



Parshas Emor 2023, two ways to elevate

This week's Parsha Perspective is in loving memory of Fruma Bas Binyamim, Leah Mintche Bas Ya'akov Yosef, Edward Ben Efraim, Shlomo Ben Edward, and Yirachmiel Daniel Ben Gedalia. May their souls be uplifted and their memories a blessing.

Our Parsha begins with many laws specifically pertaining to Kohanim. We begin with the law that is applicable till this very day, the commandment that a Kohen must remain Tahor- ritually pure at all times. He may not come in contact with a human corpse or attend funerals, with one exception.

The exclusion for this rule for a regular Kohen is his immediate relatives, his wife, father, mother, brother, sister, son, or daughter. But the Kohen Gadol, the high priest, can only become ritually impure for a Mes Mitzvah - someone with no one to bury them.

However, a question comes to mind: The last chapter of the Parsha teaches us about the holidays throughout the year, Rosh Hashanah, Yom Kippur, Sukkos, Pesach, and Shavous. It first begins with reminding us about keeping the Shabbos (23:3) *"Six days you may work, but on the seventh day you shall rest."* But the previous Pasuk states (23:2), *"These are My fix times that you shall proclaim a sacred occasion."* Since we sanctified the new month, we choose what day a holiday will begin because it's connected to a date of the month, not a day of the week. So why is Shabbos mentioned if it's every single week on Saturday and not up to us like holidays that we proclaim a day holy?!

Rashi, Rav Shlomo Yitzchaki, the leading Torah commentator, gives a simple explanation. He answers that G-d first stated the Mitzvah of Shabbos to teach us that Shabbos supersedes any holiday.

If Shabbos falls out on a holiday, we must follow the laws of Shabbos. There are things we may do on a holiday, like cooking, that we are not allowed to do if it is also Shabbos. Because the holiness of Shabbos supersedes and overrides the laws of the holidays.

However, the Ramban, Rav Moshe Ben Nachman, a leading Torah scholar in the 12th century, gives a deeper and more profound explanation. He writes that we are reminded about the Shabbos before the holidays because it represents the two ways we can connect to our Father in Heaven.

The first way writes the Ramban is the way of Shabbos, connecting to G-d through actions He established as holy. The Shabbos, a sanctified day of rest that will still be holy even during the times of Moshiach. The Tefillin, creating a bond that links our hearts and minds with holiness, energy and spirit.

The second way is like the Holiday when we choose to develop and expand our relationship with the Creator. Through everyday actions, like working on a business or being with friends, we can elevate ourselves by bringing G-d into the picture.

We can use our blessing of wealth to assist those who are less fortunate. We can help friends through hard times and inspire them to accomplish their potential.

The Ramban explains that we first need to sanctify ourselves with actions that G-d has made sanctified, for it enables us to extend that connection to activities we want to add a holy element.

Elevating our behavior and adding G-dly wisdom and spirit to make it holy and sacred. So we can fulfill and keep the commandment given a few Torah portions ago (Kedoshim 19:2) ***"You shall be holy, for I, the Lord your G-d and holy."***

This lesson is ever more relevant as we eat Matzah and celebrate Pesach Sheni - the second Pesach. The message of this unique day is reclaiming our connection that may have laid dormant as we go about our everyday lives.

To realize that we have a choice in our relationship with G-d, do we regulate our connection with the Almighty to a physical space? Or do we allow that connection to encompass our life and sanctify animalistic behavior that may be natural but not affixed to our nature?

In our daily life, it is imperative to realize that our actions and behavior reflect who we are and what we value. Every decision we make and every step we take sends a message to the world about our character.

As we get older, we realize that our behavior is not just what we do but how we do it. The intention and purpose behind our actions dictate the depth of our growth and development or the opposite. Like giving charity with compassion but recognizing that we are given a blessing to share with the world. Until we truly understand that we are not just individuals but a part of the one nation set aside by G-d to be His chosen people.

**"The real test of a society is not the absence of crises,
but whether we come out of them cynical and disillusioned,
or strengthened by our rededication to high ideals."**

-Rabbi Lord Jonathan Sacks

*Have a meaningful Shabbos,
Rabbi Sholom Yemini*