offerings included the Shte HaLechem (two loaves of bread from the wheat harvest). Our Sages explain that chametz symbolizes arrogance, which the Ramban describes as the root of all negative character traits. Matzah, on the other hand, signifies modesty and humility. Thus, the service of Pesach is to annihilate the evil and negative traits from one's life. Only after we have concluded that ritual can we rise to the next level, where we sanctify even the mundane, and infuse it with spirituality, which is the service of Shavuos.

Man is a synthesis of his nefesh habahamis (the animal soul), which has physical needs, and his G-dly soul (nefesh haElohis). Man's mission is to elevate his nefesh habahamis to function in the realm of his nefesh haElohis. With our redemption from Egypt, the Jewish nation was imbued with Divine inspiration to connect with Hashem, or the nefesh haElohis. Each year, in

preparation for Shavuot, we are given the opportunity once again to purify our soul during the 49 days of sefirah.

A parable: A sincere individual fell in with the wrong crowd and strayed from the path of Torah. Others were scandalized by his conduct, but the father loved his son dearly, and selflessly shadowed him to places he would never have dreamt of visiting just so that he could free him. The son was very far gone and rejected his father's help. But the father was unrelenting, and finally managed to sedate him so that he was able to bring him home to his room and his bed. The father hoped that when his son awoke in the familiar surroundings of his youth, he would be ready to abandon the deadbeats he had joined. He knew that one must first disassociate from evil before he can try to carve out a new way of life.

Spiritual Goals

As the great Gaon R' Yisroel Grossman was surrounded by his children and grandchildren at the Purim table, joy permeated the air. After the Gaon emotionally sang "K'ayal ta'arog al afikei mayim – as a hart cries longingly for rivulets of water, so does my soul cry longingly to You, Hashem," he sat back quietly, lost in thought.

Then, his face aglow and his eyes afire, the Gaon addressed his family: "My dear children, I want to give you a good piece of advice. Every individual must prepare in advance the goals that he would like to achieve as he gets older – the amount of Torah he would like to learn, the middos that he will refine, and how he will bring holiness into his life. The time to work on it is now, when you are young.

"I have been privileged to head the yeshiva for more than 60 years, and thousands of students have passed through its doors. I have observed that it is not their capabilities and talents that assure their success; at most, they are tools that help the individual to achieve certain goals. The students who were most successful established their spiritual goals and had the determination and the desire for greatness.

One of the grandchildren spoke up and asked, "Zaidy, do you promise me that this is the way that I will be successful?"

"I give you my word that this is the secret of success. Your future is built on your desire and will to achieve good. If you will begin at this young age, you can be sure that you will see blessing and success."

R' Grossman then added (Makkos 10b), "'From the Torah, from the Prophets and from the Writings we learn that they lead a person along the path that he wishes to proceed. (Makkos 10 b.)' The Maharsha asks: Obviously Hashem leads the person, so why do our Sages say 'they will lead' in the plural? The Maharsha answers that with every word, thought and action one creates an angel, good or bad. Thus, the Talmud is telling us that, indeed, if one seeks to achieve greatness it is his thoughts, desires and dreams that will lead him towards that objective in life."

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An Eye for An Eye? Really? Why the Discrepancy between the Written and Oral Traditions of Judaism? By: Rabbi YY Jacobson

Dedicated by Marcia Rubin

Rabbi Avraham Yitzchak KookAbuse of Human Rights

In recent years, we have become shockingly aware of the atrocities and abuses of human rights in many Muslim countries. The beheadings, the floggings, the stoning, the burnings, crucifixions, and diverse forms of torture are practiced daily, not only by ISIS, but in scores of Muslim countries.

I saw a video of a child in Iran being punished for apparently stealing something. They laid him on the ground and a car ran over his arm, amputating it. These and similar scenes of horror taking place in the 21st century are common in many Muslim countries, while most University protests are directed against Israel.

A Harsh Religion?

One of the more popular old polemics against Judaism is that our faith is harsh; it is a religion of cold and cruel laws, devoid of love and compassion. Christians used to present Christianity as the religion of love, and Judaism as the religion of stern revenge. The founder of Christianity supposedly said, "You have heard that it was said, 'An eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth.' But I say to you, 'If anyone strikes you on the right cheek, turn to him the other.'"

This is referring to a law in the book of Exodus and Leviticus, Mishpatim and Emor. The Torah states that if two men become engaged in a brawl and one of them shoves a pregnant woman, causing her to miscarry, the man responsible must pay compensation, the amount to be determined in court.

כב. וְכִי יִנָּצוּ אֲנָשִׁים וַתִּפֹּשֶׁת אִשָּׁה הָרָה וְנָפְצָה יָלְדֶיהָ וְלֹא יִהְיֶה אֶסּוֹן עֲוֹשׁ יַעֲשֶׂה כְּפֶשֶׁר יֵשׁ:

22. And should men quarrel and hit a pregnant woman, and she miscarries, but there is no fatality, he shall surely be punished when the woman's husband makes demands of him, and he shall give [restitution] according to the judges' [orders].

כג. וְאִם אֶסּוֹן יִהְיֶה וְנָתַתָּה נֶפֶשׁ תַּחַת נֶפֶשׁ:

23. But if there is a fatality, you shall give a life for a life,

כד. עֵינַי תַּחַת עֵינַי וְיָד תַּחַת יָד וְרֶגֶל תַּחַת רֶגֶל:

24. an eye for an eye, a tooth for a tooth, a hand for a hand, a foot for a foot, כה. כֹּהֵן תַּחַת כֹּהֵן פֶּצַע תַּחַת פֶּצַע חֲבוּרָה תַּחַת חֲבוּרָה:

25. a burn for a burn, a wound for a wound, a bruise for a bruise.

Clearly, it seems, the law is that if one of the men kills the woman, he dies. If he maims her, he receives in return what he did to her. "An eye for an eye... a wound for a wound." And yet, astonishingly, no Jewish court ever practiced this law, known in Latin as Lex Talionis, or the Law of Retaliation.[1]

The Proof of Maimonides

Maimonides, the 12th century sage, rabbi, physician, philosopher, leader, and the greatest codifier of Jewish law, writes:

רמב"ם הלכות חובל ומזיק א, ה: ומניין שזה שנאמר באברים "עין תחת עין... (שמות כא, כד; ויקרא כד, כ), תשלומין הוא? נאמר "חבורה, תחת חבורה" (שמות כא, כה), ובפירוש נאמר "וכי יכה איש את רעהו, באבן או באגרוף... רק שבתו ייתן, ורפא ירפא" (ראה שמות כא, יח-יט). הא למדת ש"תחת" שנאמר בחבורה תשלומין, והוא הדין ל"תחת" הנאמר בעין ובשאר אברים.

He offers a wonderful proof:[2]

"An eye for an eye" covers two verses (Exodus 21:24-25), concluding a context of six verses (21:18-19, 22-25). If you view the verse in context, Maimonides argues, it is obvious that the Torah cannot be explained literally. The chapter begins with a case of intentionally inflicted injury. It concludes with a case of accidental injury. The opening verses (18-19), on intentionally inflicted injury, read as follows:

יח. וְכִי יִרְיֹבוּ אֲנָשִׁים וְהָכָה אִישׁ אֶת רֵעֵהוּ בְּאֶבֶן אוֹ בְּאֶגְרֹף וְלֹא יָמוּת וְנָפַל לְמִשְׁכָּב:

18. And if men quarrel, and one strikes the other with a stone or with a fist, and he does not die but is confined to [his] bed,

יט. אִם יָקוּם וְהִתְהַלֵּךְ בַּחוּץ עַל מִשְׁעָנָתוֹ וְנָקָה הַמֶּלֶךְ רַק שִׁבְתּוֹ יִתֵּן וְרָפָא יִרְפָּא:

19. if he gets up and walks about outside on his support, the assailant shall be cleared; he shall give only [payment] for his [enforced] idleness, and he shall provide for his cure.

The closing verses (22-25), on accidentally inflicted injury, quoted above, reads as follows: "And if men shall fight and collide with a pregnant woman and she miscarries but does not herself die, he [the fighting man] shall surely be punished, in accord with the assessment of [the value of the fetus]... But if there is a fatality, you shall give a life for a life; an eye for an eye, a tooth for a tooth, a hand for a hand, a foot for a foot; a burn for a burn, a wound for a wound..."

Asks the Rambam: We have a major contradiction. Here you tell me "a wound for a wound." If I wound the woman, I must be wounded as I wounded her. But just three verses earlier you told me that if I wound my friend with a stone or my fist all I need to do is to cover all medical expenses

and pay his wage as a result of him being unable to work. There is a blatant contradiction here, which renders the text completely senseless. Thus, the rabbis conclude, that what the verse meant with the words “a wound for a wound,” or “an eye for an eye,” “a tooth for a tooth,” etc. is monetary compensation. If a person was hired to work for you for his entire life on all possible jobs, how much would the value decrease if he was missing an eye? That must be paid up, in addition to all of his or her medical expenses, and in addition to covering his or her wage during his illness, and in addition to paying for the pain and the humiliation. [3]

And then Rambam continues:

אף על פי שדברים אלו נראים מעניין תורה שבכתב, כולן מפורשין הן מפי משה מהר סיני, וכולן הלכה למעשה הן בידינו; וכזה ראו אבותינו דנין בבית דינו של יהושע, ובבית דינו של שמואל הרמתי, ובכל בית דין ובית דין שעמדו מימות משה ועד עכשיו.

Though this is obvious from the text itself, we have also heard this from Moses, who explained the text this way. So it was practiced in every Jewish court, in the court of Joshua, the court of Samuel, and in every Jewish court from the time of Moses to this very day.[4]

More Proofs

If we delve more into the text, we can see how convincing the argument is. The text says “And if men shall fight and collide with a pregnant woman and she miscarries but does not herself die, he [the fighting man] shall surely be punished, in accord with the assessment of [the value of the fetus]... But if there is a fatality, you shall give a life for a life; an eye for an eye, a tooth for a tooth, a hand for a hand, a foot for a foot; a burn for a burn, a wound for a wound...”

But what is the meaning of “life for life” if any harm follows? In this unintentional tragic mishap, can we seriously maintain that the Torah decrees the death penalty for the one who caused this accident? This is clearly an unfortunate circumstance for which the Torah set aside sites of refuge. Is the Torah contradicting itself and saying here that if you kill someone by mistake, you get killed? Obviously, then, the Torah is referring to money.[5] What is even more convincing is when we view the context. In the case of intentionally inflicted injury, the Torah does not introduce the punishment of “an eye for an eye.” All that the Torah requires from the perpetrator is to pay for the time and medical expenses. This is contrary to the closing verse of an accidentally inflicted injury where the Torah introduces the phrase “an eye for an eye.” Can we really assume that if I hurt you intentionally, my punishment is only monetary; and when I wound you by err, they punish me by amputation? Logically one is forced to interpret here the meaning of “eye for an eye” as the value of an eye, meaning financial compensation.

Furthermore, if the Torah meant, taking the eye of the injurer for the eye of the victim, the Torah would have said so. But the Torah never says, “take an eye for an eye.” The Torah says, “and you shall give... an eye for an eye.” Were the text's intention to extract an eye from the villain, the use of the word ‘give’ is inappropriate. The physical punishment of an “eye for an eye” is meant to take from the guilty, not to give to the victim. Giving implies something that is meant to reach the recipient. But if they take the eye of the perpetrator, what are they giving to the victim? Only monetary compensation fits that definition.

An Eye Beneath an Eye

The Gaon of Vilna offers a further brilliant insight. The Torah does not say, “an eye for an eye,” It says, literally, “an eye beneath an eye.” In correct Hebrew grammar, “an eye for an eye” should have been stated in these words: “ayin bead ayin,” instead of “ayin tachat ayin,” an eye beneath an eye. Why did the Torah not use the more appropriate “ayin bead (literally, for) ayin” instead of “ayin tachat” (literally, underneath)? This hints to us that the punishment is beneath the eye. The three Hebrew letters for the Hebrew word ayin—“eye”—are ayin, yod, nun. If we take the letters that are directly “beneath” each of these letters, i.e., that follow them in the alphabet, we get the three letters pei, kaf, samech, which, when rearranged, yield the Hebrew word kesef, “money.”[6]

[Those of you who question the method of interchanging letters to get kesef from ayin might consider the classic Stanley Kubrick film 2001. The name of the computer in that film is HAL, which Kubrick derived from IBM, the letters that are immediately “beneath” the letters HAL in the English alphabet. This construct is called temurah.]

This truth is really expressed in the very word “tachat.” The word tachat connotes not identical substitution, but one item substituted for a different item. This strange phraseology of tachat is found in one other place in the Torah, in the Book of Genesis. After Abraham lifts his sword ready to sacrifice Isaac on Mount Moriah, he was suddenly told by the angel of G-d not to sacrifice Isaac, “Abraham went and took the ram and brought it up for a burnt offering instead of (tachat) his son.” We see from here that tachat does not imply a duplicate substitution (retaliation), but rather implies monetary compensation.

The Talmud dedicates two pages in which nine of the greatest sages delve into the text and deduce that the meaning of the Torah is not physical punishment but monetary compensation. How, for example, could justice be served if the person who poked out his neighbor's eyes was himself blind? Or what if one of the parties had only one functioning eye before the incident? Clearly, there are many cases in which such a punishment would be neither equitable nor just.

In addition to this, how is it even possible to exactly duplicate bodily harm? Can you ever be sure it will be exactly an “eye for an eye”? [7]

Say What You Mean

Granted. But why doesn't the Torah simply say what it means? If the Torah never meant to mandate physical punishment in cases of personal injury, why wasn't the text more clearly written? A great deal of misunderstanding, misinterpretation, and trouble could have been avoided had the Torah simply stated, “The court shall levy the appropriate compensatory payment in cases of personal injury.”

Some even want to say that as society has become less barbaric, the rabbis reinterpreted the verse to mean one pays the damages for the eye, instead of actually taking out the eye of the perpetrator as it used to be done in the olden days. Yet this is simply untrue. Throughout all of Jewish history, we do not have a SINGLE RECORD of any Torah judge implementing “an eye for an eye!”

Two Perspectives

It is here that we come to discover the nuanced way in which Judaism has been presented. The biblical text is not a blueprint for practical law; the fact is that there is almost not a single mitzvah in the Torah that can be fully understood when reading the biblical text. Not Tefilin, not Esrog, not Matzah, not Sukkah, not Mezuzah, not Mikvah, not Shabbos, and not Shofar.[8] Thus, Moses presented an oral explanation for the biblical text so that we can appreciate its full meaning.

What then is the purpose of the biblical text? It describes not so much practical law, but rather the full meaning of a person's actions from G-d's perspective. Its words, written often in code, capture the full scope and meaning of every single action of a person, on the most spiritual, abstract level, all the way down to the most concrete plane.[9]

Maimonides, here again, comes to the rescue. In a few brief words, he shares a very profound and moving idea.

