Points to Ponder

Emor Master

**אֱמֹ֥ר Emor (21:1)** – Today’s Kohanim are commanded not to become Tamai. Notwithstanding the ability to perform the Avodah, these rules remain in effect. In addition, the Kohein is given the chance to recite Birkas Kohanim – at which time they recite a prayer noting that they did “Mah She’Gazarta” that which you have commanded us. Why is Birkas Kohanim such a command**? Rav Pam ztl.** cited the **Binyan Shlomo** who suggested that it was a Gezaira that allowed even the Kohein who was a sinner to ascend the Duchan – unless he had taken a life. Rav Pam explains that lest a Kohein consider himself inadequate to offer a blessing in front of a distinguished assemblage – he can tell Hashem that it was a Gezaira that He had commanded to the Kohein. “You Hashem, commanded it – and I followed.”

**אֱמֹ֥ר אֶל־הַכֹּֽהֲנִ֖ים בְּנֵ֣י אַֽהֲרֹ֑ן וְאָֽמַרְתָּ֣ אֲלֵהֶ֔ם Speak to the Kohanim the sons of Aaron (21:1) – Ramban** notes that when we discuss the role of the Kohanim in regard to Korbanos, they are referred to as Bnei Aharon. However when we speak to their status and kedusha, they are referred to as Kohanim. The **Chasam Sofer** asks why they are referred to as Kohanim Bnei Aharon here insofar as this section deals with the inherent Kedusha of the Kohanim. Why mention that they were Bnei Aharon? The Chasam Sofer answers that in regard to the Kohanim themselves, this issue is one of kohanim – of their inherent holy status. However, as **Rashi** notes, there is an additional responsibility here – for the adults to teach the younger Kohanim. This second responsibility is one where the Kohein must protect the young as he would, the Korban. Thus, in that regard, the kohanim are referred to as Bnei Aharon.

**אֱמֹ֥ר אֶל־הַכֹּֽהֲנִ֖ים בְּנֵ֣י אַֽהֲרֹ֑ן וְאָֽמַרְתָּ֣ אֲלֵהֶ֔ם Say to the Kohanim, sons of Aharon (21:1) - Rashi** notes that the double requirement to speak is to have the adults teach the children. But where do we learn that V’Amarta refers to teaching children? **Rav Moshe Feinstein ztl.** explains that it is not enough to teach children to just do Mitzvos because then the children will not stick to it in the future. Instead, parents need to speak to the children about the importance and value of following the Mitzvos. That way the child learns the rules but also the ability to understand the beauty of the Mitzvos and that they are not burdens. **Rav Yaakov Weinberg ztl** added that this is like the child playing with his friends when the ball rolls into the cemetery. The child is about to go in to retrieve the ball and his father pulls him away telling him that he cannot go in there. When the child questions why he cannot when everyone does, the parent should not only explain that he is a Kohein and is not allowed in, he should also explain that as a Kohein the child has a better status that carries more importance. The same is true for Am Yisrael. The nations may be able to do or eat whatever they want but we are more important and should be taught to appreciate that status.

**Hashem said to Moshe to speak to the Kohanim, the sons of Aaron (21:1)** – Usually when we find Hashem preparing to transmit a Mitzva or Mitzvos to Bnei Yisroel, he uses the word “VaYidaber” – why is the word “VaYomer” used instead? **Rav Moshe Feinstein ztl**. explains that the main reason why Kohanim were separated and instructed to be different was in order for them to be able to teach ideal Judaism to the rest of Am Yisroel. Although keeping oneself Kadosh and Tahor is not always an easy task, Moshe was told to tell it to Kohanim and make sure that they did not show that it was hard to fulfill. By demonstrating a calm, engaging Judaism, they would be able to encourage others to adhere to it.

**The Kohanim, children of Aharon (21:1)** – Why are they referred to both as Kohanim and Bnei Aharon? **Ramban** comments that when it comes to Korbanos they are called Aharon and sons without mentioning the Kohein status but here where they are being warned not to become Tamai – even when not in the Mikdash and therefore the stress is on the Kohanim – the reason they cannot become tamai is dependent on the status that is upon them all the time**. Rav Gifter ztl.** pointed out that according to Ramban the Kohein is never to become Tamai because of his status and that there is a HETER in the case of his relatives who pass. **Rambam** sounds like he is of the opinion that the reason a Kohein is allowed to become Tamai for a relative who passes is because of the obligation to mourn for relatives. The difference would seem to come in the case of the Kohein Gadol who is not allowed to become Tamai for relatives – Ramban would explain this as a result of an even higher status where the Heter does not exist and Rambam would need to explain that the obligation to mourn comes from Rachmanus – and here the same Av HaRachaman does not allow him to become Tamai as part of the Rachmanus.

**אֱמֹ֥ר אֶל־הַכֹּֽהֲנִ֖ים בְּנֵ֣י אַֽהֲרֹ֑ן וְאָֽמַרְתָּ֣ אֲלֵהֶ֔ם Speak to the Kohanim sons of Aharon and say onto them (21:1)** - Why is there a double language of Emor and V’Amarta? **Rashi** explains that it adds the extra responsibility to the older ones to teach the younger ones. But why is this lesson being taught here? **Rav Moshe Sternbuch Shlita** explained that when it comes to matters of Kedusha one tends to think that these levels and rules only apply to adults. Hence the Torah teaches us that it is incumbent upon us to teach our young that they should also learn about Kedusha and strive to implement its values and level at even the youngest of ages.

**לְנֶ֥פֶשׁ לֹֽא־יִטַּמָּ֖א בְּעַמָּֽיו For a soul he should not become Tamai (21:1) - Rashi** explains even if he was  Kohein Gadol and a Nazir who was going to prepare the Korban Pesach, he still needs to become Tamai for a member of the community. **Rav Elya Lopian ztl**. would quote in the name of the **Chofetz Chaim** that if the Torah goes so far in order to show respect for a person who passed having lived a life and performed some Mitzvos, how much more so must we show respect and care for the living while the soul is attached to the body.

