

Pulse OF Emunah

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life

LESSONS

MARKED AS SERVANTS

A restaurant employee in New York City began distributing leftover food from the restaurant to a group of homeless people who frequented the streets nearby. Most were grateful, but one woman refused to touch any of the food. Curiosity overcame him, and he asked her why. "I would rather starve to death than accept food from a Jew!" she said.

Surprised, the man exclaimed, "But I'm not Jewish!" "Only Jews are capable of this type of generosity," she insisted.

When the man told his mother about it, he was shocked by her reply. "You aren't going to believe this, but the truth is that you are Jewish," she said. "Your father is not, but I am, and that makes you a Jew as well." This incredible revelation eventually led the man to Eretz Yisrael and a life of full Jewish observance.

The homeless woman's perception in this story highlights the goal that we must all strive for. As Jews, we must not be satisfied with living up to the standards of the society around us. As Jews, we have a higher responsibility: we must represent Hashem's attributes. Our character traits must mark us as servants of G-d Himself.

Adapted from A Life Worth Living by Rabbi Shragee Freedman at LivingKiddushHashem.org, with the permission of the publisher



gem

OF THE WEEK

A KOHEN'S AUTHORITY

By Rabbi Moshe Pogrow

Neither the *kohen* nor even the *kohen gadol* is granted any authority by virtue of his priestly office. It is not the task of the *kohen gadol* to interpret the Torah. His word as a *kohen* does not have the binding authority to permit or forbid.

Bear in mind that the *par kohen hameisiach* is brought only for the *kohen's* own sin, due to an error on his part in interpreting the law, unlike the *par he'elem davar shel tzibbur* which is brought for *horaah l'acheirim v'shgagas acheirim*. In everyday life, among the people, the position of the *kohen gadol* in relation to the Torah is no different from that of the lowliest woodcutter.

This proves wrong the talk of a Jewish hierarchy—as though *kehuna* were the source of all hierarchical pretentiousness. This false claim, which has passed from mouth to mouth, is utterly discredited by Jewish law and by the facts of Jewish history. Throughout thousands of years of Jewish history, the influence of priestly authority in the shaping of the community was not pronounced. The overwhelming majority of men who had impact on the life

continued on reverse side

powerful
PRAYER

ASHREI:
A PRAYER FOR SUSTENANCE



Why did the Sages stress the importance of Ashrei, and ordain that it be recited three times every day? The Zohar explains: "Why thrice? Because of the mention of sustenance and provision? But this occurs only twice a day, as is evident from Shemos 16:8: 'In the evening He will give you meat to eat, and in the morning, bread to the full.'"

Hence, it follows that Ashrei is recited two times a day as a prayer for sustenance, and once as a song of praise to the open hand of G-d.

Adapted from World of Prayer by Rabbi Elie Munk

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YISRAEL V'HAZMANIM

By Rabbi Dovid Sapirman, Dean, Ani Maamin Foundation

The middle section of every Shemone Esrei is specifically suited to that day's *tefillah*. On weekdays we ask for our needs, and on Shabbos we speak about its sanctity. On Yom Tov, we declare the *kedusha* of the holidays.

However, the *bracha* of Yom Tov begins, "You chose us from all the nations." Why is this important to mention on festivals?

There is another significant difference between the closing of the *bracha* on Shabbos and Yom Tov. On Shabbos, we thank Hashem for making the Shabbos holy, but on Yom Tov we add "Who sanctified Yisrael and the appointed times." Why the difference?

The answer is given in the Gemara. The dates of Shabbos have been fixed permanently since the time of Bereishis, and can never be altered. Even if, *chas v'shalom*, no Jews in the world were keeping Shabbos, it would still be Shabbos.

Yom Tov, however, requires the participation of *am Yisrael*. When the Sanhedrin was still functioning, the Beis Din Hagadol would pronounce the arrival of Rosh Chodesh, from which we would count down to the festival. Without the Beis Din proclaiming the new moon, there could be no holidays. It was for this reason that the Greeks wanted to eradicate Rosh Chodesh, even though it is a relatively minor observance. Without it, the Jewish people would no longer have any Yamim Tovim at all. The Beis Din was also given the power to add an extra month to the calendar, Adar Sheini, pushing all of the holidays forward by a month.

Before the abolishment of the Sanhedrin, Hillel the Second together with his Beis Din established the Jewish calendar with all appropriate leap years and sanctified all Roshei Chadashim in advance so that Yom Tov could still continue.

This is the connection of the Yamim Tovim to our status as a chosen people: Hashem has even given us the power to control the times of Heaven. Even when the Heavenly court is about to convene to judge the world on Rosh Hashanah, if the Beis Din on earth should suddenly add another day to the previous month, the judgment is pushed off another day. One who eats *chametz* on Pesach is liable to a serious punishment—but only if done at the time that Beis Din declares. Only when Beis Din says it is Pesach is it indeed Pesach. 

of the Jewish nation as its leaders and teachers were not *kohanim*, and those among them who were *kohanim* exerted influence not by virtue of their priestly position but on account of their personal qualities—which would have opened the nation's hearts to them even had they not been descendants of Aharon.

If there are *kohanim* and *levi'im* who happen to be qualified to sit on the Sanhedrin, it is a mitzvah to appoint them, but the Sanhedrin need not have *kohanim* and *levi'im* in order to serve as an authority. The *kohanim* and *levi'im* know that "*Hashem hu nachalasan*." Since they have no inheritance in the land, they devote themselves to the service and knowledge of the Torah. But their function is to teach, to influence the nation to serve Hashem, to make peace between people—not to wield the authority of the Law.

The task of the *kohen gadol*, then, is this: His life should serve as an example of proper understanding and proper observance of the Torah. That which the *beis din hagadol* is to teach the nation to fulfill, the *kohen gadol* is to exemplify in his life. It is fitting that he be *mufta b'horaah*, but his primary task is to be a model for his people and to actualize, in his life, his knowledge of Torah. 

Based on the commentary of Rav Shamshon Raphael Hirsch zt"l on Chumash, with permission from the publisher.



wonder WORLD

BUSY AS A BEE II



How do bees make honey?

Flowers contain a sugary juice called nectar. Bees have long tongues that they extend into the flower like straws to suck out the nectar, then store it in their second stomach, called a "honey stomach." When the honey stomach is full, the bee goes back to its hive and transfers the nectar to another bee. The next bee chews on the nectar for 30 minutes, then passes it on to another bee. As the nectar goes from bee to bee, it is slowly transformed into honey. Eventually, it is stored in hexagonal storage jars made of wax we call honeycombs. The bees then flap their wings over the honey to thicken it to the right consistency, then seal it with a wax lid to store for later use. 

Adapted from the Niflaos HaBoreh Explorer series by Rabbi Yaakov Lubin

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