

Toras Aish

Thoughts From Across the Torah Spectrum

RABBI MORDECHAI WEISS

You Never Know, You Never Know

Rabbi Shlomo Carlbach of blessed memory used to tell the story of a man in quest of holiness. As he entered the hallowed synagogue he noticed the austere Rabbi of the congregation sitting in the front row-deep in prayer and supplication.

Is this an example of holiness? He asked.

Yes it could be but in this case it was not.

As he continued his search he noticed a man adorned in such finely clothes deep in Torah thought. Surely he was one of the leaders of the Jewish community?

Is this the example of the ultimate holiness? He asked.

And the response again came. It could be, but in this case it was not.

Interspersed in his story Shlomo would sing his song “you never know, you never know - you never know, you never know”.

But just then - as Shlomo continued his story - the man saw and old poor suffering man with tears in his eyes, as he recited the holy words of the Psalms. The pages of his prayer book were drenched from his crying and weeping.

And again the question reverberated:

Is this the example of pure holiness?

And the response was definitive - “Yes this is the example of true “kedusha” holiness”.

Often we look at a person or an event and we are convinced that this is the highest level of sainthood and godliness - not realizing that G-d seeks what is in the hearts and soul of humankind and not their outward appearance.

The Talmud in Tractate Taanit tells the story of Rabbi Broka from the city of Chazoi who frequented the marketplace of Bei Lefet where Elijah the prophet was known to appear. One day when Elijah appeared Rabbi Broka asked him, “Is there anyone in this marketplace who will receive a share in the world to come?”

One would expect that Elijah would have sought out a person who was a holy Rabbi or a person in the forefront of the Jewish community or one who gave the most Tzadaka. In the end Elijah chose one person. He was dressed as a non-Jew and his job was

to save young Jewish girls from being violated when taken into captivity by notifying the Rabbis and telling them to pray and take action to affect their release.

The Talmud continues that Elijah chose two other people. When Rabbi Broka asked what they did to deserve such a lofty reward he responded that they made people laugh. No extra “shuckling” during their davening, no long recitation of the Shmoneh Esrei, not even learning Torah for long hours into the night. Just making people happy - this is what earned them a share in the world to come.

I remember years ago when I had to undergo surgery and, as one inevitably realizes, surgery is much less challenging than the recuperation after the surgery. Hours of pain and discomfort, sleepless nights, make this time difficult and very agonizing

The best way to survive such an event in your life is to have the support staff in your room so that they can help you and comfort you during this trying time. During recovery, even the most menial tasks become challenging and difficult.

I was lucky to have had present at my side my wonderful wife D'vorah who tended to my every need to make my stay at the hospital as bearable as possible.

But I also had the services of two non-Jewish nurses whose compassion and concern, their empathy and professionalism allowed me to cope with this very difficult and painful time in my life. At one point, the evening before the beginning of the onset of Shabbat, one of the nurses approached me and asked how I was feeling. When I responded that given the situation I was feeling fine she responded that had I said that I wasn't feeling well, she was prepared to stay the entire night to guarantee that I would receive the best of care.

It was then that the words of my friend Reb Shlomo reverberated in my ears, “You never know, you never know”. And I recalled the incident quoted in Tractate Taanit and the statement by Elijah the prophet on who is designated to receive a share in the world to come.

Had Elijah the prophet been standing near me at that time and I would have asked him is there anyone here worthy to receive a share in the world to come – he would have pointed definitively at these nurses and would have proclaimed that they are praiseworthy of such rewards.

You see, only G-d judges people. And in G-d's eyes all people who do kindness – Jews or non-Jews -

are worthy of a share in the great reward of the world to come. ©2021 Rabbi Mordechai Weiss has been involved in Jewish education for over four decades. He has served as Principal of various Hebrew Day Schools and as evaluator for Middle States Association. He has received numerous awards for his innovative programs and was chosen to receive the coveted "outstanding Principal" award from the National association of Private Schools. During his distinguished leadership as Principal, his school received the sought-after "Excellence in Education" award given by the US Department of Education. He now resides in Efrat and is available for speaking engagements. He can be contacted at rvmordechai@aol.com.

RABBI LORD JONATHAN SACKS Z"L

Covenant & Conversation

Rabbi Sacks zt"l had prepared a full year of Covenant & Conversation for 5781, based on his book Lessons in Leadership. The Office of Rabbi Sacks will continue to distribute these weekly essays, so that people all around the world can keep on learning and finding inspiration in his Torah.