**לְנֶ֥פֶשׁ לֹֽא־יִטַּמָּ֖א בְּעַמָּֽיו For a soul they shall not become Tamai (21:1) – Rav Aizik Ausband ztl.** used to note that the reason why the word “Nefesh” is stressed instead of the word “Mes” is that although the body has not been placed into eternal rest, and the Nefesh is still hanging around, a Kohein is still not allowed to become Tamai for the soul’s need.

**כִּ֚י אִם־לִשְׁאֵר֔וֹ הַקָּרֹ֖ב אֵלָ֑יו  Except for his wife (21:2)** - Why is the Kohein’s wife the first one listed as one of the relatives he must become Tamai for? **Rav Zalman Sorotzkin ztl.** explains that all of a Kohein’s relatives from his youth (his parents, siblings) are all part of his past. The relationship with his wife, however, is one of the future, of potential. While we build our future on the foundation of the past, and likely still have relationships with those people of the past, the future with one’s wife is a dream and vision of hope, and therefore takes precedent as the most important.

**כִּ֚י אִם־לִשְׁאֵר֔וֹ הַקָּרֹ֖ב אֵלָ֑יו  Except for his She’Er (21:2)** – The Talmud equates She’Er with his wife. Why is she referred to as She’Er here? **Rav Dovid Tevel ztl (Nefesh Dovid)** – suggested that original wife (Chava) brought sin into the world. That sin brought about death – and survivors. One might assume that the modern recreation of that relationship is cursed --- and accordingly the husband who is a kohein should not relate to it. That is why we refer to the wife as a She’er. It is through that loving relationship that children are born and a family’s name remains for another generation long after this one expires.

**כִּ֚י אִם־לִשְׁאֵר֔וֹ הַקָּרֹ֖ב אֵלָ֑יו  Except for the relatives who are close to him (21:2)** - Why is it ok for a Kohein to become Tamai for his relatives? **Rav Schachter Shlita** often reminded us that it was a Machlokes between Rabbi Akiva and Rabbi Yishmael if the Kohein had an OPPORTUNITY or perhaps even an OBLIGATION to become Tamai. Why should he even be ALLOWED to become Tamai? Rav Schachter explained that when it comes to Kavod HaBriyos that accents the Tzelem Elokim, it is not AGAINST the honor due to Hashem, it is precisely in line with it. Hence, for his own relatives, a Kohein can (must?) become Tamai -- to recognize and respect the Kavod Tzelem Elokim that he alone can respect.

**He shall become Tamai for her (21:3)** – Why? The Gemara suggests that this is part of the Mitzva of Kavod HaBriyos which **Rav Schachter Shlita** explained applies even after the death of a Jew. The Meiri in his introduction to Shas quotes a midrash that there is connection between Anochee and Lo Tirtzach on the luchos and the connection is one of Kavod HaBriyos. Sometimes Kavod HaBriyos lets us violate a Mitzva in the Torah. Kavod HaBriyos does not mean he will be embarrassed about being Jewish. Kavod HaBriyos means having the basic human dignity that a person is entitled to.

**A husband shall not defile himself for a wife who was not legitimate (21:4) – Rashi** explains that we are dealing with a Kohein who marries someone he was not allowed to and Beit Din is commanded to demand their divorce. Ostensibly the Beit Din did its job but the Kohein ignored the Beit Din. **The Beis Yisrael of Ger** notes that despite the way he responded to the bigger issue, the Torah is teaching us that in regard to the issue of post-death practice we still give him Mitzvos because we do not give up hope on him. This is a powerful lesson on the fact that no matter how far from Torah a person travels, he should never give up because the Torah does not give up on him.

**They shall be holy to their God (21:6)** – What type of Holiness is being described here**? Rav Yehuda Amital Ztl.** noted that the Torah explains that what makes a person holy is not all kinds of ethereal, lofty things, but rather the simplest foundations of inter-personal relationships: the prohibition against stealing, the prohibition against speaking falsely, the prohibition against hating one's fellow. This is true holiness: being connected to the world and behaving in accordance with fundamental morality towards others - not isolating oneself and engaging in "higher" matters. Kohanim must defile themselves for the sake of burying their close relatives. The law could have been that kohanim, the holy people of the nation who are dedicated exclusively to Divine service, are beyond all the regular emotions associated with mourning, and therefore are not required to defile themselves. Instead, the Torah insists that even they – especially they – must be defiled for this purpose.

**וּבַת֙ אִ֣ישׁ כֹּהֵ֔ן כִּ֥י תֵחֵ֖ל לִזְנ֑וֹת  And the daughter of a male Kohein (21:9)** - The **Yalkut Shimoni** notes that the Bas Kohein is doubly responsible for her actions -- not only does she engage in conduct unbecoming, she could have given birth to Kohanim Gedolim**! Rav Baruch Mordechai Ezrachi Shlita** asked what is gained by adding that she could have been the mother of Kohanim Gedolim? He explains that her true calling in life was to be the mother of Kohanim Gedolim. When she entered the depths of depravity, trying to give up on her Kohein or Jewish status, we remind her that no matter how far you fall, you do not give up your Jewish soul. The Jewish soul creates opportunity yes, but it also comes with a responsibility to know never to give it up.

**וּבַת֙ אִ֣ישׁ כֹּהֵ֔ן כִּ֥י תֵחֵ֖ל לִזְנ֑וֹת When the daughter of a Kohein commits adultery, she receive the death penalty of Sereifa (21:9)** – Why do all other adulteresses receive Chenek and she Sereifa? Why bump her death penalty 2 levels up? **Rav Zeidel Epstein ztl.** quoted the **Alter of Kelm ztl**. who explained that the Possuk provides the reason – that when one is of a higher station in life, more is demanded of him. When one grows up in a home of Kedusha and Kehuna or is raised in a home built on the foundations of Torah, Avodah and Gemillas Chessed the demands from Hashem are higher but so is the potential for reward.

**And from the Mikdash he shall not leave (21:12)** – The Talmud (Sanhedrin 18b) notes that the Kohein Gadol would follow the bier of a departed relative from a distance. We do not find such a scripted distancing in any other case in the Torah. Why are we so careful here? **Rav Moshe Feinstein ztl.** explained that the Kohein Gadol was the national symbol of holiness and purity. Everyone looked to him to know how to behave in all situations. If that is the case, he needed to be extra careful in his ability to preserve the demand of Kedusha as demanded of him by Hashem and explained by the Chachamim. He needed to be sure not to convey the message that when he was emotional, he was allowed to violate the rules of Min HaMikdash Lo Yetzai.

