



BS"D

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INTERNET PARSHA SHEET ON EMOR - 5785

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Sefirah: On Friday night we will count the 34th day of the Omer.

<https://jewishlink.news/the-meaning-of-greatness/>

Emor: The Meaning of Greatness

Rabbi Judah Mischel

Executive Director, Camp HASC; Mashpiah, OU-NCSY

Rav Moshe Feinstein, zt"l, the beloved rosh yeshivah of Mesivta Tifereth Jerusalem on the Lower East Side of Manhattan, was considered the poseik ha-dor, the leading halachic authority of his generation. Revered for his unmatched genius and hasmada, constant engagement in Talmud Torah, he authored Igros Moshe, a nine volume series of responsa that includes thousands of his brilliant teshuvos, plus an index which fills an additional volume, entitled Yad Moshe. Reb Moshe's wise counsel and psak were eagerly sought by Jews worldwide; countless people of all stripes turned to the tzadik with questions and quandaries large and small. Most significantly perhaps, Reb Moshe was adored for his compassion, sensitivity and midos tovos — his humble care and respect for other human beings.

Dr. Melvin Zelefsky, chair of radiology at Jacobi Medical Center and professor of radiology at Albert Einstein College of Medicine was a talmid of Reb Moshe, and would often visit the Rosh Yeshiva to discuss various medical shailos. Once, when Dr. Zelefsky came to MTJ to discuss a new breakthrough in cardiac surgery, Reb Moshe offered Dr. Zelefsky a unique opportunity: *I have just completed a thorough response to a similar inquiry and wrote a teshuvah detailing all of the various elements of the question. Accompany me home and I will gladly share it with you so that you can make a copy and have it for yourself."

They arrived at the high-rise apartment complex where Reb Moshe lived and walked toward the elevators in the main lobby and Dr Zelefsky pressed the "up" button. When the elevator door opened, Reb Moshe made no move to enter. The doors closed and the elevator began its ascent without them. Dr. Zelefsky was confused, but chose not to question the Rosh Yeshiva. Perhaps Reb Moshe was lost in thought; either way, he pressed the elevator's "up" button a second time. When the elevator arrived, the gadol's curious behavior repeated itself, and once again, Reb Moshe did not enter.

Reb Moshe subtly motioned toward the other end of the lobby. A little girl, who did not appear to be Jewish, sat on the floor, alone. Reb Moshe turned to

Dr. Zelefsky and said, "That child is too young to be left alone. I don't want to leave until the person responsible for her returns."

The Gadol haDor and his respected visitor then waited patiently together. Some time later, the door of the apartment building's rental office opened and a frazzled looking woman, obviously the little girl's mother appeared. Slightly embarrassed, the woman took hold of her daughter's hand and quickly continued on her way.

When Reb Moshe entered the elevator, he remarked gently to Dr. Zelefsky, A klein kind darfhoben shemirah, "A young child requires protection." אומר אל-הכהנים בני אהרן ואמרת אליהם "Speak the kohanim, the sons of Aharon, and tell them-." (21:1)

Rashi points out a seemingly unnecessary repetition in this sentence in the words emor, "speak to", and v'amarta, "and say to them". This phenomenon, he says, teaches us that להזהיר גדולים על הקטנים "the adults (gedolim) should I'hazir, 'warn' the young." In other words, in addition to the kohanim learning from Aharon how to observe the laws of purity, the kohanim should, in turn, "warn" their children to observe these commandments, so that they will not make themselves impure. The young kohanim, too, should avoid contact with the dead so as not to be rendered tameh l'nefesh, ritually impure.

Here, we generally translate Rashi's term gedolim, as "adults" and this is the peshat and basic intent of the commentary. How-ever, the term gadol, "great," is also used to describe great rabbis, leaders and sages. What, precisely, is a "great" person? Automatically labelling brilliant rvshei yeshivah, Talmudic decisors or people of spiritual influence as gedolim can in fact be inaccurate. One who has acquired greatness in intellectual knowledge is of course worthy of respect, but that alone does not qualify them as a gadol b'Yisrael, a "great leader" in Am Yisrael. Providing guidance and support for one's community, yeshivah, network or constituency is meaningful and worthy of much appreciation, but this, too, does not qualify them as a "gadol b'Yisrael."

Gedolim, "big people," are those who see the big picture — and do something about it. Anecdotes of Reb Moshe's broad and deep vision, his humanity, his universal care and concern for others, are instructive to all of us. Truly "big people," leaders of the nation, are those who take responsibility for others, including those beyond the members of their group, worldview, location or society. Great people, leaders with global vision, are those who heed the call of Emor, and can see across the lobby. May we hear and implement the Ribbono shel Olam's call to be a mamleches kohanim, a nation of priests, lovingly and compassionately warning the young, and taking responsibility for each other, for the future, the whole world and every soul in need of resources, wisdom or protection.

<https://torah.org/torah-portion/rav-frand-5785-emor/>

Speak Softly and Put Up With a Lot of Shtick

Rav Yissochar Frand

Parshas Emor

Posted on May 15, 2025 (5785)

These divrei Torah were adapted from the hashkafa portion of Rabbi Yissocher Frand's Commuter Chavrusah Tapes on the weekly portion: #1335 – May We Accept Tzedaka From Non-Jews? Good Shabbos!

Speak Softly and Put Up With a Lot of Shtick

Parshas Emor begins with the words: "And Hashem said to Moshe, 'Speak to the Kohanim the sons of Aharon and say to them: Each of you shall not contaminate himself to a (dead) person among his people.'" (Vayikra 21:1) This introduces us to the prohibition of aKohenallowing himself to become defiled by contact with the dead. We are familiar with the Rashi at the beginning of theparsha, who teaches that the redundant use of the verb amar (say/speak) in this pasuk indicates that this is an exhortation that adultKohanimshould warn their (male) children not to become tameh (ritually impure).

According to the Tur, this is the Biblical source for themitzvahof chinuch (educating our children in the ways of Torah). I saw in a sefer, Divrei Yisrael, from the Modzitzer Rebbe, that in fact any time the Torah uses the language

“Daber el Bnei Yisrael v’amarta aleihem” (Speak to the Children of Israel and say to them), which is not that uncommon, it is a similar redundancy from which we should also be able to apply the principle: L’hazhir gedolim al haketanim (adults should warn children regarding the observance). Chazal say that the verb daber is a lashon kashe (more intense form of speech), which may be appropriate when speaking to adults, while the verb amar is a softer form of speech, which is appropriate when speaking to children. So why do we specifically learn out that the adults should warn the children here in the beginning of Parshas Emor, when the Torah uses the language “Emor / v’amarta?” Shouldn’t we also be able to learn the same lesson from every time the Torah uses the language “Daber / v’amarta?” However, the Torah is trying to emphasize a very important lesson regarding educating our children: By children, it needs to be “Emor / v’amarta,” which is a very soft form of communication. The only way to successfully deal with children is to be excessively soft with them. That is why it is only from here (the only occurrence in the Torah of this Emor / v’amarta construct) that Chazal derive the lesson of adults warning children – it must be with a “double dose of amira” – softness compounded with softness. I don’t know what happened to society over the past number of decades, however, if this was the case in the times of the Torah, it is certainly the case in our day and age. We need to be very, very soft and gentle in how we deal with our children. Perhaps in other eras, the technique of “the left hand pushing away and the right hand drawing near” (Sanhedrin 107b) was effective. However, today it needs to be both the right and left hands drawing near.

I was shown a shiur by a Rav Menashe Reisman from Eretz Yisrael, in which he mentioned a very interesting Medrash Yalkut Shimoni (on Tehillim Chapter 72). A fellow left over a will which specified “My son will not be able to get the money from my estate until he becomes a shoteh (fool).” The son went to Rabbi Yosi b’Reb Yehudah and asked him what the will meant. “I am not a shoteh and I am not going to become a shoteh. What does my father want from me?”

The Medrash says that Rabbi Yosi b’Reb Yehuda took this will to Rabbi Yehoshua ben Korcha. He went to Rabbi Yehoshua ben Korcha’s house and looked in through the window and saw the great Rabbi crawling on his hands and knees with a pacifier in his mouth. He was crawling after his young son. Rabbi Yosi b’Reb Yehuda was embarrassed to go inside and see Rabbi Yehoshua ben Korcha in that state.

The Medrash says that Rabbi Yehoshua ben Korcha noticed Rabbi Yosi b’Reb Yehuda outside and he called him in. Rabbi Yosi b’Reb Yehuda entered and said “I have this will that I don’t understand.” Rabbi Yehoshua ben Korcha said “I will explain the will to you.”

This son who was holding the will did not want to get married because he did not want the burden of raising children. Do you know what it takes to raise children? A person needs to act like a shoteh. Which adult goes around on his hands and knees? But any of us who have raised children have been on our hands and knees. Have you ever played catch with your child? When your child was three years old and he was trying to learn how to bat a ball and he had a plastic bat with a big barrel, you stood three feet in front of him and threw the ball to him slowly. You are an adult. Maybe you are even a Rosh Yeshiva or a Rav. Maybe you are a prestigious lawyer. But there you are, playing in a sandbox with a plastic bat and ball.

That is what his father was telling him: You can collect the will when you become a shoteh – i.e., when you get married and have children. Then you will become a “shoteh” – that is what you need to do! That is what it takes to raise children.

This is all part of the theme of “Emor v’amarta” – when dealing with children, a person needs to speak in soft and gentle tones. This is lesson number one in chinuch habanim. We need to handle our children with kid gloves, making sure to make Yiddishkeit exciting, pleasant, and pleasurable to them, rather than being a burden.

The Dubno Maggid: Holidays Became a Painful Reminder of What Could Have Been

I would like to share a mashal (parable) from the Dubno Maggid (as was his forte).

We are all familiar with the following pasuk because it is part of the Torah reading of every Yom Tov: “Speak to the Children of Israel and say to them: Hashem’s appointed festivals that you are to designate as holy convocations – these are My appointed festivals.” (Vayira 23:1) This introduces the “moadim,” beginning with Shabbos, then Pesach, then Shavuot, Rosh Hashanah, Yom Kippur, and Succos. The Ribono shel Olam gave us a wonderful present called Yom Tov.