רמב"ם הלכות חובל ומזיק א, ג: זה שנאמר בתורה "כאשר יתן מום באדם, כן יינתן בו" (אמור כד, כ), אינו לחבול בזה כמו שחבל בחברו, אלא שהוא ראוי לחסרו אבר או לחבול בו כמו שעשה; ולפיכך משלם נזקו. והרי הוא אומר "ולא תקחו כופר לנפש רוצח" (במדבר לה, לא), לרוצח בלבד הוא שאין כופר; אבל לחסרון אברים או לחבלות, יש כופר.

Rambam, Laws of Personal Injuries 1:3: “The Torah's statement ‘As a man shall inflict a wound upon a person, so shall be inflicted upon him’ does not mean that we should physically injure the perpetrator, but that the perpetrator is deserving of losing his limb and must therefore pay financial restitution.” Apparently, the Rambam believes, as do many other scholars who echo the same sentiment, that the Torah confronts a serious dilemma as it moves to convey its deeply nuanced approach to cases of personal injury: using the

tools at its disposal, how can Jewish law best reflect the discrepancy between the “deserved” and “actual” punishment?

An eye for an eye is the ultimate statement of human equality. Every person's eye is as precious as anyone else's. The eye of a prince is worth no more than the eye of a peasant. This was completely new in history, transforming the landscape of the moral language of civilization. (The Babylonian Code of Hammurabi, for example, legislated that the eye of a noble was of much greater value than the eye of a commoner.)

Had the Torah, however, mandated financial payment from the outset, the full gravity of the crime would not have been conveyed. The event would have been consigned to the realm of *dinei mammonot*, monetary crimes, and the precious nature of human life and limb would have been diminished. The gravity of the crime is such that, on a theoretical level, on the level of “deserved punishment,” the case belongs squarely in the realm of *dinei nefashot*, capital law. The perpetrator may deserve the physical loss of a limb in return for the damage inflicted upon his victim. Torah law, however, will not consider physical mutilation as a possible punishment for a crime. The penalty must therefore be commuted into financial terms.

The Torah, therefore, proceeds to express, with delicate balance, both theory and practice within the law. First, the written text records the punishment for wounding your fellow, in terms of compensation. Then the Torah goes on to express the “deserved punishment” without any mitigation: “...an eye for an eye, a tooth for a tooth...” In this way, the severity of the crime is immediately made clear to all. The Oral Law serves as the vehicle of transmission, so we don't err in practice.

Jewish law thus finds a way to memorialize both the “deserved” and the “actual” punishments within the halachic code.

No Atonement

Why is this so crucial? So that you never think that maiming someone's body is merely a monetary issue, like breaking his watch. It is not! It is something you have no way of atoning for even if you pay him all the money in the world. Even if you did it by mistake, you can never compensate for it via finances alone.

It also teaches us the truth that there are no exceptions. An eye of a peasant child is no less of value than the eye of a powerful monarch. If I poke out that eye, I have done something for which there is no real way of atonement through money.

Maimonides more fully developed the idea that monetary restitution alone cannot atone for physical damages:

רמב"ם הלכות חובל ומזיק ה, ט: אינו דומה מזיק חברו בגופו, למזיק ממנו, שהמזיק ממון חברו, כיון ששילם מה שהוא חייב לשלם, נתכפר לו. אבל חובל בחברו, אף על פי שנתן לו תמורה דברים, אין מתכפר לו; ואפילו הקריב כל אילני נביות, אין מתכפר לו, ולא נמחל עוונות, עד שיבקש מן הנחבל וימחול לו.

"Causing bodily injury is not like causing monetary loss. One who causes monetary loss is exonerated as soon as he repays the damages. But if one injured his neighbor, even though he paid all five categories of monetary restitution — even if he offered to G-d all the rams of Nevayot [see Isaiah 60:7] — he is not exonerated until he has asked the injured party for forgiveness, and he agrees to forgive him." (Rambam, Personal Injuries, 5:9) When Your Animal Kills

We have another fascinating example for this a few sentences further in Parshat Mishpatim, where an even more glaring example of the discrepancy between theory and practice in the realm of punishment emerges. In this case, both variables are bluntly recorded in the written text itself.

As the Torah discusses the laws of a habitually violent animal owned by a Jew, two conflicting consequences appear in the text for the very same crime.

The Torah states that, under normal circumstances, if an individual's ox gores and kills another human being, the animal is put to death but the owner receives no further penalty. If, however, the animal has shown clear violent tendencies in the past — to the extent that the owner has been warned yet has

failed to take appropriate precautions — the Torah emphatically proclaims, "...The ox shall be stoned and even its owner shall die."

But in the very next verse, the text offers the condemned man an opportunity to escape his dire fate through the payment of a financial penalty assessed by the court.

כח. וכי יגח שׁוֹר אֶת אִישׁ אוֹ אֶת אִשָּׁה נָמַת סָקוֹל יִסָּקֵל הֵשׁ וְזֶה אֶת בָּשָׂרוֹ וּבָעַל הֵשׁ זֶה נָקִי:

28. And if a bull gores a man or a woman and [that one] dies, the bull shall surely be stoned, and its flesh shall not be eaten, and the owner of the bull is clear.

כט. וְאִם שׁוֹר נִגַּח הוּא מִתְמַלֵּשׁ לִשְׂכָשְׁם וְהוּעַד בְּבָעָלָיו וְלֹא יִשְׁמְרֵנוּ וְהָמִית אִישׁ אוֹ אִשָּׁה הֵשׁ זֶה וְזֶה יִסָּקֵל וְגַם בְּעָלָיו יוּמָת:

29. But if it is a [habitually] goring bull since yesterday and the day before yesterday, and its owner had been warned, but he did not guard it, and it puts to death a man or a woman, the bull shall be stoned, and also its owner shall be put to death,

ל. אִם פָּקַד יוֹשֶׁת עָלָיו וְנָתַן פְּדִיָן נָפֶשׁ וְכָל אֲשֶׁר יוֹשֶׁת עָלָיו:

30. Insofar as ransom shall be levied upon him, he shall give the redemption of his soul according to all that is levied upon him.

The written text itself seems bewilderingly contradictory. On the one hand, the Torah clearly states that the owner of a violent animal who killed another human being “shall also die.” Then, however, it says that he pays money to the heirs of the victim—the full “value” of the person as it were.

What is going on here? How can we take such a text seriously?

Once again, our question can be answered by considering the distinction between “deserved” and “actual” punishment.

The Torah wants us to understand that, on a theoretical level, the owner of the ox who killed a human deserves to die. His negligence has directly resulted in the loss of human life. On a practical level, however, this sentence cannot be carried out. Halacha only mandates capital or corporal punishment in cases of active crimes. Crimes of “un-involvement,” consisting of the failure to do something right, cannot carry such penalties in an earthly court. The owner who fails to guard his dangerous animal can only be fully punished through heavenly means.

Through carefully balancing the textual flow, the Torah manages to convey a complex, multilayered message of personal responsibility in a nuanced case of “un-involvement.”

Azar's Question

Yet it goes one step deeper.

During the years when Rabbi Avraham Yitzchak Kook (1865-1935) served as chief rabbi of Jaffa, before he became chief rabbi of Israel (then Palestine), he met and befriended many of the Hebrew writers and intellectuals of the time. His initial contact in that circle was the 'elder' of the Hebrew writers, Alexander Ziskind Rabinowitz, better known by the abbreviation Azar. Azar was one of the leaders of Po'alei Tzion, an anti-religious, Marxist party; but over the years, Azar developed strong ties with traditional Judaism. He met with Rabbi Kook many times, and they became friends.

Azar once asked Rabbi Kook: How can the Sages interpret the verse "an eye for an eye" as referring to monetary compensation? Does this explanation not contradict the peshat, the simple meaning of the verse?

True, as we recall, the Talmud brings a number of proofs that the phrase "eye for an eye" cannot be taken literally. But what bothered Azar was the blatant discrepancy between the simple reading of the verse and the Talmudic interpretation. After all is said and done, if an "eye for an eye" in fact means monetary compensation, why does the Torah not state that explicitly?

The Parable

Rabbi Kook responded by way of a parable. The Kabbalists, he explained, compared the Written Torah to a father and the Oral Torah to a mother. Just as the mother absorbs the seed of the father, and develops it into an embryo, and ultimately a full fetus, so the oral tradition develops and explains the seminal, brief and cryptic text of the written Torah.[10] When parents

discover their son has committed a grave offense, how do they react—at least back in the 1920s when Rabbi Kook had this conversation with Azar. (Today, we know, things have changed somewhat; yet the principle behind this remains the same).

The father immediately raises his hand to punish his son. But the mother, full of sensitivity and compassion, rushes to stop him. 'Please, not in anger!' she pleads, and she convinces the father to mete out a lighter punishment.

An onlooker might conclude that all this drama was superfluous. In the end, the boy did not receive corporal punishment. The mother was triumphant. Her husband knew he has to listen to her. Why make a big show of it?

In fact, the scene provided an important educational lesson for the errant son. Even though he was only lightly disciplined, the son was made to understand that his actions deserved a much more severe punishment.

A Fitting Punishment

This is exactly the case when one individual injures another. The offender needs to understand the gravity of his actions. That is why the written text, the “father,” declares: An eye for an eye. In practice, though, he only pays monetary restitution, as the Oral Law rules. For the Oral Law is like the mother.

But he should not think that with money alone he can repair the damage he inflicted. How will not he think so? Only if the “father”—the written Torah—states in uncompromising terms “an eye for an eye; a tooth for a tooth; a wound for a wound.”

Azar was astounded. He was impressed how one can clarify legal concepts in Jewish Law by way of Kabbalistic metaphors. Azar remarked: “I once heard the Rabbi say that the boundaries between Halacha and Kabbalah, the exoteric and the esoteric areas of Torah, are not rigid. For some people, Torah with Rashi's commentary is an esoteric study; while for others, even a chapter in the Kabbalistic work Eitz Chayim belongs to the revealed part of Torah.”[11]

Here we have one example of how one verse in Torah, far from expressing the harshness of Judaism, actually served a blueprint to teach our people the infinite dignity of the human body carved in G-d's image. This we must teach the world. _

[1] It is interesting to note that The Code of Hammurabi is a well-preserved Babylonian law code of ancient Mesopotamia, dating back to about 1754 BCE. It is one of the oldest deciphered writings of significant length in the world. The sixth Babylonian king, Hammurabi, enacted the code, and partial copies exist on a human-sized stone stele and various clay tablets. The Code consists of 282 laws, one of them is: “an eye for an eye, a tooth for a tooth” (lex talionis). We do not know if the Lex Talionis of Hammurabi's Code was carried out literally in ancient times. There are scholars who believe that the Code itself was not the law code by which the society operated, but rather the fulfillment of a so-called “divine mandate” by the gods to the king: a law code to prove he was divinely ordained to rule, but not one which was operative in ancient Babylon. Regardless, in Judaism “an eye for an eye...” was never understood literally.[2] Many wondered why the Rambam came up with his own proof, not stated in the Talmud exploring this matter. The truth is that the source of the Rambam's proof is in Mechilta Derashbi Parshas Mishptim.[3] See the details in Rambam Hilchos Chovel Umazik ch. 1.[4] Question: How then can Rabbi Eliezer, in Talmud Bava Kama p. 83 interpret the verse literally? Many say that what Rabbi Eliezer means is that the perpetrator pays “demei mazik,” the worth of the limbs of the perpetrator, rather than the victim, thus conveying that in essence, it was his limb that had to be punished. See at length Torah Shlaimah to Mishpatim and Meluim to Mishpatim, in the chapter dedicated to this discussion.[5] We can explain that this is the case where one man intended to kill his fellow, and then killed the woman by error. See Rashi to this verse for the two opinions on the matter. According to the Halacha, if one has the intention to kill someone and kills someone else, he is not killed.[6] Gaon of Vilna in Torah Gems, volume 2, p. 151[7] Talmud Bava Kama pp. 83-84. Here is just one excerpt from there: It was taught in a baraita: Reb Shimon b. Yochai says: “Eye for

eye” means pecuniary compensation. You say pecuniary compensation, but perhaps it is not so, and actual retaliation by putting out an eye is meant? What then will you say where a blind man put out the eye of another man, or where a cripple cut off the hand of another, or where a lame person broke the leg of another? How can I carry out, in this case, the principle of retaliation of “eye for eye” seeing that the Torah says, “You shall have one manner of law,” implying that the manner of law should be the same in all cases? (Baba Kamma 84a).[8] See at length Tanya Igeres Hakodesh ch. 29.[9] The great 14th-century kabbalist Rabbi Menachem Rikanti in his commentary on Mishpatim explains, amazingly, the mystical meaning of this verse. A human body and all of its limbs reflect the Divine metaphysical “body,” known as “Adam Haelyon.” The body embodies the Divine attributes correlating to the various parts of one's body. When one knocks out the tooth of another, he, so to speak, removes the spiritual “tooth” within the Divine source, and indeed loses the spiritual source of his tooth. If we can appreciate the Torah text also as a spiritual manual for the spiritual limbs of a person, then the verse actually also has a literal meaning.[10] Tanya Igeres Hakodesh ibid.

from: Rabbi Shafier <rebbe@theshmuz.com> reply to: binny@theshmuz.com date: May 11, 2022, 2:06 PM

Rabbi Bentzion Shafier Emor

The Torah's System of Self Protection

“A cow or a sheep, it and its child, do not slaughter on one day.” Vayikrah 22:28

In one of the many mitzvahs that teaches us how to deal with animals, the Torah commands us not to kill a mother and its offspring on one day.

The Sefer HaChinuch explains that one of the rationales behind the mitzvah is “to train ourselves in the trait of mercy, and to distance ourselves from the trait of cruelty. Even though we are permitted to slaughter animals to eat, we must do so in a merciful manner. Killing both the mother and the child in the same day is merciless and will train us in brutality. Therefore, the Torah forbids it.”

This Sefer Ha'Chinuch is difficult to understand. If the Torah is concerned about the good of the animal and its suffering, then the logical thing to do would be to forbid slaughtering it. If, on the other hand, the Torah is concerned about man and the damage such actions will have on him, then slaughtering another living creature to consume its flesh is about as barbaric an act as one could imagine. Surely the act of killing the animal should be forbidden altogether. Yet the Torah allows you to kill animals for any productive reason: whether for their hides, their meat, or any other use. Not only that, you may slaughter as many of them as you like. You may butcher a thousand cows in one day to make shoes to bring to the market – this won't lead you to cruelty – but make sure that none of these animals are related. If two of those cows are mother and child, it is barbaric. Don't do it! This mitzvah seems very difficult to understand.

The answer to this question is based on understanding how our middos are shaped.

In many places the Sefer HaChinuch stresses that a person's actions molds his very personality. If he acts with kindness and compassion, these traits become part of his inner nature. He will then feel other people's pain, and it will become difficult for him to ignore their pleas for help. He will become a kind, compassionate person. The opposite is true as well. If a person acts with cruelty, this trait will become part of him. It will be more difficult for him to care about another person's plight. He will have a difficult time being sensitive to the suffering of others. He will have adopted callousness into his inner essence.

