Points to Ponder

Achrei Mos Kedoshim – Master

**אַֽחֲרֵ֣י מ֔וֹת שְׁנֵ֖י בְּנֵ֣י אַֽהֲרֹ֑ן  After the death of Aharon’s 2 sons (16:1)** - The Midrash notes many reasons why the sons of Aharon died. Among the reasons was that they did not take advice from one another. Now while it makes sese for their punishment for not seeking advice from their elders, but why punish them for not seeking advice from one another? Doesn’t the fact that they both participated imply that they agreed with the path they selected? **Rav Dovid Soloveitchik ztl**. highlights the importance of seeking advice when choosing a plan. When people talk before they act, they often allow more cool heads to prevail and listen to their own words.

**ַֽאַֽחֲרֵ֣י מ֔וֹת שְׁנֵ֖י בְּנֵ֣י אַֽהֲרֹ֑ן  After the deaths of Aharon’s 2 sons (16:1**) – Why do we highlight the time frame as a prelude to the Avodas Yom HaKpippurim? **Rav Simcha Wasserman ztl.** explained that when tragedy happens, it calls to the survivors to conduct a personal Yom Kippur in order to seek atonement.

**דַּבֵּר֘ אֶל־אַֽהֲרֹ֣ן אָחִ֒יךָ֒ וְאַל־יָבֹ֤א בְכָל־עֵת֙ אֶל־הַקֹּ֔דֶשׁ Do not come at all times into the sanctuary (16:2)** **- Rashi** notes that since the Shechinah is there, take heed not to come regularly. The message is clear - even the sublime, pristine experience of hashraas hashechinah can become unmarveling and aweless if treated as ordinary and routine. It is, as **Rav Chaim Shmuelevitz zt"l** emphasizes “habit and routine are the great enemy of uplifting spirituality." Rav Yonasan Sacks Shlita explains that the balance of loyal adherence to the Dvar Hashem and the importance of spiritual growth and creativity, underlie the Parshiyos of Acharei Mos and Kedoshim. Parshas Acharei Mos, which follows the death of Nadav and Avihu, emphasizes obedience of the Dvar Hashem. Nadav and Avihu were killed for offering an "Aish zara asher lo tziva osam" (Vayikra 10:1) "An alien fire that He had not commanded them". The clear message of their death underscores that genuine Avodas Hashem rests on strict observance of the letter of the law. Perhaps for this very reason Parshas Acharei Mos contains the avodas Yom Hakippurim and Parshas Ho-arayos, both of which stress the detailed order and structure of Avodas Hashem and religious life.

**דַּבֵּר֘ אֶל־אַֽהֲרֹ֣ן אָחִ֒יךָ֒ וְאַל־יָבֹ֤א בְכָל־עֵת֙ אֶל־הַקֹּ֔דֶשׁ Speak to Aharon your brother (16:2) - Rashi** notes that Hashem was telling Moshe to warn Aharon so that he not do as did his sons and be spared death. But why would AHARON need that warning? **Rav Amital ztl**. explained that sometimes in order to gain spiritual things we think it is ok to push off the “smaller” things. Hashem was warning Aharon not to make that choice.

**כִּ֚י בֶּֽעָנָ֔ן אֵֽרָאֶ֖ה עַל־הַכַּפֹּֽרֶת: For in the cloud I shall appear (16:2)** – **Rashi** explains that since Hashem is always there a person needs to be careful not to hang out in the Kodesh lest he become lax due to familiarity. But isn’t that exactly what WE seek every day? Don’t we declare Shivisee Hashem L’Negdee Tamid? Why are we not worried about being lax then? **Rav Shteinman ztl.** explains that there is a difference between being in the revealed Shechina which needs extra protection from the glory. It is similar to not looking at the hands of the Kohein while he is Duchanin but the same hands can be looked at, later in the day. The Moon, we are told, not to gaze at exceptionally but we are allowed to look. When we demonstrate respect for something we are embarrassed of our standing in its presence.

**You shall not come to the area of Kodesh all the time (16:2) –** **Rav Lamm ztl.** used this possuk to remind us that man is never allowed to take every position or ethical mood that he adopts for himself and attach Kedusha to it, calling it moral. Only things that are identified as truly Kodesh Kodoshim may man approach – and then – only in the manner that the Torah identifies as the WAY to make it Kadosh. Rabbi Lamm added that this is one reason why Pirkei Avos specifically opens with the history of the Mesorah – let no one think it is for each of us to determine what is ethical and moral. It is not. Ethics draw their background from Sinai.

**And from the congregation of Yisrael you will take 2 goats as a sin offering and a one Ram for an Olah (16:5)** – why is it that the Kohein Gadol uses a Bull for himself and only a goat for the entirety of the Jewish people? Shouldn’t he use a bigger Korban for the larger group**? Rav Zalman Sorotzkin ztl.** explains that the bull and the goat come to atone for Tumas Mikdash V’Kodoshav. The bull which is offered on behalf of his family and of his fellow Kohanim actually applies to a larger group with more opportunity to transgress issues of Tumas Mikdash. The rest of the nation is not as involved in the Mikdash and has fewer opportunities to create Tumas Mikdash. As a result, a goat should be enough.

**וְכִפֶּ֥ר בַּֽעֲד֖וֹ וּבְעַ֥ד בֵּיתֽוֹ And he shall atone for himself and his family (16:6)** – The Mishna (Yoma 1:1) notes Rav Yehuda’s opinion that they would prepare an extra wife for the Kohein Gadol so that he would have someone to atone for in the home**. Rav Yitzchak Rappaport ztl. Maggid of Wolkomir** notes that the Mizbeiach cries for the family that divorces. What role does the Mizbeiach play? The Maggid explained that only with grave difficulty do we allow the Kohein Gadol to divorce his wife and there it is for a mitzva. Certainly, the Mizbeiach cries for a personal divorce.

