



EMOR

A JEW IS A JEW, IS A JEW, IS A JEW

Appreciating the Untouchable Preciousness of Every Jew

PARSHAH OVERVIEW

Emor

The Torah section of *Emor* (“speak”) begins with the special laws pertaining to the *Kohanim* (priests), the *Kohen Gadol* (High Priest), and the Temple service: A *Kohen* may not become ritually impure through contact with a dead body, save on the occasion of the death of a close relative. A *Kohen* may not marry a divorcée or a woman with a promiscuous past; a *Kohen Gadol* can marry only a virgin. A *Kohen* with a physical deformity cannot serve in the Holy Temple, nor can a deformed animal be brought as an offering.

A newborn calf, lamb, or kid

must be left with its mother for seven days before being eligible to be an offering; one may not slaughter an animal and its offspring on the same day.

The second part of *Emor* lists the annual Callings of Holiness—the festivals of the Jewish calendar: the weekly Shabbat; the bringing of the Passover offering on 14 Nisan; the seven-day Passover festival beginning on 15 Nisan; the bringing of the *Omer* offering from the first barley harvest on the second day of Passover, and the commencement, on that day, of the forty-nine-day

counting of the *Omer*, culminating in the festival of Shavuot on the fiftieth day; a “remembrance of shofar blowing” on 1 Tishrei; a solemn fast day on 10 Tishrei; the Sukkot festival—during which we are to dwell in huts for seven days and take the four kinds—beginning on 15 Tishrei; and the immediately following holiday of the “eighth day” of Sukkot (Shemini Atzeret).

Next, the Torah discusses the lighting of the menorah in the Temple, and the showbread (*lechem hapanim*) placed weekly on the table there.

TEXT 1

Leviticus 23:40

וּלְקַחְתֶּם לָכֶם בַּיּוֹם הָרִאשׁוֹן: פְּרִי עֵץ הָדָר, כַּפֹּת
תְּמָרִים, וְעֵנָף עֵץ עָבֹת, וְעֵרְבֵי נָחַל, וּשְׂמַחְתֶּם לִפְנֵי ה'
אֱלֹהֵיכֶם שִׁבְעַת יָמִים.

And you shall take for yourselves on the first day: a beautiful fruit of a tree, date palm fronds, a branch of a dense-leaved tree, and willows of the brook, and you shall rejoice before your G-d for seven days.

Specific descriptions
in the Torah teach us
important laws about
the four species.



TEXT 2

*Rabbi Shneur Zalman of
Liadi, Shulchan Aruch
HaRav, Orach Chayim
648:29*

אין שעויר לגדל האַתרוג למעלה, שאַפּלוּ הוא גדול כּל כּף עד שְׁנַטל עַל
הַכֶּתֶף הָרִי זֶה כָּשֶׁר. אָבֵל לְמַטָּה יֵשׁ לוֹ שְׁעוֹר, שְׂאֵם הוּא פְּחוֹת מִכִּיּצָה –
פְּסוּל, לְפִי שֶׁרֵב הָאֲתָרוּגִים אֵין גְּדוּלָן פְּחוֹת מִכִּיּצָה, וְזֶה שְׂאֵין בּוֹ כִּיּצָה
– הָרִי עֲדִין לֹא נִגְמַר פְּרִיו, וְהַתּוֹרָה אָמְרָה: "פְּרִי עֵץ", שְׂיֵהָא פְּרִי גְמוּר.

There is no maximum limit to the size of an *etrog*. It is valid even if it is so big that it must be carried on one's shoulder. There is, however, a minimum limit. An *etrog* smaller than the size of an egg is invalid because most *etrogim* grow to no less than the size of an egg. Hence the fact that an *etrog* has not grown to that size shows that it is not fully grown—and the Torah's expression, "fruit of a tree," implies a fruit that is complete.

TEXT 3

Rabbi Shneur Zalman of
Liadi, *ibid.*, 645:3

"כַּפֹּת תְּמָרִים" — זֶה לְוִלָּב, שֶׁהוּא
גִּדְלָל עַל אֵילָן שֶׁל תְּמָרִים. וּמִתּוֹךְ
שֶׁכַּתְּבָהּ הַתּוֹרָה לְשׁוֹן "כַּפֹּת" וְלֹא
כַּתְּבָהּ "עַלֵי תְּמָרִים", מֵכָאן אַתָּה לָמַד
שֶׁצָּרִיךְ שִׁיְהִיו אוֹתָן עָלִים הֶרְאוּיִין
לְאַגְדָן וְלִכְפוֹתָן עִם הַשְׁדָּרָה מִחֲמַת
שֶׁהֵן עֲדִין רַכִּים, שֶׁהָרִי לֹא נִכְתְּבוּ
נִקְדוֹת בַּתּוֹרָה, וּפְרוּשׁוֹ הוּא "כַּפּוֹת".