Dovid Ha'Melech was a mighty warrior. According to this logic, it would follow that Dovid Ha'Melech should have been one of the cruelest men in history. He was known as a mighty, merciless warrior. He killed a mountain lion with his bare hands. He won the rights to marry Shaul's daughter by killing and disfiguring 200 Philistines and bringing back their body parts to the king. When Avshalom waged war against him, Chushi advised, “Do not

think of ambushing him (Dovid) at night, for everyone knows that he fights like a bear.” And Dovid said about himself, “I will seek out my enemy and have no mercy upon them.”

Yet we know that Dovid was one of the kindest, most compassionate men who ever lived. Tehillim is not the expression of a cruel man. It is a manifestation of his pure devotion to HASHEM, the outpourings of a heart that is pure, kindly and full of compassion. How is it possible that going to war didn’t ruin him?

The formula for perfecting one’s middos

The Orchas Tzadikim in his introduction explains that perfecting one’s middos is comparable to a chef preparing a meal. The right ingredients, in the right proportions, prepared in the right manner, will yield a delicious dish. However, all three have to be correct. If, for example, instead of sautéing the onions for 10 minutes, you leave them on the flame for an hour, or if instead of a teaspoon of salt you add a cup, the food will be inedible. It is the quality of the ingredients, in the proper amounts, prepared correctly, that determines the final product.

So too, he explains, when working on one’s character traits. It is the right amount of the right middah in the right time that is the key to perfection. Each middah has its place, time, and correct measure.

This seems to be the answer to Dovid Ha’Melech. When he went to war, it was in the manner that HASHEM directed him. HASHEM designed the human and understands the delicate balance within him: what affects him and how. HASHEM commanded us to make use of certain behaviors, in certain measures, and at certain times. The same act when done for the wrong reason will be disastrous to the person. However, when it’s done for the right reasons, in the right measure, it will not harm him. Dovid remained pure and unsullied because he followed the Torah’s system of self-perfection, designed by the only One who truly understands the nature of the human.

The Torah: the ultimate system of perfection This seems to be the answer to the Sefer Ha’Chinuch as well. The Torah isn’t concerned about the pain of the animal; it is concerned about man. Man is the reason for creation.

Everything in existence was formed to serve him. However, man was fashioned in a delicate balance. If he uses this world for its intended purpose, in the right way, in the right time, then he grows and perfects himself.

However, if he uses the world incorrectly, in the wrong manner, or to the wrong extent, he is damaged by that process.

The act of killing a mother and child is akin to wiping out generations; it is pitiless and cruel. HASHEM, Who understands the balance and nature of man, has told us that killing an animal for good use will not lead you to a hardened nature, provided you do so within the given boundaries. Remain within the system and you are safe. Leave these guidelines and you are in grave danger.

This concept is very applicable as it helps us appreciate the wisdom of the Torah’s system for growth. There is much that modern man understands about the inner workings of the human, and there is at least as much, if not more, that he doesn’t understand. HASHEM has designed us and has given us the guidebook for perfection. It is our job to follow the Torah’s directives in the right balance, in the right time, in the right manner, thereby actualizing our potential as the reason for all of creation.

This is an excerpt from the Shmuz on the Parsha book.

from: **Rabbi Yitzchok Adlerstein** <ravadlerstein@torah.org> to: targumim@torah.org date: May 12, 2022, 1:41 PM subject: Reb Yeruchem - You Are Important – Like It Or Not

Reb Yeruchem By Rabbi Yitzchok Adlerstein To Dedicate an Article click here

Parshas Emor You Are Important – Like It Or Not print

A baal among his people shall not become tamei to the one who desecrates him.[2]

How you translate baal generates very different readings of the pasuk. Rashi assumes that it means “husband.” A kohen is permitted and instructed to become tamei while tending to the burial of his wife. If that wife is one “who desecrates him,” i.e. she is a woman whom he was not permitted as a kohen to marry, then he may not become tamei. Onkelos, however translates baal as “important person.” The one who possesses the distinction of being a kohen is instructed not to desecrate his role and station by becoming tamei when forbidden to do so.

Now, just what is this desecration? You might argue that it is stepping out of his exalted role. When he becomes tamei, his service as kohen is halted until he becomes tahor again. In the interim, he descends from his lofty position. Ramban, however, does not take it that way. “Because they are priests to Hashem and serve our G-d, tell them to comport themselves with honor and stature, and not to become tamei.” He reads our pasuk as a demand not to desecrate and disgrace their station. But this is not readily understood. We find elsewhere that people of stature can choose to forego any honor coming to them. The kohen does not have that option. He is required to maintain his dignity, even if he would prefer to disregard it. Why should this be so?

The answer, I believe, lies in what the word “desecrate” implies. The person who ignores the rules of Shabbos does not merely violate, or transgress. The Torah calls him a desecrator of Shabbos. Ibn Ezra[3] comments on Hashem’s sanctifying (i.e. the opposite of desecrating) Shabbos from among the other days of the week. “Work should not be done on it as it is done on the others.” How do we display this sanctification? We follow the words of Yeshaya. “If you proclaim Shabbos a delight...and you honor it by not engaging in your own affairs...or discussing the forbidden.”[4] We see – and we implement this in practice – that the desecration of something special lies in treating it like ordinary things. The holiness of Shabbos demands of us that we speak differently, walk differently, dress differently, eat different foods. Treating Shabbos similarly to other days of the week fully desecrates it. Kedushah, on the other hand, requires distinction, separation, and visibly flaunting its specialness.

Why is it, then, that some people are permitted to forego the honor due them? The answer is that it depends on the reason for the honor. When the honor is due because of some relationship, its owner can excuse it. A parent can forego the honor due them by a child. That honor grows out of the debt of gratitude owed by the child. The kohen, however, is given his role and distinction by G-d. Violating its terms is a desecration not of himself, but of that role – and really a desecration of G-d’s Word which created the distinction. He is a kohen not by choice, but because Hashem elevated him to that position. It is not his to forego. If he treats himself like other people, he desecrates the reality of what he is.

Similarly, there are people who willingly proclaim their denial of human specialness. They are prepared to live closer to the life styles of animals. We say to such people, “Like it or not, you are a human being! You cannot live as an animal.”

Bnei Torah are like this as well. Some, out of a sense of genuine modesty, do not want to seem different than anyone else. They are embarrassed when they are treated as different from commoners. They prefer to freely mix with the completely ignorant.

They, too, are mistaken. They cannot walk away from the distinction of being Bnei Torah, of being different. Bnei Torah are obligated to live according to their elevated station. They must keep to the expectations of living on a higher plane, and take steps to broadcast the difference! How? By ensuring that they distinguish themselves in love for their fellow man, in honoring their fellow man, and in always speaking gently and calmly with people.

1. Based on Daas Torah by R. Yeruchem Levovitz zt”l, Vayikra pgs. 206-209 ↑2. Vayikra 24:4 ↑3. Bereishis 2:3 ↑4. Yeshaya 58:13 ↑

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Collected thoughts from Rabbi Elimelech Biderman Shlita

Chinuch – Teaching by ExampleThe parashah begins with the words (21:1), **מהילא תרמאו ורהא ינב מינהכה לא רומא**, "Say to the kohanim, the sons of Aharon and say to them" The term "say" (תרמאו...רומא) is written twice in this sentence and seems redundant. Rashi explains, **מינטקה לע מילודג ריהוהל**, "The older kohanim should train the younger kohanim." **מינהכה לא רמא**, "Tell the older kohanim... מהילא תרמאו, to train the younger kohanim" to be cautious with the special laws of kehunah. This pasuk is alluding to the mitzvah of chinuch, so we can glean from this section guidance for chinuch habanim. A primary rule in chinuch is to be a role model. More than with words, parents teach by setting a good example. We can learn this principle from Avraham Avinu, as it states (Bereishis 18:7), **בוטו דר רקב נב חקיו מהרבא דר רקבה לאו ותוא**, "Avraham ran to the cattle, took a tender and good calf, and gave it to the youth who hurried to prepare it." Rashi writes that the lad was Yishmael. Avraham wanted Yishmael to prepare the meat for the guests **ותוצמב וכנהל ידכ**, to train him to do mitzvos. But notice that Avraham himself brought the calf. He didn't send Yishmael to get the cattle. This is because the best way to educate children is by showing them. Yishmael saw his father rushing to prepare the animals for the guests, so Yishmael also prepared it quickly (as it states, **ותוא תושעל רהמיו**). This ideal way of teaching by example is hinted at in Rashi's words at the beginning of the parashah (21:1) **מינטקה לע מילודג ריהוהל**. We can translate it as follows- **לע מינטקה לע מילודג ריהוהל**, the adults' deeds should shine and influence, **לע מינטקה**, the younger generation. Pirkei Avos means "Chapters of the Fathers." This holy tractate teaches yiras Shamayim, middos, proper conduct, and is called Avos. The most effective way parents can give over middos tovot, and yiras shomayim is by being a living example of this. Chazal (Bava Kama 97:) say, "What coin did Avraham Avinu possess? There was an old man and an old woman on one side and a lad and a girl on the other side." The old and the young were on opposite sides of the same coin because the young are influenced by the old. The way the parents act is how the children will become. They are on the same coin because although they are at different stages in life, they influence one another. It states (Bereishis 12:3), **ותחפשם לכ**, "And all families of the earth shall bless themselves by you." Rashi explains that people will want their children to be like Avraham Avinu. Rashi writes, "A father will say to his son, 'You should be like Avraham.'" It can be explained (תוחז דרדב) that parents want to live like Terach (Avraham's father) and to do whatever their heart desires while they tell their children to be righteous. But it doesn't work that way. Parents cannot expect their children to be better than them.

Teach with Words Teaching by example is essential, but these lessons need to be accompanied by words. Therefore, Pirkei Avos often states, **היה אורא**, "He would say..." We can explain, **אורא**, his essence, **היה**, is what he spoke. The combination of teaching by example and with words can educate children to go on the proper path. Reb Yaakov Galinsky zt'l told the following mashal: A poor non-Jew heard that poor Yidden go around the shuls during Shacharis, Minchah, and Maariv collecting money, and he decided to dress up like a Yid and do the same. It was a financially wise decision because he earned some money each day during the tefillos. One day, he heard one of the collectors announce, "Raboisay! I'm a ger tzedek. The Torah says forty-eight times that one must love converts." After that speech, everyone gave him some more money. The goy saw that this announcement helped the Yid earn more money, so he began making this announcement as well. In every beis medresh, he announced that he was a ger tzedek, and people gave him generously. One day, he heard one of his fellow collectors announce, "I'm a descendant of the Baal Shem Tov zt'l. It is a great merit to support an einikel of the Baal Shem Tov." The congregant gave him very generously in honor of his illustrious grandfather.

So, the goy decided to win on both accounts. He announced, "I am an einikel of the Baal Shem Tov, and a ger tzedek." The Yidden quickly realized he was a phony and banished him from the beis medresh. He had contradicted himself. Reb Yankele Galinsky zt'l says that the same is when parents tell their children to act a certain way, but they don't act that way. As a result, their words fall flat on their children and are ineffective.

2 Education – Making our Children Aware of their Dignified Stature The pasuk (21:1) states: **מהילע... שפנל אל שפנל וימעב אמטי אל שפנל**, "Say to the kohanim... and tell them: Each of you shall not become tamei to a [dead] person." We already explained that **מהילע תרמאו** "Tell them" means that the older kohanim should educate the younger kohanim. What should the older kohanim teach the younger kohanim? **וימעב אמטי אל שפנל**, "Do not become tamei." They should tell the younger kohanim to be cautious from tumah. In our generation, this means to tell them not to sully their souls with the internet (and other modern-day tumos). But how do we accomplish that? How do we influence our children that they shouldn't want all the impurities that are out there? The answer is, **ורהא ינב מינהכה לא רומא**, tell them that they are kohanim, Hashem's loyal servants. Tell them that they are **ינב**, **ורהא ינב**, descendants of tzaddikim. Tell them that they are holy, exalted beings, and therefore tumah isn't good for them. If you restrict a child without explanation, the child will feel stifled. For example, if you will say, "You can't see this, you can't go there, and you can't do this or that," and you don't explain to the child how this is for his benefit, he won't understand why he can't enjoy the world as others do. But when you explain to your child how holy and special he is and how much he will gain, even in this world, by living a pure Jewish, he will despise the lifestyle of degradation and lowliness. Therefore, explain to your children that all the impure pleasures of the world ultimately lead to a lot of heartache and depression (as this is well known and documented). When this information is conveyed correctly, it facilitates the children's resolve to avoid the tumah of the world.

3 Also, make your child aware of the great privilege of being a Yid; tell him he has a beautiful soul, and it is below his dignity to lower himself to the ways of the goyim. There was a melamed who had a side job selling esrogim. The Pnei Menachem of Gur zt'l told him, "You don't only work with esrogim before succos. You work with esrogim the entire year because each student is like a precious esrog. A talented esrog merchant knows how to clean an esrog so it will appear beautiful. A reckless esrog merchant can scratch and ruin a beautiful esrog. Students are the same. Handle them with care, and they will shine. Mishandle them, and you ruin them, r'l." Chinuch is Essential It states in this week's parashah (23:40), **ידה צע ירפ וישארה מויב מכל מתחקלו**, "You shall take for yourselves on the first day a beautiful fruit of a tree." Chazal tell us that **ידה צע ירפ** refers to a species that the tree and the fruit have the same taste. (This is how we know the pasuk is referring to an esrog because an esrog and its tree taste the same.) The Imrei Chaim of Viznitz zt'l said that fruit denotes children, and the tree denotes the parents. Our goal is, **הויב וירפ וצע**, the tree and the fruit should be the same. The children should be as good as their parents (or better than their parents). There shouldn't be yeridas hadoros, the decline of generations. We accomplish this with chinuch comprised of being a good example combined with conversation, as we explained, and topped off with many tefillos. The four children at the Seder are the chacham, rasha, tam, and the she'eino yodeia lishol. We can explain that these children are symbolic of four generations, and it shows the yeridas hadoros, the degradation of our nation that we witness in our times. The first generation is the chacham, who is too wise for his own good. He asks too many questions; he isn't satisfied accepting the rules of the Torah with simple faith. This leads him to raise a rebellious son, the rasha. Next, the grandchild will be a tam, one who knows very little about Yiddishkeit, and then comes the she'eino yodeia lishol, a fourth generation that knows nothing at all about Yiddishkeit. It is the generation that asks no questions because they know absolutely nothing. Their parents knew a drop about Yiddishkeit, and the generation before them knew even more but rebelled. It all began with the

chacham who asked too many questions. They didn't want to accept the Torah with simple faith, and the bitter results weren't long in coming. The Chasam Sofer zt'l (Toras Moshe – Hagaddah Shel Pesach, ה"ד, ראו) writes, "There are parents who haven't abandoned the Torah; they keep all the mitzvos, only they do so by rote. (הדמולמ מישנא תוצמ). They don't study Torah, and they never speak words of Torah and mussar. The children, who never heard their parents speaking Torah and mussar view their parents' adherence to the mitzvos as insanity. This results in children ultimately leaving klal Yisrael. But it isn't the children's fault. Their parents ate the unripe fruit of apikorsus, heresy [and the children ate those fruits after they ripened]." In Nisan, there's a mitzvah to say a brachah when you see fruit trees blossoming. In this brachah we praise Hashem for creating תורירב תונליאו beautiful creatures and beautiful trees. Why do we mention תורירב תונליאו, beautiful creatures in this brachah? Isn't the brachah for the beautiful trees? People say it refers to the people who water and tend to the trees. The tree wouldn't blossom so well if it weren't for them. They are the תורירב תונליאו, beautiful creations that bring forth the תורירב תונליאו, beautiful trees. We add that it is the same with the development of good, ehrlicher children. The devoted parents – who educate and daven for their children – are the תורירב תונליאו, beautiful people who bring about the blossoming of the תורירב תונליאו, the beautiful trees – their offspring. ...

