



אֱמֹר
Emor

אשרינו Ashreinu

Enhancing your Study of the Weekly Torah Portion

It's the Small Things That Count

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Parshat Emor contains an entire section regarding the Yamim Tovim: Pesach, Sefirat Ha'omer, Shavuot, Rosh Hashana, Yom Kippur, and Sukkot. However there is one pasuk that seems out of place:

וּבְקַצְרְכֶם אֶת קְצִיר
אֲרָצְכֶם, לֹא תִכְלֶה
פֶּאֶת שְׂדֵה בְּקִצְרְךָ,
יִלְקֹט קְצִירְךָ, לֹא
תִלְקֹט לְעֹנֵי וְלִגְר
תַּעֲזֹב אֹתָם אֲנִי ה'
אֱלֹהֵיכֶם

ings of your harvest. [Rather] you shall leave these for the poor person and for the stranger. I am the Lord, your God” (Vayikra 23:22).

This problem bothered Rashi, and he quotes Chazal who present an explanation: “Said R. Avdimi bar R. Yosef: Why did the Torah place these agricultural mitzvot in the midst of the festival laws, Pesach and Shavuot on one side, Rosh Hashanah, Yom Kippur, and Sukkot on the other? In order to teach you that whoever gives gleanings, the forgotten sheaf, and the corner of the field to the poor person in a proper manner, is considered as though he built the Beit HaMikdash and brought his sacrifices within it (Sifra Emor 13:12).

So now we understand. The Torah wanted to magnify the importance of the mitzvah of giving to a poor person. Therefore, this mitzvah was put into the middle of the parsha of the holidays, when everyone was going up to the Beit Hamikdash to offer the festival sacrifices. But this raises a further question. Why is this specific mitzvah so important that it equals building the Beit Hamikdash and bringing *korbanot*?



“When you reap the harvest of your Land, you shall not completely remove the corner of your field during your harvesting, and you shall not gather up the glean-

Rav Moshe Miller (Shiur Le'Yom HaShabbat) offers an explanation. The gemara in Yevamot describes the procedure for conversion to Judaism. When a gentile comes to become a ger, we first try to dissuade him in order to determine that his intentions to convert are pure. Therefore we tell him, "You should know -- the Jews suffer terribly from the nations. They incessantly hound and persecute us." If he responds, "Yes, I know, and I'm really not worthy of being a Jew," then we accept him and we inform him of a few severe mitzvot and a few light mitzvot. The gemara gives *leket*, *shichecha*, and *peah* as examples of "light mitzvot." But now we must understand why these mitzvot are singled out. They are "light" in the sense that they don't require much effort. All you have to do is leave over 2 or 3 stalks of wheat in the field for the poor person to gather. But why are they so fundamental to Judaism that they are among the first mitzvot taught to a *ger*? Why are they placed next to the harshest mitzvot, which incur *karet*?

The lesson is clear. A person is judged by the small things. When we have the potential convert before us, we inform him of one of the most important principles of Judaism: he now has to get used to conceding and waiving his personal privileges. This is a part of his test if he is worthy of joining the Jewish religion. A Jew is tested on the small things. This is embodied in the seemingly simple mitzvot of *leket*, *shichecha*, and *peah*. And this is why they are mentioned in the middle of the parsha of the holidays. Everyone is careful about chametz and matzah, very important mitzvot. Not violating Yom Tov is basic to Judaism, more so not to disgrace the holiest of holidays -- Yom Kippur. But don't forget the small mitzvot!

We are not farmers and do not merit to fulfill these mitzvot, but there are opportunities in our modern lives for small acts of kindness that don't require much effort but can make a difference in another person's life. A quick smile or warm greeting, noticing when someone could use a helping hand. We can "easily" leave a trail of "stalks" behind us throughout the day that, though small in effort and time, define who we are.

Remember the poor person and don't forget to give him something. Because that is Judaism -- it's the small things that count.