אֲבָל אִם שָׁהָה הַלּוּלָב עַל הַדָּקָל עַד
שֶׁנִּתְקַשּׁוּ עָלָיו כָּעֵץ וְנִתְרַחֲקוּ וְנִתְפָּרְדּוּ
מִהַשְׁדָּרָה, שֶׁכֵּן הוּא דְרָכָן - שֶׁכָּל מֵה
שֶׁהֵן מוֹסִיפִים לְהִתְקַשּׁוֹת הֵן מִתְרַחֲקִים
מִהַשְׁדָּרָה, וְאִם נִתְקַשּׁוּ כָּל כָּף עַד שֶׁאֵי
אֶפְשָׁר לִכְפוֹתָן וְלְאַגְדָן עִם הַשְׁדָּרָה,
הָרִי זֶה פָּסוּל.

The term “date palm fronds” connotes a *lulav* that grows on a date palm. Since the Torah used the term *kapot temarim* instead of “leaves of a date palm” (*alei temarim*), we learn that the leaves must be such that they can be brought together and bound together with the spine because they are still pliable. This concept is derived because vowels are not written in the Torah, and the term *kapot* could also be read *kafut*, meaning “bound.”

It can happen that the *lulav* remains on the date palm until its leaves become as stiff as wood and they spread out and became separated from the spine, as the stiffer they become, the more they spread away from the spine. In such a case, we determine if the leaves have become so firm that they can no longer be bound together with the spine. If this is indeed the case, the *lulav* is invalid.

TEXT 4

*Rabbi Shneur Zalman of
Liadi, ibid., 646:2*

וְאִינוּ נִקְרָא "עֵבֶת" אֲלָא אִם כֵּן יוֹצְאִין
מִמֶּנּוּ לְפָחוֹת שְׁלֹשָׁה עָלִין מִקֵּץ אֶחָד,
כְּלוּמַר שְׁיוּצְאִין שְׁלֹשָׁה עָלִין אוֹ יוֹתֵר
סְמוּכִין זֶה לָזֶה בְּעֵגוּל אֶחָד, שְׁאִין אֶחָד
מֵהֶם נִמּוּךְ מִחֲבֵרוֹ, אֲפִי עַל פִּי שְׁאִין כָּל
הַשְּׁלֹשָׁה עָלִין יוֹצְאִין מֵעֵקֶץ אֶחָד, כִּינּוּ
שֶׁהֵן דְּבוּקִין זֶה בְּזֶה וְעוֹמְדִין בְּשִׁוּהָ
בְּעֵגוּל אֶחָד – הֵרִי זֶה עֵבֶת.

אֲבָל אִם נִשְׁנִי עָלִין הֵן עוֹמְדִין בְּשִׁוּהָ
דְּבוּקִים זֶה בְּזֶה וְעֵלָה הַשְּׁלִישִׁי הוּא
לְמַעַלָּה מֵהֶם, אוֹ שֶׁהַשְּׁלִישִׁי יוֹצֵא לְמַטָּה
מֵהַשְּׁנַיִם וְעוֹלָה וְרוֹכֵב עַל גְּבִי הַשְּׁנַיִם –
אִין זֶה "עֵבֶת", אֲלָא נִקְרָא "הֵדֵס"
שׁוֹטָה", וּפְסוּל כָּל נִשְׁבָּעָה אֲפִלּוּ בְּשַׁעַת
הַדְּחָק שְׁאִי אֶפְשָׁר לְמַצֵּא הֵדֵס אֲחֵר,
וְאִין לְטַל אוֹתוֹ אֲפִלּוּ בְּלֹא בִּרְכָּה, כִּינּוּ
שְׁאִינוּ מִין הֵדֵס הַכָּשֵׁר כָּלָל.

A *hadas* is not considered “dense-leaved” unless at least three leaves emerge from a single point, i.e., three or more leaves are positioned next to each other in a circle around the stem, none of them being lower than the other. Even though they do not emerge from a single root, if they are very close to each other and stand on an equal plane in one circle, they are considered as “dense-leaved.”

