

# PENINIM ON THE TORAH

## PARSHA BOOKLET

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### *Parashat Emor*

*Say to the Kohanim, the sons of Aharon... each of you shall not contaminate himself to a (dead) person among his people." (21:1)*

The Midrash comments, "It is written, 'The fear of Hashem is pure, enduring forever,'" (Tehillim 19:10). Rabbi Levi says, "From the fear that Aharon feared of Hashem, he merited to receive the parsha of taharah, ritual purity, which does not leave his family forever. This is a reference to the parsha that deals with becoming tamei to a corpse. The commentators cite the pasuk in Malachi 2:5, "I gave these to him (the founders of the Priestly line of Levi, Aharon and his great-grandson, Pinchas) for the sake of the fear which he feared Me." This is a reference to Aharon HaKohen who accepted the Torah from Moshe Rabbeinu with trepidation and fear. The Midrash relates that when Moshe anointed Aharon with the anointing oil, Aharon trembled and said, "Woe is me, perhaps I have defiled the holy oil." In other words, Aharon's consummate fear of Heaven was the reason that Hashem chose him to be the Kohen Gadol.

Horav Gedalyah Schorr, zl, suggests an alternative explanation. When Hashem created the attribute of fear, it was so that people would fear danger, frightening people, precarious situations, etc. Some fear calamity, while others fear illness. Some individuals shudder from the thought of a natural disaster, while others stand in trepidation of an evil empire. For the average person, fear is very real, engulfing a person in one way or another. Not so, Aharon HaKohen, the quintessential yarei Shomayim. Instead of wasting Hashem's creation of fear on inconsequential fear, he focused it entirely on Hashem. He feared only Hashem: nothing and no one else. He understood that there is nothing to fear but the Almighty Who controls everything. This is the meaning of the pasuk in Malachi which attributes Kehunah Gedolah, the High Priesthood, to Aharon because of his exceptional sense of yiraas Shomayim: "I gave these to him for the sake of fear - I gave him the ability to fear all that is frightening, and he went and 'he feared Me.'" He took that fear and focused it only on Me.

In truth, this should be the focus for all of us. Of whom are we really afraid? Everything is up to Hashem; everything is controlled by Him. Therefore, we channel our fear towards the incorrect source. If we would fear only Hashem, we would realize that there is nothing else to fear, because everything is in His hands.

In any event, the Midrash is teaching us that, as a result of Aharon's exemplary sense of yiraas Shomayim, he was privileged to have the parsha of tamei meis directed to him and his descendants. This is enigmatic. Is it necessary to have a special merit to warrant having this parsha directed only to the Kohen? Why is it that only a Kohen is prohibited from coming in contact with a corpse? Furthermore, how is it a privilege that one earns through special merit?

Rav Schorr explains that the Kohanim were imbued with a unique koach ha'taharah, power of purity, which is part of their essence, which they must constantly strive to preserve and maintain. It was in the merit of Aharon's fear of Heaven that they originally received this unusual power. It is in their enduring development of--and adherence to--this special virtue that they continue to exemplify taharah.

*Each of you shall not contaminate himself to a (dead) person among his people. (21:1)*

The word b'amov, "among his people," teaches us a powerful lesson. If the deceased is "among his people," meaning that there are other Jews available to care for the body and take responsibility for a quick and proper burial, then a Kohen may not participate and become tamei, contaminate himself, to the body. If, however, the corpse is isolated, with no one around to arrange a burial, a situation which is referred to as meis mitzvah, then even the Kohen Gadol is required to involve himself in burying the corpse. Let us try to digest this halachah. Tumaas meis, the spiritual defilement that emanates from a corpse, is extremely stringent. It is the highest, most intense form of tumah. It teaches us that the departure of the neshamah, soul, creates a void created in the human body. A human being is the repository of a holy neshamah. While the neshamah is within him, the individual is tahor, ritually pure, clean and holy. The moment the neshamah leaves his body, this all changes and tumah sets in. Thus, even though Kohanim may become tamei to their seven close relatives, the Kohen Gadol, who must maintain a strict standard of holiness and purity, may not become tamei even to his close relatives. He may neither leave the Mikdash, nor may he defile his state of kedushah, holiness.

Nonetheless, this entire exalted level of kedushah is set aside, indeed, abrogated, when it comes into conflict with kavod ha'brios, the respect and dignity to be accorded to a human being. How great is the respect one must demonstrate towards the body of a person which serves as the receptacle for the neshamah, that even the Kohen Gadol who is never permitted to defile himself - even to his close relatives - must be metameh himself for a meis mitzvah. If a Jewish corpse lay in disrespect with no one to bury it, then the Kohen Gadol must do so. From the highest level of kedushah, to the nadir of tumah, all of this is set aside for kavod ha'brios, the dignity of man.

Human dignity plays a critical role in life. The dignity of every man is sacred and must, therefore, be preserved. Moshe Rabbeinu carefully weighed each word he said in his final rebuke to Klal Yisrael, in order not to cause anyone any undo embarrassment. Indeed, the obligation to protect the feeling and dignity of our fellow man applies not only to the righteous, or even to the common man, but rather, it applies even to the lowliest and coarsest components of the nation. This is clearly demonstrated in the Talmud Gittin 57a where Rabbi Elazar notes the seriousness of putting a man to shame. Bar Kamtza was a man of exceptionally base character, a man who had no qualms about disparaging his own coreligionists to the Roman emperor, and, as a result,

was the vehicle that catalyzed so much death and destruction. Yet, even his dignity was held sacred. The humiliation of this vile person brought upon Klal Yisrael the loss of its Bais Hamikdash, because Hashem espoused the cause of Bar Kamtza.

The list goes on, with Hashem punishing the donkey who rebuked Bilaam. Certainly, Bilaam was not a person who contributed to the value of spiritual life in this world. Yet, he was a human being who was humiliated, and therefore, Hashem championed his cause.

As mentioned earlier, the principle of kavod ha'brios finds expression in the halachah that states, "Rabbinic enactments and various scriptural prohibitions are set aside when they conflict with human respect and dignity" (Berachos 19b). Horav Chaim Shmuelevitz, zl, demonstrates that the concept of kavod ha'brios does not stop at refraining from insulting or degrading one's fellow human being. One is obliged to enhance and even magnify his fellow human being's prestige and honor. The Talmud in Chullin 6b relates that Chizkiyahu HaMelech destroyed the copper snake that Moshe Rabbeinu had fashioned in the wilderness. This was because the people were getting carried away and beginning to worship this copper snake as an idol. The Talmud wonders why none of Chizkiyahu's predecessors destroyed the copper image, especially after they had destroyed all of the other idols. They explain that makom hinichu l'hisgader, "They left him (Chizkiyahu) room for accomplishment!" In other words, they left him the opportunity to enhance his own reputation by destroying what had become an idol. We learn from here that augmenting Chizkiyahu's prestige and allowing for his reputation to achieve lasting fame was more important than destroying a troublesome idol - even at the expense of desecrating Hashem's Name.

Rav Chaim explains that our surprise at the overwhelming significance attributed to kavod ha'brios is the result of our lack of comprehension of the towering stature of a human being. Were we to recognize and appreciate the incredible potential inherent in every human being, we would not marvel at the honor that is due. Man is created in the image of G-d. Thus, he has the ability to scale unfathomable heights. Indeed, it takes a great person to perceive the inherent greatness of man.

The Chazon Ish, zl, was such an individual. His yiraas Shomayim, fear of Heaven, coupled with his emunah, faith, in the Almighty, coalesced to form an individual whose essence was a symphony of praise for Hashem, characterized by an appreciation for the majesty of those who study His Torah and strive to emulate His ways. His love for man was a product of his extreme love for his Creator. He wrote: "I take pleasure in gladdening the hearts of others, and I feel it a great obligation never to cause any discomfort to any man - even for a moment."

This is how he lived his life, as this principle guided his actions and relationships with people. In 1951, a polio epidemic swept across the Holy Land, leaving devastation in its wake. Many children were sacrificed to its effects. One day, one of the rebbeim at the Lomza Yeshivah related to the Chazon Ish about an especially tragic story of a young child who had died. He was an only child to his devastated parents who were inconsolable from grief. In addition, they had received few visitors during the week of shiva, seven-day mourning period, since people were afraid of attracting some of the lingering germs. Immediately, the Chazon Ish asked, "Do you think that my visit will be of some importance to them?" When the rebbe replied in the affirmative, the Chazon Ish immediately rose to leave for the individual's house.

The Chazon Ish was slightly near-sighted, and he often studied without his glasses. Nonetheless, he would never leave his apartment without wearing his glasses, explaining, "Without glasses, I might not notice someone's nod or other form of greeting, which might, chas v'shalom, Heaven forbid, offend them."

A reporter for a secularist newspaper related that he was curious about this great man called the Chazon Ish. He wanted to know what made him so special. After making the trip to Bnei Brak, the Chazon Ish invited the reporter to take a walk with him. They were walking slowly, in silence, when suddenly the Chazon Ish slowed down markedly. When the reporter expressed his wonderment, the Chazon Ish explained, "In front of us walks a cripple. It is not proper to pass by with our sure, healthy steps. Better to slow down and remain behind him." This was a powerful example of the Chazon Ish's greatness. A rosh yeshivah once came to the Chazon Ish and asked to have hataros neder, an annulment of a vow he had made. The Chazon Ish asked a scholar with whom he had been speaking to serve as the second member of a bais din, judicial court of three, and he asked someone to check the street for a third "judge". A third individual joined them shortly. The bais din was convened, and the three judges performed the necessary annulment. After the third judge who had been brought in from the street had left, the Chazon Ish said, "We must do this once again. I know the individual who served as our third judge, and, although he is a wonderful, virtuous person, he is not learned, which is a requisite for being a judge for the annulment of a vow. Once you called him in, I did not want to say anything for fear of humiliating him."

In closing, I quote Horav Yitzchak Zilberstein, Shlita, who cites the Talmud in Bava Metzia 86b that recounts how Avraham Avinu welcomed the three wayfarers to his tent: "Let some water be brought and wash your feet" (Bereishis 18:4). Avraham did not know that they were really angels. He thought they were Arabs who worshipped the dust of their feet, and he refused to permit an object of idolatry to enter his home. Chazal relate that the angels responded to Avraham, "Do you suspect us of being Arabs who bow down to the dust of their feet?" Because of Avraham's error, because he wrongly suspected the angels of being Arabs, Yishmael descended from him! Imagine how much pain Avraham must have been experiencing post Bris Milah, yet he served the guests. Due to one error in judgment, he was punished with a son like Yishmael. This is the lesson of kavod ha'brios, human dignity - human potential: never belittle it.

*He (the Kohen Gadol) shall not marry a widow, a divorcee, a desecrated woman, or a harlot.  
(21:14)*

The Torah has already prohibited a Kohen from marrying a divorcee, a desecrated woman, or a harlot. Why does it repeat itself concerning the Kohen Gadol? After all, the Kohen Gadol is a regular Kohen with some added mitzvos. Horav Mordechai Gifter, zl, explains that added mitzvos elevate and transform the individual to the point that he becomes an entirely new being. Thus, since a Kohen possesses more mitzvos than the rest of Klal Yisrael, his relationship to mitzvos - even those that apply to the rest of the Jewish nation - is different. His Shabbos is different than the Shabbos of other Jews. When the Torah states the mitzvos that apply to the common Kohen and retools them for the Kohen Gadol, they are not simply added mitzvos - they are a completely new application for an entirely different person. The prohibition that applied to the Kohen in general is not the same as the one which applies to the Kohen Gadol, because the

Kohen Gadol is a different entity as a result of his additional mitzvos. The Kohen Gadol's relationship with all mitzvos is different than that of other Kohanim, due to his unique and exalted status.

We must remember that when we say the words *asher kideshanu b'mitzvosav*, "Who sanctified us through His commandments," we mean just that. Every time we perform a mitzvah, we become elevated to a higher status and become different people than we were before we performed the mitzvah.

*When you reap the harvest of your land, you shall not remove completely the corners of your field... and you shall gather the gleanings of your harvest; for the poor and the proselyte shall you leave them. (23:22)*

The Sifri notes this pasuk's placement in middle of the chapter dealing with the Moadim, Festivals. They explain that the Torah is teaching us the significance of leaving gifts for the poor. It is regarded as if one had shared in the rebuilding of the Bais Hamikdash and brought his korbanos, sacrifices, there. This explains the placement of this pasuk amidst the Moadim, but it does not address its location right in middle of the Festival of Shavuot, celebrating the Giving of the Torah. Horav Yerachmiel Krom, Shlita, distinguishes the mitzvos sichlios, "common sense" mitzvos--which are basically humanitarian in nature, easy to understand and accept, those that quite possibly one could figure out on his own--from those that are beyond human cognition.

It is important for a Jew to understand that the Torah has 613 mitzvos, all of which were given to us by Hashem, and that the only reason for us to carry out these mitzvos, regardless of their rationale, is that Hashem commanded us to do so. The only protection against the yetzer hora, evil inclination, is the Torah and the yiraas Shomayim, fear of Heaven, generated by our adherence to its precepts. When we perform certain mitzvos because they "seem right" or they are humanitarian, we fall into the trap of allowing our minds to decide what is important and what is not. In a lecture to the student body of the Rabbiner Seminar in Berlin, a yeshivah comprised of students who were both G-d-fearing and erudite, the Rosh Hayeshivah of Baranovitz, Horav Elchanan Wasserman, zl, explained the significance of yiraas Shomayim as the only factor in determining and motivating one's proper behavior. Ethics, culture, refinement and intelligence do not protect the individual from falling into the abyss of immorality, cruelty and behavior fitting for the lowest of the low.

The Rosh Yeshivah cited Avraham Avinu's excuse to Avimelech, explaining why he had claimed that Sarah Imeinu was his sister. He said, "Because I said there is but no fear of G-d in this place and they will slay me because of my wife" (Bereishis 20:11). The word *rak*, but, seems superfluous. He should have simply said, "There is no fear of G-d in this place." Why does he add the word "but"? Rav Elchanan replied with the same reply that is presented by the Malbim in his commentary to the Chumash: Avraham was teaching Avimelech that intellect and ethics, character refinement and proper demeanor, if motivated by one's logic, are no guarantee that this person will not act totally paradoxical if his lust is aroused or if his intellect is "turned off." Seichel, common sense and logic do not protect one from sin. Only yiraas Shomayim, fear of Heaven, of the Divine supervisor, Who oversees every one of our actions, protects us from falling into the nadir of depravity. The fear of Hashem and the overwhelming shame associated

with sinning in His Presence, knowing that He watches what we do and knows what goes on in our minds, are the only real deterrents from sin.

