

**Wembley Synagogue**

אָמַר

Insights from the commentators into the Sidra of Emor

אָמַר אֶל הַכֹּהֲנִים בְּנֵי אַהֲרֹן - Say to the *Kohanim*, the sons of Aharon, and tell them....(21:1)
Why wasn't Moshe commanded to convey this to Aharon himself? The *Midrash Rabbah* (*Shemot* 32:1) states that if the Jews would have waited for Moshe to return from the mountain and would not have made the golden calf, there would not have been any exile and the angel of death would not have any power over them. When the Jews proclaimed at Sinai that they would "do and listen," Hashem said that they were worthy to live forever. However, when they proclaimed a few weeks later in reference to the golden calf, "This is your god, O' Israel," death returned to them. Since the phenomenon of death returned to the Jewish people through the worshipping of the golden calf, which was made with Aharon's assistance, the laws of defilement by a corpse were said to his children and not to him in order not to cause him any pain. (In reality Aharon did not personally contravene any Torah law, and adamantly opposed the worship of the calf (see *Midrash Rabbah*, *Vayikra* 7:1), but the thought that death was related in some way to his actions would have hurt him immensely) (Source: Vedibarta Bam)

אָמַר אֶל הַכֹּהֲנִים בְּנֵי אַהֲרֹן - Say to the Kohanim,...and tell them (21:1)

Rashi explains that the Torah uses the redundant wording of "Emor (say) followed by V'amarta (and you shall say), to tell us that this is "*hazhir gedolim al haketanim*," – to warn the adults regarding the children. In a constructive lesson for the Kohanim, the Torah teaches us a valuable lesson. Only by appropriate attention to the education of the children can our future be assured. Ignoring the process of education can have devastating effects (Source: Peninim on the Torah)

לֹא יִקְרְחוּ קִרְחָה בְּרֵאשָׁם - They (the Kohanim) should not make a bald spot on their heads (and they should not shave the edge of their beard, and in their flesh they should not scratch a scratch. They shall be holy to their G-d) (21:5-6)

The above practices were common among the priests of idolatry to distinguish themselves as priests. The Kohanim were forbidden to follow these practices since they had to distinguish themselves through exemplary service to Hashem. This concept is alluded to in the above verse. After listing the various prohibitions upon the Kohanim, the Torah states "they should be holy to their G-d." That is, their distinction should come from the fact that they are "holy to their G-d" and not from any form of self-mutilation. (Source: R' Yehoshua Leib Diskin - P'ninim Mishulchan Govoha)

וְלֹא תַחַלְלוּ אֶת שְׁם קְדֹשִׁי - And you shall not desecrate My name (22:32)

The Chafetz Chaim said that Jews can be compared to officers. When a person dons a uniform with its indication of rank, he is expected to act in a manner befitting his station. Should he fail to do so, he brings shame to those he serves. (Source: The Parsha Anthology)

The opposite of Chillul Hashem (profane the name of Hashem) is Kiddush Hashem (to sanctify the name of Hashem by acting in a manner that brings honour on Jews in the eyes of non-Jews. A striking example of Kiddush Hashem is given in the Talmud Yerushalmi Bava Metzia 5:2. Rabbi Shmuel bar Sorsarti was in Rome when the queen lost her jewels, and found them. A proclamation was issued warning the finder to return them within thirty days; after the expiration of the date he would be beheaded. The Rabbi did not return them until thirty days had passed. The queen asked him whether the reason for the delay was his absence from the country, but he admitted that he had been in Rome all the time and knew of the proclamation. "Why then did you not return the jewels to me within thirty days?" she asked. The rabbi replied "so that you would not say that I was prompted by fear of you to return them, but by fear of heaven." The queen then exclaimed "Blessed be the G-d of the Jews!" Although unlikely to be as dramatic, opportunities for Kiddush Hashem present themselves in daily life today as well. (Source: From week to week – Sidra Messages for Today- Rabbi G Jacobs ZTL)

דַּבֵּר אֶל בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל...מִקְרָאֵי קֹדֶשׁ - Speak to the Children of Israel (23:2)

