

PHILOTORAH

יהי רצון מלפניך ה' אלהינו וא' להי אבותינו שתשלח מהרה רפואה שלמה מן השמים, רפואת הנפש ורפואת הגוף לפצועי המלחמה, ולנפגעי מעשי טרור ואנטישמיות בישראל – ובכל מקום שהם, עם שאר חולי ישראל. אמן.

May HaShem protect our soldiers and the hostages; may He send Refu'ah Sh'leima to the many injured; may He console the bereaved families and all of Israel, and may He end this war with success and peace for Klal Yisrael.



קדשים

אבות – פרק ב'

YERUSHALAYIM

in/out times for Parshat

K'DOSHIM

ג' אייר ה'תשפ"ד

May 10-11, '24



6:51PM

PLAG (earliest) **6:01PM**



8:07PM

R' Tam **8:44PM**

For other locales,
click on the Z'MANIM link



KIDDUSH L'VANA

With the molad on Wednesday, May 8th around noon-time, the first opportunity for Minhag Yerushalayim (which is three full days after the molad for KL) is Motza'ei Shabbat Parshat K'doshim (May 11th).

Because Motza"Sh is the most popular time for KL, many shuls/people will say KL this Motza'ei Shabbat, not just the Minhag Yerushalayim people.

Those who wait for KL until seven days have past following the molad, will have their first op on Wednesday night, May 15th.

BIRKAT HA-ILANOT

If you haven't said it yet, you've got only Tuesday and Wednesday (29,30 Nisan) to say it. Because of two Adars this year, by now it will be difficult to find fruit trees in blossom. If you can't find any, look at olive trees - if they have the white flowers (they don't look too much like flowers, but they are - no offense, you special ATZEI ZAYIT) and olives have not yet started to develop, the bracha can be said - but only until Nisan ends. See PT link.

Yom HaZikaron & YOM HA'ATZMA'UT

Officially, Memorial Day for fallen Israeli soldiers and victims of terror, is on the 4th of Iyar, followed by Yom HaAtzmaut on the 5th of Iyar.

However, when Leil Yom HaZikaron would be on Motza'ei Shabbat, in order to avoid Chilul Shabbat in the preparations for ceremonies and other ways the day is marked, both Yom HaZikaron and Yom HaAtzmaut are postponed by one day.

Yom HaZikaron, therefore, is on Sunday night and Monday (May 12-13) and Yom HaAtzmaut is on Monday night and Tuesday (May 13-14).

Note that Yom HaAtzmaut is on the general calendar date that the State was declared 76 years ago.

Jewish and general dates either coincide or are a day off every 19 years (76 equals four 19-year cycles). This year, HEI IYAR and May 14th are a day off (that is common), but the postponement results in the match of dates on the calendar.

It (almost) goes without saying, that we remember and mourn fallen soldiers from 76 years ago as well as those who have fallen in the past seven months - and many different times in between.

More in next week's PhiloTorah...

K'DOSHIM

30th of 54 sedras;
7th of 10 in Vayikra



Written on 109 lines • ranks: 49th

4 Parshiyot, 3 open and 1 closed

64 p'sukim, ranks 49th (9th in Vayikra)

868 words, ranks 49th (9th in Vayikra)

3229 letters, ranks 49 (9th in Vayikra)

MITZVOT

51 mitzvot - 13 pos. and 38 prohibitions

K'doshim is 5th place on the mitzvot/sedra list, following Ki Teitzei's 74, Emor's 63, R'ei's 55, and Mishpatim's 53.

However, on the Mitzva-density list, K'doshim is number 1. If we create a new statistic of mitzvot per 1000 p'sukim, K'doshim heads the list with a MD of 797 ($51/64 \cdot 1000 = 796.875$). Ki Teitzei has a MD of 673. Emor, 508. R'ei, 436½. Mishpatim, 449. Just for comparison purposes, Acharei's MD is $28/80 \cdot 1000 = 350$.

The 17 sedras without mitzvot have MDs of 0. The 1-mitzva sedras vary in MD depending on number of p'sukim.

Sedra-by-Sedra Aliya Summary

[P> X:Y (Z)] and [S> X:Y (Z)] indicate start of a parsha p'tucha or s'tuma. X:Y is Perek:Pasuk of the beginning of the parsha; (Z) is the number of p'sukim in the parsha.

Numbers in [square brackets] are the Mitzva-count of Sefer HaChinuch AND Rambam's Sefer HaMitzvot. A=ASEI (positive mitzva); L=LAV (prohibition). X:Y is the perek and pasuk from which the mitzva comes.

Kohen - First Aliya - 17 p'sukim - 16:1-17

[S> 19:1 (22)] K'DOSHIM TIHYU! BE HOLY! - HOW? In light of the exceptionally large number of mitzvot in this sedra (K'doshim), one can fairly assume that the answer to that question is - by the observance of mitzvot. But, this means more than "just going through the motions". It means a Torah way of life, mitzvot for the right motives and with the right enthusiasm, and performance of mitzvot motivated by AHAVAT HASHEM, love of G-d (not just YIR'AT HASHEM, fear of G-d - but that too).

One must revere his parents [212, A211 19:3], yet keep the Shabbat, meaning (among other things) that if one's parents tell him to violate the Shabbat (or any other mitzva - Torah ordained or rabbinic), he may not listen to them. (Neither may he be disrespectful in his refusal to obey.) Parents and their children are all commanded by G-d to keep the Shabbat (and all mitzvot).

We may not "turn towards" idolatry in thought or words [213, L10 19:4] nor may we make idols [214, L3 19:4]. This specifically prohibits making idols for others. Both these mitzvot are among

the many that are designed to keep the Jew far away from idolatry.

Korbanot must be offered in the Beit HaMikdash in a proper and pleasing manner. Specifically, one must keep to the time limits presented for eating sacred meat [215, L131 19:8]. Violation carries a death penalty from heaven.

Watch this next set of mitzvot: Leave the corner of your field uncut, so that poor people might come and find grain to reap [216, A120 19:10]; do not reap your entire field [217, A210 19:9]. A positive mitzva and a prohibition that basically say the same thing. Here's another pair: Leave the gleanings of the field for the poor [218, A121 19:10]; do not take the gleanings [219, L211 19:9]. And then these two pairs of mitzvot are doubled again - each pair of mitzvot is counted separately as applied to a vineyard [220-223; A123-124, L212-213 19:9-10].

This is one of many examples of the statement made by Rabi Chananya ben Akashya in the last mishna of Masechet Makot, the mishna chosen to conclude the reading/learning of each perek of Pirkei Avot. He said: G-d wanted to merit the People of Israel, therefore he 'heaped' upon them Torah and Mitzvot. Note that it doesn't say that He merely gave us mitzvot - but rather, he heaped (HIRBA) them upon us. This suggests multiple merit for proper observance (but multiple demerits for violations - it is a double-edged sword).

Stealing [224, L244 19:11], denying holding that which belongs to someone else [225, L248 19:11], and swearing to that effect [226, L249 19:11] are all forbidden. Swearing falsely [227, L61 19:12] is forbidden.

That the Torah says one who swears falsely disgraces G-d's name, is echoed by Rambam when he distinguishes between 'serious' sins and 'light' sins. Rambam puts into the serious category all sins that carry a death penalty... and swearing falsely. So destructive are false and vain oaths to the under-pinnings of society, that it is placed with the capital offenses (even though swearing falsely is not per se a capital offense).

Notice something else. Denying that you are holding someone else's possession is a LAV, a Torah prohibition. So is swearing falsely. And so is swearing that you don't have someone's possession when you do, is also a prohibition. Counted separately, even though that violation is covered by two other mitzvot LO TAASEI. Rabi Chananya again. And maybe other reasons as well for the apparent 'duplication'.

Withholding someone's property [228, L247 19:13], robbery [229, L245 19:13], and delaying payment of a laborer [230, L238 19:13] are prohibited. Most people would probably rationalize the situation and not consider delaying payment as a form of theft. The Torah implies that one is (can be?) as serious as the other.

There are many everyday situations for which the prohibition of delaying wages apply: hair-dresser or barber, taxi driver, babysitter... In most cases, people pay for services rendered when they are expected to. We all pay a cab driver at the conclusion of a ride. No one says to the driver, "Sorry, I haven't got the money for the fare; I'll pay you tomorrow." But the mitzvot still apply.

It is suggested that one has KAVANA for the mitzva of paying wages on time, when one pays for a taxi ride or a visit to the hair dresser...

Now take this example: Your regular cleaning lady finishes a few hours of work and you are supposed to pay her, let's say, 150₪. You don't have change. Only a 200₪ note. If you tell her that you don't have change and that you'll pay her the next time she comes, you are in possible violation of mitzva 230, above, and in non-fulfillment of the positive command to pay a laborer on time (counted elsewhere). If the worker freely agrees, without any hard feelings, to wait for payment - then the issur was not violated, but the positive command was not fulfilled either. And if the worker only half-heartedly agrees to the delay - because she is, perhaps, embarrassed to tell you that she needs the money now, then the prohibition is also violated by you. Rather, take steps to get the change, or give her the 200₪ and ask her to bring you change the next time she comes. No violation on your part and a

mitzva has been performed by your hand.

It is forbidden to curse a fellow Jew [231, L317 19:14]; and one may not place a stumbling block before the blind [232, L299 19:14], meaning [not exclusively] that one may not mislead or entrap others. Care must be taken not to mislead anyone, even inadvertently. This can include stretching the truth or saying something that is not actually a lie, but it will convey to others that which is not really so. (Helping someone do the wrong thing is part of this prohibition - even if the other knows what he's doing and wants to do it.)

Levi - Second Aliya - 8 p'sukim - 19:15-22

Do not pervert justice [233, L273 19:15], do not favor a poor person in a judgment, nor show honor to a prominent person during a trial [234, L275 19:15]. We must always carry out true justice [235, A177 19:15]. Once again, notice that we have a positive mitzva which, in essence, is the "flip side" of several prohibitions, the violation of which results in distorting and perverting justice.

Even though these mitzvot are directed to judges and the courts, each individual Jew must draw from these mitzvot the importance of being fair and apply some of these rules on an informal basis, to everyday life.

Neither gossip nor slander (regardless of whether what you say is true or false) [236, L301 19:16];

Even plain gossip is prohibited - it's called R'CHILUT. Malicious gossip is worse - it's called LASHON HARA. The prohibition is from the same words in the Torah - LO TEILEICH RACHIL B'AMECHA. An even worse level of the same prohibition is spreading a lie to defame someone - this is called MOTZI SHEIM RA. None of it is good.

Do not stand by while your fellow is in danger of life, limb, or property [237, L297 19:16]. Do not hate your fellow Jew in your heart [238, L302 19:17]; reproach your fellow SENSITIVELY [239, A205 19:17] being careful to avoid embarrassing him [240, L303 19:17] (even while reproaching).

Notice: A person is reproaching a fellow Jew for doing a sin, yet he must avoid embarrassing him - how much more so (KAL VACHOMER) must we avoid ever embarrassing another individual who has done nothing wrong.

Do not take revenge [241, L304 19:18] nor bear a grudge [242, L305 19:18]; "Love thy neighbor..." [243, A206 19:18]. Notice the constant reminder: "I am G-d" or words to that effect. Being nice to others is not just nice; it is part of Torah and the fulfillment of G-d's commandments.

It is forbidden to cross-breed animals of different species [244, L217 19:19], to sow mixed seeds [245, L215 19:19],

and to wear Shaatnez, mixtures of wool and linen in a garment. Note that in this one pasuk, there is a forbidden animal-animal mix, a plant-plant mix, and an animal-plant mix, making the point (among others) that G-d allows us a dominance over nature but has imposed restrictions and limits.

Shlishi - Third Aliya - 10 p'sukim - 19:23-32

Next we find the complicated issue of the atonement for improper relations with a maidservant who is partially freed and partially still a slave. In some cases, a Korban ASHAM is required.

[P> 19:23 (10)] Fruits of the first three years of a tree's life are forbidden, i.e. they are ORLA [246, L192 19:23]. The 4th year's yield is sacred [247, A119 19:24] and must be eaten only in Yerushalayim, or redeemed and the money used for food and drink in Yerushalayim. From the fifth year on, the fruits are permitted. One may not eat gluttonously [248, L195 19:26]. One may not consult and rely on omens, divination, conjuring, or some aspects of astrology [249,250; L32,33 19:26]. Shaving the temple area of the head is forbidden [251, L43 19:27] as is shaving the face with a razor [252, L44 19:27].

Permanent tattooing is forbidden [253, L41 19:28]. Protect your daughters from loose behavior. Keep the Shabbat and respect the place of the Mikdash

(even when no Beit HaMikdash stands there) [254, A21 19:30].

[There is a dispute as to whether the Torah-level sanctity of the place of the Mikdash applies when no Mikdash stands. Some say it is d'Rabanan in our time; others say it remains Torah law.]