**וְכִפֶּ֥ר בַּֽעֲד֖וֹ וּבְעַ֥ד בֵּיתֽוֹ And he will atone for himself and his household (16:6)** - When we read about Yehoshua Kohein Gadol (Haftorah of Be’Haalosecha and Chanukah) we learn that Yehoshua was held liable since his kids had intermarried. Why would this affect his ability to atone for Am Yisrael? **Rav Schachter Shlita quoted Rav Moshe Soloveitchik ztl.** who explained that when it comes to Yom Kippur, the Kohein needs to  be able to have the opportunity to achieve atonement. If Yehoshua’s family did not divorce their non-Jewish wives, the atonement of his household would have been impossible and he wouldn’t be able to serve as Kohein Gadol on behalf of the Jewish people.

**וְכִפֶּ֥ר בַּֽעֲד֖וֹ וּבְעַ֥ד בֵּיתֽוֹ And he shall atone for himself and for his home (16:6) – Rashi** cites the Talmud (Yoma 36a) who notes that the atonement here refers to the recitation of Vidui. Why is Vidui referred to as Kappara if it is merely a part of the Kappara process. This is even more perplexing when we consider the fact that the Saeir La’Azazel has a Vidui recited upon it and that time it is referred to as “Vidui”? **Rav Nissan Alpert ztl.** suggested that the entirety of the 2 Seirim is based on the concept that life presents 2 sets of almost identical choices before us. On the surface they appear almost identical however, as the year and time play out, the choices are as different as life and death itself. We are powerless to control the lot in life – as symbolized by the Goral. When we get that idea into our minds and being , that brings us to Kappara. For the Seir l’Hashem, the words are the kappara. For the one LaAzazel, the outside needs to change first – bringing the idea to the inside fully.

**עַל־שְׁנֵ֥י הַשְּׂעִירִ֖ם גֹּֽרָל֑וֹת  A lot for Hashem and a lot for Azazel (16:8)** - Why the need for the double lottery? **Rav Schachter shlita** would note that the intent here is to demonstrate the fragility of life to us. We are showing Hashem that our lives are so simple that any influence can set the course for our lives in one direction or the other. In a moment a Tzaddik can be turned but at the same time, a Rasha can be influenced positively.

**And Aharon shall place a lottery for the two sheep (16:8) –** The Talmud tells us that the 2 sheep had to be indistinguishable and the single deciding factor as to which would be LaHashem and which L’Azazel would be the goral. **Maran HaRav Schachter Shlita** notes that the Goral highlights the idea of coincidence in life. We are showing Hashem that circumstances DO make a difference in regard to Kappara. For under the right circumstances even a Rasha can again become a Tzaddik. Thus, we implore Hashem, do not punish the Sinner too much as it is the influence of circumstance that often compounds our destiny.

**וְנָתַ֧ן אַֽהֲרֹ֛ן עַל־שְׁנֵ֥י הַשְּׂעִירִ֖ם גֹּֽרָל֑וֹת One lottery for Hashem and the other for Azazel (16:8) -** Why is the lottery for Azazel so important? **Rav Yechiel Yitzchok Perr Shlita** explained that everyone has a choice in life -- to choose to do good or bad. The **Tur (OC 36)** hints to this idea when it notes that in the letter alef there is a yud on top and another on the bottom highlighting that a Yid can choose to raise himself up to Olam HaBa or down to Geheinom. The lack of a negative (a missing lower yud) ruins the Alef because, sadly, the motivation of fear also works.

**The cloud of Ketores (16:13)** – The Ketores procedure is done once the Kohein Gadol is in the Kodesh HaKodoshim. This is in distinct opposition to the practice of the Tziddukim who insisted that the Ketores be prepared outside and brought in burning already. The **Shaarei Chaim** explains that the soul of a Jew is found from within and it is his job to bring that soul and spirit out to the outside world. The opposite, taking from the outside to create the spark within, is not ok. The **Drash V’HaIyun** adds that the

Tziddukim tried to “enhance” Jewish practice by bringing from the non-Jews into their services – this is a guarantee that the service and those providing it will be dead on arrival.

**הַשֹּׁכֵ֣ן אִתָּ֔ם בְּת֖וֹךְ טֻמְאֹתָֽם Who rests among them even in their Tumah (16:16) - Rabbi Dr. Abraham J. Twerski ztl.** noted that this Possuk highlights to us that we do not have permission to assume that someone has strayed too far to do Teshuva. He added in the name of **Rav Nachman of Breslov** that when Rav Nachman experienced depression, his only solace was knowing that Hashem was withhim in those places too. Rav Twerski encouraged us to utilize our relationship with Hashem fully.

**הַשֹּׁכֵ֣ן אִתָּ֔ם בְּת֖וֹךְ טֻמְאֹתָֽם I live with them even in their Tumah state (16:16) - Rav Dr. Abraham J. Twerski ztl.** used this possuk as an inspiration to those who often feel that they are too far gone to do Teshuva. This Possuk reminds us that no one is ever too far away to be rejected by Hashem. He is truly everywhere so we out make the most of our relationship with Him.

**הַשֹּׁכֵ֣ן אִתָּ֔ם בְּת֖וֹךְ טֻמְאֹתָֽם:He dwells with them even in their Tumah (16:16**) – **Rashi** notes that Hashem is with them even in their Tumah. The Zohar HaKadosh adds that when the Shechina is with us in our Tumah, it appears as a mother. Why a mother? **Rav Chaim Volozhiner ztl.** explains that although both parents love the child, when the child soils himself, it is the mother who comfortably washes the child and calms him as she changes him. The same lesson is apparent when the Shechina is with us in our soiled clothes. Ima Shechina tries to get us cleaned so that we can be purified.

**And no man shall be in the Ohel Moed (16:17) – Ramban** explains that even Malachim are not allowed to be there. So how is the Kohein Gadol able to be there**? Rav Eliyahu Sternbuch of Antwerp** explains that the Kohein Gadol would be transformed into an angel at that time. The idea being that no angel and no person could represent the Jewish people and plead our case in front of Hashem necessitated the transformation of the Kohein Gadol so that he would be able to plead on our behalf in front of Hashem on Yom Kippur.