If, however, two leaves stand on an equal plane, very close to each other, and the third leaf emerges on a higher level than the other two, or emerges on a lower level than the other two and ascends and lies on them, this is not considered “dense-leaved.” Rather, such a species is called a “crazed myrtle.” It is invalid throughout the seven days of the festival, even in a pressing situation when no other myrtle twig can be found. It should not be used, even without reciting a blessing, for it does not belong to the same species as a valid myrtle.

TEXT 5A

Talmud, Sukkah 33b

נִקְטָם רֹאשָׁהּ, נִפְרָצוּ עָלֶיהָ, וְהִצְפִּצָּהּ — פְּסוּלָהּ.
כְּמוֹשָׁהּ, וְשִׁנְּשׁוּהָ מִקִּצָּת עָלֶיהָ, וְשָׁל בָּעַל — כְּשִׁיחָהּ.

An *aravah* whose top was severed, or its leaves were torn, or if it is a *tzaftzafah* [a species similar to, but not actually a willow], is invalid.

An *aravah* that is slightly dried, or if a minority of its leaves fell off, or if it grew in a field, is valid.

TEXT 5B

Rashi, ad loc.

"ושל בעל". גדילה בשדה שלא
על הנחל.

“In a field.” Meaning, an *aravah* that grows in a field, and not by a brook.

TEXT 6

*Rabbi Yosef Caro,
Shulchan Aruch, Orach
Chayim 647:1*

ערבי נחל האמור בתורה הוא מין ידוע הנקרא כן, עלה שלו משוך
כנחל ופיו חלק וקנה שלו אדום. ורוב מין זה גדל על הנחלים לכך
נקראו ערבי נחל, ואפילו היה גדל במדבר או בהרים כשר.

The “willows of the brook” that the Torah speaks of refers to a specific species that is known by that name. It has an elongated leaf, similar to a brook, the edges of its leaves are smooth, and it has a red stem. This species mostly grows by a brook, which is why it is called “willows of the brook.” However, even if it grew in the desert or in the mountains, it is valid.

QUESTION

If the species doesn't match up to the precise description provided in the Torah, it is invalid.

When it comes to the willow, however, why do the Torah's descriptions seem equivocal?

TEXT 7

Talmud, Sukkah 33b

“עֲרֵבֵי נַחַל,” אֵין לִי אֶלָּא עֲרֵבֵי נַחַל. וְשֶׁל בַּעַל וְשֶׁל הָרִים
מִיָּין? תִּלְמוּד לֹמַר: “עֲרֵבֵי נַחַל” מְכַל מְקוֹם.

The verse states, “willows of the brook.” From where do we derive that even willows from a field or from a mountain are valid? From the verse’s usage of the plural, “willows of the brook,” we derive that willows are valid in any case.

ANSWER

The Torah's use of the plural “*arvei*” implies that multiple types of willows are valid.

QUESTION

How come the Torah demands specifications of the other three species, but is content with any kind of willow?



TEXT 8

Rabbi Naftali Silberberg,
“How Is the Torah
Interpreted?”
www.chabad.org

Our sages tell us that Torah can be interpreted in four different general ways: *peshat*, *remez*, *drush* and *sod*.

1) *Peshat* is the simple interpretation of the Torah. When the verse says (Genesis 1:1) that “In the beginning G d created the Heaven and Earth,” it means exactly what it seems to mean, in a very literal sense.

2) *Remez* is the different hints and allusions which are contained within the Torah. One of the methodologies the Torah employs to make these hints is *gematriya*, the numerical value of the letters of the Hebrew alphabet. For example, the *gematriya* of “*Bereshit bara*” (“In the beginning He created”) is the same as “*b’Rosh Hashanah nivra ha’olam*” (“on Rosh Hashanah the world was created”) (Talmud, Rosh Hashanah 10b)!

Bereshit bara and *b’Rosh Hashanah nivra* are both 1116.

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3) *Drush* (or Midrash) expounds upon the deeper meaning of the verse. The Hebrew word for “in the beginning” is *bereshit*. The Midrash tells us that this word can be split into two words—*b reshit*. The Torah is telling us that the world was created for two (“*b*”) “*reshit*”s (“firsts”)—the Jews and the Torah. Although this is not the simple interpretation of the word, nevertheless it is a true and valid way of understanding the Torah.

