

# Toras Aish

## Thoughts From Across the Torah Spectrum

**RABBI LORD JONATHAN SACKS**

### Covenant & Conversation

**T**here is something very strange about the festival of Succot, of which our parsha is the primary source. On the one hand, it is the festival supremely associated with joy. It is the only festival in our parsha that mentions rejoicing: "And you shall rejoice before the Lord your God seven days" (Lev. 23:40). In the Torah as a whole, joy is mentioned not at all in relation to Rosh Hashanah, Yom Kippur or Pesach, once in connection with Shavuot and three times in connection with Succot. Hence its name: z'man simchatenu, the festival of our joy.

Yet what it recalls is one of the more negative elements of the wilderness years: "You shall live in booths seven days; all citizens in Israel shall live in booths, so that future generations may know that I made the Israelites live in booths when I brought them out of the land of Egypt, I the Lord your God." (Lev. 23:42-43)

For forty years, the Israelites lived without permanent homes, often on the move. They were in the wilderness, in no man's land, where it is hard to know what to expect and what dangers lie in wait along the way. To be sure, the people lived under Divine protection. But they could never be sure in advance whether it would be forthcoming and what form this protection might take. It was a prolonged period of insecurity.

How then are we to understand the fact that Succot of all festivals is called z'man simchatenu, the festival of our joy? It would have made sense to call Pesach -- freedom's birthday -- the festival of joy. It would have made sense to call Shavuot -- the day of revelation at Sinai -- the festival of joy. But why give that title to a festival that commemorates forty years of exposure to the heat, cold, wind and rain. Remembering that, why should we feel joy?

Besides which, what was the miracle? Pesach and Shavuot recall miracles. But travelling through the wilderness with only temporary homes was neither miraculous nor unique. That is what people who travel through the wilderness do. They must. They are on a journey. They can only have a temporary dwelling. In this respect there was nothing special about the Israelites' experience.

It was this consideration that led Rabbi Eliezer

(Succah 11b) to suggest that the succah represents the Clouds of Glory, ananei kavod, that accompanied the Israelites during those years, sheltering them from heat and cold, protecting them from their enemies, and guiding them on the way. This is a beautiful and imaginative solution to the problem. It identifies a miracle and explains why a festival should be dedicated to remembering it. That is why Rashi and Ramban take it as the plain sense of the verse.

But it is difficult, nonetheless. A succah looks nothing like the Clouds of Glory. It would be hard to imagine anything less like the Clouds of Glory. The connection between a succah and Clouds of Glory comes not from the Torah but from the book of Isaiah, referring not to the past but to the future: "Then the Lord will create over all of Mount Zion and over those who assemble there a cloud of smoke by day and a glow of flaming fire by night; over everything the glory will be a canopy. It will be a succah for shade from heat by day, and a shelter and hiding place from the storm and rain." (Is. 4:5-6)

Rabbi Akiva dissents from Rabbi Eliezer's view and says that a succah is what it says it is: a hut, a booth, a temporary dwelling. (Succah 11b) What, according to Rabbi Akiva, was the miracle? There is no way of knowing the answer. But we can guess.

If a succah represents the Clouds of Glory -- the view of Rabbi Eliezer -- then it celebrates God's miracle. If it represents nothing other than a succah itself -- Rabbi Akiva's view -- then it celebrates the human miracle of which Jeremiah spoke when he said: "Thus said the Lord, "I remember the devotion of your youth, how as a bride you loved Me and followed Me in the wilderness, through a land not sown" (Jer. 2:2).

The Israelites may have complained and rebelled. But they followed God. They kept going. Like Abraham and Sarah, they were prepared to journey into the unknown.

If we understand this to be the miracle, we can infer a deep truth about faith itself. Faith is not certainty. Faith is the courage to live with uncertainty. Almost every phase of the exodus was fraught with difficulties, real or imagined. That is what makes the Torah so powerful. It does not pretend that life is any easier than it is. The road is not straight and the journey is long. Unexpected things happen. Crises suddenly appear. It becomes important to embed in a people's memory the knowledge that we can handle the unknown. God is

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with us, giving us the courage we need.

Each Succot it is as if God were reminding us: don't think you need solid walls to make you feel safe. I led your ancestors through the desert so that they would never forget the journey they had to make and the obstacles they had to overcome to get to this land. He said, "I made the Israelites live in booths when I brought them out of the land of Egypt." (Lev. 23:43) In those booths, fragile and open to the elements, the Israelites learnt the courage to live with uncertainty.

