

**Yad Avraham Institute**  
**Weekly Torah Commentaries Series**  
**Portion of Emor**

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**Presented By: Rabbi Yosef Kalatsky, *Shlita***

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**About the Yad Avraham Institute**

The Yad Avraham is a Torah learning institute located in midtown Manhattan. Classes are offered every day during the week starting at 5:50am and throughout the day. Classes in Chumash, Halacha, Hashkofa, Gemara, and general topics are well attended by businessmen, professionals, and students. The Yad Avraham invites you to participate in our extensive offerings of classes and events.

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## **Emor**

*Presented by*

**Rabbi Yosef Kalatsky, Shlita**

**Dean**

### ***1. The Kohen, the Chosen of the Chosen***

The Torah states, **“Hashem said to Moshe, ‘Say to the Kohanim (Priests), the sons of Aaron, and tell them Each of you shall not contaminate himself to a (dead) person among his people, except for the relative who is closest to him, to (his wife) and his mother and to his father, to his son, to his daughter, and to his brother, and to his sister.’”** However, the High Priest (Kohen Gadol) is not permitted to contaminate himself to anyone, including his closest relatives because he is **“exalted above his brethren-upon whose head the anointed oil has been poured...”** He is not permitted to compromise his holy status even for his closest relatives.

Sforno explains that the Kohen must maintain an elevated status in the eyes of the people. If he were to attend every funeral and contaminate himself with everyone's deceased, he will no longer be revered by the people and seen as special. Consequently, his ability to be the disseminator of Torah and to be effective in his role as the Kohen will be severely undermined. He must maintain an esteemed and removed status in order to be effective. Thus, the Jewish people would be attentive to his teachings.

The Gemara in Tractate Avodah Zorah tells us that at the time of the giving of the Torah at Sinai, the Jewish people reverted back to a state of spirituality that was the equivalent of Adam before he had eaten from the Tree of Knowledge. At that moment, the Jewish people were no longer subject to death or any physical imperfection or ailment. It was only because of the sin of the Golden Calf that they had reverted back to the state of Adam after the sin. They once again became subject to death and reassumed their physical defects.

Although the tribe of Levy did not participate in the sin of the Golden Calf, they nevertheless became subject to death and physical limitation because they are part of the Jewish people. Based on the principle of *“kol Yisroel areivim zeh la zeh* - every Jew is responsible for his fellow,” the spirituality of the Levy is intertwined with

that of every other Jew. Based on this principle, when the Jewish people became putrefied with the sin of idolatry, the tribe of Levy became defiled and diminished despite their non-participation. It is because of this spiritual interconnection among all Jews that every one has relevance to the fulfillment of all of the 613 mitzvos. Although many mitzvos are only relevant to a specific segment of the Jewish people, nevertheless all of the people are beneficiaries of each other's spiritual accomplishments.

The Kohen, being the most special of the tribe that did not participate in idolatry, reflects the profile of the individual who G'd had intended to be the one to serve Him. The Tribe of Levy became subject to death and physical defect only because they are part of the Jewish people. Therefore, when the Kohen is contaminated through the dead or has a physical defect he is disqualified from the service in the Temple because it reflects Adam's failing in existence. The sacrifices are only effective within the Attribute of Mercy. If the Kohen should officiate within the context of spiritual contamination or physical defect, rather than being an advocate on behalf of the Jewish people he would be a basis for prosecution. Similarly, the High Priest is not permitted to officiate in his gold vestments when he performs the Yom Kippur service in the Holy of Holies. This is because his gold vestments would recall the sin of the Golden Calf before the Attribute of Justice.

