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Rabbi Mordechai Willig Sanctity

I

The Ramban, in his introduction to Sefer Vayikra, refers to it as Toras Kohanim, the term found in the Mishnah (Megillah 30b): on Pesach, we read the parshah of the festivals of Toras Kohanim. The laws of Shabbos and the festivals, which apply to all of Am Yisrael, are included in Vayikra because of the korbanos brought on these days. These special sacrifices, a major reason for the moadei Hashem (23:37), are offered by the Kohanim.

Rav S. R. Hirsch (23:1) suggests a conceptual connection between festivals and korbanos: "That which the Temple is in space, is what the festivals are in time. Both have our union with Hashem as their aim." The Bais Hamikdash sets Hashem's Torah as the center-point of our lives. The term "mishkan ha'edus" (Shemos 38:21) means the mishkan which was made for the luchos ha'edus (Ramban). Hashem's Torah, symbolized by the luchos which Hashem gave us at Sinai, is placed in the Kodosh haKodoshim. The luchos, found in the holiest part of the Mishkan, are the source of its sanctity (Rav Soloveitchik, cited in Eretz HaTzvi 12:5, p. 91).

To this day, we focus on Hashem daily when davening by facing the Bais Hamikdash and the Kodosh haKodoshim (Brachos 30a). Hashem's sanctuary in space, like space itself, is unchanging and inspires our eternal relationship with the eternal Torah. Time, on the other hand, is the changing succession of one event after another. The festivals are the holiest point in time, when Hashem's presence is most clearly felt. Just as

we face the holiness of the Bais Hamikdash daily, so do we remember that every day leads to holiness of Shabbos (Ramban, Shemos 20:5).

II

Rav Hirsch adds that the immediately preceding section (22:26-33) includes laws of "temporal relationships within the framework of the spatial sanctuary", namely that a sacrifice may be brought only after an animal is with its mother for seven days (27), that one may not slaughter an animal and its young on the same day (28), and that the korban must be eaten on the day it is offered and slaughtered with that intention (29, 30). Rav Hirsch suggests that "the temporal character of these offering laws connects them with laws of the festivals, which also last for a period of one day or seven days."

This idea can explain why the aforementioned parshah of the festivals of Toras Kohanim begins with these seemingly unrelated laws of "shor oh kesev." The logical connection of Rav Hirsch between space and time and the common significance of the numbers one and seven led Chazal to add these introductory pesukim.

The Netziv (Ha'mek Davar, 27) alternatively explains that the laws of these pesukim relate to Pesach and Sukkos, when they are read, on a practical level. Aside from the specifics of the korbanos, the Torah warns against chilul Hashem (32). Generally, holidays can lead to levity and even sin (Kiddushin 81a). We are warned to avoid this, and to sanctify Hashem by communal prayer, ideally in Yerushalayim (see Ramban 23:2).

III

The Ramban's introduction notes that the laws of prohibited foods and relations apply to all of Am Yisrael as well. They are found in Toras Kohanim because they can lead to ritual impurity and an obligatory korban, both of which relate to the Bais Hamikdash.

The avoidance of prohibited foods and relations and overindulgence in permissible pleasures is the very essence of human sanctity (Ramban 19:1). When one experiences physical pleasure with appropriate restraint, his actions are sanctified and "redeemed" (Rav Soloveitchik, *And From There You Shall Seek*, p. 110ff.).

Human sanctity complements the aforementioned sanctities of space and time (olam, shanah, nefesh; see Ramban, *Sha'ar Hagemul*, Chavel ed., p. 296). As we face the Bais Hamikdash from afar and remember Shabbos all week andyom tov all year, so, too, must we be mindful of Hashem when we engage in physical activities.

While the ratio of totally spiritual activities to spiritually minded physical activities varies from person to person, the following pasuk may provide a model for all to follow regardless of their own proper balance. The Kohen Gadol sprinkles the blood in the Kodosh haKodoshim once upward and seven times downward (16:14). Everyone should devote at least one unit to spiritual pursuits for every seven spent on worldly matters. The Maharal (*Ner Mitzvah*; see *Chanukah: Conflict of Cultures Then and Now*) implies this ratio as well. He views Sukkos as a seven-day holiday representing nature, and Shmini Atzeres, day eight, when we celebrate the heavenly Torah, as representing the supernatural.

IV

The critical link between the mundane and the Divine is emphasized in the ways these sprinklings are numbered. While the Gemara (Yoma 55a) provides a technical or scriptural reason and the Kabbalists provide an esoteric one (*Avodas Hakodesh*, 16:14), one can suggest a conceptual explanation as well, which perhaps underlies the scriptural source.

Each of the seven downward sprinklings, counted one to seven, is preceded by "one," referring to the upward one. This remarkable method of counting, which the chazzan and kahal recite responsively and repeatedly on Yom Kippur, teaches that one may not be involved in earthly matters without the pervasive influence of heavenly ideals. [The Ba'al HaTurim refers to tachtonim and elyonim, low and high realms, but interprets the ratio differently.]

The ideal of sanctity is strongly linked to separation from sexual immorality (Rashi, 19:1). Unfortunately, even in this critical area, and even among otherwise observant Jews, we have seen the fulfillment of the Psalmist's description: "They mingled with the nations and learned their deeds" (106:35).

Overlooking such immoral acts in the spirit of today's non-judgmentalism threatens the very core of a holy Jewish society, especially if the acts are publicly known, and even more so if they are publicly flaunted. While the preventative measures found in the Rambam (Hilchos Yom Tov, 6:21), based on the aforementioned Gemara in Kiddushin (see Maggid Mishneh), may be impracticable, acquiescence to and acceptance of what was unacceptable even in secular society in the recent past by the Torah community is itself a chilul Hashem, as the Netziv noted, and likened to placing an idol in the Sanctuary (Akedas Yitzchak, Parashas Vayera).

We are duty-bound to sanctify all our time by our connecting it to the holy times of Shabbos and festivals, Torah and mitzvos. We must sanctify our homes by focusing on the holy space of the Bais Hamikdash and its successor, the Bais Haknesses. We must fulfill kedoshim tiyu by refraining from the prohibited, exercising restraint, and thereby sublimating the permissible. By doing so, we will merit the practical reinstatement of Toras Kohanim in the Bais Hamikdash.

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Faith As A Journey

by Chief Rabbi Lord Jonathan Sacks

Emor (Leviticus 21-24) Faith As A Journey In its account of the festivals of the Jewish year, this week's Torah portion contains the following statement: You shall dwell in thatched huts for seven days. Everyone included in Israel must live in such thatched huts. This is so that future generations will know that I caused the Israelites to live in sukkot when I brought them out of Egypt. I am the Lord your God. What precisely this means was the subject of disagreement between two great teachers of the Mishnaic era, Rabbi Eliezer and Rabbi Akiva. According to the Talmud Bavli (Sukkah 11a), Rabbi Eliezer holds that the reference is to the clouds of glory that accompanied the Israelites on their journey through the desert. Rabbi Akiva maintains that the verse is to be understood literally (sukkot mammash). It means "huts" - no more, no less. A similar difference of opinion exists between the great medieval Jewish commentators. Rashi and Ramban favour the "clouds of glory" interpretation. Ramban cites as proof the prophecy of Isaiah concerning the end of days: Then the Lord will create over all of Mount Zion and over those who assemble there a cloud of smoke by day and a glow of flaming fire by night; over all the glory will be a canopy. It will be a shelter and shade from the heat of the day, and a refuge and hiding place from the storm and rain. (Isaiah 4:5-6) Here the word sukkah clearly refers not to a natural but to a miraculous protection. Ibn Ezra and Rashbam, however, favour the literal interpretation. Rashbam explains as follows: the festival of Sukkot, when the harvest was complete and the people were surrounded by the blessings of the land, was the time to remind them of how they came to be there. The Israelites would relive the wilderness years during which they had no permanent home. They would then feel a sense of gratitude to God for bringing them to the land. Rashbam's prooftext is Moses' speech in Devarim 8: When you have eaten and are satisfied, praise the Lord your God for the good land he has given you. Be careful that you do not forget the Lord your God . . . Otherwise, when you eat and are satisfied, when you build fine houses and settle down, and when your herds and flocks grow large and your silver and gold increase and all you have is multiplied, then

