

Toras Aish

Thoughts From Across the Torah Spectrum

RABBI SHLOMO RISKIN

Shabbat Shalom

What does it mean to be holy, to be spiritual, to be really and genuinely religious (and not merely observant)? And, especially in light of this particular period of the calendar year when we in Israel memorialize Holocaust Day and Memorial Day, and celebrate Israeli Independence Day and Jerusalem Day; what gives so many special individuals the courage to place their lives at risk - and even sacrifice their lives - for their Jerusalem, for their Israeliness, for their nationality and their religion, for their beliefs and their homeland?

The Hebrew word which encompasses the various aspects of the personality trait which leads to sanctity and martyrdom is *Kadosh*, usually translated as holy. In last week's Biblical reading we came across the generic commandment "You shall be holy," (Lev. 19:2), and in this week's reading the *Kohen* - priests are commanded specifically to be holy (within the context of their prohibitions not to become defiled by contact with a corpse Lev.21:6), and the Jews are commanded to martyr themselves if need be (Lev 22:32, the Hebrew usage being *vehikdashiti*, "I shall be made holy in the midst of the children of Israel, I the Lord who makes you holy"), and the Festivals (our meeting days with G-d, Hebrew *mo'ed*) are called "holy convocations" (Lev 23:2). The source of this holiness is obviously G-d, as the Bible iterates and re-iterates, and as we have just seen in the Biblical verse referring to martyrdom. But what does "holy" actually mean, and how can we become holy people?

Conventional wisdom has it that holiness is linked to the mystical, the mysterious, the esoteric, probably emanating from a classical book on the subject of Rudolf Otto, "The Idea of the Holy," wherein the term "numinous" is coined to describe this mystical connotation of the concept. I believe that the Bible, and especially the classical Biblical commentaries of the Bible, would suggest a far more prosaic but more profound meaning to holiness, one which it would behoove each of us to try to attain.

As early as in the opening verses of the second chapter of Genesis, the Hebrew word *Kadosh* (holy) appears for the first time: "And G-d blessed the seventh day and made it holy..." (Gen 2:3). The classical commentary *Rashi* (*ad loc*) explains both terms,

blessing (*berakha*) as well as holiness (*kedushah*): "He blessed the seventh day by providing a double portion of manna for it, and He made the seventh day holy by not sending any manna on it." Since manna was the special food provided by G-d for the Israelites in the desert (perhaps a metaphor for wandering humanity in a world of transition between primordial Eden and eventual Paradise), blessing refers to the extra physical portion provided on Friday night for the Sabbath table, whereas *Kedushah* refers to the lack of the physical manna which did not fall on the Sabbath day at all.

Now the usual Hebrew meaning of *Kadosh* is separate, apart from (*Kedoshim tihyu, persushim tihyu*), and this definition would certainly be appropriate for G-d, who is theologically above, beyond, separate and apart from the boundaries and limitations of our physical, material world and existence. Since the human being is created in the Divine image, contains within his/her essential being a spark of the Divine, a portion of G-d from on High, each of us must develop within ourselves the ability to transcend the physical, to be involved in the more intellectual and other-than-worldly aspects of our life, which religious moralists would call the G-d within us rather than the animal within us. To do this is the higher purpose of the Sabbath days, twenty - five hours devoted to Prayer, study and loving familial (and communal) communication.

From this perspective, what does it mean to be holy? It means to be above the physical blandishments of monetary bribery, sexual seduction and temptation; it means not devoting oneself only - or mainly - to the acquisition of material wealth. A moral and ethical human being who knows how to say no to improper physical urges or suggestions and attempts to live his/her life in the pursuit of eternal values and ideals such as the acquisition of knowledge, the betterment of society, the propagation of compassion and peace between individuals and nations, is indeed holy.

I would take this one step deeper. If G-d is eternal and His values are eternal, and if there is indeed a part of that eternal G-d within each of us, then insofar as we develop that divinely endowed soul within ourselves, we too become eternal, we too have the ability to transcend this physical world and this physical life, we too share in the life after life of the King of all Kings, the eternal life of all worlds (*El Hai ha-olamim*). Indeed, for someone who devotes his time in this world

**TORAS AISH IS A WEEKLY PARSHA
NEWSLETTER DISTRIBUTED VIA EMAIL AND THE
WORLD WIDE WEB AT [HTTP://AISHDAS.ORG](http://AISHDAS.ORG).
FOR MORE INFO EMAIL YITZ@AISHDAS.ORG**

The material presented in this publication was collected from publicly available electronic mail, computer archives and the UseNet. It is being presented with the permission of the respective authors. Toras Aish is an independent publication, and does not necessarily reflect the views of any given synagogue.

