

Toras Aish

Thoughts From Across the Torah Spectrum

RABBI LORD JONATHAN SACKS

Covenant & Conversation

The parsha of Emor contains a chapter dedicated to the festivals of the Jewish year. There are five such passages in the Torah. Two, both in the book of Exodus (Ex. 23:14-17; 34:18, 22-23), are very brief. They refer only to the three pilgrimage festivals, Pesach, Shavuot and Sukkot. They do not specify their dates, merely their rough position in the agricultural year. Nor do they mention the specific commands related to the festivals.

This leaves three other festival accounts, the one in our parsha, a second one in Numbers 28-29, and the third in Deuteronomy 16. What is striking is how different they are. This is not, as critics maintain, because the Torah is a composite document but rather because it comes at its subject-matter from multiple perspectives -- a characteristic of the Torah mindset as a whole.

The long section on the festivals in Numbers is wholly dedicated to the special additional sacrifices [the musaf] brought on holy days including Shabbat and Rosh Chodesh. A memory of this is preserved in the Musaf prayers for these days. These are holy times from the perspective of the Tabernacle, the Temple, and later the synagogue.

The account in Deuteronomy is about society. Moses at the end of his life told the next generation where they had come from, where they were going to, and the kind of society they were to construct. It was to be the opposite of Egypt. It would strive for justice, freedom and human dignity.

One of Deuteronomy's most important themes is its insistence that worship be centralised "in the place that G-d will choose," which turned out to be Jerusalem. The unity of G-d was to be mirrored in the unity of the nation, something that could not be achieved if every tribe had its own temple, sanctuary or shrine. That is why, when it comes to the festivals, Deuteronomy speaks only of Pesach, Shavuot and Sukkot, and not Rosh Hashanah or Yom Kippur, because only on those three was there a duty of Aliyah le-regel, pilgrimage to the Temple.

Equally significant is Deuteronomy's focus -- not found elsewhere -- on social inclusion: "you, your sons and daughters, your male and female servants, the Levites within your gates, and the stranger, the

orphan and the widow living among you." Deuteronomy is less about individual spirituality than about the kind of society that honours the presence of G-d by honouring our fellow humans, especially those at the margins of society. The idea that we can serve G-d while being indifferent to, or dismissive of, our fellow human beings is utterly alien to the vision of Deuteronomy.

Which leaves Emor, the account in this week's parsha. It too is distinctive. Unlike the Exodus and Deuteronomy passages it includes Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur. It also tells us about the specific mitzvot of the festivals, most notably Sukkot: it is the only place where the Torah mentions the arba minim, the "four kinds," and the command to live in a sukkah.

It has, though, various structural oddities. The most striking one is the fact that it includes Shabbat in the list of the festivals. This would not be strange in itself. After all, Shabbat is one of the holy days. What is strange is the way it speaks about Shabbat: The Lord said to Moses, "Speak to the Israelites and say to them: The appointed times [moadei] of the Lord, which you are to proclaim [tikre'u] as sacred assemblies [mikra'ei kodesh]. These are my appointed festivals [mo'adai]. Six days shall you work, but the seventh day is a sabbath of sabbaths, a day of sacred assembly [mikra kodesh]. You are not to do any work; wherever you live, it is a sabbath to the Lord."

There is then a paragraph break, after which the whole passage seems to begin again: These are the Lord's appointed times [mo'adei] festivals, the sacred assemblies [mikra'ei kodesh] you are to proclaim [tikre'u] at their appointed times [be-mo'adam].

This structure, with its two beginnings, puzzled the commentators. Even more was the fact that the Torah here seems to be calling Shabbat a mo'ed, an appointed time, and a mikra kodesh, a sacred assembly, which it does nowhere else. As Rashi puts it: "What has Shabbat to do with the festivals?" The festivals are annual occurrences, Shabbat is a weekly one. The festivals depend on the calendar fixed by the Bet Din. That is the meaning of the phrase, "the sacred



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assemblies you are to proclaim at their appointed times." Shabbat, however, does not depend on any act by the Bet Din and is independent of both the solar and lunar calendar. Its holiness comes directly from G-d and from the dawn of creation. Bringing the two together under a single heading seems to make no sense. Shabbat is one thing, moadim and mikra'ei kodesh are something else. So what connects the two?

