



ALIYA-BY-ALIYA SEDRA SUMMARY

RABBI REUVEN TRADBURKS
RCA ISRAEL REGION

In memory of **Evelyn Rivers a"h**
חווה פֶּעסָא בַּת אֶהרֹן זִלְמָן הֶכֶהן ע"ה
Mother of Reuven Tradburks

PARSHAT EMOR

The central theme of the book of Vayikra is holiness. Holiness comes in all shapes and sizes. In an attempt to give a framework for the laws of our parsha as well as the laws leading to it, including the laws of sacrifices, of tuma, of kashrut and forbidden relationships and of the plethora of mitzvot in Kedoshim that leads to our parsha, let me offer a theory of Kedusha, of holiness.

Kedusha inheres in that which is elevated, the aspects of the human condition that rise above the mere physical, that rise above what we share with animals.

Man is not a fancy animal. Man is unique. Majestic. Elevated. Where man's uniqueness, his majesty, his elevated status is expressed, there you will find holiness.

Man shares certain basic features with animals: a physical body, food, procreation, illness and death. But by virtue of being created in the image of G-d, man rises above the animal. And this image of G-d expresses itself in the unique aspects of the human condition; free will and self-control, communication and human interaction, and the desire to express our elevated status by approach to G-d.

It is in these unique, majestic aspects of our lives that holiness inheres. When man expresses his free will and self-control, when

he lives in society recognizing the elevated status of the other, and when he aspires, elevates himself, drawing near to his Creator, he is engaging in holiness. Holiness lies in those areas of the uniqueness of mankind over the animals: discipline, society and the reach for the Divine.

The Torah regulates, through mitzvot in all 3 of these areas. Firstly, in those things shared with animals, there are regulations: in food and in the permitted and forbidden marital relationships. The unique human aspect of discipline in the things we share with animals expresses our holiness.

The many and varied mitzvot of society, like generosity and care for others in the beautiful parsha of Kedoshim is man expressing himself as a social being, showing regard for others who are created in G-d's image. These mitzvot express the elevated nature of man's behavior in society, another expression of his holiness.

Holiness in its most robust form is found in man's reach for G-d, his desire to approach G-d. For that desire of approach to G-d has no parallel in the animal world. Approach to G-d is truly unique to man. And in that, it is the most dramatic expression of holiness.

Hence the laws of sacrifice and of tuma and tahara, the *when* and *how* of approach to G-d are regulated with a great number of laws.

Our parsha continues the discussion of holiness. The details of korbanot already discussed in Sefer Vayikra are the "how" of Divine Service. The details of Tuma are the

“who” of Divine Service. And in our parsha, once we already know the how and the who of Divine Service, we focus on the “conduits” of Divine service, the Kohen and the offerings themselves. And then holiness in time.



1ST ALIYA (VAYIKRA 21:1-15)

Kohanim may not come in contact with the dead except for their nuclear family. Nor may they adopt non-Jewish mourning practices such as balding their head and beard or cutting their flesh. Kohanim shall be holy to G-d, for they serve Him. A Kohen may not marry a divorcee. You are to sanctify them. The Kohen Gadol may never become tamei, for he is anointed. He may not marry a divorcee or widow.

The Kohen is the conduit of service of G-d, the most elevated of human endeavors. As such he is regulated with different laws. His marriage, an area we have noted is emblematic of holiness is regulated. So too the Kohen Gadol, who approaches G-d in an ever more rarified form has even more demanding regulations of marriage.

Each level of kedusha has its own laws. Kedushat Kehuna, the holiness inherent in Kohanim, is different from Kedushat Yisrael, the holiness of the Jewish people. And each level of kedusha has its own expressions through mitzvot.

All of these details are to express the theme of man's regal station in life. Human beings are elevated as they are created in G-d's Image. Jews are elevated as we have the Divine Covenant. Serving G-d is a further elevation, as we express our rarified station in seeking an even closer moment with the Divine.

And each of these have details. Holiness and its rule is the expression of human uniqueness.



2ND ALIYA (21:16-22:16)

A Kohen who has a blemish may not serve in the Mikdash. This includes blind, lame, broken limbs, eye conditions and others. He may consume holy items but not perform the service. A Kohen may not serve while Tamei, as this desecrates the holy. While a non-Kohen may not consume the holy (teruma), those who are a part of the Kohen's home may. His daughter, before marriage or after if childless, is part of his home and may consume the holy. The holy is profaned when consumed by others.

The Kohen serves in the Mikdash. And he also receives certain benefits, like Teruma (2% of produce grown in the Land of Israel). If he has certain quite dramatic blemishes, he may not serve. But that does not mean he may not enjoy the benefits, like Teruma. His Kedushat Kehuna, his status as a Kohen is unaffected by blemishes.

Perhaps this is to convey to the Kohen: a blemish limits *what* you may *do*, but not *who* you *are*. You are a Kohen with a blemish but a Kohen you remain. And this message resonates not only for the Kohen. We all could use this reminder: we are created in His Image. Some with greater abilities some with less. And over time, our abilities wither and we aren't what we used to be; can't do what we used to do. Time limits *what* we *do*, but not *who* we *are*. Created in His Image we remain.



3RD ALIYA (22:17-33)

An animal offering may not have a blemish. This includes blind, broken limbs, eye conditions and others. This applies to a non-Jew's offering as well. An animal with a blemish is not pleasing. An offering must be at least 8 days old. A mother and offspring may not be slaughtered on the

same day. An offering may not be eaten after the 2nd day. Do not profane My Name, rather sanctify Me in your midst.

