

THE COMMUNITY PARSHA SHEET



**PARSHAT
ACHAREI-KEDOSHIM**

London's Leading Young Professionals Platform and Jewish Communal Centre



RABBI JONATHAN TAWIL
TAL Founder & Director

PARASHA INSIGHTS

A cruel husband once approached his wife and told her "I'm the boss and you're nothing." She instantly replied, "Well I guess then... that makes you the boss of nothing!"

How much wisdom was captured in those few lines and wasted on a joke. The wife's response didn't deny that he was the boss - in fact, she readily agreed with him. She merely explained to him over what he was the boss. In other words, if you treat a wife like she's nothing, then you are the boss of nothing. Treat her like a person then you are the boss of a person. Treat her like a queen, then you are the boss of a queen - that is a King. Would you like to be a king? Fine - just treat her like a queen!

In this weeks Parsha we read one of the most famous statements that has resounded for generations - "VeAhavta LeReacha Kamocha - you should love your neighbour like yourself". So famous is this statement that R Akiva said this is a Klal Gadol BaTorah - a great rule in the torah.

This is a profound mitzvah. We all love ourselves, very very much! The torah seems to command that we take that same love and focus it on all those around us.

Yet the Ramban finds this hard to accept. How can it be that you should love your friend equally to yourself? There is a rule in the Gemara: "Chayecha Kodmin." - Your life always takes precedence.

The Gemara Bava Metzia (62a) states that if two people in the desert finding a canteen with enough water in it to keep only one person alive. The one who has it uses it, and is not supposed to give it to his friend. He must tend to his own life first, thus it seems he must love himself more than others.

Thus asks the Ramban how can it be that

we're instructed here to love a friend equally to our love for our self, when we know that the Torah supports a person's survival instinct and says that ultimately your own life comes first? What is the real meaning of VeAhavta LeReacha KaMocha?

The Ramban explains that the Torah is commanding us here to love our friends also, in a similar way (Kamocha) that we love ourselves. The Ramban takes the phrase Kamocha as an overstatement for emphasis. That desire that we have regarding ourselves, to live and be well, should carry over to others. The Ramban supports his view by the fact that Torah doesn't say "et reacha", rather "lereacha." "LeReacha means towards your friend, but not exactly the same. We know that we are not expected to love the person of our neighbour as much as we love our own self. However, we are expected to love our fellow in all areas, as we love all good for ourselves. Similarly the Rambam (Mada 6:3) writes that we should speak in praise of our neighbours, be careful with the honour and the property of others - as we are with our own.

VeAhavta LeReacha KaMocha is a very hard mitzvah to complete. It is a constant mitzvah, and requires much self inspection before applying it to others. We meet so many people in our daily lives, and we immediately form views about them. We relate to different people differently, yet we are told with one blanket statement - treat them all with love, put yourselves in their shoes and look out for their interests just as you would for your own.

The Chida writes that this Mitzvah is most manifest between a husband and wife. In the outside world, it might be easy for us to show our kindness, after all, everyone is watching, so we need to impress. Yet when it comes to behind doors, that is when we are really being put to the test. When a man comes home from work he should not expect the dinner on the table, he should not view as the woman's obligation, rather

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he should see it as kindness, she worked hard for it and spent quality time; put himself in her shoes. Similarly the women should not take for granted the husbands work, she should view it as Chesed.

We can now understand why this mitzvah was placed in the Parsha of Kedoshim.

What does holiness have to do with loving your neighbour. Of course by doing the mitzvah you bring unity and happiness but does that lead to holiness. The answer is that to acquire holiness two things need to occur. The first is to love your neighbour, exempli-

fy in Ben Adam LeChavero and the second is to do it in a manner of Kedusha.

A true Torah-observant home is certainly most conducive to the Divine Presence. However, we should remember that as important as observance of Mitzvot is, it is possible as Ramban says (19:2) for a person to be in technical compliance with every halachic requirement, and nevertheless be a vulgar person. The Midrash (Vayikra Rabba 13:3) states that the Mitzvot were given to us for no reason other than to refine our characters.

R Shlomo Zalman Auerbach was

accompanied by a student before he entered his home, R Shlomo Zalman paused to brush the dust from his coat. He explained to the student, "The Talmud says that the Shechina dwells amongst man and wife. Do you think it is respectful to be in the presence of the Shechina with a dusty garment?"