Rabbi Yonasan Eybeschutz comments that until this point, all of the mitzvot in the sidra were addressed to Aharon and his children while here the Torah addresses the entire nation. He explains that the mitzvah of the sanctification of the Festivals was given to the entire nation and not specifically to the Kohanim. (Source: The Parsha Anthology)

Speak to the Children of Israel and say to them: The appointed times of Hashem, that you are to designate as holy convocations; these are my appointed times. (23:2)

After introducing the chapter of the festivals with this verse, the Torah proceeds to speak about Shabbat in the next verse. Rashi explains that the Torah speaks of the Shabbat when listing the festivals in order to teach us that one who desecrates the festivals is viewed as having desecrated Shabbat, while one who observes the festivals is viewed as one who has observed the Shabbat. Rabbi Moshe Feinstein ZTL in his commentary *Darash Moshe* explains that the lesson of Shabbat and the festivals are complimentary. The observance of Shabbat demonstrates our faith in the fact that Hashem created the world in six days and rested on the seventh. And the observance of the festivals demonstrates our belief that Hashem Himself continues the management of the world, and changes nature as He wills to benefit His nation. We celebrate Pesach to commemorate the fact that Hashem took us out of Egypt with wonders and miracles to make us His nation. We celebrate Sukkot to commemorate the fact that Hashem provided us with Clouds of Glory to shelter us in the desert and we celebrate Shavuot to commemorate the fact that Hashem gave us the Torah. The Torah juxtaposes the observance of Shabbat next to the observance of the festivals to teach us that belief in one of these truths without the other is insufficient –The belief that Hashem created the world and that everything that occurs in it is under His management are in fact two parts of a whole and this explains the juxtaposition of Yom Tov and Shabbat in the verse.

And when you make the harvest of your land, you shall not complete your field's harvest down to the last corner. (23:22)

When harvesting, the owner of a field is obligated to leave over the last portion for poor people. Why did the Torah see fit to provide charity to the needy in the form of unharvested grain or fruit? The person must now harvest, thresh, grind and bake that which he gathers up. Wouldn't the pauper appreciate something that was ready to enjoy? The answer is that the Torah wants the poor man to enjoy the feeling of owning something. Toiling over "his own" section of the field, will give him a degree of the satisfaction. (Source: R' Aharon Bakst - P'ninim MiShulchan Govoha)

You shall take for yourselves on the first day the fruit of a tree of splendour... (23:40). Proper intentions are extremely important when performing a Mitzvah, remarked the Baal Shem Tov. A person should make sure that his intentions are solely for the sake of Heaven and not for the sake of earning honour or any other motive. For example, when a person goes looking for a beautiful etrog before Sukkot, he must investigate his true motives. Is his intention purely for the sake of honouring Heaven or is he merely interested in displaying the magnificent etrog before an admiring crowd. This is alluded to in the acronym of the verse in Tehilim (36:12) "אל תבואי רגל גאה" "Let not the foot of arrogance come to me" the first Hebrew letter of each word spell "etrog" (Source: A Shabbos Vort)

You shall set them (the show-bread)... upon the pure table before Hashem (24:6) This teaches that they would lift it and display the show-bread to the Festival pilgrims and say to them: "Behold the love in which you are held by Hashem; it is taken away as fresh as it was set down" (Gemara Chagigah 26)

Why were the pilgrims shown just this particular miracle; i.e. that the show-bread would remain fresh for eight whole days? The students of Rav Shimeon bar Yochai asked him why did the manna fall from Heaven every day and not just once a year? (Yoma 76a)

He answered them with a parable. A King gave his son his yearly allowance in one lump sum at the beginning of the year. This resulted in the prince seeing the King only once a year. The King wished to see his son more often, so he decided to give him a daily allowance, forcing the prince to come by everyday. Likewise with the manna, Bnei Yisrael would worry every day that perhaps there would be no manna on the following day and they would die. This forced them to turn their hearts to Hashem everyday. The other reason is a practical one - so that the Jews would have fresh bread to eat daily.

Hashem chose to send down the manna each day, because like the king who loved his son, Hashem loved Bnei Yisrael so much that He wanted them to go each day to meet with them. Hence the show-bread was shown to the festival pilgrims as a symbol of Hashem's abiding love for His people. (Source: Imrei Tzvi)

Shabbat Shalom



Shabbat starts 8.00pm



Shabbat ends: 9.25pm