

Potomac Torah Study Center

Vol. 9 #32, May 6, 2022; 5 Iyar 5782; Kedoshim

NOTE: Devrei Torah presented weekly in Loving Memory of Rabbi Leonard S. Cahan z"l, Rabbi Emeritus of Congregation Har Shalom, who started me on my road to learning 50 years ago and was our family Rebbe and close friend until his untimely death.

Devrei Torah are now Available for Download (normally by noon on Fridays) from www.PotomacTorah.org. Thanks to Bill Landau for hosting the Devrei Torah archives.

Kedoshim is a fundamental structure of Jewish religious belief, almost at the center of the Torah. Since a chiasmic structure (which the Torah utilizes over and over) points to the center as the most important focus, one would expect extensive and detailed commentary on Kedoshim. Surprisingly, however, many of the modern commentators who normally focus in depth on aspects of every parsha instead select different topics for Kedoshim. One reason could be that most years (non-leap years), we read Acharei Mot with Kedoshim – thus many of the Devrei Torah in those years focus on the first of the two parshot. Also, we normally come to Kedoshim a couple of weeks after Pesach, around Yom HaZikaron and Yom Ha'Atzmaut – so many commentators write about remembering fallen Israeli soldiers and Israeli Independence Day when they might otherwise delve more into issues regarding Kedoshim.

As we look at posts from and relevant to Israel this week, what do we see? Putin's health is deteriorating, and he faces surgery very soon for what appears to be advanced colon or rectal cancer. Good news? Probably not, because Putin found probably the only Russian leader more evil than he is to take over when illness requires that he turn over control. Meanwhile, we read of brutal terror attacks in Israel – murders that seem to come more frequently and with more brutality each day.

Meanwhile, the legal profession is dealing with a leak of a draft Supreme Court decision that, if accurate, would overturn current case law on abortion. The result would apparently remove federal oversight over abortion and return legal status to the various states. Regardless of individuals' views of the legal merits and political implications, a leak of a draft Supreme Court decision should trouble all Americans. Rabbi Marc Angel posted a medical and Halachic discussion of abortion issues by Dr. Richard Grazi, whose discussion of the complexities of the abortion question is well worth reading. I am attaching his article to my E-mail version. Alternatively, you may find the article here: <https://www.jewishideas.org/article/zika-halakhah-and-politics-abortion>

Focusing on the parsha comes as a relief compared to news reports. The parsha opens with God directing Moshe to tell the people, "*You shall be holy, for holy am I, Hashem, your God*" (19:2). As Rabbi Label Lam states (below), there is very little in either the Torah or Navi (Prophets) giving us guidance on how to be holy. Kedoshim contains 51 mitzvot – mostly specific instructions for handling numerous conditions (e.g., not to round off the edge of our scalp or to destroy the edges of our beards; 19:27). Rabbi Lord Jonathan Sacks, z"l, notes that Kadosh (holy) relates to Kiddushin, an essential part of the marriage ceremony. Rabbi Sacks explains that to be Jewish is to bear witness to Hashem. We must be faithful to each other, as in a marriage, the way that our Creator pledges to be faithful to each of us. Kadosh reminds us that we are in Hashem's presence. As Rabbi Rhine puts it, we must be ready to have conversations with God (daven) – the way that Adam Rishon spoke with God in Gan Eden. Rabbi Yehoshua Singer discusses views of classic sources and explains clearly the central role of Kadosh as a guide to proper behavior for all Jews.

Rabbi Jason Goldstein reminds us that the 51 mitzvot in Kedoshim include references to all of the Aseret Dibrot (Vayikra Rabbah 24:5). One of the most famous mitzvot is to love our neighbors as we love ourselves (19:18). Rabbi Marc Angel astutely observes that loving our neighbors requires that we love ourselves. If we cannot respect ourselves, then we cannot genuinely love others. Rav Kook adds that our religion requires that we look positively on fellow Jews.

On Yom Kippur afternoon, we read the sexual prohibitions from chapter 18 (Acharei Mot). Kedoshim opens (chapter 19) with the requirement to be holy because Hashem is holy. The Torah continues with chapter 20, punishments for engaging in any of the forbidden sexual relationships from chapter 18. These chapters are part of a chiasmic structure that points to the center (chapter 19): the requirement to be holy because Hashem is holy. Steinsaltz observes that engaging in forbidden sexual practices leads to our being kicked out of the land. The dozens of specific mitzvot in the parsha demonstrate that a person can slide gradually into violating “minor” mitzvot. This theme returns in Eikev (Devarim 7:12), where a famous Rashi reminds us that Hashem honors those who observe the seemingly minor mitzvot that one might trample with his heel (another meaning of “Eikev”).

My beloved Rebbe, Rabbi Leonard Cahan, z”l, preferred to discuss legal sections of the Torah rather than chronology (narrative or historical sections). Can a parsha be exciting when it comes close to repeating one two chapters earlier, and when it contains 51 mitzvot coming one after the next? To me, the series of Devrei Torah following raise fascinating questions of what some basic concepts mean. What is “Kadosh”? Why does Hashem being Kadosh require that we also be Kadosh? Why does the Torah try to explain Hashem’s connection to Kadosh by presenting dozens of very specific and sometimes obscure mitzvot? I find the Devrei Torah in this collection fascinating and hope that you will also.

Much of the inspiration for my weekly Dvar Torah message comes from the insights of Rabbi David Fohrman and his team of scholars at www.alephbeta.org. Please join me in supporting this wonderful organization, which has increased its scholarly work during the pandemic, despite many of its supporters having to cut back on their donations.

Please daven for a Refuah Shlemah for Yehoshua Mayer HaLevi ben Nechama Zelda, Leib Dovid ben Etel, Mordechai ben Chaya, Hershel Tzvi ben Chana, Uzi Yehuda ben Mirda Behla, David Moshe ben Raizel; Zvi ben Sara Chaya, Eliav Yerachmiel ben Sara Dina, Reuven ben Masha, Meir ben Sara, Oscar ben Simcha; Noa Shachar bat Avigael, Kayla bat Ester, and Malka bat Simcha, who need our prayers. Please contact me for any additions or subtractions. Thank you.

Shabbat Shalom,
Hannah & Alan

Dvar Torah: Kedoshim: Your Whole Being is Holy (5777)

by Rabbi Label Lam

HASHEM spoke to Moshe saying, “Speak to the entire assembly of the Children of Israel and say to them, “You shall Be Holy, for Holy am I, HASHEM, your G-d.”” (Vayikra 19:1)

If this statement to “be holy” is not a Commandment, then what is it? What is expected from us, “the entire assembly of the Children of Israel”? How do we go about being holy? What is the measuring stick? What are the guidelines? How do we know if we’ve done it or that we are doing it right? Where is the Shulchan Aruch – Code of Jewish Law on being holy? For everything else there is precision guidance. For the business of being holy we are left on our own? Why?

It’s interesting that there is very little written and detailed instruction in another super important area of life. People cry out for help with desperation all the time and yet the rule book is hidden and seemingly non-existent.

When it comes to the major project of parenting the next generation of loyal Jews we basically have one line from Shlomo HaMelech, “Raise the child according to his way, and then when he grows old he will not depart from it!” (Mishlei 22:6) Again, why are there no specifics?

It depends on the particular nature of the child. What works for one may fail another. There can be a general expectation of uniform behavior and a collective approach to teaching but true educational training is individualistic. Shlomo HaMelech did not say raise children according their way, he said raise the child according to his way. The group-think model can only go so far if we expect that when that child grows old he will not depart from it!

Rabbi Kalish, the Rosh HaYeshiva from Waterbury said, "Let's say that 5 boys missed morning Davening. I can devise a way that they will be at Davening tomorrow morning, but I want them to be at Davening 40 years from now." That far-sighted dimension of wise advice, "so when he grows old he will not depart from it" compels us to design a unique strategy for each child, including ourselves.

I heard from my Rebbe that there are two ways that Jews cook -- ripen -- develop. The old fashioned style is the way a roast is prepared. It is covered with spices and broiled at 450 degrees for 3 hours. At one point it is toasty on the outside but it could be that when you slice it open you might discover it is frozen and raw on the inside. Not done yet!

Then there is a newer high tech approach represented by the microwave. Put in a frozen hotdog and after a few minutes there may still be ice crystals on the outside but when you bite into it you burn your tongue. There's an invisible fire within.

The ideal education, the Chovos HaLevavos points out, is accomplished when the external training meets the fire within. So too an aspiring musician must practice scales and learn music theory. He is not a musician though until he expresses himself from the inside- out. Without the classic training he would not be able to articulate his musicality. Without inspiration his musical talents will wither.

"Be Holy" challenges us to express ourselves, our deepest selves. The Piacezno Rebbe said, "It is not sufficient to act holy but one must become holy." "Be creative and contribute to the world. Give it the best you have. Make a niche for yourself that will always be felt in the world." Playing this life with your whole being is holy!

<https://torah.org/torah-portion/dvartorah-5777-kedoshim/>

Are you ready to have a conversation?

by Rabbi Mordechai Rhine *

One of the boldest statements is the statement with which this week's Parsha begins. Hashem says to us, "You shall be holy, because I am holy."

In my mind's ear I can hear loud objections. What does one have to do with the other? So, Hashem is holy. Great! What does that have to do with me?

Many people think that religion is mostly about obeying the religious system. Indeed, the Torah instructs us with Mitzvos to do and a list of Aveiros (prohibitions) to refrain from. One might think that as long as we do Mitzvos and avoid Aveiros we have fulfilled our obligation.

The truth, however, is that while observing Torah is a very important first step, it is only the first step. The ultimate goal is that we should have a relationship with Hashem. As we say in the first verses of Shema, "Hashem is one; and you shall love Him."

To have a relationship with Hashem -- to love Him, to have a conversation with Him as part of a trusting relationship -- we must have a commonality with Him. "You shall be holy, because I am holy," is not only a Mitzva, a commandment. More importantly it is a statement of perspective. Although, we humans, are physical, Hashem is not physical. The Torah directive is for us to try to be a bit more in sync with Him. Train yourself to be a bit less enveloped in your physical drives. Hashem is nobility, so try to be noble.

The goal is that we should be able to "look Hashem in the eye," and have a heartfelt conversation. To do that requires trust and understanding; we need to share values with Him. We need to feel safe in His presence.

Rabbi Yosef Kairo (the author of Shulchan Aruch) tells us (Beis Yosef 125) that Hashem's favorite prayer is Kedusha, when we lift ourselves on our tiptoes and "look Hashem eye to eye." The expression "eye to eye" means that we have a commonality, an understanding; we are "on the same page." Why are we seeing Hashem "eye to eye" when we recite Kedusha and lift ourselves on our tiptoes?

When does a person lift themselves on their tiptoes? When they are trying to reach something that is out of reach. In Kedusha we declare that Hashem is Kadosh (holy). We lift ourselves up as if to say, “We are striving to have commonality with You, Hashem. We are striving to be holy and spiritual on the level that we can. We are human, but we yearn for a relationship with You. We are ready for an ‘eye to eye,’ heartfelt conversation.”

Much has been written regarding the religious dilemma that some humans have in recognizing Hashem. To the religious Jew, the perspective of the non-religious person is confusing. The world is clearly a sophisticated place, a place that didn't happen accidentally. The human body, DNA, and the world in general, indicate a wise and caring creator.

A personal perspective, if I may: When my wife works hard to create a beautiful Shabbos dinner (as she does each week), it would take sheer foolishness to consider that maybe the beautiful meal created itself, and there is no need to thank her. The question has therefore been asked for generations, “Why is it that some people see the wonder of creation and do not recognize Hashem?”

Some suggest that when we recognize Hashem as the wise creator, we are perforce obligated to observe His laws. This would be both an ethical imperative (Hashem created the world in which we live so it is proper to obey the “homeowner” who hosts us,) and as an act of wisdom (Hashem created the world generously. Clearly, He loves us. The Mitzvos are for our good to guide us to greatness). If a person does not want to obey Mitzvos, the theory goes, they might try to nip the logic as it starts by claiming they don't believe in a creator.

It seems to me that there is another possibility as to why some people are not ready to acknowledge Hashem. I believe it may be because having a relationship, a conversation, and a commonality with Hashem, seems awkward. Many people find it hard to have a conversation, much less a conversation with Hashem. Yet, that is the essence of our religion: To believe that as great as Hashem is, He is interested and relates to each of us. We can, and should, talk to Him, both formally and informally, in prayer.

Talking to Hashem in prayer calls upon our personal integrity. It means that we are ready to have a conversation with Him. It is a conversation in which we share ourselves -- our hopes, our dreams, our fears, our pains, and our joys -- in a heartfelt way. In our conversation with Hashem, we can and should sense our vulnerabilities, and recognize that we stand before His greatness.

“Be holy,” Hashem says, “Because I am holy.”

“We are partners in the journey called life as man strives in action and attitude to be great. In holiness we have commonality. We have shared values. Come, let's see ‘eye to eye.’ Come, let's have a conversation.”

Wishing you and yours a wonderful Shabbos!

Rabbi Mordechai Rhine is a certified mediator and coach with Rabbinic experience of over 20 years. Based in Maryland, he provides services internationally via Zoom. He is the Director of TEACH613: Building Torah Communities, One family at a Time, and the founder of CARE Mediation, focused on Marriage/ Shalom Bayis and personal coaching. To reach Rabbi Rhine, his websites are www.care-mediation.com and www.teach613.org; his email is RMRhine@gmail.com. **For information or to join any Torah613 classes, contact Rabbi Rhine.**

Love Others as Yourself!?! Thoughts for Parashat Kedoshim

by Rabbi Marc D. Angel *

“And you shall love your neighbor as yourself,” (Vayikra 19:18).

Rabbi Akiva considered this verse to be a great principle of the Torah. Indeed, it is widely considered to be the “golden rule” that is at the root of human morality and civilization.

The only problem is: is it really possible to love one's neighbor as oneself? In some special cases, the answer is yes. But in many cases, it would seem to be unlikely, if not impossible, to love others as oneself — especially if they are unlovable!

We come across people who are malicious, cruel, or vindictive. We know people who are manipulative, egomaniacal, dishonest and offensive. We see people who act in destructive ways, who undermine families and communities. Can we really be expected to love such people?

Some of our sages have explained that the Torah calls on us to love our “neighbor,” i.e. only those individuals who act in a “neighborly” way, who observe Torah and mitzvot, who maintain a moral and courteous lifestyle. According to this line of thinking, there is no obligation to love wicked, immoral people.

Maimonides teaches:

“It is a commandment to love each fellow Israelite as oneself, as it is stated, You shall love your fellow as yourself. Therefore one must speak in praise of his fellow and be concerned for his property, as one is concerned about one’s own property and honor. One who gains personal honor by shaming another has no place in the world to come.” (Hilkhot De’ot 6:3)

Maimonides offers practical advice on how loving one’s neighbor is to be fulfilled. He does not write about actually loving — or even liking — the other person. Rather, he instructs us how to behave toward others: speak well of them, be concerned for their property. Just as we want others to speak nicely about us and be respectful of our property, so we should demonstrate these qualities toward others...even if we do not really like them. Maimonides is careful to add that one should not gain personal honor by shaming others and tearing them down. One who engages in such behavior has no place in the world to come.

Maimonides seems to have based himself on a teaching of the Talmudic sage, Hillel, who taught: that which is hateful to you, do not do unto others. Hillel’s emphasis was not on the ethereal emotion of love, but on practical implementation of proper behavior toward others. Even if we do not have positive emotional feelings for particular people, we still should not act toward them in a manner that we wouldn’t want them to act toward us.

It seems, then, that we may understand the commandment to love others as a demand that we act decently, that we conduct ourselves with high moral standards...even toward people we may not actually like. We should not lower our own ethical standards even when dealing with less-than wonderful people.

We might also understand the commandment as pointing us in the direction of a philosophy of life that stresses love of others. Rabbi Yitzhak Shemuel Reggio, a 19th century Italian Jewish Bible commentator, noted that it is not possible to love another person as much as we love ourselves; what, then, does this Torah passage mean? He translates the verse as follows: you shall love your neighbor who is like you i.e. you must remember that all human beings are created in the image of God, all have the right to respect and dignity, all share a common humanity. If you recognize that the "other" is actually "like yourself", you will be better able to love/empathize/respect him or her.

Rabbi Reggio's universalistic understanding of the "golden rule" teaches that all human beings – whatever their race, religion or nationality – are entitled to be treated "like ourselves". They, too, were created by God. They, too, have the human qualities with which we are endowed. If we can see "them" as being just like "us", we are more likely to develop a sense of kinship and responsibility to all of humanity.

It must be noted, though, that the commandment to love our neighbor does not mean we should allow him/her to commit injustices. The same Torah portion that calls on us to love others calls on us to chastise those who behave wrongly. We are commanded not to stand idly by when an innocent person is in trouble. We need to recognize that some people forfeit their right to our love and compassion when their behavior is reprehensible and dangerous to others. Or rather, our love for people must include our responsibility to help them avoid immoral and harmful behavior.

The commandment to love others as ourselves implies that we need to love ourselves! This means we need to live upright and honorable lives; when we look in the mirror, we should see someone whom we respect. That is also an essential ingredient in the “golden rule.” [Emphasis added]

* Founder and Director, Institute for Jewish Ideas and Ideals.

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<https://www.jewishideas.org/love-others-yourself-thoughts-parashat-kedoshim>

Israel: A Tiny Nation, A Great Destiny: Thoughts for Yom Ha'Atzmaut by Rabbi Marc D. Angel *

A tiny nation, often misunderstood and maligned, changed the course of history for the good. This tiny nation produced the Bible and its prophets; sages and mystics; poets and dreamers. This tiny nation, generation after generation, in many ways has been the conscience of humanity, the litmus test of human civilization.

This tiny nation lived in a tiny land in antiquity. Its King David established Jerusalem as its capital city a thousand years before the dawn of Christianity and more than 1600 years before Mohammed. It was seldom allowed to live in peace: other nations threatened, attacked, made war. It saw its capital city razed by vicious enemies, its Temples destroyed by Babylonians and Romans, its citizens ravaged and exiled.

This tiny nation, scattered throughout the world, faced persecutions and humiliations. Its men and women and children were confined to ghettos, deprived of elementary human rights, subjected to pogroms and pillage. Millions of them were murdered during the Holocaust.

Exiled from its land for nearly 2000 years, it always dreamed of returning to its ancestral soil and re-establishing its sovereignty. It prayed daily for the return. Many of its members made pilgrimages, and some remained living in the land throughout the generations, in conditions of poverty and oppression.

In spite of the persecutions it suffered and in spite of the callousness of so many nations of the world, this tiny nation maintained faith in One God and in the mission He assigned it to bring the lofty teachings of Torah to humanity. In spite of all its sufferings, this tiny nation maintained faith in humanity: it strove to make the world a better place for all human beings, with an eternal optimism that is truly a wonder.

This tiny nation, born 3500 years ago, wove its way through history and refused to be destroyed or silenced. This tiny nation, scattered throughout the lands of the world, found the will and the courage to return to its historic homeland after nearly 2000 years of exile. The return home has been difficult. It has had to fight wars, withstand terrorism, overcome economic boycotts, endure political isolation, and combat hateful propaganda.

Yet, this tiny and ancient nation, against all reasonable odds, has re-established its sovereignty in its historic homeland; it has created a vibrant, dynamic, idealistic society, dedicated to the ideals of freedom and democracy. With its memory spanning the millennia, it has created a modern, progressive state.

My wife Gilda and I first visited this historic land in the summer of 1968, a year after our marriage. When we glimpsed the shoreline from the airplane window, we both found ourselves with tears in our eyes. We were not born in this land; we had never been there before; and yet we were returning — we and all the generations of our families were returning through us. "When the Lord turned back the captivity of Zion, we were as in a dream)Psalm 126:1(."

This tiny people is Israel. This tiny land is Israel. This nation of dreamers and visionaries, builders and farmers, sages and scientists, warriors and peace makers — this nation is Israel. This tiny nation is a great nation. This tiny land is a holy land. "The tiny shall become a thousand, and the least a mighty nation)Isaiah 60:22(."

Israel is a bastion of hope in a world filled with despair. It is a wellspring of human dignity in a world filled with shameless hatred and strife.

To stand with Israel is to stand for the redemption of the people of Israel and humanity. To stand with Israel is to recognize the sheer wonder of the survival and contributions of the people of Israel. It is to affirm the preciousness of life over a culture of death; righteousness over hypocrisy; idealism over despair. This tiny nation in its tiny land is a testament to the greatness of the human spirit. It is a testimony to God's providence.

It is a privilege, beyond words, to dream with Israel and share its destiny.

"For Zion's sake I shall not be silent, and for Jerusalem's sake I shall not rest, until her righteousness go forth as brightness and her salvation as a flaming torch)Isaiah 62:1(."

* Founder and Director, Institute for Jewish Ideas and Ideals.

<https://www.jewishideas.org/article/israel-tiny-nation-great-destiny-thoughts-yom-haatsmaut>

The Value of an Explanatory Prayer Service

By Rabbi Hayyim Angel *

This past Shabbat)April 30, 2022(, I had the privilege to lead a newly-opened explanatory prayer service at Congregation Beth Aaron in Teaneck, New Jersey. The service is dedicated to the memory of Andy Dimond, who passed away last year. Raised in a largely secular Jewish family, Andy became observant in his adulthood and was deeply dedicated to inspiring others religiously.

It is striking that in a highly observant community as Teaneck, there is a profound thirst for learning more about Torah and prayer. Some sixty people were in attendance, and we learned about the weekly Torah reading and prayer. It was inspiring to see so many people take the step to learn more about the services they attend regularly.

Here is a summary of the main talk I gave, pertaining to the value of an explanatory service and the goals of prayer.

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Prayer is hard! Even for those of us who attend synagogue services regularly, there are a number of fundamental impediments to prayer.

For many, the Hebrew language is a barrier. Despite the fact that Jewish law permits prayer in any language one understands, our public prayers are recited in Hebrew.

Although thanking God can be understood as an expression of good manners and gratitude, what do words of praise and petition actually achieve? Furthermore, we pray from a fixed text, and recite the same prayers whether at times of great joy or when we are beset by crisis.

For many, analysis is more stimulating than prayer, making Torah study a more meaningful religious encounter. The same holds true for acts of tzedakah and hesed toward others, where we immediately feel a sense of religious fulfillment.

While we may confront different challenges than did earlier generations, our struggle to attain religious devotion is hardly a uniquely modern problem. Let us consider one remarkable passage from the Jerusalem Talmud:

R. Hiyya said, "I never concentrated during prayer in all my days! Once I wanted to concentrate, but I thought about who will meet the king first: Ja Persian high official[or the Exilarch." Shemuel said, "I count chicks." R. Bun b. Hiyya said, "I count bricks." R. Matnaya said, "I am grateful to my head, because it bows by itself when I reach Modim)Berakhot 2:4, 16a(.

One commentary entitled Toledot Yitzhak)by Rabbi Yitzhak Karo, the brother of Rabbi Yosef Karo(remarks that the Talmud teaches that even the greatest Sages struggled with the issue of proper intention and focus during prayer. Their struggles should inspire us to improve our focus, and not to despair when we find prayer difficult.

In addition to our efforts, we need God's help to pray. We begin each Amidah with the introductory petition: "O Lord, open my lips, that my mouth may declare Your praise" (Psalms 51:17). We pray to God to enable us to pray! Once we recognize some of the inherent challenges in prayer, we may begin to address those challenges and enhance our ability to pray.

* * * *

One of the most incredible aspects of seeing a starry night is the concept of light years. We are looking at the stars right now, but we see one star as it appeared 20 years ago, another as it appeared 40 years ago, another as it appeared 100 years ago, and so on. It creates a staggering feeling of time-transcendence.

The prayer book offers a similar phenomenon. It is an anthology of sacred texts, which includes passages from the Torah, later books of the Bible incorporated in the Prophets and the Holy Writings, Mishnah, Talmud, the medieval period, sixteenth-century mystical traditions — all the way to prayers for the modern State of Israel. When we pray, we engage God in a relationship right now, but we also transcend time by seamlessly moving through the set order of prayers.

Engagement with the traditional prayer book connects us with communities everywhere and all time. Without this fixed text, we would have lost our shared identity long ago.

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The great mystic Rabbi Hayyim Vital (1542-1620), upon entering the synagogue, would say, "I now am ready to fulfill the commandment of loving my neighbor as myself." Although the commandment "love your neighbor as yourself" (Leviticus 19:18) is a celebrated tenet of the Torah, it seems surprising that Rabbi Vital would call attention to this commandment in the particular context of prayer.

Rabbi Vital teaches a profound lesson about prayer. Communal prayer creates shared lives, built around God, the Torah, education, and community service. Prayers express our greatest ideas and ideals. If we truly can pray, we truly can love others on the highest plane.

A great measure of the success of a prayer service is how people behave outside of the synagogue in day-to-day life. Are we bringing religious values to every aspect of our lives? Are we more sensitive, better people?

Learning to pray requires making ourselves vulnerable to accept that we need help praying. It inspires us to transcend ourselves and our time and connect to eternity. And it prods us to look beyond the walls of our synagogues to develop religious and communal engagement in all areas of our lives.

* Institute for Jewish Ideas and Ideals.

<https://www.jewishideas.org/article/value-explanatory-prayer-service>

Kedoshim - Hallowed with Holiness by Rabbi Yehoshua Singer *

This week's parsha opens with an enigmatic, though beautiful, mitzvah – "You shall be holy for I am holy" (Vayikra 19:2). This is undoubtedly a most lofty obligation - to follow G-d's ways and be holy in a manner somehow similar to G-d. But what is holiness? What does it mean to be holy and how do we attain this lofty status?

The Rambam (ibid.) quotes a Medrash Toras Kohanim which explains that just as Hashem is separate so too we should be separate. The Rambam explains that this concept of separation is referring to a separation from physicality. We understand and recognize G-d's holiness in that he is spiritual and has no physicality, and it is this separation from physicality which we are being commanded to emulate.

The Rambam clarifies that this does not mean a separation from the physical world, but rather is defining how we should approach and engage with the physical world. There are many specific actions or activities which the Torah has defined

as forbidden. In these parshiyos we have a list of forbidden relationships. A short while ago in Parshas Shemini, we read of a long list of forbidden foods. However, there are many relationships and many foods and drinks which are still permitted. How should we view these items and how should we approach these areas of life? It is to address this question that we are told, "Be holy" and separate ourselves.

The Ramba"n explains that if a person would only follow the letter of the law and avoid all forbidden activities they could still live a hedonistic life. One could indulge himself in food and drink with gluttony and even drink himself into a drunken stupor, without ever directly violating a commandment. If one is honest, he could spend his entire life engaged in business and amassing wealth, without ever cheating or stealing or violating any other commandment. However, these lifestyles fall far short from the depth, meaning and joy which Hashem wants us to have in life, both in this world and in the next world. We are, therefore, given this mitzvah to "be holy" and separate ourselves from over-indulgence in physical pleasures and physical pursuits. We should engage appropriately with the permitted areas of our physical lives, but at the same time we must be careful not to over-indulge and lose sight of the true value and purpose of life.

The Ramba"n concludes by explaining that there are many areas where the Torah will give us details and then add one mitzvah which is meant to encapsulate the spirit of the law. This is the mitzvah of "be holy." After teaching us of many forbidden physical activities, we are commanded to understand and live by a deeper message – to remember that life has a higher purpose and not to get caught up in physical pursuits. We find a similar idea in the mitzvos regarding monetary law and business law. After many specific mitzvos are given in these areas, we are then commanded "and you shall do what is just and proper" (Devarim 6:18). It is not enough to simply follow the letter of the law. We must understand the deeper message and live by it.

In addition to the powerful lesson the Ramba"n is teaching us on where we should focus our efforts and our goals in life, I believe there is a powerful lesson about our humanity in his words. The Ramba"n tells us that we can attain a status of holiness by separating from excessive physicality, or in other words – by simply abstaining and holding back. Holiness is not defined by what we do, but rather by what we don't do. What makes us holy is our ability to hold back and to abstain from indulgence. Holiness is achieved by recognizing that one has something more and does not need the physicality before him. Holiness is expressed by our equanimity and our self-control and by our ability to rise above our challenges and maintain our standards.

The Ramba"n is teaching us the true beauty of this mitzvah. We must understand that we have a nobility and sanctity within ourselves that is far greater than anything the physical world can offer us. We must rise above our physical goals and seek a higher road, to recognize the G-dly soul within us and truly "be holy."

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Kedoshim: Be Unique – For I Am!

By Rabbi Haim Ovadia *

*"Speak unto all the congregation of the children of Israel, and say unto them: You shall be holy;
for I YHWH your God, am holy."*

The word Kadosh is traditionally translated as holy. The more meticulous commentators explain that קדוש means separate, designated, set aside. Consequently, all which is sacred is also Kadosh because it must be set apart and not accessed by all. In that sense, the opening verse of Parashat Kedoshim is understood as saying that just as God is set apart from the world, so devout Israelites must separate themselves from the rest of the people, from the nations, and from the crowd. According to Nahmanides, the process of separation continues within the nation, as those who want to be spiritually elevated take upon themselves additional measures of abstinence and religious practices.

This interpretation raises several problems:

1. Immediately following the imperative "be holy!" the Torah lists forbidden actions along desired ones. Most of them are natural laws, preached, if not practically followed, by most civilized societies. Nowhere in this portion or in the Bible can we find support for the idea of abstaining even from the things which are allowed.

2. In Exodus (19:6), God refers to the Israelites as a kingdom of priests. Since the role of a priest is to teach and promulgate knowledge of the Torah, as stated by Malachi (2:7), this designation means that just as the Kohanim are the spiritual leaders of the nation, so the nation should become a spiritual guidelight for the whole world. This idea is also supported by the famous words of Isaiah (2:3) and Micah (4:2): "...many nations will say, let us ascend the mount of the God of Jacob, so He will teach us His ways and we will walk in His paths." How can we succeed in that mission if we become aloof and search for ways to be better than others?

3. The interpretation of Kadosh as holy suggests a level of separation between factions of the nation and between individuals, but the language of the whole chapter is one of friendship and connectivity. To illustrate that, here is the list of words which refer to different segments of the nation and the family in the first 18 verses of chapter 19: All the congregation of the children of Israel; mother and father; the poor and the sojourner; your companion; your friend; a hired worker; a deaf person; a blind person; a poor person; an important person; your tribesmen; your friend; your brother; your companion; your fellow men... and the culmination "love the other as you love yourself." This list shows without doubt that the theme of the chapter is inclusivity and friendship, rather than the creation of a holy, elitist religious group.

I would therefore suggest a different interpretation of שׁוֹדֵד, one which is in line with its original Hebrew context – unique. Verse 19:2 will be translated thus:

"Speak to all the congregation of the children of Israel and tell them: you shall be unique, for I, God, am unique!"

Already the early Mishnaic scholars emphasized the idea of an individual's uniqueness. Talmud Yerushalmi (Berakhot 9:1) mentions a special blessing recited upon seeing a great multitude:

"blessed is the Master of Secrets [who created so many people], each with a unique face, each with a unique personality."

This blessing, as other statements in Rabbinical literature, relies on the beautiful concept, found in the first chapter of the Torah, that humans were created in the image of God.

Throughout human history, the uniqueness of the individual was challenged and suppressed by monarchs, tyrants, and totalitarian regimes. Today, we would like to think that, at least in developed countries, such oppression has all but disappeared, and that if it exists it is limited to religious movements which indoctrinate their followers into thoughtless adherence to a clear-cut ideology. Sadly, this is not the case. Though we made significant progress in the ability of mankind to understand and respect differences and otherness, our society, even in countries we would like to think of as modern, is fragmented and stratified. We equate unity with uniformity, and therefore seek to conceal or erase differences. When we fail, we often shut ourselves in a bubble of people who are like us, either physically, religiously, or intellectually, and find there our refuge of unity.

This rejection of human individuality stems from fear and from the inability to appreciate and digest our multifaceted, and sometimes insane, human experience. I have recently found that fear expressed by Yuval Noah Harari a professor of history at Hebrew University and a best-selling author. In his book Homo Deus, Harari argues for a new understanding of mankind, one which makes us nothing more than a random collection of wires, neurons, and chemical reactions. Our experiences, he claims, are all subjective, and there is no objective entity or personality which could be described as human. Harari goes on to predict the end of humanity as we know it, and its replacement by improved cyborgs. Harari's scientific-philosophical treatise is nothing less than a new way to oppress human creativity and individuality by making them insignificant.

The Torah guides us not to be swayed by ancient or modern ideologues. Each individual is, as the word indicates, indivisible and unique. This understanding leads to an appreciation of one's own talents and gifts, and to the nurturing of self-esteem and a sense of purpose and fulfilment. It is then extended towards the rest of humanity, as we realize that all others are unique as well.

Shabbat Shalom.

* Torah VeAhava (now SephardicU.com). Rabbi, Beth Sholom Sephardic Minyan (Potomac, MD) and faculty member, AJRCA non-denominational rabbinical school). **New: Many of Rabbi Ovadia's Devrei Torah are now available on**

Sefaria: <https://www.sefaria.org/profile/haim-ovadia?tab=sheets> Hebrew quotes from the Torah, omitted here, are in Rabbi Ovadia's original in Sefaria.

Kedoshim: Striving for Holiness in the Everyday

By Rabbi Jason Goldstein *

In Parshat Kedoshim, we find a plethora of mitzvot. HaShem tells us "You shall each revere his mother and his father," "Keep My sabbaths," and "Do not steal" (Lev. 19:3, 19:11). If these mitzvot sound familiar, you are not alone. They are very reminiscent of the Aseret HaDibrot. No less than seven of the Ten Commandments have direct parallels in Parshat Kedoshim. There is a midrash that goes even further and identifies all ten of the Aseret HaDibrot scattered throughout other mitzvot of our parsha (Vayikra Rabbah 24:5)

The obvious question is why. Why does the Torah repeat that which we already know? The answer lies in an examination of the broader context of both series of pesukim.

HaShem presented the Aseret HaDibrot at the most enthralling moment in the entire history of Bnei Yisrael. At Matan Torah there was an unprecedented intimacy between Bnei Yisrael and HaShem. It was a time of intense religious devotion. At that moment when HaShem said "Do not steal," no one could even begin to contemplate breaking that command. The world for Bnei Yisrael at the time was black and white.

We are now very far away from matan Torah and live in the gray. Parshat Kedoshim comes after the details of the korbanot, after the details of tumah and tahara, and after the details of kashrut. Our parsha comes after the details of how to apply HaShem's mitzvot in the real world. On an intellectual level, we all know what is right and what is wrong, but when it comes to applying that in the real world, things can sometimes get a little murky. It is all too easy to slip. In our day to day lives, when we may not feel directly in God's presence, that is the time when we have to be the most careful.

It is for this reason that God exhorts to "be holy" (Lev. 19:2). The Torah is telling us that the path to becoming holy is doing what is right, not only when we are experiencing our highest moments of religiosity, but even more so when we are engaging in our daily routine activities. By internalizing these commands, let us strive to be truly worthy to be called kadosh.

Shabbat Shalom.

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<https://library.yctorah.org/2022/05/kedoshim22>

Deep South Israeli Diplomacy

By Rabbi Moshe Rube *

With the Day of Remembrance for Israeli Soldiers and Israeli Independence Day upon us, so much can be said and left unsaid.

We're so grateful to have the State of Israel and even more so for all who have made the ultimate sacrifice so that we Jews can be safe in our land. Israel is a holy land, and those that have fought for her are the holy of holies.