**אֲשֶׁ֨ר יִֽהְיֶ֥ה בוֹ֙ מ֔וּם לֹ֣א יִקְרַ֔ב לְהַקְרִ֖יב  If he has a deformity he shall not come close to bring the bread of Hashem (21:17)** – Why does a physical deformity ruin a Kohein’s ability to serve in the Beis HaMikdah? **Rashi** notes (21:18) that bringing Korbanos to Hashem should be no lower than bringing one to a nobleman. When we present something, we need to be as presentable as the gift we are presenting**. Rav Belsky ztl.** adds that the Kohein is the representative of Klal Yisrael and his presentation to Hashem needs to be blemishless or he should not represent. Rav Belsky added that the same is true of us – we too, need to represent ourselves in the best way possible when we represent Judaism – we need to make sure we represent Am HaNivchar with a sense of Kedusha and reverence just like Hashem would expect from us.

**אֲשֶׁ֨ר יִֽהְיֶ֥ה בוֹ֙ מ֔וּם לֹ֣א יִקְרַ֔ב לְהַקְרִ֖יב  A man from among you who has a blemish shall not step forward to do the service (21:17)** – The sense of the law is that one performing the Avodah should not have any impediment to his Kavana when he is doing the service of Hashem. **Rav Nissan Alpert ztl** asks why the Torah does not demand him to be a Baal Middos as well? He explains that the Torah demands Kiddush Hashem in the world. The process of V’Nikdashtee can only be achieved if one does not vilify that which is established to bring Kedusha into the world. Only the Baal Midos Tovos can achieve this.

**And you shall count from the day after “Shabbos” from the day you bring the Omer (23:15) – Rav Aharon Kotler** ztl noted the connection of the count to the Kabbalas HaTorah to the bringing of a Harvest-based Korban. He noted that without the realization that Hashem is the provider of all sustenance and that without Emunah there can be no sustenance, the Torah cannot be properly acquired or understood. (This might provide a new insight into the idea of Im Ein Kemach Ein Torah.)

**וּבְאַרְצְכֶ֖ם לֹ֥א תַֽעֲשֽׂוּ And in your land you shall not make one (22:24) - Rashi** notes that this Halacha is obvious since it is a Chovas HaGuf -- Why would we even THINK to limit it to the land of Israel? Rashi adds that this teaches us that the rule here must come to add the Tamai. **Rav Chaim Feinstein Shlita** adds that the Chiddush works in the reverse. Lest someone think that the increase in animal population would prevent the Mitzva of Yishuv HaAretz and therefore would allow the castration of the animals specifically in the land, the Torah reminds us that in the land you may not do it either.

**וּמִיּ֤וֹם הַשְּׁמִינִי֙ וָהָ֔לְאָה יֵֽרָצֶ֕ה לְקָרְבַּ֥ן אִשֶּׁ֖ה From the 8th day and onward it can be brought as a Korban (22:27)** – The **Midrash** notes that the reason is that one cannot see the king (Hashem) before experiencing Shabbos (the queen) first. This is true for humans (Bris is on the 8th day too) and animals. But why does an animal need to experience Shabbos? Will it make a difference? **Rav Baruch Mordechai Ezrachi Shlita** says that this is the power of Shabbos – it changes the experience of life for everyone. In fact, the Gemara (Zevachim 91a) notes that Shabbos changes the quality of a Korban (i.e. the Tamid) not directly connected to Shabbos per se and infuses it too, with the transformative power of Kedusha. The same is true for our animal. Shabbos will make its experience more Kadosh.

**אֹת֣וֹ וְאֶת־בְּנ֔וֹ לֹ֥א תִשְׁחֲט֖וּ בְּי֥וֹם אֶחָֽד It and its offspring shall not be slaughtered on the same day (22:28)** – Why is this Mitzvah listed near the section that deals with the laws of Yom Tov? **Rav Avigdor Nebenzahl Shlita** noted that the Gemara (Chullin 83a) identified 4 times that one needs to be informed when the mother was sold. All of them are around Yamim Tovim when people tend to buy more meat and the potential of violating this Torah prohibition is high. Rav Nebenzahl adds that these times need an extra layer of protection for this Mitzva and thus it was juxtaposed to the laws of Yom Tov.

**לִרְצֹֽנְכֶ֖ם תִּזְבָּֽחוּ When you bring a Korban (22:29)** – Why do we highlight that the Korban Todah needs to be “L’Ratzon”? **Rav Moshe Tzvi Neriah ztl.** answered that thanksgiving cannot be mandated, it needs to be heartfelt. This is the Toah’s point here specifically – that you WANT to bring the Korban because internally you want to – Tov, L’Hodos L’Hashem. Perhaps this is why in the future it will be the Todah that will not be Battel as opposed to the other Korbanos. The internal need to say thanks, will not be Battel in the future.

**לִרְצֹֽנְכֶ֖ם תִּזְבָּֽחוּ: When you bring a korban to Hashem (22:29) - The Alter of Kelm** would often note that when we want to express our Hakarat Hatov to Hashem, we do so in the manner that expresses our emotions -- and the best way to show that emotion is with the fullest participation in Mitzvos. But why would bringing a Korban and consuming it within the right time be connected to Hakaras Hatov? He answered that when you care for someone, you want to do exactly as they would want … when it comes to listening to Hashem, that means creating Kiddush Hashem.

**לִרְצֹֽנְכֶ֖ם תִּזְבָּֽחוּ When you bring a Zevach Todah to Hashem (22:29)** – Why does the Torah follow this section about bringing a Korban Todah with the laws of Chilul and Kiddush Hashem? What is the connection? **Rav Chaim Kanievsky ztl.** answers that a Kafui Tov is Kofer B’Ikkar. This is a concept we find throughout the time that Bnei Yisrael were in the Midbar – that when the people were severely punished, it was due to their lack of Hakaras HaTov that led to their constant complaints. The ability to bring a Korban Todah demonstrates the opposite – that I am NOT a Kafui Tov. This is the Alef Bet of making a Kiddush Hashem.

