

SHABBAT SHALOM FROM CYBERSPACE**EMOR****Haftarah: Yehezkel 44:15-31****MAY 13, 2017 17 IYAR 5777****Pesach Sheni is Wednesday May 10th****Lag Ba'Omer will be celebrated on Sunday, May 14th****DEDICATION: Happy Anniversary Chantelle, Happy Birthday Alfred and Victor
In memory of Rabbi Binyomin Kamenetzky**

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Rabbi Wein**RABBI BINYAMIN KAMENETZKY, Z'TL**

Rabbi Binyamin Kamenetzky passed away last week. He was the eldest son of the great Rabbi Yaakov Kamenetzky and was a distant relative of our family in previous generations. Presently, a niece of mine is married to one of his sons. But this familial relationship was not the basis of my connection with him and my admiration of his great accomplishments of a long lifetime.

He was a member of a generation of pioneers in Jewish education that operated after World War II and reshaped and revitalized Orthodox Jewry in the United States. Driven by faith in the past and a vision for the future, reviled and ridiculed by the then Jewish establishment and Federations, these Torah scholars established Jewish day schools with scant financial backing. Going against the tuition free schooling offered from a then excellent public school educational system, this cadre of dedicated young men founded schools in then unlikely places, schools that changed the face of American Jewry until today.

A leading figure in that revolution in American Jewish life was Rabbi Binyamin Kamenetzky. He headed a school in Nassau County, the Yeshiva of the South Shore. Today this area has a very strong and large Orthodox community. But many decades ago Nassau County was alien territory – perhaps even enemy territory – as far as meaningful Jewish education was concerned.

Many Jewish leaders of the time called the Day School movement un-American! And in that area and environment, Rabbi Binyamin Kamenetzky, over

many decades of toil and talent, built an empire of Jewish education and Torah observance.

But perhaps just as importantly, Rabbi Kamenetzky was a force for good in all areas of Jewish life in the Five Towns area of Nassau County. Every individual and every Jewish institution could rely on his counsel, influence, and personal and political connections for help in times of need and crisis.

His vision was wider than just his school and its needs. In a world that sometimes defined itself by turf and exclusivity, he saw beyond narrow parochial borders and envisaged the Jewish community as a whole. The Five Towns and Far Rockaway areas of greater New York today contain many and varied institutions of Jewish learning. But that is only because of the pioneering labor of that generation after the war that undertook the daunting task of rebuilding the Jewish world after its near destruction seventy years ago.

It was a generation of unsung and unknown heroes and Rabbi Binyamin Kamenetzky was representative of those brave visionaries and dedicated educators. Because the Lord gifted him with a long life span in practical terms, he outlived his generation and never really received his due. He was a symbol of past greatness but his very presence amongst us still had influence and lessons to learn.

This scion of a great rabbinic family, born in the heartland of Jewish life in prewar Lithuania, succeeded in America, undaunted by its strangeness and completely different culture. This ability was a hallmark of his public and private persona. They don't make them this way any longer.

He was a very creative person. He founded a lunch and learn program in Manhattan long before that type of program became regular and normal in American Jewish life. I spoke for his group a number of times many decades ago and I always marveled as to his ability to bring together so many disparate Jews of various backgrounds for an hour of Torah study in the midst of a busy business day.

Lunch and Learn programs now exist everywhere in the Jewish world today and are important in the never-ending battle to keep Jews Jewish. My first experience with this type of program was when Rabbi Binyamin Kamenetzky invited me to speak. It was an experience I have never forgotten and I still cherish.

Aside from the thousands of young people who received their Jewish education through his school there are many others, young and old, that have benefited from his initiatives, programs and personal guidance and interest. Rabbi Binyamin Kamenetzky was a throwback to a world that once was and will never be again, he saw a world that would rebuild Jewish life and reward all of those that kept faith with Torah and observance. A unique personality whose lifespan covered a radically and rapidly changing society, his perspective and counsel will be sorely missed. May his memory be a blessing to his family and all who were privileged to know him.

Editors Notes

Would We Have Acted Differently? Emor 5777

We begin this week's portions with Hashem telling Moses, Emor El HaKohanin ... Speak to the Kohanim the children of Aaron, VeAmarta Aleyhem ... And say to them. The rabbis ask why the double language of Emor and Amarta, say and say? From this we learn that one generation is responsible to teach another generation. I also see a lesson in the use of the word emor as opposed to the word daber. The rabbis teach that emor is used to speak in a soft way as opposed to daber which is used to speak in a harsh manner. Perhaps there is a lesson to try to teach in a soft manner.

Last week we added a new column, Rav Kook on the Perasha to our weekly newsletter. When I told the following story I heard from Rabbi A Leib Sheinbaum of Cleveland, my friend Mark Raymer mentioned that it sounded typical of Rav Kook who saw the best in everyone and elevated everyone he met.

