

ב"ה Torah Tidbits

ISSUE 1657

APRIL 25TH 2026
ח' אייר תשפ"ו

אחרי מות - קדשים
ACHAREI MOT - KEDOSHIM

AVOT 3

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Rav Yosef Tzvi Rimon

The National Mission of the
Shagririm Generation Page 72



Rebbetzin Dr. Adina Shmidman

The Echo of Effort
Page 58

וכי־תבאו אל־הארץ ויקרא י"ט:כ"ג

YERUSHALAYIM SHABBAT ACHAREI MOT - KEDOSHIM ZMANIM

CANDLES 6:38 PM • EARLY 5:51 PM • HAVDALA 7:54 PM • RABBEINU TAM 8:32 PM



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A SHORT VORT

BY RABBI CHANOCH YERES
RAV, BEIT KNESSET BEIT YISRAEL, YEMIN MOSHE

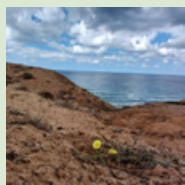
"For in the cloud I appear upon the ark-covering" (16:2) - (טז:ב - כי בענן אראה על הכפורת)

Why the need to mention in what visual impression G-d will appear? Why in a cloud?

Rashi explains the appearance in a cloud to warn the kohen not to get into the habit of entering where there is G-d's presence.

Rabbi Meir Shapiro M'Lublin (1887-1933) answers that the image of a cloud can hint to people who find themselves in situations of extreme difficulty, where the outcome seems unclear and hazy. The pasuk is telling us that even in such cases, one should not despair. When gloomy and murky times cover the land and there is a feeling of being lost, G-d comforts us, "In the cloud I will appear". Even from within these dark clouds of distress, I will be there with you and bring hope.

Shabbat Shalom




COVER PHOTO

Photographed by Howie Mischel

I snapped this while we were leading a hike with all our kids and grandkids along the trail at Hof Hasharon National Park. For me, this is symbolic of Israel - a beautiful flower alone in the world. Of course there are always those words from Bamidbar 23:7-9: הַיָּהוָה לְבַדָּד יֵשֶׁן.

HELPFUL REMINDERS

 7 Days After Molad: 9 Iyar / Sat. night April 25

Last Opportunity to Say Kiddush Levana until: 14 Iyar / Thurs. night April 30

CANDLE LIGHTING AND HAVDALA TIMES



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JERUSALEM

Ranges 11 days Wednesday - Shabbat
April 22 - May 2 | 5 - 15 Iyar

Earliest Tallit and Tefillin	5:10-4:58
Sunrise	6:03-5:53
Sof Zman Kriat Shema	9:20-9:14
Magen Avraham	8:42-8:35
Sof Zman Tefila (According to the Gra and Baal HaTanya)	10:26-10:21
Chatzot (Halachic Noon)	12:37-12:36
Mincha Gedola (Earliest Mincha)	1:10-1:09
Plag Mincha	5:50-5:55
Sunset (Including Elevation)	7:17-7:24



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	ACHAREI MOT-KEDOSHIM			EMOR		
	Candles	Early	Havdala	Candles	Early	Havdala
Yerushalayim/Maale Adumim	6:38	5:51	7:54	6:43	5:55	7:59
Aza Area (Netivot, Sderot et al)	6:56	5:54	7:56	7:01	5:57	8:01
Beit Shemesh/RBS	6:57	5:52	7:54	7:02	5:56	8:00
Gush Etzion	6:54	5:52	7:54	6:59	5:55	7:59
Raanana/Tel Mond/Herzliya/K.Saba	6:56	5:53	7:56	7:01	5:57	8:01
Modiin/Chashmonaim	6:55	5:53	7:55	7:00	5:56	8:00
Netanya	6:56	5:54	7:56	7:01	5:57	8:02
Be'er Sheva	6:55	5:53	7:54	6:59	5:56	8:00
Rehovot	6:55	5:53	7:55	7:00	5:57	8:01
Petach Tikva	6:38	5:53	7:56	6:43	5:57	8:01
Ginot Shomron	6:55	5:52	7:55	7:00	5:56	8:00
Haifa / Zichron	6:46	5:54	7:57	6:51	5:58	8:02
Gush Shiloh	6:54	5:52	7:54	6:59	5:55	7:59
Tel Aviv / Givat Shmuel	6:56	5:54	7:56	7:01	5:57	8:02
Givat Ze'ev	6:58	5:52	7:54	7:03	5:55	8:00
Chevron / Kiryat Arba	6:54	5:52	7:54	6:59	5:55	7:59
Ashkelon	6:56	5:54	7:56	7:01	5:58	8:02
Yad Binyamin	6:55	5:53	7:55	7:00	5:57	8:01
Tzfat / Bikat HaYarden	6:48	5:52	7:55	6:54	5:55	8:01
Golan	6:53	5:51	7:54	6:59	5:55	8:00
Nahariya/Maalot	6:45	5:53	7:56	6:50	5:57	8:02
Afula	6:55	5:52	7:55	7:00	5:56	8:01

Rabbeinu Tam (Jerusalem): Acharei Mot-Kedoshim - 8:32 PM • Emor - 8:37 PM

All Times According to MyZmanim (20 mins before Sunset in most Cities; 40 mins in Yerushalayim and Petach Tikva; 30 mins in Tzfat, Nahariya, Maalot and Haifa)

Daf Yomi: Menachos 104



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DEAR TORAH TIDBITS FAMILY

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There is a phrase in Hebrew, “*etrogim acharei Sukkot*,” *etrogs* after Sukkot. It’s the idea that although an *etrog* before Sukkot can be worth a hundred, two hundred, sometimes five hundred shekels, the day after Sukkot ends, though, aside from making jam, it’s basically useless. You can probably buy a dozen for a shekel. The same idea applies to writing this column. I always prefer to talk about things that happened very recently, because discussing events that happened months prior kind of feels like *etrogim* after Sukkot. Not as relevant.

But since this Torah Tidbits edition, God-willing, is going to be arriving in *shuls* right after Yom Ha’atzmaut, and we have to go to print very far in advance (since the printing houses do not work as usual during the week of Yom HaZikaron and Yom Ha’atzmaut), I therefore cannot talk about a Yom Ha’atzmaut that hasn’t happened yet. Instead, I will talk about something about Pesach that for many years I took for granted, and every year around Pesach time I am exposed more and more to it and come to appreciate it in a deeper way.

Truth be told, the *parshiyot* of the past few weeks have been very relevant to the theme. A few weeks ago we read *Parshat Shemini*, and then *Tazria-Metzora*, and this week we read *Acharei Mot-Kedoshim*, in which we hear

the command *Kedoshim tihyu laShem Elokeichem*, that we are to be a holy people. *Shemini* teaches us that holiness is about what we put into our mouths. *Tazria-Metzora* teaches us that it is also about what comes out of our mouths. And *Acharei Mot-Kedoshim* teaches us that it is also about what we do with our bodies and our minds. The goal is to be as holy as possible, so that we can be as close as possible to *HaKadosh Baruch Hu*.

Just a few weeks ago, no matter who we passed on the street, and no matter to whom we were writing a message or an email, we ended off with “*chag kasher v’sameach*” - have a kosher and joyful holiday. It is the one time a year that we use this greeting. I have often wondered why we put *kasher* before *sameach*. People will say, “Of course it is going to be kosher, and *b’ezrat Hashem* it will be joyful as well.” But the reality is that it is not “of course” a kosher Pesach. It takes a tremendous amount of effort to *kasher* our homes and make sure they are ready for Pesach. For most people, cleaning is not an enjoyable activity, and the laws of *kashering* a kitchen are complex. Then there’s the matter of grocery shopping and sometimes appliance shopping. It’s a very difficult thing to accomplish.

It is so, so important to realize how it is that there are so many kosher items in stores in time for Pesach. A major part of that is because of the extraordinarily dedicated team at OU Israel Kashrut, together with the OU’s broader *kashrut* teams around the world and other *hechsherim*, working extremely hard to make sure that, months in advance, factories

Dedicated L’iluy Nishmat

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Henry Schiffmiller ז"ל

whose 25th Yahrtzeit is on י"ג אייר

are *kashered* and products are ready to be sold for Pesach.

I was speaking recently with Rabbi Ezra Friedman, director of our Gustave and Carol Jacobs Center for Kashrut Education, and I tried to get from him an exact number of how many calls, WhatsApps, and questions he received on the OU Israel *kashrut* hotline just before Pesach. He told me it was in the many thousands. I then spoke with Rabbi Yissachar Dov Krakowski, Rabbi Yonatan Korach, and others on the team, and they too told me that the number of questions that come in to OU *kashrut* in New York, OU Israel, and rabbanim around the world simply skyrockets in the weeks leading up to Pesach.

But beyond the questions and answers by our rabbinic staff, what really impressed me was traveling around the country with the *kashrut* team and seeing the endless amount of work they do to ensure that every factory is *kashered* and that products which need to be exported leave the country on time. I had the *zechut* of seeing two different types of operations up close: the *kashering* of factories and the *kashering* of restaurants.

I was at the *kashering* of both Harvey's Smokehouse, which *baruch Hashem* is now under OU Badatz Mehadrin, as well as Papagaio, which has been under the OU Badatz Mehadrin for many years and was *kashered* for Pesach again this year. I saw our *kashrut* team working extremely hard for many long hours. Some of our *mashgichim* were there for seventeen hours straight, cleaning and *kashering*, doing everything possible to make sure the restaurants were as spotless and as kosher as possible.

To watch Rabbi Yissachar Dov Krakowski, who heads our *kashrut* department here in Israel, come in on a Thursday night, on a



motzei Shabbat, come to a restaurant to work into the early hours of the morning alongside his team, including Rabbi Zevi Carlebach, Rabbi Yonatan Korach, and Rabbi Motti Cohen & Rabbi Mordechai, our *mashgiach* at Papagaio, was inspiring. They take this work so seriously. Any *safek* that could arise, no matter how small, they simply do not leave unresolved. They were scrubbing and scrubbing and scrubbing for hours on end to make sure that every detail was one hundred percent.

In loving memory of
Rebbetzin Josephine Reichel ע"ה
on her 26th *yahrzeit* - י"א א"ר
*from the Bronner
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Nothing less would do.