But the battle doesn't stop at the battlefield. Every day, Israel and its ambassadors fight a diplomatic war on the world stage from the powers that seek to delegitimize it. This war of words, if not fought and won, leads to wars of weapons. Those that fight in it also deserve our deepest gratitude and to be called holy.

With this in mind allow me to relate the words of Levi Eshkol (taken from Yehuda Avener's "The Prime Ministers") that he

uttered while visiting our stomping grounds of the Deep South.

After Israel's victory in the Six Day War, Egypt, Syria, and Iraq replenished their air supplies, and Russia was supplying them with equipment and military experts. With remarkable perseverance, they vowed to finish their genocide of the Jewish state.

In order to combat this threat, Israel needed new fighter jets. The ones they had were obsolete, and they had to turn to the United States. They needed at least fifty new U.S. made jets called the F-4 Phantoms. Without them, the victory in the Six Day War would be short-lived.

On the diplomatic mission, President Lyndon Johnson invited Prime Minister Levi Eshkol to his private ranch deep in the heart of Texas to meet with him and his cabinet. After a tour and a hearty dinner, the talks began. President Johnson and his staff showed hesitancy as they remained unconvinced that Israel was truly in danger and that they were making reasonable efforts at peace. Also, they feared that such a commitment would have negative international repercussions for America. Therefore, President Johnson said he needed "time" to consider Eshkol's request before the USA embarked on this "irrevocable course".

Eshkol responded,

"Mr. President, how much time? I would love for somebody in the world - here in this room - to tell me when and where and how I can get a peace process going with the Arabs. I wouldn't be here asking for Phantoms if somebody could tell me how to do that. But instead of peace we are faced with an unprecedented Arab rearmament that again threatens our very existence. The immediate issue is the means to defend ourselves against another attempted onslaught. Surely, you can understand that. Israel feels weaker now than before the Six-Day War. Why? Because as you rightly said, Mr. President, we are a small country of two and a half million Jews surrounded by a sea of Arabs. They outnumber us in every possible way. So what are we supposed to do? Wait until Russia gives them so many planes that they can dictate their terms at will? People used to say that a one to three ratio in aircraft in favor of the Arabs was adequate for our defense. Granted our pilots are good. But my God, there is a limit!"

At this point, Eshkol's face turned white as he galloped on.

"Mr. President, the State of Israel is the last chance for the Jewish People. We Jews are in our land to rebuild a sovereign State which will, we hope grow in population. I pray with all my heart to avoid another war. But I know of only one address to acquire the tools we need to defend ourselves - and that address is you. In a couple of years' time, the Arabs will have nine hundred to one thousand first-line aircraft. To deter them we need to have three hundred and fifty to four hundred. We'll try to manage with that ratio. If I have to return home without a commitment from you on the Phantoms, our citizens will be demoralized and our Arab neighbors will rejoice, knowing we have been abandoned. That will mean war. And I know of no other prescription for deterring it other than by you supplying us with the means to do so, the Phantoms."

President Johnson supplied Israel with the Phantoms they needed.

May our remembrance of the fallen and celebration of the State of Israel serve as a prayer that the Jewish State only know victory on the battlefields of action and words.

Moadim LeSimchah!

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Kedoshim: Love Your Neighbor

“Do not take revenge nor bear a grudge against anyone among your people. You must love your neighbor as you love yourself.” (Lev. 19:18)

Is this mitzvah of Ahavat Yisrael realistic? Is it possible to truly love another person as much as we love ourselves?

Attaining Ahavat Yisrael

Rav Kook stressed the importance of loving the Jewish people. In his magnum opus *Orot HaKodesh*, Rav Kook gave practical advice on how to achieve this love.

- Love for the Jewish people does not start from the heart, but from the head. To truly love and understand the Jewish people – each individual Jew and the nation as a whole – requires a wisdom that is both insightful and multifaceted. This intellectual inquiry is an important discipline of Torah study.
- Loving others does not mean indifference to baseness and moral decline. Our goal is to awaken knowledge and morality, integrity, and refinement; to clearly mark the purpose of life, its purity and holiness. Even our acts of loving-kindness should be based on a hidden *Gevurah*, an inner outrage at the world’s — and thus our own — spiritual failures.
- If we take note of others’ positive traits, we will come to love them with an inner affection. This is not a form of insincere flattery, nor does it mean white-washing their faults and foibles. But by concentrating on their positive characteristics — and every person has a good side — the negative aspects become less significant.
- This method provides an additional benefit. The Sages cautioned against joining with the wicked and exposing oneself to their negative influence. But if we connect to their positive traits, then this contact will not endanger our own moral and spiritual purity.

We can attain a high level of love for Israel by deepening our awareness of the inner ties that bind together all the souls of the Jewish people, throughout all the generations. In the following revealing passage, Rav Kook expressed his own profound sense of connection with and love for every Jewish soul:

“Listen to me, my people! I speak to you from my soul, from within my innermost soul. I call out to you from the living connection by which I am bound to all of you, and by which all of you are bound to me. I feel this more deeply than any other feeling: that only you — all of you, all of your souls, throughout all of your generations — you alone are the meaning of my life. In you I live. In the aggregation of all of you, my life has that content that is called ‘life.’ Without you, I have nothing. All hopes, all aspirations, all purpose in life, all that I find inside myself – these are only when I am with you. I need to connect with all of your souls. I must love you with a boundless love....”

Each one of you, each individual soul from the aggregation of all of you, is a great spark from the torch of infinite light, which enlightens my existence. You give meaning to life and work, to Torah and prayer, to song and hope. It is through the conduit of your being that I sense everything and love everything.” (Shemonah Kevatzim, vol. I, sec. 163)

Love for Every Jew

For Rav Kook, Ahavat Yisrael was not just theoretical. Stories abound of his extraordinary love for other Jews, even those who were intensely antagonistic to his ways and beliefs. Below is one such story, from the period that Rav Kook served as

chief rabbi of pre-state Israel.

A vocal group of ultra-Orthodox Jerusalemites vociferously opposed Rav Kook due to his positive attitude towards secular Zionists. They would frequently post in the streets of Jerusalem broadsheets that denounced the Chief Rabbi and discrediting his authority.

One day Rav Kook returned from a brit milah ceremony in Jerusalem's Old City, accompanied by dozens of students. Suddenly a small group of hotheaded extremists attacked the rabbi, showering him with waste water. The chief rabbi was completely drenched by the filthy water. Emotions soared and tempers flared.

By the time Rav Kook had arrived home, news of the attack had spread throughout the city. Prominent citizens arrived to express their repugnance at the shameful incident. One of the visitors was the legal counsel of British Mandate. The attorney advised Rav Kook to press charges against the hooligans, and he promised that they would be promptly deported from the country.

The legal counsel was astounded by Rav Kook's response.

"I have no interest in court cases," replied the rabbi. "Despite what they did to me, I love them. I am ready to kiss them, so great is my love! I burn with love for every Jew."

These were Rav Kook's thoughts, shortly after this deeply humiliating act.

Rav Kook would say:

"There is no such thing as Ahavat Chinam — groundless love. Why groundless? He is a Jew, and I am obligated to love and respect him. There is only Sinat Chinam — hate without reason. But Ahavat Chinam? Never!"

(Adapted from Orot HaKodesh vol. III, pp. 324–334; Malachim K'vnei Adam, pp. 262, 483–485.)

<http://www.ravkooktorah.org/KDOSHM62.htm>

In Search of Jewish Identity (Kedoshim 5776)

By Lord Rabbi Jonathan Sacks, z"l, Former Chief Rabbi of the U.K.*

The other day I was having a conversation with a Jewish intellectual and the question came up, as it often does, as to the nature of Jewish identity. What are we? What makes us Jewish? This has been one of the persisting debates about Jewish life ever since the nineteenth century. Until then, people by and large knew who and what Jews were. They were the heirs of an ancient nation who, in the Sinai desert long ago, made a covenant with God and, with greater or lesser success, tried to live by it ever since. They were God's people.

Needless to say, this upset others. The Greeks thought they were the superior race. They called non-Greeks "barbarians," a word intended to resemble the sound made by sheep. The Romans likewise thought themselves better than others, Christians and Muslims both held, in their different ways, that they, not the Jews, were the true chosen of God. The result was many centuries of persecution. So when Jews were given the chance to become citizens of the newly secular nation states of Europe, they seized it with open arms. In many cases they abandoned their faith and religious practice. But they were still regarded as Jews.

What, though, did this mean? It could not mean that they were a people dedicated to God, since many of them no longer believed in God or acted as if they did. So it came to mean a race. Benjamin Disraeli, converted to Christianity by his father as a young child, thought of his identity in those terms. He once wrote, "All is race — there is no other truth," and

said about himself, in response to a taunt by the Irish politician Daniel O'Connell, "Yes, I am a Jew, and when the ancestors of the right honourable gentleman were brutal savages in an unknown island, mine were priests in the temple of Solomon."

The trouble was that hostility to Jews did not cease despite all that Europe claimed by way of enlightenment, reason, the pursuit of science and emancipation. It could now, though, no longer be defined by religion, since neither Jews nor Europeans used that as the basis of identity. So Jews became hated for their race, and in the 1870s a new word was coined to express this: antisemitism. This was dangerous. So long as Jews were defined by religion, Christians could work to convert them. You can change your religion. But you cannot change your race. Anti-Semites could only work, therefore, for the expulsion or extermination of the Jews.

Ever since the Holocaust it has become taboo to use the word "race" in polite society in the West. Yet secular Jewish identity persists, and there seems no other way of referring to it. So a new term has come to be used instead: ethnicity, which means roughly what "race" meant in the nineteenth century. The Wikipedia definition of ethnicity is "a category of people who identify with each other based on common ancestral, social, cultural, or national experiences."

The trouble is that ethnicity is where we came from, not where we are going to. It involves culture and cuisine, a set of memories meaningful to parents but ever less so to their children. In any case, there is no one Jewish ethnicity: there are ethnicities in the plural. That is what makes Sefardi Jews different from their Ashkenazi cousins, and Sefardi Jews from North Africa and the Middle East different from those whose families originally came from Spain and Portugal.

Besides which, what is often thought of as Jewish ethnicity is often not even Jewish in origin. It is a lingering trace of what Jews absorbed from a local non-Jewish culture: Polish dress, Russian music, North African food, and the German-Jewish dialect known as Yiddish along with its Spanish-Jewish counterpart Ladino. Ethnicity is often a set of borrowings thought of as Jewish because their origins have been forgotten.

Judaism is not an ethnicity and Jews are not an ethnic group. Go to the Western Wall in Jerusalem and you will see Jews of every colour and culture under the sun, the Beta Israel from Ethiopia, the Bene Israel from India, Bukharan Jews from central Asia, Iraqi, Berber, Egyptian, Kurdish and Libyan Jews, the Temanim from Yemen, alongside American Jews from Russia, South African Jews from Lithuania, and British Jews from German-speaking Poland. Their food, music, dress, customs and conventions are all different. Jewishness is not an ethnicity but a bricolage of multiple ethnicities.

Besides which, ethnicity does not last. If Jews are merely an ethnic group, they will experience the fate of all such groups, which is that they disappear over time. Like the grandchildren of Irish, Polish, German and Norwegian immigrants to America, they merge into the melting pot. Ethnicity lasts for three generations, for as long as children can remember immigrant grandparents and their distinctive ways. Then it begins to fade, for there is no reason for it not to. If Jews had been no more than an ethnicity, they would have died out long ago, along with the Canaanites, Perizzites and Jebusites, known only to students of antiquity and having left no mark on the civilization of the West.

So when, in 2000, a British Jewish research institute proposed that Jews in Britain be defined as an ethnic group and not a religious community, it took a non-Jewish journalist, Andrew Marr, to state the obvious: 'All this is shallow water,' he wrote, 'and the further in you wade, the shallower it gets.' He continued:

The Jews have always had stories for the rest of us. They have had their Bible, one of the great imaginative works of the human spirit. They have been victim of the worst modernity can do, a mirror for Western madness. Above all they have had the story of their cultural and genetic survival from the Roman Empire to the 2000s, weaving and thriving amid uncomprehending, hostile European tribes.

This story, their post-Bible, their epic of bodies, not words, involved an intense competitive hardening of generations which threw up, in the end, a blaze of individual geniuses in Europe and America. Outside painting, Morris dancing and rap music, it's hard to think of many areas of Western endeavour where Jews haven't been disproportionately successful. For non-Jews, who

don't believe in a people being chosen by God, the lesson is that generations of people living on their wits and hard work, outside the more comfortable mainstream certainties, will seed Einsteins and Wittgensteins, Trotskys and Seiffs. Culture matters . . . The Jews really have been different; they have enriched the world and challenged it.

Marr himself is neither Jewish nor a religious believer, but his insight points us in the direction of this week's parsha, which contains one of the most important sentences in Judaism: "*Speak to the whole assembly of Israel and say to them: Be holy because I, the Lord your God, am holy.*" Jews were and remain the people summoned to holiness.

What does this mean? Rashi reads it in context. The previous chapter was about forbidden sexual relationships. So is the next chapter. So he understands it as meaning, be careful not to put yourself in the way of temptation to forbidden sex. Ramban reads it more broadly. The Torah forbids certain activities and permits others. When it says "Be holy" it means, according to Ramban, practice self-restraint even in the domain of the permitted. Don't be a glutton, even if what you are eating is kosher. Don't be an alcoholic even if what you are drinking is kosher wine. Don't be, in his famous phrase, a naval bireshut ha-Torah, "a scoundrel with Torah license."

These are localised interpretations. They are what the verse means in its immediate context. But it clearly means something larger as well, and the chapter itself tells us what this is. To be holy is to love your neighbour and to love the stranger. It means not stealing, lying, or deceiving others. It means not standing idly by when someone else's life is in danger. It means not cursing the deaf or putting a stumbling block before the blind, that is, insulting or taking advantage of others even when they are completely unaware of it – because God is not unaware of it.

It means not planting your field with different kinds of seed, not crossbreeding your livestock or wearing clothes made of a forbidden mixture of wool and linen – or as we would put it nowadays, respecting the integrity of the environment. It means not conforming with whatever happens to be the idolatry of the time – and every age has its idols. It means being honest in business, doing justice, treating your employees well, and sharing your blessings (in those days, parts of the harvest) with others.

It means not hating people, not bearing a grudge or taking revenge. If someone has done you wrong, don't hate them. Remonstrate with them. Let them know what they have done and how it has hurt you, give them a chance to apologise and make amends, and then forgive them.

Above all, "Be holy" means, "Have the courage to be different." That is the root meaning of kadosh in Hebrew. It means something distinctive and set apart. "Be holy for I the Lord your God am holy" is one of the most counter-intuitive sentences in the whole of religious literature. How can we be like God? He is infinite, we are finite. He is eternal, we are mortal. He is vaster than the universe, we are a mere speck on its surface. Yet, says the Torah, in one respect we can be.

God is in but not of the world. So we are called on to be in but not of the world. We don't worship nature. We don't follow fashion. We don't behave like everyone else just because everyone else does. We don't conform. We dance to a different music. We don't live in the present. We remember our people's past and help build our people's future. Not by accident does the word kadosh also have the meaning of marriage, kiddushin, because to marry means to be faithful to one another, as God pledges himself to be faithful to us and we to him, even in the hard times.

To be holy means to bear witness to the presence of God in our, and our people's, lives. Israel – the Jewish people – is the people who in themselves give testimony to One beyond ourselves. To be Jewish means to live in the conscious presence of the God we can't see but can sense as the force within ourselves urging us to be more courageous, just and generous than ourselves. That's what Judaism's rituals are about: reminding us of the presence of the Divine.

Every individual on earth has an ethnicity. But only one people was ever asked collectively to be holy. That, to me, is what it is to be a Jew.

<https://www.rabbisacks.org/covenant-conversation/kedoshim/in-search-of-jewish-identity/> The archives do not preserve footnotes for this Dvar Torah.

Saintly or Simple?: An Essay on Parshat Kedoshim

By Adin Even-Israel, z"l (Steinsaltz)* © Chabad 2022

It is not for naught that the parshah is called Parshat Kedoshim. Holiness is undoubtedly a central motif in the parshah, throughout which expressions connected with holiness repeatedly recur.

This holiness, however, has a surprising aspect. In books that deal with holiness, the deeper they delve into the concept, the more profound it becomes, to the point that it is designated as the loftiest value that exists. As the Maharal explains, holiness is that which is transcendent in its essence.¹ By contrast, the concept of holiness that arises from Parshat Kedoshim seems completely different.

The parshah begins, "Speak to the entire community of Israel and say to them: You shall be holy, for I, G d your L rd, am holy."² The commandment to be holy appears in the context of G d's holiness: You shall be holy as I am holy. But on the other hand, the commandments connected with this injunction do not appear to relate at all to the sort of transcendent holiness that the Maharal describes. Parshat Kedoshim is full of commandments, which include the prohibitions on stealing, lying, cheating, and so forth. At first glance, they do not appear to be special requirements or standards that an ordinary responsible person could not meet. On the whole, these are practices that are, more or less, commonly observed by the average person throughout the world, irrespective of religion or cultural background.

This puzzling question arises at the end of the section discussing forbidden sexual relationships as well. These laws begin with: "You shall keep My decrees and observe them, for I am G d, who makes you holy,"³ and they end with: "You shall be holy to Me, for I, G d, am holy."⁴ That is to say, one who keeps these laws is called holy. Thus, the same difficulty arises: How is a person who simply refrains from committing a few sins considered holy? Even if one complies with everything that is written here – a certain number of positive commandments and a certain number of negative commandments – is that all that is needed to be considered holy? One would think that attaining holiness would require special safeguards and practices; but from here it seems that as long as one refrains from a few contemptible acts, that is all that is required to be holy. How can this be?

This question recurs throughout the entire parshah. As a matter of fact, this parshah – which begins "You shall be holy" – contains nothing of a particularly holy character, and the definition of holiness that emerges from it is rather modest. It would seem to be devoid of any spiritual demand or attempt to elevate people to a higher sphere.

Earthly view

The list of forbidden sexual relationships in this parshah corresponds to the list in Parshat Acharei Mot, where it says, "Do not follow the practices of the land of Egypt...and do not follow the practices of the land of Canaan."⁵ The passage concludes:

Do not become defiled through any of these acts; for through all of these the nations became defiled...The Land became defiled; and when I directed My providence at the sin committed there, the Land vomited out its inhabitants...For all those abominations were done by the people who lived in the Land before you, and the Land became defiled. Let not the Land vomit you out for defiling it, as it vomited out the nation that was before you...You shall keep My charge not to engage in any of the abominable practices that were carried out before you, so that you not become defiled through them.⁶

In Parshat Acharei Mot these practices are presented as utterly abhorrent. Abominations and abominable practices, impure and disgusting – these are acts that the Land cannot tolerate, and it vomits out anyone who commits them. By contrast, when we come to Parshat Kedoshim, there is a significant change in tone. Previously, it said that the Land cannot tolerate one who does such a thing, whether he is a Jew or not; he is crooked, twisted, and perverted. In Parshat Kedoshim, however, although it does say that these are sins and that they bear penalties such as stoning and strangulation, it also says that one who refrains from doing these things is considered holy.

The repetition of the section on forbidden sexual relationships in Parshot Acharei Mot and Kedoshim represents two ways of looking at things. There is the heavenly view, which asks how it is possible to sink so low. But there is also the earthly view, which says that although corporal punishment and other severe penalties still apply here, still, one who guards himself against all these abominations is included in the category of “Keep yourselves holy, and you will be holy.”⁷

These are two different views of the very same thing. When a person is on a truly high level, there are things that he does not even consider doing; they are simply unthinkable. Parshat Acharei Mot addresses these people. But if a person is on a low level, suddenly everything looks different; suddenly, one who complies with all these laws is called holy. There are many actions that one would generally consider abhorrent and would never consider pursuing. But a person can change, as can his environment, and as a result, what was once easy to avoid can now be an extraordinary challenge. At this point, refraining from such improper behavior is no longer a simple task, but has become a matter of stubborn loyalty to one’s views and principles.

There was a time when the typical pious Eastern European Jew had a beard and wore a long garment; this was a sign of his Judaism. When some of these Jews began to adopt the German style of dress – a short jacket and a trimmed beard – they were called Deutsch (German) by their peers in derision, an expression that indicated that such dress and demeanor were considered contemptible by other Jews. It was clear to the traditional members of the community that these Jews did not observe the mitzvot, and they were often even suspected of being apostates. This attitude was part of the way of life of Jews in Eastern Europe at the time.

In those times, there lived a great hasidic master known as the Ruzhiner Rebbe, who lived in a palatial home. One day, a visitor arrived at his home – one such Deutscher, with a short jacket and a trimmed beard – and he was received by the Rebbe immediately, without all the usual delays. He was granted a private audience with the Rebbe that lasted for hours. Afterward, to everyone’s surprise, the Rebbe came out and personally escorted his visitor to the door. Everyone was shocked; what was the meaning of this? Finally, someone dared to ask the Rebbe: Who was this man who was so honored by the Rebbe? The Rebbe answered: “I asked G d to grant me the privilege of seeing the gadol hador (greatest tzaddik of the generation) in which the Messiah will come.”

This story expresses my point precisely. It may very well be that the gadol hador is someone of the type that one would least expect. The appearance of the visitor drew derision from the Hasidim, but they did not realize that in his own place and time he was not only a tzaddik but the gadol hador himself.

The personal secretary of the Kotzker Rebbe once related that when it was brought to the Rebbe’s attention that his spoons were being stolen, he cried out, “Stolen? Is it not written in the Torah, ‘You shall not steal’?!” The secretary then added that when the Rebbe said this, it made a tremendous impression on him – he truly could not understand how it was possible that someone would steal; in the Rebbe’s mind, such a thing was impossible.

But there is another perspective on “You shall not steal” and “You shall not deal deceitfully or falsely with one another”⁸ – the earthly view. These matters are relevant; they exist in the world. While the heavenly view cannot fathom how people could act in such a way, the earthly view is grounded in reality, acknowledging the way of the world.

The earthly view can descend lower and lower in each generation. Sometimes one reads the descriptions of the most derelict characters from several generations ago, and one asks himself: These are the generation’s most despicable people? Rabbi Shneur Zalman of Liadi writes that even the most sinful person in our communities nevertheless prays three times a day, wears tzitzit, and puts on tefillin. Nowadays, there are places where such a person would be considered the gadol hador, or if not that, then at least an important person. This is the essence of the earthly view: If a person truly does not steal, he is holy; and if by chance he does not swear falsely as well, then he is truly a righteous and holy Jew.

When the section on forbidden sexual relationships is read on Yom Kippur in the synagogue, it sounds completely different from when it is read in the comfort of one’s home, whether one is poor or wealthy; because when one sits among the people, the words of the Torah become an actual possibility. The more respectable or cloistered one’s place of residence, the less one’s spiritual sensitivity is to the concept of “You shall be holy.” Sometimes, when a person hears, sees, and discovers all these things from below, he finds that being holy is truly not a simple matter.

In the not too distant past, if someone would have said that Jews would leave their homes in the Land of Israel and commit idolatry in a far-off land, this would have sounded preposterous, simply implausible. Why would a normal person go somewhere and bow down before an idol and make an offering to it? Such a thing could not happen.

Now, when one reads through the list of mitzvot in the parshah from beginning to end, it is clear that there are places where this practice is common, widespread in fact, and there are places where such things are done in broad daylight. Suddenly, everything becomes a matter of “You shall be holy.”

After three thousand years, Parshat Kedoshim has become relevant again. The earthly view is no longer far from us. I do not know how our fathers or our grandfathers explained to themselves the spiritual difficulty of being holy, that one who does not commit these acts is called holy. Now, as time has passed and the world has changed, the answer is unfortunately clear.

Resisting jadedness

There is an additional aspect of this same idea that we must address. We read in Micah: “What does G d require of you: Only to do justice and to love goodness and to walk modestly with your G d.”⁹ Overall, many of the requirements in Parshat Kedoshim fall under this same overarching message: “Behave like a responsible person.” No more is required.

When we talk about the struggle of life from the perspective of an ordinary person, we speak of two types of enemies. On the one hand, there are overt embodiments of forces of evil. On the other hand, there is a subtler enemy that is no less potent and dangerous: erosion, where nothing out of the ordinary seems to happen.

The Talmud relates an incident in which R. Amram Chasida almost impulsively succumbed to the incredible temptation of sexual impropriety,¹⁰ demonstrating that sometimes even a decent and righteous man can suddenly find himself in a situation for which he is unprepared, and he engages in an exceptional struggle with base instinct. There are also other situations where there is no instinctual temptation, but only the slow and continual erosion of life.

The positive and negative commandments that appear here, and which characterize holiness, are things that generally do not suddenly erupt but, rather, are situations that a person gets dragged into gradually, where each time it becomes increasingly easier to be drawn in. Some people gradually become pressured by money. A livelihood is no longer an abstract concept but something very real and very painful. When a person suddenly falls into financial crisis, often this can be dealt with. But this does not always happen all at once. More often it happens gradually, where every day something else goes by the wayside, and it becomes more and more difficult to avoid rationalizing immoral behavior for the sake of supporting oneself and one’s family.

Thus, are “You shall not steal” and “You shall not deal deceitfully or falsely with one another” truly sins that no ordinary responsible person would commit? When faced with a harsh reality, even such a person can become worn down and succumb.

The law of shifchah charufah (a half-betrothed maidservant) that appears here¹¹ likewise fits into this pattern. This is a woman whose status is not exactly clear; she is half slave and half free. Her master succumbs to the temptation to sin with this woman precisely because of this muddled status. She is a half-married slave woman, and it all seems easier and less complicated.

For this same reason, the Torah says regarding the stranger, “Do not wrong him.”¹² After all, it is simple to cheat the stranger, just as it is also easy to oppress him and take advantage of him. One might rationalize that what he is doing is not a great sin; he is only cheating the stranger a bit, since he doesn’t know the prices. It is actually beneficial, one may reason, to insult him a little, until he becomes more experienced and ceases to be a stranger. When he becomes a resident of the land, one of us, he himself will do the same to others.

One can see how “you shall not sow your field with a mixture of seeds”¹³ – the law of kilayim – may irk some people, and

if there is a grocer who can truly comply with the law of “Do not falsify measurements, whether in length, weight or volume,”¹⁴ then to a certain extent he is indeed a holy person. The Tosefta says of Abba Shaul b. Butnit and R. Elazar b. Tzadok, who were grocers in Jerusalem, that they would take special steps to ensure that their customers received the full measure that was due them.¹⁵ If this was the practice of ordinary grocers, these actions would not have been singled out in the Tosefta and credited solely to two of the most pious men in Jerusalem at a time when the Temple still stood. This does not mean that all the other people were thieves, only that one is constantly under social pressure not to be naïve. Everyone is tempted to take advantage of his fellow man, and many succumb to this temptation. In such a society, it is easy to rationalize: Everyone steals, everyone lies, and everyone cheats – why shouldn’t I?

Constant erosion, along with the general atmosphere that immoral practices are accepted in society, create a situation in which when one does these things, on a large or small scale, they no longer feel like bad behavior, like sinful acts. Likewise, regarding forbidden sexual relationships, many commentators note that part of the problem stems from the daily reality and proximity. People who fall prey to these kinds of sins do not usually do so because they are suddenly seized with an uncontrollable urge. Rather, relationships develop gradually, until suddenly a person finds himself in a situation that he never would have believed was possible.

This process does not happen all at once, or because the burden of piety and morality is suddenly impossible to bear. It is just that bearing this burden on a daily basis is incredibly taxing. No individual demand in the Torah creates the sense of facing an abyss. Each of these is a minor battle over minor things, but the battles add up, and may seem to some like a war with no end in sight.

Bringing a korban every once in a while is simple. But to fulfill all the various major and minor requirements listed in Parshat Kedoshim every day is quite another story. Not for naught does the Torah say, “Everyone shall revere his mother and his father.”¹⁶ Anyone who has any experience in this knows how difficult it is. It is something that we are faced with every day, and it can be especially challenging when one’s father and mother are themselves not exceptionally holy people.

This struggle is the fundamental struggle for holiness. Parshat Kedoshim presents a long list of minor requirements, none of which is extraordinary on its own, but each one recurs day after day. The very requirement to maintain this routine without succumbing to jadedness and despair – that itself creates the highest levels of holiness.

“With all your might”

We recite every day: “You shall love G d your Lord with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your might.”¹⁷ Our sages interpret as follows: “‘With all your heart’ means with both your inclinations, with the good inclination and with the evil inclination; ‘with all your soul’ means even if He takes your life; and ‘with all your might’ means with all your money.”¹⁸ But the order in this series of required sacrifices to G d is strange: If one is ready to give to G d with both of his inclinations, and he is even prepared to give up his life in service of G d, it seems anticlimactic to end the series with the injunction to give up one’s money in service of G d as well.

The meaning of “with all your money” is not simply that the person is told to hand over his money. Rather, every person faces a life of wearying, unending toil. “With all your money” is not about the act of giving but about committing oneself to a type of life where he is aware of the sacrifices expected of him from the outset. One must face these sacrifices not once in his lifetime but every day – often three or ten times a day. In light of the erosion that we have discussed, it stands to reason that “with all your money” is actually the most difficult demand of the three. First comes “with all your heart,” then “with all your soul,” and if someone is truly courageous and holy, he can also serve G d “with all your might.” A lion or a bear can be struck down, but a million termites is a different kind of challenge altogether.

The secret to achieving this courage is “Sanctify yourselves and be holy, for I am holy.”¹⁹ We agree to take upon ourselves the million termites of life, which appear every day and at every hour, from the time we rise in the morning until we go to sleep at night. The solution is to emulate G d; when we bring G d into the picture, we begin to understand the meaning of the verse, “I am G d – I have not changed.”²⁰ G d does not change; He remains holy no matter what the circumstances. “Who dwells with them in the midst of their impurity”²¹ – G d has the ability to maintain life in the midst of

impurity. Parshat Kedoshim states that we, too, can walk in His ways. Then and only then will we succeed in being holy like Him.

FOOTNOTES:

1. Tiferet Yisrael 37.
2. Lev. 19:2.
3. Lev. 20:8
4. Lev. 20:26.
5. Lev. 18:3.
6. Lev. 18:24–30.
7. Lev. 20:7.
8. Lev. 19:11.
9. Micah 6:8.
10. Kiddushin 81a.
11. Lev. 19:20–22.
12. Lev. 19:33.
13. Lev. 19:19.
14. 19:35.
15. Beitza 3:8.
16. Lev. 19:3.
17. Deut. 6:5.
18. Berachot 54a.
19. Lev. 20:7.
20. Mal. 3:6.
21. Lev. 16:16..

* Rabbi Adin Even-Israel, z"l, (Steinsaltz) (1937-2020), one of the leading rabbis of this century and author of many books, was best known for his monumental translation of and commentary on the Talmud. © Chabad 2022.

https://www.chabad.org/parshah/article_cdo/aid/5105946/jewish/The-Sin-of-Aarons-Sons.htm

Kedoshim: Torah Thought

Chabad of Greater Dayton, OH

The name of this week's Torah portion is Kedoshim, which literally means "holy," as G d tells the Jewish people that they are obligated to always be holy.

Holiness can mean different things depending on the context, and here it means that G d wants us to be different, to stand out and live differently from everyone around us. Another term sometimes used in the Torah for this is hevdel, "separation," implying that we are to keep ourselves separate and behave differently.

These words might sound familiar, as at their root they are associated with the ceremonies we use to usher Shabbat in and out. We begin Shabbat with kiddush and we conclude it with havdalah — leaving the holy day sandwiched between these two rituals.

Shabbat is a day that stands out among the rest of the week, and it must therefore be highlighted by special rituals at its beginning and end.

And just like Shabbat, the Jewish people must also be highlighted, in the way we act and in the way we treat the world around us.

With prayers for the coming of Moshiach very soon,

Rabbi Nochum Mangel

Kedoshim: What Can a Thief Teach Us?

An Insight by the Rebbe * © Chabad 2022

You must not steal (Leviticus 19:11)

The Ba'al Shem Tov teaches that everything we see can teach us some lesson in how to better fulfill our Divine mission and spiritual potential, we can also elevate a forbidden character trait or action by learning from it. Thus, Rabbi Zusha of Anipoli listed seven traits of a thief that we should emulate:

1. He works silently, modestly, and without fanfare.
2. He is prepared to face danger in order to carry out his mission.
3. He pays full attention even to the smallest detail.
4. He works hard.
5. He works quickly, not wasting any time.
6. He is confident and optimistic.
7. If he does not succeed the first time, he tries again and again.

If we apply these traits to positive endeavors, we have not merely avoided stealing but elevated its redeeming characteristics, as well.

* — from the *Kehot Chumash*

Gut Shabbos,

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Likutei Divrei Torah

Gleanings of Divrei Torah on Parashat Hashavuah
via the Internet

Volume 28, Issue 30

Shabbat Parashat Kedoshim

5782 B”H

Covenant and Conversation

Rabbi Jonathan Sacks, z”l

From Priest to People

Something fundamental happens at the beginning of this parsha and the story is one of the greatest, if rarely acknowledged, contributions of Judaism to the world.

Until now Vayikra has been largely about sacrifices, purity, the Sanctuary, and the Priesthood. It has been, in short, about a holy place, holy offerings, and the elite and holy people – Aaron and his descendants – who minister there. Suddenly, in chapter 19, the text opens up to embrace the whole of the people and the whole of life:

The Lord said to Moses: “Speak to the entire assembly of Israel and say to them, ‘Be holy because I, the Lord, your God, am holy.’” (Lev. 19:1–2)

This is the first and only time in Leviticus that so inclusive an address is commanded. The Sages say that it means that the contents of the chapter were proclaimed by Moses to a formal gathering of the entire nation (hak’hel). It is the people as a whole who are commanded to “be holy,” not just an elite, the Priests. It is life itself that is to be sanctified, as the chapter goes on to make clear. Holiness is to be made manifest in the way the nation makes its clothes and plants its fields, in the way justice is administered, workers are paid, and business conducted. The vulnerable – the deaf, the blind, the elderly, and the stranger – are to be afforded special protection. The whole society is to be governed by love, without resentments or revenge.

What we witness here, in other words, is the radical democratisation of holiness. All ancient societies had Priests. We have encountered four instances in the Torah thus far of non-Israelite Priests: Malkizedek, Abraham’s contemporary, described as a Priest of God Most High; Potiphar, Joseph’s father-in-law; the Egyptian Priests as a whole, whose land Joseph did not nationalise; and Yitro, Moses’ father-in-law, a Midianite Priest. The Priesthood was not unique to Israel, and everywhere it was an elite. Here for the first time, we find a code of holiness directed to the people as a whole. We are all called on to be holy.

In a strange way, though, this comes as no surprise. The idea, if not the details, had already been hinted at. The most explicit instance comes in the prelude to the great covenant-making ceremony at Mount Sinai when God tells Moses to say to the people, “Now if you obey Me fully and keep My

covenant, then out of all nations you will be My treasured possession. Although the whole earth is Mine, you will be for Me a kingdom of Priests and a holy nation” (Ex. 19:5–6), that is, a kingdom all of whose members are to be in some sense Priests, and a nation that is in its entirety holy.

The first intimation is much earlier still, in the first chapter of Genesis, with its monumental assertion, “‘Let Us make mankind in Our image, in Our likeness’.... So God created mankind in His own image, in the image of God He created them; male and female He created them” (Gen. 1:26–27). What is revolutionary in this declaration is not that a human being could be in the image of God. That is precisely how kings of Mesopotamian city states and pharaohs of Egypt were regarded. They were seen as the representatives, the living images, of the gods. That is how they derived their authority. The Torah’s revolution is the statement that not some, but all, humans share this dignity. Regardless of class, colour, culture, or creed, we are all in the image and likeness of God.