### ***2. The Jewish People, the Beloved Children of G'd***

The Torah states regarding the three species of animals that qualify to be brought as an offering, **“When an ox, sheep, or a goat is born...”** The Midrash states, **“There were three situations in which G'd had taken the Jewish people to task and the nations of the world rejoiced. G'd had said to the Jewish people, ‘I will show you your failings.’ When the nations of the world saw that G'd was going to judge the Jewish people they rejoiced saying, ‘Now G'd will destroy them.’ When G'd saw that the nations rejoiced over the pending destruction of His people, He overturned the judgment for the good. As the**

Prophet states, G'd said, 'If your sins are crimson (like a crimson thread) then they will be restored to the whiteness of snow. If they are like a (red) worm, then they will be restored to the whiteness of (washed) wool.' (Regardless of the degree of failing of the Jewish people they can repent). To this the nations responded, 'We thought G'd was going to destroy the Jewish people but we see that He is only giving them a way to benefit themselves.' Another situation in which G'd judged the Jewish people the Prophet states, 'G'd quarreled with his people...' Once again, the nations rejoiced. G'd again overturned the judgment for the good. G'd said, 'Bilaam had come to curse you but I did not allow My Wrath to come upon you.' ..." It is indicated from the Midrash that had the nations of the world not rejoiced over the pending judgment and destruction of the Jewish people, G'd would have allowed His Attribute of Justice to come upon them. However, in each case, because the nations rejoiced over the impending extinction of the Jewish people, G'd overturned His judgment and allowed them to benefit. Why should the rejoicing of the nations of the world determine the manner in which G'd deals with His people?

The Torah tells us that when G'd had initially sent Moshe to approach Pharaoh, G'd identified the Jewish people as, "**My son, My first born Israel...**" G'd had communicated to Pharaoh that He loved and valued the Jewish people as His First Born child. If he would not allow them to leave Egypt, then G'd would bring the plagues upon him and his people. When Pharaoh did not heed the Word of G'd, Egypt was destroyed through the ten plagues. The revealed miracles that came upon Egypt demonstrated that there was no other power other than G'd Himself. His Omnipotence was demonstrated to the entire world.

After the exodus from Egypt and the receiving of the Torah at Sinai, the Jewish people sinned with the Golden Calf as well as the sin of the spies. G'd decreed that they should be destroyed. However, Moshe supplicated G'd on their behalf saying, "If You destroy Your people in the desert Egypt will say, "G'd had taken them into the desert to be killed." Meaning, G'd did not have the ability to take them into the Promised Land. This perception would cause G'd to be viewed as limited. This would be a Desecration of His Name. G'd immediately retracted the decree not wanting to bring about a desecration of His Name. The Attribute of Mercy was evoked was to prevent a desecration of G'd's Name.

If the nations of the world will rejoice over the destruction of the Jewish people, who are considered to be His children and chosen it would be a desecration of His

Name. This causes Attribute of Justice to be retracted, thus allowing the Attribute of Mercy to be implemented. The Midrash cites an allegory regarding a mother who brings her child to the court to be judged for death because of his misbehavior. The observers in the court said, "How could a mother bring about her own son's death?" When she heard what was being said, she responded, "He is actually a good son. Although he had failed, he has the ability to correct his ways." In response to this, the judge rendered a favorable judgment for her son. Since G'd is the "Father" of the Jewish people because He regards them as "His firstborn son", if the nations of the world should rejoice over their prosecution then it would reflect negatively on G'd.

When the nations of the world truly believe that they have the upper hand over the Jewish people and are able to bring about their destruction, it evokes the Attribute of Mercy on behalf of His children. When the Jewish people are in a precarious state, one needs to supplicate G'd more intensely because the Attribute of Mercy is readily available. However, if the Jewish people believe that they are secure in their position, although they are seriously failing spiritually, one needs to be concerned that they will be subject to the Attribute of Justice.

