

פרשת אמור

'Social Distancing' and 'Shelter-in-Place'.

If we would have heard those terms six months ago, would we have known their meaning and their intent?

Perhaps then, we may have interpreted those terms based on whatever context we would have with which to associate them.

I think I might have interpreted 'social distancing' as meaning don't associate with a bad crowd of people. That is a reasonable assumption to make based on many sources that we know.

Dovid HaMelech begins his Sefer Tehillim (Perek 1/Posuk 1) by writing:

אֲשֶׁר־י הָאִישׁ אֲשֶׁר לֹא הָלַךְ בְּעֵצַת רְשָׁעִים וּבְדַרְךְ חַטָּאִים לֹא עָמַד וּבְמוֹשָׁב
לְצִים לֹא יָשָׁב:

Happy is the man who did not walk according to the counsel of the wicked and in the way of the sinners he did not stand and who did not sit with the scoffers.

In Chumash, Rashi teaches us such a lesson. We read at the beginning of Parshas Korach (B'midbar Perek 16/Posuk 1):

וַיִּקַּח קִרְחַב בֶּן יִצְחָר בֶּן קֵהוֹשׁ בֶּן לֵוִי וְדָתָן וְאַבִּירָם בְּנֵי אֶלְיָאֵב וְאוֹן בֶּן פְּלֹת בְּנֵי
רְאוּבֵן:

Korach ben Yitzhor ben Kehos ben Levi took, with Doston and Aviram the sons of Eliav and On ben Peles from the children of Reuven.

ודתן ואבירם - בשביל שהיה שבט ראובן שרוי בחנייתם תימנה, שכן לקחת ובניו החונים תימנה, נשתתפו עם קרח במחלוקתו, אוי לרשע אוי לשכנו.

Doston and Aviram – Because Shevet Reuven was camped in the south of the encampment of Israel, neighboring Kehos and his children who were camped in the south of the Levite encampment, they partnered with Korach in the argument he began.

Woe for the wicked; woe for his neighbor!

I am not sure what I would have understood the first time that I heard 'shelter-in-place'. Maybe I would have associated it with the Mitzvah that B'nei Yisroel were given on the eve of the Exodus.

We read there (Sh'mos Perek 12/Posuk 22):

וּלְקַחְתֶּם אֲגֻדַּת אֶזֶב וּטְבַלְתֶּם בַּדָּם אֲשֶׁר בַּסֶּף וְהִגַּעְתֶּם אֶל הַמַּשְׁקוּף וְאֶל
שְׁתֵּי הַמְּזוּזוֹת מִן הַדָּם אֲשֶׁר בַּסֶּף וְאֵתֶם לֹא תֵצְאוּ אִישׁ מִפֶּתַח בֵּיתוֹ עַד בֹּקֶר:

You shall take a bunch of hyssops and immerse them in the blood [of the Korban Pesach] that is in the pan and you shall reach it up to the lintel and the two doorposts from the blood that is in the pan; and you -do not go out, anyone, from the opening of his house until morning.

Rashi explains:

ואתם לא תצאו וגו' - מגיד שמאחר שנתנה רשות למשחית לחבל אינו מבחין בין צדיק לרשע, ולילה רשות למחבלים הוא, שנאמר (תהלים קד/כ¹)
בו תרמוש כל חיתו יער:

And you-you should not go out – this tells us that since the 'destroyer' was given permission to destroy, it does not distinguish between the righteous and the wicked. Night is in the province of the destroyers as it is written, 'in the night, all the wild animals of the forest creep'.

Even though 'shelter-in-place' seems like a very apt description for the circumstances in which we find ourselves because we are not only 'staying' in place but we are sheltering, taking refuge from a deadly virus, but 'social distancing' is certainly a misnomer.

My friendship with my neighbors and my love for my family is not limited or tempered by the unique situation in which I find myself. Rather, we are required to have 'physical-distancing' so that germs cannot be transmitted when we limit our proximity between one and another. We are not socially-distant whatsoever.

¹ The entire verse reads:

תָּשֶׁת חֹשֶׁךְ וְיִהְיֶה לַיְלָה בּוֹ תִרְמֹשׁ כָּל חֵיתוֹ יַעַר:
You place darkness and it is night; in it, all of the wild animals of the forest creep.

However, truth be said, there is certainly a concern that 'sheltering-in-place' and 'physical distancing' can lead to true 'social distancing', a very unwanted result.

Social relationships are part of the fabric of Torah life. We call those relationships:

בין אדם לחברו

Between one person and another.

And we note that the Torah uses the term חבר for the other even though the word זולת would be apt terminology as well.

We know that although we were taught, correctly so, that *chaver* means a friend, its underlying meaning is 'one with whom we are connected'.

Chibur means connection and one who is our 'friend' means that we feel a connection with that person. That 'connection' is not determined by physical proximity and it is not severed by physical distance.

The connection is one that is deep inside us; it transcends continents and oceans.

When the connection reaches its ultimate level, those who are connected are

כאיש אחד

Like one person.

That statement, that those who are truly connected at a uniquely special level are 'like one person' is not a platitude; it is not giving lip-service to something in which we do not believe.