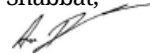
Then there was a story Rabbi Yonatan Korach shared with me. Amongst the 36 wineries that the OU certifies in Israel we have a winery up on the Lebanese border that, over the last period, has been under regular fire. A certain procedure had to be performed inside the factory on *Chol HaMoed*. It could not wait. So Rabbi Korach left his family on *Chol HaMoed* and drove up north. He spent six hours inside that winery doing what had to be done, with booms heard every minute between our own fire into Lebanon and Hezbollah fire into the north. On the drive there he had siren after siren, he even mentioned that he witnessed two helicopters chasing down a suicide drone sent from Lebanon! These are events that one would only think to see in their imagination, not on your way to take care of *kashrus* business at a winery. He said to me, "At the end of the day, there is a Jew who has a winery, and we cannot tell him that we are afraid to come up north. We have to go, no matter what the situation is, no matter how dangerous it is."

Hearing that, and seeing all of it firsthand, made me realize how fortunate we are to have such an incredibly dedicated staff working around the clock so that we can wish each other a *chag kasher v'sameach* and have kosher for Pesach products, and

kosher products year-round, that give us the ability to be *kedoshim* in a real way. This is what enables us to take the lessons of *Parshat Shemini*, *Tazria-Metzora*, and *Acharei Mot-Kedoshim* and actually live them, by becoming the holiest Jews we possibly can be through lives of Torah and *kashrut*.

On behalf of all our readership, I want to thank Rabbi Yissachar Dov Krakowski, Rabbi Ezra Friedman, Rabbi Yonatan Korach, Rabbi Zevi Carlebach, Rabbi Motti Cohen, Mrs. Rachel Stewart, and the entire OU Israel *kashrut* team for the endless hard work you do throughout the year, and especially before Pesach, to enable each of us to elevate our spiritual lives and follow the Torah.

Wishing you all an uplifting and inspiring Shabbat,



Rabbi Avi Berman



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ALIYA-BY-ALIYA SEDRA SUMMARY

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ACHAREI MOT-KEDOSHIM



1ST ALIYA (VAYIKRA 16:1-24)

After the death of his 2 sons, Aaron is instructed to enter the Holy of Holies only through an elaborate process of offerings. He is to bring a private sin offering. And a communal sin offering of 2 identical goats, one as an offering, one sent to the wilderness, determined by lottery. The blood of both his offering and the communal shall be brought into the Holy of Holies, accompanied by incense. The smoke of the incense fills the Holy of Holies. The (scape) goat is sent to the wilderness. The people gain kapara, atonement.

The Torah outlines an elaborate ceremony of unique offerings in order for Aaron to enter the Holy of Holies, including the scapegoat ceremony and the incense offered in the Holy of Holies. And it is all performed by the Kohen Gadol.

However, the first verse indicates this was after the death of Aaron's 2 sons. But that was 3 parshiot ago, in Shemini. Why is there a break after their death for the sections of the laws of Kashrut and then the very detailed laws of Tuma of Tzaraat that took up the parshiot of Tazria and Metzora – and then indicate that this section is after their death? What is the thematic flow of these sections?

The central theme of the book of Vayikra is Kedusha, holiness. Holiness is the reach for the beyond, the reach for the Divine. The book begins with the reach for the Divine through

sacrifices because those are the most supercharged way of drawing near to G-d. They are brought in the place of G-d's dwelling, in the Mishkan. The bringing of sacrifices in the Mishkan is man approaching G-d in His Abode, a supercharged manner and place of expressing a desire to be near to Him.

Nadav and Avihu wanted to achieve an even higher pinnacle of approach to G-d; incense, the smoke symbol of G-d's Presence. Problem is, they were unauthorized.

The Torah needs to immediately respond and outline the drawing of parameters of how to draw near in this supercharged Mishkan..

So, it immediately outlines the complicated rules of Tuma, which restrict entry to the Mishkan.

And if the Mishkan is a supercharged place of approaching G-d, certainly the Holy of Holies is the pinnacle of nearness to G-d.

So, after outlining the rules and regulations for regular approach to G-d, the Torah outlines the even more elaborate rules and regulations for the approach to G-d in the Holy of Holies.



2ND ALIYA (16:25-17:7)

This entire ceremony is done once a year on Yom Kippur, to gain atonement and purity. Tell the entire people: all sacrifices are to be brought to the Mikdash. The Cohen is to offer them, so they are pleasing. We are to no longer offer sacrifices to spirits.

Only at the end of the entire description of how one is to enter the Holy of Holies does the Torah tell us that this is to be done on Yom

Kippur. That is a powerful double layering of holiness; the holiest place and the holiest time.



3RD ALIYA (17:8-8:21)

Blood is not to be consumed, for life is in the blood. I have given it to you to use for atonement on the altar, not to consume. The blood of an undomesticated animal or bird that is killed for consumption, that blood is to be covered with earth. Do not do what the Egyptians or Canaanites do. Do My commands; and live. Sexual relations with relatives are forbidden: including spouses of parents, half siblings, grandchildren, aunts, in-laws. In addition, marrying 2 women who are closely related. Or a married woman.

The subject of entry into the Mikdash gives way now to the listing of forbidden marital relationships. These laws are entirely unrelated to the Mikdash.

But, as pointed out to me by my mechutan, Marty Lockshin, these forbidden relationships are described as causing Tuma, a familiar topic, and may result in the Land spitting you out. That is a parallel to the Mishkan. One who is Tamei may not enter the Mikdash. And one who defiles himself by forbidden sexual activity may not enter the Land of Israel. Well, it doesn't say it that way – it says the Land will not tolerate you, will vomit you out. In a word; the holiness of place demands purity. The holiness of the Mikdash. And the holiness of the Land of Israel.

And in this the Torah presents a radical notion; that holiness inheres not only in the holy place, the Mikdash. And not only in the holy time of Shabbat and holidays. But in the holiness of our relationships. Holiness is the central theme of Vayikra. Played out in the Mikdash, in offerings, in Tuma and its restrictions of entry into the holy place. But as well in the holiness of private life. Holiness is both

public and private, ritual and personal, related to the Holy One and to our fellow man. And this is the perfect segue to Parshat Kedoshim; holiness in daily life.



4TH ALIYA (8:22-19:14)

A man shall not lie with a man. Sexual relations with an animal are forbidden. These things (all the above) defile the land: it will spit you out. (Parshat Kedoshim) Be Holy, as I, G-d, your G-d is holy. Revere parents, keep Shabbat. Do not turn to idols or make graven gods. A shlamim offering may only be eaten for 2 days. Help the poor and stranger when harvesting a field by leaving dropped or forgotten produce or grapes. Don't steal, lie or swear falsely. Don't cheat; or tarry paying wages til the morning. Don't curse the deaf, trip up the blind.

This aliya begins Parshat Kedoshim, the best parsha in the Torah. Or at least Rashi says so on the first verse: most topics of the Torah are contained here. There are 51 mitzvot in 64 verses. We have left the topic of holiness of the Mikdash and focus on holiness in our behavior. These are the greatest themes of ethical behavior; helping the poor with dignity, honesty, care for employees, care for the deaf and blind. In just these few verses, our every moment of human interaction becomes meaningful; every step we take and thought we think needs vigilance. To be true. And kind. And give dignity to others. This parsha is the fullest expression of how holiness need inhere in our everyday treatment of others.



5TH ALIYA (19:15-32)

Do not pervert justice by favoring either poor or powerful. Don't spread gossip, nor stand by your brother's blood. Don't hate. Don't take revenge; love your neighbor as yourself. Do not interbreed animal, seeds, or wear wool and linen. In the

land, fruit is forbidden for the first 3 years of growth, 4th year holy, 5th year permissible. Do not use divination. Nor round the corners of your face or use a straight razor on your beard. Nor tattoo. Nor seek sorcery. Rise before the aged, glorify the wizened.

The mention of justice is a foil: in court, we pursue justice. But not on the streets. It is not our place to be judges; judges cannot favor one person over another. But we certainly can. And must. We must favor and help the victim. And revenge; we are not judges to mete out just revenge. If he didn't lend you, forget about it - you still should do the right thing and lend to him.



6TH ALIYA (19:33-20:7)

Love the convert. Employ accurate weights and measures. One who gives their child to Molech shall be put to death. And if you don't do it, I will. The one who turns and follows sorcery, I will deal with them. Be holy; for I am Holy.

The convert may feel out of place, different, self-conscious, without family, not part of the crowd. Be extra sensitive to those who feel left out.

Accurate weights and measures would seem obvious. But the Torah is emphasizing that even when you can get away with it, don't. Like cursing the deaf. Who will ever know?



7TH ALIYA (20:8-27)

The following receive the death penalty: cursing parents, the long list of forbidden sexual relationships listed above. Observing these laws and not those of the nations will prevent the Land from spitting you out, as it has done to those nations. Since I have distinguished you, it is you who shall possess the Land, the land flowing with milk and honey. And you shall distinguish between animals to be eaten and those not.

Be holy to Me and I will distinguish you to be My people.

The Jewish idea of ethical monotheism is on full display in Kedoshim. Holiness wanders seamlessly in the parsha from taking care of the poor, to laws of sacrifices, to honesty, to sexual prohibitions, to loving your neighbor, not hating; all under the rubric of holiness. Finding a pattern to the list of mitzvot in the parsha is challenging. But that is the point. There is no pattern. Because holiness wanders throughout our life, touching on the myriad pursuits of our day-to-day existence. It's all holy.

And we express this in the blessing we make over mitzvot – asher kidshanu b'mitzvotav. G-d makes us holy through His mitzvot. The mitzvot make us holy.

The parsha concludes: We are to be holy so that the Land does not spit us out. These words must give us pause, those of us privileged to walk the streets of our Land. The land could spit us out. All these mitzvot are not simply our own personal religious life. We, we who live in our Land, we particularly need to be extra vigilant in all these holy things, ritual, interpersonal, speech, care, love; for our success in this Land rests upon it.

HAFTORAH - AMOS 9:7-15 (ACCORDING TO THE ASHKENAZI CUSTOM)

This week's haftorah speaks about exile and punishment that will be the result of the Jewish people straying from the path of the Torah.

Amos, the great prophet, brings a message from God in which he reminds the people of Israel of God's kindness and his love of his nation.

Although God is forced to punish the nation for their misdeeds, He will never completely destroy his nation. They will be sent into exile and unfortunately will find themselves in every

corner of the world - but the time will come when they will return to the land of their soul.

At that time the House of David will lead the nation and peace and prosperity will abound.

