



GEULAS YISRAEL

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RAM YESHIVAT HAR ETZION
MAGGID SHIUR ALL PARSHA AND ALL DAF, OU.ORG

Higher Ground, Slower Answers

Greater nobility demands greater accountability. Greater spiritual opportunity carries greater obligation. To be more elevated is not a privilege alone; it is a summons to more mitzvot.

We were chosen by Hashem to become a nation of kohanim, living a life shaped by 613 mitzvot, so that a broader world can live by seven. Not only to model that life, but to bring Hashem's presence into the world through our faith and devotion. More mitzvot were given to us, and with them, greater responsibility, so that our elevated status is lived and visible.

That same pattern appears among the Kohanim, who enable religious experience in the Mikdash. They are granted certain privileges, including the twenty-four gifts, yet these come together with added layers of obligation. Parashat Emor defines three primary areas in which a Kohen must exercise heightened caution: contact with death, the parameters of marriage, and the preservation of bodily dignity. The Kohen Gadol stands at an even higher level, bound by more restrictive marital limitations and a more exacting standard regarding contact with death.

A NATURAL EXTENSION

These special guidelines for Kohanim do not appear in a vacuum. The concluding sections of both Parashat Acharei Mot and

Kedoshim carefully lay out the framework of issurei bi'ah, defining which relationships are permitted and which are forbidden. Within that broader structure, it is natural to introduce the more demanding marital standards expected of a Kohen in Parashat Emor. Once the general boundaries of marriage are drawn for all of Klal Yisrael, the Torah then sharpens those expectations for those who stand closer.

Likewise, the prohibitions against contact with the dead in Emor continue the discussion begun in Parashat Tazria and Metzora, which lay out the many forms of tumah that apply to every Jew. Against that backdrop, the opening sections of Parashat Emor, which detail the distinct tumah restrictions of the Kohanim, unfold as a natural extension of Tazria and Metzora.

Except for one thing.

RESOLUTION DELAYED

Each form of tumah introduced in Tazria and Metzora is followed by the halachic manner in which that tumah is resolved. At times the resolution is immediate, such as immersion in a mikvah. At other times it unfolds slowly and with greater complexity. The clearest example is the Metzora, whose process culminates in korbanot and singular ceremonies, with oil and blood applied to his body.

Yet the laws of tumah through contact with

the dead, introduced in Emor, are not followed by any parallel process of resolution. The rhythm established in Tazria and Metzora, of tumah followed by procedures of purification, is suddenly disrupted. Emor presents the reality of tumah through contact with the dead, but offers no pathway to remove it.

This disruption in the Torah's rhythm did not go unnoticed. The Midrash (Kohelet Rabbah 9:8) records a striking exchange between Moshe Rabbeinu and Hashem surrounding this textual gap. Moshe is troubled by the absence of any process of purification in Parashat Emor. This parsha presents the tumah of contact with the dead, yet offers no way forward.

Only later, when the Torah reaches Parashat Chukat, an entire sefer after Emor, does Hashem reveal that the Parah Adumah is the mechanism through which tumah from death is addressed.

Why did Hashem delay the laws of Parah Adumah? Evidently, this delay itself carries a message.

NOT YET READY

In part, the halachot of Parah Adumah are postponed because we were not yet ready to appreciate their meaning. Death remains the one mystery that human beings cannot penetrate. We do not understand it, we cannot prevent it, and we encounter it most painfully in those we love. It is a dead end, philosophically and emotionally, a place where human answers simply do not reach.

At that point of paralysis, we require something beyond ourselves. The response must come from a higher wisdom, a wisdom we cannot fully grasp. Unable to solve death, we turn to Hashem, who enters our world with a process that lies beyond human comprehension. The very opacity of Parah Adumah

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sharpens our awareness of the higher wisdom of Hashem. Death itself resists understanding, and even the process that addresses it remains beyond us. We are not given an explanation. We are given a *chok*, the quintessential *chok*, and that experience deepens our awareness of how much remains in Hashem's domain.

But that awareness only takes shape when a person is forced to confront it.

This awareness could not yet take root at the stage of Parashat Emor. The Mishkan had just been erected. The nation stood at a high point, poised to enter the Land, living in a more elevated and protected reality. We had experienced death: the three thousand after the *eigel* and the tragic loss of Aharon's sons. But those moments were tied to specific failures. Death had not yet settled into daily life.

Only later, after the sin of the spies and the uprising of Korach, did our reality shift. It became clear that an entire generation would not enter the Land. Year by year, that generation moved toward its end. Death was no longer exceptional but commonplace.

It was in that setting that Parah Adumah was given. Hashem was teaching that even within an atmosphere heavy with loss, He alone provides a path forward. The halachic solution to tumah gestures toward something broader, a response to how we live with death

and how we endure national tragedy.

Had these laws been introduced in Emor, they would have remained abstract. We had not yet encountered death as an ongoing condition, and we could not yet receive the message embedded within the *chok*.

By the time we reach Chukat, the experience of loss has deepened, and we were more prepared to turn upward, seeking a response that does not come from within the human realm.

THE CLARITY OF DANGER

The past two and a half years have exposed our own vulnerabilities. We continue to live with loss and with wounds that will not fully heal. During the recent war with Iran, the threat of death felt immediate, as missiles could reach any part of the country. That exposure, as frightening as it was, sharpened our awareness of the protection we were granted.

Before the missiles fell, we knew in theory about systems like the Iron Dome, but only afterwards could we begin to grasp how much death and destruction were averted. Encountering danger deepened our appreciation for the mercy we were shown, even when that mercy was partial and the pain remains.

NOT ALWAYS IMMEDIATE

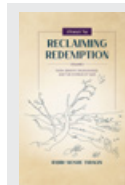
There is a second reason the Torah delays the laws of Parah Adumah. Hashem does not want to leave us with the impression that every halachic rupture is met by an immediate and accessible repair. Had Parah Adumah appeared alongside the laws of tumah from contact with death, the sequence would suggest a predictable rhythm, problem followed by solution, break followed by restoration.

But Parah Adumah does not function within that rhythm. It unfolds slowly, across several days, and demands a level of precision that resists simplification. Even after it is performed, it remains difficult to grasp. By

delaying its presentation, the Torah reflects that very character. The answer exists, but it is not immediate, and it is not straightforward. The distance between the problem and its resolution is part of what we are meant to notice.

We are drawn toward immediacy. In confronting external threats or tensions within our own society, we look for clarity, for something that resolves tension quickly. The structure of Parah Adumah quietly unsettles that expectation. Some processes take time. Some forms of repair unfold gradually, without revealing their full logic along the way. Over these past years, we have come to recognize this reality more deeply. We continue forward even when the path is not yet clear, holding to Hashem even when the process is only partially understood.

This too is part of what it means to live at a higher level. Not only to carry more mitzvot, but to inhabit a world in which not everything is immediately resolved. The closer a person stands before Hashem, the less life is reduced to clear formulas and predictable outcomes. Parah Adumah does not only address tumah. It establishes that even when understanding is partial and resolution is delayed, a person continues to stand before Hashem and to live within His presence, even without full clarity. ■



Rabbi Moshe Taragin's latest sefer entitled: **Reclaiming Redemption, Vol. II: Faith, Identity, Peoplehood, and the Storms of War**, is available at: mtaraginbooks.com.

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