**TO DEDICATE THIS NEWSLETTER PLEASE CALL
973-472-0180 OR EMAIL YITZ@AISHDAS.ORG**

to the development of the divine within himself, the transition from life to life becomes almost natural and seamless.

When Rav Yosef Yitzhak, the Rebbe just prior to Rav Menahem Mendel Schneerson ztz"l stood fearlessly before the Communist Commissar who had put a gun to his head, the atheist war lord gazed with astonishment at the rabbinic sage. "Many heads have already rolled onto the floor of this office," he shouted. "You don't understand," replied the Rebbe. "I am constantly moving between this temporal world and the world of eternity. Mine is the G-d of eternity, so I need have no fear of you..."

Yosef Goodman, child of Efrat, son of Mordecai and Anne Goodman who own the pizzeria in Efrat, was a proud and outstanding member of the "Maglan" paratroopers of the IDF. When his parachute became entangled with that of his commander in a trial run, he had a split second to make a critical decision: either they would both crash, or he would disentangle his parachute plummeting to certain death but his commander would live. When he took the oath to defend the eternity of his nation with his earthly life, he had already made the decision. He disentangled his parachute....

When Roi Klein saw a hand-grenade about to explode in a closed area where he and his unit entered to evacuate a wounded comrade, he knew what he had to do: smother the grenade with his body. Roi was killed instantly, but all the other soldiers remained alive. The reason he did what he did was clear; before he performed this act of Kiddush Hashem he cried out: "Shema Yisrael, HaShem Elokeinu HaShem Ehad." As we say in our morning prayers: "O Guardian of Israel, protect the remnant of Your nation Israel, and do not destroy Israel, those who say, Hear O Israel... Protect Your holy nation, protect the remnant of Your holy nation, and do not destroy Your holy nation..." © 2007 *Ohr Torah Institutions & Rabbi S. Riskin*

RABBI DOV KRAMER

Taking a Closer Look

Be careful when learning, for an inadvertent mistake made when learning is considered to be [a sin done] purposely" (Avos 3:13 in most editions; 3:16 in most others). There are actually

numerous ways that this Mishnah has been translated, but this seems to be the one most widely given. Why is an inadvertent error taken to be an intended misdeed? Rashi and Bartenura explain that if one was not extremely careful when learning about something, the wrong conclusion can be reached. If and when this causes the wrong action to be chosen, even though this "misdeed" was unintentional (as it was thought to be the right thing to do), because it was the result of not learning well enough or carefully enough (which could have been avoided), it is considered as if the wrong thing had been done on purpose. Rabbeinu Yonah extends this idea of "not being careful enough in learning" to not reviewing what was already learned, as it may then be forgotten, and because learning it again and again will lead to a more correct understanding. (Based on what I wrote last week, this can be extended to not discussing it with others as well, since "brain-sharing" will also lead to a much better understanding of the topic.)

If not learning something well enough turns the resulting inadvertent misdeed into an intentional one, ignorance can no longer be an excuse for doing the wrong thing, since one could have learned about it and avoided the mistake. For example, if someone violated the Sabbath because they didn't know something was forbidden, it would still be considered as if they did it on purpose if they had the opportunity to learn that it was forbidden (in a lecture or through textual study) and chose to do something else instead. And, in fact, some commentaries (e.g. Sefornu) understand this to be precisely what the Mishnah is saying: "Be careful to learn as much as you can, for an inadvertent mistake made because something wasn't learned (when it could have been) is considered as if it were done on purpose."

However, the Talmud (Bava Metziya 33b) seems to contradict this, telling us that the inadvertent misdeeds of sages (which could have been avoided had they learned the relevant issue more carefully) are considered as if they were done on purpose, while for laypeople ("amay ha-aretz"), sins done on purpose are considered as if they were done unintentionally. Why are those who have not learned "off the hook" (so to speak) if they also could have learned what to do and thereby avoided the mistake? And why are their intentional sins considered as if they were only done accidentally. The Talmud even tells us that this is consistent with what our Mishnah (in Avos) teaches us! But doesn't our Mishnah say (or imply) just the opposite (regarding lay people)?

