



# THE HARRY H. BEREN TORAH WEEKLY

A project of the Denver Community Kollel



Because Torah Is for Every Jew

Emor 5776

May 20, 2016

## A Taste of Torah The Big Kehuna

By Rabbi Mordechai Fleisher

The story is told of a poor ignoramus who suddenly won the lottery and became rich overnight. That Shabbos, the *gabbai* (sexton) of the local synagogue, aware of the newfound prestige of the once-unnoticed member, seated him on the eastern wall, right next to the rabbi.

All Shabbos long, as the newly-minted millionaire sat next to the rabbi, he scratched his head and wondered what he could discuss with the town's most learned and respected citizen. It was late Shabbos afternoon, and the congregation was reciting the several verses customarily inserted toward the end of the Shabbos *mincha* prayers, including, "Man and animal You save, Hashem." (Psalms 36:7) A lightbulb suddenly went on in the man's head. Turning to the rabbi, he said, "Honored rabbi, I am wondering about the meaning of this verse. Why is animal placed next to man?" The rabbi, not thrilled with his new seatmate, muttered under his breath, "Perhaps the *gabbai* can answer that question!"

It seems that people often get honor for the wrong reasons. Yet, the Talmud tells us that the great author of the Mishna, Rabbi Yehuda HaNassi, would honor the wealthy. (No, he did not need their money. Besides being the greatest Torah scholar of his time, he was extremely wealthy and the political leader of the Jewish People. He enjoyed a close personal relationship with the Roman emperor, as well.)

In this week's parsha, the Torah discusses the sanctity and attendant responsibilities and obligations of the *kohanim*, the priests, who are the descendants of Aharon. The Torah commands the rest of the Jewish People, "And you shall sanctify him, for he offers the food of your G-d; he shall remain holy to you, for holy am I, Hashem, who

sanctifies you." (Emor 21:8)

Rabbi Moshe Alshich (1508-1593) points out a number of problems with this verse. The previous verses make clear that the *kohanim* are sanctified by G-d; why, then, is additional sanctification by other Jews necessary? Furthermore, what is meant by "he shall remain holy to you" - isn't this included in the commandment to make them holy? What is added by ensuring that they "remain holy?" (See Rashi *ibid.* for an approach to these two issues.) What is the relevance of mentioning that Hashem Himself is holy - and that He makes us, the entire Jewish Nation, holy?

The Alshich answers that there are two separate sanctities being presented to us. One of these is the status of priesthood conferred upon Aharon and the sons of Aharon by Hashem Himself. But this sanctity, explains the Alshich, is not that much greater than the holiness all Jews are imbued with. However, the Torah demands that the rest of the Jewish People actively sanctify the *kohanim* because of what they do, namely, the service in the *Mishkan* (Tabernacle) and *Bais Hamikdash* (Temple). True, other Jews are unable to do this; the *kohanim* are qualified by dint of their initial level of holiness. But the fact that this is their station in life demands that the other members of the Jewish People sanctify them.

The verse is thus stating that non-*kohanim* must sanctify the *kohanim*. The inherent holiness of the *kohanim*, however - referred to with "he shall remain holy to you" - is not the source of this obligation. Rather, the obligation is "for he offers the food of your G-d." The inherent sanctity of the *kohanim* given by Hashem Himself, however - "he shall remain holy to you" - is very similar

*Continued on back*

## Stories For The Soul

### Heed the Call

based on a story on [revach.net](http://revach.net)

When Rabbi Shimon Schwab (1908-1995) was a young man learning in yeshiva, he had the opportunity to visit the saintly Chofetz Chaim (Rabbi Yisrael Meir Kagan; 1839-1933). In the course of the visit, the Chofetz Chaim asked him if he was a *kohein* (priest). Rabbi Schwab answered that he was a *yisrael*. The Chofetz Chaim then said, "I am a *kohein*. Do you know what difference it makes whether I am a *kohein* or a *yisrael*? When Mashiach comes, we'll all go up to Jerusalem and we'll all clamor to enter the *Bais Hamikdash* (Temple) to bring sacrifices. We'll run to the gates of the *Bais Hamikdash* and then, suddenly, we will be stopped. I will be allowed to enter the *Bais Hamikdash*, but you will be forced to remain outside. Those who are forced to wait outside will be extremely jealous of the *kohanim* who are allowed in to perform the service."

The Chofetz Chaim continued, "What caused this situation? Three thousand years ago, when the Jewish People made the Golden Calf, Moshe stood by the gate of the camp and cried out, 'Whoever is for Hashem should join me!' My ancestors hurried to stand before Moshe, ready to do as he directed. Your ancestors, however, did not answer his call. My ancestors merited the *kehuna* (priesthood) as reward for their deeds."

The Chofetz Chaim then said, "Why am I telling you this? Because every person has moments when an inner call rings out, 'Whoever is for Hashem...' One day, when you hear this call in your heart, take action and don't be lazy! Don't repeat the same mistake that your forefathers made, which caused them to lose such a valuable gift!"

In this week's parsha, the Torah discusses the special sanctity of the *kohanim*, a sanctity they earned through their dedication to Hashem and His Torah.

