

A Dvar Torah From the Rosh HaYeshiva

RABBI MOSHE REVAH, שליט"א



Dear Yeshiva Family:

This week's *parshah* begins with instructing the *kohanim* with the performance of extra *mitzvos* due to their holy, elevated status as priests of Hashem. The Torah states: "Hashem said to Moshe: **say** to the kohanim and you shall **say** to them ..." Rashi notes the redundant usage of the word "say" and quotes a Gemarah (Yevamos 114a) that states the redundancy teaches us to enjoin the adults with regards to minors. Meaning, that the adult kohanim are commanded to ensure that kohanim who are minors also abide by these special laws for the kohanim.

The *Sefer Ozneyim LeTorah* (from R' Zalman Sorotskin zt"l) asks: In other places the Torah also specifies that we ensure children do not sin, but only here does it utilize the unusual manner of repeating the word "say." Why?

R' Zalman explains that generally there are two main sources of influencers shaping a child's life. There is what he picks up from the home, and there is what he picks up elsewhere, be it from his school or the street. Someone who sends his child to a school where similar values are being taught as to what he teaches at home will, in general, have an easier time successfully imparting to his child the values he wishes to imbue, for all the messages the child is getting in his formative years are in sync with each other. However, many challenges begin when the school, or his circle of friends, are not teaching or displaying similar values or lessons as to what is being expressed at home. In this case, the child can grow confused, as a bag of mixed messages is placed at his feet and he has to decide between his parents' and his teacher's values, and then perhaps, in the child's view, they are both wrong!

Therefore, specifically for the mitzvah of *kahuna*, the priesthood, which only applies to a small segment of the population, the Torah reiterates the challenge of bringing up children with the values of the Torah. This boy will go to school and not witness these special *kohanic mitzvos* being practiced by all his friends or his Rebbe and he will learn to not practice them. A kohen child may go to a good school but still face the above-mentioned challenges of a child sent to a school with a different value system or different emphasis than his parents. There is one set of values or emphasis being promoted at home, and these mitzvos and values are not practiced by most of his friends. That's a challenge. Therefore, specifically here the Torah has to repeat its dictum to bring up our children properly.

This is the double use of the word "say" in the Torah. The Torah is communicating how one should face this challenge — by increasing the influence at home. If someone knows there will be other influencers in his child's life, the Torah is emphasizing to be careful and "say" your message twice! If you're going to ensure the clarity of your messaging to your children, you will have to double your efforts in the home to counteract the lack of congruence from the outside world! "Say it twice!"

This understanding is especially important when choosing a school for one's children. It does not benefit one to choose a school for his family with a different ("lower" or "higher") value system than he practices at home. It will be counter effective as the child has to navigate conflicting and confusing messages about what is important and what is right. The result is not a message but a mess.

The Sefer Ohel Moshe suggests that even halachically this has a practical application. The Rema (OC 128:41) cites an opinion that if the daughter of a kohen struggles with Judaism and “goes off the derech” the father loses the status of being a Kohen! R’ Yaakov Kaminetsky zt”l explains this is because we assume her choosing such a path was a result of a bad upbringing in the home and therefore, we “blame” the father. It is of note that this rule applies specifically to a daughter and not a son, and the reason is because of what we discussed above. It used to be that a girl primarily stayed at home and had very little exposure to the outside world. Therefore, all of her ‘chinuch’ or upbringing was a product of the home. Her ‘misbehaving’ reflected directly on the father. However, a son, even in the olden days, did go out of the house and was likely exposed to other opinions and values; therefore, we do not automatically blame the father for the son’s poor choices. The Mishnah Berurah notes that nowadays (100 years ago), when girls also have frequent exposure to the outside world, this rule no longer applies, for we no longer blame parents for the way their children turn out!!!

Practically, this lesson to the Kohanim is quite relevant to us. The outside world is becoming more and more toxic, with anti-Torah and anti-moral views being accepted as mainstream opinion, and woe unto the person that dares challenge them. There are so many messages from the outside world which can tarnish the chinuch we preach to our children from the inside. We must take the advice the Torah gives the Kohanim in this week’s *parshah*. If we feel that the messages our children receive from the outside world are not in line with the messages we are sending them then we have to double our efforts. We must “say” and “say” again! Basic chinuch is not enough. We need to drill home the messages of joy and fulfillment in a life of Torah. We cannot expect the outside world to second our message, rather we have to be concerned that the world will only second-guess our message.

In recent months, we have seen the crumbling of the once perceived high morals and ethics of many of the institutions of higher education in America. Many alumni who used to take pride in their university and college education, even from Ivy League institutions, are no longer willing to pay homage to those places that have shown their true, dark colors. Kristallnacht (November 9, 1938) was the night of the broken glass, named for the thousands of shops that had their glass broken in Germany when anti-Semitism was finally completely exposed. R’ Shimon Schwab commented that the real glass referred to was the glass of illusion that German Jews believed in when they claimed Berlin is the new Jerusalem. This shattering of illusions is happening here in America regarding how we relate to and feel pride in the institutions of higher learning that educated us.

The phrase “Alma Mater” is Latin for “nourishing mother.” Disregarding its Christian connotation, it is a borrowed phrase that proclaims that the school a person graduated from was a nourishing mother for him or her! The message is that this school made this person! Here is where this person got his or her chinuch! Yet, we should not relate to these unethical institutions of higher learning as places that made us. Higher learning of lower values feels nauseating, not nourishing. This illusion of these unethical schools being our nourishing mother is now shattered. Even if we received our professional training there, that does not make us who we are. Our Alma Mater (if I can reuse that phrase) is our Yeshivos and Seminaries, our day schools and our homes! Those are the places, dedicated to the morals and ethics of the Torah and continuing our traditions, that truly make us. Those are the real places that we should take pride in if we are lucky enough to be associated with them.

May Hashem continue to help us all appreciate the incredible beauty and correctness of our Jewish values disseminated by our Mosdos HaTorah and let us strengthen ourselves as we continue to be the light unto the nations!

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