

# Toras Aish

## Thoughts From Across the Torah Spectrum

**CHIEF RABBI LORD JONATHAN SACKS**

### Covenant & Conversation

**O**ur parsha begins with a restriction on the people for whom a cohen may become tamei, a word usually translated as "defiled, impure, ceremonially unclean." A priest may not touch or be under the same roof as a dead body. He must remain aloof from close contact with the dead, with the exception of a close relative, defined in our parsha as a wife, a mother or father, son or daughter, brother or unmarried sister. The law for the cohen gadol, High Priest, is stricter still. He may not allow himself to become ceremonially unclean even for a close relative, though both he and an ordinary priest may do so for a mitzvah, that is, one who has no one else to attend to his funeral. Here the basic requirement of human dignity overrides the priestly imperative of purity.

These laws, together with many others in Vayikra and Bemidbar—especially the rite of the Red Heifer, used to cleanse those who had come into contact with the dead—are hard for us to understand nowadays. They already were in the days of the sages. Rabban Yohanan ben Zakkai is famous for saying to his students, "It is not that death defiles nor that the waters [of the Red Heifer] purify. Rather, G-d says, I have ordained a statute and issued a decree, and you have no permission to transgress it." The implication seems to be that the rules have no logic. They are simply Divine commands.

They are indeed perplexing. Death defiles. But so does childbirth (Lev. 12). The strange cluster of phenomena known as tsaraat, usually translated as leprosy, coincides with no known illness since it is a condition that can affect not only a person but also garments and the walls of a house (Lev. 13-14). We know of no medical condition to which this corresponds.

Then, in our parsha, there is the exclusion from service in the Sanctuary of a cohen who had a physical blemish—someone who was blind or lame, had a deformed nose or misshapen limb, a crippled leg or hand, a hunchback or a dwarf (Lev. 21:16-21). Why so? Such an exclusion seems to fly in the face of the

principle that "The Lord does not look at the things people look at. People look at the outward appearance, but the Lord looks at the heart" (1 Sam. 16:7). Why should outward appearance affect whether you may or may not serve as a priest in the house of G-d?

Yet these decrees do have an underlying logic. To understand them we have first to understand the concept of the holy.

G-d is beyond space and time, yet G-d created space and time as well as the physical entities that occupy space and time. G-d is therefore "concealed." The Hebrew word for universe, olam, comes from the same Hebrew root as ne'elam, "hidden." As the mystics put it: creation involved tzimtzum, divine self-effacement, for without it neither the universe nor we could exist. At every point, the infinite would obliterate the finite.

Yet if G-d was completely and permanently hidden from the physical world, it would be as if He were absent. From a human perspective there would be no difference between an unknowable G-d and a non-existent G-d. Therefore G-d established the holy as the point at which the Eternal enters time and the Infinite enters space. Holy time is Shabbat. Holy space was the Tabernacle, and later, the Temple.

G-d's eternity stands in the sharpest possible contrast to our mortality. All that lives will one day die. All that is physical will one day erode and cease to be. Even the sun, and the universe itself, will eventually become extinct. Hence the extreme delicacy and danger of the Tabernacle or Temple, the point at which That-which-is-beyond-time-and-space enters time and space. Like matter and anti-matter, the combination of the purely spiritual and the unmistakably physical is explosive and must be guarded against. Just as a highly sensitive experiment has to be conducted without the slightest contamination, so the holy space had to be kept free of conditions that bespoke mortality.

Tumah should therefore not be thought of as "defilement," as if there were something wrong or sinful about it. Tumah is about mortality. Death bespeaks mortality, but so too does birth. A skin disease like tsaraat makes us vividly aware of the body. So does an unusual physical attribute like a misshapen limb. Even mould on a garment or the wall of a house is a symptom of physical decay. There is nothing wrong about any of these things but they focus our attention on the physical and are therefore incompatible with the holy space of the Tabernacle, dedicated to the

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Mr. & Mrs. Itzy Weisberg  
in memory of  
דוד יצחק בן רפאל ז"ל

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presence of the non-physical, the Eternal Infinite that never dies or decays.

There is a graphic example of this at the beginning of the book of Job. In a series of blows, Job loses everything: his flocks, his herds, his children. Yet his faith remains intact. Satan then proposes subjecting Job to an even greater trial, covering his body with sores (Job 1-2). The logic of this seems absurd. How can a skin disease be a greater trial of faith than losing your children? It isn't. But what the book is saying is that when your body is afflicted, it can be hard, even impossible, to focus on spirituality. This has nothing to do with ultimate truth and everything to do with the human mind. As Maimonides said, you cannot give your mind to meditating on truth when you are hungry or thirsty, homeless or sick (Guide for the Perplexed 3:27).

