

BS"D

To: Parsha@YahooGroups.com
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INTERNET PARSHA SHEET ON EMOR - 5762

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From: sefira@torah.org
Subject: Day 30/ 4 weeks and 2 days
Tonight, the evening of Friday, April 26, will be day 30, which is 4 weeks and 2 days of the omer.

From: RABBI YISSOCHER FRAND
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"RavFrاند" List - Rabbi Frاند on Parshas Emor -

Kohen Gadol In the Holy of Holies: High Potential versus High Risk
A regular Kohen [Priest] may not marry a divorcee. However, unlike a regular Kohen, a Kohen Gadol [High Priest] may not even marry a widow. A Kohen Gadol must marry a woman who has never before been married.

The Moshav Zekeinim al haTorah (a Biblical commentary from the authors of the Talmudic Tosfos commentary) suggests a reason for this restriction on the Kohen Gadol. Had the Kohen Gadol been allowed to marry a widow, we would have been afraid of the following scenario: Perhaps the Kohen would have his eyes on a married woman, who he really wanted to marry. When he went into the Holy of Holies on Yom Kippur to utter the explicit Name of G-d (Shem haMeforash -- which has supernatural powers capable even of killing people [Rashi Shmos 2:14]), he might have in mind the husband of the woman who he wants to marry -- and thereby cause his death. To avoid this potentially life-threatening situation, the Torah commands the Kohen Gadol to only marry a woman who was never previously married.

This reason is literally mind-boggling. Yom Kippur is the holiest day of the year. The location is the holiest spot on earth. The Kohen Gadol is going to utter from his mouth the holiest of syllables. And what are we afraid of? We are afraid that he might be thinking "I wish so-and-so would drop dead, so I can marry his wife!"

To make the matter even more astonishing, this interpretation is quoted in the Moshav Zekeinim al haTorah in the name of "HaChossid" -- the pious one. (Rav Bergman says this probably refers to the Rokeach.) This interpretation came from a person who was famous for his piety and holiness!

Rav Bergman writes that we learn from this Tosfos that there is no limit to the depths to which people can sink. This very person, who is ostensibly the holiest man in the Jewish nation, on the holiest day of the year, at the holiest place in the world, might have such evil and perverted thoughts. Such is the nature of the human being.

If this message is thoroughly depressing in terms of the wickedness of man's spirit, we need to contrast it with that of a different teaching of Chazal [our Sages].

The Medrash in Parshas Acharei Mos asks a question about the pasuk [verse] that describes the Kohen Gadol's entrance into the Holy of Holies. The pasuk says, "And no man shall be in the Tent of Meeting" [Vayikra 16:17]. The Midrash asks: "Was not the Kohen Gadol, himself, a man?" The Midrash quotes the opinion of Rabbi Avahu in the name of Rabbi Pinchas that when the Kohen Gadol entered the Holy of Holies he was not human, he was like a Heavenly Angel.

If the Kohen Gadol does everything properly, he transcends the level of humanity and rises to that of a Heavenly creature.

The first Medrash says that the Kohen Gadol can be thinking the most malevolent of thoughts when he enters the Holy of Holies. According to the second Medrash, the Torah testifies that a Kohen Gadol is capable of escaping all human limitations when he enters the Holy of Holies. How do we reconcile these two Medrashim?

The answer, Rav Bergman suggests, is the power of Torah and Mitzvos. As human beings, we are capable of the worst. There is no limit to the depths to which people can sink. Never think, "but we are speaking of civilized people". One only needs to read the Holocaust literature to understand that this is no argument. Human beings, without Torah and without Mitzvos and without Kedusha [Holiness] can think the worst of thoughts... _IN_ the Holy of Holies, _ON_ Yom Kippur. But by virtue of Torah and Mitzvos, a person can become elevated and transcend humanity. The Kohen Gadol can achieve such heights as well. This is a very, very, sobering thought.

With this idea, Rav Bergman relates a beautiful interpretation to a Talmudic passage. The Talmud [Shabbos 88b] says that when Moshe went up on Mt. Sinai to receive the Torah, the Angels tried to talk G-d out of giving it to him. They argued that the Torah was an inappropriate gift for humans. G-d instructed Moshe to answer the argument of the Angels. Moshe countered that the Torah could only be meant for human beings and not for the Angels because the Torah says "I am the L-rd who took you out of Egypt..." The angels were never in Egypt!

What, indeed, were the Angels thinking? They were aware of what is written in the Torah. They knew they had never been in Egypt.

Rav Bergman explains that the issue was not the historical fact that the Jews were taken out of Egypt, while the Angels were never taken out of Egypt. The issue was that the Jews needed the Torah because they had been in Egypt -- and while there, had sunk to the 49th level of depravity. They needed the Torah to raise themselves. They needed the Torah to keep themselves straight. The Angels, who were never in Egypt and had never experienced that spiritual depravity, do not need a Torah. They were created at a certain spiritual level and they maintain that level throughout their existence.

This was the basis of Moshe's argument: You do not need the Torah. We -- who despite being in the holiest of places can still have the least holy of thoughts -- need the Torah! The Angels agreed that Moshe was right. People need the Torah, so that they can potentially achieve the level of Angels.

Transcribed by David Twersky; Seattle, Washington twerskyd@aol.com Technical Assistance by Dovid Hoffman; Baltimore dhoffman@torah.org This dvar Torah was adapted from the hashkafa portion of Rabbi Yissocher Frand's Commuter Chavrusah Tapes on the weekly portion: Tape # 237, Sterilization: Is It Permitted?

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<http://www.tzemachdavid.org/thepracticaltorah/emor.shtml>

THE PRACTICAL TORAH
BY RABBI MICHAEL TAUBES

Parshas Emor: The Mitzvah of Chodosh

No definitive Halacha LeMa'aseh conclusions should be applied to practical situations based on any of these Shiurim.

The Torah tells us that on the second day of Pesach (the 16th of Nissan), a special offering had to be brought to Hashem consisting of the grain from the first harvest of that season (VaYikra 23:10-11). Since the Torah specifies (Ibid. Pasuk 10) that the amount of this grain brought was to be an Omer's worth, meaning, as the Torah indicates earlier (Shemos 16:36) one tenth of an Eiphah, the equivalent of about

two quarts, this offering was known simply as the Korban Omer. The Torah elsewhere (VaYikra 2:14) indicates, as interpreted by the Gemara in Menachos (68b) based on another Posuk (Shemos 9:31) that this first grain offering consisted specifically of barley; the barley was roasted and then ground into a kind of meal, as the Gemara earlier (Ibid. 66b) states. The Rambam (Hilchos Tamidin U'Musafin 7:11-12) clearly details each step of this Korban from the preparations for the harvesting of the barley through the actual offering.

