

THE COMMUNITY PARSHA SHEET



PARSHAT EMOR

London's Leading Young Professionals Platform and Jewish Communal Centre



RABBI JONATHAN TAWIL
TAL Founder & Director

THE CHOICE IS OURS

The story is told about a man that didn't believe in free will. After 120 years he went up to heaven and was met with two paths in front of him. The first had a sign saying "Believers in predestination" and the second said "Believers in free will".

Needless to say, he chooses the first and goes down a long path. Finally, he arrives at a large brick wall up to the Shamayim and a small door. He knocks on the door and an angel appears asking him, 'What brings you to my door, mortal?' And the man says, 'Well, there were these two signs, and I chose the one that said predestination.' The angel says, "You chose it? You can't come in here" and slams the door. The man is heartbroken. Finally, he trudges back to the crossroads and goes down the other road. Eventually he comes to another giant wall and a door that says 'FREE WILL.' He knocks and another angel opens the door and says, "Why did you come this way, mortal?" And the man says, "I had no choice!"

We believe that free will lies at the essence of our existence. Hashem has placed us here with the ability to decide our actions. He has created a world of reward and punishment that is governed by our free will.

In this week's Parasha, we learn a great lesson in how much we are supposed to appreciate this free will. When a person

came to the Bet Hamikdash to offer up a Korban, his (together with the Kohen's) intentions had to be clear and focused on the special mitzvah. All Korbanot were the same. Nevertheless the Torah seems to go out of its way and single out the Korban Todah (thanksgiving offering) to mention the importance of good intention when being offered up. (22:29) – it should be offered up willingly.

Every Korban had to be offered up to Hashem with good intent. Why does the Pasuk single out the Korban Todah? The Korban Todah was brought as a thanksgiving to Hashem for saving the person from one of four things. (Release from jail, getting better from serious illness, safely travelling across the sea and wilderness).

The Oneg Yom Tov explains that the word Toda – thanks comes from the word Modeh – to admit.

One can only admit something that is able to deny.

Let us take a thought for a moment.

Hashem's power is infinite and the whole world is full of His presence. How is it possible for man to sin with Hashem there at the same time? How is it possible for Hashem to be present and allow man to sin?

This is one of the greatest kindness of Hashem that in order for us to have free will, He enables us to go against His will. When something bad happens and someone survives, they have two paths in front of them. They can use their extra life to enjoy the physicalities of this world or they can focus that extra life on

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servicing Hashem. The person that brings the Todah admits and shows his love of Hashem.

This is the meaning to our Pasuk; Lirtonechem Tizbechuhu - we are acknowledging the gift of free will. We thank (Toda) Hashem for the free will that he has given us even whilst He is present.

So how should we guide our free will?

The Torah teaches that 3 types of domesticated animals were offered as Korbanot (sacrifices) in the temple – the cattle, the sheep and the goats. These 3 are mentioned in our Parasha. (22:27)

The Midrash (Yalkut Shimoni, Emor) has a fascinating insight as to why these three animals were given the merit to be offered up and stand as a merit for Am Yisrael.

The ox – Shor, was in the merit of Avraham. When the 3 angels arrived at his house as guests, he ran to the flock and chose a calf (young ox). The sheep - Kesev was in the merit of Yitschak. At the Akeida (binding of Isaac) Avraham was eventually told not to offer his son up. Instead, he looked up and found the ram.

The Ez – goat was in merit of Yakov. Rivka commanded Yakov to get two goats so that she would cook for Yitschak tasty food and he would bless Yakov (thinking he was Eisav). Rabbi Yehuda Leb Eidel (Iyeh Hayam) asks we can understand why Avraham and Yitschak actions are a merit for their children, but why are Yakov's actions- which essentially were deceiving- a merit for his children? Yakov wore the goats skin as a means to deceive his father – is that a merit?

R Yehudah Leb gives a fascinating answer. When Rivka approached Yakov with the idea, he was frightened. He stated that Eisav is an Ish Sair – literally hairy, VeAnochi Ish Chalak – and I am smooth.

On a deeper level, Yakov was saying that Eisav always attributes everything to Seir – demons and idols, whereas I attribute everything to Hashem. Surely, he said to Rivka, Yitschak will realise. Rivka responded and calmed his fears and Yakov dressed in the goat's skin.

When we delve deeper, we see that Yakov had a much better option to 'deceive' his father.

When Yakov came in to his father, he

was asked how come he managed to prepare the food so quick. He answered it was because Hashem had caused things to be quick. This triggered some doubt in Yitzchak's mind. If Eisav was before him, how come he mentioned G-d's Name – something he didn't usually do?

It was only then that Yitschak asked him to draw near so that he could feel him to check it was really Eisav.