And yet, Klal Yisrael abused that gift until the Ribono shel Olam had to say – as He does so movingly in the Haftarah we read on the Shabbos before Tisha B’Av – “My Soul detests your new moons and your appointed times, they have become a burden upon Me...” (Yeshaya 1:14) Our starting point was Parshas Emor, where the Ribono shel Olam designated the festivals as “My time with you”. A “moed” is an appointment, a meeting time. The Yomim Tovim started out as a time to rendezvous with the Shechina. However, it turned into that which we find in the first perek of Yeshaya: “I can’t stand your Yomim Tovim. Stay away, they are burdensome for Me.”

The Dubno Maggid (Rav Yakov ben Wolf Kranz – 1741-1804) gave a mashal to explain how this transpired:

There was once a wealthy man who had several children that all became very ill. The man found the best doctor available and insisted the doctor come live with him to treat his children. The doctor put some kind of medication together which the children had to drink as their treatment, and they all got better. Some time went by and they had a recurrence of the illness.

The wealthy man figured, if it worked one time, I will bring the doctor back a second time. He brought the doctor back. The doctor made the same medicine but the children refused to take it because it was too bitter. Their conditions deteriorated. The doctor saw that they were not taking their medication. There was nothing more that he could do, so he left. As time went by, whenever the doctor would meet this wealthy man, he would get a scowl from him. The father was upset with the doctor.

The doctor protested: “What do you want from me? I prepared the medicine. It worked the first time. The second time, the children refused to take the medicine. What do you want from me? It is not my fault!”

The man said, “Yes, I know it is not your fault; but every time I see you, I am reminded ‘if they would only take that medicine’. You remind me of what they could do and how they could get better, but they don’t get better. So every time I see you, I get into a bad mood because you remind me of the opportunity and ability that they would have, if they would only take the medicine.”

The Dubno Maggid explains that this is the meaning of that pasuk in Yeshaya: “I gave you the Yomim Tovim. This is our special time together. Eleh hem moa’dai. These are the times that a person has the ability to be with the Ribono shel Olam. He doesn’t go to work. He doesn’t need to rush. He is able to get closer to the Ribono shel Olam, todavenbetter, to be better, to come to Yerushalayim, to bring korbonos. And yet, they don’t take advantage of this opportunity.

The moadim are like the doctor. Just like every time the father saw the doctor, it put him in a bad mood because his children were not taking advantage of the tremendous opportunity, so too, Hashem says “Your new moons and appointed times, My soul despises.” I can’t stand it because these Yomim Tovim could be so wonderful and so enhancing and it is right there for you – and yet you don’t take advantage.

The Seforno actually says this whole idea in just a few words. On this pasuk of Eleh hem moa’dai (Vayikra 23:1), the Seforno writes as follows:

These are the moadim that I want, however Klal Yisraelis supposed to make the Moadim into mikraei kodesh – times imbued with sanctity. We are supposed todavenbetter, learn better, enjoy, be with our families, all these things. But we don’t do that. The days are treated like week days in which they engage solely in pleasures of the moment and strictly in mundane human pleasures. They do not become moa’dai (My Meeting times, as it says in Parshas Emor), but rather strictly moadeichem (Your Meeting times,

as it says in the first perek of Yeshaya). Your idea of a Yom Tov is just a feeding fest. That is something "My Soul detests."
 Transcribed by David Twersky; Jerusalem DavidATwersky@gmail.com
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 This week's write-up is adapted from the hashkafa portion of Rabbi Yissochar Frand's Commuter Chavrusah Series on the weekly Torah portion. A complete catalogue can be ordered from the Yad Yechiel Institute, PO Box 511, Owings Mills MD 21117-0511. Call (410) 358-0416 or e-mail tapes@yadyechiel.org or visit <http://www.yadyechiel.org/> for further information.

from: Ira Zlotowitz <Iraz@klalgovoah.org>
 date: May 15, 2025, 7:01 PM
 subject: **Tidbits • Parashas Emor 5785 in memory of Rav Meir Zlotowitz ZTL**

Parashas Emor • May 17th • 19 Iyar 5785
 Lag Ba'omer is Thursday evening, May 15th. The Rema writes that the custom is to have a moderate increase in joy on this day. This day is also the yahrzeit of Rabi Shimon bar Yochai, the day when the students of Rabi Akiva stopped dying, and the date when Rabi Akiva ordained his new generation of students. The restrictions of the Sefirah Aveilus period are relaxed on Lag Ba'omer (additionally, for those who observed the 'first half' this marks the end of their aveilus period). Many poskim do not allow listening to music until the morning of Lag Ba'omer. Ashkenazim permit cutting hair on the morning of Lag BaOmer. As Lag Ba'omer this year is Erev Shabbos, if it will be difficult to schedule a haircut on Friday, then one may get one on Thursday night. Although Sefardim normally wait until the morning of the 34th for haircuts, as the 34th is Shabbos many allow haircuts on Lag Ba'omer.

(From Ira Zlotowitz <iraz@klalgovoah.org> Thurs. 5/15/2025 9:16 PM I shared this earlier on my WhatsApp Tidbits list and got so many responses and follow-up questions that I felt it was worth sending here as well. Rav Dovid Feinstein zt"l paskened that, based on the Be'er Heitev, it is permitted to take a haircut and shave starting now. I confirmed this with Rabbi Edelman of MTJ, who told me that every year, on the day before Lag BaOmer, Rav Dovid zt"l would personally go for a haircut after Mincha. See the Be'er Heitev attached below.493;5.)

Tachanun is omitted on Lag Ba'omer. After shekiyah on the evening of Lag Ba'omer, one should refrain from saying "tonight is Lag Ba'omer" until after counting sefirah. However, if one inadvertently said "tonight is Lag Ba'omer", he may still count that night (and beyond) with a berachah. Sefirah: On Friday night we count the 34th day of the Omer.

Pirkei Avos: Perek 4
 Daf Yomi - Shabbos: Bavli: Shevuos 16 • Yerushalmi: Eruvin 59 • Mishnah Yomis: Avos 1:8-9 • Oraysa (coming week): Taanis 15b-17b • Kitzur Shulchan Aruch: 88:2-6

Shabbos Mevorchim Chodesh Sivan is next Shabbos Parashas Behar-Bechukosai.

Shavuot is on Monday and Tuesday, June 2nd-3rd.

Emor: Laws of Kohanim and their households • Parameters of physical defects that will disqualify Kohanim from serving in the Beis Hamikdash and those of animal Korbanos • Shabbos and the holidays • Description of the lighting of the Menorah and the arrangement of the Lechem HaPanim • The Megadeif 'blesses' Hashem, and is put to death for his sin • The punishment for murder • The penalties for damages • See Taryag Weekly for the various mitzvos.

Haftarah: The Parashah began with the discussion of the laws of Kohanim. Yechezkel (44:15-31) also discusses laws of the Kohanim, including the laws which will apply at the time of the third Beis HaMikdash - may it be built speedily within our days.

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Make sure to call your parents, in-laws, grandparents and Rebbe to wish them a good Shabbos. If you didn't speak to your kids today, make sure to connect with them as well!

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Parashas Emor: 124 Pesukim • 24 Obligations • 39 Prohibitions

1) A Kohen may not become tamei mes. 2) A Kohen must become tamei mes for specified relatives. 3) A tamei Kohen may not serve until nightfall following his immersion. 4-6) A Kohen may not marry a zonah, chalalah or a divorcee. 7) Honor the Kohen. 8-9) A Kohen Gadol may not become tamei mes even for relatives (including parents). 10) A Kohen Gadol must marry a besulah. 11) A Kohen Gadol may not marry a zonah, chalalah, divorcee or widow. 12) A Kohen Gadol may not cohabit with a widow. 13-14) A Kohen with a blemish - even a temporary one - may not perform Temple service. 15) A blemished Kohen may not enter the Mikdash past the Mizbei'ach. 16-17) A Kohen who is tamei may not perform Temple service or eat terumah or separated challah. 18-19) A non-Kohen as well as a Kohen's toshav or sachir slave may not eat terumah, challah or bikkurim. 20) An uncircumcised Kohen may not eat kodashim or terumah. 21) A Kohenes who is a chalalah or is married to a non-Kohen may not eat kodashim or terumah. 22) Do not eat produce before terumah is separated from it. 23) Do not designate a blemished animal for a korban. 24) Bring korbanos from the finest animals. 25) Do not inflict a korban with a blemish. 26-28) Do not slaughter, offer, or sprinkle the blood of a blemished animal. 29) Do not castrate a person or animal. 30) Do not sacrifice a blemished korban of a non-Jew. 31) Animals to be sacrificed must be no less than eight days old. 32) Do not slaughter an animal and its mother on the same day. 33) Do not cause a Chillul Hashem. 34) Bring about Kiddush Hashem. 35-39) Observe the Yom Tov of Pesach, do no melachah on it; bring its Korban Mussaf on all seven days. 40) Bring the Korban Omer on the second day of Pesach. 41-43) Do not eat Chadash grains. 44) Count Sefiras Ha'Omer. 45) Bring Sh'tei Halechem on Shavuot. 46-47) Observe Shavuot; do no melachah on it. 48-49) Observe Rosh

Hashanah; do no melachah on it. 50) Bring the Korban Mussaf on Rosh Hashanah. 51-52) Fast on Yom Kippur and bring its Korban Mussaf. 53-55) Do not eat or perform melachah on Yom Kippur; observe the holiday. 56-58) Observe the first day of Succos; do no melachah on it. Bring its Korban Mussaf on all 7 days. 59-61) Observe Shemini Atzeres; do no melachah on it. Bring its Korban Mussaf. 62) Take the Daled Minim on the first day of Succos. 63) Sit in a Succah on all seven days of Succos.