The Torah then states (VaYikra 23:14) that until this Korban Omer is brought, it is forbidden for one to eat bread or grain products. The Mishnah in Menachos (70a) after specifying that this injunction applies to the Chamishas Minai Dagan, five species of grain, namely, wheat, barley, spelt, oats, and rye, explains that the prohibition is to eat any of these grains (or their derivatives) which had grown, or, more literally, took root, during the past year, since the Korban Omer was brought on the previous Pesach, until the current Korban Omer is brought. Any such grain which begins to take root after Pesach is called "Chodosh," meaning "new" by this Mishnah, and it is forbidden to eat Chodosh or products made from Chodosh until the Korban Omer is brought on the next Pesach. The Rambam (Hilchos Ma'achalos Asuros 10:4) and the Shulchan Aruch (Yoreh Deah 293:3) rule accordingly.

An earlier Mishnah in Menachos (68a) states that in the absence of the Beis HaMikdash, when no Korban Omer is brought at all, Chodosh becomes permissible to eat only following the day on which it would have been brought, that is, the 16th of Nissan. One may eat Chodosh, then, starting on the evening of the 17th of Nissan, and, based on the Gemara's conclusion (Amud b Ibid.) on the evening of the 18th of Nissan if one lives outside of Eretz Yisrael, where an extra day of Yom Tov is observed because of a doubt (at one time) as to the true calendar date. The Rambam (Ibid. Halacha 2) and the Shulchan Aruch (Ibid. Sif 1) again rule accordingly.

It should be noted that there is a dispute as to how long it takes for these grains to take root after they're planted. The Shach (Ibid. Sif Katan 2) quotes from the Terumas HaDeshen (Sheilos U'Teshuvos Terumas HaDeshen Siman 191) that it takes three days, based on an opinion quoted in the Gemara in Pesachim (55a), but Rabbi Akiva Eiger (Chidushei Rabbi Akiva Eiger Ibid. s.v. Hinu), among others, questions this, saying that opinion is not the accepted one, and that it rather takes two weeks. The Shach himself, in his Nekudos HaKessef (Ibid. s.v. K'D'Muchach) raises this question, noting that the Gemara in Yevamos (83a) seems to rule clearly that it takes two weeks. The Vilna Gaon (Biar HaGra Ibid. Sof Sif Katan 2) brings this up as well and tries to reconcile the problem, but leaves the matter in doubt. The Aruch HaShulchan (Ibid. Sifim 7-9) summarizes the different positions, but concludes that the view of the Terumas HaDeshen (Ibid.) that it takes three days is correct when discussing, as we are, plants, as opposed to trees. This dispute would obviously have great bearing on any grains planted in the springtime just before Pesach in determining whether or not they'd be labeled as Chodosh.

In formulating this Mitzvah not to eat Chodosh, the Torah (Ibid.) specifies that it is to be observed "B'chol Moshvoseichem," "wherever you dwell." This would imply that this Mitzvah is not restricted to Eretz Yisrael or to its produce. Indeed, the Mishnah in Orlah (3:9) states plainly that the prohibition to eat Chodosh applies everywhere according to the Torah. The Mishnah in Kiddushin (36b-37a), however, presents a dispute about this, implying that the majority of authorities hold that Chodosh in fact applies only in Eretz Yisrael. In the ensuing discussion, the Gemara (Ibid.) suggests that the phrase "B'chol Moshvoseichem" may be understood to teach not that the Mitzvah applies outside of Eretz Yisrael, but that even in Eretz Yisrael it was not to be operative until the land had indeed become a dwelling place, that is, after the entire conquest and division of the land. The Yerushalmi in Kiddushin (Perek 1 Halachah 8, 22a) suggests that although produce grown outside of Eretz Yisrad is not subject to the laws of Chodosh, the phrase "B'chol Moshvoseichem" teaches that Chodosh produce from Eretz Yisrael which is brought outside the land may still not be eaten. The aforementioned Gemara in Menachos (68b) presents this dispute somewhat differently: some Amoraim learn that the Mitzvah of Chodosh applies outside of Eretz Yisrael on a Torah level, while others

hold that the Mitzvah is MideRabbanan anywhere outside the land; either way, though, the Mitzvah applies everywhere.

The Rambam cited above (Ibid. Halachah 2) rules clearly that the Mitzvah of Chodosh applies on a Torah level everywhere, as do the Rif in Kiddushin (15b in the pages of the Rif) the Rosh there (Perek 1 Siman 62) and others. Elsewhere, however, the Rosh (Sheilos U'Teshuvos HaRosh Klal 2 Siman 1) quotes some Rishonim who hold that there is a doubt as to whether this Mitzvah applies outside of Eretz Yisrael, and others who hold that it applies only MideRabbanan outside the land, and still others who hold that even MideRabbanan it applies only to the lands immediately neighboring Eretz Yisrael. The Aruch HaShulchan (Yoreh Deah Ibid. Sifim 2-6) presents a synopsis and a discussion of all of these views, and the basis for their positions.

The Shulchan Aruch quoted above (Yoreh Deah Ibid. Sif 2) rules that the Mitzvah of Chodosh applies both in Eretz Yisrael and outside the land, adding that it doesn't matter whether the particular field is owned by a Jew or by a non-Jew, the subject of a different dispute. The Ramo, however, (Ibid. Sif 3), writes that because of certain doubts which generally prevail as to when most available grains actually grew, one may be lenient and disregard the problem of Chodosh outside of Eretz Yisrael, unless one is indeed sure when the grain grew. He then adds that even when it is proper to be stringent with this Mitzvah, one should not publicize this Halacha if people generally use Chodosh products, because it is better for people to err unintentionally than to err intentionally.

The long-standing practice in most communities, as already noted by the aforementioned Terumas HaDeshen (Ibid.) has been to be lenient, permitting eating Chodosh products grown outside of Eretz Yisrael; many Poskim have attempted to defend this leniency. The Taz (Ibid. Sif Katan 4), for example, tries to explain why we may be lenient even if it means following the minority view. The Bach, in his commentary to the Tur (Yoreh Deah Ibid. s.v. Kisiv) writes that in his country, the practice even among the Gedolei Torah and their students was to be lenient about this, and that it is not clear from the Gemara that Chodosh applies anywhere but in Eretz Yisrael. He thus concludes that no Torah authority should prohibit eating Chodosh, ruling against the accepted leniency, and only one who is known as an exceptionally pious person who is strict about other things should accept this stringency upon himself as a Midas Chasidus, an act of extra piety.