The story takes place in 1945. Rabbi Moshe David Tenenbaum, zl, who was then head of the Vaad HaYeshivos in the Holy Land, went for a vacation in a small village in the north. As he was walking one day, a member of a nearby kibbutz approached him and asked if he could serve as the tenth man for a minyan. At first, the rabbi thought the fellow was teasing him, since it was a non-religious kibbutz and prayer with a minyan, was uncommon to say the least. How surprised he was when he arrived at the kibbutz to meet the other members of the minyan. His surprise increased when he discovered that they

were not praying, but rather, performing a Brit Milah. The mohel, ritual circumciser, was a fellow in shorts, who did not appear to be observant. Nonetheless, the mohel recited the blessings fluently and performed the circumcision flawlessly, with apparent skill.

Immediately following the ceremony, the rabbi approached the mohel and asked him where he had practiced to become such a specialist. The man explained that he used to be a Vishnitzer Chasid and had for years been a mohel in Vishnitz. Upon arriving in Israel, his relationship with Hashem had waned, and once he joined the kibbutz, he had naturally become estranged from Jewish observance. Nonetheless, he still retained his skill as a mohel, which he employed when needed.

They finished their conversation, and Rav Moshe David was about to leave when the father of the infant came over and made a request: "We have an elderly grandfather who - due to his failing health - was unable to attend the ceremony. I am sure that it would mean the world to him if you could visit with him a moment and extend a blessing of mazel tov." Rav Moshe David was only too happy to hearten an elderly Jew. He went to the home and met the grandfather, who was confined to a wheelchair. He sat down next to him and began a conversation. He introduced himself as hailing from Jerusalem where he was a chasid of Karlin. As soon as he mentioned his connection with Karlin, the grandfather's eyes perked up, and he said, "I must tell you a story.

"I immigrated to Israel from Germany, where I had lived an assimilated lifestyle (as did many German Jews who had fallen under the influence of the scourge of Haskalah, Enlightenment.) One Friday night, my friend informed me that a Chassidic Rebbe - Rabbi Yisrael Perlow, zl, had arrived in Germany for health reasons. Chassidic Rebbes were not common in Germany and certainly not in Berlin. We felt it would be an interesting sight (a Rebbe conducting his Tish surrounded by his Chassidim around a large table). I already owned a car, so although it was Shabbat, we drove over to where the Rebbe was conducting his Tish.

"We entered the large room to see the Rebbe about to speak. 'I rarely speak Torah thoughts at the Shabbos Tish,' the Rebbe began. 'Since I am a guest visiting Berlin, however, I will change my custom and say divrei Torah.' That Shabbos was Parashas Kedoshim. It has been quite some time, and I have gone through much since that time. Nonetheless, I was so impacted by the holy Rebbe's words, I remember them as if they were today. The Rebbe began with the opening words of the parsha, Kedoshim tiheyu, 'You shall be holy.' He then quoted

the rest of the pasuk and the next; the Torah's enjoinder to revere parents, followed by the commandment to observe Shabbat, with the closing words - 'I am Hashem.'

"What is the relationship between these statements?' the Rebbe asked. 'It all depends on to whom one is speaking. To my Chassidim, it is sufficient to simply say to them - "You shall be holy." However, there are Jews for whom this is almost too much to ask (being that they are no longer religiously-connected with Hashem). To them, the Torah says, "Every man: your father and mother shall you revere." If you are no longer observant, then at least do what your parents did. Surely, there must have been a semblance of Jewish observance at home. Attempt to maintain old family practices (as a way of holding onto Judaism). As long as one holds on, there is hope. Sadly, there are Jews who have distanced themselves, so that they are not prepared to observe all of the practices that were part of their life growing up at home. To them the Torah admonishes: at least keep My Shabbos. That much you do remember.'

"I thought it was over, when, suddenly, the Rebbe raised his voice, banged on the table and declared, 'From you, Jews of Berlin, even that we cannot expect. (You have gravitated away so far, distancing yourselves from ritual observance, parental customs, even the basics, like Shabbos.) You should at least remember, "Ani Hashem, I am Hashem! Remember that there is a Creator Who guides this world!"

"The Rebbe's pounding on the table set off a pounding in my heart. At that time, I had a daughter who was engaged to marry a gentile (that was Berlin in those days. Sadly, it was not uncommon). I did not need more. The Rebbe's pounding continued to pound in my chest. I dropped everything, and within a week, I was on a boat to Eretz Yisrael. If you saw today a grandchild of mine receive a Brit Milah, it is only because I attended the Rebbe's Tish. That night's pounding of Ani Hashem has been my conscience throughout these years."