Rambam writes in Hilchos Mamrim (Perek 2/Halacha 4) in connection with the obligation of the Sanhedrin to punish offenders, even when the standard procedures of Beis Din would not bring them a conviction:

...כשם שהרופא חותך ידו או רגלו של זה כדי שיחיה כולו כך בית דין מורים בזמן מן הזמנים לעבור על קצת מצות לפי שעה כדי שיתקיימו כולם כדרך שאמרו חכמים הראשונים חלל עליו שבת אחת כדי שישמור שבתות הרבה.

Just like the physician amputates a hand or a foot so that the entire body of the patient will live, so does Beis Din at certain times

instruct to violate a few Mitzvos at certain times so that all can exist. This is in the same way that the Chachamim said, 'Violate one Shabbos for this endangered person so that he can observe many Shabbosos.'²

In his commentary there, Radbaz writes:

כשם שהרופא חותך וכו'. אין המשל הזה צודק אלא אם כן אנו רואין את כל ישראל כאילו הם גוף אחד ואף על פי שגופין מחולקין הם כיון שנשמותיהם ממקום אחד חוצבו הרי הם כגוף אחד כי הנשמה היא עיקר, ודע זה.

Just like the physician amputates – This allegory is only correct if we see all of Israel as if they are one body. And even though they are separate bodies, since their souls are all quarried from one place, they as if they are one body. This is because the *neshamah* is the fundamental part of a person.

Know this.

² We read in Masseches Yoma (85 b):

רבי שמעון בן מנסיא אומר: (שמות לא/טז) ושמרו בני ישראל את השבת [לעשות את השבת], אמרה תורה: חלל עליו שבת אחת, כדי שישמור שבתות הרבה. אמר רב יהודה אמר שמואל: אי הואי התם הוה אמינא: דידי עדיפא מדידהו, (ויקרא יח/ה) וחי בהם - ולא שימות בהם. אמר רבא: לכולהו אית להו פירכא, בר מדשמואל דלית ליה פירכא.

Rabi Shimon ben Menasia says: 'We read, "B'nei Yisroel should guard the Shabbos [to do the Shabbos]." The Torah is saying 'Profane one Shabbos for the endangered person so that he can observe many Shabbosos. Rav Yehuda said in the name of Sh'muel, 'If I would have been there when this topic was raised, I would have said better than him. [I would have said from the verse], "He shall live in them [the Mitzvos]" meaning that he should not die in them.'

Rovo said, the only explanation that cannot be rejected is that of Sh'muel.

According to the first explanation, the implication is that if a person's death is imminent, that is, he will not live to the next Shabbos, one doesn't profane Shabbos for him since he will not be able to observe future Shabbosos.

According to Sh'muel who derives it from וחי בהם, in any instance you preserve life and there is no need for the rationale of 'so he can observe other Shabbosos'.

Similarly, the need for social contact, whether it be in physical proximity or not, is emphasized in the Mishnah in Masseches Ovos that gives special importance to personal connections. We read there (Perek 1/Mishnah 6):

יהושע בן פרחיה אומר עשה לך רב וקנה לך חבר...:

Yehoshua ben Perachia says, 'make for yourself a Rav and acquire for yourself a *chaver*...

One has to be willing to expend his valuable funds so that he can be personally connected with the other.

And perhaps, the need for social closeness, whether or not connected with physical proximity, is emphasized by the Tanna Choni HaMe'agel in a most poignant manner.

We read in Masseches Taanis (23 a):

אמר רבי יוחנן: כל ימיו של אותו צדיק היה מצטער על מקרא זה שיר המעלות בשוב ה' את שיבת ציון היינו כחולמים. אמר: מי איכא דניים שבעין שנין בחלמא? יומא חד הוה אזל באורחא, חזייה להווא גברא דהוה נטע חרובא, אמר ליה: האי, עד כמה שנין טעין? - אמר ליה: עד שבעין שנין. - אמר ליה: פשיטא לך דחיית שבעין שנין? - אמר ליה: האי [גברא] עלמא בחרובא אשכחתי, כי היכי דשתלי לי אבהתי - שתלי נמי לבראי. יתיב, קא כריך ריפתא, אתא ליה שינתא, נים. אהדרא ליה משוניתא, איכסי מעינא, ונים שבעין שנין. כי קם חזייה להווא גברא דהווא קא מלקט מינייהו. אמר ליה: את הוא דשתלתיה? - אמר ליה: בר בריה אנא. אמר ליה: שמע מינה דניימי שבעין שנין. חזא לחמריה דאתיילידא ליה רמכי רמכי. אזל לביתיה, אמר להו: בריה דחוני המעגל מי קיים? - אמרו ליה: בריה ליתא, בר בריה איתא. אמר להו: אנא חוני המעגל. לא הימנוהו. אזל לבית המדרש, שמעינהו לרבנן דקאמרי: נהירן שמעתתין כבשני חוני המעגל, דכי הוי עייל לבית מדרשא, כל קושיא דהוו להו לרבנן הוה מפרק להו. אמר להו: אנא ניהו, ולא הימנוהו, ולא עבדי ליה יקרא כדמבעי ליה, חלש דעתיה, בעי רחמי ומית. אמר רבא, היינו דאמרי אינשי: או חברותא או מיתותא.

Rabi Yochanan said, 'For all of his life, that *Tzaddik Choni HaMe'agel* was bothered by the verse, 'A song of ascent when Hashem returned the return of Zion [after seventy years of exile], we were like dreamers.' Choni said, 'Can a person sleep for seventy years in a dream?'