**וְלֹ֤א תְחַלְּלוּ֙ אֶת־שֵׁ֣ם קָדְשִׁ֔י You shall not desecrate My holy name (22:32)** - This Possuk is the source for the tremendous sin of Chillul Hashem. Rabbeinu Yona notes that Chillul Hahem can be rectified by Kiddush Hashem which **Rav Pam ztl.** explained refersnot only to giving **up** one’s life for Hashem but also **living** a life that is a Kiddush Hashem. Rav Pam ztl. added that when young Baalei Teshuva get engaged, it is often a difficult thing for their parents to accept but when the parents see that the young couple treats them and one another with respect, they are creating a Kiddush Hashem.

**ְלֹ֤א תְחַלְּלוּ֙ אֶת־שֵׁ֣ם קָדְשִׁ֔י And you shall not curse my name (24:32) – The Rambam (Yesodei Hatorah 5:11)** explains that Chilul Hashem can exist when a Talmid Chacham merely appears to be engaging in conduct unbecoming his stature. **Rav Avraham Pam ztl.** would often add that this is true even for things that are not the way they seem. Even if that which is under question is where there is a plausible explanation that people will not likely conclude, the issue of Chilul Hashem still applies – even when wrong in the minds of people. Therefore, one should avoid Kiyur Meod Meod.

**וְלֹ֤א תְחַלְּלוּ֙ אֶת־שֵׁ֣ם קָדְשִׁ֔י  And you should not make a Chilul Hashem (22:32) - Rav Schachter Shlita** would often remind us that when an individual Jew acts improperly, he disgraces the entire Jewish people, as well as the Jewish religion. He would remind us of the story about the local Catholic bishop who commented to **Rav Yitschok Elchanan Spector** that one of the major causes of anti-Semitism was the Talmudic statement that "*atem kruyim adam ve'ein umos ha'olam keruyim adam*" - that  if the Jews do not consider non-Jews to be human beings, how could Jews expect anything less than animosity from non-Jews. However, Rav Yitschok Elchanan explained to the bishop that what the Rabbis mean to say was the following: In biblical Hebrew there are four terms for a person - *ish, enosh, gever,* and *adam*. The first three terms have a different form when used in the plural (*anashim, gevarim*). The last term - *adam* remains the same even when used to refer to many men. When any other individual who murders, steals, or acts improperly, we do not say that his behavior is representative of his entire nation. We would say that that individual is bad, but the rest of the nation as a whole is basically good. We distinguish between *gever* (in the singular) and *gevarim* (in the plural); between *ish* (in the singular) and *anashim* (in the plural). But with respect to the individual Jew, we call him "*adam*", used for both the singular and the plural, and assume that the individual is representative of the entire people. Only regarding the Jews is there a principle that "*kol Yisroel areivim zeh lazeh*". The concept of nationhood only applies to the Jews: "*Mi keamcha Yisroel goy echad ba'aretz*"; other peoples are called *"mishpachos ha'adamah*". Any individual Jew who behaves improperly brings disgrace upon his entire nation, as well as upon the entire Jewish religion exactly because we are all one "*adam*".

**And I will be sanctified within the Bnei Yisrael (22:32) – Rav Zev Tzichchik (Toras Zev, Zevachim)** comments that the proper way to sanctify Hashem is identified in a Tefillah we say each day – Kadeish Es Shimcha Al Makdeeshei Shimeicha – “Sanctify Your name by those who sanctify themselves by your name.” In other words – those who really believe in Hashem and hang on even when the natural means of hanging on seem impossible, are those who really create Kiddush Hashem. Their strong belief helps make a greater Kiddush Hashem.

**I shall be sanctified within Bnei Yisrael (22:32)** – The Gemara (Berachos 21b) notes that in order to recite a Dvar She’BKedusha one needs a Minyan. **Rav Moshe Tzvi Neriah ztl.** noted the tension between the work of the mussar movement which stressed the spiritual ascent of the individual versus that of the Kedusha of the community as stressed by **Rav Kook ztl** (Olas Riya II: p. 275 footnote). While the mussar movement needed each individual to work on his sense of self and its perfection, Rav Kook explained that real kedusha can only exist in the communal context. Why? Rav Kook ztl. explains that while the process of self growth begins with Hisbodedus or focus on the individual, the greatness of man is not achieved fully when by himself. For that man needs to see himself as a functioning member of society and thus able to fully appreciate Kedusha.

**Moadei Hashem (23:2)** – Why does this section appear in Toras Kohanim? Are the holidays limited to the Kohanim? **Rav Schachter Shlita quoted Rav Soloveitchik ztl.** who explained that as far of Mishmaros were concerned, there was limited involvement of the Kohanim. It was the fact that the Kohanim were also charged to be the ones whose job it was to teach the Torah to the masses when they were not on Mishmar that put this section into Toras Kohanim.

**Parshas HaMoadim:** Why is Parshas HaMoadim mentioned in the middle of Chumash Vayikra which keeps the focus on the Kohanim? **Rav Schachter Shlita** quoted **Rav Soloveitchik ztl.** who noted that in the time of the Beis HaMikdash a Kohein functioned for a single day twice a year. For this he needs Matnos Kehuna? The rest of the year their job was to teach and their main job was on Shabbos and Yom Tov. Thus, the Parshas HaMoadim was in Toras Kohanim in order to be a source of reminder of the Kohanim’s primary job of Yoru Mishpateicha L’Yaakov.

**These are the holidays of Hashem that shall be called holy (23:5)** – Why is this section in the middle of a Parsha that describes the obligations of Kohanim and Korbanos? Why not put it in the middle of Bamidbar just prior to the Korbanos of Mussaf? **Rav Hershel Schachter Shlita quoted Rav Soloveitchik** ztl who suggested that the role of the Kohein is not limited to the ceremonial roles in the Beis HaMikdash but included the primary responsibility of education. The main opportunity to educate the masses comes on Shabbos and Yom Tov. Therefore, the Kohein was given responsibility to educate on these days and thus their rules are mentioned here too.