Rashi tells us it is to emphasize the holiness of the festivals. "Whoever desecrates the festivals is as if he had desecrated the Sabbath, and whoever observes the festivals as if he had observed the Sabbath." The point Rashi is making is that we can imagine someone saying that he respects the Sabbath because it is G-d-given, but the festivals are of an altogether lesser sanctity, first because we are permitted certain kinds of work, such as cooking and carrying, and second because they depend on a human act of fixing the calendar. The inclusion of Shabbat among the festivals is to negate this kind of reasoning.

Ramban offers a very different explanation. Shabbat is stated before the festivals just as it is stated before Moses' instructions to the people to begin work on the construction of the Sanctuary, to tell us that just as the command to build the Sanctuary does not override Shabbat, so the command to celebrate the festivals does not override Shabbat. So, although we may cook and carry on festivals we may not do so if a festival falls on Shabbat.

By far the most radical explanation was given by the Vilna Gaon. According to him, the words "'Six days shall you work, but the seventh day is a sabbath of sabbaths," do not apply to the days of the week but to the days of the year. There are seven holy days specified in our parsha: the first and seventh day of Pesach, one day of Shavuot, Rosh Hashanah, Yom Kippur, the first day of Sukkot and Shmini Atseret. On six of them we are allowed to do some work, such as cooking and carrying, but on the seventh, Yom Kippur, we are not, because it is a "Sabbath of Sabbaths" (see verse 32). The Torah uses two different expressions for the prohibition of work on festivals in general and on the "seventh day." On the festivals what is forbidden is melechet avodah ("burdensome or servile work"), whereas on the seventh day what is forbidden is melakhah, "any work" even if not burdensome. So Yom

Kippur is to the year what Shabbat is to the week.

The Vilna Gaon's reading allows us to see something else: that holy time is patterned on what I have called (in the Introduction to the Siddur) fractals: the same pattern at different levels of magnitude. So the structure of the week -- six days of work followed by a seventh that is holy -- is mirrored in the structure of the year -- six days of lesser holiness plus a seventh, Yom Kippur, of supreme holiness. As we will see in two chapters' time (Lev. 25), the same pattern appears on an even larger scale: six ordinary years followed by the year of Shemittah, "release."

Wherever the Torah wishes to emphasize the dimension of holiness (the word kodesh appears no less than twelve times in Lev. 23), it makes systematic use of the number and concept of seven. So there are not only seven holy days in the annual calendar. There are also seven paragraphs in the chapter. The word "seven" or "seventh" occurs repeatedly (eighteen times) as does the word for the seventh day, Shabbat in one or other of its forms (fifteen times). The word "harvest" appears seven times.

However, it seems to me that Leviticus 23 is telling another story as well -- a deeply spiritual one. Recall our argument (made by Judah Halevi and Ibn Ezra) that almost the entire forty chapters between Exodus 24 and Leviticus 25 are a digression, brought about because Moses argued that the people needed G-d to be close. They wanted to encounter Him not only at the top of the mountain but also in the midst of the camp; not only as a terrifying power overturning empires and dividing the sea but also as a constant presence in their lives. That was why G-d gave the Israelites the Sanctuary (Exodus 25-40) and its service (i.e. the book of Leviticus as a whole).

That is why the list of the festivals in Leviticus emphasizes not the social dimension we find in Deuteronomy, or the sacrificial dimension we find in Numbers, but rather the spiritual dimension of encounter, closeness, the meeting of the human and the divine. This explains why we find in this chapter, more than in any other, two key words. One is mo'ed, the other is mikra kodesh, and both are deeper than they seem.

The word mo'ed does not just mean "appointed time." We find the same word in the phrase ohel mo'ed meaning "tent of meeting." If the ohel mo'ed was the place where man and G-d met, then the mo'adim in our chapter are the times when we and G-d meet. This idea is given beautiful expression in the last line of the mystical song we sing on Shabbat, Yedid nefesh, "Hurry, beloved, for the appointed time [mo'ed] has come." Mo'ed here means a tryst -- an appointment made between lovers to meet at a certain time and place.

As for the phrase mikra kodesh, it comes from the same root as the word that gives the entire book its

name: Vayikra, meaning "to be summoned in love." A mikra kodesh is not just a holy day. It is a meeting to which we have been called in affection by One who holds us close.

Much of the book of Vayikra is about the holiness of place, the Sanctuary. Some of it is about the holiness of people, the Cohanim, the priests, and Israel as a whole, as "a kingdom of priests." In chapter 23, the Torah turns to the holiness of time and the times of holiness.