This is what Avraham told Avimelech: "Whereas I have noted that your nation is advanced in their intellect, their character traits are refined, and their demeanor is graceful and impressive. Indeed, there is rak, but only one, deficiency that I notice: there is no yiraas Elokim, fear of G-d, imbedded in your people. It is this one virtue which is most important to me, because, without it, the other attributes are inconsequential. My life is not secure in such a place. They would easily kill me to get at my wife.

Rav Elchanan gave this lecture on the eve of World War II, when the most cultured European nation, Germany, was about to unleash a war of terror that would demonstrate beyond any shadow of a doubt the veracity of the above statement: without yiraas Shomayim one can become a monster.

Horav Meir Simchah HaKohen, zl, m'Dvinsk explains the pesukim with which we commenced our thought. The Torah tells us in the beginning of this chapter about the Festival of Shavuus, "You shall convoke on this very day - there shall be a holy convocation for yourselves - you shall do no laborious work; it is an eternal decree in your dwelling places for all generations." Why? Because this is the day on which the Torah was given to us. It is the day that Hashem selected us to become His holy nation. One might think that the joy of receiving the Torah is applicable only concerning those mitzvos that are not clearly rational, such as Tefillin, mixing wool and linen, circumcision, etc. No! On Shavuus we received all the mitzvos, the entire Torah - even, the mitzvos that are seemingly rational, as tzedakah, loving the proselyte, performing acts of loving-kindness. It all came to us from Hashem. Unless one believes that a mitzvah such as honoring one's parents is founded and based in the Torah, and that is the reason for carrying it out, he can eventually disregard even such a rational mitzvah - when it does not "agree" with him. This is why the mitzvah of tzedakah is placed right in middle of the Festival of the Giving of the Torah; to teach us that the reason for giving tzedakah is the Torah - nothing else. In fact, in a shmuess, ethical discourse, Horav Chaim Shmuelevitz, zl, commented that although a person's natural instinct is to love to give charity and despise usury, once the Torah commands it, the mitzvah should become our primary motivation for fulfilling the giving of tzedakah and abhorring the taking of usury.

Rav Chaim gives a powerful mashal, analogy, to help us better understand this concept. Imagine, before us on the table is a spoiled, disgusting plate of food. In addition, someone has placed a powerful poison into the food that would immediately kill whoever eats it. Obviously, nobody will touch the plate. The question is: Why? Is it because it is disgusting, or is it because it is poison? The correct answer should be: Naturally, one would not eat it because of its loathsome condition, but now that it is poison, its foul taste is secondary to its lethal properties. This is what the Torah has done for us. We now understand that mitzvah observance is therapeutic, and transgression is detrimental to our spiritual health. We also know that the only determining factor for success is Torah adherence. Otherwise, we are like everybody else. For those who do not understand what that means: Look around contemporary society.

*If the daughter of a Kohen desecrates herself through adultery, she desecrates her father; she shall be consumed by fire. (21:9)*

The Torah's prescribed punishment for a bas Kohen who commits adultery is greater than for a bas Yisrael who commits the same sin. The daughter of a common Jew is executed through chenek, choking, while the daughter of a Kohen receives sereifah, burning. The reason for this severe punishment is the nature of the home in which the bas Kohen had been raised. The education that she received was loftier; the environment that she was raised in was one of increased sanctity. This grants her elevated status. She had more, because she was exposed to more. Consequently, her sin is greater, and thus, her punishment is concomitantly harsher. She should have known better than to sin in a manner endemic to a member of the lowest echelon of society. In other words, she is guilty twofold: first, for desecrating her father's name, her background, her education, her family purity; she is also culpable for her own position. A girl raised in such a home should have developed a more profound perspective on life. Her goals and objectives should have been loftier. Her raison d'etre should have been more elevated. When one hails from such a home, more is expected of her. With her act of defilement, she brought herself down, and she also brought down her father's reputation!

Let us look at the Torah's reason: she profanes her father. The Kehunah, Priesthood, was the most exalted position in the spiritual hierarchy of Klal Yisrael. Shevet Levi stood out among the tribes as the tribe that represented the reply to Moshe Rabbeinu's clarion call, Mi l'Hashem eilai, "Who is for Hashem (should come) to me!"

The tribe of Levi came forward. They did not sin with the Golden Calf. From the tribe of Levi, the Kohanim were singled out to perform the service in the Bais Hamikdash. When this girl sinned, she impugned the integrity of the Kehunah. The Baalei Mussar, Ethicists, compare this to two thieves, both members of distinguished families who were brought before a judge for sentencing. One thief was sentenced to six months, while the other was sentenced to eight months in prison. "Why?" asked the defense attorney. "Why was one punished more harshly than the other?" The judge, who was a perceptive man, replied, "The thief who received a six month sentence carried out his thievery while dressed in the regular street clothes of a common citizen. The other one had the gall to wear a policeman's uniform when he stole. He deserves a harsher punishment."

While having an illustrious lineage can serve as the basis for greater censure, it can also serve as a sentinel protecting one from sin. We find that when Yosef HaTzaddik was confronted by Potifar's wife, what ultimately saved him was the d'mus d'yukno shel aviv, his father's image, which appeared to him. Yosef merited to have his father appear to him to save him from sin. Why did Yosef merit this unprecedented favor? Horav Yerachmiel Kromm, Shlita, explains that Yosef never forgot from whom he descended. This awareness accompanied him, guiding him throughout life. Thus, he was able to "call upon it" when he needed it.

This phenomenon did not necessarily affect others in such a positive manner. We find that Adoniya ben Chagis, David Hamelech's rebellious son, did not make use of his unique lineage. In Sefer Melachim I, 1:6, the pasuk says, "All his days his father had never saddened him (by) saying, 'Why have you done this?'" Horav Alexander Zusha Friedman, zl, writes in his Maaynah

Shel Torah that he heard the Gaon, zl, m'Vilna cited, explaining that the phrase, "his father never saddened him," means that the fact that he descended from such an illustrious and distinguished father did not sadden him during his sinful behavior. It did not arouse within him a desire to repent. He never asked himself, "How can I, David Hamelech's son, act so reprehensibly?" He did not care. One who disregards his esteemed forebears does not deserve to benefit from their merit.

The idea that one's background plays a pivotal role in what is expected of him has compelling ramifications upon anyone who has been privileged to receive a full Torah education. One who has spent his life in a yeshivah, who has been exposed to Torah leaders of the highest calibre, having imbibed Torah in an environment that is sacrosanct and conducive to spiritual ascendancy - has an enormous responsibility. He is the proverbial "bas Kohen." He is viewed in a different light by others, and he should similarly view himself in a different light. Everything that he does, every activity, regardless of its significance, is measured on a more elaborate and demanding scale.

Indeed, it is only the gedolim - those who are greater or who have had a stronger, more sophisticated education - that are held accountable for even the little infractions. Why? Horav Yaakov Neiman, zl, gives the following parable to shed light on this theory. A soldier must maintain his uniform in excellent condition. His pants must be creased and, certainly, no buttons may be missing from his jacket. A soldier who disregards his uniform denigrates the army in which he serves. On the other hand, one who has deserted his position, who is AWOL from his battalion, will not be held in contempt for a missing button on his jacket. He has to answer for a much more serious grievance. We are all soldiers in Hashem's legion. There are those who stand at the forefront of the battle for Torah, and there are those who have, regrettably, distanced themselves far from the front line. Some have even deserted the unit completely. Ostensibly, defining one's infraction will be commensurate with his standing. A soldier is disciplined for a missing button. A missing soldier has much more for which to answer. The button is the least of his problems.

*When an ox or sheep or a goat is born, it shall remain under its mother for seven days. (22:27)*

Chazal derive two significant laws from the Torah's wording. The word yivaled, is born, teaches us that only an animal that is born through a natural birth is eligible to be a sacrifice. One that is born through a caesarian birth, however, is not eligible as a sacrifice. Also, since it must remain "under its mother," an "orphaned" animal, which has no mother, will also be excluded. Let us attempt to analyze the reason for these invalidations. An animal born by a caesarian section has no physical blemishes. There is nothing noticeably wrong with it. Yet, as a korban, it has been excluded as if it were blemished. Why?

Horav Tuvia Lisitzin, zl, cites the Talmud Shabbos 127b which teaches us an important lesson that sheds light on the above question. "Rabbi Shimon ben Gamliel said: 'We may stimulate pity to a ritually clean animal on Yom Tov.' In other words, we may attempt to arouse the maternal instincts of an animal for its young on Yom Tov. How was this performed? Abaye said: 'A lump of salt was brought and placed in its womb, so that it might remember its travails during

childbirth and have pity upon its young.' Yet, this applies only in the case of a clean animal, but not for an unclean one. What is the reason? An unclean animal does not spurn its young. If it does spurn it, it does not take it back."

We derive from Chazal that there is an intrinsic difference between a *beheimah temeiah*, ritually unclean animal, and a *beheimah tahorah*, clean animal. It is possible to stimulate compassion only within the emotions of a clean animal. An unclean animal is missing the maternal instinct of compassion for its child which is inherent in mothers. An unclean animal will not take back its young once it has distanced itself.

We understand now why the Torah has prohibited us from eating an unclean animal. An animal that can lose all feelings of compassion for its own young is an animal from which we should not partake. It leaves an impression that will affect our own psyche. Likewise, we find that there are certain fowl that we are not permitted to eat. They are birds of prey that plunder and kill. They have no compassion and are thus not suitable for Jewish consumption.

There is an added level of compassion that is to be derived from Chazal. The pain of childbirth creates a sense of pity and compassion within the mother for its young, to the point that later on the pain caused by a lump of salt in its womb will engender its feelings of compassion as it remembers the pangs of childbirth. This raises its feeling of maternal love for its young, a feeling that can be aroused only within an animal that has endured the normal pains of childbirth. An animal that has delivered its young through a caesarian birth will not have this feeling. There was no natural birth; therefore, something is missing in the loving relationship between mother and child. The bonding that is generated through birth is not present. Therefore, an animal delivered through a caesarian birth is invalid as a *korban*. It may be eaten as *chullin*, non-consecrated flesh, but not as a *korban*. It is missing that "extra" emotion that elevates it, rendering it worthy of being sanctified as a *korban*.

This idea may also be applied to an "orphaned" animal. An animal whose mother died during birth did not experience the maternal love that is initiated through this process. Thus, it is deficient in nature and not valid to be used as a sacrifice. It is noteworthy that when the Torah invalidates an animal from being consecrated, Chazal are able to delve into the inner workings of an animal's nature in order to conjure a rationale for its impediment. Everything is based on reason. We are limited, however, in our ability to comprehend the full depth of the underlying catalyst for the Torah's decrees. We observe because we believe. The reason which we do offer is only to provide some form of rationale for human comprehension.

*When you slaughter a feast Thanksgiving-offering to Hashem. (22:29)*

David Hamelech says in Sefer Tehillim 107:21,22, "Let him give thanks to Hashem for His kindness... and let them slaughter Thanksgiving-offerings, and relate His works with joyful song." The Midrash asserts that with the advent of Moshiach Tzidkeinu, all *korbanos* will become *batel*, nullified, except for the *Korban Todah*, Thanksgiving-offering, which will never be negated. In an earlier Midrash, Chazal state, "He who has an ox, let him offer an ox as a

sacrifice; he who has a ram, let him offer a ram; he who has a sheep, let him offer a sheep; he who has a dove, let him offer a dove; he who has fine flour, let him offer fine flour; he who has nothing, let him bring words, as it says in Hoshea 14:2, "Take words with you and return to Hashem." What are Chazal teaching us via the above statements?

Horav Sholom Yosef Elyashiv, Shlita, explains that when Hashem performs miracles for a person, after he is saved from death, survives a chronic illness, or is spared from an injury, he is obliged to pay gratitude to the Almighty for His beneficence. In the time of the Bais Hamikdash, he would have offered a Korban Todah from an animal or fowl that he could afford. If he was very poor, he would have offered fine flour. In any event, he would have brought a Thanksgiving-offering in tribute to Hashem. Now that there is no option of offering a korban, the individual brings "words." What is the meaning of bringing "words"?

Rav Elyashiv cites the Talmud Shabbos 33b in which Rabbi Shimon bar Yochai said that since he had been miraculously saved, he felt that he should do something for the community as a form of gratitude to the Almighty. He asked, "Is there anything that requires mending?" He was told that there was a place where there was a safek tumah, doubtful ritual uncleanness, a grave of bones having been lost there, which causes a problem for the Kohanim who have trouble circumventing it. Rabbi Shimon rendered judgment concerning the area, whereby part of it was rendered clean and part it was marked as off limits to Kohanim.

We see from here that when Rabbi Shimon bar Yochai decided to mend something for the community, he focused on an area which was a safek, had doubtful tumah. He did not feel it was necessary to concentrate on an expanse which was clearly unclean, because the people knew to distance themselves from that place. The spiritual danger was apparent.

Chazal say that when the world was originally created, Hashem gazed upon the actions of the wicked in contrast to the actions of the righteous. When the Torah writes in Bereishis 1:2, "When the earth was astonishingly empty" this is a reference to the deeds of the wicked. In contrast, when Hashem said, "Let there be light" (Ibid 1:3), the Torah refers to the actions of the righteous. In pasuk 4, the Torah writes: "And G-d separated between the light and the darkness." This means that Hashem distinguished between the actions of the righteous and the actions of the wicked. Was this necessary? One can plainly see the difference between night and day: darkness and light.

Rav Elyashiv explains that the connotation of the word erev, evening, begins immediately after midday - when it is still light, when the sun is practically still in middle of the sky. Likewise, boker, morning, begins with rising of the morning star - when it is still pitch dark outside. It is regarding this ambiguous time - when it is considered dark, even though it is light, and it is considered light, even though it is dark - that Hashem separated light from dark and delineated the actions of the righteous from that of the wicked. This is the time when people err. These are the people and the actions about whom one can easily err. This is what Rabbi Shimon bar Yochai mended. He took a place that was in doubt, a place where the community could err, and he clarified it.

Why did he do this? Because he had received Hashem's miracles. His gratitude was zikui harabim, bringing merit to the masses. When one sustains a miracle, when he has been blessed by Hashem, he should pay his gratitude with "words" - with zikui harabim. By enlightening the

masses to the dangers of maasei reshaim, the actions of the wicked, by clarifying what is really "light" and what is really "darkness," by reaching out to the alienated, the unaffiliated and those who have never even been there, we are offering our Korban Todah to Hashem.

And the seventh day is a day of complete rest... you shall not do any work; it is a Shabbos for Hashem. (23:3)

The words Shabbos l'Hashem, "A Shabbos for Hashem," defines the way we should view this holy day. It is Hashem's day. To desecrate it is to undermine Hashem, to show disrespect to the Almighty on the day that He designated for Himself. All too often we forget, and think that we are in charge; we make decisions; things must go our way. We forget that we are here as guests of the Almighty. He issues the orders; He makes the decisions; things go His way. Once we learn to accept this, the experience of "life" will go so much easier. It is Hashem's world; we just happen to live here. Shabbos is His day which He wants us to celebrate with Him.