Thus was born the cluster of ideas that, though they took many millennia to be realised, led to the distinctive culture of the West: the non-negotiable dignity of the human person, the idea of human rights, and eventually, the political and economic expressions of these ideas: liberal democracy on the one hand, and the free market on the other.

The point is not that these ideas were fully formed in the minds of human beings during the period of biblical history. Manifestly, this is not so. The concept of human rights is a product of the seventeenth century. Democracy was not fully implemented until the twentieth. But already in Genesis 1 the seed was planted. That is what Jefferson meant in his famous words, “We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal,” and what John F. Kennedy alluded to in his Inaugural Address when he spoke of the “revolutionary belief” that “the rights of man come not from the generosity of the state, but from the hand of God.”

The irony is that these three texts, Genesis 1, Exodus 19:6, and Leviticus 19, are all spoken in the Priestly voice Judaism calls *Torat Kohanim*.^[1] On the face of it, Priests were not egalitarian. They all came from a single tribe, the Levites, and from a single family, that of Aaron, within the tribe. To be sure, the Torah tells us that this was not God’s original intention. Initially, it was to have been the firstborn – those who were saved from the last of the plagues – who were charged with

special holiness as the ministers of God. It was only after the sin of the Golden Calf, in which the tribe of Levi did not participate, that the change was made. Even so, the Priesthood would have been an elite, a role reserved specifically for firstborn males. So deep is the concept of equality written into monotheism that it emerges precisely from the Priestly voice, from which we would least expect it.

The reason is this: religion in the ancient world was, not accidentally but essentially, a defence of hierarchy. With the development, first of agriculture, then of cities, what emerged were highly stratified societies with a ruler on top, surrounded by a royal court, beneath which was an administrative elite, and at the bottom, an illiterate mass that was conscripted from time to time either as an army or as a *corvée*, a labour force used in the construction of monumental buildings.

What kept the structure in place was an elaborate doctrine of a heavenly hierarchy whose origins were told in myth, whose most familiar natural symbol was the sun, and whose architectural representation was the pyramid or ziggurat, a massive building broad at the base and narrow at the top. The gods had fought and established an order of dominance and submission. To rebel against the earthly hierarchy was to challenge reality itself. This belief was universal in the ancient world. Aristotle thought that some were born to rule, others to be ruled. Plato constructed a myth in his *The Republic*, in which class divisions existed because the gods had made some people with gold, some with silver, and others with bronze. This was the “noble lie” that had to be told if a society was to protect itself against dissent from within.

Monotheism removes the entire mythological basis of hierarchy. There is no order among the gods because there are no gods, there is only the One God, Creator of all. Some form of hierarchy will always exist: armies need commanders, films need directors, and orchestras, conductors. But these are functional, not ontological. They are not a matter of birth. So it is all the more impressive to find the most egalitarian sentiments coming from the world of the Priest, whose religious role was a matter of birth.

The concept of equality we find in the Torah specifically and Judaism generally is not an equality of wealth: Judaism is not communism.

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Nor is it an equality of power: Judaism is not anarchy. It is fundamentally an equality of dignity. We are all equal citizens in the nation whose sovereign is God. Hence the elaborate political and economic structure set out in Leviticus, organised around the number seven, the sign of the holy. Every seventh day is free time. Every seventh year, the produce of the field belongs to all, Israelite slaves are to be liberated, and debts released. Every fiftieth year, ancestral land was to return to its original owners. Thus the inequalities that are the inevitable result of freedom are mitigated. The logic of all these provisions is the Priestly insight that God, creator of all, is the ultimate owner of all: "The land must not be sold permanently, because the land is Mine and you reside in My land as strangers and temporary residents" (Lev. 25:23). God therefore has the right, not just the power, to set limits to inequality. No one should be robbed of dignity by total poverty, endless servitude, or unrelieved indebtedness.

What is truly remarkable, however, is what happened after the biblical era and the destruction of the Second Temple. Faced with the loss of the entire infrastructure of the holy, the Temple, its Priests, and sacrifices, Judaism translated the entire system of avoda, divine service, into the everyday life of ordinary Jews. In prayer, every Jew became a Priest offering a sacrifice. In repentance, he became a High Priest, atoning for his sins and those of his people. Every synagogue, in Israel or elsewhere, became a fragment of the Temple in Jerusalem. Every table became an altar, every act of charity or hospitality, a kind of sacrifice.

Torah study, once the speciality of the Priesthood, became the right and obligation of everyone. Not everyone could wear the crown of Priesthood, but everyone could wear the crown of Torah. A mamzer talmid chacham, a Torah scholar of illegitimate birth, say the Sages, is greater than an am ha'aretz Kohen Gadol, an ignorant High Priest. Out of the devastating tragedy of the loss of the Temple, the Sages created a religious and social order that came closer to the ideal of the people as "a kingdom of Priests and a holy nation" than had ever previously been realised. The seed had been planted long before, in the opening of Leviticus 19: "Speak to the entire assembly of Israel and say to them, 'Be holy because I the Lord your God am holy.'"

Holiness belongs to all of us when we turn our lives into the service of God, and society into a home for the Divine Presence.

[1] There is, of course, a prophetic call to equality also. We hear, in all the prophets, a critique of the abuse of power and the exploitation of the poor and powerless. What made the Priestly voice so significant is that it is the voice of law, and thus of the legal structures that alleviated poverty and set limits to slavery.

Shabbat Shalom: Rabbi Shlomo Riskin

Speak unto all the congregation of the children of Israel and say to them: You shall be holy, for I the Lord your God am holy. (Leviticus 19:2)

Holiness is certainly a "religious" word expressing a worthy ideal, if not the worthiest of all. But upon encountering this idea in the opening verses of this portion, we must admit that the concept seems rather vague and difficult to define. What does it really mean to be "holy"?

Examining some of the commentators on this issue of holiness, the remarks of Rashi and Nahmanides are thought-provoking, not only because of their differences, but also because of their similarities.

Rashi explains the phrase "you shall be holy..." as follows:

You shall separate yourselves. Abstain from forbidden sexual relationships and from sin, because wherever you find a warning to guard against sexual immorality, you find the mention of holiness. (Rashi on Leviticus 19:2)

Since the sexual drive is probably the strongest of our physiological needs and urges – and the most likely to get us into trouble (an old Yiddish proverb has it that most men dig their graves with their sexual organ) – it makes sense that Rashi will use this activity as a paradigm for all others. Who is a holy individual? The one who can control his sexual temptations, and arrange his life in a way in which he/she will not end up trapped in forces which often overtake and destroy all too many families.

Nahmanides, after initially quoting Rashi's understanding of holiness, goes a step further by pointing out that the rabbinic interpretation of the phrase (as cited in the Midrash Torat Kohanim) doesn't limit the holiness of self-restraint exclusively to sexual behavior, but rather applies it to all elements of human nature: The commandment is ordering disciplined conduct in every aspect of life.

Nahmanides goes on to explain that a Jew may punctiliously observe all the details of the laws and still act "repulsively, within the parameters of the Torah" (naval b'reshut ha'Torah). In effect, argues Nahmanides, the commandments must be seen as the floor of the building and not as the ceiling: everyone must keep all the laws as a minimum requirement, and then add to them as his/her personality or conscience desires or dictates, as well as in accordance with the nature of the situation which arises.

Since life is so complex, we require necessary guideposts or clearly enunciated goals to help us make the proper decisions regarding our daily conduct – especially in those areas where a black and white halakhic directive does not exist. Therefore, "you shall be holy" is the guidepost or meta-halakhic principle which must determine our relationship to the Creator. It reminds us that although drinking and eating kosher foods to excess, for example, may be technically permitted, an individual who

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strives for holiness dare not spend the majority of his time in pursuit of delectable dishes and outstanding wines. And in Judaism, as Nahmanides would see it, holiness refers to a God-like personality, a person who strives to dedicate him/herself to lofty goals of compassionate and moral conduct. Self-restraint and proper balance between extremes are necessary prerequisites for a worthy human-divine relationship.

Nahmanides finds the parallel for the meta-halakhic "you shall be holy" in the human-divine relationship, within the equally meta-halakhic "you shall do what is right and good" (Deut. 6:18) in all of our interpersonal human relationships. It is impossible for the Torah to detail every single possible point of contact between two human beings, points which could easily become stressful and litigious. Thus, Nahmanides tells us that doing what is right and good must be the overall rubric under which we are to conduct our affairs.

It turns out that Rashi's focus regarding the concept of "you shall be holy" concerns matters of sexuality, while Nahmanides focuses on the entire range of our experience, giving us a global view of modesty and restrained human conduct. A formalistic reason for these two different approaches to the interpretation of holiness may derive from the context of the verse in question. Apparently, the placement of the commandment "you shall be holy" which opens chapter nineteen, sends Rashi and Nahmanides in two different directions. Rashi, finding that immediately preceding the mandate to be holy, the Torah presents all the laws of improper sexual behavior – twenty-three biblical prohibitions, twenty-three forbidden sexual alliances – he is inspired to conclude that holiness must refer first and foremost to the sexual realm.

Nahmanides, however, gazes ahead and sees, following the directive "to be holy," no less than 51 commandments in Kedoshim unfolding before him, with approximately half dealing with ritual and the other half dealing with the ethical – including such famous laws as "love your neighbor as yourself" and "you shall not place a stumbling block before the blind." Nahmanides therefore prefers to view holiness as applying to the entire range of the human experience.

In a most basic way, however, the two approaches are very similar. Both Rashi and Nahmanides define holiness as disciplined self-control, as the ability to say "no" to one's most instinctive physical desires. They both understand that the religious key to human conduct requires love and limits, the ability to love others and the self-control to set limits on one's desires.

Interestingly and surprisingly enough, in the Hollywood, Newscaster and political societies a virtual revolution is now taking place in the area of man-woman relationships. Scores of women have come forward and testified to sexual abuse years and decades ago, including woman who claimed that former Vice-

President and currently Presidential aspirant Joe Biden had touched them inappropriately on their shoulders or kissed their hair. These various allegations caused Nancy Pelosi, Speaker of the Congressional House of Representatives to strongly suggest that the ethical code of proper conduct between the sexes had to change drastically, that men ought hold women “at arm’s length” unless they received explicit permission to touch or kiss beforehand. And recently an op-Ed appeared in the Jerusalem Post explaining the importance of “shomer negiyah.”

The Person in the Parsha
Rabbi Dr. Tzvi Hersh Weinreb
I Get No Respect!

I love visiting residences for senior citizens. For one thing, being around truly older people invariably helps me feel young by comparison.

Recently, I was a weekend guest scholar at such a residence. I dispensed with my prepared lectures and instead tried to engage the residents of the facility, not one of whom was less than ninety years old, in a group discussion. This proved to be a very wise move on my part, because I learned a great deal about the experience of getting old. Or, as one wise man insisted, “You don’t get ‘old’—you get ‘older.’”

The question that I raised to provoke discussion was this: “What made you first realize that you were getting ‘older?’”

I was taken aback by the reactions of the group, because there were clearly two very different sets of responses.

One member of the group responded, “I knew I was getting older when people started to ignore me. I was no more than a piece of furniture to them. Worse, they no longer noticed me at all.”

About half of the group expressed their agreement with this person’s experience. They proceeded to describe various experiences that they had in being ignored. Some of those stories were quite poignant and powerful. One woman even described how she was present at the outbreak of a fire in a hotel lobby, and the rescue workers “simply did not see me sitting there. That is, until I started to scream!”

But then some of the others spoke up expressing quite different experiences. One gentleman said it for the rest of this second group: “I knew that I was getting older when passengers on the subway or bus stood up for me and gave me their seat.” That basic gesture of respect conveyed to the members of this group of senior citizens that they had indeed reached the age when they were not ignored, but rather the beneficiaries of acts of deference.

The discussion then entered another phase, as both groups agreed that, while they certainly did not want to be ignored, they also were resentful of these gestures of respect. The group unanimously supported the position articulated by the oldest person there, who

said: “We don’t want gestures of respect. We want genuine respect.”

It seems that the entire group, although appreciative of those who relinquished seats on the subway for them, wanted something more. They wanted their opinions to be heard, their life experience to be appreciated, and their accumulated wisdom to be acknowledged. Symbolic gestures were insufficient, and sometimes were even experienced as demeaning.

This week’s Torah portion, Parshat Kedoshim (Leviticus 19:1-20:27), contains the basic biblical commandment regarding treatment of the elderly: “You shall rise before the aged and show deference to the old; you shall fear your God: I am the Lord.” (ibid. 19:32)

Rashi’s comments on this verse indicate how sensitive he was to the subtle reactions expressed by the members of my little group. Here is what he says, paraphrasing the Talmudic Sages: “What is deference? It is refraining from sitting in his place, and not interrupting his words. Whereas one might think to simply close his eyes and pretend not to even see the old person, the verse cautions us to fear your God, for after all, he knows what is in the heart of man...”

Interestingly, not sitting in his seat mean much more than just giving him a seat on the bus. It means recognizes that the elderly person has his own seat, his own well-earned place in society, which you, the younger person, dare not usurp. It is more than just a gesture. It is an acknowledgement of the valued place the elder has in society, a place which is his and his alone.

Similarly, not interrupting the older person’s conversation is much more than an act of courtesy. It is awareness that this older person has something valuable to say, a message to which one must listen attentively.

How well our Torah knows the deviousness of which we are all capable. We can easily pretend not to notice the older person. But He who reads our minds and knows what is in our hearts will be the judge of that. We must fear Him, and not resort to self-justification and excuses. We must deal with the older person as a real person, whose presence cannot be ignored, but must be taken into full account in our conversation.

Rabbi Naftali Zvi Yehuda Berlin, in his commentary on this verse, refers us to a passage in the Midrash Rabbah on the weekly portion of Beha’alotecha in the Book of Numbers, which understands the phrase “you shall fear your God” as being the consequence of your showing deference to the elderly. Thus, if you treat the elderly well you will attain the spiritual level of the God-fearing person. But if you refrain from showing the elderly that deference, you can never aspire to the title “God-fearing person” no matter how pious you are in other respects.

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There is another entirely different perspective on our verse which provides a practical motive for honoring the elderly. It is to be found in the commentary of Abraham Ibn Ezra, who explains the phrase, “You shall fear your God,” in the following way:

“The time will come when you will be old and frail and lonely. You will long for proper treatment at the hands of the young. But if you showed disrespect for the elderly when you were young, and did not “fear God,” God will not reward you with the treatment you desire in your own old age.”

As each of us strives to show genuine respect to our elders we help construct a society in which the elderly have their proper place. That society will hopefully still be there when we become older, and then we will reap the benefits of our own youthful behavior.

Our Torah portion is entitled Kedoshim, which means “holy.” One of the major components of the holy society is the treatment it accords to every one of its members, especially those who are vulnerable. Treating the elderly with genuine respect, truly listening to them and valuing their contributions, is an essential part of what it mean to be a “holy people.”

Torah.Org: Rabbi Yissocher Frand
Kedusha: A Personal Mitzvah that Needs the Community

“And G-d spoke to Moses saying: ‘Speak to the entire Community of Israel and tell them You must be Holy, for I the L-rd your G-d am Holy.’” [Vayikra 19:1-2]

The Medrash comments that this pasuk said “be’Hakhel,” namely, it was said to all the Jewish people together. In contrast, most of the Torah was taught to Moshe, who taught it to Aharon, who taught to Aharon’s sons, who taught to the Elders, etc., etc. However, Moshe taught this parsha in everyone’s presence.

Why is this parsha different? The Medrash answers because most of the fundamentals of Torah are dependent on this parsha of “Kedoshim Tiheyu — You shall be Holy.”

The simple interpretation of this Medrash is that since there are so many important laws that are contained in this parsha, it was said in the presence of everyone.

However, perhaps the Medrash means something else. Perhaps it means that the specific mitzvah of ‘You shall be Holy’ is so important, and has so many of the fundamentals of Torah dependent upon it, that this mitzvah itself was given publicly.

According to the Ramban, this mitzvah teaches us how to live and act as Jews. The Ramban explains that if not for this mitzvah, a person could conceivably be a “naval birshus haTorah,” meaning, he could be an observant Jew, and simultaneously a glutton. He could live an obscene life within the parameters of the Torah. He could eat as much as he wants;

he could indulge in all the physical pleasures of life; and it might all be 'glatt kosher.'

If not for this mitzvah, such a person could be called a Tzadik [righteous person]. However, the Torah says, "You shall be Holy"—you must abstain. You must act with restraint, with holiness. Do not indulge. Do not be a glutton. That is the mitzvah of Kedoshim Tiheyu. It is so vital that it had to be said to the entire nation together.

The Shemen HaTov explains that a person cannot be Holy unto himself. Even though it is an individual mitzvah, the individual needs the help of society. If someone lives in a society that is indulgent, it becomes very difficult for that individual to remain a 'Kadosh' [holy person].

In order to achieve "You shall be holy," the cooperation of a person's family, city and nation are required. The parsha needed to be given to everyone together. When everyone is involved in conspicuous indulgence, it becomes almost impossible for an individual to act with restraint.

We see this very clearly in the society in which we live today. Rampant hedonism surrounds us, where people instantly gratify their every whim and wish. We live in a society that does not know about kedusha [holiness]. The only way we can personally achieve this mitzvah of "You shall be holy," is if we not only work on ourselves, but we elevate those around us and try to live among people who also share the ideal of Kedoshim Tiheyu.

It must begin with the individual. As the Chassidic Rebbe, Reb Bunim, is quoted as having said, when he was young he thought he could change the world. As he got older, he saw he could not change the entire world, but at least he could change his city. As time went on, he saw that even that was beyond his grasp, but he said, "I will at least change my neighborhood." When he saw that that was not working, he said, "I'll at least try to change my family." When he saw that that failed as well, he said, "I will need to try to only change myself."

However, once he succeeded in changing himself, then he saw that his family was different, his neighborhood was different, his city was different, and in a sense the entire world was different.

When working on this mitzvah of "Kedoshim Tiheyu," we cannot go it alone. We need to work on ourselves, and then our families, and then our neighborhoods, and then our societies.

Dvar Torah: Chief Rabbi Ephraim Mirvis

What is holiness? When we hear the term holy, we conjure up all types of images in our mind but actually the concept of kedusha, holiness, is quite different from what many people presume it to be.

Being holy - Parshat Kedoshim commences with the imperative, "Kedoshim tihyu," – "You must be holy just as the Lord your God is holy." (Vayikra 19:2) There follows 51 of the 613 mitzvot of the Torah. They provide a recipe for kedusha, for leading a sacred life. What are these mitzvot all about?

They include for example keeping shabbat, fearing heaven, not worshipping idols, loving others like yourself, loving the stranger, not putting a stumbling block before the blind, not cursing the deaf, being very charitable, being honest in your business dealings, not taking revenge and so on. What we can see is that holiness is all about elevating the ordinary.

I find the opening mitzvah of these 51 to be the most significant: "Ish imo v'aviv tira'u." – "Every person should revere their mother and father." (Vayikra 19:3) This is a mitzvah all about healthy discipline. It's about the functioning of a happy, nurturing family unit. It's about children loving and respecting their parents and parents loving and respecting their children.

Family - Our Covid-19 experiences have highlighted for us just how central and crucial the family unit is in our lives. The breakdown of the family unit contributes not just to the destabilising of our society but also to the desecration of our society, while loving, caring and nurturing family environments contribute towards a higher level of kedusha, of holiness in this world.

Surely that is what King David meant when he said, "I shall dwell in the house of the Lord all the days of my life." (Tehillim 27:4) He meant to say: I will bring Hashem into my home so that the spirit of Hashem should be felt through the love and the care and the compassion that is felt within the family circle.

During the coronavirus pandemic I've been inspired by so many families who, despite the significant challenges, have brought beautiful kedusha into their homes. From Parshat Kedoshim we learn that if we elevate the ordinary to become extraordinary, each and every one of us can be holy.

Rabbi Dr. Nachum Amsel Encyclopedia of Jewish Values*

Doing Nothing Is Not An Option for a Jew

The political system in most societies today can often be described in their attitudes towards the rights of every individual living there, vis a vis the other individuals living in the society, as well as the individual's rights vis a vis the government. Judaism, on the other hand, in addition to acknowledging certain basic rights in an all-Jewish society, also discusses the obligations of each Jew to other individuals in a Jewish society, as well as the obligations of the individual to the government. How do Jewish societal obligations differ from those in other societies? What are those obligations of the

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individual Jew, and how do they affect interpersonal relations among Jews today?

There is no society in the world today where a person can be prosecuted for not helping another person in need. Numerous case studies attest to this societal norm, where people feel no obligation to help someone in need and are not legally bound to assist. For example, in the famous Kitty Genovese incident in New York City in 1964, when 38 onlookers in the buildings surrounding the courtyard witnessed a slow, brutal murder for forty-five minutes without anyone calling the police or helping the murdered woman. Although this shocked many people, there were no charges brought against these witnesses. In the 1982 incident in New Bedford, Massachusetts, made famous by the movie "The Accused," onlookers witnessed a rape in a bar. The state could not legally prosecute mere onlookers for not stopping this crime. Only those who verbally supported and encouraged the rape eventually stood trial. Regrettable as it might be, there is no law by which someone who stands by and does nothing can be prosecuted when he or she witnesses a crime or an injustice (some municipalities tried to pass "Good Samaritan" laws but they were deemed illegal). Similarly, in 1997, when Paparazzi photographers chased the car of Princess Diana which went out of control and she was critically injured, the photographers stood by and watched as she died, without calling for help. Nine photographers were charged with manslaughter in France, but the charges were thrown out in 2002. But Jewish law and Judaism take an entirely different view (and, as a result, Israel is the only country in the world where a bystander can indeed be charged for doing nothing). Why? What is the origin or such a Jewish law?

It is our Parsha that the Torah commands that a Jew has a legal responsibility to help someone in trouble, and it is a Torah violation if he or she stands by and does nothing. The Pasuk-verse read this week is "one shall not stand by idly while his brother's blood is being shed. (Leviticus 19:16)" A Jew is forbidden by Jewish law from allowing a person to drown if he or she has the ability to save this person drowning (even if not a licensed lifeguard). Of course, if the onlooker cannot swim, then he or she has no obligation to jump and try to save the person drowning, since this obligation exists only when the onlooker could save the person in need and then chooses not to do so. However, even the non-swimming onlooker would certainly be obligated to call someone to help. The Talmud (Sanhedrin 73a) discusses the issue, based on our verse, and concludes that a Jew must help anyone in any kind of trouble, even to the point of preventing the death of an innocent victim by killing the potential killer.

Rambam codified this obligation (Maimonides, Hilchot Rotze-ach 1:15), stating that one who does not try to assist someone being murdered or raped has violated three separate sins, two general obligations to help someone in need and

one specific additional obligation regarding murder. This responsibility certainly extends to all situations where an onlooker can save someone. This concept is also codified as such in Shulchan Aruch, the Code of Jewish Law (Shulchan Aruch, Choshen Mishpat 426:1). Thus, according to Shulchan Aruch, even a person who withholds information that could help someone else violates this Jewish law. In addition, the law about not standing idly by is not an isolated value in Judaism. Other Jewish laws prohibit a Jew from standing by and doing nothing. A person may not even pass by a lost object and do nothing by refusing to pick it up. Judaism obligates the Jew to retrieve the lost object and tr. Judaism obligates the Jew to pick up the object and tries to return it to its owner (Deuteronomy 22:1-3).

Keeping Quiet And Doing Nothing Can Be A Violation - In addition to the specific Torah laws stated above, there are numerous Talmudic references which look down on anyone who sits by quietly when he or she could step in and help. For example, the Talmud (Beitzah 23a) calls certain animals "the animals of Rabbi Eliezer," even though Rabbi Eliezer did not own these animals. Apparently, the owner of these animals, Rabbi Eliezer's neighbor, committed a sin through the animals. But because Rabbi Eliezer, merely the neighbor, did not protest, the Talmud calls these Rabbi Eliezer's animals, as if Rabbi Eliezer sinned with animals along with that individual.

Similarly, the Talmud records (Moed Katan 5a) that if a person allows certain sins to be committed without strongly objecting, that person is considered a murderer. The Talmud (Sanhedrin 20a) also says that Abner, King Saul's general, was punished for not protesting King Saul's evil actions. Further on, another opinion says that he did protest but did not protest hard enough. His punishment apparently was an early death. A further indictment of one who does not protest evil is stated (Shabbat 54b) regarding the man who saw sin in his home and did nothing in protest -- he is indicted as if he committed the sin. If it occurred in his city and he did not protest, he is indicted with the sinners of his city. And even in the entire world, if the person could have protested and did not, he is also guilty as if he did the sin. A few lines further in the Talmud (Shabbat 55a), the angels and God berate and punish the righteous people simply because they might have stopped the evildoers from bringing about their evil, but instead did nothing. According to another source (Berachot 12b), if a person could ask for mercy on behalf of another, and does not do so, he is considered a sinner. Therefore, we see that in Judaism, not doing something in the face of injustice and sin brings culpability as well.

This Should Be A Quality Of Every Jew - There is a tradition that one of the qualities of every Jew is the characteristic of *Chesed*, the ability to go beyond the requirement of the law and to help others. Thus, it is no accident that Jews have always been at the forefront of human

rights movements and projects that help others in need. The Talmud states (Beitzah 32b) that mercy is a quality of every Jew possesses, and in another passage (Yevamot 79a) it states that one of the three characteristics of every Jew is kindness. This statement should not be construed to imply that only Jews have this quality of giving and kindness. All Jews have this potential, while many non-Jews have this quality. Based on the verse in Leviticus obligating each Jew to love his fellow Jew (Leviticus 19:18), Maimonides rules (Maimonides, Hilchot Deot 6:3) that the Mitzvah to love every Jew as oneself involves a legal obligation to preserve or retrieve the other person's money and dignity, as if they were your own.

The notion of caring for other Jews is extended further by the concept that every Jew is responsible for every other Jew (Shevuot 39a). This signifies that a Jew should feel the pain of every other Jew. More than just feeling an obligation to help, this idea also means that another Jew's pain should now become his or her own pain. Thus, the Midrash (Midrash, Vayikra Rabbah 4:6) says that Jews are compared to sheep because when any limb of a sheep hurts, the sheep's entire body feels that pain. So, too, when any Jew is in pain, other Jews should also feel it. In fact, the name Jew itself connotes this concept. Although *Yehudi*, Jew, originally meant someone who came from the tribe of Judah, it has come to mean the person who exhibited the quality of Judah, which was to stand up to his father and Pharaoh and offer himself instead, to save his brother Benjamin (Midrash, Beraishit Rabbah 98:6). Every Jew should feel this responsibility and caring for every other Jew.

It was also this specific quality by Judah that was necessary for Jewish leadership. It was this trait that led Jacob to appoint Judah as the leader of the Jewish people for all time. The kingship descended from the tribe of Judah, and it is Jewish belief that the Messiah will also come from Judah. Logically, it could be argued that the more charismatic, more experienced (at leadership) and more beloved son Joseph should have been named by Jacob as leader of the brothers. But Jacob realized that only Judah truly had this one necessary quality of leadership -- the willingness to help a brother in need.

***This column has been adapted from a series of volumes written by Rabbi Dr. Nachum Amsel "The Encyclopedia of Jewish Values" available from Urim and Amazon. For the full article or to review all the footnotes in the original, contact the author at nachum@jewishdestiny.com**

OTS Dvar Torah

You Shall be Holy: By David Nekrutman

דבר אל כל עדת בני ישראל ואמרת אליהם קדשים תהיו
 "כי קדוש אני ה' אלקיכם"

"Speak to the entire congregation of the children of Israel, and say to them, "You shall be kadosh, for I, the L-rd, your God, am kadosh" (Leviticus 19:2)

Likutei Divrei Torah

Translating Kadosh - There are certain words in Hebrew that are hard to translate into English, and even when translated, still hard to fully explain in a few words. One of those terms is "kadosh." Normally translated as "holy," the first time it appears in the Bible is the last creative act of God, Shabbat: "God blessed the seventh day and declared it kadosh" (Genesis 2:3). Besides G-d, Shabbat and the Nation of Israel, kadosh applies to:

The Festivals (Lev. 23:4)
 Jubilee (Lev. 25:12),
 The Nazirite (Num. 6:8)
 The Prophet (II Kings 4:9)
 The Temple (Isa. 56:7)
 The Torah (Ezek. 22:26)
 Jerusalem (Neh. 11:1)

One can easily deduce from the above examples that kadosh means "set apart." This definition in fact is substantiated in Leviticus itself -- "You shall be holy (קדושים) to me, for I the Lord am holy (קדוש), and I have set you apart (ונאדל) from other peoples to be mine" (Lev. 20:26). The appearance of the root קדש in tandem with the root בלל informs the reader in this week's Torah portion that God desires for His people to be set apart from the other nations of the world.

Illicit Relations - In the attainment of national holiness, Leviticus 19 & 20 provide a practical guide on how to achieve it. It includes being honest in business, respecting the elderly, not bearing a grudge, seeking vengeance or hating another as well as not getting tattooed nor seeking mediums to connect with loved ones that have passed away, and no child sacrifice. It may take a lifetime for a nation to master many of these mitzvot, but at least these Levitical chapters provide clear instructions on how to do so.

A peripheral reading of the revolutionary Code of Sexual Conduct in Leviticus 18 suggests that the outlawing of these relationships is directly connected to the immoral practices of Egypt and, more specifically, as a counter response to Canaan -- "Like the practice of the land of Egypt, in which you dwelled, you shall not do, and like the practice of the land of Canaan, to which I am bringing you, you shall not do, and you shall not follow their statutes" (v.3). However, if one is to examine other Torah texts relating to Canaanite behavior prior to the nation of Israel receiving the Torah, there is hardly any mention of their moral depravity.

Canaanites in Genesis - Canaan is first mentioned in the Torah after the episode of the flood. We are privy to Noah's nakedness, Ham's gossip of it, and Shem and Japheth covering their father with a blanket. When Noah wakes up from his drunken stupor and realizes what was done to him, he curses his grandchild -- Canaan. In an attempt to solve the exegetical puzzle as to what sexual offense took place, Rashi presents two possibilities; Ham either castrated or sodomized his father.

In answering why Noah cursed Canaan -- as opposed to Ham, who perpetrated the crime -- Rashi says since Ham prevented his father

Noah from having a fourth child by castrating him, Noah in turn cursed Ham's fourth child – Canaan. Although the nation of Canaan commits egregious sins against God later in the Torah, at the time this event took place, the man named Canaan is guilty of nothing.

There was a familial edict of the Abrahamic family prohibiting them from marrying the daughters of Canaan (Genesis 24:3-4 & 28:1). Isaac and Jacob obeyed the edict, but Esau did not. Both Judah and Simeon violated the family tradition by marrying Canaanite women (Genesis 38:2 & 46:10).

But the Torah does not indicate that the Abrahamic familial edict of not marrying the Canaanite daughters was based upon their moral depravity. In fact, the only time we see any sexual offensiveness committed by the Canaanites was when Shechem abducted and raped Dinah (Gen 34:2). Hamor, Shechem's father, is fully aware of the gravity of the situation and wishes to peacefully settle the situation with Jacob. However, Simeon and Levi, enraged with Shechem's violation of their sister, conjure up a diabolical revenge plan which completely annihilates the males in that tribe.

Revolutionary Code of Relational Holiness - Based upon the Books of Joshua, Judges, Kings and Isaiah, as well as recent archaeological findings of the Canaanites in the land of Israel and in other places, the worship of Baal, El and Asherah was deeply rooted in this region before and after Abraham. It was believed that these gods directly influenced the rain and other aspects of nature. In an agricultural economy with a dry season during the year, the lure of worshipping these gods in the land of Canaan was a powerful one, especially when the rainy season did not come in a timely manner. Worship of these gods included engaging in both male and female temple prostitution, child sacrifice, and self-laceration.

My contention is when Rashi speaks of *kadosh* as it pertains to the new Code of Sexual Conduct, it is separate from the prohibition of imitating the practices of Egypt and Canaan. Furthermore, I believe Rashi was using the new divine morality as a prerequisite, necessary to fulfill all the other *mitzvot* relating to holiness that are outlined in Leviticus Chapters 19 & 20.

Rashi sees that in this parsha, the Jewish people are standing between the Egyptian paganism of the past and the Canaanite culture of the future. To achieve their uniqueness as a nation, not only will they need to completely remove the idolatrous nature of each civilization from their midst, but they will also need to practice their own divine morality.

The history of the Jewish people prior to becoming a nation at Sinai is filled with the improper and incestuous relationships mentioned in Leviticus 18. Jacob married two sisters; Judah married his daughter-in-law Tamar. Simeon, according to the Midrash, married his sister Dinah. Another Midrash says

that Jacob's other sons married their half-sisters. Yocheved married her nephew, Amram, the parents of Moses, Aaron and Miriam.

This new moral code is more than just separating from sexual relationships, as compared to other pagan societies. It is the springboard to properly defining familial relationships, to build a nation that will remain in the Land of Israel. In being set apart from these relationships as a nation, the Jewish people can truly actualize holiness and work toward bettering society.

Torah.Org Dvar Torah by Rabbi Label Lam

He Is US - You shall not take revenge and you shall not bear a grudge against the members of your people; and you shall love your neighbor as yourself- I am HASHEM (Vayikra 19:18)

What if somebody finds another Jew annoying?! Do I have to like everybody? If I don't someone then how can I possibly be expected to love them?! How do we go about the business of loving our neighbor as our self?

Rav Hirsch makes a point that the choice of this key word "L'Reyecha- to your neighbor" indicates that the responsibility to love your neighbor as yourself is non-specific in practice but generalized in its approach.

He writes: "It is not the person himself, but everything that pertains to the person, all his conditions of life, the weal and the woe, which make up his position in this world. To this, his weal and his woe, we are to give our love as if it were our own. We are to rejoice in his good fortune and grieve over his misfortune as if it were our own.

We are to assist at everything that furthers his well being and happiness as if we were working for ourselves and must keep trouble away from him as assiduously as if it threatened ourselves.

This is something that lies within our possibilities and is something which is required of us even toward somebody whose personality may be actually highly antipathetic to us. For the demand of this love is something which lies quite outside the sphere of the personality of our neighbor, is not based on any of his qualities. "I am HASHEM"- is given as the motive for the demand. It is something which is expected from us to all of our fellow-men in the Name of G-d, who has given all men a call of "REYIM" (shepherds). Everyone is to find and recognize in everybody else his "MIRAH"- "the pasturage of his life", the furthering of his own well-being, the condition for his own happiness in life."

I remember observing Matzah baking in New Square over 30 years ago. There was a team of individuals, families working together at the various stations to produce Matzos for Pesach. The way the Matzos were distributed I do believe reflects part of the meaning of this comment by Rav Hirsch. Each family was designated to receive whatever Matzos were produced from a given bag of flour. Nobody

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involved in the production knew until the very end, which bag of flour, which round of Matzah production would be theirs. Therefore everybody had a very strong incentive to work hard for each round of production because perhaps any one of those batches of Matzos might be theirs. They were naturally motivated even if by a self interest that everybody's should be the best it could be.

The term "L'REYECHA" speaks of the other as your shepherd. Everybody benefits one another in a family, in a community, in a society. What's beneficial to one should be helpful to us all. Each of us a midget on the shoulders of giants, -those that came before and world of people around us. To illustrate how profoundly real this idea is, just imagine if we had to produce from scratch our own food and clothing and shelter. See how dependant materially and how interdependent our lives are!