**וְהִתְוַדָּ֣ה עָלָ֗יו אֶת־כָּל־עֲו‍ֹנֹת֙ בְּנֵ֣י יִשְׂרָאֵ֔ל  And he will recite Vidui on it (16:21)** – It is interesting that the Kohein’s vidui contains neither the remorse not the Kabbalah L’Atid – the resolve not to sin in the future. Why? **Rav Schachter Shlita** quoted in the name of his Rebbe **Rav Soloveitchik ztl.** that the Vidui of the Kohein Gadol cannot cover the Teshuva steps required of another for that needs the individual and cannot be filled in by another. There is a Kappara function to the vidui we recite when we do it on our own – it is a breaking of the will, an awareness of our inability to run and hide and an acceptance of who and where we are – which are the necessary building blocks of Teshuvah & Kapparah.

**And he shall send it with the Ish Itti into the Midbar (16:21)** – The Mishna in Yoma (67a) tells of an extraordinary miracle that would happen with this process. When the Azazel Goat would get to the Midbar and the service there performed, a red sash would turn white at the doorway of the Ulam. If it turned white, the people were happy and if not so they were sad and embarrassed. Later they decided to tie the sash half to a stone and half between its horns. **Rav Sabato Shlita** asks why it was necessary to make the change in the practice? Why not let the people see if their Tefillos were answered? He answered that at times the answer was no, and an answer of “no” can lead to hopelessness and hopelessness leads to all sorts of dangerous things. Teshuva is not about knowing, it is about being helpful and hopeful. Hope happens when one feels close to Hashem and getting to that point is crucial in the development of the human being.

**וְנָשָׂ֨א הַשָּׂעִ֥יר עָלָ֛יו אֶת־כָּל־עֲו‍ֹנֹתָ֖ם אֶל־אֶ֣רֶץ גְּזֵרָ֑ה And the Se’ir shall carry all their transgressions to a wasteland (16:22)** - Why is it that the Se’Ir LaAzazel atones for so much more and yet plays such a small role in the details of the Avoda of Yom Kippur? **Rav Yisrael Belsky ztl.** explained that before there can be atonement for sin, there needs to be a place for inspiration and recognition that one can recharge the spiritual batteries and come to recognize the value of doing Teshuva in order to be close to Hashem. Hence, the areas that close one off from the complete Teshuva play a larger role in the atonement process for their repair sets up the opportunity not only for filling in the void created by sin, it sets the stage for improvement in the relationship with Hashem.

**And Aharon should come (16:23)** – This final step of entering the Kodesh HaKodoshim seems to be unnecessary. The Chizkuni asks why do the ketores utensils need to be removed by the Kohein Gadol? Let next year’s Kohein Gadol remove the stuff? The **Nofes Tzufim** explains that it is not superfluous but rather an insult to leave a mess in the Kodesh Kodoshim. The gemara (Shabbos 47a) notes the same in regard to clearing certain Keilim on Shabbos.

**For on this day the Kohein Gadol shall provide atonement for you to cleanse you (16:30)** – What is the purpose of this cleansing**? Rambam** seems to suggest that it is beyond human understanding. **Kuzari** however, understands that the concept of Tumah involves a cessation of life and conversely, Tahara involves a bond with life. **Rav Haim Sabato Shlita** suggests that this is the intention here as well. Lifnei Hashem Titharu is a command that we are to commit to life and not allow a part of our personality to die as a result of sin. Yom Kippur is the opportunity for man to renew himself and shed the difficulties of the past.

**וְעִנִּיתֶ֖ם אֶת־נַפְשֹֽׁתֵיכֶ֑ם חֻקַּ֖ת עוֹלָֽם:  It is a Sabbath of complete rest for you, and you shall afflict yourselves; an eternal decree (16:31)** - How are we to understand the concept of Inui Nefesh – of affliction as part of the Teshuva process? **Rav Mayer Twersky Shlita** quoted **Abarbanel** who explained that *Inui nefesh*, affliction, refers to fasting.  Abarbanel explains that *Yom Hakipurim* is a day devoted to *teshuva*. *Cheit* represents betrayal, failure, hypocrisy, hubris, foolishness and rebelliousness. *Cheit* signifies the opportunities of life squandered. *Teshuva* involves recognition of *cheit* and its magnitude. And thus the self-awareness induced by *teshuva* is excruciating. Ultimately, *teshuva* culminates in the joy and elation of *kapara* and rapprochement with *Hakadosh Baruch Hu*. But the path is paved with anguish. When the Torah commands *inui nefesh* on *Yom Hakipurim* it speaks of this penitential, existential anguish as well. Rav Twersky added that *teshuva* provides us with a means to monitor our *teshuva* efforts. If we are coasting along, singing *ashamnu* and "*klapping*" *al cheit* but not feeling anguish, we have yet to hit the mark. "*Aval hacharata u'sheviras ha'lev v'ha'bechi zeh nachutz me'od v'ha'marbeh b'bechi b'mistarim meshubach* - but [feeling] remorse, [having] a broken heart and crying are necessary. And one whom in private, cries effusively is praiseworthy"

**אַחַ֖ת בַּשָּׁנָ֑ה To atone for Bnei Yisrael…once a year (16:34)** – All holidays are but once a year. Why the added words in regard to Yom Kippur? **Rav Elya Lopian ztl**. explained that while Yom Kippur is a once a year experience, a person is in a Yom Kippur status every time a Tzaddik dies. This is the Torah’s intent here—that we atone now so that we should not need atonement the rest of the year via the death of a tzaddik.

**So that Bnei Yisrael will bring their Korbanos to Hashem (17:5) – Rav Aharon Lichtenstein ztl.** noted the parallel between this Parsha and that of Shichutei Chutz mentioned in Parshas Re’eh. On the surface, the Mitzvos are the same. However, the section in this Parsha seems to counteract the desire to engage in the pagan worship of Egypt. The concerns of Parshas Re’eh seem to be more focused on the need to counteract the difficulty of recognizing the centrality of the Mikdash in human life and the need to seek it instead of being mired in the everyday functioning.

