

LAMPLIGHTER

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Parshas Emor
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LIVING WITH THE TIMES

This week's Torah portion, Emor, begins with a fundamental teaching about the education of children: "Speak to the priests...and say to them." Our Sages explain that this repetition alludes to the mitzva (commandment) and obligation placed on adults to instruct their children in the proper path. Parents, the Torah insists, must provide the next generation with the proper Jewish education.

But why is such a fundamental concept not mentioned until now, halfway through the Torah? Would it not have been more appropriate for this mitzva to be given immediately after the revelation at Mt. Sinai? Furthermore, why is this mitzva mentioned in connection with the priests?

In explanation, bear in mind that the Torah portion studied during any given week has particular significance for that time of year. Its selection is not arbitrary; its teachings are especially applicable at that particular time. The commandment to educate the young must therefore apply most specifically now, during the month of Iyar, a month primarily characterized by counting the Omer.

The essential concept of Sefirat HaOmer, counting the Omer, is education. The Jews were educated and refined as they counted the days before the Torah was given on Mt. Sinai, seven weeks after their exodus from Egypt. The release from bondage was, so to speak, the "birth" of the Jewish nation, which was then followed by a period in which they were educated for the great event to come.

This learning experience was not, however, in the fundamentals of Judaism; G-d had already said of Abraham, "For I know him, that he will command his children and his household after him, that they will keep the way of G-d." This process of refinement, achieved through counting the Omer, refers to an even higher degree of perfection.

Furthermore, this type of education has a special connection to the service of the priests, for their job was to bring the Jews closer to G-d through the sacrifices brought in the Holy Temple. Because the priests raised the sanctity of the entire Jewish nation, it is to them that the commandment to instruct the young was addressed.

We learn from this that the duty to provide our children - and every Jewish child - with a proper Jewish education involves more than teaching them just the basics of Judaism. We must also endeavor to instill in them the desire for perfection in the service of G-d.

Today, as we stand on the threshold of Moshiach's imminent arrival, this lesson is particularly apt, for it prepares us for that time when "the entire world will be filled with the knowledge of G-d, like the waters of the sea cover the earth."

The Kohen Gene

By Elisha Greenbaum

Ever looked around a synagogue and noticed the incredible array of people from different races wandering the aisles? Hard to believe we've got anything in common, let alone common ancestry and religion.

In the late '90s, a study came out attempting to prove that kohanim (priests), no matter their facial or racial makeup, all descend from a common paternal ancestor. The geneticists involved collected DNA samples from hundreds of kohanim, and searched for common markers on the Y-chromosome. Incredibly, they found that over 98% of men with a family tradition of priesthood showed evidence of descent from the same great-great-great grandfather.

I find it fascinating that Moses' older brother, the biblical High Priest Aaron the kohen, lived some 3,300 years ago but bequeathed his genetic signature to these men. Ashkenazi, Sephardi, Yemenite and Italian kohanim can actually trace their backgrounds back to the Jews of the Exodus. And if modern science has given us the tools to prove common ancestry, isn't the next obvious step to dedicate ourselves to our common purpose—G-d's Torah and mitzvot?

Recently, I came across a statistic that absolutely floored me. According to one Australian laboratory, nearly one-quarter of the DNA tests performed demonstrate the assumed father not to be the real biological parent. One quarter!

Contrast this sorry record with that of Jews throughout history. What would happen if a kohen's wife committed adultery? The resulting illegitimate child would be an assumed kohen. He'd join his "father" on the dais and recite the Priestly Blessing; he'd get dibs on the first aliyah. He'd hand down a tradition of priesthood to his own sons . . . But in reality he's no kohen, and his DNA and that of his future male descendants would not bear those crucial markers.

But almost 100% of all men with family tradition of priesthood do descend from kohanim. Generation after generation of Jewish women were faithful to their husbands and their tradition. What a proud record of fidelity. Geneticists describe these results as "the highest record of paternity-certainty ever recorded," and there is no reason to assume that their sisters married to Levites and Israelites were any less faithful to their spouses and religion.

This devotion to our spouses and our G-d has always been the way of the Jew. Even during our slavery in Egypt, subject to the capricious demands of an evil nation, our women distinguished themselves. The Book of Leviticus records the only example of illegitimacy, the product of the rape of a Jewess by an Egyptian overseer. The Torah hints that this woman's flirtatious manner may have precipitated the dreadful occurrence, but the crime was committed by the Egyptian.