Other nations told stories that celebrated their strength. They built palaces and castles as expressions of invincibility. The Jewish people was different. They carried with them a story about the uncertainties and hazards of history. They spoke of their ancestors' journey through the wilderness without homes, houses, protection against the elements. It is a story of spiritual strength, not military strength.

Succot is a testament to the Jewish people's survival. Even if it loses its land and is cast again into the wilderness, it will lose neither heart nor hope. It will remember that it spent its early years as a nation living in a succah, a temporary dwelling exposed to the elements. It will know that in the wilderness, no encampment is permanent. It will keep travelling until once again it reaches the promised land: Israel, home.

It is no accident that the Jewish people is the only one to have survived 2,000 years of exile and dispersion, its identity intact and energy unabated. It is the only people who can live in a shack with leaves as a roof and yet feel surrounded by clouds of glory. It is the only people who can live in a temporary dwelling and yet rejoice.

Economist John Kay and former Governor of the Bank of England Mervyn King have just published a book, *Radical Uncertainty*. In it they make the distinction between risk, which is calculable, and uncertainty, which is not. They argue that people have relied too much on calculations of probability while neglecting the fact that danger may appear from a completely unexpected source. The sudden appearance of the Coronavirus just as their book appeared proved their point. People knew there was a possibility of a pandemic. But no one knew what it would be like, where it would come from, how rapidly it would spread, and what toll it would take.

More important than the calculation of

probabilities, they say, is understanding the situation, answering the question, "What is going on?" (The authors derive this idea from Richard Rumelt, *Good Strategy/Bad Strategy*, Crown, 2011.) This, they say, is never answered by statistics or predictions but rather by narrative, by telling a story.

That is exactly what Succot is about. It is a story about uncertainty. It tells us that we can know everything else, but we will never know what tomorrow will bring. Time is a journey across a wilderness.

On Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur we pray to be written into the Book of Life. On Succot we rejoice because we believe we have received a positive answer to our prayer. But as we turn to face the coming year, we acknowledge at the outset that life is fragile, vulnerable in a dozen different ways. We do not know what our health will be, what our career or livelihood will be, or what will happen to society and to the world. We cannot escape exposure to risk. That is what life is.

The succah symbolises living with unpredictability. Succot is the festival of radical uncertainty. But it places it within the framework of a narrative, exactly as Kay and King suggest. It tells us that though we journey through a wilderness, we as a people will reach our destination. If we see life through the eyes of faith, we will know we are surrounded by clouds of glory. Amid uncertainty we will find ourselves able to rejoice. We need no castles for protection or palaces for glory. A humble succah will do, for when we sit within it, we sit beneath what the Zohar calls "the shade of faith."

I believe that the experience of leaving the protection of a house and entering the exposure of the succah is a way of taming our fear of the unknown. It says: We have been here before. We are all travellers on a journey. The Divine Presence is with us. We need not be afraid. That is a source of the resilience we need in our interconnected, hazardous, radically uncertain world. *Covenant and Conversation 5780 is kindly supported by the Maurice Wohl Charitable Foundation in memory of Maurice and Vivienne Wohl z"l* ©2020 Rabbi Lord J. Sacks and rabbisacks.org

**RABBI SHLOMO RISKIN**

## Shabbat Shalom

"**A**nd I shall be sanctified in the midst of the children of Israel" (Lev. 22:32). The portion of Emor opens with a strange commandment to the kohanim-priests of Israel: "And the Lord said to Moses, 'Say to the priests children of Aaron, and tell them: "Do not defile yourselves by contact with the dead of the nation.'" (Leviticus 21:1). The Bible then lists the exceptions to this rule. A Kohen may defile himself only for the burial of his wife, his mother, his father, his son, his daughter, his brother and his unmarried sister. Otherwise our Priest-teachers are forbidden contact with the dead.

In contrast, one of the most important functions of the Christians clergy is administering “last rites,” and properly burying the dead. Clearly the Torah is teaching that Judaism is not chiefly concerned with death and the hereafter; rather, it is principally engaged with life in the here-and-now. Our major religious imperative is not how to ease the transition from this world to the next, but how to improve and repair our own society. But there seems to be an inconsistency; our very same portion goes on to command (as quoted above): “You shall not desecrate the name of My holiness; I shall be sanctified in the midst of the children of Israel” (Lev. 22:32). And herein lies the mitzvah of “Kiddush HaShem,” explain our Talmudic Sages, the necessity of sacrificing one’s life—sanctifying the name of God—for the sake of the commandments of the Bible. Jews must give up their lives rather than transgress any of the three major prohibitions of murder, sexual immorality or adultery; and, in times of persecution, Jews must die rather than publicly transgress even the simplest or most “minor” of Jewish laws, even a Jewish custom involving our shoelaces (B.T. Sanhedrin 74a,b). Our Talmudic Sages insist, however, that when Jews are not being persecuted, it is forbidden for Jews to forfeit their lives in order not to desecrate Shabbat, for example, if an individual feels chest pains Shabbat morning, he must be driven to the nearest hospital! It is better that he desecrate one Shabbat and remain alive to keep many Shabbatot.

