

Parashat emor - I shall be sanctified amidst the children of Israel

*"They **shall be holy to their God**, and **they shall not desecrate their God's Name**, for they offer up the fire offerings of the Lord, the food offering of their God, so they shall be holy".*

(Vayikra 21, 6).

*"You shall **sanctify him**, for he offers up the food offering of your God; he shall be holy to you, for I, the Lord Who sanctifies you, am holy".* (Vayikra 21,8).

Our parasha opens with special commandments which apply to our holiest members - our elite team of kohanim, the priests who man the worship of Hashem in the temple. Nearly every order here comes with a warning, along the lines such as, "You must **sanctify** them" and "do not **desecrate** my name".

These reflect a higher standard expected of those who represent complete holiness, and are tasked with dealing with "our Lord's bread", that if not kept will cause G-d's name to be desecrated.

This continues the line started in last parasha, commanding Bnei Yisrael "You shall be holy" - we are expected to go beyond just performing mitzvot; we need to aspire to **be holy**.

"You shall not desecrate My Holy Name. I shall be sanctified amidst the children of Israel. I am the Lord Who sanctifies you". (Vayikra 22,32).

Our objective as a people is to sanctify Hashem's name in the world. The kohanim represent the highest standards of kedusha toward the rest of Am Yisrael. This sanctity imposes a great deal of responsibility on us to represent it to the world. If we don't keep up to these standards, not only do we fail our potential but we directly disgrace G-d's name.

The difference between the levels of kedusha of Yisrael and kohen, is in the fact that only a small part of the nation can be living in the palace of G-d, while the rest are obligated to **live a life of holiness through our everyday lives**.

With a sharp turn the parasha shifts to discuss the Moadim, our holidays:

"Speak to the children of Israel and say to them: The Lord's appointed [holy days] that you shall designate as holy occasions. These are My appointed [holy days]. [For] six days, work may be performed, but on the seventh day, it is a complete rest day, a holy occasion; you shall not perform any work. It is a Sabbath to the Lord in all your dwelling places. These are the Lord's appointed [holy days], holy occasions, which you shall designate in their appointed time"

One may question what does this belong in the context of kedusha of kohanim. But here is one aspect in which our kedusha is practiced.

The first Moed mentioned is Shabbat, which we practice every week. After mentioning Shabbat the parasha repeats the introduction to the Moadim before continuing. There is a difference between Shabbat and the rest of the holidays. Shabbat was **created** with the world. G-d's builds into the weekly cycle a break to connect to Him.

The other holidays in our annual cycle we are partners in creating. We are to **proclaim them in their season**.

We are granted some control over the calendar by deciding when Rosh Chodesh will take place, or if we need to declare a leap year.

Our holiness grants us this ability. Our judgement will determine which day would be holy.

Furthermore, these holidays are tied to our annual routine. Hashem makes us holy and in turn we make the times holy.

One mitzvah mentioned here is sefirat haomer which we are practicing at these very days. We bring our first wheat which we toiled for in the previous year, **to the Mikdash** and then we count up 49 days until we reach day 50 - Shavuot Chag Matan Torah. Every day we rise in holiness until we are ready to receive the Torah. At that time we bring **Bikurim**, our first fruit, to the Mikdash. This reminds us everything we do day to day needs to be lived in kedusha.

May we be zoche to achieve a kingdom of kohanim and holy people.

"I shall be sanctified amidst the children of Israel. I am the Lord Who sanctifies you".

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