And God said to Moshe: ‘Say to the Kohanim, the sons of Aharon... for a dead person he shall not become impure among his people.’

Vayikra 21:1

“For a crown, the oil of his God’s annointment, is upon him; I am God.”

Vayikra 21:12

When he was brought to the funeral home, another deceased person was also brought into the facility to be taken care of. A member of the Touro College and University System

A SENSITIVE QUESTION

A Kohen is not allowed to defile himself for the dead. During the Musaf service of Yom Kippur we read the tragic story of the ten martyrs who were killed by the Roman government. There is an interesting question that arises from this episode which is relevant to our verse. Rabban Shimon ben Gamliel was chosen to be put to death first, and he was killed by the sword. Rabbi Yishmael, the Kohen Gadol, picked up the head of Rabban Shimon ben Gamliel and cried out bitterly and lamented, “Oh, how can it be that this tongue which was so skilled in the precepts of the Torah must now lick the dirt!” We can ask, however, how Rabbi Yishmael, who was the Kohen Gadol, could allow himself to come into direct contact with the dead?

This question was presented to Rabbi Tzvi Pesach Frank (1873-1961), the Chief Rabbi of Yerushalayim, as part of a discussion regarding another case. The wife of a certain Kohen had died, and the halachah is that the Kohen is allowed, and even required, to participate in her funeral. When he was brought to the funeral home, however, another deceased person was also brought into the facility to be taken care of. Now, although the Kohen certainly was allowed to defile himself for the sake of his wife, he had no reason to become exposed to the ritual impurities of the other person who had died, who was not his relative. Was this man permitted to be in that funeral home to fulfill the mitzvah of taking care of the burial needs of his wife?

HaRav Frank answered that since this Kohen was already going to become impure, and being in the building would not expose him to any further level of tum’ah, he was allowed to enter. However, he was warned that when his wife was taken out, he should be careful to leave the building first. If he would allow her body to be removed before his leaving, for that moment he would be in the building and exposed to the tum’ah of the other deceased person without the excuse of being there for his wife.

We can use this same approach to explain the actions of Rabbi Yishmael. Rabbi Yishmael was already in the building together with Rabban Shimon ben Gamliel who was killed. Once he was already exposed to the defilement of the dead, there was no additional level of tum’ah to which he was exposed by now picking up the head.

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STRONG LEADERSHIP

Bnei Yisrael would come to the Beis HaMikdash to see the Kohanim performing the Avodah, accompanied by the Levi'im chanting their melodies and Psalms. Only one tribe had access to the internal workings of the Beis HaMikdash. It might have troubled the average Jew that this unique group of people was selected over everyone to become Hashem’s legion, His faithful servants. They must have questioned this phenomenon. What really is the reason that only the Kohanim and the Levi'im could act as agents for the people to offer korbanos? What trait rendered them so special?

Pninim al HaTorah cites HaRav Y. A. Hirshovitz, who attributes the distinction of the Kohanim to their grandfather, Aharon HaKohen. He stood up against those who would raise a hand against Toras Hashem, against those who chose to replace divinity with a Golden Calf. They compounded their sin by flaunting it, dancing and reveling before it. Aharon made an altar, proclaiming (Shemos 32:5): “There will be a holiday for Hashem tomorrow.” Bnei Yisrael, however, thought in different terms than Aharon. They thought that they would celebrate the worship of their man-made idol. But Aharon was referring to the following day when the Golden Calf...
would be ground to dust and the perpetrators who clung to it would be executed. There truly was a festival for Hashem - the Almighty’s name was affirmed and sanctified.

Aharon represented the central point where people who feared and believed in Hashem would rally together. Yes, Aharon withstood the onslaught of rebellion. He stemmed the tide of assimilation. Those who created the incursion, who incited the people to idol worship, were put to death. Aharon’s sanctuary of kedusha endured to overcome both the internal and external challenges which face us.