Ov and Yid'oni (mediums and wizards) are forbidden [255,256; L8,9 19:31]. One must rise and otherwise respect the elderly and Torah scholars [257, A209 19:32].

R'vi'i - Fourth Aliya - 5 p'sukim - 19:33-37

[S> 19:33 (5)] One must not take advantage of the newcomer to the Land (convert and/or stranger). The convert shall be treated with love; we must learn from our Egyptian experience. It is forbidden to cheat with any false measures [258, L271 19:35]; one must be honest in weights and measures [259, A208 19:36]. Keep all of G-d's statutes and laws.

Chamishi - 5th Aliya - 7 p'sukim - 20:1-7

[P> 20:1 (27)] The punishment for Molech (a perverse idolatrous practice involving child-sacrifice) is death by stoning. G-d will cut off the one who serves Molech. If society does not punish the violator, G-d will. So too for the practice of Ov and Yid'oni.

Sanctify yourself and be holy.

As the sedra started with the command to Be Holy, the major section of mitzvot in Parshat K'doshim concludes with the same command (different wording).

Shishi Sixth Aliya 15 p'sukim - 20:8-22

Preserve the statutes and do them, for G-d sanctifies us because of our deeds.

Cursing one's parents, even after their deaths, is forbidden [260, L318 20:9], and is a capital offense.

The Torah reiterates the forbidden relationships that were presented at the end of Acharei. They are all capital offenses. The specific methods of execution vary, but it is in this context that Rambam learns the command to Sanhedrin to carry out the punishment of "internal burning" when called for [261, A208 20:14].

Again, the Torah commands us to preserve all of the mitzvot, thus preventing the Land (of Israel) from expelling us.

Sh'VII Seventh Aliya 5 p'sukim - 20:23-27

It is forbidden to follow the practices of the nations amongst whom we find ourselves [262, L30 20:23]. This ISUR applies to idolatrous practices, immoral acts, and that which has no apparent reason. There is no prohibition of following a non-Jewish practice that is reasonable and constructive.

In order to inherit the land of Israel, we must not behave in the abominable ways of nations that preceded us. We must distinguish between kosher and non-kosher animals (and life-styles); we must be holy and distinct from others. We are not automatically different from anyone else. Torah makes us different. Torah gives us our unique identities.

Every Jew must play a dual role. We are each individuals and we are part of Klal Yisrael. We are exhorted to keep the Torah as individuals, but we are also "advised" to be faithful to G-d so that tragedies will not happen to the People of Israel as a whole.

Ov & Yid'oni are punished by stoning.

Maftir is the final 3 p'sukim. They make a powerful summary of all the mitzvot of Acharei and K'doshim. There is a repeat of the command to be holy, and the reason: that G-d is holy. And we find G-d's promise that He will keep us apart from the other nations, to be His.

Haftara 9 p'sukim

Amos 9:7-15 short haftara

Let's put it like this: There is a haftara for each sedra. And that includes one for Parshat Acharei and one for K'doshim. These two haftarot are one from Amos - HALO CHIVNEI CHUSHIYIM - let's call it HALO. and the other is from Yechezkeil - let's call it HATISHPOT. It is not clear which haftara is for which sedra - some Chumashim have HALO for Acharei and HATISHPOT for K'doshim, and some Chumashim have it the other way

around.

In all one-Adar years, Acharei and K'doshim are combined and HALO is the haftara for the double sedra. It doesn't matter which haftara goes with which haftara, everyone (Ashkenazim) read HALO when the sedras are combined.

In two-Adar years, the sedras are read separately, and...

In most of these year-types, one or the other sedra has a special haftara that pre-empts the regular haftara. When that happens, regardless of whether it is Acharei or K'doshim that has a special haftara, the other gets HALO. Acharei is sometimes Shabbat HaGadol. We then read HALO for K'doshim. K'doshim can sometimes be Shabbat Rosh Chodesh Iyar. Then the week before, we read HALO for Acharei. Sometimes one or the other (different for Israel and Chutz LaAretz) is Machar Chodesh. The other one gets HALO.

If it looks to you like HATISHPOT is not a popular haftara, you'd be right. And why is that so? Because HATISHPOT is very down on Yerushalayim. HATISHPOT is sometimes referred to as TO'EIVAT YERUSHALAYIM.

This year, 5784, is the one year-type of the 14 different year-types of our Calendar, that neither Acharei nor K'doshim is a 'special'.

In that case, one of them gets HALO and the other gets HATISHPOT.

Some say that it should be HALO for Acharei and HATISHPOT for K'doshim; some say the other way around.

And finally, to YERUSHALAYIM. There is a prevalent minhag to read HALO for both Acharei and K'doshim, resulting in Yechezkeil's HATISHPOT haftara NEVER being read.

Prevalent minhag, but not without controversy. Some authorities object to reading the same haftara for two consecutive sedras. Yet, there is another example of that being done.

Do you know when and where a haftara is read on two consecutive weeks?

5784's year-type is coded MEM-ZAYIN-CHET, meaning it is a Shana M'uberet, that began on Shabbat (ZAYIN) and its Kislev is CHASEIR, the 30th of that month is removed. Only this year-type has both Acharei and K'doshim separate and neither is a 'special'. The last time we had a year like this was back in 5757 (1997) - 27 years ago. And before that in 5733 (1974, 24 years earlier). It is scheduled next for 5801, 17 years from now. It doesn't happen often.

The haftara basically clarifies the "deal part" of the command to be holy. Amos stresses that we will be just like all other of G-d's children on Earth, no different from the Ethiopians, the Philistines, etc. That is, of course, if we don't remain faithful to G-d. Because if we do, and keep the mitzvot sincerely, then the promises of the Torah will be

realized and we will be unique among the nations. It's really up to us. That's our challenge.

See Rabbi Winkler's haftara atricle following for his presentation of HATISHPOT.

Bringing the Prophets to Life

Weekly insights into the Haftara by Rabbi Nachman (Neil) Winkler

Author of Bringing the Prophets to Life (Gefen Publ.)

See the sedra-summary about which haftara will be read in Jerusalem

Here you will find the Yechezkeil haftara - HATISHPOT

K'doshim - 16 p'sukim - Yechezkeil 22:1-16

The Hidden Consolation

See the Sedra-Summary (above) for details as to the rareness of this haftara.

The twenty-second perek of Sefer Yechezkel is filled with some of the strongest denunciations of Israel found in all of the Tanach. This haftara selection does not focus upon those many mitzvot we hear throughout the parasha - mitzvot that would help bring the nation closer Hashem and place them on a greater level of kedusha. Instead, Chazal chose this nevu'a that connected to the final section of the parasha, where the Torah warns Israel against the practice of the lowest forms of human behavior, including adultery,

incest and child sacrifice. Indeed, Rav Amnon Bazak brilliantly points out how the prophet lists nine of his generation's abominations (in verses 7-11) - and ALL of them are included in the two chapters of parashat Kedoshim (19 & 20)!

Now, there is little question as to why Yechezkel attacks Israel with this powerful prophecy as G-d Himself refers to Yerushalayim as IR HADAMIM - a city of bloodshed! The generation of Yechezkel was guilty of committing the worst of atrocities, including bloodshed and idolatry. The navi knew that these people needed to hear these harsh words in the hope that they would change their sinful behavior. However, the question that concerns us is why our ancient scholars chose this prophecy to be read for all future generations (albeit rarely) on this Shabbat. And, truthfully, I find it especially troubling that our generation, a generation whose parents and/or grandparents survived the destruction of one-third of our nation - must now hear these painful words on the very Shabbat when we look forward to the upcoming celebration of Yom Ha'atzma'ut! Would it not have been more fitting to have chosen a haftara - even one that harshly criticized the sinful nation - but would have included some message of hope and promise for the future? Would that not have been a message more timely and appreciated by our generation, rather than one that closes with the prediction of exile and dispersion?

Yes. It is, as I said, a very UNpleasant message for us to hear on this Shabbat.

Which is why it is so important to review the entire haftara carefully - which I what I had to do. Because the key to "unlocking" the hope hidden in this depressing and frightful prophecy can be found in the final two p'sukim.

After warning of the coming of galut, Hashem promises: ...V'HATIMOTI TUM'ATEICH MIMEICH - that in the Diaspora, G-d will "remove your contamination" - a divine pledge that the oppression of exile will purify you. Hashem predicts that the many years of suffering in hostile lands will bring the nation to recognize their misdeeds and cleanse them from the sins of the past. Indeed, the very last pasuk guarantees that at that time, Israel would return to their land - a return that would be witnessed by all - and THIS, the prophet closes, will prove to His children that He is Hashem, their G-d.

THIS is the consolation that we find in our haftara, and THIS is what we, our generation, are witnessing today. ✨

The fun way to go over the weekly sedra with your children, grandchildren, Shabbat guests

K'DOSHIM



Shabbat candles are reminder to keep the Shabbat, which is attached to Reverence for parents and to Reverence for the Mikdash • B'samim is for Havdala, not our regular havdala, but between kosher and non-kosher animals and between us and other nations - mentioned at the end of the sedra. [Some hold that this IS the source of the mitzva of havdala on Motza"Sh] • Mickey Mouse as the Sorcerer's Apprentice represents the prohibitions of divination, omens, and other "black arts" • and so does

the crystal ball • heart in the Torah is a pictogram for Love thy fellow being a great Torah rule • Lifesaver is for the mitzva not to stand by idly while someone is in danger • Grapes and wheat refer to many agricultural mitzvot in the sedra - PE'AH, LEKET, and others • Thief is various prohibitions related to stealing • the zonkey is a reminder of the prohibition of cross breeding animals • Scale is weighing a 1 kilo weight against another 1 kilo weight, and they don't balance. Either the weights are off or the scale is off, or both. ASUR to use false weights and measures or even to possess them • Razor - prohibited to shave one's face with one • First 3 trees with fruit stand for ORLA, then the 4th year is marked KODESH - the fruit is KADOSH. 5th year's fruit is to eat • Photo of the actor who played the character Tattoo on Fantasy Island, reminding us of the prohibition of tattooing • the stamp is of Helen Keller, who was both deaf and blind, which we find in a figurative sense in the pasuk that prohibits cursing the deaf and placing a stumbling block before the blind • On Sukkot we add into Birkat HaMazon a petition to G-d, that He should restore the fallen SUKKAT DAVID. The Sukka of David is the Beit HaMikdash. The origin of this mini-prayer for Sukkot is found in the haftara this week • passenger paying cab driver for the ride - double fulfillment of the mitzva to pay someone you hired on time and the prohibition of delaying payment • Issur of ELOHEI MASEICHA • The haftara of both Acharei and K'doshim (in many shuls in Jerusalem) begins with the word HALO.

There is a picture of gold rods. The solid ones are marked NO and the hollow ones are marked YES. The cartoon character is the Hollow Knight. An Egged bus sign quoting the command in this week's sdra to stand for the elderly. And one Unexplained.

לע"נ
הרב יעקב צבי ב"ר דוד אריה
ז"ל
Rabbi Jonathan Sacks z"l

Judaism's Three Voices

K'doshim

The nineteenth chapter of Vayikra, with which our parsha begins, is one of the supreme statements of the ethics of the Torah. It's about the right, the good and the holy, and it contains some of Judaism's greatest moral commands: "You shall love your neighbour as yourself", and "Let the stranger who lives among you be like your native-born. Love him as yourself, for you were strangers in Egypt."

But the chapter is also surpassingly strange. It contains what looks like a random jumble of commands, many of which have nothing whatever to do with ethics and only the most tenuous connection with holiness:

Do not mate different kinds of animals.

Do not plant your field with two kinds of

seed.

Do not wear clothing woven of two kinds of material. (Vayikra 19:19)

Do not eat any meat with the blood still in it.

Do not practise divination or sorcery.

Do not cut the hair at the sides of your head or clip off the edges of your beard. (Vayikra 19:26-28)

And so the list goes on. What have these to do with the right, the good, and the holy?

To understand this we have to engage in an enormous leap of insight into the unique moral/social/spiritual vision of the Torah, so unlike anything we find elsewhere.

The West has had many attempts at defining a moral system. Some focused on rationality, others on emotions like sympathy and empathy. For some the central principle was service to the state, for others moral duty, for yet others the greatest happiness of the greatest number. These are all forms of moral simplicity.

Judaism insists on the opposite: moral complexity. The moral life isn't easy. Sometimes duties or loyalties clash. Sometimes reason says one thing, emotion another. More fundamentally, Judaism identified three distinct moral sensibilities each of which has its own voice and vocabulary. They are [1] the ethics of the king, [2] the ethics of the

kohen and fundamentally, [3] the ethics of the prophet.

