

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 almost 50 years ago and was our family Rebbe and close friend until his recent 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.

The Fisher family sponsors the Devrei Torah for Shabbat Emor in loving memory of our Grandmother and Great Grandmother, Bella Fisher, whose 27th yahrtzeit is on Shabbat Emor, 15 Iyar.

Today, Friday, the 29th day of the Omer, 14 Iyar, is Pesach Sheni, the only holy day that Hashem added to the Torah in response to human initiative. Some Jews were tamei (ritually impure) because of contact with a dead body and therefore unable to participate in the korban Pesach on the first anniversary of the Exodus. They complained to Moshe about missing the opportunity to participate in this holy mitzvah because they performed the mitzvah of caring for a deceased Jew. God responded by providing a second opportunity for them to offer the Korban Pesach a month later – Pesach Sheni (Bemidbar 9:6-10). (According to Rashi, God would have added Pesach Sheni anyway but gave the people the merit of having the mitzvah presented through their initiative.) When the Torah presents the Moedim (special days of coming close to Hashem, or holidays) in Emor, Pesach Sheni is missing, because it arose separately and is only a Moed for those who are tamei on Pesach.

Shabbas this year is 15 Iyar, the 30th day of the Omer, special to my family as the yahrtzeit of my beloved grandmother, Behla Fisher, Behla bat Shlomo, who died prematurely at age 97 – prematurely, because she was coherent and a major part of our family until shortly before she died. My children were pre-Bar Mitzvah at the time, but they have vivid memories of her, as do the rest of our family. Born in the Ukraine in 1897, Grandma told us about hiding from the Ukrainians on Christian holidays, when they would come searching for Jews to kill. She learned to read Russian and Yiddish watching her brothers' tutor. After coming to Canada and then Chicago, she taught herself to speak and read English. A socialist in the underground before the Russian Revolution, she was a union leader in Chicago, working with Eugene Debs. She taught her granddaughters how to sew and cook, and she prepared meals and cookies for her grandchildren and great grandchildren.

Rabbi David Fohrman delves into the meaning of the Omer in some of his Devrei Torah. The first use of "omer" is in Shemot 16. After the Jews ran out of the matzot that they brought with them from Egypt, they complained about having no food. God provided quail that evening and then manna each morning (except Shabbat) for the 40 years in the Midbar. The rules of manna were that each family was to gather an omer per person each day (and a double portion on Fridays). Any family gathering too much or not enough would discover upon returning to camp that his portion ended up being exactly one omer per person. One had to eat his entire allotment each day (except Friday) or any left over would rot and be full of worms the next morning. The principle was sharing – an equal amount for everyone.

In Emor, immediately after discussing the Omer (between Pesach and Shavuot), the Torah mentions the laws of Pel'ah and leket (Vayikra 23:22). After entering the land (Israel), when harvesting crops, we must leave the corners of the field and some of the gleanings for the poor. Again, we have the concept that we must share our wealth (all of which is a gift from God) with those less fortunate than ourselves. The laws of the Omer, both in Shemot and Vayikra, mirror for individuals the ideals of true socialism, a social philosophy (for governments) that Jews developed. (Unfortunately,

socialism in practice has always degenerated into oppression.) My grandmother was a member of the socialist/communist underground in the Ukraine and worked with socialists in Chicago. She was smart enough to realize that communism under Russia was tyranny, not the ideal sharing that she and the Torah both envisioned.

During the time of the Mishkan and Temple, Jews had to bring an omer of barley on the second day of Pesach. Until bringing the omer offering, they could not eat “new grain” from any of the five species of grain (wheat, barley, oats, rye, and spelt). Yehoshua 5 presents the entry of the Jews into Israel after the 40 years in the Midbar. Their first action was to circumcise all the men. It was Pesach, so the people had to eat matzot or roasted grain (not bread). After bringing an Omer on the second day of Pesach, the people sat down to eat from the new grain, the grain from Israel, for the first time.

The year that our son David was born, Grandma came for his Pidyan Ha-Ben, which was on 10 Nisan, 31 days after his birth. (My beloved sister died on 10 Nisan 12 years later.) My beloved Rebbe, Rabbi Leonard Cahan, z”l, officiated at the Pidyan Ha-Ben, as he had at our wedding and David’s bris. My grandmother and Rebbe knew and admired each other. Rabbi Cahan, in addition to teaching us about Shabbat and the Moadim, frequently reminded us that we Jews have a responsibility to care for those less fortunate than us. Grandma always taught the same message – one she knew intimately, having grown up in poverty. She connected very closely with our Rabbi and with the message that comes through so frequently in the Torah and Navi. We are all responsible for our fellow humans – an implication of Hillel’s famous summary of the Torah, one so concise that he could present it while standing on one foot.

Please daven for a Refuah Shlema for Gedalya ben Sarah, Mordechai ben Chaya, Baruch Yitzhak ben Perl, David Leib HaKohen ben Sheina Reizel, Zev ben Sara Chaya, Uzi Yehuda ben Milda Behla, HaRav Dovid Meir ben Chaya Tzippa; Eliav Yerachmiel ben Sara Dina, Amoz ben Tziviah, Reuven ben Masha, Moshe David ben Hannah, Meir ben Sara, Yitzhok Tzvi ben Yehudit Miriam, Yaakov Naphtali ben Michal Leah, Rivka Chaya bat Leah, Chaya Tova bat Narges, Zissel Bat Mazal, Chana Bracha bas Rochel Leah, Leah Fruma bat Musa Devorah, Hinda Behla bat Chaya Leah, Nechama bas Tikva Rachel, Miriam Chava bat Yachid, Ruth bat Sarah, and Tova bat Narges, all of whom greatly need our prayers. Note: Beth Sholom has additional names, including coronavirus victims, on a Tehillim list.

Hannah & Alan

Drasha: Emor: Whose Holiday?
by Rabbi Mordechai Kamenetzky © 1997

[Please remember Mordechai ben Chaya for a Mishebarach!]

Something is very special about Jewish Holidays. Of course, the atmosphere is unique, the rituals are delightful, and the warmth and spirit are inspiring. However, there is one particular aspect about every Jewish Holiday that makes it different than Shabbos. Hashem gave the ability to declare the dates of the holidays specifically to His people. The months of the year are determined exclusively by the Bais Din (Jewish Courts) who establish when a month begins and when a month ends. Thus, the Bais Din actually controls the destiny and timing of the holidays. If Rosh Chodesh is determined to be on a particular day, then the holiday that is to fall on the 15th day of the month is determined by Bais Din’s initial Rosh Chodesh declaration. In this week’s portion, The Torah states this enormous power clearly and emphatically as it enumerates the holidays and details many aspects of their observance. The Torah defines the Yomim Tovim as, “Hashem’s appointed festivals that you are to designate as holy convocations” (Leviticus:23-2). Clearly, the Torah states that it is us, the human court system that is to designate the holidays. In fact the Talmud relates that Rabbi Gamliel had declared the first of Tishrei on a particular day and was challenged by Rabbi Yehoshua who would have had declared Rosh Chodesh (the new month) on a different day. Tishrei is the month in which Yom Kippur occurs and the discrepancy in the Rosh Chodesh date raised major ramifications. So important was the concept of a unified declaration as to when the month begins and ends, that in order to authenticate the ruling of his Bais Din, Rabbi Gamliel asked Rabbi Yehoshua to visit him on what should have been the latter’s Yom Kippur with his staff and money belt.

So Hashem declares that it is we, who declare the holidays. Yet the verse that says, “Hashem’s appointed festivals that you are to designate as holy convocations” ends with the words “these are My appointed festivals” (Leviticus: 23-2)

What does the ending, " My appointed festivals" mean? Why is it necessary? Didn't Hashem just tell us that we declare the Yom Tov?

After Israel liberated Jerusalem in the aftermath of the Six-Day War, it found itself with additional territory. One particular parcel, a Jordanian military base that overlooked the capitol and was used to shell the civilian population, was purchased by a real estate magnate. He decided to allow an educational institution to use the large parcel until he decided what he would do with it.

The dedication ceremony was full of pomp and circumstance. Everyone was delighted that the very place that was once a bastion of terror was now becoming an institution of education. An Israel Army general named Ben-Uzi was the guest speaker. After discussing the virtues of the philanthropist and the institution, he ended his speech with the following impression. "Imagine," he exclaimed, "only a few weeks ago all of this land was theirs. And now, "he paused and added triumphantly, "it is ours!"

All of a sudden, a voice interrupted. It was none other than the philanthropist himself. "Ben-Uzi!" he declared, "Oh, no. It is not ours. It is mine!"

G-d Almighty gave the sages tremendous power in establishing the Yomim Tovim. They could change the dates and fate of Passover or Yom Kippur by declaring the New Moon either a day earlier or later. Yet Hashem still wanted to re-affirm one point. No matter how much power the Bais Din might have, they were to remember one simple fact. The Holidays are Mine. When humans take too much control, they may tend to give an all-too-human character to the holiness of the festival. Passover may become the festival of liberation from physical bondage with no mention of the spiritual liberation we also experienced. Sukkos may be rendered the holiday of the homeless and the meaning of the spiritual clouds may be totally ignored. Shavuos may become a celebration of intellectual acquirement and not a celebration of our bond to the holy Torah. Even as we revel in the fact that we declare the holidays, Hashem is there to remind us, albeit gently, "No, Ben-Uzi, they are mine!"

Good Shabbos!

Is Holiness Only Skin Deep?

by Rabbi Dov Linzer, Rosh HaYeshiva, Yeshivat Chovevei Torah © 2014, 2020

Through the book of Vayikra, the Torah has been concerned with kedusha, sanctity, and how to protect it. The Torah now turns its attention from the sanctity of the Temple to the sanctity of those who are constantly in the Temple – the Kohanim. The Children of Israel were commanded in Parashat Kedoshim "you shall become holy," (Vayikra 19:2) indicating that for them holiness was an aspiration, something to strive towards, and not innate. In contrast, the Kohanim are both commanded to become holy – "Holy shall they be their God, and they shall not defile the name of the God ... and they shall be holy" (21:6) – and are, at the same time, already considered to be holy: "A woman who is a prostitute or defiled, or a woman who is divorced from her husband they shall not take, because he is holy to his God." (verse 7). Thus, for them the command to "become holy," is less one of aspiring to a status that is not yet achieved, as much as it is a command to preserve and protect their holy status.

Now, this idea of intrinsic sanctity is hard for many people, especially since we live in an egalitarian, non-caste society, a society in which status is a function of accomplishment, not a right from birth. "What makes the Kohanim holier than any other Jew? Why are they better just because who their father was?" we may reasonably ask. The Torah does, to some degree, address this. He is holy, we are told, not as something innate from birth, but because of the role which he has been assigned: "... for he offers up the bread of God." Nevertheless, he is entitled to this role as a birthright, and this role is not open to non-Kohanim. This is a very challenging concept for many today.

In addition, it seems that the Torah is not only asking us to see Kohanim as holy because of the role that they play, but also because they have been chosen to embody holiness on this earth. Just as the Temple is holy because God's presence dwells in it, so the Kohanim are holy because they are regularly in the Temple and thus God's holiness extends to them as well: "Holy shall he be to you, for holy am I, the Lord who makes you holy." Thus we find in Parashat Ki Tisa (Shemot, 30:22-30) that the anointing oil was made to both sanctify the Temple and its vessels, and to sanctify the Kohanim who serve in the Temple. The Kohanim, then, are a type of klei kodesh, holy vessel, which is holy not just because of the role he plays, but as an object, as it were, that has been chosen to be an embodiment of God's holiness, as a symbol of holiness.

What makes the concept of kedusha as applied to Kohanim even more challenging is the way in which the kedusha expresses itself. In what ways does a Cohen's holiness require him to act differently from an average Jew? First, we are told, he may not become tamei, impure, to a dead body, unless it is of a person of his immediate family. Second, he must be conscious of his outward appearance, and cannot disfigure himself in mourning. And, finally, he may not marry certain women who are seen as less than proper – a prostitute or a divorced woman. This is a strange and troubling list. The first demand is understandable – tumah is conceptually the antithesis of kedusha, and, were he to become tamei he would have to remove himself from the Temple and from his role of offering the sacrifices.

The last two items on the list, in contrast, do not interfere with his ability to function in his role, but they do – presumably – impact how he is perceived. A Kohen who has disfigured himself, even in mourning, is not looked at with honor and respect. A Kohen who has married a (former) prostitute would naturally be looked at by many people with disdain. He would not be able to command their respect for him, and thus would compromise his role as a symbol of holiness to the people. This is also why, presumably, he is proscribed from marrying a divorced woman. In a society which highly valued virgins, and which probably regularly saw divorced women as “defiled,” regardless of who was to blame for the divorce, being married to a divorced woman would lower a person’s status in the eyes of many. Thus, a Kohen which must be a symbol of holiness, and must call upon people’s respect, cannot allow himself to be seen by others with disdain.

This focus on appearances extends to the next section of the parasha – the concern with blemishes. We are told that a Kohen who has an external blemish “may not draw near to offer up the bread of his God.” (Vayikra 21:17). Why does a blemish matter? He hasn’t done anything wrong! He is not to blame! But, of course, people are people, and they will naturally look with more respect on a Kohen who is tall, good looking, and handsome, than they will on a Kohen who is physically disfigured. People do focus on trivial externalities. Let us not forget that the Temple itself is the epitome of a focus on the external – with its gold and silver, its purple and crimson – the Temple was to look beautiful and majestic so that people would see it, and God who was represented by it, with honor and respect.

The practical implications of holiness, then, are understandable, but they remain quite challenging. Now we ask not only what entitles a Kohen to this holiness, but also why this holiness is translated in such external, superficial ways. Why are the commands not more moral and religious, as they are in Parashat Kedoshim? Why does his holiness not demand of him to live a life that is morally beyond repute, and that is fully focused on serving God? We are told that “a person sees with his eyes,” but we are also told, “but God sees to the heart.” (Shmuel I, 17:7). So why not try to correct people’s focus on externals rather than tacitly accepting it, and accommodating it?

Perhaps these two questions answer one another. **The Kohen’s kedusha status, while present from birth, is not the kedusha of Parashat Kedoshim. The kedusha of that parasha remains the true kedusha. It is a kedusha of morality and of religiosity. It is a kedusha of aspiration, one that the Kohanim are not excluded from. They, like every Jew, must constantly be working to grow morally and religious, to be closer to God not physically, but spiritually and morally. The Kohen, like every Jew, must strive his entire life to “become holy.”**

The kedusha of Parshat Emor, in contrast, is the kedusha that Kohanim have from birth, but it is a very different kedusha. It is one that they have by virtue of the role that has been given to them, and because they have been chosen to serve as a symbol to the people. This lesser kedusha is one that is not about who they are, but about what they are. Who they are inside, what type of person they are, is the concern of Parashat Kedoshim. What they are on the outside – a symbol to the people – is the concern of Parashat Emor. This kedusha of being not like a person and a subject, but of being like an object, like a klei kodesh, like the very Mikdash itself, is one which does express itself in terms of externals. The kedusha of Kedoshim is the kedusha of a person; the kedusha of Emor is the kedusha of an object.

The problem still remains, however. People will gravitate towards the external. People will see the external kedusha as the primary, as the one that really matters, and will ignore the more significant, but less visible, internal kedusha. And, in fact, we know that so many people do, sadly, associate religiosity with externals – externals of dress and appearance, externals of performance that serve to mark one or one’s community as different, as somehow “more holy.” To focus on the less visible kedusha, the character of the person, their values, their morality, their true religious striving – to serve God fully and in ways that truly matter – is truly a profound challenge. It is so rare that we are able to focus on the more important kedusha of Kedoshim, and to not be distracted by the kedusha of Emor. Who among us will not immediately assume that the rabbi with the long beard and the black hat and the long bekesh is not more holy than the clean-shaven rabbi who sometimes wears jeans?

The challenge for us is to both acknowledge the importance that people give to externals and appearances, and the need to accommodate it, and at the same time to be aware that true worth, and true kedusha, lies not without but within. If there are times that we must make certain concessions to the way the world works, we must do all that we can to ensure that we do not marginalize those with merely external blemishes, that we do not give undue significance to the external- object-based kedusha of Parashat Emor. We must ensure that we keep our focus on the internal- person-based kedusha of Parashat Kedoshim. “For a man sees with the eyes, but God sees to the heart.”

Shabbat Shalom!
Emphasis added.

Emor -- Ready? If not, here I come!

by Rabbi Mordechai Rhine ©2020 Teach 613

This week’s Parsha contains one of the most important mitzvos in all of Torah: The mitzva that Kohanim should not become Tomey (ritually impure) to a dead body. Although most Jews are not Kohanim (descendants of Aaron), this mitzva contains a message that is fundamental to living life as a successful Jew.

The Rambam explains that since the Kohanim were supposed to perform the service in the Beis Hamikdash, they were restricted from caring for the deceased. Coming in contact with a dead body makes a person Tomey on a level that requires a seven-day purification process before entering the Beis Hamikdash. This was not compatible with the Kohanim's mission of service. As the Abarbanel explains, "Other people can care for the deceased. The Kohanim have a particular mission that they must fulfill."

The concept of mission is fundamental to any person who wants to live life purposefully. There are so many good deeds to do. That is wonderful. But, besides paying attention to good deeds, the Torah guides us to discover our personal mission, upon which we must focus. Sometimes, a mitzva may be wonderful, but contradictory to our personal mission. In such a case, if someone else can attend to that particular wonderful mitzva, we do not drop our personal assignment to attend wonderful endeavors.

Indeed, when the Kohein encounters a mitzva to attend a dead body, and that mitzva cannot be done by anyone else, he is to attend to that, even though it will make him Tomey. Examples of this are the passing of a close relative (one of the immediate seven relatives), or a Meis Mitzva, a person who has passed away with no one to care for the body. In such cases, the mitzva cannot be done properly by anyone else. So, the Kohein does indeed step in and attend to it, even though it will make him Tomey and invalidate him (for a time) from attending to his mission in the Beis Hamikdash.

