

## Say to the Kohanim, the sons of Aharon, and you shall say to them: to a (dead) person he shall not become impure among his people. (21:1)

Chazal (*Midrash Vayikra Rabbah* 26:6) quotes the *pasuk* in *Sefer Tehillim* (19:10), *Yiraas Hashem tehorah omedes la'ad*, "Fear of Hashem is pure, it will stand for all eternity." Rav Levi said, "Because Aharon *HaKohen* maintained such fear of Hashem, he was given this *parsha*, which will accompany his children and their descendants until the end of time." Which *parsha* is this? The *parsha* which addresses the avoidance of impurity.

It sounds as if the primary requirement imposed upon the *Kohanim* is the mandate that they maintain a heightened level of purity. What about the prohibition against marrying a divorcee or someone whose lineage is tainted? Why is the *mitzvah* of maintaining purity singled out as the *mitzvah* that was given to the *Kohanim* for all time?

The *Zera Shimshon* addresses this question. He explains that, with regard to matters of impurity, one might conjecture that once a *Kohen* becomes impure – that is it. His holiness has been compromised, so that it had departed from him; he can now be exposed to impurity without the fear of further damage. In contemporary times we assume everyone to be impure, since we no longer have access to the ashes of the *Parah Adumah*, which is the vehicle for effecting purification. Thus, one might wonder what the purpose is in a *Kohen* avoiding impurity altogether. After all, – it is what it is; he is already impure.

Hashem thus makes it clear that this *mitzvah* is not null and void. It will exist until the end of time. Therefore, although they have no possibility of maintaining true purity, it is still prohibited for *Kohanim* to come in contact with impurity.

The crux of Hashem's promise appears to be that the Almighty will continually dwell with the *Kohanim* – even in the midst of their impurity. This implies that the sanctity of the *Kohanim* never leaves them, and that, even when they become impure, the *Shechinah* will continue to repose among them. This is why *Kohanim* can never be allowed to become impure and why this *mitzvah* continues to remain a hallmark of the unique relationship between Hashem and His *Kohanim* for all time.

Perhaps we might extend this idea further. A great *Chassidic* leader (*Horav Levi Yitzchak m'Berdichev*) once said, "One can be for Hashem or (*chas v'shalom*, Heaven forbid) against Hashem, but he cannot say that he is not with Hashem." This means that Hashem never leaves a person, regardless of his iniquity. He is a loving Father Who never rejects His child. He is with us in times of joy, in times of sadness, in times of adversity and in times of our failure to act as a loving child should act. In a recent visit to Bnei Brak, I had the opportunity to meet with the *Kuzmirer Rebbe, Shlita*. I shared with him the travail that someone was experiencing as a result of a soured

interpersonal relationship. The *Rebbe*'s reaction was inspirational. He remarked, "I do not understand why people do this to other Jews. Hashem says, '*Imo Anochi b'tzarah*, I am with him during his troubles.' This means that when a Jew suffers, he does not suffer alone. Hashem is with him. When a person causes another Jew to have pain, he is causing Hashem to 'have' pain. Why would a person want to cause pain for Hashem?"

We never think about it this way. At times we might cause hurt and humiliation to another Jew; of course, we feel justified with our actions. We feel it is payback for what he did to us, or it is a deterrent for what he might do to us in the future. While in someone's perverted mind he might justify his actions, but does he ever think about the fact that he is simultaneously causing pain for Hashem? That is something no one can justify.