The Penay Yehoshua asks a different question. If those who learn have even their unintentional sins considered as if they were done intentionally, and those who don't learn have their intentional sins considered to be unintentional, why would anyone learn? Wouldn't they be better off remaining ignorant? This can't really

be the case, as "a sinner can't come out having benefited from sinning" (see Kesubos 36b). The Penay Yehoshua answers that although the layperson is held responsible for not having learned how to avoid the sin, it is included in the all-encompassing sin of not having learned. "Bitul Torah," not learning when one could have, is the gravest of sins, and is not limited only to missing out on the great mitzvah of learning Torah. Rather, anything that would have been gained had the learning been done, including the ability to avoid what became unintentional sins, is built in to the punishment of not learning. Therefore, although the unintentional sin that could have been avoided is not categorized as an intentional sin, the result is the same, falling instead under the category of "bitul Torah." The Torah scholar that sinned inadvertently, on the other hand, did spend his time learning (just not carefully enough), so his mistake can't fall under the category of "bitul Torah." His avoidable unintentional sin is therefore bumped up to be considered as if it were done intentionally. This would answer our question as well, as our Mishnah is only discussing the scholar, and is therefore not at odds with the Talmud at all (but actually saying the same thing).

While we can now understand why many commentators only understood the Mishnah in Avos to be referring to scholars that didn't study carefully enough (and not to laypeople that didn't study), even if avoidable unintentional sins are categorized under "bitul Torah," why are sins done intentionally by laypeople knocked down to the level of sins that were not done intentionally? How does the Penay Yehoshua consider the intentional sin of the layperson to be attributable to "bitul Torah" rather than the specific sin? After all, this layperson chose to commit this sin despite knowing it was wrong. Why is it considered unintentional instead?

A person can observe the Torah for several reasons. There could be a fear of punishment, a desire for reward, peer pressure, or even doing things by rote (if that's how a person was raised). Ideally, however, a person should follow G-d's laws because they appreciate how great G-d is, want to please Him and get close to Him, and know there must be real value to following His commandments. How does one attain this appreciation of G-d and His laws? By learning about them (see Rashi on Devarim 6:6). Through the study of Torah we understand more about G-d, including what's important to Him, and get a taste of His divine wisdom. If, after gaining a better comprehension of G-d's awesomeness we still sin, that sin is even greater. By the same token, a sin done by someone who never got to experience learning cannot be considered as severe.

The Talmud describes four categories of people; those that only study Biblical verses, those that study the laws (taught in the Mishnayos) but not the explanation of the different opinions stated in the

Mishnah (i.e. the Gemoro), those that also study the reasons behind the laws (the Gemoro), and laypeople. The implication is that "laypeople" refers to those that do not learn at all (even if they are "religious"). Rashi tells us that not only do they not learn themselves, but they also have disdain for those that do. Of the three categories of those who learn, it is specifically those that learn Mishnayos but not Gemoro that the Talmud is referring to as having their unintentional errors considered to be intentional.

It can therefore be suggested that the reason the intentional sin of the layperson is considered as if it was not intentional is precisely because he doesn't learn Torah, and as a result cannot fully appreciate G-d and His commandments. Someone who tosses a dirt-covered diamond aside because he doesn't realize that there is a diamond underneath cannot be said to be purposely tossing away a diamond. Similarly, the layperson, even though he knows something is wrong, if he doesn't understand the full ramifications of his actions, cannot be said to have purposely brought those consequences on himself. Nevertheless, he is responsible for doing so because he should have learned Torah, which would have enabled him to understand the full severity of his actions. The same way that "bitul Torah" encompasses not knowing what is wrong in order to avoid it, it also encompasses not realizing how wrong it is and not appreciating the value of avoiding sin. Ultimately, though, we are fully responsible for those things that we could have known but don't, whether it is because we didn't learn enough or because we didn't learn carefully enough. © 2007 Rabbi D. Kramer

MACHON ZOMET

Shabbat B'Shabbato

by Rabbi Amnon Bazak, Yeshivat Har Etzion

A short passage in this week's Torah portion is devoted to sacrifices that are invalid because of the element of time (Vayikra 22:26-30). This includes: (1) The age of the animal-"Let it remain with its mother for seven days, and from the eighth day on it will be accepted as a sacrifice to G-d" [22:27]. (2) A specific relationship to parents: "For an ox or a sheep, do not slaughter it and its son on the same day" [22:28]. (3) The fact that a voluntary sacrifice must be eaten on the day it is killed: "Let it be eaten that day, do not leave any of it until the morning" [22:30]. However, in spite of the fact that all three laws have in common the word "day," each of these laws is significant in its own way.