Constantly Connected

Yitzy Lanner ('19)

Perek 23 of Parshat Emor gets a lot more publicity than the rest of the parsha, because it discusses the laws of the Jewish holidays -- Pesach, Shavuot, Rosh Hashanah, Yom Kippur, and Sukkot (Shabbat makes it in there as well). When listing the holidays, Hashem gives a reason for why we have each of them except for two. When mentioning Rosh Hashanah, Hashem does not say that it is the Yom HaDin, the day of judgement, and when mentioning Shavuot, Hashem does not mention that this is Zman Matan Torateinu, the holiday when we celebrate the receiving of the Torah on Har Sinai. Why is this so? Why does Hashem give the reasons for the other holidays listed, but not for Rosh Hashanah and Shavuot?

The Kli Yakar offers a very insightful answer. He suggests that Hashem chose not to mention that Rosh Hashanah is the day of judgement because He does not want people to think that the rest of the year they can misbehave and sin, and only when it comes time for Rosh Hashanah, they will start behaving and fulfilling the will of Hashem.

The Kli Yakar goes on to explain that the reason why Hashem did not mention that Shavuot was the day the Jewish people received the Torah is because Hashem does not want us thinking that the receiving of the Torah was only a one-time occurrence and that it only happened once, thousands of years ago, and now it is just some outdated law book. He wants us to feel as if we are receiving the Torah again every day, therefore it will not feel old and disconnected to us. There is an important and valuable lesson that can be extrapolated from this idea. With Shavuot coming up, let's celebrate our rich history and traditions that are thousands of years old and also rejoice in the freshness of the Torah and get excited about the magnificent opportunities to grow in our Judaism.

Hut of Uncertainty

Sara Deichman ('19)

This week's parsha details the holidays mentioned in the Torah. When expounding on Shavuot, the Torah

states:

“You shall dwell in huts for seven days. Everyone included in Israel must live in such huts. This is so that future generations will know that I caused the Israelites to live in sukkot when I brought them out of Egypt...” (Vayikra 23:42-43) .

This pasuk brings about a crucial debate between two Torah scholars, Rabbi Eliezer and Rabbi Akiva. The two disagree on God’s intention regarding the sukkah. Rabbi Eliezer contends that the sukkah represents the cloud that provided comfort and safety to the nation as they travelled through the desert. In contrast, Rabbi Akiva holds that the sukkah refers to the tangible hut the people of Bnei Yisrael resided in. If we follow Rabbi Akiva, what does this seemingly superficial hut teach us, and further, what does this holiday as a whole truly represent?

We customarily build sukkot representing the physical hut of the people in order to display our immense trust in God. A hut is a temporary fixture, constantly ready to move, not knowing where it will next be planted. The time the Jews spent wandering throughout the desert laid the foundation for the immense trust we have in God, going through life with profuse faith as the Jews did upon leaving Egypt and traveling in the wilderness for years. The hut symbolizes the hard yet possible human capacity to follow God without certainty of where we will end up. May the physical representation of our spiritual path in life lead us to always believe in God, even when our next step isn’t crystal clear.

Holy Time

Adina Hirsch (‘19)

Parshat Emor is well known for discussing the Shalosh Regalim, Rosh Hashana, and Yom Kippur. However, this parsha also mentions Shabbat. Immediately after talking about Shabbat, the Torah follows with the following pasuk:

אֵלֶּה מוֹעֲדֵי ה' מִקְרָאֵי קֹדֶשׁ אֲשֶׁר-תִּקְרְאוּ
אֹתָם בְּמוֹעֲדָם

“These are the Lord’s appointed [holy days], holy occasions, which you shall designate in their ap-

pointed time” (Vayikra 23:4).

The fact that the Torah here seems to be calling Shabbat a *mo'ed*, an appointed time, and a *mikra kodesh*, a sacred assembly, seems strange. As Rashi asks, “What has Shabbat to do with the festivals?” While holidays occur annually, Shabbat occurs weekly. While holidays depend on the Beit Din and revolve around the lunar calendar, Shabbat is only dependent on the weekly cycle, a construct derived directly from Hashem’s creation of the universe. What is the connection between Shabbat and the festivals?