Shemiras Shabbos, Shabbos observance, has been a staple of our faith from its very genesis. Throughout the generations, people have sacrificed their livelihood, disregarding the opportunities available to them if they were to desecrate the Shabbos. It was Hashem's day - not theirs. The commitment that these people had made did not go unnoticed by Hashem. Aware of their dedication, He repaid each one at the appropriate time. I recently came across the following story.

It was just days before World War II, prior to Germany's attack on Russia. The citizens of the city of Bendin were notified by the Russian Army that every person, regardless of age or position, must carry identity papers with him. Whoever was caught without papers was to be sent immediately to Siberia. This obviously was a difficult decree for the Jewish population, since it meant that on Shabbos when they walked to shul, they would have to carry their identity papers. The Bendiner Rav rendered a halachic decision that since it involved pikuach nefesh, a matter of life and death, it was permitted to carry the papers to shul on Shabbos. All the Jews of the city listened to the rav, except one Jew, who refused to carry on Shabbos, regardless of the halachic dispensation.

His family begged him to either not go to shul or to carry the papers with him. He emphatically refused. "Do you want to go to Siberia?" they asked. "If that is to be my punishment, so be it. I will not carry on Shabbos." he replied.

During Krias haTorah, the Russian soldiers barged into the shul and demanded that each of the worshippers present their identity papers. They went from one to the other, searching, checking, looking for anyone who had the temerity to ignore the government's decree. The only one who did not have papers was the one Jew who had refused to carry them to shul. He was immediately dragged out of shul, his family later rounded up, and, that night, they were all placed on a train to Siberia.

It was a long and grueling trip, especially with the knowledge of what awaited them at their destination. During the entire trip, the man tried to calm his family, "I do not believe that because I observed Shabbos, I will suffer. You will see that Shabbos will protect us." Because

they were sent out that night, they were not in town the next day when Germany attacked Russia. The Germans gathered all the citizens of the community and took them to their infamous concentration camps. They took everyone, except the Jew and his family, who were on their way to Siberia.

They survived the war and are today distinguished members of the Bnei Brak community. Shabbos protected them.

In way of a postscript, this is not the place to discuss the halachic position concerning this individual's refusal to carry his papers to shul. The rav had permitted this activity. In this case, the man was unnecessarily putting his life in danger. Was it really Biblically considered to be carrying? Obviously, this was not an open and shut case. The purpose of the story is only to demonstrate a Jew's commitment to Shabbos - and the reciprocity that he received.

Say to the Kohanim... and tell them. (21:1)

It seems that the Torah is twice instructing Moshe Rabbeinu to speak to the Kohanim. Chazal explain the apparent redundancy to imply that the Kohanim were to convey this teaching to others who would otherwise not be enjoined in this command. This is a reference to young children. The adults are not permitted to cause their children to become tamei, spiritually contaminated, from exposure to the dead. This is a noteworthy response which begs elucidation. The pasuk implies that the adults were commanded twice. There is no mention, however, of any communication to the children. From where do Chazal derive that this is a message for adults concerning their children?

Horav Moshe Shapiro, Shlita, explains that the way to influence the children is by strengthening the resolve and commitment of the adults. A direct reprimand to the children will not be as effective as one that the parents teach by example. Ask any educator: the best and most effective way to reach the students is by working with - and on - the parents.

In his commentary to Parashas Tazria, the Maggid, zl, m'Dubno writes that he queried his great rebbe, the Gaon, zl, m'Vilna concerning the most effective approach towards inspiring and influencing others. The Gaon replied with an analogy. One should take a large cup and surround it with a number of smaller cups. He should pour the liquid into the large cup, and it will overflow into the smaller cups. That is how one is mashpia, influences, others. The more he refines his own character traits, the more he enhances and embellishes his own knowledge, the greater will be his impact on others. It influences those he seeks to inspire.

Horav Yaakov Kamenetsky, zl, says that this idea is especially focused on parents. In fact, he suggests that the term chinuch habanim, education of children, which is applied to the process of parents guiding their children, is actually a misnomer. Parents are primarily not mechanchim, educators. They are mashpiim, individuals who influence. The word mashpia, explains Rav Yaakov, is related to the word shipua, something inclined or on a slant. Parents are like a slanted roof with regard to their children. What they do, what they think, what they profess, all trickles down to their children, leaving a lasting effect. We must see to it that the effect is a positive one.

Our children learn to appreciate and value what we, as parents, seem to appreciate and value. The pasuk in Mishlei 27:21 reads, "The refining pot is for silver, and the furnace is for gold. And a man is tested by his praise." Simply, this phrase means that we can judge a person by his reputation, by the praises (or lack thereof) with which others describe him. Rabbeinu Yonah explains that Shlomo Hamelech is teaching us that a man is judged by that which he praises. Horav Yitzchak Hutner, zl, cited by Rabbi Issachar Frand, gives a compelling example of the meaning of this pasuk.

Rav Hutner contends that a businessman who spends only two hours a night studying Torah can be on a higher spiritual plane than a kollel fellow who studies Torah all day. For instance, if the kollel fellow spends his time at home talking about the business successes of his neighbor or about someone's incredible success in the stock market, he indicates that he is a businessman at heart. He praises money. He worships money. He envies and extols those who have money. He conveys a profound message to his children: money counts; money is everything.

The lay person, on the other hand, whose greatest pleasure is to give honor to a talmid chacham, Torah scholar, and who makes it clear that the most important part of his day is the hour or two that he spends at a shiur or learning b'chavrusa, with a study partner, is teaching his children that the most important business is Torah business. It is the most important thing in his life. What we say trickles down to our children, leaving a lasting effect.

Say to the Kohanim... and tell them. (21:1)

Chazal expound on the apparent redundancy in our pasuk of, "Say (to the Kohanim) and tell (them)." This implies that they were to convey this teaching to others who would otherwise not be commanded in this mitzvah. This is a reference to the children about whom the parents are cautioned to make sure that they do not become contaminated by being in the presence of the dead. Emor v'amarta has become the catchphrase which alludes to parents' responsibility to arrange the education of their children. There is no dearth of stories which demonstrate parents' responsibility and commitment to their children's educational development. Veritably, children learn best by example. Who can better convey the values and goals of a Torah Jew than parents!

In order for parents to inculcate their children with an appreciation for Torah and a sense of yiraas Shomayim, fear of Heaven, it is crucial that they imbue them with ahavas Torah, a love of Torah. Ahavas Torah breeds yiraas Shomayim, an enthusiasm for proficiency in Torah knowledge and a longing for success in mitzvah performance. The following inspiring story, related by Horav Yitzchak Zilberstein, Shlita, portrays this idea.

Two kollel fellows in Eretz Yisrael, both young talmidei chachamim, Torah scholars, had decided among themselves to have a chavrusa, be study partners, in the limud, study, of

Mishnayos. Seven days each week, without fail, these two young men would spend half an hour together learning Mishnayos. This went on for quite some time. After two years, one of the young men was asked, at the behest of a number of distinguished Torah leaders, to relocate and assume a rabbinic position in France. He accepted the position, but refused to end his chavrusa relationship for the study of Mishnayos, planning to continue by telephone. Every night they would learn together by long distance, making use of the gift of technology. In order to capitalize on the most economical long distance rates and the difference in times between Eretz Yisrael and France, they would speak every night between eleven-thirty and midnight.

One day, while sitting with her three-year old son, the wife of the kollel fellow in Eretz Yisrael, asked him to draw a picture of the first thing that came to his mind. "I would like to see how well you draw," she said.

The young lad drew an interesting picture, which he explained was his father studying Mishnayos. In the corner of the paper was a clock with both hands pointing to the twelve. Outside, through the window, they saw darkness. This is the first thing that came to his mind! This is what he saw at home, and this is what he was growing up to value, to appreciate and to love. A child learns to appreciate what his father values. How awesome is our responsibility to convey the correct values by virtue of our example.

If the daughter of a Kohen will be desecrated through adultery, she desecrates her father.  
(21:9)

Rashi explains that this rebellious young lady besmirches her father's name, because people will say, "Accursed is the one who gave birth to her; accursed is the one who raised her." Perhaps we can offer another explanation for this term. We are taught that the sin of chillul Hashem, profaning the Name of Hashem, is the most serious offense a Jew can commit. Regarding the pasuk in Shemos 31:14, Mechallelehah mos yumas, "Its desecrator shall be put to death," the Zohar Hakadosh explains the word, mechallelehah, its desecrator, as a derivative of the word, challal, which means a vacuum, a hole, an open space. The Nefesh Hachaim explains the pasuk in Vayikra 22:32, V'lo sechallelu es shem kodshi, "You shall not desecrate My Holy Name," that one who profanes Hashem's Name is intimating that the place where he stands is void of Hashem. Thus, the individual can do whatever he desires, because Hashem is not there.

This is also the meaning of "she desecrates her father." A girl who acts in such an immoral manner indicates by her actions that there was a parental void in her home. She is mechallel her father; she makes it appear as if there had been no father to raise her. For otherwise, how could she have acted this way?

I must add that this indication is not necessarily true. We observe that some of the finest homes have regrettably produced children that are a great challenge, children who need that extra dose of love and care, children who are at risk. There definitely are both a father and a mother who work overtime to provide for all of their children's needs, but, at times, they are simply not successful. This does not mean that they were not present. It is a nisayon, a challenge from Hashem, that they have to surmount and over which they must triumph. Hashem Yerachem.

He shall not leave the sanctuary. (21:12)

The Kohen Gadol is forbidden even to follow the funeral procession of a relative. Homiletically, we may derive from here that the Kohen Gadol and, for that matter, anyone who makes the Sanctuary/bais ha'medrash his home, his place of study, should see to it that when he leaves it should be only for a matter of great urgency or necessity. His spiritual sustenance is provided in the Sanctuary, and every interruption diminishes the spiritual flow. Hence, the Kohen Gadol, as well as the ben Torah who dedicates himself to the Sanctuary, should ensconce himself in this holy environment and let its kedushah, holiness, permeate him.

Horav Michel Yehudah Lefkowitz, Shlita, was once asked if he ever had the privilege of meeting the Chofetz Chaim. He responded, to everyone's surprise, in the negative. He then looked at the questioner, "You seem surprised. It is true that I studied in a yeshivah which was certainly in the proximity of the Chafetz Chaim, and once the Chafetz Chaim even visited the town where I studied. Indeed, all of the yeshivah students, together with the town's citizens, went out to greet the gadol ha'dor, preeminent Torah leader of the generation. Unfortunately, I was lazy."

When the questioner heard these words from the venerable gaon, he was doubly surprised. He wondered how someone could be so lazy. Sensing the man's quandary, Rav Michel Yehudah said, "It is not that I did not want to see the Chafetz Chaim. It was just that I had a greater desire to learn another blatt, folio, of Gemara." We now have an idea how he became such a distinguished gaon.

Horav Shlomo Zalman Auerbach, zl, once met a yeshivah student, a relative, on the street. This took place during the zman, yeshivah session, when the young man should have been studying in the yeshivah. "What brings you here?" Rav Shlomo Zalman asked. "Why are you not in the yeshivah?" The young man replied, "I have to attend the wedding of a close friend."

Rav Shlomo Zalman countered, "I also studied in yeshivah, and my friends also invited me to their weddings. I benefited much more, however, from the extra time that I spent studying and reviewing the Gemara. I had priorities, and Torah study was highest on my list. Now, some sixty years later, there is a difference between those who attended every wedding and me. When they go to a wedding, they must remain there for a few hours for anyone to notice that they had been there. I, however, walk in to a wedding for a few minutes, and everyone knows that I attended."

*You shall not desecrate My holy Name; rather I should be sanctified among Bnei Yisrael. (22:22)*

Giving up one's life in sanctification of Hashem's Name is a primary responsibility and obligation for every Jew. Throughout the millennia, our brethren have sacrificed their lives Al Kiddush Hashem, under the most cruel and inhumane conditions. Just over sixty years ago, millions of our people were killed in the European Holocaust, just because they were Jews. There are also those who are prepared and willing to sacrifice themselves without fanfare, because of their complete devotion to Hashem and His mitzvos. I recently heard a powerful story concerning the Manchester Rosh Hayeshivah, Horav Yehudah Zev Segal, zl, that portrays Kiddush Hashem at its zenith. The story was related by Reb Boruch Leib Sassoon, a talmid of the Mir in Poland and contemporary of Rav Segal.

As a student in the Mirrer Yeshivah, Rav Segal exemplified diligence in Torah study and commitment to mitzvah observance. He cared not only about himself; he also saw to it that there would not be any incursion into the nature of the holy fabric of the yeshivah's spiritual environment. Europe was regrettably infested with a dangerous spiritual "disease" called the Enlightenment. It consisted of apostate Jews whose sole objective was to impugn the integrity of Torah and mitzvos. These self-loathing heretics seized every opportunity to undermine Torah Judaism. To further their nefarious goals, they would plant their cohorts in various Torah centers in order to spread their ideology subtly to unsuspecting students. One day, Rav Segal noticed a book of secular philosophy on the chair of one of the students who was suspected of being a free-thinker. He grabbed the book and hid it. When the owner of the book returned and noticed that his book was gone, he investigated and discovered that Rav Segal had taken it. He accosted Rav Segal and demanded that he return his book. Rav Segal, of course, did not acquiesce to his demands. This incurred a fit of rage from the young man, who was not used to getting "no" for an answer. He began to threaten Rav Segal with bodily harm. "If you do not return my book immediately, I will kill you!" he screamed.

"I will not return a book filled with heresy to you," countered Rav Segal.

Suddenly, the apostate placed his hands on Rav Segal's throat and began to squeeze. "I am serious," he said, "if you do not give me the book, I will kill you."

He began to choke Rav Segal who, in a loud voice filled with emotion, recited the brachah, blessing, one makes as he is about to die Al Kiddush Hashem. Just as Rav Segal was about to pass out, he was saved by someone.

When Reb Baruch Leib was queried regarding his knowledge of the incident, his reply was, "I was there. I was the one who saved the Manchester Rosh Hayeshivah."

This is an incident in which a person was prepared to give up his life, so that others would not be exposed to spiritual filth. How far are we from such a plateau in avodas Hashem, service to the Almighty?

