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# פרשת אמור Parshat Emor

## Ashreinu | אשרינו

ENHANCING YOUR STUDY OF THE WEEKLY TORAH PORTION



### BIG THINGS COME IN SMALL PACKAGES

RABBI RAEI BLUMENTHAL

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OLIVIA KAHANE ('23)

LIZI BUGAY ('22)

DONIE ZAK ('21)

ELIANA BROIDE ('21)

The Torah begins its instructions to the Kohanim: Don't come into contact with a dead body. But the words that the Torah uses are irregular in that Moshe is commanded to

say to the Kohanim, and say to them: **אמור... ואמרת**. This redundancy is noted by Rashi (21:1) (citing Chazal) who comments:

**אמור... ואמרת** - להזהיר גדולים על הקטנים. The great ones should instruct the small ones.

On a simple level, this is clearly instructing parents to educate their children. But the choice of verbiage, **אמור** and **אמרת**, contains within it a profound lesson, as explained by the Birkat

Avraham of Slonim:

There are times in our lives that are times of **גדלות**, greatness, and other times that are times of **קטנות**, smallness. We have all experienced times of immense greatness: davening that seemed to fly up to *shamayim*, singing that lifted our souls. We have all experienced moments of inspiration, elation, and transcendence. And once we have tasted those delicious moments, the rest of life appears pale and dull in comparison. Mincha on a random Tuesday simply cannot compete with the power of Kol Nidrei.

This leaves us with a profound sense of longing and often despair. Most of life is made of small moments. Most of life is uninspired. Most of life is pixelated and choppy, while precious few seconds are spent in glorious high-definition *ruchniyut*.

The Birkat Avraham, however, suggests that it is not our lives that are so devastatingly off balance, but

our perspectives. We all assume that life is *supposed* to be about those moments of inspiration and elevation. But that's not the case at all. Hashem has many *malachim, seraphim, and ofanei hakodesh* that do His will with complete devotion and inspiration. From all of creation, we are the only beings capable of connecting to Hashem in moments of קטנות, of darkness, hardship, and challenge.

Why then does Hashem grant us any moments of inspiration at all? להזהיר גדולים על הקטנים -- so that the great ones should inspire the small ones. That is to say, the great moments of understanding and clarity should inform us of what is possible in the small moments.

May Hashem help us find Him in this craziness as well, and we hope that from this smallness will come greatness that we have never seen before.

## FOLLOW THE LEADER

OLIVIA KAHANE ('23)

Parshat Emor includes many of the rules and laws for the kohanim. In this week's parsha we also learn about the holidays we must observe. However, before I could even read about the holidays and laws, I had so many questions on the first pasuk:

וַיֹּאמֶר ה' אֶל מֹשֶׁה אָמַר אֶל הַכֹּהֲנִים בְּנֵי אַהֲרֹן  
וְאָמַרְתָּ אֲלֵהֶם לִנְפֹשׁ לֹא יִטְמָא בְּעַמּוּי

“ And Hashem said to Moshe, speak to the kohanim, the sons of Aharon, and say to them: None shall defile himself for any [dead] person among his nation” (Vayikra 21:1).

The pasuk says אָמַר and then וְאָמַרְתָּ אֲלֵהֶם. Why does the pasuk repeat itself? Rashi explains that the reason for the repetition is to instruct adults to teach their children also to not defile themselves. The Gemara Yevamot (114a) points out that the message of adults teaching children not to violate the laws of the Torah is actually conveyed three times, in three separate ways. First

is the prohibition of eating blood. Eating blood was common in those days, and by commanding adults to teach children this prohibition, the Torah is teaching us that EVERYONE should be inculcated with the Torah's teachings. Second is the prohibition against eating insects. We learn from this that even people who are lacking basic instincts should be taught Torah. Children can be disgusting and not understand what they're doing. Therefore, we must teach them to not eat insects because we should try to help make them more refined. Third are the laws of defilement and purity, laws that humans can not fully comprehend. They are divinely decreed. Therefore, teaching children about these laws and restrictions teaches them that even if humans do not understand everything, we must follow as Hashem says. Although it may be difficult at times, we must always follow as Hashem says, because He has a plan for us. Good Shabbos.

## TIME TO GROW

LIZI BUGAY ('22)

In this week's parsha, Parshat Emor, Hashem commands Moshe to tell Bnei Yisrael about the festivals that they should keep. He says to Moshe:

וּסְפַרְתֶּם לָכֶם מִמִּחֶרֶת הַשַּׁבָּת מִיּוֹם הַבִּיאָכֶם אֶת  
עֹמֶר הַתְּנוּפָה שֶׁבַע שָׁבָתוֹת תְּמִימֹת תִּהְיֶינָה

“And you shall count for yourselves, from the morrow of the rest day from the day you bring the omer as a wave offering, seven weeks; they shall be complete” (Vayikra 23:15).

Why do we count? The purpose of leaving Egypt was to receive the Torah on Har Sinai. We are supposed to occupy ourselves with as much study of Torah as possible, but unfortunately many people waste their time. Counting *sefirah* before Shavuot is a preparation for *Kabbalat haTorah* and emphasizes the importance of time. This serves as a reminder to use every free moment for the study of Torah.

Another lesson we can learn about *sefirah* comes

from the fact that we count with a bracha each and every night. If one forgets to count after a full day, the bracha is no longer included on the following days. This shows how each day affects the next and teaches us the importance of each day. Even only one day devoid of Torah learning adversely affects the future.

