

Points to Ponder
Achrei Mos/Kedoshim 5778

You shall not come to the area of Kodesh all the time (16:2) – Rav Lamm Shlita 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.

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'Halyun** 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.

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.

You shall be holy (19:1) – 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.

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.

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.

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.

Haftorah: 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.