We are spiritual beings but we are also physical beings. We cannot be spiritual, close to G-d, all the time. That is why there is secular time as well as holy time. But one day in seven, we stop working and enter the presence of the G-d of creation. On certain days of the year, the festivals, we celebrate the G-d of history. The holiness of Shabbat is determined by G-d alone because He alone created the universe. The holiness of the festivals is partially determined by us (i.e. by the fixing of the calendar), because history is a partnership between us and G-d. But in two respects they are the same. They are both times of meeting (mo'ed), and they are both times when we feel ourselves called, summoned, invited as G-d's guests (mikra kodesh).

We can't always be spiritual. G-d has given us a material world with which to engage. But on the seventh day of the week, and (originally) seven days in the year, G-d gives us dedicated time in which we feel the closeness of the Shekhinah and are bathed in the radiance of G-d's love. ©2016 Rabbi Lord J. Sacks and rabbisacks.org

RABBI SHLOMO RISKIN

Shabbat Shalom

"**A**nd G-d spoke unto Moses saying: Speak unto Aaron and to his sons, that they separate themselves from the holy things of the children of Israel which they sacrifice unto me so that they profane not My holy name, I am G-d!" [Lev. 22:1-2]

The theme of the priesthood, explored in our portion of Emor, is further amplified in the Haftarah, where we read, "And they [the priests] shall teach My people the difference between the holy and the common, and cause them to discern between the ritually impure and the ritually pure. And in a controversy they shall stand to judge...and they shall hallow my Sabbaths." [Ezekiel 44:23-24]

The priests were obviously the religious leaders of the Israelites. However, there are a number of problematic issues regarding their office, status and function. First, one of the great mysteries in the Torah concern the laws of the Red Heifer, whereby the priest is commanded to conduct a complex ritual so that a person defiled by contact with the dead is returned to a state of purity [Numbers 19]. At the same time, the dutiful priest discovers that while facilitating the impure person's return to purity, he himself has become

impure. Is it not strange that the very individual who purifies the impure must himself become impure in the process. Why?

A further difficulty concerning the priesthood emerges from the Torah's commandment not to give the Levite tribe, which includes all priests, an ancestral share in the land. Their housing problem was solved by transferring 42 cities from the other tribes' inheritance to the Levites and priests; these cities, as well as six additional "cities of refuge" described in the Torah (Numbers 35) as such, were all islands of protection for anyone who killed accidentally, the fear of revenge by blood relatives of the victim forcing the 'killer' to flee for his life. Inside these 48 cities, the accidental killer could receive asylum, starting his life all over again without the fear that one of the victim's relatives would kill him. (Maimonides, Laws of the Murderer, 8,9).

We have to remember that all sorts of unsavory types fit into the category of the accidental killer; even someone who intended to murder X and ended up murdering Y, or someone who merely intended to maim significantly but not to murder, was called an accidental killer (shogeg), and had a right to seek asylum. Such individuals may not warrant the death penalty in a Jewish Court of Law, but they certainly cannot be counted among the elite of serious Jewry.

Is it not strange that the Torah commands the priestly class, whom I would have imagined to be located as near to the Holy Temple as possible, to have their lives intertwined with such trigger-happy criminals and lowlifes?

Finally, the Kohen- Priest ascends the 'bimah' to ask the Almighty to bless the Israelites with the words: "Blessed art Thou...who has sanctified us with the Sanctity of Aaron and has commanded us to bless His nation Israel with love." Do we have another instance in our laws of benedictions wherein the individual bestowing the blessing must do so with love? What does this signify?

In order to begin to understand the true role of Jewish leadership, we must remember that Abraham was not the first person after Noah to devote himself to G-d. Noah's son, Shem – who according to the Midrash was not only born nine generations before Abraham but lived forty years after the first patriarch died – really qualified for this preeminent position. According to the Midrash, it was he, together with his son Ever, who established the first yeshiva in history. When Rebecca, Abraham's daughter-in-law, felt unwell in her pregnancy, she "inquired of the Lord" (Gen. 25:22); Rashi explains that she sought the spiritual advice not of Abraham but rather of Shem. Several verses later, after she gives birth to twins, Jacob the younger son is described as "dwelling in tents." (25:27) Again Rashi tells us that these are the tents of Torah, the tent of Shem and the tent of Ever,

for which Jacob, left his father's and grandfather's home to study Torah for fourteen years. And Rashi explains that the guests of honor "at the great feast Abraham made on the day that Isaac was weaned," (Gen. 21:8) were "...the greatest of the generation (gedolai hador): Shem and Ever and Elimelech."