Say to the Kohanim, the sons of Aharon, and tell them. (21:1)

Rashi explains that the redundancy of the words, Emor, v'omarta, "Say to the Kohanim and tell them," is teaching us an important lesson. Emor v'omarta - l'hazhir gedolim al laketanim, "to caution the adults about the children." Basically, the Torah is expressing the significance of teaching the next generation. This concept applies not only to parents, but also to all of those charged with disseminating Torah. L'hazhir, to caution, may be derived from the word zohar, to shine/illuminate. It is imperative that the student notices the teacher's joy and enthusiasm about everything holy: Torah; mitzvah observance; acts of loving-kindness. Only when exhibiting these traits is he truly able to convey the beauty of being an observant Jew. It is not enough to merely teach; one must light up the students' eyes. This occurs when the student sees the rebbe's elation, his thrill and excitement at being able to impart his Torah knowledge to another Jew. When the teacher is enthusiastic about his work, the student senses its significance.

Horav Yitzchak Zilberstein, Shlita, relates the following story that occurred with Horav Binyamin Finkel, Shlita. In one of the developments outside of Yerushalayim, a lecture for baalei teshuvah, recent returnees to Jewish observance, was planned. Fifty people were to attend this shiur. As it would happen, the lecturer had a last-minute conflict that prevented him from attending. The organizers of the lecture called upon Rav Binyamin to give the shiur instead. Realizing the importance of maintaining credibility and continuity, he accepted the invitation. It took him considerable time using public transportation to reach the home of the sponsor. At first, he thought he had a wrong address; nobody seemed to be home. As he was about to leave, the door opened. A young man greeted him apologetically. Apparently, he had forgotten to organize the lecture and, therefore, no one had come.

Rav Binyamin had taken considerable time to travel to the shiur. He was not going to waste it. "Let us learn together," he said to the young man, whose name was Moshe. The man was excited about the opportunity for a "one on one" chavrusa, study partner, with the Mashgiach. He even brought along his young son. The seder ha'limud, order of study, was to study Mishnayos for thirty minutes, followed by thirty minutes of Talmud. Prior to the shiur, Moshe asked Rav Binyamin, "When we finish studying the Mishnayos, can you let me know?" "Surely," Rav Binyamin replied, not knowing why it was crucial for Moshe to know when they started studying the Talmud portion of the Shiur.

Thirty minutes had elapsed, and Rav Binyamin notified Moshe that they were about to begin the Gemara. Moshe arose from his chair. With great enthusiasm, he recited the Bircas Shehechyanu. Moshe explained, "I have never studied Gemara before. This is my first time, and I wanted to thank Hashem for granting me the opportunity to study the Talmud."

Twenty years later, Rav Binyamin was walking down one of the streets in Yerushalayim when he was approached by a middle-aged man. To all outward appearances, he seemed to be a rav or rosh yeshivah. "Rav Finkel, do you recognize me?" the man asked. "Forgive me, but I do not," replied Rav Binyamin.

"I am Moshe, with whom you learned Gemara twenty years ago." "What brings you to Yerushalayim?" Rav Binyamin asked, visibly taken aback by the contrast between his present appearance and that of twenty years earlier.

"I have just taken a position as rosh kollel in one of the kollelim here in Yerushalayim. The Shiur that you gave me that night was the beginning of my total return to the Torah way of life."

Emor v'omarta: When the teacher demonstrates indifference to the subject and to the student, the lesson has a commensurate endurance. In contrast, when he displays excitement, joy and enthusiasm, he produces students of the caliber of Moshe, who followed in his path and continued his work.

Students are machshiv, appreciate and value, the Torah in the manner that the rebbe values it. In the following story cited by Rabbi Yechiel Spero, we see how a gadol, Torah luminary, valued the Torah. Horav Michel Forshlager, zl, was a brilliant talmid chacham, Torah scholar, whose volumes of commentary on Torah and halachah indicate his encyclopedic knowledge and utter brilliance. His hasmadah, diligence, in Torah study overshadowed even his erudition, so attached was he to Torah every waking minute of the day. Horav Yaakov Y.

Ruderman, zl, Rosh Hayeshivah of Ner Israel in Baltimore would send the premier students of his nascent yeshivah on Friday afternoons to "speak in learning", discourse various topics in the Talmud, with him.

Rav Michel did not care about his material surroundings. His life's essence was nothing but Torah. Understandably, the American students who visited with him were somewhat taken aback with the sparseness of his living conditions. To put it simply: Rav Michel lived in abject poverty. His home had one focus: Torah study - and nothing else. When his guests would arrive, Rav Michel would greet them with a big smile. His table was piled high with open sefarim, as he researched and plumbed the depths of Torah and its commentaries.

Before he began to speak in learning, he would excuse himself, leave the room and return a few minutes later. His behavior seemed strange to the young yeshivah students: He went out to exchange his old worn-out sweater for one that was slightly less tattered. Rav Michel felt the need to explain his actions: "There is a reason for changing sweaters before I speak in learning with you. I own two sweaters - one is for weekdays and one is reserved for Shabbos. Before you walked in I was wearing the weekday one, but before I speak divrei Torah with two such distinguished yeshivah students, I feel compelled to put on my Shabbos sweater as a token of kavod haTorah, honor for the Torah, which you embody."

This is Torah study at its zenith. When one is machshiv Torah, he also values and reveres those who study and disseminate Torah. Regrettably, he who does not respect those who study the Torah is not demonstrating respect for the Torah either. This is to be noted especially by parents. Parents convey a critical message to their children by their every action. The esteem in which they hold their children's rebbeim foreshadows the respect the children will show to these same rebbeim. It always begins at home: Emor v'omarta, "the adults are cautioned regarding the children."

*Say to the Kohanim, the sons of Aharon. (21:1)*

The Midrash tells us that Hashem showed Moshe Rabbeinu an outline of the future, the various Torah leaders of every generation. He showed him Shaul Hamelech, the first king of the Jewish people, and the manner in which he died tragically by the sword. When Moshe saw this, he asked, "Is it proper that the first king to reign over Your children should perish by the sword?" Hashem replied, "You say this to me. Emor el haKohanim, say this to the Kohanim, whom he killed in the city of Nov. They serve as an indictment against him." Apparently, Moshe agreed with the Kohanim's incrimination of Shaul. His only question was in regard to Shaul being the first king. What is the significance of being first?

Horav Nosson Wachtfogel, zl, notes that throughout the Torah we find primacy and precedence given to the rishon, first. Terumah and Maaser have kedushah, sanctity, because they are first. Adam HaRishon's sin was overwhelming because he was the first man, thus attributing greater significance to his sin. Reuven would have been the Kohen and king over Klal Yisrael had he not erred. Even the gentile nations acknowledge the relevance and distinction to be accorded to the first, to the one who inaugurates a position. During the Polish Revolution, Marshal Wosilski, Poland's first marshal came to the president and demanded that he abdicate his position. The president was guarded by two powerful soldiers who moved forward to kill the seditious marshal. As they moved toward him, the marshal opened his tunic and declared, "Are

you prepared to kill the first Polish marshal?" Upon hearing this, they immediately moved back, a move that heralded the beginning of the end for the Polish president.

Likewise, Moshe was claiming that Shaul was the first king and should, therefore, not have died such a humiliating death by the sword. Hashem replied by citing the pasuk, Emor el haKohanim, "Say to the Kohanim:" While it is true that being the first of anything engenders great distinction, how will you respond to the accusation brought by the Kohanim of Nov? They are also rishon, first. The Kehunah, priesthood, is honored first in every endeavor. Indeed, all of Shevet Levi receives distinction because they were the first ones to stand up for the honor of Heaven during the sin of the Golden Calf. After Levi was criticized by Yaakov Avinu, he repented and became the first Rosh HaYeshivah of the Shivtei Kah, Tribes. Yes, the fact that Shaul was the first king is of great significance. He reduced that significance, however, by killing the Kohanim who also had the advantage of being first. As with every honor, it is beneficial only if the individual values it. The favored position can only assist one who acknowledges the advantage that it generates. Apparently, Shaul did not respect the position of the Kohanim. Thus, his inaugural position of monarchy was similarly not honored.

Say to the Kohanim, the sons of Aharon, and tell them. (21:1) Rashi explains that the apparent redundancy of the words Emor, v'omarta, Say to the Kohanim and tell them, is a reference to the important role the adult Kohanim play in teaching the laws to their children. I was recently reading how the Brisker Rav, zl, raised his children and the critical significance he gave to supervising their educational development personally. While some of contemporary society's enlightened parents might feel his approach was a bit to the right of center, he succeeded in laying the foundation for generations of offspring dedicated to emes, spiritual integrity, and the Torah way. The Brisker Rav said later on in his life, that when he was young, he was personally aware of where his children were and what they were doing twenty-four hours a day, seven-days a week. Furthermore, his children were acutely aware of his supervision and impact upon every aspect of their lives. This probably would not be comfortable for some of today's children or their parents. They are not, however, gedolei Yisrael. The Brisker Rav was a firm believer that a child have a sense of freedom, but nonetheless the parent should monitor everything. Granting total freedom to a child is to court disaster. A parent should combine discipline with love, taking a deep interest in his life, regardless of his age. Yet, the parent should be strict with regard to granting him total independence.

The Brisker Rav did not waste money on frivolities or materialistic notions. On the other hand, when the demands were spiritual, he always found the money. Even if an old Chumash or Siddur was not worn or torn, if a child wanted a new one, the Brisker Rav purchased it. The greatest respect was accorded to his children's rebbeim. Consequently, the children learned to emulate these values in their own homes.

While there is much to be written about the Brisker Rav's approach to chinuch habanim, the following vignette summarizes it, teaching us what we should do in order to achieve success in raising our children. The Brisker Rav was once taking a stroll in Yerushalayim, when a man came up to him and said, "I am very envious of the Brisker Rav. All of his children go in the richtigen vehg, proper way, b'derech ha'Torah, in the path of the Torah, even though they were raised during turbulent times. Many other families, even some of the most distinguished rabbinic

families in Lithuania, did not fare so well. Many of the young people were swept up in the revolutionary movements and the like."

The Brisker Rav did not respond. He simply listened and nodded his head in acknowledgment. Approximately one half hour later, he turned to his son, Rav Rephael, who was with him at the time, and said, "Ah, they do not know how many tears I shed as I shokeled, rocked, each baby in the carriages; how I prayed; and how many kapitlach, chapters, of Tehillim, I recited for them that they should follow in the path of Torah."

Rav Rephael followed in his father's footsteps. A master mechanech, educator, he raised his only child, a daughter, in the Brisker way of integrity and simplicity. He understood the crucial value of the home, especially when it came to a girl's educational development. He would say, "Whereas a son's domain is in the yeshivah, the daughter absorbs her Yiddishkeit primarily in the home. Parental example and life experience are her primary texts - even in contemporary times."

His daughter recalled an incident that demonstrated her father's approach to infusing his perspective of pashtus, simplicity, in her education at home: "I remember when I was young and about to enter the first grade. I was an only daughter, which would normally grant my parents license to spoil me. The situation was far from that. I was given a simple, homemade briefcase with the straps stitched on by hand. My maternal grandmother came over and declared, "I am buying her a nice new leather book bag with a matching lunch bag - a special set." My father said, "Wait a moment. She will not go to school the first day with both pieces of the set. If she does, it will cause jealousy. First, she will bring the book bag, then, a few weeks later, she can bring the matching lunch bag."

This orientation is quite different from that to which our children are accustomed today. Interestingly, many years later, Rav Rephael's daughter recalled the incident with pride as having a seminal influence on her life.

*If the daughter of a man who is a Kohen will be defiled through having illicit relationships, she defiles her father. (21:9)*

One would think that her sin is serious enough. Why does the Torah add that she defiles her father? In the Derashos HaRan the question is raised why Avraham Avinu was prepared to allow Yitzchak to marry into a family from Charan, yet he rejected anyone from Canaan? The people of Charan were idol worshippers, while the Canaanites were steeped in licentiousness and moral depravity. Is one form of malevolence less evil than the other? The Rav explains that both activities are reprehensible. The sin of idol worship is a philosophic distortion that a parent does not necessarily transmit from parent to child. A character flaw, however, such as moral degeneracy, is transmitted from parent to child. This is why the Torah adds that the daughter of a Kohen who debases herself demonstrates that her perversion and wanton behavior are part of her family legacy. Her perverse actions degrade her father, because they indicate a genetic flaw in her moral makeup.

In his Shoeil u'Meishiv, Horav Yosef Shaul Natanson, zl, applies this thesis halachically. Halachah states that a Kohen whose daughter apostatizes her faith may still duchen, bless the

people. The Magen Avraham questions this law. Idol worship is a grave sin. Should the father not be held in contempt for his daughter's actions?

The Shoel u'Meishiv contends that a father is discredited only when the child's transgression is such that it reflects the parent's moral turpitude. If the sin, however, is one that bespeaks a child's cognitive perversity, an imperfection in his philosophic perspective, the onus of guilt is not attributed to the parent.

*They placed him under guard to clarify for themselves through Hashem. (24:12)*

Rashi explains that the blasphemer was incarcerated because Moshe Rabbeinu was not sure if he was to be punished with the death penalty or not. The commentators question this. What reason could there possibly be for not executing him? Is he any better than an individual who curses his parents, a sin that is punishable by death? Certainly, one who blasphemes the Almighty is guilty of a treasonous offense that should carry with it the death penalty. Horav Tzvi Hersh Ferber, zl, explains that the Heavenly Tribunal adjudicates in a manner similar to that of earthly judgment. Let us approach this transgression from an earthly perspective.

Imagine a person of ill repute, a drunkard and ne'er do well, a depressed, poor man whom life's many opportunities have passed by. If he were to stand in the street and publicly curse the king, would anybody listen? Would anybody make a public outcry? No! Because he is a nothing. True, he would be punished, but he would not be executed, because to do so would be to validate his very existence. If a powerful, distinguished, nobleman were to commit the same transgression, he would surely be put to death, because the sin is weighed relative to the sinner. A nobleman who humiliates the king commits a public act of treason. He must be executed as a demonstration of the king's power and authority. When a man of no standing insults the king, it is not considered to be much of an insult.

The same idea applies to the incident of the blasphemer. He was a person of questionable lineage, descending from the union of an Egyptian father and a Jewish mother whose moral behavior was reprehensible. Such a person certainly did not maintain a high regard in the community. Thus, conceivably he should not receive a serious punishment. Nonetheless, the verdict issued against him was death, since it is important to destroy the few thorns in the vineyard before they have an effect upon the grapes.

*You shall sanctify him, for he offers the food of your G-d. (21:8)*

Simply, the pasuk is teaching us to treat the Kohanim with the esteem befitting the Almighty's Divine servants whose function it is to offer Hashem's sacrifices. The Kesav Sofer takes a penetrating look into the meaning of this pasuk. If we look at the status of the Kohen, we note a paradox. On the one hand, he is the spiritual elite of the Jewish People. He has been selected to stand in Divine service before Hashem and also to act as a spiritual mentor of Klal Yisrael.