**Tell Bnei Yisrael that I am Hashem their God (18:2)** – What is being added here? Why is this the introduction to the section of Arayos instead of the reason provided at the end as is often the case after Mitzvos are introduced**? Rav Zilberstein Shlita** quoted Rav Baruch the grandson of the Baal Shem Tov who would regularly note that while his grandfather noted that non-Jews cannot understand Jewish strength, He would also add that Jews do not even know their own strength too. Rav Zilberstein then added that the **Or HaChaim** notes that Hashem gave us Mitzvos because he knows that we can keep them and that we want to. However, when it comes to Arayos, it is tougher and man does not know his own strength to overcome the toughness. That’s why Hashem begins here with the understanding that he is Hashem – and that we WANT to attach ourselves to the spiritual strength that comes from our unique relationship with him especially in this uniquely difficult area of life.

**כְּמַֽעֲשֵׂ֧ה אֶֽרֶץ־מִצְרַ֛יִם אֲשֶׁ֥ר יְשַׁבְתֶּם־בָּ֖הּ לֹ֣א תַֽעֲשׂ֑וּ  Like the actions of the Egyptians you shall not do (18:3)** – The command not to be as the Egyptians seems somewhat harsh for a nation that even prior to receiving the Torah AND living in Egypt still did not submit to this urge. Why this concern now? **Rav Shmuel HaLevi Wosner ztl.** explained that when one is surrounded by a debased society, it is easier for one to commit himself to a life distinct from the society around him if he so chooses. However, when the Jews went into Eretz Yisrael, their challenges would come from within – and the reminder to be careful not to debase themselves became more important. Thus, the harsh reminder.

**כְּמַֽעֲשֵׂ֧ה אֶֽרֶץ־מִצְרַ֛יִם אֲשֶׁ֥ר יְשַׁבְתֶּם־בָּ֖הּ לֹ֣א תַֽעֲשׂ֑וּ  Like the actions of Eretz Mitzrayim you shall not do (18:3)** - What do we mean when we say “LIKE the actions of Eretz Mitzrayim”? Why does the Torah open the section of Arayos this way? **Rav Chaim Yaakov Goldvicht ztl.** explained that wherever a Jew is, inevitably s/he stands out. As a result, we need to separate the way we live and be distinct not only to everyone else’s expectations but to our own first.

**וּבְחֻקֹּֽתֵיהֶ֖ם לֹ֥א תֵלֵֽכוּ And in their laws you shall not follow (18:3) - Rashi** notes that this shows us that Mitzrayim and Canaan were more corrupt than all other practices and in the places where the Jews were, was more corrupt than other places. Why? Why was it worse than the other places? **Rav Wolbe ztl.** explains that this was the protective Hashgacha of Hashem because historically when the people around the were most corrupt and their values most alien to the Jews, the Jews stood their ground and stayed closest to their values. The closer the alignment, the tougher it is to withstand outside influence.

**כְּמַֽעֲשֵׂ֧ה אֶֽרֶץ־מִצְרַ֛יִם אֲשֶׁ֥ר יְשַׁבְתֶּם־בָּ֖הּ לֹ֣א תַֽעֲשׂ֑וּ Like the actions of Eretz Mitzrayim that you lived in (18:3) – Rashi** explains that Egypt and Canaan were the most aberrant of the nations of the world at the time. It is most interesting that very places that Hashem placed the Jewish nation were the most odd in practice. **Rav Shlomo Wolbe ztl.** explains that in the places where one sees the most crass of behaviors that are most oppositional to Judaism, we find the strongest adherence to Jewish principles. For every Jew – no matter his level of observance has a spark of Kedusha within him which is antithetical to the concept of Tumah. Placing the nation in the face of the contrast would help us understand our place in the world – as individuals and as a nation.

**כְּמַֽעֲשֵׂ֧ה אֶֽרֶץ־מִצְרַ֛יִם אֲשֶׁ֥ר יְשַׁבְתֶּם־בָּ֖הּ לֹ֣א תַֽעֲשׂ֑ו Like the ways of Eretz Mitzrayim that you settled you should not do and like the ways of Eretz Cannan…you should not do (18:3)** – **Kli Yakar** assumes that it is the ways of the JEWS in Mitzrayim who did not want to leave and like the way of people who give up hope on Eretz Canaan, preferring not to settle it that should be avoided. **Rav Chaim Sabato Shlita** learns that one cannot survive on a yahadus that does not see Galus as a “strange” thing that we hope ends in a proper time. Galus is not ideal – V’Chai Bahem-- we need to grow from Torah experiences .

**וְאֶת־חֻקֹּתַ֥י תִּשְׁמְר֖וּ לָלֶ֣כֶת בָּהֶ֑ם My Chukim you shall observe (18:4) – Rashi** notes that the Chukim here refer to things that are Gezeiros HaMelech – not eating pig, not wearing Shatnez and the power of the purification of the Mei Chatas. It is interesting that in Parshas Beshalach (15:26) the Parah Adumah replaces the example of Taharas Mei Chatas. Why did it change? **The Lubavitcher Rebbe ztl.** explained that in this instance we are counting things that seem to have a logical explanation but are Chukim. Parah Adumah is so foreign from logic insofar as it is both considered a Korban (Hence it is called Chatas) but is not brought on a Mizbeiach and is prepared outside of the camp. Thus, it cannot be counted together with the others. Hazaah is a bit closer as it is somewhere near similar to Tevilah but is fulfilled with a few drops instead of the whole body – a Chok. In Beshalach we highlight KOL Chukav – including the most strangest of the strange – the Parah Adumah.

**וָחַ֣י בָּהֶ֑ם And you should live by them (18:5) – Rav Yehuda Amital ztl**. noted three ideas that we learn from the Possuk. a) Mitzvot are to be performed not with sadness or a sense of suffering, but rather with joy and vitality. b) At the end of the Midrash Tanchuma on the Torah we learn that an evil person is considered dead even during his lifetime, because "he sees the sun shining but does not recite the blessing '…Who creates the lights;' he sees the sun set but does not recite the blessing '…Who makes the evenings.'" The characteristic of a living being is that it reacts; it is not apathetic to what is happening around it. The same idea applies to our service of God: it should flow as a natural reaction to what is happening around us. We should feel as though we simply have to do it, that we cannot exist without it. c) Torah and mitzvot must be a person's main activity. A person may engage for most of the day in work that enables him to earn a living, and he may learn Torah for only one hour each day, but he must feel that that one hour is the important part of his day and of his life, and that all the rest is secondary. Rashi, commenting on the verse, "And you shall observe My statutes to walk in them" (Vayikra 18:4), teaches: "One should not say, 'I have studied the wisdom of Israel; now I shall go and study the wisdom of the nations.'" One may not compare the two spheres. One may indeed study secular disciplines and other cultures, but study of Torah remains in a class of its own and is always the most important. A person should feel that Torah is his life; everything else is subservient to that purpose. According to these interpretations, "he shall live by them" means that our observance of mitzvot must be full of life, must be a natural part of our life, and must be the focus of our life.