Additionally, we can question the wording of this pasuk when it states, וּסְפַרְתֶּם לָכֶם, “you should count for yourselves”. We know the Torah doesn’t waste any words, so what is the meaning of the extra words, “for yourselves”? The Ohr HaChaim suggests that Bnei Yisrael had to count seven weeks to purify themselves so they would become God’s “bride” and would be able to ascend Har Sinai to receive the Torah. The counting would have been seven days, but the impurity amongst Bnei Yisrael was too strong as a result of their stay in Egypt, requiring them to purify for seven weeks instead. When the Jews were in Egypt, they were on such a low level and were on the brink of destruction. At the last second, Bnei Yisrael were redeemed, and it was during these seven weeks that they went through this remarkable transformation. With that being said, there are more than two weeks left of the Omer, and we should utilize the remaining time to be our best selves and reach our full potential.

## THE GIFT OF TORAH

DONIE ZAK ('21)

In this week’s parsha, Parshat Emor, Hashem describes the celebration of Pesach, Shavuot, Sukkot, Rosh Hashanah, and Yom Kippur. When referring to most of the holidays, Hashem mentions them directly by name, but he does not mention Shavuot as *Zman Matan Torateinu* or Rosh Hashana as *Yom Hadin*. Instead, when describing the commandments of Shavuot, He says:

עַד מִמָּחֳרַת הַשַּׁבָּת הַשְּׂבִיעִית תִּסְפְּרוּ  
חֲמִשִּׁים יוֹם וְהִקְרַבְתֶּם מִנְחָה חֲדָשָׁה לַיהוָה

meaning, “you should count until the day after the seventh week, [namely,] the 50th day, [on which]

you should bring a new meal offering to Hashem” (Vayikra 23:16). In regards to Rosh Hashana, He commands:

דַּבֵּר אֶל בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל לֵאמֹר בַּחֹדֶשׁ הַשְּׂבִיעִי בְּאֶחָד  
לַחֹדֶשׁ יְהִי לָכֶם שַׁבָּתוֹן זִכְרוֹן תְּרוּעָה מִקְרָא קֹדֶשׁ

“Speak to the children of Israel, saying: In the seventh month, on the first of the month, it shall be a Sabbath for you, a remembrance of [Israel through] the shofar blast a holy occasion” (Vayikra 23:24).

Why were the names of those two special holidays excluded? The Kli Yakar offers an insightful explanation. He answers that the inclusion of the names of these holidays might mislead the Jewish people. On Shavuot we celebrate getting the Torah, and on Rosh Hashana we are judged for our actions. Referring to Shavuot as *Zman Matan Torateinu* could lead someone to believe that we received the Torah a long time ago and therefore can not relate to it nowadays. Instead, we should feel as if the Torah is a new gift that we ourselves receive each year. A similar idea applies to Rosh Hashana. Referring to Rosh Hashana as *Yom Hadin* may have led to the misinterpretation that Hashem is only watching our actions on that day, and on all other days we do not have to observe His mitzvot.

By leaving out the names of these days, Hashem is reminding us how special receiving the Torah is to each of us and that we should follow its laws every single day. As Shavuot approaches, let us always remember how lucky we are to have the Torah and to always follow Hashem’s commandments. Have a great Shabbos!

## SO PROUD OF YOU

ELIANA BROIDE ('21)

As I was reading this week’s parsha, I instantly felt nostalgic about being in school. I came across the pasuk:

וְלֹא תַחֲלִלוּ אֶת שֵׁם קֹדְשִׁי וְנִקְדַּשְׁתִּי בְּתוֹךְ  
בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל אֲנִי ה' מִקְדָּשְׁכֶם

“You shall not defile my holy name, and I shall be sanctified among the children of Israel; I am Hashem who sanctifies you” (Vayikra 22:32).

I immediately pictured myself on the school bus on my way to a class trip. I imagined my teacher walking up and down the bus and reminding us, “Make sure you make a Kiddush Hashem. We need to show the world how special the Jewish people really are!” When I came across this commandment written in this week’s parsha, I began to think, “what exactly is a Kiddush Hashem?” We’ve all learned when we were younger that when we act properly, Hashem’s name is sanctified, but what exactly does that mean?

Rabbi Jonathan Sacks explains how it is basically impossible for man to understand Hashem as the Being that He is. The way that Hashem becomes known to the world is through His people. We are a living testimony to Hashem’s greatness and we act as His ambassadors in this world. So, when the Jewish people act in a moral manner, the world views Hashem in a positive light. This is how we create a Kiddush Hashem. On the other hand, when the Jewish people act immorally, the rest of the world views Hashem as such. This is how we, *chas v’shalom*, create a Chilul Hashem. Essentially, the way the world views Hashem’s name is fully dependent on how we act individually and as a nation.

Being responsible for how the world views Hashem puts us under a lot of pressure. How are we supposed to do this? Especially during these unprecedented times, how are we supposed to show everyone how incredible Hashem is when we are isolated from the rest of the world?

The Rambam explains that a Kiddush Hashem is when: “a person goes above and beyond what the Torah expects of him.” With that in mind, we don’t need to physically be with people to accomplish this goal. This could mean going out of your way to reach out to someone who might need a call during this tough time, being extra helpful with your younger siblings at home, or davening in the morning with extra *kavana* before Zoom classes begin. With social distancing comes more time to work on being the best we can be. So, instead of letting the hours pass by watching Netflix, we should aim to use this time to go “above and beyond.” If we do this, we will certainly create a Kiddush Hashem and make Hashem proud.

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