### **3. Overcoming One's Conflicts of Interest**

The Midrash states, "Rav Elazer says, 'One who is compassionate to those who are cruel will ultimately become cruel to the compassionate ones.' As we see King Saul took pity upon King Aggog who personified cruelty and evil. (After Saul destroyed the Amalekites, he allowed their king Aggog to survive, although he was commanded to destroy the entire people). King Saul destroyed the community of Nove, the city of Kohanim. In doing so, eighty-five Priests who were qualified to become the High Priest were killed. They had harbored and protected David when he was a fugitive fleeing with his men from King Saul. King Saul's act was one of cruelty to those who were compassionate." Because King Saul had allowed his own conflicts and feelings to dictate his behavior in these instances, he ultimately lost his kingdom and was killed.

The Torah states, "**You shall safeguard My Mitzvos and perform them – for I am Hashem.**" Rashi cites Chazal who explain, "**You shall safeguard My Mitzvos**" refers to the study and retention of Torah. The only way one is able to safeguard the Torah is by engaging in Torah study and reviewing its subject matter. Consequently, one will actualize what he had studied by performing the mitzvos. "**Performing them**" is referring to the actualization of what one had studied. The Torah

continues, “**for I am Hashem**” in order to emphasize the importance of this dictate. G’d is saying, “It is I who commanded you to do this. Therefore you should not take it lightly.”

The Gemara in Tractate Kiddushin states, “I created the evil inclination and the Torah as its antidote.” Because G’d created man, He understands every aspect of his being and how to maintain and control it. The evil inclination, which was created by G’d, can only be subordinated and incapacitated through the study of Torah and the actualization of mitzvos. One can not minimize the imperative to study Torah because G’d Himself says that it is the only way that one can dispel his personal conflicts to come upon truth. If one does not follow the prescription set forth by G’d, he will fail because it is not possible to succeed through any other means. Regardless of how humanitarian or moral one may believe himself to be, if he does not engaged in Torah study and the performance of its mitzvos, then he remains a physical being that is subject to his inclination.

Rambam writes in *Hilchos Deos* (The laws Pertaining to Character & Behavior) that there are physical ailments that cause one to taste food items that are sweet as bitter and visa versa. There are other physical ailments that cause one to crave inedible foods, such as earth and charcoal, while simultaneously rejecting edible foods, such as bread, as detestable. Rambam writes that similarly people experience spiritual illnesses that cause them to gravitate towards areas that corrupt one’s spirituality while rejecting and detesting mitzvos. The more one’s soul becomes spiritually ill, the more one is revolted by holiness and purity. Yeshayah, the Prophet, refers to these individuals as those “who see ‘good’ as ‘evil’ and the ‘evil’ as ‘good.’ They see light as darkness and darkness as light.”

Rambam writes that way one can overcome the spiritual illness is to consult with the Torah sages because they are the healers of the soul who are qualified to guide the individual and prescribe to him a course of action that will cure him. The sages are qualified to do this because they are G’d’s agents. By engaging in Torah study and actualizing the mitzvos, one will be able to sustain and advance his spirituality and thus address his objective and purpose in existence.

#### ***4. The Two Mourning Periods on the Jewish Calendar***

The Torah tells us that there is a mitzvah to count the days of the Omer from the second day of Passover until the festival of Shavuot. The Omer period is a time of mourning, during which one does not engage in celebration. The Gemara in Tractate Yevamos tells us that between the festival of Passover and Shavuot, 24,000 students of Rebbe Akiva passed away in a plague. They died over a 33-day period. Because of the magnitude of tragedy to the Jewish people, to have lost the greatest Torah sages in a single period of time, it is the custom of Jews to observe a partial mourning period during the Omer that does not allow celebration.

There is another period of mourning, that is observed by the Jewish people for three weeks. It begins from the seventeenth day of the month of Tamuz and culminates with the ninth of the month of Av (Tisha B’Av). The week during which the ninth of Av occurs was legislated by Chazal to be a time of intense mourning to commemorate the destruction of the Holy Temples. We see that of the two periods of mourning on the Jewish Calendar are related to either the destruction of the Temple or the passing of the 24,000 Torah sages. There are no other times during the year that are periods of mourning, regardless of the tragedies that have occurred. Evidently, it is the loss of the Temple or the destruction of Torah which calls for grieving.

