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A HIGHER ELEVATION

In פרשת קדושים, we are given one of the most powerful and wide-reaching mitzvot in the Torah:

”קדושים תהיו” - **You shall be holy.**

But what does that actually mean?

Rashi explains that *kedoshim* means **separating from immoral behavior**, particularly in the realm of עריות. Holiness, according to Rashi, is about knowing where the lines are and having the strength to stay on the right side of them.

But then comes the Ramban, who takes it a step further.

The Ramban says that holiness is not just about avoiding what’s אסור, it’s about how we relate even to what’s מותר. A person can technically keep all 613 mitzvot and still live a life of indulgence, constantly chasing comfort and pleasure. That’s what the Ramban famously

calls a “נבל ברשות התורה”-someone who lives within halacha, but misses its spirit.

Holiness, then, is not just about *what we don’t do*. It’s about **how we live**.

There’s a story told about Rav Elimelech of Lizhensk זצ”א. A chassid once came to him feeling frustrated. He was keeping mitzvot, learning, doing everything “right,” yet felt unchanged. Reb Elimelech explained that a person can act correctly on the outside, yet still be driven by ego and desire within. True עבודת ה’ begins when a person works on who they are, not just what they do.

This idea is captured beautifully in his famous tefillah. He doesn’t only ask Hashem to help him avoid sin; he asks for something deeper—to see the good in others, to remove negativity from his heart, and to live with humility and clarity. It’s a tefillah about becoming a different kind of person.

קדושה begins when we step back. Not just from what’s forbidden, but from overindulging even in what’s allowed and refining our inner world.

That message feels especially relevant living in Israel today.

We are surrounded by incredible bracha, but also constant pressure and distraction. It’s easy to just get through the day. Especially, when we can’t predict the next.

But being part of עם ישראל in ארץ ישראל is not just about being here. It’s about **how we live here**.

Because in the end, קדושה isn’t only about avoiding what’s wrong, it’s about elevating what’s right.

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AARON'S SILENCE AND THE STRENGTH OF KLAL YISRAEL

Our parasha begins by describing in great detail the **Avoda** of the Kohen Gadol on Yom Kippur, the holiest day of the year. The high point of the Avoda is when Aharon, the Kohen Gadol, enters the holiest of holies, the **Kodesh HaKodashim**, the holiest place in the world.

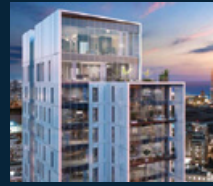
Before launching into the details of the Avoda, the Torah begins with the pasuk: **וידבר ה' אל משה אחרי מות שני בני אהרון בקרבם** "לפני ה' וימותו". The pasuk mentions the death of Aharon's two sons, Nadav and Avihu, who died when they "drew too close to Hashem's presence". Why does the Torah have to mention their deaths? Why start the description of the holiest day of the year by mentioning the death of Aharon's two dear sons?

I think the Torah is trying to teach us something about Aharon's greatness. Immediately following the deaths of Nadav and Avihu in the **Kodesh HaKodashim**, Hashem wants Aharon to go to that very same place! It would be totally understandable if Aharon had resisted this and requested to be absolved from this duty, but that is not at all how Aharon responds. Aharon takes on this sacred responsibility without saying a word! He understands that this isn't about him, but rather that he functions as Am Yisrael's representative before Hashem on the holiest day of the year.

Focusing on the needs of the **klal** and not seeing things from one's own narrow perspective enables us to reach tremendous heights and to achieve greatness. ■

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