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 subject: Rabbi Reisman's Weekly Chumash Shiur

Rabbi Reisman – Parshas Emor 5782

1 – Topic – The consequences of speaking Lashon Hora

As we prepare for Shabbos Parshas Emor. We watch the clock tick down to Shavuot, to Kabbalas Hatorah. I have no doubt that as we come closer to Kabbalas Hatorah more and more people will be attending the Mishmar to prepare properly for our Kabbalas Hatorah. We are entering now the second half of Sefira and we feel the excitement marching towards Mattan Torah. We should feel it.

Let me share with you two thoughts at the end of the Parsha and then B'eizras Hashem a Dvar Halacha at the beginning of the Parsha. Let us start with a thought at the end of the Parsha a few Pesukim from the end. It says in 24:19 (וְאִישׁ, כִּי-יִתֵּן מוֹם בְּעַמִּיתוֹ--בְּאִשׁוֹר עֵשָׂה, כִּן יַעֲשֶׂה לוֹ) A person who inflicts a wound on his friend, as he did so shall be done to him (וְעַתָּה עֵין, שְׁחָרַרְתָּ שְׁחָרַרְתָּ--בְּאִשׁוֹר עֵין, כִּן יַעֲשֶׂה לוֹ) (תַּחַת עֵין, שְׁחָרַרְתָּ שְׁחָרַרְתָּ--בְּאִשׁוֹר עֵין, כִּן יַעֲשֶׂה לוֹ).

In the Talelai Oros he brings that from here a Remez to something that is mentioned in the Chovos Halevavos and the Chofetz Chaim brings in the Sefer Shemiras Halashon. Specifically, the Chofetz Chaim in Sefer Shemiras Halashon in the Shaar Hazechira, Perek Zayin, brings an incredible thing. That when someone talks Lashon Hora about someone else the Mitzvos of the speaker of Lashon Hora go to the one who the Lashon Hora is spoken about. So that he gets a windfall of Mitzvos. It is a mistake when people say it is "All" the Mitzvos as that is not true. It does not say all the Mitzvos, it says the Mitzvos. If you look at the source in the Chovos Halevavos (ואמר) אחד כן החסידים הרבה בני אדם יבואו ליום החשבון וכשמראים להם מעשיהם ימצאו בספר זכיותם זכיות שלא עשו אותם ויאמרו לא עשינו אותם ויאמרו להם עשה אותם אשר דבר בכך וספר בגנותכם. וכן כשיחסרו מספר זכיות המספרים בגנותם יבקשו אותו בעת ההיא ויאמר (להם) אבדו מכם בעת שדברתם בפלוני ופלוני you will see that it is some of the Mitzvos. Some of the Mitzvos of a person who speaks Lashon Hora go and switch to the recipient and that is the person who was hurt by his words. It switches over.

Somewhere else in Shemiras Halashon the Chofetz Chaim writes that this may be the reason that at the end of Elokai Netzor there is a Minhag to say a Posuk that has to do with the person's name. Why say a Posuk that has to do with a person's name? He says because there is a concept that L'asid Lavo on the Yom Hadin people will come to the Yom Hadin with a Behala and

they will not remember their name. What that means exactly is hard to understand but Balei Kabala write such an idea that people will not remember their names.

Zagt the Chofetz Chaim that on the Yom Hadin on the scales a person will see either Mitzvos that he didn't do that are suddenly on the scale or Mitzvos that he did do but are not there. There will be a Behala, there will be a question, am I the right person? Somehow that is related to the idea that a person has to stick his name into into a Mitzvah, into Shemoneh Esrei. Whatever that means, the Yesod of the Shemiras Halashon that a person who speaks Lashon Hora Rachmana Litzlon loses Mitzvos to the other person, that Yesod is Merumaz in this Posuk. (וְאִישׁ, כִּי-יִתֵּן מוֹם בְּעַמִּיתוֹ), if you have damaged someone else, (בְּאִשׁוֹר עֵשָׂה) the Mitzvos that you have done (כִּן יַעֲשֶׂה לוֹ), go over to the other person. This idea is brought in the Chovos Halevavos in the Shaar Hachani'a (הכניעה), Perek Zayin and this is the idea that is brought down.

Now of course this idea needs an explanation. You suddenly get a windfall, a bonanza. It is your lucky day, someone spoke Lashon Hora about you and you get Zechusim that you don't deserve. It is very difficult to understand the concept.

In the Michtav Eliyahu he explains it as follows. He says that when Reuven speaks Lashon Hora about Shimon, how damaging is it? Well it depends. It depends on how much of a respected person Reuven is. If the person speaking the Lashon Hora is a Tzaddik, obviously he is doing something that is not Tzidkus now but he is otherwise a righteous person, a Talmid Chochom, a Chashuve person, then when he speaks bad about someone else it causes greater damage. If he is less than that, then it causes less damage. Zagt the Michtav Eliyahu, to the extent that your Mitzvos do damage to the other person that because you did Mitzvos you are respected and does damage to the other person, then it is like you are using the Mitzvos to hurt him, so Rachmana Litzlon you lose the Mitzvos and it comes to him. In other words, the damage, the hurt that he got is compensated by the cause of the damage. However, that works, it is obviously an extraordinary type of a punishment for someone who speaks Lashon Hora and hopefully it is something that will motivate us to do better.

Parshas Emor: Commemorating the Desert Experience: An Analysis of Parshat Hamo'adot (Ch. 23)

By Rabbi Yitzchak Etshalom

I. PARASHAT HAMO'ADOT

The only complete treatment of the holiday calendar found in the Torah is the centerpiece of our Parashah. Although reading it in the original (to which we will refer throughout the shiur) is preferable, here is a translation which may be used for reference. Paragraph breaks represent separation of Parashiot and those few terms which are in bold-faced print will be explained in the shiur:

1 Hashem spoke to Mosheh, saying:

2 Speak to the people of Yisra'el and say to them: These are the appointed festivals of Hashem that you shall proclaim as Mikra'ei Kodesh, my appointed festivals.

3 Six days shall work be done; but the seventh day is a Shabbat Shabbaton, a Mikra Kodesh; you shall do no work: it is a Shabbat to Hashem throughout your settlements.

4 These are the appointed festivals of Hashem, the Mikra'ei Kodesh, which you shall celebrate at the time appointed for them.

5 In the first month, on the fourteenth day of the month, at twilight, there shall be a passover offering to Hashem,

6 and on the fifteenth day of the same month is the festival of unleavened bread to Hashem; seven days you shall eat unleavened bread.

7 On the first day you shall have a Mikra Kodesh; you shall not work at your occupations.

8 For seven days you shall present Hashem's offerings by fire; on the seventh day there shall be a Mikra Kodesh: you shall not work at your occupations.

9 Hashem spoke to Mosheh:

10 Speak to the people of Yisra'el and say to them: When you enter the land that I am giving you and you reap its harvest, you shall bring the omer of the first fruits of your harvest to the priest.

11 He shall raise the omer before Hashem, that you may find acceptance; on the day after the Shabbat the priest shall raise it.

12 On the day when you raise the omer, you shall offer a lamb a year old, without blemish, as a burnt offering to Hashem.

13 And the grain offering with it shall be two-tenths of an ephah of choice flour mixed with oil, an offering by fire of pleasing odor to Hashem; and the drink offering with it shall be of wine, one-fourth of a hin.

14 You shall eat no bread or parched grain or fresh ears until that very day, until you have brought the offering of your God: it is a statute forever throughout your generations in all your settlements.

15 And from the day after the Shabbat, from the day on which you bring the omer of the elevation offering, you shall count off seven weeks; they shall be complete. 16 You shall count until the day after the seventh Shabbat, fifty days; then you shall present an offering of new grain to Hashem.

17 You shall bring from your settlements two loaves of bread as an elevation offering, each made of two-tenths of an ephah; they shall be of choice flour, baked with leaven, as first fruits to Hashem.

18 You shall present with the bread seven lambs a year old without blemish, one young bull, and two rams; they shall be a burnt offering to Hashem, along with their grain offering and their drink offerings, an offering by fire of pleasing odor to Hashem.

19 You shall also offer one male goat for a sin offering, and two male lambs a year old as a sacrifice of well-being.

20 The priest shall raise them with the bread of the first fruits as an elevation offering before Hashem, together with the two lambs; they shall be holy to Hashem for the priest.

21 On that same day you shall make proclamation; you shall hold a Mikra Kodesh; you shall not work at your occupations. This is a statute forever in all your settlements throughout your generations.

22 When you reap the harvest of your land, you shall not reap to the very edges of your field, or gather the gleanings of your harvest; you shall leave them for the poor and for the alien: I am Hashem your God.

23 Hashem spoke to Mosheh, saying:

24 Speak to the people of Yisra'el, saying: In the seventh month, on the first day of the month, you shall observe a Shabbaton, a commemoration of T'ruah, a Mikra Kodesh.

25 You shall not work at your occupations; and you shall present Hashem's offering by fire.

26 Hashem spoke to Mosheh, saying:

27 Now, the tenth day of this seventh month is the day of atonement; it shall be a Mikra Kodesh for you: you shall deny yourselves and present Hashem's offering by fire;

28 and you shall do no work during that entire day; for it is a day of atonement, to make atonement on your behalf before Hashem your God.

29 For anyone who does not practice self-denial during that entire day shall be cut off from the people.

30 And anyone who does any work during that entire day, such a one I will destroy from the midst of the people.

31 You shall do no work: it is a statute forever throughout your generations in all your settlements.

32 It shall be to you a Shabbat Shabbaton , and you shall deny yourselves; on the ninth day of the month at evening, from evening to evening you shall keep your Shabbat.

33 Hashem spoke to Mosheh, saying:

34 Speak to the people of Yisra'el, saying: On the fifteenth day of this seventh month, and lasting seven days, there shall be the festival of booths to Hashem.

35 The first day shall be a Mikra Kodesh ; you shall not work at your occupations.

36 Seven days you shall present Hashem's offerings by fire; on the eighth day you shall observe a Mikra Kodesh and present Hashem's offerings by fire; it is a solemn assembly; you shall not work at your occupations.

37 These are the appointed festivals of Hashem, which you shall celebrate as times of Mikra Kodesh , for presenting to Hashem offerings by fire - burnt offerings and grain offerings, sacrifices and drink offerings, each on its proper day -

38 apart from the Shabbats of Hashem, and apart from your gifts, and apart from all your votive offerings, and apart from all your freewill offerings, which you give to Hashem.

39 Now, the fifteenth day of the seventh month, when you have gathered in the produce of the land, you shall keep the festival of Hashem, lasting seven days; a Shabbaton on the first day, and a Shabbaton on the eighth day.

40 On the first day you shall take the fruit of majestic trees, branches of palm trees, boughs of leafy trees, and willows of the brook; and you shall rejoice before Hashem your God for seven days.

41 You shall keep it as a festival to Hashem seven days in the year; you shall keep it in the seventh month as a statute forever throughout your generations.

42 You shall live in booths for seven days; all that are citizens in Yisra'el shall live in booths,

43 so that your generations may know that I made the people of Yisra'el live in booths when I brought them out of the land of Egypt: I am Hashem your God.

44 Thus Mosheh declared to the people of Yisra'el the appointed festivals of Hashem.

II. SEVEN QUESTIONS ON THE PARASHAH

Since every subsection within our selection utilizes and highlights the number seven (which is a topic for a separate shiur), I would like to pose seven questions on the text:

- 1) Five of the holidays mentioned are also described as a Shabbaton - and two of them, [the weekly] Shabbat and Yom haKippurim are called Shabbat Shabbaton. What is the meaning of this word (which is clearly related to Shabbat)?
- 2) The listing presented is "the appointed times of Hashem which you (the B'nei Yisra'el) shall declare". Those holidays which fall on a given day of the month (e.g. Pesach on Nisan 15) are clearly declared by the B'nei Yisra'el, when the court announces the new month (under those circumstances when the calendar was fixed on a monthly basis by the testimony of witnesses who had seen the new moon); this is the Gemara's explanation for the liturgical phrase M'kadesh Yisra'el v'haZ'manim (He who sanctifies Yisra'el and the seasons) - it is Yisra'el who sanctify the seasons (BT Berakhot 49a). It is, therefore, understandable why Pesach, Shavu'ot etc. are listed in a group headed by "which you shall declare in their time". Shabbat, on the other hand, exists independently of our declaration or observance of that holy day (which is why the signature form in the Shabbat liturgy is M'kadesh haShabbat, with no mention of Yisra'el (see, however, JT Berakhot 8:1 for a variant version). Why then is Shabbat included in our list? This question is a bit stronger when viewed against the backdrop of the Gemara in Arakhin (11b), which notes that the reason we don't say Hallel on Shabbat is because Shabbat is not considered a Mo'ed (appointed time).
- 3) In the section (vv. 9-14) relating to the beginning-of-the-harvest offering (brought on the second day of Hag haMatzot), the Torah describes this offering as an omer - which is the amount of the offering. Not only is it odd to refer to an offering by its volume, this term is repeated four times within a space of 6 verses. What is the significance of the omer as an appellation for this offering?
- 4) At the end of the section detailing the festival of Shavu'ot (vv. 15-22), the Torah interjects the laws of Pe'ah (leaving the corner of the field unharvested for the poor) and Leket (leaving the gleaning of the harvest - again for the poor). What is the

rationale behind the inclusion of these "non-holiday" laws in our list?

5) In v. 24, the holiday of the first day of the seventh month (which we commonly call "Rosh haShanah") is denoted not only as a Shabbaton , but also as a Zikhron T'ruah - meaning "commemoration of a [Shofar's] blast". Although Rashi explains that this refers to the obligation to recite the various theme-driven verses during Musaf of Rosh haShanah, this only works if we read Zikhron T'ruah as "a mention of a Shofar blast "; however, a simpler read is "a commemoration of a Shofar blast ". What is being commemorated by the blasting of the Shofar?

6) In v. 32, Yom haKippurim is called a Shabbat Shabbaton (just as it is earlier in Vayyikra - 16:31). Why is Yom haKippurim given this title - which is otherwise only accorded to Shabbat?