**וָחַ֣י בָּהֶ֑ם And you shall live by them (18:5) – Rav Schachter Shlita** noted that this teaches us that the more one studies the Torah, the more he learns and discovers the way of life. Thus, he explained, while the Gemara notes Chochma BaGoyim Taamein – if you find logic in secular knowledge, believe it because the ability to understand and make discoveries and observations in the natural sciences. Still, Torah BaGoyim – if you seek the Derech HaChaim – that you shall not find without the Torah.

**וָחַ֣י בָּהֶ֑ם And he will live by them (18:5)** - **The Netziv** notes that the words “V’Chai” refers to the ability to introduce Chiddushei Torah. How did he come to that conclusion? **Rav Noson Tzvi Finkel ztl**. explained that the concept of “Chiddush” is the ability to know and discern the will and intent of Hashem (especially in the Torah). This mission is the ultimate mission in life.

**וָחַ֣י בָּהֶ֑ם That you should do them and live by them (18:5)** – The **Shelah HaKadosh** points out that one needs to keep the Torah using a lively approach to it – with Zrizus etc. Torah life needs to be tasty (See Rashi to Berachos 51a that we say Chai about a Kos Shel Beracha -- that it needs renewal. **Rav Elimelech Biderman Shlita** added a story with the Baal Shem Tov who was walking with his students and came across a frozen river. He remarked to his students that the cold, frozen nature of life is dangerous. He explained that while a flowing river is one of the things that cannot become Tamai and actually removes some of the most intense Tumot – when it is cold and lifeless, the Goyim come and etch their mark – and he showed them many crosses – etched in the ice. A Jew, he added, cannot ever get so cold.

**וָחַ֣י בָּהֶ֑ם And you should live by them (18:5) – Rav Shmuel Eliezer Stern Shlita** once noted that we do not recite the Beracha of Shomer Amo Yisrael La’Ad on Friday nights because Shabbos does not need Shmirah. Shabbos itself is supposed to provide the protection for us. This is somewhat problematic , he noted because in the same Beracha we ask Hashem to protect us when we enter and leave. Why then do we not assume that Shabbos will protect us? He answers that Shabbos can only protect when we allow a sense of calm to pervade in the general atmosphere but in the entrance and exit from Shabbos, we tend to be rushing and this can be dangerous – especially with cars – and it requires shmirah from Hashem. **Rav Wolbe ztl.** would often point out that when rubbernecking an accident, one needs to think like the situation with the Sotah (Kol HaRoeh Sotah B’Kilkulah Yazir Atzmo min HaYayin) and in this case one needs to be reminded to obey all traffic laws.

**וָחַ֣י בָּהֶ֑ם You shall observe My decrees and My laws which a person should perform, and through them he shall live - I am Hashem" (Vayikra 18, 5). - Rav Wolbe** ztl. explains that the Torah is referring not to physical living, but rather to spiritual living. The performance of mitzvos enables us to live more spiritually elevated lives than the gentile nations. The Rotzeiach is also told to run to the Ir Miklat “VaChai” and we must create a way for him to live – which the Talmud explains involves his Rebbe going with him. Rav Wolbe explains that just as physical life cannot tolerate interruptions - a heart that stops beating for even a matter of minutes can no longer be resuscitated, so too, a Torah life does not tolerate interruption.

**וּמִזַּרְעֲךָ֥ לֹֽא־תִתֵּ֖ן לְהַֽעֲבִ֣יר לַמֹּ֑לֶךְ  And from your children you shall not give to Molech (18:21)** - Why are the laws of forbidden relationships juxtaposed with the laws of human sacrifice? **Rav Schachter Shlita** mentioned in the name of Rav Soloveitchik ztl. that if one violates the rules of sexual morality, s/he will also come to violate violation of obvious Mishpatim as well. (When people give their children to Molech they do so in order not to give up material niceties. This desire begins when people do not care about rules of morality begun in their own sexual desires).

**וְלֹֽא־תָקִ֤יא הָאָ֨רֶץ֙ אֶתְכֶ֔ם And the land should not spit you out (18:28)** - What a graphic image! Why was it necessary? And to think that it is repeated again in Parshas Kedoshim. Why is that the image that Hashem wants us to have? **Rav Eliyahu Schlessinger Shlita** explained that like a body that vomits out that which is not good for her, Eretz Yisrael is granted the same ability – to quickly expel that which harms her. It is critical that we recall that quick expulsion lest we miss the fact that Hashem can decide to end his Chessed grace and remove the irritant to the Kedusha of the land – the Toavot that are performed therein.

**וְלֹֽא־תָקִ֤יא הָאָ֨רֶץ֙ אֶתְכֶ֔ם And the land shall not vomit you out when you make it impure (18:28) – Rashi** compares this to a prince who vomits when his body cannot take a foreign substance – the land cannot handle those who sin. **The Meshech Chochma** quotes in the name of his father, that this is true initially but in the long term, like the prince, Eretz Yisrael learns to handle the sinner. Therefore, explains **Rav Bernard Weinberger shlita**, Hashem warns us that we should be different in the land so that the Siman of the land – as one of holiness that does not tolerate foreign Tumah, remain with us uniquely.