Yirmiyahu and Yechezkeil talk about their distinctive sensibilities:

For the teaching of the law [Torah] by the kohen will not cease, nor will counsel [EITZA] from the wise [CHACHAM], nor the word [DAVAR] from the prophets. (Yirmiyahu 18:18)

They will go searching for a vision [CHAZON] from the prophet, kohanic instruction in the law [TORAH] will cease, the counsel [EITZA] of the elders will come to an end. (Yechezkeil 7:26)

Kohanim think in terms of Torah. Prophets have "the Word" or "a vision". Elders and the wise have EITZA. What does this mean?

Kings and their courts are associated in Judaism with wisdom - CHOCHMA, EITZA and their synonyms. Several books of Tanach, most conspicuously Mishlei and Kohelet, are books of "wisdom" of which the supreme exemplar was King Solomon. Wisdom in Judaism is the most universal form of knowledge, and the Wisdom literature is the closest the Hebrew Bible comes to the other literature of the ancient Near East, as well as the Hellenistic Sages. It is practical, pragmatic, based on experience and observation; it is judicious, prudent. It is a prescription for a life that is safe and sound, without excess or extremes, but hardly dramatic or transformative. That is the voice of

wisdom, the virtue of kings.

The prophetic voice is quite different, impassioned, vivid, radical in its critique of the misuse of power and the exploitative pursuit of wealth. The prophet speaks on behalf of the people, the poor, the downtrodden, the abused. He or she thinks of the moral life in terms of relationships: between God and humanity and between human beings themselves. The key terms for the prophet are TZEDEK (distributive justice), MISHPAT (retributive justice), CHESSED (loving kindness) and RACHAMIM (mercy, compassion). The prophet has emotional intelligence, sympathy and empathy, and feels the plight of the lonely and oppressed. Prophecy is never abstract. It doesn't think in terms of universals. It responds to the here and now of time and place. The kohen hears the word of God for all time. The prophet hears the word of God for this time.

The ethic of the Kohen, and of holiness generally, is different again. The key activities of the kohen are L'HAVDIL - to discriminate, distinguish and divide - and L'HOROT - to instruct people in the law, both generally as teachers and in specific instances as judges. The key words of the KOHEN are KODESH and CHOL (holy and secular), TAMEI and TAHOR (impure and pure).

The single most important passage in the Torah that speaks in the kohen's voice is chapter 1 of B'reishit, the

narrative of creation. Here too a key verb is L'HAVDIL, to divide, which appears five times. God divides between light and dark, the upper and lower waters, and day and night. Other key words are "bless" - God blesses the animals, humankind, and the seventh day; and "sanctify" (KADESH) - at the end of creation God sanctifies the Shabbat. Overwhelmingly, elsewhere in the Torah the verb L'HAVDIL and the root KADOSH occur in a kohanic context; and it is the kohanim who bless the people.

The task of the kohen, like God at creation, is to bring order out of chaos. The kohen establishes boundaries in both time and space. There are holy times and holy places, and each time and place has its own integrity, its own setting in the total scheme of things. The kohen's protest is against the blurring of boundaries so common in pagan religions - between gods and humans, between life and death, between the sexes and so on. A sin, for the kohen, is an act in the wrong place, and its punishment is exile, being cast out of your rightful place. A good society, for the kohen, is one in which everything is in its proper place, and the kohen has special sensitivity toward the stranger, the person who has no place of his or her own.

The strange collection of commands in K'doshim thus turns out not to be strange at all. The holiness code sees love and justice as part of a total vision of an ordered universe in which each

thing, person and act has their rightful place, and it is this order that is threatened when the boundary between different kinds of animals, grain, fabrics is breached; when the human body is lacerated; or when people eat blood, the sign of death, in order to feed life.

In the secular West we are familiar with the voice of wisdom. It is common ground between the books of Mishlei and Kohelet and the great sages from Aristotle to Marcus Aurelius to Montaigne. We know, too, the prophetic voice and what Einstein called its "almost fanatical love of justice". We are far less familiar with the kohanic idea that just as there is a scientific order to nature, so there is a moral order, and it consists in keeping separate the things that are separate, and maintaining the boundaries that respect the integrity of the world God created and seven times pronounced good.

The kohanic voice is not marginal to Judaism. It is central, essential. It is the voice of the Torah's first chapter. It is the voice that defined the Jewish vocation as "a kingdom of kohanim and a holy nation". It dominates Vayikra, the central book of the Torah. And whereas the prophetic spirit lives on in aggada, the kohen's voice prevails in halacha. And the very name Torah - from the verb L'HOROT - is a kohanic word.

Perhaps the idea of ecology, one of the key discoveries of modern times, will allow us to understand better the kohen's vision and its code of holiness,

both of which see ethics not just as practical wisdom or prophetic justice but also as honouring the deep structure - the sacred ontology - of being. An ordered universe is a moral universe, a world at peace with its Creator and itself.

Around the Shabbat Table:

Let's consider the voices of the king, the prophet, and the kohen throughout Tanach.

- (1) Can you think of times where you hear each different perspective shine in different ways?
- (2) Why do you think having a more nuanced approach to laws of holiness is important?
- (3) Which "voice" do you identify with the most when making decisions? Ethical, passionate, or discerning?

Y'HI ZICHRO BARUCH

Message from the Parsha

Rabbi Katriel (Kenneth) Brander

What 'Holy' Means Today

"Be Holy." With these simple words, the Torah poses a great challenge for each of us. We, the descendants of those who stood at Sinai, are bound by 613

commandments, with a litany of details regarding their observance, clarified by the rabbinic tradition. The Torah's commandments guide us both morally and spiritually, providing instruction for how we are meant to treat our neighbors and the needy, to create sacred spaces, to engage in worship, and so much more. The Torah offers a comprehensive blueprint for a deep and rich religious life.

Yet with all this, the Ramban, in his commentary to the opening verse of our Parsha, claims there is more to be done than what is listed in the Five Books of the Torah. He points out that someone acting cleverly could find ways to technically abide by all that the Torah asks of us, yet nonetheless engage in behaviors unbecoming of a servant of God - what Ramban terms a **NAVAL BIRSHUT HATORAH**, a degenerate within the guidelines of the Torah. Hence, Ramban argues, the Torah has to command us to look beyond the letter of the law, and **K'DOSHIM TIHYU** - to be holy - namely, to act in ways that accord with the Divine will, even when doing so is not specified in the Torah.

As we read this parsha, we are fighting for our future as a nation in the Land of Israel and against antisemitic threats throughout the Diaspora. This struggle must inspire us to ask ourselves, what type of Jewish community do we wish to safeguard? In these tumultuous times, what are the goals of this sacred people

that we wish to secure? The responsibility of K'DOSHIM TIHYU is the essential spiritual genetic code that we wish to protect and actualize.

The sacred requirement to sanctify God's name, to comport ourselves in ways that reflect the Divine, takes on even greater urgency in a time of war. For example, addressing the Torah's instruction that the military encampment of the Jewish people must be 'holy' (D'varim 23:15), Abarbanel writes:

It is the practice of the nations in their wars that they eat every abomination and are steeped in promiscuity; stealing and theft abound, yet none are ashamed. And they similarly gird themselves in viciousness, rage, and anger, since their strength is of human origin. Yet the encampment of Israel is holy, accompanied by Divine Providence, for their warring is conducted not through human strength [alone], but through divine power, to save them from attack and to combat their enemies. Therefore it is fitting that their actions should be holy and pure.

This certainly has been, and remains, the challenge we face in this moment - maintaining our holiness, and with it our sense of dignity towards all people, even in the midst of wartime. The fact that the IDF implements protocols to ensure the local population's safety and health that are above and beyond international law is consistent with the ideal of being holy. There is no doubt that this is what

Hashem asks of us right now: not only to follow the Torah's stated high bar for conducting war justly, but to succeed in channeling greater divine light into the world through our actions. It may not be appreciated in the short term, but history will bear witness if we live up to this mandate of a posture of holiness on the battlefield and in our civil society. That is how we emulate God in this world, and preserve the Divine that lies within every one of our souls.



PhiloTorah D'var Torah

ZEH HAYOM

ASA HASHEM - NAGILA V'NISM'CHA VO

Yes, I'm talking about the 5th of Iyar, the day - 76 years ago - when the State of Israel was declared.

True, Yom HaAtzmaut is on the 6th of Iyar this year, and in some years it can be on the 3rd or 4th of Iyar. When you know that Yom HaAtzmaut's date is moved - more often than not - in order to avoid possible Chilul Shabbat, the day is invested with additional K'dusha.

It isn't just that the State was established on 5 Iyar that makes Yom HaAtzmaut worthy of our joyous thanks and acknowledgment to HKBH for it.

Throughout the 1878 years between the destruction of the Second Beit HaMik-

dash and Statehood, Jews were guests and strangers in many countries around the world - often oppressed and often with many restrictions. Even attempting to return to Eretz Yisrael, they often met with hostility and restrictions on numbers - quotas.

From 5 Iyar 5708 - May 14th 1948 - Eretz Yisrael was governed by Jews and all Jews were welcomed with open arms. Quota replaced by Right of Return.

The country is Jewish. Its official day of rest is Shabbat. Its calendar runs from Tishrei through Elul. (Yes, the January, February calendar is also used.) You can date checks (remember those?) with only the Hebrew date. Mezuzot on doorposts is the norm, not an anomaly. We have an army (as we well know at this very moment) where all food served is kosher and minyanim are readily available.

And there's much more. But let's get to some other points.

Ever hear this: I'd celebrate Yom HaAtzmaut if it weren't in the Omer.

I've heard that more than once.

Here's my answer: The Shulchan Aruch discusses a Brit Mila during the Omer. It says that the father and Sandak (and even the Mohel) can shave and take a haircut for the Brit, because it is their Yom Tov. And if you see the Hand of God in the establishment of the Medina, then that becomes your (and our) Yom Tov.

(The last sentence was mine.)

With the 33 day rule for the Omer (mourning restrictions, that is), there are different ways of counting. If you take Yom HaAtzmaut out of the mourning number of days, you can easily add a day or two to 'make up' for celebrating.

And, besides, the Omer period is not intrinsically mourning. In fact it is originally a festive period a bit like Chol HaMoed, being the intermediate days between Pesach and its Atzeret, Shavuot.

Remember that the counting at the time of the Beit HaMikdash was from the Omer offering to the Sh'tei HaLechem - nothing sad there. Just the opposite.

With the destruction of the Beit HaMikdash and the cessation of Temple service, there was a vacuum that resulted in the Omer period. That vacuum was filled by mourning the tragic deaths of the Talmidim of Rabi Akiva (and/or events during the Crusades). And it wasn't the whole period of the Omer that switched moods - reference the 33 day rule.

The 49 days of the Omer include six days of Pesach, three days of Rosh Chodesh, Pesach Sheni, Lag BaOmer, seven Shabbatot, three prep days before Shavuot... and in our time, Yom HaAtzma't and Yom Yerushalayim. The Omer has been and continues to reclaim some of its festive nature... May it continue until the building of the Third Beit

HaMikdash when the mournful practices and nature of the period will only be memories that people may or may not share with their children and grandchildren.

And here's the other favorite argument: Many of the founders of the State were not religious and many were anti religious. True, but HaShem works His wonders in unusual ways, sometimes.

Let's look at excerpts from the Proclamation of Independence of the State of Israel.

The Land of Israel was the birthplace of the Jewish people. Here their spiritual, religious and national identity was formed... Exiled from Palestine, the Jewish people remained faithful to it in all the countries of their dispersion, never ceasing to pray and hope for their return and restoration of their national freedom... In recent decades, they returned in their masses. They reclaimed a wilderness, revived their language, built cities and villages, and established a vigorous and ever-growing community... They sought peace, yet were ever prepared to defend themselves... Accordingly we... hereby proclaim the establishment of the Jewish state in Palestine, to be called Israel... The state of Israel will promote the development of the country for the benefit of all its inhabitants; will be based on precepts of liberty, justice and peace taught by the Hebrew prophets... We offer peace and amity to all neighboring states and their

peoples... Our call goes out to the Jewish people all over the world to rally to our side in the task of immigration and development, and to stand by us in the great struggle for the fulfillment of the dream of generations – the redemption of Israel... With trust in Almighty God, we set our hands to this declaration...

A few minutes after the Declaration was finished being read, Ben Gurion called upon Rabbi Yehuda Leib Maimon (Fishman) to say the SHEHECHEYANU bracha.

This PTDT has not been an objective presentation of all points of view concerning HAKAMAT HAMEDINA. It never was intended to be that.

Hallel with a bracha? Daytime there is ample halachic foundation to do so. Yes, there are other opinions.

But the declaration of Statehood started an all-out war. Guess what? The Chanuka victory over the Greeks and the Miracle of the Oil was followed by only 26 years of Jewish self-rule, during which time, we continued fighting the Greeks. Then things got worse (and worser, as my daughters at a young age used to say). Romans took over. Things went downhill and then the Beit HaMikdash was destroyed and we were exiled for centuries. And yet, our Sages declared that we thank HaShem for the bright spots with an 8-day festival with full Hallel throughout.