“אָמַר אֶל־בְּנֵי־אַהֲרֹן וְאָמַרְתָּ אֲלֵהֶם”

“Speak to the Kohanim the sons of Aharon and say to them” (Vayikra 21:1)

The Midrash explains that the double expression of “Emor” and “V’amarta” is meant to caution the elders regarding the youth about this mitzvah of being careful about purity. One may understand this Midrash that Moshe Rabbeinu was to instruct the elders in “V’amarta”, in that after Moshe relayed this mitzvah to them, they, the elders, should in turn relay this mitzvah to the youth. However the pasuk seems to state that the word “V’amarta” is also referring to Moshe’s directives to the elders. What was the nature of this extra instruction to the elders?

There is a well-known expression that a person’s luxuries become his child’s necessities. One who indulges periodically may set these ‘extras’ as a basic standard for his child. This is true regarding ruchniyus as well; one who sets a high bar in performance of mitzvos sets his next generation in a position where their basic standard is on a higher level and vice versa. Rav Moshe Feinstein zt”l explains that Moshe was to explain to the older generation that their adherence and approach to this mitzvah (and indeed all mitzvos) will set the standard and tone of how the future generations will conduct themselves. One’s actions live on far after he leaves this world, as the higher standard he establishes becomes the standard of his children and future generations.

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from: Rabbi Mordechai Kamenetzky <rmk@torah.org> drasha@torah.org

date: May 14, 2025, 2:46 PM

subject: Drasha - Mitzvah-Watch

By Rabbi Mordechai Kamenetzky

Parshas Emor

Mitzvah-Watch

Observation does not necessarily mean participation – at least in an etymological or grammatical sense. My dealings with Jews who do not keep Torah law have led me to hear one quip, “of course Rabbi, I am an observant Jew. If someone performs a mitzvah in my presence, I observe a mitzvah!” Of course, in our vernacular, when one is called an observant Jew, he does much more than watch! He or she participates in mitzvah performance; watching is not enough.

So that is why I was troubled this week, when I noticed a particularly expressive exhortation to mitzvah performance u’shmartem es mitzvosai, v’aseesem osum — watch the mitzvos and do them” (Leviticus 22:31). What does “watch mitzvos” mean? If one does a mitzvah, he is surely doing more than watching them. Why then does the Torah tell us to watch the mitzvos in addition to performing them?

This past winter, in honor of 7 Adar, a day designated to honor the yearzeit of Moshe Rabbeinu, it was decided to give recognition to the community Chevra Kadish (burial society). **Rabbi Paysach Krohn** addressed a large gathering at Brooklyn’s Bais HaChaim Chapel. His inspiring talk, (which I highly recommend) concerned the delicate issues of death, dignity, and decorum. He related the following story: (I may have skewed some details and invite my Dutch readers to correct my embellishments!)

Rabbi Yehuda Laib Lewis is the Rav of a beautiful kehilla in Amsterdam. As in every kehilla, the community has a Chevra Kadisha which tends to the needs of the dead and dying, ensures a dignified burial for the deceased, and helps the mourners through the process of bereavement.

Membership is a privilege and only outstanding members of the kehilla are selected. There is one group of people who, no matter how outstanding they are considered in the community, are never asked to serve as part of the

Chevra. You see, kohanim (priests) are not allowed to come in contact with a dead body, so burying the dead is one mitzvah that they rarely perform!

It so happened that Rabbi Lewis’s community purchased a plot of land to consecrate a new cemetery for the kehilla. The kohanim, as well as other members of the community participated in this great mitzvah and designated the first plot that was to be used. Not long after the purchase, a member of the kehilla passed away. He would be the first to be buried in the new cemetery. The next day the friends and mourners arrived with the deceased at the cemetery.

Shovels in hand, they approached the grave to begin burying the inaugural plot for the deceased.

They were shocked to see that the plot had been dug!

After burying the man, they found out the true story. Moshe Cohen, a member of the community and a kohen, wanted to participate in the great mitzvah of burying the dead, all his life. However, there are very few limits to the restriction of a kohen coming in contact with a dead person. But when Mr. Cohen heard that there was a new cemetery being consecrated and that there was no one interred in it, he saw the opportunity that he had watched and waited for. And the first one buried in the new cemetery had his grave ready and waiting, dug by none other than Moshe Cohen!

The Chasam Sofer reminds us of another time the Torah uses the word watch. The Torah tells us of Yosef’s dreams of glory and that his father Yaakov, “watched the incident” Rashi explains that watched means waited in anticipation of fulfillment. The Chasam Sofer explains that the Torah in this week’s parsha tells us to do more than perform mitzvos. It tells us to watch for them. It exhorts us to anticipate their fulfillment. It teaches us to wait for the opportunities that arise, ready and able to perform when opportunity knocks!

Rabbi Akiva, his body raked by burning iron combs, told his students, “all my life I waited for the mitzvah to give one’s soul for the Almighty. I wondered, ‘when would it come to my hands so that I may fulfill it?’”

The Torah tells us this week, Watch for the mitzvos and then observe them! It is not enough to be a Jewish observer, rather one must be a Jewish anticipator as well! Good Shabbos!

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From: riets@substack.com

Emor: **Trigger Warnings and Sensitivity in the Teaching of Jewish Law**
RIETS Kollel Elyon

May 15

Rabbi Daniel Z. Feldman

This week’s Torah reading contains descriptions of physical characteristics that disqualify a kohen the Temple service. Given that many listeners may answer to these descriptions, the question of sensitivity presents itself. The contemporary practice of issuing “trigger warnings” before conveying content that may provoke discomfort, anxiety, or anguish in some of the audience might have a precedent in the Talmudic passage discussing ona’at devarim, roughly translatable as “verbal oppression”, or speaking hurtfully to others. In a cryptic declaration at the very end of that discussion, there is a statement that one should not say “hang this fish” if someone in the family has been executed by hanging. (The translation here is intentionally broad; it is possible that the idea is not to use this language in front of relative of the hanged individual, or that the relative himself should not, or would not, use this phrasing; see Rashi.) At first blush, this seems to indicate that one must indeed be wary not only of topics that are sensitive for listeners, but even for words that trigger memories through unintended verbal connections. Douglas Hofstadter and Emmanuel Sandler, in their book *Surfaces and Essences*, (ch.2) discuss the phenomenon that the mind automatically makes linguistic associations, what they call “the irrepressibility of seeing certain analogies”. Strikingly, the example they give is an unacknowledged direct quote from our Talmudic passage: “One mustn’t say hang up your fish in a hanged man’s house” also “one mustn’t speak a rope in a hanged man’s

house" the English counterpart of the French "Il ne faut pas parler de corde dans le maison d'un pendu".

As they explain, "the idea expressed by such proverbs is of course that people cannot help making analogical associations at the drop of a hat, and that everyone should be sensitive to this fact. Thus, even if one innocently wishes to allude to a piece of rope that was used to tie a package, or to say that some fish should be hung out to dry, it would be boorish to do so in the presence of the family of someone who had been hanged. The hanging would be vividly present in the uttered words, no matter how the thought was phrased. And so in certain circumstances, certain things cannot be said or even hinted at. This proverb tips its hat to the fluidity of human cognition..."

Does this, then, mean that such insensitivity constitutes a violation of *ona'at devarim*? A standard of this level, while admirable, could be overwhelming. It may not even be possible for a speaker to be aware of, and consistently keep track of, every unrelated word that may inadvertently provoke an unwelcome association. If one assumes the prohibition of *ona'at devarim* requires intention, or especially deception (two points of contention among the authorities) that would further limit its applicability to this situation. It does not seem, in fact, that this does represent an actual violation of the formal prohibition, and it is not cited in the codes of Jewish law. (see however Sefer Chasidim, 635, who does mandate behavior based on this passage). Presumably, the significance of the Talmudic message is to raise the consciousness of the speakers to the possibility of such connections, and to advocate for sensitivity whenever reasonable, but not to assert that to do otherwise, especially unknowingly, would constitute a genuine transgression. Another example of semantic sensitivity is found in a rabbinic sources where it is taught that one who wishes to convey to his blind teacher that nighttime has arrived should not say "it is dark now" but rather, "you should take off your tefilin" (as those are not worn at night).

Of course there is language that is known to be hurtful, such as racial epithets or related expressions of group disparagement, and this world demands a higher level of responsibility from the speaker. Even when not directed at an individual, which creates its own category of offense, such language can inflict pain through the associations it evokes by usage in front of sensitive listeners, both of the "hanging fish" variety and as a display of general disdain, which is itself a source of anxiety and discomfort.

Ironically, efforts to reduce the usage of such language can be its own source of further negative impact, as these often require the very invoking of the terms that themselves inflict anguish in the process. As such, a careful cost benefit analysis would need to be done to assess how and when such efforts should take place. At times, a desire to establish one's own moral credentials comes at the cost of those one is endeavoring to protect, a form of counterproductive virtue signaling.

More so, if false or misleading accusations of utilizing hurtful language are leveled at others, such as is often done against opponents in political campaigns and the like, a new level of harm is created. Not only are the allegations acts of slander, they themselves inflict the harm that is being blamed on the targets of the accusations. This constitutes "Offense Ventriloquism", the placing of damaging language into the mouths of others while in fact committing that very offense, and is its own unique transgression.

A precedent for this concern can be found in the writings of the Chafetz Chaim (Hil. Lashon Hara 5:10) who discusses the fact that it is sometimes necessary to publicly expose sinners, including those who engage in lashon hara. Nonetheless, he warns, this should not be done if the subject of the malicious speech is unaware that it has happened, as the very act of publicizing the matter will cause additional harm to the victim (He is actually referring to the specific transgression of *rekhilus*, but the point could easily be applied more broadly), even though his intention is noble, to be "zealous for the truth".

An important question then to consider is whether the sensitivity to avoiding painful language and subject matter would extend even to the teaching of

Torah and Jewish law, and whether it would potentially restrict certain acts within communal ritual practice.