**וּבַיּ֣וֹם הַשְּׁבִיעִ֗י שַׁבַּ֤ת שַׁבָּתוֹן֙ מִקְרָא־קֹ֔דֶשׁ On the seventh day it will be a Shabbat Shabbaton (23:3) - Ramban** explains that it will be an occasion of Kodesh. What does this mean? **Rav Yerucham Levovitz ztl.** explains that the day of Shabbos cannot be like a regular day -- man has a responsibility to make Shabbos into a special day -- a real holy experience that will stand out. Everything contributes to that experience -- the food, the drink and even what we wear hence the reference of Mikra Kodesh and the responsibility that Halacha provides to make it so.

**וּסְפַרְתֶּ֤ם לָכֶם֙ מִמָּֽחֳרַ֣ת הַשַּׁבָּ֔ת And you shall count for yourselves (23:16)** – There is a well known Chassidic (Chiddushei HaRim) and Mussar (See Lev Eliyahu) idea that the days of the Omer count parallel the 48 paths to wisdom mentioned in the 6th Perek of Pirkei Avos. However, the parallel is off by one. Both Chassidic & Mussar masters respond that the last day is the day for review. Doesn’t that seem like a forced explanation? **Rav Asher Weiss Shlita** pointed out that this is certainly not so. Divrei Torah are not like every other science that needs only the mastery of the intellectual. Rather, the words of Torah require one to put his heart and soul into it. No one greater than Moshe Rabbeinu needed to Daven and review in order not to forget Torah. The status of reviewing it and the 48 ways make our path to Torah commitment strong.

**And you shall bring the Omer of the beginning of your reaping to the Kohein (23:10)-** Why is the Korban HaOmer not mentioned as part of the Korbanos of the second day of Pesach in the Mussaf? **Rav Yonasan Sacks Shlita** suggested that while the Shtei HaLechem of Shavuos appears both here and in the Korbanos section in Parshas Pinchas, the omer does not. Accordingly, the Omer must not be a korban of the Yom Tov (which would also explain why it does not get its own whole Hallel even in Eretz Yisrael See Erachin 11a).

**וּסְפַרְתֶּ֤ם לָכֶם֙ מִמָּֽחֳרַ֣ת הַשַּׁבָּ֔ת You shall count...until the night after the 7th week you will count 50 days (23:15-16)** - What is the basis of the count known as Sefiras HaOmer? Are we counting TOWARD Shavuos or FROM Pesach? What message are we supposed to learn from this count? **Mrs. Sivan Rahav Meir ShT’ch** quoted Viktor Frankl who noted that in the United States we have a Statue of Liberty but liberty only reflects where we have come from. The bigger question we need to ask ourselves is where we are going. Next to the Statue of Liberty we need a Statue of Responsibility. We have a Sefirah that twins these two foundations. From Pesach we achieve liberty but it must be twinned with a focus toward where we are headed -- namely Matan Torah.

**וּסְפַרְתֶּ֤ם לָכֶם֙ And you shall count (23:15**) - The Gemara tells us that it is a Mitzva to count weeks and to count days. Why we need to count both if when we count weeks we are, by definitions counting days? **Rav Chaim Pinchas Sheinberg ztl.** answers that the message here is that one plus one is not only 2 but things add up to a bigger picture until we get to the Sheleimus of Hashem. Interestingly**, Sivan Rahav Meir** posted in the name of Viktor Frankl that America has a Statue of Liberty to promote Freedom, it also needs a statue of responsibility – to promote the ability to maintain freedom. Mrs. Meir added that this is the connection between Pesach which celebrates Cheirus and Shavuos which best highlights Achrayos.

**שֶׁ֥בַע שַׁבָּת֖וֹת תְּמִימֹ֥ת תִּֽהְיֶֽינָה Seven complete weeks (23:15) – Rav Asher Weiss Shlita** noted that the three main keilim in the Beis HaMikdash – the Shulchan, Menorah and Mizbeiach all had the concept of Tamid associated with them. This comes to demonstrate that one cannot grow in service to Hashem with breaks and dissociations – there needs to be a continuity to the process. He cited Rav Chaim Shmuellevitz ztl. who famously noted that there is a difference between Rabbi Akiva’s going to learn for 2 12-year periods or one continuous 24 year period. The difference is in the letdown. In Torah growth we cannot allow room for a let down.

**שֶׁ֥בַע שַׁבָּת֖וֹת תְּמִימֹ֥ת תִּֽהְיֶֽינָה They shall be complete (23:15) – Rav Schachter Shlita** noted that it is only here in Parshas Emor where the count of Sefirah is in days not weeks, that we speak of Temimos as opposed to Parshas Re’eh where we talk about 7 weeks. Why? **Rav Schachter quoted Rav Soloveitchik** who explained that there are 2 different aspects of counting Sefirah – that of the individual and that of the community. The individual count needs to be Tamim (complete) while that of the community does not. Thus, if one did not count at night, according to the Behag, s/he counts without a Beracha during the day since the individual Mitzva passed and that which remains is the communal one – to establish Shavuos.

**When you reap the harvest of your land, you shall not reap all the way to the edges of your field, or gather the gleanings of your harvest; you shall leave them for the poor and the stranger: I the Lord am your God." (23:22)**  - In last week’s parsha we had almost the exact Mitzva presented. Why the repetition? And why here in the middle of the laws of Shavuos? **Rav Aharon Lichtenstein ztl.** suggested, based on comments from the Ibn Ezra (who suggested that the object of the message in Parshas Kedoshim is the potential corner-cutter in his religious observance as opposed to the person mentioned here who is not intending to cheat the poor on purpose)that the mitzvot regarding mandatory gifts to the poor were placed amidst the section of the festivals in order to prevent a situation in which involvement with the festivals causes one to overlook the interests of the needy, either through sheer neglect or though an ideology that prioritizes the festivals over the needs of the poor.

**לֶֽעָנִ֤י וְלַגֵּר֙ תַּֽעֲזֹ֣ב אֹתָ֔ם For the poor and the proselyte shall you leave them (23:22)** - Why do we leave raw materials in the field for the poor; would they not benefit more from ready made meals? **Rav Aharon Bakst ztl** explained that the Torah is teaching us a psychological insight. The fact that the poor collector still has to be active in the process of preparing the food mitigates his shame for having to accept charity. His efforts afford him some measure of satisfaction so that he doesn’t feel like a total failure. At times one may care for an elderly parent or someone who is handicapped. If the parent/patient offers to participate in some of the family chores or help cook, the caretaker may defer the offer in his well-intentioned effort to spare the parent or patient any added stress. But at times the parent/patient may feel a sense of satisfaction from his efforts. In addition, it can help him feel that he is not a complete burden on others since he is able to contribute too.