The rabbi went on to explain that the casual spectator who sees such a non-observant man does not take the time to wonder if there is another side to the story. He might easily disregard the many grandfathers we all often see. Do we ever stop to think: Why? Why is he like this? What was his background: Who turned him off? Was he ever turned on? What kind of life did he have?

He continued, I meet such people every week in various settings. Some never had a chance. Some were even raised Orthodox but assimilated when they went off to school. For some it was financial,

peer pressure, ignorance, lack of interest, but everyone has a story. We must never forget this. We must never judge - because, who knows, if given similar circumstances, whether we would have acted differently - or even worse?

I was so moved by these words. I thought every teacher and every parent should hear them. I wanted to know more about Rabbi Perlow, the Stoliner Rebbe who passed away shortly after this story, I thought of what a remarkable man he must have been. I wanted to know more about Rabbi Tennebaum who had such tremendous insight and when I thought about what Mark had said, it really made sense. This sounded like Rav Kook and perhaps is why Rav Kook was the great man he was. It behooves us all to study the words and writings of such special people and hope that some of it brushes up on us.

Shabbat Shalom,

David Bibi

Rav Kook on the Parasha Kohanim and the Illusion of Death

"God told Moses, 'Speak to the kohanim, the descendants of Aaron. Let no [kohen] defile himself [by contact] with a dead soul among his people.'" (Lev. 21:1)

Why are kohanim not allowed to come in contact with a dead body? Why does the Torah refer to the dead person as a "dead soul"? After all, it is the body that dies, not the soul!

The Parable of Twin Brothers: In his book on mourning practices, Geshet Hachaim, Rabbi Tukachinsky used the following parable to explain the Jewish view on life after death:

Twin brothers, fetuses in their mother's womb, enjoyed a carefree life. Their world was dark and warm and protected. These twins were alike in all aspects but one. One brother was a 'believer': he believed in an afterlife, in a future reality much different from their current, miniature universe.

The second brother, however, was a skeptic. All he knew was the familiar world of the womb. Anything besides what he could feel and sense was only an illusion. The skeptic tried to talk some sense into his brother. He warned him to be realistic, but to no avail. His naive brother insisted on believing in an extraordinary world that exists after life in the womb, a world so immense and fantastic that it transcends their wildest dreams.

Summary of the Perasha

The months passed, and the fatal moment arrived. Labor began. The fetuses became aware of tremendous contractions and shifting in their little world. The freethinker recognized that 'this is it.' His short but pleasant life was about to end. He felt the forces pressuring him to go down, but fought against them. He knew that outside the womb, a cruel death awaited, with no protective sack and no umbilical cord. Suddenly, he realized that his naive brother was giving in to the forces around them. His brother was sinking lower!

"Don't give up!" he cried, but his twin took no heed. "Where are you, my dear brother?" He shuddered as he heard the screams from outside the womb. His poor brother had met his cruel fate. How naive he had been, with his foolish belief in a bigger, better world!

Then the skeptic felt the uterine muscles pushing him out, against his will, into the abyss. He screamed out ...

"Mazal Tov!" called out the doctor. "Two healthy baby boys!"

The Illusion of Death

Rav Kook wrote: "Death is a false illusion; its defilement is due to its deceptive nature. What people call 'death' is in fact the intensification of life. Because man wallows in pettiness, he pictures this increase of life in a pained, black fashion, which he calls 'death.'"

The kohanim in their holiness are able to rise above this falsehood. Yet, falsehood and deception rule over the world. In order to overcome the illusion of death, the kohanim must limit their exposure to death. They need to protect themselves from those images that impress the soul with deceiving messages.

The word 'soul' in the verse does not refer to soul of the dead person. It refers to the soul of the kohen. This is how the verse should be understood: "For the sake of the soul, the kohen shall not defile himself among his people" — for the sake of the kohen's soul, he must distance and protect himself from death and its illusions.

(Gold from the Land of Israel pp. 207-209. Adapted from Orot HaKodesh vol. II, p. 380.)

Emor - Holiness regarding Kohanim, Holidays

- 1- Laws of a regular Kohen and a Kohen gadol (who he can become tameh for, mourn for, and marry)
- 2- Blemishes that disqualify a Kohen from service, laws regarding a Kohen who becomes tameh (and what kodshim he can eat), who a Kohen can share his teruma with
- 3- Blemishes and other characteristics that disqualify an animal for a korban
- 4- Holidays - Pesach, Omer, Shavuot
- 5- Holidays- Rosh Hashana, Kippur
- 6- Holidays- Succoth, Shemini Asseret
- 7- Details regarding the menorah and the show bread, the blasphemer, laws of murder and damages

FROM THE RABBIS OF THE JERSEY SHORE

"They shall be holy to their G-d and they shall not desecrate the Name of their G-d." (Vayikra 21:6)

The Torah states that Kohanim shall be holy to G-d and they shall not desecrate His Name. This teaches us that a Kohen who falls short of holiness is guilty of desecrating Hashem's Name. Why is it considered desecrating Hashem's Name if one does not become holy? Surely there is a big gap between one who falls short of holiness and one who desecrates Hashem's Name?

