

אֲשֶׁרֵינוּ  
יִטְמָא

## פרשת אמור Parshat Emor

# Ashreinu | אשרינו

ENHANCING YOUR STUDY OF THE WEEKLY TORAH PORTION



## POTENTIAL OF LIFE

RABBI MOSHE NACHBAR

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BATSHEVA SHEKHTER ('20)

DONIE ZAK ('21)

NAOMI REICHENBERG ('22)

ADINA EISENMANN ('22)

In this week's parsha, Emor, the first pasuk tells us:

”וַיֹּאמֶר ה' אֶל-מֹשֶׁה  
אָמַר אֶל-הַכֹּהֲנִים  
בְּנֵי אַהֲרֹן וְאָמַרְתָּ  
אֲלֵהֶם לִנְפֹשׁ לֹא-  
יִטְמָא בְּעַמִּי:”

“And Hashem said to Moses: Speak to

the priests, the sons of Aaron, and say to them: None shall defile himself for any [dead] person among his kin” (Vayikra 21:1).

The question many of our great mefarshim ask is, what is the nature of this command? The next few pesukim teach us of the laws pertaining to the kohanim remaining pure by not coming into contact with a dead body. What is the nature of this obligation for a kohen to remain pure?

The Ramban comments that the reason why a kohen may not become impure through tumat meit is because every kohen has the potential to become Kohen Gadol one day. This potential keeps them from becoming impure.

The Sforno comments that the elevated sanctity of a kohen requires him to avoid that which is a complete contradiction to sanctity. In this case, that contradiction is the void of life. A kohen is holy and requires being involved with that which is living, growing, and evolving. Death is, of course, the absence of life, and therefore a kohen must be very careful to never come in contact with the dead.

In both of these comments, we can learn a great lesson. To be devoted to our service of God, we must know that we have great potential to become great people and leaders. Additionally, we must be true and authentic, never becoming involved in contradiction. With both of these traits, we can strive higher and higher in our relationship with Hashem.

# IS SHABBAT A CHAG?

BATSHEVA SHEKHTER ('20)

This week's parsha, Parshat Emor, lists many laws regarding kohanim, the Kohen Gadol, the *avodah* in the Mishkan, slaughtering animals, and Jewish festivals. The fourth aliyah begins with Hashem introducing to Moshe the section discussing the timing of the holidays on the Jewish calendar. The pasuk states:

דַּבֵּר אֶל-בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל וְאָמַרְתָּ אֲלֵהֶם מוֹעֲדֵי  
ה' אֲשֶׁר תִּקְרְאוּ אֹתָם מִקְרָאֵי קֹדֶשׁ אֵלֶּה הֵם  
מוֹעֲדֵי

“Speak to Bnei Yisrael and tell them: These are My fixed, the fixed times of Hashem, which you shall proclaim as sacred occasions” (Vayikra 23:2).

Following this introduction, the parsha mentions Shabbat for one pasuk and then returns to discussing the Jewish holidays. Is Shabbat meant to be categorized as one of the *moadim* or is it an separate entity on its own? Does the parsha pause to discuss Shabbat or is this section explaining only one topic that includes both Shabbat and Chagim?

The word *moed* can describe a meeting in which person A comes to person B, or person B comes to person A. These two types of meetings directly relate to the two forms of holy times mentioned separately in this parsha. On Shabbat, we celebrate the type of meeting with Hashem when He brings Himself down to this world. We praise Hashem who alone, “sanctified Shabbat,” remember Creation through which Hashem came down to this world, and sing *zemirot* to welcome Hashem into our homes.

On the contrary, Yom Tov is meant as an opportunity for us to meet Hashem on “His turf.” We go up to Yerushalayim to offer *korbanot* in Hashem's home, the Beit Hamikdash, remember Yetziat Mitzrayim as an occasion when we were elevated spiritually and geographically, and praise Hashem who, “sanctifies Israel and holy times” by instructing us to determine the dates of the holidays based off the new moon at the beginning of a new month.

Based on this understanding, Shabbat and the rest

of the Chagim are all considered *moadim*, but refer to two different types of meetings between us and Hashem. It is our responsibility as the Jewish people to fulfill the goals of these two meetings: to embrace Hashem's presence in our surroundings on Shabbat and to strengthen our relationship with Hashem by approaching Him through *tefillah* and *mitzvot* on Yom Tov.

## PREVENTING EMBARRASSMENT

DONIE ZAK ('21)

In this week's parsha, Parshat Emor, Hashem commands Moshe to tell the Jewish people about a number of *mitzvot* that will apply to them once they enter the land of Israel. One of these *mitzvot* is the *mitzvah* of *peah*, the commandment of leaving a corner of one's field unharvested for the poor to take a portion of the farmer's produce for themselves.

It is written:

וּבְקִצְרְכֶם אֶת-קִצִּיר אֲרָצְכֶם לֹא-תִכְלֶה  
פֶּאת שְׂדֵךְ בְּקִצְרֶךָ וּלְקִט קִצִּירְךָ לֹא  
תִּלְקֹט לְעֵנִי וּלְגֵר תֵּעֲזֹב אֹתָם

“And when you reap the harvest of your land, you shall not reap all the way to the edges of your field, or gather the gleanings of your harvest; you shall leave them for the poor and the stranger” (Vayikra 23:22).