**Just on the tenth day of the seventh month it will be Yom Kippur…a day of holiness for you (23:27)** – What is meant by the additional word Ach? Ach usually means a limitation. **Rashi** explains that the day atones for those who return not for those who do not do Teshuvah. But, notes **Rav Gifter ztl**., that aspect of the day is not discussed here – rather in Achrei Mos. **Ibn Ezra** suggests that the day is a day of limitation of Simcha and Oneg of the mundane as it focuses on the spiritual joy instead. Rav Gifter adds that lest one think that this day is a day of a burden, it is not so. Yom Kippur is the day for OUR spiritual need and OUR benefit.

**בְּתִשְׁעָ֤ה לַחֹ֨דֶשׁ֙ בָּעֶ֔רֶב  You shall starve your vital spirits on the 9th day of the month (23:32)** - The Talmud learns that one who eats on the 9th is as if he fasted the 9th and the 10th. **Rabbi Dr. Abraham Twerski ztl.** would often retell the story of the person that the Baal Shem Tov was told would be with him in Gan Eden. He discovered that the man was a lumberjack with a huge appetite. When asked why he ate so well. The man told the Baal Shem that he saw his father beaten by a non-Jewish feudal lord for refusing to convert. The man promised that if someone would try to do the same to him, s/he would have an opponent to deal with. The Baal Shem noted that this is why the man was lofty -- every morsel he ate, equal to a part of the service of Yom Kippur.

**And you shall take for yourselves on the first day…and you shall rejoice with them in front of Hashem (23:40)** – How does one know when the rejoicing of a situation is positive and within the boundaries of the law and when it is dangerous to Shimras HaMitzvos and the will of Hashem? **Rav Dovid Lau Shlita** suggested that when we look to the 4 Minim, we might get the hint. On the one hand, the Lulav and other Minim remind us of the harvest and the joy in the plentiful bounty. At the same time, they are a reminder of the need to have judgement on the winds and rains of the upcoming season. Rav Lau explained that adding to the rejoicing requires a parallel addition to the recognition that there is something and someone greater to look to. When we can do both – we have our concepts of Simcha correct.

**וּשְׂמַחְתֶּ֗ם לִפְנֵ֛י  And you should rejoice in front of Hashem for 7 days (23:40) - Rav Aizik Sher ztl.** would often explain that the joy of the Yamim Tovim is not simply an outward display, that is not Hashem’s desire. Hashem desires an inner state of Simcha -- Ach Sameiach. It is the experience that changes man’s Avodah into Hashem’s desire of him.

**בַּסֻּכֹּ֥ת תֵּֽשְׁב֖וּ שִׁבְעַ֣ת יָמִ֑ים You shall dwell in a Sukkah for 7 days (23:42)** – If Sukkos is known as the time of our Simcha, why do we go into the temporary dwelling to celebrate it? Wouldn’t it be MORE celebratory if celebrate in a more spacey, comfortable place? **Rav Menachem Genack Shlita** suggested that the point of the Mitzva of Sukkos is the idea that we are dwelling in the presence of Hashem and rely on him. That is also why we read Koheles on this holiday. Koheles also proves that all of the things we think bring us to Simcha are nothing compared to knowing that Hashem protects us which will bring us the ultimate peace of mind.

**Command Bnei Yisrael that they should take pure olive oil for you(24:2) – Rashi** explains that this section speaks of the mitzvah of the actual Neiros while the command in Parshas Tetzaveh was only in regard to the construction of the Mishkan. The main mitzvah of lighting is here and there it was mentioned as a means of expecting to be commanded later. Why does the command only come later (here)? **Rav Moshe Feinstein ztl.** explained that the oil of the Menorah needed to be pure because it represented a Torah that was pure. Lest one think that there was personal incentive in Korbanos or in the appointment of the Kohanim or the building of the Mishkan, Hashem commanded that this not be the case. Thus, the command comes pure – as the Torah itself is – to be perfectly clear that Hashem’s Torah is free of personal incentive. (Rav Moshe went on to explain Menuchas Shabbos in the same way – as a means of recognizing Hashem’s ways and emulating them instead of determining how WE want to rest or when).

**מִחוּץ֩ לְפָרֹ֨כֶת הָֽעֵדֻ֜ת  Outside of the Paroches (24:3)** - Why is it that the location of the Menorah is identified on the basis of where it is NOT? Why highlight that it is OUTSIDE of the PAroches**? Rav Dov Kook Shlita** suggested that the Gemara (Shabbos 22b) notes that the western Ner of the Menorah is testimony to all of Am Yisrael that the Shechina rests on them. If that is the case, then the candle has to be visible to the people. That is why the Torah specifies that it is NOT hidden by the Paroches.

**The story of the Mikallel (24:10)** **– Rashi** notes that one of three possibilities led to this soul making the tragic error that he did. Either he went out of his world (the language if “VaYetze” from Olam –noting that when one is out of sorts, one must be careful not to throw it away), that he lost his understanding of Torah principles (that he couldn’t understand Lechem HaPanim so he decided that the rules of the Torah “make no Sense”) or he felt a profound sense of rejection about his questionable pedigree that made him curse Hashem. **Rav Yechiel Yitzchak Perr Shlita** explained that as with the case of the Mikallel, we too, need to handle life’s difficult questions not by throwing in the towel and cursing God but through the process of further declaring our Emunah and understanding that Hashem had a different plan that is better for us in the end.