Rabbi Eli Scheller explains with a parable. When a manager of a baseball team is choosing players, he only chooses those that he believes have tremendous potential. The players he picks, he believes, will perform incredibly well and they will assist the team in winning the championship. If one of the players begins goofing off, it will reflect poorly on the team and on the manager. The manager needs each player to be the best he can be in his position, not merely mediocre.

So too, when Hashem – the Ultimate Manager – chooses His players in this world, He only chooses those that can become great and accomplish big things. Hashem assigned every individual a position and a mission which, if he fails to complete, reflects negatively on the whole team. A person who is merely average isn't fulfilling his mission in life and he thereby desecrates Hashem's Name.

A Kohen, and perhaps all of us, make up Hashem's team. Rabbi Reuven Semah

"Say to the Kohanim and say to them..." (Vayikra 21:1)

The Torah repeats the word "emor and VeAmarta" as if emphasizing this commandment that the Kohanim should not become defiled by a dead body. The Rabbis learn from the extra word that we must train our children to keep the misvot just like we do. The question is asked, "Why is the obligation to teach our children to keep the commandments said by the laws of Kohanim and their prohibition to become impure?"

One possible answer is that when a Kohen tells his son not to come in contact with impurity, the son may question his father, "How come the other people don't have this restriction? Even very observant people are allowed to touch a dead body. How come I may not?" The Kohen father must tell his son, "You are different, my son. You are a Kohen. We have greater responsibilities; therefore, more is expected of us." This is the way we should train our children. We have to build them up and show them how great they can be, and that more is expected of them than of the rest of the world. The Jewish people have a mission in this world and when a child realizes that he has a part in that mission, then he will rise to the occasion and become that special person. Compared to the rest of the world, we are a kingdom of Kohanim and therefore have to act and live on a different level! Rabbi Shmuel Choueka

"Be very very humble" (Pirke Abot 4:4)

Pirke Abot is filled from beginning to end with moral lessons and advice. Yet, more emphasis ("very very") is placed on this statement than on any other. It is almost as if there is some kind of danger in being conceited or in seeking honor. Why is humility given such great importance, more than any other trait? It is known that in this world there is no reward for misvot. Rather, the rewards are all in the next world. The reason for this is that all the benefits a person can possibly get in this world would not be enough payment for even one misvah. This is because misvot are spiritual in nature. They cannot be rewarded with material things, because the payment would not correspond to the deed. However, if one receives honor for a misvah, he is getting some compensation for his deed, since honor is spiritual in nature.

This is what this Mishnah is warning us about. If someone seeks honor and receives it, he is using up his merits for which he was to be rewarded in the World to Come. One should be exceedingly humble and run away from honor, because he has no idea how much of his future reward he may be using up for a fleeting moment of praise and honor. (Hafess Hayim al HaTorah)

RABBI ELI MANSOUR Man and Beast

At the end of Parashat Emor, we read of the unfortunate incident of the "Megadef," the blasphemer, a man from Beneh Yisrael who publicly blasphemed the name of God. In response, God instructed Moshe that the "Megadef" must be put to death. Interestingly enough, however, God's instructions do not end there. He then proceeded to tell Moshe other, seemingly unrelated laws: "One who kills an animal shall pay for it, and one who kills a person shall die" (24:21). For some reason, after establishing the punishment for blasphemy, God finds it necessary to add that one is liable to capital punishment for murder, and one who kills somebody's animal must compensate for the loss. How are these laws relevant to the context of the "Megadef"?

The sin of the "Megadef" involves his misuse of the faculty of speech. Our ability to communicate ideas through words is a remarkable gift from Hashem, and is what distinguishes us and sets us fundamentally apart from other creatures. And we have been given this gift to use for lofty purposes – to speak kindly to others, to pray, to learn, and to help develop and advance the world. The "Megadef" used this power for the precise opposite purpose – to defame and desecrate the Name of God. God emphasizes this aspect of the "Megadef" story by noting the distinction between killing people and killing animals. A murderer is liable to the death penalty, whereas killing somebody's animal is punishable only by compensation. The loss of an animal can be compensated for, but the loss of a human life can never be repaid. Human beings are fundamentally different from beasts, as we are endowed with a sacred soul, and this difference is most clearly manifest through the power of verbal communication. Therefore, when responding to the tragic incident of the "Megadef," God noted the legal distinction between murder and killing an animal. He emphasizes the special status of human beings, who are able to speak and express ideas, thus highlighting the gravity of blasphemy, the ultimate misuse and defilement of the faculty of speech.

