

Torah Wellsprings

*Collected thoughts
from
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Achrei - Kedoshim



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Table of Contents

Torah Wellsprings - Achrei - Kedoshim

Accepting Hashem's Plan	4
Parnassah from Hashem	5
Ahavas Yisrael with Awareness that Everything is from Hashem	6
"Kedoshim Tehiyu - You Shall be Holy"	7
Sefiras HaOmer.....	12

Torah Wellsprings - Achrei - Kedoshim

Accepting Hashem's Plan

It states (19:3) אִישׁ אִמּוֹ וְאָבִיו תִּירָאוּ, "Every man shall fear his mother and his father". How does one perform the mitzvah of fearing his parents? Rashi writes, ... לֹא יֵשֵׁב בְּמִקְוָמוֹ, "What is fear? Don't sit in his place..." One aspect of fearing one's parents is not to sit in their place.

The Zohar Hakadosh (p.82a) says that this pasuk also alludes to fearing Hashem because Hashem is the "Father" of Bnei Yisrael. The Sfas Emes says that we fear

Hashem by ... לֹא יֵשֵׁב בְּמִקְוָמוֹ, when we don't sit in His place, which means that we don't ever think that we could do a better job of running His world, chalilah. We trust that Hashem is leading us in the very best way.¹

It states in this week's parashah (19:5-6) וְכִי תִזְבַּח וְזָבַח לְרִצְוֹנְכֶם תִּזְבַּחְהוּ, בְּיוֹם זְבִיחַתְּכֶם יֵאָכֵל וּמִקְוֶהְתָּ, "When you slaughter a korban Shelamim to Hashem, you shall slaughter it to find favor for yourselves. On the day of the *shechitah* shall it be eaten and on the next day..."

1. The Sadugeira Rebbe zt'l told a story that happened in the time of the Rambam. (The story is written in Ner Yisrael, vol.3, p.40):

It was a year of drought. Strong, fierce winds blew that year, but instead of the winds bringing in rain, the winds only caused havoc. The crops didn't grow well, and people were hungry. Everyone hoped that the next year, things would be better.

A malach pleaded before Hashem, "Let me run the world for a year", and Hashem consented. That year, rain fell abundantly, always at the right times, and the weather was always fair and tranquil. There weren't any strong winds. The wheat stalks grew tall and were packed with robust kernels. The wheat kernels were ground into fluffy, snow-white flour. However, when baked in an oven, the bread crumbled into tiny pieces. All crops were useless and inedible.

The malach returned to Hakadosh Baruch Hu and asked what he had done wrong. Hakadosh Baruch Hu explained that when a wheat kernel is planted in the ground, it rots and becomes part of the earth, then it grows into a wheat stalk. Nevertheless, the element of "earth" is still attached to the wheat kernels. The earth element in the wheat causes the wheat particles to detach from one another. This is the reason winds are important. The winds shake off the earth particles from the wheat. But the year the malach led the world, there weren't any strong winds. The malach thought it was doing a favor for the world, but as a result, the earth element remained within the wheat. This is the reason the bread crumbled and didn't hold together.

Hashem knows best how to lead the world, and no one should try to take His place. As in Hilchos Kibud Av v'Em, there is a prohibition לִישֵׁב מִמְקוֹמוֹ, to sit in one's parents' place, so, too, no one should try to sit in Hashem's place to lead the world. Only Hashem knows what is truly good for each individual and for the world.

Let us also learn from this story that when something seems bad to us, it is good. The strong winds seemed bad to people (and to the malach), but Hakadosh Baruch Hu's wisdom is endless; He knows what must be done. We often don't know why and how everything is for our good, but we can rely on Hashem that it is certainly so. As a great tzaddik said, "It is a great distress and an embarrassment if I would serve a G-d whose ways I can understand." Hashem's wisdom is so far greater than ours, it is only reasonable and rationale that there will be things Hashem does that we don't understand.

Therefore, if "strong winds" of tzaros blow, we must believe that this is chesed in concealment. Very good things will come from it.

In our generation, there is no Beis HaMikdash, and we aren't able to bring a korban Shelamim. Nevertheless, the Divrei Yisrael zt'l says, there is an avodah we can do that will be accepted in Heaven as though it were a korban Shelamim. When we accept Hashem's decree with love, and without complaining, when we say, "Hashem knows how to lead my life and how to lead the world, I accept His plan, for I believe it is all for the good," it is accepted in heaven as a korban shelamim. This is the meaning of the pasuk, וְכִי תִזְבַּחוּ זֶבַח שְׁלָמִים לַיהוָה, if you want to bring a korban shelamim in our days, לְרַצְּנֵכֶם, sacrifice your desires. Perhaps you wanted more money, more honor, or better health, and you aren't living the life you would choose and want for yourself. But you לְרַצְּנֵכֶם תִּזְבַּחְהוּ, sacrifice your desires and believe that Hashem knows what is truly good for you. As it states (Avos 2:4) בְּטֹל רְצוֹנְךָ מִפְּנֵי הַשָּׁמַיִם, annul your will to Hashem's plan. Annul your will, and accept the path that Hashem has chosen for you. This emunah is mesugal for parnassah, as the pasuk states, בְּיוֹם וּזְבַחְכֶם יֵאָבֵל וּמִמָּחָרְתָּ, This means you will have parnassah for today, and you won't have to worry about tomorrow.

