

## Parshas Emor

### IT'S NOT WHAT IT LOOKS LIKE

The Cohanim are restricted over and above other Jews with regard to certain laws:

לא-יקרחה קרחה בראשם, ופאת זקנם לא יגלחו; ובבשרם-לא ישרטו, שרטה. קדשים יהיו  
head, nor may you remove your beard. Do not cut your skin. Be holy... (21: 5-6)

The prohibition on men to remove all their hair is actually not specific to Cohanim, and pertains to all Jews. The Maharil Diskin explains why.

Jews are defined by their actions, not appearance. A Jew is recognised by their force of good deeds and quality of character. In popular culture however, we know all too well that in the age of “celebrity”, a makeover is somehow newsworthy. Appearances are deceptive; the same person is perceived differently by looking different, yet remaining the same.

But how is the principle that appearances aren't all they seem, taught from the laws of a Cohen – who actually have a uniform they are required to wear?

Perhaps a distinction can be drawn. The uniform is not universal – that would truly be meaningless. The uniform is exclusive to Cohanim. An on-duty Cohen is serving God in the Beis HaMikdash – the clothing is for the office, not the individual.

The way you dress might not be appropriate for a monarch or head of state. They have to dress up out of respect for the office, not themselves – not a hair can be out of place. But as God's people, as princes and princesses one and all, we have to dress for the office too. Not everyone has to have a suit and black hat; everyone is at a different place. But we have to respect who we are enough to dress with class and dignity.

### IN THE CLOUDS

The Clouds of Glory marked travel movements for the Jews in the desert, and according to Midrash, flattened obstacles, cleared wild beasts, and possibly cleaned their clothing too. The Chag of Succos is dedicated to commemorating them. There is no equivalent display of appreciation for the manna or Miriam's well, which are all along the same line of supernatural providence for the nation. Why are the Clouds remembered, and not the well or manna?

The Chida explains that food and water are the basic requirements for survival. Taking the Jews into the wilderness of the desert necessarily meant God would provide nourishment from somewhere; what could otherwise be expected? The Jews had their own shelter through tents and huts. But Clouds that protected the camp from the harsh sun, and according to Midrash even more, is far beyond what could have been expected – לפנים משורת הדין.

Secondly, they were a gift that showed God's love for the people. This is proven by the fact that people outside the camp – such as the Egyptian stragglers and people forced out due to tzaraas – did not benefit.

Thirdly, the Clouds were appreciated far more than the manna and the water. The Jews complained and gave orders regarding the food and drink on offer in the desert – but they never complained about the Clouds. The Clouds were the perfect gift.

The Chida notes that perhaps these are hinted to:

לְמַעַן יִדְעוּ דִרְתֵיכֶם כִּי בְסֻכּוֹת הוֹשַׁבְתִּי אֶת בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל בְּהוֹצִיאִי אוֹתָם מֵאֶרֶץ מִצְרַיִם אֲנִי ה' אֱלֹהֵיכֶם – In order that your ensuing generations should know that I had the children of Israel live in booths when I took them out of the land of Egypt. I am the Lord, your God. (23: 43)

לְמַעַן יִדְעוּ דִרְתֵיכֶם כִּי בְסֻכּוֹת הוֹשַׁבְתִּי – I gave it to you as a gift; and they were enjoyed perfectly

אֶת בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל – I gave it to the Jews; not the Egyptian stragglers.

בְּהוֹצִיאִי אוֹתָם מֵאֶרֶץ מִצְרַיִם אֲנִי ה' אֱלֹהֵיכֶם – I took you out of Egypt; so I fed you, but didn't have to provide the Clouds.

The Clouds were an incredible, and totally unwarranted display of affection to the Jews. This is commemorated on Succos.

## TIMELESS LESSONS

The Torah never refers explicitly to Shavuos or Rosh Hashana by their primary themes; Shavuos being the anniversary of receiving of the Torah and Rosh Hashana being the day of judgement. Why does the Torah overlook this?