What the first of the two laws have in common is that they are related to a moral issue. It is wrong to offer a sacrifice for which the link with its mother is in some way harmed. (According to the commentaries, based on the sages, "it and its son" in the verse about the second type of sacrifice refers to the mother.) The first law is related to the importance of the contact

between a mother and her child during the first days after a birth, and it reminds us of what is written about a woman and her child: "If a woman becomes pregnant and gives birth to a boy, she shall be impure for seven days, corresponding to the days of her impure flow. And on the eighth day he shall be circumcised." [Vayikra 12:2-3]. The second law, not to kill two members of a family on the same day, stems from a moral outlook which is also relevant to human beings. Rivka warned her son Yaacov about the special tragedy which might happen in their family: "Why should I lose both of you in one day?" [Bereishit 27:45]. Part of the punishment meted out to the sons of Eli was the same. "And this will be a sign for you, what will happen to your two sons, Chofni and Pinchas. They will both die on the same day." [Shmuel I 2:34]. The death of two sons of a single family on the same day is an especially shocking event, and to some extent this is also true of animals.

The third law, on the other hand, is not related at all to a moral issue, but is rather a law pertaining to eating the flesh of a sacrifice. However, the element of time links it to the second law, by way of contrast. The emphasis of the second law is the problematic nature of having two events take place on the same day, while the third law points out a case which is the opposite. Here it is specifically required that two things take place on the same day. From a logical point of view, what unites these last two laws is the concept that a day is a single unit of time. Taking several actions within the span of a single day is an expression of the intensity of the actions, either in a positive or a negative way. The fact that the flesh is to be eaten on the day the animal was slaughtered shows the link between the bringing of a sacrifice and the mitzva to partake of its flesh, emphasizing the element of thanksgiving in bringing the sacrifice.

Based on the above discussion, the connection to the rest of this week's Torah portion is also clear. After the laws linking time to the sacrifices are given at the end of Chapter 22, the Torah continues in Chapter 23 with the laws of the holidays, which are related to the sanctity of time (with constant repetitions of the terms, "day, seven days, the eighth day, etc). Thus, the Torah progresses from the concept of time and its importance in terms of the elements which comprise it to a discussion of the importance of time in the context of the calendar.

RABBI AVI WEISS

Shabbat Forshpeis

This week's Torah portion presents many rules pertaining to the Kohen (Jewish priest). Among these laws is the prohibition against any contact with the dead. Except for his closest family members, the Kohen cannot touch a dead corpse, be present at burial or even be in the same room as a dead body.

What is the rationale of this prohibition and what is its relationship to the Kehuna (priesthood)?

Perhaps the reasoning of this law lies with an understanding of the difference between the ultimate goal of life itself. Some faith communities see the ultimate goal of existence the arrival in the life hereafter. Christianity, for example, insists that redemption is dependent upon the belief that Jesus died for one's sins. In Islam, martyrdom is revered, as only through death can one reach the ultimate world.

The Torah, on the other hand, is fundamentally a system that accentuates commitment to G-d, in this world-the world of the living. While Judaism does believe that the hereafter is of important status, it takes a back seat to this world. As the Psalmist states, "I shall not die but live and proclaim the works of the Lord," (Psalms 118:17) and "The dead cannot praise the Lord...but we (the living) will bless the Lord now and forever." (Psalms 115:17-18)

To teach this point the Kohen, the teacher par excellence is mandated not to have any contact with the dead. This is a way of imparting the concept that the ultimate sanctification of G-d is not through death but through life.

My dear friend and teacher, Rabbi Saul Berman has suggested another approach. It was the priest of old who was often called on to intercede on behalf of the deceased. In ancient times, families hoped that through such intercession, the dead person would receive a better place in the life hereafter. In such situations, the priest may have been tempted to, and sometimes did, take payoffs for intervening.

It is then understandable that the Torah insists that the Kohen have no contact whatsoever with the deceased. This would make it impossible for him to take advantage of people, particularly when they are going through a deep loss, when they are most vulnerable.