7) A careful look at the "parashah" of Sukkot / Sh'mini Atzeret (vv. 33-44) reveals that there are really two distinct sections within this one parashah. Note that v. 37 begins with Ele Mo'adei Hashem , a perfect conclusion to the opening Ele Mo'adei Hashem (v. 4). Once that "conclusion" is finished (v. 38), the Torah adds another perspective of Sukkot / Sh'mini Atzeret. Note the differences between the two sections:

a) In the first section, the holiday is called Hag haSukkot , but does not explain the meaning for this title; the second refers to it as Hag l'Hashem - but associates the timing with the end of the harvest season.

b) In the first section, both the first and eighth days are called Mikra'ei Kodesh ; in the second section both are called Shabbaton.

c) The first section only includes the commands regarding not working and bringing the proper offerings; the second includes the two Mitzvot unique to the holiday - the four species (Lulav, Etrog, Hadas, Aravah) and residing in the Sukkah. Our final question: Why are there two independent texts of Sukkot / Sh'mini Atzeret?

III THE VILNA GA'ON'S EXPLANATION

R. Eliyahu Kramer zt"l, known as the Ga'on miVilna (d. 1799), suggests a brilliant and innovative approach to understanding the first section which answers our second question - and a bit of the first.

[Introductory note: as the Torah instructs us in Sh'mot 12:16, we are not allowed to do M'lakhah on a Yom Tov, with the exception of Okhel Nephesh (M'lakhah needed for eating purposes for that day; this is permitted only when Yom Tov falls on a weekday). This is not true regarding Shabbat, on which all M'lakhah is forbidden - nor is it true for Yom haKippurim, where there is no permit for any food-related M'lakhah].

The Ga'on maintains that the first section (vv. 1-3) is not addressing [the weekly] Shabbat; rather, it operates as a header for the rest of the Parashah:

Six days shall work be done - this refers to the six holidays (first day of Pesach, last day of Pesach, Shavu'ot, Rosh haShanah [remember that from the Torah's perspective, even Rosh haShanah is only one day], first day of Sukkot and Sh'mini 'Atzeret) when some type of M'lakhah (Okhel Nephesh) may be done;

But the seventh day is a Shabbat Shabbaton- this refers to the seventh of these days, Yom haKippurim;

You shall do no work- on Yom haKippurim, all types of M'lakhah are forbidden.

In this fashion, the Ga'on explains the inclusion of Shabbat on our list - it isn't there at all! It also explains the use of the phrase Shabbat Shabbaton in v. 3 - it is referring to Yom haKippurim, which has already been titled Shabbat Shabbaton in Ch. 16.

Although there is much to recommend this approach, I would like to suggest one that not only responds to all of our questions, but also addresses this "Shabbat" section from a "p'shat" perspective.

IV. WHAT IS A "MIKRA KODESH"?

Before addressing the overall theme of this parashah, I would like to pose two questions of a general nature:

a) What is the meaning of the phrase Mikra Kodesh , which is the description of each one of these special days (along with a general name for all of them: v. 2,4,37)?

b) What is the rationale behind the placement of this list? Why is it set towards the end of Sefer Vayyikra? (Of course, this question could be posed no matter where it is placed; nevertheless, if we can find a solid reason why this parashah "belongs" here, that is a path we should pursue.)

REEXPERIENCING THE EVOLUTION OF THE GOY KADOSH

Every one of the days under discussion is liturgically referred to as a Zekher liY'tziat Mitzrayim - a "commemoration of the Exodus". Although it is abundantly clear why Pesach serves this purpose - and both Shabbat (D'varim 5:15) and Sukkot (Vayyikra 23:43) are connected with the Exodus in the Torah - the rest of the holidays don't have an apparent connection with the Exodus. Even the Sukkot association is weak if we understand Y'tzi'at Mitzrayim as the plagues and the crossing of the Reed Sea. Why is each of these holy days considered a Zekher liY'tziat Mitzrayim?

I would like to suggest that the entire system of the Jewish calendar - including both Shabbat and all of the Yamim Tovim - is designed to help us reexperience and internalize the "highlights" of our travels through the desert. In other words, we must adopt a more complete and inclusive understanding of Y'tzi'at Mitzrayim . As we examine the salient features of each of these holy days, specifically as they are outlined - and alluded to - in our text, we will find that each of them reinforces a component of that experience which the Torah desires us to maintain. We will also find that the order of the holy days can be viewed as deliberate and sequentially significant.

When we stood at the foot of Har Sinai - which was the intermediary goal of the Exodus (Sh'mot 3:12) - God assured us that if we keep His covenant, we will become a Goy Kadosh (a holy nation). There are two distinct elements in this formula: A nation, implying a unified purpose, common concern and pervasive sense of mutual responsibility. The second element is holiness, wherein that unified group is directed towards a sanctified purpose. This order is significant and indispensable; we must first achieve a sense of unity and fellowship before moving that group into the realm of the holy. It is only after this dual goal has been achieved that we can construct the Mishkan and allow God's Presence to rest among us - which is the pinnacle of the Goy Kadosh. The system of the Jewish calendar can best be understood through the prism of the evolution of the B'nei Yisra'el towards their destiny as a Goy Kadosh.

This explains why each of these holy days is considered a Mikra Kodesh . The word Mikra is used in only one other context (besides Sh'mot 12 - Pesach; our parashah and the other "listing" at Bamidbar 28) - in Bamidbar 10:2. God commanded Mosheh to fashion two trumpets of silver, which were to be used l'Mikra ha'Edah - to assemble the people. A Mikra is, therefore, a call of assembly. What then is a Mikra Kodesh? Simply an assembly for a holy purpose. In other words, a Mikra Kodesh is an actualization of the ideal of the Goy Kadosh - the group coming together for a holy purpose.

This also explains the placement of this parashah at this juncture in Vayyikra. After detailing the parameters of "public" Kedushah (the Mishkan and those impurities which cause defilement) and "private" Kedushah (see last week's shiur), along with the special Kedushah of the Kohanim (Chapters 21-22), the Torah brings these together as the private/individual Kedushah is manifested in the public domain, chiefly through the offices of the Kohanim.

After this introduction, we can re-examine the parashah, note the underlying theme and answer our questions.

V. ANALYZING THE PARASHAH

SHABBAT

Even though we are accustomed to thinking of Shabbat as a commemoration of - and testimony to - God's creation (see Sh'mot 20:12), Shabbat also has an explicit Zekher liY'tziat Mitzrayim dimension, as mentioned above. Besides the explicit verse (D'varim 5:15) cited previously, there is a direct Shabbat association with the desert experience which is uniquely tied up with the notion of national unity.

One introductory note: As we have mentioned in earlier shiurim, when studying Tanakh, we must simultaneously view the text as outsiders while experiencing it as participants. As outsiders, we are enriched with the global view of the entire canonized text and the interpretations and comments of our sages. As participants, we only know what the original target

audience (be it Mosheh, Aharon or the B'nei Yisra'el) knew; we must try to understand (to whatever extent possible) the impact of these particular words and phrases on the ears of this original audience.

When Shabbaton - a relatively rare word - is used, it certainly must evoke in the listener the original context in which it was used. A quick search of the Tanakh reveals that the earliest appearance of this word is in the Chapter 16 of Sh'mot - in the story of the Mahn (Manna).

The story of the Mahn is, (as we indicated in this year's shiur on Parashat Beshalach), the central turning point in the preparation of the B'nei Yisra'el for their arrival at Sinai.

A quick review of the story will help us understand the relevance of the story of the Mahn to our goal of building a holy nation.

There are two central features of how the B'nei Yisra'el were to respond to the Mahn.

- * They were to only take the proper amount per person in the household.

- * They were to take double on Friday and take none on Shabbat.

Each of these commands (which, for the most part, the whole nation followed) carries a critical step in the development of the holy nation.

R. Yaakov Medan, in a wonderful article (Megadim 17:61-90), points out that the command for each person to restrict himself to a daily portion for each member of the household represented not only a good deal of faith in God - but also tremendous self-restraint and concern for one's fellow. This is how he explains the "test" of the Mahn (16:4) - that we were tested to see how much concern each of us could demonstrate for our fellow, knowing that if we took more than our portion, someone else would go hungry. Indeed, the B'nei Yisra'el passed this test with flying colors! (v. 18) For a slave people, wandering in a desert to exercise this much self-restraint was a demonstration of their readiness to stand as a unified nation and to enter into a covenant which includes mutual responsibility.

This self-restraint was the first building block in the process of turning a multitude of slaves into a unified nation. The ability to maintain concern for one's fellow in the face of such temptation was the first indication that we would indeed be able to become a Goy Kadosh.

By beginning the parashah of Mikra'ei Kodesh with Shabbat - and by specifically referring to that day as a Shabbat Shabbaton , we are immediately reminded of - and brought back to - that wonderful demonstration of mutual concern with the Mahn. Indeed, Shabbat carries a powerful "social-justice" component (see Ramban at D'varim 5:15); by stepping back from our daily attempt to conquer the world and amass more for ourselves, we are given the golden opportunity to allow others in to our lives and to develop our own empathy for those less fortunate. In addition, the cessation from M'lakhah heightens our awareness of Who is really in charge and of our obligation to look out for all of His creatures.

HAG HAMATZOT

This one is pretty straightforward. In order to keep the experience of the Exodus at the forefront of our consciousness, the Torah commanded us to relive it (therefore calling it Hag haMatzot, underscoring the method by which we reexperience it) every year. Note that these holy days are also called Mikra'ei Kodesh , in that they remind us of our holy ingathering. Besides the overarching thematic Mikra Kodesh, this one is a bit special - if we think back to the various guidelines and restrictions given us in the context of the Korban Pesach (e.g. to be eaten as a household - see our shiur on Parashat Bo).

One question about this section which we must address is the repeated introduction in v. 4. Once the Torah already captioned this chapter (in v. 2) with the phrase "These are the appointed times..." why repeat it two verses later?

We will only get to this question near the end of the shiur in our discussion about the two sections of Sukkot / Sh'mini Atzeret.

OMER HAT'NUFAH

On the day after Hag haPesach (the second day of Hag haMatzot), we are commanded to offer up an Omer's worth of grain (barley). Why this amount - and why mention it so often?

When we look back at the Mahn story, we note that each portion of Mahn that fell was 1/10th of an Ephah - or 1 Omer's worth! It is not surprising that the Torah commands us to "lift up" (symbolically returning the Mahn to its rightful Owner) exactly that amount of grain the day after Pesach. The lesson is clear: Liberation must carry with it a renewed sense of concern for social welfare and a mutual responsibility. As soon as we have celebrated our freedom, the Torah commands us to remember the miracle of the Mahn - and our miraculous response to the test.

PE'AH AND LEKET

The exact middle verse of our parashah is the "interjected" command to leave Pe'ah (the corner of the field) and Leket (gleanings) for the poor. Now we can understand the significance of this addition - while harvesting, celebrating with a new grain offering (v. 16) etc., we must not forget our brothers and sisters who have fallen on hard times. The Torah interrupts the flow of the calendar to remind us that we can not be Holy without ensuring that we are doing so as a Nation.

ZIKHRON T'RUAH

When we come to evaluate the meaning of this phrase within the context of our parashah, we have to again return to the mode of "participant" as opposed to "observer". If the B'nei Yisra'el are commanded to perform an act of commemoration of a Shofar-blast, it must refer to a particular blast which they had already experienced - and are now being commanded to commemorate.

The only Shofar blast which we know of in their past was the blast (or series of blasts) at Har Sinai which prefaced and followed the Revelation. The festival of the first day of the seventh month ("Rosh haShanah") is, therefore, a commemoration of the stand at Sinai. The Shofar which we blow is intended to remind us of that great event.

When we first arrived at Sinai, the Torah describes us as "encamping opposite the mountain" (Sh'mot 19:2). The Hebrew verb for this encampment is not the expected vaYahanu ("and they encamped"), rather it is the singular vaYihan (lit. "and he encamped"). Rashi (ibid) is sensitive to this anomaly and explains that we encamped there "as one person, with one heart".

The stand at Sinai was the next step of the process begun with the Mahn (hence, Rosh haShanah is also called a Shabbaton) - moving from a Goy to a Goy Kadosh.

YOM HAKIPPURIM

We then move to a new level of Goy Kadosh . Previously, the unity we experienced was the product of the spirit of sharing and self-restraint. We now come to the day on which we allow ourselves to be stripped of all that divides us. We have no food, drink, fancy clothes (we dress in white because we are either angels or dead) or family life - we have all been "equalized". Yom haKippurim gives us the opportunity to move to a new level of mutual concern - and to focus that concern on a holy enterprise. The sole focus of Yom haKippurim in its first presentation in the Torah (Vayyikra 16) is the purification of the Mishkan. We have now moved from a Goy Kadosh in the abstract (the stand at Sinai) to a Goy Kadosh with a purpose and a focus of activity - sanctity of the camp and a reenshrinement of God's Presence. Yom haKippurim is called Shabbat Shabbaton because it is a "super-Mahn" experience; mutual concern focused on a holy goal.

SUKKOT AND SH'MINI ATZERET

At this point, it pays to review the three points of contrast between the two treatments of this holiday:

a) In the first section, the holiday is called Hag haSukkot , but does not explain the meaning for this title; the second refers to it as Hag l'Hashem - but associates the timing with the end of the harvest season.

b) In the first section, both the first and eighth days are called Mikra'ei Kodesh ; in the second section both are called Shabbaton.

c) The first section only includes the commands regarding not working and bringing the proper offerings; the second includes the two Mitzvot unique to the holiday - the four species (Lulav, Etrog, Hadas, Aravah) and residing in the Sukkah.

And now to the answers:

The first section of Sukkot / Sh'mini Atzeret deals with the holiday as a part of the agricultural cycle of celebration - a cycle which began with Hag haMatzot.

[This also explains why the first section here ends with the concluding Ele Mo'adei Hashem - closing off the "middle" section of the list which began at v. 4. This answers the question asked above (in the section on Hag haMatzot) as to why there is a second caption of our list in v. 4.] As such, it is simply called Hag haSukkot - a purely agricultural connotation. Keep in mind that a Sukkah is a booth used by the workers during harvest season when they could not return home every night - and to rest during the heat of the summer noontime. These days are denoted as Mikra'ei Kodesh - a teleology which is only realized in the second section. They are also replete with offerings and two days of non-work - dedicated to God - but there is no "unity" factor here.

The second treatment, beginning (v. 39) with Akh (which evokes the beginning of the Yom haKippurim section), is a dramatic turn. Instead of being a harvest festival, it is to take place "when you have gathered in the produce of the land" (i.e. that is when you are to celebrate, not the focus of the celebration). This festival includes a Shabbaton at the beginning and the end - bringing us back to the unity theme.

We are then given the two Mitzvot unique to Sukkot: Arba Minim (the Four Species) and Sukkah.

There are many Midrashim explaining the symbolism of the Arba Minim (e.g. they represent the four types of Jews, the four climes of Eretz Yisra'el, four part of the body) - but all of them rest on two basic Halakhic premises: All four species are indispensable for the Mitzvah (inclusion) and all four must be taken as one (community). The introduction of this Mitzvah here underscores the Shabbaton aspect of Sukkot.