The conclusion of this section states the mitzvah of Kiddush Hashem and Hillul Hashem. Actions done by little ole me can cause G-d's Name to be desecrated, Hillul Hashem. Or sanctified, Kiddush Hashem. The Holiness of G-d's Name hovers over our every action. Our care and kindness, the gentle manner of our speech, the pleasantness of our demeanor can be a Kiddush Hashem, unbeknownst and unintended by us. What a weighty responsibility. And a wonderful opportunity.



4TH ALIYA (23:1-22)

These are the holy days: 6 days work, 7th day is Shabbat. Pesach is on the 14th of the 1st month; for 7 days eat matza. The first day is holy, no melacha should be done, as is the 7th day. The Omer offering of freshly harvested barley is brought the day after the first holiday day of Pesach. It permits consumption of the new grain. Count 7 full weeks and on the 50th day bring an offering of new wheat as baked chametz. That day (Shavuot) shall be a holy day on which no melacha shall be done. When harvesting, leave the corners and the dropped items to the poor and stranger.

The Torah here introduces us to a new theme of Kedusha: holiness in time. The holiness of proximity to G-d has been expressed in holiness in space, the Mishkan. And through food and relationships, we are holy. And Kohanim have holiness. Now, time too. Shabbat and holidays are a rendezvous with G-d, not only in a particular place but in a particular time.

For there is no parallel to the regulation of

time in the animal kingdom. Time is recognized and regulated only by human beings.



5TH ALIYA (23:23-32)

The first day of the 7th month (Rosh Hashana) is a truah remembrance. No work shall be done. The 10th day (Yom Kippur) is a holy day on which to afflict your soul, for it is a day of atonement. No work shall be done. From evening til evening.

The brevity of the Torah's description of Rosh Hashana and Yom Kippur belie their drama in our lives. But their description, remembrance and atonement – those are resonant words. These are not historically rich like Pesach. But relationally rich; G-d noting us. And granting us atonement.



6TH ALIYA (23:33-44)

The 15th of the 7th month begins a 7-day holiday of Sukkot. The first day is holy, no work shall be done. The 8th day is holy, no work shall be done. These are the holy days each with its offerings, besides the offerings of Shabbat and voluntary ones. And also, on the 15th of the 7th month take a Lulav and Etrog and rejoice before G-d for 7 days. Dwell in Sukkot so you shall know that I had the Jews dwell in Sukkot upon the Exodus.

In the Torah, Sukkot is the end of the year. For the holidays. And so, we have extra joy and appreciation for the holiday cycle that began with Pesach. People need rhythm in life. Something to look forward to. To anticipate. To expect. Every culture has its special days. Our special days are holy, uplifted, change of routine, change of locale (in going to Jerusalem). And for that we are blessed. And appreciative.



7TH ALIYA (24:1-23)

Bring oil for a permanent light in the Menorah, set outside the Holy

of Holi'es. Bake 12 loaves to be placed in 2 groups of 6 on the Shulchan every Shabbat. The Kohanim shall eat this holy bread in the Mikdash.

2 men fought. The Jewish man cursed G-d. He was held until his sentence would be determined by G-d. He shall be stoned. These crimes are punishable by death: cursing G-d, murder. Others have financial penalties: property damage and bodily assault.

Oil, flour and wine figure prominently in the Mikdash. Oil in the Menorah. Bread on the Shulchan. Wine, though not mentioned here, is brought with the animal sacrifices. It is noteworthy that each of these 3 is processed. Grain is the natural item; the bread is processed by people. Olives, natural; olive oil processed. Grapes, natural; wine processed. None of these occur naturally; they are all processed by people.

Perhaps this too is to serve G-d specifically with items that express the uniqueness of mankind, our ability to take the natural and be creative. We serve Him with our creativity, our ingenuity, the unique qualities of mankind.

Holiness and its laws are expressions of the elevated and noble station of man.

HAFTORAH

YEchezkel 44:15-31

This week's haftorah echoes the parsha, in that it discusses various laws pertaining to the *kohanim*.

We are privy in this memorable section to learn about the service of the *kohanim* in the third Holy Temple through the elevated prophecy of Yechezkel. The realities he describes will come to fruition at the time

of the Final Redemption.

As part of his vision, we learn about the unique vestments worn by the priests, laws of who they can marry, and the laws regarding coming in contact with a dead body.

There is also a call to the *kohanim* to serve as teachers and leaders of the nation of Israel.

Being that the *kohanim* are to serve solely as the emissaries of the Almighty, they do not receive a portion of the Land of Israel but are given the meat of the sacrifices and tithes which support their holy work. ■



STATS

31st of 54 sedras; 8th of 10 in Vayikra.
Written on 215 lines (rank: 20th).
17 parshiyot; 11 open, 6 closed.
124 pesukim, rank: 15; 1st in Vayikra.
1614 words, rank: 22; 2nd in Vayikra.
6106 letters, rank: 23; 2nd in Vayikra.
Relatively short pesukim account for its drop in ranking for words & letters.



MITZVOT

63 of 613 mitzvot; 24 positive 39 prohibitions.
Emor has more than one mitzvah per two pesukim, five times the Torah's average. Only Ki Teitzei (with 74) has more mitzvot than Emor.



Mazal Tov to
Stefan & Rochelle Somogyi
and family on the birth
of a great grandson