One of the most important exercises in life is to identify the tasks and interactions that are your personal mission. These are things that no one else can do. Destiny has assigned them to you. We most readily appreciate examples on the communal or workplace level, where some personal assignment might not be done effectively by anyone else. However, the concept of mission is even more relevant when we consider personal relationships. There is no one in the world who can bestow a parent's love to a child, other than a parent. And, there is no one in the world who can bestow a child's love to a parent, other than a child. Similarly, there is no one who can provide the encouragement a spouse gives to a spouse, other than the spouse. And, there is no one who can provide the perspective that a good friend gives to a good friend, other than a good friend. These are situations and relationships that no one else can fill. These are examples of personal mission. When other mitzvos or endeavors beckon we need to make sure that we are still attending to these personal dimensions. Even when service in the Beis Hamikdash "calls" to the Kohein, he must still attend to the relative or Meis Mitzva that only he is positioned to attend to.

When I shared this thought in the "Home to Home" program this week, one of the participants suggested a noteworthy application. Particularly in today's coronavirus environment, there are many people who are staying home and not doing their own shopping. While many are able to get home delivery, the social distance can remain overwhelming, even as their physical needs are provided for. Often, a "check-in" by a neighbor by phone or a friend offering to do an errand, can be classified as a mitzva that no one else but a neighbor or friend can really provide. Even the most friendly delivery worker cannot provide the care and support that a neighborly gesture can.

Although the mitzva not to become Tomey is a mitzva that is given to Kohanim alone, its message resonates in a way that can focus how we prioritize our day. We each have endeavors that are our mission. We must strive to focus on them and not just run after everything that comes our way. But when something that cannot be done by others is presented, we are paying attention, and are ready. If no one else is ready or able, we are prepared to step in, emotionally, physically, and financially.

With best wishes for a wonderful Shabbos.

Parshas Emor

by Rabbi Yehoshua Singer*

A large portion of this week's parsha, is devoted to the laws of the sacrifices brought on the different holidays. In the center of this discussion, the Torah interjects the mitzvos of Leket and Pe'ah, the requirements to leave portions of the harvest in the field for the poor to collect. Rash"i quotes Rebi Avdimi b'Rebi Yosef who explains this apparent interruption teaches us a beautiful message. Anyone who leaves the gifts for the poor in his field is viewed as if he has built the Beis Hamikdash and brought his sacrifices within it.

The Gur Aryeh notes that all charity is viewed as though one has sacrificed and given of themselves for G-d. Yet, these charities are unique in being viewed as though one has given a gift as great as bringing a sacrifice in the Beis Hamikdash. The difference, he explains, lies in the level of regulation. The mitzvos that Hashem decrees are revelations of His will for this world. While all charity is a mitzvah, these charities are unique in that the form, time and place of the charity are also regulated. The added regulation means that the way these charities are given is itself important to G-d. Therefore, it is only these charities which are comparable to sacrifices brought in the Beis Hamikdash. With other charities it is only the act of giving that is of great importance to G-d. The manner is not as significant.

This, he says, is the meaning of the Gemara in Kiddushin (31a) that one who is commanded to do a mitzvah is greater than one who is doing a mitzvah voluntarily. A mitzvah that has been commanded is an expression of G-d's will for the world. That which one does voluntarily, though certainly significant in one's relationship with G-d, is not as critical for the world. Therefore, the one who has done that which was commanded is greater. He has furthered G-d's purpose in the world.

When we put this thought in the broader context of Torah this is very difficult to understand. The Mesillas Yesharim explains in his opening chapter that the essence of a Torah life is emotionally connecting with and devoting ourselves to G-d. Our ultimate purpose in being placed in this world is not for what we achieve in this world. It is only as an opportunity to enhance and deepen our relationship with G-d. Furthermore, we know that G-d has no need for our help. He can achieve whatever He wishes, irrelevant of our actions. It would seem that the only significance of our actions is in displaying our commitment to G-d, and our devotion to His will. Don't I display a greater devotion and commitment when I go beyond the commandments, than I do by simply fulfilling the commandments? No matter how significant the accomplishment may be, when I am fulfilling commandments, I am only doing that which is demanded of me.

This Gur Aryeh is teaching us an important lesson in our relationship with G-d. True relationships are built on shared experiences and goals. If we wish to connect with G-d and deepen our devotion to Him, we must do more than simply display commitment. We must devote ourselves to that which is important to G-d. Voluntary actions can serve to deepen devotion to G-d in a general sense, but they do not connect us on a deeper level. The deeper connection of shared goals and experiences can only be achieved through those actions which G-d has commanded. Those are the actions which are G-d's own will. In this way, one who is obligated has achieved a deeper and more complete relationship with G-d, than one who has acted voluntarily.

This lesson is applicable in our relationships with our family and friends. In order to connect and have a relationship with someone, we must do more than simply express our respect and spend time together. We must find ways to understand each other. We must reach beyond our own perspective and seek to understand what is significant to the other person if we truly wish to develop or deepen a meaningful relationship.

* Rabbi, Am HaTorah Congregation, Bethesda, MD (and a close friend who has helped me with my Devrei Torah on numerous occasions in recent years).

Emor: A Writer's Block Dvar Torah

By Rabbi Moshe Rube
Knesseth Torah Congregation, Birmingham, AL*

I must confess that I have writer's block this week. Social distancing affects us all in different ways and for a rabbi the effect is that it's hard to find new material when the days of my week are mostly spent in the same environment that is my home.

Not for nothing did the Talmudic sage Choni Hamagel state "Give me a chavruta (study partner) or give me death". It's not just a study partner. When we're around people, our brains light up and we can think in different ways. The best is when we talk to someone in person and we experience the other person's ticks and mannerisms, our neurons flare and our creativity shines. But that has been limited to a great degree and I'm beginning to feel it. So this week I will just give a simple question and answer Dvar Torah and I'll have to leave out the fancier writing, deeper philosophy, jokes, and personal anecdotes I like to throw in.

In this week's parsha (I really don't like starting Dvar Torahs with that statement but such is the effect of this) God tells Moshe to "Say to the Priests the sons of Aharon that they may not become contaminated to the dead". Our question is why did God unnecessarily say the phrase "sons of Aharon"? We already know that the priests were the sons of Aharon.

Rashi jumps on this and says that God was telling Moshe that he must tell the Priests that they must instruct their children in these laws. The verse should read like this, "Say to the priests that they should instruct the children of Aharon (their children) in the ways of Kohanim."

The Torah is telling us here that the best person to teach children are their parents i.e. the ones that know the child best. While we of course send our kids to school, we should never outsource their education. (In fact, many have told me that this is the reason why Mountain Brook schools have such a wonderful reputation. It's because the parents are so involved.) Parents are the greatest influencers of their children.

Not even Moshe Rabbenu, our greatest teacher, could teach the children their Torah better than their parents so God told him not to even try. Rather, He told Moshe to empower the parents to teach their kids.

Shabbat Shalom!

* We joined KI when our son Evan was in medical school at the university of Alabama in Birmingham. This remarkable shul, with a great history, is a treasure in the South, and Rabbi Rube is a truly outstanding Rabbi of the young generation.

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))

Why Does Only Pesach Have a Make-Up Day?

By Yehuda Shurpin* © 2020

Unique among the holidays is Passover, which has a make-up day called Pesach Sheni ("Second Passover [Sacrifice]") a month later, on the 14th of Iyar. On Pesach Sheni, those who were unable to participate in the Passover offering in the Holy Temple at the proper time could observe the mitzvah. But why is Passover the only holiday to have a make-up day?

The Simple Response: Passover Is Easy to Miss

From a practical standpoint, Passover is the only holiday whose central observance can be easily missed due to circumstances beyond one's control.

For example, with enough effort, one can almost always make sure to have access to a shofar for Rosh Hashanah, a lulav and etrog for Sukkot, etc.

On the other hand, in Temple Times, the centerpiece of Passover was eating the korban Pesach (Passover offering) with the matzah and the bitter herbs. In fact, the very name of the holiday, "Pesach" (translated as Passover), comes from the Passover offering.

Now, this could only be done in close proximity to the Temple in Jerusalem (or its forerunner, the Tabernacle), and one had to be in a state of ritual purity. Due to these logistical hurdles, it was entirely conceivable for someone to miss the Passover offering and therefore need to take advantage of a "round two."

(This also explains why the Second Passover is only for those who missed eating the offering; it is not, however, for anyone who missed out on matzah, maror, reading the Haggadah, etc. to catch up.)

In fact, this is exactly how Pesach Sheni came to be. We read in the Torah that as the first anniversary of the Exodus approached and G d instructed the people of Israel to bring the Passover offering on the afternoon of the 14th of Nissan, "there were, however, certain persons who had become ritually impure through contact with a dead body, and could not, therefore, prepare the Passover offering on that day. They approached Moses and Aaron . . . and they said: ' . . . Why should we be deprived, and not be able to present G d's offering in its time, amongst the children of Israel?'"¹

In response to their plea, G d established the 14th of Iyar as the Second Passover (Pesach Sheni) for anyone who was unable to bring the offering at its appointed time in the previous month.

The Deeper Reason: Passover Is Our Birth

The Chassidic masters explain that the underlying theme of the Second Passover is the concept of teshuvah ("return"), and that it is never too late to correct our mistakes. To quote the Hayom Yom of the 14th of Iyar:

The theme of Pesach Sheini is that it is never too late. It is always possible to put things right. Even if one was ritually impure, or one was far away, and even in a case when this (impurity, etc.) was deliberate, nonetheless he can correct it.

The Lubavitcher Rebbe explains that this is uniquely tied to Passover, which marks the "birth of the Jewish nation."²

You can miss many things (busses, exams, work meetings and even flights) and make them up later. But if you miss being born, you really missed the boat.

Therefore, G-d, wanted every person, even those who purposely missed the first Passover, to have a second chance at Passover, teaching that it truly is never too late to correct our deficiencies, even the most fundamental ones.³

Nowadays, even though we cannot bring the Passover offering, the custom is to still celebrate the Second Passover by eating matzah—shmurah matzah, if possible—and by omitting Tachanun from the prayer services. When marking this day, we should take the clear lesson to heart that no matter how far we may go, or how impure we may have become, G-d will pave the way for us if we sincerely want to make amends.

FOOTNOTES:

1. Numbers 9:6–7.

2. See Ezekiel, ch. 16.

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Emor: Children who Shine

by Rabbi Moshe Wisnefsky*

G-d told Moses, "Say to the priests...say to them...." (Vayikra 21:1)

The Sages teach us that the verb "to say" is repeated in this verse in order to indicate that it is priests' duty to "caution" their children regarding their priestly duties. The Hebrew word for "to caution" (לזהיר) also means "to make shine," implying that we should not be content with training our youth to observe G-d's commandments minimally and perfunctorily. Rather, we should teach them to perform the commandments in the best way possible, even going beyond the letter of the law. By imparting this enthusiasm to our children, we will enable them -- and the commandments they perform -- to sparkle and "shine."

This lesson is emphasized by the fact that the Torah conveys it in the context of its instruction to the priests. The priests' task is to help others rise spiritually and become close to G-d. So too, we should strive to educate our youth not merely to be well-versed in the Torah and punctilious in observing its commandments, but to see their study and observance as ways to draw close to G-d.

From Kehot's **Daily Wisdom #2**

* An insight from the Rebbe.

With heartfelt wishes for a healthy Shabbos,

Rabbi Yosef B. Friedman

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Parashat Emor
Bev Morris and Elayne Mayerfeld

Covenant and Conversation

Rabbi Jonathan Sacks

Three Versions of Shabbat

There is something unique about the way Parashat Emor speaks about Shabbat. It calls it a *mo'ed* and a *mikra kodesh* when, in the conventional sense of these words, it is neither. *Mo'ed* means an appointed time with a fixed date on the calendar. *Mikra kodesh* means either a sacred assembly, a time at which the nation gathered at the central Sanctuary, or a day made holy by proclamation, that is, through the human court's determination of the calendar. Shabbat is none of these things. It has no fixed date on the calendar. It is not a time of national assembly. And it is not a day made holy by the proclamation of the human court. Shabbat was the day made holy by God Himself at the beginning of time.

The explanation lies in the context in which the passage containing these terms appears, the chapters of the Torah whose primary theme is holiness (Lev. 18–27). The radical claim made in these chapters is that holiness, a term normally reserved for God, can be acquired by human beings when they act like God. The festivals stand to Shabbat the way the Sanctuary stands to the universe. Both are humanly created domains of holiness constructed on the model of divine creation and sanctification as they appear at the beginning of Genesis. By inviting human beings to create a sanctuary and determine the monthly and yearly calendar, God invests us with the dignity of a holiness we have not just received passively as a gift, but acquired actively as co-creators with God.

Mikra kodesh and *mo'ed* as they appear in Leviticus have an extra sense that they do not bear elsewhere because they evoke the opening verse of the book: "He called [Vayikra] to Moses, and the Lord spoke to him in the Tent of Meeting [Ohel Mo'ed], saying..." (Lev. 1:1). The focus is on *mikra* as "call" and *mo'ed* as "meeting." When the Torah uses these words uniquely in this chapter to apply to Shabbat as well as the festivals, it is focusing on the encounter between God and humanity in the arena of time. Whether it is God's call to us or ours to Him, whether God initiates the meeting or we do, holy time becomes a lovers' rendezvous, a still point in the turning world when lover and beloved, Creator and creation, "make time" for one another and know one another in the special form of knowledge we call love. If this is so, what does Parashat Emor tell us about Shabbat that we do not learn elsewhere? The answer becomes clear when we look at two other passages, the two versions of the Decalogue, the Ten

Commandments, as they appear in Exodus and Deuteronomy. Famously, the wording of the two versions is different. The Exodus account begins with the word *Zachor*, remember. The Deuteronomy account begins with *Shamor*, "keep, guard, protect." But they differ more profoundly in their very understanding of the nature and significance of the day. Here is the Exodus text:

Remember the Sabbath day by keeping it holy. Six days you shall labour and do all your work, but the seventh day is a sabbath to the Lord your God. On it you shall not do any work.... For in six days the Lord made the heavens and the earth... but He rested on the seventh day. Therefore the Lord blessed the Sabbath day and made it holy. (Ex. 20:7–9)

According to this, Shabbat is a reminder of creation. The Deuteronomy text gives a very different account:

Six days you shall labour and do all your work, but the seventh day is a sabbath to the Lord your God. On it you shall not do any work, neither you, nor your son or daughter, nor your male or female servant... Remember that you were slaves in Egypt and that the Lord your God brought you out of there... Therefore the Lord your God has commanded you to observe the Sabbath day. (Deut. 5:11–14)

Here there is no reference to creation. Instead the Torah speaks about a historical event: the Exodus. We keep Shabbat not because God rested on the seventh day but because He took our ancestors out of Egypt, from slavery to freedom. Therefore, Shabbat is a day of freedom even for servants, and even for domestic animals. One day in seven, no one is a slave.

Of course, both are true, and we integrate both accounts into the text of the Kiddush we make on Friday night. We call Shabbat a remembrance of creation (*zikaron lemaaseh bereishit*) as well as a reminder of the Exodus (*zekher liyetziat Mitzrayim*). However, once we set the Leviticus account in the context of these other two, a richer pattern emerges.

If we pay close attention, we can hear three primary voices in the Torah: those of Kingship, Priesthood, and Prophecy. These are the three fundamental leadership roles and they have distinctive modes of knowledge.

Priests, Prophets, and the governing elite (the wise, the Elders, Kings and their courts) each have their own ways of thinking and speaking. Kings and courts use the language of

chochmah, "wisdom." Priests teach Torah, the word of God for all time. Prophets have visions. They have "the word" of God not for all time but for this time. Prophecy is about history as the interaction between God and humanity.

Is it merely accidental that there happen to be three voices, when there could have been four, or two, or one? The answer is no. There are three voices because, axiomatic to Jewish faith is the belief that God is encountered in three ways: in creation, revelation, and redemption. [1]

Wisdom is the ability to see God in creation, in the intricate complexity of the natural universe and the human mind. In contemporary terms, *chochmah* is a combination of the sciences and humanities: all that allows us to see the universe as the work of God and human beings as the image of God. It is summed up in a verse from Psalms (104:24), "How many are Your works, O Lord; You have made them all in wisdom."

Revelation, Torah, the speciality of the Priest, is the ability to hear God in the form of the commanding voice, most characteristically in the form of law: "And God said," "And God spoke," "And God commanded." Revelation is a matter not of seeing but of listening, in the deep sense of hearing and heeding, attending and responding. Wisdom tells us how things are. Revelation tells us how we should live. Prophetic consciousness is always focused on redemption, the long and winding road towards a society based on justice and compassion, love and forgiveness, peace and human dignity. The prophet knows where we came from and where we are going to, what stage we have reached in the journey and what dangers lie ahead. The prophetic word is always related to history, to the present in relation to the past and the future: not history as a mere succession of events, but as an approach to or digression from the good society, the Promised Land, and the Messianic Age.

Creation, revelation, and redemption represent the three basic relationships within which Judaism and human life are set. Creation is God's relationship to the world. Revelation is God's relationship with us. When we apply revelation to creation, the result is redemption: the world in which God's will and ours coincide.