If we were to approach married life with VeAhavta LeReacha KaMocha constantly on our minds, seeking the best for our partner as well as for ourselves, really understanding what they have been through that day, and infuse our relationship with Kedusha then we will ultimately become One.



RABBI DAVID BAADANI

Director - TAL Chazanut Program

PARSHAT ACHAREI-KEDOSHIM

One of the Yom Kippur works in which our Parsha deals with is the offering of the korban within the Holy of Holies by the כהן גדול. This work was one of the most special works on the holiest day of the year.

During the time of the Second המקדש בית there was a debate between the sages of the Torah and those who defined themselves as not believing in the oral Torah, (tzedokim - Sadducees) about the way this work should be performed. According to the Sadducees, first the כהן גדול should give the coals on the מזבח (Pan) with the קטורת when it is outside the Holy of Holies, and he will only enter the Holy of Holies when the בית המקדש is full of smoke and fragrances of the incense. In contrast, the sages of Israel believed that the כהן גדול should have two separate pans.

One with the incense and the other with the coals, and only when he was in the Holy of Holies should he mix them together therefore the smell of incense would come before our Father in heaven to atone for the people of Israel.

From the words of Chazal, it is clear that this debate was important also in the eyes of the Sadducees. Their way was not only to defy and argue, but they saw it as a real way of living their life. It is said about יוחנן כהן גדול who served eighty years as a כהן גדול until he became a Sadducee at the end of his life, that all his life he was waiting for the day when he could put the incense in the 'right' way in accordance with the Sadducees' way.

What is the main point of their disagreement? What is the root from which we can learn to distinguish between the opinions of our sages and those who oppose their teachings?

The Sadducees argued that the view of

Jewish life begins from the outside. That means that first of all we need to see what the world thinks and what its current agenda is, and only then should one come to the inside, to the Holy of Holies, and see how one can find reference to the current global trend in the Torah and live accordingly.

The sages of the Torah forcefully opposed this method. Because there is no point in Judaism that can be changed according to the spirit of time. That if so, Judaism is nothing worth fighting for but a pale shadow of time and its upheavals. The sages of Israel saw that real life can only be lived when the interior precedes the exterior. Not by trying to fit Judaism into one's comfort zone but by coming to the 'inside' with courage and asking to know how I can use my qualities, characters and tendencies in the best way, in accordance with the Jewish and Torah way.

Shabbat Shalom



RABBI YEHONATAN SALEM

PARSHAT ACHAREI MOT - GIVING OR TAKING?

The Torah teaches us a lot about the commandment, incumbent upon a man, of getting married. Due to its importance, the mitzvah "to be fruitful and multiply" is the first commandment to be mentioned in the Torah. Getting married, building a relationship with our spouse, and establishing the next generation is our main agenda. Nevertheless, in this week's parashah we

find many restrictions as to whom a person may marry. Many relationships, especially those of close family are prohibited.

This is a very interesting scenario. Unlike other positive commandments or prohibitions, where an action is either permitted or forbidden, here we find that the Torah advocates marital relationships, yet it qualifies which ones are suitable and which ones not.

The Seforno (Acharei Mot 18:6) explains that in fact it would be advantageous to choose a marriage partner from close family. Being that they are "closer to home" in mentality, nuances, ideas, ways of doing

things etc., one would be more naturally attracted to them. Nevertheless, the Torah forbade many of these relationships as it does not want people to build relationships based on lust and desire. Such a relationship, where the spouses are only thinking about what they can take from their marriage would not produce good results. It comes out that the difference between a relationship being permitted or forbidden depends upon the thoughts and intentions with which it will probably be made. If lust and desire are the main drive in one's marriage, the relationship will be one of "self-centred" kindness – being "kind" to

oneself by feeding one's desires. Such a relationship will never provide any meaning or satisfaction. They have "missed the boat" understanding what marriage is about – an emotional relationship. This being so, the only way that a relationship will provide true emotional and physical nourishment, is when both partners enter it in order to do genuine kindness, i.e. for the other one. Then, when each one gives, there will be a receiver, thereby giving a sense of fulfilment and satisfaction to the giver.