This emunah is also mesugal for health and longevity. The Divrei Yisrael says that this is the meaning of the pasukim (Tehillim 92:15-16) עוֹד יִגְבּוּן בְּשֵׁיבָה דְשָׁנִים וְרַעְנָנִים יִהְיוּ, לְהַגִּיד כִּי יֵשֶׁר, "They will be fruitful in old age, vigorous and fresh they will be, to declare that Hashem is just, my Rock in Whom there is no wrong." The pasukim are saying as follows: לְהַגִּיד כִּי יֵשֶׁר ה', if a person says that Hashem is just, and that everything He does is correct and good, he will merit long life and health, as it states עוֹד יִגְבּוּן בְּשֵׁיבָה דְשָׁנִים וְרַעְנָנִים יִהְיוּ, "They will be fruitful in old age, vigorous and fresh they will be."

It states (Tehillim 81:5-6) כִּי חָק לְיִשְׂרָאֵל הוּא מִשְׁפָּט, לֹא לִמְעַלְמֵי יַעֲקֹב, עֲדוּת בִּיהוֹסֵף שָׁמוֹ בְּצִאֲתוֹ עַל אֶרֶץ מִצְרַיִם שְׁפַת לֹא לִמְעַלְמֵי יַעֲקֹב, לֹא יִדְעֵתִי אֲשַׁמְעֵהוּ. A renowned magid explains that when hardships befall people, they don't understand the reason. This is the meaning of the pasuk, כִּי חָק לְיִשְׂרָאֵל הוּא (for it is known that a חק is something we don't understand). In their eyes, the

hardships are like a חק, something that doesn't have an explanation. However, מִשְׁפָּט, for Hashem it is מִשְׁפָּט, something that is very reasonable, and for our good. עֲדוּת בִּיהוֹסֵף שָׁמוֹ, a testimony to this is the story that happened to Yosef. בְּצִאֲתוֹ עַל אֶרֶץ מִצְרַיִם שְׁפַת לֹא יִדְעֵתִי אֲשַׁמְעֵהוּ, he was sold to Mitzrayim. At first, no one understood why this had to happen. But it was for Bnei Yisrael's benefit. בְּצִאֲתוֹ עַל אֶרֶץ מִצְרַיִם, he became the king of Mitzrayim and sustained his family during the hunger years. Similarly, we must know that everything we go through is for our benefit. It is all part of Hashem's plan.

In the Shemonah Esrei of Minchah on Shabbos we say יִכִּירוּ בְּנֵיךְ וַיִּדְעוּ כִּי מֵאֵתְךָ הִיא מְנוּחָתָם. The Siddur Beis Avraham explains, יִכִּירוּ בְּנֵיךְ, when Klal Yisrael recognizes that everything they have, and everything that happens to them is from Hashem, הִיא מְנוּחָתָם, this awareness calms them.

Parnassah from Hashem

It states (Tehillim 115:4-5) עֲצָבֵיהֶם קָסָף וְזָהָב מַעֲשֵׂה יָדַי אֲדָמָה, "Their idols are silver and gold, the handiwork of man. They have a mouth but they do not speak; they have eyes but they do not see." The Koberner zt'l explains that עֲצָבֵיהֶם קָסָף וְזָהָב can mean that they are sad (atzvus) because they lack gold and silver.

Reb Moshe Koberner explains that primarily, they are sad because they think their financial problems are their own fault. They tell themselves that if they had tried harder, or if they had been wiser, etc., they would have wealth. They would be like their neighbors who are well-off.

But they are mistaken. It is impossible for them to have more money. Parnassah is decreed in heaven, and they receive the amount that is destined for them. Nothing they would have done could have changed this reality.

This is the meaning of the pasuk, עֲצָבֵיהֶם קָסָף וְזָהָב מַעֲשֵׂה יָדַי אֲדָמָה, they are sad because they think the work of man earns gold and silver,

and they blame themselves for not making more money. They don't realize that money isn't up to them. They have received the amount of money that was decreed from Above.

The next pasuk states *פֶּה לָהֶם וְלֹא יִדְבְּרוּ*, "They have a mouth, but they do not speak..." This is a second problem that arises for those who think the work of man earns money. One problem, as we discussed, is atzvus, sadness, because they blame themselves for their financial struggles. The second problem is *פֶּה לָהֶם וְלֹא יִדְבְּרוּ*, "They have a mouth, but they do not speak..." They don't turn to Hashem with tefillos. Why should they daven if money is entirely in their hands to attain? However, if they knew that Hashem gives parnassah, they would certainly daven for it.²

Ahavas Yisrael with Awareness that Everything is from Hashem

It states in this week's parashah (19:18) *וְאַהֲבַת לְרֵעֶךָ כְּמוֹךָ אֲנִי ה'*, "Love your fellow as yourself, I am Hashem."

I heard from a magid Shlita that *לְרֵעֶךָ* doesn't seem to be an appropriate word to describe a friendly fellow man. *לְרֵעֶךָ* has the word *רע* in it, which means bad. It seems that the pasuk should state instead *וְאַהֲבַת לְחֵבְרֶךָ כְּמוֹךָ*, *וְאַהֲבַת לְרֵעֶךָ כְּמוֹךָ*, or *לְיָדִידְךָ כְּמוֹךָ*, which means "Love your *friend* like yourself." Why does it state *וְאַהֲבַת לְרֵעֶךָ*, from the word *רע*, which

refers to someone who makes your life miserable?

The answer is that the entire phrase is *וְאַהֲבַת לְרֵעֶךָ כְּמוֹךָ אֲנִי ה'*, "Love your fellow as yourself, I am Hashem." When one believes that everything is from Hashem, he won't be angry with his fellow man. He will be able to love his fellow man, regardless of what he did to him. This is because he knows that his fellow man didn't harm him. Whatever happened was destined from heaven, so why can't he love his fellow man?