To this point, the Sefer Chasidim, (#768), quoted authoritatively by the Magen Avraham (Orach Chaim, 138:4) asserts that when reading a section from the Torah that may call unwanted attention to an individual with physical traits described negatively in that section, that person should not be called to the Torah for that section. The concern is, of course, that he will be embarrassed in that light, and R. Reuven Margoliot (Mekor Chesed to the Sefer Chasidim, 768, #2) bases this sensitivity on the "hanging fish" exhortation from the Talmud.

Moreso, this consideration is extended to spiritual blemishes as well, and one who is suspected of sinful behavior should not be called to the Torah for the sections detailing the relevant prohibitions. It may be argued that this latter policy is due to the fact that calling an individual to the Torah whose behavior defies the words being read at that moment undermines the Torah's message; while this may also be true, it is clear from the Sefer Chasidim's language that it is also due to fear of embarrassing the sinner. (See also the Chida's commentary, Brit Olam.)

Following the lead of this ruling, R. Yitzchak Zilberstein (Hearev Na III, 288-290) the case of a lecturer of a Daf Yomi class, who reaches the section, for example, in the tractate Bekhorot, where disqualifying physical defects are described. In this particular class, there is a participant who answers to that description. What should the lecturer do: skip that page or section? Mistranslate or fudge the rendition? Or proceed as normal? He notes some differences from the Sefer Chasidim's situation: in the case of the Torah reading, all of it will be read, just with someone else called to the Torah, while skipping the relevant sections of the Talmud will compromise or falsify the teaching; and he earlier issue was with calling that person up to the Torah, not simply having him in the room. A more parallel case would be calling on that person to read for the group. However, regarding this last point, it should be noted that there are multiple degrees of concern: it is true that calling the person up to the Torah puts a spotlight on him that is more of a public embarrassment, but even being present may subject him to unpleasant feelings of the "hang this fish" variety, which may constitute *ona'at devarim*.

After considering the factors, R. Zilberstein's inclination was that no change should be made, and the individual in question well presumably not feel any embarrassment, recognizing that his physical features are a function of God's creation. R. Nissim Karelitz, however, was not as sanguine, and asserted that emotions are not necessarily so easily overridden, and the lecturer may need to use careful judgment and sensitivity.

The task of teaching requires both imparting information and conveying character. Usually, these two goals are in harmony. At times, however, they are in tension; and that, too, is a lesson.

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<https://jewishlink.news/one-step-at-a-time-4/>

One Step at a Time

By Rabbi Shalom Rosner

May 15, 2025

The opening pasuk in the parsha states: "Emor el hakohanim bnei Aharon v'amarta aleihem." Rashi explains that the double use of the terms "emor" and "v'amarta" is to admonish the adult Kohanim to be responsible for the minor Kohanim, to properly educate them to refrain from coming into contact with an impure element.

The Lubavitcher Rebbe extends this directive to apply not just to Kohanim, but rather as a warning to all parents of the importance of educating their children. We are not speaking of the basic necessity to educate our children, as this would not first appear in the middle of sefer Vayikra. Rather, this instruction appearing in Emor is hinting at a more advanced approach to education. This is highlighted by another important concept that appears

later in our parsha—the counting of the Omer, which always intersects with the reading of parshat Emor. Just as we count the 49 consecutive days of the Omer, so too, are we to educate our children that they are to progressively advance to higher levels of spiritual achievement, step-by-step on a daily basis.

When advancing in spirituality as in other aspects, one must be careful not to seek shortcuts, but to progress one step at a time. As the Imrei Shefer posits, first focus on the basics (613 commandments) and only, thereafter, to take upon oneself additional restrictions or limitations.

Rabbi Mordechai Eliyahu—“al pi derush”—derives an important lesson relating to spiritual growth from the mitzvah of requiring one to construct a guardrail around his roof. When people are inspired, they often seek to reach for the stars. It is natural to strive to be the best at everything we do.

However, when it comes to enhancing our spirituality, we need to establish realistic goals and to take them step-by-step. If a person tries to jump too high too quickly, he is likely to fall. We have to establish a fence around the roof, or the target we set for ourselves, so that it is within our reach. Be careful not to set goals that are unrealistic and unattainable. A goal that is slightly beyond a person's reach may be within his grasp, and one should constantly seek to grow and improve. Yet, one who tries to take upon oneself too much too quickly is doomed for failure.

<https://rabbisacks.org/covenant-conversation/emor/eternity-and-mortality/>

Covenant & Conversation

Rabbi Jonathan Sacks ZTL

Emor 5785

Eternity and Mortality

Our Parsha begins with a restriction on the people for whom a kohen may become tamei, a word usually translated as defiled, impure, ceremonially unclean. A priest may not touch or be under the same roof as a dead body. He must remain aloof from close contact with the dead (with the exception of a close relative, defined in our Parsha as his wife, a parent, a child, a brother, or an unmarried sister). The law for the Kohen Gadol (High Priest) is stricter still. He may not allow himself to become ceremonially unclean even for a close relative, although both he and an ordinary priest may do so for a mitzvah, that is, one who has no one else to attend to their funeral. In such a case, the basic requirement of human dignity overrides the priestly imperative of purity.

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

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

Then, in our Parsha, there is the exclusion from service in the Sanctuary of a kohen who had a physical blemish – someone who was blind or lame, had a deformed nose or misshapen limb, a hunched back or dwarfism (Lev. 21:16-21). Why so? Such an exclusion seems to fly in the face of the following principle:

“The Lord does not look at the things people look at. People look at the outward appearance, but the Lord looks at the heart.” 1 Sam. 16:7

Why should outward appearance affect whether you may or may not serve as a priest in the house of God?

Yet these decrees do have an underlying logic. To understand them we have first to understand the concept of the holy. God is beyond space and time, yet God created space and time as well as the physical entities that occupy space and time. God is therefore “concealed.” The Hebrew word for universe,

olam, comes from the same Hebrew root as ne'elam, “hidden.” As the mystics put it: creation involved tzimtzum, Divine self-effacement, for without it neither the universe nor we could exist. At every point, the infinite would obliterate the finite.

Yet if God was completely and permanently hidden from the physical world, it would be as if He were absent. From a human perspective there would be no difference between an unknowable God and a non-existent God.

Therefore God established the holy as the point at which the Eternal enters time and the Infinite enters space. Holy time is Shabbat. Holy space was the Tabernacle, and later, the Temple.

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

Tumah should therefore not be thought of as “defilement,” as if there were something wrong or sinful about it. Tumah is about mortality. Death bespeaks mortality, but so too does birth. A skin disease like tzara'at makes us vividly aware of the body. So does an unusual physical attribute like a misshapen limb. Even mould on a garment or the wall of a house is a symptom of physical decay. There is nothing ethically wrong about any of these things, but they focus our attention on the physical and are therefore incompatible with the holy space of the Tabernacle, dedicated to the presence of the non-physical, the Eternal Infinite that never dies or decays. There is a graphic example of this at the beginning of the book of Job. In a series of devastating blows, Job loses everything: his flocks, his herds, his children. Yet his faith remains intact. Satan then proposes subjecting Job to an even greater trial, covering his body with sores.[1] The logic of this seems absurd. How can a skin disease be a greater trial of faith than losing your children? It isn't. But what the book is saying is that when your body is afflicted, it can be hard, even impossible, to focus on spirituality. This has nothing to do with ultimate truth and everything to do with the human mind. As Maimonides said, you cannot give your mind to meditating on truth when you are hungry or thirsty, homeless or sick.[2]

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

Kugel also writes, “Most people, when they see someone ravaged by chemotherapy, just tend to keep their distance.” He quotes Psalm 38:12: “My friends and companions stand back at the sight of my affliction; even those closest to me keep their distance.” Psalm 38:12

Although the physical reactions to chemotherapy are quite different from a skin disease or a bodily abnormality, they tend to generate the same feeling in others, part of which has to do with the thought “This could happen to me.” They remind us of the “thousand natural shocks that flesh is heir to.”[3] This is the logic – if logic is the right word – of tumah. It has nothing to do with rationality and everything to do with emotion (Recall Pascal's remark that “the heart has its reasons of which reason knows nothing”). Tumah does not mean defilement. It means that which distracts from eternity and infinity by making us forcibly aware of mortality, of the fact that we are physical beings in a physical world.

What the Tabernacle represented in space and Shabbat in time was quite radical. It was not rare in the ancient world, nor in some religions today, to believe that here on earth everything is mortal. Only in Heaven or the afterlife will we encounter immortality. This is why so many religions in both East and West have been other-worldly.

In Judaism, holiness exists within this world, despite the fact that it is bounded by space and time. But holiness, like antimatter, must be carefully insulated. Hence the stringency of the laws of Shabbat on the one hand, the Temple and its priesthood on the other. The holy is the point at which heaven and earth meet, where, by intense focus and a complete absence of earthly concerns, we open up space and time to the sensed presence of God who is beyond space and time. It is an intimation of eternity in the midst of life, allowing us at our holiest moments to feel part of something that does not die. The holy is the space within which we redeem our existence from mere contingency and know that we are held within the “everlasting arms”[4] of God.

[1] See Job 1-2. [2] Guide for the Perplexed III:27. [3] From William Shakespeare's famous soliloquy in Hamlet, Act III, Scene I. [4] Deut 33:27

from: **Rabbi Yitzchok Adlerstein** <ravadlerstein@torah.org>

to: targumim@torah.org

date: May 15, 2025, 12:56 PM

subject: **Be'er Moshe - Forty-Nine Or Fifty?**[1]

Until the morrow of the seventh week, you shall count fifty days.[2]

This pasuk puts quite a strain on any regard we may have for arithmetic. The previous pasuk told us to count seven weeks, which conventionally add up to forty-nine, not fifty. Moreover, our practice seems to be to ignore this pasuk. We never count fifty. We stop short, at forty-nine. What is happening here? Maybe this numerical non-alignment is exactly the point. We are told to count to the magic number of fifty, representing different levels of spiritual preparation for our kabolas ha-Torah. Just as we move to the threshold of getting there – as we head into the fiftieth day, we stand confronted by reality. The fiftieth level? Us? Really? Before we cross the finish line, we realize that we are much further away from the goal than we would like to be. We need a fresh regimen of training.