*THE HISTORICAL OBSERVANCE OF SUKKOS*

In his *Sefer Ohr Torah*, Rabbi Menachem Tsvi Taskin explains that the mitzvah to sit in a sukkah on Sukkos is specifically described as a commemoration of the protection afforded our ancestors as they travelled through the desert (Verse 43). Accordingly, during the forty years that the Jews spent in the desert there was no need for this symbolic dwelling in order to remember the miraculous clouds of glory which surrounded them, for the miracle itself was in progress. Furthermore, the mitzvah of taking the four species was also apparently not performed for those forty years. The verse connects the taking of these species with the arrival of the nation into the land, as it says (Verse 39), “As you gather the yield of the land...you shall take...a beautiful fruit...etc.”

This approach can help understand the seemingly redundant wording of the verses in the description of the holiday of Sukkos. The paragraph opens (v. 33-36) with Moshe commanding the people to celebrate the festival of Sukkos in the seventh month. However, the nature of the observance is simply described as one where the first and eighth days are to be days...
when work is prohibited. Only later (in Verses 39-43) does the Torah once again begin the description of the holiday, but here adds the observance of the festival rituals – the taking of the four species and the dwelling in the sukkah. What is the meaning of this repetition?

We can say that Moshe began by addressing the Jews at that time, as they had not yet entered the land. They, in fact, did not take the four species, nor did they dwell in the sukkah. The later verses, however, deal with the nature of the holiday as it would apply to future generations. Here, the additional mitzvos are an integral part of the holiday of Sukkos.

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CASE - LAW REVIEW

The law of the pronouncing of the name of God to curse it appears here due to an actual episode which occurred. Chachmei HaEmes notes that there are a handful of laws which appear in the Torah at their various locations, each being presented as a response to an actual case which took place. The question arose as to how to deal with the circumstances at hand, and after it was clarified, the Torah states the halachah for all generations. These are 1. שפיח - the Shabbos desecration of the one who chopped wood (BeMidbar 15); 2. על צלב - the blasphemer of God’s name (Vayikra 24); 3. ליהושע - Tzlaphchad and the inheritance of his portion for his daughters (BeMidbar 27); 4. פסח Sản - the offering of Pesach Sheni (BeMidbar 9); 5. זמר - the debacle of Zimri taking the gentle princess Kozbi (BeMidbar 25).

The first letters of these episodes spell out the acrostic ת"נ"ס"נ"ג. The Gemara (Shabbos 104) tells us that ת"נ"ס"נ"ג were instructed to us by the prophets. On a simple level, this Gemara is telling us that there are five letters of the Alef-Bais which have a different form when they occur at the end of a word as opposed to anywhere else in a word. The fact that the letters ת"נ"ס"נ"ג change their form at the end of a word is taught to us by the prophets.

We can now also say that these five episodes, indicated by the five-letter acrostic ת"נ"ס"נ"ג, were taught to us in response to actual cases that happened, and due to the prophet (i.e. Moshe) providing the law in each case, rather than being instructed to us directly as were the other laws in the Torah.

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LEARNING A LESSON

Chazon Ish (Kovetz Igaros 3:102) writes that a careful analysis of the laws of the Torah can train a person to conduct himself in an exemplary manner and can lead one to perfect his character. As we study the Torah’s system of justice, we notice that the nature of the various punishments is equitably ascribed to particular offenses. Any act which has a severe punishment associated with it is obviously considered to be an abhorrent crime against society and/or against God. An act which is punishable with lashes is not so severe as one which is deserving of excision or death. Consequently, our attitude towards the crimes with more severe punishments should then be one of greater repulsion and disgust. Murder, for example, is deserving of capital punishment. This information in and of itself teaches us that the Torah values life as a supreme entity, and the very thought of taking another’s life should be inconceivable. Accordingly, there are various unusual scenarios in the Torah depicting situations which will almost never exist. One of these is the case of the rebellious and recalcitrant son (Devarim 21:18). Another is that of the wayward city (Devarim 13:13). Nevertheless, the point is that by studying them and their prescribed punishments, we can develop a value system, and an entire perspective upon life and its priorities can be established.

When the Torah describes the restitution due to one who has been injured, it uses a very sharp and dramatic terminology - “an eye for an eye”.