Rav Hirsch continues, "Nobody may look down on the progress of another as a hindrance to his own progress or look on the downfall of another as the means to his own rising, and nobody may rejoice in his own progress if it at the expense of his neighbor's retardment. ... The spiritually and morally perfect man only loves his own well-being as serving the same purpose as that of his neighbor. His own self-love, too, is only a consciousness of duty... and from the same consciousness of duty, he directs his love to the well-being of his neighbor, loves him as a being equally of G-d. He proclaims his love of G-d by his love to His creatures."

Stated in other words we have met the neighbor and he is us!

Bar Ilan University: Dvar Torah "Love your fellow as yourself—I am the Lord" - By Yitzhak Brand!

The commandments pertaining to interpersonal relations are generally perceived as ethical norms of society whose validity derives from natural human morality. According to such a view, it is doubtful whether one could call them religious commandments. Indeed, some *aharonim* use this to explain why a benediction is not recited when performing one of the commandments dealing with interpersonal relations:

Therefore it seems one should not make a benediction, save for the *shim'i* commandments (= those *mitzvot* whose reason is beyond us and which we simply obey; as opposed to the *sikhli* or rational commandments). With these it is clear that we should bless, "who has sanctified us by His commandments and commanded us," for had the Holy One, blessed be He, not commanded us, we would not do them. But with *sikhli* (rational) commandments, which ought to be observed even if we had not been commanded, one should not recite the benediction, "who has commanded us."... This general rule explains many things over which we do not recite a blessing... Likewise, helping to load

¹ *Sifra, Kedoshim*, 2.4.12, according to Vatican manuscript 31.

and unload a beast of burden and adjudicating disputes between one person and another fall into the category of doing good deeds, for common sense dictates that a person should deal kindly with his fellow.²

In what follows we shall ponder this approach, examining the position taken by Rabbi Akiva with regard to the commandment to love one's neighbor, in the context of an implicit polemic with early Christianity.

The well-known homily, "*Love your fellow as yourself*"—Rabbi Akiva says: This is a great principle in the Torah,"³ takes on redoubled significance in the context of the answer Jesus gave to a question asked by one of the Pharisees ("*Ba'alei ha-Torah*"): "Master, which is the greatest commandment⁴ in the Law?" He answered, "'Love the Lord your Gd with all your heart, and with all your soul, with all your mind.' That is the greatest commandment. It comes first. The second is like it: 'Love your neighbour as yourself.' Everything in the Law and the prophets hands on these two commandments."⁵ Jesus presupposes two major principles: love the Lord and love your neighbor. Rabbi Akiva differs, and combines the two into a single "great principle"—loving one's neighbor.⁶ Clearly one should not conclude from this that Rabbi Akiva was giving up the requirement that one love the Lord; in his opinion, one is obliged to love the Lord with one's entire soul, even to the point of martyrdom.⁷ It turns out that in Rabbi Akiva's view loving one's neighbour and loving the Lord are interrelated and hence are a single principle. This interrelationship derives from Scripture itself: "Love your fellow as yourself: I am the Lord" (Lev. 19:18).⁸ The proclamation, "I am the Lord," subsumes loving one's fellow in order to teach us that this is not just a human, societal affair, but rather founded on the duty a person has towards heaven, for Gd made man in His image.⁹

The idea that Rabbi Akiva sets forth, of loving one's neighbour being integrated with loving Gd, lies at the heart of another polemic between him and early Christianity: This teaches that a person should not think to say: love wisdom but hate scholars; love wisdom and hate the uneducated. Rather, love the uneducated and hate the heretic, the apostate, and the collaborator... Rabbi Akiva says: Does He not say, 'Love your fellow as yourself [I, the Lord, created him]'—when I act [properly] with you, you [should] love [me]; but when someone does not act [properly] with you, you do not [have to] love [him].¹⁰

The formulation and meaning of Rabbi Akiva's homily is uncertain. According to the version presented here, the source for the homily lies in the proclamation, "I am the Lord," which accompanies statement of the command to love one's fellow.¹¹ The proclamation puts loving one's fellow together with being created in the image of Gd: "Love your fellow as yourself [for I, the Lord, created him]."¹² Someone who casts aside his relationship to Gd and does not treat you properly, is not worthy of neighborly love.

Jesus opposes this, and in his Sermon on the Mount says that loving one's neighbour applies to all human beings: You have learned that they were told, "Love your neighbor, hate your enemy." What I tell you is this: Love your enemies and pray for your persecutors; only so can you be children of your heavenly Father, who makes his sun rise on good and bad alike, and sends the rain on the honest and the dishonest. There must be no limit to your goodness, as your heavenly Father's goodness knows no bounds.

Jesus knew of (heard) the interpretation that placed limitations on the principle of loving one's fellow, not applying it to the wicked, and sought to turn this on its head. According to him, love of one's fellow does not depend on the Lord as commander, but on the Lord as creator. Therefore, one should even love one's

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enemy and the wicked, for even if they have sinned against the Lord's commandments, they nevertheless are children of their Father in heaven. The Father/Creator's goodness knows no bounds and does not discriminate in distributing His grace, causing the sun to shine or the rain come down on all, whether righteous or wicked.

Thus we can sum up and say that Rabbi Akiva's interpretations of the commandment, "Love your fellow as yourself," wage a hidden polemic against early Christianity. At the focal point of the polemic is the question of how one should relate to loving one's fellow and to the commandments pertaining to interpersonal relations in general. Early Christianity viewed societal commandments as distinct from religious commandments, which are based on love of Gd, and thus it essentially secularized the commandments between one person and another. Rabbi Akiva, however, believed that religious and societal commandments were intertwined. Love of one's fellow depended on Gd giving the commandment, "I am the Lord." Thus, we have but one great, overarching principle in the Torah, by virtue of which man is commanded to love those who obey the Lord's commands, while on the other hand hating "the heretics, the apostates and the collaborators."

Thus we can say that for Rabbi Akiva even commandments pertaining to relations between one person and another actually pertain to the relationship between man and Gd. *Translated by Rachel Rowen*

² Originally the question was about "the **greater principle** in the Torah," but this was mistakenly translated in Greek as "greater commandment." See David Flusser, "*Asseret ha-Dibberot ve-ha-Brit ha-Hadashah*," in: Ben Zion Segal (ed.), *Asseret ha-Dibberot be-Re'it ha-Dorot*, Jerusalem 1986, p. 180; Serge Ruzer, "*Tzemed ha-Tzivuyim 'Ve-Ahavta' ba-Brit ha-Hadashah u-ve-Serekh ha-Yahad*," *TARBIZ* 71 (2002), p. 354, note 5.

³ Matthew 22:34-40 (*The New English Bible*, Oxford Study Edition). Parallel texts, with slight variation: Mark 12:28-31; Luke 10:25-28.

⁴ See Moshe Weinfeld, "*Mishnato shel Julius Welhausen—Ha'arakah Hadashah bi-Melot Me'ah Shanah le-Hofa'at Hiburo 'Akdmut le-Divrei Yemei Yisrael*," *Shnaton la-Mikra u-le-Heker ha-Mizrah ha-Kadum* 4 (1980), p. 69: "Both fundamental principles—loving Gd and loving your neighbour—joined together for Rabbi Akiva, the prominent representative of the Pharisees."

⁵ Jerusalem Talmud, *Berakhot* 9.5, p. 14b (Academy for the Hebrew Language edition, p. 75), and Babylonian Talmud, *Berakhot* 61b (the words of Rabbi Akiva himself).

⁶ Barukh Yaakov Schwartz, *Torat ha-Kedushah—Iyyunim ba-Hukah ha-Cohanit she-ba-Torah*, Jerusalem 1999, p. 323: "Repeating the formula, 'I, am the Lord,' indicates that commandments pertaining to relations between one person and another are not seen as a category in their own right, but as part of the rubric of commandments between man and Gd"; Martin Buber, *Darko shel Mikra*, Tel Aviv 1978, p. 104: "This is not an ethical precept here, but a precept of faith...insofar human beings are My creatures, I command you thus."

Such a reading is common in the *Kabbalah* and in Hassidism. See, for example, Rabbi Hayyim Vital, *Likutei Torah Nevi'im u-Khetuvim, Parashat Kedoshim*, Tel Aviv 1973, p. 190 (citing the Ari); *Toledot Yaakov Yosef, Parashat Kedoshim*, Mezhevich 1817, p. 73a; *Kedushat Levi ha-Shalem*, 2, Jerusalem 1958, p. 414; *Sefat Emet, Parashat Korah* 1896.

⁷ Thus, in similar fashion, Lactantius (Latin Church Father, end of the 3rd century) says: "The very same thing that You gave man is given to Gd, because man is in the image of Gd." See: Flusser, *Asseret ha-Dibberot*, p. 181.

⁸ *Avot de-Rabbi Nathan*, Version A, 16, according to the New York manuscript, JTS 25. A later hand erased the words "heretics" and "apostates." For variant texts, see in greater depth: Louis Finkelstein, *Mavo le-masekhtot Avot ve-Avot de-Rabbi Natan*, New York, 1950, pp. 47-51; Menahem Kister, *Iyyunim be-Avot de-Rabbi Natan—Nusah, 'Arikhah u-Farshanut*, Jerusalem 1998, pp. 69-70.

⁹ This version of the text is based on an insertion written in the margins of the manuscript.

¹⁰ Compare with Rabbi Akiva's remarks in the Mishnah, *Avot* 3.14: "**Beloved is man that was created in the image of Gd...** beloved is Israel who are referred to as Children of the Omnipresent..." paralleling Jesus' sermon, below (note 12): "**Love your neighbor as yourself...** only so can you be **children of your heavenly Father.**"

¹¹ See the homily at the beginning, *Avot de-Rabbi Nathan*, note 9 above: "**And hate (the heretics)!**...David used to say, '**Those who hate You, O Lord, I shall hate.**' This follows from the way the Vilna Gaon reads this homily: "Does he not say, 'Love your fellow as yourself, I am the Lord'? What is the reason? "**For I created him,**" and if he acts justly and properly, you shall love him; **but if not, then do not love him.**"

¹² Mathew 5:43-48 (*The New English Bible*).

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Rabbi Wein's Weekly Blog

One of the very well-known commandments that appears in this week's reading of the Torah is the injunction not to place a stumbling block in front of someone who cannot see. Interestingly enough, Rashi in commenting upon and in explaining this commandment, does not treat it literally.

The Torah does not deal with people who are so evil as to purposely and knowingly place a stumbling block before someone who is unable to see. Rather, the Rabbis interpreted the words to apply to situations where one's own bias, prejudice, financial interest or social status misleads someone who has approached him or her for advice on an issue.

If I am interested in buying a piece of real estate and I am in the real estate business, and someone approaches me for advice as to whether to purchase that exact piece of real estate, one is forbidden to advise him incorrectly to gain the financial advantage for himself. This is a rather blatant example of how the self-interest of one person can cause an unsuspecting other person who is unaware of the self-interests of the person from whom he is seeking advice. One seeking the advice is blind to the prejudice and self-interest of the person granting the advice and invokes the proverbial stumbling block placed before the person seeking direction. In the canons of ethics that exist in legal and related professions, such behavior is grounds for the accusation of malfeasance and intentional malpractice.

In our complicated and stressful society there have arisen numerous professions devoted to giving advice to others and receiving a fee for so doing. Such professions as financial planners, estate managers and programmers, therapists for both mental and physical wounds, marriage and divorce counselors and other areas in which current society is populated, if not even dominated by these advice givers. No one can expect perfection from another human being and many times the advice or planning that is suggested and adopted may turn out to be destructive. While the Torah does not expect perfection from those from whom we seek advice, it does expect honesty and transparency. There always is a tinge of self-interest on the part of the counselor or therapist involved. After all, this is the manner in which that person makes a living. Yet, as far as humanly possible, the Torah does demand objectivity, fairness, and intelligence when giving such advice, whether it be from a professional in the field or even from a friend or neighbor.

We are repeatedly warned not to volunteer advice to others in areas where we are not requested to, or if we are not expert in those fields. People tend to invest spiritual leaders with knowledge that they may not really possess. It is dangerous and an enormous responsibility to give advice to others. In biblical times, prophecy was available but in our world it no longer exists. Both the person seeking advice and the one granting such advice should be very careful not to create the stumbling block that will cause the 'blind man' to fall.

Shabbat shalom
Rabbi Berel Wein

COVENANT & CONVERSATION

Lord Rabbi Jonathan Sacks ZTL

KEDOSHIM • 5779, 5782

From Priest to People

Something fundamental happens at the beginning of this parsha and the story is one of the greatest, if rarely acknowledged, contributions of Judaism to the world.

Until now, Vayikra has been largely about sacrifices, purity, the Sanctuary, and the Priesthood. It has been, in short, about a holy place, holy offerings, and the elite and holy people – Aaron and his descendants – who minister there. Suddenly, in chapter 19, the text opens up to embrace the whole of the people and the whole of life:

The Lord spoke to Moses: "Speak to all the community of Israel. Say: 'Be holy, for I am holy; I, the Lord your God.'"

Lev. 19:1–2

This is the first and only time in Leviticus that so inclusive an address is commanded. The Sages explained this to mean that the contents of the chapter were proclaimed by Moses to a formal gathering of the entire nation (hakhel). It is the people as a whole who are commanded to "be holy", not just an elite group of priests. It is life itself that is to be sanctified, as the chapter goes on to make clear. Holiness is to be made manifest in the way the nation makes its clothes and plants its fields, in the way justice is administered, workers are paid, and business conducted. The vulnerable – the deaf, the blind, the elderly, and the stranger – are to be afforded special protection. The whole society is to be governed by love, without resentments or revenge.

What we witness here, in other words, is the radical democratisation of holiness. All ancient societies had priests. We have encountered four instances in the Torah thus far of non-Israelite priests: Malchizedek, Abraham's contemporary, described as a Priest of God Most High; Potiphera, Joseph's father-in-law; the Egyptian Priests as a whole, whose land Joseph did not nationalise; and Yitro, Moses' father-in-law, a Midianite Priest. The priesthood was not unique to Israel, and everywhere it was an elite. Here for the first time, we find a code of holiness directed to the people as a whole. We are all called on to be holy.

In a strange way, though, this comes as no surprise. The idea, if not the details, had already been hinted at. The most explicit instance comes in the prelude to the great covenant-making ceremony at Mount Sinai when God tells Moses to say to the people:

"Now, if you faithfully heed My Voice and keep My covenant, you will be My treasure among all the peoples, although the whole earth is Mine. A kingdom of priests and a holy nation you shall be to Me."

Ex. 19:5–6

Meaning, a kingdom all of whose members are to be in some sense priests, and a nation that is in its entirety holy.

The first intimation is much earlier still, in the first chapter of Genesis, with its monumental assertion:

"Let Us make humankind in Our image, in Our likeness." So God created humankind in His own image: in the image of God He created him; male and female He created them.

Gen. 1:26–27

What is revolutionary in this declaration is not that a human being could be in the image of God. That is precisely how kings of Mesopotamian city states and Pharaohs of Egypt were regarded. They were seen as the representatives, the living images, of the gods. That is how they derived their authority. The Torah's revolution is the statement that not some but all humans share this dignity. Regardless of class, colour, culture, or creed, we are all in the image and likeness of God.

Thus was born the cluster of ideas that, though they took many millennia to be realised, led to the distinctive culture of the West: the non-negotiable dignity of the human person, the idea of human rights, and eventually, the political and economic expressions of these ideas – liberal democracy on the one hand, and the free market on the other.

The point is not that these ideas were fully formed in the minds of human beings during the period of biblical history. Manifestly, this is not so. The concept of human rights is a product of the seventeenth century. Democracy was not fully implemented until the twentieth. But already in Genesis 1 the seed was planted. That is what Jefferson meant when he wrote:

God who gave us life gave us liberty. And can the liberties of a nation be thought secure when we have removed their only firm basis, a conviction in the minds of the people that these liberties are of the Gift of God?[1]

The irony is that these three texts – Genesis 1, Exodus 19:6, and Leviticus 19 – are all spoken in the priestly voice Judaism calls *Torat Kohanim*. [2] On the face of it, Priests were not egalitarian. They all came from a single tribe, the Levites, and from a single family within the tribe – that of Aaron. To be sure, the Torah tells us that this was not

God's original intention. Initially it was to have been the firstborns – those who were saved from the last of the Ten Plagues – who were charged with special holiness as the ministers of God. It was only after the sin of the Golden Calf, in which only the tribe of Levi did not participate, that the change was made. Even so, the priesthood would have been an elite, a role reserved specifically for firstborn males. So deep is the concept of equality written into monotheism that it emerges precisely from the priestly voice – from which we would least expect it.

The reason is this: religion in the ancient world was, not accidentally but essentially, a defence of hierarchy. With the development, first of agriculture, then of cities, what emerged were highly stratified societies with a ruler on top, surrounded by a royal court, beneath which was an administrative elite, and at the bottom an illiterate mass that was conscripted from time to time either as an army or as a *corvée*, a labour force used in the construction of monumental buildings.

What kept the structure in place was an elaborate doctrine of a heavenly hierarchy whose origins were told in myth, whose most familiar natural symbol was the sun, and whose architectural representation was the pyramid or *ziggurat*, a massive building broad at the base and narrow at the top. The gods had fought and established an order of dominance and submission. To rebel against the earthly hierarchy was to challenge reality itself. This belief was universal in the ancient world. Aristotle thought that some were born to rule, others to be ruled. Plato constructed a myth in his *Republic* in which class divisions existed because the gods had made some people with gold, some with silver, and others with bronze. This was the “noble lie” that had to be told if a society was to protect itself against dissent from within.

Monotheism removes the entire mythological basis of hierarchy. There is no order among the gods because there are no gods, there is only the one God, Creator of all. Some form of hierarchy will always exist: armies need commanders, films need directors, and orchestras, conductors. But these are functional, not ontological. They are not a matter of birth. So it is all the more impressive to find the most egalitarian sentiments coming from the world of the Priest, whose religious role was a matter of birth.

The concept of equality we find in the Torah specifically and in Judaism generally is not an equality of wealth: Judaism is not communism. Nor is it an equality of power: Judaism is not anarchy. It is fundamentally an equality of dignity. We are all equal citizens in the nation whose sovereign is God. Hence the elaborate political and economic structure set out in *Leviticus*, organised around the number seven, the sign of the holy. Every seventh day is free time. Every seventh year, the produce of the field belongs to all, Israelite slaves are to be liberated, and debts released. Every fiftieth year, ancestral land was to return to its original owners. Thus the inequalities that are the inevitable result of freedom are mitigated. The logic of all these provisions is the priestly insight that God, Creator of all, is the ultimate Owner of all:

“And the land shall not be sold in perpetuity, for the land is Mine. You are merely migrants and visitors to Me. Throughout the land that you possess, you must allow land to be redeemed.”

Lev. 25:23-24

God therefore has the right, not just the power, to set limits to inequality. No one should be robbed of dignity by total poverty, endless servitude, or unrelieved indebtedness.

What is truly remarkable, however, is what happened after the biblical era and the destruction of the Second Temple. Faced with the loss of the entire infrastructure of the holy, the Temple, its Priests, and sacrifices, Judaism translated the entire system of *avodah*, Divine service, into the everyday life of ordinary Jews. In prayer, every Jew became a Priest offering a sacrifice. In repentance, each became a High Priest, atoning for their sins and those of their people. Every synagogue, in Israel or elsewhere, became a fragment of the Temple in Jerusalem. Every table became an altar, every act of charity or hospitality, a kind of sacrifice.

Torah study, once the speciality of the priesthood, became the right and obligation of everyone. Not everyone could wear the crown of Priesthood, but everyone could wear the crown of Torah. A *mamzer talmid chacham*, a Torah scholar of illegitimate birth, say the Sages, is

greater than an *am ha'aretz* Kohen Gadol, an ignorant High Priest. Out of the devastating tragedy of the loss of the Temple, the Sages created a religious and social order that came closer to the ideal of the people as “a kingdom of Priests and a holy nation” than had ever previously been realised. The seed had been planted long before, in the opening of *Leviticus* 19:

“Speak to all the community of Israel. Say: ‘Be holy, for I am holy; I, the Lord your God.’”

Holiness belongs to all of us when we turn our lives into the service of God, and society into a home for the Divine Presence. That is the moral life as lived by the kingdom of priests: a world where we aspire to come close to God by coming close, in justice and love, to our fellow humans.

Shabbat Shalom: Parshat Kedoshim (Leviticus 19:1-20:27)

By Rabbi Shlomo Riskin

Efrat, Israel – “You shall love your friend as yourself – I am the Lord” (*Leviticus* 19:18)

These five Hebrew words – “You shall love your friend as yourself” – are designated by the renowned Talmudic sage Rabbi Akiva as “the greatest rule of the Torah” (*J.T. Nedarim* 30b); the bedrock of our entire ethical system.

And 50 years after the destruction of the Second Temple, Rabbi Akiva was considered one of the most illustrious of the rabbinical decisors, who led a major Talmudic academy which could boast a student body of tens of thousands.

Indeed, it became the first “*yeshivat hesder*” in history, whose students fought valiantly against the Roman conquerors, hoping to restore the Holy City of Jerusalem, to enthrone their General Bar Kokhba as King Messiah, to rebuild the Holy Temple and to usher in the time of Redemption.

Alas, the redemption was not to be; the kingdom of Bar Kokhba lasted only three and a half years; Bar Kokhba himself was killed and the aborted Judean rebellion ended in tragic failure.

The Talmud (*B.T. Yevamot* 62b) records that 24,000 disciples of Rabbi Akiva lost their lives due to askera, an Aramaic term which Rashi explains as a plague of diphtheria; but Rav Hai Gaon maintains much more logically that they died by the sword (*sicarii* in Greek means “sword”) in the Bar Kokhba wars as well as in the Hadrianic persecutions which followed the military defeat.

The initial mourning period observed during these days of the counting of the Omer – from the end of Passover until Lag Ba'omer (the 33rd day of the barley offering, when the disciples of Rabbi Akiva stopped dying) – memorializes the death of these valiant young martyrs, so anxious to restore Jewish sovereignty in Judea.

And the Talmud, morally interested in discovering an ethical flaw that might justify the failure of this heroic attempt, maintained that it was “because the students of Rabbi Akiva did not honor each other properly, that they were involved in petty jealousies and rivalries causing them to face their Roman foes from a position of disunity and internal strife (*Yevamot*, *ibid*).

But how could this be? After all, Rabbi Akiva's major teaching was that “you shall love your friend as yourself – this is the greatest rule of the Torah.” Could it be that the foremost Master – Rosh Yeshiva Rabbi Akiva, did not succeed in inculcating within his disciples his most important maxim, the one teaching which he considered to be quintessential Torah?

Allow me to suggest a number of responses. First of all, one can say that it was only after the death of the 24,000, and the understanding that the tragedy occurred because of their “causeless animosity” amongst themselves (*sinat hinam*), that Rabbi Akiva began to emphasize loving one's fellow as the greatest rule of the Torah.

Secondly, the Talmud (*B.T. Gittin* 56b) has Rabbi Akiva apply a shockingly disparaging verse to Rav Yohanan ben Zakkai, who close to seven decades earlier had left the besieged Jerusalem at the 11th hour to stand before Vespasian and trade away sovereignty over Jerusalem and hegemony over the Holy Temple, for the city of Yavne and the

Sanhedrin of 71 wise elders: "oft-times God moves wise men backwards and turns their wisdom into foolishness" (Isaiah 44:25).

You must remember that Yohanan ben Zakkai had been the teacher of the two teachers of Rabbi Akiva: Rabbi Eliezer ben Hyrcanus (Rabbi Eliezer Hagadol) and Rabbi

Yehoshua ben Hananya. And Rabbi Akiva was not attacking ben Zakkai's ideology but he was rather disparaging his persona, very much ad hominem: "God had moved ben Zakkai backwards and transformed his wisdom into foolishness!" No matter how many times Rabbi Akiva might have emphasized "Love your neighbor as yourself," this one-time "put-down" of a Torah scholar by Rabbi Akiva unfortunately may have caused his disciples to overlook his general teaching and learn from his harsh words.

Herein lies a crucial lesson for every educator: our students learn not from what we tell them during our formal lessons, but rather from what they see us do and hear us say, even, and especially if, we are speaking off the record.

And finally, when Hillel, a disciple of Rabbi Akiva, is approached by a would-be convert and challenged to teach him the entire Torah "while he stands on one leg," Hillel responds by rephrasing Rabbi Akiva's Golden Rule in more practical terms by teaching you what not to do: "What is hateful to you, do not do to your friend. This is the entire Torah; all the rest is commentary; go out and study it..." (B.T. Shabbat 31a) And similarly, the same sage Hillel teaches, "Do not judge your friend until you actually stand in his place" (Mishna Avot 2:5), which is another way of saying that you must not judge your brother unless you had been faced by the same trial he had to face – and had responded differently.

You must love your friend by seeing him and judging him as though you were truly standing in his place.

Perhaps when Rabbi Akiva initially judged Rabbi Yohanan ben Zakkai's "deal" with Vespasian, he (Rabbi Akiva) was not in the midst of a brutal and losing battle against Rome; at that earlier time it was comparatively easy for him to criticize ben Zakkai as having given up too much too soon. However, once he himself became involved in what eventually was the tragic debacle of Bar Kokhba against Rome, he very well might have taken back his critical attribution of Isaiah's verse to Rabban Yohanan ben Zakkai, who was certainly vindicated by subsequent Jewish history.

Yes, we must love our friends as we love ourselves, and one of the ways to fulfill this command is by refraining from judging our "friends" until we actually stand in their place.

Shabbat Shalom!

Do You Ever "Slaughter" Another Jew?

Rabbi YY Jacobson

A Strange Talmudic Insight into a Biblical Verse Captures the Sense of Jewish Unity

No Gashes

There is a fascinating verse in this week's Torah portion, Reah:

You are children of the Lord, your G-d. You shall neither cut yourselves nor make any baldness between your eyes, for the dead. (Deut. 14:1)

The custom of many pagans was to cut themselves in demonstration of grief over the death of a loved one. To vent their agony, they would make incisions in their flesh, pull out their hair, and flay their skin. The Torah prohibits this behavior. [1] There must be limits to grief. This is the meaning of the Hebrew word "sisgodedu," to scrape off the flesh.

The Talmud, however, adds a second meaning to this commandment:

בבמות יג, ב: לא תתגודדו-לא תעשו אגודות אגודות

The Torah is saying: Do not splinter yourself into separate groups. [2] ("Sisgodedu," from the root word "agud" or "agudah," means groups.)

This is a prohibition against the Jewish people becoming divided. Practically, this is a prohibition against one Jewish court dividing into two and guiding the community in a conflicting fashion, [3] creating division and conflict. [4]

One practical example would be this. If a synagogue has a certain tradition of how to pray, one may not come and begin praying in a different tradition without the consent of the community. [5]

But there is something strange here, and the question was first pointed out by the 16th century Jewish sage and leader, Rabbi Yehuda Leow (1512-1607), known as the Maharal, [6] chief Rabbi of Prague (who one of the most influential Jewish personalities of his time, and author of major works on Jewish thought.) The Talmud and the Midrash often present various interpretations for one biblical term or verse; but nowhere do we find two interpretations that are completely disconnected. On the simple level, "sisgodedu" means scraping off your skin. Now the Talmud tells us that it also means, "don't split up into separate groups." How do these two divergent instructions come together in a single word? Why would the Torah communicate such two disparate ideas in one word-lacerating your body and dividing a community?

Or to put it more poignantly and humorously, the sages, it seems, by imposing this second meaning are "violating" the very injunction they are trying to convey. They take a simple word in the verse and they "splinter" its meaning to connote divergent interpretations that seem to lack any common streak?

In words of the Maharal: [7] "Every man of wisdom and understanding will be amazed at the relationship of their [the sages] words with the simple meaning of the text, at a depth that is truly awesome. Yet, the man who is a stranger to this wisdom, will wonder at their unlikely reading of the verse, their words seeming implausible to him."

One Organism

Yet it is here that we can once again gain insight into the depth of Torah wisdom. [8]

The truth is, that the two interpretations are not only not divergent, they are actually one and the same. They both represent the same truth-one on a concrete, physical level; the other on a deeper, spiritual level.

The Torah prohibits us from cutting our skin as a sign of bereavement. Our bodies are sacred; our organism is integrated, precious and holy; we must never harm it. We must not separate even a bit of skin from our flesh. Even difficult moments of grief don't allow us to give up on our life and on the sacredness and beauty [9] of our bodies. [10]

But that is exactly what we are doing when we allow our people to become splintered. The entire Jewish nation is essentially one single organism. [11] We may number 15 million people, and come from different walks of life, profess extremely different opinions, and behave in opposite ways, but we are essentially like one "super organism." When I cut off a certain Jew from my life, when I cut myself off from a certain Jewish community, I am in truth cutting off part of my own flesh.

When I cut my skin, I am lacerating my body. When I cut you off from me, I am lacerating my soul. Because our souls are one.

Only G-d

I once read the following powerful story.

In the late 18th century, in Eastern Europe, there was a terrible conflict between the Chassidim and their opponents, the Misnagdim, who suspected the Chassidim in heresy and blasphemy. The chief opponent was the Vilna Gaon, the famed Rabbi Elijah (1720-1797), from the Lithuanian city Vilnius, who issued a ban (cherem) against Chassidim. He excommunicated them from the Jewish community. It was a terrible division which continued for decades.

The Misnagdim came to one of the greatest students of the Vilna Gaon, Rabbi Refael Hakohen Katz, the Rabbi of Hamburg and author of *Toras Yekusiel* (1722-1803), and asked him to sign the ban. He refused. They said: "But your own Rebbe, the Vilna Gaon, signed it, and your Rebbe is like an angel of G-d!" [12]

This was his response:

There is a famous question on the story of the Akeida, the binding of Isaac, in Genesis. G-d instructs Abraham to bring up his son Isaac as an offering. Abraham complies. At the last moment, as he is about to slaughter Isaac, The Torah states: "And a heavenly angel of G-d called out to him, and said: Abraham! Abraham!... And he said: 'Do not stretch out your hand against the lad, nor do anything to him.'" At the last moment, Isaac is saved.

There is something strange about this story. The instruction to bring Isaac as an offering came directly from G-d. [13] G-d Himself told Abraham to offer his son to Him. Why did the reverse stop-order come from an angel and not from G-d?

The answer, said Reb Refael, is this. If G-d wants to tell you not to touch a Jewish child, sending an angel will suffice. But if He wants you to "slaughter" another Jew, an angel can't suffice! G-d Himself needs to come and tell you to do it. If you are going to "slaughter" another Jew, make sure you hear it from G-d Himself.

To let Isaac live, the instruction could be communicated via an angel. To let Isaac die, G-d needed to show up Himself.

"My Rebbe is an angel of G-d," Reb Refael said. "But I will not sign a ban against another Jew," even when an angel tells me to do so. To "slaughter" a Jew I need to hear it from G-d Himself.

[The source of the above story is Toras Yechiel by Rabbi Schlezinger Parshas Vayeira. Chut Hameshulah, a biography of the Chasam Sofer, page 27. In the latter the name of the student of the Vilna Gaon is given as Reb Zalman of Valazhin, who was one of the most beloved students of the Vilna Gaon. There he also adds that when the Vilna Gaon heard this response, he himself abstained from any further action against the Chassidim!

It is also interesting to note, that according to many sources, the famed Chafetz Chaim, Rabbi Yisroel Meir Kagan, who dedicated his life to increasing Jewish unity, and his works spread among all Jews, was a grandson of Reb Refael of Hamburg.]

Be Careful

Sometimes we get in to fights with people over idealistic reasons. We "slaughter" people-with our words or actions-and we feel that we are acting on behalf of an angel. We feel angelic about our actions.

Be wary, says the Torah! If you are going to cut someone off from your life, you want to hear it from G-d Himself. If not, let it go.

[1] What is the connection between the opening of the verse about our being the children of G-d and the prohibition of gouging ourselves over the death of a loved one?

The Ohr Hachaim explains that the Torah is teaching us that death has another dimension to it. It can be compared to a person who sent his son to a faraway land in order to start a business there. The son settled in that place and over time became very close to many fine people there. After many years, the father summoned the son to return home and the son acceded to his wishes. The son is not lost. Those who had grown to know and love him are no longer able to see him, but the son is not lost. On the contrary, the son is returning home to his father. The thought of those friends going ahead and gouging themselves over the agony of the son's departure is unjust. Sadness and a melancholy feeling are in order. Gouging is definitely out. Because "Banim a'tem laHashem Elokaichem," You are children of Hashem your G-d." At death, the person is returning to the Father. The duration of that person's visit to this transient world has come to a close. The time has come to return home. Therefore, "Lo tishgo'd'du," do not gouge yourselves over a death. Reacting in such a way really contradicts our beliefs.

The Chizkuni explains that the basis for the command not to gouge ourselves is that we are the children of Hashem--we are mere children. Do we have an understanding of why we live and why we die? Can we fathom the Divine decisions which determine these occurrences? Do we appreciate the meaning of life? Do we comprehend why a person is born or why they die? A child does not comprehend the decisions that a mature father makes-and we too are children. Thus, "Lo tishgo'd'du {do not gouge yourselves}." Cf. Ibn Ezra, Ramban, Daas Zekenim, Seforno and Klei Yakar for their explanations in the juxtaposition.

[2] Yevamos 13b

רמב"ם הלכות עבודה זרה יב, יג-יד: גדידה ושריטה, אחת היא... על המת, בין שרט בידו בין שרט בכלי, לוקה... ובכלל אזהרה זו, שלא יהו שני בתי דינין בעיר אחת, זה נוהג במנהג, וזה נוהג במנהג אחר, שדבר זה גורם למחלוקת גדולה, וכתוב לא תתגודדו, לא תיעשו אנדות אנדות.

[4] The Talmud in Yevamos 13b and 14a discusses the nature of this prohibition. Abayei maintains that Lo Sisgodedu applies when two different batei dinim (courts) in one city issue conflicting rulings. This

makes the one Torah that was received at Sinai appear as "two Torahs" (Rashi ibid.) and causes confusion and discord (Rambam). Rava, however, does not object to different batei dinim, even in the same city, issuing contradictory rulings, since it is within the very nature of the Torah that different rulings will be rendered by different schools of thought, as Beis Shamai and Beis Hillel did for many years. In Rava's opinion, the prohibition of Lo Sisgodedu is meant to discourage one beis din from rendering a split decision.

See Kesef Mishnah to Rambam ibid who amends the text so that the Rambam agrees with Rava not Abaya, as is usually the standard in Halacha,

It is interesting to note, that Rabbi Ovadiah Yosef maintains that regarding any halachic issue about which it is well known that there is a difference of opinion, there is no problem of "lo sisgodedu." However, many halachik authorities disagree. A case in point: Everyone knows that many Jews wear tefillin on Chol ha-Moed and many do not. Nevertheless, the Mishnah Berurah quotes from the Artsos HaChaim that you should not allow these two groups to pray together in the same shul; they should pray in different rooms. Otherwise, he notes, it looks like there are "shtei Toros" (two Torahs).

[5] See here for the entire discussion: <http://olamot.net/sites/default/files/pdf/68.pdf>

[6] In his commentary of Gur Aryeh to this verse Deut. 14:1

[7] Beer HaGolah p. 44

[8] I heard this insight from Rabbi Yosef Cheser (Montreal), who heard it from Rabbi Schneur Kotler, the famed dean of the Lakewood Yeshiva, when he once visited Montreal. It was during a Friday night gathering and on the table was the question if Ashkenazic Jews should support a struggling Sephardic school in Montreal.