The conclusion of the haftorah resounds with the following uplifting message: "And I will return the captivity of My people Israel, and they shall rebuild desolate cities and inhabit them; and they shall plant vineyards and drink their wine, and they shall make gardens and eat their produce." ■

STATS			
	Acharei Mot	Kedoshim	Total
of 54 Sedras	29th	30th	-
of 10 in Vayikra	6th	7th	-
Lines in a Torah	154	109	263
Rank	44th	49th	-
Parshiyot	15	4	19
Ptuchot	3	3	6
Stumot	12	1	13
Pesukim	80	64	144
Rank (Torah/Vayikra)	45/6	49/9	-
Words	1170	868	2038
Rank	43/6	49/9	-
Letters	4294	3229	7523
Rank	45/6	49/9	-

MITZVOT			
	Acharei Mot	Kedoshim	Total
Positive	2	13	15
Prohibitions	26	38	64
Total	28	51	79

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THE PERSON IN THE PARSHA

BY RABBI DR. TZVI HERSH WEINREB
OU EXECUTIVE VICE PRESIDENT, EMERITUS

“Holiness: A Definition”

He never returned phone calls. He certainly never returned e-mails. He rarely smiled.

He had very sophisticated tastes in wine and fine liquor. A seven-course gourmet dinner with a wine pairing at each course was almost an everyday occurrence for him.

He had the vocabulary of a sailor and seemed to be acquainted with the obscenities and profanities of every known language.

Don't get me wrong. He had many fine qualities, and considered himself to be religious, even pious.

"After all," he would say, "I am careful that the meals that I order are always absolutely kosher. The Torah doesn't prohibit wine, nor does it require us to refrain from delicious food, and it places no limits on the quantity of food that we eat."

He would expound upon the fact that he found nothing in the Torah requiring one to return phone calls or e-mails. He even insisted that, at least in the written Torah, he found no objection to the use of vulgar language.

I knew this person, let's call him Reuben, for nearly 50 years. I was associated with him in various capacities, and often worked with him on charity projects. Although he scrupulously investigated every cause that approached him for contributions, and he was very careful as to the causes to which he made contributions,

I cannot deny that he was generous by almost all standards.

I must admit that I often wondered about his relationship with his wife. Obviously, I was not privy to the intimate details about their relationship. I did meet Reuben's wife several times, and she always appeared to be quite sad, even defeated. She certainly did not share his *joie de vivre*, dressed quite modestly compared to his lavish wardrobe, and she certainly never resorted to his foul language.

Reuben died a few months ago. One of his close business associates, who knew him as a religious Jew, eulogized him as a person who exhibited holiness. "He was no saint," proclaimed this associate, "but from my perspective as an irreligious person, Reuben was a holy man."

Now, it is common, and even to some extent permissible, to exaggerate the merits of the deceased during a eulogy for him. But there was something about the adjective "holy" that I simply could not accept and felt compelled to protest. It was certainly inappropriate for me to protest in public at the funeral, and I felt it was pointless to protest to the well-meaning person who delivered the eulogy.

So I decided to use this column as the venue for that protest.

What does it mean to be holy? For the answer to that, we need to examine a verse at the beginning of the second of this week's double-Torah portions, *Acharei Mot* and *Kedoshim* (*Exodus* 16:1-20:27). The verse reads: "Ye shall be holy; for I the Lord your God am holy."

The two greatest commentators on the Bible in the Jewish tradition, Rashi and Ramban (Nachmanides), enunciate definitions of "holiness." Rashi insists that to be holy means to be separate, distant, from various sinful exploits, especially sexual promiscuity. He says that the Hebrew words, "*kedoshim tihyu, ye shall be holy,*" are best understood as, "*perushim tihyu, ye shall keep a distance.*"

Ramban, however, takes issue with Rashi, although he characteristically does so with great courtesy and even reverence for his predecessor. Ramban's definition of holiness expresses one of his most basic teachings, and in my opinion, one of the perspectives of Judaism which is often forgotten and needs to be re-emphasized from time to time.

Ramban writes that there is more to being holy than merely to abide by the rules and regulations of the Torah. Yes, he writes, the Torah does not forbid gluttony, and it is quite possible to be a glutton yet not violate any of the laws of kashrut. True, he continues, one can use all manner of vulgar language yet violate no explicit biblical command. A man can observe every detail of the Torah's laws about family purity yet not be a loving husband.

Ramban coins a phrase: "*Naval bereshut hatorah,*" which can be translated either as, "a knave within the bounds of Torah," or alternatively, "a knave with the Torah's permission." Holiness, for Ramban, consists of all those behaviors which are to be expected from a decent human being, even if those behaviors are not explicitly prescribed by the Torah.

Reuben was a man whom I knew all of my life. Although he was not perfect, he had his positive qualities and I certainly cannot take it upon myself to condemn him. But he was not holy. Indeed, he missed the point about what the Jewish religion was all about.

Our religion is indeed about obedience and compliance to a set of laws—some ordained by God and some instituted by wise and holy men—but that is not *all* that it is about. It is about attitudes, and it is about relationships. It is about ethical behaviors which need not be prescribed in the form of rules, but is to be expected of every reasonable human being.

Some would explain Ramban's thesis in terms of the age-old distinction between the letter of the law and the spirit of the law. That is certainly one way of understanding it. Reuben is a prime example of someone who did not see beyond the letter of the law.

Our daily prayer book contains the following verse in *Isaiah* 59:21:

"This is my covenant with them says the Lord: My spirit which is upon you, and the words I have placed in your mouth, shall not depart from you or your children or your children's children..."

Clearly, the Almighty's covenant has two components: His spirit and His words. Reuben kept the latter, but ignored the former. Holiness consists of adherence to them both. Ramban teaches us that holiness is about that spirit. The Torah itself, by addressing the commandment "*kedoshim tiheyu, be holy*" to all of us, is teaching us that we are all capable of achieving that spirit. We are expected to be a *goy kadosh*, a holy people. ■

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May the learning of these Divrei Torah be לעילוי נשמת
HaRav Ya'akov Zvi ben David Arie'el zt"l

לעילוי נשמות

פנחס בן יעקב אשר וגולדה בת ישראל דוד אייזע"ה ועזריאל בן אריה לייב ומעניה בת יצחק שרטור ע"ה

Of Love and Hate

At the centre of the Mosaic books is Sefer Vayikra. At the centre of Vayikra is the “holiness code” (chapter 19) with its momentous call: “You shall be holy because I, the Lord your God, am holy.” And at the centre of chapter 19 is a brief paragraph which, by its positioning, is the apex, the high point, of the Torah:

Do not hate your brother in your heart.

Admonish your fellow and do not bear guilt on his account.

Do not take revenge or bear a grudge against anyone among your people,

but love your neighbour as your own self. I am the Lord. (*Vayikra 19:17-18*)

I want, in this study, to examine the second of these provisions: “Admonish your fellow and do not bear guilt on his account.”

Rambam and Ramban agree in seeing two quite different levels of meaning in this sentence. This is how Rambam puts it:

When one person sins against another, the latter should not hate him and remain silent. As it is said about the wicked: “And

Absalom spoke to Amnon neither good nor evil, although Absalom hated Amnon.” Rather, he is commanded to speak to him and to say to him, “Why did you do such-and-such to me? Why did you sin against me in such-and-such a matter?” As it is said, “You must surely admonish your neighbour.” If he repents and requests forgiveness from him, he must forgive and not be cruel, as it is said, “And Abraham prayed to God . . .”

If someone sees his fellow committing a sin or embarking on a path that is not good, it is a commandment to make him return to the good and to make known to him that he is sinning against himself by his evil actions, as it is said, “You must surely admonish your neighbour...”

Likewise, Ramban:

“You shall surely remonstrate with your neighbour” – this is a separate command, namely that we must teach him the reproof of instruction. “And not bear sin because of him” – for you will bear sin because of his transgression if you do not rebuke him.

However, it seems to me that the correct interpretation is that the expression “you shall surely remonstrate” is to be understood in the same way as “And Abraham remonstrated with Avimelech”. The verse is thus saying: “Do not hate your brother in your heart when

he does something to you against your will, but instead you should remonstrate with him, saying, 'Why did you do this to me?' and you will not bear sin because of him by covering up your hatred in your heart and not telling him, for when you remonstrate with him, he will justify himself before you or he will regret his action and admit his sin, and you will forgive him."

The difference between the two interpretations is that one is social, the other interpersonal. On Rambam's second and Ramban's first reading, the command is about collective responsibility. When we see a fellow Jew about to commit a sin, we must try to persuade him not to do so. We are not allowed to say, "That is a private matter between him and God." "All Israel," said the Sages, "are sureties for one another." We are each responsible, not only for our own conduct, but for the behaviour of others. That is a major chapter in Jewish law and thought.

However, both Rambam and Ramban are aware that this is not the plain sense of the text. Taken in context, what we have before us is a subtle account of the psychology of interpersonal relations.

Judaism has sometimes been accused by Christianity of being about justice rather than love ("You have heard that it was said, 'Love your neighbour and hate your enemy.' But I tell you: Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you"). This is entirely untrue. There is a wonderful teaching in *Avot deRabbi Natan*: "Who is the greatest hero? One who turns an enemy into a friend." What sets the Torah apart is its understanding of the psychology of hatred.

If someone has done us harm, it is natural to feel aggrieved. What then are we to do in order to fulfil the command, "Do not hate



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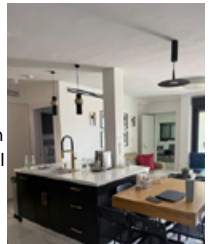
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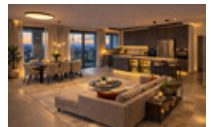


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your brother in your heart”? The Torah’s answer is: Speak. Converse. Challenge. Remonstrate. It may be that the other person had a good reason for doing what he did. Or it may be that he was acting out of malice, in which case our remonstrations will give him, if he so chooses, the opportunity to rethink, and apologise, and we should then forgive him. In either case, talking it through is the best way of restoring a broken relationship. Once again we encounter here one of the leitmotifs of Judaism: the power of speech to create, sustain, and mend relationships.

Maimonides cites a key proof-text. The story is told (II Samuel 13) of how Amnon, one of King David’s children, raped his half-sister, Tamar. When Absalom, Tamar’s brother, hears about the episode, his reaction seems on the face of it irenic, serene:

Her brother Absalom said to her, “Has that Amnon, your brother, been with you? Be quiet, now my sister; he is your brother. Don’t take this thing to heart.” And Tamar lived in her brother Absalom’s house, a desolate woman. When King David heard all this, he was furious. Absalom never said a word to Amnon, either good or bad . . .”

Appearances, however, deceive. Absalom is anything but forgiving. He waits for two years, then invites Amnon to a festive meal at sheep-shearing time. He gives instructions to his men: “Listen! When Amnon is in high spirits from drinking wine and I say to you, ‘Strike Amnon down,’ then kill him.” And so it happened.

Absalom’s silence was not the silence of forgiveness but of hate – the hate of which Pierre de LaClos spoke in *Les Liaisons Dangereuses* when he wrote the famous line, “Revenge is a dish best served cold.”

