

CHEVRAH TORAH...5777

With HEART in MIND

MUSSAR Teaching to Transform the Text & Our Lives

EMOR—Leviticus 21:1-10

NOSEH Ba-OL IM CHAVERO—Bearing the Burden With One's Fellow

...Key KOSHI...

HOW do the functions/limitations of the Kohanim model Kedusha?

WHAT does the Kohen's Job D teach us about Rabbinic leadership, and what Sacred Service truly means?



P'SHAT...Studying Torah—Encountering The Word—The Will—The ONE

The truly wise individual is not one who has achieved wisdom but a *talmid chacham*—a wise student...one who is constantly learning—including by observing and reflecting on what can be learned from other people.

<p>21:1] The Eternal One said to Moses: Speak to the priests, the sons of Aaron, and say to them:</p> <p>None shall defile himself for any [dead] person among his king, 2] except for the relatives that are closest to him: his mother, his father, his son, his daughter, and his brother; 3] also for a virgin sister, close to him because she has not married, for her he may defile himself. 4] But he shall not defile himself as a kinsman by marriage, and so profane himself.</p> <p>5] They shall not shave smooth any part of their heads, or cut the side-growth of their beards, or make gashes in their flesh. 6] They shall be holy to their God and not profane the name of their God; for they offer the Eternal's offerings by fire, the food of their God, and so must be holy.</p> <p>7] They shall not marry a woman defiled by harlotry, nor shall they marry one divorced from her husband. For they are holy to their God</p>	<p>1 וַיֹּאמֶר יְהוָה אֶל־מֹשֶׁה אֲמַר אֶל־ הַכֹּהֲנִים בְּנֵי אַהֲרֹן וְאָמַרְתָּ אֲלֵהֶם לִנְפֹשׁ לֹא־יִטְמָא בְּעַמִּי׃</p> <p>2 כִּי אִם־לְשֵׂאֲרוֹ הַקָּרֵב אֵלָיו לְאָמוֹ וּלְאָבִיו וּלְבִנּוֹ וּלְבִתּוֹ וּלְאָחִיו׃ 3 וּלְאָחֻתוֹ הַבְּתוּלָה הַקְּרוּבָה אֵלָיו אֲשֶׁר לֹא־הִיְתָה לְאִישׁ לָהּ יִטְמָא׃</p> <p>4 לֹא יִטְמָא בְּעַל בְּעַמִּי לְהַחֲלוֹ׃</p> <p>5 לֹא יִקְרַחַהּ [יִקְרַחוּ] קְרַחַהּ בְּרֹאשָׁם וּפְאֵת זָקָנָם לֹא יִגְלַחוּ וּבְבִשְׂרָם לֹא יִשְׂרְטוּ שְׂרָטוֹת׃</p> <p>6 קְדָשִׁים יִהְיוּ לֵאלֹהֵיהֶם וְלֹא יַחֲלְלוּ שֵׁם אֱלֹהֵיהֶם כִּי אֶת־אֲשֵׁי יְהוָה לֶחֶם אֱלֹהֵיהֶם הֵם מִקְרִיבִם וְהָיוּ קֹדֶשׁ׃</p> <p>7 אִשָּׁה זָנָה וְחֻלְלָה לֹא יִקְחוּ וְאִשָּׁה גְּרוּשָׁה מֵאִשָּׁה לֹא יִקְחוּ כִּי־קֹדֶשׁ הוּא לֵאלֹהֵיו׃</p> <p>8 וְקֹדֶשְׁתּוֹ כִּי־אֶת־לֶחֶם אֱלֹהֵיךָ הוּא מִקְרִיב קֹדֶשׁ יִהְיֶה־לְךָ כִּי קְדוֹשׁ אֲנִי יְהוָה מִקְדָּשְׁכֶם׃</p>
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8] and you must treat them as holy, since they offer the food of your God; they shall be holy to you, for I the Eternal who sanctify you am holy.

9] When the daughter of a priest defiles herself through harlotry, it is her father whom she defiles; she shall be put to the fire.

10] The priest who is exalted above his fellows, on whose head the anointing oil has been poured and who has been ordained to wear the vestments, shall not bare his head or rend his vestments.