One day, he was walking on the path and saw a person planting a carob tree. He said to him, 'For how many years are you planting

this tree when it will give forth its fruit?' He answered, 'For seventy years.' Choni said, 'Is it clear that you will live another seventy years?' He answered, 'I found this tree when I was born. Just like my fathers planted for me, I am planting for my sons.'

Choni sat down and ate bread and sleep came upon him. He slept and then woke up and he was covered by a large rock and hidden from eyesight and slept for seventy years.

When he awoke, he saw a man gathering carobs from the tree. He said to him, 'Are you the one who planted it?' 'I am his grandson.' He said to him, 'I understand from this that I slept for seventy years.' He saw that his donkey gave birth to multiple foals. He went to his house and asked, 'Is the son of Choni HaMe'agel still living?' They said, 'no, but his grandson is'. He said to them, 'I am Choni HaMe'agel' and they didn't believe him. He went to the Beis Midrash and heard the Rabbanim saying, 'Our study is as clear as it was in the years of Choni HaMe'agel because when he would come into the Beis Midrash, any question that the Rabbanim would have he would answer for them.' He said to them, 'I am he', but they didn't believe him and they did not honor him properly. He became upset³, sought mercy and died.

Rovo said, 'This is what people say, "Or a *chaver* or death".'

The patient reader may wonder why this timely information finds itself in our discussion of Parshas Emor. The question is appropriate and hopefully the explanation will be fitting.

³ In Masseches Shabbos (51 b) we have a similar case in which an Amora was upset at another Amora for seemingly not showing him sufficient respect.

When we read of such an episode it seems surprising that a Holy Amora would have petty concerns. Certainly, the Torah knowledge he had and the Torah life that he led would eliminate small-mindedness!

See *He'oros Masseches Shabbos*, the transcription of Rav Elyashiv's daily shiurim in which he ז"ל engages this question and presents the rationale for that Amora's displeasure.

Perhaps, the answer there is applicable here.

The fact is that by referring to physical distancing as ‘social distancing’ we are encouraging people to feel alone and abandoned. And, even if the nomenclature was accurate and we would call the restrictions that are put upon us ‘physical distancing’, such prolonged separations from people whom we love and care about and from other acquaintances as well, may lead to a sense of anomie.

Do we have the inner strength to deal with such challenges?

Unsurprisingly, the answer to this question is found in our Torah. Perhaps surprisingly, the location of that answer in the Torah is our Parshas Emor.

Let us consider the Mitzvos and regulations that the Torah imposes upon Kohanim.

Our Parsha begins (Vayikro Perek 21/P’sukim 1-3):

וַיֹּאמֶר ה' אֶל מֹשֶׁה אָמַר אֶל הַכֹּהֲנִים בְּנֵי אַהֲרֹן וְאָמַרְתָּ אֲלֵהֶם לִנְפֹשׁ לֹא יִטְמָא בְּעַמּוּי: כִּי אִם לְשֹׂארוֹ הַקָּרֵב אֵלָיו לְאִמּוֹ וּלְאָבִיו וּלְבָנוֹ וּלְבִתּוֹ וּלְאָחִיו: וּלְאֲחֹתוֹ הַבְּתוּלָה הַקְּרוּבָה אֵלָיו אֲשֶׁר לֹא הֵיטָה לְאִישׁ לֶה יִטְמָא:

Hashem said to Moshe: Say to the Kohanim, the sons of Aharon, and you shall say to them, do not become defiled by a dead person who is among his people⁴. Only for his wife or those who are

⁴ A Kohen can become defiled for a *מת מצוה*. A *מת מצוה* is a person who dies and there is no one to take care of his funeral.

That is the meaning of *בעמיו*, among his people. If the dead person is in a place where others will take care of his burial, that is he is ‘among his people’, the prohibition against the Kohen becoming impure applies. If the dead person is not ‘among his people’, the Kohen (and a Kohen Godol as well) are obligated to bury that *מת מצוה* even if the consequences will be most unfavorable.

This is how Rambam expresses this Halacha (Hilchos *Eivel* Perek 3/Halacha 8):

כהן שפגע במת מצוה בדרך הרי זה מטמא לו, אפילו כהן גדול חייב להטמא לו ולקבורו ...

A Kohen who happens across a *meis Mitzvah* on the road, the Kohen must defile himself to care for the corpse. This applies even to a Kohen Godol – he is obligated to become *tomei* and bury him.

This Halacha applies to a *Nazir* as well, even though he, too, as the same restrictions of avoiding *tum’as meis* as a Kohen Godol.

related to him, for his mother and for his father and for his son and for his daughter and for his brother. And for his never married sister who is his relative, for her he can become defiled.

We know that הלווית המת, escorting the dead to their burial is one of the Torah's Mitzvos. Its significance is made very clear from the Posuk from which this obligation is derived.