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We now understand why the Torah contains three distinct accounts of Shabbat. The account in the first version of the Ten Commandments, “For in six days the Lord made the heavens and the earth,” is the Shabbat of creation. The account in the second version, “Remember that you were slaves in Egypt and that the Lord, your God, brought you out,” is the Shabbat of redemption. The Parshat Emor account, spoken in the Priestly voice, is the Shabbat of revelation. In revelation, God calls to humankind. That is why the middle book of the Torah (that more than any other represents Torat Kohanim, “the law of the Priests,”) begins with the word Vayikra, “and He called.” It is also why Shabbat is, uniquely here, included in the days “which you shall proclaim (tikre’u) as sacred convocations (mikra’ei kodesh),” with the double emphasis on the verb k-r-a, “to call, proclaim, convoke.” Shabbat is the day in which, in the stasis of rest and the silence of the soul, we hear the Call of God.

Hence too, the word mo’ed, which in general means “appointed times,” but here means “meeting.” Judah Halevi, the eleventh-century poet and philosopher, said that on Shabbat, it is as if God had personally invited us to be dinner guests at His table.[2] The Shabbat of revelation does not look back to the birth of the universe or forwards to the future redemption. It celebrates the present moment as our private time with God. It represents “the power of now.”

Not only is this threefold structure set out in the Torah, it is embodied in the prayers of Shabbat itself. Shabbat is the only day of the year in which the evening, morning, and afternoon prayers are different from one another. In the Friday night Amidah, we refer to the Shabbat of creation: “You sanctified the seventh day for Your name’s sake as the culmination of the creation of heaven and earth.” On Shabbat morning we speak about the supreme moment of revelation: “Moses rejoiced at the gift of his portion....He brought down in his hands two tablets of stone on which was engraved the observance of the Sabbath.” On Shabbat afternoon we look forwards to the ultimate redemption, when all humanity will acknowledge that “You are One, Your name is One, and who is like Your people Israel, a nation one on earth.”[3]

Creation, revelation, and redemption form the basic triad of the Jewish faith. They are also the most fundamental structuring principle of Jewish prayer. Nowhere is this clearer than in the way the Torah understands Shabbat: one day with three dimensions, experienced successively in the experiences of evening, morning, and afternoon. What is fragmented in secular culture into science, religion, and political ideology is here united in the transforming experience of God who created the universe, whose presence fills our homes

with light, and who will one day lead us to a world of freedom, justice, and peace.

[1] Rabbi Shimon ben Tzemach Duran (1366–1441) argued that all of Maimonides’ Thirteen Principles of Faith could be reduced to these three. See Menachem Kellner, *Dogma in Medieval Jewish Thought* (Oxford: Littman Library Of Jewish Civilization; New Ed edition, July 22, 2004). In the modern era, this idea is primarily associated with Franz Rosenzweig.

[2] Judah Halevi, *The Kuzari*, II:50.

[3] The phrase *goy echad baaretz*, which appears three times in Tanach, has two meanings: “a nation unique on earth” (II Sam. 7:23, I Chr. 17:21), and “a nation reunited” after its internal divisions (Ezek. 37:22). It bears both meanings here.

Shabbat Shalom: Rabbi Shlomo Riskin

“And I shall be sanctified in the midst of the children of Israel” (Lev. 22:32). The portion of Emor opens with a strange commandment to the kohanim-priests of Israel: “And the Lord said to Moses, ‘Say to the priests children of Aaron, and tell them: ‘Do not defile yourselves by contact with the dead of the nation.’’’’ (Leviticus 21:1). The Bible then lists the exceptions to this rule. A Kohen may defile himself only for the burial of his wife, his mother, his father, his son, his daughter, his brother and his unmarried sister. Otherwise our Priest-teachers are forbidden contact with the dead.

In contrast, one of the most important functions of the Christians clergy is administering “last rites,” and properly burying the dead. Clearly the Torah is teaching that Judaism is not chiefly concerned with death and the hereafter; rather, it is principally engaged with life in the here-and-now. Our major religious imperative is not how to ease the transition from this world to the next, but how to improve and repair our own society. But there seems to be an inconsistency; our very same portion goes on to command (as quoted above): “You shall not desecrate the name of My holiness; I shall be sanctified in the midst of the children of Israel” (Lev. 22:32). And herein lies the mitzvah of “Kiddush HaShem,” explain our Talmudic Sages, the necessity of sacrificing one’s life—sanctifying the name of God—for the sake of the commandments of the Bible. Jews must give up their lives rather than transgress any of the three major prohibitions of murder, sexual immorality or adultery; and, in times of persecution, Jews must die rather than publicly transgress even the simplest or most “minor” of Jewish laws, even a Jewish custom involving our shoelaces (B.T. Sanhedrin 74a,b). Our Talmudic Sages insist, however, that when Jews are not being persecuted, it is forbidden for Jews to forfeit their lives in order not to desecrate Shabbat, for example, if an individual feels chest pains Shabbat morning, he must be driven to the nearest hospital! It is better that he desecrate one Shabbat and remain alive to keep many Shabbatot.

But then, if life is so precious, why command martyrdom at all? And the sad truth is that our

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history is tear stained and blood soaked with many sacred martyrs who gave up their lives in sanctification of the Divine Name, during the Spanish Inquisition, to cite but one example, in the late 15th and early 16th Century, when Jews were forced to kiss the cross of crucifixion or die!

The answer lies in the very juxtaposition of the law of priestly defilement emphasizing the importance of life, and the law of martyrdom enjoining death, within our same Biblical portion. Yes, preservation of life is crucial and this world is the focus of the Jewish concern—but not life merely for the sake of existing. Living, and not merely existing, means devoting one’s life to ideals and values that are more important than any individual life. We participate in eternity by dedicating our lives to the eternal values that will eventually repair the world and establish a more perfect society – in this world. As the late Martin Luther King said it. A person whose life is not dedicated to values for which he would give up his life is not worthy of living!

Hence we must value and elevate life, but always within the perspective of those principles which are greater than our redemption. Yes, “live by these [My laws],” but live the kind of life which will teach the highest purposes of life!

But how can we justify martyrdom, even if only during periods of persecution, for the sake of a Jewish custom regarding our shoelaces? What can there possibly be about a shoelace which strikes at the heart and essence of our Jewish mission? The Talmudic Commentaries of the French and German Sages of the 11th and 12th centuries, when many Jews were martyred by the Crusaders, suggest that the general accepted clothing etiquette in Rome and its numerous colonies during the second century of the Common Era was to wear white shoelaces. Jews, however, wore black shoelaces, as a memorial to the loss of our Holy Temple, Holy City of Peace, Jerusalem, and our Jewish national sovereignty. When Gentiles in times of persecution attempted to force Jews to wear white shoelaces—and thereby force the Jewish community to cease mourning for the loss of our national homeland—the Jew must respond with martyrdom (B.T. Sanhedrin 74b, Tosafot ad loc.).

My revered teacher Rav Joseph B. Solovetchik added a crucial point: There are many Jewish laws, decrees and customs which have developed from biblical times to the present, which Jews themselves do not always realize are truly vital for our national and religious preservation. Our Gentile enemies, however, always do, because they—wishing to persecute and destroy us—strike at the jugular. Hence whatever they insist that we abandon, we must maintain even at the price of our lives! From this perspective, it becomes easier to understand why anti-Semitism expresses itself in unfair attacks on the free and democratic

State of Israel, condemning us while championing the cause of our terrorist enemies; we must focus on how crucial and vital the State of Israel is for Jewish survival today.

The memorials of Holocaust Remembrance Day and Remembrance Day for the Fallen of Israel's Wars quickly followed by Independence Day and Jerusalem Day must remind us that Israel is not merely a destination but is our destiny. Israel is not only the place of our survival, but it is the heart of our mission for world salvation, from whence the word of God—a God of life, love and peace—will spread to all of humanity.

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

A Life of Sanctification

The conditions under which we live are many and varied. Some of us live in very comfortable, even idyllic, surroundings. Others struggle with diverse hardships, including poverty, disease, and the conditions of war. Our people have known unspeakably extreme conditions, such as those experienced during the Holocaust.

Throughout history, we have learned to obey God's commands, no matter the situation in which we find ourselves. Not too long ago, we all celebrated Passover. Some of us were privileged to conduct the seder in the Old City of Jerusalem, in close proximity to the site of the Holy Temple. Others gathered around tables in resorts in much more unlikely venues, ranging from Florida and California to exotic Mediterranean or Caribbean isles.

Most of us enjoyed the holiday in the warmth of our own modest homes, in places as geographically distant from each other as Brooklyn and Bnei Brak. Our collective memories drew upon images of the first Passover celebrated in Egypt at the brink of freedom from centuries of slavery, as well as images of Passovers experienced in the throes of the slavery of the Warsaw ghetto, and even in the nightmarish death camp of Auschwitz.

Our observance of mitzvot is never negated by the conditions of our lives.

This week's Torah portion, Parshat Emor (Leviticus 21:1-24:23), confronts us with a mitzvah which must be observed in the full range of life's myriad conditions, however challenging they may be. I refer to the mitzvah of kiddush Hashem, usually translated as "the sanctification of God's name." Permit me to explicate this mitzvah by first providing an outline of the entire weekly parsha.

The parsha begins with a lengthy description of the standards of behavior required of the kohanim, the priests, the "sons of Aaron." This description occupies the entire first half of the parsha, chapters 21 and 22. The latter half of the parsha, chapter 23, enumerates the major

festivals of the Jewish calendar. Between these lengthy sections, we find these brief verses:

"You shall faithfully observe My commandments... You shall not profane My holy name, so that I may be sanctified in the midst of the Israelite people—I the Lord who sanctify you... who brought you out of the land of Egypt to be your God..." (Leviticus 22:31-33).

The Rabbis understand these verses to refer, first of all, to the ultimate sacrilege: profaning God's holy name, or, in Hebrew, chillul Hashem. Conversely, these passages adumbrate the concept of the sanctification of God's name, kiddush Hashem, the noblest, and arguably the most difficult, of all the mitzvot.

Why do I say "most difficult?" Because the classical rabbinic definition of kiddush Hashem is the willingness to suffer martyrdom rather than betray one's faith in the Almighty. Thus, those Jews during the Spanish Inquisition who willingly chose martyrdom over baptism exemplified kiddush Hashem. Indeed, all of the six million victims of the Holocaust, who were killed merely because they were Jews, are said to have performed the mitzvah of kiddush Hashem.

But can this "sanctification" only occur in such dire circumstances? Is it only through one's death that one can "sanctify the Lord?" No one has ever responded to this question as resoundingly, and as eloquently, as did Maimonides when he wrote:

"Anyone who willingly, without being compelled to do so, violates any of the mitzvot, spitefully and without pangs of conscience, has thereby profaned the name of the Lord. But, on the other hand, whoever refrains from sin, or performs a mitzvah, for no other reason, not out of fear, nor to seek glory, but rather to serve the Creator, Blessed is He, as did the righteous Joseph when tempted by his master's wife, such a person has sanctified the name of the Lord..." (Maimonides, Hilchot Yesodei HaTorah, 5:10).

From this perspective, we can better understand the words of Rabbi Isaac Nissenbaum, a leader of the religious Zionist movement in pre-war Poland, and a hero of the Warsaw ghetto who was ultimately murdered there. He insisted that in the hellish conditions of Nazi persecution, it had become necessary to somewhat modify the concept of kiddush Hashem so that it signified something more than martyrdom.

He introduced the phrase kiddush hachaim, "the sanctification of life." He wished to inspire the tortured residents of the ghetto not to "die for the purpose of sanctification of the name of the Lord," but rather to "live their lives in a manner that sanctified the name of the Lord." He urged his people to sanctify the name of the Lord, even in the horrendous

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conditions of the ghetto, by doing all that they possibly could to remain alive, to survive, and to live spiritual lives to the extent that those conditions allowed.

Rabbi Nissenbaum did not survive the Holocaust. But others with similar views did. One of them was named Rabbi Gad Eisner, whose heroic deeds in the aftermath of the Holocaust have been recorded by numerous eye-witnesses.

Many of the other survivors, upon discovering that their homes were gone and that their families had been killed, were ready to surrender to the "Angel of death" rather than struggle to remain alive. "What is there to live for?" they asked.

Rabbi Gad encouraged them to remain alive and arduously walked from bed to bed in a post-Holocaust makeshift hospital to spoon feed these tragic individuals.

More than that, after they had begun to physically recover, he inspired them to engage in spiritual practices, in Torah study, and even in joyous celebrations. He would say, in Yiddish, "az menn lebt, zohl zein gelebt," loosely translated as "as long as you are alive, live to the maximum!" Then he would add, "Remaining alive, fully alive, is the greatest sanctification of the name of the Lord, the highest form of kiddush Hashem."

But one does not have to resort to Maimonides, nor even to victims or survivors of the Holocaust, to find descriptions of kiddush Hashem. The Talmud offers a definition which is appropriate to those of us who thankfully live in far less extreme conditions, who live "ordinary lives".

This is the definition of kiddush Hashem offered by the Talmudic Sage Abaye:

"Thou shall love the Lord your God." (Deuteronomy 6:5) This refers to someone whose actions cause the Lord's name to become beloved by others. He is a person who reads Scripture, studies Mishnah, and associates with the wise; one who conducts himself courteously with all others, causing them to say, 'How fortunate are his parents who taught him Torah; how fortunate is the teacher who taught him Torah. So-and-so who learned Torah, observe how beautiful are his ways, how exemplary is his conduct.' (Talmud, Tractate Yoma 86a)

This is the kiddush Hashem of which we are all capable. We need not be martyrs, we need not be heroes. We must merely guide ourselves by the Almighty's Torah and live our lives according to His ideals. That is how we can "sanctify His name."

When I was reaching the conclusion of my list of the negative prohibitions, I perceived in a nighttime dream [a communication]: "You have forgotten the fundamental mitzvah "Be careful that you do not forget God your Lord (Devarim 8:11)". I contemplated [this communication] in the morning, and it is, indeed, an important fundament of fear of God.

The mitzvah to love God (Devarim 5:6) "And you shall love Hashem, your God with all your heart, with all your being (nafshecha), and to your fullest capacity ("me'odecha)." Earlier, we discussed the dynamic of "me'od" in this mitzvah previously; for our present purposes, we will take the description of this mitzvah found in Chovos Halevavos as a representative treatment of this mitzvah:

אַבְכֵת הָאָלֵל יִתְפָּרֵךְ כִּי הִיא מְכֻלִּית הַתְּכֻנּוֹת וְסֹוף הַמְּעֻלָּות
בְּמִקְרָגָת אָנָשָׁן הַעֲבֹדָה כִּי וְהִיא פְּקִילָתָם וְסֹופָם, אַז
מִקְרָבָה לְמִצְחָה מְפַנֵּי וְלֹא אָחָרִי, וְמִפְנֵי הַזָּקָנִים כְּבָבָא
עַה בְּמִשְׁמָנָה תֹּוֹהֵר לִיהְיוֹת, בְּאָרֶךְ: שְׁמַע יִשְׂרָאֵל הַאֲלֹהִים
וְעַ, אָחָד אֲהָבָת הָאֱלֹהִים וְעַ,

Love of God, blessed is He, is the ultimate attribute and final rung in the stages of those who are devoted to service [of God] ...and it is their goal and ultimate objective, for there is no level above or beyond it. It is for this reason the prophet [Moshe Rabbeinu] juxtaposed [love of God] with God's essential unity in Mishneh Torah, as it says "Shema Yisrael Hashem Elokeinu Hasehem Echad. Ve'ahavta es Hashem Elokecha..."

It is both extraordinary and awesome, then, when we note that along with the aforementioned mitzvos, the mitzvah to take precautions in the face of potential danger is also accentuated with the word me'od (u'shmor nafshecha me'od). Moreover, the fact that the Torah requires the very same exceptional dedication and supreme effort indicates that the mandate of pikuach nefesh belongs in the same class of fundamental, axiomatic mitzvos.

All of the above, in truth, is explicated and accentuated by Rambam in our opening citation from Hilchos Rotzeach; Rambam, famously succinct and judicious, is --by his standards-- unusually expansive, almost prolix, when discussing the obligation to take precautions in the face of potential danger: "we are charged to remove it, to be watchful of it, and to be very, very vigilant in this matter." Rambam's compound structure: "remove," "watchful," and "vigilant" mirrors the Torah's repeated stress (Devarim 4:9) ""take heed and watch yourself"; Rambam's emphasis "very, very (yafeh, yafeh)" reflects the Torah's intensification "and watch yourself very(me'od) carefully."

All of the above cumulatively indicates that the Torah requires supreme effort and abundant, multi-faceted precautions if we are

to be in compliance with the prescribed "very, very vigilant" course of action.

Tosafos (Yoma 85a) comment:

לְהִי בָּהֶם וְלֹא שִׁמְוֹת בָּהֶם, שָׁלָא יוּכֶל לְבוֹא בְּשָׁוָם עַגְנוֹן
לְזִדִּי מִתְּחִית יְשָׁאָל

"You shall live through them and not die due to them" [means] that we must under no circumstances allow for the death of a Jewish person.

In other words, per Tosafos, the mandate of "לְהִי בָּהֶם, you shall live through them" obligates us to actively defer fulfilling other mitzvos in order to adopt the aforementioned abundant, multi-faceted precautions.

Accordingly, it is abundantly clear that we are to evaluate every potential course of action by this exacting standard. There is clearly no place to pursue or accommodate a perfunctory, pro forma compliance with relevant standards. It is therefore wholly illegitimate to attempt to organize minyanim or re-open yeshivos through various legal manipulations as long as we are confronting even potential danger.

In truth, the very fact that presently the only possible avenue for re-opening our batei k'neses and yeshivos entails such obvious contrivances is, per se, an unmistakable indication that we are, in fact, still confronting a very real danger, "I". Categorically, there can be no dispensation to take any steps which interfere with our discharging our obligation to take all possible precaution and to expend great efforts to those ends.

May Hashem guide us along the path of truth.

[1] We thank Rav Twersky for allowing us to attempt a translation of the Hebrew original (talmidim).

[2] "Mitzvas aseh"

[3] Many translations of Chumash herein follow, or are adaptations of, Rabbi Aryeh Kaplan's The Living Torah.