There is another equally powerful example

in Bereishit:

Now, Israel loved Joseph more than all his other sons, for he was a child of his old age; he made him an ornately coloured robe. But when his brothers saw that their father loved him more than any of them, they hated him and could not say a peaceful word to him. (*velo yachlu dabro leshalom*, literally, “they could not speak with him to peace”) (Bereishit 37:3-4)

On this, R. Jonathan Eybeschutz (c. 1690-1764) comments:

“Had they been able to sit together as a group, they would have spoken to one another, and remonstrated with each other, and would eventually have made their peace with one another. The tragedy of conflict is that it prevents people from talking together and listening to one another.” A failure to communicate is often the prelude to revenge.

The inner logic of the two verses in our sedra is therefore this: “Love your neighbour as yourself. But not all neighbours are loveable. There are those who, out of envy or malice, have done you harm. I do not therefore command you to live as if you were angels, without any of the emotions natural to human beings. I do however forbid you to hate. That is why, when someone does you wrong, you must confront the wrongdoer. You must tell him of your feelings of hurt and distress. It may be that you completely misunderstood his intentions. Or it may be that he genuinely meant to do you harm, but now, faced with the reality of the injury he has done you, he may sincerely repent of what he did. If, however, you fail to talk it through, there is a real possibility that you will bear a grudge and in the fullness of time, come to take revenge – as did Absalom.”

What is so impressive about the Torah is

that it both articulates the highest of high ideals, and at the same time speaks to us as human beings. If we were angels, it would be easy to love one another. But we are not. An ethic that commands us to love our enemies, without any hint as to how we are to achieve this, is simply unliveable. Instead, the Torah sets out a realistic programme: Communication.

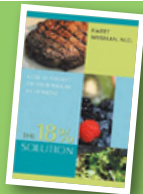
By being honest with one another, talking things through, we may be able to achieve reconciliation – not always, to be sure, but often. How much distress and even bloodshed might be spared if humanity heeded this simple command. ■

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Not a Gift - But an Obligation!

The Book of Vayikra revolves around the concept of “Mikdash”, both the recently built Mishkan and the “to be built” Bet HaMikdash. The Torah begins by detailing the laws of Korbanot (in Parashot VaYikra and Tzav), continues with the laws of Tum’ah and Tahara (in Parashot Shmini, Tazria and Metzora) and, starting with today’s parasha, the laws of sanctity and holiness (of the Mikdash and the nation itself). Indeed, the basic theme of both parashot is expressed in the “bridge” between both readings, with the closing words of Parashat Acharei Mot telling us not to defile the land with moral turpitude, and continues with the opening words our next Parashat Kedoshim: “Kedoshim t’h’yu”, demanding that we are to remain holy.”

Throughout his commentary, Rashi sees

the fulfillment of the mitzvah of “kedusha” – being holy, as a requirement to “separate” ourselves, i.e. that we be separate, unique, avoiding the immoral behavior practiced by the other nations. It is the same demand included in Hashem’s cry at Har Sinai: “V’atem t’h’yu li Mamlechet Kohanim v’Goy Kadosh”, to be a holy nation dedicated to the service of G-d.

How then can we understand the opening words of our haftarah that express precisely the opposite view: “Hahlo chiv’nei Chushiyim atem li”, “Behold, you are no different to me than the Cushite nation”, explaining that, just as G-d had done for Israel, so, too, had He “liberated” other nations from foreign lands. We are “No Different?” We are NOT a “Mamlechet Kohanim”? We are NOT a holy nation dedicated to the service of G-d? Are these the words of G-d’s prophet???

We can understand the chilling words of the navi Amos only when first reading his opening prophecies in the first two p’rakim. There, the prophet addresses the sins of Israel’s neighbors (Aram, Edom, Mo’av, among others), and foretells the resultant punishments that would befall them. However, he then includes Israel (and Judea) among these sinful nations and details their resulting punishments for their sinful behavior. And this is precisely why Amos opens this haftarah with these “chilling” words, impressing upon Israel that their corrupt deeds make them no different than other sinful nations! This moral is a basic theme found in the Book of Amos in the prophecies of other n’vi’im as well (Hoshe’a,

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Yirmiyahu, Yechezkel).

But why must we read this haftarah specifically after reading these parashot of Kedusha??

In truth, this selection is especially pertinent to the theme of “holiness?”, for it expresses a most important idea: the “specialness” of Israel is predicated upon her retaining that status of kedusha, something which can be done only through their fealty to G-d and His mitzvot. When Israel shrugs off her commitment to Hashem, when she ignores her miraculous past and, thereby, denies her glorious future, she is no different than any other nation. In fact, she is worse than they are. It is precisely THIS demand of Hashem that Amos expresses so powerfully in our haftarah, saying: “Rak etchem yada’ti...al ken efkod aleichem et kol avonoteichem” - it is **because** G-d revealed Himself to us, **because** we have witnessed His

miracles over and over again, that He expects fidelity and faithfulness from us **more** than He does from other peoples!

No. Kedusha is not a **gift** bestowed upon us; it is an **obligation** we are challenged to fulfill. ■

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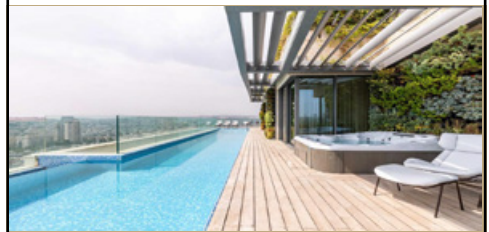
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Love Requires Boundaries

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You must love your fellow as yourself; I am God. (Vayikra 19:18)

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The convert who dwells with you must be treated as a native among you, and you must love him as yourself, for you were strangers in Egypt; I am God, your God. (Vayikra 19:34)

MITZVOT TO LOVE

Parashat Kedoshim presents both the command to love our fellow Jew and the command to love the convert. The first is not framed merely as reciprocal kindness - to be nice because you want others to be nice to you. It is far stronger. It is an absolute, unconditional obligation.

The second directive is even more radical. Throughout history, societies have often treated the outsider with suspicion or contempt. Judaism insists on the opposite. The ger must

be welcomed, embraced, and loved. These two mitzvot portray Judaism not only as a religion of love of God, but as a religion that demands love of humanity.

CONTEXT OF THE MITZVOT

Rabbi Jonathan Sacks¹ asks a penetrating question: Why are these two commands found in Parashat Kedoshim in the nineteenth chapter of Vayikra, ? The chapter appears to present a puzzling mix of laws placed side-by-side. Some are moral: don't gossip, don't hate, don't take revenge. Others concern social justice: leave produce for the poor, don't withhold wages, don't cheat in business. And then a third group seems entirely different: don't crossbreed animals, don't plant mixed seeds, don't wear *shaatnez*, don't eat blood, don't eat fruit before its time.

STRUCTURE AND BOUNDARIES

At first glance, these laws seem totally unrelated. Some are about ethical behavior, some about economic fairness, and others about purity and ritual boundaries. Rabbi Sacks cleverly explains that they share a common theme: **they are all laws of order, limits, and boundaries.**

Hatred and revenge destroy relationships. Injustice erodes the trust on which society depends. Violating the integrity of nature leads to environmental and moral disarray.

1. Rabbi Jonathan Sacks, *Judaism's Life Changing Ideas* p. 163-167.



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The Torah teaches that the universe has an underlying order, and when boundaries are ignored, chaos follows.

This is precisely why the commands to love appear here. Love flourishes only within structure. Parents who refuse to set limits may think they are being loving, but in truth they deprive their children of the tools needed to thrive. In life others may not be as sympathetic. So too in relationships between adults: healthy love requires clarity, respect, and boundaries.

The commands to love others and to love the convert are therefore placed intentionally in Parashat Kedoshim. They teach us that love is not a vague feeling and not simply “all you need.” True love requires discipline, structure and boundaries. Only then can it endure.

May we build relationships rooted in warmth but shaped by wisdom. Relationships where love is strong because boundaries are clear, and where our families, communities, and society are strengthened through the sacred discipline of genuine care. ■

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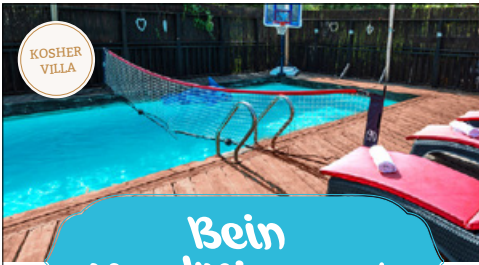
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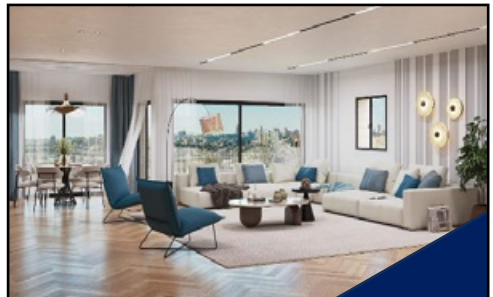
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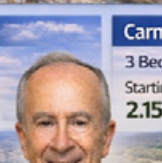
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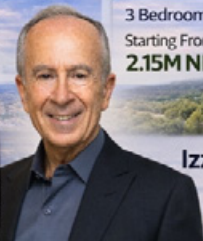


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Parashat Kedoshim is replete with mitzvot regarding interpersonal relationships. “*Lo ta’amod al dam rei’acha*—You shall not stand by [the shedding of] your fellow’s blood.” (*Vayikra 19:16*) One may not stand idly by when his brother is in danger. We can find multiple layers of meaning in this mitzvah; let us see how it is relevant to all of us at all times.

On the most basic level, Rashi zt”l explains that this is an injunction not to passively stand by when someone’s life is threatened if one is capable of saving him. The Rambam zt”l clearly notes that this not only applies if one is physically able to save someone else but even if one has the means to procure help to rescue someone in trouble, one is obligated to do so, including hiring others to save another person. Also included is to warn someone of an impending danger and alerting him to take

the necessary precautions.

The Chazon Ish zt”l extends this idea even further. Even if a person does not have the wherewithal to save another, everyone has access to the most potent tool to help, namely, tefillah. Further, one who does not pray for the safety and welfare of another, is essentially preventing salvation from reaching the one in need.

One of the most practical areas where this is relevant to all of us is praying for the recovery of those who are ill. The Brisker Rav zt”l warns people to be careful about telling others that a patient is doing much better since naturally, when one hears such a response, he will think he no longer needs to pray for his recovery, and thus the ill person may be prevented from receiving one of the most beneficial remedies — that is, continuous tefillot. The Brisker Rav even suggests that one who doesn’t pray for another’s recovery may *chas v’shalom* be considered a *rodef*, one who intentionally causes harm to another.