It was a unique, unrepeatable moment of leadership at its highest height. For forty days Moses had been communing with God, receiving from Him the Law written on tablets of stone. Then God informed him that the people had just made a Golden Calf. He would have to destroy them. It was the worst crisis of the wilderness years, and it called for every one of Moses' gifts as a leader.

First, he prayed to God not to destroy the people. God agreed. Then he went down the mountain and saw the people cavorting around the Calf. Immediately, he smashed the tablets. He burned the Calf, mixed its ashes with water and made the people drink. Then he called for people to join him. The Levites heeded the call and carried out a bloody punishment in which three thousand people died. Then Moses went back up the mountain and prayed for forty days and nights. Then for a further forty days he stayed with God while a new set of tablets was engraved. Finally, he came down the mountain on the tenth of Tishri, carrying the new tablets with him as a visible sign that God's covenant with Israel remained.

This was an extraordinary show of leadership, at times bold and decisive, at others slow and persistent. Moses had to contend with both sides, inducing the Israelites to do teshuvah and God to exercise forgiveness. At that moment he was the greatest ever embodiment of the name Israel, meaning one who wrestles with God and with people and prevails.

The good news is: there once was a Moses. Because of him, the people survived. The bad news is: what happens when there is no Moses? The Torah itself says: "No other Prophet has risen in Israel like Moses, whom the Lord knew face to face" (Deut. 34:10). What do you do in the absence of heroic leadership? That is the problem faced by every nation,

corporation, community and family. It is easy to think, "What would Moses do?" But Moses did what he did because he was what he was. We are not Moses. That is why every human group that was once touched by greatness faces a problem of continuity. How does it avoid a slow decline?

The answer is given in this week's parsha. The day Moses descended the mountain with the second tablets was to be immortalised when its anniversary became the holiest of days, Yom Kippur. On this day, the drama of teshuvah and kapparah, repentance and atonement, was to be repeated annually. This time, though, the key figure would not be Moses but Aaron, not the Prophet but the High Priest.

That is how you perpetuate a transformative event: by turning it into a ritual. Max Weber called this the routinisation of charisma. (Economy and Society (U. of California Press, 1978), 246ff) A once-and-never-again moment becomes a once-and-ever-again ceremony. As James MacGregor Burns puts it in his classic work, Leadership: "The most lasting tangible act of leadership is the creation of an institution -- a nation, a social movement, a political party, a bureaucracy -- that continues to exert moral leadership and foster needed social change long after the creative leaders are gone." (Leadership (York: Harper, 1978), 454)

There is a remarkable Midrash in which various Sages put forward their idea of *klal gadol ba-Torah*, "the great principle of the Torah." Ben Azzai says it is the verse, "This is the book of the chronicles of man: On the day that God created man, He made him in the likeness of God" (Gen. 5:1). Ben Zoma says that there is a more embracing principle, "Listen, Israel, the Lord our God, the Lord is one." Ben Nannas says there is a yet more embracing principle: "Love your neighbour as yourself." Ben Pazzi says we find a more embracing principle still: "The first sheep shall be offered in the morning, and the second sheep in the afternoon" (Exodus 29:39) -- or, as we might say today, Shacharit, Mincha and Maariv. In a word: "routine". The passage concludes: The law follows Ben Pazzi.

The meaning of Ben Pazzi's statement is clear: all the high ideals in the world -- the human person as God's image, belief in God's unity, and the love of neighbours -- count for little until they are turned into habits of action that become habits of the heart. We can all recall moments of insight or epiphany when we suddenly understood what life is about, what greatness is, and how we would like to live. A day, a week, or at most a year later the inspiration fades and becomes a distant memory and we are left as we were before, unchanged. (The passage is cited in the Introduction to the commentary HaKotev to Ein Yaakov, the collected aggadic passages of the Talmud. It is also quoted by Maharal in *Netivot Olam*, Ahavat Re'a 1.)

Judaism's greatness is that it gave space to both Prophet and Priest, to inspirational figures on the

one hand, and on the other, daily routines -- the halachah -- that take exalted visions and turn them into patterns of behaviour that reconfigure the brain and change how we feel and who we are.

One of the most unusual passages I have ever read about Judaism written by a non-Jew occurs in William Rees-Mogg's book on macro-economics, *The Reigning Error* (pg. 9-13). Rees-Mogg (1928-2012) was a financial journalist who became editor of *The Times*, chairman of the Arts Council and vice-chairman of the BBC. Religiously he was a committed Catholic.

