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G-d's Relevance TO EXISTENCE

YadAvNow.com Weekly Video Series: Emor

Rabbi Yosef Kalatsky

The Sanctity of A Cohen & Contamination

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When an Animal is Not a Valid Consecration

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The Innate Value of Our Holidays

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One Must Maintain Consecrated Items in a State of Spiritual Purity

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PIRKEI AVOS

G-d's Relevance TO EXISTENCE



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The High Priest as Model of Original Man

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1. A Kohen is not permitted to contaminate to the dead unless it is one of the 7 closest relatives: father, mother, brother, sister, son, daughter, wife.
2. The High Priest (Kohen Gadol) is not permitted to contaminate – even to the 7 closest relatives.
3. Seforno: The function of the Priest in addition to officiating is to be the disseminator of Torah.
4. Prophet Malachi: The lips of the Kohen are the keepers of the faith. Torah should be sought from his mouth.
5. If the Kohen would contaminate to others besides his family, his reverence & esteem would be diminished.
6. G-d's Presence in the Mishkan was the original intent of creation– that G-d should be on the terrestrial with man.
7. Before the sin of Adam there was no death – a derivative of the evil contained within the fruit.
8. The sin of the fruit putrefied existence causing the terrestrial to no longer be the location for G-d's Presence.
9. The Mishkan was the location for G-d's presence to dwell.
10. The High Priest was a reinstatement of Adam before the sin – he had no context of spiritual impurity.

The Proprietary Imprint of One's Life

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1. Midrash: A heavenly voice will sprout from the mountain top saying "Who has done for G-d should come and take his rightful reward.
2. "Who has praised G-d before he was endowed with a soul, who has circumcised his child before he was given a son.
3. "Who has brought to me a sacrifice before I gave him an animal, the ox, sheep and goat."
4. Positive Commandment: Install a court comprised of ordained judges & law enforcers in every community.
5. Man was endowed with the power of choice to be deserving or culpable for his choices.
6. Exercising one's full choice takes place in concealment – understanding the consequence of transgression.
7. The Torah does not want the range of choice for the Jew to be either devoutly righteous or to be a predator animal.
8. The extent of one's choice is to infuse one's action with a special intent for the sake of the mitzvah.
9. When we serve G-d at whatever level, one must be cognizant that it is all G-d given to be utilized for a specific purpose.

Why Choose The Domesticated Species For Sacrifice?

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1. The only species that qualify for sacrifices are the ox, sheep, and goat.
2. Although there are ten kosher species only the domesticated qualify.
3. Midrash: G-d said, "I don't want to burden you to scale mountains and search out fields to seek out these species."
4. Only the species raised on your feed bag and under your jurisdiction qualify.
5. Chazal: One's pain for a mitzvah (sacrifice) determines the degree of one's reward.
6. Psalms: Mitzvos were given to sanctify and purify the Jew.
7. The positive and negative Commandments correspond and parallel the spiritual component of the Jew.
8. Pain, as determinant of reward, is only true within the context of the prescribed Mitzvos.
9. Applied elsewhere it is only an exercise in futility.

The Significance Of The Juxtaposition Of The Festivals To Shabbos

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1. The Festivals and holidays are juxtaposed to the Shabbos.
2. Rashi: One who desecrates the holiday is considered as he desecrated the Shabbos.
3. One who observes the holiday is valued as though he observed the Shabbos.
4. Observing the Shabbos is a testament that G-d created the world.
5. *Gemara*: The Sanctity of the Shabbos has been in place since the beginning of creation.
6. The Festivals and holidays are sanctified by the Sanhedrin.
7. The blessing of the Festivals and holidays: G-d sanctifies the Jewish people who sanctify time.
8. The sanctity of time is derived from the sanctity of the Jew.
9. The basis for all sanctity is G-d's association with the location or people.
10. The sanctity of Shabbos: G-d's entering into existence every 7th day.
11. The Jew's sanctity: G-d taking them as His holy people.
12. The basis for all sanctity: G-d's level of association in each context.
13. The sanctity of the Festivals and Shabbos are same sourced; one who desecrates the holiday is considered as desecrating the Shabbos.



Weekly Torah Commentary Series: Emor



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G-d's Relevance TO EXISTENCE

The Levites, the Purest of the Tribes

Torah: *Emor* delineates the laws that pertain to the *Kohanim* (Priests) regarding their conduct. They are not permitted to contaminate themselves to the dead, remove the hair on their head to grieve over the dead, destroy the corners of their beard, marry a woman who has been defiled. They are not permitted to marry a divorcee. The basis for these prohibitions is as the *Torah* states, “for each one is holy to his G-d.”