We learn in Masseches Sotah (14 a):

ואמר רבי חמא ברבי חנינא, מאי דכתיב: (דברים יג/ה⁵) אחרי ה' א...ל'קִיכֶם תֵּלְכוּ? וכי אפשר לו לאדם להלך אחר שכינה? והלא כבר נאמר: (שם ד/כד⁶) כי ה' א...ל'קִיךָ אֵשׁ אוֹכֵלָה הוּא! אלא להלך אחר מדותיו של הקדוש ברוך הוא, מה הוא מלביש ערומים, אף אתה הלבש ערומים; הקדוש ברוך הוא ביקר חולים... אף אתה בקר חולים; הקדוש ברוך הוא ניחם אבלים אף אתה נחם אבלים; הקדוש ברוך הוא קבר מתים..., אף אתה קבור מתים:

Rabi Chama the son of Rabi Chanina said, 'What does the verse, 'You shall go after Hashem your G-d' mean? Is it possible for a person to follow the Shechinah? Does it not say, 'Because Hashem your G-d is a consuming fire'?

But, the verse means, 'Follow the *middos* of Hashem. He clothes the unclothed, so you should clothe the unclothed. He visits the sick, so should you visit the sick. He comforts mourners, so should you comfort mourners. HaKodosh Boruch Hu buries the dead, so should you bury the dead.

Presumably, it is obvious that all others also have such an obligation.

⁵ The entire verse reads:

אַחֲרֵי ה' אֵלֶיךָ תֵּלְכוּ וְאֵת מִצְוֹתָיו תִּשְׁמְרוּ וּבְקוֹל ה' תִּשְׁמָעוּ וְאֵת ה' תַּעֲבֹדוּ וְבִי תִדְבָּקוּ:

After Hashem your G-d should go and Him you should fear and His Mitzvos you should guard and to His Voice you should listen and Him you should serve and to Him you should cleave.

⁶ The entire verse reads:

כִּי ה' אֵלֶיךָ אֵשׁ אוֹכֵלָה הוּא קַל קָנָא:

Because Hashem your G-d is a consuming fire; He is a jealous G-d.

And thus, the inability to participate in mourning practices with others is a severe limitation – besides the actual loss for the family and friends of the deceased. That which the Torah wants from us to emulate G-d in His chessed is taken away from the Kohen.

But it is not only in death that the Kohen is separated. He is separated socially in life as well.

Although the Kohen is only forbidden from becoming *tomei*/impure by contact with a dead body, other types of impurity can also disturb his life.

For two weeks a year the Kohen serves in the Beis HaMikdosh, because the Kohanic families divided themselves into twenty-four groups⁷. Those two weeks were, in principle, a time of obligatory service. Additionally, a Kohen could come and serve during the Shlosh Regolim. If the Kohen contracts *tum'a*, he becomes ineligible to serve but there were other Kohanim to replace him.

It is true, sometimes that impurity comes from his own body, or his lack of care in avoiding impurity. But sometimes it is imposed upon him and thus disqualifies him from serving. A Kohen who is *tomei* cannot serve in the Beis HaMikdosh until he purifies himself.

In the case of impurity from a dead body there is a seven-day period, as we read in Parshas Chukkas, and in other types of *tum'a* there is generally a one-day period. For contact with the dead body, the *Mei Chattos*, the mixture of spring water and ashes of the Red Heifer are sprinkled on him on the third and seventh days and for other impurities, most of the time,

⁷ Rambam writes in Mishneh Torah (Hilchos Klei HaMikdosh Perek 4/Halacha 3):

משה רבינו חלק הכהנים לח' משמרות, ארבעה מאלעזר, וארבעה מאיתמר, וכן היו עד שמואל הנביא, ובימי שמואל חלקם הוא ודוד המלך לארבעה ועשרים משמר...

Moshe Rabbenu divided the Kohanim into 8 *mishmaros*-shifts. Four were from the family of Elazar ben Aharon HaKohen and four were from the family of I'somor ben Aharon HaKohen. The service of Kohanim proceeded with these eight *mishmaros* until the time of Sh'muel HaNovi. In the days of Sh'muel HaNovi, he and Dovid HaMelech divided them into 24 *mishmaros*.

after immersing in a Mikveh and waiting until nightfall, he becomes pure and eligible to serve in the Beis HaMikdosh once more⁸.

One might respond that a Kohen should be careful but if it does happen that he becomes temporarily disqualified, he can always serve the next day or in the coming turn of his group to be in the Beis HaMikdosh or a fellow Kohen can substitute for him.

Such an approach may work well for a *Kohen Hedyot*, one who is not a Kohen Godol.

The Kohen Godol is in a class by himself. Not only are his marriages far more restricted than that of a *Kohen Hedyot*⁹, but his service is completely different as well.

The Kohen Godol brings a personal Korban twice daily, as we read in Parshas Tzav (Vayikro Perek 6/Posuk 13):

זֶה קֶרְבַּן אַהֲרֹן וּבָנָיו אֲשֶׁר יִקְרִיבוּ לָהּ בַּיּוֹם הַמִּשַׁח אֹתוֹ עֲשִׂירַת הָאֵפֶה סֵלֶת
מִנְחָה תָמִיד מִחֲצִיתָהּ בַּבֶּקֶר וּמִחֲצִיתָהּ בְּעֶרְבֹ:

This is the Korban of Aharon and his sons that they should offer to Hashem on the day of his anointment: a tenth of an *eiphoh* of fine

⁸ Sometimes, even after being purified, a person has to bring a Korban to enter within the perimeter of the Beis HaMikdosh. In the absence of that Korban, the person is no longer *tomei*, but still carries ineligibilities.