[4] In the standard printed editions of the Mishneh Torah, the citation concludes before the word "me'od very." However, the Yemenite manuscripts all include the word "me'od"; those interested in researching this point further should consult the textual variants catalogued in the Frankel edition.

[5] See Minchas Chinuch (Mitzvah 546) and, subsequently, Rav Yaakov Kamenetzky zt"l (Emes l'Yaakov, introduction).

[6] We use extreme throughout purely in a quantitative, and not axiological, sense.

[7] Commentary to Sefer HaMitzvos, Sh'ch'chas Ha'la'avim 2

Dvar Torah

Chief Rabbi Ephraim Mirvis

Why does the Torah repeat something which is so obvious?

At the commencement of Parashat Emor Moshe was instructed "Emor el ha'kohanim b'nei Aharon v'amarta aleihem", 'say to the Kohanim the sons of Aharon, and say unto them'. He's told twice to say something to the Kohanim. Why 'emor v'amarta' - why both?

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The Ramban explains that here we have an important principle – it relates to the world of 'taharah' and 'tumah' – purity and impurity. Keeping the Children away from contamination, guaranteeing that they lead a life of kedusha, of holiness, to be imbued with the sacred at all times. Therefore it is something that needs to be repeated, and repeated again – just saying it once won't be enough.

Our sages in the Talmud give a different suggestion "emor v'amarta", saying and saying again, they say, is "l'hazhir hagedolim al haketanim" – to warn parents with regard to their children. The first 'saying' is for Moshe to say it to the parents, and the second 'saying' is for the parents to say it to the children – to guarantee the continuity of that instruction through the ages. Rav Moshe Feinstein says something beautiful on this point. With regard to the impact that parents have on their children, it's not always about formal instruction – in fact, the primary impact that parents have is informally through the example that they set.

Sometimes one might have a particular persona in the workplace, in their community, or within society – and they hope that people will be suitably impressed by what they see. But when you come home, you wind down, you relax – that's when you become your real self. It's within the family circle, particularly at times of leisure, that children see their parents for what they actually are. As a result, children very easily size their parents up – are they sincere or insincere? Do they speak in a lovely way or do they shout and scream? Do they maintain high standards of morality or not? Are they truly ethical people? When it comes to mitzvot, do they try to cut corners, or are they the real thing?

Our children internalise what they see from the very youngest age. Therefore the primary arena within which Jewish children are raised and influenced is within the family home. 'Emor v'amarta' is the instruction whereby we must study, we must learn and we must practice, and through the example we set hopefully we will inspire future generations to do just likewise.

OTS DvarTorah

The Meaning in the Process

By Rabbi Chaim Navon

When God sizes us up, he isn't merely interested in whether we've advanced the great future awaiting our nation. He is also looking at how we handled the smaller challenges we face day-to-day, from one minute to the next.

What do we face? The future, of course; so when we talk about the future, we are "facing forward." In Biblical times, however, people looked to the past, so when Hashem tells us about the things that happened in the past, he uses the word lefanim – forward. I'd like to propose a third option – facing the present.

In the verses of Parashat Emor that discuss the holidays, the counting of the Omer is discussed

as well, though it isn't truly a holiday: "And from the day on which you bring the sheaf of elevation offering—the day after the Sabbath—you shall count off seven weeks. They must be complete" (Leviticus 23:15). The Torah commands us to observe the unique tradition of counting the forty-nine days that follow the first Passover holiday. We stop counting once we reach the festival of Shavuot.

The first message conveyed by the counting of Omer is well-known, and it's a crucial one. It describes the transition from the physical freedom we celebrate on the Passover holiday to the spiritual freedom we experience on Shavuot, the day the Torah was given. We would have expected the countdown to the holiday on which the Torah was given to be just like the one broadcast worldwide when a space shuttle is launched. It should be something like "ten, nine, eight... Shavuot!" Right? Actually, the counting of the Omer is in ascending, rather than descending order, and this conveys a resounding message.

The counting of the Omer teaches us about the importance of processes and interim stages. Each week has its intrinsic value, and every day is counted. In today's goal-oriented world, people are interested only in the bottom line. It's as if the only thing that matters is the outcome. Whatever the subject at hand, we always try to cut development time – and cut to the chase. Instead of starting a diet, we take weight-loss pills. The counting of the Omer is here to remind us that it isn't just the outcome that counts. The process counts, too.

According to R. Shimshon Raphael Hirsch's calculation, based on the timeline that appears in the Talmud, the giving of the Torah didn't occur on the holiday of Shavuot. Rather, it occurred the next day. He therefore concludes that the holiday doesn't mark the giving of the Torah, but rather the time when "we prepared ourselves to be worthy of receiving the Torah." This is also the reason the Torah called this holiday Shavuot, in reference to the counting of the weeks that precede the holiday. This conclusion also bolsters the argument we presented earlier: the preparation process is also noteworthy, and not only the final outcome. This period of time is important because it is a vital prelude to the end result we hope to achieve, and because of the fact that our day-to-day, routine lives and everything that happens to us is meaningful.

"Every generation is equidistant from God", said German historian Leopold Von Ranke. Even if we don't accept this premise in its entirety, it carries an important message. The intrinsic value of our lives today isn't merely due to the fact that we are living on the stepping-stone to redemption – a veritable prelude to the future we hope to see. Our lives have intrinsic value, and the interim stages are meaningful.

There are times in history that may seem like nothing more than intermediate stages bridging between more important events. After World

War I, Ferdinand Foch, the commander of the French army, demanded that the border between Germany and France pass through the Rhine. When his demand was rejected, he made a statement that would prove historically accurate: "It isn't peace – it's a twenty-year armistice," as Winston Churchill recalled in his book, *The Gathering Storm*. In fact, people today tend to view the years between the world wars as an interim period of sorts, which lack any importance of their own. Yet weren't there people who lived and died during that time? Surely, there were those who committed heinous acts, and others who acted virtuously. Everyone is important, and ultimately, everyone will appear before God.

The same applies to our lives today. In the time to come, the present day may seem like an interim period between more important events. Still, each day has its intrinsic value and everything we do has meaning. Our lives aren't overshadowed by the great events that will transpire in the future. Redemption is our ultimate goal, but the interim stages are meaningful in their own right. When God sizes us up, he isn't interested solely in whether we've advanced the great future awaiting our nation. He is also looking at how we handled the smaller day-to-day challenges, from one minute to the next. No moment in time is trifling enough to be overlooked by the creator of the universe.

Dvar Torah: TorahWeb.Org

Rabbi Ahron Lopiansky

Between a Kohen and a Kohen Gadol

Prashas Emor starts with the special laws that apply to kohanim. Because kohanim are expected to be on a higher spiritual level than everyone else, the Torah requires more of them. One such requirement is that they stay away from corpses. The Rishonim try to give us some sense, in a way that we can relate to, of what "defilement" occurs by being in proximity to a dead body.

Be that as it may, an exception is made for the kohen when the deceased is one of the seven close relatives recognized by halacha. The Sefer Hachinuch (mitzvah 263) explains that the ways of Torah are pleasant (i.e. compatible with human nature) and the Torah did not want to distress the kohanim, for it is a great relief to pour out one's emotion and "gain solace through tears."

And yet, the Torah prohibits a Kohen Gadol from becoming tameh even for one of his seven close relatives. The Sefer Hachinuch (mitzvah 270) explains this difference by saying, "because the [Kohen Gadol]'s soul is bound up with Hashem, totally separated from human nature, and has all but forgotten this physical world, he therefore does not truly mourn his close ones, for even while they are alive, he is already distant from them."

This same distinction between "man" and "superman" is actually the crux of the parsha of Aharon and Miriam's lashon hara about

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Moshe (Bamidbar 12:1-2). They questioned the appropriateness of his having separated from his wife because of his being a prophet. They pointed out that they, too, were prophets and yet were expected to continue to live normal family lives. Hashem responded to them that Moshe was different. The Rambam (Hilchos Yesodei haTorah 7:7) articulates this difference as Moshe, "having bound himself to the Tzur haolamim [i.e. hashem], never leaving that dveikus."

This concept expresses itself in many aspects of Torah, from the Ramban's stating (Vayikra 26:11) that, "doctors have no place in the house of G-d" to Rav Chanina ben Dosa's reliance on miracles (Berachos 33, 34, and many more.) It is not that there are two Torahs, chas v'shalom; rather there is the Torah for people whose reality is a physical world with the awareness that Hashem is behind it all, and a different set of norms for those who perceive that Hashem is the reality.

The Chazon Ish hints at this at the end of chapter two of *Emunah V'Bitachon*.

Throughout the chapter the Chazon Ish stresses that genuine bitachon requires engaging with the world and believing that Hashem is doing what is best regardless of whether things turn out the way we would like them to. And yet, he hints at the end of that chapter, that a person who is on an extraordinary level of bitachon can actually sense the concurrent hasgacha and be aware that everything will be well.

I think that this principle is an important one to explain to our children when telling stories of great people that describe deeds that are commensurate only with a very high madreiga. For instance, there is a well-known story of the Vilna Gaon only greeting his sister for a very short time after not seeing her for many years and then immediately returning to his learning. When sharing that story, one must emphasize that for us this would be ignoble behavior, and only on the extraordinarily high madreiga of the Vilna Gaon who, like the Kohen gadol, lived on an entirely different plane and was barely connected to this world, is such behavior appropriate. It is not that there are different rules for different people, per se. Rather, there are different rules for different circumstances. Loss of kin is a genuine tragedy for humans living in the world that the vast majority of us live in. But for those humans leaving in a higher world than ours, death is merely the transition to the next phase of life.

Torah.Org Dvar Torah by Rabbi Label Lam

The Impression He Made

You shall observe My commandments and perform them; I am HASHEM. You shall not desecrate My holy Name, rather I should be sanctified among the Children of Israel; I am HASHEM Who sanctifies you, Who took you out of the Land of Egypt to be a G-d unto you ; I am HASHEM. (Vayikra 22:31-33)

Making a Kiddush HASHEM is one of the greatest things a person can do. Making a Chilul HASHEM is one of the most terrible things. Either our being affirms and attests to the notion that HASHEM is real and His presence surrounds and densely fills the world or we weaken this impression and we feed the illusion that the world is vacant of ultimate meaning. That is a tall order indeed but is it not the essence of our mission statement!?

I heard more than thirty years ago from Rabbi Ezriel Tauber ztl. that every nation specializes in delivering some good or service to the world. Some export oil, and some provide cheap labor, while others produce coffee etc. What is it that the Jewish People produce? Our Gross national product is not measured in dollars or exports and imports but rather we produce Kiddush HASHEM.

The Talmud explains that a Kiddush HASHEM is created when a person acts in such a way that people say, even in their hearts, "Happy is the person that gave birth to this person and happy is the teacher that taught him Torah. When the opposite impression is created, that unfortunately results in a Chilul HASHEM. Like those in high office or law enforcement, we represent more than ourselves. We represent the law, and not just the law of the land, but THE LAW! We represent G-D! The Almighty's stock in this world rises and falls, so to speak, based on our conduct, our attitude, and our very being. This does not require hiring a publicist or a high priced public relations firm. Jews is news! We are center stage everywhere we go, whether we seek the limelight or not! Privately and publicly this obligation to make a Kiddush HASHEM goes wherever we are!

It is impossible to measure the impact of a single quiet act of Kiddush HASHEM. I remember that Rabbi Mordechai Schwab ztl. once told me, "I too went to public school. My older brother Shimon went to Telz Yeshiva. I went to visit him one time. We were sitting altogether with a group of other Yeshiva students in a Malon, a hotel. I accidentally knocked over my cup of hot tea onto the lap of the fellow sitting next to me. He was rubbing his leg in extreme pain but he was waving his hand to get the attention of the waiter, and repeating, 'Waiter, please bring my friend another cup of hot tea. Please bring my friend a cup of tea!' When I saw that he was more concerned about replacing my tea than he was about his scalded lap, I said to myself, 'If that is what learning Torah can do to a person, then I too need to go to Yeshiva and learn Torah.'"

He became the Tzadik of Monsey. He impacted the lives of who knows how many thousands and thousands of people and what a walking talking Kiddush HASHEM his life was. Now that student who sat next to him in the hotel whose lap was scalded with hot tea, he had no idea how great was the impression he made.

Bar Ilan University: Dvar Torah

Why the lampstand and the table, but not the incense altar?

Shawn Zelig Aster

Why mention the lampstand and the table here? - Towards the end of this week's reading there are two short passages that deal with the oil required for the lampstand (Lev. 24:1-4) and the show-bread, for the table (Lev. 24:5-9). The lampstand and table, as we know, are two of the three furnishings of the Tabernacle that are situated within the sacred precinct. The details of the commandments regarding them and the Tabernacle are found at the end of the book of Exodus. Hence, it is surprising to find these paragraphs placed here, as Or ha-Hayyim notes: "What have they to do here, especially since these things were already spelled out in their proper place?" Indeed, the dedication of the Tabernacle is described in two other places in the Torah: in *Parashat Tzav* and *Parashat Shemini*, at the beginning of Leviticus, and in *Parashat Naso* (and the first few verses of *Beha'alotka*) in Numbers. Some of the furnishings are mentioned in each of these places, but it is not clear why in this week's reading the lampstand and table are mentioned, while the gold altar that stood beside them does not appear.

Various answers have been given to this question. Rashi (on this week's reading) connects the commandment with what was said in *Parashat Tetzaveh* and explains the wording—*ve-atah tetzaveh* ("You shall command," Ex. 27:28)—that is used there: "Ultimately you will command the Israelites in this regard." Thus he notes that mentioning the lampstand and table in this week's reading in a sense closes the circle. Nahmanides' reasons that the oil donated by the Israelite chieftains at the dedication of the Tabernacle had run out at this point, and therefore the time had come to say that "the Israelites should take purely refined oil from the community for all generations, just as they had taken the first [supply of] oil." In other words, this passage is intended the transport us from the stage of the initial inauguration of the Tabernacle to that of its maintenance throughout the generations. If so, the passages on the oil and show-bread in chapter 24 in a sense complete the account of inaugurating the Tabernacle.

The structure of Leviticus: from drawing close to sanctity

- These answers point to a connection with the commandments of the Tabernacle, but the placement of these passages can also be explained on the basis of the structure of the book of Leviticus.

Essentially, in this week's reading Leviticus concludes the commandments that pertain to the "Priestly Code," preparatory to moving on to the commandment of the sabbatical year, which pertains to the entire Jewish people, and to the end of the book.

Leviticus begins with two readings that reverberate with the idea of "being holy": issues about the sacrifices in *Va-Yikra* and *Tzav*

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(chapters 1-7). Next comes a description of the inauguration of the Tabernacle (chapters 8-9), ending with the tragic death of two of Aaron's sons.

One explanation of the death of Nadab and Abihu attributes it to their haughtiness in trying to be like their father Aaron, as Shadal suggests and as I expounded in another *Daf Shavua* (no. 1216, on *Parashat Shemini*). As we saw, at the beginning of chapter 8 (in *Parashat Tzav*) the status of Aaron and of his sons is equated, for it says, "Take Aaron along with his sons" (Lev. 8:2); "Then Moses brought Aaron and his sons forward" (Lev. 8:6); likewise, at the end of chapter 8 Moses commands all five priests: "You shall remain at the entrance of the Tent of Meeting day and night for seven days" (Lev. 8:35).

But after this preparatory camp, on the eighth day (chapter 9), Aaron alone makes all the sacrificial offerings. His sons indeed assist him, "passing" him the sacrifices (Lev. 9:13, 18), but they are not at the center of the action. Two of Aaron's sons (Eleazar and Itamar) accepted being thus shunted aside, whereas Nadab and Abihu rebelled and sought to bring sacrifices as well; and so they brought incense. The end of the affair is well known. Therefore, after dealing with the laudable need a person feels to draw close to the Lord, from the death of Aaron's sons until this week's reading the Torah turns to matters of holiness and restrictions, out of an understanding that man needs to restrict himself and not give expression to all of his aspirations.

Immediately after the Torah tells us of the sons' death, we read: "Moses said to Aaron, 'This is what the Lord meant when He said: Through those near to Me I show Myself holy, and gain glory before all the people.' And Aaron was silent" (Lev. 10:13). At this point, as the verse intimates, the book of Leviticus moves on from commandments pertaining to "closeness" (*kirvah*) and "sacrifices" (*korbanot*) to commandments pertaining to holiness and setting apart.

In other words, the Torah moves on from commandments that describe attaining heights through sacrifice to commandments that have to do with curtailing one's impulses, placing restrictions known as sanctity. All the commandments mentioned from chapter 10 to chapter 23 have to do with concepts of sanctity and setting apart. Among these is the command given to the priests, "Drink no wine or other intoxicant" (immediately after the death of Aaron's two sons, Lev. 10:9), the list of pure and impure animals (chapter 11), of which it is said, "you shall sanctify yourselves and be holy" (Lev. 11:44), the list of illicit unions (chapter 18, 20), and the passage beginning, "You shall be holy" (chapter 19), many of whose commandments place restrictions on the human being.

In this week's reading (chapter 21), the Torah gets back to matters of the priests, placing restrictions on whom they may marry, just as it

restricted them in the matter of drinking wine, in chapter 10. The commandments mentioned in chapter 23 also come full circle to the type of commandments found at the beginning of the book, to matters of sacrifice, with special emphasis on the festivals. But before the Torah moves on from matters of the priests to other matters of sanctity (such as the sanctity of the land in *Parashat Be-Har*), it focuses on two of the furnishings in the Temple: the lampstand and the table (Lev. 24:1-9).

The lampstand and the table in the context of the difference in status between the high priest and other priests - Verses 1-9 of chapter 24 deal both with the priests and with matters of continuity, but they also allude back to the great and tragic event at the center of the book of Leviticus—the death of two of Aaron's sons—putting the emphasis on the differences between the standing of the high priest and that of his fellow priests.