The Kli Yakar explains that the answer for both is the same; learning Torah each day is a new experience, bringing a new understanding and deeper insight with it. A person cannot learn the Torah as a monotonous rote study with no freshness or renewal. It is incumbent upon each of us to feel each day as though this were the day we received the Torah at Sinai. Hashem did not see fit to call the day we receive the Torah one particular day a year; as each and every day we are able to receive the Torah from Sinai. Therefore the Torah limits the description of Shavuos to a day where “you shall bring a new mincha offering to Hashem” – because calling it the day we received the Torah is a disservice to the Torah and our responsibilities.

Similarly, Rosh Hashana described as a Yom Teruah – a day of blowing the Shofar. It is not called Judgment Day because we cannot feel as though we are held accountable for our choices and actions on just one day a year; as must though we could act as we pleased all year round, with intent to make amends on Rosh Hashana. Not so. Rather, every day needs to contain the awareness and responsibility that our actions are scrutinized.

The Sforno gives an intriguing explanation for the absence of the mention of Matan Torah on Shavuos.

Matan Torah was not simply a stage on which the Bnei Yisrael received the Torah and were subsequently expected to follow its laws. Matan Torah was intended to be a stage where Klal Yisrael reached the zenith of spirituality, the absolute peak humanity was capable of reaching.

When Klal Yisrael clamoured for an idol, the Golden Calf, they made ultimate purity untenable. It was out of reach, lost. The first Luchos were lost forever, and with them the capabilities that we would never have an opportunity to achieve on our own. It is said that the first Luchos were literally unforgettable – no Torah would ever have been forgotten.

Matan Torah did not run not as expected, in effect we never had the complete Matan Torah, therefore the Torah cannot refer to Shavuos as “the day we received the Torah”.

## KIDDUSH ON YOM TOV

On the kiddush of the festivals, we say the following:

דַּבֵּר אֶל בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל וְאָמַרְתָּ אֲלֵהֶם מוֹעֲדֵי ה' אֲשֶׁר תִּקְרְאוּ אֹתָם מִקְרָאֵי קֹדֶשׁ אֵלֶּה הֵם מוֹעֲדֵי  
שְׁשֶׁת יָמִים תַּעֲשֶׂה מְלָאכָה וּבַיּוֹם הַשְּׁבִיעִי שַׁבַּת שַׁבְּתוֹן מִקְרָא קֹדֶשׁ כָּל מְלָאכָה לֹא תַעֲשׂוּ שַׁבַּת הוּא ה' בְּכֹל מוֹשְׁבֵי תֵיכֶם  
– Speak to the Children of Israel, and tell them these are the Festivals that they shall keep holy. 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. (23: 2,3)

Why is Shabbos inserted into the middle of the Festivals?

The Vilna Gaon explains that on all the Festivals certain types of food related activity are permitted, whereas on Shabbos all melachos are forbidden. However on one Yom Tov no melacha is permitted – Yom Kippur – which is also known as שַׁבְּתוֹן שַׁבַּת – the same terminology that the Torah uses for a regular Shabbos. Thus the pasuk can be rendered:

וּבַיּוֹם הַשְּׁבִיעִי שַׁבַּת שַׁבְּתוֹן מִקְרָא קֹדֶשׁ כָּל מְלָאכָה לֹא תַעֲשׂוּ  
– On six days melacha is permitted – the first and last days of Pesach (2), one day Shavuos (3), one day Rosh Hashana (4), one day Succos (5), one day Shmini Atzeres (6).

וּבַיּוֹם הַשְּׁבִיעִי שַׁבַּת שַׁבְּתוֹן מִקְרָא קֹדֶשׁ כָּל מְלָאכָה לֹא תַעֲשׂוּ

However the seventh is the holy of holiest – no melacha is permitted – Yom Kippur!

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