In addition, there is a positive commandment that is incumbent on every Jew, “You shall sanctify him...” Meaning, the Jew has an obligation to esteem and acknowledge the *Kohen* in order to indicate that he is special. Why does the *Kohen* have a unique level of sanctity, despite the fact that all Jews are innately holy because they are the nation of G-d?

Midrash citing *Psalms*: “The statements of G-d are statements of purity...” All the dictates that are commanded to the Jewish people are to protect and

maintain their purity and sanctity.” The Levites were the only ones who were not subject to the physical bondage in Egypt. Consequently, they were not influenced by their masters to become idolaters as their fellows had become.

Chazal: The Levites were involved in educating their Jewish brothers regarding their holy heritage, while they were on bondage. Although they had fallen regarding their spirituality, becoming pagans, they were nevertheless reminded of their holy ancestry by these teachings. In addition, the Tribe of *Levy* was the only one who did not participate in the sin of the Golden Calf. Thus, they were able to maintain their level of purity and sanctity from the beginning.

Initially, the first born of every family was intended to be the officiant of G-d/*Kohen* however, because of their involvement in idolatry they became tainted and were replaced by the Tribe of *Levy*. Aaron, being from the Tribe of *Levy*, assumed the role of High Priest, which

was the loftiest and most holy position because of his dimension of spirituality. It is because of their special dimension of holiness that the *Kohanim* must be acknowledged for who they are.

In the third blessing of the *Amidah* (Silent Prayer): “You (G-d) are holy and Your Name is holy, and holy ones praise You every day forever...” Sanctity also has relevance to every Jew, even the ordinary one. The appellation “holy ones” is referring to the Jewish people. The Jew acknowledges and praises G-d because he possesses purity and sanctity. It is only because of this sanctity that his praise has special value to G-d. If in fact the Jewish people had no relevance to purity and sanctity, as the nations of the world, their praise would have no value.

We find that the Jewish people are referred to as “the sanctifiers of Your Name.” This is because the Jew has the innate capacity to sanctify G-d’s Name through his essence, which is holy.

Chazal: The angels in heaven are not permitted to begin praising G-d with the *Kedushah* until the Jewish people had done so. After the Jewish people have acknowledged G-d, through the recitation of *Kedushah* (*Kadosh, Kadosh, Kadosh*) can the angel begin his recitation. The only reason G-d gave numerous dictates which address every aspect of the Jew’s life and behavior is because of his innate level of purity and sanctity. Therefore, rather than perceiving the many dictates of the *Torah* as burdensome and overwhelming, one should understand that it was only given to him because of his holy and pure state of being.

Mercy, the Secret of Jewish Survival

Torah: “When an ox or sheep or a goat is born...” These are the only three domesticated species that qualify to be brought as an offering.

Midrash: “The species that qualify to be brought as offerings were chosen in the merit of the Patriarchs. The ox was chosen in the merit of *Avraham*. As it states regarding *Avraham*’s hosting of the angels, ‘*Avraham* ran to the cattle, took a calf tender and good, and gave it to the youth who hurried to do it...’ The sheep was chosen to qualify as an offering in the merit of *Yitzchak*. As the verse states regarding the *Akeidah* (binding of *Yitzchak*), ‘And *Avraham* looked up and saw- behold a ram – after it had been caught in the thicket...’ (The species of the ram reminds G-d of the special act of the

Akeidah, which was *Avraham*’s ultimate sacrifice. G-d valued *Avraham*’s ritualization of the ram as if he had sacrificed his son *Yitzchak*.)

The goat was chosen to be an offering in the merit of *Yaakov*. As the *Torah* states (regarding *Rivka*, our Matriarch, telling her son *Yaakov* to receive the blessing from his father *Yitzchak*), ‘So now, my son, heed my voice to that which I command you. Go now to the flock and fetch from there two good goats...’ The concept of sacrifices exists only within the context of the Attribute of Mercy. The Jewish people are able to evoke G-d’s Mercy and be atoned for their sins only in the merit of the holy Patriarchs, *Avraham*, *Yitzchak*, and *Yaakov*, who through their accomplishments established a spiritual account of merit that the Jewish people can draw upon.

