

Emor

THE WEISS EDITION

# Light points

FROM THE TEACHINGS OF  
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WEEKLY TORAH PORTION



לזיכרון ולעילוי נשמת  
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תנצב"ה

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# אמור

# *Emor*

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כא:א | 21:1

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אָמַר אֶל הַכֹּהֲנִים בְּנֵי אַהֲרֹן וְאָמַרְתָּ אֲלֵהֶם לְנֶפֶשׁ לֹא יִטְמָא.

*Speak to the kohanim, the sons of Aharon, and say to them: Let none [of you] defile himself for a dead person.*

## *Warn and Shine*

The words “Speak to the Kohanim... and say to them” seem repetitive. Having instructed Moshe to “speak to the Kohanim” about the special restrictions pertaining to them, why was it necessary to reiterate “and say to them”?

Rashi notes this redundancy and explains that the phrase “and say to them” alludes to a separate instruction which was conveyed to the Kohanim—that they must ensure that even their young children (who have not yet reached the age of personal responsibility) are in observance of the unique Kohen laws. In Rashi’s words, the double expression is used in order “to caution the adults concerning the minors.”

The Hebrew word Rashi uses for “to caution” is להזהיר, *l’hazhir*. This word can also be translated as “to make shine,”

like the Hebrew word זוהר, *zohar*, which means “gleam” or “shine.” Rashi’s words thus hint that the obligation of *l’hazhir*, cautioning others from negative conduct, is achieved primarily by focusing on their inherent goodness and nurturing it until you “cause them to shine” from within.

In addition, the word *l’hazhir* underscores that our concern to teach and caution others will cause us to shine as well. As the Talmud<sup>1</sup> says of someone who teaches his fellow Torah, “G-d enlightens the eyes of both of them.”<sup>2</sup>

—*Likkutei Sichos*, vol. 7, pp. 151–152; vol. 27, pp. 165–166

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1. Temurah 16a.

2. See Mishlei 29:13.

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 כב:י-יא | 22:10-11
 

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וְכֹל זֶר לֹא יֵאָכֵל קֹדֶשׁ... וְכִתְּוּ בִּי יִקְנֶה  
נֶפֶשׁ קִנְיָן בְּסֶפֶד הוּא יֵאָכֵל בּוֹ.

*No non-Kohen may eat the holy things... But if a Kohen acquires a person as a monetary acquisition, he [the slave] may eat of it.*

## Slave Rights

The Sages teach that one may not derive benefit from this world without first reciting a *berachah*—a blessing acknowledging G-d as the world’s creator and owner. They compared partaking of this world without a *berachah* to the prohibition of deriving personal benefit from *hekdesh*, objects dedicated to the Temple.<sup>3</sup>

But how does the recitation of a *berachah* render benefit from G-d’s world permissible? Does the *berachah* cause G-d to relinquish His ownership of the universe?

Though the *berachah* does not change the ownership of the item over which it was recited, it does change the status of the individual reciting it. And in their new reality, they may partake even from that which belongs to G-d alone.

For example, the Torah prohibits non-Kohanim from eating *terumah*, the share of agricultural produce that we give to the Kohanim. An exception to this rule, however, is a Kohen’s servant, of whom the Torah says, “If a Kohen acquires a person as a monetary acquisition, he may eat of it.” Similarly, there are select portions of the sacrificial meat that are off-limits

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3. Berachos 35a.

to anyone other than a Kohen, yet a Kohen's servants may partake of them.<sup>4</sup>

We can likewise explain the significance of reciting a *berachah*. The text of the *berachah* affirms our acceptance of G-d as "*Elokeinu Melech ha'olam*, our L-rd, King of the universe." The *berachah* declares G-d's mastery of the entire universe, including the individual. Therefore, just as the servants of a Kohen may partake of foods that are ordinarily exclusive to their owner, so may those who recite a *berachah* enjoy the goodness of the world that is exclusively owned by G-d.

*-Sefer Hasichos 5751, vol. 2, p. 847*

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4. See Talmud, Zevachim 55a.