But then, if life is so precious, why command martyrdom at all? And the sad truth is that our history is tear stained and blood soaked with many sacred martyrs who gave up their lives in sanctification of the Divine Name, during the Spanish Inquisition, to cite but one example, in the late 15th and early 16th Century, when Jews were forced to kiss the cross of crucifixion or die!

The answer lies in the very juxtaposition of the law of priestly defilement emphasizing the importance of life, and the law of martyrdom enjoining death, within our same Biblical portion. Yes, preservation of life is crucial and this world is the focus of the Jewish concern—but not life merely for the sake of existing. Living, and not merely existing, means devoting one’s life to ideals and values that are more important than any individual life. We participate in eternity by dedicating our lives to the eternal values that will eventually repair the world and establish a more perfect society – in this world. As the late Martin Luther King said it. A person whose life is not dedicated to values for which he would give up his life is not worthy of living!

Hence we must value and elevate life, but always within the perspective of those principles which are greater than our redemption. Yes, “live by these [My laws],” but live the kind of life which will teach the highest purposes of life!

But how can we justify martyrdom, even if only during periods of persecution, for the sake of a Jewish custom regarding our shoelaces? What can there possibly be about a shoelace which strikes at the heart and essence of our Jewish mission? The Talmudic Commentaries of the French and German Sages of the 11th and 12th centuries, when many Jews were martyred by the Crusaders, suggest that the general accepted clothing etiquette in Rome and its numerous colonies during the second century of the Common Era was to wear white shoelaces. Jews, however, wore black shoelaces, as a memorial to the loss of our Holy Temple, Holy City of Peace, Jerusalem. and our Jewish national sovereignty. When Gentiles in times of persecution attempted to force Jews to wear white shoelaces—and thereby force the Jewish community to cease mourning for the loss of our national homeland—the Jew must respond with martyrdom (B.T. Sanhedrin 74b, Tosafot ad loc.).

My revered teacher Rav Joseph B. Solovetchik added a crucial point: There are many Jewish laws, decrees and customs which have developed from biblical times to the present, which Jews themselves do not always realize are truly vital for our national and religious preservation. Our Gentile enemies, however’ always do, because they—wishing to persecute and destroy us—strike at the jugular. Hence whatever they insist that we abandon, we must maintain even at the price of our lives! From this perspective, it becomes easier to understand why anti-Semitism expresses itself in unfair attacks on the free and democratic State of Israel, condemning us while championing the cause of our terrorist enemies; we must focus on how crucial and vital the State of Israel is for Jewish survival today.

The memorials of Holocaust Remembrance Day and Remembrance Day for the Fallen of Israel’s Wars quickly followed by Independence Day and Jerusalem Day must remind us that Israel is not merely a destination but is our destiny. Israel is not only the place of our survival, but it is the heart of our mission for world salvation, from whence the word of God—a God of life, love and peace—will spread to all of humanity. ©2020 *Ohr Torah Institutions & Rabbi S. Riskin*

#### **RABBI BEREL WEIN**

### **Wein Online**

**T**his week’s Torah reading begins with a rather detailed instruction sheet for the children of Aaron, the priests of Israel. The Torah describes for us the limitations that were placed upon them in order to guarantee that their service would be in purity and in holiness. Aspects of this instruction are still enforced today. Those who are of the priestly clan observe them rigidly even if, in other matters, they may not be that strict.

I had an experience with this regarding a certain leading official in the Jewish Agency about 30

years ago. I knew the man very well and he was a person of honor and integrity, but he was an old time socialist and was not observant in any traditional sense of the word. I happened to be in Israel when another leading person in the educational department of the Jewish Agency passed away and the family asked me to say a few words at the funeral.

This man accompanied me to the funeral chapel, but as I was going to mount the steps, he said, "This is as far as I'm going because I am a priest, a Kohen, and I don't go to funerals." I looked at him somewhat quizzically because there were so many other violations of tradition that I had observed in him, but even so I was greatly impressed. And he said to me, "Don't be so surprised; for thousands of years my family are Kohanim and I'm not going to give that up. That is a heritage that I cannot forgo." So, that is the first part of the Torah reading.