The Torah makes a point of informing us that the "Megadef" was the son of a woman named Shlomit Bat Dibri. The name "Dibri," which relates to the root "D.B.R." ("speak"), likely alludes to the fact that she was a talkative woman, who did not exercise proper discretion in speech. The Torah thus mentions her name to show us the origins of the "Megadef," the family background that very possibly led to his heinous crime. Parents who speak improperly are likely to beget children who speak improperly. It is no

coincidence that a woman referred to as "Bat Dibri" had a son who defiled his tongue by blaspheming the Almighty.

Few, if any, of us are likely to follow the example of the "Megadef" and publicly curse the Name of God. Nevertheless, we have much to learn from this unfortunate episode about the value and sanctity of speech. As speech is what sets us apart from animals, the way we talk in a sense defines the extent of our humanity. We must exercise extreme care in how we use this remarkable power, and always speak in a dignified, proper and refined manner, using this gift the way God intended for it to be used. And as we see from the story of the "Megadef," the way we speak has a profound effect upon our children, whose own manner of speech develops according to the example they see at home. If they watch and hear us speaking properly, this is how will they will speak, as well, and they will thus grow to use God's gift for the purposes it was intended, to glorify His Name and bring more Kedusha into the world.

Rabbi Meyer Laniado Shabuot and Matan Torah?

The *pesuqim* that refer to *Shabuot* in *perashat Emor* speak about a *minha*, the *minhat haOmer*, and then about counting towards the next offering, the *Shetei haLehem*. Yet, we will say in our *tefilla* on *Shabuot: zeman matan toratenu*, the time of the giving of our Torah. Where does this connection between *Shabuot*, literally the counting of weeks until the offering of the *Shetei haLehem*, and the receiving of the Torah stem from?

In the Torah we find no reference to *Shabuot* being about the receiving of the Torah [1]. What we do find are three names for the holiday of *Shabuot*:

- 1 *Hag haQasir* – Harvest Holiday [Shemot 23:16]
- 2 *Hag Shabuot* – Holiday of Weeks [Shemot 34:22]
- 3 *Yom haBikkurim* – The Day of First Fruits [Bemidbar 28:26]

All three of these names are agricultural. *Hag haQasir* the wheat harvest, *Hag Shabuot* the weeks we count from the barley harvest to the wheat harvest, and *Yom haBikkurim*, that after the offering of the *Shetei haLehem*, one may bring the first of their produce to the *Beit haMiqdash*. So, what is the connection between this agricultural holiday as described in the Torah and what we are stating in our *tefilla zeman matan toratenu*?

Matan Torah did happen around the time of *Shabuot*, but the Torah itself did not mark *Shabuot* as an anniversary of *Matan Torah*, in contrast to the other two of the *shalosh regalim*, which were given a historical dimension by the Torah. It seems the *Hakhamim* were trying to deliver a key message by creating this connection: **אם אין קמח אין תורה** [2]. If there is no flour, there is no Torah, if there is no Torah, there is no flour. Both of the elements in this Mishna, flour, and Torah, sustain us. Flour is the basic ingredient for bread, our physical sustenance, while Torah is our spiritual sustenance.

Abraham Maslow in his paper "A Theory of Human Motivation" (1943) noted that to achieve higher level goals and ultimate "self-actualization," what we may term spirituality, we must first have our basic needs taken care of. If we are worried about finding our next meal or scared for our lives, concerned about our physical or even emotional security, we will have a difficult time thinking about our purpose in this world. Our basic level needs must be met so that we can strive to accomplish our higher goals.

This idea was articulated many years before Dr. Maslow by Dr. Maimon (Maimonides) in the thirteenth century. HaRambam states in his commentary to the tenth chapter of Sanhedrin and the ninth Chapter of his *Hilkhot Teshuba* that the reward, wealth, and military security we are promised in the Torah, such as in *Perashat Behuqotai*, is to allow us to achieve our higher level goal of developing a relationship with the Creator of the world. Once our physical needs are taken care of, and we are no longer worried about feeding ourselves or defending our lives, we can more easily spend time contemplating existence and reality.

Now it should be clear what the *Hakhamim* were trying to relay to us through connecting *Shabuot* with *Matan Torah*. *Shabuot* is the harvest season for wheat and fruits, it is the time of plenty, and our physical needs are more than taken care of. It is now when we are feeling satiated that we must remember that our physical sustenance is only a stepping stone to reach a higher level of existence, a life where we can develop our relationship with the Creator of the world through properly following the Torah and the *Misvot*.

