

Points to Ponder
Emor 5777

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 Ramban 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.

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.

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 as 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.

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 Shte HaLechem of Shavuot 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).

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).

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.

Haftorah: 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.