According to the Zohar,[3] Moshe paved the way for us in this regard. “Moshe ascended to G-d.”[4] From this we see, says the Zohar, that those who wish to purify themselves are vouchsafed Heavenly assistance. How is this evident? Because the Torah continues, “And G-d called to him.” Having been told to meet the Shechinah at the top of the mountain, Moshe stopped short of the summit. In his humility, he did not see himself as doing more than trying to further elevate himself. He didn’t see himself as having arrived there yet. He was showing his intention to grow, but didn’t think that he had done enough. Hashem’s reaction was to call out to him, to invite him to approach further. Hashem would be there, holding on to him and supporting him.

Chazal often refer to Shavuot as atzeres, even though the Torah itself uses the term only in regard to Shemini Atzeres, and the seventh day of Pesach. The word usually is assumed to mean something held back. Why did Chazal apply it to Shavuot?

When a famished Dovid sought food from Achimelech the kohen, Dovid assured his benefactor that everyone who ate it would be tavor. Women, he said, have been atzura from us.[5] Yonoson translates the word as “distanced.” Perhaps Chazal had this in mind, i.e. Shavuot demands that we not see ourselves as maximally prepared. To the contrary, part of our readiness for kabolas ha-Torah is seeing ourselves as not having arrived. We are still very much on the way to Sinai, but not quite there. We are still among those who wish to purify themselves, and who are therefore vouchsafed Heavenly assistance.

Toras Kohanim speaks of the parallel between the days of Sefiras HaOmer, and the counting of years towards Yovel: “Count forty-nine days and sanctify the fiftieth, just like Yovel.” There, the Torah waxes verbose: “You shall count seven sets of seven years; seven years, seven times. The days of the seven groups of seven years will be for you forty-nine years.”[6] This is

not a lesson in arithmetic. Rather, the Torah underscores that Man’s job is to count the forty-nine years. Hashem responds, by attaching kedushah to the year that follows, the Yovel year. In counting towards kabolas ha-Torah, we need to understand that our preparation will always be shy of the mark. But this is exactly as HKBH would have it. Our job is to go as far as we can on our own. Hashem will be there to take us the remaining distance.

Adapted from Be’er Moshe, by the Ozherover Rebbe zt”l ↑

1. Vayikra 23:16 2. Zohar 2 79b 3. Shemos 19:3 4. Shmuel 1 21:6 5.

Vayikra 25:8 Be’er Moshe © 2023 by Torah.org

from: **Alan Fisher** <afisherads@yahoo.com>

date: May 15, 2025, 8:47 PM

subject: **Potomac Torah Study Center:** Devrei Torah for Emor 5785

Happy Lag B’omer. Shabbat Shalom, Alan

BS”D Potomac Torah Study Center Vol. 12 #30, May 16-17, 2025; 19 Iyar 5785; Emor 5785

Today, Friday, May 16, is Lag B’Omer. May Hashem protect Israel and Jews everywhere during 5785. May Hashem’s protection shine on all of Israel, the IDF, and Jews throughout the world. May the remaining hostages soon come home, hostilities cease, and a new era bring security and rebuilding for both Israel and all others who genuinely seek peace. This week we count our blessings on the release of Edan Alexander, Israeli-American hostage for more than 1.5 years, the first active duty IDF soldier to be released from Gaza.

This Friday (Erev Shabbat Emor) is Lag B’Omer, the end of the traditional thirty-three days of mourning that date back 1800 years. During the time of Rabbi Akiva (teacher of Rabbi Shimon bar Yochai), a plague kills 24,000 of his students, thought to be because his students do not treat each other respectfully. Lag B’Omer is the day when the plague ends, so it has become a day of joy. Rabbi Shimon, when he is near death, tells his followers to observe the date of his death as a day of joy. He dies on Lag B’Omer.

While the period of Sefira (during the seven weeks of counting the Omer) is a period of mourning, Lag B’Omer is the one joyous day during the period, and restrictions on weddings, listening to live music, shaving, and having haircuts end on this day. (There are exceptions to this generalization, so consult your Rabbi for details.)

Emor opens with special restrictions on Kohanim (chapters 21 and 22) and then goes on to the most thorough discussion of holidays in the Torah (chapter 23). The discussion of the holidays opens with Shabbat and includes Pesach, the Omer, Shavuot, Rosh Hashanah, Yom Kippur, Sukkot, and Shemini Atzeret. While the post Biblical holidays are not part of this discussion (because they observe events from later in Jewish history), the next topic in the Torah serves as a reminder of Hanukkah (24:1-4). There is an eternal decree for a Kohen (Aharon) to light a menorah continuously. As Rabbi David Fohrman notes, if a religious leader at the time of the Maccabees wanted to initiate a way to observe Hanukkah, the obvious place to look for a suggestion would be right after Emor, chapter 23 – and the next subject in the Torah is for a Kohen to light a menorah with pure olive oil. (Megillat Esther takes care of observing Purim – but we do not have a Megillah for Hanukkah.)

Rabbi Dr. Katriel (Kenneth) Brander extends the meaning of Emor into the Haftarah. During the time in the Midbar before entering Israel, after the death of Nadav and Avihu, there are only three Kohanim to perform all the sacrifices and to serve 600,000 adult men and an estimated 3,000,000 total Jews. By the time of the Haftarah, there are enough Kohanim to have 24 groups, and each group would serve at the Mishkan for a week at a time twice a year. During the weeks off from working in the Mishkan, the Kohanim would teach Torah, serve as judges on religious matters, advocate for the needy, and assist individuals and families in Shabbat observance. Rabbi Brander notes that someone who is not a Kohen could perform many of these traditional duties. The Torah even permits a person to emulate and take on the restrictions of a Kohen Gadol for a period of time by becoming a Nazir (Bemidbar 6:1-21). These possibilities make emulating the status of a

Kohen more democratic than an initial reading of the restrictions in chapters 21-22 suggests.

Sukkot is zaman simchatenu, the holiday of our happiness. Rabbi Lord Jonathan Sacks, z"l, questions why only Sukkot is considered the holiday of our happiness and how living for a week in a sukkah (shanty) brings us happiness. He observes that faith is not certainty; it is the courage to live with uncertainty. Rabbi David Fohrman suggests that the name of the holiday may come from the first night after B'Nai Yisrael leave Egypt. The first stop is Sukkot, a place with primitive pens normally used to keep cattle from running wild. The original meaning of "Sukkot" therefore seems to be "Shanty Town." As Rabbi Sacks observes, the Torah is honest about the difficulties of life. The message of Sukkot is that safety and happiness come from Hashem, not from strong walls and sturdy homes. Life is full of uncertainty. We cannot know what dangers lie in front of us – especially when spending an unknown amount of time in a harsh wilderness. God orders that we live in flimsy booths for a week to learn that safety comes from Hashem, not from structures that humans build.

Lag B'Omer reminds us that it is time to shave, cut our hair, and prepare for Shavuot in two more weeks. Keep counting, enjoy the fires of Lag B'Omer, and look forward to Shavuot.

Shabbat Shalom,
Hannah and Alan

<https://jewishlink.news/besamim-when-one-cannot-smell/>

Besamim When One Cannot Smell

By Rabbi Haim Jachter

May 15, 2025

Testing the Besamim

Before reciting the bracha on besamim, Rav Moshe Feinstein (as presented in the "Radiance of Shabbos," page 220, in the second edition) would first smell it to test if the besamim emitted smell and if he could smell. Two great Sephardic authorities, the Ben Ish Chai (parshat Vaetchanan 1:2) and the Kaf HaChaim (Orach Chayim 116:2) support this practice. Rav Moshe did this to avoid reciting a bracha levatala.

One may ask, though, how this is permitted if we cannot benefit from this world without first reciting a bracha (Brachot 35a). I suggest that the Ben Ish Chai, the Kaf HaChaim and Rav Moshe compare "test-smelling" to tasting food, which does not require a bracha. Although the application of the halacha regarding tasting without a bracha is subject to dispute, the fundamental halacha is that tasting food does not require a bracha (Shulchan Aruch, Orach Chayim 210:2 and Mishna Berura 210:19).

Since one's intention is not to benefit from the food but to taste it, a bracha is not required. Similarly, one does not intend to benefit when testing besamim to see if it gives off a smell and if one can smell. Thus, in both cases, a bracha is not required.

Conclusion

Experience dictates that everyone should adopt Rav Moshe's well-supported practice, for many report that failure to perform a "test-smell" has resulted in a bracha levatala. If one cannot smell, he should adjust the Havdala following either protocol outlined above.

Rabbi Jachter serves as the rav of Congregation Shaarei Orah, rebbe at Torah Academy of Bergen County and a get administrator with the Beth Din of Elizabeth. Rabbi Jachter's 20 books may be purchased at Amazon and Judaica House.

from: Ohr Somayach ohr@ohr.edu date: May 15, 2025, 6:05 PM S P E C I A L S - Taamei Hamitzvos - Chadash

By Rabbi Shmuel Kraines

"Study improves the quality of the act and completes it, and a mitzvah is more beautiful when it emerges from someone who understands its significance." (Meiri, Bava Kama 17a)

Chadash Mitzvos #303-305; Vayikra 23:14

We may not eat from new grain crops (chadash) until the Omeroffering has been brought from it on the 16th of Nissan, and in the absence of the Beis

HaMikdash, after that day has passed. Outside Eretz Yisrael, where the first Yom Tov of Pesach is observed for an additional day, the prohibition extends until after the 17th.

Sefer HaChinuch and Alshich explain that since grain products are people's staple food, it is fitting to bring a portion of the new crops as an offering to Hashem before partaking from it ourselves. He compares this to the obligation to recite a berachah before partaking of any pleasure in this world. The Omeroffering consists of barley because it is the first grain to fruition. It is waved in all directions to show that the entire world belongs to Hashem and that we and all we own are dedicated to Him. Once we recognize this, we are worthy of enjoying His bounty meriting further blessing.