But if this is true, why does the historic chain of the Jewish people begin with Abraham and not with Shem and Ever who preceded Abraham by ten and seven generations respectively?

This question is raised by the Raavad (1125-1198) on his gloss to Maimonides' Laws of Idolatry, when the "Great Eagle" describes how even "... their (Gentile) wise men... also thought that there was no other god but the stars and spheres. But the Creator of the universe was known to none, and recognized by none save a few solitary individuals, such as Enosh, Methusaleh, Noah, Shem and Ever. The world moved on in this fashion until that pillar of the world, the patriarch Abraham was born..." Our first patriarch"...would travel and cry out and gather the people from city to city and kingdom to kingdom until he arrived in the land of Canaan, where Abraham proclaimed his message, 'And he called there on the name of the Lord, G-d of the universe' " [Gen. 21:33]. And Maimonides details how people flocked to Abraham, who would then instruct them about the true path. (Laws of Idolatry,1,2).

But where, asks the Raavad, is Shem in all of this? "If Shem and Ever were there (and we know as we've pointed out earlier that they were the leading Sages, the gedolim) why didn't they protest this idolatry?"

The Kesef Mishnah (Rabbi Yosef Caro) offers an answer to this question: "Abraham would call out and announce [to all the peoples] belief in the unity of G-d. Shem and Ever taught the path of G-d (only) to their students. They did not awaken and announce the way Abraham did, and that's why Abraham's greatness increased."

Said simply, Shem and Ever were Torah giants, but they were deeply involved only in the spiritual progress of their students, the intellectual and religious elite.

Abraham on the other hand, understood that the mitzvah 'V'ahavta et HaShem Elokecha' (And you shall love the Lord your G-d) means that one must make G-d, the G-d of righteousness, compassion and peace, beloved by all humankind; this requires going out and traveling and teaching the masses in a Chabad- B'nai Akiva – NCSY-like fashion. Indeed, this is what Abraham did, succeeding on an unprecedented scale. Only an Abraham could have been chosen by G-d as the first Jew.

This element of the Abrahamic personality was codified by the Torah into the priesthood. The priest-Kohanim first and foremost had to love every single

Jew – had to call upon G-d to bless the Jews in a loving fashion and had to demonstrate their love by living with the dregs of Jewish society in the Cities of Refuge. The Kohen-priest had to love his fellow Jews so much that he would gladly be willing to defile himself so that another Jew could become pure! This is the secret of the mystery of the red heifer! ©2016 *Ohr Torah Institutions & Rabbi S. Riskin*

RABBI BEREL WEIN

Wein Online

The Torah commandment regarding the counting of the seven weeks between the holidays of Pesach and Shavuot appears in a timely fashion in this week's Torah reading. Over the many millennia of Torah study and commentary numerous ideas have been advanced as to the import and meaning of this commandment. Nevertheless, it is obvious that the simple meaning and apparent lesson is that we are to appreciate all of our days, weeks, months and years.

Time remains the most precious of all gifts granted to human beings. Taking notice of its passage is certainly an effective way of making us aware of its importance. In Jewish tradition, this period of time marks the progress of the Jewish people, in our early history, from a nation of slaves to a chosen and holy nation.

There are many forms of slavery present today and neither the world nor the Jewish people are completely free from all of them. This seven week period is meant to indicate the necessity for emancipating ourselves from the bondage that the material world constantly inflicts upon us.

Counting our days is a method of elevating them so that we always see ourselves serving a higher purpose and not merely groveling in the dust of a purely materialistic way of life. It is interesting to note that the Torah demands from us complete, full and whole days and weeks. Making our days truly meaningful is not a halfhearted project. It has to have within it the element of complete perfection in order to make it a spiritual journey and not just a mechanical one.

Jewish law teaches us that if we omit counting even one day during this period of time, we have to a certain extent, forfeited the necessary observance of the commandment. Lost time and lost days can never be made up....another important lesson that this period of time teaches us.

By their very nature, human beings are procrastinators. We put off what could be accomplished today and assign its performance to a later date. We are told in Avot that: 'one should never say that later in life when I have time, I will then study.' The rabbis warn us that if we wait we might not have the time, the opportunity or even life.

The future is the most uncertain thing that life presents before us. That is why the count of this period

of weeks is always the count of what was and is, and not the count of what is yet to be. There is much that we can learn from the past and much that we have to do to exploit the present, but the future remains beyond our reach.