On the other hand, the Torah gives him no way to sustain himself. He does not receive a portion in Eretz Yisrael. Indeed, he subsists on the good will of the rest of the nation, who are enjoined to sustain him. Let us face it, we live in a society where a person's checkbook balance and the size of his paycheck determine his status in the eyes of many people. While we know that such ephemeral success has little value in the ultimate scheme of life, that is human nature. Therefore, the Kohen is really at a disadvantage. How do we correct society's failing?

The Kesav Sofer explains that there are two approaches, both of which are alluded to in this pasuk. First, we should understand that we are not paying the Kohen from our own pockets. The Kohen receives payment for his service in the Bais HaMikdash from Hashem. It just so happens that Hashem uses us as his paymasters. This is the meaning of "You shall sanctify him, for he offers the food of your G-d." We have to pay for the service that the Kohen provides for us. In reality, Hashem reimburses the Kohen through us.

We tend to overlook another aspect of our relationship with the Kohen. We think that we give the Kohen, that we are the ones that support him. That is our first mistake. He sustains us. He mentors us. He is our spiritual guide. Furthermore, when we give the Kohen, his acceptance is - in reality - an act of giving! Yes, by taking from us, he is actually giving to us. A gift is a gift only when the individual on the receiving end is in need of the gift. If his acceptance is really a favor for us, then by accepting, he is giving. The Kohen does not need us - we need him! V'kidashto - "You shall sanctify him." We should appreciate the Kohen's sanctity and his value to us.

Regrettably, we view our Kohanim, spiritual leadership, with a lack of proper respect. Some of us think they owe us; we forget who is sustaining whom. The Kohen owes us nothing. We owe him everything.

*You shall not desecrate My holy Name, rather I should be sanctified among Bnei Yisrael. (22:32)*

The entire chapter preceding the commandment regarding sanctifying Hashem's name deals completely with the Festivals, the sacrifices that are offered during the Festivals and the halachos that pertain to the sacrifices as a result of the Festivals. It is, therefore, puzzling that the chapter closes with the Torah's injunction not to desecrate Hashem's Name and to be sure to sanctify His Name. Is there a connection between chillul Hashem and the Festivals?

The Netziv, zl, gives a response that is both compelling and timely. For the most part, the mitzvos of the Torah are not similar to religious practice and observance of other religions. One who dons Tzitzis will not be mistaken for an individual who is observing another religion's commandment. Tzitzis is inherently a Jewish symbol. The Festivals are different. There are non-Jewish festivals. Consequently, the fear prevails that those whose observance of Judaism is not steeped in tradition, who do not have the "backing" of thousands of years of Mesorah, might infuse an "enlightened" non-Jewish perspective into the festival. This is why the Torah admonishes us against chillul Hashem in regard to the way we celebrate our Yamim Tovim. This means that Chanukah, the Rabbinic Festival commemorating our victory over the forces of evil and impurity, should not become the festival of lights. Purim, which we celebrate in

remembrance of the foiled attempt by Haman, archenemy of the Jewish People, is not to be transformed into a carnival and a masquerade ball. This constitutes chillul Hashem at its nadir.

*You shall not desecrate My holy Name, rather I should be sanctified among the Bnei Yisrael.  
(22:32)*

The sanctification of Hashem's Name is a Jew's primary privilege and responsibility. This obligation is all encompassing. To desecrate Hashem's Name is a transgression of epic proportion. It is a sin that, regrettably, can occur with very little "effort" on our part. Indeed, if one sins merely because Hashem's will has very little bearing on his actions, then he has desecrated Hashem's Name. If this is done in public, in the presence of ten Jews, the sin is magnified. The fundamental principles are one's fear of Hashem and his respect for the Divine word. Sefer Yereim says that chillul Hashem is a grave sin. He goes as far as to posit that one who degrades any mitzvah - reflecting a sense of leniency and indifference on his part regarding kavod Shomayim, the honor of Heaven - is guilty of chillul Hashem.

It is related that when the Chafetz Chaim, zl, would review the words of the Yereim, he would weep. He would emphasize the responsibility of a ben Torah towards the "outside" world. As a soldier in Hashem's legion, he represents one who is close to the Almighty. People view him in a different light, and his demeanor and dress code should reflect his position and function. If they do not, then he defames the dignity and esteem of his position and that of the Divine Monarchy that he represents. Once the Chafetz Chaim was in a hurry to catch the train to Vilna. The Chafetz Chaim was not a traveler. If he went anywhere, it was for a significant and compelling reason. As he was rushing to the train, he was stopped along one of the side streets and asked to be the "tenth" man to complete a minyan, quorum, for Minchah in a bais avel, house of a mourner. Although the trip was extremely important, and the stop would cause him to miss the train, the Chafetz Chaim decided that he should join the minyan, so that the mourner could recite Kaddish. Why did he do it? Because the mourner who had to say Kaddish - or the people who were attempting to put together a minyan - might not understand the significance of his trip. They would in turn, regrettably, have some choice words to intimate about him in particular and rabbanim in general. This would engender a chillul Hashem. His trip to Vilna was not more important than chillul Hashem.

In his sefer Chaim Sheyeish Bahem, Horav Yitzchak Shraga Gross, Shlita, relates a story that occurred concerning Horav Michoel Ber Weissmandel, zl, the Nitra Rosh HaYeshivah, who was known for his tireless efforts on behalf of Klal Yisrael during and after World War II. Two business partners came and shared with him an all too common tragedy. Each had a son who was prepared to marry out of the faith. The fathers, although no longer observant, maintained a "strict" outlook on assimilation. Shabbos and kashrus represent one thing, but to marry a gentile - that was the bitter end. Needless to say, they were beside themselves with grief.

Rav Weissmandel inquired about the Jewish education their sons had received and how much time the fathers had spent learning with their sons. Regrettably, the story was similar to what had happened to many of those who either settled in communities where there was no Jewish education, or who exhibited apathy and, at times, anger after the war which caused them

to sever their relationship with Judaism as a religion. Rav Weissmandel listened to their story and told them he would like to share a story with them.

After World War I, new territorial borders were set up between communities. In some instances, many regions that had originally been part of one country, suddenly were transformed into two countries. In one city where there was a large Jewish population, the Jewish cemetery was separated from the rest of the community. Hence, the cemetery was in one country, while the "living" lived in another country.

This caused a problem for the Chevra Kaddisha, members of the Jewish Sacred Burial Society. While they waited for all the red tape to be cleared between the two countries, the deceased would remain unburied, which is a violation of Jewish law. Finally, a special dispensation was made for the members of the Chevra Kaddisha whereby they could go right through without being subject to needless time-consuming inspections.

Once word got out regarding the special leniency enjoyed by the Chevra Kaddisha, a group of gentile smugglers decided to take advantage of the "burial" laws. They filled a coffin with contraband, posed as members of the Jewish Chevra Kaddisha, and smuggled goods into the next country, all under the watchful eye of the inspectors. This ruse went on for months, as the gentile smugglers made a thriving business out of their "burial society".

One day a young inspector became suspicious, because the pallbearers just did not give the impression that they were really sad. "Where are you going?" he asked. "We are about to bury a fellow Jew in the cemetery," they responded.

"You do not look very sad to me. You have been joking and laughing the entire time that I have been looking at you. I do not think you are going to bury any body," the inspector told them. "Open the casket, so that I can see the body," he challenged.

"No, no, we cannot do that. It would be against Jewish law to open the casket," they countered. The young officer did not believe them, and he decided to seek out his superior. The smugglers became disconcerted and started to beg and plead with him not to make them open the casket. Now, the young inspector was convinced that they were lying. He called the lieutenant who had very little patience for this band of crooks.

"Open the casket now!" he said. The casket was opened, and the deceased turned out to be expensive contraband. The culprits began to cry and plead for mercy, "We made a mistake. It was the first time. We have to feed our starving families." They promised that they would never do it again. All of the usual excuses were rendered to cover up their lies - to no avail.

The lieutenant turned towards them and said, "You are right that you will never do it again, because by the time you get out of jail, you will be too old to do anything. It is a shame that you cried too late. Had you cried before when you were carrying the casket, then you would not have had to cry now."

Rav Weissmandel completed the story and looked at the two men, saying, "I wish with all my heart that I could help you. Your tears are very moving, and I am sure they are from the heart. Regrettably, they are too late. Had you cried years earlier, when your sons were growing up, and had you been concerned for their Jewish education, then you would not have to cry now."

What a sad, but true, response. This story repeats itself constantly. Whether it is the wrong focus on education or on our children's friends - or simply misconstrued priorities on our part - we end up crying too late. While it is true that the Shaarei Demaos, Gates of Tears, never close, one must cry before the fact. Afterwards, it is too late.

*You shall count for yourselves - from the morrow of the rest day. (23:15)*

Shavuos is not identified by the Torah with a specific day on the calendar, but as the fiftieth day after the Omer Offering. Each individual is to count every one of the days separately and clearly. Horav Chaim, zl, m'Volozhin, was wont to say that there is one mussar sefer, book of ethical discourse, that is not "counted" among the many volumes that are available for character development and introspection. It is a simple "sefer," with a compelling message and readily available - the clock. If a person were to stare at the clock on the wall and watch the seconds tick away into minutes, the minutes tick away into hours, and the hours tick away into days, he will come to realize the value of time and how it is just ticking away - while he sits and watches. This will, hopefully, spur him to wake up and do something about the time that is quickly ticking by.

Horav Zalmen Sorotzkin, zl, interprets rav Chaim's analogy into the pasuk in Tehillim 90:12, "Teach us to count our days, that we shall acquire a heart of wisdom." If we will learn to count our days, to make sure that they do not go to waste, we will then increase wisdom into our hearts.

The mitzvah of counting days between Pesach and Shavuos as a preparation for receiving the Torah is related to this idea. When one counts a day, he thinks to himself, "Another day has passed on the calendar, another day during which I should have prepared myself for receiving the Torah. Did I do what I was supposed to do - or did I waste another day? What will I now do with the remaining days till Shavuos?" These thoughts will engender a feeling of introspection and sanctity within him, feelings that will bring him closer to being ready to receive the Torah.

Say to the Kohanim, the sons of Aharon...each of you shall not contaminate himself to a (dead) person. (21:1)

Burying the dead is a great kindness in which the Kohen is prohibited to be involved. Tumah, ritual contamination, and the unique kedushah of the Kohen are mutually exclusive. There is, however, another act of kindness for the deceased that a Kohen - and every other Jew - can and should perform: to feel his pain and share it emotionally. The deceased is facing a reckoning of his actions while in his earthly abode. Whether he will achieve Heavenly repose or not depends on the results of this judgment. When one empathizes with the soul of the departed, he decreases the severity of his punishment.

Horav Yechiel Michel Stern, Shlita, relates how Horav Simcha zl, M'Kelm would go out of his way to consider the welfare of his fellow Jew. It is noted that on Shabbos, Rav Simcha Zissel's countenance radiated brilliantly from the holiness of the day. One Shabbos, however, this unique brilliance was not manifest. This mystified his students. Yet, out of deep respect for their venerable rebbe, they did not question him, waiting for him to enlighten them.

As soon as Shabbos was over and Rav Simcha Zissel recited Havdalah, he sighed deeply. He explained, "Peretz Smolenskin has passed away." [A proponent of the Haskalah, Enlightenment, he was notorious for his virulent animosity towards Torah and its disseminators.] "Can anyone fathom the agony of his soul upon arriving in the Olam HaEmes, to face judgment for its sins?"

Horav Moshe Aharon Stern, zl, the Kamenitzer Mashgiach in Eretz Yisrael, demonstrated a similar sensitivity. He recited Kaddish for a number of people who left this world childless. Often, he would arrange to have a minyan visit the graves of those who had no one to visit them. He had more than once even purchased a burial site and monument for those who had no one to care for them. This is the kind of chesed that even a Kohen can perform.

We suggest another area in which our act of kindness is not only helpful, it is crucial. Perhaps the greatest fear that a Jew has is the fear of dying alone. The thought of facing life's challenges without family or friends can have a tragic effect upon a person. One only has to visit the elderly in a hospital, many of whom are alone without family and friends, to witness this phenomenon. The look of dejection upon their faces is overwhelming. They just lie there, alone, filled with fear - waiting to die. Is this the way we should treat those who have survived life's vicissitudes - to die alone? Everybody needs somebody with whom to share his fears, his uncertainty, his anxiety. Many of these elderly Jews have children who cannot be with them for a variety of reasons. They might be unable to be there, or - regrettably - they are not very interested. Whatever the reason, it should have no bearing on our responsibility to act as Jews. No Jew should ever be subjected to the emotional trauma of being alone during this most traumatic time.

*Say to the Kohanim, the sons of Aharon, and you will say to them. (21:1)*

The Torah seems to emphasize the power of chinuch, education, predicting tragic consequences when a proper Jewish education is not administered.

Our parsha begins with an enjoinder to the Kohanim to see to it that their young are not metameh, do not ritually defile themselves by coming into contact with a dead body. Emor v'omarta; the Torah uses the redundant wording of "say" followed by "and you shall say," "I'hazhir gedolim al ha'ketanim," to enjoin adults with regard to minors. The adult Kohanim are to train and educate their young in the laws of tumah v'taharah, ritual contamination and purity, if they hope to see them grow into adults that adhere to the law.

Similarly, at the end of the parsha, the Torah relates the tragic episode of the megadef, one who blasphemed. The Torah does not mention his name; it only alludes to his tainted lineage - an Egyptian father and a Jewish mother whose name bespeaks her immodest conduct. Instead of staying home and attending to her son's upbringing, his mother was a chatterbox who involved herself in everyone's business. Her constant prattling led to immoral activities. Interestingly, his mother's name is mentioned only after he has sinned. Horav S.R. Hirsch, zl, explains that only

after we take note of the sin of the son do we begin to question the activity of his mother. We wonder how such a sin occurred. What was its origin?

Education in the home plays a pivotal role in the development of a child. It leaves an indelible imprint upon his character and attitude toward life - religiously, socially, and philosophically. Education begins at an early age. Indeed, it should begin with the parents. L'hazhir gedolim al ha'ketanim; the adults should be enjoined in regard to the young. They must first educate themselves as gedolim - before they begin to educate the ketanim. A noted educator was once speaking to a group of mothers regarding parental responsibility in educating children. One mother raised her hand and asked, "From what age should a parent begin to educate their child?" "When will the child be born?" asked/responded the educator. "Born?" she questioned emphatically, "He is already five years old!" "Why are you wasting your time here talking?" asked the educator. "You have already let five crucial years go by!"