**וַיֵּצֵא֙ בֶּן־אִשָּׁ֣ה יִשְׂרְאֵלִ֔ית וְהוּא֙ בֶּן־אִ֣ישׁ מִצְרִ֔י And the son of a Jewish woman went out (24:10)** - **Rashi** notes that the connection between the episode of the Mekallel and the Parsha of the Lechem Hapanim is in the fact that the unnamed individual here criticized the fact that the Lechem Hapanim is eaten cold and stale after so many days. Another Jew rebuked him for his harsh disrespect and he cursed Hashem as a result. Why did he care if the Lechem Hapanim is eaten warm or cold? **Rav Berel Wein Shlita** suggested that the point that irked him was whether this Lechem was Chametz or Matzah. If it were baked each day, then it could be served warm and fresh as chametz. However, if it were baked then left to rest for at least seven days, it would most certainly have to be non- chametz. However, the constant reminder of his forebears and their shortcomings was too much “in his face” for him to handle. It set him off and caused this terrible episode. The Gemara in Bava Metzia (59b) says that if someone has a family member who was once hanged, you cannot even use the word "hang" in an innocuous manner, lest you bring him shame.

**And the son of a Jewish mother went out (24:10)** – Where did he go out from? **Rashi** cites the opinion of Rabbi Berechya that he came from the story of the Lechem HaPanim. He could not understand how it was proper to keep bread for Hashem for 9 days while regular bread goes stale relatively quickly. The Meforshim ask that why would he have come to the conclusion it was going to go stale? After all, we find Chazal (Yoma 21b) who identify the idea of when the Olei Regalim came to see the Shulchan, they were able to see the bread fresh. Where was the error? **Rav Shmuel Brazil Shlita** explains that this is the meaning of Panim -- in the Lechem HaPanim – it reflected the person’s outlook of himself. If he saw himself old and stale, he would see that in the bread too. If he saw his life’s mission as unique and he the one to fulfill it, then the bread appeared fresh too.

**And a son of a Jewish woman went out and they fought within the camp (24:10)** – Why does the Torah need us to know that they were fighting? Isn’t the point of the story the blasphemy? **Rav Leib Chasman ztl.** explained that the Torah wants us to know what brings one to do such major Avairos. Had the person not come to a fight, he would never have cursed Hashem.

**שֵׁ֥ם אִמּ֛וֹ שְׁלֹמִ֥ית בַּת־דִּבְרִ֖י לְמַטֵּה־דָֽן His mother’s name was Shlomis Bas Divree (24:11)** - Why do we note his mother’s name if we leave his name out? **Rav Daniel Yolkut Shlita** suggested that the Torah is highlighting the role a mother plays in the Kedusha of family life. A mother can create an atmosphere of kedusha in everyday life— or can inject a cynicism to the potential for kedusha. **Rashi and the Ibn Ezra** both suggest that his blasphemy was about the korbanos— perhaps a lack of sensitivity for kedusha comes from Shelomit, who failed to build a home that was a Mikdash like Sara's. Parents and grandparents need to be sensitive to the degree to which the messages they give children can create the proper atmosphere or subtly poison the waters.

**וְשֵׁ֥ם אִמּ֛וֹ שְׁלֹמִ֥ית בַּת־דִּבְרִ֖י Her name was Shlomis Bas Divri (24:11) – Rashi** explains that we give her name to note that she was the only one who was a Zonah. She was called Bas Divri since she was too busy speaking to everyone, she was in everyone’s business and ultimately, they were in hers too. Does that mean that it is wrong to check in on everyone? **Rav Nosson Meir Wachtfogel ztl**. explains that there are times that there are boundaries in life. Hashem established boundaries from the time of creation. He created boundaries between Shomayim and Aretz, between animals on the land and others in the sea etc. Each animal thrives in his or her proper habitat – not when they overstep their habitats. Shlomis was guilty of having NO boundaries. She was in everyone’s business and without boundaries. That leads to destruction. There are levels of intimacy that are not “Hakol” all the same. Not everyone needs to know everything about every relationship. Our Shalom Bayis would improve if we understood and lived by that.

**וְשֵׁ֥ם אִמּ֛וֹ שְׁלֹמִ֥ית בַּת־דִּבְרִ֖י לְמַטֵּה־דָֽן His mother’s name was Shlomis Bas Divri (24:11)** - **Rashi** explains that this is a praise of Bnei Yisrael that she was the only Zonah. **Rav Pincus ztl.** explains that it could be bad to have to admit that there was a Zonah in the camp but we also see the praise that there was only one. Moreover, the fact that there was a challenge and someone failed led to an appreciation of all of the others who did not and did so out of choice instead of out of some foreign force that compelled them to comply.

**וְשֵׁ֥ם אִמּ֛וֹ שְׁלֹמִ֥ית בַּת־דִּבְרִ֖י His mother’s name was Shlomis bas Divri (24:11) – Rashi** notes that her name is mentioned as a praise to the Jewish nation to note that she alone was a Zonah. **Rav Refoel Meiselish ztl**. explains that the possuk prior notes that the young man went out and Rashi cites 2 opinions as to whether he went out from the section of Lachem HaPanim mentioned before (in that he was a non-believer that the Lechem HaPanim was meant to be a korban left out for 9 days) or whether he learned that he was not to receive rights as a tribal descendant of Dan. The reference of Shem Imo first is consistent with the rule that Tzaddikim their name comes before them except when the name attempts to use attempted Tzidkus in place of reality – just as by Lavan. Here too, she is referred to as Shem Imo Shlomis – but it means that she would be checking in on everyone – to see if her services were needed.

**They placed him in the prison (24:12) - Rashi** comments that he was kept separate from the Mikosheish. Why indeed were they not placed together? **Sefer Ikvei Erev** notes that while they did not know what to do with the Migadef, they knew that the Mikosheish was to die and were just waiting to see how the death was to be carried out. In order not to be cruel by placing him “on death row” prematurely, Moshe separated him from the Mikosheish. **Rav Yissocher Frand Shlita** adds that we need to be impacted by the sensitivity displayed here when we consider that the Migadef was a person who committed the reprehensible sin of cursing Hashem’s name, which gave him no personal pleasure or benefit, and represented a premeditated rebellion against Hashem. If the Torah shows so much concern for the psychological welfare of a person who blasphemed Hashem, how much more so must we be considerate and understanding to the feelings of every Jew with whom we interact.

**וְאִ֕ישׁ כִּ֥י יַכֶּ֖ה כָּל־נֶ֣פֶשׁ אָדָ֑ם And when a man hits another person he shall be put to death (24:19)** - Moshe just asked about the Mikallel, why does Hashem give him all of the rules of someone who hits someone else here? **Rav Moshe Feinstein ztl.** explained that Hashem wanted to teach that before anyone executes capital punishment out of love of Hashem, he must have Ahavas Yisrael. These Halachos show not only how much Hashem values human life, but also the sensitivity to human suffering and even loss of money.