This week's reading opens by addressing the Israelites: "Command the Israelite people to bring you clear oil of beaten olives for lighting" (Lev. 24:2), and reserves the act of lighting the lampstand for Aaron: "Aaron shall set it up...from evening to morning before the Lord regularly" (Lev. 24:3). Sforno notes on this verse: "Lighting the lamps, as well as offering the regular incense, may be done by a regular priest for [future] generations," but here the Torah gives Aaron special status. Also as regards the show-bread the Torah notes that laying out the bread shall be done by the aforementioned priest (that is, Aaron): "He shall arrange them before the Lord regularly" (Lev. 24:8). Only at the end of the passage, in verse 9, does the Torah mention with regard to the show-bread: "They shall belong to Aaron and his sons, who shall eat them in the sacred precinct." In other words, the tasks relating to the lampstand and the table (kindling and arranging) are reserved for Aaron, whereas eating the show-bread is for all Aaron's sons. This difference finds expression here in connection with two of the three furnishings in the sacred precinct: the lampstand and the table.

The difference between the status of the high priest and the regular priest in connection with the third sacred furnishing, the incense altar, was made clear by the Torah in no uncertain terms in *Parashat Shemini*, in the story of the death of Aaron's two sons. Here, in this week's reading, the Torah closes the circle begun in *Parashat Shemini*, and notes that the difference in status holds also with respect to the other two sacred furnishings.

Dedication of the Tabernacle in three books of the Torah - In this week's reading the Torah recapitulates the commandments of the lampstand and table in order to make clear the differences of status among the priests. It makes this distinction in order to complete a point that was stressed in *Parashat Shemini* regarding the incense altar. This distinction stands at the center of the account of the Tabernacle's dedication in the book of Leviticus, and also at the center of the book as a whole.

As we said, the account in Leviticus is but one of three different accounts of dedicating the Tabernacle. At the center of the narrative in Exodus is the parallel between the Tabernacle and the Theophany at Mount Sinai; hence the verses there that describe the inauguration of the Tabernacle make no mention of the story of Nadab and Abihu. The end of the book of Exodus says, "The cloud covered the Tent of Meeting, and the Presence of the Lord filled the Tabernacle" (Ex. 40:34); "For over the Tabernacle a cloud of the Lord rested by day, and fire would appear in it by night, in the view of all the house of Israel throughout their journeys" (Ex. 40:38), similarly to what is written at the end of revelation at Mount Sinai (Ex. 24:16-17): "The presence of the Lord abode on Mount Sinai, and the cloud hid it for six days...Now the Presence of the Lord appeared in the sight of the Israelites as a consuming fire on the top of the mountain." The description in the book of Numbers focuses on how the Tabernacle was set up and dismantled, and on the way the tribes participated in inaugurating the Tabernacle, transporting it from place to place according to the arrangement of the tribal encampment.

In contrast, the account in the book of Leviticus focuses on the affair of Nadab and Abihu and the lesson to be learned from what they did. The verses commanding the ritual of the lampstand and the table are the last echo of that story and its moral. Before Leviticus closes the discussion of the Priestly Code and the laws of holiness that pertain specifically to the priests, it turns to this very story. It reminds us of the differences in status among the priests, and the need for the regular priests to hold themselves back and respect these differences, and thus to learn a lesson from the actions of Nadab and Abihu. *Translated by Rachel Rowen.*



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Parshat Emor and Coronavirus: The Only Guarantee Is Uncertainty
by Rabbi Jonathan Sacks

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 have just 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 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. Shabbat Shalom

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date: May 8, 2020, 12:28 AM

subject: Rav Frand - Chinuch Begins at Home

Parshas Emor

Chinuch Begins at Home

These divrei Torah were adapted from the hashkafa portion of Rabbi Yissocher Frand's Commuter Chavrusah Tapes on the weekly portion: CD #1117 — Must We Honor Leviim as Well as Kohanim? Good Shabbos! Parshas Emor begins with the pasuk: “Hashem said to Moshe: ‘Say to the Kohanim, sons of Aharon, and you shall say to them: to a (dead) person he shall not become impure among his people.’” [Vayikra 21:1]. There is a redundancy in this pasuk in terms of the verb “to speak” (Emor). If first says “Emor el haKohanim” (speak to the Kohanim) and then “v’Amarta aleihem” (and say to them). The repetitious “and say to them” could have simply been eliminated.

The Gemara [Yevamos 114a], cited by Rashi here, derives the fact that the elders (gedolim) must warn the minors (ketanim) to observe these laws (of priests not becoming contaminated through contact with the dead) from that pasuk. This is one of three places where the Torah tells us that not only is an

adult commanded to do a mitzvah or prohibited from transgressing an aveirah, but the parents of little Kohanim have a responsibility to make sure that they too should not become impure (tameh).

The other two places where the Torah teaches such a lesson are not places where this derivation is based on a redundancy in Scripture. For instance, with the halacha of Sheratzim (forbidden reptiles and creeping creatures) where the pasuk [Vayikra 11:42] says “Lo Tochlum” the Gemara’s exegesis is “Lo Ta-achilum” (rather than “Do not eat”, the pasuk implies “Do not feed” as well), applying this law not only to Sheratzim, but to all kinds of forbidden foods.

The third place where we have such a teaching is the pasuk “...Any soul from you shall not consume blood...” [Vayikra 17:12] where the Talmud again teaches “This implies that the adults must warn the children not to violate this prohibition.”

Rav Zalman Sorotzkin in his sefer, Oznaim La’Torah asks an interesting question: We see it is possible to teach this principle that “adults must warn their minor children” without resorting to redundancies. This was the case with forbidden foods and the consumption of blood. Why, by the prohibition of Tumas Kohanim, where the father needs to make sure that his young Kohen son also does not become ritually impure – is it necessary to articulate this detail with the redundant expression “Emor el haKohanim v’Amarta ...”?

Rav Zalman Sorotzkin answers with a great truth of life. When raising children, as we all know, there are two main influences – the parents and “the street”. Parents try to inculcate and educate their children with the right values – the dos and the don’ts of how to behave. Society (“the street”), however, also has an undeniable influence on children. The main influence little children receive is from their parents. But as soon as the children become a little older and they start going to school, the parents are no longer their only influence. As soon as children mature a bit and become subject to peer influence and peer pressure, this too has a tremendous influence on them. In short, two things shape a child: (1) His home, his father and mother; and (2) His surroundings and environment.

Rav Zalman Sorotzkin says that when the street and the environment and the peers are teaching the same lesson as the parents, the Chinuch (education) the children receive at home is reinforced in the street and in the external environment. In such a case, the chances of being successful with the Chinuch of children is greatly increased. The children will not be hearing “mixed messages.” The parents are not saying one thing while the street says another. On the other hand, if someone’s society, class, or set friends have different values then parents will be fighting a very difficult war. Parents say one thing and the street says another.

The only way to combat this, says Rav Zalman Sorotzkin, is “Emor, v’Amarta” – redoubling our efforts, reinforcement of our words. A person’s Chinuch efforts vis a vis his children will not be reinforced by a society of peers who have different rules to play by. He points out that the father of a Kohen has a much more difficult task than the father of a Levi or the father of a Yisroel. The father of a Kohen tells his son “You need to keep the mitzvos”, “You need to keep Shabbos”, “You need to eat Kosher”. The street also says that. All the children keep Shabbos. All the children eat Kosher. The father tells his son “You cannot speak Lashon HaRah”. All the children’s parents tell them not to speak Lashon HaRah.

However, it is different by “Tumas Kohanim”. If the father tells his son “You cannot play ball near the cemetery”, all the other children are playing ball near the cemetery. So, by the prohibition of Kohanim to come into contact with death-impurity, the “street” does not preach the same values as the Kohen. When someone has an eight-year-old child and everybody else is playing near the cemetery, the child will be under significant peer pressure to join his friends in their games. What is he going to do – tell his 8-year-old friends “I cannot go. I am a Kohen?”

There, says Rav Zalman Sorotzkin, the father needs to be more forceful with his Chinuch. Therefore, the Torah here says “Emor...v’Amarta...” — to teach that the parents must emphasize an added level of education and explanation

with their children. When the lesson is not going to be reinforced in the street, it is up to the parent to tell his son (Emor) and then to repeat it once again (v'Amarta).

Rav Isaac Bernstein, z"l, takes this lesson of Rav Zalman Sorotzkin one step further.

Rav Yaakov Kamenetsky makes an interesting observation in his sefer: The Torah says "If the daughter of a man who is a Kohen will be defiled through having illicit relations, she defiles her father – she will be consumed by the fire." [Vayikra 21:9]. A Kohen's daughter who commits adultery – be it as a married woman or even as an halachically "engaged" woman – her death penalty is more intense than others who commit adultery. Whereas others receive "Chenek" (strangulation) for this crime, she receives "Sereifah" (forced drinking of molten lead). The Torah gives the reason for this stringency for a Kohen's daughter: "For she has profaned her father." Not only is she committing a sexual crime, but she is also defaming her own father.

Rav Yaakov quotes the Gemarah [Succah 56b] which states that the Priestly Family of Bilgah was punished.. When the Lechem Hapanim (Show Breads) were divided among the Kohanim, between the "Mimshmar" that was coming in and the "Mishmar" that was leaving, the Chachomim posed certain penalties and fines on the House of Bilgah. The Talmud explains that a Miriam from the house of Bilgah became an apostate. She married a Greek officer. When the Greeks entered the Bais HaMikdash, she went to the Mizbayach and began kicking it with her sandal. She yelled "You wolf, you wolf! How long will you consume the money of Israel and not stand with them in their time of need. The Temple service is a sham. People bring sacrifices. It is a waste of their money. You don't help them when they need it."

When the Sages heard about this incident, they fined the entire family of Bilgah and enacted the penalties against them, as mentioned in the Talmud. The Gemara asks why the rest of the family should be penalized for the sin of the daughter. Abaye explains – that this was in fact an appropriate punishment because that which a child says in the street, he or she must have heard at home from either his father or mother. Someone in the family must have been complaining about the fact that the Jews were bringing sacrifices and they were not getting proper "payback" from Heaven. They spend a fortune – what do they get out of it? The daughter did not invent this expression on her own. It was something she picked up at home. So far, we have been quoting from the Talmud [Succah 56b].

Rav Yaakov Kamenetsky makes an interesting observation: This halacha – "her father she defiles" and this incident involving the punishment of the family of Miriam daughter of Bilgah – is a phenomenon that only exists by daughters! By sons, there is not such a concept of "his father he defiles", no matter how mischievous or how off the track he may be! Similarly, a young girl who was illicit during her engagement (na'arah ha'me'orassah) is "stoned by her father's home." Here again, this is only by a daughter. She shames her father and is punished by the entrance to his home. Why do we not find a similar phenomenon by sons?

Rav Yaakov answers that this is because in Biblical times (and up until recent history), the only chinuch (education) that a girl received was in the home. There was no "street". There was no external environment from which she might learn. Think about it — girls did not go to school! "The honor of the daughter of the King is inward." [Tehillim 45:14] They spent their time at home. Therefore, if the daughter of a Kohen has illicit relations or speaks in a coarse fashion – it came from something she picked up at home. She has defamed her father! The parents are the clear culprits in her less than perfect upbringing. She did not pick this up at school or while playing baseball on the street. Girls grew up in a hermetically sealed environment called "home." In the Laws of Nesias Kapayim (the Priestly Blessing), it says "There are those who say that for a Kohen who has a daughter who converted or who engaged in illicit relations, there no longer exists an obligation (on Israelites) to honor him." In other words, this daughter has "profaned her father" and he loses part of his stature as a Kohen. The Ramo cites this from the Mordechai.

The Mordechai lived in the 1400s. In that era, if a girl came to convert or become sexually immoral, the likely source of the problem was from the home!

And yet, my friends, the Mishna Berura comments: "The later authorities (Achronim) write that nowadays we do not invalidate a Kohen for the apostasy or immorality of his daughter." Why not? It is because perhaps in Biblical times and perhaps even in the time of the Rishonim such as the Mordechai in the 1400s, the parents could invariably be blamed for the how their daughter turned out. Today, the situation has changed. There are currently too many outside influences – even for girls – to place all the blame on what goes on in her parents' home. The influence of the "street" was once limited only to sons. Today it impacts daughters as well.

I have one last observation from the Satmar Rav on the previously cited Gemara. The Gemara related the incident involving Miriam, daughter of Bilga, who converted and married one of the Greek officers. She married a Gentile and then verbally attacked the Mizbayach: "Lukas, Lukas." She called the Mizbayach a money-waster. For this, her father's family was punished.

The Satmar Rav asks: Is this what did her in? For calling the Mizbayach a money-waster we throw the book at her and her family? What about the fact that she had previously converted? What about the fact that she had previously married a Gentile? Something is wrong with this picture!

The Satmar Rav made a very thought-provoking point: For her conversion and for her intermarriage, the parents cannot be entirely blamed. Sometimes a girl falls in love with a handsome and charming young man of another faith – it happens, Heaven Forbid. If she leaves Yiddishkeit? That is not necessarily the parents' fault. But "Lukas, Lukas! How much longer are you going to needlessly consume the money of the Jews?" That is something she picked up at home. A young girl does not pick up such a mantra on her own. It came from her parents!

We cannot necessarily blame the parents for the other things – as horrible and as tragic as they are. But the vulgar speech, the blasphemy, a child's attitude about the Holy Mizbayach – that must have come from the home and for that, the entire family is fined.

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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.

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Parashat Emor

The Power of Speech

Rabbi Meir Goldwicht

Iyar 5766

Dedicated to the memory of Yosef ben Yaakov

In parashat Emor, the Torah relates the incident of the mekalel. The mekalel was the son of an Egyptian father and a Jewish mother from the tribe of Dan, and as a result he wished to make his home in the camp of Dan, claiming that he was their fellow tribesman even though his father was Egyptian. The tribe of Dan responded that what determines one's tribe is one's father, as it says, "Ish al diglo l'veit avotam ." When they came before Moshe Rabbeinu for a din torah, he ruled that the man had no connection to the tribe of Dan and therefore had no right to live there. Displeased with this ruling, the mekalel cursed Moshe Rabbeinu; unsure of the punishment for the mekalel, Moshe

Rabbeinu had him imprisoned until Hashem would reveal to Moshe the proper punishment, skilah.

Immediately after Hashem reveals the proper punishment, the Torah teaches the laws of damages – ayin tachat ayin, shen tachat shen – essentially repeating laws we already know from parashat Mishpatim. At the conclusion of these laws, the Torah repeats, "And Moshe told B'nei Yisrael to remove the mekalel from the camp and to stone him." Why does the Torah interrupt the parasha of the mekalel with the laws of damages, especially considering the fact that we already know these laws from parashat Mishpatim? We never find anything like this – in the middle of discussing one topic, the Torah "takes a break," only to return several pesukim later to the original topic!

We must also question why the din of the mekalel appears in sefer VaYikra instead of in sefer BaMidbar, like all of the other incidents that took place over the forty years B'nei Yisrael traversed the desert. For example, the mekosheh eitzim, which took place on the very first Shabbat after B'nei Yisrael left Mitzrayim, belongs in sefer Shemot, but because of the nature of sefer BaMidbar it was placed there instead. Why, then, does the mekalel appear at the end of VaYikra instead of BaMidbar?

To answer these questions, we must enter a very interesting sugya: the sugya of dibbur. Dibbur is not just movement of the lips that facilitates interpersonal communication. Dibbur is a reflection of one's thoughts. The Rambam rules in the third perek of Hilchot Terumot that if a person had intent to say terumah but said ma'aser instead, or olah but said shelamim instead, his words have no validity until his dibbur matches his thoughts. Shlomo HaMelech, in Shir HaShirim, refers to the dibbur of Knesset Yisrael as "umidbarech naveh," comparing it to a midbar. Through proper speech you can turn a midbar into a yishuv; conversely, through improper speech you can turn a yishuv into a midbar. In Yechezkel (20:35), the galut is referred to as "midbar ha'amim," because this is where HaKadosh Baruch Hu wants to bring us to the brit kerutah bisfatayim, to teach us to use our dibbur properly. The power of dibbur is illustrated further by Chazal, who tell us that it is forbidden to "open one's mouth to the Satan," as we learn from Avraham Avinu – even though as far as he knew, he would be returning from the Akeidah alone, the Torah tells us that he said to his servants, "And we will bow and we will return," so as not to open his mouth to the Satan. The power of a tzaddik's speech is also demonstrated in the mishnah in Berachot 5:5: A tzaddik can tell who will live and who will die based on whether his tefillah for that person flowed smoothly. The Sefer HaChinuch writes that one who uses his speech improperly is worse than an animal, because it is the ability to speak and to express one's thoughts through speech that distinguishes us from the animals. The power of dibbur is tremendous in its ability to build and to save, but also to destroy.

Sefer VaYikra deals with all the different types of kedushah that exist: kedushat ha'adam (tumah and taharah); kedushat hazman (the yomim tovim); kedushat ha'aretz (shemittah and yovel). With the parasha of the mekalel, the Torah teaches us that the key to all kedushah is kedushat haapeh, proper dibbur. This is also the reason why the Torah reviews the laws of damages within the parasha of the mekalel, to teach us that the destruction we can wreak with our mouths is no less than that which we can cause with a gun or a rock. As clear as it is that you can murder someone with a gun, it must be just as clear that you can murder someone with your dibbur as well.