The biblical scholar James Kugel recently published a book, *In the Valley of the Shadow*, about his experience of cancer. Told by the doctors that, in all probability, he had no more than two years of life left (thankfully, he was in fact cured), he describes the experience of suddenly learning of the imminence of death. He says, "the background music stopped." By "background music" he meant the sense of being part of the flow of life. We all know we will one day die, but for the most part we feel part of life and of time that will go on for ever (Plato famously described time as a moving image of eternity). It is consciousness of death that detaches us from this sense, separating us from the rest of life as if by a screen.

Kugel also writes, "Most people, when they see someone ravaged by chemotherapy, just tend to keep their distance." He quotes Psalm 38:12, "My friends and companions stand back at the sight of my affliction; even those closest to me keep their distance." Although the physical reactions to chemotherapy are quite different from a skin disease or a bodily abnormality, they tend to generate the same feeling in others, part of which has to do with the thought "This could happen to me." They remind us of the "thousand natural shocks that flesh is heir to."

This is the logic-if logic is the right word-of Tumah. It has nothing to do with rationality and everything to do with emotion (Recall Pascal's remark that "the heart has its reasons of which reason knows nothing"). Tumah does not mean defilement. It means that which distracts from eternity and infinity by making

us forcibly aware of mortality, of the fact that we are physical beings in a physical world.

What the Tabernacle represented in space and Shabbat in time was quite radical. It was not rare in the ancient world, nor in some religions today, to believe that here on earth everything is mortal. Only in Heaven or the afterlife will we encounter immortality. Hence many religions in both East and West have been other-worldly. In Judaism holiness exists within this world, despite the fact that it is bounded by space and time. But holiness, like anti-matter, must be carefully insulated. Hence the stringency of the laws of Shabbat on the one hand, the Temple and its priesthood on the other.

The holy is the point at which heaven and earth meet, where, by intense focus and a complete absence of earthly concerns, we open up space and time to the sensed presence of G-d who is beyond space and time. It is an intimation of eternity in the midst of life, allowing us at our holiest moments to feel part of something that does not die. The holy is the space within which we redeem our existence from mere contingency and know that we are held within the "everlasting arms" (Deut. 33:27) of G-d. © 2012 Chief Rabbi Lord J. Sacks and torah.org

**RABBI BEREL WEIN**

## Wein Online

**W**e can all agree that the priestly family of Aharon has always had a special rank and position within the Jewish people. Having been chosen to represent G-d to the Jewish people and the Jewish people to G-d, so to speak, they had a decisive role of influence within Jewish life. Because of this the Torah held them to a higher standard of pedigree and behavior than the rest of the Jewish people.

The prophet taught us that the priest was to resemble an angel of G-d in his knowledge and observance of Torah commandments and values. Thus the special laws for the priests regarding marriage, divorce and pedigree that appear in this week's were also intended to influence the rest of the Jewish people even though they, not being from the family of Aharon, were not bound by them.

The values of marriage, probity in personal relationships, pedigree and family were all indirectly strengthened throughout the Jewish nation by the special laws that were given to the priestly family. The priest was always meant to serve as an example, a role model for all of Israel. In essence this was his true spiritual role while his officiating at the Temple services was his day job, so to speak. We can also understand why the individual priest spent relatively little time at the Temple throughout the year but was rather occupied as the teacher of other Jews, through actual educational methodology and, just as importantly, by personal example.

During both First and Second Temple times the priests were the pivotal force in Jewish life, perhaps even more so than the kings and rulers of the nation. The priestly clan saved the Jewish people from national and moral destruction a number of times. Yet, at other times they were the catalyst for the people's abandonment of Torah and Jewish tradition.

The Talmud lists for us the names of families from Second Temple times who were to be eternally remembered positively because of their Torah true behavior. And the names of those families of priests who were to be remembered negatively, due to their unseemly practices and behavior, were also recorded. Many of the laws and duties regarding the priests remained valid and in force even after the destruction of the Second Temple.

The Talmud ordained that the priests were to continue to receive special honors and recognition from the Jewish people. The priestly blessings became the focal point of the prayer services and the honors due the priest were constantly strengthened in the long night of our exile. The priest was seen as our living personal connection to our past Temple glories and to our future redemption.

