



Parshat Emor-The Power of Speech

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Parshat Emor primarily focuses on three topics. Initially the Torah discusses the halachot of Kohanim and that which relates to their service in the Beit Hamikdash. Subsequently it devotes the bulk of the parsha to the holidays, and then ends with the tragic episode of the *megadef*-the blasphemer. What is the common thread running through these three elements?

The answer is embedded in the name of the Parsha itself-“*Emor*” which comes from the root word “*Amira*.”-to speak. When the Torah introduces the topic of Kohanim it says, “*Emor el hakohanim...*” The *moadim* are described

as *bikurei kodesh* and the Targum explains that this refers to a particular time that has great significance. The Rambam notes that these are the holy days when Klal Yisrael would gather to thank and praise Hashem. Our main focus and *avodah* on Yom Tov is *amirah*-saying *shir v'shevach* to Hashem. Similarly, we see the great negative power of speech through the story of the *megadef*.

In Breishit the Torah portrays the creation of man, “*Vayehi adam l'nefesh chaya*.” Man became a living being. Targum translates *nefesh chaya* as *ruach m'mimaleleh*-the power of speech. Hashem gave man the ability to

express himself and to articulate his ideas. This makes him unique over all segments of creation.

“*Emor v'amarata*.” The Kohanim followed the dictums of Hashem. Through *amirah* one can come to unbelievable levels. And indeed during the *moadim*, when a Jew communes with Hashem, he can scale very great heights. Conversely, corrupted speech causes a person to fall to the lowest depths as evidenced by the blasphemer. The lesson of Parshat Emor is the potency of speech. May we merit to use this gift correctly.