

Dvar Torah by Rabbi Chanoch Yeres

to his community at

Beit Knesset Beit Yisrael, Yemin Moshe

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ACHAREI-K'DOSHEM

This week we merit another double parsha, Acharei-K'doshim. This reading contains seventy-nine Divine commandments. That is over one-eighth of all the Mitzvot in the Torah. There is a great variety of Mitzvot mentioned from Yom Kippur services to moral behaviors. Even the names of these two portions seem to have a message. Acharei Mot - K'doshim - "after the death" referring to Aharon's two sons who perished. The second - "Holy ones" referring to the idea of sanctifying one's life to serving G-d. In other words, "after death - all are holy". A custom accepted to refrain from speaking ill about the deceased, all deserving of a positive eulogy.

Yet, another perspective is to emphasize the importance of life after the horrific death of Aharon's sons. Now, Acharei Mot, after the death... K'doshim... Be Holy. We see this idea within the words of the text K'DOSHEM TIHYU. Not referring to becoming a mystical or ascetic holiness but rather, sanctifying this world in holiness in which G-d's hand is visible in all laws of science and mathematics. Rabbi Joseph B, Solo-

veitchik z"l personified this idea in discerning G-d's commandments in nature and history. He saw Holiness, not to be isolated from the world but instead to impart holiness to all that one does in the world in which one is placed. Nevertheless, the same words that are commanding us to imbue holiness while being part of the world and part of universal society, the same parsha uses the phrase in the concluding chapter, V'HIVDALTEM - "and you shall distinguish or separate". Another similar phrase used later on G-d says VA'AVDIL ETCHEM - "and I have distinguished you".

Rabbi Soloveitchik once pointed out that the Jewish people do not have the option whether to be distinct or not. That is a given. Rather, the people of Israel are given an alternative by G-d. Either you make the distinction between yourselves and the nations of the world, or "I" will cause that distinction to be made. If you initiate that distinction then it will be a positive one. It will be a model of holiness in life, of loving-kindness and humanity. However, G-d warns, if you do not make that distinction and attempt to be like all other nations of the world then "I" will cause that distinction through antisemitism and ghettos.

After the loss of Aharon's sons, G-d instructs to make life holy in all our aspects of our living and to keep that distinction as a Jewish nation and

never forget where we come from and who we are. This perhaps is why the seventy-nine different mitzvot are mentioned here, after we accept the model of disseminating Holiness in all parts of our life.

Nevertheless, that separation of Israel from all nations will be made and will continue. It is up to us to choose to make it willingly. 🏰