



Parashat "Emor"

מתוך "ליקוטי שמואל"

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Teaching Our Children That We Are Different

Parshas [Emor](#)

Rabbi Yissocher Frand

The opening pasuk of Parshas Emor contains a famous redundancy. The pasuk says, "...*Emor el haKohanim, bnei Aharon, v'amarta aleihem: L'nefesh lo yeetama b'amav*" (Vayikra 21:1). Rashi comments (based on the Gemara in Yevamos 114a) on the apparently superfluous repetition of the words "*V'amarta aleihem*" (And you shall say to them) following the words "*Emor el haKohanim*" (Speak to the Kohanim): This teaches that the older *Kohanim* must warn the younger (pre-Bar Mitzvah) *Kohanim*. This is one of three places in *Torah She'beksav* (the Written Torah) where the Torah requires parents to not let their children conduct themselves in a way that violates Torah prohibitions. The Torah also gives this type of warning by the prohibition against consuming *sheratzim* (insects) and *dam* (blood). So there are Biblical prohibitions against a person feeding his child something which is not Kosher and prohibiting a Kohen from allowing his young son to come in contact with *tumas mes* (human corpse impurity). This applies even to children below the age of *chinuch* (before they are normally taught about mitzvah observance).

Rav Chaim Dov Keller (Rosh Yeshiva in Telshe – Chicago) in his *sefer Chidekel*, wonders why it is necessary for the Torah to make a special prohibition regarding young *Kohanim* becoming *tameh*, over and above the principle taught elsewhere that children should not be fed non-kosher food. Rav Keller suggests that the Torah is teaching us that when we educate our children, it is not only important for us to teach them "You can't eat this because it

is *treife* and it is terrible for your *neshama*" but beyond that, it is incumbent upon Jewish parents to educate their children to the fact that they possess within themselves a spiritually pristine essence, which must be maintained. For example, even though it might be okay for everyone else to play baseball on a cemetery lot, you are a Kohen and you cannot do that. Why? It is because you are different. You are special.

The obligation of *chinuch* extends not only to ensuring that youngsters do not commit egregious *aveiros*, but it is also important to impress upon them that they are different, for example if they have a certain spiritual stature above that of their friends and acquaintances. Perhaps those of us who are not *Kohanim* need to worry less about this type of *chinuch*, but all parents have plenty of situations where they must educate their children that they are Jewish and they are different. Our children must recognize that some things they see their peers doing do not apply to them.

It can get really tough when even among our own communities, different parents have different standards and different approaches. Many a time, a parent needs to say to his child "I am sorry. We are different. We don't do these things!" Even if the child responds – like every child in the world always says – "but, everyone is doing it!" (which usually turns out to be about 40% of his or her peer group), we need to say: "Yes, 'everyone' may be doing it, but we are not everyone! We are different and we have a different standard. We have a higher standard."

My daughter recently told me about a family in Brooklyn whose parents are very open when it comes to their children. Their daughter was the first person in her class to get a driver's license. We all know that it is a very big step for parents to let their teenage son or daughter start driving. Even though they allowed their

daughter to drive before everyone else in their peer group let their daughters drive, nevertheless, these same parents did not allow their daughter to have a cell phone.

The daughter argued that "Everyone in the class has a cell phone." I am not here to argue about whether teenagers should have cell phones or not. However, there is a strong argument to be made that cell phones involve risks. This family was very adamant with their daughter: "Sorry. Not you!" Of course, she kicked and screamed, but perhaps one day she will look back and say "My parents were right. I appreciate where they were coming from, because they wanted to raise me differently."

That is why by *tumas Kohanim* the Torah teaches that *chinuch* does not only involve ensuring that your children do not do something horrible (like consuming blood or insects). *Chinuch* also sometimes involves instilling in them the fact that they are different.

Therefore, the Torah is teaching parents not to feel uncomfortable telling their children: "Sorry, maybe everyone else is doing it, but you are not everyone. You are my child. You are a Rosenberg or a Goldberg or a Stein – or whoever you may be – but this is the way we do it."