The important lesson to be learned from this period of the year is that life often intervenes and mocks our hopes regarding the future. So this period of time, when we count the days, is most instructive as to how our lives should be lived and our behavior determined. ©2016 Rabbi Berel Wein - Jewish historian, author and international lecturer offers a complete selection of CDs, audio tapes, video tapes, DVDs, and books on Jewish history at www.rabbiwein.com. For more information on these and other products visit www.rabbiwein.com

RABBI AVI WEISS

Shabbat Forshpeis

In this week's portion, the Torah proclaims the famous dictum "eye for an eye." (Leviticus 24:20) The message seems clear. If one takes out the eye of a neighbor, his punishment is that his eye is taken out.

The oral law, however, explains through logic that "eye for an eye" is monetary compensation as it may be impossible to carry out equal justice through a physical penalty. For example, Rabbi Shimon Bar Yohai said, if a blind person damaged the sight of another...how would he be able to give an eye for an eye? The school of Hezekiah added that it can sometimes happen that more than an eye could be taken from the perpetrator if in the process of taking an eye, the assailant dies. (Baba Kamma 84a)

The Talmud also uses a textual proof for its thesis. The Torah states "You shall not take a ransom for the life of a man who is condemned to death." (Numbers 35:31) This implies that for the life of a murderer you may take no ransom, but you may take ransom for the major organs of the human body which do not grow back. (Baba Kamma 83b)

One wonders, however, if "eye for an eye" is monetary, why doesn't the Torah spell this out clearly? Perhaps it can be suggested that the written law sets the tone, gives the direction, and presents the teaching. As the Torah is read the listener hears the words "eye for an eye" and concludes that if I remove the eye of another, the crime is so heinous it is deserving of my eye being removed. In the words of Ha-ketav Ve-ha-Kabalah "the Torah mentions here only what punishment the perpetrator of bodily injuries deserves."

The oral law, however, which is the interpretation of the Torah, tells us how these rules are actually practiced. While one who removes the eye of another may be deserving of physical punishment, in practical terms he receives a monetary penalty.

My Rebbe in Tanakh, Nechama Leibowitz, points out that in the phrase "eye for an eye" (ayin tahat ayin) the term tahat is used. While usually translated as

"for" tahat actually means "instead of." In place of the eye something different is substituted - money.

This concept may explain what seems to be a difference between the written and oral law concerning capital punishment. On many occasions, for example for cursing one's parents, the Torah states "He shall die." (Exodus 21:17) Yet, the oral law cites opinions that capital punishment was hardly, if ever, carried out. (Mishna Makkot 1:10)

The Torah once again is telling us about what the perpetrator deserves. Cursing a parent and other such offenses are so horrible that they are deserving of death. However, the oral tradition, through the practical halakhic judicial process, proclaims that capital punishment hardly, if ever, actually occurs.

The written law cannot be understood without the oral law. Together they form one unit. The Zohar claims that written law is the "harsh law" while the oral tradition is the "soft law." The two combine to form what we refer to as Torah whose ways are "ways of pleasantness." (Proverbs 3:17) ©2013 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.

ENCYCLOPEDIA TALMUDIT

Chadash in the Diaspora

Translated for the Encyclopedia Talmudit by Rabbi Mordechai Weiss

The Mishna at the end of *Misnayot Orlah* states emphatically that, "Chadash" is forbidden from the Torah everywhere", which would include not only Israel but the Diaspora as well. This is derived from a sentence in this week's Torah Portion 23:14 "You shall not eat bread or roasted kernels or plump kernels until this very day...in all your dwelling places (*b'chol Moshvosechem*), which include also the Diaspora.

However there is another view which is sited in the Mishna in *Kiddushin* which states that biblically the law of "Chadash" only pertains to the land of Israel. According to this view therefore this Mitzvah is integrally connected to the offering of the Omer which only is relevant to the land of Israel. That same Mishna presents an opposing view which would be in consonance with the Mishna in *Orlah* that was cited above.