9 וּבַת אִישׁ כֹּהֵן כִּי תַחַל לְזַנוֹת אֶת־אֲבִיהָ
הִיא מְחַלְלַת בָּאֵשׁ תִּשְׂרֹף: ס 10 וְהַכֹּהֵן
הַגָּדוֹל מֵאַחָיו אֲשֶׁר־יוֹצֵק עַל־רֹאשׁוֹ | שֶׁמֶן
הַמִּשְׁחָה וּמִלֵּא אֶת־יָדָיו לְלִבָּשׁ אֶת־
הַבְּגָדִים אֶת־רֹאשׁוֹ לֹא יִפְרֹעַ וּבְגָדָיו
לֹא יִפְרֹם:

REMEZ...*Acquiring Torah*...When Torah penetrates our entire being, not just our *seichel/intellect*, this is the acquisition of Torah. –R' Avi Fertig

- V.1-2 *The Lord said to Moses: Speak to the Kohanim, the sons of Aaron, saying to them: None shall defile himself for any dead among his kin except for the relatives closest...*
ETZ HAYIM... This *par'shah* lives up to the book's alternate title, "*Torat Kohanim—The Priest's Instruction*." The previous *par'shah* set Israel apart from the nations by their actions. This *par'shah* sets the Kohanim apart from the Israelites by means of obligations and restrictions.
ABARVANEL... Rather, "*None shall defile himself among his kin with regard to his soul—nefesh*." The continued contact of the spiritual soul with the dead material body is a source of ritual impurity.
- V.4 *He shall not defile himself as a kinsman by marriage and so profane himself.*
RASHBAM... The *P'shat* sense is "*No husband among his kin the priests shall defile himself [for his wife] and so profane himself*." According to the Sages, however, the verse means he may not defile himself for a wife who is forbidden to him as a Priest, but for a proper wife he defiles himself.
S'FORNO...Being a "*Ba'al—Chief*" among his people he must not give honor to the dead, except for his relatives, for their honor is his honor.
- V.5-6 *They shall not shave smooth any part of their heads, nor cut the side-growth of their beards, or make gashes in their flesh. They shall be holy and not profane the name of their God...*
PELL...This must be read against the backdrop of the gaudy worship of the dead in ancient Egypt...All of ancient Egyptian life centered around death...When death came, the priests took over with a series of rituals, processions and incantations to get the body to its proper place...Of course, not everyone could afford the full service of the priests...Thus it was a privilege reserved for royalty and the very rich. Funerals were big business for the priests and the extensive death industry that grew around them. [[Torah Today](#), pg 144]
- HaEMEK DAVAR... The Kohanim must be holy, in the sense that they abstain from these excesses and maintain a higher standard of conduct than others, but they must be careful to do so only for "*shem Eloheyhem*." If they do so for personal glory, so that they will be honored, they are not sanctifying but profaning God's Name.
- V.7-8 *...For they are holy to their God and you must treat them as holy...for I, the Lord, who sanctify you am holy.*
RAMBAN... "*who sanctify you*"—That is, the Priests...Or perhaps it refers to the Priests and the people. In that case, the sense of the verse would be "Through him, the Priest, I sanctify all of you and cause My *Shechinah* to rest upon your Sanctuary."
HIRSCH...The Kohen is not merely an individual, but an expression of the Sanctuary he serves. As such, he is responsible to the people to offer up to God, and the people Israel are responsible to him to help him remain true to his task.
- V.10 *The Priest who is exalted above his fellows, on whose head the anointing oil has been poured, and who has been ordained to wear the vestments, shall not bare his head nor rend his vestments*
ALSHECH...We have stated earlier that God wanted to assuage the feelings of Israelites who felt jealous of the Priests. God allays such feelings by pointing out that the elevation to *Kohen Gadol* requires even more than heredity...The claim to this office is based on "*being anointed*," and so wearing the Priestly vestments...And even when the actual oil of anointment did not exist, as during the time of the Second Temple, the crown of such oil, the aura of this holy office is upon the High Priest. What is this crown? It is the Presence of God—*Ani Adonai*. Since this is so, the proximity of God's Presence more than compensates for the loss of his next of kin, and the feeling of being bereaved must be suppressed. A man who is privileged to be in the Presence must not defile himself.
Y. LIEBOWITZ... It is not written "*They shall be holy to you*," but rather "*to their God*." The Jewish people do not have to treat the *Kohen Gadol's* status as something which is holy. R' Chaim of Volozhyn [the NETZIV] notes that the holiness attributed to the *Kohanim* is conditional—on their being holy in behavior...In the Book of Exodus, the obligation of Priestly garments is described. The NETZIV comments, "They must not imply holiness to the people through their clothes. They should not appear holy by what they wear. Inside, they are Priests offering sacrifices; outside they are like any other people, and should dress like them too..." Our faith does not recognize *Kedushah* as inherent, nor an inherited part of any person. Holiness comes in the way we teach and live Torah...To regard people as holy in themselves is nothing but idolatry.

