
א ביסל תורה!

The Maimonides School Parsha Newsletter

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אמור

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Know Your Responsibility in the World

By Daniel Zilber

This week's פרשה, פרשת אמר, begins by listing the specific laws for כהנים: "אָמַר אֶל־הַכֹּהֲנִים", tell the Kohanim, "לֹא־יִטְמָא בְּעַמִּי" (כא:א) "do not defile yourselves by dealing with those who have died". With the exception of immediate family, a כהן is forbidden from contact with the dead. The כהן גדול, who is at an even higher level in בני ישראל, has additional restrictions. For example, he can't even come in contact with a parent who has died.

The sefer מאיר זכרון says that each person must serve ה' at the level that they are on. We cannot feel confident by being arrogant when we look around and realize that others may be doing less than we are. Who knows what that person has gone through? Who knows what that person's background is? Who knows if what looks like to be a smaller amount, isn't viewed as a greater accomplishment?

Along with being on a higher level, you have greater responsibilities. The מסילת ישרים states that every person must identify what their responsibility is in their world. The only measuring stick that we can truly use is how we are measuring up against ourselves. We know what we are capable of doing, and when something is truly difficult or just an excuse.

As we approach ל"ג באמר, it is appropriate to look at an example of this shown in the story of רבי שמעון. רבי שמעון relates how he and his son, רבי אלעזר, spent twelve years hiding in a cave from the Romans. During their time there, they were fed in a miraculous way and spent all of their time studying תורה. After leaving the cave, they encountered people plowing and planting. Since they were at an extremely high level, they were shocked that people were involving themselves with temporary existence, חיי שעה, and not their external existence, חיי עולם. Wherever they cast their eyes, they caused that which they viewed to be burnt. Immediately after, a Heavenly voice spoke to them, "Have you left the cave in order to destroy my world? Return to your cave!" They spent another year in the cave until they were told they could leave. Upon leaving the second time, wherever רבי אלעזר looked would burn; but, רבי שמעון would look at it and heal it.

The first time they left, they were measuring their surroundings according to their own world. After spending an additional year, they were able to measure according to the world of others. They recognized their responsibilities while understanding that whoever had not gone through their experiences, could not be expected to be on their level.

We have all come in contact with someone who we think is less knowledgeable than us. To them, we might be looked at as at a 'higher level'-they look at our actions and words to determine the right thing to do. We must bear this responsibility in a serious manner to make sure that we are being 'מקדש שם שמים' – sanctifying ה' – to the best of our ability.

ואהבת לרעך ולגרך כמוך

By Binyamin Orkaby

In this week's פרשה, פרשת אמור, we learn about טומאה and טהרה, the שלש רגלים, and דיני נפשות, שלש רגלים, and more. At the end of the פרשה, however, we are told "מִשְׁפָּט אֶחָד יִהְיֶה לָכֶם כְּגֵר כְּאֶזְרָח יִהְיֶה" One judgment you will have, for the convert and for the traveler. (כא:כב) The רבינו בחיי says that a גר is a gentile who came from a foreign land and is separated from his land like a גרגיר berry which fell from the tree. He then says that an אזרח is someone whose father was from the city though he was not. This begs the question as to why do we need to be told that there is one judgment for both traveler and convert, why not just one of them, or not say either at all?

The אור החיים first asks about the grammar of the פסוק. He asks why the פסוק says כְּגֵר כְּאֶזְרָח and not הגר כאזרח. He answers by saying that if the פסוק had said הגר כאזרח the convert like the traveler then the פסוק would be insinuating that the level of the convert is below that of a traveler. Therefore the פסוק tells us מִשְׁפָּט אֶחָד like convert like traveler to show that they are equal in the משפט.

רש"י says that the end of the פסוק teaches us that the convert and traveler are equal in their rights to everyone else in יהדות because the פסוק says ה' אלוך-יכם I am your ה'. Teaches us רש"י that ה' is telling us that he is the master of everyone you and the גרים.

The רבינו בחיי adds that the ה' אלוך-יכם comes to teach that anyone who does not enact justice properly with the גר and אזרח is as if they separated themselves from ה' and so ה' will distance Himself from them.

These explanations teach us the important of treating our fellows with respect even if they are not from our own communities. any time we can we should try and make a קידוש ה' not just with the other nations of the world but also within ישראל. In last weeks פרשה we were told ואהבת לרעך כמוך that one must love their fellows as one love oneself. This is even more important when we are with people who are outsiders like the convert and the traveler who are not from our communities. We need to sho them respect and kindness befitting a fellow Jew. Furthermore, this friday was פסח שני which was for everyone who was טמא and not able to make it to the בית המקדש in time for the first פסח שני. פסח שני was created so these people would get to partake in at least part of what they missed back in ניסן. People who are טמא are forced to be separated from those around them. Using the principle of ואהבת לרעך כמוך we should include converts and travelers so as not to make them feel as if they are impure and not worthy of being part of our communities. The second בית המקדש was destroyed because of שנאת חנם so to bring משיח we must have אהבת ישראל with everyone friend and stranger. May we be זוכה to see גאולה במהרה בימינו.

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