For example, a Kohen who owes such a Korban, is allowed to eat *Teruma* after going to the Mikveh and waiting until after nightfall. He is not allowed to enter the Beis HaMikdosh and all the more so, cannot do any of the services of the Beis HaMikdosh, until he brings that offering.

A person who has to bring such a Korban, but has not done so as of yet, is termed a *מחוסר כיפורים*, one who is lacking atonement [that is achieved by bringing the requisite offering].

⁹ We read in our Parshas Emor regarding the marriage restrictions placed upon the Kohen Godol:

אַלמְנָה וְגֵרוּשָׁה וְחָלְלָה זָנָה אֶת אֵלֶּהָ לֹא יִקַּח כִּי אִם בְּתוּלָה מֵעַמּוּי יִקַּח אִשָּׁה:

A widow or a divorcee or a woman born of a marriage forbidden to a Kohen or a woman who had forbidden relations, - these he cannot take for a wife; only a never-married woman from his people he shall take for his wife.

flour, always, half of it in the morning and half of it towards evening.

The inherent difficulty in the verse is apparent. If this *Korban* is only offered on the day of the inauguration of the Kohanim, what does the word *tomid* -always mean?

Rashi explains:

זה קרבן אהרן ובניו - אף ההדיוטות מקריבין עשירית האיפה ביום שהן מתחנכין לעבודה, אבל כהן גדול בכל יום, שנאמר מנחה תמיד וגו' והכהן המשיח תחתיו מבניו וגו' חק עולם וגו' (פסוק טו¹⁰):

This is the Korban of Aharon and his sons – Even a Kohen Hedyot brings this tenth of an eiphoh on the day of their inauguration to the service of the Beis HaMikdosh. But the Kohen Godol brings it daily. It says here, a Korban always, and we read later on: ‘The anointed Kohen who will be in place of Aharon from his sons [will bring] as a perpetual statute.’

If we wonder what would happen if a Kohen Godol becomes *tomei*, we look no farther than the episode about which Chazal teach us in Masseches Yoma (47 a) where we read:

אמרו עליו על רבי ישמעאל בן קמחית: פעם אחת סיפר דברים עם ערבי אחד בשוק, ונתזה צינורא מפיו על בגדיו, ונכנס ישבב אחיו ושמש תחתיו, וראתה אמן שני כהנים גדולים ביום אחד. ושוב אמרו עליו על רבי ישמעאל בן קמחית: פעם אחת יצא וסיפר עם הגמון אחד בשוק, ונתזה צינורא מפיו על בגדיו, ונכנס יוסף (עם) אחיו ושמש תחתיו, וראתה אמן שני כהנים גדולים ביום אחד.

They said regarding the Kohen Godol Yishmael ben Kimchis: Once he was talking with an Arab in the market places and a spray of saliva came from the mouth of the Arab upon Rabi Yishamel ben Kimchis' garments [and thus became *tomei*].

¹⁰ That verse reads in its entirety:

והכהן המשיח תחתיו מבניו יעשה אתה חק עולם לה' קליל תקטר:

The anointed Kohen Godol who will be in his place, from his sons, he shall do it as perpetual statute; brought to G-d, [his *Korban Mincha*] must be totally burned.

His brother became the Kohen Godol in his place and their mother saw two of her sons being Kohanim Gedolim on the same day.

They said something else about the Kohen Godol Rabi Yishmael ben Kimchis: One time he went out and was talking with the non-Jewish ruler in the market place and a spray of saliva came from the ruler's mouth upon Rabi Yishmael's clothes and his brother Yosef became the Kohen Godol in his place. [Again] their mother saw [two sons] serving as Kohen Godol on the same day.

If the first time that Rabi Yishmael became *tomei* was accidental, then we can be sure he took care not to let such an incident repeat itself. Evidently, though, as a high-ranking official, Rabi Yishmael could not refuse to speak with the ruler -and thus he became disqualified a second time.

Since the Kohen Godol has to bring those two daily offerings, he certainly had to physically distance himself from people. In those two instances, non-Jews disqualified him, but there are ample Halachically possible situations where Jews could disqualify him as well.

So, if we imagine the need of the conscientious Kohen Hedyot to semi-sequester himself, the Kohen Godol has to sequester himself to an extraordinary degree. He must limit his contacts, especially with those whom he may suspect are sufficiently knowledgeable or care enough to distance themselves from the Kohen Godol when they are *tomei*.

But let's go a step further with our Kohen Godol.

The Kohen Godol never has a whole day off. He is required to bring his special Korban morning and afternoon. He cannot appoint a *shliach*, a representative. He must bring it himself.

We are used to thinking, correctly so, that the Kohen Godol is required to work only on Yom HaKippurim. That is only partially correct. Certainly, the Kohen Godol must perform all of the services on Yom HaKippurim exclusively. He cannot have a substitute. A *Kohen Hedyot* cannot be a substitute. This requirement is so inviolable that the first Mishnah in Masseches Yoma (2 a) teaches us, regarding the service of Yom HaKippurim:

ומתקינין לו כהן אחר תחתיו שמא יארע בו פסול

Another Kohen is prepared to replace the Kohen Godol – perhaps something will happen to disqualify him.