The second part of the Torah reading, which also occupies a great deal of the subject matter of the entire portion, is a recounting of the calendar. It is an enumeration of the holidays, the special days of the Jewish calendar throughout the year. At first glance, one would think that these two sections of the same Torah reading really have no intrinsic connection one with the other. They deal with far different subjects and have a different tone and mood to their words. But again, I feel that that is only a superficial view. Upon deeper examination we will see a common thread that runs thru not only these two subjects but thru all subjects in the Torah as well.

The Torah represents for us constancy. It establishes a regular rhythm in our life. It is why we have so many commandments that we can, and should, fulfill day in and day out under all circumstances and conditions. It is this very constancy, the repetitiveness that the Torah imposes upon us that builds within us the holiness of spirit and is the strength of our tradition. The fact is it is not a one-day-a-week or three-days-a-year holiday for the Jewish people, but that every day counts and has its importance. Daily, one is obligated to do the will of one's creator. All of this gives a rhythm to our lives, makes life meaningful, with a specific direction for the time that we are here on earth.

The holidays themselves are the rhythm of the Jewish calendar year. We just finished Pesach and we are coming to Shavuot and then after Shavuot there comes the period of mourning, then after that the High Holy days, the holiday of Sukkot, then Hanukkah, et cetera. It is that rhythm of life that invests every holiday and allows the holiday to live within us even when its days have passed. Essentially, every day is Pesach and every day is Shavuot, and every day can be Yom Ha-Kippurim. And this is the constancy regarding the laws for the priests as well, that every day they are reminded who they are. Every day they are bound by

the restrictions, discipline and nobility that the Torah ordained for them.

So, that is the thread of consistency that binds all these disparate subjects together. The Torah preaches consistency, regularity, habitual behavior, and the idea that life is one rhythm, like a river flowing, not to be segmented into different emotional waves depending upon one's mood and upon external conditions. ©2020 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](http://www.rabbiwein.com). For more information on these and other products visit [www.rabbiwein.com](http://www.rabbiwein.com)

#### **RABBI AVI WEISS**

## **Shabbat Forshpeis**

**E**mor deals with the role of the priest serving the community. The relationship is commonly viewed as hierarchical; the movement is from the above to the below. The priest is the religious leader who is greater than his brothers and sisters. Thus, the Torah says, "And the priest who is exalted about his brethren (gadol mei'achav)." (Leviticus 21:10)

Sefat Emet reads it differently. He argues that the level of the priest's sanctity is dependent upon those he is serving. In his words, "[the non-kohen] adds strength to the priest who has been designated as holy, [enabling him] to be properly sanctified."

For the Sefat Emet, gadol mei'achav does not mean "the priest who is exalted above his brethren," but "the priest who is exalted from his brethren." The prefix mei is not comparative, "above," but diminishing, "from."

While the role of the Chassidic rebbe in many Chassidic sects is outsized, Sefat Emet, who was the first rebbe of Ger, downplayed his spiritual powers. Whatever spiritual strengths he had was inspired by his constituents.

Is it too far a stretch to extend this teaching to how halachic authority works. For some, halachic authority is thoroughly hierarchal. A posek's (decisor of Jewish Law) ruling is treated not only as a psak (decision) for the person asking the question, but as the final say on the topic, one that allows no room for discussion; moreover, the posek has the final word not only in halachic matters, but also in communal and policy matters as well.

There is an alternative approach, one I believe in step with the Sefat Emet's teaching. A psak should never cut off dialogue; rather, decisions made should set the foundation from which discussion ensues. And concerning public policy, the laity plays a crucial role in deciphering situations and conditions and helping apply them to halacha.

Yes, spiritual leaders have much to teach constituents. But constituents have much to teach spiritual leaders as well. The truly great rabbis recognize their shortcomings and grow from the people

they serve. ©2020 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 JONATHAN GEWIRTZ

## Migdal Ohr

**"**And no stranger shall eat 'kodesh,' one who dwells with or was hired by the Kohain shall not eat of the 'kodesh.'" (Vayikra 22:10)

Certain foods were gifts for the Kohanim. Among them were some that could be sold and eaten by a non-Kohain, while others, like Terumah, could only be eaten by Kohanim. The Kohain was allowed to feed his family with the Terumah, and as the next posuk will tell us, even a Canaanite slave was allowed to eat from the Terumah if the Kohain had purchased him. It is from there that we also learn the Kohain's wife may eat it even if she was not born into a Kohanic family.

In this posuk, we learn that a non-Kohain could not eat of Terumah, even if he was part of the Kohain's household. The dweller referred to is a Jewish person who had been sold as a slave. At the end of six years, instead of going free, he opts to remain with his master until the Yovel, the Jubilee 50th year.