He begins the book with a completely unexpected paean of praise for halachic Judaism. He explains his reason for doing so. Inflation, he says, is a disease of inordinacy, a failure of discipline, in this case in relation to money. What makes Judaism unique, he continues, is its legal system. This has been wrongly criticised by Christians as drily legalistic. In fact, Jewish law was essential for Jewish survival because it "provided a standard by which action could be tested, a law for the regulation of conduct, a focus for loyalty and a boundary for the energy of human nature."

All sources of energy, most notably nuclear energy, need some form of containment. Without this, they become dangerous. Jewish law has always acted as a container for the spiritual and intellectual energy of the Jewish people. That energy "has not merely exploded or been dispersed; it has been harnessed as a continuous power." What Jews have, he argues, modern economies lack: a system of self-control that allows economies to flourish without booms and crashes, inflation and recession.

The same applies to leadership. In *Good to Great*, management theorist Jim Collins argues that what the great companies have in common is a culture of discipline. In *Great By Choice* (pg. 55), he uses the phrase "the 20-Mile March" meaning that outstanding organisations plan for the marathon, not the sprint. Confidence, he says, "comes not from motivational speeches, charismatic inspiration, wild pep rallies, unfounded optimism, or blind hope." It comes from doing the deed, day after day, year after year. Great companies use disciplines that are specific, methodical and consistent. They encourage their people to be self-disciplined and responsible. They do not over-react to change, be it for good or bad. They keep their eye on the far horizon. Above all, they do not depend on heroic, charismatic leaders who at best lift the company for a while but do not provide it with the strength-in-depth they need to flourish in the long run.

The classic instance of the principles articulated by Burns, Rees-Mogg and Collins is the transformation that occurred between Ki Tissa and Acharei Mot, between the first Yom Kippur and the second, between Moses' heroic leadership and the quiet, understated priestly discipline of an annual day of repentance and atonement.

Turning ideals into codes of action that shape habits of the heart is what Judaism and leadership are about. Never lose the inspiration of the Prophets, but never lose, either, the routines that turn ideals into acts and dreams into achieved reality. *Covenant and Conversation 5781 is kindly supported by the Maurice Wohl Charitable Foundation in memory of Maurice and Vivienne Wohl z"l ©2021 Rabbi Lord J. Sacks z"l and rabbisacks.org*

RABBI SHLOMO RISKIN

Shabbat Shalom

"**S**peak to the entire congregation of the People of Israel and say to them: 'You shall be holy, for I the Lord your God am holy.'" (Leviticus 19:2) What does it mean to be holy? In our generation, the emotionally-charged observance of Yom Hazikaron – when we honor the memories of those who have lost their lives defending the State of Israel – provide poignant answers to this ancient question.

I would like to offer some context for this matter by citing a teaching from Rabbi Yechezkel "Chatzkel" Abramsky, z"l, legendary sage and rabbinical judge of London and Jerusalem. He taught that three aspects of our ethnicity create Jewish identity: belonging to a special nation, a special religion, and a special holy community. These three elements are expressed in the Tahanun supplication that we recite after the daily Shemoneh Esrei prayer.

The first element is reflected in the words: "Guardian of Israel, guard the remnant of Israel, and do not destroy Israel, those who recite 'Shema Yisrael'." Fascinatingly, the prayer speaks of "Israel" and not of "Jews", of our national heritage rather than of our religious faith. Israel is, after all, the name of our common patriarch, Yisrael; it is the special term for our national homeland – and a nation is a family writ large! Nations developed from families, and so we are the Children of Israel!

We begin this prayer by entreating the Almighty to preserve also those Jews who do not identify with a traditional code of conduct or a commitment to a particular faith or set of beliefs. It is enough that they are citizens of the State of Israel, or diaspora Jews who identify with the "Jewish family" in times of crisis. This is the covenant of Jewish peoplehood that God established with Abraham and Sarah and their descendants.

The prayer continues: "Guardian of a unique people, guard the remnant of a unique people, and do not destroy a unique people, who declare Your Name one and unique, the Lord our God is one and unique."

In this second stage of the prayer, we ask for the preservation also of those who see themselves as "Jews" in addition to being Israelis, those who live a unique traditional lifestyle of Sabbath, festivals and kashrut, and those who are committed to faith in one

God. These Jews express the covenant at Sinai, the special religious beliefs and way of life that make Jews a singular and unique people.