It also states in this week's parashah (19:17) *לֹא תִשְׂנֵא אֶת אַחִיךָ בְּלִבְבְּךָ*, "You shall not hate your brother in your heart." The Pele Yoetz teaches: "The Torah doesn't have to tell us that one mustn't hate a person who does favors for him because why would a person consider hating him? Rather, the pasuk is referring to someone who wants to harm someone else. About such a person, the Torah tells us that he mustn't hate him, and he must love him as he loves himself. Although it is very difficult to be kind to someone like that, nevertheless, since the Torah obligates this, it is possible to do so. The Torah wasn't given to malachim, and Hashem wouldn't obligate us to do something that we can't perform (see Avodah Zarah 3a). The way to perform this mitzvah is to invest a lot of effort, constantly, to contemplate on how everything that happens to man, the good and that which appears not good, is all from Hashem, and for his benefit. It is

2. I heard the following mashal from a wise tzaddik:

Bus #402 travels from Yerushalayim to Bnei Brak. Someone got on the bus and saw that there were 47 people already seated. He asked one of them, "Do you know the way to Bnei Brak?" The man replied in the negative. He went to another person, and then to a third, until he asked the entire bus, but they all told him that they didn't know the way to Bnei Brak. He shouted, "What will happen to us? We are all traveling to Bnei Brak, and none of us knows the way!"

They all answered, "Mister, sit down and relax. We don't know the way to Bnei Brak, but the bus driver knows the way. He will take us to Bnei Brak. We will all arrive in peace."

The nimshal is that people are worried. They say, "What is the way to earn parnassah?" The wise will respond, "Sir, relax and don't worry. We don't know how you can earn parnassah, and you don't know either. But there is some-One who is leading us and we can rely on Him. He will lead us on the right path, He will arrange for you what you should do, and He will grant you your parnassah.

"This tells us that this parashah was read at הקהל (when the entire nation assembled, on Succos after Shemitah, to hear and to learn Torah) because most of the Torah is dependent on it." The simple meaning of Rashi is that Parashas Kedoshim has many mitzvos, and they are the primary foundations of the Torah. Therefore, it was read in public to arouse the nation to perform these mitzvos.

Also, the Zohar (Kedoshim 81a) states, פרשתא, דא כללא דאורייתא היא, this parashah is the generalization of the entire Torah.

The Sfas Emes zy'a asks that parashas Ki Seitzei has even more mitzvos than parashas Kedoshim. Why is Parashas Kedoshim

considered כללא דאורייתא, the generalization of the entire Torah?

He answers that the Zohar is referring to the first mitzvah of parashas Kedoshim (and not the entire parashah). It is referring to the obligation to be holy, as it states קדושים תהיו בי, "You shall be holy, for holy am I, Hashem, your G-d." This mitzvah is the כללא דאורייתא, a great generalization of the entire Torah.⁴

The Midrash (Vayikra Rabba 24:9) states, יכול, "Perhaps the obligation is that a person should be as holy as Hashem is holy? Therefore, it states, בי קדוש אני ה', For I am holy, and קדושתי למעלה מקדושתכם, My holiness is above yours."

4. The Maharam Tzvi (Reb Moshe Tzvi Weingarten zt'l, rav of Shedlitz, from the gedolei hador 150 years ago) told the following mashal (on Shabbos Shuvah, year 5619, the final year of his life):

There was a person who owned a store, filled with merchandise of all sorts. The store was as large as a city block, and it was generally filled with people. Once, the store owner had to travel to another country for a month, and he was worried about how his store would run without him. He couldn't sleep for three consecutive days and nights because he was so worried and concerned. Finally, he decided that he would appoint his primary worker to take care of the store when he is away.

Early in the morning of the day he would travel, the storeowner called for his worker and gave him the key to the store. "Take care of the store when I am away. You are in charge until I return. Be responsible. I am trusting you."

The store owner traveled with his family and was away for a month. When the month was over, and the store owner returned to his city, he rushed to get to his store to see what was happening. Even before he reached it, he sensed that something was terribly wrong. He came to the store, and it was totally dark. His heart pounded rapidly as he opened the door. No one was there. No workers, no consumers, and all the shelves were empty. Everything was stolen from the store!

The financial loss was enormous.

The storeowner rushed to the home of his primary worker, woke him up from his sleep, and shouted, "What did you do to me? Why didn't you guard the store as I told you? Why did I entrust you with the key?"

The worker replied, "Boss, take it easy. You are getting all worked up over a key. A key costs a couple of dollars. Here, take the money and buy yourself another key. Now, let me go back to my sleep."

The foolish worker didn't understand that his boss's wealth and parnassah were dependent on this "key".

With this mashal, we can now explain the pasuk, קדושים תהיו, "You shall be holy." Don't think this mitzvah is the same as all of the 613 mitzvos. Rather, this mitzvah is the key that holds the entire Torah. This is the meaning of, בי קדוש אני ה', "For holy am I, Hashem, your G-d." All Yiddishkeit is dependent upon this mitzvah.

(To clarify, every one of the 613 mitzvos is endlessly valuable and endlessly essential, but people tend to be lax with some of the mitzvos, thinking that it isn't so important. But they shall know that they shouldn't play away with the mitzvah of קדושים תהיו, to be holy, for this is the key for all Torah and mitzvos.)

The meforshim struggle to understand this Midrash. How could there be even a הוה אמינא, a suggestion, a possibility, that a person should be as holy as Hashem? How could a human being become holy like the kedushah of Hashem?