If you are looking for "And we lived

happily ever after", that's the Geula Sh'leima. Until then, we thank HaShem for what He gives us - and we pray for more.

If you are still reading, I thank you and wish you, and all AM YISRAEL - MO'ADIM L'SIMCHA, LIGULA SH'LEIMA.

It's the cup half-full or half-empty thing. I believe the healthy way to look at the State of Israel is as half-full. That allows us to thank G-d for many good things. Half-empty - not the healthy way of looking at the issue.

And remember - it isn't only how you look at a half filled glass. You have to know that you can contribute to filling it up more and more. **PTDT**

Walk through the Parsha

with **Rabbi David Walk** 

HOW TO IMPROVE; DON'T REPROVE

K'doshim

I'll show that So-and-So. I'll make a bold sign describing their faults, and wave it in a crowd. Believe it or not, people think that they are fulfilling a command in this week's Torah reading by holding up placards or chanting at protests. The Mitzva appears in the verse: Reprove your colleague, so that you will not share in their guilt (Vayikra 19:17). Sadly, they ignore that next phrase: But don't incur sin on their account.

Let's further explore this precept. This rule is one of the laws in the section of our Torah which is often called the Book of Holiness, and as Prof. Everett Fox points out: they have become an exemplar and a cornerstone, at least in idealized form, in Western thinking about these issues.

What issues? This section, 'presents the longing for perfection and wholeness as properly expressed through a discipline of behavior in all areas of life, personal and communal.' It also contains, 'a moving positive plea for proper treatment of the elderly, the poor, and, in general, one's "neighbor" and extends to "sojourner".'

Our section therefore defines the moral and 'holy' individual. Initially, and primarily, such an individual must be concerned for their own behavior, but our verse extends this responsibility to concern and responsibility towards others. If I am really a moral person then I should want to dwell in an ethical community. Then I must be interested in the behavior of those with whom I interact. How do I achieve that goal?

On this point the verse is very clear: Don't incur sin!!

How can I 'incur sin'? Well, basically in two ways. First we have the 'concerned citizen' approach (which could also be called the 'busy body' approach). This model is described by the Ramban: for you will bear sin because of his

transgression if you do not rebuke him. In other words: I must do something when I see something. It sounds cool, but can very quickly lead to trouble, and conflict. Many of us don't take MUSAR or chastisement very calmly.

Let's check door number two. This is, perhaps, the Silence is Golden approach. As the Orchot Tzadikim says: 'You shall surely rebuke your neighbor, and thus not bear sin because of his wrongful conduct', which means that first you must rebuke him gently, and in private, pleading with him that you are thinking only of his own good. And then sin will not accrue to you. But if you rebuke your companion right at the beginning, with an angry voice and with wrath, and you shame him, then you are sinning, for your companion will not accept correction from you.

In other words, don't incur a sin by embarrassing or hurting a friend or neighbor. Rav Yaakov Medan of Yeshivat Har Etzayon clearly states: Keeping silent is of utmost importance! He says this both in our context, but also in the context of parenting. It's not always easy, but often holding your piece is the best advice.

The Malbim clarifies these ideas with three rules:

1. The person giving MUSAR or chastisement must be free of sin (especially the specific sin under discussion).
2. The other party must give some hint

that they are prepared to accept chastisement. And then

3. Give the MUSAR gently without causing any embarrassment.

Now we can understand why Rabi Tarfon (who lived in the 2nd century CE) said that his whole generation should refrain from MUSAR because no one was free of sin, and the Talmud also states: Just as it is a Mitzva to say something that will be heeded, so it is a Mitzva not to say something that will not be heeded (Yevamot 65b).

As a Rabbi, teacher and parent, I relatively often found myself in a position where MUSAR was expected (or even requested) of me. I never found it easy or pleasant, and often shrank from the responsibility, which made the requester unhappy. Generally, there was no winning option. Baruch Hashem I'm retired, and am rarely called upon for those chores anymore. Plus, now my kids have kids, so I get to watch them squirm, which is also uncomfortable.

So, is there really anyone who thinks that by holding up a sign on the Ayalon Expressway or in Paris Square, one is fulfilling the Mitzva of rendering MUSAR? Based on many websites and chat rooms the answer seems to be 'yes'. However, based on reality the answer is a resounding NO!

I am not against expressing opinions or demonstrating. I invested a lot of time in my youth demonstrating for Civil Rights,

against the War in Viet Nam and for Soviet Jewry. I'm also very proud of my own kids who protested on hills in Efrat and squares in Yerushalayim. But those are exercises in concerned citizenship, not the Mitzva of MUSAR.

However, both activities should have one important factor in common. And that is: Be civil, even polite. Whether the offending party is a neighbor or a politician, they are human beings who deserve our care, concern and civility. No matter how rotten their behavior or policies! We must preserve our Menschlichkeit. 🤝

Rav Kook Torah

by Rabbi

Chanan Morrison • www.ravkooktorah.com



Love Your Neighbor

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

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

Attaining Ahavat Yisrael

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

Love for the Jewish people does not

start from the heart, but from the head. To truly love and understand the Jewish people – each individual Jew and the nation as a whole – requires a wisdom that is both insightful and multifaceted. This intellectual inquiry is an important discipline of Torah study.

Loving others does not mean indifference to baseness and moral decline. Our goal is to awaken knowledge and morality, integrity, and refinement; to clearly mark the purpose of life, its purity and holiness. Even our acts of loving-kindness should be based on a hidden Gevura, an inner outrage at the world's – and thus our own – spiritual failures.

If we take note of others' positive traits, we will come to love them with an inner affection. This is not a form of insincere flattery, nor does it mean white-washing their faults and foibles. But by concentrating on their positive characteristics – and every person has a good side – the negative aspects become less significant.

This method provides an additional benefit. The Sages cautioned against joining with the wicked and exposing oneself to their negative influence. But if we connect to their positive traits, then this contact will not endanger our own moral and spiritual purity.

We can attain a high level of love for Israel by deepening our awareness of the inner ties that bind together all the souls of the Jewish people, throughout all the

generations. In the following revealing passage, Rav Kook expressed his own profound sense of connection with and love for every Jewish soul:

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

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

Love for Every Jew

For Rav Kook, Ahavat Yisrael was not just theoretical. Stories abound of his extraordinary love for other Jews, even those who were intensely antagonistic

to his ways and beliefs. Below is one such story, from the period that Rav Kook served as chief rabbi of pre-state Israel.

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

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

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

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

“I have no interest in court cases”, replied the Rav. “Despite what they did to me, I love them. I am ready to kiss

them, so great is my love! I burn with love for every Jew.”

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

Rav Kook would say:

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

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

Parsha Story

Stories and Parables from
the famed Maggid of Dubno
by Rabbi Chanan Morrison

So Many Mitzvot!

K'doshim

"Speak to the entire congregation of the children of Israel" (Vayikra 19:1). "This teaches us that this section was stated in the assembly [of the entire congregation of Israel], because most of the fundamental teachings of the Torah are dependent on it [and mentioned in it]" (Rashi, from Torat Kohanim 19:1).

The Maggid of Dubno used the following parable to explain the well-known statement of the Sages:

God wished to bestow merit upon Israel, so He gave them an abundance of Torah and mitzvot." (Makot 23b).

Wouldn't the Jewish people have more merits if they had fewer commandments to observe?

The Young Merchant

Daniel was so excited that he barely slept. The young man was on his first business trip, his first visit to the famous trade fair in Leipzig. Daniel kept a watchful eye on the money purse that his father-in-law had lent him to invest in profitable merchandise.

The young man arrived safely at Leipzig and was pleased to come across an uncle of his. Daniel proudly explained that this was his first trip to the fair and went off to find suitable lodgings for his stay.

In the meanwhile, Daniel's uncle went to various local merchants, informing them that his nephew had just arrived and would be a trustworthy person to conduct business with.

Several busy days later, Daniel visited his uncle again before starting his journey home. He had spent all of the money purchasing goods on sale from the many merchants whom he had met, and his bags were filled with valuable merchandise he hoped to sell for a good profit.

"How was your first visit here in Leipzig?" asked his uncle.

Daniel groaned. "I'm exhausted! Merchants and businessmen visited me all hours of the day. I barely had time to sleep the entire week!"

His uncle smiled broadly. "Who do you think sent all of those merchants to you? I knew this was your first visit at the fair, and I wanted to make sure that you would use your time and money wisely. I didn't want you to waste them on the card games, shows, and other diversions that could steal the attention of a young man."

Keep Them Busy!

We are all, the Maggid explained, like that young merchant in the parable. We find ourselves in an exciting world full of attractions and pitfalls. And like the devoted uncle, God wanted to make sure that we would be occupied with Torah and good deeds, so that we would not be led astray by the world's many distractions.

This is what the Sages meant that "God wished to bestow merit upon Israel, so He gave them an abundance of Torah and mitzvot." He gave us many mitzvot, to keep us focused on the important things in life: good deeds and spiritual aspirations.

Adapted from *Mishlei Ya'akov*, pp. 249-250

Rabbi Ephraim Sprecher

No Talking in Shul

"My Shabbatot you shall observe, and My Sanctuary you shall revere" (Vayikra 19:30).

Rashi comments that giving the proper respect to the Sanctuary (Beit HaMikdash) is expressed by not entering with one's walking stick, or while wearing shoes or a money belt or with dust on one's feet.

Today we have no Beit HaMikdash, but the Gemara in Megila 29 teaches that our shuls are MIKDASH M'AT, which means mini-sanctuaries and must be treated with great respect and reverence.

Tractate Derech Eretz Raba, one of the 14 so called "minor tractates", chapter 3, records an incident at the end of the life of Rabi Elazar ben Azariya when he was seriously ill, his students came to him and asked him "How can we be worthy of life in the World to Come?" He answered them "Go out and be careful with the honor due to your friends, and when you are standing in prayer, know before Whom you are standing. This will earn you life in the World to Come."

Chavos Yair wonders why R' Elazar ben Azariya prefaces his advice with the words "Go out". It seems out of place and irrelevant to the advice he offers.

He explains that R' Elazar ben Azariya's comment for addressing the great

difficulty some people have avoiding talking during davening. This occurs mainly on Shabbat when friends see each other and have time to catch up on news of family, community, business or sports.

Unfortunately this talking often takes place during davening or K'ria't HaTorah and leads to a desecration of Hashem's Sanctuary. At times a person feels that it is impolite not to respond to a question or comment from one's shul friend and feels compelled to talk, even if it is in the middle of davening in shul.

In this light, we can understand the message of R' Elazar ben Azariya. If you want to be careful in the honor due your friends, then GO OUT of Shul and talk there. When you are davening in shul, be aware before Whom you are praying. This will earn you life in the World to Come!

If only people would take to heart the words of the Chavos Yair and thereby bring about a marked improvement in the decorum in our shuls, they would then merit the great benefits that come from sincere prayer. -ESP

CHIZUK & IDUD

*Divrei Torah from the weekly sedra
with a focus on living in Eretz Yisrael
Chizuk for Olim & Idud for not-yet-Olim*

by **Rabbi Yerachmiel Roness**
Ramat Shiloh, Beit Shemesh

Yom HaAtzmaut 2016

Relevant more so today.

Some readers have communicated the concern that it may be misguided to target the rabbis and teachers who continue to reside in the galut. Our efforts in encouraging Aliyah, they claim, should be focused on the laity. The spiritual leaders are needed overseas, and they would do best using their talents there. Only if, and when, their constituents were to move here, should the leaders follow suit. I was recently reminded of this claim when my son showed me a passage in the sefer "Shivivei Ohr", a collection of letters and talks given by Rav Tzvi Pesach Frank (1873-1960), the longtime Chief Rabbi of Jerusalem. Rav Frank who had been born in Kovno, a city filled with Talmidei Chachomim, and was directly influenced by its Rabbi, Rav Yitzchak Elchanan Spektor zt"l studied in some of the greatest of the Lithuanian Yeshivot. He was first a student in Slobodka, and later studied in the Telz Yeshiva under Rav Shimon Skhop zt"l and Rav Eliezer Gordon zt"l. In 1892, as a young man, he preceded his parents making Aliyah to Jerusalem, where he continued his studies and teaching of Torah.

Having made the move here himself, R' Frank zt"l felt the need to turn to European Roshei Yeshiva in the hope of encouraging them to take a similar step, convincing them to come to Eretz Yisrael bringing their students along with them.