Rashi explains that Shabbat is mentioned in order to emphasize the holiness of the festivals. Desecrating the festivals is equivalent to desecrating Shabbat, and keeping the holidays is equivalent to keeping Shabbat. Rashi’s point is that we might have thought the holidays hold less sanctity than Shabbat because we are allowed to cook and to do some types of work that are prohibited on Shabbat. However, by including Shabbat next to the holidays, the Torah is implying that both Shabbat and the holidays contain the same level of holiness.

The Ramban offers a different perspective. Shabbat is also mentioned before Moshe commands Bnei Yisrael to build the Mishkan in order to explain to Bnei Yisrael that observance of Shabbat overrides the building of the Mishkan. So too here, Shabbat is mentioned before the festivals to show to Bnei Yisrael that Shabbat overrides the festivals. Even though we are permitted to cook and carry on holidays, if a holiday falls out on shabbat we are prohibited from such activity.

The Vilna Gaon offers a unique approach, commenting on the pasuk below:

שֵׁשֶׁת יָמִים תַּעֲשֶׂה מְלָאכָה, וּבַיּוֹם הַשְּׁבִיעִי שַׁבַּת
שַׁבְּתוֹן מִקְרָא-קֹדֶשׁ, כָּל-מְלָאכָה לֹא תַעֲשׂוּ: שַׁבַּת הוּא
”לֵה, בְּכֹל מוֹשְׁבֹתֵיכֶם

“On six days work may be performed, but on the seventh day, it is a complete day of rest, a holy occasion; you shall not perform any work. It is a Shabbat to Hashem in all your dwelling places” (23:3).

The Vilna Gaon suggests that this pasuk does not only apply to days of the week, but also to days of the year. Parshat Emor mentions seven holidays: two

days of Pesach, Shavuot, Rosh Hashanah, Yom Kippur, Sukkot, and Shemini Atzeret. For six of them we can cook and engage in other forms of work, but on Yom Kippur, we are prohibited because it is a “Shabbat Shabbaton.” The Torah uses different terminology in reference to difference in prohibitions. During the first six holidays, melechet *avodah*, burdensome work, is prohibited, while on Yom Kippur, the seventh holiday, melacha, ANY work, even if not burdensome, is prohibited, drawing a comparison between Yom Kippur and Shabbat.

The Vilna Gaon’s interpretation allows for the emergence of a time pattern. The same six days of the week followed by a seventh day of holiness is mirrored by the festivals mentioned in this week’s parsha. There are six annual festivals that contain the same halachot, followed by the seventh, Yom Kippur, a day of elevated kedusha. When the Torah highlights the level of kedusha, the pattern of seven always appears.

Furthermore, it seems that this parsha is also explaining to us another aspect of spirituality. The entire Sefer Vayikra focuses on explaining the ways for Bnei Yisrael to attain a closer relationship with Hashem. This sefer goes into detail about korbanot, building the Mishkan, and performing the *avodah* of the Mishkan.

That is why Parshat Emor emphasizes the spiritual aspects of the festivals, focusing on the meeting of man and Hashem. This also explains why specifically two integral words are mentioned: *mo’ed* and *mikra kodesh*.

Mo’ed does not simply mean “appointed time.” The same word, *mo’ed*, is utilized in the phrase *Ohel Mo’ed*, the place where man and Hashem met. The *mo’adim*, or festivals, in our chapter are the times when man and Hashem united and connected over a shared history together.

Moreover, the phrase *mikra kodesh*, originating from the same shorash as Sefer Vayikra, meaning “to be summoned in love.” A *mikra kodesh* is not just a holy day. It is a meeting between God and the Jewish people, where Hashem calls out to us with affection.

We have a spiritual connection with Hashem but we are still physical people. We are incapable of being solely spiritual every day of week. But one day out of seven, we stop working and embrace the *kedusha* that comes from a relationship with Hashem. On certain days of the year, the festivals, we celebrate our history and the miracles Hashem has performed for us. While on Shabbat we emulate Hashem’s actions when He rested from creating the world, during festivals we celebrate the partnership between us and Hashem. Yet festivals and shabbat share similarities as they are both times of *mo’ed*, and they are both times when Hashem calls to us out of love, *mikra kodesh*.

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