Hashem specifically commands the Jewish people *to leave*, as opposed to *to give*, a corner of their field's produce to the poor. Why does Hashem command the Jews to leave their field for the poor to come *take* their produce instead of going out of our way to *give* the poor the produce directly?

Most people take pride in their ability to be independent and provide for themselves. Therefore, it is natural for a human being to be embarrassed to take from others or for others to know that they need help. Hashem does not command the Jewish people to give the poor their food because that would require those who need the produce to tell other people that they need support and can not sufficiently provide for themselves on their own, causing them to be embarrassed. Hashem specifically tells the Jewish people to

leave a corner of their field in order to allow the poor to take what they need without anyone else knowing so that they will not be embarrassed.

Even for those of us who do not have the opportunity to perform this mitzvah ourselves, we can still take the lesson learned from this subtle word choice to heart, and always remember to think of others and the effect that our actions might have on them. Have a Shabbat Shalom!

## ALL YOU NEED IS FAITH

NAOMI REICHENBERG ('22)

In Parshat Emor, we learn about the holiday of Sukkot. The pasuk says:

בַּסֹּכֶת תִּשְׁבוּ שִׁבְעַת יָמִים כָּל-הָאֶזְרַח בְּיִשְׂרָאֵל  
יֹשְׁבוּ בַסֹּכֶת: לְמַעַן יִדְעוּ דַרְתֵּיכֶם כִּי בַסֹּכֹת הוֹשַׁבְתִּי  
אֶת-בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל בְּהוֹצִיאִי אוֹתָם מֵאֶרֶץ מִצְרַיִם אֲנִי ה'  
אֱלֹהֵיכֶם:

“You shall dwell in thatched huts for seven days. Everyone included in Israel must live in such thatched 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. I am the Lord your God” (Vayikra 23:42-43).

There are major disagreements between the commentators on what the word “sukkah” or “hut” actually means. Is it meant metaphorically or literally? How are we supposed to understand these so-called huts? Many scholars believe that these huts should remind us of how the clouds of glory protected us in the desert. Others believe that these are literal huts and do not symbolize anything deeper. However, if we decide to view them as only literal huts, then what does the holiday of Sukkot truly represent? What miracle does Sukkot embody if it is no more than a small home?

Most of the Torah’s stories about the Jews in the desert involve instances of them complaining repeatedly; they seem to show little to no gratitude to Hashem, who is constantly protecting and watching over

them. But what we forget to remember while reading these pesukim is that *Klal Yisrael* had to have had the utmost faith in Hakadosh Baruch Hu in order to merit leaving the desert. They had no way of knowing what or who they would encounter in the desert. All they could do was have *emunah* that Hashem would get them to where they ultimately needed to be. Perhaps the truly remarkable aspect of one of Bnei Yisrael’s major experiences, *Yetziat Mitzrayim*, was simply Am Yisrael’s *emunah* through the good, the bad, and the ugly. Sukkot represents the *emunah* we had in Hashem during the tough times in the desert.

Sukkot should not only represent the 40 years in the desert but the 2000 years we have now been in *galut*. Time and time again we have been hated and kicked out of place after place. Sukkot should serve as a reminder that although we have been through ruthless times, we still have yet to give up and be conquered. We are all here on a mission. We are here because of every single person that fought to be here before us. Sukkot is our reminder that if we just have *emunah*, nothing can phase us. We are Hashem’s chosen children, and everywhere we have gone since *galut* started has served as a temporary dwelling, and yet we still have *emunah* that Hashem will help us out.

Sukkot is known as “*zman simchateinu*” -- “the season of our joy.” This goes to show that even in our hardest times, if we just have *emunah*, we will constantly be in a season of joy. That is what Sukkot truly represents. May we all be *zoche*, merit, to have only unwavering faith in Hashem, so that in return, He will provide us IY”H countless seasons of joy that will ultimately lead to the coming of the *geulah*.

## THE BRIDGE OF SEFIRA

ADINA EISENMANN ('22)

In this week’s parsha, Parshat Emor, the Torah discuss all of the Yamim Tovim. It also addresses Sefirat Haomer, the counting of the 49 days in between Pesach and Shavuot:

וּסְפַרְתֶּם לָכֶם מִמָּחֳרַת הַשַּׁבָּת מִיּוֹם הַבִּיאָכֶם אֶת-  
עֹמֶר הַתְּנוּפָה שִׁבְעַת יָמִים תְּמִימַת תְּהִיָּנָה

“And you shall count from the next day after the Sabbath, from the day that you brought the sheaf of the wave offering; seven sabbaths shall be complete” (Vayikra 23:15).

The Sefer Hachinuch poses a very simple question on this commandment: why do we count Sefirat Haomer? We do not count the days between all of the other holidays, so why this one in particular? He explains beautifully that counting the omer creates a bridge from Pesach to Shavuot. We need this connection between the two holidays because on Pesach we have the obligation to tell the story of our ancestors leaving Egypt. However, what we tell on Pesach is only half of the story.

The Sefer Hachinuch explains that we were freed from slavery for a specific reason. If we stopped the story after the holiday of Pesach, we would be saying that the sole reason of our redemption from Egypt was just to be freed. There would have been no ultimate purpose to this freedom. By immediately counting the omer beginning the very day after we left Egypt, the second day of Pesach, we demonstrate the reason why we left Mitzrayim. We left so we could receive the Torah and become Hashem's special people. We prove this by counting up in anticipation, as we build towards the days until we can receive His Torah on Shavuot.

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