D'RASH...*Helping the Heart feel what the Mind understands ...*

ALAN MORINIS...

With “bearing the burden with the other,” we turn to face another soul in fulfillment of a major part of our human purpose. What do you need? How can I help you bear your burden? No one merits acquiring Torah who does not hear and respond to that cry.

...The paradigmatic teacher of this trait is Moses. A voice called out from the burning bush and summoned him to lead the Jewish people from exile to revelation.

We can only conclude that God called Moses to leadership and destiny because he was the kind of person who cared about other people and who, with every limb of his body, did what he could to help them carry their burdens.

When God told Moses to free the people from Egypt, Moses asked, “Whom should I tell them sent me?” God responded, “*Ehyeh Asher Ehyeh*—“I will be Who I will be.” The Talmud explains this name to mean “I am with them in their present suffering and I will be with them when they suffer under the dominion of other nations.” Here is the model we are to follow in interpersonal relations. “*Bearing the burden*” calls on us to penetrate another person’s fortress with the aim of relieving that person’s pain by joining ourselves to his or her suffering.

...Rav Wolbe writes that this is the key to not becoming habituated and dulled in our own spiritual lives....Our own spiritual growth requires that we help carry the burdens borne by our family, coworkers, communities, and the whole of humanity.

...Pay careful attention to the wording of this teaching. It says, “Bearing the burden *with*,” not “*for*.” Each of us must carry our own “yoke,” but how good and how satisfying and how human it is to have someone who lends a shoulder to help carry the load.

...This one practice is so fundamentally valuable because when you take it on, your entire personal spiritual curriculum is revealed to you. In Pirkei Avot 1:14, Hillel asks, “If I am not for myself, who will be for me? But when I am only for myself, what am I?” [With heart in Mind, pgs. 200-203]

SOD...*Helping the soul-light shine....Practice focuses on recalibrating the soul-traits that are obstructing your soul's light from shining into your I*

Rabbi SHLOMO RISKIN...

WHAT is the major task of a religious leader? That is a question that plagues every search committee as well as every practicing ‘professional’ religionist...We will attempt to provide some general direction derived from the Priestly functions...bearing in mind Rabbi Yisrael Salanter’s adage that if everyone is satisfied, you are not a proper *rabbi*, and if no one is satisfied, you are not a proper *menstch*.

The Kohen was the Priest-Educator during Biblical and Temple periods. The very first commandment concerning him is that he not defile himself by contact with the dead. This is an especially telling limitation when we remember that the primary responsibility of the priests of all other religions was to aid their adherents to “get to the other world”—that the bible of ancient Egypt was called

the Book of the Dead. In effect, Torah is teaching us that our religious leadership must deal with the living and not the dead; must spend its time teaching Torah and accessing Jewish experiences rather than giving eulogies and visiting cemeteries—must be dedicated primarily to this world rather than the World-to-Come.

Second, the High Priest wore a head-plate upon which was written “*holy unto God*” and a breast-piece on which were engraved the twelve tribes of Israel...The religious leader must dedicate his mind to the Divine and his heart to the people; his thoughts and plans must always be in line with God-endowed principles of ethical conduct, and his feelings must be informed with love, concern and commitment to the welfare of each and every Jew. His primary task must not be so much to elevate himself to God as it is to bring God to his people...The true leader helps all twelve tribes—the many different individuals to discover his/her pathway to approach God’s Tent.