There are several commentaries and explanations to explain this Midrash. Nevertheless, the simple reading of the pasuk implies that a person should attain the high level of Hashem's kedushah! אין מקרא יוצא מידי פשוטו, the pasuk never abandons its simple meaning. We understand from this the great heights of kedushah a human being can attain. One should move from level to level. When a person attains one level of kedushah, he shouldn't stop there, because there are still many levels of kedushah to attain. Even Moshe Rabbeinu was able to rise to higher levels. He was the greatest *navi*; his kedushah was phenomenal and unfathomable, yet even he was commanded with the mitzvah of קדושים תהיו, to attain an even higher level of kedushah. This is because the mitzvah applies to all Yidden, from the greatest level to the lowest. Each person can attain kedushah and break his *taavos*.

The Or HaChaim Hakadosh on the pasuk קדושים תהיו writes, "Chazal (Kidushin 39b) say, ישב אדם ולא עבר עבירה נותנים לו שכר כעושה מצוה, if a person refrains from performing an aveirah, he is accredited with reward as though he performed a mitzvah. This is the meaning of קדושים תהיו, 'You shall be holy.' This is a

positive command (mitzvas aseil), which one performs when he has the opportunity to perform an aveirah and he refrains from doing so. The mitzvah is called קדושים to tell us that whoever keeps this mitzvah is holy. This mitzvah of קדושים תהיו is for all people. Every Yid is called קדוש, 'Holy' when he performs this mitzvah. There is no Yid who can't attain this level."⁵

The Midrash (Vayikra Rabba 24:6) states, "Wherever a person makes a גדר ערוה, a boundary to protect himself from arayos, אתה מוצא בו גדר קדושה, you will find there a boundary of kedushah." This means that when a person makes a *geder*, a boundary, to keep away from aveiros, it will grant him a lot of kedushah.

The Chasam Sofer zt'l (Toras Moshe, איש ד"ה ואמר איש) teaches that many people keep the mitzvos by rote. When they were young, their parents trained them to do these deeds, and they perform them, without thinking about why they do them. Therefore, performing these good deeds does not prove their devotion to Hashem. Their observance can be called מצוות אנשים מלומדה, mitzvos performed by rote. This is the meaning of the pesukim (19:3-5) איש אמו ואביו תיראו, we are obligated to fear and honor our parents, and they trained us to perform mitzvos. Then the pasuk states, ואת שבתתי תשמרו... אל תפנו אל האילים... This means they keep Shabbos, they avoid avodah zarah, but it could be that they are mitzvos performed by rote.

5. The Sefer HaChinuch (mitzvah 387) states: "Let it be often on your lips, the words of Chazal (Avos 4:5) עבירה גוררת עבירה ומצוה גוררת מצוה, that one aveirah results in another aveirah, and one mitzvah draws another mitzvah. If you satisfy yourself with your bad taavos once, you will do so many times. But if you will be strong and conquer your yetzer hara, and you hold your eyes back from seeing bad one time, it will be easier for you to do so again. This is because the taavah draws the person like wine draws those who drink it. Those who drink a lot of wine can never be satisfied with wine. As they satisfy themselves with wine... their taavah increases. But if they will drink a cup of water, the taavah for wine will settle down, and it will be sweet for them. The same is with each person and his addiction to taavos. When they are involved in them, the yetzer hara for these matters increases each day. When he refrains, he will always be happy with his portion, all day long. Realize that Hashem made a person straight, and people seek crooked ways, for no purpose." This is as it states (Koheles 7:29) אשר עשה האלקים את האדם ישר והמה בקשו השבנות רבים, "Hashem has made man simple, but they sought many intrigues."

What will prove that their service is sincere, and that they desire to serve Hashem? That is when they add on to their avodas Hashem, something that they aren't obligated to do. This is the meaning of the words, וְכִי תִזְבְּחוּ זֶבַח שְׁלָמִים לַיהוָה לְרִצְוֹנְכֶם תִּזְבְּחוּהוּ. The pasuk is sacrificing a korban shlamim, which is a korban that one isn't obligated to bring (because it isn't brought to atone for aveiros). Bringing this korban proves לְרִצְוֹנְכֶם תִּזְבְּחוּהוּ, that we want to serve Hashem.⁶

The same applies to all גדרים וסייגים boundaries that a person takes on for himself, to distance himself from aveiros. These are not obligations. When one takes on these deeds, this proves that his observance is sincere and that he truly desires to serve Hashem.⁷

The Chasam Sofer teaches that the nations of the world don't add boundaries. They follow the customs of their parents, they do what their parents told them to do, but they won't do more than that. But Bnei Yisrael refrain from that which is permitted because of their love for their Creator. This shows the greatness of Bnei Yisrael over the nations of the world. They genuinely love Hashem, and they want to serve Him.

Serving Hashem this way will grant them many brachos. One brachah is that Hashem will grant them Eretz Yisrael in an easy way, without difficult wars. The Chasam Sofer teaches this from the following pasuk, וְאָמַר (20:24): לְכֶם אֶתֶם תִּירָשׁוּ אֶת אֶרְצוֹתֵיכֶם וְאֲנִי אֶתְנַנֶּה לְכֶם לְרִשְׁתָּהּ אֶתֶּה אֶרֶץ

וְנָתַתְּ הַלֵּב וְדָבַשׁ אֲנִי ה' אֱלֹהֵיכֶם אֲשֶׁר הִבְדַּלְתִּי אֶתְכֶם מִן הָעַמִּים, "So I said to you: You shall inherit their land, and I will give it to you to inherit it, a land flowing with milk and honey – I am Hashem, your G-d, who has separated you from the peoples." The Chasam Sofer explains אֲשֶׁר הִבְדַּלְתִּי אֶתְכֶם מִן הָעַמִּים, means if you will separate yourselves from the ways of the goyim (because the goyim only want to do the minimum, but the Jewish nation seeks to do more because of their love for Hashem), then Hashem promises that He will give you the land as an inheritance. You will conquer it and acquire it without difficulty and without hard wars.