The question arises - which Mishna is the deciding one? Shall we say that the Mishna in *Orlah* was studied last and therefore one would say that the Mishna that was presented earlier (the Mishna in *Kiddushin*) was updated and in essence nullified by the later Mishna in *Orlah* and therefore decided unequivocally that the law follows that Mishna that "Chadash is prohibited everywhere, or do we say that the Mishna in *Kiddushin* appeared later which would indicate that there is a controversy? Additionally one

could not use the argument that because the Mishna in *Orlah* appears before the Mishnah in *Keddushin* in the order of *Mishnayot* that it was therefore authored first; for we know that there is no chronological order in the presentation of *Mishnayot*. ©2016 Rabbi M. Weiss and *Encyclopedia Talmudit*

RABBI YITZCHOK ADLERSTEIN

The Torah Ties That Bind

"It is an eternal decree in your dwelling places for your generations." Meshech Chochmah: "Mitzvos forge new relationships. Broadly put, some mitzvos bind us to our Creator -- tzitzis, tefillin, mezuzah. Others tie us to each other, like gemilas chasodim and the interpersonal commandments. The difference between the two is at work in the separate paths taken by Shabbos on the one hand, and Yom Tov on the other."

Shabbos is more of an individual-friendly institution than a community-builder. Carrying is forbidden, which restricts our ease of sharing with others. So many of the steps of food preparation are forbidden. That removes one of the easiest ways of bringing people together. Instead, Shabbos creates space in which each person can spend quality time studying Torah -- or intensifying the relationship between himself and G-d. This does not, however, move people away from each other. To the contrary. As long as Jews are connected to Hashem, they are like radii of a circle, all joined at the origin -- their connection to HKBH. Through that common point of connection, they are all bound together, by way of their common relationship with Hashem. But the connection remains indirect, through a third party, rather than directly, one person to the other.

Yom Tov, on the other hand, is one of the mitzvos that binds people directly to each other. It demands that the nation come together in a central place, and there rejoice and help others rejoice. Not only is food preparation permitted, but so are carrying from one domain to another, as well as havara/ burning fuel. Were the two of them forbidden (as they are on Shabbos), it would place a damper on attempts of people to come together.

As the Jews readied themselves to leave Egypt, they were not yet bound to each other in any significant way. They were indeed of one mind and purpose; all were committed to the One G-d of Israel. They were tied together, therefore, only by way of their common link to Hashem. The avodah of that evening, therefore, resembled the conduct of Shabbos. Only those who prepare food before Shabbos have what to eat when it begins. The korban Pesach as well required people to ready themselves before the evening. The korban could be consumed only by those pre-registered for it from the day before.

From that first day, we count seven weeks

towards the holiday of Shavuos. The Torah describes the count as "from the morrow of the Shabbos." (Vayikra 23:15) It calls the first day of Pesach a "Shabbos" because both bind the people together only through their common devotion to Hashem, without assuming any more direct connection of people with each other. The counting of seven weeks towards the giving of the Torah brings the nation to greater awareness and a loftier spiritual station. Approaching Shavuos, their bond to each other matures, and becomes direct. We should now understand why at precisely this juncture the Torah introduces the laws of the mandatory gifts to the poor (Vayikra 23) -- the corners and gleanings of the field to be left to them. The people are now ready for mitzvos that strengthen their relationship with other people, not just with G-d.

This trajectory is unlike that of any other nation. Other people develop a common identity by dint of having lived together on the same land and having evolved a common culture. Klal Yisrael is very different. The glue of its nationhood is the Torah itself. The Jewish people know a strong bond to each other because they have all subordinated themselves to the Torah's authority. (Heaven itself is subordinate, as it were, to their understanding. The gemara (Rosh Hashanah 25A) states that it is the human court that determines the calendar -- and hence the day a holiday will take place -- and not the "objective" reality.)

The implementation of that authority depends on obedience to the Torah greats of each generation. Without that, it is up to each individual's understanding of the Torah's demands, and we would be back at the original position of people linked not to each other, but to their loyalty to G-d. Through emunas chachamim and fealty to mesorah, we link ourselves to each other, and function not as individuals, but as a full Torah nation. A common conception of Torah becomes the glue that holds us together, not the evolution of a common culture as is the case with other nations.

When did the interpretive powers of Man first show themselves? The sixth day of Sivan. It was on that day that many expected the giving of the Torah. Moshe, however, reasoned (Shabbos 87A) that the "third day" about which Hashem had spoken (Shemos 19:11) actually predicted the seventh of Sivan. And that is what happened. The silence at the top of the mountain on the sixth marked, in a sense, the birth of the Jewish people as a Torah nation, bound to each other through a system of human understanding, with gedolei Yisroel and mesorah at the helm. Torah she-b'al-peh had spoken; the people were ready to stay united behind it.