Surely Yakov could have initially responded by attributing his swiftness to the idols (seirim). If that would have been the case, perhaps Yitschak would have never had any doubt and wouldn't have needed to feel him.

Why didn't Yakov chose this path? R Yehudah Leb explains that Yakov was a man of truth. Lying was not his nature. He had to attribute all to Hashem. He would rather dress in goat's skin and be put in a predicament than to miss out mentioning Hashem's Divine providence. This, explains R Yehudah, is the reason that goats were offered up and stood as a merit and reminder to Yakov's testimony of Hashem's Divine providence in all.

When we guide our free will in the right direction, the effect is eternal.



RABBI DAVID BAADANI
Director - TAL Chazanut Program

LAG BE'OMER

"Love Your Fellow as Yourself" – and also Respect them

"Thou shalt love thy fellow as thyself" – Rabbi Akiva said: "This is a fundamental principle of the Torah."

For thirty-three days during Sefirat HaOmer, the Jewish people mourn the tragic loss of 24,000 students of Rabbi Akiva, who perished from a devastating epidemic. According to our Sages, this plague was not merely a physical tragedy, but a

spiritual one as well – מפני שלא נהגו – because they did not treat one another with respect.

This raises a profound question: How could the students of Rabbi Akiva, the very teacher who taught that loving one's fellow is the foundation of the Torah, fail in such a fundamental way? How could people raised on the principle of "Ve'ahavta l're'acha kamocho" – love your fellow as yourself – fall short in their relationships with one another?

The answer lies in understanding the difference between love and respect.

Love often stems from similarity – we are naturally drawn to those who are like us. The Hebrew word for love (אהבה) shares the same gematria as אחד (one), reflecting the unity and connection we feel with those who mirror ourselves. In contrast, respect arises from difference – we admire and honor what sets another apart from us, what makes them unique and distinct.

Rabbi Akiva's students likely embraced the love that comes from sameness. They loved one another for the shared ideals, values, and commitments they held. But when differences emerged – differences in

personality, approach, or perspective – they failed to honor and respect those distinctions. They loved each other only when the other was כמורך, "like yourself," but did not know how to appreciate the beauty in what made their fellow different.

As we count the Omer and prepare ourselves for receiving the Torah anew on Shavuot, let us take this lesson to heart. It is not enough to love those who are like us. We must also cultivate respect for those who are different – for it is in those

differences that each soul reveals its unique light in G-d's world.

Let us strive to both love and respect our fellow Jews – not only for how they are like us, but for how they are not.



HALACHOT BY RABBI ELI MANSOUR

Is One Allowed to Keep Other Items With the Tefillin in the Tefillin Bag?

The Shulhan Aruch (Orah Haim 42:3) writes that if one keeps his Tefillin in a bag which is exclusively designated for Tefillin, then once he placed his Tefillin in the bag, he may not then use the bag to keep money inside it. The bag at that point becomes a "Tashmish Kedusha" – an article designated for the purpose of a sacred article – and thus may not be used for money. The Mishna Berura (Rav Yisrael Meir Kagan of Radin, 1839-1933) clarifies that the Shulhan Aruch mentions money only as a common example, and in truth,

this Halacha applies to all items which are not sacred like Tefillin. Even things which are used for a Misva – such as a Siddur or Tehillim – may not be placed in the bag designated for Tefillin. Likewise, one may not keep in this bag the mirror he uses to help position the Tefillin on his head, or the marker he uses to paint his Tefillin.

Many people keep their small Tefillin bag in a larger bag, which is used also for their Tallit and Siddur. Since this larger bag is not designated exclusively for Tefillin, it may be used for other items, even items which are

not used for a Misva, such as money. This Halacha is discussed by Hacham David Yosef (contemporary) in his Halacha Berura (vol. 3, p. 301; listen to audio recording for precise citation).

Summary: A bag which is designated exclusively for Tefillin may not be used to hold anything else, even a Siddur. However, if one keeps his Tefillin bag in a larger bag together with his Tallit and Siddur, then since the larger bag is not designated exclusively for Tefillin, he may keep anything else – even money – in that larger bag.



WEEKLY PARSHA OVERVIEW

Parshat Emor

The kohanim are commanded to avoid contact with corpses in order to maintain a high standard of ritual purity. They may attend the funeral of only their seven closest relatives: father, mother, wife, son, daughter, brother, and unmarried sister. The Kohen Gadol may not attend the funeral even of his closest relatives. Certain marital restrictions are placed on the kohanim.