your heart will become proud and you will forget the Lord your God, who brought you out of Egypt, out of the land of slavery . . . You may say to yourself, "My power and the strength of my hands have produced this wealth for me." But remember the Lord your God, for it is He who gives you the ability to produce wealth, confirming his covenant which He swore to your forefathers, as it is today. (8:10-18) According to Rashbam, Sukkot (like Pesach) is a reminder of the humble origins of the Jewish people, a powerful antidote to the risks of affluence. That is one of the overarching themes of Moses' speeches in the book of Devarim and a mark of his greatness as a leader. The real challenge to the Jewish people, he warned, was not the dangers they faced in the wilderness, but the opposite, the sense of wellbeing and security they would have once they settled the land. The irony - and it has happened many times in the history of nations - is that people remember God in times of distress but forget him in times of plenty. That is when cultures become decadent and begin to decline. A question, however, remains. According to the view that sukkot is to be understood literally, what miracle does the festival of Sukkot represent? Pesach celebrates the deliverance of the Israelites from Egypt with signs and wonders. Shavuot recalls the giving of the Torah at Mount Sinai, the only time in history when an entire people experienced an unmediated revelation of God. On the "clouds of glory" interpretation, Sukkot fits this scheme. It recalls the miracles in the wilderness, the forty years during which they ate manna from heaven, drank water from a rock, and were led by a pillar of cloud by day and of fire by night (In 1776, Thomas Jefferson chose this image as his design for the Great Seal of the United States). But on the view that the sukkah is not a symbol but a fact - a hut, a booth, nothing more - what miracle does it represent? There is nothing exceptional in living in a portable home if you are a nomadic group living in the Sinai desert. It is what Bedouin do to this day. Where then is the miracle? A surprising and lovely answer is given by the prophet Jeremiah: Go and proclaim in the hearing of Jerusalem: "I remember the devotion of your youth, how, as a bride, you loved me and followed me through the desert, through a land not sown. Throughout Tenakh, most of the references to the wilderness years focus on the graciousness of God and the ingratitude of the people: their quarrels and complaints, their constant inconstancy. Jeremiah does the opposite. To be sure, there were bad things about those years, but against them stands the simple fact that the Israelites had the faith and courage to embark on a journey through an unknown land, fraught with danger, and sustained only by their trust in God. They were like Sarah who accompanied Abraham on his journey, leaving "his land, birthplace and father's house" behind. They were like Tziporah who went with Moses on his risk-laden mission to bring the Israelites out of Egypt. There is a faith that is like love; there is a love that calls for faith. That is what the Israelites showed in leaving a land where they had lived for 210 years and travelling out into the desert, "a land not sown", not knowing what would befall them on the way, but trusting in God to bring them to their destination. Perhaps it took Rabbi Akiva, the great lover of Israel, to see that what was truly remarkable about the wilderness years was not that the Israelites were surrounded by the clouds of glory but that they were an entire nation without a home or houses; they were like nomads without a place of refuge. Exposed to the elements, at risk from any surprise attack, they none the less continued on their journey in the faith that God would not desert them. To a remarkable degree Sukkot came to symbolise not just the forty years in the wilderness but also two thousand years of exile. Following the destruction of the second Temple, Jews were scattered throughout the world. Almost nowhere did they have rights. Nowhere could they consider themselves at home. Wherever they were, they were there on sufferance, dependent on a ruler's whim. At any moment without forewarning they could be expelled, as they were from England in 1290, from Vienna in 1421, Cologne, 1424, Bavaria 1442, Perugia, Vicenza, Parma and Milan in the 1480s, and most famously from Spain in 1492. These expulsions gave rise to the Christian myth of

"the wandering Jew" - conveniently ignoring the fact that it was Christians who imposed this fate on them. Yet even they were often awestruck at the fact that despite everything Jews did not give up their faith when (in Judah Halevi's phrase) "with a word lightly spoken" they could have converted to the dominant faith and put an end to their sufferings. Sukkot is the festival of a people for whom, for twenty centuries, every house was a mere temporary dwelling, every stop no more than a pause in a long journey. I find it deeply moving that Jewish tradition called this time zeman simchatenu, "the season of our joy". That, surely, is the greatness of the Jewish spirit that, with no protection other than their faith in God, Jews were able to celebrate in the midst of suffering and affirm life in the full knowledge of its risk and uncertainty. That is the faith of a remarkable nation. R. Levi Yitzchak of Berditchev once explained why the festival of Nissan has two names, Pesach and Chag haMatzot. The name Pesach represents the greatness of God who "passed over" the houses of the Israelites in Egypt. The name Chag haMatzot represents the greatness of the Israelites who were willing to follow God into the wilderness without provisions. In the Torah, God calls the festival Chag haMatzot in praise of Israel. The Jewish people, however, called it Pesach to sing the praise of God. That, it seems, is the argument between R. Eliezer and R. Akiva about Sukkot. According to R. Eliezer, it represents God's miracle, the clouds of glory. According to R. Akiva, however, it represents the miracle of Israel - their willingness to continue the long journey to freedom, vulnerable and at great risk, led only by the call of God. Why then, according to Rabbi Akiva, is Sukkot celebrated at harvest time? The answer is in the very next verse of the prophecy of Jeremiah. After speaking of "the devotion of your youth, how, as a bride, you loved me," the prophet adds: Israel is holy to God, the first fruit of His harvest. Just as, during Tishri, the Israelites celebrated their harvest, so God celebrates His - a people who, whatever else their failings, have stayed loyal to heaven's call for longer, and through a more arduous set of journeys, than any other people on earth.

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THE MITZVAH OF CHODOSH RABBI MICHAEL TAUBES

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: 10511). Since the Torah specifies (ibid. Posuk 10) that the amount of 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 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 T'midin U'Musafin – Perek 7, Hilchos 11512) 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 Chameshet Minei Dagan, the 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 – Perek 10, Halacha 4) and the Shulchan Aruch (Yoreh Deah – Siman 293, Se'if 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 (ibid. 68b), 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. 5 Se'if 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. Se'if Katan 2) quotes from the Terumas HaDeshen (Sha'ailos 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 (Chiddushei Rebbe Akiva Eiger 5 ibid. "Hai'nu"), 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. – "Kedemuchach"), raises this question, noting that the Gemara in Yevamos (83a) seems to rule clearly that it takes two weeks. The Vilna Gaon (Bei'ur Ha'GR" A – ibid. end of Se'if Katan 2) brings this up as well and tries to reconcile the problem, but leaves the matter in doubt. The Aruch HaShulchan (ibid. Se'ifim 75 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 "Be'Chol Moshvotchem", "wherever you dwell." This would imply that this Mitzvah is not restricted to Eretz Yisrael or to its produce. Indeed, the Mishnah in Orlah (Perek 3: Mishnah 9) states plainly that the prohibition to eat Chodosh applies everywhere according to the Torah. The Mishnah in Kiddushin (36b537a), 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 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, Halacha 8: Daf 22a) suggests that although produce grown outside of Eretz Yisrael is not subject to the laws of Chodosh, the phrase: "Be'Chol Moshvotchem" 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. Halacha 2) rules clearly that the Mitzvah of Chodosh applies on a Torah level everywhere, as do the Rif in Kiddushin (15b Bidapei HaRi" F), the Rosh there (Perek 1, Siman 62), and others. Elsewhere, however, the Rosh there (Sha'ailos U'Teshuvos HaRosh – K'lal 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. Se'ifim 256) 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. Se'if 2) rules that the Mitzvah of Chodosh applies both to 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. Se'if 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 longstanding 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. Se'if 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. "Kesiv"), 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 Middas Chassidut, an act of extra piety.

