



TORAH WEEKLY

A project of the Denver Community Kollel



Parshas Emor

May 8, 2020

A Taste of Torah

Exceptionally Pure

by Rabbi Aharon Wilen

The Talmud (Kesubos 103b) relates that the day that the author of the Mishna, Rabbi Yehudah Hanasi, died, *kedusha* (holiness) ceased. The basic meaning of this is that Rabbi Yehuda Hanasi, affectionately known as Rebbe, was known for his outstanding holiness and had achieved a level of sanctity that was unmatched in his era; this type of holiness ended upon his passing.

Tosafos (ibid. s. v. *oso*) offers an alternate explanation based on the Jerusalem Talmud. The Jerusalem Talmud says on the day Rebbe died, there was no *kehuna*, no priesthood. Tosafos explain that generally, *kohanim* (priests) are forbidden to come into contact with a dead body other than that of their immediate family and a *meis mitzvah* (a body that has nobody to bury it), as discussed at the beginning of this week's parsha. This precludes *kohanim* from actively participating in other funerals, as they cannot be part of the burial process. However, it was permitted for *kohanim* to fully participate in Rebbe's funeral and burial, even though such activity is normally forbidden.

This is rather perplexing. Why should there be any exceptions to this prohibition?

Although the rules of *tumah*, spiritual impurity, are a *chok*, a mitzvah whose meaning is not readily apparent, a basic insight into these rules can help us understand this exception. The Sefer Hachinuch (Mitzvah 263) explains that the prohibition

for *kohanim* to contract *tumah* from a dead body is because a person is comprised of both a body and a soul. On one side is the soul that has aspirations for spiritual greatness. On the other side is the body, whose search for physical fulfillment leads the person to all types of evil. After death, when a person's soul has left, all that remains is the physical shell, the body, the cause of all of the person's sins and shortcomings. This is why the Torah deems a human corpse impure, as one should recognize that something which causes sin is repulsive.

The *kohanim*, whose job it is to perform the service in the *Bais Hamikdash* (Temple), are consecrated to the service of Hashem. As His servants, it is not befitting that they come into contact with anything that represents sin. Therefore, they are forbidden to come into contact with a human corpse.

Based on this, the Sefer Hachinuch explains the story of the death of Rebbe. The Talmud (Kesubos 104a) relates that on his deathbed, Rebbe held up his hands and said, "Master of the Universe, it is clear and known to You that I toiled in Torah with all my ten fingers, and I did not derive benefit even with my smallest finger." Rebbe was so dedicated to his efforts in Torah study that his body did not derive any unnecessary pleasure from this world. Rebbe's body was never used improperly; it served solely as a vehicle for his service of Hashem, and never did his

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Stories for the Soul

Performance Enhancer

Rabbi Naftali Amsterdam (1832-1916) was one of the prime disciples of Rabbi Yisrael Salanter, the founder of the *mussar* movement, which placed a great focus on improving one's character. Rabbi Amsterdam served as rabbi of a number of communities across Europe during his lifetime, and he eventually settled in Eretz Yisrael later in life. Throughout his career, he strove to study *mussar* and to impart its lessons, as he had been taught by his great teacher.

Someone once found a written statement in Rabbi Amsterdam's bag expressing his commitment to helping all Jews return to the path of Torah observance.

Upon being how he planned to carry out this bold resolution, asked Rabbi Amsterdam replied, "I have resolved to keep all of the laws of the Shulchan Aruch (Code of Jewish Law) strictly. In this way, I will serve as a living Shulchan Aruch, and anyone who wants to keep the Torah will be able to see in me a living example of one who follows Hashem's ways and will learn from me how to return to Torah."

In this week's parsha we are commanded to sanctify Hashem's Name among the Jewish People. Oftentimes, the greatest sanctification of Hashem's Name is to live perfectly in accordance with His commandments, thus modeling and inspiring others to emulate such an approach to life.

Kollel Happenings

KOLLEL CLASSES CONTINUE VIA ZOOM MEETING

The Kollel is continuing many of its classes and offering new classes via Zoom Meeting. You can tune in to live classes online or call in on a phone. For a full schedule and the links and phone numbers to access this treasure trove of Torah, visit www.denverkollel.org or email info@denverkollel.org.

THE BIG PICTURE

Join a multi-part series of your choice via Zoom (online or on the phone) and discover The Big Picture of a section of Torah. Choose from an array of different Torah topics throughout the week. Classes run through 5/28. An initiative of the Denver Community Kollel in partnership with Aish of the Rockies and JOI. Visit denverkollel.org for full details.

HELP BUILD THE FUTURE OF TORAH IN DENVER

Claim your part in building the future of Torah in Denver! The Kollel is in the midst of a capital campaign to build a three-story, state-of-the-art Torah Center that will serve the entire Denver Jewish community. To contribute, or for dedication opportunities and details on the building, visit denverkollel.org or email info@denverkollel.org.

Parsha Quizzers

The six items below can be found in Rashi's commentary to this week's parsha. Can you figure out where they are? (Answers on bottom)

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|------------------|-------------------------|
| 1) Warn the kids | 4) Barley doesn't count |
| 2) Cataract | 5) Tasty wood |
| 3) Only a limb | 6) Camping ban |

Lives of Our Torah Leaders

Rabbi Menashe ben Yisrael - Part III

Some sources say that his parents went to Madeira Island, an island off the coast of Portugal where they felt it was safer despite its being under Portuguese rule. These sources say that Menashe was born in Madeira Island.

Other sources indicate that the family made their way to La Rochelle in France, and it was in La Rochelle that Menashe was born. It is possible that the family first went to Madeira Island and later made their way to La Rochelle.

Regardless, the family relocated to the Netherlands in 1610, settling in Amsterdam. Amsterdam became a haven for Sephardic Jews fleeing Portugal after 1497, and many Sephardic Jews settled there and, over time, created a sizeable community.

Technically, the Netherlands were

under Spanish rule during most of the 16th century, but the Jews living there were able to practice Judaism. From 1566-1648, the Netherland fought the Eighty Years' War to gain independence from Spain. In 1581, the Dutch republic was officially formed, and this should have enabled the Jews there to formally receive a license from the government to publicly practice Judaism. However, it was only in 1603 that the first license was granted for a public religious gathering. In 1639, three major Jewish communities in Amsterdam merged into one untied Sephardic congregation.

The Jews brought economic growth and, as the decades passed, these Jews helped make Amsterdam a major trading hub in the 17th century. Many Jews in Amsterdam attained success and wealth as merchants.

A Taste of Torah

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body lead him to sin. A body such as this is not a thing to be avoided, and so when Rebbe's soul left, the body it left behind did not conform to the regular rules of spiritual impurity, it was therefore permitted even for *kohanim* to participate in his burial.

We may not be able to make Rebbe's claim of having never benefitted from any pleasures of this world, but we can certainly seek to minimize the pull of our physical drives and move away from the impurity of the blandishments of this world.

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|---|------------------------------------|
| 1) Warn the kids 21:1 s.v. emor | 3) Only a limb 22:25 s.v. umiyad |
| 2) Cataract 21:20 s.v. oh dak | 2) Tasty wood 23:40 s.v. pri |
| 1) Barley doesn't count 23:16 s.v. mincha | 3) Camping ban 24:10 s.v. wayerzel |

Parsha Quizzers - Answers