R' Frank successfully influenced the heads of the Slobodka Yeshiva, Rav Moshe Mordechai Epstein zt"l and Rav Nosson Tzvi Finkel zt"l to bring their yeshiva to Yerushalayim and then later to Chevron. He conducted similar conversations with the Rosh Yeshiva of Slutsk, the great Rav Isser Zalman Meltzer zt"l, as well, and the following passage is taken from a letter R' Frank addressed to R' Meltzer in the year 1920:

"Amongst the many things that I would like to bring up, I would prevail upon the honorable Rav to think profoundly about rising up and coming with his Yeshiva to the Holy Mountain (Yerushalayim). Why not be motivated by the upright amongst the free thinkers who are far removed from the Torah and its teachings, and yet, are prepared to offer their bodies and souls to our holy Land? Why, then, should those who maintain and support our Torah stand afar at this critical moment, as we witness the unfolding of Divine assistance from on-high? The time has arrived to fulfill the words of the verse: 'For your servants desired its stones and favored its dust' (T'hilim 102:15). I think that there is a holy obligation for the Gedolim of our generation to hasten and leave (galut), to arrive in the holy land armed with Torah, and establish here a spiritual and holy center of Torah and 'Avoda'. Only thus will the lost glory and beauty be restored (L'HACHZIR ATARA L'YOSHNA), in order to fulfill the verse of Yishayahu: "For out of Zion will go

forth the law and the word of Hashem from Yerushalayim - KI M'TZION... With the grace of G-d we have merited to arrive at a propitious time in history. Happy will be he who prepares himself for the great and holy mitzva which is the pinnacle of our endeavor. It is surely unnecessary for me to over-emphasize the essential nature of this mitzva."

Rav Tzvi Pesach Frank was a spiritual leader deeply immersed in the public life of the Yishuv in Eretz Yisrael. He played a central role in the appointment of R' Kook, his predecessor in the role of chief rabbi of Yerushalayim, and after R' Kook's passing (after having loyally served on his rabbinical council), he succeeded him, maintaining the position for twenty five years until his passing in 1960.

R' Frank believed the leaders have to set the tone, their responsibility is not to follow their constituents but rather to show them the way by example.

When questioned how one can make Aliyah with so many non-religious abounding, R' Frank was adamant: Come to Israel yourself and emulate their dedication to the People and the Land of Israel, supplementing it with your added dedication to the Torah.

On Yom HaAtzmaut we cry out ZEH HAYOM ASA HASHEM NAGILA V'NISM'CHA VO" (T'hilim 118:23) - this is the day the Almighty brought about, let us rejoice and be happy upon it. Rav Shaul Yisraeli points to the Midrash (Shir

HaShirim Raba) which notes that although the word BO can indeed be understood as a reference to the day, a no less plausible reading of the verse, however, is that we are to rejoice BO - in Him - the Almighty.

The celebration of Yom HaAtzmaut, Israel's national independence, must be tied together with our religious belief in the source of our victories. Acknowledging the divine role in the events leads to rejoicing in Him - the Almighty himself. This great belief must then lead to action! For, indeed, R' Frank's words still bear the ring of truth: There still is "a holy obligation for the Gedolim of our generation to hasten and leave (galut), to arrive in the Holy Land armed with Torah"! 🏠🔪

These weekly words of Torah wisdom can be found in my recently published book "Eretz Yisrael and Aliyah in the weekly Parsha". It can be ordered by calling 052-336-0553 or by ordering it on Amazon



Reprinted from Living the Halachic Process by Rabbi Daniel Mann - Eretz Hemdah, with their permission [www.erezhemdah.org]

Shehecheyanu, New Clothes, and Renovations During S'firat HaOmer

Question: May one buy and wear new clothes, do work on his house, and recite Shehecheyanu during the s'firat ha'omer period?

Answer: The gemara¹ discusses the halachot of aveilut (mourning) for a deceased relative and for the national mourning over the destruction of the Beit HaMikdash during the period before Tish'a b'Av. However, the minhagim of national mourning during s'fira over the death of Rabbi Akiva's students are not found in the gemara. There are both overlap and differences between the rules for these different periods of mourning.

Regarding the aveilut of the s'fira period, the Shulchan Aruch² mentions prohibitions on marriages and hair cutting (as well as on work after sunset, but this is not widely accepted). The Mishna Berura³ further mentions the minhag of not dancing, which many have extended to include refraining from all forms of instrumental music.⁴ These standard sources make no mention, in the context of sefira, of the practices about which you inquire.

¹. See Ta'anit 29b.

². Orach Chayim 493.

³. 493:3.

⁴. See Igrot Moshe, Orach Chayim I:166.

Let us look briefly at minhagim regarding Shehecheyanu, new clothes, and work on the house as they appear in the context of the period before Tish'a b'Av. One should curtail certain activities before Tish'a b'Av, including building projects,⁵ but according to the Shulchan Aruch,⁶ this applies only during the Nine Days and not throughout the entire Three Weeks.⁷ There is also a recommendation, which not all accept,⁸ not to recite Shehecheyanu during the Three Weeks.⁹ The logic is that the b'racha of Shehecheyanu expresses our gratefulness for having made it to “this time”, which may not be appropriate at such a particularly sad time of the year. While the standard sources do not mention these issues during the s'fira period, there are some sources that do, especially in regard to reciting Shehecheyanu.¹⁰ There is basis to extend these prohibitions to the s'firat ha'omer period on two grounds. First, there is logic in doing so, as this is a nationwide sad period (as opposed to aveilut over a relative, the sad nature of which is only personal¹¹). Second, it is relatively easier to transfer minhagim when there is a model for such halachot, by doing, so to speak, a “copy and paste” from one time

period to another (i.e., from the Three Weeks to sefira).

However, paradoxically, the logic and the model are also reasons to ignore the minority strict opinions and the practice of some to refrain from some or all of the matters you mentioned. The reason is that people may have gotten confused as to which practices apply when. They remembered that there is a concept of not saying Shehecheyanu and not doing renovations during national mourning periods, and they may have heard of someone knowledgeable who says to act this way during s'fira. They then may have started adopting the practice, but not based on a decision with knowledge of the sources and a desire to accept the stringency. Rather, they thought these are the standard minhagim. This is called a minhag ta'ut. In such a case, even one who has already followed the stringent practice may suspend it without hatarat nedarim.¹²

Rav Ovadia Yosef has an interesting approach to these questions. First, he explains¹³ that one cannot call s'fira, which is actually the bridge between the joyous holidays of Pesach and Shavuot, a tragic period of time, as we term the

⁵. *Yevamot* 43a.

⁶. *Orach Chayim* 551:2.

⁷. See response D-18.

⁸. See opinions in *Mishna Berura* 551:98.

⁹. *Shulchan Aruch* op. cit. 17.

¹⁰. See several opinions cited in *Bein Pesach L'Shavuot* 16:(2).

¹¹. See *Mishna Berura* 551:98.

¹². *Shulchan Aruch* and Rama, *Yoreh Deah* 214:1.

¹³. *Yechaveh Da'at* I:24.

period leading up to Tish'a b'Av. Therefore, he is against refraining from recitation of Shehecheyanu on fruit at that time. He is not, however, against the stringency to avoid wearing new clothing that warrants Shehecheyanu, out of extra mourning. Regarding moving into a new home or doing work on an existing one, he unequivocally permits the matter.¹⁴ The Tzitz Eliezer¹⁵ is perhaps more resolute in rejecting stringency in these matters.

Thus, one need not be stringent with regard to the practices you mention. If one has acted stringently in the past, he may continue if he likes, but he should consider whether his (family's) practice is more based on confusion than on a conscious decision to accept minority stringencies.



by Rabbi Dr Raymond Apple z"l

WHICH NEIGHBOUR?

The great human duty is to love our neighbour as ourselves (Vayikra 19:18). Rabbi Akiva called it "the great principle of the Torah".

Commentators address themselves to all three phrases - "love", "your neighbour", and "as yourself".

Over the years we have looked in detail at the first and the third phrase, so this year let us examine the word "neighbour" and ask the question, "Who is my neighbour?"

The Hebrew REI-A is understood by some as "your Israelite neighbour". If this were the sense of the term it would already be an important idea, especially in an age like ours when - tragically - one group of Jews is seen and heard insulting another and giving them the no-love treatment.

But REI-A is used in the Torah in a general sense and is not limited to our fellow Jews. In Sh'mot 11:2 it means an Egyptian. In D'varim 10:19 it means a stranger. In Vayikra 19:34 the command to love a person as yourself applies to any fellow human being.

Who then is my neighbour?

Anyone. Everyone. All are made in the image of God. All are children of the same Father. All (even the unlikeable ones!) are entitled to our love and respect.

CHAMETZ

ALL YEAR ROUND

We don't talk too much about chametz once Pesach is over. Maybe we should. There is a lesson for the whole year in

¹⁴. Ibid. III:30.

¹⁵. XVIII:41.

the idea of chametz.

Apart from one small segment of the year, the ingredients of chametz are no problem. The problem is caused not by the make-up of the chametz but by the date. If it is Pesach, chametz is out: for the rest of the twelve months it is in and acceptable.

Let's now apply this idea to this week's Torah reading, K'doshim, "Be Holy". What makes us holy is not withdrawal from the world but elevating every ordinary event and experience.

Water makes us holy when we need to be physically and spiritually clean. Fire makes us holy when we need to prepare food and kindle the Shabbat light. But like everything else, water can also be a curse; floods do untold damage to human life. Fire can be a danger when it spreads and destroys nature and human habitation and life.

Like chametz, the question is the timing. If we carefully control water and fire, we can use them to make life magnificent. If they get out of control, they become our enemies.

As someone has said, a brick can be used to build a place of worship - or to construct a gas chamber. The question is what we do when the moment of opportunity is upon us. **-OZ**

Y'HI ZICHRO BARUCH

Sedra Highlight

- Dr Jacob Solomon

K'doshim

G-d said to Moshe... "Speak to the Israelites and tell them, You shall be holy. For I, the Lord your G-d, am holy" (19:1-2).

The actual meaning of, "You shall be holy", is widely discussed in the commentators. The Midrash (Sh'mot Rabba 24:6) followed by Rashi, states that this commands the avoiding of the illicit physical relationships described in the previous chapter. Holiness is a product of refraining from sexual immorality. In sharp contrast, the Ramban does not limit the concept of holiness to any category of precepts. Rather, holiness is something that should be characteristic of all aspects of life. A person who only observes the letter of the law may become a NAVAL BIRSHUT HA-TORAH, a degenerate, debased person without actually breaking the Torah. Examples of characteristic behavior would include gross overeating of roast duck with the best, most 'glatt' hechsher, and a stamp collector offering a higher price for a very rare stamp when the other already agreed to sell it to someone else who had set his heart on it.

Yet according to the Ramban's explanation, it seems that He is not actually demanding a great deal. Not being a NAVAL BIRSHUT HA-TORAH seems to be a dimension of Derech

Eretz; civilized and decent behavior. Derech Eretz is not exclusive to Am Yisrael, but to humanity in general. Why should the Torah at this stage give such prominence to the importance of civilized and decent behavior?

In response, this gives an insight into human nature. In taking on the elevated and exacting demands of the Torah, it can be fatally easy to overlook the fundamentals of the need for socially acceptable behavior at all times. Or worse, that one's position in humanity is so high that acceptable-to-others behavior is not very important. This, implies the Ramban, is just not so! All the mitzvot are to be observed in the framework of Derech Eretz; as he puts it, not to be a NAVAL BIRSHUT HA-TORAH. As R. Elazar ben Azariya declared: "If there is no Derech Eretz, there is no Torah" (Avot 3:17). Lacking suitable behavior to others, Torah observance can become a chilul HaShem, something that brings the Torah into disrepute (c.f. Yoma 86a).

This was brought home to me as a young man at Etz Chaim Yeshiva, London. Learning with my chavruta in a heated discussion on some complex point in Mesechet Yevamot, I was swinging back and forth on the chair, putting excessive strain on two of its legs. The Rosh Yeshiva, R' Nochum Ordman zt"l, in walking by broke into his characteristic warm expansive smile and whispered to me: "There's also a din of Nezikin."

You're not here to damage Yeshiva furniture however enthusiastically you learn! 🌿📖



Our Parsha introduces us to the well-known maxim that, "You should love your fellow as yourself" (Vayikra 19:18). R' Akiva held that this is the fundamental rule of the Torah, a guiding lantern showing us the way we should behave in this world. Ben Azai added that this overriding decree was, ZEH SEFER TOLDOT ADAM - 'This is the Book of the Generations of Adam' (Sifrei).

According to Midrash Rabba, the observance of the Mitzvot by all of Israel as a collective is what causes us to merit Kedusha - holiness - in this world. Indeed, our Sages teach us that the entire Parsha of Kedoshim - the central theme of which is Kedusha, and the various means to obtain it - was given over to the people as a whole (Hakhel), as if to teach us, following R' Akiva, that every Mitzva we undertake should be done on behalf of K'lal Yisrael.

