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Much of *Parashat Emor* is devoted to laws applicable only to *Kohanim*, as the *Parashah* begins (21:1), "Say to the *Kohanim*, the sons of Aharon, and tell them..." R' Shaul Yisraeli z"l (1909-1995; rabbi of Kfar Ha'roeh, Israel, and a *Rosh Yeshiva* of Yeshivat Mercaz Harav) writes: In last week's *Parashah*, the Torah directed the entire nation toward purity and holiness, as we read (19:2), "Speak to the entire assembly of *Bnei Yisrael* and say to them, 'You shall be holy, for holy am I, *Hashem*, your *Elokim*.'" Nevertheless, *Kohanim* have more laws and are directed to be more pure and more holy, as we read (21:6), "They shall be holy to their *Elokim* and they shall not desecrate the Name of their *Elokim*--for the fire-offerings of *Hashem*, the food of their *Elokim*, they offer, so they must remain holy." The very nature of Judaism, R' Yisraeli explains, involves making distinctions and separations: The Jewish People are holy, and *Kohanim* are holier. Likewise, the Jewish People are meant to be distinct from the nations of the world, as we read in last week's *Parashah* (20:26), "You shall be holy for Me, for I *Hashem* am holy, and I have separated you from the peoples to be Mine." *Hashem* has set us aside to be His; that is an inborn trait that we have. Also, we are expected to choose a holy lifestyle in order to "be holy for" *Hashem*. These two characteristics are meant to set us apart.

R' Yisraeli adds: We say in *Havdalah* that *Hashem* "separates between holy and mundane, light and dark, *Yisrael* and the nations." Just as the distinction between light and dark is critical for the world's existence, so recognizing the distinction between holy and mundane, and recognizing that the Jewish People have a different role than the other nations, is critical to the proper functioning of the world. (*Siach Shaul*)

## Shabbat

"Speak to *Bnei Yisrael* and say to them, '*Hashem*'s appointed festivals that you are to designate as *Mikra'ei Kodesh* / holy convocations--these are My appointed festivals. For six days labor may be done, and the seventh day is a day of complete rest, *Mikra Kodesh* / a holy convocation, you shall not do any work; it is a *Shabbat* for *Hashem* in all your dwelling places'." (23:2-3)

*Midrash Torat Kohanim* asks: What is *Shabbat* doing among the Festivals (i.e., *Pesach*, *Shavuot*, *Sukkot*, *Rosh Hashanah*, and *Yom Kippur*, all of which are discussed in the verses that follow)? The *Midrash* answers: This teaches that if one profanes the Festivals, it is as if he has profaned *Shabbat*. Conversely, if one observes the Festivals, it is as if he has observed the Festivals and *Shabbat*. [Until here from the *Midrash*]

R' Nosson Yehuda Leib Mintzberg z"l (1943-2018; rabbi and *Rosh Yeshiva* in Yerushalayim and Bet Shemesh, Israel) explains: The Festivals are called *Mikra'ei Kodesh*--literally, "[days] that are called holy"--because they occur only as a result of the Jewish People's sanctifying the new moon. The Torah identifies the dates when the holidays occur, but we determine when those dates will fall and make them holy by establishing a calendar. But why is *Shabbat* called "*Mikra Kodesh*"? Every seventh day is sanctified by G-d from the time of Creation; it does not need us to sanctify it!

Nevertheless, the Torah is teaching, there is a *Mitzvah* for us to supplement *Shabbat*'s holiness; we not only must treat it as if it is holy, we also must feel its holiness in our hearts. If one does not sanctify the Festivals, which have no sanctity if the Jewish People does not sanctify them, he certainly will not sanctify *Shabbat*. If an individual does feel and act holy on the Festivals, says the *Midrash*, he will sanctify *Shabbat* as well.

R' Mintzberg adds: It is this requirement to sanctify *Shabbat* that makes possible the *Mitzvah* of *Tosefet Shabbat* / adding to *Shabbat*, i.e., bringing in *Shabbat* at least a few minutes before sunset and ending it at least a few minutes later than the earliest possible time. If *Shabbat* is sanctified by *Hashem* from the time of Creation, how can we add to it? Our verse teaches that we are expected to add sanctity to the sanctity that *Hashem* already bestowed upon the day, and that allows us to add time to *Shabbat* as well.

(Ben Melech Al Ha'Torah)

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## Pirkei Avot

**“Rabbi Eliezer ben Yaakov says, ‘He who does even a single *Mitzvah* acquires for himself a single *Praklit* / advocate, and he who transgresses even a single *Aveirah* / transgression acquires for himself a single accuser’.” (4:13)**

R’ Binyamin Hakohen Vitali z”l (1651-1729; rabbi of Reggio, Italy; known as “*Rabach*”) asks: Why don’t the two parts of the *Mishnah* use parallel language--for example, saying “does” an *Aveirah*, just as it says “does” a *Mitzvah*? He answers:

We read (*Vayikra* 26:3), “If you will follow My decrees and observe My commandments, *Va’asitem otam* / and you will do them.” *Midrash Vayikra Rabbah* comments: Rabbi Chama bar Chanina said, “If you observe the Torah, I will consider it as if *Asitem otah* / you made it.” Rabbi Chanina bar Pappa said, “If you observe the Torah, I will consider it as if *Asitem atzmechem* / you made yourselves.” [Until here from the *Midrash*.]