[9] That is how Rashi explains the reason for the prohibition. Rashi Deut. 14:1

[10] Symbolically, perhaps, scraping of the skin demonstrates a lack of sensitivity that our flesh is part of "us," it is part of our soul. We may not separate the body from its internal soul. When we realize the body is part of the soul, and that the soul never dies, it alters our perception of death. When we gash our bodies after death, it demonstrates a lack of this awareness.

[11] See Talmud Yerushalmi Nedarim 9:4. Cf. Tanya chapter 32. Derech Mitzvosecha Mitzvas Ahavas Yisroel and references noted there.

[12] See Talmud Chagigah 13b that a real Rebbe is like an angel.

[13] Genesis 22:2.

Cutting Corners

By Rabbi Yirmiyohu Kaganoff

Question #1: Idolatrous shavers

What does my style of haircut have to do with idolatry?

Question #2: Women shaving

Are women included in the prohibition of shaving?

Question #3: Tweezing my beard

May I tweeze out my facial hairs?

Question #4: Am I square-headed?

Where are my head's corners? My head is round!

Introduction

In two places in the Torah, the mitzvos not to shave the "corners" or "edges" of one's head and beard are discussed. In parshas Kedoshim, the Torah states, "Lo sakifu pe'as roshechem velo sashchis eis pe'as zekanecha, "Do not round the corners of your head, and do not destroy the corners of your beard" (Vayikra 19:27). We should note that the first part of the posuk states sakifu and roshechem, both plural, whereas the latter part of the posuk states tashchis and zekanecha, which are both singular and masculine. This observation will be significant in our forthcoming discussion.

The other place where the Torah discusses the prohibition not to shave is in parshas Emor, where the Torah states, "They should not shave the corners of their beard" (Vayikra 21:5). Just reading these two pesukim already raises questions: What does the Torah mean in referring to the "corners" of your head and beard. I, like most people, have an oval-

shaped head that has no straight lines or corners! My barber tells me that my beard is roundish also, so, pray tell, where are the corners of my beard?

Even should we explain the posuk to mean “edges” rather than “corners,” it is still unclear. Where are the “edges” of my head, or those of my beard? We will return to these questions shortly.

Shaving and avodah zarah

The Rambam discusses these laws in a place that we might find somewhat unusual -- at the end of Hilchos Avodah Zarah, the laws of idol worship. As he explains himself: “It is prohibited to shave the edges of the head, as the idol worshippers and their priests used to do.” Clearly, he understands that this prohibition is linked to the general laws prohibiting idol worship, notwithstanding that these laws apply only to Jews and not to non-Jews, whose responsibility not to worship idols is the same as that of a Jew.

Similarly, when the Rambam introduces the lo saaseh not to shave, he states as follows: “The approach of the priests of idolatry was to shave their beards. Therefore, the Torah forbade shaving the beard.” It is also interesting to note that, although I translated the Rambam as “shaving,” he actually here uses the word hashchasa, which, as in the translation of the posuk in parshas Kedoshim above, means “destroying” the beard.

Both of these statements of the Rambam are unusual. Although he often quotes reasons for mitzvos before concluding the laws of that mitzvah, he rarely introduces a mitzvah with an explanation of the reason for the mitzvah. Here, he obviously felt that there was a reason to do so, which provoked other rishonim to take issue with him, as we will soon see. It is fascinating to note that today there are idolatrous practices that involve shaving the sides of the head in a way somewhat reminiscent of the Rambam’s description. It is also interesting to note that the Yiddish word for a priest, “galach,” is derived from the word giluaach, shaving.

Women and hair corners

The two mitzvos, “rounding” the head and “destroying” the edges of the beard, apply only to men and not to women, but where does the Torah teach this? The question is even stronger, since neither of these mitzvos is timebound, and they are both mitzvos lo saaseh, prohibitions of the Torah. The general rule is that women are exempt only from timebound positive mitzvos (mitzvos aseih) and not from mitzvos lo saaseh, nor from mitzvos that are not timebound!

To answer this last question, let us quote the Mishnah, which states, “Men are obligated and women are exempt from positive timebound mitzvos (mitzvas aseih shehazeman grama). Men and women are equally obligated to observe positive mitzvos that are not timebound (mitzvas aseih shelo hazeman grama). Men and women are equally obligated to observe all prohibitions (lo saaseh), except for “Don’t round (bal takif),” “Don’t destroy (bal tashchis),” and “Don’t become tamei to the dead (bal tetamei lameisim)” (Kiddushin 29a).

Thus, we are taught that there are three mitzvos lo saaseh that are discriminatory – they apply only to men, but not to women. In other words, male kohanim may not become tamei to a human corpse, but women who are wives or daughters of a kohein (called kohanos in numerous places) may become tamei. Male Jews are prohibited from “rounding out” the “edges” of their heads, but women are exempt from any prohibition of “rounding out” the “edges” of their heads. And male Jews are prohibited from “destroying” the “edges” of their beards, whereas women are exempt from any prohibition of “destroying” the “edges” of their unwanted facial hairs.

We do not yet know why these mitzvos should be exceptions and not apply to women. The Gemara asks (Kiddushin 35b), “What is the hermeneutic basis for these rulings?” In other words, how do we see in the Written Torah that this is true, based on the thirteen midos of Rabbi Yishmael.

I will note that the Gemara is not questioning why these three mitzvos are exceptions. This we know via our mesorah, the Torah she’be’al peh. The Gemara’s question is how are these laws derived from the Torah shebiksav (see Rambam, Introduction to Commentary on the Mishnah).

The relevant passage of Gemara explains that the law that a kohein may not become tamei through contact with the dead applies only to men and

not to women is clearly implied in the posuk (in parshas Emor), where it states: “Speak to the kohanim who are the sons of Aharon,” implying that the prohibition applies only to the male descendants of Aharon, but not to his female progeny. However, from where in the verse would we know that the two prohibitions of rounding the head and destroying the beard apply only to men? The Gemara first explains how we know that the prohibition against destroying the beard applies only to men. The proof for this returns us to the observation we made above: When the Torah states, Lo sakifu pe’as roshechem velo tashchis eis pe’as zekanecha, “Do not round the corners of your head, and do not destroy the corners of your beard,” the beginning of the posuk is plural, whereas the latter part is masculine singular. This change and emphasis implies that lo tashchis eis pe’as zekanecha, which translates, “You (male, singular) are not to destroy the corners of your beard” applies only to men. (This is not the only approach mentioned in the Gemara, but it is the clearest.) The Gemara also demonstrates the hermeneutic source why the lo saaseh of Lo sakifu pe’as roshechem, “Do not round the corners of your head,” also applies only to men, but not to women.

Tweezing my beard

At this point, let us examine one of our opening questions: “May I tweeze out my facial hairs?” We have already learned that a woman is permitted to do this, but we do not know what the halacha is regarding a man. In this context, we should study the Mishnah in Makkos (20a), in which the tanna kamma rules that the prohibition is violated min haTorah only by shaving with a razor, whereas Rabbi Eliezer prohibits min haTorah using either a malkeit or a rehitni. What are these two instruments? According to many rishonim, a malkeit is a pair of tweezers, and the word’s root lelakeit indeed can be translated as “to tweeze” (Bartenura, Makkos 3:5; however, cf. Rashi, Shabbos 97a). Rehitni is understood by most rishonim to mean a plane or similar implement, which has a single blade as sharp as a razor, but is meant for purposes other than shaving (Rashi, Shabbos 48b, 58b, 97a; Rambam Commentary and Bartenura, Makkos 3:5). Notwithstanding that the rishonim differ regarding the correct identification of malkeit and rehitni, they appear to agree regarding the halachic issues that result.

At the beginning of this article, we noted that there are two pesukim banning shaving, one in parshas Kedoshim, which prohibits “destroying” your beard, and the other in parshas Emor, which prohibits shaving. The Gemara (Makkos 21a) explains the tanna kamma to mean that the two pesukim, together, mean that the lo saaseh applies only when someone uses an implement that is both a normal way of shaving and destroys. Although both tweezers and planes will “destroy” the beard, the Gemara explains that neither is commonly used to shave, and, therefore, they are excluded from this prohibition, at least min haTorah. Rabbi Eliezer contends that although they are not the most common shaving instruments, it is still called shaving when they are used and, therefore, it is forbidden min haTorah to shave with them (Rivan ad loc.). Although Rabbi Eliezer disagrees with the tanna kamma, since the majority opinion rules that these two instruments are permitted, this is the halachic conclusion.

The Gemara then makes a distinction between scissors, on the one hand, and tweezers and planes on the other, explaining that even Rabbi Eliezer rules that this prohibition of the Torah does not include cutting the beard with scissors, since this does not “destroy” your beard. Since Rabbi Eliezer rules that scissors do not violate the prohibition of shaving the beard, certainly the tanna kamma agrees. Therefore, this lo saaseh is not violated when cutting beard hairs with tweezers, planes or scissors. We should note that many authorities, nevertheless, prohibit shaving using these items, for a variety of different reasons, which we will explain in a future article.=

One blade

Even when using scissors or a beard trimmer, one must be extremely careful not to shave the beard only with the lower blade of the scissors, since this is halachically the same as cutting with a razor and prohibited min haTorah (Rema, Yoreh Deah 181:10). In other words, scissors’ action is not a razor only because the cutting uses both blades. Should one blade of the scissors be used by itself, it is functioning as a razor –

the upper blade may be hanging on for the ride, but the lower blade is shaving as a razor does.

Similarly, it is prohibited *min haTorah* to shave using a flintstone (which was apparently common at one time in history), since this is equivalent to shaving with a razor (Shu't Noda Biyehudah, Yoreh Deah 2:81).

Powders and Creams

Several halachic authorities rule that, just as a scissors may be used to shave the beard, so can depilatory powders and creams be used to remove the beard (Shu't Noda Biyehudah, Yoreh Deah 2:81; Shu't Shemesh Tzedakah Yoreh Deah #61; Birkei Yosef, to Yoreh Deah 181:10; Tiferes Yisroel, Makkos 3:5 #34). They caution against using a knife or other sharp implement to scrape off the powder or cream, since this may result in using a razor-type instrument to remove the hair, if the powder or cream did not yet separate the hair from the face. Instead, they recommend using an implement made of wood or a smooth piece of bone to wipe off the powder or cream.

We will continue this topic in a future article.

Drasha

By Rabbi Mordechai Kamenetzky

Parshas Kedoshim

Burden of Reproof

This week, the Torah not only teaches us the basics of getting along with one's neighbor, it also codifies the elementary rules of behavior that set a moral standard for social etiquette. You shall not be a gossipmonger; you shall not stand idly by your brother's blood; you shall not hate your brother in your heart. You shall not take revenge. (Leviticus 19:16-18). In one matter, however, the Torah also exhorts us to act in a way that many may believe would lead our neighbors to distance themselves from us. The Torah tells us to reprove our fellow-Jew. Obviously, the concept of "live and let live" is foreign to Judaism. In fact, the mitzvah of reproof is put right next to the verse, "you shall not stand idly by your brother's blood." Spiritual distress in the Torah's view is equivalent to physical distress. Just as we cannot stand idly by when someone is drowning, so, too, when someone is drowning spiritually we must also act. But the Torah does more than just tell us to admonish – it tells us how.

"You shall not hate your brother in your heart; reprove you shall surely reprove him and do not bear a sin upon him." The last part of the charge is difficult to understand. What does the Torah mean, "and do not bear a sin upon him"?

Rashi explains that the Torah does not want you to sin while reproofing your fellow – "do not embarrass him publicly."

The actual text, however, seems to read to not bear a sin upon him, the sinner. How can we understand that?

As the Chofetz Chaim traveled around Poland and Russia to sell his works, he entered an inn in Vilna and beheld a disturbing sight. A burly young man was about to devour a hen that lay on his plate roasted and stuffed. A tall stein stood next to the succulent fowl, its rim flowing with cold brew. All of a sudden the man picked up the entire hen and stuffed it into his mouth. He washed down his meal with a giant gulp of beer, leaving the stein nearly empty. The Chofetz Chaim had never seen a Jewish person eat like that, let alone with out a bracha (blessing before food)!

He turned to the innkeeper and inquired, "Tell me a little about this man, I'd like to talk to him."

"Oh!" smirked the host while waving his hand in disgust. "There's nobody to talk to. This young man never learned a day in his life. The cantonists captured him when he was eleven and he served in the Russian army for 15 years. He hardly observes any mitzvos. It's amazing that he even eats kosher!" Then he smiled. "But I'm sure I can count on him for a three-course meal every Thursday night!"

The Chofetz Chaim was neither shocked nor amused. He simply walked over to the former soldier and shook, his greasy hand warmly. After a warm greeting the Chofetz Chaim introduced himself and spoke. "I heard that you actually survived the cruel Russian army of Czar Nikolai and you never were raised amongst your people. I am sure that many

times the terrible officers tried to convert you or at least force you to eat non-kosher. Yet you remained a steadfast Jew!" Tears welled in the Chofetz Chaim's eyes as he continued talking.

"I only wish that I that I would be guaranteed a place in the World-to-Come as you will be. What strength! What fortitude! You have withstood harsher tests than sages of old."

The soldier looked up from his plate and tears welled in his eyes too. He leaned over and kissed the hand of the elderly sage. Then the Chofetz Chaim continued. "I am sure that if you get yourself a teacher and continue your life as a true Torah-observant Jew, there will be no one in this world who is as fortunate as you!"

According to the biographer of the Chofetz Chaim, Rabbi M. M. Yasher, the soldier became a pupil of the Chofetz Chaim, and eventually became an outstanding tzadik (righteous Jew).

Perhaps with the words, "do not bear on him the sin," the verse is telling us much more. It tells us not to focus on the action of sin alone when admonishing someone. The Torah wants us to find a positive aspect that will raise the holy soul from murky depths.

It is easy to enumerate your friend's misdeeds – and perhaps even easier to tell him off. But, that is not the goal.

The Book of Mishlei tells us: "He who acclaims evildoers as righteous, will be cursed. But those who admonish will be blessed." (Proverbs:24:24-25) Rabbi Shlomo Alkabetz (c.1505 – c.1584) of Sefad explains that the two verses work in tandem. They teach us that though false flattery is abhorrent, when used to admonish by finding the good in those who have strayed, it is to be commended. The Torah wants us to build a person, and elevate him instead of thrusting the burden of his sins upon him. In that manner, you won't bully him, you will build him. For when finding faults in others, we bear a great responsibility. Not only do we bear the difficult and sensitive burden of proof, we bear an equally difficult and sensitive burden of reproof.

Good Shabbos

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Parshat Kedoshim - Being Holy

"You shall be holy..." (19:2)

Rabbi Yonatan Eybeschutz was born in Cracow (Poland) in the year 5450 (1690). Apart from being a genius in Torah, he was also greatly esteemed by prominent non-Jewish scholars, among them the Jesuit bishop Hasselbauer. Rabbi Eybeschutz used his good offices to obtain permission from the bishop to print the Talmud which had been forbidden by the Church who charged that the Talmud had anti-Christian references. One of these references was the Gemara in Yevamot (60b) that says that the Jewish People "are called 'man' and the nations of the world are not called 'man.'"

The bishop took deep and dangerous offence to this Gemara and accused Reb Yonatan that the Jews were racist and hated non-Jews.

Rabbi Yonatan replied that there were four Hebrew expressions for man: Enosh, gever, ish, and adam. The plural of enosh is anashim. The plural of gever is gevarim, the plural of ish is ishim. The word adam has no plural. There is no such word as adam-im. When the Gemara says that we are called adam and the nations of the world are not called adam, it is not because they are less human than us. Rather, the Jewish People are, in essence, one. We all come from the same soul root.

I am writing this after just returning from the funeral of Rabbi Chaim Kanievsky, zatzal, a person who embodied what it means to be adam.

I had the merit to meet Reb Chaim only once. I guess I'm something of what is known as, in Yeshiva circles, "a cold Lithuanian Jew." I am not impressed by stories of miracle-working and near supernatural powers. But to me it seemed that Reb Chaim's face radiated light. No exaggeration. "You shall be holy."

Reb Chaim showed us what it meant to be adam.

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Kedoshim: I Get No Respect!
Rabbi Dr. Tzvi Hersh Weinreb

I love visiting residences for senior citizens. For one thing, being around truly older people invariably helps me feel young by comparison.

Recently, I was a weekend guest scholar at such a residence. I dispensed with my prepared lectures and instead tried to engage the residents of the facility, not one of whom was less than ninety years old, in a group discussion. This proved to be a very wise move on my part, because I learned a great deal about the experience of getting old. Or, as one wise man insisted, “You don’t get ‘old’—you get ‘older.’”

The question that I raised to provoke discussion was this: “What made you first realize that you were getting ‘older?’”

I was taken aback by the reactions of the group, because there were clearly two very different sets of responses.

One member of the group responded, “I knew I was getting older when people started to ignore me. I was no more than a piece of furniture to them. Worse, they no longer noticed me at all.”

About half of the group expressed their agreement with this person’s experience. They proceeded to describe various experiences that they had in being ignored. Some of those stories were quite poignant and powerful. One woman even described how she was present at the outbreak of a fire in a hotel lobby, and the rescue workers “simply did not see me sitting there. That is, until I started to scream!”

But then some of the others spoke up expressing quite different experiences. One gentleman said it for the rest of this second group: “I knew that I was getting older when passengers on the subway or bus stood up for me and gave me their seat.” That basic gesture of respect conveyed to the members of this group of senior citizens that they had indeed reached the age when they were not ignored, but rather the beneficiaries of acts of deference.

The discussion then entered another phase, as both groups agreed that, while they certainly did not want to be ignored, they also were resentful of these gestures of respect. The group unanimously supported the position articulated by the oldest person there, who said: “We don’t want gestures of respect. We want genuine respect.”

It seems that the entire group, although appreciative of those who relinquished seats on the subway for them, wanted something more. They wanted their opinions to be heard, their life experience to be appreciated, and their accumulated wisdom to be acknowledged. Symbolic gestures were insufficient, and sometimes were even experienced as demeaning.

This week’s Torah portion, Parshat Kedoshim (Leviticus 19:1-20:27), contains the basic biblical commandment regarding treatment of the elderly: “You shall rise before the aged and show deference to the old; you shall fear your God: I am the Lord.” (ibid. 19:32)

Rashi’s comments on this verse indicate how sensitive he was to the subtle reactions expressed by the members of my little group. Here is what he says, paraphrasing the Talmudic Sages: “What is deference? It is refraining from sitting in his place, and not interrupting his words. Whereas one might think to simply close his eyes and pretend not to even see the old person, the verse cautions us to fear your God, for after all, he knows what is in the heart of man...”

Interestingly, not sitting in -his seat means much more than just giving him a seat on the bus. It means recognizes that the elderly person has his own seat, his own well-earned place in society, which you, the younger person, dare not usurp. It is more than just a gesture. It is an acknowledgement of the valued place the elder has in society, a place which is his and his alone.

Similarly, not interrupting the older person’s conversation is much more than an act of courtesy. It is awareness that this older person has something valuable to say, a message to which one must listen attentively.

How well our Torah knows the deviousness of which we are all capable. We can easily pretend not to notice the older person. But He who reads our minds and knows what is in our hearts will be the judge of that. We must fear Him and not resort to self-justification and excuses. We must deal with the older person as a real person, whose presence cannot be ignored but must be taken into full account in our conversation.

Rabbi Naftali Zvi Yehuda Berlin, in his commentary on this verse, refers us to a passage in the Midrash Rabbah on the weekly portion of Beha’alotcha in the Book of Numbers, which understands the phrase “you shall fear your God” as being the consequence of your showing deference to the elderly. Thus, if you treat the elderly well you will attain the spiritual level of the God-fearing person. But if you refrain from showing the elderly that deference, you can never aspire to the title “God-fearing person” no matter how pious you are in other respects.

There is another entirely different perspective on our verse which provides a practical motive for honoring the elderly. It is to be found in the commentary of Abraham ibn Ezra, who explains the phrase “You shall fear your God” in the following way:

“The time will come when you will be old and frail and lonely. You will long for proper treatment at the hands of the young. But if you showed disrespect for the

elderly when you were young, and did not “fear God,” God will not reward you with the treatment you desire in your own old age.”

As each of us strives to show genuine respect to our elders, we help construct a society in which the elderly have their proper place. That society will hopefully still be there when we become older, and then we will reap the benefits of our own youthful behavior.

Our Torah portion is entitled Kedoshim, which means “holy.” One of the major components of the holy society is the treatment it accords to every one of its members, especially those who are vulnerable. Treating the elderly with genuine respect, truly listening to them and valuing their contributions, is an essential part of what it means to be a “holy people.”

....

....

Rabbi Shmuel Rabinowitz

Parashat Kedoshim – How Can a Person Be Holy?

This week’s Torah portion opens with the call, “You shall be holy!” This commandment obligates us to examine what holiness is. Is it a feeling? An experience? The explanation for this commandment to be holy is, “for I, the Lord, your G-d, am holy.” If holiness is a divine trait, we must figure out how a person can become holy like G-d.

Many definitions have been given for the term “holy.” Among the most famous of those who researched this was Rudolf Otto, a German philosopher and theologian, who wrote a famous book called “The Idea of the Holy” where he tried to define the term and the manner in which holiness is experienced by man. In his opinion, holiness is a combination of two forces: fear of the sublime, expressed at a low level simply as fear and a higher level as a sense of glory and splendor, and the longing to get closer to the thing because of its wondrous charm. Others described holiness as an other-worldly, lofty and sublime facet. There could be truth in these definitions, but it is hard to connect them with the commandment “You shall be holy!” How can a person not only be exposed to holiness, and not only yearn for it, but become holy himself?

The key to grasping the concept of holiness in Judaism is the understanding that holiness is indeed a divine trait, and therefore, devotion to G-d is the means to attaining holiness. In Chazal literature, we find several ways in which devotion to G-d can be actualized and thus make a person holy.

In the Babylonian Talmud, the sages wondered about man’s ability to be devoted to G-d:

But is it possible to cleave to the Divine Presence? Isn’t it written: For the Lord your G-d is a devouring fire!

G-d is compared to fire. Can someone cleave to fire without getting burned? How can a physical man be close to G-d?

And the sages answer:

Rather, this verse teaches that anyone who marries his daughter to a Torah scholar, and one who conducts business [perakmatya] on behalf of Torah scholars, and one who utilizes his wealth to benefit Torah scholars with his property in some other way, the verse ascribes him credit as though he is cleaving to the Divine Presence. (Tractate Ketubot 111)

Elsewhere, the sages ask a similar question and give a different answer:

But is it actually possible for a person to follow the Divine Presence? ...Rather, the meaning is that one should follow the attributes of the Holy One, Blessed be He. Just as He clothes the naked...so too, should you clothe the naked. Just as the Holy One, Blessed be He, visits the sick...so too, should you visit the sick. Just as the Holy One, Blessed be He, consoles mourners...so too, should you console mourners. Just as the Holy One, Blessed be He, buried the dead...so too, should you bury the dead. (Sota 14)

The sages of the midrash propose a third way of being devoted to G-d:

But is it possible for flesh and blood to go up to the Heavens and to cling to the Divine Presence?... But rather, the Holy One, blessed be He, from the very beginning of the creation of the world, only occupied Himself with plantation first... You also, when you enter into the land, only occupy yourselves with plantation first. (Vayikra Rabbah 25)

We have, therefore, three means of devotion to G-d: connection to the Torah, acts of gemilut chassadim (loving-kindness), and being occupied with developing the world. These are all different expressions of divine

holiness. The Torah is the word of G-d to humanity – the manner in which man is exposed to the eternal values of the Creator of the Universe; Gemilut Chassadim, thinking of others and assisting the weak, is walking the path of G-d; and developing the world, what the sages of the midrash demonstrate through the example of planting fruit trees, makes man a partner of G-d's in the existence of the world.

It is therefore no surprise that under the title of “You shall be holy” in this week's parasha, we find a very varied list of commandments: respect for parents, keeping Shabbat, the prohibition of idolatry, various commandments to assist the poor, the commandment to judge fairly and favorably, the prohibition to hate others, to respect one's elders, etc... Indeed, there are many ways to attain holiness. In every commandment a person fulfills, whether it is between the person and G-d, between one person and another, or a commandment in which the person partners with G-d in developing the world – in each of these ways the person is being devoted to G-d and thus becoming holy.

In Judaism, holiness is not an experience; it is an action – says Jewish researcher Steven Kepnes. A person can be holy when he follows G-d's ways, connects to the Torah, performs acts of loving-kindness with others, and acts on behalf of the world's existence.

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Rav Kook Torah

Israel Independence Day: The Balfour Declaration

Rabbi Chanan Morrison

In 1916, after being stranded in Switzerland for nearly two years due to the outbreak of World War I, Rav Kook was invited to occupy the rabbinic post of the Machzikei HaDat congregation in London. He accepted the position, but on condition that after the war he be allowed to return unhindered to Eretz Yisrael.

“Not many days passed,” noted Rabbi Shimon Glitzenstein, his personal secretary in London, “when already an atmosphere of influence on all circles of Jewish life in this large and important community was formed. All recognized his extraordinary concern for the entire Jewish people.”

While Rav Kook certainly did not plan to spend three years in London, he would later describe the momentous events of this period — events in which he took an active role — as a “revelation of the hand of God” (Igrot HaRe'iyah vol. III, p. 100).

National Treachery

Soon after his arrival, Rav Kook was forced to battle Jews who were working to undermine the Jewish people's hopes of national rebirth in the land of Israel. Certain assimilated leaders of the British Jewish community, who considered themselves “Englishmen of the Mosaic faith,” openly opposed the Zionist front. This powerful group, which included the staunchly anti-Zionist Lord Montagu, had great influence on the British government due to their socio-economic and political standing. They publicly declared to the British government that the Jewish religion has no connection to Jewish nationalism, and that they opposed all plans to designate Palestine as the Jewish homeland.

In a public notice “in response to this national treachery,” Rav Kook harshly condemned all those “who tear apart the Jewish soul,” seeking to shatter the wondrous unity of Jewish religion and Jewish nationalism.

“The entire debate whether it is our national or our religious heritage that preserves and sustains us [as Jews] is a bitter mockery. The perfection of “You are one and Your Name is one, and who is like Your nation, Israel, one nation in the land” is indivisible.”

Rav Kook's statement described the cruel injustice perpetrated by the nations over the centuries, and demanded that they atone for their terrible crimes by returning Eretz Yisrael to the Jewish people and help establish an independent Jewish state. The letter was read in all British synagogues after the Shabbat Torah reading and made a deep impression. He then sent an additional letter urging the members of all British synagogues to immediately request that the British government “aid us in our demand to return to our holy land, as our eternal national home” (Igrot HaRe'iyah vol. III, pp. 107-114).

Rav Kook's efforts succeeded, and the spiteful letter written by the influential Jewish leaders was disregarded. The major British

newspapers noted the spontaneous protest, thus repairing the negative impression caused by the assimilationists.

During the parliamentary debates over authorizing a national Jewish home in Palestine, several parliament members raised the claims advanced by the Jewish assimilationists. Such a mandate, they insisted, is contrary to the spirit of Judaism.

Then Mr. Kiley, a proponent of the declaration, stood up and asked:

“Upon whom shall we rely to decide the religious aspect of this issue — upon Lord Montagu, or upon Rabbi Kook, the rabbi of Machzikei HaDat?”

Congratulating the British Nation

After the Balfour Declaration was passed in 1917, the Jewish leaders held a large celebratory banquet in London, to which they invited lords, dignitaries, and members of Parliament. Speech after speech by Jewish communal and Zionist leaders thanked the British for their historic act. When Rav Kook was given the honor of speaking, he announced:

“I have come not only to thank the British nation, but even more, to congratulate it for the privilege of making this declaration. The Jewish nation is the “scholar” among the nations, the “people of the Book,” a nation of prophets; and it is a great honor for any nation to aid it. I bless the British nation for having extended such honorable aid to the people of the Torah, so that they may return to their land and renew their homeland.”

A Wondrous Chain of Events

Rav Kook saw in the national return of the Jewish people an overt revelation of the hand of God. How could one be blind to the Divine nature of this historical process? He later wrote:

“An imperviousness to God's intervention in history plagues our generation. A series of wondrous events has, and continues to take place before us. Yet blind eyes fail to see the hand of God, and deaf ears fail to hear the Divine call guiding history.

This sequence of events began with the immigration of the disciples of the Baal Shem Tov and the Vilna Gaon to Eretz Yisrael. They were followed by the awakening of the Chibat Zion movement and the establishment of the first settlements. The Zionism founded by Herzl, the settling of the land by the pioneers of the Second Aliyah, the Balfour Declaration, and the affirmation of the mandate in San Remo by the League of Nations - these are the latest developments.

Taken individually, each event may be explained in a rational manner. But when they are viewed together, we may discern a wondrous chain of complementary links created and guided by a Divine hand. As the prophet of redemption cried out: ‘Hear, O deaf, and look! O blind, that you may see!’ (Isaiah 42:18).”

(Silver from the Land of Israel, pp. 181-184. Adapted from Mo'adei HaRe'iyah, pp. 391-393. Background material from Encyclopedia of Religious Zionism vol. 5, pp. 179-190.)

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Shema Yisrael Torah Network

Peninim on the Torah - Parashas Kedoshim

תשפ"ב פרשת קדושים

'איש אמו ואביו תיראו ואת שבתותי תשמרו אני ד'

Every man shall fear his mother and father, and you shall keep My Shabbosos; I am Hashem. (19:3)

Shemiras Shabbos, Kibbud Av V'eim: Shabbos observance is juxtaposed upon the mitzvah to honor one's parents, concluding with Hashem reminding the people that He is G-d and everyone - he and his father and mother – must obey Hashem. We are to honor and even fear our parents, but they do not supplant the Almighty. Thus, if a parent's command is contrary to a mitzvah in the Torah, the son/daughter should respectfully refuse, because Hashem's command supersedes everything else. Three imperatives of such import in one pasuk (Shemiras Shabbos, Kibbud Av V'eim, and fear of Hashem and adherence to His command) comprise a considerable amount to digest. Indeed, each of these three requires its own thesis. Apparently, the fact that the Torah presents them all in one pasuk indicates a common bond with one another. Horav Yosef Nechemiah Kornitzer, zl, offers an innovative exegesis which

sheds light on this unique relationship. He connects the above pasuk to a well-known statement in Pirkei Avos (3:1).

Akavya ben Mahallel omer, Histakeil b'sheloshah devarim v'ein atah ba l'yidei aveirah; "Look (stare/concentrate) at three things, and you will not come to sin: Where are you coming from (your source)? Where are you (ultimately) going to? (What will be your end?) Before Whom will you stand in judgment?" We come from a tipah seruch, drop/nothing; we will end up in the ground (decomposing in the earth). We will have to review our lives before Hashem. This Mishnah is meant to frighten us into confronting our mortality – before we consider sin. It should change the trajectory of our intentions and actions. It will certainly cause us to think twice before destroying our lives.

The Mishnah presents these three questions as negatives which are intended to prevent us from acting out our fantasies, committing a sin, transgressing a prohibitive command. If we truly concentrate on the message, we will not sin – unless, of course, we are foolish enough to say, "I do not care." The Mishnah does not speak to those who do not care; on the contrary, it addresses the individual who cares, but occasionally loses control in his battle with the yetzer hora, evil inclination. Rav Kornitzer suggests that these same questions/observations can focus on the positive. Rather than underscore the lowliness of man, let us concentrate on his ability to achieve greatness, on the gadlus ha'adam.

Mei'ayin basa; From where do you come? We are all descendants of the Avos and Imahos, Patriarchs and Matriarchs. Let us take a moment to think about our roots, our rich, glorious heritage. Let us take a cognitive journey through our tumultuous – but incredible – history. Let us meet the gedolim, Torah giants, and the simple Jews who served Hashem amid self-sacrifice. This "glance" should hearten and encourage us. How can one sin when he is the repository of such yichus, illustrious lineage? This corresponds with Ish imo v'aviv tirau; Respect your parents: We come from awesome parents. Our forebears are impressive. They deserve our appreciation and respect. How can we turn our back on them by acting inappropriately and committing a sin in the context of our relationship with Hashem?

A person should think about from where he hails. He descends from the holy Patriarchs and Matriarchs. They forged the path which we should follow. They lived lives of dedication, to the point of self-sacrifice in order to serve Hashem to the best of their capabilities. These are our ancestors. Looking back at the adversity that accompanied us throughout our history and our forebears who sacrificed for their beliefs, our roots should encourage us to scale the highest peaks of spirituality. After all, it is intrinsic to our DNA.

Next, we should focus on where we are destined to go: Olam Habba, the World-to-Come, the World of Truth and eternity. The reward for living a life committed to the spirit, to Hashem, is beyond extraordinary. We yearn to live in a perfect world, replete with spiritual pleasure and satisfaction-- without worry and pain. Our world is a prozdor, vestibule, to Olam Habba.

Last, before Whom we will stand in judgment. The mere thought of Hashem's greatness evokes awe and joy. Knowing that we can in some way, on some level, connect with the Creator of the Universe, Who views us as His children, evokes emotion that defies description.

Gadlus ha'Adam, the greatness of man, was the catchphrase of the Alter, zl, m'Slabodka, Horav Nosson Tzvi Finkel. It was the lodestar by which he navigated his yeshivah and guided his students. This concept was transported to America and Eretz Yisrael as his premier talmidim, students, became the pioneering Roshei Yeshiva who established Torah in these countries pre and post Holocaust. The story goes that Horav Yisrael Salanter, zl, father of the Mussar, character refinement, Movement, met the Alter. The future Slabodka Rosh Yeshivah asked Rav Yisrael what should be his avodah, function/service to the Almighty. Rav Yisrael's famous words were: L'hachayos ruach shefalim u'l'hachayos lev nidkaim; "To revive the hearts of the aggrieved and despondent." In other words, return their lives to them.

It is critical to be aware of the cultural backdrop in Europe when the Rosh Yeshivah established and guided Slabodka. The contemptible Haskalah, Enlightenment, movement with its vitriolic animus for Torah and all that it stood for, was rampant. Its adherents were bent on destroying the Torah Jew. They did this by destroying his self-esteem. What better victim than the yeshivah student who was about to start his life of devotion to Torah? They referred to him as a parasite, a free-loader, a ne'er-do-well who would amount to nothing. When you call a person a loser enough times, he will begin to believe it. Rav Nosson Tzvi taught his students to broaden the horizons of their minds – not to think small, but to think globally. This was the only way the community at large would learn to respect them and what they stood for. The appearance and dress of the yeshivah students, often the result of living lives of extreme poverty and neglect, certainly did very little to change people's perception of them.

The Alter demanded that his students be scrupulous in their behavior, both within the environs of the yeshivah and in their interaction with the outside world. He insisted that they dress properly, neatly and respectfully – indeed, l'kavod u'letiferes, "for the dignity and beauty of the Torah." He understood that one's external appearance affects his self-image. The attire upon which he insisted included a short-coated suit and a hat, no beard, and hair to be cut in a manner considered respectable by conventional norms. Slowly, the townspeople's attitude toward the yeshivah bachurim transformed. Even more important, the students' self-image also changed. The yeshivah bachur learned to view himself as a person of stature, a ben Torah, a talmid chacham, Torah scholar, who exemplified the embodiment of Torah – not an am ha'aretz, one unschooled in Torah erudition. In other words, the world saw where he excelled, over and above the characterization of the proponents of the Enlightenment.