Willing To Also Appreciate the Situation Which Brought About the Need for Salvation

The Torah teaches "When a person brings a *Korban Todah* (Thanksgiving Offering), it shall be brought willingly (*Irtzonchem*)" (Vayikra 22:29). There are many types of *korbonos*. A *Korban Todah* is brought in certain special circumstances where a person is giving thanks for recovery from illness or escape from a dangerous situation. This is a type of *korbon* that people want to bring. They are genuinely grateful for being saved from a grave danger and they obviously desire to express gratitude for their

salvation. Who does not want to express thanksgiving and express their appreciation to the Almighty under those circumstances? Why, here, of all the *korbonos*, does the Torah specify that it must be brought "*l'rtzonchem*" (willingly)? In truth, Rashi is bothered by this question. Rashi says here that the Torah, in stating "*l'rtzonchem*," is referring specifically to the need to eat the *korban* in the proper time span. This is not the simple reading of the word "*l'rtzonchem*."

The Kesav Sofer deals with the same issue. He takes a slightly different approach than Rashi:

Let us say that a person is seriously sick and then recovers from that condition. Let's ask him "What would have been your preference – to have been sick and recovered or to never have been sick in the first place?" What do we expect his response to be? Most people would say, I would rather not have had the plague and not have needed the remedy for the plague.

The *pasuk* is teaching us over here that when you bring a *Korban Todah*, not only must you be thankful for the healing and the salvation that came after your crises, but you even need to be thankful for the crises itself. Why? Anyone who has been through an ordeal from which he has been saved and feels the Hand of G-d in his salvation develops a closeness with the *Ribono shel Olam* that he would not have developed had it not been for the *tzarah* that he experienced.

The "willingness" requirement of the *Korban Todah* is that a person should not only feel "*Baruch Hashem*, I got through the operation." Ideally, the appropriate *todah* is "*Baruch Hashem* I was deathly ill and I experienced the *Yad Hashem* of how I got through that crisis." The *Korban Todah* is even for the *tzarah*! That is what the Torah is trying to emphasize here.

I heard from one of my *talmidim* that Rav Baruch Sortozkin, *zt"l*, who was one of the *Roshei Yeshiva* in Telshe – Cleveland in the 1950s, 1960s, and into the 1970s, suffered from cancer. Rav Sortozkin went through the treatment, he went through remission, and for a while he was well. Unfortunately, the cancer came back and he died as a result. He commented that before he went through this experience “if someone would have given me the option of paying him \$1,000,000 to avoid this ordeal, I would have raised the million dollars and paid it. However, after I experienced the illness, “if someone would offer me a \$1,000,000 so that I would not have had to have that experience, I would turn down the million dollars.” In other words, in hindsight, he felt that he gained immeasurably from having had that experience. This is a mind-boggling statement. Not everyone is on such a spiritual level. However, that reaction is based on this idea of the Kesav Sofer. After having gone through the ordeal and having felt the Hand of G-d and the intimacy of *Hashem* who accompanied him through his ordeal, he would not have traded away that experience for a million dollars.

Aveilus: A Moment to Sit and Think

The Sefer HaChinuch (Mitzvah 264) enumerates a positive mitzvah for *Kohanim* to become *tameh* through contact with (specific) relatives upon the time of their death and burial. Even though normally a *Kohen* is forbidden from having contact with any dead people, for the six relatives mentioned in the Torah, he does need to become *tameh*. The *Sefer HaChinuch* emphasizes that the *pesukim* are not merely giving *Kohanim* permission to become *tameh* for a father, mother, son, daughter, brother, or sister, but rather it is a mitzvah to do so.

The Sefer HaChinuch further cites the Rambam that the mitzvah specified here in Parshas Emor is really the *Mitzvah D'Oraisa* (Biblical command) of *aveilus* (mourning for relatives). In truth, the halachic consensus is that only the first day of *aveilus* is a *Mitzvah D'Oraisa*, but still, where is the mitzvah of *aveilus* mentioned in the Torah? The Rambam points to the obligation of a *Kohen* to become *tameh* for close relatives as the source of the entire *Mitzvah D'Oraisa* of *aveilus*. But let us ask a question: How can the Torah require us to mourn for a relative? Mourning is an emotion. If I loved him or her and will truly miss them, I will mourn. If we had a strained or resentful relationship, I will probably not mourn. If, for the last sixty years, I have not been speaking with an estranged close family member, I will not want to mourn. I will not be shedding any tears at their demise.

What does it mean that the Torah is giving us a mitzvah to mourn? To answer this question, the Chinuch invokes an idea he mentions many times in his *sefer* cataloging the 613 mitzvos and the reasons for each of them: Namely, a person's thoughts are influenced by his actions. Theory is all well and good, but it does not make an impression on a person.