‘אם אין תורה אין קמח, אם אין קמח אין תורה’

‘If There Is No Torah There Is No Sustenance (flour), If
There Is No Sustenance (flour) There Is No Torah’

[1] It is true that the Torah was received during this time period, but never in the Torah is it stated that *Shabuot* is the celebration of the receiving of the Torah. Furthermore, there was no set date for *Shabuot* as it was not originally meant to commemorate the day of *Matan Torah*,

rather to express gratitude for the beginning of the harvest of grain and first fruits Shemot 23:16, Vayiqra 23:15-17, Debarim 16:9-11 and remains the theme through Mishna Bikkurim 1:3, Rosh Hashana 1:2

One should note that until Hillel II, months were established based on witnesses and there was no fixed calendar. Some months ended up having 29 days, some 30, depending on when the witnesses were vetted by the court. Therefore, *Shabuot* could have fallen on the 5th, 6th, or 7th of Sivan. Note dispute in T Bavli Shabbat 86b ת"ר בששי בחדש ניטנו עשרת הדברות לישראל רבי יוסי אומר בשבעה בו

The idea that *Shabuot* is the anniversary of *Matan Torah* can be sourced as early as R. Eliezer at the end of the fourth century. He states that everyone can agree that the "*Aseret*," *Shabuot*, is the day that the Torah was given. Pesahim 68b: א"ר אלעזר הכל מודים בעצרת דבעינן נמי לכם מ"ט יום שניתנה בו תורה הוא. The connection is then echoed by Rambam, Ramban, and Sefer Hahinukh Rambam (Moreh Nevukhim, Section 3, Chapter XLIII), Ramban (Vayikra 23:36), and Sefer Hahinuch (Misvah #306)

[2] Masekhet Abot 3:17

**VICTOR BIBI
SOD HAPARASHA**

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**Rabbi Sir Jonathan Sacks
The Duality of Jewish Time**

Alongside the holiness of place and person is the holiness of time, something parshat Emor charts in its deceptively simple list of festivals and holy days (Lev. 23:1-44).

Time plays an enormous part in Judaism. The first thing God declared holy was a day: Shabbat, at the conclusion of creation. The first mitzvah given to the Jewish people as a whole, prior to the Exodus, was the command to sanctify time, by determining and applying the Jewish calendar (Ex. 12:1-2).

The prophets were the first people in history to see God in history, seeing time itself as the arena of the Divine-human encounter. Virtually every other religion and civilisation before and since has identified God, reality and truth with timelessness.

Isaiah Berlin used to quote Alexander Herzen who said about the Slavs that they had no history, only geography. The Jews, he said, had the reverse: a great deal of history but all too little geography. Much time, but little space.

So time in Judaism is an essential medium of the spiritual life. But there is one feature of the Jewish approach to time that has received less attention than it should: the duality that runs through its entire temporal structure.

Take, for instance, the calendar as a whole. Christianity uses a solar calendar, Islam a lunar one. Judaism uses both. We count time both by the monthly cycle of the moon and the seasonal cycle of the sun.

Then consider the day. Days normally have one identifiable beginning, whether this is at nightfall or daybreak or – as in the West – somewhere between. For calendar purposes, the Jewish day begins at nightfall ("And it was evening and it was morning, one day"). But if we look at the structure of the prayers – the morning prayer instituted by Abraham, afternoon by Isaac, evening by Jacob – there is a sense in which the worship of the day starts in the morning, not the night before.

Years, too, usually have one fixed beginning – the "new year". In Judaism, according to the Mishnah (Rosh Hashanah 1:1), there are no less than four new years. The first of Ellul is the new year for the tithing of animals. The fifteenth of Shevat (the first according to Bet Shammai) is the new year for trees. These are specific and subsidiary dates, but the other two are more fundamental.

According to the Torah, the first month of the year is Nissan. This was the day the earth became dry after the Flood (Gen. 8:13)[1]. It was the day the Israelites received their first command as a people (Ex. 12:2). One year later it was the day the Tabernacle was dedicated and the service of the priests inaugurated (Ex. 40:2). But the festival we call the New Year, Rosh Hashanah, falls six months later.

Holy time itself comes in two forms, as Emor makes clear. There is Shabbat and there are the festivals, and the two are announced separately. Shabbat was sanctified by God at the beginning of time for all time. The festivals are sanctified by the Jewish people to whom was given the authority and responsibility for fixing the calendar.

Hence the difference in the blessings we say. On Shabbat we praise God who "sanctifies Shabbat". On the festivals we praise God who sanctifies "Israel and the holy times" – meaning, it is God who sanctifies Israel but Israel who sanctify the holy times, determining on which days the festivals fall.

Even within the festivals there is a dual cycle. One is formed by the three pilgrimage festivals: Pesach, Shavuot and Sukkot. These are days that represent the key historic moments at the dawn of Jewish time – the Exodus, the giving of the Torah, and the forty years of desert wandering. They are festivals of history.