To develop a better perspective of gadlus ha'adam, I relate a well-known incident which occurred concerning Horav Meir Chodosh, zl, who was asked by a student to explain to him the philosophy of gadlus ha'adam as it was manifest in Slabodka. The Mashgiach answered, "All that I can explain to you will be theoretical and worthless until you see the behavior of Horav Zevullun Graz, zl, Rav of Rechovos. I suggest that you take a trip to Rechovos and spend a day with the Rav."

The avreich, young man, traveled to Rechovos and presented himself at the house of Rav Graz. "Does the Rav have a place for me to spend the night?" he asked. The Rav asked no questions. Here was a young man, properly dressed, from a good family – Why not? The Rav immediately prepared a bed for him to sleep.

The young man was excited about his good fortune. He went to bed and feigned sleep. Perhaps he would notice something during the night that would validate what he felt were the strange instructions of the Mashgiach.

The night went by, and, after a few hours of learning, Rav Zevullun retired to bed. The young man figured that it was all a waste. One does not go to Slabodka to learn how to sleep, but the Mashgiach did say that it would all be explained. So, he was determined to remain awake all night. Something was going to happen that would enable him to make sense of it all.

At two o'clock in the morning, Rav Zevullun arose from his bed to use the facilities. The young man figured that this was it. He might as well get a few hours of sleep and return to the Mashgiach with a "mission not accomplished." Then, the most unusual thing took place. Rav Zevullun went over to the closet, removed his kapote, frock, and homburg, hat, and then, when he was clothed in his rabbinic garb, he recited the Asher Yotzar blessing with great kavanah, concentration and intention.

It now all made sense. The "greatness of man" is not measured by how he acts in public. The barometer for gadlus ha'adam is determined by how he acts in middle of the night, in the privacy of his own home. When he makes the Bircas Asher Yotzar upon leaving the bathroom, does he spend a few minutes to realize that he – the crown of Creation – is about to speak to the Creator, so that he dresses accordingly?

I conclude with an inspiring thought from the Baal HaTanya. Our self-esteem is dependent upon our perception of our purpose in life. Simply put, when one realizes that his purpose in life is noble and significant, his self-esteem is elevated. Conversely, when one's perspective of his purpose in life is short-sighted, he will have a similarly myopic sense of himself. Reb Zalmen Senders was a close chassid, follower, of the Baal HaTanya. He had been one of the wealthiest Jews in Russia until his fortunes were reversed, leaving him indigent. In complete surrender, he turned to his Rebbe with a kvittel, petition, in which he described his downfall from wealth to destitution. He begged the Rebbe to intercede on his behalf. The Rebbe closed his eyes and thought for a few moments until he looked up and said, "Zalmen, apparently you have given serious thought to your perceived needs. Have you taken a moment to think why you are needed?" The Rebbe implied that we are all here for a purpose, as part of a Divine Plan. All too often we are so obsessed with our own needs that we do not realize that Hashem created us for a purpose, which is to serve Him at all times, under all circumstances. Each one of us has a unique purpose for which Hashem specifically created that person. Fulfilling that purpose should engender self-esteem within us, because we are here to do what no one else can do.

וכי תזבח וזבח שלמים לרצונכם תזבחהו

When you slaughter a feast peace-offering to Hashem, you shall slaughter it to find favor for yourselves. (19:5)

Ramban explains that when one offers a korban, sacrifice, to Hashem, the intention behind and accompanying it "shall be to find favor for oneself... like a servant ingratiating himself to his master... without any service for the purpose of receiving reward, but only to carry out the ratzon, will, of Hashem, for it is His simple will that constitutes what is appropriate and obligatory." In other words, the kavanah, intention, of the individual who is slaughtering the animal is not for the shechitah, ritual, but simply to serve Hashem by carrying out His will. This is how a Jew should live his life – to fulfill the ratzon Hashem.

Horav Chaim Pinchas Scheinberg, zl, would quote Horav Avraham Tzvi Kamai, zl, who related in the name of his father, Horav Eliyahu Baruch Kamai, zl, that: Ich darf nicht haben di baalei kisharon; ich zuch dem guteh freint, "For my shiur, Talmudic lecture, I do not require (nor do I seek out) those who are brilliant. I look for a 'good friend' (one who cares), who is interested in listening to what I have to say and wants to understand it." A good student is one who is interested in what his rebbe has to say, not in showcasing what he personally knows. It is all about wanting to fulfill the ratzon, will, of the rebbe.

Horav Dov Berish Weidenfeld, zl, the Tchebiner Rav, related that a Torah scholar once commented to Horav Yehoshua, zl, m'Kutna (author of Yeshuos Malko) that he was proficient in all of Seder Nezikin (the order of Talmud that deals extensively with laws of damages, Jewish criminal and civil law and the Jewish court system). Rav Yehoshua sought to temper his inflated ego by explaining to him that the barometer for success was not erudition (which this scholar claimed he had mastered), but rather hismasrus l'Torah, complete devotion/attachment to Torah. He asked the scholar, "Do you know the meaning of shibuda d'Oraisa?" (Chazal record a dispute concerning a lien rendered verbally without the support of a shtar, written document, whether it is scripturally binding, i.e. maybe the lender will collect his money either from the borrower or his heirs.) The young man replied, "Of course!" (This is one of the basics in Torah law.) Rav Yehoshua countered, "This is not to what I was alluding. My intention with this question was concerning Targum Onkelos's translation of the pasuk, V'es ha'nefesh asher asu b'Charan, "And the souls they made in Charan" (Bereishis 12:5). (A reference to the pagans converted by Avraham Avinu and Sarah Imeinu.) Onkelos explains it as, V'es nafshasa di shabidu l'Oraisa, "And the souls which they committed to Torah." (The only commitment of substance, the only obligation that has value and endurance, is a commitment to Torah.) "That is another form of shibuda d'Oraisa which you must remember."

Horav Baruch Shimon Schneerson, zl, Rosh Yeshivas Tchebin (son-in-law of the Tchebiner Rav) explains the concept of shibud/commitment/obligation. When one holds a lien on a parcel of land; this land is considered me'shibud, obligated to him. It may be sold numerous times, but, ultimately, the land remains meshubad to him. In other instances, one may own/have land rights to a piece of land, but said land is mortgaged to others. Owning land that is mortgaged to others does not constitute true ownership, since he is beholden to them. A similar concept applies to Torah study. One who is committed to Torah may, at times, be called away to address mundane issues which have nothing whatsoever to do with Torah. He is, however, essentially committed to Torah. What arises are simply diversions with which he must contend, but his primary shibud, commitment, remains to Torah. He also has a counterpart, whose "address" is the bais hamedrash where he is (supposedly) learning all day. At every possible juncture which calls him away from learning, however, he is the first one to be involved. Such a person may be ensconced in the bais hamedrash, but it is not where he has his shibud.

Horav Aharon Rokeach, zl, the Belzer Rebbe, was an unusual tzaddik, righteous person. His life was, indeed, a lesson in living to fulfill the ratzon Hashem. Throughout his life, he was sickly and physically frail. As a young man, he was so weak that one winter the doctor forbade him from immersing in the frigid mikvah waters. (The mikvaos had little to no heat. Poland winters are notoriously cold.) To reinforce the doctor's orders, Horav Yissachar Dov, his father, the Belzer Rebbe, enjoined him to follow the doctor's orders and prohibited him from immersing himself in the mikvah.

One frigid night at 3:00 a.m., the snow was falling, the cold wind was howling; it was not a night for even a healthy man to leave the comfort of his home – let alone one as physically delicate as the young Rav Aharon. It was quiet throughout the Belzer community, except for Rav Aharon who was on his way to the mikvah. A family member was up learning, saw this and, concerned for Rav Aharon's health, decided to follow him covertly. At first, he did not believe that Rav Aharon would take such a chance and disobey both the doctor and his father, but he appeared bent on going to the mikvah. Rav Aharon quietly entered the mikvah. He did not turn on the lamps; rather, he maneuvered himself in the freezing room. He removed his clothes and descended the steps to the frigid water. When he reached the last step, he paused and, with a voice laden with emotion, he cried out, "Ribono Shel Olam! I hereby prepare myself to fulfill the mitzvah aseil, positive commandment, of V'nishmartam me'od l'nafshoseichem, 'And you shall carefully guard your physical wellbeing,' as well as the mitzvah of Kibbud av, honoring my father, who told me not to immerse in the mikvah." Rav Aharon then ascended the steps, dressed and returned home.

When his father heard what had taken place in the mikvah, he wept tears of joy, and, with profound gratitude, he thanked the Almighty for granting him a son who had achieved shleimus, perfection, in his service to Hashem. He had fulfilled both the will of Hashem to be purified and the directives of his father and the doctor.

ו'אהבת לרעך כמוך אני ד'

You shall love your fellow as yourself – I am Hashem. (19:18)

Rabbi Akiva teaches (Yerushalmi Nedarim 30b), V'ahavta l'reiacha kamocho – Zeh klal gadol baTorah; "Love your fellow as yourself. This is the all-encompassing principle of Torah." In other words, an unbreakable bond exists between ahavas Yisrael, love of Jews, and ahavas Hashem, love of the Almighty. A general principle is one which contains all the detailed principles within it. Thus, ahavas Yisrael is the rubric under which all mitzvos fall. Loving a fellow Jew is an integral component of every mitzvah. Thus, when I shake the lulav; observe Shabbos, put on Tefillin, I am/should be enhancing my ahavas Yisrael. If we perform a mitzvah – yet our ahavas Yisrael seems lacking, we have a problem with our own observance. What is the connection between loving one's fellow and the mitzvah of Shabbos observance, or any other mitzvah for that matter?

The Tzemach Tzedek cites the Arizal (Taamei Ha'Mitzvos, Parashas Kedoshim) who explains that all Klal Yisrael comprises one

entity, which is the neshamah, soul, of Adam HaRishon. Every Jew constitutes a limb of Adam's soul. This is the basis of the arvus, mutual responsibility of our people, and the idea that one Jew is accountable for his fellow, if he sins. [This is why the Arizal would recite Viduy, Confessional, despite that he personally had not sinned.]

The Baal HaTanya teaches that to love another person means to find something in that other person which is similar to something in himself. Our individuality separates us from others, but one thing, one common bond, unites us. We, as Torah Jews, must focus upon this commonality. Our common thread is the Hashem component, the neshamah, which is a part of Hashem, within us. It has nothing to do with how observant one is, what his religious leanings are, or whether he is a good person or not. We all have that Hashem component within us that unites us. This is what we should love. We love the Hashem within all of us. How we view others depends upon how we view ourselves. If we focus on the human condition, then we are different from one another, which impedes our ability to truly love. If we concentrate, however, on the spiritual dimension which we all have, we will have no problem. Our greatest issue is that we are too preoccupied with self-love to transform it and direct this love towards others. Rather than focus on what divides us, we should concentrate on what unites us: our neshamos.

Horav Yisrael Abuchatzera, zl, the Baba Sali, was a tzaddik, holy and righteous, Torah leader, who loved all Jews. The Baba Sali's neighbor in Netivot was very sickly in his youth. He was stricken with excruciating leg pain. The various therapies and medications did nothing for him. When the Baba Sali heard of his neighbor's pain, he asked his aide to call the young man to his house. When the neighbor arrived, the Baba Sali asked to see the afflicted leg. He then went on to touch the painful area of the leg. Despite his gentle prodding, the young man screamed in pain. The Baba Sali blessed him that in the merit of his (the Baba Sali) ancestors, he should be granted a refuah sheleima, full recovery. Within the space of a few days, the young man was miraculously cured.

The next day, the Baba Sali's aide noticed a wound on his Rebbe's leg at about the same place where, only a few days earlier, the boy had been suffering from his affliction. The aide was certain that his saintly Rebbe was in extreme pain, and it was the result of his blessing of the boy. He asked for an explanation. The Baba Sali explained that when he saw the pain the boy was experiencing, he immediately wanted to pray on his behalf. How could he pray appropriately, if he himself were not suffering pain? "I asked Hashem to give me the pain, so that I could experience it sufficiently to pray."

A similar incident occurred during the Entebbe hostage crisis when terrorists took the passengers, some of whom were Jewish, hostage. The Baba Sali commented, "Heaven will attest that my personal pain over this crisis was greater than that experienced by the hostages."

As he lay on his death bed, the Baba Sali prayed that his death should serve as an atonement for Klal Yisrael. Yehi zichro baruch. May his name serve as a blessing.

Va'ani Tefillah

ע"ה Beate Frank בת אליעזר ע"ה

By her children and grandchildren, Birdie and Lenny Frank and Family
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Rabbi Yochanan Zweig

This week's Insights is dedicated in loving memory of Shirley Berkowitz, Shaindel bas Harav Yosef. "May her Neshamas have an Aliya!"
Holier Than Thou?

And Hashem spoke to Moshe saying: Speak to all the congregation of Bnei Yisroel, and say to them, become holy; for I Hashem your God, am holy. Everyone should revere their mother and father, and you should keep my Sabbaths, I am Hashem your God (19:1-3).

Parshas Kedoshim begins with Hashem exhorting Bnei Yisroel to become kadosh for Hashem is kadosh. The word kadosh is commonly translated as "holy." The meaning of the word holy is generally understood as "connected to God or religion." In other words, we generally measure holiness vis-à-vis a person's relationship with God.

A simple review of the verse shows that we cannot understand the word kadosh to mean "holy." After all, Hashem cannot be "connected" to Himself. So we are left

with a fairly serious question; what is kedushah and how does one strive to achieve it? In addition, how is the next verse, which commands reverence for one's parents, connected to this idea of being kadosh?

The word kodesh actually means to set aside or separate. When a man designates a woman to be his wife, she is "mekudeshes" to him. We say in davening that Hashem was mekadesh the Shabbos, meaning that he designated a day for us to commune with Him. Similarly, Hashem was mekadesh the Jewish people – it doesn't mean that He made us holy; rather He separated us from all the other nations, to be His alone.

So what exactly does it mean that Hashem is kadosh? Perhaps it is easier to understand what kadosh means as it relates to something we, as humans, are striving for. A baby is born very self-centered; everything is about satisfying its own needs and desires. This is only natural as a baby only senses itself. As a child matures, hopefully, it begins to recognize the outside world and its place within a broader perspective. This process of becoming less and less self-centered is the process of removing yourself from your egocentricity.

In other words, Hashem is asking us to separate ourselves from our self-centered desires and to focus outwardly. The perfect example of such a separation is Hashem Himself. Hashem is perfect with no needs or desires. All of His actions in creating the world had nothing to do with any perceived need; rather it is all a function of His wish to bestow the ultimate good on humanity. When it comes to Hashem, there are no self-serving actions, only actions directed for others. Therefore, Hashem is kadosh because His actions are separate from Himself.

We are therefore commanded to become kadosh like him. Rashi (ad loc) explains that this means separating from forbidden intimate relationships. As we explained last week, this is why this parsha follows the list of forbidden relationships. A person's strongest desire is in this area because it is so self-serving. Controlling ourselves is the key to separating from our egocentricity.

Many, if not most, children view their mother as their chef, chauffeur, butler, maid, and personal shopper, while their father is the ATM machine that makes it all possible. In other words, the world revolves around an "it's all about me" attitude. This is very dangerous to our children's emotional wellbeing and of course, to their future relationships in life. The most important lesson that we must teach our children is that we do everything for them out of love – not because the world revolves around them. The antidote, therefore, is to have great reverence for our parents. We owe our parents because nothing is "coming" to us. We have to break the sense of self and learn to focus outwardly, just like Hashem. Then we will be kadosh like Him.

Kindness is a Shame

And if a man shall take his sister, his father's daughter, or his mother's daughter, and see her nakedness, and she see his nakedness; it is a shameful thing [...] (20:17).

The Torah's description of this act is termed "chessed." Rashi (ad loc) explains that the Torah is using an Aramaic word here which means "shame." Remarkably, the same word in Hebrew is actually associated with only positive implications; the word "chessed" means "kindness." How is it possible that the same word can have two seemingly disparate meanings?

The explanation is fairly simple. Both of these words are describing the same act; that of giving to others. The difference in the meaning is based on one's perspective. The giver feels good in that he is doing an act of kindness. On the other hand, the person who is receiving is generally feeling some level of shame in that he is reliant on others to support himself.

Aramaic is the language of understanding another person's perspective. That is why the heavenly angels are unable to understand Aramaic, they are linear beings. It is also for this reason that the Talmud Bavli (written in Aramaic) was chosen over the Talmud Yerushalmi (written in Hebrew) and accepted as the authoritative source of halacha, for we can only properly understand what Hashem wants from us when we can accurately evaluate another person's view. This allows us to see beyond our own perspective and eventually reach the truth.

When Right is Wrong

You shall not take revenge [...] you shall love your friend as yourself [...] (19:18).

Rashi (ad loc) describes what the Torah's definition of revenge is (updated for a 21st century audience): Reuven asks his friend Shimon to borrow his lawnmower and Shimon refuses. The next day Shimon asks Reuven to borrow his hedge clippers and Reuven responds, "Just as you didn't lend me your lawnmower, I am refusing to lend you my hedge clippers." This is the definition of taking revenge.

Let us examine this. When Shimon refuses to lend his lawnmower to Reuven, he "only" transgresses a positive commandment – that of loving your friend as yourself. Yet when Reuven refuses to lend his clippers to Shimon, he is transgressing both a positive commandment and a negative commandment – that of "not taking revenge." This seems unfair. After all, on the face of it, Reuven seems perfectly justified in refusing to lend his clippers to Shimon; why shouldn't he treat him the same way and let Shimon learn how painful it feels to be refused? In fact, Reuven can even feel justified in that he is teaching Shimon a lesson in

how to treat a fellow Jew. Why is Reuven now subject to an additional transgression?

Reuven gets an additional transgression for exactly this reason. In his mind, Reuven is justifying why it is right to do a wrong thing. Shimon is, at worst, an unkind person. On the other hand, Reuven is feeling justified in his mistreatment of Shimon, he is making his refusal to Shimon a "mitzvah." Justifying a wrong is far more severe than missing an opportunity to do something right.

from: Rabbi Yissocher Frand <rfrand@torah.org>:

date: May 5, 2022, 11:43 PM subject: Rav Frand - The Mitzvah To 'Be Holy' Was Given in a Mass Gathering

Rav Frand By Rabbi Yissocher Frand Parshas Kedoshim
The Mitzvah To 'Be Holy' Was Given in a Mass Gathering

This dvar Torah was adapted from the hashkafa portion of Rabbi Yissocher Frand's Commuter Chavrusah Tapes on the weekly portion: Tape #458 – Giving Tochacha: Private or Public? Good Shabbos!

Note: Readers in Eretz Yisroel, who are a parsha ahead, can access a shiur from a prior year by using the archives at <https://torah.org/series/ravfrand/>.

Parshas Kedoshim begins with the words "Hashem spoke to Moshe saying: Speak to the entire assembly of the Children of Israel (kol adas bnei Yisrael) and say to them: 'Kedoshim tihiyu (You shall be holy)'" [Vayikra 19:1-2]. Rashi points out that the uncommon inclusion of the phrase "the entire assembly of the Children of Israel" in the standard phrase "Speak to the Children of Israel..." teaches us that this mitzvah was specifically given in the presence of the entire assembly of Israel (b'hakhel).

There is a famous disagreement among the early commentaries as to exactly what is meant by the mitzvah "You shall be holy." Rashi interprets the mitzvah as one of abstinence—"You shall be removed from arayos (forbidden sexual union) and from sin." The word "Kadosh" literally means "separate." When we say "Kadosh, Kadosh, Kadosh" about Hashem, we are emphasizing his separateness and uniqueness. Thus, the meaning of "You shall be Kedoshim" is "You shall be separated – from forbidden sins."

The Ramban, in a famous argument with Rashi, says that "You shall be Kedoshim" has nothing to do with illicit sexual acts. Rather, Kedoshim tihiyu refers to perfectly permissible activities. The concept is "sanctify yourself by withdrawing from that which is permissible to you" (kadesh atzmecha b'mutar lach). That Ramban declares that without such self-limitation, a person can be a 'naval b'rshus haTorah' (a glutton 'sanctioned' by the Torah). The level of sanctity required by this pasuk is that which is achieved by a person who even somewhat restrains himself from those physical pleasures that the Torah permits.

The Chasam Sofer points out that whether we accept Rashi's interpretation or the Ramban's approach, the message of this mitzvah is one of abstinence. A person could perhaps erroneously come to the conclusion that the only way to achieve this level of sanctity would be to lock himself on the top of a mountain in a monastery. We might think that a person should ideally have nothing to do with people; that a person should not get married and should have nothing to do with the opposite gender at all. The Torah therefore makes clear that the "holiness" of a monk is not desirable. This mitzva was specifically delivered "b'hakhel". Everyone was present—the men, the women, and the children.

A person must be a Kadosh (a holy person), but must be a Kadosh in the context of the congregation and the community. A person must get married and must raise children. A person must play with his kids and spend time with his family and be a part of the community. The Torah wants the holiness of complete human beings.

The Kotzker Rebbe used to stress "MEN of holiness you shall be to Me" (Shemos 22:30). "G-d is not looking for more angels." The Torah was not given to angels (Brachos 25b). It was given to human beings who have wants and desires and are social animals. It is in that context that we are commanded to develop holiness.

Therefore, specifically Kedoshim tihiyu, of all mitzvos, was relayed in a mass public gathering, to emphasize that despite our obligation to achieve holiness through a certain degree of abstinence, it must be in the context of the community, our wives, our children, and our neighbors.

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This week's write-up is adapted from the hashkafa portion of Rabbi Yissochar Frand's Commuter Chavrusah Series on the weekly Torah portion. A listing of the halachic portions for Parshas Kedoshim is provided below..

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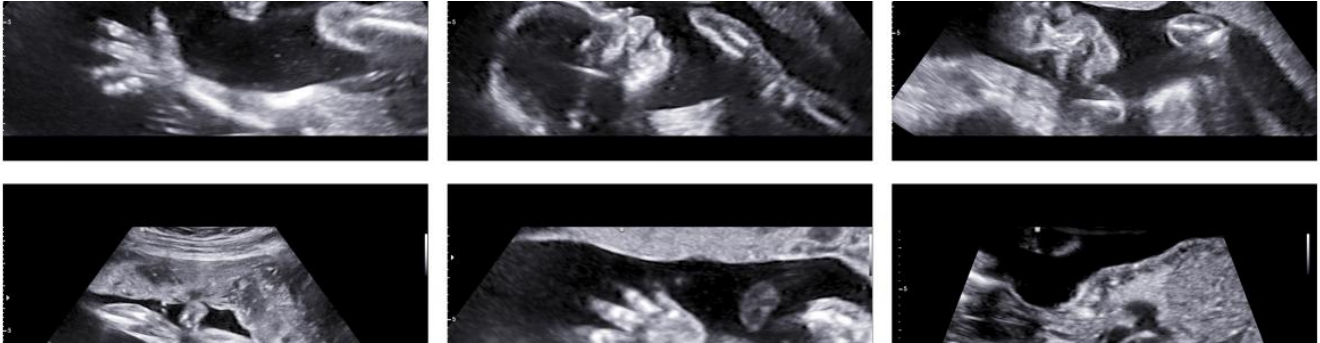
לע"נ

שרה משה בת ר' יעקב אליעזר ע"ה
ביילא בת (אריה) לייב ע"ה
אנא מלכה בת ישראל ע"ה

ZIKA, HALAKHA AND THE POLITICS OF ABORTION

Byline:

Dr. Richard Grazi



ZIKA, HALAKHA AND THE POLITICS OF ABORTION

By Dr. Richard Grazi

Zika is all over the news. About 10-30% (we don't know the exact percentage just yet) of pregnant women infected with the Zika virus will deliver babies with microcephaly, or smaller than normal heads. The medical consequences of this condition are those derived from restricted growth of the brain and include poorly developed sections of the brain, enlarged brain ventricles, and even abnormalities outside the skull such as congenital joint contractures. , [1,2] All of the described anomalies are life-altering for the babies as well as for the families into which they are born.

So where does that leave a woman who wishes to terminate her pregnancy because her fetus is doomed to be born severely disabled, or to never reach sentient life? These are the situations under which many women seek to terminate their pregnancies, and are virtually always the reason why a late termination is done. Would, for example, aborting a fetus diagnosed with a Zika infection be halakhically permissible?

This came to mind earlier this year, during the presidential primaries, as one Republican candidate after another announced the intent to criminalize the "murder of unborn children." [3] Of course, following the Supreme Court's decision announced this past June, [4] the chances of abortion again becoming illegal in this country seem remote. Still, the pressure being brought by conservative religious groups on what they see as a child-killing industry is unrelenting and has resulted in severely restricted access to abortion in many states. Some Orthodox Jews reflexively support those efforts. After all, how can God-fearing persons not consider themselves "pro-life"?

What follows is not a political discourse or an opinion about who should win our votes. It is meant to provide basic information about abortion from a traditional Jewish perspective, with the hope that the Torah-observant community can be vigilant about the matter regardless of the outcome of November's election. Delving into the abortion debate is surely risky business, given the passion with which many cling to their beliefs on the matter. It may also seem strange coming from someone whose professional life has been devoted to procreative medicine. But although most of our patients are desperate to become pregnant, someone is and wants just as desperately not to be. This happens when there is an in utero diagnosis of severe fetal anomalies, be they genetically based or acquired by other means.

The Zika crisis has forced many couples to consider the consequences of bringing a severely disabled child into their homes, including the significant impact it might have on their future lives, particularly when there are other children for whom they are responsible. As all of us who have

followed the political campaign are now aware, the Catholic and fundamentalist Christian view on abortion, even in such cases, is clear-cut: no abortion under any circumstances. One must not assume, however, that because Judaism prizes life no less than Christianity, devout Jews must also stand opposed. Halakha is more nuanced. In fact, the halakhic approach suggests that the very terminology used to describe the anti-abortion movement - "Right to Life" - has been misappropriated. In this brief paper, I will present some rabbinic decisions that have shaped present day Halakha in regards to abortion. The material that I will present is derived in large part from an analysis of the subject by Rav Moshe Zuriel. [5] But first, a brief accounting of abortion in our current political landscape is in order.

* * *

One's view on abortion is intimately connected, for obvious reasons, to one's view of when life begins. So when exactly does life begin? For many people in the United States, the answer is that life begins the moment an egg is fertilized by a sperm. At that point, that one cell embryo is considered fully human, deserving of the same rights and protections of all humans who walk the earth, and any action that disrupts the growth of that embryo, whether as a fetus or even as a bunch of cells in a petri dish, is no different from killing a fully alive human being. Those who share this belief do so with great passion. It is a passion ignited by religious zeal. They see themselves living in a society that has run amok in its countenance of murder on an industrial scale. And, as we know, that zeal itself too often has had consequences, fueling violence against actually-alive human beings who facilitate or perform abortion. The reader may remember this:

Amherst, N.Y., Oct. 24, 1998 — Dr. Barnett Slepian, an obstetrician with a practice in this Buffalo suburb, returned home from synagogue Friday night with his wife, Lynn, and greeted his four sons. Then he stepped into his kitchen, where a sniper's bullet crashed through a back window and struck him in the chest, the police said.

He fell to the floor, calling for help, and died within two hours.[6].

Dr. Slepian was one of three abortion providers in the Buffalo area. The miscreant who did this killed to defend the "Right to Life." Unfortunately, there have been others such murders supported and perpetrated and by an offshoot of the "Right to Life" movement who call themselves the Army of God.

This point of view presents great difficulty for reproductive specialists. In the routine course of fertility treatments, we routinely discard embryos, either because - like 80% of embryos formed in the natural process of reproduction - they lack implantation potential, or because we have been requested to do so by former patients. [7] Notwithstanding the pro-life nature of in vitro fertilization (IVF) - without it, millions of babies would never have been born - the technique has engendered fierce opposition in fundamentalist communities. Their calculation is simple: IVF is no different than abortion; be it a fetus in the womb or a one cell embryo in a test tube, ending their existence is murder. American voters ignore the consequences of this view at their own peril: in July, the House Appropriations Committee of the US Congress agreed to an amendment that, if passed, would deny funding of IVF treatment to military personnel whose wounds prevent them from having children by any other means.[8] Beyond the ethical implications of such a policy, a moratorium against federal funding of research involving human embryos was put into effect in 1976 and its ripple effects continue to slow the pace of advancements in IVF and its spin-off technologies, including stem cells.[9]

Even more far-reaching is the "Personhood Amendment," a brilliant new political tactic being used by those who wish to see legal abortion in this country disappear. It seeks to set a new definition of

the word "person." Its importance stems from the original Roe v. Wade decision in 1973,[10] wherein Supreme Court Justice Harry Blackmun ruled that the equal protection clause of the Fourteenth Amendment does not refer to the fetus because it is not legally considered a person. Personhood Amendments seek to redefine the term "person" as something that begins when an egg is fertilized by sperm and ends when the last breath is taken. Were this definition of personhood accepted, the right to life for an embryo or a fetus would then be guaranteed specifically by the Fourteenth Amendment.

In the last five years, thirteen states have attempted to place "personhood" measures on the ballot. Only two states - Colorado and Mississippi - have put such measures to a vote, and voters rejected them. Nevertheless, their derivative, the so-called fetal homicide laws, are already being used in many states to arrest and prosecute women who miscarry pregnancies or are otherwise seen as "harming" the fetus.[11] In Indiana earlier this year, the governor enacted a law that would prosecute any doctor who performs an abortion for almost any reason, including fetal abnormalities, for wrongful death. By that same law, any woman undergoing an abortion at any stage and for any reason would also be required to pay for burial or cremation of the fetus.[12] Appropriately, this law has not been carried out due to an injunction issued by a federal judge this past June.[13]

At the federal level, two similar pieces of legislation - the Sanctity of Human Life Act and the Life at Conception Act - are introduced in Congress year after year; they have failed on each occasion. This past winter, however, every Republican candidate indicated support for these bills.

* * *

Although abortion on demand is anathema to the ethics of the Halakha, in Jewish law there are many situations in which a pregnancy may be terminated. Within the first 40 days of pregnancy, in particular, the embryo is considered by the Talmud to be "mere water." [14] By inference, an embryo outside the womb certainly has no status as a human life. Thus, as Rabbis Mordechai Eliyahu ZS"l and Haim David Halevi ZS"l pointed out, [15,16], fertilized eggs in a petri dish may be discarded. In their responsa, neither of these authorities offers any detailed analysis of his legal ruling, considering the position to be obvious and noncontroversial from the perspective of Halakha.

Halakha also does not consider abortion a capital crime. The source for this is in the Torah itself: If two men fight and they collide with a pregnant woman and she miscarries, but she is not fatally wounded, the one who struck her shall pay damages as assessed by the husband of the woman. Exodus 21:22

Additionally, there are situations when Halakha mandates abortion. The examples that follow will illustrate this point.

Consider the Talmudic account of a woman has been convicted of a capital offense and is sentenced to death. The court rules that the sentence must be carried out immediately. Even if she is pregnant, the court determines that she, along with her unborn child, must die. Wishing to spare her the agony of anticipating her own death, the court will not wait a single extra day. It discounts any consideration of her fetus. In fact, the iconic amora, Shemuel, rules that the fetus must first be intentionally killed - by striking the woman's abdomen - before she is executed. He wishes to save her the embarrassment of contemplating the miscarriage and bleeding that will follow her death.[17] Of course, this is only a theoretical discussion - the death penalty was rarely, if ever, practiced in Jewish law, and certainly not in the era of the Talmud. Still, the discussion sheds light on how hazal viewed the fetus. In this case they make clear that a fetus is not a nephesh; it has no

independent status as being alive, and it is certainly not a human being.

The Talmud also teaches that if the childbirth process is interrupted and the mother's life is in danger, the fetus is killed and the body is removed piecemeal in order to rescue the mother's life.[18] We learn from this passage that up until the moment that the fetus emerges it is not considered a separate individual. It instead has the status of an inner organ of the mother, just like her kidneys or liver. Therefore, if she needs life, we may destroy that part. As Rashi comments there, the fetus has no soul. It does have ruah hayim, or spirit of life, but that is derived from, and is dependent on, its mother. The soul is only acquired upon birth. The notion that killing a fetus is tantamount to murder was not one that he or any of our early sages would recognize.

An example of how this is relevant was given by the Radbaz (Rabbi David ben Zimra, Sephardic, 16th century) who ruled on the case of a kohen who hit a pregnant woman and caused her to miscarry. The question was whether the kohen must thereafter refrain from reciting birkat kohanim because, by Halakha, a murderer is disqualified from all priestly services. Radbaz ruled that the kohen is permitted to continue since a fetus is not yet a soul.

While it would be safe to say that no halakhic authorities allow abortion only for the sake of convenience, all of them accept that in the case of piquah nefesh - where the fetus is jeopardizing the mother's life - her life comes first. But what do we make of a situation where a woman's pregnancy does not pose a physical danger to her, only an emotional one?

As background to Rav Zuriel's analysis, he states that the Torah is certainly concerned with savlan shel ha'beriot, the "suffering of humanity." Here is a partial listing of the responsa that he cites, specifically regarding a married woman who has conceived as the result of an adulterous relationship and requests an abortion:

- (A) Chavot Ya'ir - (Rav Yair Bachrach, Ashkenazi, 17th century) - permitted.
- (B) She'ilat Ya'avetz - (Rav Ya'akov Emden, Ashkenazi, 18th century) - permitted.
- (C) Ben Ish Chai - (Rav Yosef Hayyim, Sephardic, 19th century) - permitted.[19]

Mishpetei Uzziel (Rav Ben-Zion Meir Chai Uzziel, Sephardic, 20th century) was asked by a sick woman who feared becoming deaf in both of her ears due to childbirth. Relying on the passage in the Talmud cited above, he permitted abortion, even though it was not a matter of life and death. He specifically states that the reason the court is permitted to abort the fetus before the execution has nothing to do with the fact that they are both destined to die; rather, as clearly stated in the Talmud, it is done for the good of the woman, to spare her embarrassment.

* * *

While there are halakhic decisors who, following the rulings of their respective gedolei hador, disallow termination of such a pregnancy, there are nevertheless many poskim of major import whose views differ. Here is a sampling of 20th Century poskim who considered the subject:

- (1) Rabbi Shaul Yisraeli, Rosh Yeshiva of Mercaz HaRav, was asked by a woman who took thalidomide during pregnancy. This drug caused severe birth defects in many but not all exposed fetuses, and he permitted abortion. His hidush was that even if not all such fetuses are in danger, but the obstetricians claim that a sizeable percentage born in such situations are damaged severely, this is enough to support performing an abortion.
- (2) Rabbi Dr. Ya'akov Yechiel Weinberg, a mid-20th century European master of Torah as well as secular studies, author of Seridei Eish, was asked by a woman who was sick with German measles during her pregnancy, and who was advised by her doctors that many such fetuses are born deaf, blind and mentally impaired. He, too, permitted abortion.

(3) Rabbi Ovadia Yosef, ZS"l also permitted abortion for suitable medical causes but only to the end of the first trimester.

(4) Finally, the late Rabbi Eliezer Yehuda Waldenberg, ZS"l author of the Tzitz Eliezer, went to great length to prove why abortion of a sick fetus is permissible. He allowed first trimester abortion of a fetus that would be born with a deformity that would cause it to suffer and, famously, termination of a fetus with a lethal fetal defect such as Tay-Sachs disease up to the conclusion of the seventh month of pregnancy.