Today, the community, whether justified or not, sees the rabbi as the primary intermediary between G-d and humanity. Although most rabbis are not Kohanim (descendants of priests), I have the great honor of being both a rabbi and a Kohen. Due to my status as a Kohen, it has not always been easy for me to fulfill my role as the rabbi. Due to this limited ability to become involved in the bereavement process, I have gained a unique perspective toward death and mourning. The requirement to not fully engage has taught me that although in their time of most intense grief mourners need the support of family, friends and rabbis, there is such a thing as over involvement. No one fully understands the mystery of death, and no one can solve this age old question for a mourner as s/he sits beside her or his deceased loved one.

Only G-d knows these answers. Although they must stand as a support and comfort, no rabbi nor priest can serve as a buffer or intermediary between

the intense dialogue between a grief stricken mourner and the Almighty One at the deepest moment of loneliness, the moment of loss. © 2007 Hebrew Institute of Riverdale & CJC-AMCHA. Rabbi Avi Weiss is Founder and Dean of Yeshivat Chovevei Torah, the Open Orthodox Rabbinical School, and Senior Rabbi of the Hebrew Institute of Riverdale.

RABBI NOSSON CHAYIM LEFF

Sfas Emes

The parsha begins with an unusual turn of phrase. The language used-"Emor... ve'amarta" ("Speak... and tell") -- seems to call for special interpretation. Why does the Torah use this double mention of "amira"?

Apparently, this question also bothered Chazal. How do we know? Because the first paragraph of Medrash Rabba on the parsha addresses this very question. The methodology that Medrash Rabba uses to provide an answer is straightforward. The Amoraim there scour Tanach to find other pesukim which also use a double mention of "amar", and thus may resonate with the pasuk here.

Chazal find such an "echo" in a pasuk in Tehilim (12:7) That pasuk says: "Imeros HaShem ahmahros tehoros; kesef tzaruf, ba'alil la'aretz, mezukak shivasayim (ArtScroll: "The words of HaShem are pure words; like purified silver, clear to the world, refined sevenfold.").

The Sfas Emes notes that the pasuk in Tehilim introduces the subject of tahara (purity; i.e., "ahmahros tehoros") into the discussion. He seems to wonder what the subject of purity is doing here. To understand what the Sfas Emes says next, some background information may be helpful.

We live with a fundamental metaphysical problem: How can we, as human beings- bassar (flesh, with all of its weaknesses) vadahm (blood = volition, with all its selfishness) -- achieve a state of purity?

To this question, the Sfas Emes replies: We can achieve purity because HaShem created the world with His ma'amoros (spoken words; note that we are back to "Emor"). And HaShem's ma'amar implants tahara in the whole world. Thus, what the Sfas Emes (and Chazal) learn from the pasuk in Tehilim is that amira brings with it the possibility of tahara. In other words, the double mention of amira at the beginning of Emor is there to remind us that HaShem formed this world with his ma'amar, and thus to draw our attention to the possibility of achieving a respectable level of purity.

The Sfas Emes develops this picture further by pointing to another sense of the word "amira"-a meaning that may not be widely known. A pasuk in Devarim (26:8) tells us: VeHaShem he'emircha... liheyos Lo le'ahm segula... " (ArtScroll: "And HaShem has distinguished you... to be for Him a treasured

people...") Chazal (Berachos 6a) read this pasuk as telling us: "... veAhni eh'eseh eschem chativa ahchas... " (" You shall make Me a single "chativa", and I will make you a single "chativa"). Obviously, the key word here is "chativa". What does this word mean? Both here in Berachos and in Chagiga (3a), where this ma'amar also appears, Rashi translates "chativa" as "shevach"-praise. The Sfas Emes reads the word "he'emircha" as "chibur vedibuk-i.e., clinging together, held tightly. Thus, "Emor... ve'amarta" becomes "Cling to HaShem's Presence and you will achieve purity".

(Before you fall off your chair at the Sfas Emes's innovativeness, note that in his authoritative dictionary, Marcus Jastrow-who was not a chassidische rebbe-translates "chativa" as "object of love". This translation fits in neatly with the Sfas Emes's reading.)

The Sfas Emes recognizes that we may need some help at this point. Accordingly, he brings up reinforcements, with some "tosefes bi'ur". This "further explanation" actually introduces additional mind-stretching ideas. The Sfas Emes comments that what he has told us thus far in this ma'amar dovetails with "Sefiras Ha'omer". (In the Sfas Emes's milieu, people did not pronounce the letter "ayin" very differently from the way they pronounced the letter "aleph." Hence, the Sfas Emes assumes that we are all aware that he is reading "omer" as an allusion to "Emor". Because this remez is so obvious, he does not mention the connection.)