Rav Weissblum in *He’arat Derech* quotes a novel idea offered by Rav Yerucham Levovitz zt”l. When a person feels the pain of another

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and one prays for someone else's welfare, he can alleviate a bit of his suffering, similar to when one visits the sick, he lessens 1/60th of the illness. Moreover, davening for someone's wellbeing does not solely apply when they are physically ill, it includes any and all distress a person may experience. We can't always help a person with his financial burden, or find her a shidduch, or give them children, yet we can all daven for them and must not stand idly by and watch them suffer.

The *Maharsham zt"l* learns another significant obligation, that of deterring someone from committing a sin, if we can. Likewise, the *Chofetz Chaim zt"l* understands this verse to support active *kiruv rechokim*, bringing back lost souls who have wandered from our faith and tradition.

So often, we hear of someone suffering from a terrible plight. We may say, "OY!" we may groan, we always feel so helpless. This verse can be our inspiration to activate the most paramount means to assist others in any situation in any circumstance. ■

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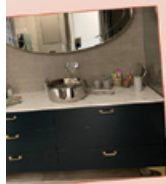
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The second of the two *parshiyot* we will read this coming *Shabbat*, *Parshat Kedoshim* of course begins with the instruction that we must seek holiness-"*Kedoshim tihiyu, ki Kadosh Ani Hashem Elokechem-You shall be holy, for I, Hashem, your Lord, am Holy.*"

Our *Chazal* in the *Midrash Rabba (Vayikra Rabba 24)* interpret this verse to mean -*Yachol KiMoni-Hashem* instructs us "Be like Me"- that we should strive to be holy, to emulate Hashem.

The ***Biala Rebbe zy'a***, asks how can we, imperfect human beings, possibly be like *HaKadosh Baruch Hu*? The Rebbe explained that our verse reminds us that every single Jew has a *neshama* a portion of divinity innate within each of us. Therefore, despite our imperfections, we must recognize that every single member of *Klal Yisrael* is indeed inherently holy.

The ***Oheiv Yisrael, Rebbe Avraham Yehoshua Heschel of Apt zy'a***, looks to another very perplexing *Maamar Chazal* to explain our verse. The Rebbe asks, how can we as mere human beings emulate *Hashem* in his infinite wisdom?

The *Gemara* in *Brachot (daf vav)* tells us that just as we are instructed to put on *Tefilin*, so to *Hashem* also dons *tefilin*. Our *tefilin* contain the verse:

Shema Yisrael Hashem Elokeinu Hashem Echad(Hear Israel, Hashem is our God, Hashem is One), while *Hashem's tefilin* contain the verse: *Mi K'Amcha Yisrael, goy echad 'Aaretz- Who is like you Israel, a unique people on Earth...*

The Rebbe explains, surely this teaching

cannot be taken literally, that *Hashem* who is beyond any physical form or limitation actually dons *tefilin*! Rather there is an important message being communicated via this parable. Just as our *tefilin* contain the verse of *Shema*, attesting to our unwavering devotion and love for *Hashem*, so too, *Hashem's* proverbial *tefilin* contains a verse showering praise, love and devotion upon the Jewish People!

The Rebbe explains that we learn from this beautiful teaching, that even if we view this and every *mitzva* as an opportunity to cling to God, to demonstrate our love and fidelity to the Master of the Universe, **that love and fidelity pales in comparison to the enduring love that Hashem feels for the Jewish People.**

The Rebbe's keen insight regarding this *mitzva* of *tefilin* really provides us with a new understanding of how we relate to each of the *mitzvot*.

Mitzvot are not solely an opportunity to cling to *Hashem*, to demonstrate our commitment and trust in the *Ribono Shel Olam*, but also to simultaneously experience *Hashem's* divine embrace, to realize that *Hashem* bestows his unending love upon all of *Klal Yisrael*.

May each of us be blessed to emulate *Hashem*, to live lives of *Kedusha*, to see the *Kedusha* inherent within one another, and also to feel and experience *Hashem's* divine embrace. ■

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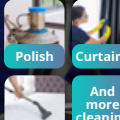
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The saintly Rebbe Aharon of Belz, zy'a (d. 1957), was a beloved *tzadik*, revered for his piety and kindness, respected for his *ayin tovah* and *ahavas Yisrael*, and for setting the stage for rebuilding Chasidus in the Holy Land after the Holocaust.

After escaping the Holocaust, the Rebbe settled in Tel Aviv, and often came in contact with Jews who had a very different way of life than the Chasidic community that he led. Reb Aharon was known to say, *Kulam kedoshim*, "they are all holy," and refused to call Jews who didn't keep Shabbos *mechalelei Shabbos*, 'Shabbos profaners'. Rather, he would refer to his neighbors as *shochechei ikar Shabbos* "forgetters of the principle of Shabbos."

While walking home one Shabbos morning, Reb Aharon encountered a Jewish doctor who did not keep Shabbos, who, seeing the Rebbe from afar, hastily discarded his lit cigarette. Another Rebbe was present and derided, "Here are your righteous 'forgetters of Shabbos'! If he truly 'forgot' that today is Shabbos, why did he throw away his cigarette when he

saw us?" Reb Aharon Belzer responded, "The moment he saw us wearing our *shtrimmelach*, he remembered that it's Shabbos!"


~
Upon hearing that members of a *Kibbutz* had begun raising pigs, a transgression so egregious that the Rambam writes that *chazal* pronounced a curse on one who raises them (Laws of Property Damages, 5:9), a couple of *chevreh* looking to stir up controversy brought the unfortunate news to Reb Aharon. They were surprised to hear the Rebbe's response.

Said Reb Aharon, "There is an opinion that in the Era of Moshiach the world will be uplifted to such a higher spiritual plane that pigs, the most 'unclean' non-Kosher animal, will become permissible to be eaten. Our brothers and sisters believe so deeply in the imminent Redemption that they are preparing for the celebratory feast! (See *Ohr haChaim haKadosh*, Vayikra, 11:7)

.....
The detailed description of the laws of "Yom Kippurim" in this week's sedra outlines the pathway for Am Yisrael to realign with Hashem through the service of the Kohen Gadol. In terms of the narrative, this is sequentially appropriate as it follows the death of Aharon's sons. Yet, delving into the experience of Yom Kippur in the middle of the Spring feels a bit out of place. Our process of national atonement includes the procedure of the scapegoat, sprinkling the blood of the sacrifice in the direction of the Holy of Holies as Teshuva for having entered there in a state of *tumah*:

"And he shall effect atonement... from the

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ritual impurity of Bnei Yisrael and from their rebellions and all their unintentional sins. We shall do likewise in the Ohel Moed — השוכן תומאתם — where G-d's Presence dwells amid their impurity.” (16:16)

Rashi offers the *p'shat*, the simple understanding of the verse: “אך על פי שהם טמאים, שכינה ביניהם, Although they are ritually unclean, nevertheless, the Divine Presence dwells in their midst!” What does this mean for us, today, in our exile, while we are still lacking a *Beis haMikdash*?

While Yom Kippur is ‘just’ one special, elevated day of the year, the *Avodah*, the essence of the service of the Kohen Gadol, is relevant all year round. Throughout the year, the ‘Kohanim’ are represented by the true *Tzadikim* of the generation who are able to go *lifnai v'lifnim*, to “enter the inner chambers”, the inner world of Nishmas Yisrael, the soul of every Jew, and see the Divine goodness there. Along these lines, one aspect of being a *mamleches Kohanim*, ‘a nation of priests’, is that each of us is able to channel this potential, and acknowledge the Divine Presence within one another, even in our so-called communal ‘impurity’.

This week we also study the *mitzvah* to judge others favorably, בצדק תשפוט עמיתך (19:15)), and to love our fellow as ourselves, ואהבת לרעך כמוך. These two *mitzvos* are access points into the inner world of a Jew, opening a portal to go *lifnai v'lifnim*.

In these days of *Sefiras haOmer*, we mourn the loss of the talmidim of Rebbe Akiva, and it was Rebbe Akiva who taught that *Vahavta l'reiacha kamocha* is the *Klal Gadol baTorah*, the cornerstone and fundamental principle of the Torah. He taught as well regarding Yom Kippur: *Ashreichem Yisrael...* “Fortunate are you, Israel! Before whom do you purify yourself and who is it that purifies you? *Avinu*

Sh'bashamayim, our Father in Heaven.”

In advance of *Lag BaOmer* we celebrate and bind ourselves to the soul of ‘Rashbi’, the holy Tanna, Rebbe Shimon bar Yochai. The 16th Century Kabbalist Rebbe Shimon Lavi zy'a composed a *piyut* extolling the virtues of Rashbi:

“*Bar Yochai, nimshachta ashrecha...* “Anointed are you, fortunate are you....”

Bar Yochai, baKodesh haKodashim... “You reached the Holy of Holies...and revealed the secret of the Seven Weeks (the Forty-Nine Gates of Understanding)....”

The teachings, pathway and *avodah* of Rebbe Shimon Bar Yochai, enable us to enter *lifnai v'lifnim*, into the Holy of Holies, the innermost depths of a Jewish soul, and reveal the secret, the highest gates of purity, there.

The Gemara relates that Rebbe Shimon bar Yochai, the Holy Tanna, said: “See how beloved Israel is to *Hakadosh Baruch Hu*, for wherever they went into exile, *Shechina imahen*, the Divine Presence went with them. They were exiled to Egypt, and *Shechina imahen*; they were exiled to Babylon, v'*Shechina imahen*. And when Am Yisrael will be redeemed in the future, the Shechinah will be redeemed with them....” (Megillah, 29a)

May we also look inward and realize that in our own soul, Hashem dwells with us and within us, regardless of any ‘impurity’ we might be involved in or surrounded by. We are all, as the Rebbe Aharon Belzer said, *Kedoshim!* ■

.....
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This Week's Inspiration

SUNDAY APR 26

7:30 PM

Men's Safrut (The Bais)

Rabbi Tzvi Maurer

7 Hartum Street, 2nd Floor

SPECIAL EVENT:

8:15 PM

NextGen Yerushalayim
at Matnas Baka,
Yisahar St 3

MONDAY APR 27

8:30 PM

The Bais (for Men)

Semichat Chaver Program

Rav Elyada Goldwicht

@ **Bet Knesset Ohel Yitzchak**

Keren Hayesod St.