The other is formed by the number seven and the concept of holiness: the seventh day, Shabbat; the seventh month, Tishri, with its three festivals of Rosh Hashanah, Yom Kippur and Sukkot; the seventh year, Shemitah; and the Jubilee marking the completion of seven seven-year cycles.

These times (with the exception of Sukkot that belongs to both cycles) have less to do with history than with what, for want of a better word, we might call metaphysics and jurisprudence, ultimate truths about the universe, the human condition, and the laws, both natural and moral, under which we live.

Each is about creation (Shabbat, a reminder of it, Rosh Hashanah the anniversary of it), divine sovereignty, justice and judgment, together with the human condition of life, death, mortality. So on Yom Kippur we face justice and judgment. On Sukkot/Shmini Atzeret we pray for rain, celebrate nature (the arba minim, lulav, etrog, hadassim and aravot, are the only mitzvah we do with unprocessed natural objects), and read the book of Kohelet, Tanakh's most profound meditation on mortality.

In the seventh and Jubilee years we acknowledge God's ultimate ownership of the land of Israel and the children of Israel. Hence we let slaves go free, release debts, let the land rest, and restore most property to its original owners. All of these have to do not with God's interventions into history but with his role as Creator and owner of the universe.

One way of seeing the difference between the first cycle and the second is to compare the prayers on Pesach, Shavuot and Sukkot with those of Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur. The Amidah of Pesach, Shavuot and Sukkot begins with the phrase "You chose us from all the peoples." The emphasis is on Jewish particularity.

By contrast, the Amidah for Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur begins by speaking of "all You have made, all You have created". The emphasis is on universality: about the judgment that affects all of creation, everything that lives.

Even Sukkot has a marked universalist thrust with its seventy sacrificial bulls representing the "seventy nations". According to Zechariah 14, it is the festival that will one day be celebrated by all the nations.

Why the duality? Because God is both the God of nature and of culture. He is the God of everyone in general, and of the people of the covenant in particular. He is the Author of both scientific law

(cause) and religious-ethical law (command).

We encounter God in both cyclical time, which represents the movement of the planets, and linear-historical time, which represents the events and evolution of the nation of which we are a part. This very duality gives rise to two kinds of religious leader: the prophet and the priest, and the different consciousness of time each represents.

Since the ancient Greeks, people have searched for a single principle that would explain everything, or the single point Archimedes sought at which to move the world, or the unique perspective (what philosophers call "the view from nowhere") from which to see truth in all its objectivity.

Judaism tells us there is no such point. Reality is more complicated than that. There is not even a single concept of time. At the very least we need two perspectives to be able to see reality in three dimensions, and that applies to time as well as space. Jewish time has two rhythms at once.

Judaism is to the spirit what Niels Bohr's complementarity theory is to quantum physics. In physics light is both a wave and a particle. In Judaism time is both historical and natural. Unexpected, counter-intuitive, certainly. But glorious in its refusal to simplify the rich complexity of time: the ticking clock, the growing plant, the ageing body and the ever-deepening mind.

[1] Although this is the subject of an argument in Gemara Rosh HaShana 11b (quoted by Rashi Bereishit Chapter 8:13) between Rabbi Yehoshua who says this occurred in Nissan and Rabbi Eliezer who says it happened in Tishrei.

AS HEARD FROM RABBI AVIGDOR MILLER Z'TL "And you shall proclaim on this self-same day, a holy convocation it should be to you" 23:21

A most unexpected phenomenon we see here, the Giving of the Torah is not mentioned.

The day is called "the Festival of Reaping" (Shemot 23:16) and "the day of the First Fruits (Bikurim)" (Bamidbar 28:26), and here it is noted as the 50th Day after the Omer (23:16).

But nothing is said about the most stupendous event in the world's history, when Hashem spoke from Mount Sinai to the entire nation.

The Men of the Great Assembly mention it in the prayers as "the time of the giving of the Torah," but in the Torah itself only names of materialistic significance are found.

This most remarkable phenomenon is paralleled by another remarkable fact: the obligation of Birkat

Hamazon, to render thanks for satiation of bread, is written openly in the Torah (Devarim 8:10) and all the Sages are unanimous that this is a 'Torah obligation'. However, the obligation to pronounce a Beracha for reading or saying words of Torah is not mentioned openly in the Torah, and not all authorities agree that it is a Torah obligation, although the greatest of Hashem's gifts is the Torah. "It is more precious than pearls..." (Mishle 8:11).

A fundamental explanation can be found in the fact that despite the magnificence of the gift of Torah, yet the magnificence of the gift of life is greater. "Better one moment of Teshuba and Good Deeds in this world, more than all the life in the World to Come' (Abot 4:17). Therefore, because the harvest and the fruit and the produce provide the opportunity to live and to achieve, the Festivals are named after them.