In our current world there are a number of study groups throughout the Jewish world, especially here in Israel, which concentrate upon the study of the laws and procedures of the priestly duties vis-a-vis the Temple services. It is no wonder therefore that the priests of Israel are proudly zealous in preserving their lineage and the special place that they occupy in Jewish life © 2012 Rabbi Berel Wein - Jewish historian, author and international lecturer offers a complete selection of CDs, audio tapes, video tapes, DVDs, and books on Jewish history at [www.rabbiwein.com](http://www.rabbiwein.com). For more information on these and other products visit [www.rabbiwein.com](http://www.rabbiwein.com)

#### **RABBI SHLOMO RISKIN**

## **Shabbat Shalom**

“On the fifteenth day of this month there shall be the festival of matzot for the Lord; for seven days shall you eat matzot.” (Leviticus 23:7,8)

Over the last few weeks, Israel has been through its cycle of commemorative days, taking us through the roller-coaster of emotions as we mourn the victims of the Holocaust and those who died in Israel's wars as well as celebrating the establishment of the State of Israel. Throughout this period, we have also been thinking about the latest threats of genocide against the Jewish people and at the commemorative ceremonies, our Prime Minister spoke passionately about the Iranian threat. With the possibility of some sort of attack on Iran in everyone's minds, our question is how should we relate to those who wish to destroy the Jewish people?

As I visited educational institutions teaching about the significance of Yom Hashoah, I couldn't help

but feel a certain satisfaction and even joy despite the deep dark clouds from Auschwitz and Treblinka. I kept hearing in my own mind the verse, "In the destruction of the wicked there is exultation" (Proverbs 11:10). Is revenge a legitimate Jewish emotion, especially in light of the prohibition against nekama- vengeance (Leviticus 19:18)?

Our portion of Emor lists the festivals. As you know, unlike the Festival of Sukkot wherein Hallel (Psalms of Praise) is recited every day, on Passover only "half Hallel" is recited during the last six days out of respect for the Egyptians who died during the Exodus. In fact, our Rabbinic Sages teach us that when the Egyptians were being drowned in the Reed Sea, the Almighty stopped the angels from singing praises. "The work of My hands is drowning in the sea, and you are singing songs of praise?!" And did we not learn in the name of Shmuel HaKatan, "You shall not rejoice at the fall of your enemies"?

When the Nazis marched into the small Polish town of Boyan, they took out the three Jewish leaders - the Rebbe, the Dayan (Judge) and the Parnas - and forced them to dig their own graves. Before being shot, the Rebbe asked to recite a very short prayer: "Blessed art Thou Lord our G-d King of the Universe who has not created me a Gentile." The Nazi murderers burst out laughing. "Foolish Jewish pig!" they screamed. "Do you not realize that if only you were a gentile, you could continue to live?" The Rebbe looked directly into the eyes of his evil executioner: "When the world is divided between those who murder innocent people and innocent people who are being murdered, I would rather be among the murdered than among those doing the murdering! Hear O Israel, the Lord is our G-d, the Lord is One."

It is our good fortune that today we have a third option, one which did not exist for the Rebbe of Boyan. We now have the possibility of defending ourselves against those who wish to destroy innocent lives. How well do I remember a talk which I gave 33 years ago to a group of nine year olds on Kibbutz Ein Tzurim. It was on Tisha B'Av, and I was trying to explain to them the horrors of the Holocaust. As I described a kinder-action when hundreds of children were rounded up for Auschwitz, one young boy raised his hand: "But Rabbi, where was Tzahal, the Israeli Army?" I kissed him on the forehead, joyous in the knowledge that a new generation was growing up without any knowledge of life before the Israel Defense Forces.

One cannot love Good without despising Evil; those who are silent in the face of evil are ultimately collaborators with the evil that is being perpetrated. It is to this end, that we are commanded to "destroy the evil within our midst" and to "blot out the memory of Amalek." It is fascinating that the verse does not command us to blot out Amalek but rather the memory of Amalek. I would maintain that the best way to do this would be to convert Amalek - at least to acceptance of

the Seven Noahide Laws of Morality. The Talmud (B.T. Sanhedrin 99) suggests that Timna, the mistress of Elifaz, son of Esau, wished to convert to Judaism, but was rejected by Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. Disappointed, she went to live with Elifaz, and the child they bore together was Amalek (Genesis 36: 12). The Talmudic lesson derived from this is that she should have been accepted. There is even a Talmudic tradition that the descendants of Amalek taught Torah in Bnei Brak!