It must be stressed, however, that the Vilna Gaon (Biar HaGra Ibid. Sif Katan 2) disagrees strongly, and uncharacteristically attacks the lenient opinions sharply, writing forcefully that the sources indicate that Chodosh applies even outside of Eretz Yisrael. The Magen Avraham (Orach Chaim Siman 489 Sif Katan 17), while defending the lenient position from a number of points of view, concludes that it is proper for one who wishes to be stricter to do so. The Mishnah Berurah (Ibid. Sif Katan 45), after summarizing the different positions, likewise writes that while one shouldn't object to those who are lenient, one should personally try to take the stricter view and avoid eating Chodosh products even outside of Eretz Yisrael.

From: IAMZMAN187@aol.com Subject: YU Enayim Latorah
THE LESSON OF THE HOLY BREAD
BY HARAV BARUCH SIMON

Parshas Emor discusses the commandment of the lechem hapanim. The lechem hapanim was composed of 12 challos split up onto two racks. They would bake new loaves on Friday, and the kohanim would remove and replace the old loaves every week on Shabbos. The old ones would be given to the kohanim to eat. There was a miracle that even though the loaves of bread were more than a week old, they were still fresh and hot.

After discussing the lechem hapanim, the parsha immediately follows into the story of the Mekalel, someone that was the product of an Egyptian and a Jewess who started cursing and blaspheming the name of G-d. Rashi explains that this individual was making fun of the idea of leaving the lechem hapanim on the shulchan for a week. He was making fun of the kohanim eating week-old bread.

The Shaar Hakavanos says that the Ari was careful to use a table

with four legs to be like the shulchan in the Beis Hamikdash, and he would also make sure to have 12 loaves on the Shabbos table corresponding to the 12 loaves of the lechem hapanim.

The Vilna Gaon based on the Rashba on Shabbos 117b would take two loaves every meal and cut both of them to make four pieces. That would be 12 pieces from the three meals combined corresponding to the 12 loaves of the lechem hapanim.

The Likutei Mahariach explains that the challos should have three braids on each side, making six braids per loaf and 12 braids per meal from lechem mishna. Alternatively the shape of the challos is elongated like the letter "Vav", and the two loaves correspond to the number 12. In various manners there is the custom to perpetuate the lechem hapanim by having 12 loaves at the Shabbos table.

The Gemara Chagigah 26b based on the description of the shulchan as being "tahor" (24:6), teaches that it has the possibility to become tamei. A wooden utensil is mikabel tumah only if it is made to move around. How could the shulchan be mekabel tumah if it was stationary? When the people would come to the Beis Hamikdash for aliyah leregel, the kohanim would pick up the shulchan and show the visitors that the lechem hapanim were still warm and fresh from the week before. The Medrash Tadshe explains that the 12 loaves represent the 12 tribes. The loaves are warm to show that the love and warmth Hashem has for the Jewish people doesn't wane or diminish. That is His special love for the Jewish people. Rav Tzadok explains that the Mekalel was not just making fun of the lechem hapanim, but he was making fun of the idea that there is sanctity of the Jewish people. The lechem hapanim represented the Jewish people and Hashem's love for them. The Mekalel wanted to make fun of the importance of the Jewish people. He couldn't relate to the pure pristine neshama of the Jewish people.

Within the Jewish people there are the 12 diverse tribes. They were each known for different characteristics and qualities, and each one belonged to the greater group. Hashem kept the loaves warm and fresh in order to show His love to the various tribes as long as their paths lead to the service of Hashem. No one can say that only their tribe or their shteible has the gateway to heaven. The Magen Avraham explains that the different customs of prayer should not be changed, because they correspond to the 12 gates of heaven for each of the 12 tribes. Each one has their own character traits and talents to contribute, and as long as they are directed to the service of Hashem, He shows His favor for them.

Rabbi Shimon bar Yochai's students did not treat everyone with proper respect. People often times respect their rebbe and Yeshiva but look down on the others. The lechem hapanim teaches us that Hashem shows respect for everybody, and we must do so as well. That is why the students got sick and died in during the days of the Omer. One has to realize that Hashem respects all of the Jewish people. We see that Hashem keeps his warmth on all the 12 tribes, so each person has to respect the elderly, scholarly, parent, friends and all others.

From:
torahweb@zeus.host4u.net[SMTP:torahweb@zeus.host4u.net] Sent:
Thursday, April 25, 2002

http://www.torahweb.org/torah/2002/parsha/rsob_emor.html

RABBI ZVI SOBOLOFSKY

THE BEIS HAMIKDOSH: LIFE RENEWED

A recurring theme in Parshas Emor is the incompatibility of the Beis HaMikdosh and tumah. The Kohanim, those designated to serve in the Beis HaMikdosh must refrain from contact with a dead body which constitutes the highest level of tumah. Although a regular Kohein does defile his sanctity to bury his immediate relatives, the Kohein Gadol, whose bond to the Beis HaMikdosh is greater, is prohibited to defile himself even under these circumstances.

A Kohein is prohibited from serving in the Beis HaMikdosh in a state of tumah. Even a person that is not a Kohein must be tahor when entering the Beis HaMikdosh or eating korbanos. The complete separation between the Beis HaMikdosh and tumah requires that even terumah, the holy food of the kohein, and maEaser sheini, the tithe

eaten in Jerusalem, must be preserved in the state of taharah. Why is tumah the antithesis of the Beis HaMikdosh, thereby requiring scrupulous care that anything associated with the Beis HaMikdosh remain tahor?

All forms of tumah are linked to a loss of life. The highest level of tumah is linked to the most profound loss of life, the death of a human being. Dead animals also emit tumah, albeit to a lesser degree. Even the loss of potential life such as when a woman becomes a niddah is associated with tumah.

According to the Ramban in the beginning of Vayikra, the primary purpose of bringing a korban is a reaffirmation of life. One who sins deserves death according to the strict rules of justice. Hashem in His mercy wants us to offer an animal in place of ourselves, thereby reminding us that it is the kindness of Hashem that grants us another opportunity to live.

The Beis HaMikdosh and everything surrounding it represent the gift of renewal of life. Tumah, which is synonymous with death, has no place in the Beis HaMikdosh. The kohein who serves in the Beis HaMikdosh must be a symbol of this renewal and have no association with the loss of life. The message emanating from the Beis HaMikdosh is clear: come back to Hashem, begin your life again, and celebrate this renewal in a state of holiness and taharah.

http://www.torahweb.org/torah/2001/parsha/rsch_emor.html

[From last year]

RABBI HERSCHEL SCHACHTER

CHILUL HASHEM

The Torah commands every Jew to be careful not to cause a chilul Hashem. When an individual Jew acts improperly, he disgraces the entire Jewish people, as well as the Jewish religion.

The story is told that on one occasion the local Catholic bishop commented to Hagaon Reb Yitschok Elchanan Spector that one of the major causes of anti-Semitism was the Talmudic statement that "atem kruyim adam ve'ein umos ha'olam keruyim adam". He argued that if the Jews do not consider non-Jews to be human beings, how could Jews expect anything less than animosity from non-Jews.