...In 1972, in his eulogy for revered teacher Rabbi Meshullam Twersky—the Talner Rebbe, Rabbi Joseph B. Soloveitchik clarified the dual and complimentary roles of religious leadership...The majestic Rav is essentially concerned with his students’ cerebral capacities, uses the logical world as his medium of communication and speaks to the intellectual elite; the holy Rebbe is essentially concerned with his students’ emotional capacities, uses religious experience as his medium of communication, and attempts to make contact with the soul of every single Jew. The majestic Rav seeks and demands exacting truth; the holy Rebbe expresses and emanates unconditional love. The majestic Rav chastises the one who commits a transgression with harsh words of condemnation; the holy Rebbe weeps over one who sins and always extends a hand in forgiveness, his arm in embrace...The majestic Rav is embodied in the head-piece, with the words “Holy to the Lord,” while the holy Rebbe is embodied in the breast-piece, whereon were engraved the twelve tribes of Israel.

Rabbi Soloveitchik, however, revels in the glory of the dialectic, generally attempting to join together the two prototypes... [Like Adam One and Adam Two in *The Lonely Man of Faith*] And although the Rav is known by that title of respect to the outside world, he is affectionately called Rebbe by each of his students and followers. I would argue that both the head-piece and breast-plate must be worn by the truly great religious leader of today—together in sacred synthesis.

Rabbi JACK STERN...

Twenty-eight years ago tonight, I stood on the bimah of Westchester Reform Temple for the first time. I still remember the sensation of butterflies swarming and storming in my stomach. I had always known that Rosh HaShanah was the

Day of Judgment, but this one was different, because on this one the judgment was not only on high but down here in that sea of faces out in front of me....

For me, Reform Judaism was a way of understanding our tradition and values which would send us back to enhance the quality of our lives in all our little corners of the world....Now, twenty-eight year later, as I stand on the bimah for my last Rosh HaShanah, still with the butterflies, it is with my prayer of thanks for all the ways in which that hope has been fulfilled.

...What I could not anticipate twenty-eight years ago were all the doors of opportunity still undisclosed through which I would someday walk and which would enhance the landscape of my life.

...From you, the members of this congregation, from those of longest standing to the ones for the first time here tonight, from you I have learned the most.

Because in my thirty-eight years as a rabbi and twenty-eight years with you here at WRT, I have learned that a rabbi's life is never boring. Frustrating, sometimes; wearing, sometimes; annoying, sometimes; but never boring. Time plays funny tricks on a rabbi, but it never drags.

...In my twenty-eight years here and my thirty-eight years as a rabbi, I have never stopped learning about the human condition. I have stood under the chuppah with brides and grooms and parents at their side, and I have learned that there are moments in human life when the thought of everything else—including caterers and flowers and table arrangements—gives way because in the loving eyes of those two people, the blessing of God descends into the world.

...And with many of you, I have stood at the graveside and I have learned that in moments of life's mystery and death's mystery, a rabbi can say the prayers, but in truth there is nothing to say....

...And above all, what you have taught me and what the years have taught me and what life keeps teaching me is the power of the human spirit, the God-given power to do the "*t'shuvah*, to make the turn of which these Holy Days speak: from taking to more giving, from grief to more sunlight, from grudges to more forgiveness, from tearing life down and tearing ourselves down to crowning life with glory and honor.

After twenty-eight years, what prayer shall I speak on this sacred day of prayer? The Chasidim tell of the simple peasant who stood before the ark. "Lord of the universe," he said, "I am a simple man. Oh, how I wish I had the words to fashion beautiful prayers to give You thanks.

“So listen to me, God, as I recite the letters of the alphabet. Because You know how I feel. You take the letters, God, and You shape the words of thanks to You that are in my heart.”

And the peasant recited, “*Alef, bet, gimmel, daled...*”

And so I ask You, “What words, O God, can I speak for the blessings of my life?”

So I simply set my blessings before You:

- the love of my family and how it has sustained me;
- the Torah of my people and how it has lighted my way;
- the partnership with this congregation
and how it has taught me with love to be a rabbi;
- and Your blessing of life itself, O God,

Who has kept me alive and sustained me and brought me to this day.

I set these blessings before You, and now You, O God, You put them together into a hymn of my thanksgiving that will be acceptable before You, my Rock and my Redeemer.

Alef, bet, gimel, daled...

Amen.

Rosh HaShanah 1990/5751

CONSIDER

Think of someone close to you who is in some form of pain.

Visualize his/her feelings; the depth of that life-experience.

HOW can you REACH OUT to that person to ease the pain?