We conclude the Amidah (Silent Prayer), “May it be Your Will...that the Holy Temple be rebuilt, speedily in our days. Grant us our share in Your Torah, and may we serve You there with reverence as days of old...” From this request it seems that there is a connection and commonality between the Temple and Torah. The Gemara in Tractate Berachos tells us that since the time of the destruction of the Temple, G’d’s only location in the world is “within the four cubits of *Halacha* (normative Jewish law).” Meaning, the study hall in which people are engaged in studying Torah in a manner that leads to practical application/elucidation of the Law, is the location of His Presence, similar to that of the Holy of Holies in the Temple. The rabbis of the Talmud, *Amoraim*, would pray in the same location that they had studied because it was the location of the Divine Presence.

When Rebbe Akiva’s students perished, it was the equivalent of the Temple being destroyed because it was due to their Torah study that the Divine Presence had a location in the world. After their death, G’d’s Presence,

relatively speaking, was removed from this existence. Although we no longer have the Temple, which was a unique level of intimacy with G'd we still have the four cubits of *Halacha* to retain His Presence.

The Gemara explains that the reason all the students of Rebbe Akiva passed away in such a short period of time was that "They did not afford one another a sufficient level of respect." The students of Rebbe Akiva were the most advanced Torah sages of that generation. Thus, it is not possible to even consider that they were disrespectful to one another. In addition, had Rebbe Akiva noticed any inappropriate behavior among his students he would have rebuked them. Evidently, their failing was at a level of subtlety that even Rebbe Akiva was not able to detect it.

Each of the students of Rebbe Akiva had a unique dimension of Torah scholarship. There were slight shades of differences between each of them. When one accords respect to a Torah sage it must be appropriate to the individual's level of Torah. The Torah Sages neither addressed or acknowledged the subtle differences of greatness between them. However, Rebbe Akiva's students did not address these subtle differences. They treated each other with the same level of respect, which was not sufficient. Why were the students of Rebbe Akiva held to such a standard of liability for a seemingly minor infraction? The Gemara tells us that G'd's exactness with the devoutly righteous is to the degree of a hairbreadth. When the tzaddik deviates as much as an iota then G'd will exact punishment upon him.

The Gemara tells us that after the 24,000 students of Rebbe Akiva passed away the world was desolate and devoid of Torah. Given this level of tragedy, how do we understand that celebration is permitted from the 33<sup>rd</sup> day onward? One would think that a greater degree of grieving should commence after this period, when the tragedy is truly felt. It is true that the loss of Torah scholarship at this unique and advanced level was truly worthy of grieving; however, the focus of the mourning period is to acknowledge and commemorate the desecration of G'd's Name. G'd had unleashed His Judgment upon the most spiritually advanced. The perception of this tragedy is the most exaggerated level of the desecration of His Name. When Torah sages and scholars are seen in a negative light by the world, it is considered a desecration of G'd's Name.

## 5. *The Cost Factor of Clarity*

The Torah states, "...When you bring the Thanks Offering (*Korban Todah*)..." The Gemara in Tractate Berachos tells us that when one survives an extraordinary event, one must appreciate the fact that he is only alive because G'd Willed it to be so. It is in these instances that one must bring the Thanks Offering. The Mishna tell us that if one returns safely after traversing the desert or from sailing the high seas, or is released from prison, or recovers from a serious illness, or after a woman gives birth, one is obligated to bring a Thanks Offering. The Midrash states, "...At the end of time all sacrifices will be nullified except for the Thanks Offering. It is because the giving of thanks to G'd will not come to an end. As it states, '...G'd is good in His Kindness forever...' King David writes in Psalms, 'I will pay Thanks (in plural).' Meaning one will bring the Thanks Offering as well as expressing one's thanks to G'd."

