



Parshas Emor 2024, Legacy of Holiness

The Parsha Perspective is in honor of Eretz Yisroel. May G-d protect our brave soldiers. May G-d return all the hostages in Gaza immediately.

The Parsha Perspective is in honor of the Refuah Shlema of HaRav Amitai Ben Shoshanna, and in loving memory of Hinda Bas Udl, 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 to 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 from 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 Parsha begins with G-d telling Moshe the following (21:1): *“Tell to the Kohanim, the sons of Aaron, and speak to them, they shall not defile themselves for a human corpse from amongst their people.”* As the Torah is usually clear and concise with its wording, why does it repeat itself by saying, **“Kohanim, the sons of Aaron”**? The Kohanim at that time were Aaron's two sons, Eleazer and Itamar. What is the intention behind the repetition?

The Ibn Ezra, Rav Avraham Ben Meir Ibn Ezra, gives a simple explanation. He answers that in Parshas Yisro, as the Jewish nation arrived at Mt. Sinai, they were

given a powerful directive. Moshe Rabbeinu relayed what G-d had told him on the mountain on the first day of preparation for the giving of the Torah.

Moshe Rabbeinu tells the Jewish people (Yisro 19:5-6): *"If you obey Me and keep My covenant, you will be to Me a treasure out of all peoples, for the entire earth is Mine. You shall be to Me a kingdom of priests and a holy nation. These are the words that you (Moshe) shall tell to the Jewish people."*

The Ibn Ezra explains that although we are all directed to be a **"kingdom of priests,"** only Aaron and his sons can serve in the Mishkan. While the entire nation should be holy, the Kohanim have a special task that necessitates diligence in their holiness and purity.

However, the Kli Yakar, Rav Ephraim Luntschitz, gives a deeper and more profound explanation. He writes that G-d says **"Kohanim, the sons of Aaron,"** to negate and invalidate an incorrect assumption about our existence. Generally, the further energy is removed from its source, the weaker and less effective it becomes. Unless an uninterrupted force propels the energy forward, it diminishes with distance.

The Kli Yakar explains that the Jewish people knew the holiness of Aaron Hakohen; they witnessed his dedication to G-d and His nation. But they could not say the same for his children. Would they follow in their father's path? Would they be equally as passionate and devoted to priestly service? Would they live up to the high standard of holiness and commitment their father established?!

So G-d said: **"Kohanim, the sons of Aaron,"** to negate such questions and tell the nation that Eleazer and Itamar match their father, Aaron Hakohen. As they serve in the Mishkan, all will see their holiness and know that Aaron's standards have not diminished or declined. Despite not being exactly like their father, Aaron's holiness continued through his children and all future Kohanim.

The Kli Yakar's powerful lesson is ever more relevant as we inch closer to the final and ultimate redemption. While our generation may not be as holy or wise as those who lived during the Beis Hamikdash, their faith lives within us. As the Lubavitcher Rebbe puts it, we are just small people on the shoulders of giants who will finish the job and bring Moshiach!

In our daily life, it is imperative that we recognize and respect each person's individuality and what they contribute to the world. A moral society is constructed on the efforts of those who came before us, allowing future generations to thrive.

Just as Aaron's holiness continued through his children, our actions today are a continuation of the dedication and faith of those who came before us. By making our contributions, we ensure the sacrifices of past generations were not in vain, paving the way to the ultimate redemption.

"Judaism is the truth that can only be told as a story, the truth that unfolds in the course of history, as part of the experience of a people who undertake a long journey, extended over many generations and continued by the act of passing on their memories and hopes to their children so that they never forget where they came from and where they are going."

-Rabbi Lord Jonathan Sacks

Have a meaningful Shabbos!

Rabbi Sholom Yemini