Taking a different approach, Rav Menachem HaBavli links the prohibition to the counting of Omer, which leads up to the time of the Giving of the Torah on Shavuot. This insight will shed light on why the mitzvah of Chadash applies even in the absence of the Omeroffering. He explains that the new crop alludes to Creation; it is as if Hashem's creation of produce repeats itself every year. We have a mitzvah to refrain from eating from the new crop until we begin counting toward the Giving of the Torah to demonstrate that the world was only created so that we fulfill the Torah and come to know the Creator. We are showing that without the Torah, there is no reason for Hashem to continue sustaining His world with the new crop. As the Mishnah in Pirkei Avos (3:17) puts it: If there is no Torah, there is no flour. Every time we refrain from eating Chadash, we honor the Creator and bring deeper into our hearts the reason for our existence (Olelos Ephraim §108).

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Rabbi Eliakim Koenigsberg

Making Every Day Special

One of the highlights of Parshas Emor is the section discussing the moadim. What is interesting about the Torah's treatment of the moadim is that it begins with a discussion of Shabbos. We normally associate the moadim with the shalosh regalim - Pesach, Shavuot and Sukkos - and with Rosh Hashana and Yom Kippur, not with Shabbos. Why does the Torah begin its discussion of the moadim with Shabbos?

Rashi quotes from Chazal that the Torah juxtaposes Shabbos and the yomim tovim in the parsha of the moadim to compare the two, "to teach you that whoever desecrates the yomim tovim is considered as if he desecrated the Shabbos days, and whoever upholds the yomim tovim is considered as if he upheld the Shabbos days" (Emor 23:3). The Ramban suggests that the Torah mentions Shabbos first not to compare the yomim tovim to Shabbos, but to contrast the two. While on Shabbos all types of work are forbidden, on yom tov only work of labor - meleches avodah - is forbidden, but melacha for the purpose of eating - ochel nefesh - is permissible.

Perhaps we can offer a third approach based on another question. After the parshas hamoadim, we find two smaller sections - one which deals with the mitzvah of arranging the lamps for the menorah, and a second which discusses the mitzvah of placing the twelve loaves of lechem hapanim on the shulchan. What is the connection between these two mitzvos and the moadim? (See Ohr Hachaim 24:2 who elaborates on this question.)

One answer might be that the Torah surrounds its discussion of the yomim tovim with Shabbos in the beginning and these two mitzvos at the end in order to give us much needed perspective. It is natural for people to feel the special quality of a yom tov. After all, each yom tov comes only once in a while. And there are unique mitzvos associated with each of the yomim tovim, whether it's sukkah or daled minim, matzah or shofar. People feel uplifted and inspired by the kedushas hayom and the mitzvos hayom of the different yomim tovim. But once the yom tov ends, and people return to their daily routines, it is often difficult to feel the same kind of spiritual exhilaration that one experiences on a yom tov.

Perhaps that is why the Torah prefaces its discussion of the moadim by first mentioning Shabbos - to remind us that experiencing kedusha does not have to be limited to special annual events. There is a yom kadosh in every week

of the year, and that is Shabbos. What's more, Shabbos has even more kedusha than the yomim tovim, which is why it is called Shabbos Shabboson (Yom Kippur is given the same title not because it equals Shabbos, but because it too is holier than the other yomim tovim). Every week has its own special day of kedusha from which to draw inspiration.

But the Torah goes even further. After it completes its discussion of the moadim, it mentions the mitzvos of the menorah and the lechem hapanim. The Torah uses the same phrase in describing these two mitzvos - lifnei Hashem tamid. These two mitzvos apply every day. The menorah must be prepared and lit, and the lechem hapanim must sit on the shulchan, each and every day. This highlights the idea that kedusha can be found not only on special occasions, a few times a year, and not only once a week, on Shabbos, but every single day. We certainly should try to draw inspiration from Shabbos and the yomim tovim. But ultimately, the goal is to engage in talmud Torah, mitzvos and ma'asim tovim with consistency, each and every day - lifnei Hashem tamid.

The mitzvah of sefiras ha'omer reflects this idea as well. To properly prepare for kabbolas ha'Torah, we have to count and invest in every one of the forty-nine days, even the weekdays, between the first day of Pesach and the yom tov of Shavuos. Serving Hashem every day with consistency and dedication makes every simple day something special and transforms our lives into one long continuum of constant spiritual growth.

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from: **Michal Horowitz** <contact@michalhorowitz.com>

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subject: [New post] Emor 5785: The Mo'adim, The Power of Chessed & the Legacy of Megillas Rus

In Parshas Emor, the Torah journeys through the festivals which make up the Jewish calendar year. After the introductory phrases which introduce the concept of the mo'adim and exhort us regarding the weekly Shabbos (Vayikra 23:1-3), the Torah moves to the festivals.

Beginning with the Korban Pesach on 14 Nissan; the seven days of Chag Ha'Matzos which begin on 15 Nissan; the Korban Omer brought on the 16th of Nissan; the 49 days/7 weeks of Sefiras Ha'Omer; the festival of Shavuos which is celebrated at the conclusion of the count of Omer; Yom Teruah on the first of Tishrei (Rosh Hashana); Yom Kippur on the tenth; Chag Ha'Succos, which begins on 15 Tishrei, and Shemini Atzeres, the culmination and conclusion of the festivals of the year (Vayikra 23:4-44). Having gone from Korban Pesach through Sefiras Ha'Omer, we arrive at the yomtov of Shavuos, and the pasuk tells us:

וּקְרָאתֶם בַּעֲצֻם יְהוָה הַזֶּה מִקְרָא־קֹדֶשׁ יִהְיֶה לָכֶם כְּלִמְלֶאכֶת עֲבֹדָה לֹא תַעֲשׂוּ חֶקֶת עוֹלָם וּבְכָל־מוֹשְׁבֹתֵיכֶם לְדֹרֹתֵיכֶם – and you shall call in the midst of this very day, a calling of holiness it shall be for you, all work of labor shall not be done, an eternal statute in all your dwelling places for your generations (23:21).

The next yomtov on the calendar is Rosh Hashana, and thus, the pasukim state:

And Hashem spoke to Moshe saying: וְדַבֵּר אֶל־בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל לֵאמֹר בַּחֹדֶשׁ הַשְּׂבִיעִי בְּאַחַד יוֹמֵי חֹדֶשׁ הַשְּׂבִיעִי תִּשְׁרְאוּ לָכֶם שְׁבֻחוֹן זָכְרוֹן תְּרוּעָה מִקְרָא־קֹדֶשׁ, speak to the Children of Israel saying: in the seventh month (Tishrei), on the first of the month, it shall be a day of cessation for you, a remembrance of the teruah (shofar) blast, a calling of holiness (23:23-24).

However, between Shavuos and Rosh Hashana, there is one pasuk that stands out:

וּבְהַעֲרֹכֶם אֶת־קִצְרֵי אֲרָצְכֶם לֹא־תִכְלֶה פֶּאת שְׂדֶה בְּהַעֲרֹךְ וְלֹקֵט קִצְרֶה לֹא תִלְקֹט לְעָנִי וְלְגֵר – and when you reap the harvest of your land, you shall not finish off (by harvesting) the corner of your field as you reap, and the gleanings of your harvest you shall not gather, to the poor and the convert you shall leave them, I am Hashem your G-d (23:22).

What are the mitzvos of pe'ah (corner of the field) and leket (gleanings) doing here, placed 'randomly' between Shavuos and Rosh Hashana? Rashi explains:

אָמַר אֲבִדִּי בְּרֵבִי יוֹסֵף, מָה רָאָה הַכְּתוּב לִתְנֶה בְּאַמְצַע הַרְגָּלִים — פֶּסַח וְעֶצְרַת מִכָּאן וְרֹאשׁ הַשָּׁנָה יוֹם הַכַּפּוּרִים וְהַגּ מִכָּאן — ? לְלַמֶּדֶךָ שֶׁכָּל הַנּוֹתֵן לֶקֶט שְׂכָחָהּ וּפָאָה לְעָנִי פְּרָאִיו, מַעֲלִין עָלָיו כֹּאֲלוּ בָּנָה בֵּית הַמִּקְדָּשׁ וְהַקְרִיב קָרְבָּנֹתָיו בְּחוּכּוֹ (סִפְרָא)

What did the Torah see to place these mitzvos in the middle of the festivals, with Pesach and Shavuos here (preceding pe'ah and leket) and Rosh Hashana and Yom Kippur and Succos here (following pe'ah and leket)? To teach you that whoever gives gleanings, 'forgettings' [Devarim 24:19] and the corner of the field to the poor person as is mandated by the Torah, it is considered as if he built the BHM"K and brought his offerings inside it (Rashi to 23:22).

This is a beautiful teaching and the Sages are highlighting for us the incredible impact of giving gifts to the poor and the unfortunate in society. A Jew does not live for himself alone and whatever bounty G-d bestows upon him is meant to be shared with others. If one has a field (or any other asset) he must realize it all belongs to Hashem, Who has commanded us to share what He gives us with others who have less.

These mitzvos are so great that they are placed in the middle of the cycle of festivals to teach us that one who fulfills them is considered as if he built the BHM"K and brought the korbanos therein (as in this perek the korbanos of each festival are outlined)!

My dear friend, Rachel Solomon, pointed out an incredibly beautiful, and deeper, idea and lesson on this Rashi. Rachel noted that this teaching clearly connects to the upcoming yomtov of Shavuos, and the Biblical character of Boaz, who is the gibor chayal (Rus 2:1) of the Book of Rus (the Megillah read on Shavuos). Rachel said that "Boaz is a clear example of exactly what Rashi said: Boaz did those mitzvos, allowing Rus to glean in his fields, and then it was their progeny, Shlomo Ha'Melech who built the BHM"K, where the korbanos were offered." Furthermore, it will be their descendant, "Mashiach ben David who will build the final BHM"K, may it be immediate and in our days."