It must be stressed, however, that the Vilna Gaon (Bei'ur Ha'GR" A 5 ibid. Se'if 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 (Orech Chaim – Siman 489, Se'if 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. Se'if 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.

Rabbi Yissocher Frand <ryfrand@torah.org> 12:05 PM (11 hours ago) to ravfrand Rabbi Yissocher Frand Parshas Emor
These divrei Torah were adapted from the hashkafa portion of Rabbi Yissocher Frand's Commuter Chavrusah Tapes on the weekly portion:

One Who Curses The Name of G-d is Not An Atheist

The end of Parshas Emor contains the unusual story of the Blasphemer. This son of a Jewish mother and an Egyptian father cursed the Name of G-d. He was brought to Moshe, but Moshe did not initially know what the appropriate punishment was for such a sin. He was told by the Almighty that such a person is deserving of Stoning, the most severe of all forms of the death penalty. Moshe publicized this Divine ruling to the Children of Israel and the Blasphemer was in fact stoned.

However, in relating this whole narrative, the Torah seems to contain a redundancy. The final pasuk of the Parsha reads: "Moshe spoke to the Children of Israel and they took the blasphemer to the outside of the camp, and they pelted him with stones; and the Children of Israel did as Hashem commanded Moses." [Vayikra 24:23] This last phrase repeating

the fact that "the Children of Israel did as Hashem commanded Moses" seems entirely superfluous.

Furthermore, Chazal are bothered by the introductory phrase to the story: "And the son of an Israelite woman went out" [Vayikra 24:10]. The Sages want to know "Where did he go out from?" There is a very enigmatic Medrash containing several opinions quoted by Rashi: Rabbi Berachya taught that he "came out" from the immediately preceding parsha in the Torah relating to the Lechem HaPanim [Show Bread]: He scoffed and said, "'On the Sabbath day he shall arrange it'. It is the practice of the king to eat warm, fresh bread every day. Might a king eat cold, nine-day old, bread?"

Every week, the Jewish people were instructed to take twelve loaves of bread and place them on the Shulchan [Table]. The bread would stay on the Shulchan for an entire week. After the week was over, they would bring in new bread. The Kohanim were then allowed to eat the bread from the previous week. The Blasphemer was ostensibly disturbed at the fact that the Kohanim were eating stale bread. This idea bothered him so much that he went out and cursed the Name of the Almighty. Does this make any sense at all? Would this be a person's biggest complaint against Judaism – that the Lechem HaPanim sits on the Table a week before it is consumed? This is what caused him to Blaspheme? What is the meaning of this?

I would like to share an explanation I saw from the Tolner Rebbe. As a preface, we must understand that Medrashim speak in a different language than the Shulchan Aruch. Medrash speaks in the language of codes and metaphors. Words allude to various things and cannot always be taken literally.

In Medrashic literature, bread more than just flour, water, yeast, and salt. Bread is symbolic of the sustenance that a Jew receives from the Almighty. When the pasuk says "For not by bread alone will man live, rather by that which is uttered by the Mouth of G-d will man live" [Devarim 8:3], it is referring to bread as the symbolism for the sustenance received from Heaven by every single Jew.

This can help us to understand a Gemara in Tractate Sanhedrin 102. Rav Ashi was sitting with his disciples and he told them "Tomorrow we are going to discuss our friend Menashe." (Menashe was one of the most wicked Kings in the history of the Davidic Dynasty). That night, Menashe appeared to Rav Ashi in a dream and told him, "You call me 'friend'? You consider me to be your equal and colleague? You are not in my league at all! You do not come to my ankles! I will prove it to you. I will ask you a halachic question and let's see if you know the answer: From where is bread cut?"

Rav Ashi admitted that he did not know. Menashe told him the halacha that bread is cut from the place that is most well baked. Then Menashe blasted Rav Ashi: "How can you call yourself a Talmid Chochoh? How dare you refer to me as 'your colleague'? You don't know simple Halachos!"

Then Rav Ashi turned the tables and started asking questions to Menashe: "Menashe, if you are such a scholar and so expert even on the laws of breaking bread, then how could it be that you are an idolater? How can you reconcile that?"

Menashe responded, "If you would have been there in my era when the evil inclination for idolatry was so great, you would have tripped over your coat running towards the idols to worship them. Do not ask me about Avodah Zarah, you cannot comprehend how strong the urges were to worship them!"

The Maharal in Netzech Yisrael, asks on this Talmudic story – why of all the questions in Halacha that might be posed, did Menashe specifically ask about where was the proper place to cut bread? He explains that Menashe was trying to tell Rav Ashi "I believe in the Ribono shel Olam. I know that there is a G-d and He provides 'Lechem' – sustenance, livelihood – to everybody; but the yetzer harah [evil

inclination] for Avodah Zarah [idolatry] was so great that I could not contain myself.

Livelihood [parnassah] came to Klal Yisrael through the Lechem HaPanim. The conduit, the pipe, through which the Almighty funneled parnassah to Klal Yisrael when the Basi HaMikdash was standing, was the Lechem HaPanim. That is why (the Gemara tells us this in Tractates Shabbos and Menachos and the Rambam rules this way in practice) they did not merely remove the old loaves and put down new loaves. There needed to be bread on the Shulchan constantly. The Kohanim slid the old loaves off simultaneously while they were sliding the new loaves on. If for a moment, the Shulchan would remain without Lechem, the conduit of Parnassah to the Jewish people would be broken. This is what Lechem HaPanim is all about.

The Blasphemer looked at the Lechem HaPanim and asked "What kind of business is this? The Almighty has stale bread?" The Blasphemer was not bothered by hot and cold bread. He was bothered by what he thought was "this baloney about the Almighty providing our sustenance". He felt that this was not true. "There may be a G-d, but if you think that He is interested in ensuring that you receive your paycheck, you are crazy!" There may be a G-d, but He does not bother himself with such mundane tasks as providing paychecks to people. The symbolism was "Look the bread is hot one week, but by the time you get to it, it's cold. There is no direct connection."

The Gemara says that the Blasphemer was wrong. The bread was not removed from the Shulchan cold a week later, but rather "as it was placed on the table so was it removed." One of the miracles of the Lechem HaPanim was that it remained warm and fresh the entire week. There was constant Providence and the hot bread symbolized the fact that the Almighty does in fact not let it become cold and He does not let the world run on its own. He is involved in people's making a living.

The Blasphemer cursed the Name of G-d. One who curses the Name of G-d is not an atheist. One who curses the Name of G-d is saying there is a G-d but I just do not believe that He is involved.