## Kollel Happenings

### ENSURING YOUR PHILANTHROPY ACHIEVES ITS GOALS AT JUNE 1<sup>ST</sup> TORAH FOR TYCOONS

Join Bruce DeBoskey, J.D., Philanthropic Strategist with The DeBoskey Group, and Rabbi Aron Yehuda Schwab, Dean of the Denver Community Kollel, as they generate an approach for your generosity. June 1<sup>st</sup>, 12-1:15 p.m. at the East Side Kosher Deli. Cost: \$25. RSVP [info@denverkollel.org](mailto:info@denverkollel.org).

### LEARN-A-THON & SIYUM ON JUNE 5<sup>TH</sup>

Join the communal completion of an entire tractate of Talmud in the course of one hour of Torah study! Men, sign up and study a preassigned section of Tractate Sotah with a class or chavrusah. Women, sign up and attend a special study session. Visit [denverkollel.org](http://denverkollel.org), email [info@denverkollel.org](mailto:info@denverkollel.org), or call 303-820-2855.

The siyum will be part of the completion of an entire order of Talmud, Seder Nashim, that is being completed by Daf Yomi participants around the world.

### LEARN 2 LEARN

You have long dreamed of acquiring the tools to achieve proficiency in learning Gemara on your own. But how? The Denver Community Kollel offers a comprehensive, step-by-step, level-by-level program crafted for people just like you. All you need is the ability to read Hebrew; we will teach you the rest. For more information, contact [rmh@denverkollel.org](mailto:rmh@denverkollel.org).

# Increase Your Jewish IQ

By Rabbi Yaakov Zions

Last week we asked: On the Shabbos preceding Rosh Chodesh, the custom is to insert special prayers. What part of this prayer is of relatively recent origin?

**A:** The opening paragraph “*Yehi ratzon*” (recited by most Ashkenazic communities) only gained widespread acceptance in the 19<sup>th</sup> Century. Its original source is in the

Talmud (Brachos 16b) as the Talmudic sage Rav’s daily post-*amidah* addition, without the reference to the upcoming month.

**This week’s question:** : After every *amidah* prayer, we customarily add an additional prayer beginning with “*Yehi ratzon*.” When else is this recited?

To submit an answer to Rabbi Zions, email [ryz@denverkollel.org](mailto:ryz@denverkollel.org).

## Lives of Our Torah Leaders

### The Rambam Part I

Rabbi Moshe ben Maimon, or the Rambam, is regarded as one of the greatest and most influential Torah authorities of the Middle Ages. Leader of the Jewish community in Egypt, his advice was sought by his brethren in many other communities. His great Torah scholarship made him one of the foremost halachic authorities of his time. His many works in areas of Torah commentary, halacha, and philosophy are extremely influential until this day. He was also one of the most acclaimed physicians of his time, serving as the personal physician

to Saladin, Sultan of Egypt.

The Rambam was born on the 14th day of the Jewish month of Nissan, Passover eve, in the year 1135 (some say 1133; others, 1138) in Cordova, Spain. His father, Rabbi Maimon, was a great Torah scholar in his own right, and was a judge on the *bais din* (Jewish court) of Cordova. The Rambam’s ancestry traced back to Rabbi Yehuda Hanassi, the author of the Mishna and, by extension, to King David (as Rabbi Yehuda was a descendant of King David).

## A Taste of Torah

*Continued from front*

to the holiness that every Jew possesses – thus, the verse continues, “for holy am I, Hashem, who sanctifies you.”

Why the need to distinguish between these two types of holiness? The Alshich explains that other Jews may have cause to question the disparity between themselves and the *kohanim*, as evidenced by the many special laws that apply to *kohanim*. “Aren’t we all Jews, descendants of the same Patriarchs and Matriarchs? Why are they so much greater than we?” some might gripe. The Torah, therefore, makes it clear that their inherent holiness is not terribly different than that of all other Jews. However, the role filled by the *kohanim* requires that other Jews sanctify them. The work they do, the mission they fulfill, is of such great sanctity, that they need to be placed on a pedestal by the rest of the Jewish Nation.

By the same token, Rabbi Yehuda honored

the wealthy. Not because the wealth they were granted by Hashem is grounds for honor. But, rather, the responsibility that comes with the wealth, the work they are tasked with in utilizing that wealth, means that they must be provided with a special status by others.

Wherever we turn in this world, we meet people occupying various stations in life. We often wonder why some receive more prestige and recognition, just because of their job description, lineage, or wealth. While it is true that in the World of Truth, no one is granted preferential treatment based on their status in this world – on the contrary, with power and wealth comes greater accountability – the Torah teaches us that when Hashem places a person in a position where the potential and the expectations are great, the rest of us must recognize and appreciate that individual’s role in this world.

The Torah Weekly is made possible through a generous grant from the Harry H. Beren Foundation of Lakewood, NJ, in memory of Harry H. Beren, z”l.  
Denver Community Kollel | 1516 Xavier Street, Denver, CO 80204 | 303-820-2855

[info@denverkollel.org](mailto:info@denverkollel.org) | [www.denverkollel.org](http://www.denverkollel.org)

To receive Torah Weekly by email, email to [info@denverkollel.org](mailto:info@denverkollel.org)