With this in mind, we must ask, why would any posek condemn a woman pregnant with a Zika-damaged fetus to carry her pregnancy to term? Rabbi Moshe Feinstein, ZS"l considered abortion except when the mother's life is clearly endangered to be impermissible.[20] In his teshuva he explains why. His reasons are many and varied and include not only his detailed halakhic analysis but also his distrust of doctors' motivations. He also believed that even a brief and painful life would merit the newborn tehiyat hameitim. Many contemporary poskim, despite their great respect for Rav Moshe, discounted his objections. What prompted Rav Moshe to take his strict position cannot be known. We do know that it was penned in 1976, shortly after abortion was legalized in the United States and in the midst of a new sexual freedom sweeping across the country. It is possible he foresaw that the collusion of these phenomena could bring undesirable consequences for the Jewish world.

In any event, not all poskim accept Rav Moshe's psak. Rav Zuriel concludes his survey with the notion that koach d'heteira adif. In this regard, the reader should recall the words of Rav Aharon Lichtenstein, ZS"l who wrote the following with the same matter in mind:

A sensitive posek recognizes both the gravity of the personal circumstances and the seriousness of the halakhic factors.... He might stretch the halakhic limits of leniency where serious domestic tragedy looms, or hold firm to the strict interpretation of the law when, as he reads the situation, the pressure for leniency stems from frivolous attitudes and reflects a debased moral compass.[21]

Regardless of which halakhic analysis is deemed more "correct," any couple facing the looming tragedy of pregnancy with a sick fetus and who chooses to terminate that pregnancy may lean on the wisdom of many giants of Torah. In the language of our sages, yesh al mi l'smikh.

* * *

Collectively, we hope and pray that none of us finds ourselves personally involved in such situations. They are heartbreaking, no doubt. But, as Torah-observant Jews, these situations must not always lead to endless pain and suffering. Our approach does not coincide with the fundamentalist sentiment sweeping America. While the Jewish perspective is indeed pro-life, its conclusion is different. To be pro-life halakhically means to be in favor of a pregnant woman retaining her dignity and for the couple in question to be allowed to live their life without the emotional trauma that accompanies the birth of a dying or damaged child. While we certainly respect those who choose to take on that burden, the Torah does not require women to do so. To be pro-life is also to support the use of IVF, when necessary, to build families, including lots of Jewish families.

Zika is a very complicated subject, too new and too potentially threatening for even the medical world to have answers. Curiously, its emergence as a serious threat to the health of American women and children at the very same time that the presidential elections are in full gear reminds us that the abortion issue - and the opposing platforms of the candidates - must be taken seriously. Redefining life as beginning at fertilization discounts the problem of savlan shel ha'beriot and ignores the cruel repercussions that such a policy would engender. As such, this doctrine is in

conflict with Halakha and cannot be countenanced by those who are committed to Torah values.

- [1]Johansson MA, Mier-y-Teran-Romero L, Reefhuis J, Gilboa SM, Hills SL. Zika and the risk of microcephaly. NEJM. 2016;375(1):1-4.
- [2]<http://www.bmj.com/content/354/bmj.i3899>
- [3]The thesis of this article is that an unborn child is not a recognized entity in Halakha. As long as it is unborn, it is called a fetus; only once it has emerged is it a child. I have therefore been careful to avoid use of such terms as “fetus in the womb” as needlessly duplicative. If it is a fetus, it can only be in the womb and if it is a child it can only be out.
- [4]http://www.nytimes.com/2016/06/28/us/supreme-court-texas-abortion.html?_r=0
- [5]Tehumin 2005. A (less-detailed) summary is available in English at <http://www.torahmusings.com/2013/08/abortions-that-are-kosher/>
- [6]<http://www.nytimes.com/1998/10/25/nyregion/abortion-doctor-in-buffalo-sl...>
- [7]The outcome of any given in vitro fertilization cycle is unpredictable. Embryos that are not transferred to the womb in the process of treatment are typically frozen for potential future use. However, those for whom IVF has been successful and who have finished growing their families may prefer not to keep their excess embryos in perpetual storage.
- [8] http://www.nytimes.com/2016/08/13/us/politics/congress-embryo-ivf.html?_r=0
- [9]<http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/americanexperience/features/general-article/babi...>
- [10]It is worth noting that the case was decided by a 7-2 majority, reflecting public sentiment. Americans still support legal abortion by a significant majority. See <http://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2016/06/27/5-facts-about-abortion/>
- [11]<https://rewire.news/article/2014/01/09/feticide-laws-advance-personhood-...>
- [12]<http://www.nytimes.com/2016/03/25/us/indiana-governor-mike-pence-signs-a...>
- [13]<http://www.nytimes.com/2016/07/01/us/federal-judge-blocks-indiana-aborti...>
- [14]Yevamot 69b
- [15]Eliyahu M. Responsum to Richard Grazi.10 Shevat 5749 (Jan 10, 1989). Tehumin 1991; vol 11
- [16]Halevi HD. Responsum to Richard Grazi.19 Tevet 5749 (Dec 27, 1988). 1990; 12:3-4; Assia nos 47-48
- [17]Arachin 7a
- [18]Sanhedrin 72b
- [19]One can argue about this response, because of the oblique manner in which it was given. However, the intent and meaning of the response is clear.
- [20]Iggrot Moshe H”M, 2: 69
- [21]Lichtenstein A: Abortion: A halakhic perspective. Tradition. 25(4):11, 1991

Byline:

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PARSHAT KEDOSHIM -shiur #1

PARSHAT KEDOSHIM & THE TEN COMMANDMENTS

It's not very difficult to find the Ten Commandments 'hiding' in Parshat Kedoshim, at least most of them. [See Ramban, Ibn Ezra, and Chizkuni on 19:2.]

In the following shiur, we study the nature of this parallel (and its 'missing links') in an attempt to uncover its deeper meaning.

INTRODUCTION

In the first four psukim of Parshat Kedoshim, the parallels to some of the 'dibrot' [the Ten Commandments] are rather obvious [e.g. honoring one's parents, keeping Shabbat, idol worship etc.]. However, as the Parsha continues, the parallels become less obvious, and as we will see, some of the parallels to the dibrot become rather 'stretched' and others appear to be missing!

Nonetheless, it would be logical to assume that there must be a deeper reason for these parallels, and the manner of their presentation.

We begin our shiur by taking note of an interesting internal pattern within Parshat Kedoshim, that may help us 'crack the code'.

THE ANI HASHEM DELIMITERS

As you review the first 18 psukim of Parshat Kedoshim, note how the 'refrain' ANI HASHEM is repeated EIGHT TIMES (at the end of just about every other pasuk). Note as well how this refrain appears in two different forms:

- ANI HASHEM ELOKEICHEM - the first four (see 19:1-10);
- ANI HASHEM - the next four times (see 19:11-18).

This pattern suggests that these mitzvot divide into TWO groups. The distinction between them is also rather obvious:

- The ANI HASHEM ELOKEICHEM group contains primarily mitzvot 'bein adam la-Makom' (between man & God) and hence is parallel to the first five DIBROT;
- The ANI HASHEM group contains primarily mitzvot which are 'bein adam le-chaveiro' (between man and his fellow man), and hence is parallel to the last five DIBROT.

To verify this, note how the ANI HASHEM ELOKEICHEM group contains obvious parallels to four of the five first DIBROT:

- I. ANOCHI (see 19:2);
- II. LO YIHIYEH (see 19:4);
- III. LO TISA - [no apparent parallel]
- IV. SHABBAT (see 19:3); &
- V. KIBBUD AV (see 19:3).

Note, however, that we have two problems. First of all, we did not find any obvious parallel for the third Commandment. But we also did not find any parallel for the laws discussed in 19:5-10 [i.e. the laws of 'pigul' and 'pe'a' etc.]. Before we return to this question, let's take a look at the second group:

In the ANI HASHEM group (see 19:12,14,16,18) we find a variety of mitzvot bein adam le-chaveiro, the most obvious parallels to the last five DIBROT being:

- VI. LO TIRTZACH - 'lo ta'amod al dam re'echa' (19:15)
- VII. LO TIN'AF - the laws of 'shifcha charufa' (19:20-22)
- VIII. LO TIGNOV - 'lo tignovu...' (see 19:11)
- IX. LO TA'ANEH be-re'acha ED SHAKER - 'lo tishav'u bi-shmi la-SHAKER...' (see 19:12).
- X. LO TACHMOD - 'lo ta'ashok et re'acha ...' (19:18).

Even though some of these parallels are a bit stronger than others, all of the mitzvot in this section can definitely be categorized according to one of the last five DIBROT.

Let's return now to our question, i.e. we are missing a parallel for the third DIBBUR - LO TISA ET SHEM HASHEM ELOKEICHA LA-SHAV - in the ANI HASHEM ELOKEICHEM group.

Bothered by this question, Chizkuni (based on Vayikra Rabba 24:5) suggests that LO TISA is parallel to 'lo tishav'u bi-shmi la-shaker' (see 19:12). However, that parallel would 'violate' the pattern that we discerned above, for the parallel should be found within the ANI HASHEM ELOKEICHEM group, i.e. in the first ten psukim.

Furthermore, based on the context of 19:12 - Lo tishav'u bi-shmi la-SHAKER - and noting the use of the word 'shaker' - its parallel to 'lo taaneh be-re'acha ed SHAKER' (Commandment #9) appears to be much more convincing. [This also keeps it in the ANI HASHEM group.]

THE MISSING 'LINK'

Let's return to the pattern set by the phrase "ANI HASHEM ELOKEICHEM". Using the 'process of elimination', the parallel to the third Commandment [LO TISA] must be located somewhere within the mitzvot discussed between 19:5 and 19:10. However, these psukim simply discuss primarily the laws of 'pigul', a law that contains no obvious parallel to 'not stating God's Name in vain'.

On the other hand, the pattern that we have seen thus far 'begs' us to look for a connection; so let's give it a try. To do so, we must first explain the law of pigul.

The korban SHLAMIM is a voluntary offering that can be eaten by the owner; however, its meat must be consumed on that same day or the next (see Vayikra 7:16-18). Parshat Kedoshim presents this law once again (see 19:5-8), adding the information that the punishment for eating the meat outside of this time frame is 'karet' - being 'cut-off' from the people of Israel (see 19:8!) - one of the most stringent of Biblical punishments.

Interestingly, Chazal [our Sages] interpret this prohibition in an even more stringent manner. They claim that the primary prohibition is not necessarily eating the korban on the third day, but rather simply THINKING about eating the KORBAN outside of its time frame! In other words, if at the time of offering this sacrifice, one merely thinks about eating its meat outside of its time frame - the offering is rendered PIGUL - and he who does so will be punished with KARET! [Even if the meat is never eaten at the wrong time.]

This strange law raises two questions. First of all, why would someone think of doing so in the first place? Secondly, let's say he does, why is the punishment for simply 'thinking about it' so severe? And finally, what is so terrible if one eats from this korban for an extra day? Is it really better that he should let the meat 'go to waste'?

'THINKING' IS WORSE THAN EATING!

To understand the logic behind the law of PIGUL, we must consider that it is quite impossible for a single person to consume the meat of an entire animal in a day or two. Therefore, practically speaking, the Torah's prohibition against eating the meat of a shlamim outside its time frame forces the individual to SHARE the meat of this korban with others!

[Recall as well that the korban must also be consumed within the walls of Yerushalayim. Therefore, the option of bringing the korban 'home' to share with his family is also precluded.]

Let's say that our assumption is correct that the owner of the KORBAN has no choice other than to share his korban SHLAMIM with other visitors in Yerushalayim. Consequently, we now have a logical reason for one to think of when he will eat this KORBAN at the time of its offering. The very THOUGHT of eating a korban outside its time frame implies that the owner does not want to SHARE his korban with others. In other words, this person offering the korban is being selfish, for he wants to save the meat

for himself.

Clearly, being selfish is a bad trait. But is it so evil that it deserves the punishment of KARET - to be totally cut off from the people of Israel?

A NECESSARY BALANCE

This law of PIGUL may contain an extremely important 'mussar' (moral message) concerning the necessary balance between our relationship with God and our fellow man.

Recall that the Korban SHLAMIM is a voluntary offering where one wishes to express his closeness to God, to re-affirm his commitment to the covenant of HAR SINAI (see TSC shiur on Parshat Vayikra). If at the height of one's spiritual experience, as he stands in front of God offering his KORBAN SHLAMIM, a selfish thought can still enter his mind - i.e. he does not want to share his korban with others - God becomes 'disgusted' with this person, and the korban becomes PIGUL. A person who has yet to inculcate the basic trait of sharing, has no right to stand in front of the MIZBEIACH and offer a voluntary korban to God!

To support this understanding, note how the next pasuk in Parshat Kedoshim contains a law that stems from a similar reason. The obligation of the farmer to leave over a part of his field for the poor ['pe'a', 'shichecha', and 'leket' / see 19:9-10] teaches the owner not to be so selfish as to keep all of its produce for himself. Here we find yet another mitzva that requires the sharing of prosperity, and thus supports our interpretation of the underlying reason for the law of pigul.

PIGUL & LO TISA

If 'sharing' is indeed the underlying reason for PIGUL and PE'A, then the parallel between Parshat Kedoshim and the Ten Commandments, as discussed above, would suggest that these laws should be in some manner related to the third Commandment of LO TISA - not to proclaim God's Name in vain. To uncover that connection, we must return to our study of the meaning of God's Name in Sefer Breishit, and its connection to the laws of the MIZBEIACH and hence to korbanot in general.

SHEM HASHEM & THE MIZBEIACH

Recall from Parshat Lech Lecha how Avraham Avinu, immediately upon his arrival in Eretz Canaan, built a MIZBEIACH and 'calls out in God's Name' in BET EL [lit. the HOUSE of God] (see Breishit 12:8 & 13:4). As we explained in our shiur on this topic, Avraham's MIZBEIACH served as a vehicle enabling him to 'call out in God's Name', or as Ramban on 12:8 explained, teaching mankind concerning their need to recognize God and His Creation.

Later at Har Sinai we find a similar connection between the mizbeiach and 'shem Hashem' [God's Name]. Immediately upon the completion of the Ten Commandments, God commands Bnei Yisrael:

"An earthen MIZBEIACH you shall make for Me... where ever I CALL OUT MY NAME I will come and bless you" (Shmot 20:21).

[Note that the psukim in Shmot 20:19-23 can also be understood as parallel to the first three DIBROT, while the remaining DIBROT are parallel to the mitzvot which continue in Parshat Mishpatim (very similar to what happens in Parshat Kedoshim). According to that parallel, the law of MIZBEIACH is clearly the parallel to LO TISA! (Read 20:22-23 carefully to verify this.)]

As the above examples show, the concept of 'shem Hashem' relates directly to the MIZBEIACH. In fact, the bet ha-mikdash itself is consistently referred to in Sefer Devarim as 'ha-Makom asher yivchar Hashem leshaken SHMO sham' - the place that God will choose to allow His Name to dwell (see for example Devarim 12:5-12, 16:1-17, and 26:1-2).

As the very purpose of the bet ha-mikdash and the mizbeiach is to properly publicize the Name of God, any law relating to the proper offering of a sacrifice could be considered as parallel to LO

TISA, especially the laws of pigul.

If so, then our parallel between the DIBROT and opening psukim Parshat Kedoshim is complete, as pigul becomes the parallel for Lo Tisa in the 'Ani Hashem Elokeichem' section!

This parallel also follows the differentiation between the mitzvot bein adam la-Makom (first five) and the mitzvot bein adam le-chaveiro (last five). It should not surprise us now to find that the Torah's presentation of the law of PIGUL includes the phrase '-et kodesh HASHEM chillel' - for he has desecrated that what is holy to God (see 19:8).

As the primary concept of the Third Commandment is not to desecrate God's Name, then its parallel could include any law that may cause God's Name (or reputation) to become tainted. An individual who comes to the bet ha-mikdash to express his special closeness to God - by offering a korban shlamim, yet at the same time thinks selfishly about himself, causes God's Name to be desecrated.

SHNEI LUCHOT HA-BRIT

One could suggest that this may be the underlying message of the two sections of the Ten Commandments, [i.e. the two LUCHOT of BRIT SINAI]. The mitzvot bein adam la-Makom' of the first five DIBROT come 'part and parcel' with the mitzvot bein adam le-chaveiro of the last five DIBROT.

In fact, the law of pigul forms a meaningful transition between these two sections, for it is a law relating to both man & God, and his fellow man. This necessary blend between one's worship of God and his respect and care for his fellow man, so typical of the other laws of Parshat Kedoshim, should be the most prominent character of the Jewish nation.

When Am Yisrael act in this manner, they become a true AM KADOSH, a holy nation that truly testifies that God is KADOSH and His Name is KADOSH. By doing so, they facilitate bringing 'shem Hashem' God's Name (and hence His reputation) to mankind.

shabbat shalom,
menachem

FOR FURTHER IYUN

A. Can you suggest a reason why ANI HASHEM ELOKEICHEM relates to the mitzvot bein adam la-Makom while ANI HASHEM relates to the mitzvot bein adam le-chaveiro (at least in the first 18 psukim)? [Hint: Which mitzvot are more universal, and which are more special for Am Yisrael?]

B. In Parshat Kedoshim, we find a pattern where there appears to be no or very little connection from one mitzva to the next. Do you think that this is intentional?

If so, based on the above shiur, what is its significance?

See Ibn Ezra in 19:3-18. Do you agree with all of his associations concerning the flow of the parsha?]

PARSHAT KEDOSHIM -shiur #2

THE HEADER / KOL ADAT YISRAEL

Does the name 'EDAH' imply something 'good' or something 'bad'? Even though EDAH carries a negative connotation in the story of the spies in Parshat Shlach, in the opening pasuk of Parshat Kedoshim it seems to imply something very positive.

In the following shiur we suggest a thematic connection between the word EDAH and the first half of Parshat Kedoshim (i.e. chapter 19).

INTRODUCTION

In contrast to most parshiot in Chumash which begin with the standard header:

"And God spoke to Moshe saying, speak to BNEI YISRAEL..."

Parshat Kedoshim adds a short but important phrase:

"And God spoke to Moshe saying, speak to KOL ADAT Bnei Yisrael... - to the entire congregation of Israel" (19:1-2).

This special header indicates that there must be some specific

reason why this parshia was given to KOL ADAT YISRAEL -i.e. to the entire EDAAH - congregation of Israel. [Note that ADAT is simply the 'smichut' form of EDAAH.]

Rashi, quoting the Midrash in Torat Kohanim, explains that specifically this parshia was given to the 'entire congregation' because it includes most of the basic principles of the Torah [rov gufeil Torah tluyin bah']. [See also Chizkuni (19:2) who quotes a similar Midrash Tanchuma.]

Even though Rashi explains why it was necessary for Moshe to relay these mitzvot in a special gathering, he does not explain why specifically the word EDAAH is used! In other words, the Torah could have simply said: speak to KOL Bnei Yisrael (ALL of Bnei Yisrael / see Devarim 1:1), or could have used the Hebrew word KAHAL instead of EDAAH, which would have been a more precise way to describe a gathering.

Therefore, the Torah's choice of the word EDAAH suggests a connection between the mitzvot of Parshat Kedoshim and the word EDAAH. To find that connection, we must consider its etymology.

The Hebrew word EDAAH stems from one of two possible roots:

- 1) ayin.daled - which implies to AFFIRM or TESTIFY
[e.g. the word EID= a witness; EDAAH= a female witness]
- 2) yod.ayin.daled - which implies to APPOINT or to DESIGNATE

The first root would imply that Am Yisrael, when called an EDAAH, serve as sort of a WITNESS, while the second root would imply that they have been APPOINTED for a certain purpose. How would either or both explanations tie into Parshat Kedoshim?

From the opening commandment of Parshat Kedoshim, one could suggest an interesting interpretation:

"KEDOSHIM TIHIYU - You shall be holy, for I, the Lord your God, am holy..." (19:2).

By acting as a holy nation, Am Yisrael 'testifies' (to itself and to other nations) that God exists, for He is holy. [See Sforno 19:2.]

Why is this testimony necessary?

Testimony is usually needed order to prove a fact. Considering that God is transcendent, it is difficult for man to perceive His existence. Therefore, God commands ADAT BNEI YISRAEL to keep special mitzvot which help create a society which 'testifies' to God's existence. One could actually combine both meanings and suggest that it is for this reason that God DESIGNATED Bnei Yisrael to become a nation.

KEDUSHA - FOR A PURPOSE

Even though this interpretation may not be 'simple pshat', it blends nicely with Sefer Vayikra's theme of KEDUSHA in the three realms of MAKOM, ZMAN, & ADAM, which we developed in our shiur on Acharei Mot.

- a) KEDUSHAT HA-MISHKAN ['kedushat makom'], we explained, implies that God separates a special place and infuse it with an intense level of holiness IN ORDER that it affect and thus elevate the level of the area which surrounds it.
- b) In a similar manner, God separated SHABBAT ['kedushat zman'], infusing it with an intense level of holiness, IN ORDER to elevate the spiritual level of the entire week.
- c) So too - KEDUSHAT AM YISRAEL ['kedushat adam']. God separates a special nation, infusing it with an intense level of holiness, IN ORDER to elevate the spiritual level of all nations. God 'designates' Am Yisrael to follow the mitzvot of KEDOSHIM TIHIYU to fulfill this purpose, and in this manner we 'testify' before all nations that God exists.

This concept, which may only be alluded to here in Parshat Kedoshim, is stated more directly in Sefer Devarim as Bnei Yisrael prepare to enter the Promised Land:

"See, I have taught you CHUKIM & MISHPATIM [compare Vayikra 18:3-5] for you to keep in the land which you are about to conquer. Observe them faithfully, for that will be PROOF of your wisdom IN THE EYES OF THE NATIONS who upon hearing all these laws will say:

Surely, that great nation is a wise people, for what great nation is there that is so CLOSE TO GOD... or what great nation has such perfect CHUKIM & MISHPATIM as the TORAH that I set before you on this day..." (Devarim 4:5-8).

TWO OTHER PARSHIOT

In addition to Parshat Kedoshim, there are two earlier parshiot of mitzvot which are directed specifically to ADAT BNEI YISRAEL.

- 1) Parshat Ha-Chodesh - Shmot 12:1-20 (see 12:3) which discusses MAKKAT BECHOROT & KORBAN PESACH.
- 2) Parshat Vayakhel - the commandment to build the MISHKAN.

One could explain the Torah's use of the phrase ADAT BNEI YISRAEL in these two parshiot in a similar manner.

(1) Parshat Ha-Chodesh (as we all know) is God's very FIRST commandment to Bnei Yisrael (see Rashi Breishit 1:1). The laws of Korban Pesach that are detailed in that parshia serve a double purpose. For Am Yisrael to:

- a) recognize God's hand in their salvation from MAKKAT BECHOROT [which caused the Egyptians to finally recognize God. [See Shmot 11:1-10.]
- b) AFFIRM their covenantal commitment to BRIT BEIN H-B'TARIM (i.e. Brit Avot). [See shiur on Parshat Va'era].

(2) Parshat Vayakhel describes the commandment to build the MISHKAN which itself serves as a symbol and testimony of God's presence. [Recall that at the focal point of the Mishkan lie the LUCHOT ha-EIDUT / see Shmot 25:16,21-22.]

One could even suggest that these three parshiot which are given to ADAT Bnei Yisrael reflect once again the three realms of KEDUSHA:

Parshat ha-Chodesh - kedushat ZMAN
Parshat Vayakhel - kedushat MAKOM
Parshat Kedoshim - kedushat ADAM

FOR FURTHER IYUN

1. Note in the first Rashi on "daber el kol ADAT Bnei Yisrael" that Rashi states: "melamed she-ne'emar be-HAKHEL". How does the parallel to Shmot 35:1 help us better understand this Rashi?
2. In Sefer Bamidbar (see 14:26-27 and its context), Bnei Yisrael sin at chet ha-meraglim. Those sinners are referred to as an EDAAH RA'A - a wicked (or bad) EDAAH?

Can our explanation of 'witness' still apply in this case?

3. Note that Korach's splinter group is also called an EDAAH, and in Korach's original complaint we find the same word - "ki KOL ha-EDAAH kulam KDOSHIM u-vetocham HASHEM..." (see Bamidbar 16:3). Can you relate this complaint of Korach to this week's shiur and the Torah's use of the word EDAAH?

PARSHAT KEDOSHIM - shiur #3

The Repetition of the "ARAYOT"

[revised 5767]

If you ever paid attention to the final psukim in Parshat Kedoshim, you must have been terribly bothered by the last pasuk of the Parsha. As anyone will immediately notice, it simply doesn't belong there!

Furthermore, did you ever notice that Vayikra chapter 20 (the last chapter of Parshat Kedoshim) is almost a repeat of chapter 18 (the last chapter of Parshat Acharei Mot)?

In the following shiur we attempt to tackle these questions by uncovering the special internal format of chapter 20 (better known as a chiasmic structure).

[Our conclusion will also help us better appreciate why Parshat Kedoshim is located in the middle of Sefer Vayikra.]

INTRODUCTION

Take a minute to review the final few psukim of Parshat Kedoshim (at least 20:23-27). While doing so, note how the second to last pasuk of Parshat Kedoshim could have formed a beautiful conclusion for the entire sedra:

"And you shall be holy [kedoshim] to Me, for I the Lord am holy, and I have set you apart from other nations to be Mine" (20:26).

However, instead of ending on that profound note, the Torah 'adds on' an extra pasuk that appears to be just 'dangling on' to this otherwise perfect ending:

"And any man or woman who has an OV or a YID'ONI shall be put to death, they shall be pelted with stones..." (20:27).
[Once again, review the 20:20-27 to verify this.]

Furthermore, over half of the specific laws and general statements found in chapter 20 were already mentioned in chapter 18!

We begin our shiur by undertaking a study of the nature of this repetition. Our conclusions will assist us in our study of the internal structure of chapter 20.

A REPEAT OF THE 'ARAYOT'

Take a few minutes to compare chapter 20 with chapter 18 (especially 18:6-23 with 20:10-21; 18:1-5 with 20:8; and 18:24-30 with 20:22-25).

You'll find that almost every mitzva that was mentioned in chapter 18 (especially the 'arayot' - the forbidden marital relationships) is repeated in chapter 20; and most of the general commandments 20:22-24 are repeats of 18:26-28!

However, if you take a closer look, you'll notice how the manner of presentation of these mitzvot in each chapter is quite different. The basic differences are as follows:

In chapter 20 we find a SPECIFIC punishment for each transgression. In contrast, chapter 18 simply states that these ARAYOT are forbidden [note the repetition of phrase 'lo tegaleh ervatan'], without informing us what specific punishment the Jewish court [bet din] should exact upon them. The punishment is only mentioned in passing at the conclusion of chapter 18, where we are told that God will 'cut off from His nation' anyone who transgresses (what we call 'karet' / see 18:29).

For this reason, the order [of the arayot] in each perek is different. In chapter 18, they follow (more or less) the order of family closeness, daughter, etc.), while the order in chapter 20 follows the severity of the punishment.

Furthermore, in chapter 20 we find the concept of KEDUSHA, while in chapter 18 we find only the concept of TUM'A.

Finally, chapter 20 includes some additional laws such as OV & YID'ONI. [Note 20:6 & 20:27.]

We'll return to this analysis shortly; however, before we continue we must first take into consideration the internal structure of chapter 20, which happens to be rather intriguing.

A CHIASTIC STRUCTURE

Within chapter 20 [note that chapter 20 constitutes an independent 'parshia'], we find a chiasitic structure [ABCDCBA] that beautifully explains why the last pasuk only appears to be 'out of place'. To illustrate this special structure, the following chart shows how the opening set of psukim are 'balanced' by a concluding set of psukim that deal with parallel topics.

While studying the chart (and the psukim!), note how the laws concerning the arayot in 20:9-21 are 'enveloped' by several sets of matching mitzvot:

VAYIKRA CHAPTER 20

=====

A - Punishment for MOLECH and OV & YID'ONI (20:1-6)
| B - "ve-HITKADISHEM vi-heyitem kedoshim..." (20:7)
| | C - Keep My CHUKIM...[intro to arayot] (20:8)
| | | D - The specific cases of the arayot (20:9-21)
| | C - Keep all My CHUKIM... [or else..." (20:22-23)
| B - "...vi-heyitem li KEDOSHIM, ki KADOSH ani..." (20:24-26)
A - Punishment for transgression of OV & YID'ONI (20:27)

Let's see now what we can learn from this structure.

First we will explain why (and how) each set of psukim is linked (i.e. A to A, B to B, etc.

Afterward, we will explain how this structure relates to chapter 18 and the theme of Sefer Vayikra.

A->A / THE 'MISSING' DETAIL

First of all, by setting up the psukim in this manner, we immediately see how the last pasuk of chapter 20 (i.e. 20:27) forms the 'bookend' for 20:1-6! In fact, 20:26 is more than just a 'matching bookend'; it actually contains an important law that is missing in 20:1-6. Let's explain:

In 20:1-6 we find:

- a) the punishment by BET DIN for MOLECH
i.e. death by stoning (see 20:2)
- b) the punishment by God for MOLECH
"ve-samti PANAI ba-ish ha-hu..." (see 20:4-5).

Then, we find:

- c) the punishment by God for OV & YID'ONI
"ve-natati PANAI ba-nefesh ha-hi..." (see 20:6)

But, we are missing:

-> the punishment by BET DIN for OV & YID'ONI!

In other words, even though 20:1-6 explains BOTH the punishment by BET-DIN & by God for MOLECH, for OV & YID'ONI we find only the punishment by God, while the punishment by Bet Din is missing. Therefore, 20:26 - which informs us that the punishment by BET DIN for OV & YID'ONI is death by stoning - complements the laws in 20:1-6.

[In the further iyun section, we will explain why specifically this law was taken from the 'header' and placed in the 'footer' of this unit; but in the meantime it is important that we recognize that these psukim form the 'bookends' of the entire parshia.

B->B / BACK TO PARSHAT SHMINI

The obvious textual parallel is the almost identical pasuk of "ve-hitkadishem vi-heyitem kedoshim..." (see 20:7 & 20:26). In addition, the concluding psukim of Parshat Shmini (see 11:44-47) provide us with an even stronger connection between 20:7 to 20:24. [To keep the shiur more concise, you'll need to find that parallel on your own.]

C->C / A FAMILIAR 'ENVELOPE' FOR [D]

Here we find a matching set of psukim that should not surprise us, for they repeat the same pattern that was already found in chapter 18. Let's explain:

Recall from last week's shiur how chapter 18 began with a 'header' (see 18:1-5) forming a very general introduction, and concluded with a similar 'footer' (see 18:26-30). This general header and footer 'enveloped' the more specific list of arayot (see 18:6-25)! As you may have noticed, the list of arayot in chapter 20 (i.e. 20:9-21) is 'surrounded' by a very similar 'header' and 'footer' of 'u-shmarten et chukotai...' (see 20:8 and 20:22). Note as well how both 'footers' in chapter 18 and in chapter 20 include a warning that the land will kick out those who transgress these laws.

Using the above chart, we would simply say that the partial format of [C-D-C] in chapter 20 parallels the entire format of chapter 18.

FROM TECHNICAL TO THEMATIC

Up until this point, our discussion has been very technical, simply showing how the Torah presents the laws of chapter 20 in chiasitic form; and in a manner parallel to chapter 18. Now we must attempt to uncover the thematic significance of this presentation. To do so we must consider the progression of the parshiot in Sefer Vayikra and their connection to the themes in Chumash that we have discussed in our study of Sefer Shmot.

WHAT'S DIFFERENT?

As we have already noted, most of the laws in chapters 20 were already mentioned in chapter 18. Therefore, to understand why the Torah repeats these laws, we must consider the two primary details which chapter 20 adds (as we noted in our above

introduction):

- 1) Punishment (usually the death penalty / 'mot yumat...') for each transgression.
- 2) The concept of KEDUSHA.

Even though chapter 18 teaches us that all of the arayot are forbidden, it does not detail the precise penalty for each transgression. It simply informs us that these acts 'defile' the land [= TUM'A / see 18:24-25], and that God will 'cut off' those who transgress [= KARET / see 18:29].

Now in chapter 20, the Torah informs us that the people are responsible to punish those who transgress (see 20:2,9,10 etc.). In other words, chapter 20 empowers bet din (the Jewish Court) to enforce these laws. In fact, enacting the death penalty (by stoning) is both the first and last topic of the perek, while each pasuk from 20:9-21 (detailing each of the arayot) concludes with a form of punishment by bet din.

Note also how the Torah introduces these punishments for the "arayot" (before they are detailed) with the statement: 've-hitkadsisitem...' -and you should make yourselves HOLY (see 20:7) - and closes them in a similar manner (see 20:26 / B->B above). However, in chapter 18, we find no mention at all of KEDUSHA; only TUM'A!

This contrasting parallel suggests that the Torah considers the act of setting up a judicial system to enforce God's special laws as a form of KEDUSHA!

Why is specifically this considered kedusha? Furthermore, why doesn't the Torah simply combine the laws in chapters 18 & 20 together? What do we gain by first learning that these acts are forbidden, and then only later find out that bet din is empowered to punish he who transgresses?

To answer these questions, we must consider the progression of parshiot from chapter 18 to 20.

A THEMATIC PROGRESSION

Recall (from the shiur on Acharei Mot) how Sefer Vayikra divides into two distinct sections:

- 1) Chapters 1-17 - laws relating to the mikdash.
- 2) Chapter 18-26 - laws concerning the nation & kedusha.

Recall as well how chapter 18 (with its introductory psukim emphasizing ANI HASHEM) forms the introduction to the second half of Sefer Vayikra. Let's take note of the progression of parshiot in the first part of this section:

Chapter 18:

- * Reject Egyptian & Canaanite culture i.e. how not to act
- * Follow My laws instead, i.e. how you should act
- * Specific examples of how not to act –
i.e. the prohibition of the "arayot"
[which are primarily 'mitzvot bein adam la-Makom'].
- * How GOD will punish those who transgress (and that nation).

Chapter 19:

KEDOSHIM TIHEYU - Be holy!

i.e. examples of how Am Yisrael should act!

[Primarily 'mitzvot bein adam le-chaveiro'.]

As we explained in last week's shiur - taking the principles of the Ten Commandments, and raising them to a higher level in a manner which affects every aspect of daily living.

No mention of punishment by bet din.

[Instead, the repetition of ANI HASHEM (in both chapters) for He will punish those who transgress and reward he who follows. See Rashi 18:2!]

Chapter 20:

Punishment by BET-DIN for those who transgress the mitzvot (recorded in chapter 18). / as explained above.

Let's consider what we may infer from this progression. First, God tells Am Yisrael how they should NOT act, then

how they SHOULD act, and that they must follow these rules - simply because He says so - summarized by the statement: ANI HASHEM!

In other words, we must follow these laws - not in fear of their punishment (by society), but only out of the love (or fear) of God.

Only afterward, in chapter 20, God commands Am Yisrael to enforce these laws, in order to ensure that they become a 'mamlechet kohanim ve-goy KADOSH!' Hence, the nation itself must set up a judicial system to enforce them.

BACK TO A-A

As our thematic analysis has shown, chapter twenty focuses on the responsibility of Bet Din to enforce the laws (originally detailed in chapter 18) by punishing those who transgress. Just as the middle section of this chiasmic structure highlights this responsibility, the opening and closing sections in the chiasmus of chapter 20 emphasize this very same point.

Recall how chapter 20 begins specifically with the responsibility of Bet Din to punish a person who worships Molech, and concludes with Bet Din's responsibility to punish a person who practices the cult of OV & YIDONI. Even though it who have appeared to more logical for both of these laws to appear in the middle section, - to highlight the theme of punishment by Bet Din in chapter 20, Chumash places one law as the 'opener' and the other as the closing pasuk.