In the merit of your גדרים וסייגים boundaries that you add on, and your sincere desire to perform Hashem's will, Hashem will grant you the land as an inheritance in an easy manner.

The Chasam Sofer compares this lesson to a renown machlokes between Reb Shimon bar Yochai and Reb Yishmael (Brachos 35b). It states (Devarim 11:14) וְאַסַּפְתָּ דִגָּן וְתִירֶשֶׁתְּ וַיִּצְהַרְךָ, "You will gather in your grain, your wine, and your oil." Reb Yishmael learns from this pasuk that a person should work for his living, and he should do the standard *hishtadlus*. Although he will have less time for Torah, the Torah wants a person to הנהג בהן דרך ארץ, live with the Torah according to the ways of the world.

Reb Shimon bar Yochai says that if he is busy with the crops all year long, when will he have time for Torah study? Rather, בזמן שישאל עושי רצונו של מקום מלאכתו נעשית על ידי אחרים,

6. This explains the order of the pasukim. First it states (19:3) אִישׁ אִמּוֹ וְאָבִיו תִּירָאוּ, to honor one's parents. Then it states (19:4) וְאֶת שַׁבְּתוֹתַי תִּשְׁמְרוּ... אַל תִּפְנוּ אֶל הָאֱלֹהִים... to keep Shabbos and to not worship avodah zarah. And then it states (19:5) וְכִי תִזְבְּחוּ זֶבַח שְׁלָמִים לַיהוָה לְרִצְוֹנְכֶם תִּזְבְּחוּהוּ, to bring a korban shlamim. The pesukim are saying that even when one keeps Shabbos and avoids avodah zarah, it might be due to the chinuch they received, and it might be מצוות אנשים מלומדה, deeds performed by rote. But when they bring the korban shlamim (or when they perform any other deed that they aren't obligated to do), this proves לְרִצְוֹנְכֶם, that they want to do Hashem's service.

7. It states in parashas Lech Lecha (17:1) הִתְהַלֵּךְ לִפְנֵי וְהָיָה תָמִים, "Walk before Me and be perfect." The Chasam Sofer (Lech Lecha) explains that there is a הליכה אחרי ה', when one goes *after* Hashem. This means that he keeps all the halachos of the Torah with all their details. He follows Hashem and His laws. However, when a person adds on boundaries to the Torah, this is called הִתְהַלֵּךְ לִפְנֵי, walking *before* Hashem. He adds boundaries to protect himself from performing aveiros.

"When the Jewish nation does Hashem's will, goyim will do their work for them." Similarly, Hashem says, if you will make גדרים וסייגים, gates and boundaries, this shows that you want to do Hashem's will. Then

Hashem will arrange that you will earn parnassah in an easy way. You won't have to toil to attain it. You can learn Torah, and goyim will work the land for you.⁸

8. Parashas Kedoshim (19:2) begins with קדושים תהיו, and concludes (20:26) with והייתם לי קדושים. It begins and ends with telling Klal Yisrael to be holy. In between these two commands, there are many halachos. They teach how one should live with kedushah. The Beis Avraham explains that at the onset (at the beginning of the parashah) we tell people to live a life of holiness – "קדושים תהיו". But if he failed and committed many aveiros, r'l, he shouldn't lose hope. Rather, we tell him (at the end of the parashah) that from now on, והייתם לי קדושים, he should seek to live in a holy manner.

This is also alluded to in the names of the parashiyos, אהרי מות קדושים. It is known that death represents falling from one's level. אהרי מות, if a person falls from his level and committed aveiros, nevertheless, he can begin again and be קדושים, holy.

It states (20:2-3) וְאֵל בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל תֹּאמַר אִישׁ אִישׁ מִבְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל וּמִן הַגֵּר הַגֵּר בְּיִשְׂרָאֵל אֲשֶׁר יָתַן מִזְרְעוֹ לַמֹּלֶךְ יָמֵת עִם הָאָרֶץ וְרִגְמָהוּ בְּאֶבֶן, וְאֲנִי אֶתֵּן וְאֵל בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל וּמִן הַגֵּר הַגֵּר בְּיִשְׂרָאֵל אֲשֶׁר יָתַן מִזְרְעוֹ לַמֹּלֶךְ יָמֵת עִם הָאָרֶץ וְרִגְמָהוּ בְּאֶבֶן, וְאֲנִי אֶתֵּן וְאֵל בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל וּמִן הַגֵּר הַגֵּר בְּיִשְׂרָאֵל אֲשֶׁר יָתַן מִזְרְעוֹ לַמֹּלֶךְ יָמֵת עִם הָאָרֶץ וְרִגְמָהוּ בְּאֶבֶן, וְאֲנִי אֶתֵּן. "Say to Bnei Yisrael: Any man from Bnei Yisrael and from the *geirim* who lives with Yisrael who shall give of his seed to Molech, shall be put to death; the people of the land shall pelt him with stones. I shall concentrate My attention upon this man, and I shall cut him off from among his people, for he had given from his offspring to Molech in order to defile My Sanctuary and to desecrate My holy name." The pasuk is referring to the severe aveirah of bringing one's children to the avodah zarah, Molech. Reb Shmuel Birnbaum zt'l (rosh yeshivas Mir, America) points out that the expression וְאֲנִי אֶתֵּן אֶת פְּנֵי בְּאִישׁ הַהוּא, "I shall concentrate My attention upon this man" to punish him, is a very harsh expression, and isn't expressed regarding any other aveirah. Rashi explains the word פְּנֵי, as follows: פְּנֵי שְׂלִי, פְּנֵי שְׂלִי, פְּנֵי שְׂלִי. This means Hashem puts aside all other matters and focuses solely on this person, to punish him because he committed the severe aveirah of bringing his children to Molech.