While Chazal differed as to whether Yom Tov requires physical celebration or spiritual focus can substitute for it, there is no disagreement in regard to Shavuos. All authorities require an oneg Yom Tov of physical delights. (Pesachim 68B) Shavuos is the time

that we became a nation of people bound directly to each other. It should be a time in which people strengthen that bond by sharing the food and friendship at a celebratory table. © 2016 Rav Y. Adlerstein & torah.org

RABBI DOV KRAMER

Taking a Closer Look

If a Kohain has a blemish, “he should not come close to offer G-d’s bread” (Vayikra 21:17). Rashi tells us that the term “bread” refers to more than just actual bread; “G-d’s bread” refers to “G-d’s food” (i.e. the offerings), as “every meal (even if not literally bread) is called ‘bread,’ as it says (Daniel 5:1) ‘Belshatzar the king made a great bread,’ which obviously means ‘made a large meal’ (as opposed to baking a loaf of bread large enough to feed ‘a thousand of his officers’). Four verses later (21:21), when the term ‘bread’ is used again, Rashi again tells us that ‘all food is called bread.’ Why did Rashi tell us this twice, within such a short span?

The most widely given answer (based on the Sifra explaining that the Torah mentioned the term “bread” twice so that we shouldn’t think it only refers to the twice-daily “Tamid” offering) is that the first mention only teaches us that a “meal” is referred to as bread; non-bread food items that aren’t part of a regularly scheduled sit-down meal might not be. Rashi therefore explains the second “bread” as teaching us that “all food” can be referred to as “bread,” not just food served at a “meal.” The “Tamid” offering, which is brought every morning and every afternoon, would be considered a “regular meal,” and we therefore might have thought that a Kohain with a blemish is only forbidden from bringing this kind of offering; the second usage of “bread” therefore teaches us that he cannot bring any offering.

Aside from needing to read more into Rashi than he says (that “meal” refers to the “Tamid” because it is scheduled every day, while “all food” includes offerings not brought every day), if Rashi’s point was that the first usage only teaches us that this Kohain cannot bring a Korbon Tamid, instead of taking the longer route of quoting a proof-text (from the Writings) that “meals” are called “bread” and then relying on us to figure out that “meal=Tamid” and “all food=all offerings,” he could have directly quoted a verse from the Torah (Bamidbar 28:2) that explicitly refers to the Korbon Tamid as “bread.”

There are other issues to be addressed as well. First of all, the word “bread” appears twice in a previous section (Vayikra 21:6 and 21:8), and there Rashi does not explain what “bread” refers to, or how it can refer to offerings. [Some suggest that “bread” in these verses could refer to the “showbread,” or to meal-offerings, which are literally “bread,” so doesn’t need to be explained. However, since it really does refer to figurative “bread,” i.e. the offerings, why didn’t Rashi tell

us this earlier?] Additionally, towards the beginning of Sefer Vayikra (3:11) Rashi already told us that “bread” refers to all kinds of food (the verse there is speaking about voluntary “Sh’lamim,” which is as far from “regularly scheduled” as an offering can get); why would he revert back to limiting “bread” to the Korbon Tamid before re-including the other offerings?

How did the word “bread” come to mean “all foods”? The commentators (specifically when discussing its meaning extending from “meals that include bread,” to non-bread food items even when not part of a meal) say it is a “borrowed term,” initially referring to something specific but then evolving to refer to things that can be traced back to the initial meaning. In this case, “bread” literally means actual bread, but since bread is a food staple (see Rashi on Sh’mos 16:8), and the main part of every meal, with everything else served being in addition to -- and secondary to -- the actual bread (which is why the blessing on bread, “Hamotzie,” covers everything served as part of the meal), the entire meal (and not just the bread itself) was referred to as “bread.” After the common usage of the term “bread” became the entire meal -- even the non-bread items served at the meal -- the term came to mean all food, even when not served/eaten with actual bread. To sum it up, the evolution of the meaning of the word bread could be described as: actual bread-->meal (where bread is served)-->all food. In the Torah, it refers to what the term has come to mean, i.e. all food, not just those served as part of a meal (as Rashi tells us on Vayikra 3:11).

Aside from Rashi not needing to explain that “bread” in 21:6 and 21:8 means “all food” because we already know this from 3:11, its precise definition in these two verses makes no practical difference, as it doesn’t impact what Kohanim can or cannot do. Rather, it explains why they have additional limitations; “because they offer G-d’s bread.” Whatever “G-d’s bread” means, they offer it, and are therefore “holy.” When it comes to a Kohain with a blemish, on the other hand, it is “G-d’s bread” that he cannot offer, so we have to know exactly what it is that he can’t offer. And even though the term “bread” evolved to mean “all food,” we need to know whether the Torah is referring to what the term has come to mean, or only to what it used to mean.