Reb Yitschok Elchanan explained to the bishop that he had not properly understood the Talmudic statement. What the Rabbis mean to say was the following: In biblical Hebrew there are four terms for a person - ish, enosh, gever, and adam. The first three terms have a different form when used in the plural (anashim, gevarim). The last term - adam remains the same even when used to refer to many men.

With respect to any other individual who murders, steals, or acts improperly, we do not say that his behavior is representative of his entire nation. We would say that that individual is bad, but the rest of the nation as a whole is basically good. We distinguish between gever (in the singular) and gevarim (in the plural); between ish (in the singular) and anashim (in the plural). But with respect to the individual Jew, we call him "adam", used for both the singular and the plural, and assume that the individual is representative of the entire people. Only regarding the Jews is there a principle that "kol Yisroel areivim zeh lazeh". The concept of nationhood only applies to the Jews: "Mi keamcha Yisroel goy echad ba'aretz"; other peoples are called "mishpachos ha'adamah".

Rabeinu Saadia Gaon commented that the uniting force for Jews is the Torah. Other peoples, who have no Torah to bind them together, have no concept of "kahal" (see Talmud Nazir 61b). Any individual Jew who behaves improperly brings disgrace upon his entire nation, as well as upon the entire Jewish religion exactly because we are all one "adam".

The Yerushalmi explains the idea behind the prohibition of nekama (taking revenge) through a moshol: If one was cutting a loaf of bread with a knife in his right hand, and accidentally cut a finger on his left hand, would his left hand slap the right hand out of revenge? Of course not! Both hands belong to one body. So too all Jews constitute "one body". The singular and the plural are both "adam".

G-d tells Avraham, "V'eescha l'goy gadol ... v'nivrechu b'cha kol mishpachos ha'adama" (B'reishis 12:2-3) - "and I will make you into a

great nation ... and all of the families of the land will be blessed through you". The term "goy" (nation) is only used when referring to the Jewish people, while the term "mishpacha" (family) is used when referring to other nations (see sefer Eretz Hatzvi siman 17 for a discussion of the halachic implications of this concept regarding determining the genealogy of Jews and non-Jews). Only among the Jews, about whom the same term (adam) is used for both the individual and the entire people, indicating a unique level of oneness and mutual responsibility, is true nationhood achieved, and therefore only regarding us did G-d use the term "goy" (nation).

From: Rabbi Riskin's Shabbat Shalom
List[SMTP:parsha@ohrtorahstone.org.il] Subject: Shabbat Shalom:
Parshat Emor by RABBI SHLOMO RISKIN

Shabbat Shalom: Parshat Emor (Leviticus: 21:1-24:23) By Shlomo Riskin

Efrat, Israel - A number of months ago, mortar shells were ejected at 11:30 P.M. onto the "caravan campus" (trailer or pre-fab mobile structures) of Yeshivat Siah, the Yeshivat hesder (Torah study plus army service) of Ohr Torah Stone on the northern end of Efrat bordering on Bethel and El Khader. The Yeshiva community (some forty singles and fifteen young families) was used to gun-shots and even fire-bombs; the mortar shells signaled a serious escalation. I immediately dispatched a bullet-proof van to evacuate the area and transport everyone to our Retreat Center in a much safer place in the center of Efrat. When I checked thirty minutes later, only the woman and children had arrived. "We took a vote," explained the head-counselor, "and unanimously decided that only the women and children would leave our hill. We dare not even appear to grant only a temporary victory to the enemy."

From whence is the source of this very special courage, an inner strength which has surfaced again and again in Efrat and throughout Israel? After all, despite daily drive-by shootings and terrorist suicide attacks which have caused just about everyone to attend an inordinate number of funerals and to be stricken with the anguished suffering of widows, orphans, and bereaved parents, our citizens continue to face their daily lives of professional commitments and family celebrations with resolute resilience and firm faith!

I believe that an important part of the answer is to be found in a crucial commandment in this week's Torah portion: "You shall not profane thy holy Name: I shall be sanctified in the midst of the children of Israel. I am the Lord who sanctifies you" (Leviticus 22:32). The sages of the Talmud explain "profaning the Divine Name" as when a rabbinic sage takes meat from a butcher without making immediate payment, or when a learned Jew is lax in his business ethics or does not speak kindly to the people at large (B.T. Yoma 66a)." "And similarly, if a sage is careful about his actions, always speaking kindly to every human being accepting everyone cheerfully and taking precise care concerning his business ethics to the point that everyone praises him and strives to emulate his comportment, then that individual is sanctifying G-d's Name, and about him it is said, 'And He says to me, you are my servant Israel, through whom I am glorified' "(Maimonides, Laws of the Foundations of Torah, 5, 11).

This interpretation, which sees the application of the command to sanctify the Almighty as performing commandments, especially in the realm of human inter-personal relationships, in a manner which will inspire others to wish to emulate one's deeds, is very much in line with the Biblical context of the verse: "An ox or a lamb, you shall not slaughter an animal and its offspring on the same day. (An obvious command expressing sensitivity even to brute beasts)"... And you shall observe My commandments and do them, I am the Lord. You shall not profane My holy Name; I shall be sanctified in the midst of the children of Israel; I am the Lord who sanctified you. (I am) He who took you out of the land of Egypt to be for you or a Lord; (The exodus clearly teaches human sensitivity, that no individual dare enslave or manipulate another). I am G-d (Leviticus 22:28-33).

However, Rashi has another interpretation, in truth the primary interpretation according to our Sages. "... What is the meaning of the

verse 'I shall be sanctified'? Commit your lives and sanctify My Name ... And when an individual commits him/her self, he/she must become committed even to the point of death" (Rashi, Leviticus 22:32). Maimonides likewise similarly interprets the commandment: "And the matter of this commandment to sanctify G-d's Name is to publicize this true faith in the world, and that we not be afraid of any harm or damage... When Nebuchadnezzar the Wicked commanded obeisance to an idol, and the multitudes of Israel bowed down to it - there was no one to sanctify G-d's Name because they were afraid - this was a shame and an embarrassment to all of Israel that this command should be lost to them..." (Book of Commandments, Positive Commandment 9). In effect, Maimonides is saying that the First Temple was destroyed by Nebuchadnezzar because all of Israel was afraid to perform the commandment of martyrdom, to sacrifice their lives for their faith by refusing to worship idols!