Reb Chaim of Volozhin in *Ruach Chaim*: A human being is comprised of three parts: the life source (*Nefesh*), spirit (*Ruach*), and the soul (*Neshama*). All physical movement emanates from the *Nefesh*. This life source is shared by man and animal alike. *Ruach* (spirit) is the spirit that gives man the power of speech/ability of expression. *Neshama* is the spiritual essence that man possesses which is the basis for his intellect. Just as each individual person is comprised of these three elements, so too do the Jewish people, as a nation, possess these three components.

Avraham, *Yitzchak*, and *Yaakov*, our Patriarchs, the founding fathers of the Jewish people, respectively represent and perfected each one of these components. *Avraham* is the equivalent of the *Nefesh* (life source) of the Jewish people. This was manifested through his pronounced characteristic of *chesed* (kindness). *Chesed* expresses itself through physical movement. As the *Torah* tells us that *Avraham* “ran” to attend to the needs of the wayfarers.

Yitzchak represents the *Neshama* of the Jewish people. He was considered to be the “unblemished offering.” Just as the *Kohen* (Priest), when he officiates, if he were to have an improper thought the sacrifice would be invalidated (*pigul*), so too was *Yitzchak* pure in thought. *Yaakov*, our Patriarch, who was continuously engaged in *Torah* study, corresponds to the *Ruach* (power of speech) of the Jewish people because *Torah* study manifests itself through verbal articulation.

Rabbeinu Bachya on *Vayikra*: When a person brings an offering to be sacrificed; he needs to first make a verbal confession for his sin (*viduy*), then he must lean on the

head of the animal with both of his hands (*smicha*), and finally the innards of the animal which include the kidneys are burnt. *Rabbeinu Bachya* explains that each aspect of bringing a sacrifice atones for a specific element of one's sin. The verbal confession (*viduy*) atones for the stage before one commits a sin when he expresses his intent to transgress. Leaning on the intended sacrifice atones for the person's act of transgression. The burning of the kidneys (which have a bearing on one's intellect) atones for the thought that went into contemplating and executing the transgression.

Reb Chaim of Volozhin: When one sins with the three aspects of his being, his thought, speech, and action, he diminishes the three components of his spiritual make up – *Nefesh, Ruach, Neshama*. When one undergoes the atonement process and he affects through it all of the aspects that had been diminished, he will be fully atoned. However, the atonement process is only viable within the Attribute of Mercy that is contingent upon the merit of the holy Patriarchs.

The Rehabilitative Process of Repentance

Torah: "When an ox or sheep or a goat is born..."

Midrash citing *Yeshaya*: "Behold, you come from nothing and your accomplishment emanates from an outcry and through an abomination you have been chosen." *Reb Levy* says, 'All of the good, pleasant, and precious actions that G-d will bring upon the Jewish people is because of their single outcry at Sinai. They had said, 'Regarding all that G-d has said, *Naaseh V'nishma* (we will do and we will listen).'

"Despite the fact that they were involved with an abomination/idolatry, G-d nevertheless chose them. They had created an abomination by contributing to the golden calf. G-d said, 'From that abomination you will bring before Me a sacrifice, and it is through it that I will chose you.' What is this sacrifice? It is the ox." Because the Jewish people had unequivocally declared, "*Naaseh V'nishma*" at Sinai, G-d transformed the species that represents the abomination of the golden calf into a sacrifice through which they were brought close to Him.

Although the Jewish people had advanced to a level of clarity that they were able to make the declaration of, "*Naaseh V'nishma*," they nevertheless failed gravely with the sin of idolatry through the golden calf. Seemingly their failing should have caused them to

forfeit their spiritual essence. Why did G-d choose specifically the abomination that seriously put the Jewish people into spiritual jeopardy?

Gemara in Tractate *Shabbos*: When the Jewish people had declared "*Naaseh V'nishma* (We will do and we will listen)" a heavenly voice (G-d) had said, "Who revealed this secret to My children? They have used the expression of the angels who serve Me." The Jewish people at Sinai had ascended to the level of angels. An angel, because of its level of clarity is completely and singularly focused on doing the Will of G-d without hesitation or question. Through the expression of "*Naaseh V'nishma*" the Jewish people had established themselves as angels because they accepted upon themselves an obligation without knowing its extent.

Because of their unwavering trust in G-d the Jewish people were able to transcend all of the impediments that are consequences of being a physical being. They believed implicitly that whatever G-d had offered them was in their very best interest. In contrast, the nations of the world whose essence is physical, they do not have the capacity to trust G-d sufficiently to accept His Will unconditionally. This is the basis for their query to G-d, when the *Torah* was offered to them, "What is written in it?"