This sad exception only demonstrates how refreshingly modest and chaste were all other Jews. The very worst and most unfortunate incident of all the time they were in slavery was not a case of adultery, G-d forbid, but abuse. It is to the credit of our ancestors that, no matter the temptations, irrespective of the dangers, they fought to stay faithful, and almost without exception they succeeded. This proud heritage they vouchsafed to us.

Jewish marriages throughout history are a model for all humanity, and the oaths and bonds that unite us with our partners and Creator will remain firm and unwavering for now and eternity.

Slice of LIFE

A Dream Fulfilled

Sam Boymel, a Holocaust survivor who has been living in Cincinnati for over 60 years, paid a random visit to the local Yeshivas Lubavitch Boys High School this year.

The businessman and philanthropist "shepped nachas" from what he saw, and he returned to the Yeshiva on a weekly basis to see the students study and pray.

The memory of the yeshivas of Europe from his youth had remained indelibly in Mr. Boymel's mind, despite the passage of time. Born in 1925 in the Polish town of Turzysk, he grew up there with his parents Rachel and Zelig, and three sisters, Chasia, Reisel and Malka.

"The Germans came in June 1941 and put us in the Ghetto," writes Mr. Boymel, in a memoir submitted to Yad Vashem. "They took us to work on the railroad tracks, and with the assistance of the Ukrainians and Poles, killed many of the Jews in the Ghetto. I used to run out of the Ghetto to get food. One of the farmers who helped me was Petr Tokarsky (known as Petro) from nearby Rostov. He would give me bread and potatoes to take back."

In September 1942 only a few hundred Jews were still alive in the Ghetto. One morning the Gestapo, with the Poles and Ukrainians aiding them, surrounded the Ghetto and ordered everyone out to walk to Kovel.

Some Poles told them that mass graves had been dug for them. Recalls Mr. Boymel, "As we were getting near the graves my mother told me to run away. She tore my yellow star off, and I started running. I looked back and saw my mother and sisters shoved into the graves, still alive. I ran into the fields and hid until dark. I saw the Ghetto burning. I ran to Petro's house in Rostov. Petro saw me and hugged me, and I started crying. He said, 'My child, how did you get here?' He told me that everyone was killed, there were no survivors. Soon after I saw my Uncle Leibel there. Petro took us both to his barn. We hid in a space under the floor - it was about 4 feet deep. The cows and pigs

were above us.

"At night Petro would remove the cover and give us food. After two months Ukrainian policemen came to the barn. Leibel saw them. He said, 'I know them, I went to school with them.' I urged him not to go out. He went out and tried talking but they shot him on the spot. I ran away. The Ukrainians burned the barn down thinking I was there. Later I found out that they had threatened Petro."

Mr. Boymel hid in the forest that night. The Germans had told the Poles and Ukrainians that for every Jew they turned in they would receive either 5 pounds of sugar or a bicycle. Everybody was looking for Jews - even children.

In the morning, a Ukrainian farmer found Mr. Boymel and called his neighbors. "As they were discussing what to do with me I ran away back to Petro's house. I was barefoot and cold, and asked him again for advice. He told me that I couldn't stay in his farm, as it was too dangerous for me. We walked several miles and he dug a deep hole and filled it with straw and leaves. I went into the hole and he covered me up.

"I stayed in that hole all winter. Once a week, I would walk to the farm and Petro would give me food, and I would stay with him for a few days. Then I would go back to hide in the hole. Petro would come every once in a while and give me food.

"In the winter of 1943 the Ukrainians were out in the forest cutting pine trees for Christmas. One of them fell into the hole. I was startled and frightened, but so were they. They ran away. I went back again to Petro. He told me that the Russian Partisans were around 40 miles away and suggested I seek refuge with them. Even though it was dangerous, it was better than the way I had lived so far. Petro offered to take me and we walked all night until we met a few partisans. I stayed with the Partisans from early 1944 and fought against the Germans."

Mr. Boymel was liberated by the Russians in 1945. He lived in a DP camp in Ferenwald, Ukraine, where he met and married his wife Rachel. Eventually the Boymels, with their baby, received visas to come to the U.S.

When the Boymels arrived, Mr. Boymel had only \$7 in his pocket, the gift of American soldiers whom he had met. They were sent to Cincinnati. "I had never heard of Cincinnati," he recalls. He knew no English, and started out working in a butcher shop at \$18 a week. Eventually he bought his own butcher shop, and then a "rest home" with eight beds that he and his wife cleaned out and renovated. Mr. Boymel went on to build an elder care and nursing home network.

The Boymels have made a career out of supporting youth and education-related initiatives in Cincinnati and Israel, that ensure Jewish continuity. These projects

symbolically compensate for their childhood and youth taken from them by the Holocaust. Rather than wallow in self-pity or misery, they have used their experiences as a powerful force for goodness and positivity.