In today's parlance, we would say that we should love every Jew unconditionally, a corollary of which is that we should nullify our own will for the good

of the whole. Ben Azai accepted this line but added that when observing Mitzvot, an individual should identify himself with all the preceding, current, and future generations of Israel, since all these souls derived from the original soul of Adam (Tanchuma). Does that not bind us all and make us each responsible for one another?

We should remember that this unconditional love does not follow current libertarian thinking that accepts everyone for who or what they are. Our love and concern for each other is predicated on the last words of the ruling: ANI HASHEM - 'I am G-d' - because by following this pivotal dictum every Jew brings Kedusha into the world and because loving our neighbor is what Hashem has charged us to do.

(Inspired by the S'fat Emet). **MP**

The Daily Portion - Sivan Rahav Meir

5 matters to keep in mind for Iyar

Translation by Yehoshua Siskin

1. Chodesh Tov. It is customary to say that the word Iyar is an abbreviation: ALEF for ANI - I am; double YUD for HASHEM; REISH for ROFECHA – your Healer. This month is considered the month of healing for both body and soul. Our commentators explain that the

nation of Israel went out from Egyptian slavery in the month of Nissan and went through a process of healing and renewal during the following month of Iyar.

2. The name Iyar was brought back from Babylonia where it meant “light”.

3. There are several special days that illuminate this month, particularly during difficult times like these:

The 18th of Iyar is Lag BaOmer, the day that Rabi Shimon Bar Yochai – identified with the hidden Torah – passed away.

The 14th of Iyar is known as Pesach Sheini. In the Sinai Desert, whoever was unable to celebrate the first Seder, asked for and was given an additional opportunity to celebrate Pesach a month later. In the middle of the month of Iyar, this day became one of rectification, a reminder that you get a second chance to make up for what was missed the first time.

And in our generation: On the 5th of Iyar, 5708 (1948), 76 years ago, the State of Israel was established and

on the 28th of Iyar, 5727 (1967), 57 years ago, the City of Jerusalem was liberated and reunited.

4. Rosh Chodesh is observed with joy, with a sense of renewal, and with prayer, On Rosh Chodesh we insert the YA’ALEH V’YAVO segment into the Sh'moneh Esrei prayer and into Birkat HaMazon. In the morning, we recite the Hallel prayer

that consists of psalms of thanksgiving. Musaf is also recited. There are those who host a special Rosh Chodesh meal and follow many other customs as well.

5. The month of Iyar possesses a special quality unique among all the months of the year: In this month, each day is associated with a mitzva, that of S'firat HaOmer. Although we begin counting the Omer in the middle of the month of Nissan and we finish on the festival of Shavuot in the month of Sivan, Iyar is the month in which each day is counted. Thus, it is a month that helps us appreciate the value of each day and the necessity of utilizing our time to the fullest. Iyar is a reminder that each day is important and unique unto itself.

Have a good and blessed month with an abundance of good news.

To receive Sivan Rahav-Meir's daily WhatsApp: tiny.cc/DailyPortion

Dvar Torah by **Rabbi Chanoch Yeres**

to his community at

Beit Knesset Beit Yisrael, Yemin Moshe

Graciously shared with PhiloTorah

K'doshim

The pasuk says in Vayikra 19:2 says "You shall be Holy" - K'DOSHIM TIHYU.

Why tell us this now? Wouldn't a more suitable place be immediately following the Ten Commandments? The sentence would make more sense in the reverse order: TIHYU K'DOSHIM. As translated in

English. Why the emphasis on "Holy shall YOU be?"

This chapter interrupts the sequence of the prohibitions of incestuous unions (perek 18) and the punishments which those who transgress them will incur (20:10-27). The Torah wishes to teach us that even commandments that deal with obligations between man and his fellow, such as honoring one's parents and refraining from theft and robbery, must be observed because they are Hashem's command and not because they are improper. Although the nations of the world may punish for the infractions of these laws, however, the purpose of punishment in "their" view is not to cause people to improve their ways, but to prevent their citizens from being victimized by criminals. As a result, the lawbreaker does not realize that his crime is essentially an unseemly act, and as such he will seek ways to get around the law. Hashem's concern, however, is rather for the purpose of teaching man simply to understand that these actions are totally unacceptable. This, then is the meaning of "You shall be Holy."

One must change his nature and his ways in order that his body and his thoughts to be in sync with the purpose of their creation. Therefore, prior to detailing the punishments, the Torah states K'DOSHIM TIHYU. Improve yourselves to the extent that you should "desire" the Torah and want to embrace the Mitzvot. The Torah then proceeds to enumerate the mitzvot which one cannot

observe unless he is "holy", meaning that he comprehends the mitzva. For example, the need to fear one's father and mother, even if he is superior to them. One must also realize that tzedaka to the poor is not a gift but rightfully theirs. These mitzvot can be understood properly only if we have elevated ourselves to a higher level of holiness. Indeed, the motivation of one to adhere to these mitzvot should be our motivation to attain a higher spiritual level and proximity to Hashem.

It always remains interesting that we read this Parsha of K'doshim around the period of Memorial Day for our Fallen Soldiers and Yom Haatzmaut. Especially this year, we owe so much to those who paid the ultimate price and becoming the ultimate K'DOSHIM, so we may live and prosper in a holy fashion with higher spiritual goals in our land of Eretz Yisrael. May we continue to be blessed in leading our lives with this unique relationship between ourselves and G-d in Heaven. Shabbat Shalom 🌻

The Weekly 'Hi All' by Rabbi Jeff Bienenfeld

K'doshim 5781

Most of us are aware of Rabbi Akiva's famous declaration that "'Loving your fellow as yourself' (19:18) is a great rule of the Torah" (Sifra 4:12). The implication of this statement is that this verse somehow encapsulates the very essence

of the Torah itself. What, however, is less well-known is that according to the Midrash (B'reishit Rabba 24:7), Rabbi Akiva was responding to his student, Ben Azzai's assertion, that it is the verse, "...on the day Gd created man, He made him in the likeness of Gd" (B'reishit 5:1), that is the true "great principle of the Torah." How are we to understand this difference of opinion?

Ben Azzai was certainly aware of his great rebbe's opinion as to which verse qualifies as the "great principle". However, what may have disturbed him was this: What happens if you do not like yourself? That is, if you allow yourself to be embarrassed and treated poorly by others, should you now be permitted to treat others in the same fashion? Ben Azzai therefore chooses a different verse. In response, quite cleverly, Rabbi Akiva (with Rav Tanhuma's interpretation) employs Ben Azzai's very verse to neutralize the objection. Indeed, love your fellow as yourself; and should you harbor terrible feelings of low esteem, you may not use that inferiority complex to excuse your mistreatment of others. Why not? Because both you and he are created in the image of Gd, and by demeaning either yourself or your fellow, you are, in effect, humiliating and disparaging Gd, Himself! One might even add that this is exactly what the Torah meant when it concluded the "love your fellow" verse with the expression, "I am HaShem." How dare anyone think of him/herself as a worthless, ne'er do well

human being when our Biblical tradition denominates us - nay, blesses us - as being "a little lower than the angels" (T'hilim 8:6).

Rav Moshe Feinstein zt"l, offers a powerful antidote to this psychological illness of inferiority by enjoining us to cultivating a genuine sense of K'dusha, holiness. The Parsha of K'doshim opens (19:2) with the famous charge of K'DOSHEM TIHYU, Be Holy. That HaShem has so commanded us clearly implies that we each have the capacity to be just that - holy! In fact, Rav Moshe derives from this religious truth that the blessing recited prior to the performance of a mitzva - ASHER KID'SHANU B'MITZVOTAV, Who has sanctified us through His commandments - should not be misunderstood as meaning that the mitzvot are the source of sanctity. Rather, it is precisely because of our innate potential for k'dusha that enables us to fulfill Gd's commandments (Darash Moshe, Vol.1, p. 154). And when those mitzvot are performed, our inner k'dusha is actualized and radiates out through our entire personality.

If, then, our ability to truly love our fellow is predicated upon our estimation of our own self-worth, and that self-esteem is somehow tethered to our being holy, how then may we develop and nurture such a sanctified life-style?

The answer, naïve though it may sound, is to commit to an aspiration, as Rav

Aharon Lichtenstein once put it; that is, to pattern one's everyday behavior so that it partakes of the holiness of the Creator. What this means is that in addition to being scrupulously ethical, in order to rise to the status of a sanctified human being, one must aspire for more. And it is here that the combined comments of Rashi and Ramban (19:2) are so very relevant.

Rashi (ad loc), quoting the Midrash (Sifra, K'doshim 1:1) maintains that k'dusha means separateness which when applied to man means refraining - desisting - from sin, principally from sexual immorality. Ramban (ad loc) broadens the mandate of k'dusha to include abstaining from all material excess and hedonistic indulgences even be they morally permissible. The commandment requires that we practice moderation and abstemiousness in all our daily affairs. His famous statement is this assertion: that the antipodal of a holy person is one who is a NAVAL BIRSHUT HATORAH, a degenerate person who, while technically observant of all 613 mitzvos, is nevertheless a knave, a lowlife.

Thus, to be holy means that, beyond living an ethically bounded life, one must aspire to a dignified and noble existence as well. In such a refined, sacred life-style, our demeanor is kind and modest; our speech is decorous and the tone of our voice is calm. Patience and generosity hallmark our character. An

aura of innocence and goodness bathes our activities with meaning and inspires us toward accomplishment and purpose. In a word, to be holy means to vanquish our insatiable, voluptuous physical desires, and in that very act of "defeat by our own hand" - in Rav Soloveitchik's arresting phrase - we can rise to a life of hallowed greatness and sanctity!

The late and much-lamented Rabbi Dr. Abraham Twerski often commented that at the root of man's sinful delinquencies and addictions is his belief that he is a nothing, a non-entity, a zero. His dismal lack of self-esteem allows him to surrender to a gloomy existence where "if I don't matter, then nothing and no one else really matters!" In such an existential void, the mandate to "love your fellow as yourself" elicits only a sarcastic, contemptuous smirk, if that.

A young fellow, crushed by a bitter divorce, was bewailing his sorry state to a rabbinic friend of much prominence. His feeling of having been betrayed, rejected and deserted made him feel empty and worthless. To which his distinguished friend sharply replied in rebuke: "If I thought you were piece of garbage, do you really think I'd be spending so much time with you?!" And like a verbal slap in the face, in his friend's empathic response of stern affirmation of his true self, the beaten-down man suddenly wakes up to the bright reality of his own unique and very special precious identity.

The message is clear: aspire to be holy, aspire to emulate Gd's holiness; for when you do - in the elevation and purging of your animality by courageous acts of "self-defeat" - you will slowly emerge as a righteous and noble being who will love and be loved by all.

>>>>

But what if our egos could teach us how to love? This is not as absurd as it sounds. Rav Shimon Shkop, in the introduction to his Sha'arei Yosher, discusses our problem: We have a God-given instinct for self-love, and at the same time are commanded to love others. How can we reconcile these diametrically opposed demands? His solution is brilliant. He says that the commandment to love others is a command to redefine who we are. He writes that: The entire "I" of a coarse and lowly person is restricted only to his substance and body. Above him is someone who feels that his "I" is a synthesis of body and soul. And above him is someone who can include in his "I" all of his household and family. Someone who walks according to the way of the Torah, his "I" includes the whole Jewish people... And there are more levels in this of a person who is whole, who can connect his soul to feel that all of the world and worlds are his "I", and he himself is only one small limb in all of creation. Then, his self-love helps him love ... all of creation.

This is how a selfish person can learn how to love; by seeing themselves as interconnected with everyone around them. For many of us, we experience this feeling with family. Rav Shimon Shkop reminds us that we can take this idea further, and embrace an even larger definition of what "I" means; we can learn to identify ourselves completely with the Jewish people, all of humanity, and even all living beings. This oceanic feeling that we are a part of a larger whole allows us to redefine ourselves, and redefine our self-interest. 🙌

Afterthoughts

- Yocheved Bienenfeld

POTEI'ACH ET YADECHA - YOM HASHOA

I need to preface this entry with an apology. I ask forgiveness up front from all the relatives and friends of the hostages who live every day as a nightmare, not knowing what is happening with their loved ones. I don't even want to imagine what it must be like because I can't handle it. That said it might be very difficult for these people to hear about the Holocaust and survivors who are telling their stories on TV, while own loved ones are still missing. This is more than understandable - but the following was how I was reacting to Yom HaShoa last year and, therefore, it seems cold and insensitive in its ignoring the current situation. Please accept this as coming

from a good place, a time when the circumstances in this country were significantly different.