If conversion is impossible, then evil must be destroyed. And one has a right to rejoice when evil individuals - ready to act against innocent people are prevented from doing so. Remember that G-d chides the angels for singing songs of praise at the Reed Sea - the angels, who could not have been harmed by the Egyptians, but not the Israelites. As we all know, the Israelites did sing at the Reed Sea. © 2012 *Ohr Torah Institutions & Rabbi S. Riskin*

#### **RABBI DOV KRAMER**

## **Taking a Closer Look**

**P**arashas Emor begins with the prohibition against Kohanim coming in contact with a corpse (Vayikra 21:1). The Torah then lists the exceptions to this law, those relatives for whom mourning is required (see Mo'eid Katan 20b), and therefore for whom Kohanim can/must become tamay (ritually impure). There are six relatives listed (father, mother, son, daughter, brother and unmarried sister), but there is no explicit mention of his wife. Nevertheless, Chazal, our sages, of blessed memory (Toras Kohanim, see Rashi on 21:2), tell us that the words "except for his relative who is close to him" is not an introductory clause stated before the relatives he can/must become tamay for are listed, but an expression that refers to his wife. Therefore, there are really seven relatives for whom mourning is mandatory, and for whom the Kohain can/must become tamay.

The wording of the Midrash that teaches us this seems a bit awkward; "his 'sh'eir' (the word used for relative in the would-be introductory clause) can only mean his wife." As Mizrachi points out, there are numerous instances where it refers to a relative other than a spouse (e.g. Vayikra 18:12-13, 25:49, Bamidbar 27:11). Nevertheless, if there is an additional relative being added to the list of those close enough to mandate mourning, it would have to be his spouse. The verse following the list (21:4) supports this as well; "a husband (who is a Kohain) shall not become tamay within his people to profane him." This is understood to mean that if his marriage was not permitted for a Kohain, he cannot become tamay for her (see Rashi). Obviously, if a Kohain cannot become tamay for his wife even from a permissible marriage, there is no need to clarify that under some circumstances he cannot become tamay for her; if the "sh'eir" expression does

not refer to his wife, then he could not become tamay for her whether the marriage was allowed or not. This does not prove, however, that he is usually allowed to become tamay for his wife, as there are other ways to understand this verse (see Ramban). Either way, we are still left wondering why the Torah used an ambiguous expression to include his wife in the list of exempted relatives, rather than just saying so explicitly.

Rambam (Hilchos Aveilus 2:1, see also 2:7 and 3:1) does not include a wife in his initial list of exempted relatives, then adds that "from the words of the scribes," i.e. a post-biblical explanation, he may/must become tamay for his wife as well. This is even more problematic, as even though it explains why the Torah doesn't mention his wife explicitly (and why the rest of the list does not begin with "and," as his mother is actually the first relative mentioned), how could Chazal allow/mandate a Kohain to become tamay if the Torah (by not including his wife on the list) forbids him from doing so? Most commentators (e.g. Kesef Mishnah) refer to Rambam's introductory guidelines (Sefer HaMitzvos, 2nd Shoresh), where he uses the expression "from the words of the scribes" to also describe biblical commandments that weren't expressed explicitly. Since a wife is not mentioned explicitly, Rambam refers to her exemption as "words of our scribes" even though this was what the Torah's meant.

This approach is difficult, for several reasons (besides having to explain the use of an ambiguous term and the lack of a connecting "and" between the first relative-his wife-and the next one on the list-his mother). First of all, why would Rambam mention that mourning for a wife is a separate category if the only difference is whether it's explicitly in the verse? There is another category-relatives one should mourn for that are completely of rabbinic origin, and this is the category Rambam includes a spouse in! Additionally, when he discusses the Kohain's wife (2:7), besides using the term "from the words of the scribes" again, he describes the legal loophole used to allow/mandate a Kohain becoming tamay for her. While this "loophole" is necessary for a situation where the marriage itself was only valid rabbinically (so his ability to become tamay for her did not exist until this marriage became a halachic reality), it would not be necessary (in a regular marriage) if the Torah itself allows a Kohain to become tamay for his wife. Why did Rambam resort to the "legal loophole" to explain a Kohain's ability/requirement to become tamay for his wife if none was needed?

Radvaz (2:7) is among the commentators who say that Rambam meant that a Kohain can only become tamay for his wife m'd'rabanan (rabbinically), with the verse that Chazal say refers to his wife being an "asmachta" (a literary "hook" to hang rabbinic laws on). The issues this approach has to resolve include how the biblical prohibition against becoming tamay for a wife could be overturned, why the Torah needed an

introductory clause at all (if it didn't add another relative to the list of exclusions), and how Rambam could include (3:1) a Kohain becoming tamay for his wife in the same category of "makos" (lashes).