Regarding the Mitzvah of Sukkah, the Rabbis said (BT Sukkah 27b): " 'all that are citizens in Yisra'el shall live in Sukkot' - this teaches that all of Yisra'el are worthy to reside in one Sukkah" (this is playing off the way that Sukkot is written in the verse - it could be read Sukkat which is singular, indicating all citizens residing in one Sukkah). This is, again, a Mitzvah which is indicative and symbolic of inclusion of all Jews. The Goy Kadosh is reinforced as we celebrate the end of the harvest.

What can we make of the culmination of our parashah? In what way is Sukkot an appropriate "pinnacle experience" in this sequence? Note that unlike the first treatment, in this second section the festival is called a Hag l'Hashem - a festival of God; that surely indicates something significant...what is it?

Looking back over the sequence of Hag haMatzot (freedom), Omer (the Mahn), Pe'ah (more social concern), Zikhron T'ruah (Har Sinai) and Yom haKippurim (Goy Kadosh) - we note that there is one critical, final step in the desert experience which has not yet been internalized.

As Ramban points out in his introduction to Sefer Sh'mot, the goal of the entire Exodus enterprise was to restore us to the glorious stature of our ancestors, with the Shekhinah residing in our midst. This was accomplished only when we constructed and successfully dedicated the Mishkan (which is, according to Ramban, why Sefer Sh'mot concludes at that point).

The Mishkan, although in the public domain, held a personal connection with each Jew. Not only were all prayers directed there (see MT Hilkhos T'fillah 1:3), but Aharon constantly wore the Hoshen, which included the names of all 12 tribes (on 12 stones) and the Ephod, whose shoulder-straps included all 12 tribes (on two stones). Every Jew had a place in the Mishkan - but could not practically come in.

The Sukkah, coming at the culmination of the season of holy days which walk us through the evolution of the B'nei Yisra'el into a Goy Kadosh, is evocative of the Mishkan. It is indeed fitting that this holiday, from its Shabbaton perspective, with its inclusive and communal approach to Kedushah, be called Hag l'Hashem .

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Parshat Emor: Sefirat Ha-Omer According to Peshat

by Rabbi Eitan Mayer

HAPPY HOLIDAYS!

On several occasions, the Torah presents us with a section which focuses on the various "Mo'adim" -- literally, "special times" or "meeting times." These Mo'adim are more familiar to us as Pesach, Shavuot, Succot, Rosh Ha-Shanah, and Yom Kippur. [Note that these are not all happy days, which makes it somewhat inappropriate to translate "Mo'adim" as "holidays," a term which has taken on a happy, vacation-like connotation.] One of these occasions for a section on Mo'adim is our parashah, Parashat Emor. Since we are deep into Sefirat Ha-Omer (the counting of the Omer, explanation to follow) and since Shavuot is on the horizon, we will narrow our focus to two specific questions in the context of the parashat ha-mo'adim:

- 1) What is the mitzvah of Sefirat Ha-Omer all about? Why does the Torah want us to count these 49 days and seven weeks?
- 2) What is the holiday of Shavuot all about? What are we celebrating?

As we progress, it should become clear why we have connected these two questions.

THE 'POPULAR' UNDERSTANDING:

[Please note that I intend no disparagement by using the word 'popular.' I mean simply 'better known.']

On the face of things, the theme of Shavuot seems very clear, something we understand and express in various ways: Shavuot celebrates the revelation of the Torah to us at Sinai:

- 1) In the tefilot (prayers) of Shavuot, we refer to Shavuot as "zeman matan Torateinu," "the time of the giving of our Torah."
- 2) Many people practice the minhag (custom) to spend all night on Shavuot learning Torah, a practice which highlights the focus on the "Torah" theme of Shavuot.
- 3) Some classical Jewish sources also express the idea that "Matan Torah" is the theme of Shavuot (i.e., not just the idea that the Torah was given on the day which happens to also be Shavuot, but that indeed, this event is the theme of the holiday). For example, Sefer Ha-Hinnukh:

MITZVAH #306: THE MITZVAH OF COUNTING THE OMER:

"[The command is] to count 49 days... the root of this mitzvah, from a peshat [= plain sense of the text] perspective, is that the essence of Yisrael is the Torah... it is the essential element, the reason they were redeemed and taken out of Egypt -- so that they should accept the Torah at Sinai and fulfill it... therefore... we are commanded to count from the day after the Yom Tov of Pesach until the day of the giving of the Torah, to express our hearts' great desire for this glorious day... for counting shows a person that all his desire and aspiration is to get to this time."

Sefer Ha-Hinnukh focuses here mainly on Sefirat Ha-Omer, not Shavuot, but his perspective on the former reveals his view of the latter. Sefirah is a strategy calculated by the Torah to help generate excitement for the commemoration of the giving of the Torah on Shavuot.

A similar perspective, heavily laced with Kabbalistic motifs, is presented by Or Ha-Chayyim, Rav Chayyim Ibn Attar, a biblical commentator whose work may be found in the standard Mikra'ot Gedolot edition of the Torah:

OR HA-CHAYYIM, VAYIKRA 23:15 --

"You shall count" -- the reason why Hashem commanded us to count seven weeks: Hazal tell us that they [Bnei Yisrael] were suffused with the impurity of Egypt. Since Hashem wanted "zivug" [i.e., intimacy] with the nation, He treated her as a

menstruant woman, who must count seven clean days [and can then become pure]. He commanded that they count seven weeks, for then they would be prepared for their entrance as a bride to the bridal canopy. And though in the other case [i.e., the menstruant woman] it is only seven days, here it is seven weeks because of the extreme nature of the[ir] impurity. [This explains why the Torah says] the counting is "for you" -- in order to purify you, for if not for this [their impurity], Hashem would have given them the Torah right away.

Or Ha-Chayyim agrees with Sefer Ha-Chinukh that Shavuot celebrates Matan Torah, and that Sefirat Ha-Omer plays an important role in the process of preparation for Matan Torah, but he differs significantly on the question of the function of the days of Sefirah. According to Sefer Ha-Chinukh, the point is the counting (to increase our excitement), while according to Or Ha-Chayyim, the counting is not the focus, the days themselves are the focus: they provide us with the time necessary to rise to a level at which we are spiritually ready to accept the Torah.

Once we accept that the theme of Shavuot is a celebration of Matan Torah, seeing Sefirat Ha-Omer as a prelude to Matan Torah seems justified:

- 1) Sefirah terminates at Shavuot, so it makes sense to say we are counting down (up) to Matan Torah.
- 2) Sefirah begins at Pesach, so it makes sense to say (as some do) that we are linking the Exodus with Revelation. The formation of Bnei Yisrael begins with their slavery, emerges with the Exodus, and takes religious form through Matan Torah.

SOME BIBLICAL EVIDENCE:

There are a few problems with the above understanding of the significance of Shavuot and Sefirat Ha-Omer as focused on Matan Torah. First it would be instructive to read VaYikra 23:9-22.

Normally, the Torah tells us what the theme of each holiday is:

- 1) Pesach: a celebration of the Exodus.
- 2) Succot: a celebration of Hashem's providing for Bnei Yisrael during their time in the desert, and a celebration of the annual ingathering of produce of that year.
- 3) Yom Kippur: a day of purifying ourselves and the Mikdash [Temple] of impurity.
- 4) Shavuot: ???

If the theme of this holiday is Matan Torah, then the Torah should clue us in somewhere! But VaYikra 23 (as well as Shemot 23, BeMidbar 28, and Devarim 16, where Shavuot appears again) breathes not a whisper of Matan Torah.

In fact, not only is Matan Torah absent, there are *other* themes supplied for Shavuot in our parasha and elsewhere in the Torah! It is to these themes that we now turn our attention.

A "PESHAT" PERSPECTIVE:

How does the Torah refer to Shavuot? What are its names in the Torah?

- 1) Chag Ha-Katzir (Holiday of "Cutting," i.e., harvesting) : Shemot 23:16.
- 2) Yom Ha-Bikkurim (Day of the First Fruits): BeMidbar 28:26.
- 3) Shavuot ("Weeks"): BeMidbar 28:26, Devarim 16:10.

The above sources in Shemot and BeMidbar clearly indicate that Shavuot is the time of the harvest, when the first fruits ripen and are brought as offerings to Hashem. But this is directly challenged by Devarim 16:9 -- "Count seven weeks, from

when the sickle begins [to cut] the standing grain" -- which makes it sound like the harvest begins not on Shavuot, the "Hag Ha-Katzir," the "Harvest Holiday," but seven weeks earlier, when Sefirah starts! This apparent discrepancy will be resolved as we go on.

Besides the question of when the harvest actually begins, we have a more pressing problem: what does all of this harvest business have to do with Sefirat Ha-Omer? What does harvesting have to do with counting? Before we deal with this question, let us stop to question our assumption: What evidence do we have that Sefirat Ha-Omer and Shavuot are thematically linked?

1) Sefirah ends at Shavuot, implying a climactic process culminating somehow in Shavuot.

2) There are similar korbanot brought at the beginning of Sefirah (the Korban Ha-Omer) and at its end, on Shavuot (the Shte Ha-Lechem, as we will discuss); these similar korbanot act as "bookends" which set off the Sefirah/Shavuot period as a cohesive unit.

3) Shavuot is completely "dependent" on Sefirah for its date. While the Torah specifies a date for all other holidays, it never tells us the date of Shavuot! The only way to "find out" when Shavuot falls out is to count these 49 days, the 50th being Shavuot. Shavuot does not stand on its own at the end of the count; it is dependent on the count. It is the count's climax, a point made forcefully by Rabbeinu Bachyei:

RABBEINU BACHYEI, VAYIKRA 23:16 --

"Until the day after the seventh week shall you count":... The Torah never mentions the holiday of Shavuot on its own, as it does with the other holidays; for example, [it never says,] "In the third month, on the sixth day, shall be the holiday of Shavuot," as it does in the case of Pesach, "On the fifteenth day of this month shall be the holiday of Matzot." The Torah thereby teaches us that this holiday is 'dragged' along with the mitzvah of the Omer, and the 49 days which are counted between the first day of Pesach and Shavuot are like the "Chol ha-Moed" between the first day of Succot and Shemini Atzeret.

Rabbeinu Bahyei gives us our first clue to the nature of the Sefirah period with relation to Shavuot: The Sefirah period is like one long holiday, with (as is usual) critical points at both ends and Chol Ha-Mo'ed in between (a perspective first articulated by Ramban and seconded here by R. Bachyei). The critical points are the first day, when the Korban Omer is offered, and the last day, Shavuot, when the Shte Ha-Lechem is offered. The intervening forty nine days carry the theme of the first day through to the last day, integrating the entire period into one organic unit with a single theme. What that theme might be will be discussed shortly.

4) The name "Shavuot," which means simply "Weeks": the holiday itself has no name, in a sense -- it simply refers us back to the days counted, to the weeks already counted. It doesn't have independent significance, it's only the endpoint of these weeks.

Now that we have firmly established the linkage between Sefirah and Shavuot, we must take a close look at the themes embedded in the section at hand. First it will be useful to quickly review the content of the Sefirah-Shavuot section:

1) The command to present an "omer" (a volume measurement) of new grain as an offering to Hashem, accompanied by animal sacrifices. The Omer is comprised of barley flour mixed with oil and other ingredients.

2) The prohibition to eat any of the new season's grain until the day the Omer is brought.

3) The command to count seven weeks, until the fiftieth day.

4) The command to bring the Shte Ha-Lechem, an offering of two loaves of wheat bread, on the fiftieth day (i.e., Shavuot). A striking exception to almost every other flour-based offering, the Shte Ha-Lechem is brought as chametz, leavened bread. It is accompanied by animal sacrifice.

5) The command to declare a holy day, with no work done, on this fiftieth day (i.e., Shavuot).

What justifies the close connections between these mitzvot? Chizkuni (a medieval biblical commentator) offers a possibility to explain the significance of Sefirah and Shavuot which may answer this question:

CHIZKUNI, VAYIKRA 23:15 --

"You shall count from the day after the Yom Tov" -- these seven weeks are between two critical points: the beginning of the barley harvest and the beginning of the wheat harvest, two crops which are governed by the laws of Shemitah... therefore, the counting is a very important matter -- it is a paradigm and reminder, that just as we count days and weeks, and then, after the seventh week, we sanctify the 50th day, we must behave similarly with regard to Shemitah and Yovel. The essence of all of the curses in this book [i.e., the curse-warnings at the end of VaYikra] is [curses for those who are not careful in] observing Shemitah, for they carry 49 types of punishment, one for each of the 49 years in the Yovel.

Chizkuni believes that Sefirah and Shavuot are actually just reminders for the truly important mitzvot: Shemitah and Yovel. Every seventh year is considered a Shemitah year, meaning that land in Eretz Yisrael may not be worked and that all debts owed by Jews to other Jews are canceled. Every fiftieth (or 49th; this is a controversy) year is considered Yovel ("Jubilee"), meaning that all Jewish slaves are freed and that all land which has changed hands in the years since the last Yovel now returns to the hands of its original owner.

What clues Chizkuni in to the connection between Sefirah/Shavuot and Shemitah/Yovel? There are several likely possibilities:

- 1) The pesukim which command Shemitah and Yovel are remarkably similar in language to those which command Sefirah and Shavuot. The language seems to beg comparison between these two sets of mitzvot.
- 2) Structurally, these two sets of mitzvot are uniquely parallel: each has seven sets of sevens, with a climax at the fiftieth day/year.

More fundamentally, however, where does Chizkuni get the idea that Shemitah and Yovel are so important that it is necessary to institute a parallel set of mitzvot to serve as annual reminders of the entirety of the cycle? In part, Chizkuni answers this question, pointing out correctly that the sections of the Torah which curse those who neglect the mitzvot (the "tochachah") do reserve special wrath for the neglect of Shemitah (see VaYikra 26:34, for example). Still, as a peshat reading, it seems strained to suggest that Sefirah and Shavuot are not significant in their own right and serve only to remind us of other mitzvot. As tempting as the linguistic and structural parallels may be, there is no indication that one set of mitzvot is merely a reminder for the other.

More fundamentally, as Ramban points out, the Torah does indeed offer an independent theme in the case of Sefirah and Shavuot, so why is it necessary to look elsewhere for that theme? Before we look at Ramban, it is important to first appreciate the meaning of the Omer and the Shte Ha-Lechem:

SEFER HA-CHINNUKH, MITZVAH 302 -- OFFERING THE OMER... ON THE SECOND DAY OF PESAH

...The root of this mitzvah is that our actions should make us conscious of the great kindness that Hashem, may He be blessed, extends to His creations, renewing for them each year the grain harvest which sustains them. Therefore, it is proper that we should offer Him some of it, so that we remember His kindness and great generosity before we benefit from it. (Hinnukh offers the same theme for the Shte He-Lechem.)

SEFER HA-CHINNUKH, MITZVAH 303 -- NOT TO EAT FROM THE NEW GRAIN UNTIL THE END OF THE 16TH DAY OF NISAN

...The root of this mitzvah is that the essential sustenance of humans is grain; therefore, it is proper to bring from the grain an offering to Hashem, who gave it to us, before we benefit from it, just as Chazal tell us about berachot, "Anyone who benefits from this world without a berachah, has illegally benefited from sanctified property."