When I listen to the memories recounted by Holocaust survivors, aside from it being shocking and disturbing beyond words, I am amazed that these people managed to stay alive at all. This is what surrounds us in Israel on Yom HaShoa, and it probably should surround us more often because we should never let these things be forgotten. I look at the faces of the children who are listening to the report of an eyewitness and it is so clear that they cannot imagine what is being relayed. I can't either. It is beyond them. It is beyond me as well. Before I got married and had children, I read every book I could about the Holocaust. I don't really know why. I hope it wasn't out of morbid curiosity. I like to think that it was an attempt to understand that which is truly beyond comprehension. And what affects me most this time of year when, in Israel you can't escape the fact that there was a nightmare called the Holocaust; and when you are surrounded by eyewitness testimonies, is my awe for these survivors. 'Awe' is an insufficient word. Admiration? More. Shock? Yes. Astonishment? For sure. These are people who did more than fight to live.

There were numerous uprisings against the Nazis by these "Jews who went like sheep to the slaughter". We only hear of the Warsaw Ghetto uprising and revolt in

the Sobibor concentration camp (where 300 out of 600 prisoners succeeded in escaping). But various ghettos had uprisings which, unfortunately, had little success. But can you imagine even attempting something of the sort? We Jews in Israel (as well as in CHu"L) are so amazed when we read of how the people here in 1948 were able to defeat the overwhelming odds of all the Arabs against them when they had very little to fight with. Guns? Planes? Ammunition? Etc. Now relate that to the Jews who knew it was suicide, but still "fought" against the Nazis. With what? If they were to be killed, then at least they would take Nazis with them.

Ultimately, I can never get past the simple fact that someone could live through that living hell and survive. Not only survive; these people who are giving their testimonies did more than that. They thrived. They built homes, had families and prided themselves in this revenge against Hitler. Many of them lived quite long lives. And I ask myself: HOW? How was it possible for them to get through all that? What kept them going? Certainly, some of it had to do with "luck" and circumstances that helped them but that is not enough. From where did they get the strength, the hope to keep on?

I don't know, but maybe this is one of the meanings of POTEI'ACH ET YADECHA UMASBI'A L'CHOL CHAI RATZON - Gd opens His hand and fills all living things

with RATZON - desire. Will. These people were blessed with the will Gd gave them and were strong enough (and "lucky" enough) to use it to save their lives.

Gd gave all of us RATZON. Will we use it? How? ❀

Insights into Halacha

- Rabbi Yehuda Spitz

[Ohr Somayach \(yspitz@ohr.edu\)](mailto:yspitz@ohr.edu)

(PhiloTorah editor's notes in green)

Switching S'firas

The Gemara Y'vamot (62b) famously and tragically details the deaths of 24,000 students of Rabbi Akiva during the time period between Pesach and Shavuot, all for not according each other proper honor. Although there are many different rationales given by the commentaries to explain this catastrophe, the Tashbetz (Shu"t vol. 1: 178) elucidates that the reason they were punished so severely for a seemingly minor infraction is that their not treating each other properly ended up engendering a tremendous Chilul Hashem. In fact, according to several authorities, the reason why Lag BaOmer is a day of celebration is that it is the day when Rabbi Akiva started teaching his five new students (including Rabbi Shimon bar Yochai), allowing the Torah's mesorah to perpetuate;

However, the Yalkut Me'am Loez and Sdei Chemed maintain that Rabbi Akiva actually bestowed

Semicha on his five new talmidim on this day.

a feat that was previously in jeopardy after the deaths of his talmidim.

This calamity is actually the basis of the annual S'fira restrictions, which include not getting married or taking a haircut.

There are also other reasons cited for these prohibitions. See Chok Yaakov that according to Rav Yochanon ben Nuri, Resha'im are judged in Gehinnom between Pesach and Shavuot... The Arizal, who mandates keeping the entire S'fira up until Erev Shavuot (including Lag B'Omer) is quoted as holding so for a different reason, a Kabbalistic prohibition, exclusive only to hair and not necessarily related to aveilut associated with S'firat HaOmer.

Yet, that does not properly explain the different and varied minhagim that Klal Yisrael keeps regarding the actual time frames of these restrictions.

And there are different minhagim. In fact, Rav Moshe Feinstein zt"l lists six different customs, and that is not including the Arizal's minhag. Yet, practically, the Pri Megadim and Mishna B'rura break it down to three main disparate customs. The others are variations on those main opinions.

Minhag # 1 - S'fardic S'fira

The Shulchan Aruch writes that one should not get married between Pesach and Shavuot until Lag BaOmer; likewise regarding haircuts, as at that time the Talmidim of Rabbi Akiva stopped dying.

Therefore, these restrictions are permitted starting from the next day - 34 of the Omer.

Minhag # 2 - LaG not LaD

However, the Rema argues, stating that the Ashkenazic minhag is to allow these activities from Lag BaOmer itself, and not necessitate waiting until the next day. The reason for the allowance a day earlier than the Shulchan Aruch mandates is either due to the dictum of MIKTZAT HAYOM K'KULO, that part of a day is considered like a full day, or that he held that the Talmidim stopped dying by/on Lag BaOmer and not Lad BaOmer. Additionally, the Rema is following early Ashkenazic authorities such as the Maharil, Mahari Weil, and the Sefer HaMinhagim of Rav Yitzchak Isaac Tyrnau (Tirna), all of whom allowed haircuts and celebrations on Lag BaOmer itself.

Although the Rema (and most other authorities explicitly only allows weddings and haircuts etc. on the day of Lag BaOmer due to the Talmudic dictum of MIKTZAT HAYOM K'KULO, and is therefore only permitted from Sunrise, nevertheless, there are several authorities who are lenient in permitting haircuts even from the preceding evening, at the start of Lag BaOmer...

Minhag # 3 - Second Sefirah

The Rema then mentions another popular minhag, to only start the S'fira

restrictions from Rosh Chodesh Iyar, and not from right after Pesach. This S'fira lasts until shortly before Shavuot, excluding Lag BaOmer itself. This has come to be known colloquially as 'Second S'fira'.

There are many variations of this opinion, when this period actually starts and ends. These will be explained further on.

But why such disparate S'firas? If we are all keeping the same prohibitions for the same reason, how can there be so many different minhagim in its practical application?

Halftime Respite

It turns out that there are two main different rationales expressed by the Rishonim as to when the S'fira restrictions should actually apply. The first, mentioned as a 'Midrash' by R' Yehoshua ibn Shu'aib and an 'old Sefardi Sefer' by the Baal HaMa'or and Tashbetz,

According to many Rishonim only on LaD BaOmer would haircuts and weddings be permitted.

is that Rabbi Akiva's Talmidim stopped dying by PARUS HAATZERET, the half-way point before Shavuot. Since the Gemara states that we should start to learn the halachos of a Yom Tov 30 days prior to its commencement, which would mean that 15 days before a holiday would be its 'midpoint', this would squarely place the PARUS on LaD BaOmer (49-15=

34). According to this, they stopped dying on LaD BaOmer and therefore all S'fira restrictions cease on this day as well. As mentioned previously, the Shulchan Aruch states that he follows this opinion, and therefore he rules that from LaD BaOmer, haircuts and weddings are permitted. As mentioned previously, this is the common Sefardi minhag.

33 Days

However, there is another opinion, attributed to the Baalei Tosafot. They maintain that in actuality the talmidim died throughout the entire time period from Pesach to Shavuot. Yet, they did not die on days when Tachanun was not said, including all days of Pesach, the Shabbatot in between, and Rosh Chodesh. This adds up to 16 days. Meaning, of the entire 49 day period, they died on 33 of those days. Therefore, as a siman to show that they died for 33 of these days (in addition to several other reasons...)* LaG BaOmer, the 33rd day of the S'fira, was chosen as a day of easing restrictions.

** These reasons include being the day when the MAHN (manna) started to fall, feeding Bnei Yisrael in the Midbar; the day when Rabbi Shimon bar Yochai and his son, Rabbi Elazar came out of the cave they hid in for 13 years; it possibly is Rabbi Shimon bar Yochai's Yahrzeit (unlikely); the day when Rabi Akiva gave S'micha to his five new students (including Rabbi Shimon bar Yochai) after the 24,000 died, allowing the Torah's mesorah to*

perpetuate; and the day when Rabi Shimon bar Yochai's hidden Torah, the Zohar, became revealed to the world.

Kavanat HaRema?

The question is, which of these minhagim is the Rema following? It is fairly certain that the second Minhag Ashkenaz he delineates, starting from Rosh Chodesh Iyar until shortly before Shavuot (and variations thereof; this will be addressed later on), is following Tosafot's shita of 33 days. Since nowadays we don't say Tachanun the whole month of Nisan, the 33 days start in Iyar and last until the beginning of Sivan. But which opinion is the first custom he cites (from Pesach until LaG BaOmer) following?

The Bach maintains that this minhag as well, follows the shita of Tosafot. In other words, both minhagim cited by the Rema, 'First S'fira' and 'Second S'fira' are due to keeping 33 days, with the variant minhagim dependent on which 33 days are customarily kept. On the other hand the Vilna Gaon argues that the Rema's 'First S'fira' minhag is due to following the shita of the Shulchan Aruch, which is that the Talmidim only died up to LaG BaOmer itself.

However, it is important to note that this discussion of figuring out the Rema's true intent is not just theoretical. It actually has practical ramifications. And yes, there is a substantial difference between these understandings that just

might affect us, and that is the question of the permissibility of switching S'firas.

S'fira Switching

The Chatam Sofer, regarding scheduling weddings during S'fira, maintained that there is "no contradiction between years" as pertaining to S'fira observance.

He also maintains that there is no TARTA D'SATREI (contradiction) between haircuts and weddings. Meaning, one may keep one Sefirah regarding haircuts and another regarding weddings.

This means that even in one town (which needs to follow one minhag), if one year someone got married on Rosh Chodesh Iyar, this does not prevent another from getting married during the SH'LOSHET Y'MEI HAGBALA (the three days before Shavuot) the next year. His psak is widely followed. Additionally, we find that according to many authorities, if there is no set minhag in a certain place (and nowadays, most Jewish communities with no one central authority are considered as such), one may simply choose which minhag to follow. Following this implies that one has the halachic right to choose which S'fira to keep in any given year, based on whatever specific circumstances affect him that year.

Rav Moshe's Ruling

However, this is not so clear-cut, nor unanimous. In fact, and although widely

and seemingly erroneously quoted as holding that one may indeed switch between 'First' and 'Second S'firas' in different years, Rav Moshe Feinstein zt"l actually qualified such action. He clarifies that for Ashkenazim to be allowed to do so would depend on the difference of opinions between the Bach and Vilna Gaon as to the interpretation of the Rema's 'First S'fira'. He explains that according to the Bach, that both minhagim are based on keeping 33 days, it technically should not matter which 33 days are kept. Accordingly, one may switch 'S'firas' in different years.

Yet, according to the GR"A, the 'First S'fira' is solely due to the Talmidim dying only during the first 33 days of the Omer. If so, questions Rav Moshe, how can one switch 'S'firas', if each is mutually exclusive, based on different accountings? If one holds that the Talmidim only died up until LaG BaOmer, how can he, in the very next year, follow a different minhag, which is based on a shita that they did not actually die at that time, or vice versa? Therefore, he maintains that according to the GR"A one may not switch 'S'firas' from year to year.

Additionally, Rav Moshe holds that the 'Second S'fira' is the true Ashkenazic minhag and that the 'First S'fira' is essentially a Sefardic minhag. He therefore concludes that an Ashkenazi may not switch from the 'Second S'fira' to the 'First', as L'CHATCHILA we should not be lenient against the shita of the

GR"A, except under extremely extenuating circumstances', but rather only between two different versions of 'Ashkenazic S'fira', in different years, both of which end in different days in Sivan (see Postscript).

Wedding Woes?

However, and although several others contemporary authorities allow only coming for the Chupa and wishing a brief Mazal Tov, nevertheless, Rav Moshe does fully permit one to attend a wedding of someone who is keeping a different S'fira, including even staying for the music and dancing. Most poskim, including Rav Yaakov Kamenetsky zt"l, Rav Shlomo Zalman Auerbach zt"l, Rav Yosef Shalom Elyashiv zt"l, Rav Yisrael Yaakov Fischer zt"l, Rav Chaim Kanievsky zt"l, Rav Moshe Sternbuch shlit"a, and Rav Nissim Karelitz zt"l, agree with Rav Moshe and allow one who is still keeping his S'fira to fully participate in a wedding of one who is keeping/kept a different S'fira.

Although several of these Gedolim write that this applies "if one got married when it was mutar for him to do so", implying that if one did not keep a proper S'fira, it may not be permitted for others to stay and rejoice at the chatuna, nevertheless, it is important to note that Rav Moshe Feinstein zt"l (and others who agreed with his reasoning) explicitly permitted attending even in such an occurrence. Rav Moshe explains

that the halacha states (Shulchan Aruch, Orach Chaim 493: 1) that if one got married during S'firat HaOmer (at a time when it was technically forbidden for him to do so) we do not punish him (meaning it is still valid). Rav Moshe writes “that there is no greater punishment for a Chatan and Kalla than having guests refuse to show up and rejoice at their wedding”, and therefore it is still permitted to attend. In a later teshuva Rav Moshe even allows a guest who would feel uncomfortable attending such a wedding ungroomed, to take a haircut, even though S'fira restrictions are still personally in affect for him. On the other hand, it is known that his son, Rav Dovid Feinstein zt"l, generally rules somewhat more stringently nowadays.

