



Parshas Emor 2022, uniquely different

This week's Parsha Perspective is in honor of the Refuah Shlema of HaRav Amitai Ben Shoshanna, Leah Mintche Bas Gittel, Aban Davis Ben Naomi, and Shaul Ben Berta.

This week's Parsha Perspective is in loving memory of Edward Ben Efraim, Shlomo Ben Edward, and Yirachmiel Daniel Ben Gedalia. May their souls be uplifted and their memories a blessing.

Our Parsha contains many laws specifically pertaining to Cohanim. We begin with the law that is applicable till this very day, the commandment that a Cohen must remain Tahor- ritually pure at all times. He is not allowed to come in contact with a human corpse.

The only exceptions to this rule for a regular Cohen are his immediate relatives, his wife, father, mother, brother, sister, son, or daughter. But the Cohen Gadol, the high priest, can only become ritually impure for a person with no one to bury them.

The Parsha concludes by teaching us about holidays like Rosh Hashanah, Yom Kippur, Sukkos, Pesach, and Shavous.

However, a question comes to mind: The Parsha begins with laws pertaining to Cohanim and their service in the Mishkan and Beis Hamikdash.

But we conclude by learning about all the holidays of the Jewish calendar year. Why does the Parsha deviate and change the topic from Cohanim to the Chagim of the Torah?!

The Chizkuni (*Rav Chezekiah ben Manoah, a French Rabbi from the 13th century*) answers this question by looking at the words of the Pasuk. The Torah writes (23:2), "*Speak to the Jewish nation and tell them.*" The Chizkuni said this was a gathering and assembly call for the entire nation. Once they congregated, they were given and explained the details of the different holidays.

The Chizkuni explains that although these two different topics are in the same Parsha, they are unconnected. Firstly, these laws begin in a new chapter. (23) Secondly, these laws were instructed to the entire Jewish people once they assembled.

This starkly contrasts the laws at the beginning of our Parsha, for they were just told to Cohanim. (21:1) "*G-d said Moshe, speak to the Cohanim, the sons of Aaron, and say to them.*"

However, the Ramban (*Rav Moshe Ben Nachman, a leading scholar, philosopher, and Kabbalist*) gives a deeper and more profound explanation. He writes that the connection between Cohanim and the holidays is twofold.

Firstly, each holiday has specific and unique sacrifices offered by the Cohen. For example, the Korban Pesach, the Omer offering on Shavous, and the seventy bulls sacrificed during Sukkot.

But the main reason, according to the Ramban, that our Parsha has both topics is because it reveals the uniqueness of every person. So far in the book of Vayikra, the emphasis and focus have been on the sacrifices of the Mishkan and those who serve in it.

But an unintended result of such a spotlight may be that a regular Jew (not a Cohen or Levi) could feel that it is not their job to have a deep connection to G-d.

The Ramban explains that since a Jew might think that it is only the Cohen or Levi's duty to be pure and serve G-d, commanded Moshe to let the nation know that **each Jewish person is obligated to have a personal, unique and profound relationship with their creator.** They must use their individual and singular abilities to serve G-d and fulfill their **specific potential.**

In our daily life, it is imperative that we recognize and respect each person's **individuality** and what they give to the world. For a moral society is only built on the notion that every person has **a part** to play and **love** to share with the rest of the world.

This lesson is ever more prevalent as we approach the special day of Lag B'Omer. For it is a pause in the mourning period for the students of the great Rabbi Akiva, who did not respect and value each other.

“Having faith in G-d means having faith in other people, and the measure of our righteousness lies in how many people we value, not in how many we condemn.”

-Rabbi Sacks of blessed memory

Have a meaningful Shabbos,

Rabbi Sholom Yemini