

Emor

by Benjamin Gee - Wednesday, May 15, 2019

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Our conduct at home has the greatest impact on our children...

Why does the Torah repeat something which is so obvious?

At the commencement of Parashat Emor Moshe was instructed “Emor el ha’kohanim b’nei Aharon v’amarta aleihem”, ‘say to the Kohanim the sons of Aharon, and say unto them’. He’s told twice to say something to the Kohanim. Why ‘emor v’amarta’ - why both?

The Ramban explains that here we have an important principle – it relates to the world of ‘taharah’ and ‘tumah’ - purity and impurity. Keeping the Children away from contamination, guaranteeing that they lead a life of kedusha, of holiness, to be imbued with the sacred at all times. Therefore it is something that needs to be repeated, and repeated again – just saying it once won’t be enough.

Our sages in the Talmud give a different suggestion “emor v’amarta’, saying and saying again, they say, is “l’hazhir hagedolim al haketanim” – to warn parents with regard to their children. The first ‘saying’ is for Moshe to say it to the parents, and the second ‘saying’ is for the parents to say it to the children - to guarantee the continuity of that instruction through the ages. Rav Moshe Feinstein says something beautiful on this point. With regard to the impact that parents have on their children, it’s not always about formal instruction - in fact, the primary impact that parents have is informally through the example that they set.

Sometimes one might have a particular persona in the workplace, in their community, or within society - and they hope that people will be suitably impressed by what they see. But when you come home, you wind down, you relax – that’s when you become your real self. It’s within the family circle, particularly at times of leisure, that children see their parents for what they actually are. As a result, children very easily size their parents up – are they sincere or insincere? Do they speak in a lovely way or do they shout and scream? Do they maintain high standards of morality or not? Are they truly ethical people? When it comes to mitzvot, do they try to cut corners, or are they the real thing?

Our children internalise what they see from the very youngest age. Therefore the primary arena within which Jewish children are raised and influenced is within the family home. ‘Emor v’amarta’ is the instruction whereby we must study, we must learn and we must practice, and through the example we set hopefully we will inspire future generations to do just likewise.

Shabbat Shalom