

BOSTONER TORAH INSIGHTS

BOSTONER 'CHASSIDUS' TRANSLATED INTO ENGLISH

PARSHAS EMOR – 19 IYAR 5781

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The Parsha begins with a discussion about the laws that are exclusively applicable to Kohanim from the family of Aharon. The Parsha ends with a detailed account of the Ben Isha Yisraelit who pronounced the name of Hashem in blasphemy.

There is a correlation between the beginning of the Parsha and the end of the Parsha regarding the relationship between a person and HaKadosh Baruch Hu and our obligation to always try our utmost to implement Hashem's will through the study of Torah and performance of Mitzvos. When a Jewish person dies and the Neshama leaves the body and returns to point of origination, there is now a spiritual void, a lack of Kedushas Yisroel in this world, and that void is quickly filled up with Tumah. The Kohanim are prohibited to come into contact with a corpse that has Tumas Mes in order to maintain their unique continuous relationship with Hashem which requires them to serve Hashem more intimately in the Makom HaMikdash. However, when the deceased is an immediate relative of the Kohen, then the opposite is true, and it is permitted or even an obligation for a Kohen to experience that loss directly.

It becomes the responsibility of immediate family members to fill this void of Kedusha when close relative passes away, which is one reason why Kaddish is said for the deceased, a prayer whose essence is literally to sanctify the name of Hashem. We also understand why the obligation of a child to fill the void of a parent is even more pronounced than the responsibility of other immediate relatives.

At the end of the Parsha, when the blasphemer creates a void of Kedusha by publicly desecration the Name of Hashem we find a striking similarity to this same concept. In this case however, it is imperative of all of Klal Yisroel to experience the spiritual loss that has occurred, similar to when a Nasi or a Gadol HaDor has passed away.

The Ohr HaChaim HaKadosh comments on the words, "and Bnei Yisroel did [as Hashem had commanded Moshe]" (Vayikra 24:23). He says, "It is difficult. Why does it say 'and Bnei Yisroel did' after it already said, '[Moshe spoke to Bnei Yisroel] and they took the blasphemer to the outside of the camp and they stoned him death', we already see that Bnei Yisroel have done what Hashem has commanded them". He suggests, since this entire matter came about because of strife and Machlokes, it is possible that those in Bnei Yisroel that sided with the position against the blasphemer they would implement his punishment with personal bias. Therefore, the Torah tells us that 'Bnei Yisroel did as Hashem commanded Moshe' to show that their intention was only to fulfill Hashem's will and not to because of their personal views on the matter.

It is noteworthy that Hashem commanded Moshe, "...all those who heard shall lean their hands upon his head and the entire assembly shall stone him" (Vayikra 24:14). This would imply that even the individual who had the direct conflict with the blasphemer, who certainly heard the blasphemy, was directly involved in the execution of the Ben Isha Yisraelis. The Ohr HaChaim is telling us that even he only implemented punishment on the blasphemer because it was the will of Hashem and not for any personal bias or secondary intentions.

Thus, whether it is showing our last respects for a loved one who passes away or whether it is to rebuke those among us who transgress, our intention should always be to fulfill and implement the will of Hashem, and not allow our personal feelings to cloud our judgement in understanding what Halacha dictates in order to fulfill and implement the will of Hashem. This is why it is always proper, even if one is knowledgeable in Halachic matters in general or very knowledgeable in one specific area of Halacha, to ask a question to another Halachic authority, even if that Halachic authority is not more knowledgeable, since by definition this second person will always be able to view the facts more objectively, and not allow personal bias to enter in the decision making process in the way that inevitable the one who is asking the question is always situated in.

There were four events recorded in the Torah in which Moshe Rabbeinu did not have an immediate response of what to do when posed with a question of Halacha, but rather turned to Hashem for guidance. The first is at the end of Parshas Emor where it was unclear what should be done to the Ben Isha Yisraelit who pronounced the name of Hashem in blasphemy. The second was in Parshas Behaaloscha regarding Pesach Sheini. The third was the Shabbos violator who was Mikoshesh Eitzim at the end of Parshas Shlach. The fourth was Bnos Tzlofchad in Parshas Pinchas and Parshas Masei.

We find that in the case of Pesach Sheini and in the case of Bnos Tzlofchad the objective of the inquiry was in order to do a Mitzvah, which is why Moshe hastened to turn to Hashem to ask what should be done. In the case of the blasphemer and the Shabbos violator, Moshe put the individuals who had transgressed the Torah into detention and did not rush to ascertain what to do.

The message is that when it comes to doing a Mitzvah and helping others to Mitzvos, one should act with alacrity. However, when one has to judge others for their transgressions or needs to implement a punishment to a fellow Jews according to the laws of the Torah, the human judges and courts should not be swift to bring judgement and justice, but rather should be particularly patient and meticulous in that judgement in accordance with the first Mishnah in Pirkei Avos.

May the Heavenly courts see our desire to do Hashem's will and speedily judge us worthy to experience the Geulah Shlayma