With this we can understand the question of the apparent redundancy that we questioned at the beginning. The Jewish people stoned the Blasphemer as they were told. But the question is, did he have an effect? Did the Blasphemer perhaps cool down the people's faith in Divine Providence (Hashgocha Pratis)? Did he perhaps cause people to doubt whether maybe HaShem is not involved in guaranteeing the livelihood of every single Jew? In order to answer this question, the Torah 'repeats' – "and the Children of Israel did as Hashem commanded Moses". This teaches that the Blasphemer did not have an effect on them. They continued to believe that the Almighty provides their parnassah and they continued to believe in the lesson of the Lechem haPanim.

This write-up is adapted from the hashkafa portion of Rabbi Yissocher Frand's Commuter Chavrusah Torah Tapes on the weekly Torah Portion. The Tapes, CDs, or a complete catalogue can be ordered from the Yad Yechiel Institute, PO Box 511, Owings Mills MD 21117-0511. Call (410) 358-0416 or e-mail tapes@yadyechiel.org or visit <http://www.yadyechiel.org/> for further information.

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from: Shema Yisrael Torah Network <shemalist@shemayisrael.com> to: Peninim <peninim@shemayisrael.com> date: Thu, Apr 25, 2013 at 6:27 PM subject: **Peninim on the Torah by Rabbi A. Leib Scheinbaum - Parshas Emor** PARSHAS EMOR

Say to the Kohanim, the sons of Aharon. (21:1)

The Kohanim represent our nation's spiritual elite. Their greatness is hereditary; thus, their responsibility to convey the compelling nature of their lineage and

station in life to the next generation is consequential. It is, therefore, noteworthy that they were excluded from the monarchy, as was the rest of the nation. On his deathbed, Yaakov Avinu, blessed each of his sons. He turned to Yehudah and said, Lo yasur shevet miYehudah, "The scepter shall not depart from Yehudah" (Bereishis 49:10). While this blessing did not take effect immediately, since Shaul Hamelech, our nation's first monarch, heralded from the tribe of Binyamin - every succeeding monarch, beginning with David Hamelech, descended from shevet Yehudah. Ramban posits that, exclusive of the fact that Yaakov bequeathed the monarchy to Yehudah, a special prohibition states that Kohanim may not reign. He claims that the Chashmonaim, who were righteous, G-d-fearing leaders, were severely punished and basically expunged from our nation because they had transgressed this interdiction. After the Chanukah miracle, they took the scepter of monarchy into their hands - and kept it in their domain.

Why are the Kohanim prohibited more so than any other shevet from ruling? It is not as if there is no precedent. U'Malkitzedek, melech Shaleim... v'hu Kohen l'Keil Elyon, "And Malkitzedek, king of Shaleim... he was a Priest of G-d, the Most High" (Bereishis 14:18). Furthermore, had Reuven not sinned, he would have received the honorarium of the crowns of both Kehunah and Malchus. Apparently, no friction exists between Malchus and Kehunah. On the contrary, it makes sense to suggest that one complements the other. Aharon HaKohen possessed the Kesser Torah, Crown of Torah, and the Kesser Kehunah. Why should he not also have enjoyed the Kesser Malchus?

Horav Aryeh Leib Heyman, zl, suggests that the cause for the exclusion of the Kohanim from monarchy originated when Aharon HaKohen did not take a more decisive position during the sin of the Golden Calf. When the nation arose against him, clamoring for a replacement of Moshe Rabbeinu, he stalled for time. He did not rebuke them for their outrageous behavior and impossible demands. Indeed, when Moshe Rabbeinu confronted Aharon, he asked, "What suffering did they impose on you to force you to do it to them?" Ramban goes so far as to interpret Moshe's critique to mean, "What did they do to cause you to hate them, so that you did this to them?" The other commentators, each in his inimitable manner, present a scathing objection to Aharon's allowing the people to carry out the sin - without putting up a fight.

These disapprovals are all relative to Aharon's lofty spiritual stature, and Aharon, indeed, had his reasons, which he expressed to Moshe. He put the sin into perspective, claiming that it was the result of hundreds of years of Jewish exposure to Egypt idolatry. Yet, Moshe refused to back off.

We are being presented with two diverse personalities, two very different natures, and two opposing perspectives on how to deal with the issue of this first communal sin. Aharon demonstrated his consummate love for the Jewish People. Ohaiv shalom v'rodef shalom, "Lover of peace and pursuer of peace," were his unique qualities which earned the Kesser Kehunah for him. As Kohan Gadol, his mission went beyond creating harmony among his fellow man. His focus now was being Yisrael l'Avinu she'ba'Shomayim, "Between Klal Yisrael and Our Father in Heaven." One quality he lacked was the dominating nature, the forcefulness and defiance, which a melech, king, must have in order to lead. When dealing with people, rachamim, compassion, is the character trait that must override all others. A king, however, must be reserved and strong. His decisions must be disciplined and guided by strict justice. A king must address the bigger picture and all of the far-reaching ramifications of his decision. He would like to show compassion, but compassion for one person can spell tragedy for another. Prior to rendering a decision, the king must take all of this into the equation.

Once Aharon deferred to the Golden Calf sinners, it left a blemish on the entire family of Kohanim. Since the Leviim are subservient to the Kohanim, the entire shevet Levi was disqualified from monarchy. Rav Heiman posits that the distinction between Malchus and Kehunah is behind the reason that Moshe's name is deleted from Parashas Tetzaveh. From the beginning of Sefer Shemos until the end of the Torah, Moshe's name is found in every parsha - except for Parashas Tetzaveh. The commentators cite various reasons for this. Rav Heiman explains that Parashas Tetzaveh is all about the Kehunah and the appointment of Aharon as its leader. By excluding Moshe from the parsha, the Torah is alluding that Malchus and Kehunah should be distinct from one another.

From the above, it seems that Aharon was passive in his resistance to Moshe. Aharon loved Jews and, as a result, he could not stand up to them. The Midrash, however, presents the first Kohan Gadol in a completely different light. While the simple reading of the Torah's narrative in Parashas Ki Sisa implies that when Moshe descended from Har Sinai, he saw the spiritual rebellion against Hashem and proceeded to smash the Luchos, Chazal do not seem to think so. Indeed, they portray a totally different scenario. Apparently, there was a serious dispute between Aharon and the elders on one side and Moshe Rabbeinu on the other. Moshe contended that a nation of idol worshippers did not deserve the Luchos. They were

too obsessed with the Golden Calf to desire Hashem. Thus, the Tablets had to be destroyed. This nation had no interest in the Luchos. Aharon and the Zekeinim disputed this. The Jews should be given another chance. After experiencing so much pain, hundreds of years of brutal slavery, they were now in no condition to reject the blandishments of the yetzer hora.

Their dispute did not stop with words. Aharon and the Zekeinim took hold of the Luchos and attempted to wrest them from Moshe's hands. Moshe persevered and triumphed over them, grabbing hold of the Luchos and smashing them. Horav Avraham Pam, zl, as quoted by Horav Yissachar Frand, Shlita, explains the "dialogue" that ensued between these spiritual giants. Aharon and the Elders screamed, "Moshe! You are wrong! True, they are presently worshipping what seems to be an idol, but we can work with them. Give us a chance to show them the error of their ways, to enlighten them in our Torah. Breaking the Luchos is an act of finality. They cannot be resurrected. Please!" Moshe did not listen. He broke the Luchos.

Despite contending against a majority of dissenting opinions, regardless of the logic of the majority's position, ignoring the emotion that also sided with them - Moshe acted with conviction and, perhaps, audacity. He made a decision based upon a kal v'chomer, a priori logical argument. Concerning the Pesach offering the Torah writes, Kol ben neichar lo yochal bo, "Anyone estranged from Judaism (a mumar) is not permitted to partake of it" (Shemos 12:43). This is only one mitzvah. Certainly, one who has abandoned Judaism cannot receive the entire Torah.

