

## Bar Mitzva speech draft

Whenever I read anything from the Torah or Haftorah, I split the content into two sections. One of them is occupied with sections of text that concur with my idea of Jewish ideology. This ideology, which has been repeated to me constantly at a younger age, is the 'do not harm' and 'everyone is equal' side of things. In other words, these are positive things. The other section is filled with items that do not agree with my idea of Jewish ideology, things that don't seem right to me.

The one thing that I always place in the negative section is rules. Of course, most rules, such as 'though shall not kill' and 'I am your one and only God', make sense to me and I agree with, but many others I just cannot envision positively. My Torah portion Emor is full of rules, and many of these rules might seem... questionable.

Emor starts off with rules directed at Aaron and his descendants, all of which were Jewish priests. The rules state that a priest may not let his hair grow wild, that he has full, unscathed clothes, that he may not leave his sanctuary, or have contact with the dead. He must be unblemished to be able to bring offerings to God.

So what's so wrong with a priest being blemished?

While yes, a Priest has his duties in conducting religious ceremonies, his most important role is that of a leader and role model for the Jewish people. If he is unclean, those that look up to him will become unclean.

People that follow their role models are never really as good as their role models. They try, and if they are able to surpass their role models, then, technically their role models are no longer role models. This is everyone's goal. But, as I said, being close, in role, to a role model is nearly impossible, because role models are so close to perfection.

When I say 'perfection', I don't mean perfection from all angles. Any of your role models may be very different than mine, and thus I would not consider your role models perfect, and you would not consider mine perfect. Perfection could really be anything we think. At that, I would start to wonder what 'perfect' really is, but wondering is just about as far as I go with that. There would be no legitimate answer, definition, or argument to what it means to be perfect, considering perfection is a technical impossibility.

So then you could raise the argument that I should stop talking about perfection if it's impossible. Well, I could respond. When I said perfection is a 'technical' impossibility, that's exactly what I meant. But life isn't exactly... technical, is it? We don't live in a world made of only binary code, numbers, and cold hard facts. After all, we are not computers. We live next to all that, but there is an element of unexplainable feelings, which affect our emotions, thoughts, and perspectives. The human soul,

debatable as it is, is made of primarily these unexplainable feelings, and our role models come from our souls, and so do all of our varied views of what perfection could be.

In the olden days, the range of different role models would have probably been of smaller size, considering life was simpler. The most common role model for Jews, would have probably been the priests, and coming from the souls of those Jews, I'm sure that they thought that to be a priest was to be perfect.

I, of course, do not use priests as my role models. Nor do I use God, but God's idea about keeping role models to very high standards makes perfect sense.

In fifth grade, my teacher would make the entire class go down to the kindergarten classes and read stories to them. Honestly, I hated it. Because I was younger then, I thought that the reason behind this was to simply do something nice to the youngsters, and to fill their schedule for the kindergarten teacher. But now, I realize that what my teacher made the class do was to show the little kids what they should be doing. Of course, they were only five and six years of age, but even that is old enough for them to remember, when they are in the fifth grade, how those gigantic kids, who seemed so perfect, read to them and brightened up their day. Then, they will try to be as perfect. It gave them the mindset and general direction to try and do good things for others.

Clearly, the Kohanim, the Jewish priests, did a good job at setting a role model for the Jewish people. We might not be truly, technically perfect yet (and we will never be), but because we always strive for it, we always get closer. And the beauty of that is that even if, for some reason, my role model slacks off, I would not blindly follow him and lower my own standards. It may be in the Jewish blood to go farther than, or to breach the unknown.

So, back to rules.

The rules set in Emor for the Kohanim are for the soul purpose of giving us the choice to try to be like those Kohanim, to be near perfect.

God had two ways of achieving this goal, the goal of having the Jewish people so close to perfect. He could have spoon-fed us these rules, and MADE us that good. But instead he gave us a choice, a decision. Decisions, right or wrong, give wisdom. That is why I hate it when my parents enforce obvious rules that make sense, because if they make sense, I should be able to not have to abide by the rules, but instead just... do them automatically. Without enforcement. When rules are enforced, I have no decision. I can't think in my brain, "What will be the outcome if I do this, or instead do that." If the rule is enforced, then it means that I already had that chance, and I made the wrong decision, and now I must have that particular rule pounded into my head so I will never disobey it again. awwRules, when directed towards me and enforced,

are sort of an insult, because what they show me is that I am not capable of doing things right on my own.

My first thoughts about whether to place these rules in the positive section or negative section were very quick. I immediately threw them into the negative, and thought, 'what's the point of this torah portion?' However, as I read it over and over again and really thought, 'why would there be a section of the Torah so negative?' And then, very quickly, it hit me: there isn't. I realized that these rules belong not in the negative section, but deep down in the positive.