



RABBI SHALOM

ROSNER

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Senior Ra"m, Kerem B'Yavneh

One Step At a Time

The opening pasuk in the Parsha states: **“Emor el hakohanim bnei aharon v’amarta aleyhem”**. Rashi explains that the double use of the terms “emor” and “v’amarta” is to admonish the adult Kohanim to be responsible for the minor Kohanim- to properly educate them to refrain from coming into contact with an impure element.

The Lubavitcher Rebbe extends this directive to apply not just to Kohanim, but rather as a warning to all parents of the importance of educating their children. We are not speaking of the basic necessity to educate our children as this would not first appear in the middle of Sefer Vakira. Rather, this instruction appearing in Emor is hinting at a more advanced approach to

education. This is highlighted by another important concept that appears later in our parsha – the counting of the Omer, which always intersects with the reading of Parshas Emor. Just as we count the 49 consecutive days of the omer, so too are we to educate our children that they are to **progressively** advance to higher levels of spiritual achievement step by step on a daily basis.

When advancing in spirituality as in other aspects, one must be careful not to seek shortcuts, but to progress one step at a time. As the Imre Shefer posits, first focus on the basics (613 commandments) and only thereafter to take upon oneself additional restrictions or limitations.

Rabbi Mordechai Eliyahu, *al pi derush*, derives an important lesson relating to spiritual growth from the mitzva of requiring one to construct a guardrail around his roof. When people are inspired, they often seek to reach for the stars. It is natural to strive to be the best at everything we do. However, when it comes to enhancing our spirituality, we need to establish realistic goals and to take it step by step. If a person tries to jump too high too quickly, he is likely to fall. We have to establish a fence around the roof, or the target we set for ourselves, so that it is within our reach. Be careful not to set goals that are unrealistic and

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unattainable. A goal that is slightly beyond a person's reach may be within his grasp, and one should constantly seek to grow and improve. Yet trying to take upon oneself too much too quickly is doomed for failure.

The *Gemara* recounts that Mar Ukva states that he is not as great as his father, who waited twenty-four hours between eating meat and milk (Hullin 105a). If Mar Ukva felt that this was such a pious act, why did he not adopt it as well? Perhaps Mar Ukva felt that there were many other characteristics that he had to improve that were more significant than expanding the waiting period between eating meat and milk. He knew that spiritual growth must occur gradually. Someone who is having difficulty with speaking *lashon hara* and proper *kavana* during *davening* should probably not take upon himself *tikkun hatzos* – to wake up in the middle of the night to mourn the destruction of the *Beis HaMikdash*. Each *humra* that we accept upon ourselves must fit our level of observance.

As we count each day of the Omer, let us contemplate how we can enhance our spirituality and our middos – doing so gradually, one step at a time so that such conduct becomes embedded within us and a strong foundation is established upon which one can further build. ■

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