Tosfos questions Moshe's logic. While it is true that one who has abandoned Judaism has no business eating the Korban Pesach, had the Jews received the Torah, they might have repented. They certainly deserved a chance to prove themselves. This is rule number one in Jewish outreach: Everybody deserves a chance.

Rav Pam explains that it was Moshe's daas Torah, wisdom derived from the Torah, that impelled him to render the unequivocal decision to break the Luchos. Our quintessential leader intuitively felt that he needed to display discipline at this most critical juncture in our nation's formation. A foundation that is weak will not endure. A foundation based on compromise is weak. There can be flexibility with the "branches," but the "trunk" must be solid. This was Moshe's finest moment. It defined him, and ultimately set the standards for Klal Yisrael's future. Aharon had his derech, approach, which was supported by popular opinion. Moshe, however, as melech, superseded their opinion. Hashem agreed with Moshe.

The mark of a gadol b'Yisrael is his greatness as a Torah giant. He is magnified in stature, not only in his erudition, but in every aspect of his moral/spiritual refinement. A giant is not simply taller than the average man; his every organ is larger than that of others. A gadol represents the true Torah monarch. His daas Torah reflects an insight based upon wisdom gleaned from Torah scholarship, the result of toil, diligence and sacrifice. Scholarship in conjunction with consummate spiritual integrity and total devotion to the Jewish nation are the traits that constitute a gadol. In addition, he brooks no compromise in his faith and adherence to the laws of Torah. He fears no man; his devotion is only to Hashem. Horav Aharon Kotler, zl, the individual who set the standard for uncompromised Torah study in America, was such a gadol.

The Rosh Yeshivah of Beth Medrash Govohah worked with selfless devotion to promote Torah and its values. He was challenged by a world of ignorance and apathy. He was attacked by Torah Judaism's overt enemies, but that was to be expected. The discreet and often subtle diatribe that emanated from those too weak to stand up to the forces were determined to secularize Judaism and distance it from Hashem. Rav Aharon was unafraid of neither Torah's declared enemies, nor of their spineless followers. Indeed, it was on the backs of these vacillating sycophants that the secular stream, whom the Rosh Yeshivah referred to as "counterfeiters of Torah," made inroads into Orthodoxy.

Rav Aharon demonstrated how, by extending religious status to the secular groups who two centuries earlier had broken away from the Torah camp and from Hashem, the very foundation of Torah was being impugned. He played a critical role in the historic psak, halachic decision, condemning membership in any organization which granted equal status to any stream of Judaism which was not Torah oriented. This psak barred Orthodox rabbis from participating in mixed religious organizations.

He would argue, "Can you imagine, doctors dedicated to eradicating a disease joining a group that spreads the sickness? It is inconceivable to build Judaism, while recognizing the legitimacy of those who deny the Torah."

Regrettably, the Rosh Yeshivah's opinion was not shared by all. Some differed philosophically; others were simply too weak to stand up to the rising pressures of those who were content with being poseiach al shtei ha'se'ifiim, "dancing between two opinions." While the situation has not been expunged, thanks to Rav Aharon,

whose piercing eyes saw the truth, a new Torah consciousness was aroused which continues to grow stronger with each passing day.

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

The Chasam Sofer renders this pasuk homiletically as presenting the imperative and guidelines for successful Jewish outreach. First: "Say to the Kohanim, the sons of Aharon" that they should act in accordance with their noble, illustrious heritage. Their Patriarch, Aharon HaKohen, was known by his nom de plume as the consummate Ohaiv shalom v'rodef shalom, ohaiv es ha'brios u'mekarvan laTorah, "(He) lover of peace and (he) pursuer of peace; (he) loves people and brings them closer to the Torah." One who seeks success in reaching out to his fellow man must first make peace with himself. No sin, no moral turpitude, no spiritual flaws - these are a given. Otherwise, one is a hypocrite. He can hardly expect someone to listen to him if he sets such a defective standard. He must also be mekabel kol ha'adam b'seivar panim yafos, "receive everyone with a cheerful face."

There is, however, one "catch" to the welcome embrace that we are to display to those who are not yet observant. There can be no vestige of chillul Hashem, desecration of Hashem's Name. One should not call attention to himself by bending over backwards in an effort to impress one who may be called a rasha, wicked, for his efforts to undermine Judaism. We must reach out, but, if we reach out to those whose perception of our work is limited, it might very well be misconstrued. This will result in a chillul Hashem, as people will say that we have mixed allegiances.

It is not worth turning off a large number of people in our attempt to reach out to one person who has gone sour. The Torah alludes to this when it writes L'nefesh lo yetamei b'amav, "Each of you shall not contaminate himself to a (dead) person among his people." In order to save one nefesh, soul/person, it is not worth endangering an entire group of people who will be left with many unanswered questions. Kiruv, Jewish outreach, is all-important, but we must always be aware of and weigh the price we might have to pay for success.

While it is imperative that one exert great care in reaching out to the unaffiliated, we must address a serious problem. It is understandable that some of us fear the unknown and are even more concerned with what others might say. Regrettably, however, there is a shortage of good, knowledgeable, committed individuals who possess the answers and have the sensitivity necessary to deal with those who are either turned off from - or were never turned on to - Judaism.

Let me just share an example from a kiruv blog I read the other day which demonstrates the type of question one might be asked, and the answer an astute expert should give. The questioner wanted to know how one "leaves" Judaism. Apparently, the product of a secular-oriented home, he grew up with nothing Jewish; thus, he never felt a connection to the religion of his ancestors. In his mind, Judaism is a religion - not a race. Why should he be forced to be part of a religion to which he has no connection and for which he has no feeling? "Why is there no 'exit strategy'?" he asks.

With care and expertise, the responder explained that, first of all, as far as the anti-Semites of the world are concerned, he is a Jew. Regardless of what he might do to dispel this notion, the reality is: he is Jewish. Hitler did not seem to care about an individual's level of observance or his affiliation with anything Jewish, or even if he was the product of an intermarriage or himself intermarried. If they could trace a drop of Jewish blood in the person's bloodlines - he was considered Jewish.

Next, Judaism is much more than about belief and practice, as we find with other religions. Judaism is a family. We are all bnei Avraham, Yitzchak, v'Yaakov, descendants of the holy Patriarchs. We accept geirim, converts, who adopt our way of life. Then they also become "family." One cannot change his family.

Last, the mere reason that the person writes his questions is an indication that he does not want to leave. He wants to stay, but does not know how. His exposure to Judaism was through the few times that he had entered a temple which mocked G-d and Judaism. How is one to develop a connection to the real thing from such exposure? He was invited to experience Orthodox Judaism though a Shabbos and other such experiences. Before one closes the door on the religion for which so many died, it would only be proper that he become acutely aware of what it is that he is rejecting.

The above is an example. People seek the truth. We need individuals who are not afraid of the truth, who can expound it as well as they live it. These individuals must be aware, however, that there are dangers of overexposure. Just like the sun: the right amount is healthy; too much can be harmful and even deadly.