Parshas Emor is always read during the days of Sefiras Ha'Omer. Hence, this seemingly 'out of place' pasuk, with Rashi's explanation, is reviewed annually in the weeks leading up to Shavuos. It is on Shavuos that we read the story of Rus the Moavite, who married Boaz. Together, they had Oved, the father of Yishai, the father of David, the father of Shlomo Ha'Melech... who built the BHM"K.

Indeed, the Torah is teaching us, see how great is the reward of doing chessed, giving charity, and having compassion on one's fellow Jew! Because Boaz told Rus not to glean in any other fields, but to remain in his field, so that her and Naami would be sustained through their poverty, he became the founder of the BHM"K, the place where G-d's presence dwells in this world.

How apropos that the Torah places the pasuk of leket and pe'ah specifically after the chag of Shavuos. Of all the places in the perek to insert this teaching, the Torah put it here to direct our hearts and minds to the lesson of Shavuos and the Book of Rus.

In fact, the Medrash teaches us: וְלֹא טְהָרָה, וְלֹא טָמְאָה, וְלֹא אִין בָּהּ זֶה אִין בָּהּ – the book of Rus does not contain laws of impurity, nor purity, nor the laws of what is forbidden or permitted. So why was it written? To teach you how great is the reward to one who performs acts of kindness for another (Medrash Rus Rabba 2:14).

How great, indeed, is the reward to one who performs chessed for another. The act does not just impact the receiver, it can actually change the entire destiny of our nation.

When you harvest your field, take care to leave the corner of the field and the gleanings for the poor amongst you... for in the merit of your act of kindness, charity and compassion, beyond what your mind can conceive... you may just be the one who brings Moshiach, who will redeem our world, our nation, and our land.

וַיֹּאמֶר בְּעֵז אֶל־רוּת הֲלֹא שָׁמַעְתְּ בְּתִי אֶל־תַּלְכִּי לִלְקֹט בְּשָׂדֶה אֲחֵר וְגַם לֹא תַעֲבֹרִי מִזֶּה וְלֹה – And Boaz said to Ruth, "Have you not heard, my daughter? Do not go to glean in another field, neither shall you go away from here, and here you shall stay with my maidens..." (Rus 2:8)...

And Boaz took Rus, and she became his wife, and he came to her, and Hashem gave her pregnancy, and she bore a son (4:13)... and (their son) Oved fathered Yishai, and Yishai fathered David (4:22)... who fathered King Shlomo.

And all of Shlomo's work was established until this day, [from] the founding of the House of Hashem until its completion, when the House of Hashem was complete (Divrei Hayamim II 8:16).
Michal, בברכת בשורות טובות ושבת שלום

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Life Is a Wedding - New Lag B'Omer Essay
by Rabbi YY Jacobson

Life Is a Wedding: The Finite as a Portal to the Infinite

Why Reb Shimon ben Yoichai's Passing Came to be Known as a "Wedding"
Lag Baomer

This Friday, known in Hebrew as Lag BaOmer, the thirty-third day of the omer,[1] is the anniversary of the passing of one of the greatest sages and spiritual giants in Jewish history, Rabbi Shimon bar Yochai.

Rabbi Shimon, who lived in Israel under Roman occupation around 165 CE (approximately one hundred years after the destruction of the Second Temple in 70 CE), was an extraordinary scholar[2], leader, sage, and mystic. He was the author of the Zohar, the most basic work of Kabbalah, revealing to the world the underlying theology of Judaism, its inner soul and energy, and initiating a new era in the development and exposure of Jewish mysticism. The most significant revelation came about on the day of Rabbi Shimon's passing, on which he expounded for many hours on the most intimate secrets of the Divine wisdom. That day was 18 Iyar, or Lag Baomer.

Centuries were to pass before the great Kabbalist Rabbi Isaac Luria (1534-1572) would proclaim, "In these times, we are allowed and duty-bound to reveal this wisdom," and Rabbi Israel Baal Shem Tov (1698-1760) and his disciples were to make them accessible to all via the teachings of Chassidus. But Lag Baomer remains the day on which "Penemeyus Hatorah," the spiritual and emotional dimension of Judaism, emerged from the womb of secrecy and exclusivity.

Before his passing, Rabbi Shimon instructed his disciples to observe his yartzeit (the day of his passing) as a time of joy and festivity,[3] since the day of a person's death marks the culminating point of all that he achieved in the course of his life on earth.[4] Since then, Jews the world over, especially at his resting place in Meron, Israel, celebrate this day with singing, dancing, kindling fires, Torah study, parades, field trips for children, and an increase in love and unity.

A Wedding?

Yet there is something strange about this day. In many Jewish works, it is called "Helulah D'Rashbi"—the "wedding" anniversary of Rabbi Shimon bar Yochai. Never before has a yartzeit, the anniversary of a person's death, been described as a "helulah," a wedding, and for good reason: death and marriage are opposed. Death terminates a marriage.[5]

Why would a yartzeit, a day of passing, be called a "wedding?" And why, from all yartzeits, was it the one of Rabbi Shimon bar Yochai which first received the title of Hilula-wedding?[6]

Grab and Eat

The Talmud makes the following observation:[7]

עירובין נד, א: אמר ליה שמואל לרב יהודה, שינבא! חטוף ואכול חטוף ואישתי, דעלמא דאולינן מיניה כהלווא דמי.

The sage Shmuel said to his student Rabbi Yehudah: "Sharp one! Grab and eat, grab and drink! The world that we are passing through is like a wedding."

Obviously, the great Talmudic sage Shmuel was not training his disciple, Rabbi Yehudah, to engage in gluttony. What then was he telling him? The 11th-century French Talmudic commentator, Rashi, explains:

חטוף אכול—אם יש לך ממון להנות עצמך אל תמתין עד למחר שמה תמות ושוב אין לך הנאה. דעלמא דאולינן מיניה גרסינן כהלווא דמי—היום ישנו ולמחר איננו, וזמה לחופה שהולכת מהר.

Shmuel's point was to warn his student not to wait until tomorrow to use his money because a person has no assurance that he will be alive tomorrow to enjoy his money. Life is similar to a wedding, which swiftly passes.

Sometimes, in our eagerness to think about the long-term, which is important, we forget that life is happening now and we must live in the moment. Some people will never allow themselves to enjoy their wealth and success today because there is always a "tomorrow" they have to save up for. But life is short, and you can't delay your happiness till tomorrow. John Lennon was not the first to understand that "Life is what happens to you while you're busy making other plans."

This is sound advice. But why, to illustrate the brevity of life, does Shmuel give the example of a wedding? There are other events that pass swiftly. Shmuel could have said, "The world that we are passing through is like a banquet," or "like a day," or "like a dream," or "like a thunderstorm," or "like a sun shower." Why the example of a wedding to describe a fleeting experience?

Clearly, Shmuel is conveying a deeper message to his student than "life is short, live today!" The example of the wedding is essential to the understanding of the message. The Paradox

At the heart of marriage lay a paradox.

Marriage, by definition, is a restrictive experience. As long as you are a bachelor, you can dance to your own beat. Once married, you must dance to two beats, and sometimes they are divergent or conflicting.

Compromise becomes the name of the game. People are different. Men and women are very different. Living together as a husband and wife requires each to "reconfigure" the database of his or her psyche, to create space for a new "program" or, more accurately, a new "hard drive." I must create space for Thou. Every successful marriage requires serious commitment, surrender, and exclusivity.

Yet, on the other hand, marriage elevates the self to infinite heights. It is precisely through marriage and the work it requires to deal with all the internal wounds triggered by such an intimate relationship that one discovers oneself in a completely new way. In the space of connectivity and commitment, we discover our deepest potential.

What is more, without the bonding of opposite genders, reproduction is impossible. In the human race, just as in the animal kingdom and the botanical world, it is the connection of female and male that creates offspring.

All of us are mortal. Our creations, too, are mortal. Even our most impressive creations—the Roman Empire, Bear Sterns, and Lehman's Brothers—are subject to decline and death. There is only one exception: Children. They outlive us, and their children outlive them. Your children constitute your link to eternity. We are here today because thousands of years ago our great-great-grandparents married and bore children. Those ancestors are long gone; their creations are long gone; their homes, towns, and cities have long crumbled. But – we are here. And they are here today through us.

When you spend an extra three hours at the office, building your company, you are investing in something that is at best temporary. When you spend that time with your children—reading them a story, playing a game with them, schmoozing with them, bonding with them, listening to them, validating their emotions, and showering them with love and wisdom—you are investing in eternity.

This is the paradox of marriage: The marital relationship will impose limitations on your life. It will require each party to tame his or her self-expression; it will trigger you in profound ways and force you to confront uncomfortable and unresolved wounds. When a couple decides to have children, these limitations become even more dramatic. Life revolves not around your desires but your children's needs.

Yet, in this very process, you become limitless and infinite. If you want to remain unrestricted in your life, unbound and unlimited, you ensure your finitude. Your life ultimately comes to an end. Conversely, by choosing to become finite, you become infinite; by choosing to become limited, through entering into a relationship and building a family, you access infinity and achieve eternity.

[This, of course, is not limited only to those who marry or have children. Even those who, for whatever reason, could not get married or have children, their lives are enshrined in eternity, as we will explain below.]

The Ultimate Marriage

This paradox constitutes the very essence of life.

Our marriage to our spouse is essentially our second marriage. All of us experience a first marriage at the moment of birth—when our souls "marry" our bodies and they "move in" together for life.

The soul and the body are, at the beginning of their marriage, two opposites: one is physical and focused on physical survival; the other is infinite consciousness, a wave of Divine infinity and oneness. One (at least initially) defines bliss as material pleasure; the other pines for transcendence, and the ultimate truth. One craves physical safety and comfort; the other yearns for attachment and intimacy with the Source of all life, with the core and energy of all reality. One sees the objective of life as meeting its needs for survival; the other—to become one with G-d.

The Farmer

The Midrash presents this parable:[8]

A farmer once married a princess, and she moved to the farm. He was a nice man and treated her respectfully. The first day, he taught her how to milk the cows; the second day, how to feed the mules; the third day, how to clean the horses. He gave her a comfortable bed near the stable, teaching her about the crow of the rooster that would awaken her.