How amazing is it, then, that the Torah juxtaposes Moshe's punishment of not being able to enter Eretz Yisrael after hitting the rock instead of speaking to it to Moshe's request to pass through the land of Edom. The king of Edom refuses to let Moshe and B'nei Yisrael pass through his land, even threatening war. Why was he so opposed? Essentially, Moshe Rabbeinu was telling the king of Edom that the two of them represented Yaakov and Eisav. Yaakov promised to meet Eisav in Seir (see Bereishit 33:14). Moshe wanted to fulfill the promise of Yaakov to Eisav. The king of Edom's response was that if Moshe really represented Yaakov, he would have used the power of Yaakov, of "hakol kol Yaakov," in dealing with the rock. Instead, Moshe used the power of Eisav, of "hayadayim y'dei Eisav." If so, the king of Edom

was prepared to confront them in battle, since his power through Eisav was stronger than their power through Eisav. This is the connection between Moshe's hitting of the rock and the king of Edom's refusal to let B'nei Yisrael pass through his land.

During these special days in which we find ourselves, one of the ways we must improve ourselves is by working on developing proper speech. We must become more conscious of how we speak with our parents, our wives, our children, and our friends. Through proper speech we can create worlds. It is not for no reason that Shlomo HaMelech teaches us, "Mavet v'chayim b'yad lashon" (Mishlei 18:21).

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by Rabbi Doniel Neustadt (dneustadt@cordetroit.com)

Weekly Halacha :: Parshas Emor Counting Sefiras Ha-Omer

Unintentionally Rabbi Doniel Neustadt Dedicated to the speedy recovery of Mordechai ben Chaya As Lag ba-Omer approaches, it is timely to call attention to a halachic problem which can easily arise. People frequently ask each other what day of the Omer it is. If one gives the correct answer – even though he does not intend to fulfill the mitzvah of counting the Omer by answering his friend – it is considered as if he fulfilled his obligation to count the Omer. This halachah, which is recorded in the Shulchan Aruch,(1) is based on an opinion in the Talmud that holds that mitzvos eimam tzrichos kavanah, mitzvos can be fulfilled even without specific intent to fulfill them. By uttering the correct day's count of the Omer, he has lost the opportunity to recite a blessing over the counting since he has, in the eyes of the halachah, already counted the Omer, albeit unintentionally.(2) One should, therefore, not give a direct answer when asked for the day of the Omer; rather one should say: Yesterday's count was such and such. Of course, this advisory applies only from sunset and onwards, since counting sefirah before sunset is invalid.(3) The danger of inadvertently counting the Omer by a causal response or comment regarding what day of the Omer it is, is most prevalent on Lag ba-Omer. The very name "Lag ba-Omer" states that it is the 33rd day of the Omer count (as Lag is the letter equivalent for the number 33).(4) Thus on the evening of Lag ba-Omer after sunset, one should be careful not to express that "today is Lag ba-Omer" until after he counts the Omer with the blessing.

QUESTION: If, inadvertently, one forgot and responded with the correct sefirah count, is there any way that he can count again that night with the blessing? DISCUSSION: B'diavad, one is permitted to recite sefirah that night with the blessing: If he responded by saying just the correct number of that day, but did not say "Today is number so and so," then he may repeat the sefirah with a blessing.(5) But if he omitted just the word "ba-Omer" (or "la-Omer"), then the count remains valid and it may not be repeated with the blessing.(6) If he responded by saying, "Today is so and so" but did not mention the "weeks" count, he may still repeat the sefirah with a blessing. For instance, on the seventeenth day he responded, "Today is day number seventeen," but he did not add, "which is two weeks and three days."(7) [Obviously, this applies only after the first week of sefirah has passed.] Even if he responded with the correct number and the right weekly count but had specific and clear intention not to fulfill the mitzvah of Sefiras ha-Omer with his response, then he may repeat the sefirah with a blessing.(8) If the person who inadvertently forgot and responded, "Today is so and so" is one who is always particular to count the Omer after tzeis ha-kochavim only, and this exchange took place before tzeis ha-kochavim, he may repeat the count with the blessing.(9) If on the fifth day, for example, he responded, "Today is six minus one," or, "Today is three plus three," he may repeat the count with the blessing.(10) If in response to the question he wrote down the correct sefirah count (but did not say it), he may repeat the sefirah with the blessing.(11) If

the questioner, for example, asked, "Is today day number five?" and the response was, "Yes, it is," then both the questioner and respondent can repeat the sefirah and recite the blessing.(12)

QUESTION: May one repeat the sefirah with a blessing if, in response to the question, "What was yesterday's Sefiras ha-Omer," one mistakenly answered today's count? DISCUSSION: Yes, he may. Since his intention was to say yesterday's count, it is considered as if he had specific intent not to fulfill today's mitzvah. Although he mistakenly said the wrong (today's) count, it still does not change the fact that he specifically intended not to fulfill the mitzvah.(13)

SHAVES AND HAIRCUTS ON LAG BA-OMER: QUESTTION Is it permitted to shave or take a haircut on the evening of Lag ba-Omer or does one need to wait until the morning? DISCUSSION: The Rama(14) says that haircutting may not take place on Lag ba-Omer until "Lag ba-Omer itself, not the evening [before]." The poskim debate what the Rama meant: Some(15) say that he meant to exclude the evening before the day of Lag ba-Omer. In their view, haircutting may begin only on the morning of Lag ba-Omer. This interpretation is based on the fact that Lag ba-Omer itself is still included in the days of mourning over the death of the disciples of Rabbi Akiva. The halachic principle of miktzas hayom kekul - a small part of the day is considered like a whole day -permits us to lift the mourning restrictions after a small part of the day has passed in mourning. Other poskim,(16) however, reject this interpretation of the Rama's ruling. In their opinion, the Rama meant to exclude only those who permit haircutting before the night of Lag ba-Omer has actually begun (tzeis ha-kochavim). Once it is definitely night, however, Lag ba-Omer has begun and haircutting is permissible. Both of these views are quoted in the Mishnah Berurah, who does not render a clear decision on this issue. In many communities it has become customary, based on the previously mentioned view, not to take a haircut or a shave until the morning of Lag ba-Omer. But in an area where a clear custom does not exist, or in case of necessity, one may be lenient and take a haircut or a shave immediately upon nightfall of Lag ba-Omer.(17) [Concerning weddings, however, there are poskim who hold that they should not be held on the evening of Lag ba-Omer,(18) while others are lenient in regard to weddings as well.(19)] FOOTNOTES: 1 O.C. 489:4. 2 Although basic halachah follows the opposing view - that one must have specific intent when fulfilling mitzvos - still, in deference to the view according to which one would have fulfilled the mitzvah, we do not recite the blessing on the (second) sefirah; Mishnah Berurah 489:22 and Beirur Halachah (s.v. sh'eim and eino). 3 Beirur Halachah 489:4 (s.v. eino). A minority view recommends that one should avoid a direct response as early as plag ha-minchah; see Shulchan Aruch ha-Rav 489:15 and Machatzis ha-Shekel 489:10. 4 See Sha'arei Teshuvah 489:1 and Beirur Halachah (s.v. moneh) who quote various views as to whether or not one fulfills the mitzvah of sefirah by counting with roshei teivos. 5 Mishnah Berurah 489:20 and Sha'ar ha-Tziyun 25. L'chatchilah, however, one should not rely on this leniency and should avoid stating the correct number even without saying "today," Kaf ha-Chayim 489:53. 6 Mishnah Berurah 489:8;489:21. 7 Mishnah Berurah 489:22. Since other poskim disagree and maintain that one has fulfilled his obligation even without mentioning the "weeks" count [except at the end of each week - day 7, 14, 21, etc.], one should l'chatchilah not rely on this leniency; see Da'as Torah 489:4 Sha'ar ha-Tziyun 489:28 and Kaf ha-Chayim 489:55. 8 Mishnah Berurah 489:22. 9 Beirur Halachah 489:4 (s.v. sheim) 10 Be'er Moshe 3:82. 11 Chasam Sofer 6:19; Aruch ha-Shulchan 489:9. 12 Da'as Torah 489:4, quoting Zachor l'Avraham. 13 Be'er Moshe 3:80. 14 O.C. 493:2. 15 Levush, Gra, Machatzis ha-Shekel, and others. 16 Chok Yaakov, Mor u'Ketzia, Eliyahu Rabbah, and others. 17 See Kaf ha-Chayim 493:30. 18 See Mishnah Berurah 493:11 quoting the Eliyahu Rabbah. See also Teshuvos Chasam Sofer O.C. 142. 19 Igros Moshe O.C. 1:159; Chelkas Yaakov 1:97. Weekly-Halacha, Text Copyright © 2004 by Rabbi Neustadt, Dr. Jeffrey Gross and Torah.org. Weekly sponsorships are available - please send email to the moderator, Dr. Jeffrey Gross jgross@torah.org. Rabbi Neustadt is Rav of Young Israel in Cleveland Heights. He may be reached at 216-321-4635 or at jsgross@core.com. Weekly Halacha © 2020 by Torah.org.

subject: [Rav Kook Torah]

Emor: Agents of Holiness Rav Kook Torah

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 kohen'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)

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Reasons For Our Minhagim The Shul Chazan 8645. The Shliach Tzibbur who leads the Tefilah prayers in shul is called the Chazan. 8646. The root of Chazan is chozeh, which means seeing. Before the advent of printed books and siddurim, the shliach tzibbur was the only member of the congregation who prayed from a written script and not orally - by heart, as the other worshippers did. Shibolei Haleket 10, Mes. Shabbos 11b, 35b, Tosasos Yom Tov Mes. Shabbos 1:3, Keser Shem Tov 284, Otzar Taamei Haminhagim The "Gabbai" of The Shul 8647. It is customary (mainly among Ashkenazim) that the person who supervises shul procedures such as seating, baalei tefilah, and calling individuals to the Torah is called the "Gabbai". In many Sephardic congregations the same functionary is called the "Parnes". 8648. This appellation originally referred to one who collected local taxes or tzedakah in the community. Since monetary contributions are necessary for shul maintenance and were usually collected by the same person, the term Gabbai [or Parnes] evolved as the title for the one appointed to generally supervise shul procedures. Mishnah Berurah SA OC 141:16, 147:8, Mes. Demai 3:1, Mes. Kedushin 4:5, Mes. Avos 3:16, Keser Shem Tov 295, Otzar Taamei Haminhagim

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Ohr Somayach :: Torah Weekly :: Parshat Emor For the week ending 9 May 2020 / 15 Iyyar 5780 Rabbi Yaakov Asher Sinclair - www.seasonsofthemoon.com Parsha Insights Dynamite of the Soul

"Until the morrow of the seventh week you shall count." (23:18) Staying awake all night may not sound "religious," but there are several times during the Jewish year when the custom is to burn the midnight oil until the sun peeps through the blinds. Many people stay up after the Seder on Pesach until the time of the morning prayers in order to recount and analyze the great miracles of the Exodus. As the Haggadah says: Rabbi Eliezer, Rabbi Yehoshua, Rabbi Elazar ben Azaria and Rabbi Akiva stayed up all night talking about the Exodus until their talmidim (students) came to tell them that it was time to recite the morning Shema Yisrael. On Yom Kippur, those with sufficient strength stay up all night in prayer and supplication, atoning for their sins. On Hoshanah Rabbah, the time when the decrees of Yom Kippur are given over to those agents who will carry them out, there is a tradition to learn all night. On the night of Shavuot there is also a widely observed custom to stay up all night. The Sages of the Kabbala formulated an order of study call a tikkun (lit. "fixing") for the night of Shavuot. This includes passages from the written Torah, the oral Torah, the mystical Zohar, as well as a list of all 613 mitzvahs. The Zohar commands those who stay awake in anticipation of receiving the Torah. The giving of the Torah was, as it were, the wedding of the Jewish People and the Torah, and so it is fitting that we should be engaged in preparing the ornaments of the bride the previous night. Another reason: On that first Shavuot morning there were some who overslept and had to be awoken to receive the Torah. In order to rectify this, we stay up. But there is a deeper reason for our not sleeping on the night of Shavuot. Sleep is the taste of death. If fact, the Talmud tells us that sleep is one-sixtieth of death. One part in sixty is the threshold of perception. Similarly, Shabbat is a "taste" of the World-to-Come. It is precisely one-sixtieth of the World-to-Come. Sleep is the taste of death in this world. King David died on Shavuot. But before he died, he never even tasted the taste of death, because he never fell into a deep sleep. Therefore, on the occasion of his yartzeit, the anniversary of his death, we avoid the "taste of death" by staying up all night. The angel of death came to King David to try and take his life. But it had no power over him since he was immersed in learning Torah, and Torah is the essence of one's life-force in

this world. The only way that the angel of death could take David's life was through cunning. He managed to distract David from his learning, and in that split second he was able to take his life from him. So, on this night of Shavuot, which is both the anniversary of the giving of the Torah and the end of King David's life, we stay awake all night and immerse ourselves in Torah study. Torah breathes life into Man. But it was not always this way. When G-d first created Man, he was animated by G- d's utterance, "Let Us make Man." It was the power of these words spoken by the Creator that gave Man the ability to live and breathe and think and act. However, this was only until the Jewish People stood at the foot of Sinai. When Hashem said, "I am Hashem, your G-d" as the first commandment, the life-force that animated Man parted from the body and the entire Jewish People died. Miraculously their souls were put back into their bodies, but what animated them now was a different utterance. No longer was their life-force derived from "Let Us make Man." Now they were like new creations. Their inner essence was powered by "I am Hashem, your G-d." From this moment, the Torah became the animating dynamic of the Jewish Soul. And when the Mashiach, the scion of King David, arrives to herald the era of the revival of the dead, it will be the Torah, the dew of life, which will be the mechanism to awaken the body from its long sleep. Then we will finally understand the words we have sung for so long: "David, Melech Yisrael, chai vekayam!" David, king of Israel, lives and endures! Sources: Tehillim 73:5, Yalkut Shimoni; Talmud Berachot 3b; Tehillim 19:9; Book of Our Heritage, Rabbi Eliyahu Kitov, translated by Rabbi Nachman Bulman; Time Pieces, Rabbi Aaron Lopianski © 2020 Ohr Somayach International

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The Unburied Corpse

by Rabbi Dr. Tzvi Hersh Weinreb

Dead. Unburied. Abandoned. Forgotten.

What can be a worse fate? I once read a very moving novel about the events immediately preceding World War I and the fate of those who were caught up in the chaos of the opening days of that war. The author of the book, a Jew, was Joseph Roth, and the name of the book is The Radetzky March. I was drawn to this book because it deals, in part, with the Jews of Galicia and the effect that World War I had upon them. Both my paternal and maternal great-grandparents were caught up in the events of those times, and I wished to learn more about those events, if only from a fictional account. I found the book informative and troubling, but the single event recorded in it that had the most impact on me was a description of the novel's hero, a combatant in the initial outbreak of the battle and gunfire. At one point, as he was fleeing for safety, he encountered the corpse of one of his fellows. Rather than pass this corpse by in his flight, he chose to drag the corpse to a nearby graveyard, dig a shallow grave with his bayonet, and bury the poor man. Although the hero of this story was not a Jew, he was acting in accordance with a supreme Jewish value. At great personal risk, he buried a met mitzvah, an abandoned corpse with no one else present to bury it. Our Torah insists that giving such a corpse the dignity of a proper burial is a mitzvah, one which takes priority over almost any other good deed.

The source for this great mitzvah is in this week's Torah portion, Parshat Emor, where we read of the strict prohibition upon kohanim, members of the priestly caste, to come into contact with the dead. Exceptions are made for the kohen's parents, children, siblings, and spouse.

And an exception is made for the met mitzvah. Should the kohen encounter an abandoned corpse, and no one else is available to bury it, he is commanded to ignore the prohibition against contact with the dead, and he must bury that corpse himself.

This is the meaning of the phrase in the very first verse of our parsha, "... he shall not defile himself for any dead person among his people..." (Leviticus 21:1). Paraphrasing Rashi's words here: "When the dead man is among his people, the kohen cannot defile himself, but when the dead man is not among

his people, i.e., there is no one else to bury him, then the prohibition does not apply."

Our tradition is unusually sensitive to the sanctity of the human body. In life, certainly. But even in death. A proper Jewish burial is the last chesed shel emet (kindness of truth) that one can perform for another.

It is this important Jewish value which has led Jewish communities throughout the ages to do all that they could to recover the bodies of those of our brethren who perished in prisons, on battlefields, or in tragic natural disasters.

I must note a poignant incident in our history, an incident which culminated in the recovery of two metei mitzvah. Part of the narrative of these two heroes is recounted in the book *The Deed* by Gerold Frank. It is the story of two boys who gave their lives to assassinate a high British official, based in Egypt, whose policies threatened to block Jewish immigration into what was then Palestine. Their names were Eliahu Bet Zouri and Eliahu Hakim. They acted under the orders of the high command of the "Stern Group." They succeeded in assassinating the official, but were tried and hanged for their efforts. They were buried near Cairo in 1945.

But they were never forgotten. In 1975, the State of Israel exchanged twenty Arab prisoners for the bodies of these two young men and reburied them in hero's graves upon Mount Herzl. In recovering their bodies and eventually affording them an appropriate Jewish burial, the Israeli government was adhering to the teaching of this week's Torah portion. They saw to it that these metei mitzvah were buried properly. Even at this moment, the remains of several Israel soldiers are unrecovered and are held by our enemies. We hope and pray that even in these uncertain times, and perhaps especially in these times, our efforts to reclaim the bodies of these heroes will be successful. These soldiers are metei mitzvah in every sense of that phrase. They performed great mitzvot in their military service, and bringing them home for a proper burial is the least we can do to honor their memories. And so, this week again, as so often in our study of the parsha, we discovered a value of paramount importance, a priority mitzvah, buried between the lines, nay between the words, of a simple phrase. This week, that phrase is in the very first verse of Parshat Emor.