4) *Sod* (secret) is the esoteric, mystical part of Torah. The *Tikkunei Zohar* (a book which gives seventy [!] different esoteric explanations for the word *bereshit*) explains that the word *bereshit* can also be split into “*bara shis*” (created [with] six). This is because the world was created through G d’s six emotional powers: kindness, severity, beauty, victory, splendor, and foundation.



*Peshat, Remez,
Drush, and Sod*

There are some instances
where a true
understanding of the
peshat can only be reached
through the deeper levels.

TEXT 9

Rashi, Genesis 1:1

אֵין הַמִּקְרָא הַזֶּה אוֹמֵר אֱלֹא דְרִשְׁנִי.

This verse demands a Midrashic explanation.

TEXT 10

*Midrash, Vayikra Rabah
30:12*

"פְּרִי עֵץ הָדָר", אֱלֹהֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל: מָה אֶתְרוֹג
זֶה יֵשׁ בּוֹ טַעַם וְיֵשׁ בּוֹ רִיחַ, כֹּךְ יִשְׂרָאֵל יֵשׁ
בָּהֶם בְּנֵי אָדָם שֵׁשׁ בָּהֶם תּוֹרָה וְיֵשׁ בָּהֶם
מַעֲשִׂים טוֹבִים.

"כַּפַּת תְּמָרִים", אֱלֹהֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל: מָה הַתְּמָרָה
הַזֹּאת יֵשׁ בּוֹ טַעַם וְאֵין בּוֹ רִיחַ, כֹּךְ הֵם
יִשְׂרָאֵל יֵשׁ בָּהֶם שֵׁשׁ בָּהֶם תּוֹרָה וְאֵין
בָּהֶם מַעֲשִׂים טוֹבִים.

"וְעֵנַף עֵץ עֵבֶת", אֱלֹהֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל: מָה הָדָס יֵשׁ
בּוֹ רִיחַ וְאֵין בּוֹ טַעַם, כֹּךְ יִשְׂרָאֵל יֵשׁ בָּהֶם
שֵׁשׁ בָּהֶם מַעֲשִׂים טוֹבִים וְאֵין בָּהֶם תּוֹרָה.

"וְעֵרְבֵי נָחַל", אֱלֹהֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל: מָה עֶרְבָה זֹאת
אֵין בָּהֶם טַעַם וְאֵין בָּהֶם רִיחַ, כֹּךְ הֵם יִשְׂרָאֵל
יֵשׁ בָּהֶם בְּנֵי אָדָם שֵׁשׁ בָּהֶם לֹא תּוֹרָה
וְלֹא מַעֲשִׂים טוֹבִים.

"A beautiful fruit of a tree"—this refers to Israel. Just like a citron (*etrog*), which has taste and has smell, so too Israel has among them people who possess Torah and possess good deeds.

"Date palm fronds"—this refers to Israel. Just like a date, which has taste and has no smell, so too Israel has among them those who possess Torah but do not possess good deeds.

"A branch of a dense-leaved tree"—this refers to Israel. Just like a myrtle, which has smell and has no taste, so too Israel has among them those who possess good deeds but do not possess Torah.

"And willows of the brook"—this refers to Israel. Just like a willow, which has no smell and has no taste, so too Israel has among them people who possess no Torah and possess no good deeds.

ANSWER

The willow represents the Jew who “has no Torah and no good deeds,” who *can* be any kind of Jew, but isn’t.

Thus, the Torah’s specific descriptions aren’t legally binding.





What is the
aravah's value?

TEXT 11

*The Rebbe, Rabbi
Menachem Mendel
Schneerson, Likutei
Sichot 22, p. 134*

די ערבה — אידן וואס "אין בהם לא תורה ולא מעשים טובים" — איז די התאחדות מיט זיי דערפאר וואס זיי זיינען אידן, וואס דאס איז א מעלה פנימית ועצמית וואס איז פאראן ביי יעדן איינעם וואס איז מזרע אברהם יצחק ויעקב — אויך ווען בפועל איז "אין בהם לא תורה ולא מעשים טובים", און אפילו א תינוק שנשבה לבין העובדי כוכבים ומזלות און ווייס גארניט אז ער איז א איד.

We unite with the *aravot*—the Jews who possess neither Torah nor good deeds—just because they are Jews. Simply being a Jew is an essential, intrinsic quality that every Jew possesses by virtue of being a descendant of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. This is true even if, in practice, they possess “neither Torah nor good deeds”—in fact, even if they are completely assimilated and don’t even know that they are Jewish.