Our edition of Rashi (on 21:17) says “every meal is called ‘bread,’ but the first edition of Rashi (as well as several other manuscripts, including the edition used by Mizrachi, see Sefer Yosef Halel) says “the entire meal is called ‘bread.’” Rather than telling us that all meals are referred to as “bread,” Rashi is telling us that all the foods, even the non-bread items, served at a meal are referred to as “bread,” since bread is served at (and is the main component of) the meal. In other words, whenever non-bread items are served with bread, all of the items being served are referred to as

"bread" (the second of the three stages in the development of the term "bread"). When it comes to the offerings brought in the Temple, this would mean any offering that is accompanied by a meal-offering (since the meal-offering itself is literally "bread"). And all we would know for sure is that Kohanim with a blemish cannot bring any offerings that are accompanied by a meal-offering (such as the Korbon Tamid, which might be what the Sifra means). By repeating the term "bread" a few verses later to include additional things this Kohain cannot offer, the Torah is telling us that when it says "bread" it is not referring only to offerings that are accompanied by meal-offerings (as the term once meant), but to "all food," even when not part of a meal with bread. Or, as applied to offerings in the Temple, even those not accompanied by a meal-offering. As stated in the Sifra, the repetition of the term "bread" expands the definition to teach us that even such offerings cannot be brought by a Kohain with a blemish.

Rashi uses the verse from Daniel (as opposed to the one in Bamidbar), because he is not trying to say that the Korbon Tamid is referred to as "bread," but that this verse can only teach us that offerings accompanied by meal-offerings, which parallel food served at a meal with bread, cannot be offered by a Kohain with a blemish. The second verse (21:21), on the other hand, which repeats the term "bread," teaches us that it refers to all food, i.e. even those offerings that are not accompanied by a meal-offering. ©2016 Rabbi D. Kramer

RABBI KALMAN PACKOUZ

Shabbat Shalom Weekly

The Torah states: "And they (the Cohanim) shall observe my charge, and they shall not bear sin for it" (Leviticus 22:9). Rashi, the commentator, explains that this verse is a warning to the priests (Cohanim) not to eat trumah (tithes from crops given to the Cohanim) while they are in a state of tumah (spiritual impurity). Why the special warning and what can we learn from it?

Even though eating trumah is the fulfillment of a mitzvah for the priests, they must be very careful not to do so in a manner that will transform the potential good into a transgression. Rabbi Yeruchem Levovitz commented that we learn from here an important principle: even when a person is involved in doing the Almighty's service, he must be very careful that no transgressions should come from it.

To reiterate, our lesson: whenever you are engaged in doing a good deed or involved in a worthwhile project, be on guard that the good you do is complete and does not include any transgressions. (And remember to say 'thank you' when appropriate!).

The Torah states: "And the Almighty said to Moshe, 'Speak to the priests, the sons of Aharon, and

say to them: Let no (priest) defile himself amongst his people" (Lev. 21:1).

The Chozeh of Lublin explained this verse to mean that Moshe was told that the priest should be worthy of being the descendants of Aharon (Aaron, the High Priest). Just as Aharon had the trait of loving and pursuing peace, so too, they should work on acquiring this trait. Therefore, the latter part of this verse warns them that even though they should try to make peace between people whenever they can, they must be careful not to defile themselves in the process. At times they might come into contact with very aggressive and violent people and they should not become too close to them lest they become negatively influenced by their faults. *Dvar Torahs based on Growth Through Torah by Rabbi Zelig Pliskin ©2016 Rabbi K. Packouz & aish.com*

RABBI SHLOMO RESSLER

Weekly Dvar

Among many things, Parshat Emor lays down instructions for the Kohanim (Priests) to remain holy. Instructions include not coming in contact with dead bodies, and growing their beards and hair (21:1-5). Recanati (13th Century) points out an interesting difference between the instructions for the Kohanim to remain "holy", and those of the Levites to be "pure". What is the difference, and why?

Recanati goes on to explain that being pure is simply a result of avoiding anything unclean, while being holy is an active quality of setting yourself apart. The Levites had to shave their hair, while the Kohanim grew it because ridding yourself of impurity requires shedding the past, while being holy requires working on yourself for the future. As a people charged with the task of being holy, we need to be both pure AND holy, and learn to merge the past with our future. ©2016 Rabbi S. Ressler and LeLamed, Inc.