This past year, Mr. Boymel fulfilled a 60-year-old dream. "It has always been my dream to see a Yeshiva Boys High School in Cincinnati," says Mr. Boymel. "I can still see the Yeshivos of Europe before my eyes."

"I was driving down Section Road," explains Mr. Boymel, "and I could not believe my eyes. In front of me were 25 yeshiva students playing in a lot adjacent to the Yeshiva building. I stopped the car and went inside the building. What I saw almost made me cry. There were 50 or more students sitting in a beautiful Study Hall learning in the old familiar tunes that I had heard when I was younger. The pure innocent faces of today's young Yeshiva students learning Torah and Talmud bring back the wonderful memories of my youth and warm my heart.

"The Nazis (may their names be obliterated) destroyed all the Yeshivos in Eastern Europe. My mother made me promise - from her grave - never to forget where I came from. When I came to America, I vowed to rebuild what was lost in Europe.

"When I saw the Yeshiva boys, I realized that G-d has given me the opportunity to make my 60-year-old dream a reality. I am so impressed with the quality of learning and dedication of the staff of the yeshiva," says Mr. Boymel. "I see students here in the Yeshiva from all over the United States and the entire world. I feel now that Cincinnati has reached a new status with the Yeshiva here in town."

Seeing the students' sincerity and commitment to learning, Mr. Boymel began to support the Yeshiva. When a facility became available, he helped the Yeshiva purchase the building and property for the upcoming school year.

In December, Mr. Boymel made a special visit to the Yeshiva. He spoke to the students from the depths of his heart, telling his life-story and encouraging them to always be proud of their Judaism. The students were very inspired. His attitude that there is nothing beneath honest and hard work is a tremendous lesson and inspiration for today's youth. He is a role-model for the boys.

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INSIGHTS

LETTERS BY THE LUBAVITCHER REBBE

A Lesson from an IDF Emblem

It was with pleasure that I received the emblem of the Northern Command [of the Israeli Defense Forces] which you sent with members of the Chabad community of Safed. I thank you, and those on whose behalf you sent the memento, for your thoughts and sentiments.

As a Jew who seeks a lesson in everything (in keeping with the teaching of the founder of Chassidism, Rabbi Israel Baal Shem Tov, "Everything of which a Jew sees or hears should serve as a lesson to him in his service of the Creator"), I find a special significance in this emblem, which centers on the figure of a deer. The deer is one of the symbols of our Holy Land, which is referred to in the Torah as "the land of the deer." Our sages explain that one of the characteristics of the deer is that "its hide does not constrain its flesh." In other words, the extremely taut skin of the deer does not inhibit its growth but, on the contrary, adapts itself and conforms to it.

Therein lies a basic lesson in all areas of life: the "hide," the external framework, must never inhibit the inner content. As the expression goes, the priority must always be of "quality over quantity."

This principle is also basic to the nature and function of an army. On the surface, it would appear that the success of an army hinges on the sophistication of its weaponry and the skill of its soldiers. But as anyone with a deeper understanding of military affairs knows, the primary thing is the morale and spirit of the troops and the commanders. In fact, the spiritual fortitude of an army can prevent the need for any use of arms, by intimidating and frightening the enemy so that they would not dare to provoke war.

This is the secret of our nation's survival: although numerically we are "the least among the nations," yet because we are G-d's chosen people, the people of the Book and the spirit, steadfast in our Jewishness, no physical force on earth can threaten our eternity. This is the secret of the might and power of the IDF—in the words of the Psalmist, "Israel, trust in G-d; [and they are guaranteed that] He is their savior and protector." Although one must of course do all that is necessary by natural means, ultimately it is the faith in the Almighty and in our uniqueness as His nation which brings victory, to the point that "a fear and terror shall befall them, by the greatness of Your arm they shall fall still as a stone": none will dare to "lift hand or foot" against us, "for the fear of the Jews befell them"—the fear of those who are bound to their Jewishness.

I was told that you assist the young men of Chabad in their campaign to raise the morale of the members of the IDF and to bring them close to the Torah and its mitzvot. Certainly, as one must do with all positive endeavors, you will continue and increase your involvement in this. And "may G-d grant might to His people; may G-d bless His people with peace."

QUESTIONS FOR THE RABBI

The "Evil Eye"

Question: I was given a red string by a friend -- she called it a "Kabbalah bracelet" and says it brings success and protection and guards against the Evil Eye. Is this for real?

Answer: There is absolutely no doubt that red strings have brought astounding success -- to the people selling them for \$29 a pop. The question is what they do for everyone else.