The Sfas Emes explains that, like the beginning of this week's parsha ("Emor..."), Sefiras Ha'omer is about achieving purity. Thus, in the tefila that we say after counting the Omer: "You commanded us to count the omer in order that we may be purified..." Our redemption from Egypt showed that we can achieve freedom from all desires and all commands other than those of HaShem. The Sfas Emes tells us that "freedom" means exactly that: to be able constantly to do the will of HaShem. Our redemption from Egypt demonstrated that possibility. That demonstration, however, was limited to the special case in which miracles were in operation.

Proceeding ever upward, after Pesach we go to the more relevant, everyday case-the experience that "Sefiras Ha'omer" brings to mind. (The Sfas Emes is reading the word "sefira" as "cutting away extraneous material". Cutting away the clutter enables us to clarify what is truly essential. This alternate meaning of the Hebrew root SPR in the sense of cutting away continues in modern Hebrew, e.g., with "sappar"-a barber. Further, the Sfas Emes is reading the word "omer" in its Biblical sense of a middah, a measure (Shemos, 16:36).

From middah as a measure, he moves on to see middos as character traits. Thus, Sefiras Ha'omer is a process in which we cut away from our middos-our behavioral qualities-everything that is extraneous to our

Avodas HaShem. By discarding everything that is not conducive to doing HaShem's will, we can achieve purity even in a world in which miracles are not apparent.

The Sfas Emes concludes with some words about Shabbos and the weekdays. Shabbos is total commitment (hisbatlus) to HaShem. By contrast, the weekdays are there to enable us to extend the chiyus of Shabbos to the mundane, material world. The Sfas Emes explains that is why the weekdays are called "yemei ha'avoda". Not only are those days "work days". They can also be days of unique Avodas HaShem.
© 2007 Rabbi N.C. Leff & torah.org

RABBI DOVID SIEGEL

Haftorah

This week's haftorah gives us a glimpse into the kohanim's status during Mashiach's times. The prophet Yechezkel begins by directing our attention to the specific regulations of the kohanim's garb. He then refers to their restriction from wine and shaving and mentions their prohibition from marrying certain women. This list seems to be, at first glance, a total repetition of the details of our parsha. Yet, a more careful analysis reveals to us something shocking about the elevated status of the ordinary kohain of Mashiach's times. His restrictions and regulations are similar to those of the Kohain Gadol mentioned in this week's parsha. This suggests that the ordinary kohain's spiritual status will be likened to that of the Kohain Gadol. Evidently, the Jewish people's status will be so elevated that the ordinary kohain will assume levels of sanctity tantamount to the most sanctified person of earlier times.

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

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

We can now appreciate the sanctity of the ordinary kohain of Mashiach's times and its message for us. First, a word about the general status of the Jewish people during that era. The prophet Yeshaya refers to this illustrious time in the following terms, "And the land will be filled with the knowledge of Hashem likened to the water that fills the sea." (Yeshaya 11:9) Rambam elaborates upon this and states, "And in this time there will be no jealousy or quarreling.... the preoccupation of all will be 'to know Hashem'...the Jewish people will be great scholars who will understand Hashem to maximum human capacity." (Hilchos M'lochim 12:5) In essence, the entire Jewish nation will be absorbed in learning Hashem's truthful ways. Their total focus will be on Hashem's expression in every aspect of life thus revealing more and more of His unlimited goodness and knowledge. It stands to reason that if this will be the knowledge of the ordinary Jew, how much greater will be that of the kohain who is privileged to stand in the actual presence of Hashem! One cannot begin contemplating the ordinary kohain's daily experience with Hashem. His profound knowledge of Hashem together with his direct and constant association with Him will truly elevate him to the sanctity of "Holy of Holies". His awareness of Hashem's presence will therefore, in certain ways, become tantamount to that of the Kohain Gadol on the holiest

day of the year. May we soon merit to witness and experience such elevated levels of sanctity, so sorely needed in our times. © 2007 Rabbi D. Siegel & torah.org

DR. AVIGDOR BONCHEK

What's Bothering Rashi?

This week's Parsha deals with many laws of the Kohanim. Also included are the laws of the Holy Days of the year.

"He shall wave the Omer before Hashem to be an appeasement for you; on the day after the Sabbath, the Priest shall wave it." (Vayikra 23:11)

"On the day after the Sabbath"-Rashi: "The day after the first day of the festival of Pesach. {This must be the meaning of 'Sabbath' here} because if you say it means the Sabbath of Creation (i.e. the weekly Sabbath), then you would not know which Sabbath [the Torah was referring to]."