Horav Simcha Wasserman, zl, and his rebbetzin never had children. Yet, Rav Simcha was considered by many to be a leading authority on the subject of child-rearing. One would think that an expert speaks from personal experience. "How did you do it?" he was once asked. His unforgettable reply is a profound lesson to us. He said, "I do have personal experience. I have the experience of observing how my parents raised me." Our parents are our first mentors, who teach the correct manner for raising a child by example and by instruction. A child is like an immigrant to a new country. He picks up what he sees, and it becomes assimilated into his lifestyle. A child makes observations and develops his weltenshauung based much upon what he has experienced in his own home. If his parents were happy, and love and warmth permeated their home, the child will grow up with a similar attitude.

I present here some of Rav Simcha's ideas concerning child-raising. Hopefully, it will be of value and a source of encouragement. When Rav Simcha noticed a number of children from one family going along together, he would take note of the way they interacted. If they were all sharing in an errand, the older ones looking out for the younger ones, it showed that they were raised in a home where the parents cared for each other. They saw love and harmony, not strife and discord. When parents fight, the children pick up the art!

By the time a child is old enough to take on some responsibility, we should train him to help out, to assume responsibility. There is nothing wrong with a three- year- old helping out with a younger brother or sister. We think of education primarily in terms of a structured environment. While we need educational institutions, education at home is an extension of the mitzvah of "Pru U'Revu," "Be fruitful and multiply." The Torah enjoins us to reproduce. The Torah tells us that reproduction does not end with begetting a child. It continues with raising him to become a decent human being. In order for a child to grow into a responsible "giving" adult, it is important that he sees this modeled at a home. People think that everything in this world is here for the purpose of enjoyment - even one's own children. We coerce our child to do what we want, so that we will be happy. Are we thinking of the child or of ourselves? We give the child a toy so that he will smile. In essence, we want to "take" the smile from the child for ourselves. It is not for the child; it is for our own satisfaction. As he grows, the child will also look to take from his parents. Hence, we have raised a "taker" not a "giver."

A parent who understands his obligation will do everything for the child - and not for his own vested interests. How many of us have ambitions for our children which are beneficial to us,

which do not serve the best interest of our child? The greater degree of concern for the child, the more success we experience in raising him.

This idea applies equally in the "other" world of education, Torah chinuch in the yeshiva/day school movement. If one's motivation is purely for the student, he will succeed. A G-d-given intuition within us enables us to reach out and mold a child into a successful human being. This intuition works for those who really care about the student - not the job.

Relationship is an important factor in a child accepting the lesson, at home as well as in school. A child needs to feel unconditionally accepted and loved. While this might be easier to convey at home, because all parents love their children, some might find it difficult to display their love. This is a serious problem for both parent and child.

Teachers/rebbeim/moros should also manifest a similar attitude towards their students. It is clearly much easier to learn values from a teacher with whom a student has a pleasant relationship. Rebbeim in yeshivos often have this type of relationship with their students, a phenomenon which is seldom found in the secular world.

Rav Simcha relates that a man who had been dean of the history department in a large secular university for fifty years, came to the yeshivah to recite Kaddish. After davening, he came over to Rav Simcha and said, "Rabbi, I am a lonely man at this point in my life." Surprised, Rav Simcha asked him, "How many students have you taught in your life?"

They made an approximate accounting, arriving at the figure of 30,000 students! Rav Simcha then turned to the professor and asked, "Out of the 30,000 students, how many invited you to their wedding?" The professor responded, somewhat disheartened, "Not a single one."

Imagine a talmid, student in yeshivah, not inviting his Rosh HaYeshivah or his rebbe muvhak, primary teacher, to his wedding. It is unheard of, because Torah is taught with love, and it creates a bond of love between the rebbe and talmid. A rebbe views his talmidim as his children. A close relationship is a natural consequence of this attitude.

*Say to the Kohanim, the sons of Aharon...each of you shall not contaminate himself to a (dead) person...(21:1)*

The parsha begins with an injunction against the Kohen being metameh, ritually defiling himself, to a dead body, unless it is one of his seven close relatives. The Kohen Gadol's level of sanctity is on a greater level in that even these relatives are "off limits" for him. One wonders how the Kohen, a descendent of Aharon HaKohen, the paradigm of ohaiv shalom, a man who loved and pursued peace, would go about reaching out at this most difficult time. A person whose overwhelming love for his fellow Jew is an integral part of his psyche, who has inherited from his illustrious ancestor an innate sensitivity towards his fellow, must find it very emotionally debilitating when he is prohibited from participating in this chesed shel emes, true kindness. Yet, I feel one can compensate for this - by comforting and consoling the living. Bringing comfort to the bereaved is most difficult. In fact, many people, as a result of their inability to convey their feelings, simply do not do it. They will come for davening and quickly mutter "Hamakom," the traditional phrase of consolation made at the home of a mourner, and promptly leave, the

circumstances becoming increasingly difficult with the magnitude of the tragedy. Veritably, when tragedy strikes, there is nothing to say. Just being there, lending a helping hand, letting the mourner know that he is not alone, is probably the most important form of consolation.

While the Kohen may not attend to the deceased, he can and should be present for the living. His sensitivity to the needs and emotions of his fellow Jew should be especially manifest at this most difficult time. How does one comfort the bereaved if the tragedy is great? I recently read an account, related by his widow, of how Rabbi Meshulam Jungreis, zl comforted a couple who had tragically lost their only child in a terrible car accident. In the words of the bereaved father, "When the Rabbi entered our house, he walked straight up to me, put his arms around me and broke down and cried with me. No one cried with me like that, except my wife. He did not say anything. He just cried. He hardly knew us, but he took us into his heart. Just knowing that he was there made it easier. He was so compassionate. He let us know that our hurt was his hurt, our pain was his pain, our grief was his grief."

This is the underlying meaning of compassion - empathizing with our friend as if his pain is our pain. We are all one in more than name - or, at least, we should be. We should be able to describe the Jewish people as two hearts beating as one. One might ask the purpose of empathizing if you cannot do anything about it? Why cause oneself unnecessary distress? The question itself indicates that one does not comprehend the value of empathy. When we identify with another person's misery, we relieve part of his distress. When someone realizes that he is not alone, the circumstance becomes less overwhelming and easier to surmount. In truth, the one who asks such a question does not really seek an answer; he is only concerned about justifying his own inactivity.

*You shall afflict yourselves; on the ninth of the month in the evening. (23:32)*

In the Talmud Berachos 8b, Chazal wonder why the Torah mentions the ninth day when we actually fast on the tenth day? They respond that we derive from here that when one eats on the ninth day with specific intention to have strength to properly fast on the tenth, he is considered as if he fasted both on the ninth and tenth day. One can harness the mundane and consecrate it for Hashem. Indeed, since it is probably more difficult to sanctify a mundane activity, one receives greater reward for his actions.

There is a well-known story concerning the Baal Shem Tov, who once prayed that his partner in Gan Eden be revealed to him. He was given the name of an individual who lived in a small village far away. His curiosity piqued, the Baal Shem Tov decided to travel to the village to meet this person. Expecting to find a devout, pious scholarly Jew, he was somewhat taken aback to meet a boor who did nothing but eat, drink and labor all day. Learning was certainly not his priority. After all, between working and eating, little time was left for anything else. Determined to find out the secret behind this individual's worthiness, the Baal Shem Tov, decided to remain for a few days to study his behavior and perhaps gain a deeper insight into his personality. After two days of observation, the Baal Shem Tov was no closer to understanding this person than he had been when he came. He then decided to confront him directly. "Tell me about yourself," he requested, "Who are you, and who were your teachers?" "I do not understand your question," he

responded. "I am a simple lumberjack who never learned anything beyond the words of the Siddur." "Why do you eat so gluttonously?" the Baal Shem Tov asked. "You eat enough to feed a small group of people."

"Let me explain to you why I have such gross eating habits. My father was a servant to an evil feudal landlord. One day he insisted that all of his vassals convert to his faith. My father, of course, refused to renege his religion. As a result, he was severely beaten to death. Because my father was a very thin, weak man, he could not offer much resistance. Who knows? Had he not died quickly, he might have yielded to the landlord's demand. Right then and there, I decided that this would never happen to me. I eat voraciously, so that I will be big and strong, so that if anyone attempts to force me to deny Hashem, he will have a difficult time succeeding."

The Baal Shem Tov now understood what kind of tzaddik stood before him. He was a person for whom every morsel of food represented an opportunity to sanctify Hashem's Name. The man lived Kiddush Shem Shomayim daily. He truly merited a lofty position in Gan Eden. We also may note from here how easy it is to underestimate people and misconstrue their actions. Clearly, when Chazal said to judge all people favorably, their intention went beyond good advice. They understand that not everything we see is as it seems to be.

*And they (the Kohanim) shall not take/marry a woman divorced by her husband. (21:7)*

It seems like a clearly stated halachah - a Kohen may not marry a divorced woman. Horav Shneur Kotler, zl, related the following story which was cited by Rabbi Pesach Krohn. It is a classic that demonstrates the sincerity of a simple Jew and the depth of understanding a rav or posek, halachik arbiter, must have of both the subject and the petitioner who asks the question. Horav Chaim Ozer Grodzenski, zl, the preeminent gadol hador, leading Torah scholar and leader of Pre-World War II Europe, was once giving a shiur, lecture, to a group of young men in his home, when a man came running in and interrupted. "Rebbe," he asked, "ich bin a Kohen; meg ich nemen a gerushah?" "I am a Kohen; may I take a divorced woman?"

The students were understandably disturbed by this interruption. How does someone have the chutzpah, audacity, to disturb Rav Chaim Ozer's shiur for such an elementary question? The Torah clearly states in no uncertain terms that a Kohen may not marry a divorced woman. What aspect of the prohibition did he not understand?

Rav Chaim Ozer looked up at the man, thought for a moment, and responded: "Ya, ihr mekt nemen a gerushah." "Yes, you may take a divorced woman."

The students were shocked at this response. How could the great sage render such a decision that clearly contradicted the Torah? They were bewildered, to say the least. Yet, Rav Chaim Ozer continued with the shiur as if nothing had occurred. His students, however, were confused. They could not understand how their rebbe could dispense such a psak, decision.

Rav Chaim Ozer noticed that he was giving a shiur to a group of students whose bodies were present, but whose minds were definitely elsewhere. He said to them, "You are probably wondering about my psak. Let me put your minds at rest. Did you notice the man's boots and riding gear? If you did, you would realize that this sincere, simple man was a baal agalah, wagon

driver. In his simple mind, he retained that he had once heard that a Kohen may not "take" - that is, marry - a divorced woman. He understood the word "take" literally and, consequently, would not take a divorced woman as a passenger on his wagon. I am certain that a divorced woman wanted a ride someplace, and he was concerned about "taking" her because of her status. He feared violating a prohibition of the Torah.

The students, albeit faithful to their great rebbe, had a difficult time reconciling this explanation with reality. They decided to go outside to see if Rav Chaim's hypothesis was true. Sure enough, they went outside to discover that Rav Chaim had made a brilliant deduction. A woman whom they knew to be divorced was preparing to board the wagon with her packages, because the simple, but pious, wagon driver had finally been permitted to take her as a passenger.

Horav Shneur Kotler supplemented this incredible story with the following addendum. "When a rav deals with his people, he must see beyond the question and examine the questioner. More often than not, the situation is more complex than it seems. One's response is invariably dependent on a number of particular circumstances. A sheilah, religious query, is hardly ever as uncomplicated as it seems. We may add that the personality of the questioner must also be a factor in the halachic quotient. People present questions from their own perspectives, in the manner in which they want to be answered. A sagacious rav will penetrate the psyche of the questioner and perceive the question he is really asking.

*If the daughter of a man who is a Kohen will be defiled through having an illicit relationship, she defiles her father. (21:9)*

Why does she defile her father more than her mother? Chazal teach us that the father is also punished. If, prior to his daughter's defilement, he had been considered a respected member of the priesthood and the community, he is demoted. It seems that this degradation is due to his status as a Kohen. Why should this "punishment" be limited to Kehunah? Should the Yisrael who does a poor job raising his daughter be different? Last, according to those commentators who translate the phrase "ki seicheil" as "who begins," rather than "who defiles," why is the punishment restricted to the "beginning" of her straying? The Torah should have said, "A Kohen's daughter who defiles herself." What is so special about "the beginning" of her moral and spiritual breakdown?

Horav Zalman Sorotzkin, zl, offers a practical insight into the Kohen's daughter who defiles herself. When a young woman demonstrates a moral breakdown by acting promiscuously, it is usually due to one of two phenomena: she inherited this character flaw, usually from her mother; or, she had a tendency to stray and keep company with the "wrong crowd." In the case of the latter, the father should be held in contempt, since the spiritual education of his children is his primary responsibility. When a young woman begins to act immorally - and we do not know for certain the origins of this depraved activity - we assume that it is inherent in her genes. In other words, we place the onus of guilt upon her mother. If we know for a fact that the mother was virtuous and upright, the blame is transferred to the father.

A Kohen may not marry a woman of questionable repute. Hence, the Kohen's daughter who defiles herself achieved her notoriety as a result of her father's lack of supervision. The

father permitted her to cavort with anyone, thereby leading her astray. According to Chazal, the law concerning a promiscuous bas Kohen applies to one who is married. Thus, the daughter of a Yisrael is punished with death by *chenek*, strangulation, and the Kohen's daughter receives the more stringent punishment of *sereifah*, death by burning. We wonder why a woman who has already left her father's home and is married should still bring shame upon her father. After all, she is no longer a part of his home. Her development began in her father's home.. He is to be blamed. This is the Torah's intent when it states, "ki'seichal liznos," "who begins to stray." It is her beginning - in her father's home - that catalyzed this tragedy. Her father should pay now, for not having paid attention earlier.

*And you shall rejoice before Hashem, your G-d, for a seven-day period. (23:40)*

The mitzvah of joy on the festival of Succos is intrinsic to the *chag*. It is an integral aspect of the festival's identity. It occurred on one of the days of Succos that the daughter of Horav Meir, zl, m'Premishlan became gravely ill. On Simchas Torah, the situation had deteriorated to the point that the young woman was at death's door. Yet, Rav Meir Premishlaner danced the *hakafos*, traditional Simchas Torah dance, with the Torah, with his usual joy and devotion. His *chassidim* were aghast at the Rebbe's behavior. How could he exhibit such jubilation at a time like this? They cried out to him, "Rebbe!" do something for your daughter!"