In order to feel like free men on Pesach, we need to lean. In order to feel like free men on Pesach, we don't break bones when eating the Korban Pesach. Similarly, the Chinuch writes, there are certain family members for whom a person normally has a positive feeling, and he should feel saddened by their passing from the world. To promote such an emotion, the Torah legislates certain actions demonstrating mourning to trigger thoughts of *aveilus* in the mind of the surviving family member.

The *avel* should pause and contemplate: Loss of a close relative is a *klap* from Heaven. Why did this happen to me? Upon proper

contemplation, he will realize that it was *aveira* which brought this misfortune upon him. In some sense, it is a form of punishment for him.

This idea of the Chinuch is a most necessary lesson for our day and age. His message is that *shiva* and *aveilus* are times to think. Most of us spend very little time thinking. We are too busy. We are incredibly busy, going from 'thing' to 'thing.' Those few moments when we are not busy, too many of us are spacing out or are looking at our cell phones. We are always occupied.

There are very few moments in life when you just need to sit and think. If it would not be for the mitzvah of *aveilus*, a person would never stop to think "What just happened over here?" Why did the person die? What does this have to do with me? Is there some kind of message from Heaven for me here?

Therefore, *aveilus* is a time that the Torah says to do nothing else but think about the relative. It is a time to contemplate.

Ironically, the Chinuch says something similar about another mitzvah in Parshas Emor. Perek 23 contains all the negative mitzvos regarding doing *melacha* on Yom Tov. There is a special *lav* for each *Yom Tov*. We can't do *melacha* on Shabbos because Shabbos commemorates the fact that Hashem rested and did not create on the seventh day.

The *Ribono shel Olam* rested, so we rest.

But why can't we work on Yom Tov? The Chinuch says that we don't work on Yom Tov because the Torah wants us to have the time to think about what the Yom Tov represents. What is Pesach about? What is Shavuos about? If we were allowed to work on Yom Tov, we would be too busy working and we would not spend the time contemplating, which would defeat one of the main purposes of the holiday.

This is the same principle that he explains about *aveilus*. Ironically, the reasons for these two mitzvos – *aveilus* and the *issur melacha* on Yom Tov – are intertwined. They are both providing time to contemplate – whether it is contemplation of a *tzarah* or a *simcha*.

This idea must be extrapolated into our everyday lives: We all lead incredibly busy lives. We must always leave ourselves time to think – not only when the Torah imposes this upon us, like with *aveilus*, *chas v'shalom*.

This need to take time to think was promoted very strongly by the Mussar Movement. What is *mussar* about? It is not just about reading Mesilas Yesharim or reading another classic *mussar* text. It is about sitting and meditating. Everyone needs to take time to think and contemplate.

Even Admirable Midos Have Boundaries

Parshas [Emor](#)

Rabbi Yissocher Frand

The last incident in Parshas Emor seems very strange and troubling. “The son of an Israelite woman went out – and he was the son of an Egyptian man – among the Children of Israel; they contended in the camp, the son of the Israelite woman and the Israelite man...” [Vayikra 24:10]. Two people get into a fight. One of them happens to be a full-fledged Jew and one of them happens to have a Jewish mother and an Egyptian father. The fellow with only a Jewish mother, in the course of the fight, pronounced the Name of G-d followed by a blasphemous remark and he was brought before Moshe. The Torah says the name of his mother: Shlomis daughter of Divree of the Tribe of Dan.

The prohibition of blasphemy is one of the most serious crimes. It is considered a capital offense, and applies even for Noachides. The Blasphemer was temporarily put in jail until his fate was determined. Ultimately, he was given the punishment of *s'kilah* [stoning].

