

SHABBAT SHALOM. Today is 5 Iyar 5768, the 20th day of the Omer. We say Kiddush Levanah tonight after Maariv.

TORAH DIALOGUE (p. 513 Hz) (p. 740 S) (p. 468 Hi)
EMOR אמור

1. The verse at the beginning of Emor states, "*And Hashem said to Moshe, 'Say to the Kohanim [Priests], the sons of Aharon, and you shall say to them: To a [dead] person he shall not become impure among his people.'*" (21:1). The construction of this command is very strange. It contains an obvious redundancy in the repetition of the terms "say to the Kohanim.... say to them." The Talmud (Yevamot 114a) infers from here a special obligation for Kohanim to ensure that even their young children (who in general are not obligated in Mitzvah performance) do not become ritually impure by virtue of contact with the dead. The first "say to the Kohanim" refers to Kohanim over Bar Mitzvah (adults) and the second "say to them" refers to the Kohanim who are minors. The problem with this is that the *drash* (homiletic interpretation) is apparently contradicting the *pshuto shel mikrah* (simple reading of the verse). There is no indication in the verse that we are speaking about minors. The simple reading is that "say to them" is referring back to the original subject—the adult Kohanim. Rav Elyakim Schlesinger, in his sefer Beit Av, offers a new insight into the mechanics of this drasha. In fact, he explains, the entire verse is referring to the adult Kohanim, but the implication of the repetition to the adults is for the benefit of the *ketanim* (young children). The adults are required to act in a way that the children will learn appropriate behavior.

2. The Rambam (Hil. Issurei Bi'ah 21:31), based on Pesachim 49a, rules that a Yisrael who is an *Am Ha'aretz* should not marry the daughter of a Kohen because this is considered a *P'gam* (blemish) to the descendants of Aharon. However, if a *Talmid Chacham* marries a *Bat Kohen* this is praiseworthy—Torah and Kehunah uniting. The Teshuvot Avnei Tzedek (Even Ha'ezer 5) states that while it is praiseworthy for a *Talmid Chacham* to marry a *Bat Kohen*, and while it is inappropriate for an *Am Ha'aretz* to marry one, if a person is not a true *Talmid Chocham* but also not a true *Am Ha'aretz*, he should not purposely seek a *Bat Kohen* to marry. But if he happens to meet a *Bat Kohen* it is not forbidden for him to marry her. Other Poskim note that since, in regard to certain halachot, there is no true *Talmid Chacham* in our times nor is there a true *Am Ha'aretz* (an *Am Ha'aretz* does not mean simply an ignoramus), the restrictions mentioned by Chazal do not apply.

3. "*He may eat the bread... both of the most holy and of the holy.*" (21:22). He refers to the Kohen who is

blemished (see 21:17-21) therefore can't participate in the Temple Service nor in the offering of the sacrifices. Nevertheless, he is permitted to eat even of the most holy of the sacrifices. Our ethical teachers learn from this verse that we are duty bound to see to it that where an employee becomes "blemished" and is less productive, we must make sure that his sustenance be maintained and some gainful employment be found for him. True, he may not come near the altar—still he eats of the most holy sacrifices as all the other priests. Furthermore, the very Kohen who is blemished and comes not near the altar, is involved in work activities which are related to the altar, such as sorting and examining the wood which is used on the altar. (Tractate Yoma 54).

4. "*You shall not slaughter an ox or sheep with its offspring on the same day.*" (22:28). Chazal (Chullin 82) teach us that if one person slaughtered the mother and a second person slaughtered the offspring, if the second person was warned, he receives lashes. Rav Zalman Sorotzkin observed that when the first person slaughtered the first animal, he placed a prohibition on everyone in the world to slaughter the second one. It is interesting to note how when one Jew performs a perfectly permissible act, he causes a prohibition to be in effect for everyone else. We can see from this how the soul of one Jew is bound with the souls of all other Jews, and how one Jew's actions can have a direct effect on all other Jews.