**Parshas Kedoshim (19:2) – Rav Aharon Lichtenstein ztl.** would point out that this Mitzva introduces many disparate ideas in the Parsha. The commonality between idol worship, stressed here more than once and the idea of taking revenge which is stressed here seems to be in the general theme of Kedoshim Teheeyu. The Rambam notes that both violations are Hevel. Rav Aharon explains that even if intellectually there could be a case made for idol worship or emotionally a purpose for revenge – they remain forbidden. For what overrides the specific detail of the Mitzva is an overriding responsibility to be with Hashem and his plan intellectually and morally.

**קְדשִׁ֣ים תִּֽהְי֑וּ כִּ֣י קָד֔וֹשׁ אֲנִ֖י You should be Kedoshim (19:2)** – The Torah notes the mitzvah to be Kedoshim which is written without a Vov while recognizing the idea that Hashem is Kadosh which is written Moleh. Why? **Rav Schachter Shlita** cites the Sifrei who explains that the idea expressed herein is that we should not, and cannot be on the same level of Kedusha as Hashem. His Kedusha is Moleh while ours is Chaser. What are the Rabbonim of the Sifrei suggesting? Rav Schachter offered an insight **from Rav Shimon Shkop ztl**. who, in his introduction to Shaarei Yoshor suggested that we need to define our community as an extension of ourselves. True altruistic Chessed is for Hashem. However, when we see the world as extensions of ourselves, we strive harder to do for the other successfully.

**קְדשִׁ֣ים תִּֽהְי֑וּ כִּ֣י קָד֔וֹשׁ אֲנִ֖י You shall be holy (19:2)** – What is holiness by Hashem’s standards? **Rav Dov Yaffe ztl.** explains that when Hashem extends beyond the natural order of things into the miraculous and supernatural He is doing so because of the Jewish people who also extend beyond natural expectations. **Rav Shmuel Rozovsky ztl.** explained that this is the intention of the Gemara (Berachos 20) that notes that today Hashem does not perform miracles as he did in the days of old because today we are not as committed and Moser Nefesh as they were in the days of old. Still, Rav Yaffe adds, we are able to be Kedoshim by ruling over nature and not naturally giving in to Taavah from Teva.

**קְדשִׁ֣ים תִּֽהְי֑וּ כִּ֣י קָד֔וֹשׁ אֲנִ֖י You shall be holy because I am holy (19:2)** - Hashem is holy because he is separated. How is man supposed to be like that? Moreover, the Mitzvos associated with Kedoshim TeHeeiyu are not the ones associated with separation from society? **Rav Amital ztl.** explained that there are people who think that in order to progress in the service of God it is necessary to “connect.” What they usually mean is that a person should strive for maximum self-fulfillment in this realm, even it involves deviation from accepted societal norms. What this week’s *parasha* comes to teach us is the opposite: in order to be holy, there is no need to sever oneself from one’s surroundings. Rather, one should serve God specifically from within one’s world, through the most seemingly trivial actions. To honor one’s parents in the proper way is to be holy; to tell the truth is to be holy; and so on. The path to achieving closeness to God does not pass through strange and unusual behavior. Rather, it covers the routine, day-to-day actions which a person encounters all  the time. Although God is holy in the transcendental sense, He commands us to be holy within the world and to sanctify what is in it. It is paradoxically only in this way that we are able to cleave to the trait of holiness that we associate with God.

**אִ֣ישׁ אִמּ֤וֹ וְאָבִיו֙ תִּירָ֔אוּ A man should fear his mother and father (19:3) - Rashi** explains that a person honors his mother more than the father and reveres the father more than the mother so the order of who comes first for each is reversed. **Rav Wolbe ztl.** notes that by nature we tend to be drawn to Mitzvos that match our personalities. The Torah is telling us that we need to work harder at fulfilling all of Hashem’s mitzvos -- even the harder ones for each of us.

**Don’t curse the deaf-mute (19:4)** – Why the stress on the Cheireish? **Rashi** explains that the Cheireish is still alive and therefore one cannot curse at him – even though he cannot presently hear. **Rav Zevin ztl.** explains that as long as he is alive, there is still hope for the Cheireish. There is a chance that a cure might be found and therefore do not curse – lest it come back to bite you.

**The hired worker’s wage shall not remain with you until morning (19:13)** – This rule only applies to workers as opposed to paying for product. **Tosafos** (in Bava Kama) notes that if paying for damages in real estate must be paid B’Meitav. But when paying workers, one must not pay in moveable property – only in currency. The reason is that the workers put their lives on the line for the hirer. The Rishonim explain that a hired worker must be paid not because you hired him but rather because it is a Milveh HaKasuv BaTorah. **Rav Schachter Shlita** explained that this is an imposed Chiyuv and the terms are not left to the the hirer to explain. His opinion is lowered due to the responsibility placed on him by the Torah.

**Judge people favorably…Love your neighbor as yourself (19:15, 18)** – Both commandments here – one to Beis Din and the other on every Jew – require us to change our outlook on fellow Jews. How are we to achieve this honestly? **Rav Mordechai Greenberg Shlita quoted Rav Kook ztl** (Ein Aya 9:287) who explained that 2 people can look at the same situation in 2 distinct ways. One can see it positively because he seeks out the opportunity to be Makir Tov – to see the good in situations. The other wants to see things negatively and so he finds a reason to challenge the Tov. Thus, one who wants to achieve B’Tzedek Tishpot or V’Ahavta, needs to work on himself first in order to see to it, that what we look at we see in a positive light.

**וְלֹֽא־תִשָּׂ֥א עָלָ֖יו חֵֽטְא Reproof your neighbor and do not bear his sin on him (19:17) - Rav Gedaliah Schorr ztl** noted that we have a responsibility not to place the burden of the sin on him but rather are to place his burden on the sin. In other words, one should make it clear that the sin is not “like him to do.”

**Don’t hate your friend in your heart, reproof him and do not hold it against him (19:17)** – The **Riyatz of Chabad** would often note that if the reproof does not work, it must be YOUR efforts that are to blame for your reproof must not have come from the heart.