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Chief Rabbi Ephraim Mirvis

chiefrabbi.org Chief Rabbi Ephraim Mirvis Dvar Torah: Emor When can the performance of a great mitzva bring our people into disrepute? The Torah, in Parshat Emor, gives us the mitzvah: 'vlo techalelu et sheim kodshai – you must not desecrate my holy name'. Here Hashem is telling us that none of our deeds should, God forbid, give a bad name to Hashem, to our Torah or to our people. Then the Torah continues with a second mitzvah, 'Vnichtashti b'toch bnei Yisrael – and I shall be sanctified in the midst of the Jewish people'. The Gemara, in Megillah, Daf 3b, tells us that from the word 'b'toch' – 'in the midst of' – we learn about the requirement of a minyan, a quorum of 10 men for all devarim shebikdusha – precepts of supreme holiness. Such as Baruchu, Kedusha, Kaddish, the reading of the Torah in public, a wedding and so on. Now, the two mitzvot of chillul Hashem (not desecrating His name), and Kidush Hashem, (sanctifying his name) are linked together through the vav, the word 'and' between them in the phrase 'V'nikdashti' – 'and I will be sanctified'. The Chatam Sofer explained as follows: 'shelo yitchallel al yadei kiddush Hashem shemo hagadol' – says the Chatam Sofer: we must always make sure that our Kiddush Hashem does not cause a Chillul Hashem. Let me give you an example. When travelling on an airplane and you want to daven in a minyan; what you should first do is enquire from the stewards and stewardesses if they're ok with it and when the best time will be. Then, when you do daven, guarantee that you don't cause inconvenience for fellow travellers, in terms of your location on the plane. Because if you're not careful, it is possible that the staging of this minyan could cause a Chillul Hashem. Similarly during these very trying times of the Coronavirus, we are witnessing a few incidents

of awful Chillul Hashem, bringing us all into disrepute. But the converse is also the case, I would like to say a huge *Yashar Koach*, a huge thank you to all of you who should have been enjoying smachot at this time. But unfortunately that's not possible, either they're being postponed or they have needed to be an adjusted version of your grand simcha. Your disappointment has been matched by your recognition of the fact that you're performing an incredible mitzvah – the mitzvah to preserve life. And I, and so many others, have been so inspired by the example that you have set and the great kiddush Hashem that you have performed. Let us hope that Hakadosh Baruch Hu will provide us with many opportunities to perform Kiddush Hashem, to sanctify his name and to keep far away from Chillul Hashem – never to desecrate his name. And may we, as soon as possible, be in a position, in good health and happiness, to come together in minyanim, for the sake of *Devarim Shebikdusha*, to sanctify God's name in this world in the best possible way. *Shabbat shalom. Rabbi Mirvis is the Chief Rabbi of the United Kingdom. He was formerly Chief Rabbi of Ireland.*

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torahweb.org Mikdash, Simcha, and Chessed - The Three Pillars of Yom Tov Rabbi Zvi Sobolofsky Every yom tov has its unique halachos and themes, and yet there are some aspects of yom tov that apply to all yomim tovim. The bringing of Korbanos, referenced in Parshas Emor, plays a major role in the celebration of all yomim tovim. The Shalosh Regalim have their mitzvos of offering multiple Korbanos upon visiting the Beis Hamikdash, Yom Kippur has its unique Avodah that plays such a prominent role in the observance of the day, and even Rosh Hashana, which is not linked directly to the Mikdash, is observed in a unique way in the Beis Hamikdash. Tekias Shofar is performed slightly differently in the Beis Hamikdash; according to the Talmud Yerushalmi the practice of blowing Shofar on Shabbos only in the Beis Hamikdash is of Torah origin, thereby highlighting that Tekias Shofar in Mikdash is different than everywhere else. Furthermore, we can see from the fact that Elkanah and his family would visit the Mishkan in Shilo annually on Rosh Hashana that Rosh Hashana in Mikdash is unique. In Parshas Re'eh we are instructed to be b'simcha (to rejoice) on the Shalosh Regalim. Although different from the Shalosh Regalim, the Yomim Noraim, according to many, are also times of joy. The Rambam notes that Rosh Hashana and Yom Kippur are not days of boundless joy because of the somber mood that must accompany days of judgment, nevertheless there, is to a lesser degree, a mitzva of rejoicing even on these days. The halacha that aveilus is cancelled by Rosh Hashana and Yom Kippur just as it is by the Shalosh Regalim proves that we have a chiyuv simcha even on the Yomim Noraim. Our responsibility to do chessed with others, particularly those in dire need, has added significance on all of the yomim tovim. The Torah stresses that our joy cannot be complete without sharing with the poor and others who are in need financially or emotionally. In Parshas Emor we read that the celebration of the Shavuos harvest is only complete when we share of that harvest with others. It is not coincidental that the story of Megillas Rus is read on Shavuos; care for the needy is integral to celebration of the day. During the days of Ezra there was a great celebration of Rosh Hashana that is described in Tanach. We read not only of the Torah and Tefilla that marked the day but also of the sending of food to those in need. Rosh Hashana is not complete without caring for others. Although Yom Kippur does not involve providing food for the poor for Yom Kippur itself, the age-old custom of kapparos being distributed to the poor highlights that even Yom Kippur cannot be observed properly without caring for the needy. These three universal aspects of yom tov - Mikdash, simcha, and chessed - are strongly linked to one another, and it is our connection to Hashem through the vehicle of Mikdash that sets the stage for the proper observance of yom tov. As we visit Hashem's home and we experience being in His presence we are immediately filled with intense joy; Rabbi Soloveichik

observed that the very mitzva of simcha is a direct result of being in Hashem's presence. The starting point of our very existence is a state of total joy, but as we drift further from Hashem our joy is mitigated. When we return, through aliyah l'regel on the Shalosh Regalim and through teshuva during the Yomim Noraim, we are filled again with that all-encompassing joy. It is this simcha of reconnecting with Hashem through Mikdash that is the engine that drives our responsibility to others. The Ramban in his introduction to Vayikra highlights how the world of korbanos teaches us about the great kindness Hashem bestows on us. Korbanos which atone for our shortcomings are a gift from Hashem who is all compassionate. Rather than judging us strictly, He treats us with loving kindness. When we are recipients of His kindness, we in turn realize we must share that kindness with others. The Rambam (Hilchos Megilla) describes the significance of sharing the joy of Purim with those who need it most, telling us that one who does so is compared to Hashem Who acts in this manner and thus the sharing of joy with others is the greatest form of simcha. May we merit to see the Beis Hamikdash rebuilt and our simcha complete as we share our joy with others and by doing so emulate Hashem Himself. Copyright © 2020 by TorahWeb.org. All rights reserved.

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Parsha Parables By Rabbi Mordechai Kamenetzky

Drasha - Parshas Emor Mitzvah Vigilante Rabbi Mordechai Kamenetzky
Dedicated to the speedy recovery of Mordechai ben Chaya The Torah tells us in this week's parsha, "u'shmartem es mitzvosai, v'aseesem osum — watch the mitzvos and do them" (Vayikra 22:31). What does watch mitzvos mean. If one does a mitzvah he is surely doing more than watching them. Watching mitzvos seems quite passive. Observant Jew is a term used for those who actually perform the and adhere to the laws, and the curious word observant, perhaps, indeed comes from the Hebrew word u'shmartem. But doesn't Hashem want us to be more than just watchers. If He tells us to do mitzvos, then surely we watch them! Why the double, if not redundant, expression? This past Thursday evening I went to be Menachem Avel (in the vernacular - pay a shiva call) a friend, Rabbi Zissel Zelman, who was sitting shiva for his father. He is a Chicago native whose father, Rabbi Zelman, grew up in Chicago way before Torah Judaism had flourished there. Reb Zissel related that as a young man, his father would pass the newsstand every Saturday night after shul to pick up a paper. As he did not carry money with him, he had made an arrangement with the vendors to return on Sunday morning to pay the vendor. Rabbi Zelman was not interested in the sports pages nor was he interested in the headlines. In fact he was not interested in the paper altogether. Rabbi Zelman bought the paper for his mother. She also was not interested in the sports or the news. She was interested in the dead. Every Saturday night she would comb the paper looking for announcements of tombstone unveilings that were to take place on Sunday at the Jewish Cemeteries. An unveiling is a time when people are charitable, and the elderly Mrs. Zelman would go to the cemeteries and raise funds from the gathered for Yeshivos in Europe in Israel. She would eventually turn the coins into bills and send the money overseas. A plaque hangs today in the Slobodka Yeshiva in Israel commemorating her efforts. Perhaps the Torah is telling us more than just doing mitzvos. It is telling us to watch for mitzvos. Be on guard. There are hundreds of opportunities to find mitzvos and to do them. But we must be observant and vigilant. There are hundreds of mitzvos that pass by our very eyes. Scores of Good Mornings. Hundreds of packages we can help lift, as well as spirits. There are hundreds of hearts we can help heal as well as small acts of charity we can fulfill. Perhaps the Torah is telling us more than watch the mitzvos that come our way. Perhaps it may be telling us to be on the lookout for those that are out there waiting for us to observe them! Sponsored L'Refuah Shlaimah of Yehuda ben Miriam Liba Text Copyright © 2005 by Rabbi M. Kamenetzky and Torah.org. Drasha © 2020 by Torah.org.

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פרק א' אמר ר' מש' פ'
אך בחמשה עשר יום לחודש השבעי ... תחווגו את ה' שבעת מינים
fifteenth day of the seventh month...you shall celebrate Hashem's festival for a seven-day period. (23:39) The Festival of *Succos*, as is the case with all the other festivals, is replete with deep esoteric meaning far beyond the grasp of the average Jew who observes it simply because it is a G-d-given *mitzvah*. A *mitzvah*, regardless of the level with which one observes it, and his understanding of its various spiritual facets, have enormous power and incredible influence. Just executing the decree of Hashem, simply because this is the way of a Jew, is powerful, as the following story related by the *Tolner Rebbe, Shlita*, illustrates. A *baal teshuvah*, penitent, who had come to the *Rebbe* for advice regarding a specific problem, told the following story. This man's grandfather lived in a small American town, distant from mainstream America and even more distant from mainstream Judaism. Nonetheless, he observed one *mitzvah* religiously – to the point of *mesiras nefesh*, self-sacrifice: *Succah*. He was steadfast in its observance, unwavering in his commitment to the *mitzvah*, despite the fact that he observed absolutely nothing else. Every year when *Succos* arrived, he built a *succah* in the courtyard of his house and dwelled in it 24/7 for seven days. Prior to leaving this world, he wrote a will bequeathing all of his assets to the one descendant who would observe *Succos* as he did: build a *succah* and live in it for seven days, day and night. His children and grandchildren were certain that he had lost his mind. Thus, they were unprepared to accept his will. They were not going to dwell in a *succah* for seven days. It was meaningless to them, because they were quite distant from religious observance. They did not even visit their temple on *Yom Kippur*, as other pseudo-religious/secular oriented Jews do. They knew nothing, and, as a result, kept nothing. Indeed, they were clueless concerning why their father/grandfather was so committed to this weird practice. Furthermore, to the best of their knowledge, their father/grandfather's estate was not worth much. He was not known to have had any money to speak of. One grandson, a sensitive soul, was upset that not a single member of the family was willing to honor the memory of his grandfather. He decided that he would do it. He met with the lawyer who was executor of the estate and informed him of his decision. The lawyer was pleased, but he first wanted the rest of the family to sign off on the will. They all signed that as far as they were concerned, the entire estate could go directly to the grandson who had acquiesced to his grandfather's request. After the grandson received the will, he discovered a reality (to which the lawyer had been privy the entire time) that his grandfather was quite wealthy. He had made investments that paid off handsomely, and he owned a number of parcels of real estate which, although when originally purchased were not worth much, had increased exponentially in value over the years. Not one to create jealousy and discord within the family, he kept his newly-found wealth a secret. He had made a lucrative decision. *Succos* came along, and he carried out his end of the deal, sequestering himself for seven full days in his grandfather's *succah*. During these seven days, in order to overcome the feelings of loneliness, he would think. He first tried to learn the significance of *Succos* and what it meant to the Jewish people. He could not do it on his own. He searched for a rabbi who could answer his questions. A few days passed, and he was given the name of an Orthodox rabbi who lived a few hundred miles away, a four-hour drive from his town. His curiosity overwhelmed him. He called the rabbi, told him the story and asked him to explain the meaning and significance of the *succah*. The rabbi understood that he was referring to the *mitzvah* of *Succah*, so he explained its meaning and religious significance. He asked the rabbi if he could impose upon him to visit and look at the *succah* and validate it as kosher for festival use. He offered to reimburse the rabbi for his time and expenses. The rabbi agreed and made the trip. How shocked he was to discover that the "*succah*" was nothing

more than metal bars attached together by plastic sheeting wrapped around them. There was no *schach* whatsoever covering the *succah*. It was totally *pasul*, invalid. The rabbi attempted to explain the meaning and difference between kosher and non-kosher with regard to *succah*, and, for that matter, everything else about Judaism. The grandson was relentless and refused to be pushed off, until the rabbi agreed to tutor him in the basics of Judaism. This is how it all began. A *mitzvah pesulah*, invalid performance of a *mitzvah*, with good intentions, but a lack of knowledge, had the awesome power to catalyze the alteration of this man's life. This is the extraordinary power of a *mitzvah*!

ויצא בן אשה יישראלית והוא בן איש מצרי... ויקלל *The son of a Yisraeli woman went out and he was the son of an Egyptian man*
...they contended in the camp... and he pronounced the Name ... and he blasphemed. (24:10,11) It was a truly tragic ending to a sinful relationship that had begun years earlier in Egypt. Shlomis bas Divri was a woman of ill repute, whose immoral behavior led to a relationship with an Egyptian that produced a son who later blasphemed the Name of Hashem. It might take time, but a relationship that is prohibited, that is not meant to be, will not bear good fruit unless the poison is expunged. Love conquers all – but Torah. Having said this, we quote *Rashi*, who explains, *Mei heicha yatza*, “From where did he (the blasphemer) go out?” Apparently, he came to pitch his tent in the camp of the tribe of Dan (his mother was from that tribe). The members of the tribe asked him what he was doing there; i.e. what was his connection to the tribe of Dan? He replied that he was one of the sons of Dan [he belonged]. They said that a tribal son was defined by his paternal lineage, not maternal. His father was not a Jew, thus excluding him from pitching his tent among them. He took his case to Moshe *Rabbeinu*, who found his claim wanting. As a result of losing the case, he “lost it” and blasphemed. The blasphemer was no ordinary person. He had witnessed the miracles in Egypt, and stood at *Har Sinai* amid the *kolos*, loud sounds, *kolos u'berakim*, loud sounds and lightning, that accompanied the giving of the Torah. He had heard Hashem's voice. Yet, in the space of a moment, this individual lost it and descended from his spiritual perch to the nadir of depravity, during which time he blasphemed the Name. How does such a tragic downfall occur in such a short interval of time? *Horav Shimshon Pincus*, zl, explains that it all began when, *Va'yeitzei*, “He went out” from Moshe's *bais din*, court, feeling that he had been deprived of justice, that he had been wronged. He felt justified in making his claim for a place among the tribe of Dan. Moshe told him, “Sorry, you are not a member of the tribe. Your mother's lineage does not count.” That is *halachah*. One's disagreement does not alter the *halachah*. *Halachah* is immutable. It does not change just because a person finds it difficult to accept. The moment that the judge (Moshe *Rabbeinu*) decided against him, the *megadeif*, blasphemer, went out of his mind and spiritually threw his life away. He became angry, and he blasphemed the Name of Hashem! It happens all the time. A person may be driving for hours; everything is going smoothly; the weather is perfect and traffic is moving; he is listening to an inspiring CD; all is well, until someone cuts him off, and he loses it. In that ten-second interval, spurred on by anger, he makes a decision to speed up and chase the offender, to pay him back for destroying his moment of calm. That is when he loses control and spins out... Ten seconds of anger can destroy a lifetime of achievement. As this is true in the physical world, it applies equally to *ruchnius*, spirituality. One can be a devout, G-d-fearing, fully-observant Jew – *davening*, learning, *tzedakah*, *Daf Yomi* – all of the good and holy endeavors, until one day, one moment, during which he does not come out on top, when the fellow with whom he does not see eye-to-eye emerges triumphant. He loses it and voices his opinion in the most degrading, demeaning, profane manner. Gone! All his spiritual achievement just went out the window. That is what anger will do to a person. *V'haseir Satan milfaneinu u'meiachareinu* “And remove Satan from before us and from behind us.” Before us – illicit desire; after us – anger. There you have it. We must pray to be spared from the effects of anger. We cannot do it alone. We require Heavenly assistance. For that, we

must pray. In the *sefer*, “*Maane Rach*,” an inspiring compendium on the evils of anger and ways to protect oneself from it, the distinguished author, *Horav Moshe Levinson*, zl (grandfather of *Horav Yosef Shalom Elyashiv*, zl), lists in detail all the Rabbinic statements that pertain to anger. He also provides advice and strategies on how to circumvent falling into the clutches of anger. Of the twelve suggestions/strategies that he gives, I would like to focus on the last two. *Middah k'neged middah*, measure for measure, plays a pivotal role in how Hashem responds to our actions – both good and bad. In other words, what goes around comes around. The way we act toward others sets the barometer on how Hashem will deal with us. When we are demanding and nit-pick everything that our fellow does concerning us, so will Hashem act towards us. (He will not nit-pick, but our behavior and demanding attitude short- circuit his usual magnanimity.) People mess up; they make mistakes; they forget to pay compliments, act decently and graciously. When we forgive, we can hope that we, too, will be forgiven. When we retaliate, execrate and demand vengeance, we can expect the same when we befool. Second, everything that happens to us is Heavenly-manipulated for a good reason. (I say “good” because everything that comes from Hashem – even if we do not see or understand it is good.) If what just happened causes us to become angry, we must realize that Hashem wanted it to happen. He did not want us to become angry, but to accept and live with what happened. He wanted us to exert self-control, but, when we did not, we added “failed” to the test. *Horav Yisrael Salanter*, zl, the father of the *Mussar*, ethical/character refinement, movement, was an individual of exemplary character and extraordinary self-control. This was especially true with regard to the *middah*, character trait, of *kaas*, anger. He was wont to say, “Almost all infractions that occur between man and his fellow man are the result of some form of anger.” (A person who is overly demanding and refuses to acquiesce, to ameliorate an indignity that occurred.) *Rav Yisrael* was by nature an exacting person with a fiery personality, who, through self-control, was able to expunge from within himself any taint of dissatisfaction with any grievance against him. He overlooked and smoothed over any indignity that came his way. If someone acted callously and offended him, he let it slide and would go out of his way to perform a favor for the one who had acted rudely to him. Nonetheless, at times he acted strongly, never allowing for the honor of Torah or its disseminators to be impugned. Even when he manifested anger, it was merely in order to prove a point. He would refer to this as “facial” anger, not “emotional” anger. In other words, it was all for show. One time, however, *Rav Yisrael* “became” angry. **In 1859, the cholera plague broke out** with a vengeance, devastating Vilna and its surrounding towns. It claimed the lives of many of our brothers and sisters, not discriminating against age or economic background. *Rav Yisrael* organized healthcare and maintenance programs that virtually saved thousands of lives. He himself established a hospital with 1500 beds to serve the needs of the ill. He influenced the physicians to settle for a fee of “zero” for their services. He enlisted the assistance of his students, who traveled from town to town at great risk to their own lives, to ferret out any suspected cases of cholera in order to bring the patient to Vilna to the hospital. These young men, under the specific direction and encouragement of *Rav Yisrael*, transformed *Shabbos* into *chol*, weekday, as stated in *Shulchan Aruch*. (*Orach Chaim* 328 – *Pikuach nefesh docheh Shabbos*. The *Shabbos* prohibitions are set aside in deference to human life.) One Friday night, the grandson of one of Vilna's most distinguished families took ill. His fever spiked, and his future appeared be ominous at best. He was a very sick child. *Rav Yisrael*'s students worked through the night, chopping wood for fire to heat up water, bringing medicine and anything else that would save the child. Hashem listened to the accompanying prayers, and their efforts proved successful, to the point that the child pulled through. A few days passed, and the grandfather visited *Rav Yisrael*'s *Kollel* to pay his gratitude to the *Kollel* fellows who had labored tirelessly and with utmost devotion to save his grandson. All would have been well had he said, “thank you,” and left. Sadly, he felt he must say his piece. He had a problem with the *chillul Shabbos*, blatant desecration of *Shabbos*, that the *Kollel* members had done.