**וְאִ֕ישׁ כִּ֥י יַכֶּ֖ה כָּל־נֶ֣פֶשׁ אָדָ֑ם When a person places a blemish in his friend (24:19**) – The Chovos HaLevavos explains that when we come to the day of Judgement and hear many things we are to be rewarded for, we will discover that he did not do these things. Similarly, there will be things we did do and will not receive reward for. In both cases it will be because we were, or did, denigrate our fellow man and the perpetrator will surrender his Zechusim to the victim. **Rav Scheinerman** explained that this is seen in our Possuk which declares that when a person places a blemish in (the character) of his neighbor, that which he tries to do shall happen to him (the Zechusim will move and he will be impoverished).

Haftara:

**Kedushas Kehunah - Rav Schachter Shlita** would often remind us that many people think the Jewish tradition is only about death. This week’s Haftarah also highlights the issue but not from the perspective of the dead, rather from the perspective of the one who is alive -- the Kohein. Even a Kohein is given the responsibility to show respect for the meis but the Kavod HaBriyos is a Kal V’Chomer for the one who is alive. And, although there is a well known Machlokes as to whether Lah Yitamah is an opportunity or a Chiyuv, it was a tradition that was handed down within the Kohein families going back to the times of the Mikdash. Rav Schachter would remind us of the famous Shittas HaRambam that ONLY the Kohein has a Chiyuv to become Tamai -- because this is a part of the expression of the Kavod HaBriyos.

**The children of Tzadok (Yechezkel 44:15)** – Why does Tzaddok get special mention here as the patriarch of Kohanim? Why are they uniquely going to serve Hashem? The **Dubno Maggid** explains that this period in time was an extremely turbulent one for the Jews in general and the kohanim in particular. There were many who chose to serve Avodah Zara. Bnei Tzaddok stood up to the challenges. That is why they were rewarded – Heimah Yikrivu Eklai L’Sharteinee.

**But the Kohanim, the Leviim sons of Tzaddok who kept the charge of my Mikdash (Yechezkel 44:15**) – What does this Nevuah add to the Parsha? It is almost identical? **Rav Soloveitchik ztl.** explained that the Kohanim at the time of Yechezkel were not all keeping the sanctity of the Kehuna. The Parsha tells us that the Kohanim need to be Kosher but the Haftorah reminds us that they will continue to maintain their existence even after the Churban – and that the Kedushas Kehuna is proof that there will be a need to keep the kedusha again in the future.

**בְּנֵ֣י צָד֗וֹק  The children of Tzaddok (Yechezkel 44:15)** - The Novi highlights the family of Tzaddok who were descendants of Pinchas as ideal Kohanim**. Rav Yigal Ariel Shlita** explains that even when Bnei Yisrael went off the derech and served idols, the children of Tzaddok (beyond the other Kohanim) retained the Kedusha of the Mikdash due to their commitment. Rav Ariel points out that unlike their ancestor Pinchas, who needed to change the status quo, Tzaddok and his descendants defended Hashem’s glory by adhering to it in the face of challenge.

**וְרֹאשָׁם֙ לֹ֣א יְגַלֵּ֔חוּ וּפֶ֖רַע לֹ֣א יְשַׁלֵּ֑חוּ They shall not shave their heads but also shouldn’t grow it wildly (Yechezkel 44:20)** – The Gemara (Taanis 17a) notes that the Anshei Mishmar are allowed to get haircuts in honor of Shabbos so that they not come into the Mishmar looking disheveled. Now, in regard to the Nazir, we find the opposite, that the Nazir is supposed to let his hair grow – as a sign of his holiness. Why the difference between the Kohein and the Nazir? **Rav Yaakov Kamenetzsky ztl** suggested that the difference was that a sign of Kavod toward Shomayim is when a person appears honored in front of people – hence he should be presentable and respectable. A Nazir does not perform service in the Beis HaMikdash, he is removed from Olam Hazeh. He has no one to dress for in order to impress.

**וְהָֽאַלְמָנָה֙ אֲשֶׁר תִּֽהְיֶ֣ה אַלְמָנָ֔ה מִכֹּהֵ֖ן יִקָּֽחוּ A widow who is the widow of a Kohein he shall take (Yechezkel 44:22) – Rashi** notes that this refers to the Kohein Gadol. **Abarbanel** and **Malbim** disagree arguing that in the future the Kohanim will not be able to marry widows like the Kohein Gadol cannot. The difference between them and the Kohein Gadol will be that they can marry a Kohein’s widow. **Rav Gideon Weitzman Shlita** explained that as active teachers of the Jewish people, the Kohanim need to achieve a higher level of Kedusha and thus they will have a stronger limit in order to be in a better position to teach the people how to properly sanctify their lives.

**They shall instruct My people concerning [the difference] between holy and ordinary, and they shall inform them of [the difference] between contaminated and clean. Concerning a disagreement, they shall stand in judgment, and shall adjudicate them according to My laws." (Yechezkel 44:23-24**)- **Rav Avraham Rivlin Shlita** often stressed that the primary role of the tribe of Levi was not in the service aspect of the job but rather in the role of serving as role models of Kedusha – means of serving as inspirations for the people in their lives to inspire for. The calling already began in Mitzrayim where the Leviim were offered a distinct status and even existed in the name Levi – which Leah used to bring Yaakov closer.

**The Kohanim shall not eat any Neveilah or Tereifa (Yechezkel 44:31)** – No one may eat a

Neveila or Tereifa. Why specify the Kohanim? **Rashi** explains that since in the Mikdash there were Korbanos that they ate that did not undergo Shechita, one might think they were able to make changes to the rules or that the rules didn’t apply to them. Nothing could be further from the truth and thus the Torah makes the rules clear. **Rav Gideon Rothstein** points out that this is often the challenge to relevancy of timeless Torah law – it needs proper clarification in a modern context – not to be rewritten. It isn’t the PERSON who lives apart from the rules, it is the context wherein sometimes the rules are different.