*The schedule is subject to change



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**TUESDAY
APR 28**

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COMMUNITY BEIT MIDRASH IN BAKAA

Classes @ Bet Knesset Nitzanim, 3 Asher Street, Bakaa

9:20 AM

Understanding Tefila

Rabbi Yossi Goldin

11:25 AM

P'shat in the Parsha

Rabbi Shmuel Goldin

10:10 AM

Rambam: Letters & Introductions

Rabbi Yitzchak Breitowitz

12:20 PM

Unlocking the Messages of Chazal

Rabbi Shai Finkelstein

TORAH TUESDAYS WITH THE WOMEN'S DIVISION

Classes @ Beit Knesset HaNassi, 24 Ussishkin St. Rechavia

9:15AM

Torah Tapestries with

Mrs. Shira Smiles

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10:00AM -2:00PM

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Rabbi Ian Shaffer

Rabbi Aschi Dick

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7:30 PM Men's Safrut in **BEIT SHEMESH** Rabbi Elie Levi

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WEDNESDAY
APR 29

COMMUNITY BEIT MIDRASH IN REHAVIA

@ Bet Knesset HaNassi,
24 Ussishkin St., Rechavia

9:15AM

Holy Poetry **Rabbi Dr. Aharon Adler**

10:20AM

Halachic and Hashkafic Issues
in Contemporary Society
Rabbi Anthony Manning

11:25 AM

Mussar and Self Improvement:
A study of Rav Kook's sefer
Midot HaRayah
Rabbi Aaron Goldscheider

12:30 PM

Jews in the Middle Ages:
External Threats and Internal
Developments **Dr. Deborah Polster**



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8:00 PM

NextGen Beit Shemesh
Kehillat Mishkan Shilo
Nachal Ein Gedi St 39

THURSDAY
APR 30

COMMUNITY BEIT MIDRASH IN ARNONA

@ Bet Knesset Shai Agnon,
11 Rechov Leib Yaffe, Arnona

9:15 AM

Parshat HaShavua **Rabbi Ari Kahn**

10:30AM

Parshat HaShavua
Rabbi Baruch Taub

11:25 AM

Trailblazing the Text of Tanach
Rabbi Neil Winkler

12:20 AM

Modern Masters **Rabbi Sam Shor**

BET KNESSET OHEL YITZCHAK

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8:00 PM

Halachic Controversies
(the Bais) **Rabbi Aschi Dick**

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- Modiin - (Darchei Tzion) - Sun May 10
- Maaleh Adumim - the "UP" Shul - Sun May 10
- Carmei Gat - (Carmei Tzion) Mon May 11
- Chashmonaim (Rimon Shul) - Tues May 12
- Pardes Chana (Klal Yisrael) - Tues May 12
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Kashrut In Israel - Part One

Eretz Yisrael, our homeland, is a place where a Jew can experience tremendous spiritual growth. Although as in all aspects of life, with great potential comes great challenges. This is especially true regarding the topic of kosher food in Israel. There is no question that there is an abundance of kosher food in Israel, something we could only dream of in the Diaspora. Items we had to steer clear of overseas are suddenly kosher with strict supervision here in Israel. Yet at the same time, the challenges of the Israeli kosher market are in some respects more difficult than we are used to overseas. There is such a wide array of certifications, there are additional concerns due to the mitzvot *hateluyot ba'aretz*, and unfortunately, politics can also complicate

matters and obscure the actual issues of kashrut. All these factors combined can make us feel we are groping in the dark when trying to choose products we can rely on.

Let's try to shed some light on the issues and establish a degree of clarity here. Although it would be impossible to explain all aspects of the Israeli kosher food system in a single, brief article, we will try to outline the imperative factors, the most common misconceptions, and the general underpinnings of the system, in order to provide the reader with a more enlightened ability to decide which certifications they will choose to rely on.

THE ISRAELI KOSHER CONSUMER

Whenever a product is being sold or marketed, a company or service must ask itself, who is the target consumer? This fundamental question is especially important for the kosher food market in Israel. For the past 75 years, Jews overseas have faced many challenges in keeping kosher. Communities were built around making sure there was a kosher butcher, bakery and food services. Even today, with so many kosher products and establishments available, keeping kosher can still be a challenge at times. Any Jew who keeps kosher in the diaspora is making a conscience choice to do so. They are choosing to shop only from a limited selection of products and to spend more to purchase certified food in a country where non-kosher food is much more common and usually more affordable as well. Since such a lifestyle demands very obvious sacrifices, the profile of the consumer who consistently keeps kosher is either Orthodox

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or extremely traditional.

In Israel, the reality is quite different. On the one hand the kosher opportunities in Israel are almost endless: hotels with full kosher certification, malls with entire kosher food sections, and of course supermarkets where every single product must be kosher, period. Yet this reality, for all its seeming ease and abundance, comes with a serious challenge. Studies have shown that over 75 percent of Israelis are interested in keeping kosher at some level or another; this, however, is in no way an indication of their religious observance. On the contrary, out of this large percentage, a majority do not consider themselves religious but rather see keeping kosher as a cultural tradition they wish to hold onto. In fact, since they don't identify as "religious," many of the Israel's kosher consumers will eat non-kosher when traveling outside Israel.

This situation, with the market for kosher food in Israel consisting largely of not-fully-observant Jews, greatly affects the way certifications are given. Since the average kosher consumer is interested in having access to as many products as possible, standards are much more fluid. Often, the non-religious kosher consumer has little or no knowledge of the different certifications, and in fact, as long as someone claims that their product or establishment is kosher, even with no certification whatsoever, a majority of kosher consumers in Israel will eat regardless of standards, supervision or reliability. For example, many European brand-named snacks and

chocolates are not certified and are not consumed by the religious community in Europe, yet it is quite common to find these snacks certified in Israel as kosher with a symbol on a sticker and no apparent certification on the original label. Because the Israeli public wants to eat this product, and since supermarkets that would like kosher certification are required by the Chief Rabbinate to have all products certified, Israeli importers will go to great lengths to get the product certified. In most cases the importer pays for some type of certification, while the facility changes nothing in their production or ingredients. This demand from the Israeli kosher consumer makes it hard for higher-standard certifications to meet their needs. The consumer wants a worldwide selection of all types of food, yet at the same time insists on some type of kosher certification, which naturally leads to a lowering of standards, sometimes to a drastic extent.

Of course, the religious kosher consumer takes a much different approach. Many certifications in Israel adhere to some of the highest standards. These certifications are often under the auspices of a "Badatz"—an abbreviation for *beit din tzedek*, a board of supervising rabbis.

Yet, certain political or social concerns pose too many constraints for the regular kosher consumer or manufacturer. Certain certifications have political associations which would require them to use only their own or very specific kosher ingredients, even in cases where the basic products require little or

minimal kosher supervision. In addition, they might require extra *mashgichim* or pose other demands that might be considered beyond normal kosher standards. On a market level, since different Badatzim serve different communities, there is pressure for manufacturers to hold multiple certifications, since some distributors require a certain certification for the population they serve, while others need a different symbol for their clientele.

**LOCAL PRODUCTION
AND IMPORTED PRODUCTS**

Israel's food market has shifted drastically over the last thirty years. Although local production still prevails in areas such as shechitah, dairy products, fresh produce and wines, most finished food products are now imported. There are various reasons behind this new phenomenon, and it, in turn, gives rise to various issues. One might assume that since the country has a majority of Jews and an independent central Jewish authority (the Chief Rabbinate), the challenges of kosher supervision should be easier, but the contrary is true. A large percentage of raw ingredients are imported, and just as many finished products are made overseas. This includes condiments, cereals, candies and frozen products.

In future articles we will continue to discuss the intricacies of Kashrut in Israel. ■

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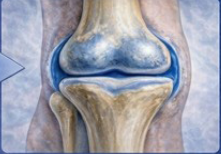
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Planting Redemption

Most of the mitzvot that govern agriculture apply only in Eretz Yisrael and not to produce grown outside the Land. One notable exception is the halachah of arlah, which applies in Chutz La'aretz as well. The fruit of a tree during its first three years is forbidden, while the produce of the fourth year is treated similarly to ma'aser sheini and is eaten in Yerushalayim. This prohibition applies both to trees planted in Eretz Yisrael and to fruit trees planted outside Eretz Yisrael.

It is striking, then, that the Torah introduces the halachot of arlah with the phrase, "When you enter the land and plant trees." This establishes that although the halachot of arlah apply in Chutz La'aretz, they do so with a different halachic status. The Gemara explains that the issur of arlah in Chutz La'aretz does not emerge directly from the pesukim, but from a Halachah LeMoshe MiSinai. That distinction accounts for several differences between arlah in Eretz Yisrael and arlah in

Chutz La'aretz.

Yet the Torah still anchors these halachot in our entry into the Land. By linking the laws of arlah to Eretz Yisrael, the Torah hints that the experience of arlah carries a message about life in Israel and about geulah.

The central message of arlah is that nature, though created by HaKadosh Baruch Hu, may still remain incomplete. Hashem intentionally left His world unfinished so that human beings could become His partners in perfecting creation. Something natural is not automatically sacred, nor is it automatically complete.

MILAH AND HUMAN COMPLETION

This same message surfaces in the other mitzvah associated with arlah, namely brit milah. The foreskin itself is called "orlah." That mitzvah sharply demonstrates that Hashem did not create a finished, perfected human form, but instead left the male body intentionally incomplete, to be completed through human action.

This idea stands at the heart of Rabbi Akiva's response to Turnus Rufus, a Roman governor of Judea who often challenged Jewish belief and practice. Roman culture celebrated the perfection of the human body and viewed circumcision as mutilation. Turnus Rufus asked: if a circumcised state is more complete, why did Hashem not create man in that form from the outset? Rabbi Akiva responded by

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shifting the conversation. He asked whether wheat or bread is superior. Bread is the more refined product, yet Hashem creates raw wheat and expects human beings to process it into something of higher caliber.

This perspective is embedded in our own berachah. We recite “hamotzi lechem min ha’aretz,” even though Hashem does not produce bread directly from the ground. We thank Hashem not only for those materials, but for granting us the capacity and responsibility to refine them. Hashem desires human partners in the completion of His world.

PATIENCE AND THE PACE OF REDEMPTION

Yet despite the similarities between milah and arlah, in teaching that we are tasked with perfecting a divinely imperfect world, there is a fundamental difference between them. The perfection achieved through milah is immediate, brought about through a single, decisive human act.

By contrast, the perfection of a tree’s fruit cannot be hastened. It requires three full years for the fruit to mature, and no human effort can accelerate that process. In this case, human beings are asked not to act, but to wait. The mitzvah of arlah thus teaches two lessons: the responsibility to bring the world toward completion, and the discipline to allow certain processes to unfold in their proper time.

This is precisely why the halachah of arlah is introduced with our entry into the Land. As we enter Eretz Yisrael, we carry expansive hopes. We imagine the fulfillment of prophecy, a world refined by the presence of Hashem as His people return to His land. Arlah tempers those expectations. It reminds us that redemption in Israel often unfolds slowly, across time. Unlike milah, it cannot be forced or accelerated through human intervention. There are moments in which our task is not

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to shape, but to wait, allowing the process of geulah to develop at its own pace.