The hired servant here is not a paid laborer (though some say it is), but a Jewish servant who was sold into slavery (presumably for theft), who is within the six-year period of time. He may not eat Terumah, we are told, and the same applies even if he later chooses to stay in the household until the end of the fifty-year cycle.

It seems odd that a Kohain may feed holy Terumah to his non-Jewish slave, or even to his animals if it's a food fit for animal feed. Despite this, he may not use it to feed his Jewish slaves, whom he is commanded to treat better than himself and who undoubtedly have more holiness than a non-Jewish slave and certainly more than an animal! Why is this?

Since the eating of Terumah was permitted only to a Kohain, a Jewish slave who was not a Kohain would not be allowed to eat it because he is a "stranger." Why then is a non-Jewish slave not called a stranger? Because he has no standing at all in terms of his lineage, just as the Kohain's ox or goat was not in the category of being a Kohain, Levi, or Yisrael.

There is an amazing underlying message contained within these verses.

A non-Jewish slave may eat of the Kohain's Terumah because he is part of the Kohain's family and property, no different than his wife, children born to his maidservants, or his ox. He has no identity of his own. Not so the Jewish slave.

Though he is part of the household, he is not completely subordinate to the Kohain. He retains his own status as a Yisrael, a Jew intended to be a servant only of Hashem, even if for now he is working for the

Kohain. Even if he has chosen willingly to remain in his master's house and serve him for fifty years, he never loses the individual holiness he has as a non-Kohain.

No one should ever feel that they don't matter or that the world can do without them. They are unique and even if they are willing to cast their lives away, Hashem, Who created them to be as they are, will never consider them insignificant or agree to that.

*A yeshiva student was looking for a room to rent. He saw an ad, and it turned out that there was an old widow who had one available. He thought about the problem of Yichud, being secluded in a house alone with a woman who was not his wife or immediate family, but she was so old he was sure it wouldn't apply to him.*

*Nevertheless, he asked a shaila of R' Moshe Feinstein z"l. He expected R' Moshe to tell him that it was still assur M'drabbanan, (prohibited Rabbinically) or that it was midas chasidus (a pious thing to do) not to take the room, but he was totally unprepared for what R' Moshe DID tell him.*

*"You may not take the room. A Jewish woman," said R' Moshe, "never loses her beauty." ©2020 Rabbi J. Gewirtz and Migdal Ohr*

### RABBI DAVID LEVIN

## The Purity of the Kohein

In last week's parshiot, Acharei Mot and Kedoshim, we saw that the entire Adat B'nei Yisrael were commanded on the mitzvah of "kedoshim t'h'yu, you shall be holy." The commandment is preceded by the word "v'amarta, and you will say". In this week's parasha, we find that the Kohanim are commanded with a further set of laws that are designed to keep them even more pure and without tumah (impurity) compared to the rest of B'nei Yisrael. This time, however, the commandment is "kedoshim y'h'yu l'Elokeihem, they shall be holy to their Elokim." This time also the word amar, say, is used and is repeated in two different forms of the same word, "Emor el haKohanim, say (command form) to the Kohanim," and "v'amarta aleihem, and you shall say (a different command form) to them." Our Rabbis explain this repetition in several different ways, each with a different message for our lives and our understanding of the mitzvot.

The Kohanim were Kadosh, set aside from the B'nei Yisrael in several ways. Kohanim did not have land and did not have inheritance of land as did the other tribes. Most of these same rules applied to the Levi'im because they also had responsibilities in the Temple, but the Kohanim were even more restricted than the Levi'im. Kohanim were admonished on becoming tamei (impure) because tum'ah would affect their ability to serve Hashem in the Bet HaMikdash. The Kohanim were not permitted to become tamei from a "met", a corpse, except for a list of relatives

mentioned in the first p'sukim in this parasha. A Kohein Hediote, a regular Kohen, could become tamei only for his wife, father, mother, son, daughter, brother, and a sister who had not been married. The Kohein Gadol was not permitted to become tamei even for his parents. The first use of the word "emor, say" is associated with the phrase "l'nefesh lo y'tamah, for the soul (corpse) he shall not become tamei." The exception to the rule is then stated, "ki im l'sh'eiro, except for his wife," and continues with the other exceptions listed earlier. The second use of the word, "v'amarta, and you shall say," begins a description of an emergency situation, namely, a "met mitzvah", a body that a Kohein discovers where there is no one else able to bury it. Here the Kohein is required to perform this task even though it will make him tamei and exclude him from serving in the Bet Hamikdash for a period of seven days.