Maharal of Prague in his commentary on the Megillah of Esther explains that one gives thanks when one understands and appreciates that the only reason he is the beneficiary of a kindness is because it comes from a particular source. Meaning, the giving of thanks is an acknowledgement of the kindness of the benefactor. If however one attributes his safe return or recovery to a statistic or "good fortune", he will not offer thanks. At the end of time, because everything will be seen within the context of absolute clarity, the source of all existence will be evident. It is because of this clarity that all mankind will recognize and acknowledge that they are continuous recipients of G'd's Beneficence. There will be nothing to distort the reality of that fact. Therefore, the Thanks Offering will not be nullified at the end of time because one will truly recognize that he must give thanks to G'd for every aspect of his being.

The Thanks Offering is a meal offering that is comprised of forty loaves of bread, ten of them being leavened. In addition, an animal is brought as a sacrifice. All other meal offerings in order to be valid needed to be unleavened. If there was any intermingling of leavening, it was invalidated. The basis for a leavened product to be seen in a negative context, regarding something of sanctity, is because it represents many aspects of the evil inclination. A leavened product is tastier, which connotes lust and desire. During the processing of a leavened product it expands and rises, which represents arrogance and haughtiness. Therefore it is not accepted as a meal offering. If this is so, why does the Thanks Offering contain loaves of bread that are leavened (*chametz*)? If the

basis for the Thanks Offering is acknowledging G'd's Kindness, which one can only come upon if one possesses humility, then why does the Thanks Offering contain something that represents the characteristic which causes the denial of truth?

For one to acknowledge that the only reason that he had survived a particular situation is because of G'd's Kindness is not a simple matter. Factually, one does possess an evil inclination. Therefore, by nature, every individual has a resistance to recognize the truth and attribute his life to G'd's Kindness. If one acknowledges this fact, it creates an indebtedness to G'd. If one acknowledges the truth of his situation, despite the struggle to deny it and brings the Thanks Offering, it is considered a great accomplishment. The leavened aspect of the Thanks offering is a representation of the struggle which the individual experiences.

### **YAD AVRAHAM DAILY CLASS SCHEDULE**

#### **Monday Through Friday**

5:50- 6:00 am	Chumash with Rashi
6:00- 6:15 am	Pirkei Avos (Maharal)
6:15- 6:30 am	Mishna Berurah
6:30 -6:45 am	Mussar – Path of the Just
6:45 -7:25 am	Talmud—Tractate Makkos
7:25 - 8:20 am	Davening Followed by Breakfast
8:20 - 8:45 am	Mishna - Rabbi Rovner
9:00 -10:00 am	Daf Yomi- Bava Basra
2:00pm	Mincha

#### **Special Weekday Classes**

##### ***Monday***

11:30 – 12:30pm	<b>Talmud: Chagigah</b> Location: Sunrise Capital 641 Lexington (25 <sup>th</sup> FL.) Enter on 54 <sup>th</sup> Street
1:00-2:00 pm	<b>Ramchal: Derech Hashem</b> Location: Cedarview Capital 1Penn Plaza ( 45 <sup>th</sup> FL. )

##### ***Tuesday***

12:10 - 1:10pm	<b>Torah Insight Based on the Parsha</b> Location: Yad Avraham
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##### ***Wednesday***

11:30 – 12:30 pm	<b>Talmud: Chagigah</b> Location: Sunrise Capital 641 Lexington (25 <sup>th</sup> FL.) Enter on 54 <sup>th</sup> Street
1:00—2:00 pm	<b>Rambam Hilchos Talmud Torah</b> Location: Yad Avraham

##### ***Thursday***

11:00 –12:00pm	<b>Duties of The Heart</b> Location: Yad Avraham
12:30 – 1:30 pm	<b>Talmud: Chagigah</b> Sunrise Capital 641 Lexington (25 <sup>th</sup> FL)