When the Jew gives thanks for his bread, he thanks Hashem for the life that bread makes possible, and for the many opportunities that life offers in greatness of Torah and Mitzvot and in the service of Hashem in countless ways.

Quoted from "A Kingdom of Cohanim " by Rabbi Avigdor Miller ZT'L

Editors Notes

Worth a second read

The Power of Speech

This morning we were discussing this week's portion of Emor which begins with with the word Emor - speak to the kohanim and say [to them]," Rashi comments on the double language which literally translates as. "Say...and you shall say." He continues and explains that "[This double expression comes] to admonish the adult [Kohanim to be responsible] for the minors".

The rabbis would expand on this as a heavenly command for each generation to teach the next generation. I once discussed this with Rabbi Abittan and he suggested it was a command not to be afraid to talk to your kids. Speak to them and speak some more.

We spoke about the world we grew up in and compared it to the world of our children and grandchildren. We had seven television channels with the Honeymooners, Lucy (where she and Ricky slept in separate beds) and the Brady Bunch. Today there are a thousand plus channels competing with texting, Facebook, instagram and YouTube. Our children are hearing a wide range of voices. Additionally the values of society are changing so rapidly and we find ourselves being called strange

because we don't want to subject our daughters to share a restroom with some guy who is potentially a pervert in a dress. With all those voices playing, we need to use our own voice. We can't assume; we need to voice our thoughts, our opinions and what we've learned in life through trial and error. Too often a child doesn't want to hear so a parent choses to remain silent. We can't be that parent. We need to talk to our children.

We spoke about the tremendous power in words. We mentioned what my brother Victor wrote about last week explaining how words create reality and can change even heaven.

Rabbi Abittan was always cognizant of and stressed the power of words. He would suggest we twist our tongue seven times before speaking as each word was so potent. He was especially concerned when we visited someone in the hospital. He explained that the mitzvah of visiting the sick depends on what we do when visiting. Our tongues could often hurt a patient as much as they could help. Rabbi Paysach Krohn has a great class on the subjects on the dos and especially the don'ts of Bikkur Cholim.

I was in the ICU once visiting someone and he was telling us of the strange words of some who visited him. We were discussing the words of the rabbis and their cautions and this whole concept of words creating reality.

The ICU nurse was listening and she told us that she could write a book on the subject, but she became a true believer following a bus ride across town. She was living in New Jersey on the water opposite the city a two minute walk from the ferry. She was working in ICU at NYU at the time on 1st Avenue and 34th Street. Her shift began each morning at 6AM and ended each evening at 6:30. The half hour lap allowed the nurses to give details on their patients from shift to shift to each other. A few moments after she went off duty each evening, she took the cross town bus to the ferry. If the traffic wasn't bad she caught the 7:00PM ferry, if not she caught the 7:30 and there was always the last ferry at 8. One evening she walked out of the 34th Street exit at 6:40 and it was pouring. With an umbrella and a jacket, she was soaked just crossing the street to the bus stop. With the crazy weather and traffic, the bus barely got to Third Avenue and it was already 7PM. The people on board were agitated and antsy. It was almost 7:30 when they passed Fifth Avenue. People were pushing each other and no one offered a pregnant lady a seat. After passing 6th Avenue, the bus driver got on the PA system.

“Passengers, I am Mike your bus driver. Although I can do nothing about either the traffic or the weather, I apologize for both and for our delay. I realize how stressed many of you are. I know most of you will exit at the next stop for Penn Station and many have missed their trains. I would like each of you to exit at the front. When you exit you will see my outstretched hand. I want you to deposit into my hand all your stress, all your problems and all your aggravation. I beg you not to take them home with you to burden your spouses and children. Please drop them with me and when I get to the Hudson, I will drop all of them into the river.”

The nurse told us that suddenly everyone looked at each other and smiled. In some ways the tension faded a bit. And then at Seventh Avenue, each of the people getting off dropped their problems into Mike’s hand. The same happened at Eight Avenue and all the way to the River where she exited the bus thanking Mike and dropping off her own problems. As she boarded the ferry the rain stopped and she realized that although she had been sitting on a bus for an hour and fifteen minutes, she was smiling. She looked out into the Hudson imagining Mike dropping all their problems into the water. How could she be smiling after taking so much time to cross less than two miles of 34th Street?

She realized at that moment the power of words. Mike, a bus driver, someone invisible to most of the City was able to utter a few words and change the night and possibly much more of forty or fifty people.

She told us that it was after this experience that she began focusing on the power of her own words especially in ICU with both patients and with family, with other nurses and staff.

The message in the Perasha is on the power of words and the power in communicating. Hashem is telling us to speak and speak again to our children. Don’t assume they know. Don’t assume they are not confused. Turn off the TV, close the phone and speak with them. Say it and say it again. Our words when used correctly can be very powerful.