**Don’t take revenge or bear a grudge against your fellow man – you should love your neighbor as yourself for I am Hashem (19:18)** - The juxtaposition seems a bit difficult to comprehend. Why would the Torah warn us against revenge, an act that is surely filled will malice and ill-will, and then command us to instead love our brother as our self? Surely one who wants revenge is not ready to take that great leap, from anger-filled rage to the highest level of brotherly love? Isn’t asking the potential avenger to love the object of his anger like himself asking too much? Using a story from his father ztl’s experience with Rav Elchonon Wasserman ztl HY”D, **Rav Mordechai Kamenetzsky Shlita** explained that one cannot bear a grudge when a person chooses not to be a vehicle for Chessed – one cannot take revenge for that choice. In the same way that one does not get angry at himself for not being able to complete a particular task and needing a Chessed, one should not hold it against another who chooses to be incapable of rising to the task. Instead, treat him as you do yourself – with love and respect.

**וְאָֽהַבְתָּ֥ לְרֵֽעֲךָ֖ כָּמ֑וֹךָ Love your neighbor as yourself (19:18)** - The Gemara (Yevamos 62b) notes that 12,000 pairs of Rabbi Akiva’s students died during this time period. Why do we not call them 24,000. Why 12,000 pairs? And how could they not have learned from his statement that v’Ahavta is the biggest rule of the Torah? **Chasam Sofer** explains that we need to be united in Torah study. If we are not, the Torah we study alone is not as strong. The stress on the idea of pairs is a message about how we can respect the torah by respecting the paired aspect of learning together. **Rav Mordechai Willig Shlita** once suggested that this might explain why we do not marry during this time. We need to make sure we know how to properly partner in order to fulfill v’ahavta.

**וְאָֽהַבְתָּ֥ לְרֵֽעֲךָ֖ כָּמ֑וֹךָ Love your neighbor as yourself (19:18) - The Rambam** (Pirush Hamishna Demai  2)notes that Talmidei Chachamim are called Chaveirim becau they are Chaveirim to Hashem. **Rav Elyashiv ztl.** added that when one is walking at night, one walks wih a Chevra for protection from thieves and dangerous gangs. Our generation is one that is filled with danger on the road of Service to Hashem and so one needs a trusted Chevra to help with safety in the numbers.

**Do not plant Kilayim (19:19)** – Why is one not allowed to plant Kilayim? **Ramban** offers 2 explanations: First, when one plants or grafts Kilayim, one is denying the good world Hashem created by trying to change its order and rule. Additionally, every tree and blade of grass has a Malach who is in charge of it. When one makes a Kilayim, s/he is messing with the celestial order of things. **Rav Asher Weiss Shlita** added that the 2 reasons are really one and of the same. In the same way that the Torah was given to us and is not to be changed as it is complete, so too, is the world complete and we are not to mess with that either. We should accept it for what it is – a gift from Hashem.

**When you enter the land and you will plant any fruit tree (19:23)** – Why do the rules of Orlah and Neta Revai apply to fruit trees as opposed to vegetation? **Rav CY Goldvicht ztl.** explained that initially the world was filled with trees and all vegetation grew on them. This is how one can entertain the possibility that the Eitz HaDaas was a wheat TREE. It was the Chessed of Hashem that symbolized this notion. After man sinned, he would need to work the land to receive the same output (or the power of Gevurah pushing back on the Chessed). Thus, the main thanks and Mitzva goes to the trees and moreover, when one gets to Eretz Yisrael, the first things to be involved in are the planting of the trees.

**מִפְּנֵ֤י שֵׂיבָה֙ תָּק֔וּם וְהָֽדַרְתָּ֖ פְּנֵ֣י זָקֵ֑ן Rise in the presence of a elderly person (19:32)** –  The Gemora (Kiddushin 32b) teaches that this obligation is not limited to an aged individual, as the word זקן can also be read as a contraction of the words קנה זה – he who has acquired, which the Gemora elucidates as referring to חכמה שקנה זה – a sage who has acquired wisdom. In other words, in addition to the literal requirement to rise and show respect to an elderly person, we are also commanded to do so in the presence of a Torah scholar. Why does the contraction state only קנה זה without clarifying to what acquisition we are referring, namely the wisdom of Torah study? **Rav Chaim Zvi Senter Shlita** explains in the name of **Rav Avrohom Achi HaGra** that although there are many objects and possessions that seem to be acquirable, in reality the only true acquisition that a person can own in this world is Torah scholarship, which is permanent and can never be taken away from him. Therefore, there was no need for the Torah to clarify which acquisition it is alluding to, as it is self-evident. Rabbi Senter adds that while the society around us tempts us to spend much of our time pursuing the “acquisition” of mundane and ephemeral objectives, we must not lose sight of the fact that acquiring Torah knowledge is not only our mission and purpose in this world, but it is also the only enduring acquisition and accomplishment.

**חֶ֣סֶד ה֔וּא It is a Chessed (20:17) - Rav Dessler ztl** explains that Chessed is an incredible middah but that it can be misused in the wrong circumstance. This is why Hashem tells Avraham that He will shield him. The Shield is a protection from the misuse and overuse of Chessed.

**And you shall be holy to me because I am Hashem and I separated you from the other nations to be for me (20:26) – Rav Dovid Kviat ztl.** explains that Hashem is letting us know that already from Maamad Har Sinai we were separated and put forward from the rest of the nations. However, the **Mesech Chochma** adds that we need to preserve our uniqueness. If we are able to do so, we will be ok. Otherwise, the nations of the world will come along and separate us from them. **Rabbi Frand Shlita** added that if we do not sanctify and distinguish ourselves – the nations will sanctify themselves from us.

**And you should be holy to me…and I separated you from the other nations to be for me (20:26)** – Kedusha is often understood to be a means of separation from the nations of the world. This is strengthened by a Gemara in Pesachim (104a) that highlights this message in the Yom Tov Kiddush. However**, Rav Gifter Ztl**. added that Kedusha is inherently part of the Jewish identity. The Jew is Kadosh whether he likes it or not and the only question for him is to highlight the uniqueness of the Kedusha and make it practical.

**Haftara (Regular for Achrei/Kedoshim)**

**Are you not like Kushites to me (Amos 9:7)** – What does Amos mean with this comparison? **Rav Avraham Rivlin Shlita** cites **Rashi** who argues that Hashem is letting Bnei Yisrael know that they do not have a “Get out of jail Free” card in their possession as Am HaNivchar. At the same time, **Malbim** adds that like the Kushite who is always recognizeable to his family, Am Yisrael is recognizable to Aveinu She’BaShomayim. It depends how we look onto ourselves and the chance to reconnect.