The prayer concludes with the highest stage of love, "Guardian of a sacred people, guard the remnant of a sacred people, and do not destroy a sacred people, who triplicate with three sanctities before the Sacred One." This is the final and highest aspect of our ethnicity: in addition to our being a nation and a religion – Jews and Israelis, bound up together with a family-nation-state and committed to a system of traditions and beliefs – we must also strive to be truly close to our loving God, to be holy and sacred, God-like in words and deeds, devoid of egocentricity even to the extent of martyrdom for the sake of God and Israel.

This is the very first commandment of this week's Torah reading of Kedoshim: "you shall be holy." What does this mean? Yosef Goodman, z"l, son of my beloved friends, Mordechai and Anne Goodman, demonstrated how to answer this question.

In early 2006, Yosef, a member of an elite IDF unit, was participating in an army training maneuver at the Nitzanim base near the city of Ashdod. While jumping out of an army plane, Yosef's parachute became entangled with the parachute of his unit commander, a war hero who had saved many Jewish lives and who was central to our military victories.

If Yosef did nothing, chances were that they would both be killed as the plane crashed to the ground, but there also was a small possibility that they both would live. Yosef, however, – in a split second decision – opted to disentangle his parachute from that of his commanding officer, thereby saving the life of the commander, but catapulting him to certain death on the ground below. At the funeral on Har Herzl, the head of the entire unit praised Yosef, calling him a fearless soldier who showed everyone the meaning of selfless Zionism. Yosef, z"l, acted above and beyond what Jewish law expected of him, but he certainly was a holy Jew, close to God Himself.

Who is holy? Roi Klein, z"l, a young married father of two, who loved his nation, his land and his Torah with all his heart and soul. In the Second Lebanon War in the Summer of 2006 against Hizbullah, Roi found himself in the town of Bint Jbeil removing armaments with his army reserve unit. He was standing near the entrance to a building when a terrorist threw a grenade that landed near him. Klein yelled out to his men, "Klein is dead! Klein is dead!" and, while proclaiming "Shema Yisrael!", jumped on the live grenade, muffling the explosion with his body and saving the lives of all of his fellow soldiers. Roi, z"l, too is a kadosh, a holy Jew.

Please, God, preserve all members of the Jewish nation: the Jews who have only the most basic of Jewish ethnic ties, those who also have deep Jewish religious ties, and especially those who have attained a

degree of God-like holiness! Preserve all members of the Jewish nation, for each of us has the capacity to strive for holiness! ©2021 Ohr Torah Institutions & Rabbi S. Riskin

RABBI BEREL WEIN

Wein Online

The Torah reading for this week is a double portion, which together contains the largest number of commandments that appears in any one section of the holy Torah. One question which has challenged Judaism throughout the ages is why do we need so many commandments to fulfill our obligation to be good, kind, and faithful? Is it not sufficient that we understand the general principles as outlined in the Ten Commandments, which permeate all Jewish life and scholarship?

Since we are aware of the goal – namely that of being a good, honest, and compassionate human being – shouldn't that realization suffice and not require all of the particular details that make up the bulk of this week's Torah reading. Even though we understand, as any lawyer will tell you, that the devil is in the details, at first glance and even with a superficial understanding, it seems completely superfluous to have these many instructions hurled upon us, to achieve the goal that we are all aware of.

By the way, this has always been the contention of some factions in Jewish life through history - that the details of the commandments were not really that important, but as a Jew, it was crucial to be a good person at heart. This was the contention of the ancient Sadducees in second Temple times and continues to be the philosophy of all those groups that deviated from Jewish tradition and observance of the Torah Commandments throughout the ages. It remains, even today, the banner of the non-Orthodox groups that loudly proclaim and justify their essential non-Jewish Jewishness. To them, the details are unnecessary, burdensome and of little value. Just be a good person, they proclaim, and that alone is the essence of Judaism.

But human history teaches us differently. As has been famously articulated: the road to hell is paved with good intentions, and good intentions often lead to tyranny over others, and even to murder and genocide. Without the details, how are good intentions to be fulfilled. We cannot rely upon human judgment to guarantee that those good intentions will ever be realized.

The worst dictators and murders of the past few centuries such as Napoleon, the Kaiser, and even Hitler and Stalin always proclaimed that they had good intentions for their country, and, in fact, for all of mankind. They maintained that to achieve those good intentions they were entitled to use force and coercion against millions of others, to actualize their good

objectives.

In our current world society, good intentions alone, without the restraint of the commandments and details, led to the murder of millions of unborn but living fetuses, concentration camps, gulags, the cancel culture, and the tyranny of the majority over the minority, no matter how slight the margin of majority in terms of numbers and popularity.