Rabbi Moshe Shamah ("Recalling the Covenant") discusses this issue, and I would like to build upon his suggestion that the change (over time) in the status of women affected whether it was appropriate for a Kohain to become tamay for his wife. There is no question that women are treated with much more respect now than they were just a century ago; it is not unreasonable to assume that their status has continually evolved/improved since biblical times.

S'fornu (21:4) is among those who say the prohibition against a Kohain becoming tamay is a function of his special status; his role (or at least how he's perceived) as a religious leader would be diminished if he were involved in taking care of the dead. Being involved in the burial of his close relatives, on the other hand, would not affect this, as taking care of their needs is an extension of the honor due him. If at the time the Torah was given (and we know Rambam was very conscious of how things would be perceived when this groundbreaking system of life and law was introduced, see his

Letter Regarding the Resurrection of the Dead, as well as his take on animal offerings in Moreh N'vuchim) the status of women was such that a Kohain becoming tamay even for his wife would diminish his prestige in the eyes of the masses, we can understand why the Torah couldn't explicitly permit it. When the status of women improved, and the husband-wife relationship improved with it (as evidenced by the disappearance of widespread polygamy and concubines), becoming tamay for his wife no longer impeded a Kohain's status; if anything, his relationship with his wife was now closer and stronger than with any of his other relatives, and there was now more of a need to take care of her burial than any their's.

Although the Torah was introduced at a specific time in history, it was designed to remain relevant throughout history. It applies today as much as it ever did, despite the changes the world has undergone since it was given thousands of years ago. It takes Divine Wisdom for a document to be relevant (and acceptable to society) when it was introduced and remain so for every subsequent generation-no matter how much civilization changes. I would suggest that the Torah dealt with this challenge by including a clause that applies to a society that wouldn't respect a Kohain who buries his wife and applies after it evolved to the point where it couldn't respect a Kohain who didn't take part in his wife's burial.

Initially, a Kohain could only become tamay for the six relatives mentioned explicitly. Even though no introductory clause was necessary for that "message," it was included because of the role it would eventually play. There could be no "and" before mentioning the

Kohain's mother, as, at this point in time, his mother was the first relative on the list. Chazal realized that the introductory clause was there, worded in a way that purposely referenced "the relative who is closest to him," because when mankind evolved to the point that "his wife is considered part of him" ("ishto k'gufo," see B'choros 35b), the Torah wanted the wife to be included in the list of exceptions. (As Toras Kohanim puts it, she was the only relative the Torah could have possibly meant to include by using the expression "relative who is closest to him.") The "legal loophole" may have been the way they explained the change, but the impetus for the change was knowing that this is what the Torah had in mind all along. © 2012 Rabbi D. Kramer

#### RABBI AVI WEISS

## Shabbat Forshpeis

**W**hen our oldest daughter Dena was wed to Mark, I found myself in deep thought. A dear friend came by and said, "Loosen up Avi. Enjoy it. You'll have time to think later."

This exchange helps to shed light on the mandate in this week's portion to count 49 days between Passover and Shavuot. (Leviticus 23:15) Sefer Ha-Hinukh asks why we begin the count from the second day and not the first day of Passover.

The way Jewish ritual approaches celebratory and tragic moments in life may reveal the answer. Consider the painful experience of death. Halakha insists the bereaved be able to become totally involved in the tragedy to the extent that family members are relieved from performing affirmative commandments between death and burial. Only after burial does the period of Shivah, of deep reflection set in.

Similarly, in moments of joy. When leaving Egypt, Am Yisrael was immersed in the euphoria of the Exodus. Only following that euphoria, which manifests itself through the Passover Seder, do we begin counting towards the receiving of the Torah-the event that gives meaning and purpose to the Exodus. Jewish law allows for the full experiencing of the event. Only then does it ask for separate distinct moments of evaluation.

My son Dov noted that there is psychological benefit to this principle. After all, when something of import occurs, we should be encouraged to feel deeply and wholly what is happening. We should literally be in the moment. Only afterwards, from a distance, can we step back and with clarity, contemplate the significance of the event and begin to put it in perspective.

Not coincidentally, this portion is read between Israel Independence Day and the anniversary of the liberation of Jerusalem. Some erroneously suggest these days should be de-emphasized as we are in the post - Zionist era. To the contrary. These days deserve greater focus as we are, in fact, in a new, even more challenging phase within the modern Zionist period. For sixty years we ecstatically celebrated the coming into

being of the State. Now begins the more reflective period of looking inward and defining what is the significance of the State to the Jewish people and the world at large.