*Rabach* explains: The *Midrash* is commenting on the seemingly superfluous phrase, “*Va’asitem otam*.” Obviously, one who observes the Torah will “do” what the Torah says. Therefore, the two Sages quoted by the *Midrash* expound that if one observes the Torah, *Hashem* will view it as if he “made” the Torah (see below) or “made” himself. (The words “do” and “make” have the same Hebrew root--*Ayin, Sin, Heh*.) This, continues *Rabach*, explains why “does” is the appropriate verb to use in connection with a *Mitzvah* more so than in connection with a transgression.

What does it mean to “make” the Torah? *Rabach* explains, based on the *Zohar*: The *Mitzvot* we are commanded to perform are the physical manifestations of the Torah. However, every *Mitzvah* has its root in the spiritual world far “above.” Though we can sense only the physical component of a *Mitzvah*, our *Mitzvah* performance has effects as well at that spiritual root of the *Mitzvah*--the place, so-to-speak, where the *Mitzvah* was “made.”

What does it mean to “make” oneself? *Rabach* explains: Our Sages teach that the 365 negative commandments and 248 affirmative commandments correspond to the number of limbs and sinews in the human body, as we read (*Kohelet* 12:13), “The sum of the matter, when all has been considered--have reverence for *Elokim* and keep His commandments, for that is the whole of man.” Accordingly, when one observes the Torah’s *Mitzvot*, each *Mitzvah* benefits one part of his body so that he “makes” himself. In contrast, if a person neglects a particular *Mitzvah*, it is as if he is missing a part of his body.

Lastly, *Rabach* notes, the Talmud’s usual word for an “advocate” is “*Saneigor*.” A “*Praklit*,” however, is a stronger advocate than a *Saneigor*.

(Ahavat Olam)

**“You shall take for yourselves on the first day the fruit of a citron tree . . .” (23:40)**

R’ Nachman of Breslov z”l (1772-1810; Ukraine) observed: We have no idea how precious this *Mitzvah* is. The proof of its unique worth is that even people of limited means spend freely on a top-of-the-line *Etrog*--more so than people do for other *Mitzvot*. Though we don’t know the reasons for its worth, our souls sense that this is an unusually precious *Mitzvah*.

(Sichot Ha’Ran #125)

**“Outside the *Parochet Ha’edut* / Curtain of the Testimony, in the *Ohel Mo’ed*, Aharon shall arrange it, from evening to morning, before *Hashem*, continually--an eternal decree for your generations.” (24:3)**

The *Gemara* (*Menachot* 86a) explains why the *Parochet* is called the “Curtain of Testimony”: The western light of the *Menorah*, which was adjacent to the *Parochet*, testified to mankind that the *Shechinah* dwells in *Yisrael*, for the *Kohen* filled it with the same amount of oil as the other lights, but the other lights all went out in the morning, while the western light continued to burn until evening. [Until here from the *Gemara*]

R’ Shlomo ben Mordechai z”l (16<sup>th</sup> century; rabbi of Mezeritch, Poland) asks: Were there no other miracles that testified that the *Shechinah* dwells in *Yisrael*--for example, the fact that a fire came down from Heaven to consume the offerings on the *Mizbei’ach*, or the fact that a Cloud covered the *Mishkan* so thickly that Moshe could not enter the Tabernacle? [In the *Bet Hamikdash*, too, there were daily miracles that testified to the presence of the *Shechinah*. See *Pirkei Avot* 5:7.] Many of those miracles occurred in the public portions of the *Mishkan* and *Bet Hamikdash*, while the western light burned deep inside the Sanctuary, where it was not visible! Moreover, if the burning light was meant to serve as a testimony that the *Shechinah* dwells in *Yisrael*, at least it should have been the eastern light, which was the light closest to the public space, not the western light, which was the light closest to the Holy of Holies!

R’ Shlomo answers: The *Gemara* does not mean that the burning of the western light was a testimony while the *Mishkan*/*Bet Hamikdash* stood, for there were many more public miracles that happened in the Temple. Rather, the western light burnt continuously to testify that even after the “sunset” of Jewish independence--the sun sets in the west--after Nevuchadnezar had destroyed the *Bet Hamikdash* and other empires continued to subdue the Jewish People, the *Shechinah* would continue to dwell in *Yisrael*. This would be made particularly evident by a miracle that mimicked the miracle of the western light--i.e., the miracle of *Chanukah*, which involved the lights of the *Menorah* burning for longer than they should have done naturally.

(Mizbach Ha’zahav, Conclusion)