

The Torah teaches that the Mikdash service cannot be done by a Kohen with a *mum* defect.

וַיְדַבֵּר מֹשֶׁה אֶל-אַהֲרֹן וְאֶל-בָּנָיו וְאֶל-כָּל-בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל: פ

“And Moshe spoke to Aharon and his sons, and to all of the Bnei Yisroel.” (Vayikra 21:24).

This passuk is unique in that it recounts that Moshe actually spoke to Aharon and the Bnei Yisroel. This ends off a parsha (a break), therefore, what Moshe said here must be the prior instruction. Additionally, the next passuk is, “And Hashem spoke to Moshe, saying.” (Ibid 22:1). Every time the Torah gives instructions to Moshe it merely gives the instruction. (See Ibid 21:1 *Hashem spoke to Moshe* and the parasha ends off without a recap. Ibid 21:26 *And Hashem spoke to Moshe*, no recap. Then, *Speak to Aharon*, Ibid 21:17. *And Hashem spoke to Moshe*, Ibid 22:1, and again 17 and again 26. Never with saying that Moshe actually taught it to the people. It does say, “Thus Moshe declared to Israel the set times – *Moadim* – of Hashem.” Ibid 23:44. However, that is more an action of him now setting the *Moadim* schedule than actually recapping the lesson). Portions of the Torah never, otherwise, end off by saying “And Moshe spoke to Aharon and his sons and the entire Bnei Yisroel.” It is presumed that Moshe inculcated the lessons. Why does the Torah specifically tell us that Moshe told them about this teaching?

Midrash says, *And Moshe encouraged Aharon through his sons and his sons through each other, and he also gave the power to Beis Din to oversee that these commands are kept.* (Sifra 3:12. See also, Yalkut Shimoni 632:7).

Rashi says, *Bnei Yisroel were told so that they can convey this through Beis Din, as a watch over the Kohanim.* (He quotes the Midrash).

Sifsei Chachamim points out *it must be Beis Din. Otherwise, what does a regular Yisroel have to do with warning Kohanim?*

Ibin Ezra learns, *that since it included Bnei Yisroel we now know that everyone who eats from kodesh must be clean. Otherwise, we would think that a blemished Kohen cannot bring an offering for a Yisroel but the Yisroel can eat it if a regular Kohen brings it. Therefore, since we learn that blemished kohanim may eat kodesh, so long as they are tahor, so, too, Yisroelim may eat, only if tahor.*

Chizkuni says *Bnei Yisroel were told so that they do not entrust their offerings to a blemished kohen. They should know who they are entrusting their korban to.*

Similarly, Birkat Asher brings Rav Kook and points out that it says *Bnei Yisroel because they are the victims of the blemished kohen performing the offering.*

All of these comments answer why the Bnei Yisroel were warned and taught this. However, it does not explain the extra passuk needed to say that they were taught. It could easily have commenced with *And Hashem spoke to Moshe, tell Aharon, his sons, and all of Bnei Yisroel.* Then the Torah would be teaching that all of Bnei Yisroel had to know because Beis Din is empowered to monitor kohanim or so that a Yisroel would know not to go to a blemished Koshen. Why the extra passuk?

This parsah (from break to break) commences: “And Hashem spoke to Moshe, saying. Speak to Aharon saying, ‘A man from your children for generations that has a blemish shall not come close to offer the Lord’s bread.” (Ibid 21:16-17). The Torah does not tell Moshe to tell Aharon’s sons or the Bnei Yisroel; he was instructed only to tell Aharon. Why then, did Moshe specifically tell all the Kohanim and all of Bnei Yisroel?

The kohen with a *mum* includes an outward defect, “who is blind, lame, has a deformed face, or limbs of differing lengths.” (Ibid 21:18). It also includes defects that are not readily seen: “dry lesions, sores, or even crushed testicles.” (Ibid 21:19). Such a kohen cannot offer the Lord’s bread – korbanos – and cannot come close to the mizbeach or into the kodesh. However, he may eat from kodesh foods. (Ibid 21:22). The Torah writes, “He has a blemish in him. The bread of the Lord he shall not bring close.” (Ibid 21:21).

The Torah is clear that this kohen is not blemished. There is nothing, inherently wrong, with this kohen. The blemish is on or in him. He happens to have a blemish. The blemish resides in him, but he – as a whole – is not blemished. He is not a blemished person or even a blemished kohen. He can eat kodesh, teruma, korbanos. He can come into the Beis HaMikdash and the Mishkan. He is still a kohen – getting honored with first aliyos and leading benching. For some reason Hashem did not want the kohen to bring korbanos. (It reads from here, at least, that such a kohen who has a hidden blemish but does not have an outward blemish can perform Birchos Kohanim publicly).

Moshe didn't simply tell Bnei Yisroel. He told *all of Bnei Yisroel*. Moshe did not want create a stigma on such kohanim. Hashem instructed Moshe to tell this to Aharon. Aharon, then, would be in charge of instructing his offspring. Kohanim would self-regulate and make sure those with a blemish do not perform korban services. However, Moshe realized Hashem did not tell this to Aharon. If this was meant to be a stigma, embarrassment, and to be hidden, Hashem would tell this directly to Aharon. Hashem told Moshe. Moshe, therefore, realized, it was meant to be written in the Torah and for everyone to know about it.

*Aharon's sons and all of Bnei Yisroel*. Not just Beis Din but the entire nation should know. For whatever reason, a kohen with a mum cannot perform the intimate avodas Mikdash. However, that kohen is still a kohen, is still a person, and should be treated and considered as such. A blemish is on him but he is not blemished.