The rest of the year, the Kohen Godol can decide to offer any of the Korbonos when he wishes, at any time. That is what the following Mishnah there (14 a) teaches:

ושאר כל הימים אם רצה להקריב מקריב שכהן גדול מקריב חלק בראש
ונוטל חלק בראש:

The rest of the year, if the Kohen Godol wishes to offer any of the Korbonos, he may do so because the Kohen Godol has first rights to offer portions and to take the portions that are divided among the Kohanim.

Such is the privilege of the Kohen Godol but he doesn't have to exercise that privilege.

However, the Kohen Godol *must* bring a Korban twice daily. That is a privilege and he must exercise it. That is what we learn in Rambam's Hilchos Maaseh Korbonos (Perek 12).

What stress is imposed upon him! He cannot take a day off. He cannot go away for a Shabbos because his offerings are brought daily.

And the Kohen Godol's personal life is uniquely circumscribed. We read in Parshas Emor (ibid./P'sukim 11-12):

ועל כל נפשית מית לא יבא לאביו ולאמו לא יטמא: ומן המקדש לא יצא ולא
יחלל את מקדש א...לקיו כי נזר שמן משחת א...לקיו עליו אני ה':

He cannot come near the souls of any dead; he cannot become tomei for his father or for his mother. He cannot leave the Mikdosh and may not profane the Sanctuary of his G-d because the crown of the anointing oil of his G-d is upon him; I am Hashem.

There is an opinion in Chazal (Masseches Sanhedrin 18 a), that when there is a death, the Kohen Godol must physically remain in the Beis HaMikdosh and cannot participate in a funeral even if he maintains a distance that will keep him safe from impurity.

And of course, there is the extreme loneliness, true social distancing, besides the physical component of geographic separation, that is imposed

upon the Kohen Godol on Yom HaKippurim when he uniquely stands before the Ribbono Shel Olom.

Even prior to Yom HaKippurim, the first Mishnah in Masseches Yoma (2 a) teaches:

שבעת ימים קודם יום הכפורים מפרישין כהן גדול מביתו:

Seven days prior to Yom HaKippurim we separate the Kohen Godol from his house and from his wife.

And when Yom HaKippurim does arrive, the burdens are many. First, upon his shoulders is the atonement for all of Israel. Three P'sukim in Parshas Acharei Mos express such an obligation and responsibility.

We read there (Vayikro Perek 16/Posuk 6):

והקריב אהרן את פר החטאת אשר לו וכפר בעדו ובעד ביתו:

Aharon shall bring the bullock for a sin-offering that is his, and he shall atone for himself and for his household.

We then read (ibid. Posuk 11):

והקריב אהרן את פר החטאת אשר לו וכפר בעדו ובעד ביתו ושחט את פר החטאת אשר לו:

Aharon shall bring the bullock for a sin-offering that is his and he should atone for himself and for his household and he shall slaughter the bullock for a sin-offering that is his.

Rashi writes there:

וכפר בעדו וגו' - וידוי שני עליו ועל אחיו הכהנים, שהם כלם קרוים ביתו, שנאמר (תהלים קלה/יט¹¹) בית אהרן ברכו את ה' וגו', מכאן שהכהנים מתכפרים בו...

He shall atone for himself – This second *viduy*-confession is for himself and his brothers, the Kohanim. They are all called 'his household' as it says, 'House of Aharon, bless Hashem'. From this Posuk in Acharei Mos we learn that the Kohanim are atoned through the Kohen Godol.

¹¹ The entire verse reads:

בית ישראל ברכו את ה' בית אהרן ברכו את ה'.
House of Israel, bless Hashem; House of Aharon, bless Hashem.

And we read the third verse in that series (Posuk 17):

וְכָל אָדָם לֹא יִהְיֶה בְּאֹהֶל מוֹעֵד בְּבָאוּ לְכַפֵּר בַּקֹּדֶשׁ עַד צֵאתוֹ וְכֹפֵר בְּעֵדוֹ וּבְעֵד
בֵּיתוֹ וּבְעֵד כָּל קְהַל יִשְׂרָאֵל:

No person shall be in the Ohel Moed when Aharon comes to atone in the Kodesh Kodoshim until he goes out from it; he shall atone for himself, for his household and for the entire congregation of Israel.

However, in this verse when the atonement is made for Klal Yisroel, the Torah makes an additional stipulation: the Kohen Godol shall be totally alone!

How is the extremity of that loneliness emphasized? The Torah wrote earlier (Posuk 2) in its introduction to the *Avodas Yom HaKippurim*:

וַיֹּאמֶר ה' אֶל מֹשֶׁה דַּבֵּר אֶל אַהֲרֹן אַחִיךָ וְאֵל יִבְאֵ בְּכָל עֵת אֶל הַקֹּדֶשׁ מִבַּיִת
לְפָרֶקֶת אֶל פְּנֵי הַכַּפֹּרֶת אֲשֶׁר עַל הָאָרֶן וְלֹא יָמוּת כִּי בָעֵנָן אֲרָאָה עַל הַכַּפֹּרֶת:

Hashem said to Moshe, 'Speak to your brother Aharon that he should not come at any time to the Kodesh Kodoshim, inside the dividing curtain, to face the *Kapores*-covering on the Aron HaKodesh – and then he won't die; because I Hashem will appear upon the *Kapores*.

At that moment, the Kohen Godol has no other person to help him, no one to befriend him, no individual to offer him support. He is all by himself.