Good intentions without the restraint of details and commandments are, in fact, a danger, and not a boon to human society. Through the Torah commandments, Judaism offers instructions as how to become a good person and maintain a moral life. It teaches us that oftentimes it is the minority, not the majority, that is correct.

Even though the goal of being a good and holy person should never be forgotten – for otherwise the observance of the details would be of little value, as is noted by Ramban, that one can be a wicked person while believing oneself to be within the purview of the Torah. It is the balance between the great ultimate goals and the details of how to achieve that, which makes Judaism unique, vibrant, and eternal. This balancing act is the secret of the survival of Judaism and the Jewish people throughout the ages. ©2021 Rabbi Berel Wein - Jewish historian, author and international lecturer offers a complete selection of CDs, audio tapes, video tapes, DVDs, and books on Jewish history at www.rabbiwein.com. For more information on these and other products visit www.rabbiwein.com

RABBI AVI WEISS

Shabbat Forshpeis

From a literal perspective, the names of the Torah portions consist of nothing more than the first major word of the part of the Torah that is read during a given Shabbat. It can, however, be argued that there is meaning within the names themselves.

Acharei Mot means “after death.” What is the challenge that presents itself with the loss of someone close?

In my early years of the rabbinate, I always felt that my role as a spiritual leader was to sit with bereaved families and help them undo the pain they were feeling.

But after my mother died many decades ago, I stood before my congregation and apologized. I said, “I’m sorry. All these years I thought my goal as a rabbi was, in time of death, to stop the suffering, mend the broken heart, lift the heaviness. With the death of my mother, I have come to realize that is impossible. One can’t remove the darkness, but should try to reach out to God, feel His embrace as He helps us go on.”

In memory of my mother, I’ve written these words concerning the loss of someone close: To what can death be compared?

To a person who enters a darkened room for the first time and trips over the furniture. Each time he

enters the room, he learns more and more where the furniture stands. In time he becomes familiar with the room, and despite the darkness knows how to get around.

So, too, death. There is darkness in death that cannot be chased away. But it is possible to learn how to continue to live despite the darkness which forever remains.

Not only in death but in life, there are sometimes no answers. The heart condition, the cancer, the spinal injury remains; the depression, the loneliness doesn’t go away; the learning disability, the speech impediment cannot be surmounted; the struggle with a marriage, a parent, a sibling, a child continues.

The ability to cope, yes, the ability to navigate the dark room and, in time, make one’s way, is made easier and is sometimes only possible when one is able to feel the fullness of God’s presence. The Psalmist makes this point when calling out, “For my father and mother have left me, but the Lord gathers me in” (Psalms 27:10).

Death is final. Once dead, father and mother can never return. And yet, King David declares, God is there not necessarily to obviate problems, but to cuddle us, to hug us, to gather us in by helping us deal with the situation at hand.

And we, women and men, mandated to imitate divine ways, are encouraged to do the same – aiding the bereaved to navigate their way through. Often, life is a process of managing problems, rather than solving them. ©2021 Hebrew Institute of Riverdale & CJC-AMCHA. Rabbi Avi Weiss is Founder and Dean of Yeshivat Chovevei Torah, the Open Orthodox Rabbinical School, and Senior Rabbi of the Hebrew Institute of Riverdale

RABBI AVROHOM LEVENTHAL

Grab Torah by the Foot

There is a famous story in the Gemara (Masechet Shabbat, 31A). A gentile once came to Shammai the Elder and told him that he would convert to Judaism if Shammai could teach him all of the Torah while standing on one foot. Shammai, incensed at such a notion, threw him out of the house.

This man then approached Hillel the Elder with the same request. Hillel told him “that which is hated to you don’t do to another. This is ALL of the Torah. Everything else is commentary. Go and learn”.

It seems that this story, along with a few others on the same page, is brought to reveal to us the patience of Hillel. This prospective convert unsuccessfully attempted to incite Hillel with a ridiculous request. In fact, Hillel was an extremely patient and understanding man and “passed the test” of potential anger.

The lesson, however, is much deeper and has little to do with Hillel himself.

The basis for Hillel’s statement comes from

Parshat Kedoshim: "וְאָהַבְתָּ לְרֵעֶךָ כְּמוֹךָ, אֲנִי ה' – And you should love your neighbor as yourself, I am HaShem.

Rabbi Akiva, in a similar vein to Hillel, said that this commandment is the "great rule of the Torah". So, two of the greatest of our Rabbis have emphasized that the foundation of Torah rests on how we interact with others.

HaShem Himself reinforces this by ending the pasuk with the words, אֲנִי ה'. He is "signing off" that there is a direct correlation between your relationship with others and to Him.