Now we can appreciate the terse summary by Ramban, integrating the mitzvot of Korban Ha-Omer, Sefirah, Shte Ha-

Lechem, and Shavuot:

RAMBAN VAYIKRA 23:15

"The rationale behind this section: that we start to count at the beginning of the barley harvest and bring the first of the harvest as an offering to Hashem along with an animal offering. Then the count is to be completed at the beginning of the harvest of wheat, and he offers from it a fine flour offering to Hashem along with an animal offering. This is the reason these offerings are mentioned in this section, for they are only to accompany the flour-based offerings, which are the essence of this holiday...."

Our goal in this season is to thank Hashem for the harvest and celebrate the harvest. This process cannot focus on one day, since there are two critical points at the beginning of the harvest: the beginning of the harvest of barley, the major grain for animal feed, and the beginning of the harvest of wheat, the major grain for human sustenance. In order to integrate both points into a unified whole which can then be celebrated with one holiday (Shavuot), the Torah commands that we link the two critical points by counting the days between them, maintaining our consciousness of the significance of both and their linkedness. At the beginning of the period, we bring the Korban Ha-Omer, which is of flour -- unfinished, incomplete in comparison to the leavened, 'sophisticated' bread required of the Shte Ha-Lechem, which we bring at the end. In a sense, then, the korbanot themselves hint that the Omer is a process, with a "work-in-progress" korban at the beginning and a supremely complete korban at the end.

Indeed, if the goal of Sefirah is not just to count, but to count in order to achieve continuity and linkage between the Omer and Shte Ha-Lechem (i.e., barley and wheat harvests), it becomes clearer why there are halachic opinions which look at the entire counting as one mitzvah (rather than forty nine independent mitzvot) or one integrated act and therefore would claim that if you miss a night's counting, you may have lost everything.

In addition, it is now also clear how the Torah can say that the beginning of the Omer is the beginning of the harvest season -- "Count seven weeks from the time the sickle begins [to cut] the standing grain" -- and yet also consider Shavuot, fifty days later, the Chag Ha-Katzir, the festival of harvest. Shavuot celebrates the two beginnings, integrated into one unit by the connective act of counting.

Finally, it is also clear why the Korban Omer (of barley) is the act which permits *all* new grain to be eaten, including new wheat: the entire period of Sefirah is integrated into a unit, so the act at the beginning which appears to offer Hashem a portion of only one grain is truly an act which offers Hashem the first portion of the entire harvest period, which integrates barley and wheat. It is as if both beginnings take place on one day. This is what we halachically accomplish by counting the days from one significant point to another.

May we take the opportunity to offer the first portion of all of our harvests to Hashem in thanks, and may He see fit to lavish upon us generous harvests to sustain us in lives of dedication to Him.

Shabbat Shalom

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PARSHAT EMOR - "moadei Hashem"

What is a "moed"?

Most of us would answer - a Jewish holiday [i.e. a "yom-tov"].
 [Most English Bibles translate "moed" - a fixed time.]

However, earlier in Chumash, the Hebrew word "chag" was used to describe the Holidays (e.g. see Shmot 12:14, 13:6, 23:16). So why does Parshat Emor prefer to use the Hebrew word "moed" instead? [See 23:2,4,37,44.]

Furthermore, it is just by chance that the same Hebrew word "moed" is also used to describe the Mishkan, i.e. the "Ohel MOED"? [See Vayikra 1:1, Shmot 30:34 etc.]

In this week's shiur, we attempt to answer these questions by taking a closer look at Vayikra chapter 23.

INTRODUCTION

Even though Parshat Emor discusses all of the Jewish holidays, these same holidays are also discussed in the other books of Chumash as well:

- * in Sefer Shmot: Parshat Mishpatim (23:14-17) & Ki-tisa (34:23);
- * in Sefer Bamidbar: Parshat Pinchas (chapters 28-29);
- * in Sefer Devarim: Parshat Re'ay (chapter 16).

However, within these four 'parshiot' we find two distinct sets of holidays:

A) The "SHALOSH REGALIM"

[the three pilgrimage holidays]
 i.e.- chag ha'Matzot, Shavuot, & Succot;

B) The "YOMIM NORAIM"

[the days of awe / the 'high holidays']
 i.e.- Rosh ha'Shana, Yom Kippur & Shmini Atzeret.

Sefer Shmot and Sefer Devarim discuss ONLY the "shalosh regalim", while Sefer Vayikra and Sefer Bamidbar discuss both the "shalosh regalim" AND the "yomim noraim".

At first glance this 'multiple presentation' of the chagim in FOUR different books of the Chumash appears to be superfluous. After all, would it not have been more logical for the Torah to present ALL of these laws together in ONE Parsha (and in ONE Sefer)?

However, since the Torah does present the holidays in four different "seforim", we can safely assume that there must be something special about each presentation, and that each relates to the primary theme of its respective "sefer".

Even though our shiur will focus on the chagim in Emor, we must begin our study with the chagim in Parshat Mishpatim, for that 'parshia' contains the first mention of the SHALOSH REGALIM in Chumash.

[As the shiur is very textual (more than usual), it is recommended that you follow it with a Tanach at hand.]

TWO CALENDARS

As background for our shiur, we'll need to first review some basics regarding the 'Biblical calendar'.

Even though we commonly refer to the Jewish calendar as 'lunar', in Chumash, we find the use of both a 'solar' [i.e. the agricultural seasons] and a 'lunar' calendar [i.e. the 29 day cycle of the moon].

The solar calendar in Chumash corresponds to the seasons of the agricultural year (in Hebrew: "tkufot ha'shana"). For example:

spring = "aviv" (see Shmot 13:3 & 23:14), and

autumn = "b'tzeit ha'shana" (Shmot 23:16 & Devarim 11:12).

We also find many instances where Chumash relates to a calendar that is based on the monthly cycle of the moon. For example:

"ha'chodesh ha'zeh lachem rosh chodashim" (Shmot 12:2) & the special korban on 'rosh chodesh' (see Bamidbar 28:11)

These two calendars are 'correlated' by the periodic addition of an 'extra' month to assure that the FIRST month of the lunar year will always correspond with the spring equinox (see Shmot 12:1-2).

With this distinction in mind, let's take a careful look at the calendar which Chumash employs when it describes the holidays.

THE SHALOSH REGALIM IN PARSHAT MISHPATIM

Let's take a quick look at Shmot 23:14-17, as this is the first presentation of the "shalosh regalim" in Chumash:

"Three times a year celebrate to Me:

- (1) Keep CHAG HA'MATZOT, eat matza... at the "moed" [appointed time] in the SPRING [when you went out of Egypt]...
- (2) and a CHAG KATZIR [a grain HARVEST holiday] for the first-fruits of what you have sown in your field,
- (3) and a CHAG HA'ASIF [a fruit gathering holiday] at the conclusion of the [agricultural] year...

"Three times a years, each male should come to be seen by God..." (see Shmot 23:14-17)

Note how these three holidays are described ONLY by the agricultural time of year in which they are celebrated .without any mention of the specific lunar date!:

chag ha'Matzot: "b'aviv" - in the SPRING;
 chag ha'Katzir: the wheat harvest - in the early SUMMER;
 chag ha'Asif: the fruit harvest - in the AUTUMN.

Note as well (in 23:17) that the primary mitzvah associated with each of these three holidays is "aliyah la'regel" - to be seen by God [i.e. by visiting Him at the Mishkan/Mikdash]. [Note that this presentation is repeated in a very similar fashion in Parshat Ki-tisa (see Shmot 34:18-26) when Moshe Rabeinu receives the second Luchot. However, that repetition was necessary due to the events of "chet ha'egel" (see TSC shiur on Ki-tisa), and hence -beyond the scope of this shiur.]

THE SHALOSH REGALIM IN PARSHAT RE'AY

In Sefer Devarim (see 16:1-17) we find a very similar presentation, although a bit more detailed. As you review that chapter, note that once again:

- * Only the SHALOSH REGALIM are presented
- * Only their agricultural dates are cited, and
- * The primary mitzvah is "aliya la'regel"

However, this unit adds two important details that were not mentioned in Parshat Mishpatim:

1) WHERE the mitzvah of "aliyah la'regel" is to take place, i.e. "ba'makom asher Yivchar Hashem..." - at the site that God will choose to have His Name dwell there.

[See 16:2,6,11,15,16.]

2) that we must REJOICE on these holidays - not only with our own family, but also with the less fortunate, such as the stranger, the orphan, the widow etc. (see 16:11,14).

The Torah demands that when we celebrate and thank God for the bounty of our harvest, we must invite the less fortunate to join us.

AGRICULTURAL HOLIDAYS

It is not coincidental the Torah chose to use the solar calendar in its presentation of the SHALOSH REGALIM. Clearly, the Torah's primary intention is that we must thank God during these three critical times of the agricultural year:

- (1) when nature 'comes back to life' in the spring (PESACH)
- (2) at the conclusion of the wheat harvest (SHAVUOT)
- (3) at the conclusion of the fruit harvest (SUCCOT)

Hence, the Torah describes these three holidays by their agricultural dates, with even mentioning a lunar date.

However, when the Torah presents the holidays in EMOR (Vayikra 23) and PINCHAS (Bamidbar 28->29), we will find a very different manner of presentation, as the 'lunar date' of each holiday is included as well. We will now review those two units, noting how each "chag" is introduced with its precise lunar month and day.

THE CHAGIM IN PINCHAS

Briefly scan Bamidbar chapters 28 & 29 (in Parshat Pinchas), noting how it comprises a complete unit - focusing on one primary topic, i.e. the details of the KORBAN MUSAF that is offered (in the Bet ha'Mikdash) on each holiday. Note how it first details the daily "korban tamid" (see 28:1-8), followed by the weekly and monthly Musaf offering (see 28:9-15) that is offered on Shabbat and Rosh Chodesh. Afterward, beginning with 28:16, ALL of the holidays are mentioned, one at time - introduced with their lunar date, followed by the details of its specific Musaf offering. Technically speaking, this entire section could also be titled - "korbanot ha'Tmidim v'ha'Musafim" - since that is its primary focus, and it is in that context that the holidays are presented.

As this unit serves as the yearly 'schedule' for offering the korban Tamid and Musaf in the Temple, it makes sense that each holiday is introduced solely by its lunar date.

[Note that the "maftir" reading on each holiday is taken from this unit, and we quote its relevant section every time when we doven tefilat Musaf!]

A QUICK SUMMARY

Before we begin our study of the holidays in Parshat Emor, let's summarize what we have discussed thus far:

In the books of Shmot and Devarim, only the "shalosh regalim" were presented, and only according to their solar dates - focusing on our obligation to 'visit God' during these critical times of the agricultural year.

In Sefer Bamidbar, all the holidays were presented according to their lunar dates, as that unit focused on the specific korban Musaf offered on each special day.

In earlier shiurim, we have also discussed the thematic connection between each of these units, and the book in which they were presented:

- * In Parshat Mishpatim - as part of laws pertaining to 'social justice', and hence their thematic connection to the psukim that precede them in Shmot 23:6-12.
[See TSC shiur on Parshat Mishpatim.]
- * In Parshat Re'ay - in the context of the primary topic of chapters 12 thru 17, i.e. "ha'makom asher yivchar Hashem".
[See TSC shiur on Parshat Re'ay.]
- * In Parshat Pinchas - as part of the laws of Tmidim u'Musafim.
[See TSC shiur on Parshat Pinchas.]

In contrast to these units, we will now show how the presentation of the holidays in Parshat Emor is unique, and how it relates to the overall theme of Sefer Vayikra.

THE CHAGIM IN PARSHAT EMOR

Review Vayikra 23:1-44, noting how this unit also presents all of the holidays (i.e. the shalosh regalim & the "yamim noraim"), yet unlike Parshat Pinchas, this time they are presented by BOTH their lunar and solar dates! Furthermore, in addition to certain mitzvot which are common to all of the holidays, we also find a unique mitzvah for each holiday. For example:

Chag Ha'Matzot - the special OMER offering (from barely);

Shavuot - the SHTEI HA'LECHEM offering (from wheat);
Rosh Ha'Shana - YOM TERUAH - blowing the shofar;
Yom Kippur - fasting;
Succot - sitting in the SUCCAH.
and the ARBA MINIM (lulav and etrog etc.).

To appreciate why these specific details are found in Sefer Vayikra, let's take a closer look at how these laws are presented, as well as the dates that are used.

'DOUBLE DATING'

As we noted above, it is rather obvious how Parshat Emor presents the holidays by their LUNAR dates (month/day). However, as the following table will now demonstrate, when Parshat Emor introduces the special mitzvah for each holiday, especially in regard to the SHALOSH REGALIM, the agricultural season (i.e. the SOLAR date) is mentioned as well! For example, note:

CHAG HA'MATZOT - mitzvat ha'OMER

"When you enter the Land... and HARVEST the grain, you must bring the OMER - the FIRST HARVEST to the Kohen (23:10);

SHAVUOT - mitzvat SHTEI HA'LECHEM

"... count SEVEN WEEKS [from when the first grain becomes ripe], then... you shall bring a NEW flour offering..." (23:16);

SUCCOT - the ARBA MINIM

"On the 15th day of the 7th month WHEN YOU GATHER THE PRODUCE OF THE LAND... and you shall take on the first day a 'hadar' fruit..." (see 23:39).

In fact, look carefully and you'll notice that Parshat Emor presents the agricultural related commandment for each of the "shalosh regalim" in an independent manner!

For example, the agricultural mitzvah to bring the korban 'ha'omer' and the "shtei ha'lechem" is presented in a separate 'dibur' (see 23:9-22) that makes no mention at all of the lunar date! Similarly, the mitzvah of the "arba minim" in 23:39-41 is presented independently, and AFTER the mitzvah CHAG HA'SUCCOT is first presented in 23:33-38. [To verify this, compare these two sections carefully!]

So why does the structure of Emor have to be so complicated? Would it not have made more sense for the Torah to employ one standard set of dates, and explain all the mitzvot for each holiday together?

To answer this question, we must first take a closer look at the internal structure of Vayikra chapter 23.

THE COMMON MITZVOT

Even though Parshat Emor presents the special mitzvot of each holiday, it also presents some common mitzvot for all the holidays - immediately after each is introduced by its lunar date.

Review chapter 23 and note the pattern, noting how each holiday is referred to as a "moed", and that we are commanded to make it a "mikra kodesh" [to call out to set it aside for a national gathering] - when work is prohibited - "kol mlechet avodah lo taasu"; and that we must offer an korban - "v'hikravtem ishe l'Hashem".

To verify this, note the following psukim:

CHAG HAMATZOT / 23:6-8

ROSH HA'SHANA / 23:25

YOM KIPPUR / 23:27-28

SUCCOT & SHMINI ATZERET / 23:33-36

[Note that in regard to SHAVUOT (see 23:21) a lunar date and the phrase "v'hikravtem" is missing! For a discussion why, see the TSC shiur on Shavuot.]

Therefore, in relation to the LUNAR date, Parshat Emor requires that on each holiday the nation must gather together ["mikra kodesh"], refrain from physical labor ["kol mlechet

avoda lo ta'asu"], and offer a special korban Musaf [=v'hikravtem ishe la'Hashem"], as detailed in Parshat Pinchas.