And to his virgin sister who is close to him, who has not been wed to a man; to her shall he contaminate himself. (21:3)

Chazal teach that it is a mitzvah for a Kohen to defile himself to the seven close relatives. Indeed, as Chazal say, if the Kohen refuses to ritually contaminate

himself to any of them, we compel him to do so (Zevachim 100a). In a way, this is a form of sacrifice. A Kohen who is sincere about his station in life might get carried away. He might feel that, even for a close relative, it is just not worth it. He has heretofore maintained his purity. Why should he ruin his spotless record? Obviously, such a Kohen has no clue concerning kedushah, holiness, and taharah, purity. One is holy and pure as long as he adheres to Hashem's word. When his mind starts playing games, and his perspective on frumkeit, religiosity, becomes subjectively flawed - he has a very serious problem.

Family plays a significant role in Jewish life. We see here that while the Kohen must maintain a strict and highly-elevated level of personal purity, he must nonetheless defile himself to a member of his family. If family is so important, why is it that individuals who are normally quite generous, suddenly shy away and melt into the background when an extended member of their own family is down and out? Horav Gamliel Rabinowitz, Shlita, goes to the crux of the problem as he explains that it all boils down to kavod, respect; payback/gratitude; recognition of all of the things that we want for ourselves in return for being "nice" to someone in need.

Let us face it, when one helps a stranger he is acknowledged, appreciated and overwhelmed with abundant gratitude. When it is a family member whom we have helped, it is quite possible that we will not even receive a "thank you." Why? Because it is only right that one should help his own. It is expected. On the contrary, Heaven help him if he turns a deaf ear to the pleas of a family member. Family expects to be supported - even when there are no plaques or public accolades. It is difficult to help when there is little or no appreciation.

Rav Gamliel quotes Horav Mottel Slonimer, zl, who explains that one does not look forward to helping relatives, due to the lack of gratitude associated with his assistance. On the contrary, often he is left with complaints for not doing more. One must be acutely aware that disregarding the plight of a relative is Biblically prohibited. This may be defined from the fact that the Kohen may not defile himself to anyone, but he must defile himself to his closest relatives.

When an ox or a sheep or a goat is born... it is acceptable for a fire-offering to Hashem. (22:27)

The Yalkut Shimoni teaches us why the above three animals (ox, sheep, goat) were selected to serve as Korbanos, sacrifices. The ox was chosen in the merit of Avraham Avinu who, in the course of preparing dinner for his "Heavenly" guests, ran to bring for them an ox. [V'el ha'bakar ratz Avraham, "And to the ox Avraham ran" (Bereishis 18:7)]. Yitzchak Avinu's z'chus, merit, catalyzed the designation of the sheep as a sacrifice. [Va'yar v'hinei ayil neechaz ba'svach b'karnav, "And he raised his eyes and saw, and behold! A ram, afterwards caught in the thicket" (Bereishis 22:13)]. When Yaakov Avinu appeared before his father to receive the blessing, bringing with him dinner made of goat meat, he paved the way for the goat to be used for korbanos. [V'kach li misham shnei gedeyei izim tovim, "And take for me from there two choice young kids of the goats" (Bereishis 26:9)]. Interestingly, this same Midrash is quoted by the Targum Yerushalmi - but with a twist concerning the goats. The Targum posits that it was the fact that Yaakov covered his arms with goat hair when he brought his father dinner that served as the merit for goats to be placed on the Mizbayach, Altar, as a sacrifice. This appears strange, since for all intents and purposes, when Yaakov appeared before his father clothed in goats hair, it was not his finest moment. The entire scene was beguiling, so that Yitzchak would think that before him stood Eisav - not Yaakov. Why would an act of deception be worthy of merit - let alone catalyze the goat as a standard for sacrifice? One would think that it would be quite the opposite.

In his Iyeh HaYam, Horav Yehudah Leib Edil, zl, offers an inspiring explanation. When Rivkah Imeinu instructed Yaakov to take Eisav's place, the Patriarch shuddered at the thought of being complicit in an act of prevarication. How could he deceive his father? Yet, with great trepidation, he went forward and presented himself as Eisav to his father. There was a physical issue that had to be resolved. Eisav was hairy - Yaakov was not. This created a serious problem for Yaakov. What if, for some reason, Yitzchak would want to embrace his son, only to discover that his once hairy son was now smooth as silk? Yaakov's deception would be discovered, and he would be eternally condemned by his father. One does not lie to Yitzchak, the Olah temimah, perfect offering.

We forget, however, that the only reason Yitzchak asked his son to "come closer" was because of the way he spoke, alluding to G-d, that had paved the way for his good fortune. This was not Eisav's style of speech. He never mentioned G-d - period. Eisav was a self-made man, the archetype agnostic. There was no place in his life for a Higher Power. In other words, Yaakov Avinu brought the "lie" upon himself. Had he spoken like Eisav: "I did it," "I found it," - all "me," then Yitzchak would never have suspected that something was amiss. If, for once in his life,

Yaakov would not have attributed his success to Hashem, Yitzchak would not have questioned him. Our Patriarch was not prepared to turn his back on Hashem, to falsify something in which he believed with all his heart and soul. This remains Yaakov's distinctive merit for which we "collected" when we would offer a goat on the Altar.

Perhaps we might suggest an alternative approach which follows along similar lines. When Yaakov was instructed by his mother to present himself as Eisav, he was taking an enormous chance. True, his mother told him, "Do not worry," but to lie was acting against his grain. Yet, his mother told him to do it. How could he disagree with his mother? From a spiritual vantage point, she was right "up there" with Yitzchak. When gedolei hador, the preeminent Torah leaders of our generation, issue a call, impose a decree - we listen; we follow. We trust in our chachamim, Torah scholars - even when their instructions do not conform with our line of thinking. This is the z'chus, merit, of the goats and why we need them today more than ever.

Va'ani Tefillah Shema Yisrael Hashem Elokeinu Hashem Echad.

Krias Shema is a mitzvah - just like other mitzvos. If so, why is a brachah, blessing, not recited prior to performing this mitzvah? Why should Krias Shema be different than Hallel and Megillah? This question applies even according to those who deem the recitation of the three parshios, chapters, of Krias Shema to be Rabbinnically ordained, since Hallel and Megillah are also Rabbinic decrees; yet, we recite a blessing.

Horav Shimon Schwab, zl, explains that the essence of the mitzvah of Krias Shema is Kabbolas Ol Malchus Shomayim, accepting upon oneself the yoke of Heaven. This is primarily the intent and focus of the first pasuk. If one were to simply read the words of Shema Yisrael: Hashem Elokeinu Hashem Echad, without the accompanying kavanah, intent and devotion necessary to the acceptance of Hashem's existence and Oneness, His sovereignty over the world - he would not have fulfilled the mitzvah. In other words, the mitzvah is not just the reading - but the kavanah. The mitzvah of Shema is: Hear, listen, intellectualize and grasp it in your mind! Mere kria, reading, is nothing. The rest of Krias Shema does not carry such stringency. Thus, if one were to read the words without concentrating on their meaning and message, he would still be fulfilling the kria, reading. That is all that is necessary.

Since the kavanah transforms Krias Shema into a mitzvah, no blessing is required. One does not bless for kavanah, because it is not a physical action. Blessings are a requisite for a maaseh ha'mitzvah, a mitzvah which demands a physical act. This is why we do not say a brachah over the mitzvah of tefillah. Prayer is actually an avodah b'lev, action expressed through the heart, via one's proper kavanah.

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Subject Weekly Parsha from Rabbi Berel Wein

**In My Opinion :: Rabbi Berel Wein
Frustrations**

Every day of life automatically brings with it a share of frustrations and disappointments. Very rarely do things turn out for us exactly as we planned and hoped that they would. Some frustrations are relatively minor even in our personal scheme of things - my inability to easily change a halogen light bulb or carry a tune for instance. Other frustrations such as health problems and financial difficulties and reverses take on a greater dimension in our lives.