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 כב:לב | 22:32
 

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וְנִקְדְּשֵׁתִי בְּתוֹךְ בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל.

*I shall be sanctified amidst the children of Israel.*

## *Self-Sacrifice with a Capital “S”*

The Torah’s directive that we should cause G-d to be sanctified teaches us the obligation of *mesiras nefesh*, meaning that in certain situations we must sacrifice our lives in order not to disobey G-d’s commands. When a Jew exhibits his commitment to G-d to the point that he is willing to surrender his life for Him, his devotion causes G-d to be revered and sanctified.

Now, from the verse in Tehillim “He declares *His* words to Yaakov, *His* rules and *His* ordinances to Yisrael,”<sup>5</sup> the Midrash understands that “All that G-d instructs the Jewish people to do, He Himself fulfills as well.”<sup>6</sup> Accordingly, if G-d commands the Jewish people to sacrifice their lives for the fulfillment of a mitzvah, it must be that G-d, too, observes this commandment!

Where do we see this? In the mitzvah of examining a woman who is a *sotah*, a woman accused of immoral behavior, who is prohibited to her husband until she is proven innocent. In order to restore their marriage, the Torah provides a process in which a portion of the Torah, containing several mentions of G-d’s name, is erased into water for the *sotah* to drink. The water will affect her negatively only if she is guilty. If it has no adverse effects on her, we consider her innocent and she may return to her husband.

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5. 147:19.

6. Shemos Rabbah 30:9.

It can thus be said that G-d too sacrifices Himself,<sup>7</sup> as it were, for the fulfillment of a mitzvah. In the words of the Talmud, “G-d declares: My Name, written in sanctity, shall be blotted out in water in order to make peace between a man and his wife!”<sup>8</sup>

—*Sefer Hasichos 5749, vol. 1, p. 290, fn. 68*

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7. Since “G-d is One and His name is One” (Zechariah 14:9).

8. Shabbos 116a.



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 כב:לב | 22:32
 

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וְנִקְדַּשְׁתִּי בְּתוֹךְ בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל.

*I shall be sanctified amidst the children of Israel.*

## *The Ultimate Kiddush Hashem*

The Torah's directive that "G-d shall be sanctified" teaches us the obligation of *mesiras nefesh*—to sacrifice our very lives for our faith (primarily, to choose death rather than transgressing the cardinal sins of idolatry, adultery or murder). When a Jew demonstrates his willingness to sacrifice his life in order not to abandon his faith, his devotion to G-d leads to G-d's being revered and sanctified.

Rashi makes a point of mentioning, however, based on the Midrash,<sup>9</sup> that "a person who surrenders his life [for the sanctification of G-d's name] must do so with complete willingness to die. Because if a person surrenders himself to die but is hoping for a miracle, a miracle will not be performed for him." This implies that the martyr's innermost intentions and true willingness to die are integral to the sanctification of G-d's name.

This is because, in Rashi's view, although our greatest act of sanctifying G-d is to willingly sacrifice of our lives for our faith, yet when a Jew dies a martyr it is not *G-d's* best publicity. On the contrary, when a Jew is harmed because of his religious beliefs, people deride the Torah and question G-d's existence.<sup>10</sup> The greatest possible glorification of G-d's name

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9. Toras Kohanim, Vayikra 22:32.

10. See Tehillim 79:10: "Why should the nations say, 'Where is their G-d?'"

in this world is therefore when G-d miraculously *saves* those who surrender their lives for Him.

This ultimate sanctification of G-d's name is obviously beyond human effort and can be brought only about by G-d Himself, but it is subject to human interference—"if a person surrenders himself to die but is hoping for a miracle, a miracle is *not* performed for him." Rashi therefore cautions that when surrendering your life to sanctify G-d's name, you must do so with complete willingness to die in order *not to interfere* with the greatest sanctification of G-d's name, which only He can bring about—a miraculous deliverance from the threat to your life.

—*Likkutei Sichos, vol. 27, pp. 167-175, fn. 36*



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