There is a machloket, argument, between Rashi and Tosefot together with the Rambam as to the basic principle behind each of these mitzvot. The first case is the case of "l'nefesh lo y'tamah, for a soul he shall not become tamei." The underlying question is whether becoming tamei for a relative is a heter, permission is granted to go against the general law, or whether it is docheh, not going against the general law but instead performing a positive commandment which supersedes the negative commandment (mitvat aseh docheh lo ta'aseh, a positive commandment takes precedence over a negative commandment). In the case of a heter, the Kohein is given permission to "break" the law under certain circumstances. If instead it is docheh, the Kohein is performing the law completely without the need of special permission.

Rashi looks at both the case of the k'rovim, relatives, and the case of the "met mitzvah" as the same construct when it comes to the question of heter or docheh. He believes that both cases are governed by heter. The Ba'alei Tosefot believe that both cases are governed by aseh docheh lo ta'aseh because of kavod habriot, respect for Hashem's creations. According to Tosefot, the respect that we must have for the body which housed the soul creates our aseh, our positive commandment, by which we are docheh the lo ta'aseh, the negative commandment of he shall not become tamei. From here we can learn the importance of respect for those things which were once holy because of their association with holy things. We do not automatically discard items when they no longer serve their purpose. We continue to treat them with respect for the service that they performed. All the more so should we give respect to the elderly even if they are so ill that they have lost all their ability to connect with us.

Our Rabbis also explain the double use of the form aleph, mem, resh (amar), to indicate that this is a mitzvah given to the gedolim, the elders, to instruct the

k'tanim, the youngsters. But one could ask "why was this mitzvah chosen for this instruction?" We are reminded that the mitzvah to bury one's dead is so important that the mitzvot of tefillin, krias shema, tefilla, and the observance of almost any other mitzvah in the Torah is delayed until the corpse is buried. One is even required to follow behind a casket even at the expense of important mitzvah of talmud torah, studying the laws of the Torah. When a Kohein is forbidden to perform this mitzvah because the corpse is not one of the k'rovim or a "met mitzvah", he might look upon this as an incorrect interpretation of the law. Therefore, the gedolim warn the k'tanim on this matter. The Rabbis do not use the phrase, "avos al banim, fathers on sons" but instead "gedolim al hak'tanim, the elders on the young." This can be interpreted as those who are firm in their understanding of Hashem's instructions have the responsibility to caution those who do not yet possess that knowledge and conviction. Where parents have not had the opportunity to develop this understanding, it is the responsibility of the Rabbis and teachers of the community to help the students as their surrogate "fathers." Our Rabbis (elders) must help the young or unlearned understand which mitzvah takes precedence when two mitzvot are applicable but appear to cancel each other. The Torah is a complex set of laws with an overriding set of principles. That is one of the reasons why we must consult Rabbis who are the elders and who guide us through these laws.

We no longer have the Bet HaMikdash or the service of the Kohanim. Still today, Kohanim abide by the restrictions against becoming impure. Though we cannot become pure without the Bet HaMikdash, we also must strive to remain pure in our actions and our thoughts. May our efforts to maintain that purity enable us to be rewarded with the establishment of the Third Bet HaMikdash, speedily in our time. ©2020 Rabbi D. Levin

#### **RABBI MORDECHAI KAMENETZKY**

### **Mitzvah Vigilante**

**T**he Torah tells us in this week's parsha, "u'shmartem es mitzvosai, v'aseesem osum -- watch the mitzvos and do them" (Vayikra 22:31). What does watch mitzvos mean. If one does a mitzvah he is surely doing more than watching them. Watching mitzvos seems quite passive. Observant Jew is a term used for those who actually perform the and adhere to the laws, and the curious word observant, perhaps, indeed comes from the Hebrew word u'shmartem. But doesn't Hashem want us to be more than just watchers. If He tells us to do mitzvos, then surely we watch them! Why the double, if not redundant, expression? This past Thursday evening I went to be Menachem Avel (in the vernacular -- pay a shiva call) a friend, Rabbi Zissel Zelman, who was sitting shiva for his father. He is a

Chicago native whose father, Rabbi Zelman, grew up in Chicago way before Torah Judaism had flourished there. Reb Zissel related that as a young man, his father would pass the newsstand every Saturday night after shul to pick up a paper. As he did not carry money with him, he had made an arrangement with the vendors to return on Sunday morning to pay the vendor.

Rabbi Zelman was not interested in the sports pages nor was he interested in the headlines. In fact he was not interested in the paper altogether. Rabbi Zelman bought the paper for his mother. She also was not interested in the sports or the news. She was interested in the dead. Every Saturday night she would comb th paper looking for announcements of tombstone unveilings that were to take place on Sunday at the Jewish Cemeteries. An unveiling is a time when people are charitable, and the elderly Mrs. Zelman would go to the cemeteries and raise funds from the gathered for Yeshivos in Europe in Israel. She would eventually turn the coins into bills and send the money overseas. A plaque hangs today in the Slobodka Yeshiva in Israel commemorating her efforts.