Nevertheless, a few pasukim later it states (20:7) וְהִתְקַדְּשְׁתֶּם וְהִיִּיתֶם קְדוֹשִׁים כִּי אֲנִי ה' אֱלֹהֵיכֶם, "You shall sanctify yourselves and you will be holy, for I am Hashem, your G-d." Even after this severe aveirah, he is told to be holy. How can such a person be holy? It seems that after performing this severe aveirah, he has a long path of teshuvah before he can be considered holy. But this is the uniqueness of the Jewish soul. In one moment, he can turn around and become holy. Even if he was at the lowest level, with a moment of teshuvah, he can rise to the highest level. This is because a Yid is a חֵלֶק אֱלֹהִים מִמַּעַל, a part of Hashem. Therefore, even to this rasha, Hashem says to make himself holy. וְהִתְקַדְּשְׁתֶּם וְהִיִּיתֶם קְדוֹשִׁים כִּי אֲנִי ה' אֱלֹהֵיכֶם, "You shall sanctify yourselves and you will be holy, for I am Hashem, your G-d."

There is a mashal about a person called Yankel who opened a restaurant. Many people frequented the eatery, and he was earning a good living. But there was something else that was growing, in addition to his wallet and bank account. He was nibbling on the food, here and there throughout the day, and this was seen on his girth. His wife told him to be more cautious, not to eat all day long, as it wasn't healthy for him. He didn't take it seriously and didn't change his eating habits.

One evening, after the restaurant was closed, a loyal gentile worker said to his boss, Yankel, that he wanted to show him something in a side room. Yankel went there, and he saw a table filled with good food. "What is this for?" he asked.

His worker replied, 'I overheard the conversation you and your wife are having lately, related to whether you eat too much at the restaurant or not. So I decided to take note of what you eat. Whatever you eat in the restaurant, I made an equal portion of it and placed it on the table in this room. This will help you realize how much you are eating each day!'

The nimshal is related to kedushah. Each good deed accumulates until one has many good deeds. A drop of Torah in the morning, another Mishnah later on in the day, a chapter of Tehillim here and there, they all gather and sanctify him.

Sefiras HaOmer

Some kehilos count sefiras ha'omer in a loud voice and with great enthusiasm and hislahavus. Someone asked Reb Yosef Salant zt'l why people shout out the brachah on sefiras ha'omer. Reb Yosef Salant replied, "What is the question? Every brachah should be said that way!"

The person countered, "But no one shouts the other brachos!"

"Now, that is a good question!" Reb Yosef replied.

A student of Reb Chaim of Sanz zt'l described how Rebbe Chaim of Sanz would count sefiras ha'omer. "His face turned black like coal and ער האט געדראָפּעט אויף די גראָדע ווענט - he climbed straight walls." This is an expression of exceptional hislahavus.

In his later years, my grandfather, Reb Moshe Mordechai of Lelov zt'l, lived in my parents' home, and he had a minyan for maariv in their home. Although he was weak and old, he counted sefiras ha'omer with all his strength. His excitement was palpable. In the prayer after sefiras ha'omer, he would repeat around ten times, ואטער, ואתקדש בקדושה של מעלה... ולתקן את נפשותינו מכל סיג ופגם, "I should become pure and holy with the kedushah of Above... and this mitzvah should rectify all blemishes from our souls..."

(After he finished sefiras ha'omer, my mother would inspect the house to make sure everything was ok and that

nothing broke due to her father-in-law's spirited sefiras ha'omer.)

Sefiras HaOmer begins on the second day of Pesach, the day the korban ha'omer was brought in the Beis HaMikdash, and it ends on Shavuos, the day the shte'i halechem, two breads were brought in the Beis HaMikdash. The omer is brought from barley, primarily used as animal food, while the shte'i halechem were made of wheat flour, a staple from which human food is made. The Aruch HaShulchan (and other sefarim) say that this symbolizes our growth during the days of sefiras ha'omer. We elevate ourselves from being at the level of animals to the heights of humans. It is a time to improve our ways significantly.

Reb Akiva's 24,000 students were niftar during these days because they didn't sufficiently honor one another. We mourn that error and seek to improve our ways during these days, especially our behaviors bein adam l'chaveiro.

After the counting of sefiras ha'omer, there's a tefillah that mentions the sefira that is associated with that day: חסד שבחסד, חסד חסד, שבגבורה, and so on. Chesed represents love, and in the merit of sefiras ha'omer, instead of loving materialistic matters, we seek to increase our love of the Torah and mitzvos, our fellow man, and Hashem. Gevurah is associated with fear. These days, we can rectify our natural feelings of fear and channel them toward fearing Hashem.⁹

9. Sefiras ha'omer purifies and prepares us for the yom tov Shavuos. It makes us a fitting vessel to accept the holiness of the upcoming yom tov.

The Mishnah (Klayim 8:5) describes an animal called אדני השדה. It is a unique animal due to its human-like features. Rambam writes, "There are animals that appear like human beings. Those who tell the news of the world say that this animal speaks a lot, but its words are unintelligible. It speaks like a human being. It is called Alnans in Arabic. Many things are said about it."