Rashi comments on the fact that the Torah specifies the name of his mother as being Shlomis bas Divree: The Torah here makes known the praise of Israel, for this was the only woman (of all the Jewish women) who was promiscuous. Rashi says that this story – at the end of Parshas Emor – alludes back to a story that occurred all the way back in the timeframe of Parshas Shemos. This was the only Jewish woman, during all the years of Egyptian bondage – that had an extra-marital affair. And even in this case, there was a story behind her having illicit relations with an Egyptian that certainly mitigates the guilt from her perspective. This is what happened: The second *perek* of Sefer Shemos contains the story of the Egyptian taskmaster smiting the Jew. Rashi there reveals that this Jewish victim was none other than the husband of this Shlomis bas Divree, mother of the Blasphemer. This Egyptian taskmaster cast his eyes upon Shlomis bas Divree. He summoned her husband to work early one morning while it was still dark outside. He returned to the fellow's house, climbed into his bed, and had relations with his wife who thought that she was having relations with her husband. Rashi continues that the Jewish husband came home and sensed what happened. He confronted the Egyptian taskmaster who started beating him in an attempt to kill him so that he would not reveal his secret.

The Blasphemer was thus the product of this illicit union between the Egyptian taskmaster (who Moshe kills and buries, in Shemos 2:12) and the wife of the Jew who we find being beaten

in Shemos 2:11, who is identified here in Parshas Emor as Shlomis bas Divree.

In light of what Rashi relates in Parshas Shemos, it is somewhat strange that Rashi here in Parshas Emor calls Shlomis bas Divree a *zonah* [a woman of ill repute]. Based on the narrative cited in Shemos, this woman was guiltless. She had no idea at the time that the Egyptian taskmaster was raping her! We have a universal principle that *ones Rachmana patrei* [the Torah excuses circumstances beyond a person's control]. These were certainly circumstances beyond her control!

Apparently, she did something wrong, because Rashi calls her a *zonah* and says "*pirsema ha'kasuv*" [the Torah reveals her identity]. What did she do wrong?

Rashi continues to expound on the etymology of her name: "Shlomis" – indicating she used to be overly talkative – going around to everyone and saying "Shalom to you; Shalom to you; Shalom to you." Her real name was not Shlomis, but she was called that because it described her activities of going around and schmoozing with everyone she met. However, again we can ask – is saying "Shalom to you" to everyone a good quality or a bad quality? Rabbi Masya ben Charash [Avos 4:15] counsels: "Greet with words of Shalom every person (even before they greet you)." Rashi seems to be throwing the book at this poor Shlomis when she is very undeserving of such chastisement. Rashi likewise says that Divree was also not her father's real name. That name also indicates someone who speaks with every person (from the root word *daber*, meaning to speak). What is going on here?

The basic answer to this question lies in a Medrash HaGadol on this week's parsha. The Medrash HaGadol says on the words "Daughter of Divree" – that she was a "*Dabranis*" [one who talks a lot] and as a result of her speaking too much, she drew attention

to herself, and that is why the Egyptian cast his sights upon her. She was always out there talking to everybody. Therefore, even though that quality can be a positive attribute (as we see in Pirkei Avos), that is true only for the proper time, place and person. A woman who is supposed to be modest cannot be as proactive and outwardly focused as a man can.

True, Rav Masya ben Charish says to go out of your way to greet people before they greet you, but it depends on who and depends under what circumstances. Chazal are trying to point out here by expounding the words "*Bas Divree*" that the mother of the Blasphemer was too talkative, too friendly. Because of that, the Egyptian felt himself drawn towards her. How did he have "eyes for her"? It is because she was out there mixing around and talking with everybody. She went beyond the boundaries of how a proper modest Jewish woman is supposed to act. That is how it happened. This means that she was not totally guiltless or blameless in the unfortunate incident in which she conceived the Blasphemer. This thing happened to her because she stepped over the line. People can misuse and abuse any type of proper human attribute. Chazal are saying that the forwardness of "*Shlomis bas Divree*" got her into trouble.

The Mishna also writes in Avos [1:12]: Be amongst the disciples of Aharon the Kohen – lovers of peace and pursuers of peace. The question is why – in teaching this lesson – does the Mishna need to begin "Be amongst the disciples of Aharon the Kohen"? Let the Mishna say it straight: Be lovers of peace and pursuers of peace! The answer is that being a lover of peace and a pursuer of peace is a fantastic attribute. The Holy One Blessed Be He found no better vessel to hold blessing other than Shalom [peace] [Uktzin 3:12]. However, even Shalom can be overdone. Sometimes a person is not supposed to make Shalom. Sometimes a person

must stand up for what is proper. Therefore, the Mishna does not teach: Always be a lover of peace and a pursuer of peace. No. Be a lover and pursuer of peace like Aharon the Priest. Aharon was a lover and pursuer of peace, but he knew when to make peace and he knew when to say “Thus far, and no further. We cannot compromise.” Therefore, even this very elevated and praiseworthy characteristic, Shalom, has its time and place. Peace too has its boundaries. There is a time to say “Yes” to peace and there is a time to say “No” to peace.