A deeper insight into these words of Rashi and Maimonides becomes evident when we ponder another Biblical anomaly: in last Sabbath's Torah reading, we were taught the command, "You shall observe my statutes and my commandments which a human being shall perform; and you shall live by them" (Leviticus 18:5). Our Sages deduce from these words: " 'You shall live by them' - and not die by them." In general, a human life takes precedence over the commands of the Torah (Maimonides, Mishneh Torah, Laws of the Foundations of Torah, 5,1). After all, the bottom line of the akedah story is that the Almighty desires Isaac to live, and - with the exception of the three most stringent transgressions of murder, sexual immorality and idolatry - if a Jew is forced by a Gentile either to transgress a commandment (like the Sabbath) or die, he must choose to transgress the commandment! But then is it not strange that "You shall live by them" comes as an introduction to the laws of sexual immorality, for which you must die rather than transgress them!

The answer is deeply significant. For Judaism, it is not only an unreflected life which is of little value; a life lived for no higher value other than to keep on living is also of little value. After all, no one lives forever; hence, the individual whose highest purpose in life to go on living is someday doomed to failure! Therefore, the Torah is teaching us that we must live our lives in the backdrop of values which are more significant than any single individual life. Paradoxically, only a person who has values for which he would sacrifice his future will merit a future; such an individual may lose his life, but he gains eternity.

Israel is now embarked on a continuation of her War of Independence, in a life and death struggle against a Palestinian Authority who is hell-bent on obliterating the State of Israel from the map of the Middle East. When Arafat refused Barak's all too generous offer of the overwhelming majority (94-96%) of the West Bank, including most of East Jerusalem, he explained his avowed goal of pushing us back not to the '67 boundary lines but rather to the '47 boundary lines, in effect, the end of the Jewish State. We in Israel, especially in the wake of the return of European anti-Semitism, understand the crucial importance of the State of Israel for the Jewish future. For us, it is a great privilege to stand in the front lines of battle in such a fateful hour!

Shabbat Shalom

You can find Rabbi Riskin's parshiot on the web at:
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From: listmaster[SMTP:listmaster@shemayisrael.com] Subject:
PENINIM ON THE TORAH BY RABBI A. LEIB SCHEINBAUM
PARSHAS EMOR

Say to the Kohanim, the sons of Aharon: Each of you shall not contaminate himself to a (dead) person. (21:1)

Burying the dead is a great kindness in which the Kohen is prohibited to be involved. Tumah, ritual contamination, and the unique kedushah of the Kohen are mutually exclusive. There is, however, another act of kindness for the deceased that a Kohen - and every

other Jew - can and should perform: to feel his pain and share it emotionally. The deceased is facing a reckoning of his actions while in his earthly abode. Whether he will achieve Heavenly repose or not depends on the results of this judgment. When one empathizes with the soul of the departed, he decreases the severity of his punishment.

Horav Yechiel Michel Stern, Shlita, relates how Horav Simcha zl, M'Kelm would go out of his way to consider the welfare of his fellow Jew. It is noted that on Shabbos, Rav Simcha Zissel's countenance radiated brilliantly from the holiness of the day. One Shabbos, however, this unique brilliance was not manifest. This mystified his students. Yet, out of deep respect for their venerable rebbe, they did not question him, waiting for him to enlighten them.

As soon as Shabbos was over and Rav Simcha Zissel recited Havdalah, he sighed deeply. He explained, "Peretz Smolenskin has passed away." [A proponent of the Haskalah, Enlightenment, he was notorious for his virulent animosity towards Torah and its disseminators.] "Can anyone fathom the agony of his soul upon arriving in the Olam Ha'Emes, to face judgment for its sins?"

Horav Moshe Aharon Stern, zl, the Kamenitzer Mashgiach in Eretz Yisrael, demonstrated a similar sensitivity. He recited Kaddish for a number of people who left this world childless. Often, he would arrange to have a minyan visit the graves of those who had no one to visit them. He had more than once even purchased a burial site and monument for those who had no one to care for them. This is the kind of chesed that even a Kohen can perform.

We suggest another area in which our act of kindness is not only helpful, it is crucial. Perhaps the greatest fear that a Jew has is the fear of dying alone. The thought of facing life's challenges without family or friends can have a tragic effect upon a person. One only has to visit the elderly in a hospital, many of whom are alone without family and friends, to witness this phenomenon. The look of dejection upon their faces is overwhelming. They just lie there, alone, filled with fear - waiting to die. Is this the way we should treat those who have survived life's vicissitudes - to die alone? Everybody needs somebody with whom to share his fears, his uncertainty, his anxiety. Many of these elderly Jews have children who cannot be with them for a variety of reasons. They might be unable to be there, or - regrettably - they are not very interested. Whatever the reason, it should have no bearing on our responsibility to act as Jews. No Jew should ever be subjected to the emotional trauma of being alone during this most traumatic time.

Say to the Kohanim, the sons of Aharon, and you will say to them. (21:1)

The Torah seems to emphasize the power of chinuch, education, predicting tragic consequences when a proper Jewish education is not administered.

Our parsha begins with an enjoinder to the Kohanim to see to it that their young are not metameh, do not ritually defile themselves by coming into contact with a dead body. Emor v'omarta; the Torah uses the redundant wording of "say" followed by "and you shall say," "I'hazhir gedolim al ha'ketanim," to enjoin adults with regard to minors. The adult Kohanim are to train and educate their young in the laws of tumah v'taharah, ritual contamination and purity, if they hope to see them grow into adults that adhere to the law.

Similarly, at the end of the parsha, the Torah relates the tragic episode of the megadef, one who blasphemed. The Torah does not mention his name; it only alludes to his tainted lineage - an Egyptian father and a Jewish mother whose name bespeaks her immodest conduct. Instead of staying home and attending to her son's upbringing, his mother was a chatterbox who involved herself in everyone's business. Her constant prattling led to immoral activities. Interestingly, his mother's name is mentioned only after he has sinned. Horav S.R. Hirsch, zl, explains that only after we take note of the sin of the son do we begin to question the activity of his mother. We wonder how such a sin occurred. What was its origin?

Education in the home plays a pivotal role in the development of a child. It leaves an indelible imprint upon his character and attitude toward life - religiously, socially, and philosophically. Education begins at an early age. Indeed, it should begin with the parents. L'hazhir

gedolim al ha'ketanim; the adults should be enjoined in regard to the young. They must first educate themselves as gedolim - before they begin to educate the ketanim. A noted educator was once speaking to a group of mothers regarding parental responsibility in educating children. One mother raised her hand and asked, "From what age should a parent begin to educate their child?" "When will the child be born?" asked/responded the educator. "Born?" she questioned emphatically, "He is already five years old!" "Why are you wasting your time here talking?" asked the educator. "You have already let five crucial years go by!"