We are, understandably, an impatient people living in an impatient era. An age of immediacy and rapid exchange of information conditions us to expect quick, tangible results. Furthermore, after waiting for thousands of years, and after the courage and sacrifice that brought us back to our land, it is only natural to expect swift and sweeping change in Israel. And we still have much to accomplish, both externally and domestically.

Arlah, stated as we enter the land, reminds us that entry itself demands patience and endurance. Even as we begin to build, we are asked to wait, to allow processes to unfold, and to recognize that not every stage of growth can be rushed.

HIDDEN

There is a second message about geulah embedded within the mitzvah of arlah. The

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term orlah literally means covered. In the context of an uncircumcised male, this terminology is straightforward, as a part of the body is covered by skin that milah removes. However, its application to forbidden fruit is less obvious. Rashi explains that something covered is distant and removed from a person's use. Covering, in Rashi's language, signals inaccessibility and restraint.

At a deeper level, the term orlah also suggests that the fruit's maturation is concealed. The future, fully ripened fruit has not yet emerged. It remains hidden behind earlier, less developed stages. The tree carries within it a more complete potential, but that potential is concealed by what is still immature. In this sense, orlah does not only describe prohibition, but a process unfolding beneath the surface, partially obscured from view.

Redemption often advances in similarly concealed ways. At times we can look back and identify moments that clearly carried redemptive weight. More often, however, the process remains hidden from us, beyond the reach of human calculation. Geulah unfolds through Hashem's intervention in history, beyond human capacity not only to shape, but even to fully understand.

This is why the mitzvah of arlah is introduced alongside our entry into the Land. It cautions us with two enduring lessons as we begin that journey. We must cultivate patience, allowing the long and demanding process of redemption to unfold in its time. And we must accept that much of that process will remain beyond our grasp. Redemption moves forward, but it does so under the cover of divine logic, not always within the clarity of human understanding.

FROM BROWN TO GREEN

The Midrash draws a third lesson about

geulah from arlah, not from the issur itself but from the way the Torah introduces it. The Torah does not merely state that when you enter the land the first three years of fruit are forbidden. Instead, it opens with a broader phrase: "When you enter the land, you shall plant trees." That language seems unnecessary. Fruit can only emerge once trees are planted. Moreover, the Torah's formulation does not read as a condition. It reads as a directive: ונטעתם כל עץ מאכל.

The Midrash understands this as an independent message. Hashem is not only legislating the laws of arlah, but is also encouraging us to take an active role in developing the land through planting and cultivation. Just as He planted trees at the beginning of creation, so too we are commanded to plant when we enter Eretz Yisrael.

This opening pasuk, which introduces arlah, establishes a message that extends beyond the halachah itself. Hashem expects us to build the land, agriculturally and otherwise. In the direct sense, this pasuk and the Midrash encourage agricultural activity in Eretz Yisrael. Planting trees in Israel has become a central part of reclaiming a once barren landscape, turning a brown and desolate land into one that is green and alive through cultivation and growth. When fires strike and forests are consumed, the loss is felt not only as a human tragedy, but as a setback in the long effort to restore life to this once-brown land.

In a broader sense, agriculture has always stood at the heart of the Zionist vision of renewing an infertile land. It serves as a visible sign that our return is part of a larger redemptive arc. A land that remained dry and neglected for generations is now producing and flourishing. Furthermore, Israel

has become a major innovator and exporter of agricultural technology, offering solutions in farming and water management to those willing to receive that blessing. In this way, we have fulfilled the divine expectation to plant, to build, and to develop His land.

FIELDS AND FOUNDATIONS

Beyond the agricultural dimension, the “mitzvah” of planting trees calls upon us to build the broader infrastructure of life in Israel: roads, cities, buildings, and the full range of services that sustain a society, including social, political, judicial, and welfare systems. For the first time in many generations, we carry both the responsibility and the privilege of building beyond the beit midrash and beyond the beit kneset.

The introduction to the halachot of arlah reminds us that this task is not merely practical or national; it reflects the will of Hashem. In calling upon us to plant, the Torah invites us to mirror His own act of creation. Just as Hashem formed and developed His world, He now calls upon us to shape and develop ours in Eretz Yisrael, walking in His path as partners in creation.

Arlah may at first appear to be a narrow issur. Yet both the prohibition itself and the way it is introduced convey important messages about returning to Eretz Yisrael. The process demands patience. At times it unfolds beneath the surface, concealed from view. Yet we continue to plant, and we continue to build, moving toward a future that may not always be visible, but remains assured. ■



Rabbi Moshe Taragin's latest sefer entitled: **Reclaiming Redemption, Vol. II: Faith, Identity, Peoplehood, and the Storms of War**, is available at: mtaraginbooks.com.

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“When the plowman shall meet the reaper”
(Amos 9:13)

In describing the overflowing bounty of the end of days, the Navi Amos envisions a striking image: the plowman meeting the reaper. When do these two ever meet? The Malbim explains that the plowman, arriving to prepare the earth in the spring, will encounter

the reaper still harvesting the previous year’s crop. The abundance will be so great that the harvest will extend for months.

On a deeper level, these two figures reflect two dimensions of the human experience. As the plowman, we labor in this world — the הזורעים בדמעה — we sow with effort, often with strain, and without the privilege of seeing the outcome. We invest in our homes, our work, and our communities, yet the results are not always visible. At times, they emerge only years later — like children who come to understand their parents’ choices only in adulthood.

As the reaper, however, we stand on the other side. We benefit from what has been planted before us, often without fully recognizing the labor that made it possible. We receive, we partake, yet we do not always pause to acknowledge the effort behind the blessing.

Amos offers a vision of convergence. The plowman will meet the reaper. In that future moment, effort and outcome will no longer be distant from one another. The distance between planting and harvesting will close, allowing us to see, with clarity, the connection between what we give and what we receive—and to respond with a fuller sense of gratitude for the gifts Hashem places in our lives. ■

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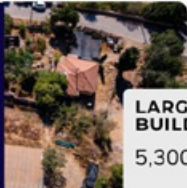
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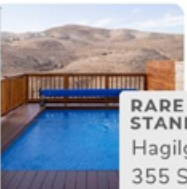
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RABBI AARON GOLDSCHIEDER

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Rav Kook: In Service to Hashem Pirkei Avot 3:11

Rav Chanina ben Dosa says: Anyone whose fear of sin precedes his wisdom, his wisdom will endure..." (Pirkei Avot 3:11)

Rav Chaim Volozhin explains the Mishna to mean that wisdom and intellect alone will not always guard a person from sin (*Ruach Chaim* 3:11). Sincere study of Torah which is geared to enriching and developing a deeper relationship with Hashem can be transformative. In this way, Torah learning becomes a vital catalyst in helping one to guard oneself and overcome sin.

This Mishna clearly echoes a verse in Mishlei: "The beginning of wisdom is the fear of the Lord" (Mishlei 9:10).

It should be noted that it is the sage Rav Chanina ben Dosa who emphasizes *yirat shamayim*, sincerity and awe of God. Rav Chanina ben Dosa is the talmudic personality perhaps most well-known for his deep devotion and an amazing capability to perform wonders.

Rav Kook comments on two Talmudic tales concerning this beloved and eminent sage.

First is the story of Rav Chanina ben Dosa visiting his teacher, Rebbe Yochanan ben

Zakai. During his stay, the son of Rebbe Yochanan became dangerously ill. Rebbe Yochanan turned to his student, Rav Chanina ben Dosa and asked that he pray for the healing of his son.

The young boy was healed. The wife of Rebbe Yochanan ben Zakai was surprised to see that her husband had asked his student to pray and that he did not pray himself. Rebbe Yochanan answered her with the following illustration: "He is like a servant before the king while I am like a minister before the King." (*Berachot* 34b).

What is the difference between a minister and an officer? Why is it that God is more attentive to the servant? One would think that the king would be more attentive to the minister.

Rav Kook explained that when one stands before God in prayer, one must put one's intellect and analysis aside. It is a time for purity of heart and child-like faith. Rebbe Yochanan ben Zakai recognized that his student Rav Chanina ben Dosa exemplified this quality - something that even he himself struggled to attain. Rav Chanina was a man of saintly devotion and extreme righteousness. Rav Chanina performed God's will like a faithful servant without questioning or deeper understanding. (*Ain Aya, Berachot* 34b)

Rav Chanina ben Dosa's teaching in the Mishnah in Pirkei Avot above (3:11) aligns squarely with his heartfelt prayer which healed the child of his master. According to Rav Chanina, purity of heart and sincere devotion is the ultimate pursuit in order to

attain the highest rung of spirituality.

A second poignant Talmudic story regarding Rav Chanina ben Dosa tells of an incident where a venomous snake was harming the inhabitants of a city. They called on the great sage for his help. Rabbi Chanina went to the snake's hole and placed his heel over it. The snake bit him and the snake immediately died while Rabbi Chanina remained totally unharmed. Rav Chanina lifted the snake and said: "It is not the snake that kills, but sin kills. (Berachot 33a)

Rav Kook explained, based on Rashi, that the snake mentioned in this text was not an ordinary snake. The term used in the Talmud is that it was an "arod". This creature is a fusion of two different species: a snake and perhaps a turtle. The mixed-breed that caused pain and suffering was a creature not created by God in the natural course of the days of creation. It is an aberration.

Rav Kook suggested that this fact concerning the "arod" is the key to understanding this aggadic text.

Sin is an act by which a person veers from the organic and healthy path which is natural to man. When man veers off the track, he painfully collides with obstacles that cause ache and suffering. Rav Chanina ben Dosa, who aligned every fiber of his being with the will of the Creator, was certain that if he encountered this deviant creature he could subdue its malice. (Ain Aya, Berachot 33a)

Thus, Rav Chanina declared that it is not a snake alone that is poisonous and inflicts pain; it is the sin of man that so often causes heartache and acute suffering. Rav Chanina serves as an exquisite exemplar of living a saintly,

blissful and joyful life. A life in which one aligns their will with the Will of the Almighty.

Another towering twentieth century rabbinic figure also pointed to the remarkable figure of Rav Chanina ben Dosa in accentuating the character trait of purity and exquisite faith. At a gala dinner held in Crown Heights on June 14, 1942, Rabbi Joseph. B. Soloveitchik delivered a short address, celebrating the 45th anniversary of the Lubavitch Yeshiva,

Tomche Tmimim. He compared the exceptional work of the Rebbe and Chabad

to the wondrous ways of the talmudic sage, Rav Chanina ben Dosa.