With this, perhaps we can look at the story of the gentile in a different light.

This man genuinely wanted to convert to Judaism, follow the Torah and come close to HaShem. He knew, however, that he had much ground to cover as he was already an adult and had learned nothing until this point.

His request was sincere: How can I learn the basics of Judaism in the shortest time possible? The 'one foot' was not only to literally be able to learn Torah quickly. He was asking "what is the one fundamental principle (foot) that encompasses all of the Torah?"

Shammai interpreted his question as insolence and mockery. Hillel recognized his sincerity and summed it up with his version of the "Golden Rule", what is hated by you, don't do to others.

There are two categories of Mitzvot, those between a person and God and those between a person and others. Our goal in life, as stated in Pirkei Avot (3:1), should be to act in a manner which is pleasant to others, which gives nachat to HaShem.

The litmus test of our relationship to G-d is how we treat other people. If we truly desire to be close to Him, we must ensure that we treat ALL of His children in a proper manner.

"וְאָהַבְתָּ לְרֵעֶךָ כְּמוֹךָ, אֲנִי ה' – And you should love your neighbor as yourself, I am HaShem.

The two relationships, with others and ultimately with HaShem, are intertwined.

As parents, we know that there is no greater pleasure than seeing our children getting along with one another. And no greater pain than discord among siblings.

Our Father above is the ultimate parent. More than anything, He wants us all to love, respect and care for one another.

As it says in the Elya Rabba (28): וְכִי אָמַר לָהֶם: הַקְּבִ"ה לְיִשְׂרָאֵל, בְּנֵי אֱהוּבֵי כְּלוּם חֲסֵרְתִי דְבַר שֶׁאֵבַקְשׁ מִכֶּם. וְמָה אֲנִי מְבַקֵּשׁ מִכֶּם? אֲלָא שֶׁתְּהִי אֹהֲבִים זֶה אֶת זֶה, וְתִהְיוּ מְכַבְּדִים זֶה אֶת זֶה!

What does the Holy One say to the Jewish people? My beloved children. I lack nothing. I only ask from you that you should love each other and respect each other."

We have the ability to give Him and each other the ultimate nachat! ©2021 Rabbi A. Leventhal. Rabbi

Leventhal is the Executive Director of Lema'an Achai lemaanachai.org

RABBI JONATHAN GEWIRTZ

Migdal Ohr

"**T**his shall be to you a law for all time: to make atonement... from all their sins once per year, and [Aharon] did as Hashem commanded Moshe." (Vayikra 16:34) The laws of the Kohain Gadol's service on Yom Kippur were given months before they were needed, in Nissan, shortly after the demise of Aharon's two sons, Nadav and Avihu. We read Parshas Achrei Mos now, relatively closely after Pesach, and again on Yom Kippur itself. This posuk is actually the last verse read as part of the kriah on Yom Kippur at Shacharis.

Rashi teaches us that though going into the Holy of Holies and wearing special vestments would be a source of glory for Aharon, he fulfilled this service solely to fulfill Hashem's command, as stated in the posuk. He put aside his own feelings and focused solely on Hashem.

There is a beautiful Chasam Sofer here. He makes a play on words, and says that the sins were atoned for and made into "as Hashem commanded Moshe." The Jews' sins were transformed into Mitzvot through Teshuva Mai'Ahava, repentance born of love of Hashem. The question is, why only once per year? Why not repent every day as it says in Pirkei Avos? Secondly, how can we know they will repent from love?

We can answer these with another comment of the Chasam Sofer on this posuk. On the eighth day of the inauguration, when Aharon began to do the Avoda, he brought the same offerings as the Yom Kippur service, and one might say that he had already "done" Yom Kippur that year, and when Yom Kippur came around, he would not be able to do the service since the Torah limits it to once per year. In fact, we learn the laws of separating the Kohain from his wife seven days before Yom Kippur from the Miluim, so they appear to be parallel.

The Chasam Sofer therefore quotes the Ramban that the bull Aharon offered on Yom HaShmini was one to atone for a Kohain Gadol who had worshiped Avoda Zara, and it was part of his purification for his involvement in the Golden Calf.

Nevertheless, though this would be embarrassing for Aharon, that he was guilty for his role there, when Yom Kippur came around, Aharon did the Yom Kippur service properly as commanded, despite the fact that it would highlight his previous wrongdoing. The Chasam Sofer elaborates further, but the point is that Aharon was willing to acknowledge his errors publicly in the service of Hashem, and we see this specifically because of the command for once per year.