Evaluating only after the event occurs is a lesson for all of us. And that's why we begin counting from the second day of Passover - so we can enjoy moments when they come and then afterwards take the time to reflect and anticipate. © 2012 Hebrew Institute of Riverdale & CJC-AMCHA. Rabbi Avi Weiss is Founder and Dean of Yeshivat Chovevei Torah, the Open Orthodox Rabbinical School, and Senior Rabbi of the Hebrew Institute of Riverdale.

### MACHON ZOMET

## Shabbat B'Shabbato

by Rabbi Mordechai Greenberg  
Rosh Yeshiva, Kerem B'Yavne

**“W**hen you come to the land... Let the land rest, Shabbat for G-d. For six years you will plant on your land... and the seventh year will be Shabbat for G-d." [Vayikra 25:2-4]. The sequence of the text is problematic. Did the land rest as soon as the nation arrived in Eretz Yisrael? Didn't the process begin with fourteen years of conquest of the land? And then, after the land was divided among the tribes, the people worked on the land for the first six years, and only then did the year of Shemita come.

In Likutei Torah, the author of the Tanya explains that the Torah teaches us that the entire human effort must be performed with the full awareness that the ultimate goal is the spiritual uplifting which results from the Shemita. And this can teach us a lesson about all material activities of man. Every deed must be performed for a holy purpose. And that is why the concept of Shemita appears first, as soon as the people entered the land, even though it would not take place until after six years of agricultural labor. The spirit of the Shemita should be present during all the initial years of labor.

In the same way, the Shabbat shines its light on all the weekdays of full activity. It is written, "The sages said, let all your deeds be performed in the name of heaven. This refers even to voluntary acts such as eating and drinking, walking, and sitting... They should all be performed as a way to serve the Creator" [Orach Chaim 231]. The source for this is in the Rambam: "Thus, one who follows this path is always serving G-d... Even when he sleeps, he does so in order that his mind and his body will rest, so that he will not become sick... In this way, the sleep itself is as a manner of service to G-d." [Hilchot Dei'ot 3].

It is said that one time Rabbi Shlomo Zalman Auerbach developed very strong headaches while he was preparing a lesson. The rabbi stopped studying and went to rest, while he told his wife that if somebody came looking for him she should reply that he was busy preparing the lesson. When his wife wanted to know

why he wanted her to tell a lie, he said that the sleep itself was part of the preparation.

The Talmud tells us that the early generations considered their Torah study as permanent and their labors as temporary, and therefore both the Torah and the labor prospered. However, the later generations considered their labor as permanent and their study as temporary, and neither one prospered in their hands. This seems to imply that a person should spend most of his time with Torah, and the remaining time making a living. However, Rav Kook explained that the concepts of "permanent" and "temporary" are not related to the amount of time spent but rather to the importance that a person attaches to the activity.

When the Torah stands at the center of a person's life, all of his material labors are also transformed into something that is holy. That is the reason that "both the Torah and the labor prospered." But if the labor is perceived as the main element, that is, the main objective of the labor is to increase a person's wealth his labor remains a material thing, without any mantle of sanctity. The conclusion is that even if a person spends many hours on making a living and a relatively short time studying Torah, it may still be true that his Torah has the status of "permanence" with respect to the "temporary" labor.

"The main trait of the concepts 'temporary' and 'permanent' do not depend on the time spent, as much as on the realization that what the person feels is his permanent occupation is the main effort that he makes, even if for practical purposes he does not spend much time doing it." [Rav Kook, Ein Ayah, Berachot 35].  
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### RABBI DOVID SIEGEL

## Haftorah

**T**his week's haftorah gives us a glimpse into the kohanim's status during Moshiach's times. The prophet Yechezkel begins by directing our attention to the specific regulations of the kohanim's garb. He then refers to their restriction from wine and shaving and mentions their prohibition from marrying certain women. This list seems to be, at first glance, a total repetition of the details of our parsha. Yet, a more careful analysis reveals to us something shocking about the elevated status of the ordinary kohain of Mashiach's times. His restrictions and regulations are similar to those of the Kohain Gadol mentioned in this week's parsha. This suggests that the ordinary kohain's spiritual status will be likened to that of the Kohain Gadol. Evidently, the Jewish people's status will be so elevated that the ordinary kohain will assume levels of sanctity tantamount to the most sanctified person of earlier times.