Rabbi Soloveitchik cited a lesser known episode recorded not in the Talmud, but in the Midrash (*Kohelet Raba* 1:1):

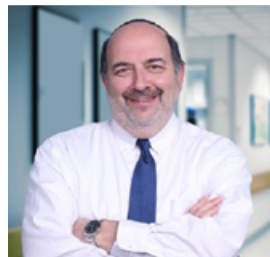
One of the greatest Talmudic sages of his day, Rabbi Chanina ben Dosa, saw his fellow townspeople taking various offerings to Jerusalem, "Everyone is taking offerings up to Jerusalem, but I take nothing?"

He was destitute and could not bring anything to the Holy Temple.

With this in mind he went to the empty lands outside the city and found a rock. He chipped it, chiseled it and polished it, and proclaimed: "Behold I take upon myself to take it up to Jerusalem!"



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Rabbi Chanina ben Dosa then sought to hire workers to transport the stone and five men chanced to come his way. The workers agreed to lug the boulder for a significant charge. The sage, however, did not have such a sum on him and the workers moved on.

So the Midrash continues: Five angels appeared as regular men and made a similar offer. Though they did not demand immediate payment, they had an added stipulation, "On condition that you bear some of the weight, at least place one of your fingers under the rock."

Rabbi Chanina ben Dosa accepted the offer, placing his finger beneath rock.

When they reached Jerusalem, Rabbi Chanina ben Dosa looked for the workers to pay their wages but they were nowhere to be found.

There is a deep message here. If the angels are carrying the rock, why did they ask him to

place his finger under the rock?

The answer is, because we are partners with G-d in healing the world. I need to lift my finger. I need to do something. I need to extend my arm. The rest G-d will do. ("Defying Laws of Nature": Yiddish address of Rav Joseph B. Soloveitchik, edited by Menachem Butler)

Rav Soloveitchik and Rav Kook both accentuate the pure, unadulterated faith in God we must all pursue and seek to attain. Indeed, such faith is a source of true blessing and a pathway to experiencing an elevated life in which one feels God's abiding closeness and love. ■



Rabbi Goldscheider's most recent OU Press Publication, "Torah United" on the weekly Parsha, can be ordered directly from Rabbi Goldscheider at aarong@ouisrael.org at a special price for Torah Tidbits readers.

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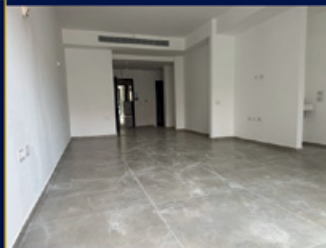
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Sefirat Ha'omer of Someone Who Does Not Understand

לעילוי נשמת
יואל אפרים בן אברהם עוזיאל זלצמן ז"ל

Question: In our *shul*, the *chazan* leads *sefirat ha'omer*. Now, the set *chazan* is an *avel* with a very weak background, and I believe that he does not know what the words of *sefirat ha'omer* mean. Is he capable of doing the *sefira* for those who want to be *yotzei* with him?

Answer: Your concern has some basis, but we will see that it is misplaced.

The general rule is that *mitzvot* of recitation, even those that can be done in any language (see list in *mishna*, Sota 32a), require the reciter to understand the language (Mishna Berura 62:3). However, if he is reciting in *lashon hakodesh* (biblical/rabbinic Hebrew), then one does not need to understand it (*ibid.*). Although one might thus think that your concern lacks merit, the Magen Avraham (489:2) says: "If he does not understand *lashon hakodesh* and counted in *lashon hakodesh*, he did not fulfill his *mitzva*, as he did not know what he counted, and this is not counting; so it seems to me." The Mishna Berura (489:5) accepts this ruling.

Rav Yaakov Emden (Mor U'ketzia to Magen Avraham *ibid.*) disagrees, and his opinion is cited, with different levels of acceptance, by the Birkei Yosef (489:7), Sha'arei Teshuva (489:3), and Kaf Hachayim (489:20). He bases

himself on Tosafot (Sota 32a), who implies that in the list of recitations in that *mishna*, they can be done in languages other than *lashon hakodesh* only if one understands them, implying that comprehension is not needed in *lashon hakodesh*. But the Mishna Berura (Sha'ar Hatziyun 489:6) argues that this misses the point, as *sefirat ha'omer* is not on the list, and the Magen Avraham was positing that it is a unique *mitzva*, as I will explain in my words. *Sefirat ha'omer* is not fundamentally a *mitzva* of recitation, but of cognitive counting, just with an additional condition of vocalization. If one parrots the words of the *sefira*, he has not fulfilled the spirit or the letter of the law. This dovetails with the opinions that one who is unsure of the day of *omer* cannot count multiple times to cover his bases (see Living the Halachic Process II, D-18); guessing is not counting.

If our explanation of the Magen Avraham is correct, it is unlikely there should be concern in your case. It is safe to assume that the *chazan* knows what day of the *omer* it is and that he is expressing that with the words he is saying, just that he **might** not know how the words correspond to the content. In that case, he is cognitively counting and regarding the recitation requirement, it is valid in *lashon hakodesh* even without specific understanding of the words. The Maharil Diskin (Kuntras Acharon

55) indeed assumes that the Magen Avraham agrees in such a case. Admittedly, apparently not all *Acharonim* make this distinction within the Magen Avraham (see Kaf Hachayim 489:20), and it is unclear what level of coordination between words and content is required. The Maharil Diskin also says that the matter is more complicated during the period of counting weeks also, as, if there are two countings, one might need to know with which words he is accomplishing each counting.

On a practical basis, your concern is based on the assumption that people are being *yotzei* their *sefira* through the *chazan*, which is actually not advisable. There is a *machloket Acharonim* whether one can fulfill *sefirat ha'omer* by listening to someone else's count, and the *minhag* is not to rely on others (Mishna Berura 489:5). Even if one missed a day of counting and needs to rely on the "leader" due to the *beracha*, he should **count himself**, and is *yotzei* only with the other's *beracha* preceding his counting. Regarding the *beracha*, the rule that it is valid in *lashon hakodesh* without understanding applies. Even if one does rely on the *chazan* for the whole thing, halachic

logic dictates that if the listener understands the words, it should not matter that the reciter does not (beyond our scope).

So, while it is wonderful if a rabbi is able to help anyone whose lack of understanding endangers his fulfillment of *sefirat ha'omer*, it is not a specific issue if that person "leads the *tzibbur*." ■

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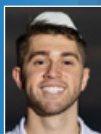
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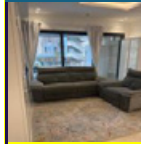
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לעילוי נשמת
מאיר יצחק בן יוסף אליהו הכהן ז"ל

The war of the past few years has shaken us all to our core. We lived through days of shattering pain, loss, and devastating injuries - and yet, from within that fire, something extraordinary emerged: an almost incomprehensible elevation of the human spirit. If anyone still thought we had raised a "screen addicted generation" - a lazy or pampered generation - reality proved them spectacularly wrong. What we have is an *incredible* generation. A generation on a mission. A generation whose self-sacrifice for Am Yisrael knows no limits. We saw soldiers ready to give everything. We saw heroic wives of reservists. We saw families who held each other up and carried one another through it all. At the end of a week like this one, we feel the sheer weight and magnitude of these days. In this unique time of Geula, a time in which we are witnessing miracles unseen by our ancestors for thousands of years, we also carry the profound ache of loss and the immeasurable grief of

bereaved families. Only someone who truly sees the greatness of these times, can begin to cope with the depth of the pain.

And it is *precisely now*, when the spirit is running so high, that we must face a painful reality that has been accompanying the Dati-Leumi community for years: the challenge of singlehood. Among us live tens of thousands of single men and women: high-quality, successful, value-driven individuals who excel in every area of life, yet when it comes to building a home, something remains stuck. The war, for all the strength of character it revealed, has made this reality even harder. The psychological pressure, the extended reserve duty, the shift in priorities - all of these have created a need for professional and personal support far greater than ever before.

This past Shabbat, with *Shagririm Balev*, we had the privilege of spending Shabbat together with eighty singles aged thirty and up, at a shabbaton organized in partnership with the OU. The Parshiyot of that week, Tazria-Metzora, perhaps hint at something deeply important. Parshat Metzora deals with someone who spoke lashon hara, someone who caused division within Am Yisrael. And specifically after a period of war, a war whose causes included division and machloket, the spiritual "tzara'at" of our time - we need the

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Koach of *Tazria*: the power of renewal, of growth, of new homes being born in Israel. "*Tsha ki tazria v'yalda...*" - "When a woman conceives and gives birth..." Every wedding is another act of teshuva, another act of tikun. The enemy chooses to destroy - and we choose to *build*. This past Shabbat we witnessed up close the profound longing to build a home, and the extraordinary human and spiritual strength of the incredible singles of our generation.

At *Shagririm Balev*, we believe with complete conviction that building homes in Israel is not a private matter - it is an urgent *national mission*. We cannot leave our singles to fight this battle alone. The mission of Religious Zionism right now is to invest in building the national home - one individual home at a time.

Today, we celebrate 513 happy couples who met through *Shagririm Balev*. Over **20,000 singles** are registered to the initiative, alongside more than **5,000 "ambassadors"** - friends and family members who have actively enlisted to the effort of shidduchim. This approach, built on personal connection and trust, is proving itself: B"H, every two days we celebrate a wedding.

To keep growing, we need *you* as partners. Maintaining the technology platform, providing professional guidance, producing singles events, and training ambassadors - all of this demands enormous resources. Our next goal is clear and non-negotiable: **a wedding every single day**.

We are calling on you to join this revolution. Here's how you can help:

1. **Join as an Ambassador** - Dedicate time every week to creating shidduchim for people you know.
2. **Spread the word** - Encourage singles to register and take advantage of the

platform.

3. **Support us financially** - Partner with our current fundraising campaign ([link on the back page of this bulletin](#)). Every donation is a brick in a home yet to be built - and please, encourage others to give too. Without resources, we simply cannot move forward.

Together - *k'ish echad b'lev echad* - we will build hundreds and thousands of new homes in Israel, and add another floor to the building of our geula. B"H, through the power of *arvut hadadit*, may we merit to see building after building, *adei ad*. ■



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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**.

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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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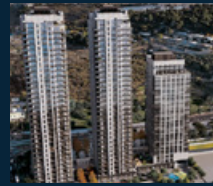
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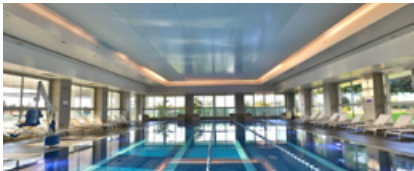
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