



TORAH WEEKLY

A project of the Denver Community Kollel



Parshas Emor

April 30, 2021

A Taste of Torah Being and Becoming

by Rabbi Mordechai Fleisher

It is very difficult, if not impossible, to estimate the worth of a person. The Talmud (Sanhedrin 74a) expresses this idea succinctly when it states, “Who says your blood is redder, maybe his blood is redder?!” Nonetheless, we do find that the Torah elevates certain groups of people over others; this week’s parsha is a case in point, as the Torah discusses the special laws that apply to the *Kohanim*, Aharon and his descendants, who performed the service in the *Mishkan* (Tabernacle) and, later, in the *Bais Hamikdash* (Temple).

The tension between these two poles – the impossibility of determining the value of one person over another versus giving greater inherent value to one person, for better or for worse – is one of the many paradoxes that Judaism presents us with in life. But within this very parsha that seems to focus on different lineage-based classes within Judaism, a message of balance simultaneously emerges.

The Ramban notes that there are two different titles bestowed upon the *Kohanim* in the parsha. Sometimes, they are called “*Kohanim*,” while at other times, they are referred to as “Aharon and his sons.” The Ramban says that when the Torah is discussing a law that is related to external *kedusha* (sanctity), such as the sacrificial service, the priests are referred to as “Aharon and his sons,” but when discussing a law that applies to the *Kohanim* at all times, not just in relation to areas of *kedusha*, they are called *Kohanim*. The Ramban explains that a responsibility imposed upon a *Kohein* at all times is due to the special stature of the *Kohanim*; the law is a reflection of the *Kohein*’s inherent sanctity, and so they are called by the name that reflects that special status – *Kohanim*. When, however, the Torah is

focused on matters of external *kedusha*, the term “Aharon and his sons” is used, since these laws are due to the nature of the external item under discussion, not the inherent sanctity of the *Kohanim*.

The dichotomy discussed by the Ramban is relevant to every person, *Kohein* or otherwise. Every person is unique, and occupies a specific niche in the universe. Whether one is a *Kohein*, *Levi*, or *Yisrael*, whether one is born Jewish or is a convert – there is an inherent sanctity of some level that the person possesses. Yes, the *Kohein* possesses greater inherent sanctity than the *Levi*, who, in turn, possesses greater inherent sanctity than the *Yisrael*. At the same time, the sanctity stratus into which one is born by no means limits the person’s ability to achieve great things in life, and, indeed, to achieve to a greater degree than one born into a class of greater sanctity. This is the “Aharon and his sons” reality of life. It is the realization that one’s greatness is expressed through what one does during the time he is given in the world. The environment that surrounds a person provides infinite opportunities to achieve, be it avoiding evil or embracing good. One’s ability to resist temptation and to perform the mitzvos properly bestow holiness and greatness upon the person, regardless of the spiritual level he may have started with.

One has no control over what type of family he is born into or what tools he is given for his journey through life. One does, however, determine what he will do with those tools – be they distinguished lineage, intelligence, personality, talent, or any other feature of life. As the great chassidic leader Rabbi Zusha of Hanipol (1718-1800) commented, ““When I get to Heaven, I will not be asked, ‘Why weren’t

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Stories for the Soul

Good Things Come in Trees

Rabbi Berel Wein was once invited to a meeting with the editor of the Detroit Free Press. After introductions had been made, the editor told him the following story.

His mother, Mary, had immigrated to America from Ireland as an uneducated, 18-year-old peasant girl. She was hired as a domestic maid by an observant family. The head of the house was the president of the neighboring Orthodox shul.

Mary knew nothing about Judaism and had probably never met a Jew before arriving in America. The family went on vacation Mary’s first December in America, leaving Mary alone in the house. They were scheduled to return on the night of December 24, and Mary realized that there would be no holiday tree to greet them when they did. This bothered her greatly, and, using the money the family had left her, she went out and purchased not only a holiday tree but all kinds of festive decorations to hang on the front of the house.

When the family returned from vacation, they saw the holiday tree through the living room window and the rest of the house festooned with holiday lights. They assumed

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Kollel Happenings

THE KOSHER STATUS OF ARTIFICIAL MEAT AT MAY 5 T4T ON ZOOM

As technology progresses in creating everything from artificial flavors to artificial intelligence, the question of artificial meat comes to the fore in the realm of kashrus. Join Kollel Senior Educator Rabbi Mordechai Fleisher as he explores the halachic view of lab-produced meat at a May 5 T4T. Visit denverkollel.org for further details.

SPRING-SUMMER AVOS UBANIM ON SHABBOS AFTERNOON

The Kollel's spring-summer Avos Ubanim program continues this Shabbos afternoon at the Kollel Torah Centers in West Denver and Southeast Denver. Learning begins one hour before mincha, followed by nosh and prizes. For sponsorships and more info, email info@denverkollel.org.

MILE HIGH TORAH PODCAST FROM THE KOLLEL

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Halacha Riddles

This week's question: How is it possible for there to be three different proper blessings for a fruit (eaten alone) under three different circumstances?

Answer: If one eats a fruit whose development is not complete but is nonetheless edible, the proper *bracha* is *ha'adama* (see *The Laws of Brachos* by Rabbi Binyamin Forst 9:III fn. 36:1:c). If it is unripe and thus difficult to eat

(but somewhat edible), one would recite a *shehakol* (Mishna Berura 202:18). If the unripe difficult-to-eat fruit is rendered easily eaten through cooking, one would recite *ha'eitz* upon the cooked, unripe fruit (ibid.).

This week's question: How is it possible for there to be three different proper blessings on the same food depending on the degree to which it is cooked?

Lives of Our Torah Leaders

Rabbi Saadia Gaon - Part XXVII

Besides his *Emunos Vide'os*, discussed earlier, another major work written by Rav Saadia was his translation of, and commentary on, TaNaCH (the Torah, Prophets and Writings). This work was divided into two parts. The *Pirush Hakatzer*, or short commentary, is a translation of the Torah into Arabic along with some basic explanations

of the verses; this was meant for the broader community. The second part, *Pirush Ha'aruch*, or long commentary, is a more extensive commentary meant for a more educated audience. Only parts of this great work are extant today: The Torah itself Yeshaya (Isaiah), the Five Megillos, Tehillim (Psalms), Iyov (Job), Mishlei (Proverbs), and Daniel.

A Taste of Torah

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you like Moshe?" or "Why weren't you like Avraham?" I will be asked, "Why weren't you like Zusha!?"

Stories for the Soul

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that they had somehow pulled into the wrong driveway and drove around the block. But alas, it was their address.

The head of the family entered the house contemplating how to explain the Christmas tree and lights to the members of the shul, most of whom walked right past his house on their way to shul. Meanwhile, Mary was eagerly anticipating the family's excitement when they realized that they would not be without a Christmas tree.

After entering the house, the head of the family called Mary into his study. He told her, "In my whole life no one has ever done such a beautiful thing for me as you did." Then he took out

a \$100 bill – a very large sum in the middle of the Depression – and gave it to her. Only after that did he explain that Jews do not celebrate with trees.

When he had finished telling the story, the editor told Rabbi Wein, "And that is why there has never been an editorial critical of Israel in the Detroit Free Press since I became editor, and never will be as long as I am the editor."

In this week's parsha, we are commanded to sanctify Hashem's Name. Living up to the standards of the Torah in all circumstances, including the difficult and awkward moments life throws at us, display our commitment to Hashem and His Torah.

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