Rav Meir went into his daughter's room, observed her laying comatose, near death, and walked out. He turned his eyes Heavenward and exclaimed, "Ribono Shel Olam, You commanded us to blow Shofar on Rosh Hashanah, and Meirel did as You asked. You commanded us to fast on Yom Kippur, and Meirel listened and fasted. You commanded us to be joyous and dance on Simchas Torah, and Meirel listened and danced. You made my daughter ill, and you commanded that we should accept even a harsh decree with joy. "One is obligated to bless (Hashem) for a misfortune just as he blesses (Hashem) for a good occurrence." Chazal interpret this to mean that one should accept the *raah*, misfortune, with joy. But, Ribono Shel Olam, there is a *halachah* that states, 'Ein mearvin simchah besimchah,' 'One may not mix one simchah with another.' How can I serve You properly in both of these circumstances at the same time?" Immediately, when he said this, his daughter's fever broke, indicating that she was on the road to recovery.

This story demonstrates the profound sincerity this great *tzaddik* demonstrated in fulfilling mitzvos and adhering to Chazal's words. He understood that misfortune is from Hashem, oriented towards a specific purpose. Our lack of understanding the ways of the Almighty neither precludes nor changes their inherent value, meaning, or purpose. If Chazal say that one must bless Hashem for misfortune in the same manner that one blesses Him for a happy occasion, Rav Meir did just that. He blessed Him in the same manner, to the point that he equated blessing Hashem regarding his daughter's illness with dancing on Simchas Torah. How far we are from the spiritual plateau of our ancestors!

*Aharon shall arrange it, from evening to morning. (24:3)*

The Torah tells us in this pasuk that Aharon HaKohen was responsible for arranging the lamps of the Menorah. In Parashas Tetzaveh, when the Torah records this ritual, it mentions that Aharon's sons also arranged the lamps of the Menorah. Why is only Aharon's name mentioned here? The Baal HaTurim explains that after Nadav and Avihu died in the Sanctuary, Aharon no longer permitted his remaining sons to enter alone. He always accompanied them into the Sanctuary. These are amazing words! The Baal HaTurim's penetrating insight into Aharon's behavior is both profound and pragmatic. How are we to understand this? Elazar and Isamar, Aharon's remaining sons, were not children. They were grown men, erudite and pious. Why would Aharon deem it necessary to accompany them into the Sanctuary?

Horav Yitzchak Zilberstein, Shlita, feels that Aharon's action implies a profound truth in regard to child-rearing. Parents should not leave their children unsupervised, even in Hashem's Sanctuary! Being a parent denotes tremendous responsibility; one that cannot and should not be delegated to the street or to friends and neighbors. Parents should personally observe and supervise their child's growth and development.

Is the Sanctuary sacrosanct to the point that it is impossible to be adversely influenced? First, how does one know that the child arrived at the bais ha'medrash? Perhaps he was waylaid along the way. Furthermore, who is to say that a bais ha'medrash that is open to everyone, whose policy is to reach out to the wide spectrum of Jewish society, will not contain within its walls someone of unsavory character and belief? Indeed, even in the sheltered walls of those batei medrash that are exclusionary by nature and principle, who is to know what festers in the inner heart and mind of all those in its midst?

It is for this reason that parents have an overriding responsibility to be cognizant of everything that involves their children. They must be sure that their children have responsible and spiritually refined friends and that they adhere to the parameters set forth by the institution to which they are sent to learn Torah. This is true for those children who have made the sanctuary their home. How much more so should we devote our attention and efforts on behalf of those children, who for a number of reasons, are not availed this opportunity?

Horav Zilberstein decries those parents who permit their children to "hang around," either on foot or riding around on their bikes a good part of the day, riding in circles with nowhere to go. (We must bear in mind that Horav Zilberstein is a rav in Bnei Brak - not in an American metropolis.) When children - regardless of their age - spend quality time, hours and hours unsupervised, aimlessly wandering, parents are asking for trouble. Parents must realize - and I paraphrase Horav Zilberstein - that just because they are tired and they need the necessary rest and relaxation, they do not have an excuse for permitting their children to be unsupervised. Would they chance losing an expensive diamond because they were too tired to take care of it? Our children are our greatest and most valuable treasure. We should treat them as such. Accordingly, if parents are to spend as much time as feasible in the supervision of their children, it would be logical that these same parents should themselves display the highest ideals and character traits, in order to imbue these values and attributes into their children. Would it not be

foolish - and, in fact, hypocritical and self-defeating - to delude ourselves with the notion that we each teach our children to become masters in an area where we ourselves have failed in the amateur stage? Should we not study and perfect all of the moral skills and virtues in which we hope our children will perfect themselves, so that we can model for them what is acceptable and what is not? Prior to attempting to rid our children of their faults and bad habits, should we not first begin by examining ourselves, seeking to purge these vices from our own demeanor? Should we not scrutinize our own words and actions to insure our children do not emulate and - even outdo - us? To paraphrase Horav S. R. Hirsch, zl, "At the moment G-d places our very first child into our arms, we should solemnly pledge in His presence that, before attempting to become the educators of His pupils in His spirit, we will first proceed to the task of educating ourselves." patience, equanimity, gentleness, sensitivity, integrity, humility, moderation, justice and loving-kindness from us. We have a responsibility to provide them with a positive example.

The love we demonstrate for our children should motivate us to triumph over our shortcomings, to root out the evil that has plagued us, and to eliminate the faults that have been an unfortunate part of our existence. In conclusion, the maxim "docendo discimus," "we learn by teaching," may be applicable to other fields of endeavor. In regard to raising Jewish children in the derech Hashem, way of Hashem, we should read instead, "Let us learn in order that we may teach."

*Say to the Kohanim...and tell them; No one may contaminate himself to a (dead) person among his people. (21:2)*

According to halachah, the source of tumah, spiritual contamination, is contact with a dead body, whether this contact is direct or indirect. The Zohar Hakadosh comments that when the human body is deprived of its source of life, the soul, it becomes a source of contamination. Indeed, the human corpse is referred to as "avi avos ha'tumah", "father of the fathers of contamination." As Horav S.R. Hirsch,zl, explains, death is the ultimate manifestation of the stripping of the soul and spirit from matter. Once they are removed, the body becomes a lifeless mass. The living human body represents moral freedom and the ability to grow both physically and spiritually. It signifies the ability to serve the Almighty and provides an opportunity for spiritual growth. Death represents the negation of everything, the end of moral freedom, the cessation of growth, the opposite of our purpose on this earth. Hence, with the departure of life, a transformation takes place so that tumah, the antithesis of life, predominates.

Horav Hirsch also notes the striking contrast between the laws of tumah as expressed to the Kohanim, the spiritual mentors of our People, and the religious practices of other nations. In other religions, the advent of death is a time for summoning the priest to administer the last rites. Perhaps this practice is in consonance with the belief that the kingdom of G-d commences when the kingdom of man comes to a close. This concept suggests that human existence has no

intrinsic value, that it is nothing more than a precursor of the kingdom of the dead. In this perspective, spirituality exists only in death, little spirituality is attributed to life. Indeed, with this idea in mind, we can certainly understand the underlying rationale for the behavior of those who adhere to these ideas.

Our Torah presents a different idea: The Kohen's function is not to focus on death, but rather on life. He teaches us how to live, not how to die. When the family of a dying person is gathered at his bedside, the Kohen, the spiritual symbol, remains at a distance, indicating this his holy mission is not to interact with death. Some might say that the Kohen stays away out of self-interest, but such foolishness only bespeaks the source of the comment. The Kohen is instructed to be distant, attesting to the immortality of the soul, to the eternal nature of Judaism's spiritual ideal. Hence, death is not an end, but a bridge connecting two worlds of the living - human life with spiritual life. The Torah offers a dispensation to the Kohen when his close family is involved. He is a human being with emotions like everybody else. He hurts and grieves like the rest of the community. The Torah disciplines his life as it determines when and how he is to let himself experience and express his emotions.

*If the daughter of a Kohen desecrates herself through adultery, she desecrates her father - she shall be consumed by fire. (21:9)*

The Torah records one of the most tragic incidents that a parent could ever confront: A child disgraces herself, her family, and even her religion. When a Jewish child assimilates and acts like a member of a subculture of contemporary society, she disgraces the religion for which her ancestors died. The parents are humiliated by her reprehensible act of rebellion. Chazal attribute a portion of the blame on them, as the Torah says, "She desecrates her father." Those who see her state, "Accursed is the one who gave birth to her; accursed is the one who raised her." Furthermore, Chazal maintain that her father's position is diminished. He no longer receives the eminence he had previously been accorded.

This is a very bitter pill to swallow. Parents raise a child, assuming that they are doing an adequate job of childrearing. Suddenly, they are confronted with an out of control situation. In addition to their personal tragedy of losing a child, they are publicly castigated, censured for being poor parents. Is this right? Do they not have enough with which to contend? Must public humiliation be added to their list of miseries? Nachlas Tzvi cites two apparently contradictory sources in Chazal that seem to address the parents' onus of guilt in the matter. The Talmud Sukkah 56b recounts the story of Miriam bas Bilgah, a descendant of a distinguished family who became an apostate and married a Greek officer. When the Greeks entered the Heichal, she had

the gall to remove her sandal and begin beating on the Mizbayach screaming, "Lyka, Lukas (a reference to the Almighty), how long will You continue to devour the Jew's money and not stand behind them during their times of affliction?" When Chazal heard about this blasphemy, they decreed that the ring in the Bais Hamikdash which was used for slaughtering korbanos, and the little window through which the members of her Priestly family would place their knives, was to be forever sealed. In other words, her family was publicly censured and degraded as a result of her sacrilegious behavior. This Chazal seems to support the fact that parents are to be held responsible for the evil wrought by their offspring.

In the Talmud Berachos 10a, Chazal seem to imply something totally different. The Talmud tells of Chizkiyahu Ha'Melech's sickness, during which he was visited by the distinguished Navi of the day, Yeshayahu HaNavi, who told him that death had been decreed against him: "You will die in this world and not live in the next world, because you did not occupy yourself with the mitzvah, of 'Be fruitful and multiply.'" He responded that he had not had children because he saw by Divine Inspiration that he would father a wicked son. He was told that he should not worry about the future. He should do his part, and the Almighty would do His. To paraphrase the words of Chazal, "What have you to do with the secrets of the All-Merciful?" We derive from here a completely different perspective than that which was cited earlier. We note that even parents who are fine, decent, G-d fearing Jews, who do everything to educate and raise their children in the Torah way, can be plagued with a son such as Menashe ben Chizkiyahu Ha'Melech, whose evil was notorious. Ostensibly, there are circumstances in which the parents are responsible, and there are instances when they do all that a responsible, loving parent can and must do, and yet they still have a problematic child.

Nachlas Tzvi suggests two defining factors by which one can ascertain the genesis of this child's sinful behavior. First, we observe the form of education that the parents have provided for their child. Chizkiyahu had an incredible track record in Jewish education. During his tenure as king, Chazal searched from one end of Eretz Yisrael till the other and found that the youth was well-versed in the most difficult areas of Torah law. With a father such as Chizkiyahu, one was assured of the finest Jewish education in the most conducive environment. Second, we must note the family environment. Have the parents been supportive of the education, or have they denigrated the system, the school and the teachers? Every indication from Chazal points to the fact that bas Bilgah was privy to the vilifying remarks about the Mizbayach and its function. The daughter followed in her father's footsteps; in fact, she exceeded her father in sheer chutzpah and aggression.

Consequently, one must do whatever possible to provide a fine Torah education for his children, never surrendering in the face of adversity. Indeed, if a child were physically ill, would we throw up our hands in disgust or regret and say, "I give up"? A child's spiritual and emotional health is no different. Actually, its effect is more far-reaching.

We suggest that in emphasizing the father's disgrace, the Torah might be focusing on the source of this girl's problem. Regrettably, often enough we find parents who attempt to relive their own lives through their children. They impose standards and demands on their children, some of whom are not up to these rigid demands. A child should be educated according to his own way - not according to the parents' idiosyncrasies. He should live up to his potential, not the parents' expectations. The bas Kohen was indirectly driven to her tragic end by her father. He is disgraced for the role he played in his child's ruin. Our children should be our best friends, a relationship that should develop with time.

*You shall observe My commandments and perform them. (22:31)*

In selecting a Hebrew word to define observance, the Torah uses the expression "shemirah," which means to guard. Horav Elazar Menachem Shach, Shlita, explains that it is incumbent upon every individual Jew to be a shomer, watchman, on the mitzvos. This means that he has the obligation to guard the mitzvos so that they are observed by the community. It is not enough to merely focus upon one's personal mitzvah observance. It is essential that one see to it that the entire community also be observant, so that the mitzvos are not left unguarded, open to influence and disdain.

This is the true meaning of Chazal's dictum, "Kol Yisrael areivim zeh lazeh," "All Yisrael are responsible one for another." An areiv, guarantor, is one who accepts upon himself to repay the loan if the borrower does not pay. In regard to mitzvos, this concept goes one step further. We are guarantors that others will perform the mitzvah. It is like saying that we guarantee that the borrower will pay back the loan. We do not just substitute; we ensure that the one who is responsible fulfills his own obligations. Arvus means to see to it that all Jews understand and perform mitzvos.

*The son of an Israelite woman went out - And he was the son of an Egyptian man....And they fought in the camp. (24:10)*

Chazal focus upon the words "went out". From where did he go "out"? Simply, it means that he left his tent and entered into the camp where he blasphemed. In a homiletic rendering, Chazal say that he left his "world," a reference to the World To Come, as a result of his iniquitous sin. In his rebuke to Klal Yisrael, Yeshayahu Hanavi says, "Yisrael does not know My Name, My

nation does not understand." He quotes Hashem as declaring that His people have neglected their relationship with the Almighty. Chazal add a new dimension to the two expressions of neglect: do not "know," and do not "understand". They say "Yisrael does not know the past; My nation does not understand the future." Apparently, a lack of perception regarding the past and future is a contributing factor to sin.

Horav Mordechai Rogov, zl, explains that the root of sin, the prevalent reason that so many people slip into a life of sin, is that they constrict their perspective. They live in their own little world, consisting only of the "here" and the "now". One who refuses to look back to delve into our glorious history, to learn a lesson, to appreciate and take pride in the conviction, devotion and achievements of our ancestors, is depriving himself of a remarkable source of pride, encouragement and fortitude. This source of pride, this ray of hope, engenders a different perspective for the "lost" Jew. Contemporary man seeks to connect with something. Regrettably, those who have assimilated away from their Jewish culture have connected to the wrong place.

Similarly, one should integrate the future into his perspective. We have to understand that this world is temporary. Sooner, and hopefully later, one will have the opportunity to enjoy true bliss in the World To Come. True, it may be difficult to conceive, but one must face the realization that there must be something better than this world. Furthermore, there is another aspect of the future that one should confront: the consequences of his assimilation. Will there be a second generation to carry on his "religious" beliefs? Or will these descendants see the fallacy of their parents' supposed conviction and gravitate even further from the religion of their ancestors? One who lives in a vacuum totally devoid of the perspective of time, ignoring the past and future, will probably never experience more than the present.