Maharal of Prague: Repentance is a spiritual rehabilitation that has relevance only to the Jew. This is because his essence is spiritual. When he sins, it does not touch upon his essence because it is only considered to be something external and happenstance. Sin does not emanate from his spiritual essence which is lofty and pure. The non-Jew on the other hand, whose essence is physical, is affected by his sin to a point of not being able to be rehabilitated. This is because his sin emanates from his core, which is material.

Gemara in Tractate *Sanhedrin*: If a non-Jew should violate any one of the Noachide Laws, even inadvertently, it is punishable by death. The concept of punishment in the *Torah* is to rehabilitate and restore the sinner to his original status.

When the Jewish people declared "*Naaseh V'nishma*" they revealed and confirmed their spiritual essence. They are no less than the most advanced angel. Thus, even if they were to sin with the ultimate abomination, which is idolatry, it is not considered a terminal failure. The sin did not emanate from their spiritual essence.

Therefore, G-d specifically chose the ox as the species to openly declare that the essence of the Jew is unlike the essence of the Noachide.

The Species of Sacrifices, A Demonstration of G-d's Love

Torah: "When an ox or sheep or a goat is born..." These are the only three domesticated species that qualify to be brought as an offering.

Midrash citing Micha: "'My nation, what did I do to you? I want you to attest to the fact that I did not make you weary by burdening you with My *mitzvos*...'

"Reb Yehudah b'Reb Simon: 'G-d said to the Jewish people, 'I have given you ten kosher species. Three of the species are under your jurisdiction and seven of them are not. The ox, sheep, and goat are domesticated and are easily available to you. The other seven undomesticated species....I did not want to inconvenience you by asking you to ascend the mountains or to exhaust yourselves by traversing the fields in order to bring them to Me as a sacrifice. Rather, I chose the species that grow and develop in your domain and are nurtured with your feedbag. Therefore these domesticated species are a testament that I did not want to burden you with My *mitzvos*.'

Torah: If a Jew sins, even inadvertently, he needs to bring a sacrifice to be atoned. It is not sufficient to repent alone. When the *Torah* refers to sacrifices it is within the context of "*Korban L'shem* (Sacrifice to G-d)." Since the *Torah* uses the appellation for G-d that connotes the Attribute of Mercy, regarding sacrifices and atonement, it indicates that without G-d's Mercy, one would not be atoned, although he had attempted to correct the wrong. Based on the Attribute of Justice, the culpability for an inadvertent transgression would not allow one to be atoned.

One would think that even within the context of Mercy to facilitate atonement, one would need to demonstrate a willingness to go to any length in order to be forgiven. Therefore, G-d should have made it more difficult for one to come upon the species that qualifies for atonement.

Gemara: Sacrifice that is brought for atonement must be predicated by repentance. As it states, "The sacrifice of the evil is an abomination (to G-d)." Meaning, if one brings a sacrifice without first repenting it is seen

as an abomination by G-d. In order for one to repent in a qualitative manner, it is not only required to have remorse for the sin that had been committed, he must also be pained and feel shame because of his past transgression. If this is so, why did G-d not require the sinner to bring the undomesticated animal in order to show his sincere desire to repent?

It is true that in order to repent and achieve atonement one must be remorseful and pained because of his sin. He must feel devastated by the fact that he transgressed against His Maker. However, G-d only wants that the sinner to focus and address the sin that he had violated. Outside of the transgression itself, G-d has no interest in overly burdening the individual to achieve atonement. This is an outgrowth of G-d's exceptional love for the Jewish people.

It is interesting to note that all the blessings of the *Amidah* conclude with a description of an aspect of what G-d is. For example, the first blessing concludes, "...*Hashem* Shield of *Avraham*." The blessing of G-d's Might concludes, "...*Hashem*, Who resuscitates the dead." The blessing of Insight concludes, "...*Hashem*, gracious Giver of wisdom." The blessing for redemption concludes, "...*Hashem*, Redeemer of Israel." Etc.