Yet her life was miserable.

He consulted his father-in-law, the king. "I am trying so hard to satisfy your daughter, to no avail. She is miserable. What am I to do?"

The king responded: You're a fine and sincere young man. But you must understand: your wife grew up in royalty; the life of the farm does not speak to her heart. You can't offer her what she needs because you have no concept that it exists.

This is a parable of the soul that married the body. The body is the peasant farmer, offering us success and power and all other kinds of potatoes and tomatoes. Most of us live thinking that we are peasants, seeking comfort and validation. That is why, however much we have, it is never enough. Because we are feeding ourselves the wrong thing. It can be everything the peasant has ever dreamed of, but it's still not enough because the princess has been raised on finer stuff.

Our bodies and animal consciousness mean well. Our Divine soul is anxious, so the body tells our soul: Wait till you see what's for breakfast. The body gives the soul the most delicious breakfast, lunch, and dinner. It creates comfort zones and ensures we get the validation, pleasure, affluence, and influence we crave. The poor animal soul thinks that if it becomes a celebrity, or gets some attention, or feels like a success story, life will be great. But, alas, we still have a void; the void of a soul yearning for attachment -- attachment to the ultimate reality, to G-d, the source and essence of all. The Divine soul does not need attention and validation; it craves an ego-death, so it can surrender completely and return to its source, and the only true reality.

So the body takes the soul and provides it with workable coping mechanisms to ensure safety and comfort; it may even take the soul on beautiful vacations, build it a fine home, and grant it precious jewelry. It may help it become successful socially, financially, and maybe even religiously. But the delights of the "farm" will not do the trick. The soul needs "bitul" -- it is seeking the end of separateness; it is searching for oneness with the Divine; it misses G-d.

As the soul enters into a body for a lifelong "marriage," its self-expression becomes severely limited, as it is living with a partner who does not initially even understand its language. And unlike marriage, where you can run away from your husband for a few hours to get some fresh air, the soul can never leave the body to take a break; it remains confined within the body. Sometimes, like in a marriage, the soul is completely ignored.

Yet, just as in a physical marriage that it is only as a result of the unity between man and woman that they can find their truest depth and achieve eternity, so it is with the marriage of soul and body. It is only in this world, while enlothed in the body, that the soul can transcend itself and reach heights completely impossible to reach if it were to remain "single" in heaven.

Only in this world, through its arduous work within and with the body and the animal consciousness, can the soul discover its truest self -- its deepest relationship with G-d, most powerfully and intimately, one that was not possible in the paradise of heaven. Because it is here on earth that the soul needs to choose the relationship, own it, fight for it, and find the courage to choose trust over fear, surrender over shame and judgement of self and others. Only in the container of the body and animal soul are we given the choice to surrender our egoic mind to infinite oneness.

It is only on earth, that we can experience transformation, completely going out of our fixed limitations and rebirthing ourselves. In heaven, we are what we are. On Earth, we can transform ourselves. An addict can experience recovery; an obnoxious, self-centered man can become noble and kind; a crooked liar can become an honest human being. An anxious person can learn trust; a depressed individual can learn to surrender; an angry or envious person can heal the mother or father wound; a man or woman immersed in self-shame and loathing can heal the sense of abandonment and discover their oneness with G-d. In this world, we can make real changes. True growth is possible.

And finally, only in this world, can we fulfill G-d's Mitzvos and perform Divine deeds—the "children" created by the marriage of body and soul—through which they connect to G-d Himself, in his deepest essence and core.

Life On Earth is a Wedding

We can, at last, appreciate what Shmuel said to his student Rabbi Yehudah: "Sharp one! Grab and eat, grab and drink! The world that we are passing through is like a wedding."

A wedding may seem like a limiting experience, yet it is precisely this limitation that allows you to reach your deepest potential, and what is more, lifts you on the wings of eternity. The same is true, suggested the Talmudic sage, concerning the world we pass through. Our journeys in this world may seem so restrictive and stressful, filled with agony, hardships, and pain. In paradise, there is no trauma; on earth, who can escape some form of abandonment? Even the most blessed life is filled with the anxiety of the soul confined in a material body.

Yet you have to know, said the sage Shmuel, that it is through the work in this world that the soul reaches its deepest potential and experiences radical, infinite, and eternal growth.

It is our journey here on earth that affords us the opportunity, each moment, to choose transformation, to choose trust, to confront our wounds and surrender to the all-pervading reality of Hashem.

In this world, we can become completely one with G-d through an ongoing relationship with Him, every moment, with every thought, word, and deed. We get to

perform His mitzvos and saturate the cosmos with His Torah. This can only happen in this world. Hence, "grab and eat! Grab and drink!" Seize the moment!

Grab every mitzvah that you can do in this world, each one serves as a channel for Divine infinity. Cherish every moment you have. Because what may look like a fleeting and insignificant moment to you is really like a wedding, it is a gateway to the deepest of the deep and the holiest of the holy. Every moment we reveal the holiness and goodness embedded in our soul and our world carries within it the most awesome potential -- the potential for the deepest unity, to become One with His essence.

This world, and every moment we enjoy in it, is like a wedding—it is a portal to infinity, a staircase to heaven, and that which is beyond heaven.

Grab every opportunity to do the work, the work of inner refinement and healing, with authenticity, emotional vulnerability, and connection, the work of finding G-d in Torah study and mitzvos, and in every moment of our day and night, and becoming a beacon of light and love for others.

Because you can't do any of this in heaven's paradise, where there are no blockages and traumas.

The Gift of Kabbalah and Chassidus

This is why it was the yartzeit of Rabbi Shimon bar Yochai that came to be defined as "Hilula," as a wedding. He was the one who gave the Jewish world the gift of Penemeyus Hatorah, the inner core of Torah. What is Kabbalah and Chassidus?

On the surface, Judaism is all about structure—performing fixed laws at certain times, places, and in certain ways. Each mitzvah has its detailed, fixed structure etched in stone. Halacha, Jewish law, is detail-oriented: it obliges the Jew to do many things and to abstain from many others, and there are fixed times and rituals for everything.

This is the glory of Judaism -- and it sustained our people for three millennia. Those who had deviated from the Torah and the Mitzvos, sadly, within a few generations were lost to our people. It is an irrefutable fact that Yiddishkeit has been the lifeline of the Jewish people, the sole reason for our survival amid chaos and suffering.

And yet, over the generations, it has become stale. Many Jews experience Judaism as a burden more than as a blissful opportunity. G-d Himself has become for many a difficult and painful topic and experience.

It is here where we can appreciate the soul of Torah--the teachings of Kabbalah and Chassidus.

One of the main themes of Jewish mysticism is to help us experience the Torah as a blueprint for internal healing and redemptive consciousness; how each of the mitzvos is a portal to infinity, to transcend structure and touch the Divine. Kabbalah and Chassidism focus extensively on the inner meaning of every aspect and detail of Jewish law and observance, demonstrating its cosmic significance and spiritual Divine power.

The teachings of Kabbalah and Chassidism explain at length the inner chemistry of the soul and the body and how every single one of us is infinite consciousness having a finite experience, so we can sublimate the finite and merge it with the infinite. It explains to us how the traumas and challenges of our journeys are the portals through which we touch our deepest holiness and wholeness.

Kabbalah and Chassidus reveal the significance and purpose of every moment in this world; the sacred quality of the body; the Divine music and mystery inside of every physical phenomenon; the depth and holiness of every creature in this world; the truth that matter is a manifestation of spiritual energy. They help us attune ourselves to the deepest frequency of reality -- the Oneness of Hashem. "Ein Od Milvado" (there is nothing outside of Him), even though the pain of life is so real and challenging. Rabbi Shimon is the one who helped us experience life as a "wedding"—a place where limitations are opportunities for infinity.

The final day of a person's earthly life, says the mystics, marks the point at which "all his deeds, teachings, and work" achieve their culminating perfection and the zenith of their impact upon our lives.[9] So each Lag BaOmer, we celebrate Rabbi Shimon's life and the revelation of the esoteric soul of Torah. We dance with the soul that showed us how life was a wedding, an opportunity to merge paradoxes and connect to eternity.

These teachings and experiences allow us to taste redemption even in exile, to experience the "wedding" between us and Hashem even as we struggle with concealment and loss, by leaning into the frequency of faith, trust, love, and surrender.[10]

[1] The forty-nine-day Omer count begins on the second night of Passover and culminates in the festival of Shavuot. [2] Almost every one of the Talmud's 523 chapters contains at least one law cited in the name of Rabbi Shimon (see Likkutei Sichot, vol. XII, p. 194). [3] See Zohar vol. 3 p. 287b; p. 291a. Pri Aitz Chaim Shaar Sefiras Haomer chapter 7; Shaar Hakavanos Sefiras Haomer Derush # 12. Mishnas Chassidim (by Rabbi Amnuel Chei Riki) Mesechte Iyar 1:6. [4] See Tanya Igeres Hakodesh sections 27-28. [5] Mishna Kidushin 1:1 [6] Subsequently, other yartzeits of tzaddikim have been dubbed "Yom Hahelula," a marriage day, but the first was the yartzeit of Rabbi Shimon. [7] Eiruvin 54a [8] Midrash Rabah Kohelet. [9] Tanya Igeres Hakodesh ch. 27-28 [10] This essay is based on a discourse by the Alter Rebbe, Rabbi Schneur Zalman of Liadi (1745-1812), said on Lag Baomer, 1804, and his son Rabbi Dov Ber, the Mithler Rebbe (1733-1827), Maamari Admur Haentzei Vayikra vol. 2 Maamar LeHavin Einyan Helulah D'Rashbi. As well as on the discourses with the same beginning of the year 5654 (1894) by the Rebbe Rashab, and the above discourse by the Lubavitcher Rebbe from the years 5719 (1959), 5730 (1970), 5737 (1977) and Maamar Shabbos Vayeitzei, 10 Kislev 5746 (1985), published in Sefer Hamaamarim Melukat.