TEXT 12

*Rabbi Yirmiyahu
Ullman, “Bad Jew,”
www.ohr.edu*

In Poland in the early 20th century, a few Jewish students were allowed to attend medical school. The only catch was that they had to supply their own Jewish cadavers to study on (after all, it would not befit a Polish cadaver to help a Jewish student).

Familiar with the problem in Jewish law of dissecting Jewish bodies, the students approached the foremost Halachic authority of the time, Rabbi Chaim Ozer Grodzensky. They proposed that in order to gain entrance to medical school, they be allowed to use the bodies of deceased Jews of ill repute or criminals.

The Rabbi, after recovering from the shock of the suggestion, responded, “For me to allow that, I would have to know what G-d thinks about those people!”

An *aravah*-Jew is important simply because they are Jewish.

Every Jew is an equal member of G-d's chosen people.



TEXT 13

*Rabbi Yisrael Baal Shem
Tov, quoted in Keter
Shem Tov, Hosafot 139*

מען זאל ליעב האבן און מייקר זיין דעם גאר פשוטן אידן אזוי
ווי דעם גרעסטן גאון, ווייל ער איז א איד, ואב אחד לכולנו
כאמור: "בנים אתם לה' אלקיכם", ונאמר: "אהבתי אתכם
אמר ה'".

We must love and cherish the simplest Jew as much as the
greatest scholar, just because he or she is a Jew, and "we all
have one Father" (Malachi 2:10), "You are all children of your
G-d" (Deuteronomy 14:1), and "I loved you," says G-d"
(Malachi 1:2).

TEXT 14

*Rabbi Yosef Yitzchak
Schneersohn, Sefer
Hasichot 5701, p. 25*

מורנו הבעל שם טוב דיבר הרבה אודות
אהבת ישראל אהבת התורה ואהבת ה',
וגילה מהותו של יהודי. למרות שעל פי
חיצוניות התורה הנגלית אין זה לכאורה
תואם, דהרי "משחק בקוביא פסול
לעדות", ויש כאלה שאין עונים אמן
אחריהם, אך על פי פנימיות הרי מהותו
טוב, אלא ש"אליה וקוץ בה".

כל ישראל ערבים זה בזה, ואף אחד אינו
יכול לומר: "אני למדן, אני חסיד ומניח
שלושה זוגות תפילין, ומה אכפת לי
מהזולת". כמו בשותפים, אומר הרי אחד
לשני: "דבר זה הרי נוגע לשנינו, ענינך
הוא הרי עניני", ואין הם רבים ביניהם,
כך צריך להיות גם בדבר זה.

Our teacher the Baal Shem spoke very much about
three loves—that of a fellow Jew, of the Torah, and
of G-d—thereby exposing the essence of what a
Jew is. The legal portion of Torah may declare a
certain Jew as “unfit”; for example, gamblers are
unfit to give testimony, and there are certain Jews
after whose blessings we don’t answer amen.
However, according to the soul of Torah, every Jew
is inherently good.

All Jews are responsible for one another. No one
has the liberty to say, “I’m a scholar, I’m a pious
man who puts on three pairs of *tefilin*; why should I
bother with someone else?” Just as two partners
would tell one another, “Look, we’re in this
together. Whatever’s your business is my business,
and there’s no such thing as fighting against each
other,” so must it be with every Jew.

One's Jewishness can
never be diminished.



KEY POINTS

1. The Torah commands us to take four species on the holiday of Sukkot: the *lulav*, the *etrog*, the *hadas*, and the *aravah*.
2. Although the first three species must match the Torah's description of them, an *aravah* is valid even if it does not grow near a brook as the Torah describes.
3. The first three species represent a Jew who is actively involved in Torah and *mitzvot*, or at least one of the two. Therefore, their defining characteristics must be actively present.
4. The *aravah* represents the Jew who is not actively involved in Torah and *mitzvot*. Therefore, the *aravah*'s defining characteristics do not have to be actively present. As long as it is a willow that could theoretically be a brook willow, it is valid.

KEY POINTS

5. The *aravah*-Jew is as integral to the Jewish nation as the *aravah* is integral to the four species.
6. The *aravah*-Jew's value as a Jew is inherent. Every Jew is an equal member of G-d's chosen people.