He felt that it was too much. [The complaints always seem to come after the fact.] *Rav Yisrael* was concerned lest his students weaken their commitment to saving lives. He acted out of character and declared, “You are going to teach me what is permitted [concerning *Shabbos*] and what is prohibited? I arranged for these special young men to leave their homes and dedicate themselves to saving lives. I guaranteed their families that the contagious nature of this plague would not affect them. [He obviously prayed for their continued health.] Hashem listened to me, and we were able to save thousands without one of our students becoming ill. Can you make such a claim?” When the grandfather heard this, he realized that he had hurt the feelings of the *gadol ha'dor*, preeminent leader of the generation. He immediately sat down on the floor (which is what one who is excommunicated does, much like a mourner) and begged *Rav Yisrael*’s forgiveness for his insolence. *Rav Yisrael*, of course, forgave the man, but, for the rest of *Rav Yisrael*’s life, he was pained over the fact that once in his life he was compelled to employ anger.

עלילוי נשימת הרב היל ב"ר ישעיהו אליהו ז"ל ברכה נאלהע בת שלמה הכהן ז"ה ר' סוף רפאל ז"ה י"ר י"ה
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Weekly Parsha Emor Rabbi Wein's Weekly Blog

This week's Torah reading begins with a rather detailed instruction sheet for the children of Aaron, the priests of Israel. The Torah describes for us the limitations that were placed upon them in order to guarantee that their service would be in purity and in holiness. Aspects of this instruction are still enforced today. Those who are of the priestly clan observe them rigidly even if, in other matters, they may not be that strict.

I had an experience with this regarding a certain leading official in the Jewish Agency about 30 years ago. I knew the man very well and he was a person of honor and integrity, but he was an old time socialist and was not observant in any traditional sense of the word. I happened to be in Israel when another leading person in the educational department of the Jewish Agency passed away and the family asked me to say a few words at the funeral.

This man accompanied me to the funeral chapel, but as I was going to mount the steps, he said, “This is as far as I’m going because I am a priest, a Kohen, and I don’t go to funerals.” I looked at him somewhat quizzically because there were so many other violations of tradition that I had observed in him, but even so I was greatly impressed. And he said to me, “Don’t be so surprised; for thousands of years my family are Kohanim and I’m not going to give that up. That is a heritage that I cannot forgo.” So, that is the first part of the Torah reading.

The second part of the Torah reading, which also occupies a great deal of the subject matter of the entire portion, is a recounting of the calendar. It is an enumeration of the holidays, the special days of the Jewish calendar throughout the year. At first glance, one would think that these two sections of the same Torah reading really have no intrinsic connection one with the other. They deal with far different subjects and have a different tone and mood to their words. But again, I feel that that is only a superficial view. Upon deeper examination we will see a common thread that runs thru not only these two subjects but thru all subjects in the Torah as well.

The Torah represents for us constancy. It establishes a regular rhythm in our life. It is why we have so many commandments that we can, and should, fulfill day in and day out under all circumstances and conditions. It is this very constancy, the repetitiveness that the Torah imposes upon us that builds within us the holiness of spirit and is the strength of our tradition. The fact is it is not a one-day-a-week or three-days-a-year holiday for the Jewish people, but that every day counts and has its importance. Daily, one is obligated to do the will of one’s creator. All of this gives a rhythm to our lives, makes life meaningful, with a specific direction for the time that we are here on earth.

The holidays themselves are the rhythm of the Jewish calendar year. We just finished Pesach and we are coming to Shavuot and then after Shavuot there comes the period of mourning, then after that the High Holy days, the holiday of Sukkot, then Hanukkah, et cetera. It is that rhythm of life that invests every holiday and allows the holiday to live within us even when its days have passed. Essentially, every day is Pesach and every day is Shavuot, and every day can be Yom Ha-Kippurim. And this is the constancy regarding the laws for the priests as well, that every day they are reminded who they are. Every day they are bound by the restrictions, discipline and nobility that the Torah ordained for them.

So, that is the thread of consistency that binds all these disparate subjects together. The Torah preaches consistency, regularity, habitual behavior, and the idea that life is one rhythm, like a river flowing, not to be segmented into different emotional waves depending upon one’s mood and upon external conditions. Shabbat Shalom. Rabbi Berel Wein.

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subject: Rabbi Riskin on the Weekly Torah Portion

Shabbat Shalom: Emor (Leviticus 21:1-24:23) By Rabbi Shlomo Riskin
Efrat, Israel – “And I shall be sanctified in the midst of the children of Israel” (Lev. 22:32).

The portion of Emor opens with a strange commandment to the kohanim-priests of Israel: “And the Lord said to Moses, ‘Say to the priests children of Aaron, and tell them: “Do not defile yourselves by contact with the dead of the nation.”’” (Leviticus 21:1). The Bible then lists the exceptions to this rule. A Kohen may defile himself only for the burial of his wife, his mother, his father, his son, his daughter, his brother and his unmarried sister. Otherwise our Priest-teachers are forbidden contact with the dead.

In contrast, one of the most important functions of the Christians clergy is administering “last rites,” and properly burying the dead. Clearly the Torah is teaching that Judaism is not chiefly concerned with death and the hereafter; rather, it is principally engaged with life in the here-and-now. Our major religious imperative is not how to ease the transition from this world to the next, but how to improve and repair our own society. But there seems to be an inconsistency; our very same portion goes on to command (as quoted above): “You shall not desecrate the name of My holiness; I shall be sanctified in the midst of the children of Israel” (Lev. 22:32). And herein lies the mitzvah of “Kiddush HaShem,” explain our Talmudic Sages, the necessity of sacrificing one’s life—sanctifying the name of God—for the sake of the commandments of the Bible. Jews must give up their lives rather than transgress any of the three major prohibitions of murder, sexual immorality or adultery; and, in times of persecution, Jews must die rather than publicly transgress even the simplest or most “minor” of Jewish laws, even a Jewish custom involving our shoelaces (B.T. Sanhedrin 74a,b). Our Talmudic Sages insist, however, that when Jews are not being persecuted, it is forbidden for Jews to forfeit their lives in order not to desecrate Shabbat; for example, if an individual feels chest pains Shabbat morning, he must be driven to the nearest hospital! It is better that he desecrate one Shabbat and remain alive to keep many Shabbatot.

But then, if life is so precious, why command martyrdom at all? And the sad truth is that our history is tear stained and blood soaked with many sacred martyrs who gave up their lives in sanctification of the Divine Name, during the Spanish Inquisition, to cite but one example, in the late 15th and early 16th Century, when Jews were forced to kiss the cross of crucifixion or die!

The answer lies in the very juxtaposition of the law of priestly defilement emphasizing the importance of life, and the law of martyrdom enjoining death, within our same Biblical portion. Yes, preservation of life is crucial and this world is the focus of the Jewish concern—but not life merely for the sake of existing. Living, and not merely existing, means devoting one’s life to ideals and values that are more important than any individual life. We participate in eternity by dedicating our lives to the eternal values that will eventually repair the world and establish a more perfect society – in this world. As the late Martin Luther King said it. A person whose life is not dedicated to values for which he would give up his life is not worthy of living!

Hence we must value and elevate life, but always within the perspective of those principles which are greater than our redemption. Yes, “live by these [My laws],” but live the kind of life which will teach the highest purposes of life!

But how can we justify martyrdom, even if only during periods of persecution, for the sake of a Jewish custom regarding our shoelaces? What can there possibly be about a shoelace which strikes at the heart and essence of our Jewish mission? The Talmudic

Commentaries of the French and German Sages of the 11th and 12th centuries, when many Jews were martyred by the Crusaders, suggest that the general accepted clothing etiquette in Rome and its numerous colonies during the second century of the Common Era was to wear white shoelaces. Jews, however, wore black shoelaces, as a memorial to the loss of our Holy Temple, Holy City of Peace, Jerusalem, and our Jewish national sovereignty. When Gentiles in times of persecution attempted to force Jews to wear white shoelaces—and thereby force the Jewish community to cease mourning for the loss of our national homeland—the Jew must respond with martyrdom (B.T. Sanhedrin 74b, Tosafot ad loc.).

My revered teacher Rav Joseph B. Solovetchik added a crucial point: There are many Jewish laws, decrees and customs which have developed from biblical times to the present, which Jews themselves do not always realize are truly vital for our national and religious preservation. Our Gentile enemies, however² always do, because they—wishing to persecute and destroy us—strike at the jugular. Hence whatever they insist that we abandon, we must maintain even at the price of our lives! From this perspective, it becomes easier to understand why anti-Semitism expresses itself in unfair attacks on the free and democratic State of Israel, condemning us while championing the cause of our terrorist enemies; we must focus on how crucial and vital the State of Israel is for Jewish survival today.

The memorials of Holocaust Remembrance Day and Remembrance Day for the Fallen of Israel's Wars quickly followed by Independence Day and Jerusalem Day must remind us that Israel is not merely a destination but is our destiny. Israel is not only the place of our survival, but it is the heart of our mission for world salvation, from whence the word of God—a God of life, love and peace—will spread to all of humanity. Shabbat Shalom!

[Rabbi Nahum Eliezer Rabinovitch, a native of Montreal, an Israeli posek and among the leader of National Religious Jews in Israel, head of Yeshivat Birkat Moshe in Ma'ale Adumim, passed away Tuesday night at 92.]

https://www.jewishideas.org/article/haver-ha-ir-model-rabbinic-leadership#_edn27

Haver Ha-Ir: A Model of Rabbinic Leadership

Rabbi Dr. Marc D. Angel

Among the titles that rabbinic literature ascribes to Torah scholars is Haver Ha-Ir. This phrase denotes someone of great learning, integrity and commitment to the welfare of the community.^[1] Rabbi Benzion Uziel noted: "The rabbi of a community is called by our Sages Haver Ir because he tends to the needs of the public and gathers them for prayer and Torah study."^[2]

The Haver Ha-Ir model of rabbinic leadership deserves careful attention. The rabbi is literally to be a "friend" of the city, a person who is engaged in people's lives, who strives to make society a better place. He is to feel personal responsibility for the spiritual and material wellbeing of the community. The Haver Ha-Ir is not an aloof scholar nor an otherworldly mystic, but is with the people and for the people. We may explore the Haver Ha-Ir model by considering the teachings of four rabbinic figures of the modern period: Rabbi Benzion Uziel (1880–1953); Rabbi Joseph B. Soloveitchik (1903–1993); Rabbi Haim David Halevy (1924–1998); and Rabbi Nahum Rabinovitch (1928–).

....

Rabbi Nahum Rabinovitch: Shutafut

Rabbi Nahum Rabinovitch has served as Rosh Yeshiva of Yeshivat Birkat Moshe in Maale Adumim for many years. A respected posek and thinker, his teachings provide important insight into the role of a Haver Ha-Ir.

Rabbi Rabinovitch draws on the halakhic idea that members of a community are in a partnership relationship. They each share equally in rights and obligations. Since societies include members with different views, the notion of shutafut, partnership, is very important. Instead of each individual or group struggling in an adversarial manner against those with different opinions, all members of society should recognize that they are partners in the same venture. In spite of differences, they need to find ways of working together for the betterment of society as a whole.

In order to reach a practical agreement and cooperation among various groups of society, it is necessary to open doors of genuine dialogue among these groups.

Dialogue among the various groups in society will enable them to overcome the deep rifts and conflicts that exist and that are growing.^[27]

Rabbi Rabinovitch pointed out that the religiously observant community had a responsibility to society as a whole, not merely to their own religious enclaves. Since the religious, along with all other citizens, are partners with equal rights and obligations, they need to be concerned with issues beyond their own neighborhoods. For example, since the Torah was given to all Jews, it is incumbent upon the religious education leaders to recognize their responsibility to the entire public. They should work in harmony with the general education system in order to meet the needs of all students, not only the students in the religious school system. They need to work for the inclusion of Torah values, without diminishing the need for students to study

science and technology and other subjects that are essential for the social and economic life of the nation.

We must create religious schools not only for children [from religious families] but also for children whose parents want them to excel in computers, mathematics, vocations and other fields. In these schools children will also learn Torah.... Religious education can draw to itself a large portion of children in Israel, if only it would know how to approach the various groupings of society.^[28]

As another example of how the religious community should be working in partnership with other segments of society, Rabbi Rabinovitch points to economic issues. All society is impacted negatively by rampant inflation. Why then are the religious parties not front and center in dealing with this problem? Shouldn't rabbis throughout the land be preaching and teaching about the ills of inflation, the sufferings of the poor, and so forth? Why should economic issues be relegated to the domain of the "secular" community, when this is an area that impacts on society as a whole?^[29]

Another striking example: seat belts. Many Israelis are killed or injured in automobile accidents each year. Some years ago, a suggestion was made to make wearing seat belts a legal requirement. This would save lives and reduce injuries. Yet, before a seat belt law was enacted in Israel, there were delays so that studies could be made to determine the effectiveness of seat belts. Yet, such studies had already been made in other countries and the evidence was clear that seat belts are an important safety feature. Why was so much time lost before enacting the law in Israel? Why wasn't this issue high among the priorities of the religious community? "The time has come for us to recognize that confronting such issues is a moral and religious obligation, and we must be the acute prodders in confronting situations which involve safety to life."^[30] Rabbi Rabinovitch notes that the light of Torah cannot be revealed or shown as long as Torah manifests itself as the Torah of a particular group, but only when the Torah is the Torah for all society. The challenge at the door of the sages of Torah is to demonstrate how great is the power of Torah for arranging the life of the community at large....We have the genuine opportunity to spread Torah among large segments of the Israeli public, and ultimately to almost all the residents of the State, if only we can succeed to break the sectarian or religious party muzzle. This will not be an easy task, and there are those on all sides who wish to protect their narrow interests and who strive to strengthen those muzzles. Nevertheless, we must undertake this task.^[31]

For Rabbi Rabinovitch, the principle of shutafut is at the heart of creating a vibrant and healthy society. Each member of society needs to feel a sense of partnership with all other members of society. Breaking into small self-contained "interest groups" undermines the general harmony of society.

The Haver Ha-Ir model of leadership entails a grand religious vision, courage, respect

and a sense of partnership with all members of society. The rabbi, as an exemplar of this model of leadership, must strive not merely to study and teach Torah, but to live Torah.

[27] Nahum Rabinovitch, *Mesilot Bilvavam* (Maale Adumim: Maaliyot, 5775), 372.

[28] Ibid., p. 393. [29] Ibid., p. 396. [30] Ibid., p. 397. [31] Ibid., p. 400.

The "Nones" and Us: Thoughts for Parashat Emor

Angel for Shabbat, 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.

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By: Rabbi Marc D. Angel

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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 Shtei 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 Shtei 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 Shtei 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 Shtei 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 Shtei 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 Shtei Ha-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, Shtei 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 Shtei 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 Shtei 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

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 Moshe 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 HA'KIPPURIM

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 area 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 Hilkhot 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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Shiurim in Chumash & Navi by Menachem Leibtag

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 MUSAFA 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 looks 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 - mitzvah 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 - mitzvah 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 "shetei 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 I'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: "ayleh 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 "ayleh 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 "ayleh 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 Shetei 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 iy'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 KEDUSHAH - the theme of Sefer Vayikra. We set aside special times, and infuse them with special KEDUSHAH 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 you 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'keshet 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!