The prophet Yechezkel conveys this message by drawing our focus to the priestly garb during their service. It will be exclusively linen rather than the

customary complex woolen and golden material of earlier times. In addition, the kohanim will be forbidden to wear their garb outside the Bais Hamikdash thereby limiting all mundane association with the garb. Their hair length will be regulated and limited to that of the Kohain Gadol of earlier times- not too long, not too short. They will even be forbidden to marry widows thus limiting their marriage to virgins. (see comments of Radak, Abravenel and Malbim to these respective passages) All of these regulations run parallel lines with those of the earlier Kohain Gadol. In fact, some of them were previously prescribed for the Kohain Gadol during his elevated Yom Kippur service. We conclude from this that the daily Temple service of Mashiach's times will assume higher levels of devotion than ever and resemble, on some level, the Yom Kippur service of earlier generations. The earlier experience of the Kohain Gadol on the holiest of all days in the holiest of all places will eventually become part of the daily service of Mashiach's times!

In order to digest this overwhelming development let us study the inner workings of the Kohain Gadol. In this week's parsha, the Torah gives us the reason for the Kohain Gadol's elevated status. After listing all his specific regulations the Torah states "And he should not leave the Mikdash and not profane the sanctity of Hashem because the crown of Hashem is upon his head." (Vayikra 21:12) Sefer HaChinuch (in Mitzva 270) elaborates upon the concept of "the crown of Hashem". He cites the opinion of the Rambam (in Hilchos Klei Hamikdash 5:7) that the Kohain Gadol was confined to the Bais Hamikdash area throughout his entire day of service. In addition, Rambam teaches us that the Kohain Gadol was forbidden to leave the holy city of Yerushalayim during nightly hours. This produced an incredible focus on Hashem and His service yielding the supreme sanctity of the Kohain Gadol. Sefer HaChinuch profoundly states, "Although the Kohain Gadol was human he was designated to be Holy of Holies. His soul ranked amongst the angels constantly cleaving to Hashem thus detaching the Kohain Gadol from all mundane interests and concerns." (ad loc) Sefer HaChinuch understands the Kohain Gadol's elevated sanctity as a product of his total immersion in the service of Hashem. His surroundings of total sanctity together with his constant focus on Hashem and His service produced the holiest man on earth. His elevated life-style was restricted to one of total sanctity because his total interest and focus were devoted to purity and sanctity.

We can now appreciate the sanctity of the ordinary kohain of Mashiach's times and its message for us. First, a word about the general status of the Jewish people during that era. The prophet Yeshaya refers to this illustrious time in the following terms, "And the land will be filled with the knowledge of Hashem likened to the water that fills the sea." (Yeshaya 11:9) Rambam elaborates upon this and states, "And in this

time there will be no jealousy or quarreling.... the preoccupation of all will be 'to know Hashem'...the Jewish people will be great scholars who will understand Hashem to maximum human capacity." (Hilchos M'lochim 12:5) In essence, the entire Jewish nation will be absorbed in learning Hashem's truthful ways. Their total focus will be on Hashem's expression in every aspect of life thus revealing more and more of His unlimited goodness and knowledge. It stands to reason that if this will be the knowledge of the ordinary Jew, how much greater will be that of the kohain who is privileged to stand in the actual presence of Hashem! One cannot begin contemplating the ordinary kohain's daily experience with Hashem. His profound knowledge of Hashem together with his direct and constant association with Him will truly elevate him to the sanctity of "Holy of Holies". His awareness of Hashem's presence will therefore, in certain ways, become tantamount to that of the Kohain Gadol on the holiest day of the year. May we soon merit to witness and experience such elevated levels of sanctity, so sorely needed in our times. © 2012 Rabbi D. Siegel & torah.org

**RABBI YISROEL CINER**

## Parsha Insights

**T**his week we read the parsha of Emor. In last week's parsha the entire Bnei Yisroel {Children of Israel} were commanded to be holy. In this week's parsha, the kohanim {priests} who were all chosen to be the 'm'sharsay Hashem' {the servers of Hashem} are commanded to observe an additional level of purity.

"Hashem said to Moshe: Emor el hakohanim {Say to the kohanim} the sons of Aharon, v'amarta aleihem {and say to them}: To a dead person do not defile yourself. [21:1]" All kohanim, regardless of any service being performed in the Mishkan {Tabernacle}, are commanded to not come in contact with a dead person.

There is a redundancy in the passuk as Moshe seems to be told to "emor v'amarta"-say and then say again. Rashi quotes the Talmud [Yevamos 114A] which explains that this teaches us "I'hazhir gedolim ol k'tanim"-that the older people must warn (and educate) the younger people.

We know that this is the case in regard to the entire Torah-those who know more have an obligation to teach those who know less. If so, why is this concept stressed specifically over here by the special purity laws which pertain to the kohanim?