Although not written in any Kabbalistic source that I have seen, the red string is an old tradition. A thread is wrapped seven times around the tomb of Rachel in Israel, and then cut into little cords. It is then said to give protection from the "Evil Eye" for one who wears it on his or her wrist.

The Evil Eye is the name given to harmful negative energy which is created by people looking at you with envy or ill-feeling. The red string is supposed to deflect this energy.

This is a widely accepted belief and whatever its source it seems pretty harmless. But the Talmud says that the Evil Eye can only affect you if you worry about it, whereas it leaves you alone if you ignore it. So a more effective (and cheaper) way to avoid the Evil Eye is to forget about it.

If you are concerned that some sinister power has designs on you, there are other solutions. The most powerful protection against evil forces is the force of goodness. Whether a red string helps or not I do not know, but it is definitely not a replacement for sincere prayer, generous charity and moral conduct.

It is certainly easier and less demanding to just buy a piece of string. But the world does not become better as a result. There is still negative energy, it just hasn't caught you. But when you increase in positive energy by doing more selfless and holy acts, rather than just deflecting those forces you are combating them and diminishing their power.

For someone who lives an ethical life, a red string is nothing more than an accessory.

A WORD

from the Director

This coming Sunday is Lag B'Omer - the 33rd day of the Omer period. It is the anniversary of passing of the great Rabbi Shimon bar Yochai, known as the Rashbi.

One time, one of the Rashbi's (Rabbi Shimon Bar Yochai) students went abroad and returned very wealthy. When Rashbi's other disciples saw this, they became envious and also wanted to go abroad so that they, too, could become wealthy. Rashbi took his students to a certain valley, according to some opinions a valley near Meron, and said: "Valley, valley, become full of golden dinars!"

As the valley filled up with golden dinars, he told his students that each of them could take as much as he wanted from the gold. But they should know that by doing this they would be taking from their share in the World to Come. The students, of course, took none of the gold.

When the Midrash relates this story, it doesn't refer to the incident as being of a miraculous nature. How can this be? Because for the Rashbi it wasn't miraculous. He was one of an elite few in every generation who are not affected by the fact that we live in a spiritual and physical exile.

In a similar vein, a story is told of a great rabbi who was informed that Moshiach had finally come. The rabbi immediately opened his window and sniffed the air outside. "No," said the rabbi, "the report is not true."

What a strange way to ascertain whether or not the Redemption has finally come, by sniffing the air! But this rabbi, a great tzadik, was not affected, in a spiritual sense, by the Exile. He was, in a sense, always living in the Garden of Eden and his surroundings were always permeated with the spiritual scent of paradise. So, he had to open the window and smell the air outside to note whether the outside, too, had been permeated with this special aroma.

May we all merit, soon, to join those righteous few in every generation who are always in a state of Redemption, with the true and ultimate redemption of all the Jewish people and the entire world.

J. I. Gutnick

IT HAPPENED *Once...*

The prayers had been said and the festive meal celebrating the auspicious day of Rosh Hashana had been eaten in great happiness and anticipation of the blessings of a good new year.

The evening after Rosh Hashana, Rabbi Shimon bar Yochai had retired for the night, but his sleep was disturbed by a frightening dream concerning his two nephews. In the dream his nephews stood, pale and frightened, faced with a deputation of Roman officials. The Romans demanded from them the enormous sum of 600 dinarim.

Bright and early the next day Rabbi Shimon headed for the home of his nephews. When he arrived they were busily involved in their business affairs. They were surprised by the arrival of their uncle; as a leader of his people he had little time for social calls. Rising from their seats they were anxious to make Rabbi Shimon comfortable, but their uncle had come with a purpose. Looking at his two nephews Rabbi Shimon said: "I think it is strongly advisable that the two of you become involved with the needs of the community. For example, you could perhaps undertake supporting the needy and the infirm. The two young men asked no questions. After all, their uncle was a great tzadik, recognized among all the Jewish people for his wisdom. They were happy to implement his idea, but they asked their uncle: "Where will we get the money to distribute? Our business is not earning much of a surplus yet."

He replied, "Take the money from your earnings and keep a strict record of all your disbursements. At the end of the year I will reimburse you for your expenditures."

They readily agreed, and Rabbi Shimon left feeling relieved that the arrangements had been settled.

Several months later, enemies of the young men informed upon them to the Roman government, reporting that they were operating a silk business without having first obtained a state permit. A group of armed Roman soldiers entered their home and announced to the shocked young men that they were under arrest. As they were being led away to prison in chains, they were given a choice. Either they could make a costly silk garment for the emperor, or pay a fine of 600 dinarim.