Now to our other question, of how we would know the Jews would repent from love and have their

sins turned to mitzvos. Regarding the korban of a leader who sinned, the Torah (Vayikra 4:22) says, "Asher nasi yecheteh, when a prince sins." Chazal darshan the word "asher, when" to be similar to "ashrei, fortunate." R' Yochanan ben Zakkai says (Horayos 10b), "Fortunate is the generation whose leader brings an offering for his sin. If the leader atones for his sin, do you need to articulate that a commoner will do so as well? If he atones for his unwitting sins, do you need mention that he will atone for his intentional ones?"

We now understand that when the people saw Aharon, their spiritual leader, able and willing to acknowledge his wrongdoings and focus on making Hashem happy, they were able to follow suit. Just as Aharon performed the Avoda out of love, solely for the sake of Hashem and with no ulterior motives, they were inspired each year to repent from love, and Aharon thereby turned their sins into mitzvos, through the example he set.

Once, when the Satmar Rebbe z"l was leaving the hospital after an illness, a very pushy fellow "insisted" on helping him put on his coat. The Rav told him he didn't need any help, even though he really did. When he was later asked why, he told the questioner:

"I didn't let him help me because that man wasn't interested in helping a weak old Jew. Instead, he was focused on his mitzvah of Bikur Cholim, and I am not simply a "cheifetz shel mitzvah," (an object to be used for a good deed.)" ©2021 Rabbi J. Gewirtz and Migdal Ohr

RABBI ZVI SOBOLOFSKY

TorahWeb

There are two mitzvos in Parshas Kedoshim that together encompass the entirety of our avodas Hashem. The first is "kedoshim tihyu -- You should be holy", which is interpreted differently by Rashi and Ramban. Rashi explains this passuk to refer specifically to prohibited relationships. The Rambam expands its scope and includes it in Sefer Kedusha of Mishna Torah in the halachos of kashrus as well. According to these rishonim, it is the scrupulous observance of these intricate laws that makes up a life of kedusha.

Ramban interprets kedoshim tihyu as referring to one's lifestyle, and understands it to proscribe all physical indulgences that, although not specifically prohibited, do not fit in to a lifestyle of kedusha. Thus, according to Ramban, even if all the detailed laws of Sefer Kedusha are observed, a gluttonous, hedonistic lifestyle is a violation of kedoshim tihyu, since being kadosh demands a lifestyle of kedusha.

Both interpretations of kedoshim tihyu focus on our relationship with Hashem. The second expansive mitzva of Parshas Kedoshim is "V'ahavta l'reacha kamocho -- You should love your fellow man as you love yourself", which includes all aspects of being adam

la'chaveiro. The Baal Halachos Gedolos counts different examples of chessed, such as bikur cholim, nichum aveilim, etc. as separate mitzvos. In Rambam's count of the mitzvos, however, he includes all mitzvos of chessed in one mitzvah, i.e. subsumed under the mitzva of "V'ahavta l'reacha kamocho". According to Rambam, why don't distinct types of chessed count as separate mitzvos?

There are two dimensions to the mitzvos being adam la'chaveiro. The Chafetz Chaim comments on the passuk in the navi Micha that Hashem requires us to, "asos mishpat v'ahavas chessed -- act justly and love kindness." Why is it that with respect to justice we are told to act, while regarding kindness we are told to love kindness as well? The Chafetz Chaim explains that justice can be served through action alone. Kindness, however, can't be fully implemented if one remains an unkind person internally; in order to act truly kindly, we must become individuals who love performing acts of kindness. If the Torah would have commanded us concerning specific acts of chessed, we may have misunderstood that kind acts alone suffice. Therefore this mitzva is formulated using the word "love" because we must become loving people.

Feeling love is essential, but it is not enough. There is an additional source which obligates us in each of the numerous specific acts of chessed: the Torah delineates the different acts of kindness Hashem performs, and we are required to emulate Hashem. Just as He visits the sick, comforts the bereaved, and rejoices with the chosson and kallah, so too must we follow suit. The Torah illustrates how Hashem is involved in the specifics to teach us that just having a good heart and vague feelings of love are not sufficient, rather these emotions must result in concrete actions to our fellow man.