Alone!

When we think about the restrictions upon all Kohanim and the far greater, quantitatively and qualitatively, restrictions that are placed upon the Kohen Godol, we can wonder: what will become of such a person.

Man is a social being. Rambam teaches us that clearly in *Moreh Nevuchim*. We read there (Chelek 2/Perek 40):

הָאָדָם מְדִינִי בְּטַבְעוֹ, וְשֵׁטְבָעוֹ שִׁיחִיָּה מִתְקַבֵּץ

Man, in his nature, is social. His nature is to be part of a group.

Hashem designated the family of Aharon to be Kohanim. Hashem decreed that from that family there should be a Kohen Godol. Is it possible

to imagine that Hashem decreed laws that go against the very human nature that He Yisborach created?

Are Kohanim, and Kohanim Gedolim in particular, condemned to unhappiness and maladjustment, or worse, because of the high expectations placed upon them?

Whereas such may be our expectations or predictions, the facts of the ground tell us otherwise.

The most famous of those facts is what the Mishnah in Ovos (Perek 1/Mishnah 12) commands us:

הלל אומר הוי מתלמידיו של אהרן אוהב שלום ורודף שלום אוהב את
הבריות ומקרבן לתורה:

Hillel said, 'Be among the disciples of Aharon- loving peace, seeking peace, loving people and bringing them close to Torah.'

Rather than being an outlier, separate from society and outside of its boundaries, the Kohen Godol is at the very center of society. Not only is he at the center of society's religious behavior, he is at the center of and the leader of the social behavior of society.

The Kohen Godol *loves* people. He constantly seeks their welfare. He wants their family life to be as good as possible. He wants friends and business associates to interact in the most positive manner. And he does not forget that the welfare of the Jew is determined by his true and sincere connection to Torah and to the Ribbono Shel Olom.

Perhaps counterintuitively, the Kohen is the leader of the social order of the Jewish People.

And, the Kohanim are also a positive part of the social fabric of Israel. Religiously, they seek to bring closeness between Israel and HaKodosh Boruch Hu because they offer the *Korbonos* that Israel bring.

But, the Kohanim do not remain within the confines of the Beis HaMikdosh or a particular ghetto.

Let us allow Seforno¹² to provide us with direction regarding the Torah's expectations of Kohanim.

He writes at the beginning of Parshas Emor (Perek 21/Posuk 1):

ויאמר ה' אל משה אמור אל הכהנים. מה שנאמר למעלה להבין ולהורות כל מיני הטומאות ולהבדיל בין הבהמה הטהורה לטמאה ובין העוף הטמא לטהור כי זה יאות יותר לכהנים כאמרו ולהבדיל בין הקדש ובין החול ובין הטמא ובין הטהור ולהורות:

Hashem said to Moshe, say to the Kohanim - Regarding that which was said earlier in the previous Parshos that deal with purity and impurity, that which is forbidden and that which is allowed and that which brings sanctity and that which brings profanity -beginning with Parshas Sh'mini – to understand and to teach¹³. This is in regards to all types of impurities. This is in regards to know to distinguish between the *tahor* animal and the one that isn't *tahor* and the impure fowl and that which is pure¹⁴.

All this is particularly appropriate for Kohanim. This is as the verse says, 'to distinguish between that which is holy and that which is

¹² Almost all of the paraphrased rendition of this section of Seforno, and many of the footnotes, will be based on the commentary of Rav Yehuda Copperman ZT"L.

The sparseness of Seforno's writing in general, and specifically here, requires an accompanying commentary.

¹³ Seforno is referring to the concluding verse in Parshas Metzora (Vayikro Perek 14/Posuk 57):

לְהוֹרֹת בְּיוֹם הַטְּמֵא וּבְיוֹם הַטָּהוֹר זֹאת תּוֹרַת הַצִּרְעָת:

To teach on the day of impurity and on the day of purity; this is the law of the Metzora.

¹⁴ Here, Seforno is referring to the conclusion of Parshas Shemini (ibid. Perek 11/Posuk 47) where we read:

לְהַבְדִּיל בֵּין הַטְּמֵא וּבֵין הַטָּהוֹר וּבֵין הַסְּחִיָּה הַנֹּאֲכָלֶת וּבֵין הַסְּחִיָּה אֲשֶׁר לֹא תֹאֲכַל:

To distinguish between that which is impure and that which is pure and between the animal that may be eaten and the animal that may not be eaten.

profane, between that which is impure and that which is pure and to teach¹⁵.

The Kohanim have unique rights, responsibilities and exclusivity in the Beis HaMikdosh. They have exclusivity regarding conferring the impurity of *tzora'as*, Halachic leprosy upon a person.

However, in regards to other Halachos and Mitzvos that the Torah has taught in Parshas Shmini, parts of Tazria and Metzora, sections of Acharei Mos and in Kedoshim, they have a particular function as well.

When Hashem speaks to Moshe and tells him 'say' twice:

אָמַר אֶל הַכֹּהֲנִים בְּנֵי אַהֲרֹן וְאָמַרְתָּ אֲלֵהֶם

Say to the Kohanim, the sons of Aharon, and say to them

those multiple 'sayings' refer, says Seforno, to the entirety of the Halachos that were said in the previous sections, following the Halachos of Korbonos in Parshos Vayikro and Tzav.

