



by Rabbi Dr Raymond Apple z"l

ACHAREI-K'DOSHEM

Ordinary Acts

This week's (second) sidra, K'doshim, means "Holy Ones". It opens with God's command to emulate His holiness and be holy people (Vayikra 19:1-2).

Holiness is usually defined in spiritual, even mystical terms, denoting a somewhat rarefied life above the ordinary, but this sidra has a more practical approach, interpreting holiness ethically and requiring a life of uprightness and decency.

It must be in this sense that a shule is called K'HILA K'DOSHA "a holy congregation".

Its members are not necessarily imbued with otherworldly sanctity, but they show they are a holy congregation by helping each other, supporting the community, and improving their society.

But good deeds alone do not earn the title "holy". This comes from doing what has to be done from the right motives, as indicated in the traditional prayer for those "who occupy themselves with the needs of the community BE-EMUNA, in faith."

If the motive is right, the life of the congregation is holy.

The point is made by Rambam in his explanation of the law that says that using Temple property for a secular purpose requires the bringing of a trespass offering.

The object that a person uses may be a mere inanimate brick or stone, but because God's name is attached to it, it is holy. Any ordinary act becomes holy if it is dedicated to the name of God.

Three Types of Neighbour

"Love your neighbour as yourself", says the Torah (Vayikra 19:18).

What sort of neighbour?

Rabbi Yisra'el Salanter had a straightforward answer: "Every sort of neighbour!"

He derives this message from the Biblical text. The opening verse, "Be holy", tells us to revere those who are able to attain the highest standards.

The second verse, "Respect your father and mother and keep My Sabbaths", symbolises the intermediate category of people who have not (yet!) reached the really high levels.

The third verse, "Do not turn to idols", represents the residual cate-

gory of those who have neither reached high spirituality nor engaged in a basic degree of ethical and religious life, but nonetheless never crosses the line to real idolatry.

Some people are too fussy about whom they love. Others who do not share their commitments or opinions are immediately suspect and not really deserving of tolerance and respect. The Torah, as Rabbi Yisra'el sees it, writes off nobody. -OZ

Y'HI ZICHRO BARUCH