Although we say that our relationships should be built on giving and not on taking for ourselves, nevertheless, the receiver of any kindness should graciously accept it. If instead, one just allows it to be given, or, refuses to receive it altogether, the giver's sensation of fulfilment will be dampened, which is the opposite of giving. I will never forget, as a guest, that I once spent time and energy selecting some delicious chocolates to give my hosts. When I presented them with the chocolates as thanks for their hospitality, their reaction was: "Oh, you really didn't need to, it wasn't necessary". What a "let-down" I felt!

Let us try and discern if our relationships are truly ones of giving, or if we are just granting ourselves our desires, lusts and satisfactions under the guise of an altruistic relationship.

PARSHAT KEDOSHIM - TO TELL OR NOT TO TELL

The week's parashah contains many positive and negative commandments concerning our actions towards others. Among these commandments the verse (Kedoshim 19:16) states: "You should not go tale bearing amongst your people,

and you should not stand by idly when your friend's life is in danger, for I am G-d". What is the connection between the beginning of the verse [not to slander one's friend] and the end of the verse [not to stand by idly when one's friend is in danger]? Are they juxtaposed merely because they contain concepts about relationships with others? Furthermore, what is their relevance to the verse's end: "for I am G-d"?

We have all heard about the severity of slandering. It causes the breakdown of marriages or relationships between parents and children. It can cause business-partnerships to dissolve, when one person slanders his partner. It can cause families to split, and if one goes as far as testifying falsely or causing people to get angry with one another, the results may even be fatal. Hence, the Torah commands us quite emphatically to guard our tongue and not to go tale-bearing. Nevertheless, situations do arise where we need to speak up and seemingly slander our fellow man! For example, when a fellow Jew enquires about someone you know, with a view to potentially becoming their partner in business or spouse in marriage. If you happen to know, for certain, some derogatory information that will probably undermine the intended partnership, then your responsibility is towards your enquirer's welfare, and you should not remain silent. If you say nothing, he may innocently enter the partnership, not knowing that his prospective partner does not understand business, or has diverse goals, and he may suffer needlessly as a result. Conversely, by relating the information that you know you may be "saving the enquirer's blood from being spilt". One need not see his friend actually drowning in order for it to be mitzvah to save him.

Rather, even saving him from getting into any difficult situation is a great kindness, and one which the Torah obligates us to do. I once got to know about a certain match that was being made between a boy and a girl that I knew. Knowing that the boy had a medical problem that the father of the girl would not tolerate, I informed the father of the girl. He was most grateful to me for stopping something that may have had disastrous results.

Having said this, we must nevertheless realise that it may be difficult to differentiate between situations when it is permissible, correct or even obligatory to mention derogatory information, and situations when it is not. (In such cases a halachic authority should be consulted.) Included in the intricate conditions of when one may speak derogatorily for a positive purpose, is to honestly assess one's intent for saying it. If there is any element of jealousy, getting-back at the subject or flattery of the listener that is driving us to reveal this fact, then we must make sure when revealing the information to focus only on the positive reasons for doing so, and not on any negative drives that we may have. Hence, the verse ends "for I am G-d" – realise that I can decipher your motives and see your true intentions. Often, the difference between permissible motives and forbidden ones may be very subtle. We should know that depending on our intentions we may be performing a mitzvah or chas veshalom, an aveirah, and that life and death are controlled by the tongue.

Through our being conscious of the above, may we merit that Hashem guide our actions, words and thoughts to do what is truly good for our fellow man.



HALACHOT BY RABBI ELI MANSOUR

MUST ONE UNDERSTAND THE WORDS OF KIDDUSH TO FULFIL HIS OBLIGATION?

There is a famous Halachic concept called "Shome'a Ke'one," which allows a person to fulfil his obligation to recite a certain text by listening to somebody else's recitation. On Shabbat, for example, it is customary for one person to recite Kiddush, and the others at the table fulfil their obligation by listening to that recitation and reciting "Amen."

A number of conditions must be met for this mechanism of "Shome'a Ke'one" to work. For one thing, both parties must have Kavana (intention) that the recitation should fulfil the obligation of the listeners. The one reciting Kiddush must have in mind that the others will fulfil their requirement by listening to his Kiddush, and they, too, must have this in mind as they listen to the Kiddush.