These two principles upon which the entire Torah rests, kedusha and ahava, have both broad and narrow applications. We must perfect our actions as well as our perspective on how we relate to the physical world that surrounds us. Similarly, we must excel in our practical acts of kindness while simultaneously becoming loving sensitive individuals. As we read the myriad mitzvos, both being adam la'makom and being adam la'chaveiro found in Parshas Kedoshim, let us focus on the dual goals of both facets of Torah observance. ©2016 Rabbi Z. Sobolofsky & TorahWeb.org

RABBI SHLOMO RESSLER

Lelamed Weekly Dvar

Our Parsha commands us to be holy, gives examples of what that entails, and then mentions the shelamim (peace) offering (19:2-5). One of the laws of this offering is that it must be consumed before the third day. If any remains, or if there is even intent to have any remaining on the third day, the entire offering would not be accepted. How would the mere

consideration of eating it on day three invalidate an offering if it didn't end up happening anyway?

Rabbi David Fohrman suggests that the answer can be derived from the topic mentioned thereafter. After these offering details, the Torah speaks of social justice rules, such as the leaving of one's harvest for those less fortunate, honoring one's commitments, and not stealing. All these ordinances aim to build respect for others. This same respect for others would prevent one from even considering breaking the shelamim 3-day rule. Respecting and honoring the boundaries of G-d and of people will enable us to lead holy and just lives. © 2021 Rabbi S. Ressler and Lelamed, Inc.

RABBI YISROEL CINER

Parsha Insights

This week we read the double parsha of Acharei Mos-Kedoshim. Kedoshim begins: "And Hashem spoke to Moshe saying: Speak to the entire congregation of Bnei Yisroel {the Children of Israel} and say to them: You shall be holy, because I, Hashem your G-d, am holy." [19:1-2] This concept is reiterated again later in the parsha: "Sanctify yourselves and you shall be holy because I am Hashem your G-d." [20:7]

The Medrash [Rabbah 24:8] compares this to a king's subjects who presented three crowns to their king. The king placed one crown on his head and placed the other two onto the heads of his sons. So too, in the heavenly kingdom, the angels cry out "Holy, Holy, Holy," [Yishayahu 6:3] and thus crown Hashem with three crowns. Hashem places one on His head and the other two are placed onto the heads of Bnei Yisroel as it says: "You shall be holy," [19:2] and "you shall be holy." [20:7]

The Targum Yonasan explains the nature of these three 'Holies' that Hashem is crowned with. (This is included in the Uva L'Zion portion of the morning prayers.) Hashem is holy in the heights of the heavens above, He is holy on the earth where He displays his power and He is holy for all eternity.

The Ohr Gedalyahu elucidates each of these 'Holies' further and shows which two the King, Hashem, gave to His children, Bnei Yisroel. "Hashem is holy in the heights of the heavens above." He is totally above and beyond our comprehension. Our only inkling of Hashem is through His Middos--the way that He interacts with this world. But knowledge of Hashem Himself, what is called Atzmuso Yisborach, of that we have absolutely no idea.

"He is holy on the earth where He displays his power." Hashem's power here on earth is abundantly clear. The miracles of life that are all around us, the majestic beauty of nature and the individual providence that guides each individual all testify to the awesome power of Hashem. Yet, with all of these myriad differences that course their way in and around each person, Hashem Himself remains separate, removed

and unchanged.

"He is holy for all eternity." He was, is and will be. Totally beyond that parameter of time that has such a strong hold on us that we can't even imagine existence beyond it. Two of these crowns were given to Hashem's children, enabling us to share His holiness.

We too have the capacity to be holy here on earth. While involving ourselves in this world we must retain our focus that our primary accomplishments take place in a world that is totally separate and removed from our daily grind and grime. We must act in an honest and uplifted manner, thereby bringing holiness and Kiddush Hashem {Sanctification of Hashem's name} wherever we go. By living in such a manner we can access that third crown and also attain eternity. When the Torah's eternal light illuminates the person who lives according to its teachings, that person becomes a part of that eternity.

We here in Israel and Jews all over the world are living through an amazing time. The anti-Semitism in the world has reached levels that I believe haven't been seen since the pre-Holocaust days. At the same time, this situation has caused an unprecedented level of achdus {unity} in Yisroel. I imagine that the heavenly goal in all that we're experiencing is this achdus. The Temple was destroyed because of sinas chinam {baseless animosity} and it will be achdus that will ultimately bring about the redemption.

This places an incredible responsibility upon us to be holy here on earth. On one level, in order to not give grounds for any accusations against us. On another level, to help promote this achdus amongst us. And most importantly, in order to rouse Hashem's powerful protection and deliverance. This will enable the world to reach its ultimate state of full redemption, becoming one with that third crown, the crown of eternity. © 2015 Rabbi Y. Ciner & torah.org