Ra'v Bartenura writes, "It is an animal that grows in the fields. A long cord emerges from the earth, and this animal grows from it. The animal is called ידוע, and ידעוני in the Torah (see Devarim 18:11). It is connected from its belly to this rope that comes out from the earth. Its face, hands, and legs appear like a human being. No creature can come near it because it kills and rips whatever comes near it. When they want to capture it, they shoot arrows at the rope until it becomes disconnected. It shouts bitterly and dies immediately. Perhaps Iyov discussed this animal when he said (Iyov 5:23) עם אבני השדה ברייתך."

It states (Vayikra 15:31) והזרתם את בני ישראל מטמאתם, "You shall separate Bnei Yisrael from their tumah." The Sfas Emes (Tazria 5643 and Metzora 5646) says that the root of the word והזרתם is זר, which means a crown. This teaches us that when you separate from the impurity of this world, it becomes your crown.¹⁰

It states (18:3) כמעשה ארץ מצרים אשר ישבתם בה לא תעשו תעשו וכמעשה ארץ כנען אשר אני מביא אתכם שמה לא תלכו ובחקתיהם לא תלכו, "Like the practice of the land of Egypt, in which you dwelled, you shall not do, and like the practice of the land of Canaan, to which I am bringing you, you shall not do, and you shall not follow their statutes." According to many meforshim, this is a warning against committing *arayos*. The Mitzrim and the Canaanim sinned with these matters, and we shouldn't be like them. The Sfas Emes (Acharei 5635) says that if this were the meaning of the pasuk, the pasuk is extra because the Torah clearly forbids *arayos* and states so in the following pasukim. What is the purpose of this double warning?

The Sfas Emes says that the pasuk refers to permitted deeds (and not *arayos*). It is saying that even when we engage in permitted activities, we should do them differently than the goyim would. כמעשה ארץ מצרים אשר ישבתם בה לא תעשו וכמעשה ארץ כנען אשר אני מביא אתכם שמה לא תעשו ובחקתיהם לא תלכו, "Like the practice of the land of Egypt, in which you dwelled, you shall not do, and like the practice of the land of Canaan, to which I am bringing you, you shall not do, and you shall not follow their statutes." Our middos, speech, how we relax, and the way we dress should be distinctly different from the ways of the goyim.

The avodah during the days of sefiras ha'omer is to elevate ourselves from behaving like animals and like the nations of the world to living like human beings and going in the ways of Hashem.¹¹

The Zohar (*Eikev* 272.) refers to the time that we eat as "a time of war". If you eat properly, you win the battle and become elevated. If you don't eat properly, you lose the war, and the food will draw you down.

Reb Avraham Genichovsky zt'l pointed out that although this animal looks like a human being, nevertheless, it is bound to the ground, so it is an animal. This hints that if you are connected to the ground, you are an animal. Tear yourself away from earthly temptations, and you will become human.

10. Furthermore, the Sfas Emes teaches that if you fall into the trap of *aveiros*, r"l, and then you separate yourself from them, והזרתם, the *aveiros* and *tumah* become your crown. This is based on the principle that when one does *teshuvah*, his *aveiros* become virtues. Thus, והזרתם, he receives a crown, מטמאתם, from the *aveiros* and *tumah*.

11. Sfas Emes writes that a technique to elevate our mundane deeds to be deeds of *kedushah* is to perform them in connection with a *mitzvah*. An example of this concept is to prepare delicious meals for Shabbos, *yom tov*, or a *siyum*. If you want to eat well, there are days and times you can do so, and it will be *kedushah*. It will be performed with a *mitzvah*.

The Chinuch (488) discusses the *mitzvah* to be happy on *yom tov*, and he writes, "One of the reasons for this *mitzvah* is because it is understood to all that a person needs to be happy at times. It is a human need, just as a person needs food, rest, and sleep. Hashem wanted to grant us (His nation and sheep) the ability to fulfill this need while performing a *mitzvah*. So, Hashem commanded us to be happy [on *yom tov*], so we can earn merits with everything we do."

We learn from this Chinuch the benefit of sanctifying our mundane deeds by turning them into *mitzvos*.

He writes, "Bnei Yisrael can do all their deeds with holiness because of the *mitzvos*. This is the meaning of the next words of the pasuk את משפטי תעשו, 'You shall fulfill my *mitzvos*...' When you do so, your everyday deeds won't resemble the ways of the Mitzrim and the Canaanim..."

The Pachad Yitzchak of Boyan *zt'l* taught אין קידוש אלא במקום סעודה, which can be translated to mean that the primary way one becomes

holy is when he eats his meals properly. We can rise, or chas v'shalom, fall with how we eat our food.¹²

12. One Friday night, chassidim sat together at a zits (chassidic gathering), discussing the importance of eating with kedushah. The following morning, there was a kiddush in shul, and hot kugel was served. Reb Aharon, the Rav of Zhytomyr *zt'l*, had attended the Friday night zits and was inspired to eat with holiness. So, he waited a few moments before eating the kugel. This is how he wanted to weaken the grip of the yetzer hara and temptation. As he waited, he used his fork to cut his portion of kugel into small pieces. That's when he found a needle in his kugel. Reb Aharon would say, "Since then, I make sure to attend every Friday night zits because the zits saved my life. Had I eaten quickly, I might have swallowed that needle."

Rebbe Zev of Zhytomyr *zt'l* once looked out his window and said, "I see a cheese blintz running down the street."