That was the problem of Shlomis bas Divree. Her friendliness, outwardness and over-talkativeness got her into trouble in the first place. The appropriateness of being friendly depends to whom, by whom, where, and when. That is the lesson of this Rashi – there is a time and a boundary for even the most admirable of character traits.

A true masmid

Written by Daniel Shasha

Our Parashah teaches us that the *menorah* should burn “before Hashem continually” (24:4). Rashi explains that it doesn’t mean that it should be burning 24/7; rather it must burn every night. Rabbi Shlomo Wolbe learns from here the true definition of a *masmid*, a diligent student. Not specifically one who never stops learning but one who is very consistent. (*Alei Shur*, vol 2 p. 322) Rashi (*Mishlei* 17:24) says it is the attitude of a fool to say, “the Torah is so vast, there’s no point even trying to learn it”. In contrast a wise person says, “I will learn a bit today and a bit tomorrow”; before he realizes, he will have studied a lot of Torah.

Beyon all realms of possibility!

Written by Rafi Jager

Towards the end of this week's Parsha, we read about the heinous cursing of Hashem perpetrated by a Jew in the Israelite camp.

What follows is a series of laws – blasphemy is punishable by death through stoning, a murderer shall be put to death, and damage of property must be repaid through monetary compensation.

Finally, in the last pasuk we are told, the blasphemer is taken outside the camp and stoned to death, as Hashem had commanded in the aforementioned series of punishments.

Analyzing this passage, it seems strange that the punishments for murder and property damage were included at this point in the Torah. If the subject of this section is the felony of blasphemy, why were the seemingly irrelevant punishments for these other crimes thrown in?

Rabbi Moshe Feinstein, answers that the Torah is highlighting for us the dangerous depths to which a person devoid of fear of Hashem can fall. When a person has slipped to the level that he can physically bring himself to utter a curse of Hashem, the ultimate sign of disrespect for divine rule, murder is no longer beyond his realm of possibilities.

And if, for whatever reason, the circumstances are that he cannot commit murder (because of public opinion or fear of punishment from the government), he is prone to cause damage in any way that he can. To whom will such a person be held responsible? Who will keep him in check? Without fear and belief in a living G-d who will hold us accountable for everything that we do, there is nothing that a person cannot and will not rationalize. Unfortunately, we don't have to search back too far in history to find the ultimate catastrophic results of this mindset. The Torah, therefore, places the punishments for murder and property damage immediately after the punishment for blasphemy, to convey to us that without maintaining a strong belief in Hashem, anything is possible. The welfare of society is dependent upon it.

Good Shabbos!

Live up to the Stature of your Parents!

Written by Benjamin A Rose

“If the daughter of a man who is a Kohen will be defiled through having illicit relations, she has disgraced her father and should be burned.” Rashi explains, “She has disgraced the honor of her father. People will say – Cursed be the one who fathered and raised this child.”

From here we see that a person must live up to the prominence of his parents. He cannot say, “I can be who I want to be although my father is a Rav, Rosh Yeshivah or someone important in the community.” He must act in accordance with their status. We see this from the fact that the daughter of a Kohen is burned and does not receive the typical punishment of strangulation that a regular woman who is Mezanah receives. She must live up to the fact that her father is a Kohen and has a greater level of Kedushah.

Rabbi Yisrael Meir Benkus, a Torah scholar of note, use to carry a small pocket Gemarah with him. Where ever he had a few minutes spare, he would open it and learn, even if it was just for a minute or two.

Over time, those moments accumulated. Eventually, Rabbi Benkus completed the entire Talmud—not through his regular learning shecule but through these small pockets of time throughout his day!

Although he had many siyumin on Shas this siyum had special significance.

Humor

Q: What do you call a potato that smokes weed?

A: A baked potato.

Q: What do you call a potato that’s reluctant to jump into boiling water?

A: A hesi-tater.

A young Israeli returns from an extended trip in India just in time for Lag B'Omer – “I was going to try walking on hot burning coals but I got cold feet.”

Q: What is a potato's life philosophy?

A: I think, therefore I yam.