The blessing of repentance is the only one of the blessings that concludes with a reference to what G-d wants and desires and not to what He is- "...*Hashem*, Who desires repentance." G-d desires that the Jew repents, like a father wants his beloved child to correct his ways. As much as the father understands that he must discipline his child in order to make a qualitative and lasting correction, he is simultaneously pained that he must do so. Although G-d wants the Jew to repent and to experience the necessary remorse and pain in order to achieve a qualitative atonement, He simultaneously does not want to burden His children to facilitate the result. Therefore, G-d only asked that the Jewish people to bring domesticated species as sacrifices, which is a testament to the Jewish people and the world that G-d does not wish to burden His children with His *mitzvos*.

The Sanctity of the Jewish People (Kedoshim)

Torah: "*Hashem* spoke to *Moshe* saying – Speak to the entire assembly of the Children of Israel and say to them: You shall be holy, for holy am I, *Hashem* your G-d." It is

a Positive Commandment for a Jew to sanctify himself. The basis for a Jew to sanctify himself is to establish and secure his relationship with G-d. Since G-d is holy, the Jew must assume a posture of holiness in order to have a commonality with His Maker.

Ramban: The *mitzvah* of, “You shall be holy” is referring removing oneself from the areas that are permitted. Since G-d is completely removed from the material and has no relevance to it, one must also exist within a similar context. The more one removes himself from the material the more relevance he will have to the spiritual, thus reflecting G-d’s Holiness. The objective of physical existence was to create a setting in which man would utilize the material to facilitate and actualize his own spiritual potential. Holiness regarding the human being is to engage in the physical solely for the spiritual. G-d is the source of all holiness. Anything that He associates Himself with, assumes a sanctified status.

Torah: At the time of the giving of the *Torah* at Sinai, the Mountain assumed a sanctified/consecrated status when the Divine Presence descended upon it. No one was permitted to approach the Mountain as long as the Divine Presence was associated with it. After the Divine Presence ascended from it, the Jewish people were permitted to approach it because it had reverted back to its ordinary state. We see clearly from this example, that the basis for sanctification is G-d’s association with that particular setting or individual. For example, the day of *Shabbos* is considered the most holy because G-d’s Presence enters into existence on the seventh day of Creation and continuously does so that day. The Divine Presence departs from this existence at the end of the seventh day.

It is interesting to note that the text of the blessing that one recites prior to performing a *mitzvah* is, “...You have sanctified us through Your *mitzvos* and You commanded us...” Thus, the value of the performance of a *mitzvah* is to be the medium through which the Jew can be sanctified by G-d. When one engages in a *mitzvah*, it causes a level of sanctity to come upon the individual.

It is only the Jew who was commanded to fulfill the dictates of the *Torah*, thus he is the only one who has relevance to the sanctity of the *mitzvos*. If this is so, that through the *mitzvah* we are sanctified, then why do we beseech G-d in the *Amidah* (Silent Prayer) of *Shabbos* and *Yom Tov*, “... sanctify us with Your *mitzvos* and give us our portion in the *Torah*?” When one performs a *mitzvah*, it should be a natural consequence that becomes sanctified.

In fact, the *mitzvah* has the innate ability to bring sanctity upon the individual through its performance as the text of the blessing indicates. However, the *mitzvah* is only the medium to sanctify the Jew if the individual is worthy of a relationship with G-d. If the individual is despised by G-d his *mitzvah* performance will not bring about a state of sanctity.

Rambam in the *Laws of Repentance*: After one transgresses one is considered to be, “despised, repugnant, and abominable to G-d.” As a result, G-d will reject this individual’s *mitzvah* because of his quality of person. One must repent in order to be worthy of the relationship with G-d, thus allowing the *mitzvos* the function as a medium to bring about sanctification. of being tainted with sin, when one performs a *mitzvah* G-d rejects it and “throws it back” at the individual. Thus, we beseech G-d on *Shabbos* and Holidays, which are days of intense Mercy, that despite our shortcomings G-d will accept our *mitzvos* and allow them to be the medium for our relationship with Him.

We conclude the *Amidah* (Silent Prayer) with a request: “May it be Your Will, *Hashem* our G-d...that the Holy Temple be rebuilt, speedily in our days. Grant us our share in Your *Torah*...” What is the correlation between having the Temple built and meriting our portion in *Torah*? Evidently, they are clearly linked. Before the Temple was destroyed, was the location for the Divine Presence. Because G-d in the midst of the Jewish people they had a greater degree of sanctity, thus qualifying them to have greater relevance to their portion of *Torah*, which is the ultimate in sanctity. Thus it is through the rebuilding of the Temple that the necessary clarity will come upon the Jewish people to allow them to actualize their portion of *Torah*.