*The son of an Israelite woman went out and he was the son of an Egyptian man... And they fought in the camp. (24:10)*

The word "Va'yetze," (he) "went out" is the source of much discussion among Chazal, as they address from "where" he "went out." They cite a number of homiletical expositions to explain the blasphemer's point of departure. Horav Eliyahu Schlesinger, Shlita, suggests a novel approach. If, indeed, we delve into the text, we note an irregularity. The Torah records the grave sin that was perpetrated, followed by the Heavenly verdict that the blasphemer be stoned to death. Prior to the Torah's recording the actual execution, we read three pesukim which relate to the damages incurred by man against another fellow's property - or even against another fellow. Then the Torah concludes with the execution. It does not seem to be appropriate to position the

laws of social damages in the middle of a case of capital punishment of the degree of blasphemy. Is the Torah conveying a message to us by the proximity of these pesukim to each other?

Furthermore, we find another parsha in the Torah which begins with "V'ayetze", "He went out". In Sefer Bereishis, the Torah relates Yaakov Avinu's departure from home, "V'ayetze Yaakov mi'Beer Sheva, v'ayelech Charanah", "And Yaakov left Beer Sheva and he went to Charan." The commentators wonder why the Torah emphasizes Yaakov Avinu's point of departure, as well as his destination. Is it really necessary to record from where he left and to where he was going? They explain that Yaakov had two goals in mind: to leave Beer Sheva, to escape his evil brother who was bent on killing him; and also to reach his mother's family in Charan, to fulfill his mother's directive.

The megadef, blasphemer, had only one goal: to "go away," to escape, to turn his back on Yahadus, Judaism. He had nowhere to go, because one who leaves Judaism has no goal, has no purpose other than to escape his responsibilities and renege on his commitment as a Jew. Indeed, those who leave Judaism do so not because they have something better, somewhere else to go; they go because they want to run away. They float aimlessly, without cause, without goal, without purpose. They know "from where they come", but they do not realize "where they will ultimately go."

The Torah adds a new dimension to the Torah deserter's composite. One might think when one deserts Torah to the point that he is prepared to rebel against and blaspheme Hashem's Name, he can still be a fine person. In fact, he might be a good Jew who, through his other efforts such as charity and good deeds, maintains his standing as a decent and upstanding Jew. The Torah teaches us that this is not true. A Jew who abandons Judaism, who reneges against the Almighty, is capable of doing any type of injustice. He is no longer G-d-fearing; his sense of discipline is gone. This is why the Torah interjects the narrative of the megadef into the laws pertaining to social injustice. He who "goes out," does not realize how far away he might ultimately end up.

*Say to the Kohanim, the sons of Aharon, and tell them: Each of you shall not contaminate himself to a (dead) person among his people. (21:1)*

Why is it necessary to have two "amiros," sayings? Rashi cites Chazal in the Talmud Yevamos 114a who say that the Torah is emphasizing the need for "the gedolim to warn the ketanim." The Kohanim, scholars and teachers of the people, were to convey this teaching to others who were not necessarily obligated by this mitzvah. The adult Kohanim were cautioned to

make sure that their children not become contaminated. The Midrash says that the word gedolim is a reference to the "beings," angels in Heaven Above, for whom one amirah, admonishment, suffices. The tachtonim, human beings who walk the face of the earth, who are subject to the blandishments of the yetzer hora, evil inclination, need at least two enjoinders to curb their appetite for sin. What is the meaning of the two amiros, enjoinders, that would assist the tachtonim, humans, in thwarting the yetzer hora's efforts to cause them to sin?

Horav Eliyahu Schlessinger, Shlita, cites Horav P. Friedman, Shlita, who explains this Midrash by using a concept stated by the Koznitzer Maggid, zl. The Torah in Parashas Haazinu (Devarim 32:) declares, "Give ear o' heavens, and I will speak; and may the earth hear the words of my mouth." The Maggid explains this pasuk in the following manner: The tzaddik who attempts to reprove his generation in order to bring them back to serve Hashem properly, but does not succeed, should realize that their hearts have turned to stone. In order to reach them, he should focus his words on the origin of their neshamah, soul. In Heaven, the klipos, "outer shells", which prevent the words of admonishment from entering their hearts, are not effective. Horav Schlessinger explains that, actually, a person's neshamah has two components. The primary neshamah which remains pure and holy - untainted by anything - stays in Heaven. The aspect that leaves the Heaven to enter into the human body is but a small part of the neshamah's light, the "overflow." As a person serves Hashem and studies Torah, accordingly the two neshamos become bound up with one another.

The Bnei Yissacher explains the concept of Machatzis Hashekel: Each Jew was instructed to give only a half-shekel to the Mikdash, based upon this idea. The numerical equivalent of "shekel" is the same as "nefesh," referring to the soul of man. We are enjoined to give a half-shekel, alluding to our responsibility to elevate our half of the nefesh/neshamah, and bind it up with its pure source in Heaven.

The neshamah in Heaven is never blemished or tainted by our sins. What we do on earth affects only our "earthly" neshamah. This is so that even when man sullies himself with sin in this world, he still has the opportunity left for him to perform teshuvah and repent, since the neshamah in Heaven remains in its pristine state. "Kol Yisrael yeish lahem chelek la'Olam Habah," "Every Jew has a portion in the World To Come." Does this apply to the wicked who have perverted Hashem's word, who have denigrated His mitzvos and belittled His Torah? Yes! The neshamah that is in Heaven is not affected by the person's rebellion in his human existence. It continues in its state of purity and holiness, waiting for its "other half" to repent and return to its source. When the tzaddik offers words of rebuke, he should first focus on the "earthly" soul. If he sees that it is to no avail, he should speak to the unaffected neshamah, the one in Shomayim, that will always hear. This is implied by the Torah's redundancy of "Hocheach tocheach es amisecha" "You shall reprove your fellow man," (Vayikra 19:17). If at first one is not successful with his tochachah, he should speak again to the soul in Heaven. Every Jew has his bedrock, his

foundation of spiritual stability, the Pintele Yid that will never be blemished. For every Jew, there is always hope.

We now have a profound understanding of the words of the Midrash. Because the elyonim, angels, do not have a yetzer hora that would sway them and blemish their neshamos, they do not need a special amirah to the source of their neshamah. One amirah from Hashem is sufficient. For the tachtonim, humans, who have a yetzer hora, we can only hope that two amiros - one for their earthly neshamah and the second for their Heavenly neshamah, are sufficient enjoinder to bring them back to serve Him. These are the two amiros: to the person and -- if that does not work -- speak to their neshamos in Heaven.

*Say to the Kohanim, the sons of Aharon, and tell them, Each of you shall not contaminate himself to a (dead) person. (21:1)*

The various commentators address the Torah's redundancy in its enjoinder to the Kohanim regarding the laws of tumah, ritual contamination. Rashi cites Chazal who say that the Torah is emphasizing the need for the gedolim, adults, to warn the ketanim, children. In a homiletic rendering of the pasuk, the Chasam Sofer focuses upon what has regrettably become common practice: We take an interest only in the "gedolim," while we ignore the "ketanim". For example, when a member of the community passes away, we make an effort to provide everything for the "niftar ha'gadol," the distinguished deceased. We prepare a "great" funeral, with "great" eulogies; we see to it that a "large" crowd assembles for the funeral, followed by an appropriate burial. What about the "ketanim," the "little," forgotten people, the widow and orphans who are now left to fend for themselves, bereft of their husband and father? When the Torah begins its chapter dealing with death in a family, it seeks to make us acutely aware of the responsibility for caring about the little things in the same manner in which we dedicate ourselves to addressing the big issues.

*The Kohen who is exalted above his brethren - upon whose head the anointment oil has been poured. (21:10)*

The Kohen Gadol "stands" above the other Kohanim as a result of certain qualities with which he has been vested. Chazal enumerate five areas in which he was "greater" than the others. One of these was strength. The Kohen Gadol was exceptionally strong. This is indicated by

Aharon Hakohen's ability to consecrate twenty-two thousand Leviim - in one day. This process involved physically raising each one and moving them back and forth, up and down. The magnitude of this task is evident when one realizes that this was all performed in the space of one day!

Let us analyze this statement. When we take into consideration that such an incredible feat could be performed only through the intervention of a miracle, it no longer serves as evidence of Aharon's amazing physical strength. Furthermore, what difference does it really make if the Kohen Gadol possesses remarkable physical strength? Does this make him a better, more virtuous person?

We find another mention of the concept of strength in the Talmud Nedarim 38a, wherein it is stated that the Shechinah rests only on one who is strong. Incidentally, in his commentary, the Rambam explains Chazal's statement as a reference to one's ability to overwhelm the blandishments of his yetzer hora, evil inclination. The commentaries, however, disagree with this interpretation, leaving a consensus that specifically refers to physical strength.

Horav Chaim Shmuelevitz, zl, defines strength as one's ability to overcome a tendency towards indolence. We tend to find excuses for not doing a specific task: it is either too hard, unnecessary or unimportant. The true reason behind our excuses is laziness. Why are we lazy? Is it because we do not appreciate or value the task at hand? When one is machshiv, appreciates and holds a given endeavor in esteem, he will somehow find the strength and vitality to perform it. It is difficult work to paint a house, but when it is one's own house, the difficulty seems to disappear. Why? Because the individual is machshiv his house more. When one values a project or endeavor, he attacks it with zest and vibrancy. No obstacles stand in his way. He overcomes any challenge that confronts him. Indolence creeps in when one does not have "cheishak," desire.

One who comes home after a day's work and finds the "time" and "strength" to study Torah, to leave the comfort of his home to attend a shiur, demonstrates his esteem for limud ha'Torah. One who is machshiv Torah will always find a way to study it. One who finds excuses to justify his laziness simply is not machshiv Torah! It is obvious that lifting twenty-two thousand Leviim in one day is impossible. Aharon had every reason to defer from this task. How could he do it? When one is machshiv, values, Hashem's command, however, nothing deters him. Aharon's incredible strength lay in his attitude, his drive, his overwhelming desire to fulfill mitzvas Hashem. He undertook the impossible. Hashem responded to Aharon's effort by miraculously transforming the impossible into the achievable.

The son of an Israelite woman - and he was the son of an Egyptian man... the son of the Israelite woman pronounced the Name and blasphemed... the name of his mother was Shlomis daughter of Divri. (24:10,11) The Torah relates the story of a Jew who committed the heinous sin of blaspheming the Name of Hashem. The Torah records this person's mother's name as Shlomis

bas Divri. Rashi attributes the name Shlomis to her tendency to greet everyone, striking up a conversation with everyone she meets. The name Divri also implies that she was a dabronis, talked very much with everyone. Apparently, her proclivity to talk excessively led to all forms of sinful speech and behavior. The Chasam Sofer questions Rashi's statement. It would seem that Rashi was giving us a reason why this woman gave birth to such a despicable son. Rather than relating her deplorable behavior to us, Rashi tells us that she was a friendly person who made a point of greeting everyone she encountered. Second, Rashi comments regarding both aspects of her name - Shlomis and Divri. Is that really necessary? Moreover, while the name Shlomis implies her amicability towards people, the name Divri, whose root word is diber, alludes to a harsher form of speech. What was Shlomis really like and wherein lay the origin of her iniquity?

In his approach to responding to these questions, the Satmar Rav, zl, is bothered by the fact that the generation of the wilderness, the people who stood at Har Sinai during the Revelation and accepted Hashem's Torah, produced an individual who could commit such an atrocious sin. Furthermore, according to the Daas Zekeinim, the blasphemer was a Torah scholar! How are we to understand the evolution of this tragic occurrence and its ramifications for us today?

In response to these questions, the Satmar Rav cites the pasuk in Devarim 29:18 regarding the renewal of the covenant in which Hashem details the punishment for he who would defy the Torah, saying, "Shalom yiheyeh li," "Peace will be with me," though I walk as my heart sees fit. He is not impressed with the thought of impending punishment. Hashem will surely punish him, as Rashi explains that those sins that heretofore were committed inadvertently will now be viewed as done b'meizid, intentionally. Is this the type of punishment for one who scoffs punishment? Should he be punished so harshly that his shegagos, unintentional transgressions, be treated as zedonos, intentional ones?

He explains that the covenant here is a reference to each Jew's responsibility towards his fellow man. "Kol Yisrael areivim ze la'zeh," "All Jews are responsible one for another" is a halachic axiom. When one Jew sees another Jew transgressing, he has a moral responsibility to protest and help him to return to the Torah way. There are those who regrettably shirk their responsibility due to personal vested interests. They will express a number of excuses to justify not making an issue. First and foremost is the idea of shalom - peace. Peace among Jews is the lifeblood of our People. Unity and harmony - achdus is G-d like. As Hashem is echad - One, He wants His children to live in achdus - oneness, in harmony with one another.

When a close friend is doing something that is harmful to himself, it behooves an individual to prevent him from hurting himself. When one sins, he is hurting himself - and Klal Yisrael! A true friend will not stand idly by ignoring, and at times even encouraging him --

simply because he does not want to strain his relationship. Such a person is not a friend. Any relationship that does not leave room for constructive criticism is not a relationship.

This is the meaning of the pasuk. He, who when he hears the punishment that will be meted out to those who ignore their responsibility towards their fellow Jew, saying, "Peace will be with me," meaning - shalom is more important than addressing my brothers' shortcomings, he will have a share in all the sins committed by his friend. Although regarding his friends' sins he is only a shogeg, Hashem will consider him a meizid, because he could have prevented them from occurring.

With this in mind, we can understand the underlying meaning of Shlomis bas Divri's name. She believed in shalom - hence the name Shlomis. While still in Egypt, she made it her business to make peace with everyone. The wicked were her best friends, to the point that she would put down her brethren in order to sycophant to the reshaim - all in the name of shalom. Interestingly, she was at peace only with those who desecrated the Torah and denigrated Hashem's word. In her relationship with the rest of her brethren, she was at odds. She spoke harshly to them, with hatred and vitriol. She was Shlomis to the wicked and Divri, speaking harshly, to the righteous. What began as Shalom, by ignoring her responsibility, ended as hatred towards those from who she had originated. A child growing up in such a home, observing such a double standard, an inner animus towards observant Jews who were supposedly his brothers, can have very little recourse but to grow up into the blasphemer that he became.

Horav Hirsch explains that to educate means to guide or lead someone else toward oneself. This is based upon the idea that the word "educate" is derived from the Latin "ex"=(out) and "ducere" - (to lead or to guide). The German term popularized by Horav Hirsch for defining education is "erziehen," which literally means "to draw" one's pupil up towards one's own level. The educator's/parent's function is to "bring his pupil/child up" to the level that the educator/parent has himself attained. Our children learn to walk by watching us walk. They subsequently learn

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