The nation is required to honor the kohanim. Physical irregularities that invalidate a kohen from serving in the Temple are listed. Terumah, a

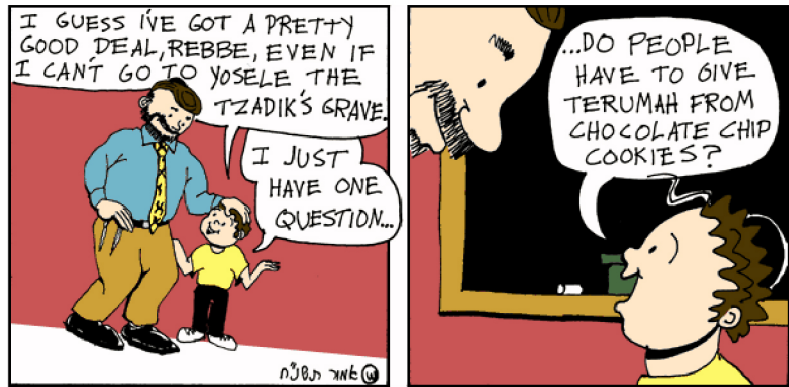
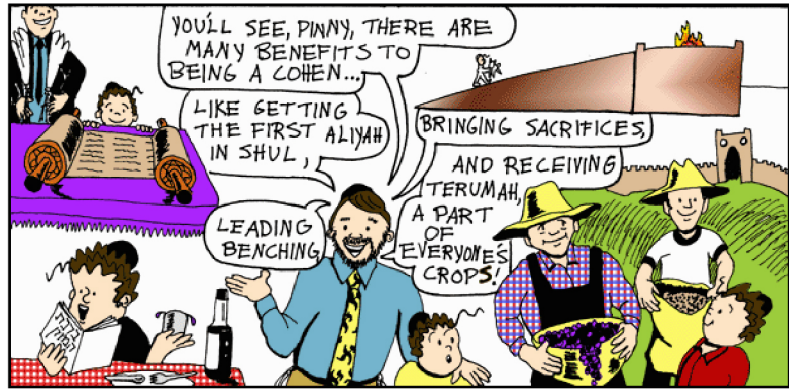
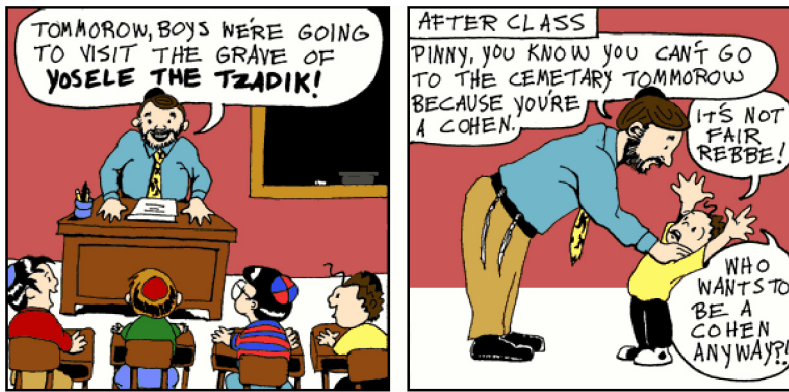
portion of the crop that is given to the kohanim, may be eaten only by kohanim and their household. An animal may be sacrificed in the Temple after it is eight days old and is free from any physical defects.

The nation is commanded to sanctify the Name of Hashem by insuring that their behavior is always exemplary and by being prepared to surrender their lives rather than murder, engage in licentious relations or worship idols.

The special characteristics of the

holidays are described, and the nation is reminded not to do certain types of creative work during these holidays. New grain may not be eaten until the omer of barley is offered in the Temple. This Torah portion explains the laws of preparing the oil for the Menorah and baking the lechem hapanim in the Temple. A man blasphemes Hashem, and is executed as prescribed in the Torah.

Rabbi Sinclair,
Seasonsofthemoon.com



Q

1. Which male descendants of Aharon are exempt from the prohibition against contacting a dead body?
2. Does a kohen have an option regarding becoming ritually defiled when his unmarried sister passes away?
3. How does one honor a kohen?
4. How does the Torah restrict the Kohen Gadol with regard to mourning?
5. The Torah states in verse 22:3 that one who "approaches holy objects" while in a state of tumah (impurity) is penalized with excision. What does the Torah mean by "approaches"?

A

1. 21:1 - Challim - those disqualified from the priesthood because they are descended from a relationship forbidden to a kohen.
2. 21:3 - No, he is required to do so.
3. 21:8 - He is first in all matters of holiness. For example, a kohen reads from the Torah first, and is usually the one to lead the blessings before and after meals.
4. 21:10-12 - He may not allow his hair to grow long, nor attend to his close relatives if they die, nor accompany a funeral procession.
5. 22:3 - Eats.

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