The Kohanim were particularly fit and appropriate, explains Seforno in regards to the Torah's intent in the first Posuk of our Parshas Emor, to deal with a vast array of Mitzvos.

The Kohanim, were *the* authorities regarding the determination of *Tzora'as*.

But their tasks were greater than that. They *should* be involved in particular with *tum'a* and *tahara*, and not ignore instilling sanctity among Israel.

The function of Kohanim is to be leaders in all areas of Jewish life. Therefore, we learned about their all-encompassing responsibilities in the Posuk from Parshas Shemini that was said to the Kohanim after the deaths of Nodov and Avihu:

¹⁵ The reference here is to the verses in Parshas Shemini (Perek 10/P'sukim 10-11) which were said to Aharon and his surviving sons:

וְלִהְבְּדִיל בֵּין הַקֹּדֶשׁ וּבֵין הַחֵל וּבֵין הַטָּמֵא וּבֵין הַטָּהוֹר: וְלְהוֹרֹת אֶת בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל אֵת כָּל הַחֻקִּים אֲשֶׁר דִּבֶּר ה' אֲלֵיהֶם בְּיַד מֹשֶׁה:

[Your task is] to distinguish between the holy and the profane and between that which is impure and that which is pure. To teach B'nei Yisroel all of the statutes that Hashem spoke to the Kohanim through Moshe.

וּלְהַבְדִּיל בֵּין הַקֹּדֶשׁ וּבֵין הַחֵל וּבֵין הַטָּמֵא וּבֵין הַטְּהוֹר: וּלְהוֹרֹת אֶת בְּנֵי
יִשְׂרָאֵל אֵת כָּל הַחֻקִּים אֲשֶׁר דִּבֶּר ה' אֲלֵיהֶם בְּיַד מֹשֶׁה:

To distinguish between the holy and the profane and between that which is impure and that which is pure. To teach B'nei Yisroel all of the statutes that Hashem spoke to the Kohanim through Moshe.

One cannot give instructions that will be accepted by the people if there is no connection between those who instruct and command and those who are expected to receive them.

How did such a connection come about between the Kohanim and the people, between the Kohen Godol and the people?

The Kohen Godol, as we learned, had a unique responsibility to the *Klal*. He was to bring their atonement.

Do we think that bringing atonement was an act that was technical only? Do we think that it was enough for the Kohen Godol to meticulously follow the laws of the Avoda and not have unique *kavanos* regarding the acts that he was performing? Could the Kohen Godol perform perfunctorily without unique intent, prayer and supplication before the Ribbono Shel Olom?

Obviously not.

The Kohen Godol who lived up to his position *had* to love Israel and to sincerely seek G-d's forgiveness for them otherwise people would avoid him and reject him from being the one performing the service of the Beis HaMikdosh on their behalf.

We shouldn't be surprised that Aharon HaKohen loved people. If he did not possess such a love, how could he have served in that august position?

And each and every Kohen as well, if he lived up to his responsibilities. The Kohen was expected to offer the Korbonos of Israel. There were offerings that were intended to atone. There were offerings that were brought as a gift to enhance the person's relationship between man and G-d.

In each instance, if the Kohen only acts perfunctorily, the Korbon is accepted, but does it mean that Hashem will accept the offering fully?

When we daven daily, we say:

רצה ה' א...לקינו בעמך ישראל ובתפילתם והשב את העבודה לדביר
ביתך...

Hashem, accept willingly Your People Israel and their prayers and return the service to the Beis HaMikdosh...

ואשי ישראל ותפילתם באהבה תקבל ברצון

Israel's offerings on the fire of the altar and their prayers, with love, accept *willingly*..

If the Kohen only performs his service as a burden, can we expect the Will of G-d to be satisfied with the offering?

Thus, we see that the Kohanim as a whole, and the Kohen Godol in particular, teach us that we have inner capabilities, we have the facility, to overcome that which is imposed upon us, that which brings us to separation and that which places hardships upon us.

'Distance' is a sense that we possess. When artificial distance is forced upon us, whether by the Mitzvos that the Torah requires or by circumstances that HaKodosh Boruch Hu has decreed upon us, we possess the ability to sense 'closeness'.

Just like 'distance' is a sense, a feeling, so the capacity for 'closeness' is a sense, a feeling.

We may be forced to be distant geographically from our surroundings, but we are not forced to remove our sense of closeness, care and concern for those whom we love, for those with whom we take pleasure being in their company.

We remember the words of Radbaz that we saw above:

כל ישראל כאילו הם גוף אחד ואף על פי שגופין מחולקין הם כיון
שנשמותיהם ממקום אחד חוצבו הרי הם כגוף אחד כי הנשמה היא עיקר,
ודע זה.

All of Israel is as if they are one body. And even though they are separate bodies, since their souls are all quarried from one place,

they are like they are one body. This is because the *neshama* is the fundamental part of a person. Know this.

‘Know this’, Radbaz concludes. ‘Instill this knowledge and awareness within your hearts so that never will you feel separate, never will you feel alone. You are always included in the *Klal*, the connection is permanent. You are never lost from your connection to the Jewish People and you are never absent from your connection with Hashem Yisborach.’

Shabbat Shalom

B’sorot Tovot

Rabbi Pollock