When Rabbi Shimon heard the terrible news he rushed to the prison and managed to speak to his nephews. He urgently inquired of them: "How much money did you distribute to tzedaka (charity) this year?"

They replied that they were not certain of the exact amount, but they had kept a careful record of every disbursement, just as he had instructed them. They told him where to find their notebook, and he located it easily. When he returned to them he said: "Give me six dinarim at once!" The rabbi offered no further explanation, and the nephews immediately gave him the money without question. Rabbi Shimon took the money and approached the guard with it, offering the six dinarim as a bribe. The guard

accepted it happily and to their surprise, the young men were immediately released and allowed to return home.

One of his nephews turned to Rabbi Shimon and questioned him, "If the fine was 600 dinarim, how were you able to bribe them with only six? There must be more to this than you have revealed to us."

Only then did Rabbi Shimon tell them his dream and the explanation for his request that they give charity. "On the evening after Rosh Hashana I dreamed that you would be required to pay the Romans 600 dinarim. I asked you to give the same sum to tzedaka, a far preferable way to spend money than giving it to the evil Roman government."

The nephews were astounded by their uncle's story. "However, when I checked your accounts I saw that you were short six dinarim; therefore I asked you for the remaining sum. After you had completed payment you had the merit to be freed."

"But Uncle," they protested, "if you had only told us about the dream, we would have gladly given the entire sum to tzedaka at once, and been spared from suffering the entire incident!"

"That is so," replied Rabbi Shimon, "but had I told you in advance, you would not have given the money from a pure heart only for the mitzva (commandment), but only to spare yourselves from pain. It is only because you gave the money with pure intentions and without any thought of yourselves that you were worthy to be saved from punishment."

PARSHAH IN A NUTSHELL

The Torah section of Emor ("Speak") begins with the special laws pertaining to the kohanim ("priests"), the kohen gadol ("high priest"), and the Temple service: A kohen may not become ritually impure through contact with a dead body, save on the occasion of the death of a close relative. A kohen may not marry a divorcee, or a woman with a promiscuous past; a kohen gadol can marry only a virgin. A kohen with a physical deformity cannot serve in the Holy Temple, nor can a deformed animal be brought as an offering.

A newborn calf, lamb or kid must be left with its mother for seven days before being eligible for an offering; one may not slaughter an animal and its offspring on the same day.

The second part of Emor lists the annual Callings of Holiness—the festivals of the Jewish calendar: the weekly Shabbat; the bringing of the Passover offering on 14 Nissan; the seven-day Passover festival beginning on 15 Nissan; the bringing of the Omer offering from the first barley harvest on the second day of Passover, and the commencement, on that day, of the 49-day Counting of the Omer, culminating in the festival of Shavuot on the fiftieth day; a "remembrance of shofar blowing" on 1 Tishrei; a solemn fast day on 10 Tishrei; the Sukkot festival—during which we are to dwell in huts for seven days and take the "Four Kinds"—beginning on 15 Tishrei; and the immediately following holiday of the "eighth day" of Sukkot (Shemini Atzeret).

Next the Torah discusses the lighting of the menorah in the Temple, and the showbread (lechem hapanim) placed weekly on the table there.

Emor concludes with the incident of a man executed for blasphemy, and the penalties for murder (death) and for injuring one's fellow or destroying his property (monetary compensation).

CANDLE LIGHTING



	Shabbos 12 - 13 May	
	Begins	Ends
Melbourne	5:04	6:02
Adelaide	5:05	6:02
Brisbane	4:51	5:45
Darwin	6:12	7:03
Gold Coast	4:48	5:42
Perth	5:12	6:07
Sydney	4:47	5:43
Canberra	4:52	5:49
Launceston	4:47	5:48
Auckland	5:07	6:05
Wellington	4:57	5:58
Hobart	4:43	5:45
Byron Bay	4:47	5:41

CHABAD HOUSE OF CAULFIELD LUBAVITCH

439 INKERMAN STREET, CAULFIELD

PARSHAS EMOR • 16 IYAR • 12 MAY

FRIDAY NIGHT:	CANDLE LIGHTING:	5.04 PM
	MINCHA:	5.10 PM
	KABBOLAS SHABBOS:	5.40 PM
SHABBOS DAY:	LATEST TIME TO SAY SHEMA:	9.41 AM
	SHACHARIS:	10.00 AM
	MINCHA:	5.00 PM
	SHABBOS ENDS:	6.02 PM
WEEKDAYS:	SHACHARIS:	8.00/9.15/10.00 AM
	MINCHA:	5.05 PM
	MAARIV:	5.55 PM