By studying them and their prescribed punishments, we can develop a value system, and an entire perspective upon life and its priorities can be established.
**Halachic Corner**

**Pesach Shenii Pirkei Avos Ch. 4**

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During the days between Pesach and Shavuos, 24,000 of the talmidim of Rabbi Akiva died (Yevamos 62b). It is for this reason that we are accustomed to take upon ourselves various forms of mourning during this period. (See Shulchan Aruch O.C. 493:1) On the 33rd day of the Omer the deaths of the students ceased. We therefore have a custom not to fast on that day, nor do we say Tachanun during Minchah on the 32nd day and on Lag B’Omer. Additionally, we may once again start cutting hair and shaving on the day of the 33rd day of the Omer. One should also increase his joy somewhat (ibid. ש). Even though the period of mourning ends on Lag B’Omer, one must continue to mourn at least through the night of Lag B’Omer, and should not begin to shave, get a haircut, or listen to live music until the morning of Lag B’Omer.

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**Halachic Corner** is dedicated by Benyomin Freeman in memory of his father, רל הbarang ידב ושת המיימע, ז"ל. May his memory be for a blessing.

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**Questions for Thought and Study**

1. How is it the responsibility of all Bnei Yisrael to make sure that a Kohen remains holy? See Ohr HaChaim 21:8
2. Which feature of the face is considered קדחת יפת (“glory of the face”)? See Ramban 21:18
3. Why does the parasha concerning the purification of a Kohen come right after the section concerning blemishes that disqualify a Kohen? See Ibn Ezra 22:2
4. Why does an animal have to be at least in its eighth day before being brought as a פרג (“sacrifice”)? See Ba’al HaTurim 22:27
5. Which words indicate that every individual is required to count Sefirah and it is not a communal obligation? See Tosfos Menachos 65
6. Why are the gifts to the poor – קרג (corner) and ערג (gleanings) – mentioned after the commandment to bring the Omer offering? See Ohr HaChaim 23:22

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- By Hebrew Theological College wishing mazal tov to Rabbi Eliezer & Dr. Malkie Eisenberg on the birth of a grandson, born to Moish & Hadassah Eisenberg; to Dr. Sam & Rita Lipshtiz and Moshe & Doreen Mermelstein on the Bar Mitzvah of their grandson, Cobi Mermelstein; to HTC Board of Regents member Rabbi Yaakov Rajchenbach and his wife Judy on the birth of a grandson, born to Rabbi Moshe & Sarala Rajchenbach; and to Beis Midrash talmid Davy Isenberg on his engagement to Rochel Doerfer, and extending heartfelt condolences to HTC Board of Regents member Rabbi Bernard Neuman and his wife Miriam on the loss of their brother-in-law, Norman Friedman, מ"ה.
- Gourmet Torah at Shallots Bistro is not meeting in the restaurant, so we are bringing Torah to you. Please join Rabbi Moshe Shechter over Zoom on Thursday, May 14, at 12:30 PM. Topic: “Rus: The Mother of the Moshiach Dynasty”. Zoom info will be emailed and posted on HTC’s facebook page.
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Answers:
1. The term  הָנַסְתָּר ("and you shall sanctify him") written in singular form indicates that it is the responsibility of the courts to punish the Kohen (with lashes) until he divorces his wife who is forbidden to him.
2. Regarding the blemishes of a Kohen, the word הַנַשְׁתָּר — “sunken” or “disfigurement of the nose” (see Berachos 34b) – is used. The nose is considered the עדן הָרֶגֶן of a face, so when it is disfigured it is considered to be “destroyed”, another term described as הָנַסְתָּר.
3. The connection is to show that even though a blemished Kohen may eat from the gifts given to him, he must be pure הָנַסְתָּר when doing so.
4. If the animal is sacrificed on any of its first seven days, it will appear as if the person is sacrificing to one of the items created during the first days of Creation (e.g. the sun, the moon, etc.). By sacrificing the animal on the eighth day, one indicates that the sacrifice is completely to Hashem.
5. The plural form of the words הָנַסְתָּר, הָנַסְתָּר ("and you shall count for yourselves") speaks collectively to each and every individual. If it was a communal obligation, the Torah would have said הָנַסְתָּר הָנַסְתָּר.
6. One might think that since the first harvest is brought as an offering, the gifts to the poor would be given collectively to each and every individual. If it was a communal obligation, the Torah would have said הָנַסְתָּר הָנַסְתָּר.