

Torah Talk – מאמרי תורה



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Parashot Acharei Mot-Kedoshim
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פרשות אחרי מות-קדושים
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Torah Reading: *Vayikra* (Leviticus) 16:1-20:27

In these *parashot*, Hashem instructs Moshe regarding the procedures for *Yom Kippur* (the Day of Atonement); Hashem then tells Moshe to give the people a series of ethical and ritual laws instructing them on how to be holy.

MILTON's core value of מדור לדור – *m'dor l'dor* ("from generation to generation") is reflected in this week's *parashot*.

The following appears in *Parashat Kedoshim* regarding the older generation (19:32):
"מִפְּנֵי שִׂיבָה תִּקּוּם, וְהִדַּרְתָּ פְּנֵי זָקֵן; וַיִּרְאֵתָ מֵאָה-לִּהְיֶה, אֲנִי ה' – You shall rise before the aged, and honor the face of the old person, and you shall fear your God: I am Hashem."

On either side of this *mitzvah*, we find exhortations against sacrificing one's children to Molech. Earlier (18:21) the text states, "וּמִזְרֵעְךָ לֹא-תִתֵּן, לְהַעֲבִיר לַמֹּלֶךְ; וְלֹא תִחַלֵּל אֶת-שֵׁם אֱ-לֹהֶיךָ, אֲנִי ה'. – You shall not give any of your seed to pass over to Molech, neither shall you profane the name of your God: I am Hashem." And later (20:2-7) it says, "אִישׁ אִישׁ מִבְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל וּמִן-הַגֵּר הַגֵּר בְּיִשְׂרָאֵל אֲשֶׁר יִתֵּן מִזְרְעוֹ לַמֹּלֶךְ, ... מוֹת יוּמָת – Whoever of the Bnei Yisrael, or of the strangers that live in Yisrael, that gives of his seed to Molech, he shall surely be put to death."

Molech is the name of an ancient Ammonite god worshipped by the Phoenicians and Canaanites, who believed that the highest form of fealty to a deity was to give it that which was most precious: one's child. The Torah, beginning with the *akeidah*, the binding of Isaac, and continuing throughout the rest of the Five Books, makes clear that this kind of practice is anathema to Hashem.

Many people believe that the order and juxtaposition of the various laws listed in the book of *Vayikra* (Leviticus) is not accidental. In this case, a lesson can be gleaned from the way the text surrounds a law about how we treat the elderly with statements on how we treat our children.

People often get stuck, both geographically and chronologically, in their own 'ד אמות – *dalet amot* – literally, “four cubits,” a term signifying each individual’s subjective perspective. We often forget that others’ generational experiences can differ starkly from our own. We cannot quite understand what it is to be elderly as we are not there yet and as we did not grow up at the beginning of the 20th Century. At the same time, too many of us forget what it is like to be a kid and cannot fathom what it means to be growing up at the beginning of the 21st Century. The Torah reminds us that we need to leave our comfort zones to truly understand what it is to be a senior citizen or a child today and that we need to respect and treat others within their frames of reference, not ours.

Shabbat Shalom.

For Discussion:

- What is the main thing you want another generation to understand about your generation?
- Why do you think that things such as fashion, music, comedy, etc. change from generation to generation?
- How can we better our treatment of those older than us and younger than us?