Horav Simcha Wasserman, zl, and his rebbetzin never had children. Yet, Rav Simcha was considered by many to be a leading authority on the subject of child-rearing. One would think that an expert speaks from personal experience. "How did you do it?" he was once asked. His unforgettable reply is a profound lesson to us. He said, "I do have personal experience. I have the experience of observing how my parents raised me." Our parents are our first mentors, who teach the correct manner for raising a child by example and by instruction. A child is like an immigrant to a new country. He picks up what he sees, and it becomes assimilated into his lifestyle. A child makes observations and develops his weltenshauung based much upon what he has experienced in his own home. If his parents were happy, and love and warmth permeated their home, the child will grow up with a similar attitude.

I present here some of Rav Simcha's ideas concerning child-raising. Hopefully, it will be of value and a source of encouragement. When Rav Simcha noticed a number of children from one family going along together, he would take note of the way they interacted. If they were all sharing in an errand, the older ones looking out for the younger ones, it showed that they were raised in a home where the parents cared for each other. They saw love and harmony, not strife and discord. When parents fight, the children pick up the art!

By the time a child is old enough to take on some responsibility, we should train him to help out, to assume responsibility. There is nothing wrong with a three- year- old helping out with a younger brother or sister. We think of education primarily in terms of a structured environment. While we need educational institutions, education at home is an extension of the mitzvah of "Pru U'Revu," "Be fruitful and multiply." The Torah enjoins us to reproduce. The Torah tells us that reproduction does not end with begetting a child. It continues with raising him to become a decent human being. In order for a child to grow into a responsible "giving" adult, it is important that he sees this modeled at a home. People think that everything in this world is here for the purpose of enjoyment - even one's own children. We coerce our child to do what we want, so that we will be happy. Are we thinking of the child or of ourselves? We give the child a toy so that he will smile. In essence, we want to "take" the smile from the child for ourselves. It is not for the child; it is for our own satisfaction. As he grows, the child will also look to take from his parents. Hence, we have raised a "taker" not a "giver."

A parent who understands his obligation will do everything for the child - and not for his own vested interests. How many of us have ambitions for our children which are beneficial to us, which do not serve the best interest of our child? The greater degree of concern for the child, the more success we experience in raising him.

This idea applies equally in the "other" world of education, Torah chinuch in the yeshiva/day school movement. If one's motivation is purely for the student, he will succeed. A G-d -given intuition within us enables us to reach out and mold a child into a successful human being. This intuition works for those who really care about the student - not the job.

Relationship is an important factor in a child accepting the lesson, at home as well as in school. A child needs to feel unconditionally accepted and loved. While this might be easier to convey at home, because all parents love their children, some might find it difficult to display their love. This is a serious problem for both parent and child.

Teachers/rebbeim/moros should also manifest a similar attitude towards their students. It is clearly much easier to learn values from a teacher with whom a student has a pleasant relationship. Rebbeim in

yeshivos often have this type of relationship with their students, a phenomenon which is seldom found in the secular world.

Rav Simcha relates that a man who had been dean of the history department in a large secular university for fifty years, came to the yeshiva to recite Kaddish. After davening, he came over to Rav Simcha and said, "Rabbi, I am a lonely man at this point in my life." Surprised, Rav Simcha asked him, "How many students have you taught in your life?"

They made an approximate accounting, arriving at the figure of 30,000 students! Rav Simcha then turned to the professor and asked, "Out of the 30,000 students, how many invited you to their wedding?" The professor responded, somewhat disheartened, "Not a single one."

Imagine a talmid, student in yeshiva, not inviting his Rosh HaYeshiva or his rebbe muvhak, primary teacher, to his wedding. It is unheard of, because Torah is taught with love, and it creates a bond of love between the rebbe and talmid. A rebbe views his talmidim as his children. A close relationship is a natural consequence of this attitude.

Sponsored in loving memory of our Mother and Grandmother Mrs. Fanny (Brunner) Feldman Rabbi & Mrs. L. Scheinbaum & Family

From: RABBI JONATHAN SCHWARTZ jschwrtz@ymail.yu.edu
Subject: [internetchaburah] Internet Chaburah -- Parshat Emor
Prologue: Why offer him preferential treatment?

The Torah informs us that the Kohein is to be accorded special honor (V'keedasho) because Hashem himself is Kadosh. Now seriously, there are many reasons to honor a Kohein but simply because Hashem is holy too? Isn't that a reason to perform all Mitzvot? Why specify it here?

R. Meshulam Gross (Nachalat Zvi) explains that the Mitzva of V'keedasho applies even when it appears that the Yisrael is of a greater status than his Kohein. Even though the Yisrael might possess certain criteria that give him rights before the Kohein, there is still a need to accord honor to the Kohein. Thus, despite the fact that there are times when the Mamzer Talmid Chacham takes precedence over the Kohein Am HaAretz, there is still a need for honoring the Kohein. The Mechilta compares this to the honor of Hashem: Ani Hashem Meekadeeshchem that my honor is above yours. Still, I sanctify and honor you. Similarly, you should honor the Kohein, even if his honor seems less than yours.

Chevron: Now and forever for Kohanim too?

The Midrash (Mishlei, 9) notes that when Rabbi Akiva died, Eliyahu Hanovi carried him to his Kever. Rabbi Yehoshua Hagarsee, student of Rabbi Akiva asked him how he was able to be in contact with the body if he was a Kohein? Eliyahu answered that there is no Tumah for Talmidei chachamim or their students. Based upon this Midrash, many allow visits to the Kevarim of Talmidei Chachamim.

The difficulty with this Midrash begins when we consider the Gemara. The Talmud (Sukkah 25b) notes that the people who needed the Pesach Sheni were those who carried the Aron of Yosef through the desert. Yosef was a Tzaddik, and notwithstanding the pallbearers were Tamei?

Moreover, we find examples when Amoraim would walk through Israel to identify Kevarim ostensibly to avoid Tumah by Kohanim (see Bava Basra 58a and Rashbam and Tosafos there). (It should be noted that Rav Yaakov Emden <Bava Metzia 85b> assumed the Amoraim marked the Kevarim to give the people a place to daven). Either way, it seems that the Gemara felt that Tzaddikim are Mitameh. Ergo, the Kohanim may not visit their Kevarim including that of Mearat HaMachpelah in Chevron. How are we to reconcile the Gemara with the Midrash?

Tosafos (Bava Metzia 114b) notes that the Midrash is unique as it spoke of a Mes Mitzva situation. We know that in such a situation, the Kohein Gadol must become Tamei to deal with the Mes if necessary. The Rosh (Shut Rosh 30:1) adds that that Eliyahu was not a Kohein and thus there is no basis for the first opinion. The Ritva (Megilla 3b)

and Meiri (Yevamot 61b) both agree that even if the Midrash is correct it does not decide Halacha if the Talmud provides alternative information. Thus, the Kohein may not visit any grave, even those at Chevron.