The Oznayim LeTorah offers a beautiful explanation which has very practical implications. We know that a child is influenced both by his parents/teachers and by his friends/environment. It is often unfortunate that the latter pair have a much stronger effect than the first pair do. Trying to educate a child to act in a specific way or to consider certain things to be important when others around him are not

acting in such a way and are treating those things with disregard is exceedingly difficult.

That is the predicament that the kohanim find themselves in. They have to teach their children to stay away from the things which cause ritual impurity. Their children's friends have no such concerns. They can play with reckless abandon, not worrying what they might come in contact with. The young kohanim however, have a different set of rules and standards that must be maintained. What is the solution? What can the parents do? "Emor v'amarta"-say and then say again! Put more and more effort into explaining and thereby educating your children. "Emor v'amarta"-say and then say again.

In Shoftim [13], Manoach, the father of Shimshon {Samson}, when faced with an even more difficult situation, was instructed to deal with it in a fascinating manner. An angel of Hashem appeared to the wife of Manoach and informed her that she would become pregnant and give birth to a son. She was told to abstain from any wine, any intoxicating beverages and from any food that a Nazir is not allowed to eat. When he would be born, no (hair-cutting) blade would be allowed to go upon his head. He would be a Nazir {Nazirite} from the womb.

She came and related to her husband, Manoach, all that had happened. He then prayed to Hashem, asking Him to send the angel again to instruct them as to what they should do. Hashem sent the angel who once again approached the woman when Manoach wasn't there. She quickly ran and summoned her husband, Manoach, who asked the angel what would be with the child. The angel answered: "All that I told the woman you shall adhere to." He then went on to repeat all of the specific instructions and then again commanded: "All that I commanded her you shall adhere to."

On the surface, this whole conversation seems very strange. Why did Manoach feel the need for the angel to return and repeat all of the instructions that had already been told to his wife?

I heard the following explanation in the name of Rav Shimon Shwab. Manoach was correctly troubled by what he had heard. How will it be possible to bring up this child to abstain from things from which I partake?! How can I teach him to do as I say and not as I do? He thus asked the angel what will be with the child.

What was the response he received? "All that I told the woman YOU shall adhere to." YOU have to keep it! You have to personally assume all of those restrictions for yourself. By doing that and setting a proper example, you'll be able to educate him to act in a way that none of his peers are acting.

I once heard an amusing but sad story. A teacher called a parent to inform him that his son in the first grade kept on stealing things. The father was shocked and asked the teacher what sort of things his son was taking. The teacher explained that he kept taking other children's pencils. At this point the father

was totally bewildered. "Why would he take pencils of all things?! We have plenty of pencils in the house! I bring home pencils from the office every day!" Like I said, amusing but sad. The example and the sincerity of the parents have an incredibly profound effect on a child. The Maggid Speaks tells of the Ridvaz (one of the leaders of his generation who published two classic commentaries on the Jerusalem Talmud) who began to cry as he waited for the prayers to begin in the shul {synagogue} on the day of his father's yahrtzeit {anniversary of his death}. A close friend approached him and asked why he was so upset considering the fact that his father had lived until the age of eighty and had died more than fifty years ago.

The Ridvaz explained: When I was a young boy, my father had hired the best mela'med {teacher} for me. He charged one ruble a month which was a large sum of money in those days, especially for my father who was very poor.

My father made a living building furnaces. One winter there was a shortage of cement and lime and my father couldn't meet the payments for my mela'med. Three months went by and he hadn't paid him. One day, I brought home a note from my teacher which said that if he didn't receive money by the next morning, he'd be unable to continue teaching me.

My parents were devastated. To them my Torah study meant everything and they felt that nothing should stand in its way. That evening at shul, my father overheard a wealthy man complain that the contractors who were building a house for his son couldn't get a furnace because of the shortages. He offered six ruble to anyone who would get him a furnace. In Russia, a furnace was vital as it was used for both cooking and heating.

When my father came home from shul he discussed the matter with my mother. They agreed that my father would take apart our furnace, brick by brick and rebuild it for the rich man. They would then have money for my mela'med.

My father did just that and received the promised six rubles. These he immediately gave me to pay my mela'med. "Tell the mela'med," he said proudly, "that three are back pay and the other three are for the next three months."

That winter was bitterly cold and we all froze and shivered in order that I could have the best mela'med and grow in Torah.

The Ridvaz took a breath and then continued. "This afternoon it was very cold and I was considering having a minyan {quorum for prayer} in my home. Then I decided that in honor of my father I should make the extra effort, brave the cold and go to shul. I was crying thinking about the self-sacrifice that my family had for my learning."

"Emor v'amarta"-say and then say again. Do as I do. The effects can last for generations. © 2012 Rabbi Y. Ciner & torah.org