One can easily say that our ability to deal with life's frustrations in a calm and measured way is the true test of character and mettle. Usually frustration leads to feelings of anger and anger leads to bitterness of spirit and even to violence. I have seen articles by professionals in the field of human psychology that advocate expressions of anger as often being a positive reaction to frustrations.

“Blowing off steam” is an understandable reaction to moments of extreme frustration. Yet the Torah and Jewish tradition militates strongly against such expressions of anger in almost all circumstances of life.

Maimonides, who advocates moderation and a middle of the road approach regarding all human behavior traits, nevertheless advocates extremism in avoiding anger.

The Talmud is replete with statements denigrating anger as a response to the frustrations of life. Anger is a statement that there is no God present in the world. Anger by its very presence is heresy and a denial of faith.

That being the case, how is one to deal with the inevitable daily frustrations of life? Are there no antidotes to the roiling emotions of frustration that fester within us so regularly?

One such antidote, that Jewish tradition advances, is the idea and sense of perspective in viewing life. If one is viewing a painting by a great impressionist or pointillist artist, one is advised to view the painting from a distance - not close up. When standing close up, the canvas appears to be composed of disconnected blotches of paint that carry forth no message or scene.

Standing ten feet away from the canvas the genius of the artist is revealed. Instead of seeing individual small blotches of paint one views a masterpiece of color and form. If in our lives we stand too close to the mundane occurrences that are our daily lot, we are very prone to life’s frustrations and all of the negativities that they produce within us.

Life must be viewed as a whole and being aware of the general picture can help us deal with the particular issues that confront us. The rabbis went so far as to teach us that a living human being should not complain about life’s circumstances and problems – is it not sufficient that the person is still alive?

The Jew begins one’s day by acknowledging the fact that one is still alive to live another day. In the overall scheme of such a view of human existence frustrations and disappointments are more easily borne and dealt with. Perspective is the key to mental health and spiritual strength. Acceptance of one’s inherent limitations is also a necessity in combatting the negativities that life’s frustrations engender within us. There are many things that I simply cannot do. By finally realizing that I do not have that necessary skill, talent or ability, I am no longer as frustrated by my inability to accomplish that mundane act and goal that so baffles me. Professional athletes always proclaim the mantra that they have to “play within themselves” and “not try to do too much.” Bluntly put, this means that they recognize their limitations and concentrate on what they can do, and not fret too much over what they cannot do. This is a good lesson for all of us in all of life’s circumstances.

Of course, acceptance of one’s limitations demands a lowered ego. It is interesting to note that Maimonides, in discussing acceptable traits, links humility with the absence of anger. Someone who is haughty, arrogant and full of hubris will automatically live a life of frustration and anger. Things never go right for such people for everything that does not go right for them is perceived as a personal slight and as a blow to one’s ego.

The great men of the Lithuanian Mussar Movement used one’s reaction to life’s frustrations as a litmus test of one’s spiritual status. Serenity in life and in dealing with life’s challenges became the hallmark of the truly pious Torah Jew. The prophet taught us that “the wicked storm is like the raging sea.” King David blessed God for “leading him to the calm waters.” Life is always replete with frustrations. How we deal with them is the true measure of our spiritual selves.

Shabat shalom

From **Destiny Foundation/Rabbi Berel Wein**
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Subject **Weekly Parsha from Rabbi Berel Wein**

Weekly Parsha :: Rabbi Berel Wein **Emor**

The review of the yearly holidays of Israel appears in this week’s parsha. This type of review also appears in a number of different places in the holy Torah. The reasons advanced by the commentators for this seemingly unnecessary repetition are many, varied and insightful. But there is one that truly resonates with me and I think it has great relevance to our times and circumstances.

And the gist of this explanation, of the necessity for repeating the holiday cycle a number of times, is as follows: The original mention of the holiday cycle is directed to a generation that seemingly needed no such reminders or instructions.

The holiday of Pesach and the commemoration of the exodus from Egyptian bondage were fresh in the minds and memories of the generation of the desert.

And the holiday of Succot was a daily event in their lives, living as they did in their tents and underneath the heavenly clouds in the desert of Sinai. The agricultural nature of Succot - the ingathering of the summer produce of the land – and of Shavuot – the harvest of the spring and winter grain crop and the offering of the first fruits of the land in the Temple – were not yet relevant to that generation, a generation that would not live to see the Land of Israel inhabited by the people of Israel. That description of the holiday cycle came to teach Israel that this cycle was eternal, independent of geographic reality, and not subject to the actual circumstances of life and locality then present in the Jewish world.

The further repetitions of the holiday cycle dealt with the service of the sacrifices to be offered in the Temple. This repetition is Temple service oriented. In the absence of the Temple and its sacrificial service and of the loss of the Jewish homeland and its agricultural produce, one would have possibly thought that the holidays no longer had true meaning, and in effect could stop to exist. This is what happened to other faiths, cultures and even mighty empires.

The loss of power, homeland and sovereignty also made their holidays and days of historical and national commemoration extinct. The Jewish people, faith and its Torah have survived for millennia without nationhood, homeland and with the absence of any vestige of temporal power. One of the main reasons for this near miraculous ability to survive and even thrive has been the proper halachic observances of the holidays of the Jewish calendar year.

There is almost an unconditional and unconnected review of the holidays again in the book of Dvarim, for the observance and importance of the holidays is never relegated to particular generations or geographic locations. The holidays denote the passage of time on the Jewish calendar but they themselves are timeless and, in a certain sense, they are above purely historical time.

The very repetitions of the holidays that appear in the Torah serve to remind us of this fact, of our spiritual existence. As a consequence of our return to our ancient homeland, the agricultural nature of the holidays now exists once more. It in itself confirms the timeless quality that the holidays of the Jewish year represent.

Shabat shalom

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Rabbi Dr. Tzvi Hersh Weinreb

Orthodox Union / www.ou.org
Rabbi Weinreb’s Parsha Column, Emor
Sponsored in memory of Nathan and Louise Schwartz a”h

“Like All Other Boys”

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

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

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

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

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

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

The verse to which I refer reads, "You shall not profane My holy name, that I may be sanctified in the midst of the Israelite people..." (Leviticus 22:32). This verse is the source text for two opposing concepts which lie at the core of Jewish belief. One concept, the negative one, is chillul Hashem, the profanation of God's name, behavior which disgraces the Divine reputation. The opposite concept is kiddush Hashem, behavior which sanctifies God's name and thus brings prestige and honor to Him. Before providing illustrations of the types of behavior that might either profane or sanctify God, let me give you a brief sketch of Rabbi Gustman's biography. He was a brilliant Talmud student in the yeshiva he attended. As a very young man, he was betrothed to the daughter of the rabbi of one of the small suburbs of the great prewar Jewish metropolis of Vilna. Soon after his marriage, his father-in-law died, leaving the position of rabbi of that community to his son-in-law, Rabbi Israel.

The towering rabbinic figure in Vilna in those immediate prewar years was Rabbi Chaim Ozer Grodzenski. Rabbi Chaim Ozer was so impressed by this young man that, despite his age, he included him in his rabbinic court. Soon afterwards, the war broke out. Rabbi Gustman managed to survive by hiding in an array of unimaginable circumstances—in the forest, in a cave, in a pig pen, and in the abandoned ghetto of Vilna. In the course of his flight and evasion of the Nazis, his little son was murdered in front of his eyes. He would recount the story of how he witnessed his son's murder and of how he was forced to take his dead son's shoes and sell them for food.

