



Acharei

'After death we say holy things'.

That is a translation of the titles, of the three portions of the law, which we commence reading this Shabbat.

'Acharei Mot Kedoshim Emor', 'Acharei Mot' – after death, 'Kedoshim' – holy things, 'Emor' – we should be saying.

It is so fitting that we impart this message at this time of the year, immediately prior to Yom HaShoah.

Every year on Yom HaShoah, there is so much sadness in our hearts and I am filled with enormous grief, particularly when I reflect on the murder of over one million children during the Shoah.

Now fascinatingly, in the third of these portions – 'Emor', the Torah gives us a Mitzvah 'Venikdashti betoch bnei yisrael' – it's a mitzvah of kiddush Hashem, to sanctify the life of Hashem.

Rabbi Yaakov Kamenetsky taught that this is the only mitzvah in the entire Torah which we are called upon to keep from the moment we are born. For other mitzvot we are 'bar chiyuva' – we must keep them from Bar Mitzvah or Bat Mitzvah. But 'kiddush Hashem', we perform from the moment we are born because it is passive.

'Venikdashti' – through us, Hashem is sanctified, and it is so true – the greatest ambassadors for Jewish religion, faith and tradition – are our children.

Their happiness, their joy, everything that they do reflecting the greatness of our faith, is just marvellous, but what it also means is that sadly, when young lives are taken just for being Jewish, that is also 'al kiddush Hashem'.

The Rambam tells us that the mitzvah of kiddush Hashem is the mitzvah of 'Kol beit Yisrael', it is a mitzvah for the whole house of Israel. It is an unusual term for the Rambam to use when it comes to a description of Jewish people.

From the Hallel we know, when we refer to 'beit Yisrael', we soon thereafter say 'haktanim im hag'dolim', the young ones, together with the older ones.

Children are included in kiddush Hashem at all levels, in all circumstances and recently, so tragically, we have seen this happen yet again, when Hamas attacked on October 7th, with impunity and enormous cruelty, they mercilessly murdered so many children. They even took little kids into captivity as hostages.

Children are included and so when we all chant 'Acheinu kol beit yisrael', it is that reference to the Jewish people of 'kol beit yisrael', we include our children.

May Hashem bless them, together with all of us, that soon we should arrive at a time when there will be Simcha, great joy and great celebration for one and all.

Shabbat Shalom.