Perhaps the Torah is telling us more than just doing mitzvos. It is telling us to watch for mitzvos. Be on guard. There are hundreds of opportunities to find mitzvos and to do them. But we must be observant and vigilant. There are hundreds of mitzvos that pass by our very eyes. Scores of Good Mornings.

Hundreds of packages we can help lift, as well as spirits. There are hundreds of hearts we can help heal as well as small acts of charity we can fulfill. Perhaps the Torah is telling us more than watch the mitzvos that come our way. Perhaps it may be telling us to be on the lookout for those that are out there waiting for us to observe them!

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## ENCYCLOPEDIA TALMUDIT

### Chadash in the Diaspora

Translated by Rabbi Mordechai Weiss

**T**he mishnah at the end of *Orlah* makes an unequivocal statement about *chadash* (grain from the new harvest, which may not be eaten until the *omer* offering is brought on the sixteenth of Nissan). According to this mishnah, “*Chadash* is biblically forbidden everywhere.” This means it is an issue not only in Israel, but in the Diaspora as well. The rule is derived from the verse: “Until that very day, until you have brought the offering of your G-d, you shall eat no bread or parched grain or fresh ears; it is a law for all time throughout the ages **in all your settlements**” (*Vayikra* 23:14). Clearly, this last phrase includes the Diaspora.

Even though *chadash* applies in the Diaspora according to this mishnah, the *omer* offering may not be brought from grain grown in the Diaspora (as the

mishnah states in *Menachot* and as the Rambam rules).

This mitzva is more difficult to follow in the Diaspora, since wheat there sprouts before the sixteenth of Nissan, and might be made into flour (which is not the case in Israel). Some rabbinic leaders in the Diaspora used to roam from place to place with their own pots and pans, looking for wheat that was not *chadash*.

However, the mishnah in *Kiddushin* presents, in addition to the view cited above, a lenient view that biblically the law of *chadash* pertains only to the Land of Israel. According to this view, the mitzva of *chadash* is similar to the offering of the *omer*, in that both are relevant only in the Land of Israel. Thus, we see that in *Kiddushin* the status of *chadash* in the Diaspora is disputed. One would expect that we would follow the explicit ruling in *Orlah*, where only one view is recorded: that *chadash* is forbidden everywhere. But it is not that simple. Which mishnah to follow may depend upon which tractate was written first. If the mishnah in *Orlah* is later than the mishnah in *Kiddushin*, then it seems there was a disagreement followed by an unopposed statement, so we should follow the unopposed statement. (Hence *chadash* would be prohibited even in the Diaspora.) However, if *Orlah* is earlier, then it seems the disagreement continued afterwards in *Kiddushin* despite categorical statement in *Orlah*.

We might assume that *Orlah* must bearlier. After all, it is part of *Seder Zera'im* (the first of the six orders of the Mishnah), while *Kiddushin* is part of *Seder Nashim* (the third order). But it is not that simple. There is a general principle that “The Mishnah is not in order.” This means that the order of the Mishnah’s tractates is logical, not chronological. It does not necessarily correspond to the time periods in which they were originally taught. ©2017 Rabbi M. Weiss and *Encyclopedia Talmudit*

## RABBI ARON TENDLER

### Haftorah Commentary

**T**his week's haftorah discusses the laws of the kohanim during the Messianic era. The prophet Yechezkel devotes special attention to the regulations of the kohanim and to their priestly garb. He states the kohain's restriction from drinking wine or shaving his head and makes mention of his prohibition of marrying a widow or divorcee. At first glance these details seem to be a total repetition of the laws in this week's parsha. However a more careful examination reveals to us a shocking dimension of the era of Mashiach and the elevated status of the kohanim during those times. According to the comments of the Radak, Abravanel and Malbim throughout the haftorah it is apparent that the status of the ordinary kohain will undergo a radical change and will reflect an elevated lifestyle of sanctity and purity. In essence it appears

that the status of the ordinary kohain in the time of Mashiach will parallel that of the Kohain Gadol in earlier times.