Ramban (Yevamos 61b) seems to utilize the Midrash to suggest that Tzaddikim are not Mitamei. Sefer Hachinuch seems to agree (Mitzva 263). However it has been suggested that these opinions are lenient only during the actual burial, not visiting later in life. This opinion seems based upon the wording of the Tosafist Rav Chaim Kohein who noted that he would have attended Rabbeinu Tam's funeral if he had been alive when the latter passed away (Kesubos 103b). The Beis yosef limited this statement to applying to the funeral, not to visiting the cemetery of Tzaddikim.

When discussing the matter Halachically, the Kitzur Shulchan Aruch (202:14) reminds us that it is a mistake to think that one may visit the Kever of a Tzaddik. The Minchas Elazar (Vol. III:24) utilized a Sefak Sefaika (whether Tzaddikim are Mitamei and if they are whether kohanim are not already Tamei already, based on Raavad to Hil. Nezeirus 5:17) to be lenient. Avnei Nezer (Yoreh Deah 466:17) differentiated between the example of a Mes who died at the hand of Malach HaMaves who would be Tamei and those who died B'neshika, who would not. The Avnei Nezer and Chiddushei HaRim would not allow Kohanim to be involved in preparing Rav Menachem Mendel of Kotzk and the Sfas Emes for burial. Similarly, Rav Ovadiah Yosef (Shut Yechaveh Daas IV:58) notes that Kohanim would be best off not entering Kivrei Tzaddikim at Mearat HaMachpelah or Kever Rachel.

Battala News

Mazal Tov to Mr. and Mrs. Aryeh Morris and family upon the recent birth of a baby boy.

Mazal Tov to Mr. and Mrs. Danny Stein upon the recent birth of a Baby boy.

Mazal Tov to Rabbi and Dr. Avraham Rabinowich upon the birth and Bris of Menachem Mendel

Mazal Tov to Rabbi and Mrs. Chaim Shulman upon the recent birth of a baby girl.

Mazal Tov to Rabbi and Mrs. Zvi Romm upon their recent appointment as Rov and Rebbetzin of Bialastoker Shul, Lower East Side, NY

From: Rabbi Ben Kelsen benish@att.net To: parshas_hashavuah@yahogroups.com Subject: [parshas_hashavuah] HaRav Shlomo Elimelech Drillman, zt"l on Parshas Emor

HaGaon HARAV SHLOMO ELIMELECH DRILLMAN, zt"l Rosh Yeshiva, Yeshivas Rabbeinu Yitzchok Elchonon

Parshas Emor

Editor's Note: The following is based upon a private conversation between HaRav Drillman, zt"l and the editor that took place on the evening of Thursday, 18 Iyar 5751 (May 2, 1991), based upon a shiur that HaRav Drillman heard from Rabbeinu u'Moreinu HaGaon HaRav Yosef Dov HaLevi Soloveitchik, zt"l in the mid-1970's. BGK

Vayikra 22:32 -You shall not profane My holy Name; but I will be sanctified among Bnei Yisroel. I am Hashem Who makes you holy.

Rashi- Verse 32: You shall not profane,; to transgress My words intentionally. Since it is said, "and you shall not profane," why does the verse say, "and I will be sanctified" Surrender yourself [to martyrdom] and sanctify My Name! Perhaps [this command applies even when] he is alone? The verse says: Among Bnei Yisroel. And when he surrenders himself, he should surrender himself in order to die, for whoever surrenders himself [to martyrdom] for the sake of a miracle, a miracle is not performed for him. For so we find in [the case of] Chananyah, Misha'el and Azaryah, who did not surrender themselves for the sake of a miracle, as it is said, "But if not [= if He does not save us], be it known to you, O' King, [that we will not serve your gods], etc."- whether He saves [us] or whether he does not save [us], it should be known to you, [i.e. that we will not serve your idols]

The Torah tells us that there is an obligation to sanctify the name of the Ribbono Shel Olam as well as a corresponding Mitzvas Lo

Sa'aseh, which is stated in the first half of the passuk, not to blaspheme the holy or sanctified name of HKB"H (Lo sechalelu es sheim kodshi...). Let us examine the nature of these mitzvos.

According to Chazal, it is from this passuk that we learn the Mitzvah of "Yai'Hareig v'al Ya'avov", literally "be killed before violating". This commandment requires that in certain instances one should submit himself to be killed rather than transgress certain types of aveiros. The most common of these are illicit sexual relationships, murder and idolatry. It should be noted that there are also other situations when one must surrender his life, such as during a Sha'as HaShmad. Submitting oneself to be killed in such situations is considered a fulfillment of the Mitzvah of Kiddush Hashem. Should one fail to do so he violates the prohibition of Chillul Hashem.

In Hilchos Yisodei HaTorah (chapter 5) the Rambam discusses the laws of Kiddush Hashem and Chillul Hashem, beginning with the laws of Yai'Hareig v'al Ya'avov and concluding with scenarios of Chillul Hashem that defame or slander the Torah and/or its scholars. One such example is found in the Bavli in Masseches Yoma (86a) which cites as examples of a Chillul Hashem the case of a talmid chocham who purchases on credit or who walks 4 Amos (cubits) without wearing his Tefillin.

HaRav Drillman said that The Rav, zt"l explained that the Rambam intentionally connected these different sorts of Chillul Hashem in the same chapter of the Yad. The Gemara in Masseches Sanhedrin (61b) cites the Machlokes between Abbaye and Rava regarding the question of if one who worships Avodah Zara out of fear for his life is guilty for transgressing the prohibition against idolatry. Tosafos asks, in an almost sarcastic manner, that if such a scenario is not a violation of the prohibition against idolatry then in what kind of a situation would the Mitzvah of Yai'Hareig v'al apply?

The Rav answered Tosafos' question through the Rambam. In his Sefer HaMitzvos (Mitzvas Asei 9), the Rambam states that there is a Mitzvah to sanctify the name of Hashem and to offer our lives so that an oppressor not think that we have "oveir al hada'as" (yielded to their oppression and are willing to deny Yehadus" even though in actuality the Jew really does not believe in the action which he is doing.

As an example of this idea, HaRav Drillman pointed to the famous story of Chana and her children who refused to bow down before an idol even though it would have been obvious to all present that they were merely picking up a piece of jewelry and not worshiping the idol. Although technically there would have been no transgression of the prohibition against worshiping Avodah Zara, one must still fulfill the obligation of Kiddush Hashem and allow oneself to be killed in order to show that a Jew cannot be coerced into surrendering his faith.