5. There is a debate among authorities as to whether the counting of the Omer is required as a Biblical Mitzvah or not. One point of view (the majority) is that in the absence of the Omer Offering and the Two Loaves, i.e. without what to count from and what to count towards, there is also no Torah Mitzvah to count. However, the Sages declared that we should count even without a Beit HaMikdash, as a commemoration of the Temple, and for other reasons. The Rambam and the Chinuch consider the counting of the Omer to be an independent Mitzvah which applies today—*D'orayta* (with Torah authority)—even in our time. Note that the introductory paragraph to counting—*Hineni Muchan*—seems to imply that the counting is Torah law, even today. On the other hand, the concluding prayer—*Harachaman*—implies that it is a rabbinically ordained commemoration of the Beit HaMikdash. One way or the other, we are commanded to count the days of the Omer. Even if you can no longer say a Brachah, there is still a Mitzvah to count. And we should also use this Omer period for self-improvement of personal traits and religious behavior, just as our ancestors underwent a period of spiritual growth in preparation of standing at Sinai to receive the Torah. (Phil Chernofsky).

6. *"And ye shall count unto you from the day after this Sabbath, from the day of your bringing the Omer for waving, seven complete weeks shall it be."* (23:15). The commandment of "Sefirat Haomer," the counting of the seven week period between Passover and Shavuot, is a unique directive with far greater significance than we normally associate with the counting of time periods. On the one hand the counting enables us to link the two festivals of Passover and Shavuot, thereby correlating the spiritual experiences of these holidays. Passover celebrates our beginning as a physical nation, while Shavuot commemorates our unique transformation into the "people of God" through our acceptance of the Torah. This counting period also enables us to relive the experience and anticipation of the Jews during their exodus from Egypt and their subsequent preparation for the receiving of the Torah. Traditionally, counting symbolizes a yearning, a longing for the realization of a goal. Thus these seven weeks represent our yearning for a renewal of spiritual awareness on Shavuot. Therefore we are not merely to cross these days off our calendars but rather, as Jews, we are to use this annual opportunity to strive for a revitalized Torah commitment.

7. The Torah states, *"And when you reap the harvest of your land, you shall not wholly reap the corner of your field, and the gleanings of your harvest you shall not gather, for the poor and the stranger you shall leave them (the corners and the gleaning)."* Why is the owner commanded to leave the corners and gleanings rather than being commanded to gather the produce and give it to the poor? (Rabbi Zelig Pliskin).

HAFTORAH (p. 528 Hz) (p. 761 S) (p. 883 Hi)
EZEKIEL יְחֻקָא

Our haftorah sets forth details of the Temple and priesthood in the restored Third Temple (may we merit it soon!) It depicts ideal Kohanim, sons of Tzadok who will lead the people as true "sons of Levi," rather than being led by them, dependent upon them for their livelihood (Hirsch, who, as Rambam, says that scholars should support themselves!). Ezekiel's Temple laws seemingly conflict with those of the Torah—e.g. he also prohibits a widow and non-virgin to an ordinary Kohen, except another Kohen's widow. Some say that these laws will change in the Third Temple. Rav A. Nebenzal attempts to reconcile the differences. Perhaps during Ezekiel's corrupt era, the Kohen's role was unusually difficult. He then needed an extra-devoted wife, who had never been married to another, unless she already was used to the sacrifice of being a Kohen's wife.

SHABBAT HALACHAH

Non-Jew Replacing Battery in Smoke Detector

One may instruct a non-Jew to change a battery in a smoke detector that has stopped working if the people in the house are afraid to be without the protection of a smoke detector during the night. This Halachah would only apply if there is some basis to their fear as a lit stove or burning candles. It is permissible to instruct a non-Jew to silence a ringing smoke detector if the alarm is bothersome to the people of the household.

Opening a Book With Lettering on the Edges

Most authorities do not consider opening a book with lettering on the edge of the pages to be subject to the prohibition of writing or erasing, as it is made to be opened and closed and the letters remain intact. It is advisable, however, to take account of the stricter view and to refrain from stamping books in this manner. One should preferably use another copy of the book if available.