Points to Ponder

Achrei Mos/Kedoshim 5781

**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.

**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.

**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.

**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.

**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.

**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.

**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.

**Haftara**

**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.