The Rambam also cites the example of Chananya, Misha'el and Azaryah who were thrown into a fiery furnace for refusing to bow down before Nevuchadnetzar. The Rambam eloquently describes their strength at a time when all people, even other Jews, bowed before Babylonian king, and no one was mikadeish the name of the Ribbono Shel Olam. According to the Rambam, Chananya, Misha'el and Azaryah's act of Kiddush Hashem returned a sense of honor to Klal Yisroel. It is at specifically such exceptional and difficult times, the Rambam emphasizes, that the obligation of Kiddush Hashem is paramount.

An interesting idea can be found in ma'aseh of Ma'amad Har Sinai. At Har Sinai HKB"H gave Klal Yisroel the Torah with the use of Kolei Kolos, which resulted in a tumultuous occasion. Rashi HaKadosh tells us that the Luchos Sheniyos, the second set of tablets that Moshe Rabbeinu brought back from Har Sinai, were given without any of the accouterments such as the Kolos u'Vevakim, lightning and thunder. Furthermore, in comparison to the first time, Moshe Rabbeinu ascended Har Sinai by himself without any companions. HaRav Drillman asked why there was a difference between the two transmissions of the Torah.

HaRav Drillman said that The Rav explained that the tumultuous manner in which the first Luchos were given was an Ayin Hara, a foreshadowing of destruction of the Luchos. For this reason HKB"H did not use the extra fanfare that He implemented at the first Matan Torah. Yet why, asked The Rav, being that HKB"H knows everything

that was, is, and will be, why would He give the first Luchos through Kolei Kolos even though He knew full well that this would foretell their ultimate destruction?

The Rav explained that HKB"H wanted the nations of the world to recognize the greatness of the Klal Yisroel. If we look back at history we find that Avraham Avinu was held in the highest regard by the nations of the world. Yitzchok Avinu, however, had less prestige, and Yaakov Avinu even less. This trend continued until, finally, the Shivtei Koh were enslaved by the Egyptians. Had the descendants of Yaakov been able to garner the same level of respect as their grandfather, Avraham, then it would have been very difficult for the Egyptians to enslave Bnei Yisroel.

The Ribbono Shel Olam wanted to ensure that the Am HaNivchar would receive the respect that they deserve. He raised them in the eyes of the nations of the world through Yitzias Mitzrayim and the first Kabbolas HaTorah. The Torah tells us that the nations of the world were "Chil achaz yoshvei pilashes", gripped with fear. Interestingly, the Rambam says that this passuk refers to Ma'amad Har Sinai and not the Krias Yam Suf. According to the Rambam it was the Kolei Kolos which caused all the nations of the world to recognize the greatness and unique nature of the relationship between Klal Yisroel and the Ribbono Shel Olam. This was the purpose of the Kolei Kolos.

After the destruction of the Beis HaMikdosh, Klal Yisroel once again found ourselves without respect. The honor of Am HaNivchar had to be restored and so HKB"H told Yishayahu HaNavi that the people would preform the mitzvah of Kiddush Hashem. It was for this reason that Chananya Misha'el and Azaryah defied the rule of the Babylonian king, returning the honor of Klal Yisroel by making their stand against Nevuchadnetzar, to remind the people of the Mitzvah of being mikadeish the Sheim Hashem.

HaRav Drillman explained in the name of The Rav, zt"l, that the nature of the Mitzvah of Yai'Hareig v'al Ya'avov includes within it, as an integral part of its purpose, the notion that the honor of Klal Yisroel should not be tarnished. It is for this reason that the Rambam includes the various forms of Chillul Hashem when describing the issur, because all of them, idolatry, illicit sexual relationships, murder or a talmid chocham embarrassing the Torah and himself have the common feature of diminishing the honor of the Am HaNivchar. Therefore, according to the Rambam, when a Jew worships Avodah Zara, whether he be coerced or simply doing an act that resembles the form of worship of that particular type of idolatry, it is still a case of Chillul Hashem because he has lessened the honor of Klal Yisroel.

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From: Ohr Somayach[SMTP:ohr@ohr.edu] Subject: Torah Weekly - Emor

* TORAH WEEKLY * Highlights of the Weekly Torah Portion
Parshat Emor For the week ending 15 Iyar 5762 / April 26 & 27, 2002
Sponsored by Kof-K www.kof-k.com | info@kof-k.com
DAMSEL IN DISTRESS

"Hashem said to Moshe 'Say to the kohanim, the sons of Aaron, and tell them: Each of you shall not contaminate himself to a (dead) personB (21:1)

The usual reference to the kohanim is "the sons of "Aharon f the kohanim." Why does the Torah reverse the order here and call them "kohanim f b'nei Aharon?"

The kohanim have to be "b'nei Aharon." Just like Aharon was the personification of chesed, loving and pursuing kindness all his life, so too the job of a kohen must be focused on giving and loving kindness.

The ultimate kindness is a kindness that can never be repaid. Burying someone after their soul has departed from their body is a kindness that never be repaid. Since the kohanim are commanded to be like Aharon, pillars of loving-kindness, they might assume that this trait overrides all other considerations. Thus the Torah stipulates in the following verse "Each of you shall not contaminate himself to a (dead) personB"

In this world, loving-kindness has limits. Even though the kohanim are charged to be "sons of Aharon," a kohen, because of his very high

level of holiness, may not come into contact with cadavers. In that instance, holiness overrides the imperative to do kindness.

The nature of a Jew is to do kindness. The gemara teaches that a Jew who does not show the three traits of mercy, bashfulness and loving-kindness is of suspect lineage.

Jews are naturally kind people. But kindness must never place us in spiritual danger.

Impurity for the sake of others is not a Jewish idea. Kindness doesn't mean a person has to pollute his own spirituality for every cause.

IT'S NOT HARD TO BE A JEW

"Say to the kohanim, the sons of Aaron, and tell themB" (21:1)

Rabbi Moshe Feinstein, zatzal, once said that it took only four words to kill a generation of Jews. Those four words were "Shver tzuzein a Yid." "It's hard to be a Jew."

The kohanim are the leaders of the Jewish People. The currency of leadership is inspiration. You cannot lead by telling people that their lives are going to consist of perpetual drudgery. If you do that, they will vote with their feet in droves. The beginning of this week's parsha contains a seeming redundancy: "Say to the kohanim, the sons of Aaron, and tell themB." If Moshe has to "say" something to the kohanim, why does he need to also "tell" them?

This repetition implies tough talk. No-nonsense communication.

The repetition of the words is to stress to the kohanim that in order to bring the people close to Torah, they must express eternal laws which are as immutable as stone in such a way that the ear of the people can grasp their beauty and excitement and relevance.

That it's not hard to be a Jew.

Sources: "Damsel in Distress" based on Chochma u'Mussar by Rabbi Breuer as heard from Rabbi C.Z. Senter "It's NOT Hard to be a Jew" based on Rabbi Moshe Feinstein in Derash Moshe as heard from Rabbi C.Z Senter

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