However, within this same unit, we also find that the "shalosh regalim" are presented INDEPENDENTLY with a solar date - within the context of its agricultural mitzvah.

If we take a closer look at those psukim, we'll also notice that in each instance the concept of a SHABBAT or SHABBATON is mentioned in conjunction with the special agricultural mitzvah of each holiday [i.e. OMER, SHTEI HA'LECHEM & ARBA MINIM].

Furthermore, we also find the use of the word SHABBATON in the presentation of ROSH HA'SHANA and YOM KIPPUR as well! [See 23:24,32.]

Finally, note the detail of the mitzvot relating to SHABBATON always conclude with the phrase: "chukat olam l'doroteichem [b'chol moshveteichem]", see 23:14,21,31,41!

The following chart summarizes this second pattern in which the word SHABBAT or SHABBATON is mentioned in relation to each holiday:

Chag Ha'MATZOT - "mi'mochorat ha'SHABBAT" (23:11)
SHAVUOT - "ad mimochorat ha'SHABBAT ha'shviit..." (23:16)
ROSH Ha'SHANA - "SHABBATON, zichron truah..." (23:24)
YOM KIPPUR - SHABBAT SHABBATON hi lachem..." (23:32)
SUCCOT & - ba'yom ha'rishon SHABBATON... (23:39)
SHMINI ATZERET - u'bayom ha'Shmini SHABBATON" (23:39)

Note also that within this parsha, the SHABBAT/agricultural aspect is first introduced by a separate "dibur":
"And God spoke to Moshe saying... When you ENTER THE LAND that I am giving you REAP ITS HARVEST, you shall bring the OMER - the first sheaf of your harvest to God. This OMER shall be waived in front of God... on the day after SHABBAT the Kohen shall waive it...." (23:9-14)

The most striking example of this 'double pattern' is found in the psukim that describe Succot. Note how the Torah first introduces this holiday as a MIKRA KODESH by its lunar date: "On the 15th day of the 7th month Chag Succot seven days: on the first day there shall be a MIKRA KODESH... and on the eighth day a MIKRA KODESH..." (23:35-36)
[As this is the last MOED, the next pasuk summarizes all of the chagim: "ayleah Moadei Hashem..." (23:37-38)].

Then, in a very abrupt fashion, AFTER summarizing the moadim, the Torah returns to Succot again, but now calls it a SHABBATON:
" 'ACH' - on the 15th day of the seventh month, when you GATHER THE HARVEST OF YOUR FIELD, you shall celebrate for seven days, on the first day - a SHABBATON, and on the eighth day - a SHABBATON." (23:39)

Hence, it appears from Parshat Emor that each holiday is treated as both a "moed" (in relation to "mikra kodesh", "isur melacha", & "v'hikravtem") AND as a "shabbaton" (in relation to its special mitzvah).

A DOUBLE 'HEADER'

Let's take a look now at the introductory psukim of this entire unit (i.e. 23:1-3), for they appear to allude as well to the double nature of this presentation.

First of all, note how the opening psukim of chapter 23 appear to contradict each other:

* "And God told Moshe, tell Bnei Yisrael... THESE are the MOADEI HASHEM (fixed times), which YOU shall call MIKRAEI KODESH (a sacred gathering) - these are the MOADIM". (23:1-2)

* "SIX days work may be done, but the SEVENTH day shall be a SHABBAT SHABBATON 'mikra kodesh'..." (23:3)

THESE are the 'MOADEI HASHEM'...

On the 14th day of the first month - Pesach

On the 15th day of the first month - chag ha'Matzot...

(see 23:4-6)

Based on this header, it remains unclear if SHABBAT should be considered one of the MOADIM?

If yes, then why does 23:4 repeat the header "ayleah moadei Hashem"?

If not, why is SHABBAT mentioned at all in the first three psukim?

Furthermore, there appears to be two types of 'mikraei kodesh' in Parshat Emor.

(1) MOADIM - those that Bnei Yisrael declare: "asher tik'ru otam [that YOU shall call] - mikraei kodesh" (23:2)

(2) SHABBAT - that God has set aside to be a 'mikra kodesh' (read 23:3 carefully!).

This distinction, and the repetition of the header "ayleah moadei Hashem" in 23:4, indicate the first three psukim could be considered a 'double' header: i.e. MO'ADIM and SHABBATONIM.

As the unit progresses, this 'double header' reflects the double presentation of chagim in this entire unit, as discussed above. In regard to the shalosh regalim, the SHABBATON aspect is presented separately. In regard to Rosh Ha'shana and Yom Kippur, the SHABBATON aspect is included in the 'lunar' MIKRA KODESH presentation.
[In regard to the agricultural nature of Rosh ha'shana and Yom Kippur, see TSC shiur on Rosh ha'shana.]

What is the meaning of the double nature of this presentation? Why does Parshat Emor relate to both the lunar and solar calendars? One could suggest the following explanation.

THE AGRICULTURAL ASPECT

As mentioned above, Parshat Emor details a special agricultural related mitzvah for each of the shalosh regalim: Chag ha'Matzot:

The Korban Ha'Omer- from the first BARLEY harvest. Shavuot:

The Korban Shte Ha'lechem, from the first WHEAT harvest. Succot:

Taking the 'Arba Minim', the four species -
[i.e. the lulav, etrog, hadas and arava]

These mitzvot relate directly to the agricultural seasons in Eretz Yisrael in which these holidays fall. In the spring, barley is the first grain crop to become ripe. During the next seven weeks, the wheat crop ripens and is harvested. As this is the only time of the year when wheat grows in Eretz Yisrael, these seven weeks are indeed a critical time, for the grain which will be consumed during the entire year is harvested during this very short time period.

Similarly, the ARBA MINIM, which are brought to the Mikdash on Succot, also relate to the agricultural importance of the fruit harvest ("pri eytz hadar v'kapot tmarim") at this time of the year, and the need for water in the forthcoming rainy season ("arvei nachal").

Therefore, specifically when the Torah relates to these agricultural mitzvot, these holidays are referred to as SHABBATONIM - for the concept of "shabbat" relates to the DAYS of the week, and thus, to the cycle of nature caused by the sun, i.e. the agricultural seasons of the year. They also relate to the natural cycle of the sun.

[Recall that the 365 day cycle of the earth revolving around the sun causes the seasons.]

As these holidays are celebrated during the most critical

times of the agricultural year, the Torah commands us to gather at this time of the year in the Bet HaMikdash and offer special korbanot from our harvest. Instead of relating these phenomena of nature to a pantheon of gods, as the Canaanite people did, Am Yisrael must recognize that it is God's hand behind nature and therefore, we must thank Him for our harvest.

[This challenge - to find God while working and living within the framework of nature - is reflected in the blessing we make over bread: "ha'motzi lechem min ha'aretz". Even though we perform 99% of work in the process of making bread (e.g. sowing, reaping, winnowing, grinding, kneading, baking etc.), we thank God as though He had given us bread directly from the ground!]

THE HISTORICAL HOLIDAYS

Even though these agricultural mitzvot alone provides sufficient reason to celebrate these holidays, the Torah finds HISTORICAL significance in these seasonal holidays as well.

The spring commemorates our redemption from Egypt. The grain harvest coincides with the time of Matan Torah. During the fruit harvest we recall our supernatural existence in the desert under the "annanei kavod" (clouds of God's glory) in the desert.

Just as the Torah employs to the SOLAR date of the chagim in relation to the agricultural mitzvot, the Torah also employs the LUNAR date of these chagim in relation to their historical significance. For example, when describing Chag Ha'Matzot, which commemorates the historical event of Yetziat Mitzraim, the lunar date of the 15th day of the first month is used (see 23:6). Similarly, when the Torah refers to Succot as a Mikra Kodesh, it employs solely the lunar date and emphasizes the mitzvah of sitting in the succah, in commemoration of our dwelling in succot during our journey through the desert (see 23:34-35,43).

One could suggest that specifically the lunar calendar is used in relation to the historical aspect, for we count the MONTHS in commemoration of our Exodus from Egypt, the most momentous event in our national history:

"ha'chodesh ha'zeh lachem ROSH CHODASHIM..." This month (in which you are leaving Egypt) will be for you the FIRST month... (see Shmot 12:1-3).

REDEMPTION IN THE SPRING

From the repeated emphasis in Chumash that we celebrate our redemption from Egypt in the early spring ("chodesh ha'aviv" /see Shmot 13:2-4 and Devarim 16:1-2), it would appear that it was not incidental that the Exodus took place at that time. Rather, God desired that our national birth take place at the same time of year when the growth cycle of nature recommences. [For a similar reason, it would appear that God desired that Bnei Yisrael enter the Promised Land in the first month of the spring (see Yehoshua 4:19 & 5:10).]

One could suggest that the celebration of our national redemption specifically in the spring emphasizes its proper meaning. Despite its importance, our freedom attained at Yetziat Mitzraim should be understood as only the INITIAL stage of our national spiritual 'growth', just as the spring marks only the initial stage in the growth process of nature! Just as the blossoming of nature in the spring leads to the grain harvest in the early summer and fruit harvest in the late summer, so too our national freedom must lead to the achievement of higher goals in our national history.

Thus, counting seven weeks from chag ha'matzot until chag ha'shavuot (sfirat ha'omer) emphasizes that Shavuot (commemorating the Giving of the Torah) should be considered the culmination of the process that began at Yetziat Mitzrayim, just as the grain harvest is the culmination of its growth process that began in the spring.

[One would expect that this historical aspect of Shavuot, i.e. Matan Torah, should also be mentioned in Parshat Emor. For some reason, it is not. We will deal with this issue y"h in our shiur on Shavuot.]

By combining the two calendars, the Torah teaches us that during the critical times of the agricultural year we must not only thank God for His providence over nature but we must also thank Him for His providence over our history. In a polytheistic society, these various attributes were divided among many gods. In an atheistic society, man fails to see God in either. The double nature of the chagim emphasizes this tenet that God is not only the Force behind nature, but He also guides the history of nations.

Man must recognize God's providence in all realms of his daily life; by recognizing His hand in both the unfolding of our national history and through perceiving His greatness as He is the power behind all the phenomena of nature.

KEDUSHAT ZMAN

In conclusion, we can now return to our original question, i.e. why does specifically Sefer Vayikra describe these holidays as MOADIM?

The Hebrew word "moed" stems from the root "vav.ayin.daled" - to meet.

[That's why a committee in Hebrew is a "vaad", and a conference is a "ve'iydah". See also Shmot 29:42-43 and Amos 3:3. Finally, note Breishit 1:14!]

The Mishkan is called an OHEL MOED - a tent of meeting - for in that tent Bnei Yisrael [symbolically] 'meet' God. In a similar manner, the Jewish holidays are called MOADIM, for their primary purpose is that we set aside special times during the year to MEET God. Clearly, in Parshat Emor, the Torah emphasizes the "bein adam la'makom" [between God and man] aspect of the holidays. Not only do we perform the mitzva of "aliya la'regel", we also perform a wide range of special mitzvot that occupy our entire day during those holidays.

[See Sefer Kuzari ma'amar r'vii in relation to the chagim!]

As we explained in last week's shiur, this is the essence of KEDUSHA - the theme of Sefer Vayikra. We set aside special times, and infuse them with special KEDUSHA to come closer to Hashem. However, our experience during these holidays provides us with the spiritual strength to remain close to God during the remainder of the year.

shabbat shalom
menachem

FOR FURTHER IYUN

A. WHY IN VAYIKRA?

Why is this parsha that describes the special mitzvot of all the chagim located specifically in Sefer Vayikra?

Based on last week's shiur, we can suggest an answer. We explained that the second half of Vayikra 'translates' the concentrated level of the shchina dwelling in the Mishkan to norms of behavior in our daily life in the "aretz" (into the realms of kedushat ha'aretz and kedushat zman, and kedushat Makom).

The special agricultural mitzvot of the chagim are a manifestation of how the Kedusha of the Mishkan affects our daily life. By bringing these special korbanot from our harvest, the toils of our daily labor, to the Beit HaMikdash we remind ourselves of God's Hand in nature and in the routine of our daily life.

B. Does the mitzvah of Succah relate to historical aspect (yetziat mitzraim) or to the agricultural aspect (temporary booths built by the farmers in the field collecting the harvest) - or both?

1. Use the two psukim which describe succot (23:34,42-43) to base your answer. [Relate also to Succah 11b, succah k'neged ananei kavod or succot mamash.]
2. Note also the use of "chukat olam b'chal moshvateichem" - see 23:14,21,31 in relation to Shabbaton. Note also 23:3!

Now note 23:41, based on the above pattern, what word is missing?

Now look at pasuk 23:42 - "ba'succot TAY'SHVU..."!

Can you explain now why 'that word' is missing in 23:41?

3. Why is the word "ezrach" used in 23:42? Relate to Shmot 12:49! [How does "moshvoteichem" relate to the word "shabbat"?]

C. Chagei Tishrei and agriculture:

We noted earlier that Parshat Emor also included chagei Tishrei, and each is referred to as a shabbaton, as well as a mikra kodesh.

As explained in our shiur on Rosh HaShana, these three holidays, Rosh HaShana, Yom Kippur, and Shmini Atzeret, relate to forthcoming year.

A new agricultural year is about to begin, and we must recognize that its fate is not a function of chance or the whims of a pantheon of gods, rather a result of our acceptance of God's kingdom and the observance of His mitzvot.

[Note from Parshat Pinchas, that these three chagim share a common and unique korban musaf! (1-1-7/1)]

Note also that Succot stands at the agricultural crossroads of last year's harvest and next year's rainy season. Thus, we recite "Hallel" in thanksgiving for the previous year, but we all say "Hoshanot" in anticipation of the forthcoming year.]

D. The sun, we explained, relates to the agricultural aspects of chagim, while the moon to its historical aspect.

1. Relate this to the waxing and waning feature of the moon and God's hashagacha over our history.
2. Relate this to the concept of "hester panim"
3. Relate this to the fact that succot and pesach fall out on the 15th day of the lunar month (full moon), while rosh hashana -yom din- falls on the first of the month (b'keset lyom chageinu)
4. Relate this to the concept and korbanot of Rosh Chodesh.
5. Why do you suppose that the sun serves a symbol of 'nature'?

E. Note the emphasis on the number 'seven' throughout this parsha. How and why does the number seven relate to the solar calendar, and the agricultural holidays. Relate your answer to the first perek of Sefer Breishit and shabbat!

F. Why do you think that the mitzvot of aliyah la'regel are presented specifically in Sefer Shmot?

Relate to the general theme in the second half of the Shmot, relating to the function of the Mishkan as a perpetuation of Har Sinai. In what manner can "aliyah la'regel", a national gathering at the Mishkan on the holidays, serve as a re-enactment of certain aspects of Ma'amad Har Sinai?

G. Compare carefully 23:1-4 to Shmot 35:1-4 and notice the amazing parallel!. How does this enhance your understanding of this parsha, shabbat, and of the Mishkan?]

See Ramban on 23:1-2!