Some of the noticeable changes include the following regulations. Although the ordinary kohain is restricted from marrying a divorcee, he need not marry a virgin and is certainly permitted to a widow. Yet according to the understanding of Radak, the ordinary kohain in the Messianic era will be restricted (with one exception) to the marriage of a virgin. (see commentary to 44:22) The ordinary kohain was forbidden to serve in the Bais Hamikdash with overgrown hair however no specific regulations were given regarding his general hair length. But according to the Radak (44:20) the kohain of the future, like the present Kohain Gadol, will be required to maintain an extremely short hairstyle. The ordinary garb of the kohain consisted of multi-colored wool and linen but the kohain of the future, like the Kohain Gadol on Yom Kippur, will wear strictly linen garb. (see Radak 44:16) This garb will even assume the supreme sanctity of the Yom Kippur garb and will be forbidden to be taken outside of the walls of the Bais Hamikdash.

These new regulations suggest that the elevated status of the ordinary kohain of the future will be tantamount to that of the present Kohain Gadol. In fact, some of these regulations were previously limited to the elevated Yom Kippur service of the Kohain Gadol. The conclusion we draw from here is that the ordinary Temple service of the Messianic era will be on par with that of the Kohain Gadol of earlier generations. And in certain ways the elevated experiences of the Kohain Gadol on Yom Kippur in the Holy of Holies will eventually become the daily experience of the ordinary kohain in the times of Mashiach.

In order to appreciate this overwhelming phenomena it is important to understand the mind set and sanctity of the Kohain Gadol. In this week's parsha, the Torah gives us the reason for the elevated status of the Kohain Gadol. After listing many of his specific regulations the Torah adds, "And he should not leave the Mikdash so as not to profane the sanctity of Hashem because the crown of Hashem is upon the Kohain Gadol's head." (Vayikra 21:12) The Sefer HaChinuch (Mitzva 270) gives us insight into the intriguing concept of "the crown of Hashem". Before quoting his words it is of value to study the opinion of the Rambam (Klei Hamikdash 5:7) who is of the following opinion. Rambam maintains that the Kohain Gadol was permanently confined to his designated chamber in the Bais Hamikdash throughout each day of service. In addition the Rambam notes that the nightly quarters of the Kohain Gadol were restricted to Yerushalayim proper and under no circumstances could the Kohain Gadol ever leave the Holy City. The Sefer Hachinuch explains that this constant and total focus on Hashem and His service yielded the supreme

quality of the Kohain Gadol.

He therefore characterizes the Kohain Gadol in the following terms. "The Kohain Gadol was isolated from all in order to be elevated to the perfect status of sanctity. Although he was a physical being, his soul dwelled constantly amongst the heavenly servants. Due to his total preoccupation with spirituality he was elevated above the rest of humanity and removed from all mundane interest and worldly concerns. The Chinuch views the elevated status of the Kohain Gadol's sanctity a result of his total immersion in the service of Hashem. His perfect spiritual surroundings, intense focus on sacrifice and constant awareness of the presence of Hashem produced the holiest man on earth. This is what the Torah means when referring to the crown of Hashem worn by the Kohain Gadol. His mind and total preoccupation were purity and sanctity and he literally carried Hashem in his mind at all times. It is this mind set which produced the strict regulations and limitations of the Kohain Gadol, reflecting an elevated life style of perfect sanctity. In essence, the Kohain Gadol's life-style was restricted to one of perfect sanctity because his entire interest and focus was also one of purity and sanctity.

We now begin to understand and appreciate the status of the ordinary kohain during the Messianic era. In general we are told that the focus of the entire world will be one of purity and sanctity. The prophet Yeshaya speaks of the illustrious era of Mashiach and presents it in the following terms. "And the land will be filled with the knowledge of Hashem like the water fills the sea." (Yeshaya 11:9) Rambam elaborates upon this and states, "And in this time there will be no jealousy or quarrel... and the preoccupation of all will be 'to know Hashem'...and the Jewish people will be great scholars who will understand Hashem to the maximum human capacity." (M'lochim 12:5)

It stands to reason that if this will be the elevated understanding of the ordinary Jew, how much greater will be the level of the kohain who is privileged to serve Hashem daily and stand in His presence?! We can safely say that the ordinary Kohain's indescribable understanding of Hashem coupled with his direct and constant contact with Hashem will truly yield extreme levels of sanctity. His general status will be tantamount to that of the earlier Kohain Gadol and even share aspects of the "Holy of Holies." We now understand the specific regulations of the ordinary kohain of the future. His total interest will be focused on spirituality and, like the Kohain Gadol of previous times, will be removed from mundane involvement and worldly concerns. It therefore follows logically that the ordinary kohain's lifestyle will be akin to that of the Kohain Gadol, one of elevated purity and sanctity reflecting the "crown of Hashem" worn upon his head. May we soon merit to experience such elevated levels of sanctity, so sorely missing in our times. ©2020 Rabbi A. Tandler & torah.org