THE SAME THREE STAGES IN SEFER SHMOT

In a certain manner, the progression from chapter 18 through chapter 19 till chapter 20 is quite similar to the sequence of events in Sefer Shmot. Let's explain:

Recall that as the process of Yetziat Mitzrayim began, God's first commandment to Bnei Yisrael (when they were still in Egypt) was that they recognize ANI HASHEM (see Shmot 6:4-8), and hence to rid themselves of Egyptian culture. In our shiur on Parshat Va'era we proved this from Yechezkel 20:5-11. [Note the parallels between that perek in Yechezkel and Vayikra chapter 18, i.e. the phrase ANI HASHEM and the commandment to rid themselves from Egyptian culture. (Compare 18:1-5 to Yech. 20:5-10.)]

Recall as well that at MARA (after Bnei Yisrael left Egypt and crossed the Red Sea) God repeats this commandment, to prepare them for Matan Torah at Har Sinai. [See Shmot 16:26-27.]

Hence, those events would parallel Vayikra chapter 18.

Then Bnei Yisrael arrive at Har Sinai and receive the Ten Commandments. As we discussed in our first shiur on Parshat Kedoshim, the mitzvot in chapter 19 are presented in a manner quite similar to the Ten Commandments in Parshat Yitro. Hence Matan Torah would be parallel to Vayikra chapter 19.

Finally, the Ten Commandments are followed by Parshat MISHPATIM, which introduces an entire set of the civil laws, together with the specific punishment that BET-DIN must execute for each transgression. Here we find a parallel to Vayikra chapter 20, for there too we find the specific punishments that BET-DIN must execute for the transgressions that were first mentioned in chapter 18.

The following chart summarizes this parallel between Shmot and Vayikra.

	SHMOT	VAYIKRA
REJECT Egyptian culture:	Va'era / 6:4-8	chapter 18
FOLLOW GOD'S LAWS:	Yitro / 20:1-14	chapter 19
PUNISHMENT BY BET DIN:	Mishpatim	chapter 20

A HIGHER LEVEL

The above chart can help better appreciate how Sefer Vayikra takes the principles of Sefer Shmot and raises them to a higher level. It can also help us understand the repetition of the arayot in Vayikra chapter 20.

Just as Vayikra chapter 19 takes the Ten Commandments of

Sefer Shmot and raises them to a higher level, so too Vayikra chapter 20 can be understood as an 'upgrade' for the laws in Parshat Mishpatim. Recall from our study of Parshat Mishpatim how chapter 21 details the punishments that bet din is instructed to enforce for the most basic cases of CIVIL laws. Albeit the importance of this judicial system, it can be found in almost every society. In Sefer Vayikra, where the Torah emphasizes how we are to become a special nation - an AM KADOSH, bet din is now entrusted with the power to enforce not only the classic civil laws, but also the special laws that Bnei Yisrael must keep. In this manner, bet din duty is to enact punishment in order to assure that Bnei Yisrael indeed become an "am kadosh".

TO WARN OR TO PUNISH

Nevertheless, we must still explain why it is necessary for Sefer Vayikra to first explain what is not permitted WITHOUT mentioned punishment by bet din, and then later repeat those laws together with their specific punishments. Furthermore, we must explain why these two parshiot that deal with the same topic (i.e. chapters 18 and 20) are interrupted by the laws of 'kedoshim tihiyu' in chapter 19.

This progression and parallel could be understood as striking the fine balance between realism and idealism. Ideally, we would prefer that the individual follow God's laws simply because God has commanded, and NOT out of fear that bet din may punish him. Therefore, the Torah first presents these laws while reminding us that ANI HASHEM, without mentioning at all that bet din is required to enforce them. Only afterward, God commands our society to set up a court system that will enforce these laws, in order to make sure that Am Yisrael indeed does become a GOY KADOSH.

However, the enforcement of these laws by bet din must be preceded by a set of laws that focus on the kedusha of Am Yisrael, and hence how Bnei Yisrael SHOULD act. Once Bnei Yisrael can indeed establish a society of an AM KADOSH (by fulfilling the mitzvot of chapter 19), then it becomes important that bet din becomes involved in enacting punishment for those who transgress the laws of kedusha as well. Nonetheless, the emphasis of bet din must be first on foremost of the positive aspects of 'kedoshim tihiyu', while their responsibility to punish transgressors should become secondary to that.

This concept of KEDUSHA that God expects that we act on a higher level IN ORDER that we become worthy to be His people is reflected in the concluding pasuk of chapter 20:

"And you shall be HOLY for Me, for I am Lord am Holy, for I HAVE SEPARATED YOU FROM THE OTHER NATIONS TO BE MINE!"

(see 20:26).

THE NAME FOR BET DIN

Even though our entire shiur has assumed that the punishments detailed in chapter 20 must be carried out by Bet-Din (the Jewish court), Chumash never uses those words to describe the court. Instead, the opening psukim require that the "am ha'aretz" – the People of the Land – shall stone him (see Vayikra 20:2).

Rashi (on that pasuk) immediately comments that "mot yu'mat" [he shall be put to death / 20:2] refers to a court decision made by Bet Din – yet the question remains, why the phrase "am ha'aretz" is used.

Rashi offers several explanations. The first (quoting Torat Kohanim) is rather technical, explaining that if Bet Din cannot execute its decision, then the people should come to their assistance. In his second explanation, Rashi offers a more thematic approach (also based on Torat Kohanim), suggesting that the "aretz" – the Land – refers to the special nature of the Land of Israel – which deserves to be inherited **on the condition** that the people of Israel act properly, and can be thrown out should they defile the land (see Vayikra 18:24-29 & 20:22-24).

As this type of behavior could cause the 'People of the Land' to lose their land, therefore the 'People of the Land' are responsible to punish those who transgress, for those people are not only hurting themselves, they are harming the entire nation.

REPRESENTING GOD OR THE PEOPLE?

It is interesting to note that in Parshat Mishpatim, which also discusses punishments – Chumash consistently refers to Bet-Din as "elohim" (see Shmot 21:6, 22:7-8,27 and the commentators); while in Parshat Kedoshim, Bet Din is referred to as "am ha'aretz".

One could suggest a very simple reason. In regard to transgressions in the realm of civil law ["bein adam 'chaveiro], the judges of Bet Din must feel that they carry the responsibility of God on their shoulder; while in the realm of 'religious law' ["bein adam la'Makom"], Bet Din must carry the responsibility of the entire nation – who are striving to create a society of an "am kadosh".

In that sense, Bet Din carry a 'double-identity'. On the one hand, they represent their society, but on the other hand they must also feel as though they are working on behalf of God Himself.

As we strive to grow as an "am kadosh", we must also strive to be worthy of Judges of this stature.

shabbat shalom,
menachem

FOR FURTHER IYUN

A. OV & YID'ONI

In our shiur, we did not explain why specifically the law of OV & YID'ONI is singled out, and used to conclude the parshia.

First of all, note Rashi on this pasuk, who quotes the midrash halacha that learns out from this special structure that just like OV & YID'ONI who is 'chayav KARET' (see 20:6) and with warning (see 19:31) he is 'chayav sekila' [stoning / see 20:27], so too for any other transgression... - see Rashi!

From a thematic angle, based on Sefer Devarim, OV & YID'ONI takes on additional significance. See Devarim 18:9-15 where the Torah forbids us to approach any type of 'future teller' or 'soothsayer' including the OV & YID'ONI. Note how similar those psukim are to Vayikra chapter 18!! There, the Torah explains how we must follow the guidance of a NAVI, and not look for guidance from those who use 'other methods'.

Every nation has its spiritual leaders. To become an AM KADOSH, we must be sure not to follow after these people who offer 'shortcuts' to spirituality by 'bringing up the dead' or 'reading palms' etc. As God's nation, we must recognize that our fate is solely in the hands of God, and thus a direct function of our deeds. Belief that certain events are pre-determined or believing that by bringing up the dead we can get an 'inside word' on what will happen, etc. negates the very basics of Judaism and our belief in 'hashgachat Hashem' as a function of our deeds. [see daily kriyat shma etc. / 've-akamal']

B. VE-HITKADISHEM...

In the above shiur, we saw how the concept of KEDUSHA was introduced hand in hand with the mitzva that bet din enact punishment against those who do not follow God's special laws.

Here, we find an amazing parallel (once again) to the events at Har Sinai. Recall that first time in the Torah that we find an act of KEDUSHA by man [i.e. 've-kidashtem...'] is at Har Sinai, when God commands Moshe to prepare Bnei Yisrael for Matan Torah: "Go to the people - ve-KIDASHTAM" (Shmot 19:10), and again in 19:14: "va-yered Moshe, va-yeKADESH et ha-am..."

What did Moshe do that the Torah considers it 'leKADESH'? Review 19:10-14, noting that Moshe warns them: "do not go near your wives" (19:15) [similar to the laws of arayot], and sets up policemen to guard the mountain instructing them to KILL anyone who touches the mountain [by stoning / see 19:12-13!] This is quite similar to the laws in chapter 20 which introduce KEDUSHA with appointing bet din to enforce God's laws which relate to the fact that the SHCHINA is now present in the camp.

Parshas Kedoshim: Speak to the Entire Congregation

By Rabbi Yitzchak Etshalom

This shiur is dedicated to the memory of the thousands of brave soldiers of Tzahal and the underground who gave their lives for the creation and protection of Medinat Yisra'el, for the Sanctity of God's Name, the Nation and the Land. May their memories always be a shining inspiration for us as we move from the solemnity of Yom haZikaron to the celebration and Hallel of Yom ha'Atzma'ut.

KOL ADAT B'NEI YISRA'EL

Our Parashah is introduced with the fairly uncommon mention of Kol Adat B'nei Yisra'el – (the entire congregation of the B'nei Yisra'el); there are only two previous times when Mosheh gave commands directly to the whole nation: Regarding the Korban Pesach (Sh'mot 12:3) and regarding the construction of the Mishkan (Sh'mot 35:1,4). In those two cases, the direct participation of every individual is obviously needed: Everyone had to donate to the construction of the Mishkan and everyone had to personally participate in the Korban Pesach. In the case of Parashat Kedoshim, we are faced with an anomaly: A list of laws, not unlike many Mitzvot given earlier, which are to be pronounced in front of the entire congregation. Why was Parashat Kedoshim said b'Hakhel (with the whole congregation assembled)? (see Torat Kohanim [cited in Rashi] at the beginning of our Parashah).

A second question arises from the formulation of the first “command” in our Parashah:

Kedoshim Tihyu, Ki Kadosh Ani Hashem Eloheikhem
“Be holy, for I, Hashem your God, am Holy.”

What is the Torah commanding us here? We are accustomed to Mitzvot which direct us in a specific way – either to action (e.g. eating Matzot, taking a Lulav) or to avoiding an action (e.g. stealing, murder). The command to “be holy” is unspecified and gives us no clue as to how we are to fulfill it.

There are two ways to approach this problem. We could either view the statement as independent – in which case our questions stands and we need to identify the specific parameters and goals of this Mitzvah. Alternatively, we could view this statement as general, either explicated in later verses or itself an additional perspective on earlier verses.

II. KEDOSHIM TIHYU AS AN INDEPENDENT MITZVAH

RAMBAM'S VIEW

Ramban and Rambam, in different ways, understand this Mitzvah to be independent. Rambam, in his fourth introductory paragraph to the Sefer haMitzvot (Shoresh #4), maintains that this statement is not to be reckoned as a Mitzvah (among the reckoning of 613 Mitzvot), since it is general in nature (what the Rambam calls a Mitzvah Kolelet.) Rambam equates the command to “be holy” with commands such as “keep all of My Mitzvot” etc.

RAMBAN'S VIEW

Ramban, in a very different style, assumes an independent stand to this command:

Abstain from the forbidden sexual relationships [mentioned in the preceding section] and from [other] sin, because wherever you find [in the Torah] a warning to guard against immorality, you find the mention of ‘holiness’”. This is Rashi's language.

[note: we can see from Rashi's comments that he does not view Kedoshim Tih'yu as purely independent, rather it underscores the sexual prohibitions presented in the previous chapter. As is clear immediately, Ramban differs on this critical point.]

But in the Torat Kohanim, I have seen it mentioned without any qualification [i.e. without any particular reference to immorality, as Rashi expressed it], saying: “Be self-restraining.” Similarly, the Rabbis taught there: “And you shall sanctify yourselves, and be holy, for I am Holy. Just as I am Holy, so be you holy. Just as I am Pure, so be you pure.” And in my

opinion, this abstinence does not refer only to restraint from acts of immorality, as the Rabbi [Rashi] wrote, but it is rather the self-control mentioned throughout the Talmud, which confers upon those who practice it the name of P'rushim, [literally: "those who are separated" from self-indulgence, as will be explained, or those who practice self-restraint]. The meaning thereof is as follows: The Torah has admonished us against immorality and forbidden foods, but permitted sexual intercourse between man and his wife, and the eating of [certain] meat and wine. If so, a man of desire could consider this to be a permission to be passionately addicted to sexual intercourse with his wife or many wives, and be among winebibbers, among gluttonous eaters of flesh, and speak freely all profanities, since this prohibition has not been [expressly] mentioned in the Torah, and thus he will become a Naval biR'shut haTorah (sordid person within the permissible realm of the Torah)! Therefore, after having listed the matters which He prohibited altogether, Scripture followed them up by a general command that we practice moderation even in matters which are permitted, [such as in the following]: One should minimize sexual intercourse, similar to that which the Rabbis have said: "So that the disciples of the Sages should not be found together with their wives as often as the hens," and he should not engage in it except as required in fulfillment of the commandment thereof. He should also sanctify himself [to self-restraint] by using wine in small amounts, just as Scripture calls a Nazirite "holy" [for abstaining from wine and strong drink], and he should remember the evils which the Torah mentioned as following from [drinking wine] in the cases of Noach and Lot. Similarly, he should keep himself away from impurity [in his ordinary daily activity], even though we have not been admonished against it in the Torah. Likewise, he should guard his mouth and tongue from being defiled by excessive food and lewd talk, similar to what Scripture states, and every mouth speaks wantonness, and he should purify himself in this respect until he reaches the degree known as [complete] "self-restraint," as the Rabbis said concerning Rabbi Chiyya, that never in his life did he engage in unnecessary talk. It is with reference to these and similar matters that this general commandment [Kedoshim Tihyu] is concerned, after He had enumerated all individual deeds which are strictly forbidden, so that cleanliness of hands and body, are also included in this precept, just like the Rabbis have said: "And you shall sanctify yourselves : this refers to the washing of hands before meals. And be you holy : this refers to the washing of hands after meals [before the reciting of Birkat haMazon]. For I am Holy – this refers to the spiced oil" [with which they used to rub their hands after a meal.] For although these [washing and perfuming of hands] are commandments of Rabbinic origin, yet Scripture's main intention is to warn us of such matters, that we should be [physically] clean and [ritually] pure, and separated from the common people who soil themselves with luxuries and unseemly things. And such is the way of the Torah, that after it lists certain specific prohibitions, it includes them all in a general precept. Thus after warning with detailed laws regarding all business dealings between people, such as not to steal or rob or to wrong one another, and other similar prohibitions, He said in general: And you shall do that which is right and good: , thus including under a Mitzvat Aseh the duty of doing that which is right and of agreeing to a compromise [when not to do so would be inequitable]; as well as all requirements to act "beyond" the line of justice [i.e. to be generous in not insisting upon one's rights as defined by the strict letter of the law, but to agree to act "beyond" that line of the strict law] for the sake of pleasing one's fellowman, as I will explain when I reach there [that verse], with the will of haKadosh Barukh Hu. Similarly in the case of the Sabbath, He prohibited doing certain classes of work by means of a Mitzvat Lo Ta'aseh, and painstaking labors [not categorized as "work", such as transferring heavy loads in one's yard from one place to another, etc.] He included under a general Mitzvat Aseh, as it is said, but on the seventh day you shall rest. I will yet explain this, with God's help.

III. KEDOSHIM TIHYU AS THE TELOS OF MITZVOT

As noted above, Rashi maintains (unlike Rambam and Ramban) that Kedoshim Tihyu does not stand independently, rather it is a proper summary to the sexual prohibitions listed in the previous chapter (and, perhaps, a "distant introduction" to that same list in the following chapter). There are other Rishonim (notably S'forno) who maintain that Kedoshim Tihyu is the "topic sentence" for most, if not all of the Mitzvot in chapter 19. To wit, Kedoshim Tihyu is a general command – and the Mitzvot which follow direct us to behave in such a fashion as will insure our achieving this lofty status.

For purposes of this shiur, we will adopt this approach and attempt to understand the role of the various Mitzvot given (although, for brevity's sake, we will only discuss those Mitzvot mentioned in the first 19 verses of the chapter) within the scheme of Kedoshim Tihyu. Before going further, I'd like to pose two questions on the wording of verse 2.

Besides our concern as to meaning (what does it mean to be Kadosh?), there is a grammatical sense here that bears inquiry. Many of the Mitzvot given to the B'nei Yisra'el are presented in the grammatically singular form – even though they are given to everyone as individuals. The clearest example of this is the Ten Statements (Sh'mot Ch. 20, D'varim Ch. 5 – see Ramban at the beginning of Sh'mot 20).

Even though these statements were given to the entire people, they were given in the singular (e.g. Zakhor as opposed to Zikhru). Why is the goal-statement of our Parashah, Kedoshim Tihyu, presented in the plural? The second half of the

statement is much more troubling – ...Ki Kadosh Ani Hashem Eloheikhem – “...for I, Hashem your God, am Holy”. The transitional word Ki, usually translated as “because”, seems to make no sense here. The statement is presented as a cause and effect – since God is Holy, the Congregation of Yisra’el should be holy. What is the reasoning here? How does the fact of God’s sanctity imply ours? Another question presents itself once we start looking through the various Mitzvot in this Parashah. At the conclusion of many of the verses, the refrain Ani YHVH or Ani Hashem Eloheikhem is found as a concluding statement. What is the rhyme and reason of this “signature”? (This is a double question – what does it mean, and what is the logic behind its placement at particular junctures.)

Once we look at the Parashah in greater detail, two specific Mitzvot (or groups of Mitzvot) catch our eye as being somewhat incongruous with the theme of the Parashah. In vv. 5-8, after being (reminded) (commanded) regarding fearing our parents, observing Shabbat and avoiding idolatry – areas of Halakhah which we would all agree hold central places in our religious consciousness – the Torah elaborates the law of pigul, of the goodwill offering which is eaten after its due time (Halakhically translated into an offering regarding which the officiant intended it to be eaten later than its due time and had that intent while officiating). This would seem to be a relatively “minor” area of law, one which does not seem to fit the “grand” nature of the call to be holy and the areas of honor for parents, Shabbat observance and avoiding idolatry. What is the role of pigul in this scheme?

One final question: After the crescendo of interpersonal Mitzvot, climaxing in the credo of Jewish ethics: v’Ahavta l’Re’akha Kamokhah – (you shall love your fellow as yourself – v. 18), the Torah follows with a command to keep God’s Hukim, specifically the laws of Kil’ayim (not mixing wool and linen in clothing, not mixing seeds and not cross-breeding animals). This seems like a big “letdown” after the glorious call to fellowship in the previous few verses. What is the logic behind the placement of this command/group of commands?

To summarize our questions:

- 1) Why was this Parashah to be said to the entire congregation?
- 2) Why is this command given in the plural?
- 3) What is the meaning of “Kedoshim Tihyu”?
- 4) What is the logic behind “...for I, Hashem your God, am holy”?
- 5) What is the meaning behind the refrain Ani YHVH?
- 6) What is the role of the law of pigul in our Parashah?
- 7) What is the logic behind the placement of Hukot Kil’ayim?

IV. FROM “GOY KADOSH” TO “KEDOSHIM TIHYU”

When we compare the last time that our entire people was addressed – at the foot of Mount Sinai – with this time, we note a striking similarity:

You shall be unto me a kingdom of Kohanim and a Goy Kadosh (holy nation). (Sh’mot 19:6).

In the same way, this address to the entire people begins with a charge to be holy; but, there’s the rub. As opposed to Goy Kadosh – a directive to the nation as a singular political unit to manifest sanctity – in our case, the charge is directed to each individual – Kedoshim Tihyu. Why the switch?

When we chart the sequence of Mitzvot given to us until this point, we note that they follow a sequence designed to create a just and holy society – but are not, for the most part, addressed to the spiritual growth and sanctity of the individual. We can break the sequence into three sections:

A) Sefer haB’rit (Sh’mot 20-23):

Besides the Ten Statements (see our shiur on that topic, found at <http://www.torah.org/advanced/mikra/sh/dt.57.2.5.html>),

nearly all of the Mitzvot given in this section are geared to creating and maintaining a just society. From the laws of murder, kidnapping and self-defense to the protection of the downtrodden and avoidance of judicial corruption, the Sefer haB'rit inheres the blueprint for a theistically-focused ethical society. (As implied, there are a few apparent exceptions to this rule; proper treatment of this subject is beyond the scope of this shiur.)

B) The Mishkan (Sanctuary – Sh'mot 25-Vayyikra 10):

Once the society is just and safeguarded against corruption and oppression, it is ready to receive the Divine Presence. Keep in mind that the goal of the Mishkan was to enshrine God among the people, not in the tent itself (Sh'mot 25:8). Once the Mishkan was constructed, God commanded us regarding those methods via which the community and the individual might come closer (Korban) to Him. Although, as mentioned, this system was made available to individuals – both as expiation and to support the desire for a closeness to the Divine Presence – it was still within the realm of the communal sanctity of the Mishkan.

C) Tum'ah (Impurity – Vayyikra 11-18):

Interestingly, nearly all of these laws (Forbidden foods and their impact on ritual purity [Ch. 11]; childbirth [Ch. 12]; scale disease and its attendant rituals [Ch. 13 & 14]; sexual emissions [Ch. 15]; purification of the Mishkan from its impurities [Ch. 16]; prohibitions relating to “outside” slaughtering [Ch. 17]; prohibitions relating to sexual relations [Ch. 18]) are addressed to the individual. (The one exception is Ch. 16, the purification of the Mishkan.)

The reason for this can be explained by way of an analogy from the world of group dynamics. For example, when a group is singing together (e.g. at a Shabbaton), the entire group is considered to be singing, not one individual. To the extent that an individual is leading the group or deciding on the next song, he or she is doing so as a representative of the group, not as an individual. On the other hand, if even one person disrupts the singing (by talking, laughing, trying to sing something else etc.), that can totally defeat the group effort. In other words – a group effort is supported by the group but can be destroyed by one individual.

In much the same way, we credit the manifestation of God's Presence among the people to the group; nevertheless, one individual can destroy that experience and drive the Shekhinah away through one of the various behaviors which bring Tum'ah into the realm of the Divine. The third section – of Tum'ah – is indeed addressed to the individual, because he or she has the ability to destroy the national enterprise of Kedushah.

In any case, [nearly] all of the Mitzvot given to us until this point are geared to creating, enhancing and maintaining the national Kedushah as reflected by God's Presence among the people.

As we move into our Parashah, we note a clear shift in emphasis – the Torah is now addressing the individual and demanding a “higher” level of spirituality. It is no longer enough to be a member of a Goy Kadosh and not to disrupt that Kedushah; each individual is now called to his own spiritual growth – to finally achieve the ultimate in human heroism, which was the original Divine mandate for humanity:

And God said: Let us make Man in Our Image... and God created Man in His Image, in the Image of God He created him... (B'resheet 1:26-27).

Why then is this Divine charge given in the plural – Kedoshim Tih'yu – if it is addressed to the individual? The answer lies in understanding the basic tension of Jewish values. Unlike some Eastern worship-systems, we do not maintain that individual spiritual perfection is the sole goal of our existence. We live in this world and have practical obligations towards it. On the other, we do not maintain that we should negate our personae to the communal will and effort, ignoring our own talents, desires and ambitions.

As such, the enterprise of individual Kedushah can not be taken out of the realm of the community – and we must be addressed to grow as individuals within the context of interpersonal relationships as well as internally. Therefore, the Torah addresses us as an entire nation – but, instead of a Holy Nation, we are now called to add “Nation of Holy Individuals” to our title.

V. VERSE 2 REVISITED

We can now answer our first two questions:

- 1) This Parashah to be said to the entire congregation because, unlike earlier Parashiot which were addressed to the national project of Kedushah – and thus could be communicated to the leaders first – this Parashah is addressed to the personal Kedushah-growth of each individual.
- 2) The command was given in the plural because it was addressed to the individuals as they behave both personally and socially.

KI KADOSH ANI

We can now also answer the next two questions:

- 3) Kedoshim Tih'yu means that we should finally realize and actualize the Tzelem Elokim (Image of God) in which we were all created. Doing so means imitating God (within the limits imposed by both the laws of physics [i.e. science] and the laws of morality [i.e. the Torah]).
- 4) This also explains the logic behind “for I, Hashem your God, am holy”; since we were created in His Image (whatever that may mean; that is a shiur in and of itself), we are now called to reflect that Image through our own behavior. [Alternatively, we could read the Ki as an extended Kaf haDim'yon (the letter Kaf as a prefix indicates similarity) – i.e. “be holy LIKE I, Hashem your God, am Holy.”]

VI. THE “ANI YHVH” REFRAIN

In order to understand the constant refrain of Ani YHVH in our Parashah (note that it continues – more sporadically – through Ch. 22), we'll deviate for a moment to investigate the central text of Hallel: Hodu lHashem Ki Tov, Ki l'Olam Has'do (“give thanks to YHVH, for He is good, for His kindness endures forever” – T'hilim 118:1).

The second verse in that chapter is Yomar Na Yisra'el, Ki l'Olam Has'do – lit. “let Yisra'el say: for His kindness endures forever”. This sentence is a bit awkward, as the Ki (“...for...”) at the beginning of the second half of this verse seems to point nowhere; an idea cannot begin with the introduction of an effect, it must be preceded by a cause (e.g. “He is good”). In addition, our custom of responding to the leader is not to echo his line (Yomar Na...), rather to repeat the first line. Why do we do this? [These two questions are equally germane in reference to the next two verses.]

I would like to suggest that the second verse should be understood as follows: Yomar Na Yisra'el [Hodu lHashem Ki Tov] Ki l'Olam Has'do.

In other words, the Psalmist is asking Yisra'el (and the House of Aharon and the God-fearers) to join in his praise which begins with Hodu.... Why then does the verse abbreviate this phrase? It is simply too long! Keep in mind that many of the T'hilim were composed to be recited by the Levi'im in antiphonal fashion in the Beit haMikdash – and, as such, meter was a significant consideration. The verse includes an ellipsis: Yomar Na Yisra'el: “...Ki l'Olam Has'do” – which explains our response and the awkward grammar.

The same approach can be utilized to explain the refrain of Ani Hashem [Eloheikhem] in our Parashah. The topic sentence of our Parashah is “Be holy, for I, Hashem your God, am Holy”. The signature form Ani YHVH is an elliptical way of repeating the entire charge to God-like Kedushah. As an example, instead of reading Ish Imo v'Aviv Tira'u v'et Shab'totai Tish'moru, Ani Hashem Eloheikhem (Each man shall fear his mother and father; observe My Shabbatot, I am Hashem your God) (v. 3), read Ish Imo v'Aviv Tira'u v'et Shab'totai Tish'moru, [Kedoshim Tih'yu, Ki Kadosh] Ani Hashem Eloheikhem (Each man shall fear his mother and father; observe My Shabbatot, [be holy, for] I Hashem your God [am Holy]).

- 5) This answers our fifth question – the refrain of Ani YHVH is an abbreviated form of the topic sentence, marking each occurrence of this refrain as a demarcation of another dimension of Kedoshim Tih'yu. We can almost view the components of our Parashah as a list, each item concluding with a short form of the sentence which guides the entire section.

We can now examine the first several stages of our Parashah to better understand the call to individual Kedushah.

VII. FEARING PARENTS AND OBSERVING SHABBAT

Each man shall fear his parents, observe My Shabbatot, I am Hashem your God (v. 3)

Why are these two juxtaposed? In addition, the grammar of the first stich is uneven: It is first phrased in the singular (Ish Imo v'Aviv -"each man, his mother and father...") but ends in the plural (Tira'u – "you [plural] shall fear").

Rashi is sensitive to the first problem – and his answer will help us with the second. "Observe My Shabbatot": The text juxtaposed Sh'mirat Shabbat to fear of your father, to teach you that although I have warned you concerning fear of your father, if he tells you to desecrate Shabbat, do not heed him..."I am Hashem your God": you and your father are obligated to honor Me, therefore, do not heed him to violate My words."

This also explains the grammatical shift: God [through Mosheh] is addressing the entire nation, made up of many multi-generational families. Even though He is speaking to each individual son and daughter, even those parents have their own parents to respect and fear. That entire group has a greater mission and loyalty to keep in mind – we are all bound to God's commands.

The import of this balance is to keep any particular object of our honor or fear from becoming an end in and of itself – and keeps us from creating an obsession around it. Even though we are commanded to fear our parents, that fear should not become so overwhelming that it keeps us from heeding God's commands.

This is, indeed, a reflection of God's Sanctity – the goal of the whole enterprise. Although we often associate sanctity with isolation (a Nazirite is considered Kadosh – see Bamidbar 6:5), God's Holiness is one of synthesis and balance. On the one hand, God is transcendent; yet God is also immanent. This same balance is the (very challenging) goal of Kedoshim Tih'yu. The balance between fear of parents and loyalty to God's commands is one dimension of this imitation of the Divine.

VIII. DO NOT TURN TO THE FALSE GODS

The next verse uses a new verb in its repetition of the warning against idolatry. Al Tiph'nu – "Do not turn away to the false gods...". The Torah uses this verb to again stress the need for balance; one of the prevalent features of pagan worship is fetishism, such that the entire focus of the individual is geared to this worship-object. Although the Torah abhors idolatry for its demeaning of the worshipper and the inherent silliness of the notion (see MT Avodah Zarah 11:16), it may also be warning us away from fetishism and obsessive behavior.

[Note that nearly all Mitzvot have maximum limits; perhaps this is a way of assuring that no Mitzvah would be turned into an end in and of itself].

IX. PIGUL

Armed with our understanding of Ani YHVH as a "marker", we can now explain the role of pigul here. Note that the refrain does not show up again until the end of v. 10 – so pigul is included in one "Kedoshim- Tih'yu dimension" with the laws of Pe'ah, Leket, Peret and 'Olelot (various gleanings left for the poor during harvest). Shadal (Sh'mu'el David Luzzato, 19th century Italian commentator) suggests that the reasoning behind the law of pigul is akin to the gleanings. If the Torah had allowed a goodwill offering (Korban Sh'lamim) to be eaten over an indefinite time period, the individual would likely eat some, with his family and close friends, during the first few days after bringing it. He would then store it away and continue to "celebrate" with his entourage. Keep in mind that a Sh'lamim is brought from the flock or the herd – a large animal which cannot be devoured quickly. Since the Torah commands that a Sh'lamim must be eaten on the day that it is offered and the morrow – no later than the end of that second night, the one bringing the offering will perforce share it with many others. The assumption is that not only will this offering have a portion for God (burnt on the altar), a portion for the Kohanim (see Vayyikra 7:34) and a portion for the Yisra'el who brought it (see Rashi on Vayyikra 3:1) – it will also include the poor, since the one who brought it will have to share it around to make sure it is devoured on time.

This understanding of Pigul underscores another dimension of the balance and synthesis which is the desired type of Kedushah. Not only must both the "secular" and "holy" parts of our lives be informed by a desire to holiness – but those considerations must inform each other. Not only do we have to act compassionately and generously with the poor in our midst – we have to make that consideration a part and parcel of our Mikdash-experience.

This answers our sixth question – pigul is an integral piece of the Kedushah experience, as it ensures that we not “lose ourselves” in the sanctity of the Mikdash and forget our communal responsibilities.

X. VERSES 11-18: THE ETHICAL SOCIETY

As I mentioned in the shorter shiur sent out last week, these four groups of Mitzvot are geared towards elevating a society to the pinnacle of interpersonal sensitivity and empathy:

We start with the society which is rife with stealing – such that a person’s word, even in court, is not to be trusted, where even God’s Name is desecrated in the name of material gain. This is the society of “What’s yours is mine and what’s mine is mine” (Avot 5:10) – and verses 11 & 12 address this level of corruption and command us to move up from here.

Then – the society in which more subtle types of corruption exist – holding back pay, hurting people who won’t find out that it’s you – or won’t even know about it. This is the society of “What’s yours is mine and what’s mine is yours” – without respect for boundaries. To this society, the Torah addresses verses 13 & 14.

We then look at a society which has moved up from these levels – but where there is still discrimination and favoritism in the system – and where idle gossip and “turning a blind eye” are the norm. “What’s yours is yours and what’s mine is mine” – i.e. mind your own business. To this society, the Torah addresses verses 15 & 16.

And then we move to build the ideal society: Once we have justice, revenge seems reasonable. And there seems to be no need for my letting you know that your behavior upsets me – or to be as concerned with your needs as I am with mine. We move from the just society to the holy society. All of the Mitzvot in these last two verses take us beyond justice – they move us towards compassion. Towards “What’s mine is yours and what’s yours is yours”.

XI. HUKOT KIL’AYIM

Now, to our final question: Why does the Torah mention the prohibitions of cross-breeding, cross-planting and “woolsylinsy” immediately after the glorious crescendo of “Love your fellow as yourself”? These three prohibitions are introduced with the phrase Et Hukotai Tish’moru – “Keep my Hukot”. Although conventional wisdom holds that a Hok is a “non-rational” law (see Rashi at the beginning of Parashat Hukat, 19:2), the simple meaning of the word is “immutable law”. See, for instance, Yirmiyahu 33:25, where he refers to the Hukot of heaven and earth. In Hebrew, the laws of physics are called Hukim, whereas rules of grammar are called Mishpatim. When the Torah says that we must observe God’s Hukot, it means that we have to uphold and support the laws which God etched into the universe. Why is this the case – and how can we do so?

Keep in mind that our original mandate was to be “in God’s Image” and to have dominion over the earth. If we look at the description of creation in the first chapter of B’resheet, we notice that there is a stress on order and closed cycles of reproduction and regeneration. The day ends here, the night begins here; the heavenly waters and earthly waters are separated; the land ends here and the water begins here; each tree and plant regenerates l’Mineihu (according to its own kind) and so on.

Since we are charged with being God’s “caretakers” of the earth, it follows that we must not only continue the process of creation and order (note that our Rabbis say that a judge who renders perfect judgment is considered a partner with God in creation), but we must also not attempt to subvert that order.

Ramban (Vayyikra 19:19) provides two reasons for this limitation. If we attempt to usurp God’s order, the implication is that God’s creation is insufficient and somehow imperfect. In addition, he notes, many forms of usurpation of the natural order impair the reproductive ability of that species (witness the mule).

After having guided us to the perfectly ethical and compassionate society, the Torah addresses the next concern. Since we have (we think) achieved Kedoshim Tih’yu, and fully reflect God’s sanctity, we may parlay that relationship into a full partnership and deign to improve upon His design. The lesson of Hukot Kil’ayim is the limited nature of our partnership – we may endeavor to actualize our Godly Image, but we must never forget that it is a limited partnership. The parallel of Kedoshim Tih’yu with Kadosh Ani must never lead us to arrogantly forgetting our role in God’s world. This lofty goal is only achieved when we not only maintain balance – but also perspective.

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