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

He was overheard telling a particular bereaved father that in a certain sense, his soldier son was superior to the rabbi's own son. "Both your boy and mine," he said, "sanctified God's name by their death. They were both killed because they were Jews. But in the synagogue in heaven,

where they both reside now, my son is sitting in the pews. Your son is the shaliach tzibbur, the prayer leader. This is because my son died as a passive victim, whereas your son died as a hero, leading a group of soldiers in defense of our land and our people."

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

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

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

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

Now we are in a position to understand the seemingly strange blessing which Rabbi Gustman gave my friend's little boy. "I bless you", he was saying, "that you just be like other boys, like boys in peaceful times. I bless you that you not suffer times of persecution and that you never need to experience the battlefield. I bless you that you sanctify God in your ordinary life, in life and not, God forbid, in tragic death."

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

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

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

From Jeffrey Gross <jgross@torah.org>
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**Weekly Halacha Parshas Emor
by Rabbi Doniel Neustadt
The Blessing of ha-Gomel - Part 2**

Question: Which situations call for the recitation of birkas ha-gomel?

Discussion: We mentioned above four categories of people who are supposed to recite ha-gomel. We will briefly discuss those categories and their modern counterparts:

Crossing a desert

Nowadays, a trip on a paved road through a desert is no more dangerous than a trip on an interstate highway; thus birkas ha-gomel is not recited. Still, were it to happen that one lost his way in a desert and survived, ha-gomel would be recited.

Imprisonment

The poskim debate if this refers only to imprisonment in which one's life was endangered or threatened, such as being a prisoner of war, or even jail imprisonment for criminal activity, where one's life is not necessarily in danger. In practice, the individual case should be presented to a rav for a ruling, as many modern prisons can be quite dangerous. 43

Serious illness

This includes recovery from any illness or medical situation which is or could be life-threatening, 44 or any surgery which required general anesthesia. 45 Many poskim maintain that if a patient is so weak that he remains bedridden for three consecutive days, ha-gomel is recited even if according to the doctors the patient's life was not in danger. 46

Diagnosed mental illness which required that the patient be restrained or hospitalized is considered life-threatening, and birkas ha-gomel is recited upon recovery. 47

Birkas ha-gomel should be recited upon complete recovery from the illness or condition, even if the patient needs to continue taking medication for his condition. If, according to the doctors, the patient will never completely regain his former strength, then ha-gomel is recited as soon as he is well enough to walk.

Sea voyage

This refers only to voyages far into the ocean that last several days. 48 However, it also includes shorter trips where harsh weather conditions threatened the safety of the passengers.

Whether or not to recite birkas ha-gomel after an airplane trip is a subject of much debate. There are three opinions:

1. It is doubtful whether ha-gomel may be recited, 49 unless a potentially dangerous situation developed during the flight.
2. Ha-gomel is recited only if the airplane crossed over an ocean or a desert. 50
3. Ha-gomel is recited after every airplane trip. 51

While there is no clear ruling on this issue, the custom today generally follows the poskim who require the recitation of ha-gomel only when an ocean (or a desert) is crossed. [Once the destination has been reached, ha-gomel is recited; the return leg of the trip necessitates its own ha-gomel. 52]

Question: Is birkas ha-gomel recited in cases other than the four categories mentioned?

Discussion: In addition to the four categories of danger mentioned above, our custom is to recite ha-gomel whenever one finds himself in a life-threatening situation and was saved by the grace of Hashem. As long as one came face to face with actual danger and survived, whether he was saved miraculously or by what appears to be "natural" means, ha-gomel is recited. 53 For example, 54 a survivor of

- an attack by wild animals who normally kill their prey
- a car accident which according to bystanders should have been fatal
- a bus which was blown up by a suicide bomber
- a shooting attack
- an armed robbery
- a collapsed building
- a soldier who saw combat in war

In the cases mentioned earlier, the person found himself in actual danger and was nevertheless saved. Sometimes, however, a person is merely close to the danger, but was not actually involved in the danger itself. In those cases, birkas ha-gomel is not recited. 55 Some examples are:

- a sighting of a wild animal, but the animal did not attack
- a killer aiming a weapon in one's general direction, but was overpowered
- a car that went out of control but came to a last minute stop
- a low-impact head-on car crash
- a bomb that exploded seconds before people entered that area
- a gun that discharged by accident and missed the person by inches

General note:

If one remains in doubt as to whether or not he is obligated to recite birkas ha-gomel (e.g., it is difficult to determine if he was in "actual" danger; an unresolved dispute among the poskim; a minyan is not available; a father for a minor, a woman who is embarrassed to recite the blessing in the presence of men, etc.), he has two options whereby he can fulfill his obligation:

- He can recite the blessing without pronouncing Hashem's name. The text would then be: Baruch atah ha-gomel . . .

He can have specific intent to fulfill this mitzvah when reciting the morning blessing of ha-gomel chasadim tovim l'amo Yisrael. Preferably, he should do so out loud in front of ten men, including two Torah scholars. If he wishes, he can add at the end of the text the words "shegemalani (kol) tov." 56

42. See Ketzos ha-Shulchan 65:1.

43. See Be'ur Halachah 219:1 (s.v. chavush), Aruch ha-Shulchan 219:5 and Kaf ha-Chayim 219:11.

44. Rama 219:8.

45. See Avnei Nezer, Y.D. 321; Orchos Rabbeinu, vol. 1, pg. 91; Halichos Shelomo 1:23-2; Tzitz Eliezer 12:18.

46. See Be'ur Halachah 219:8 (s.v. kegon); Ketzos ha-Shulchan 65:3.

47. Tzitz Eliezer 12:18.

48. Minchas Yitzchak 4:11. Thus, ha-gomel is not recited when taking the ferry from Britain to France.

49. Chelkas Yaakov 2:9, quoting the Belzer Rebbe. This was also the view of the Brisker Rav and Tchebiner Rav, quoted in Teshuvos v'Hanahagos 1:81 and 3:191. See also b'Tzeil ha-Chochmah 2:20. According to this opinion, birkas ha-gomel can be said only without pronouncing Hashem's Name.

50. Chazon Ish and Harav Y. Y. Kanievsky (quoted in Orchos Rabbeinu, vol. 1, pg. 91); Minchas Yitzchak 2:47; Tzitz Eliezer 11:14.

51. Igras Mos he, O.C. 2:59; Ketzos ha-Shulchan 65:1; Harav S.Z. Auerbach (Halichos Shelomo 1:23-5); Be'er Moshe 7:69; Yechaveh Da'as 2:26 (for a trip longer than seventy-two minutes).

52. Halichos Shelomo 1:23-4. Others hold that if the duration of the trip is less than three days, then ha-gomel should be recited only upon return; Kaf ha-Chayim 219:5.

53. Mishnah Berurah 219:32. This is the Ashkenazi custom; Sefaradim, however, recite ha-gomel only in situations that fall under one of the four categories mentioned; Kaf ha-Chayim 219:52.

54. The following lists are to be used only as a guide. In actual practice, the case with all of its various details must be presented to a rav for a final ruling.

55. See Maharal (Nesivos Olam, Nesiv ha-Avodah 13), quoted in Shevet ha-Levi 9:45. See also Halichos Shelomo 1:23-1; Chut Shani, Shabbos vol. 2, pg. 302, quoting Harav N. Karelitz; Knei Bosesem 1:12.

56. Harav S.Z. Auerbach (Halichos Shelomo 1:23-8). According to Harav Auerbach, this second method is preferable to the first.

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