In conclusion, now that we have a clearer understanding of the various S'fira minhagim and their sources, we can appreciate the array of customs followed by our neighbors and friends. And if you do get a wedding invitation inviting you to share in a simcha at some point between Pesach and Shavuot, you will now know how to respond – by asking your local competent halachic authority a proper sh'eila.

Postscript: As mentioned previously, there are many variations as to the exact starting and ending dates for the S'fira, and especially the ‘Second S'fira’. For example, there is the Rema’s basic ‘Second S'fira’, which starts after Rosh Chodesh Iyar, breaks for LaG

BaOmer, and continues until Erev Shavuot, as well as its alternative, the Magen Avraham, Chayei Adam, Aruch HaShulchan, and Mishna Berura’s minhag, which starts from and includes Rosh Chodesh Iyar until the SH'LOSHET Y'MEI HAGBALA, with a break on LaG BaOmer. Another common minhag is the Derech HaChayim’s minhag which starts from Isru Chag Pesach, skips Rosh Chodesh Iyar and LaG BaOmer, and ends by Rosh Chodesh Sivan. Another interesting custom is the Elyah Rabba’s minhag, keeping the entire S'fira excluding LaG BaOmer, and concluding on Erev Shavuot. Another variation is the Taz’s custom, to keep the ‘First S'fira’ for haircuts, but to continue with the prohibition on weddings after LaG BaOmer until shortly before Shavuot; due to the horrific tragedies perpetrated by the Crusaders to many Ashkenazic communities during the second half of S'fira (G'zeirat Tatn”u). And of course, there is the well-known minhag of the Arizal, which is to keep the entire S'fira for haircuts, including LaG BaOmer, until Erev Shavuot. One should check with his knowledgeable Rabbinic authority as to which exact minhag he should personally follow.

The author wishes to thank Rabbi Naftali Zvi Frankel for providing several important sources and for being the impetus for this author’s interest and research on this topic.

See website for all the footnotes and sources.

For any questions, comments or for the full

Mareh Mekomot / sources, please email the author: yspitz@ohr.edu

Rabbi Yehuda Spitz serves as the **Sho'el U'Meishiv** and **Rosh Chavura** of the **Ohr Lagolah Halacha Kollel** at **Yeshivas Ohr Somayach** in **Yerushalayim**. He also currently writes a contemporary halacha column for the Ohr Somayach website titled **"Insights Into Halacha"**.

ohr.edu/this_week/insights_into_halacha/

Disclaimer: This is not a comprehensive guide, rather a brief summary to raise awareness of the issues. In any real case one should ask a competent Halachic authority.

Rabbi Yehuda Spitz's English halacha sefer, "Food: A Halachic Analysis" (Mosaica/ Feldheim) containing over 500 pages featuring over 30 comprehensive chapters discussing the myriad halachic issues pertaining to food, is now available online and in bookstores everywhere.

Gimatriya Match

K'DOSHIM

GM Vayikra 19:30 (in Parshat K'doshim) and Vayikra 26:2 (last pasuk in B'har), are identical p'sukim -

אֶת־שַׁבְּתוֹתַי תִּשְׁמְרוּ וּבִמְקֹדְשֵׁי תִירְאוּ
אֲנִי ה' :

"Keep My Shabbats and revere My sanctuary. I am God."

The gimatriya of each (3623) matches Chayei Sara's opening pasuk (B'reishit 23:1)

וַיְהִי וַיֵּלֶם שָׂרָה בְּאֵה שָׁנָה וְעֶשְׂרִים
שָׁנָה וְשִׁבְעֵי שָׁנִים וַיֵּלֶם שָׂרָה:

"Sara had lived to be 100+20+7 (127) years old. [These were] the years of Sarah's life."

Let's take a look at a Rashi quoting the Midrash B'reishit Rabba that describes Sara Imeinu's special life. That Rashi is on the pasuk at the end of perek 24, when Yitzchak brings Rivka into his mother's tent, and the Midrash says that when Sara died, the specialness of her tent disappeared; but when Rivka came there, they returned.

...שָׁכַל זְמַן שֶׁשָּׂרָה קִיַּמַת הָיָה גַר דְּלוּק מִמְּעַרְב
שֶׁצֶת לְעֶרְבֵי שֶׁצֶת וּבְצֶרֶחַ מְלוּוִיָּה צָעֵסָה וְעָנָן
קָשׁוּר עַל הָאֶהָל...

"...For while Sara was living, a light had been burning in the tent from one Shabbat eve to the next, there was always a blessing in the dough (a miraculous increase) and a cloud was always hanging over the tent (as a divine protection)..."

That's a pretty nice summary of Sara's life, with the association with Shabbat and the Mikdash-Shabbat atmosphere, tent, cloud, light (Menora), special bread (Lechem HaPanim).

The life of SARA IMEINU was a prototype for both Shabbat and Mikdash - which brings us back to the pasuk from our sedra.

RED ALERT!

K'doshim

*by Rabbi Eddie Davis (RED)
of the Young Israel of Hollywood -
Ft. Lauderdale (Florida)*

DIVREI TORAH

- “You shall be holy...” (19:2). According to Rashi, the injunction to be holy calls upon Jews to avoid the illicit relationships described in the previous chapter. Separation from immorality creates holiness.

The Ramban claims the concept of holiness is not limited to one particular category of commandments. In fact, real holiness results only when one disciplines himself in the area of what is permitted. We must not surrender to self-indulgence, gluttony, or licentiousness even when the act itself is permitted by law.

The Akeidat Yitzchak writes as follows: Partaking of the pleasures of this world can occur in different fashions.

- (1) Partaking of the forbidden.
- (2) Partaking of the permitted pleasures.
- (3) Partaking only of those permitted pleasures that are vital for survival and good health of one's body.

The person who indulges in all physical and material pleasures regardless of God's ordinances is enslaved to his evil urges.

Of the second category of person, the one who indulges in everything that the Torah has not specifically forbidden, regardless of his need for these pleasures, Shlomo HaMelech (Kohelet 9,7) observes: “Go and eat your bread in joy.”

This third category is the person who does not indulge unless his vital needs are involved; he does not wish to partake of anything which by reason of his partaking may deprive someone else who is in need of it.

The fact that someone does not steal or rob or otherwise break the law, does not make such person holy. The Talmud (Yevamot 20) advises that if someone strives for holiness he should abstain from pleasures that are permissible. Most of our Sages are not described as saintly although doubtless all of them were righteous and pious. Only a handful qualify for the title “saintly”. Rabi Yehuda HaNasi, who never touched the flesh of the lower part of his body, is an example of such a saintly person (Shabbat 118). Even a Rabi Yosi, who never indulged in idle conversation, does not seem to rate the description “holy” (Sukka 28). Only those who apply to themselves the criteria listed for category 3 above can qualify for that distinctive appellation.

- In this week's sidra we read the mitzva of standing up for an elderly person and for a Talmid Chacham (Torah scholar).

The Gemara (Shavuot 50b) relates that Rav Nachman stood out of respect for the wife of Rav Huna because “the wife of a Torah scholar is like a Torah scholar.”

The Tosafot and RaN imply that there is a Torah obligation to stand up for the wife of a Talmid Chacham. The Minchat Chinuch (257:3) writes that while a Talmid Chacham can absolve others of the obligation to stand up for him (he can be Mocheil his Kavod), that only applies to him; his wife cannot be Mochelet the honor given to her as the wife of a Talmid Chacham since the Torah being honored is not hers.

If the wife of a Torah scholar is widowed, Tosafot, the Ramban and the RaN are of the opinion that there is no longer a Torah obligation to honor her. The Taz (Yoreh De'ah 242:14) cites the Maharam who wrote that if the widow of a Talmid Chacham marries an unlearned person, it is not necessary to honor her as before. The implication is that until she remarries there is an obligation to honor her because of her deceased husband.

(19:17) Reprove. Great is the power of merit of reproof even if the reproof goes unheeded, and the transgressor does not stop sinning. The importance of reproof can be learned from the following words of Chazal: “Three were consulted in that plot [to throw all the male newborns into the river]: Yitro, Iyov, and Bilaam. Bilaam, who suggested the plan, was killed. Iyov, who remained

silent, was punished by suffering. Yitro, who ran away, merited that some of his descendants would sit in the Chamber of Hewn Stone” (Sota 11). At that time, Yitro was an idolater. Moreover, his protest against Pharaoh’s decision only consisted of running away, and had no effect. Pharaoh’s decree conformed exclusively to Bilaam’s advice. Nevertheless, Yitro merited that the Almighty brought him to His service. He became a convert, and his descendants had the greatest good fortune one can have in this world – to sit as members of the Sanhedrin. And all this was in reward for a “silent protest”. By contrast, Iyov, who Scripture describes as “pure, honest, and God-fearing” (Iyov 1:1), was punished for not protesting; and not just any sufferings, but “the sufferings of Job” the most terrible ever known. He would have avoided all that pain if he had just protested. Even a “vain” protest, which would not have cancelled Pharaoh’s decree, would have been better than silence (Oznayim LaTorah).

- “And you shall love your neighbor as yourself.” Rabi Akiva noted that this is a great principle of Torah (Yerushalmi Nedarim 9:4). The commentators ask: Doesn’t Rabi Akiva contradict this in another statement (Bava Metzia 62a) where he said, “And your brother shall live with you – your life comes first?” The Chatam Sofer resolves the apparent contradictions in the following manner: In regard to worldly matters, one’s life comes before his friend’s.

Therefore, Rabbi Akiva says that if two people are in the desert and there is only enough water for one of them to survive, if the water belongs to one person, he is not required to share it with his friend. However, in reference to spiritual matters, such as Torah learning, one must place his friend's well-being before his own, and must instruct him even at the expense of his own learning, since by teaching another person, both teacher and pupil benefit (hence the word KAMOCHA). This is why Rabi Akiva stresses that loving one's neighbor as one self is a great principle of Torah.

Questions by RED

From the Text

1. Why do we have to be holy? (19:2)
2. What is Leket? (19:9)
3. Do not delay paying a worker. (19:13). May I delay in paying a babysitter?
4. You see a person drowning. Must you jump in the water to save him?
5. Am I permitted to hate someone who wronged me? (19:17)

From Rashi

6. How does Rashi translate the Hebrew word Kedoshim? (19:2)
7. Why does the Torah place the mother first (and in the Ten Commandments, it places the father first)? (19:3)
8. What is the difference between Don't

Steal here and in the Ten Commandments? (19:4)

9. Why does the Torah repeat the prohibition of Do Not Take My Name in Vain? (19:12)

10. Give a practical example of Do Not Place a Stumbling Block in Front of a Blind Person (19:14)

From the Rabbis

11. Why was it necessary to assemble all the people for Kedoshim? (Chizkuni)

12. Love your neighbor as yourself. How about if your neighbor is an evil person? (Ramban)

13. Am I required to wish someone success in his business? (Ramban)

From the Midrash

14. In the Book of Shmuel Alef, it says that Shaul built an altar to Hashem; he was the first who built an altar. (14:35). Didn't No'ach, Avraham, Yitzchak, Yaakov, and Moshe all build altars too?

From the Haftara (Amos)

15. What does Hashem expect from us after He freed us from the Egyptian slavery?

Relationships

16.
 - a) Yosef - Orde
 - b) Asher - Serach
 - c) Nachor - Aram
 - d) Yaakov - Naftali
 - e) Machli - Mushi

ANSWERS

1. Because Hashem is holy.
2. When harvesting, if one or two ears fall to the ground, they are gleanings that must be left for the poor.
3. No, you must pay her right away.
4. No, you are not required to risk your own life to save another. You may throw him a rope. (Although not required - because of the risk - if you assess the situation and feel you can do it, it is a voluntary mitzva.)
5. No, you may not hate him.
6. Being separate: separate from acts of sexual immorality.
7. It is natural to fear the father; therefore the mother is mentioned first here. It is natural to honor the mother first; therefore the father is placed first in the Ten Commandments.
8. In the Ten Commandments, the Torah refers to kidnapping. Here it is talking about stealing possessions.
9. Here it includes swearing with a nickname for Hashem.
10. Don't give another person bad advice on business.
11. Because all the Mitzvot are subsumed within this Sidra.
12. No, not if he is a Rasha, an evil person.
13. Yes, wish him success. It is under the Mitzva of Love your neighbor as yourself.
14. He was the first king to build an altar.
15. To be His loyal servants.

16. Relationships

- a) Uncle - nephew
- b) Father - daughter
- c) Grandfather - grandson
- d) Father - son
- e) Brothers