**And I will plant them on their land and they will no longer be uprooted from upon their land (Amos 9:15)** – Why do we read this section of the Novi for this week’s Haftorah if it seemingly has no direct connection to either Parsha? **Rav Soloveitchik ztl**. explained that these Parshiyos speak about things that bring about fear and terror – that the Bnei Yisrael COULD lose Eretz Yisrael. They learned that the land could reject them if they kept the same negative behavior as the previous generations. The nation needed encouragement to know that Galus is only temporary and that redemption is still possible and imminent – and thus this Haftorah is read to uplift our spirits especially in these tough times.

**Are you not like the sons of the Kushiim (9:17) – Rav Schachter Shlita** would remind us that while normally we read the Haftorah of the last Parsha and that would mean reading the one for Kedoshim which comes from Yechezkel, we do not do so this week. The reason is that while we hold like the Tanaaim who allow this section to be read, Rav Eliezer strongly recommended that we do not read the Haftorah that speaks about Toavos Yirushalayim. Since the section choice is theoretically up to the Maftir to choose viz a viz its connection to the Sedra, we can take Rav Eliezer’s opinion into account and not read that Haftorah. Rav Duvlitzsky quotes Rav Soloveitchik ztl. who notes that even on years that the Parshiyos are split and Parshas Kedoshim fell on a Shabbos that was not Erev Rosh Chodesh or Rosh Chodesh itself, the minhag in Lithuania was to repeat our Haftorah both weeks. (Rav Teitz Shlita did not necessarily agree that this was the minhag) The Levush disagrees and notes that the entire issue is in reference to a different Haftorah entirely and our practice is NEVER to read THAT Haftorah (it talks about the insult to Avraham and Sarah as in appropriate parents – not about Toavos Yirushalayim). Rav Eliezer’s position was expressed when someone got up to read this Haftorah and Rav Eliezer jumped and announced “before you speak of the Toavos Yirushalayim, check the Toavos of your mother” and they checked and discovered that the reader was a Mamzer. Rav Soloveitchik ztl. added that there is another lesson to be learned here – that before we publicize the difficulties we have with Yirushalayim (read: the government of Israel) we should think twice – we should work to change things but not just report Toavos Yirushalayim.

**בַּיּ֣וֹם הַה֔וּא אָקִ֛ים אֶת־סֻכַּ֥ת דָּוִ֖יד הַנֹּפֶ֑לֶת The fallen Sukkah of Dovid (Amos 9:11) - Rav Dovid Feinstein ztl**. noted that in the same way that a Sukkah cannot provide shelter without the assistance of Hashem, so too, the Jewish people can only be redeemed if they return to Hashem and cease being like the children of the Cushites. Kingship is as fragile as a Sukkah -- only with loyalty to Hashem will it remain strong.

**בַּיּ֣וֹם הַה֔וּא אָקִ֛ים אֶת־סֻכַּ֥ת דָּוִ֖יד הַנֹּפֶ֑לֶת On that day I will raise the Sukkah of Dovid that has fallen (Amos (9:11)** - Why is the Beis Hamikdash referred to as Dovid’s Sukkah and not that of Shlomo? **Rav Yisroel Reisman Shlita** answered that while Shlomo built the physical structure, the spirit of the place is purely Dovid’s. He had the desire for it and it is his spirit that will return. This is also perhaps why it is referred to as a Sukkah as opposed to a Bayit. Sukkos can be put up, taken down and rebuilt again.

**Haftara (For when it is Machar Chodesh)**

**מָחָ֣ר חֹ֑דֶשׁ Machar Chodesh (Shmuel Alef 20:18)** - Why do we read this Haftara when the next day is Rosh Chodesh? **Rav Shimon Schwab ztl.** suggests that Rosh Chodesh has the potential to bring Moshiach (Hence the comment that we will build a new Mizbeiach in Zion <Musaf Rosh Chodesh>). When the Haftara mentions that Dovid was not in his place, it reminds us that we lack Moshiach especially because of the Sin of Sinas Chinam (as was Shaul’s problem too). When we fix it, we can merit Moshiach.

**מָחָ֣ר חֹ֑דֶשׁ Machar Chodesh (Shmuel Alef 20:18)**: Why have a special Haftorah for the day before Rosh Chodesh? We do not have it for any of the other Yamim Tovim! **Rav Soloveitchik** ztl once noted that there are striking similarities between the moon and the Jewish people. Like the moon who right after it hits its nadir, it begins a rapid ascent toward a new beginning, the Jewish people can take solace in their darkest moments that Machar Chodesh – signaling a new day – a Yom She’Kulo Aruch!

**Look the arrows are on this side of you, get them and then come (Shmuel Alef 20:21) – Rav Soloveitchik ztl.** noted that the test can also be interpreted homiletically. If man wishes to shed the Divine role that Hashem has selected for him than he can come to town and live a normal life in peace and pleasure. However, if man if I tell the lad that the arrows are far away, that you might partake a great vision, but you will need to travel far and enter steep valleys and ascend tall mountains to achieve those faraway horizons – then start on your journey because you will have been sent by Hashem on it.

**Haftara (For when it is Shabbos Hagadol)**

**Rav Moshe Lichtenstein** Shlita notes that the *haftara* opens with the renewal of the relationship between God and man by way of sacrifices and a restoration of the situation that had existed in the past, following a long period of sin. Thus, it parallels what happened in Egypt, for there too God remained faithful to His people and accepted their sacrifices, and thus the primal love that had existed between the patriarchs and God was restored. And the *haftara* closes with a reference to a prophet-messenger who will come and return the people to God, in the wake of which they will be redeemed. Moshe's role in the exodus from Egypt is passed on to Eliyahu, and just as Moshe parted from Israel to the wilderness of Chorev and returned to redeem them, so too Eliyahu who also reached an encounter with God at Chorev will return in the future and bring to the redemption of Israel.