The verse seems to say that the Omer offering is to be brought on the day following the Sabbath. The word "Sabbath" means the seventh day of the week. But Rashi (on the basis of the Sages' interpretation) tells us that the Sabbath here does not mean the seventh day of the week; rather, it means the festival (the first day of Pesach) -- which is also a day of rest, which is the literal meaning of the word "Sabbath."

Certainly this does not seem to be the simple meaning of the verse. What would you ask?

A Question: Why does Rashi prefer the unusual meaning of "Sabbath" (festival) over its usual meaning (the seventh day)? Hint: Actually Rashi's comment contains the answer.

An Answer: Rashi says it can't mean the regular Sabbath because then we wouldn't know which specific Sabbath of the year was referred to and hence we wouldn't know when the Omer should be brought.

Nevertheless, one could still ask a question on Rashi's translating the word "Sabbath" as "festival."

A Question: Where do we ever find that the word "Sabbath" means "festival" in the Torah? Doesn't it always mean "the seventh day"? Can you find an example of "Sabbath" meaning "festival"?

An Answer: Yes the Torah does occasionally refer to festival as "Sabbath." See this Chapter (23) Verse 24 where Rosh Hashanah is referred to as "Shabbaton," and again in verse 23:39 referring to Succot it says: "on the first day Shabbaton and on the eighth day Shabbaton." All these are examples of "Shabbat" used to designate a festival, or more precisely, a day of rest. So Rashi's interpretation of "the day after the Sabbath" as the day after the festival does have parallels in the Torah.

Note that Yom Kippur is called "Shabbat Shabbaton" (the Sabbath of Sabbaths-23:32). This has been explained to mean that Yom Kippur is the Sabbath of the festivals. There are six festivals ("Sabbaths") during the year:

1. Rosh Hashanah
2. First day of Succot
3. Shemini Atzeret
4. First day of Pesach
5. Last day of Pesach
6. One day of Shavuot.

Thus, Yom Kippur is the Sabbath of those six days. On the six festivals one is permitted to do some "work" (e.g., prepare food). But all work is forbidden on Yom Kippur, so it stands as the Sabbath (the seventh day) of these festivals (Sabbaths).

It is interesting to mention that there was a very serious and long-standing dispute between the Talmudic Sages and the Sadducees. The latter claimed that the word "Sabbath" in our verse meant Saturday, thus the "day after the Sabbath" meant Sunday. The Sages refuted their claim with many different arguments. It seems that the Christian celebration of Easter Sunday can most likely be traced back to this debate. That day is usually the Sunday after the first day of Pesach. © 2007 Dr. A. Bonchek & aish.com

RABBI ZVI MILLER

The Salant Foundation

The Prophet Isaiah (58:5) admonished Klal Yisrael for being downhearted on Yom Kippur-Is such gloom the fast that I have chosen? Is the purpose of the day for man to afflict his soul? Is it to bow down his head as a bulrush, and to spread sackcloth and ashes under his feet?

What is the criticism of Isaiah? Yom Kippur is a time of judgment, fasting, and repentance. Isn't the focus of the day to reflect on one's misdeeds and shortcomings-and to feel a sense of despondence?

In the next passage (58:6) Isaiah explains what should take place on Yom Kippur-Isn't the purpose of this fast that I have chosen to loosen fetters of wickedness, to undo the bands of the yoke, and to let the oppressed go free, and that you break every yoke?

Yom Kippur is a time of liberation. It provides us with the opportunity to extricate ourselves from negativity and selfishness. If we open our hearts to the power of Yom Kippur and fill our souls with goodness and kindness-Then shall your light break forth as the morning, and your healing shall quickly spring forth (58:8).

The Torah deliberately writes (Vayikra 23:32) that Yom Kippur takes place on the ninth of Tishrei, even though the actual date of observance is the tenth of Tishrei. By associating the previous day, i.e. the ninth, to Yom Kippur, the Torah is telling us that anyone who partakes of a festive meal on the ninth is considered as if he fasted on both the ninth and the tenth. In the same spirit of the Prophet, this verse teaches that Yom Kippur is a time of joy and celebration-for there is no greater happiness than forgiveness and redemption.