The Shulhan Aruch adds another important condition, of which many people are unaware. He writes (listen to audio recording for precise citation) that the listener, who fulfills his obligation by hearing the recitation, must understand what is being said.

Based on the comments of a number of earlier authorities the Shulhan Aruch maintains that the system of "Shome'a Ke'one" requires the listener's comprehension of the recited text. Often, people at the table on Friday night do not necessarily understand the words of Kiddush. It would therefore be proper before Kiddush to briefly explain the words of Kiddush so that the listeners will understand what is being said. Nevertheless, if one listened to Kiddush and did not understand what was recited, he has Be'di'abad (after the fact) fulfilled his obligation. This is the ruling of the Mishna Berura, who writes that in such a case one may rely on those authorities who do not require the listener to understand the

text. This is also the ruling of Rabbi Moshe Halevi (Israel, 1961-2001), in his work Birkat Hashem.

It must be emphasized that this refers only to the recitation of a Hebrew text. If a person recited a Beracha or Kiddush in a different language, then according to all views the listener fulfils his obligation only if he understands what was recited. It is only regarding a Hebrew recitation that some authorities allow the listener to fulfil his obligation even if he does not understand the language. Summary: Before one recites Kiddush on Friday night, he should make sure that all those who will be fulfilling their obligation by listening to his recitation have a basic understanding of the words of Kiddush. Nevertheless, if someone did not understand, he nevertheless fulfils his obligation by listening to Kiddush. This applies as well to other situations where one fulfils his obligation to recite a certain text by listening to its recitation by somebody else.



WEEKLY PARSHA OVERVIEW

Parshat Acharei Mot - Kedoshim

PARSHAT ACHAREI MOT

Hashem instructs the kohanim to exercise extreme care when they enter the Mishkan. On Yom Kippur, the Kohen Gadol (High Priest) is to approach the holiest part of the Mishkan after special preparations and wearing special clothing. He brings offerings unique to Yom Kippur, including two identical goats that are designated by lottery. One is "for Hashem, and is offered in the Temple, while the other is "for Azazel," to be in the desert. The Torah states the individual's obligations on Yom Kippur: On the 10th day of the seventh month, one must "afflict" oneself. We are to abstain from eating and drinking, anointing, wearing leather footwear, washing and marital relations.

Consumption of blood is prohibited. The blood of slaughtered birds and undomesticated beasts must be covered. The people are warned against engaging in the wicked practices that were common in Egypt. Incest is defined and prohibited. Marital relations are forbidden during a woman's monthly cycle. Homosexuality, bestiality and child sacrifice are prohibited.

PARSHAT KEDOSHIM

The nation is enjoined to be holy. Many prohibitions and positive commandments are taught: Prohibitions: Idolatry; eating offerings after their time-limit; theft and robbery; denial of theft; false oaths; retention of someone's property; delaying payment to an employee; hating or cursing a fellow Jew (especially

one's parents); gossip; placing physical and spiritual stumbling blocks; perversion of justice; inaction when others are in danger; embarrassing; revenge; bearing a grudge; cross-breeding; wearing a garment of wool and linen; harvesting a tree during its first three years; gluttony and intoxication; witchcraft; shaving the beard and sideburns; tattooing.

Positive: Awe for parents and respect for the elderly; leaving part of the harvest for the poor; loving others (especially a convert); eating in Jerusalem the fruits from a tree's fourth year; awe for the Temple; respect for Torah scholars, the blind and the deaf.

Rabbi Sinclair,
Seasonsofthemoon.com



1

Why does the Torah emphasize that Parshat Acharei Mot was taught after the death of Aharon's sons?

16:1 - To strengthen the warning not to enter the kodesh kodashim except on Yom Kippur.

2

What is the punishment for a kohen gadol who inappropriately enters the kodesh kodashim?

16:2 - Death.

3

How long did the first Beit Hamikdash stand?

16:3 - 410 years.

4

What did the kohen gadol wear when he entered the kodesh kodashim?

16:4 - Only the four linen garments worn by an ordinary kohen.

5

How many times did the kohen gadol change his clothing and immerse in the mikveh on Yom Kippur?

16:4 - Five times.

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