The chassidim looked out the window, wondering what their Rebbe was referring to, but all they saw was a yungerman running down the street with his tallis and tefillin tucked under his arm. The Rebbe explained, "This man's mother-in-law made cheese blintzes this morning and told him to daven quickly so he could eat them while they're hot. As it is known from the teachings of the Baal Shem Tov *zt'l*, a person is where his thoughts are. Therefore, since this yungerman was excited to eat the cheese blintzes, that's how he appeared to me."

Reb Hillel Kolemaia *zt'l* was visiting Rebbe Avraham Yaakov of Sadigura *zt'l*. When Reb Hillel was preparing to leave, the Sadigura Rebbe said, "Reb Hillel, you are renowned for your mussar lessons. Please give me mussar."

Reb Hillel Kolemeia said, "Why doesn't the Rebbe give mussar to his chassidim?"

The Rebbe replied, "I teach my chassidim to eat properly. If they do that, their deeds will automatically be good."

Someone asked the Chazon ish *zt'l* for advice on how to be less passionate about food. The Chazon Ish *zt'l* replied, "I am certain that the 'Ketzos' never experienced the taste of kugel." He explained that a person cannot carry two passions with the same intensity in his heart. The Ketzos desired Torah immensely, and automatically, he had less interest in matters of Olam HaZeh. Therefore, when one desires Torah and a connection with Hashem, automatically, he has weakened his craving for food.

Reb Ahron Luria (the Avodas Panim) *zt'l* asked Rebbe Shlomke of Zvhil *zt'l* for advice on kedushas achilah, to eat with holiness. Rebbe Shlomke told him, "When you eat, remember that Hashem is present." He said that this counsel is alluded to in Megillas Esther when it states (5:8) יבוא המלך והמן אל המשתה אשר אעשה להם, "let the king and Haman come to the banquet that I will make for them..." This hints that when you eat, invite the King. When you know that the King is there, you will eat properly.

Haman, the yetzer hara, will also be at the meal, as indicated by the words יבוא המלך והמן אל המשתה. Haman, the yetzer hara, seeks to entice us to eat in improper ways. But remember that Hashem is present, and with that awareness, you will be inspired to eat appropriately.

The pasuk concludes, ומחר אעשה כדבר המלך, "Tomorrow I will do the king's bidding." If you remember Hashem at the meal, then, ומחר, "eventually, אעשה כדבר המלך, you will eat as the King desires, properly, as a Yid should.

The Baal HaTanya offers another counsel for kedushas achilah. He advises pushing off the meal for a later time. He writes, "When one desires to eat and pushes off the meal for an hour or less, he has conquered the sitra achara below, and Hashem's honor and kedushah increases Above. And because of this kedushah, he will receive immense help from Heaven to succeed in his avodas Hashem."

The Meor Einayim (Matos) clarifies that we can't serve Hashem by eating on levels that are beyond us, but within our levels, we can eat in manners that will elevate the sparks of the food and bring immense pleasure to our Father in heaven.

A primary way to eat with kedushah is to say proper brachos over the food.¹³

There are kelipos, impurities, in food that can draw a person down. And, in contrast, there is kedushah, holy sparks in food that can elevate the person. A primary factor determining whether he will go up or down from the meal is how he says the brachos over the food.

Reb Chaim Vital *zt'l* writes, "My teacher, the Arizal, told me that attaining *ruach*

hakodesh depends on the degree of *kavanah* one has when he makes *brachos* on food. When the *brachos* are said with *kavanah*, it destroys the *kelipos*, and the food is pure to receive holiness. The Arizal warned me about this a lot... A person must be extremely careful with brachos over foods because the person becomes holy from these *brachos*, as it says (Tehillim 40:9), ותורתך בתוך מעי, 'Your Torah is in my stomach.' A divine spirit comes to the person."¹⁴

13. Rebbe Zev of Zhytomyr *zt'l* was once in an inn and saw someone eating without a brachah. Reb Zev told him that there are neshamos in food. Sometimes, a neshamah waits for years for a tikkun, and if a person says a brachah over food, the neshamah can go up to Gan Eden. Reb Zev added, "And at times, the neshamah in food is the neshamah of your own relative, perhaps even of your father or mother."

The man hit his forehead with his hand and shouted, "Today is my father's *yahrzeit*!"

14. When one makes an על המחיה, he says the phrase, ונברך עליה בקדושה ובטהרה, "We will bless You in the land with holiness and with purity..." We don't mention kedushah and taharah in ברכת המזון. Why is that?

Rebbe Aharon of Belz *zt'l* explains that this is because when we eat bread, we first wash our hands, and the entire mannerism of eating is generally with kedushah and taharah. Therefore, we don't need a reminder in the brachah that we should eat with holiness and purity because, generally, that is how the meal will appear. However, mezonos is often eaten in haste. When someone is hungry, he grabs a mezonos and eats it. He doesn't wash his hands first. He might forget to eat with purity and holiness. Therefore, Chazal established that the brachah *acharonah* should remind us to eat these mini-meals with kedushah and taharah.

Tzaddikim of the Bobov dynasty sought to say על המחיה every day so they could say the words ונברך עליה בקדושה ובטהרה.

ספר באר החיים

פרקי על אבות

נערך ונלקט מתוך תוכן
דברי שיחותיו של

מורינו הגה"צ רבי

אברהם
אלימלך
בידערמאן

שריט"א



SWIVEL ∞ 718.614.0795

הפצה ראשית

נר המזאור

הפצה בארה"ק
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עונג רוחני אימי הקי

ניתן להשיג בכל חנויות הספרים