The purpose of avodas Hashem and repentance is true joy and delight. Although certain aspects of our observance evoke remorse—this is the means and not the end. Through proper appreciation and fulfillment of the Yom Kippur procedure—our spirits are cleansed, our souls elevated, and our hearts filled with delight. [Based on Ohr HaTzafon of Rav Nossan Zvi Finkel] © 2007 Rabbi Z. Miller & The Salant Foundation

RABBI MORDECHAI KAMENETZKY

Message of Restraint

The portion Emor begins with a series of exhortations directed to the chosen among the chosen. The elite group of Ahron's descendants are warned about myriad requirements, obligations, and responsibilities that they share as the spiritual leaders of the Jewish nation.

The most celebrated of them regards the defilement of a dead person. "Hashem said to Moses, Say to the Kohanim, the sons of Aaron, and tell them, Each of you shall not contaminate himself with a [dead] person among his people" (Leviticus 21:1).

Note the odd expression, "Say to the kohanim, and tell them" The commentaries are quick to point out this seemingly redundant exhortation. It surely seems that telling them once is not enough.

Rashi, in fact, quotes Tractate Yevamos:114a explaining, "'Say,' and again 'thou shalt say unto them'—this repetition is intended to admonish the older about their young ones also, that they should teach them to avoid defilement." Clearly, the repetitive nature of the verse defines an exhortation, one far beyond the normal "no." Can there perhaps be a directive to the child within us as well?

My grandfather, Rabbi Yaakov Kamenetzky, of blessed memory, told me the story of how, as the Rav of Toronto, he was quickly introduced to a new world, far different than the world he was accustomed to as the Rav of the tiny Lithuanian shtetl of Tzitivyan, which he left in 1937. One of his congregants had invited him to a pidyon haben, a special ceremony and feast made when a first-born child reaches thirty days old and his father redeems him from the kohen for five silver shekels (dollars).

Entering the hall, Rav Yaakov was impressed by the beautiful meal prepared in honor of the event. He was reviewing the procedure, and the interaction with the Kohen that would frame the event, when the father of the child introduced Rav Yaakov to his father-in-law, a Mr. Segal. Suddenly, Rav Yaakov realized that there was trouble. If Mr. Segal was a Levite, as the name Segal traditionally denotes (Se'gan L'kohen, an assistant to the Kohen), then there would be no need for a Pidyon HaBen. For, if the mother of the child is the daughter of either a Kohen or Levi, then no redemption is necessary.

"Mr. Segal," asked Rav Yaakov, "are you by any chance a Levi?" "Of course!" beamed the elderly Segal.

Rav Yaakov tried to explain to the father of the child that a pidyon haben was unnecessary, but the father was adamant. He had prepared a great spread, appointed a kohen, and even had the traditional silver tray sprinkled with garlic and sugar cubes, awaiting the baby. He wanted to carry out the ceremony!

It took quite a while for Rav Yaakov to dissuade the man that this was no mitzvah, and to perform the ceremony with a blessing would be not only superfluous, but also irreverent and a transgression.

(In fact, one apocryphal ending has the father complaining, "What do you mean, I don't have to make a pidyon haben? I made one for my first son and I'm going to make one for this son!")

Ultimately, Rav Yaakov, convinced the man to transform the celebration into a party commemorating, his child's 30th day entered in good health, an important milestone with many halachic ramifications.

Sometimes our desire to perform Mitzvos transcends the will of Hashem not to do them, especially when it comes to emotionally charged rituals that deal with birth and death. In Jerusalem, there is a custom that mourners do not accompany their father's body into the cemetery. Many foreigners, who have attended their parents' funerals in Jerusalem, refuse to abide by that custom, and go to the cemetery despite the protestations of the Jerusalem Chevra Kadisha (Burial Society). It is most difficult to suppress tears on the Shabbos during one's mourning period. However, one must not grieve on the Shabbos. And now, imagine, how difficult is it for a kohen to hold back from attending the funeral of a dear friend or cousin, or any family member who does not fit the criteria that would allow kohenetic defilement? After all, isn't attending a funeral a great mitzvah?

Thus, when the Torah discusses the prohibition of defilement, the Torah must announce, "Tell them and tell them, To warn the greater ones to teach the weaker or lesser ones." The power of constraint is not that simple, but the temptation to transgress is compounded when the transgression is rationalized with validity and good-feelings. Thus, the will of the L-rd must be emphatically reiterated to our weaker instincts, when mortal rationality can distort Divine will. © 2001 Rabbi M. Kamenetzky & Project Genesis, Inc.

