Points to Ponder

Achrei Mos/Kedoshim 5783

**כְּתֹֽנֶת־בַּ֨ד קֹ֜דֶשׁ יִלְבָּ֗שׁ He should wear a holy linen tunic (16:4) - Rashi** notes that the Kohein Gadol does not wear the 8 Bigdei Kehuna when in the Kodesh HaKodashim on Yom Kippur because they contain gold and we have a rule that the prosecutor (gold reminiscent of the Eigel) cannot become the defense. If that is the case, how does the Kohein Gadol wear gold outside of the Kodesh HaKodashim? **Rav Wolbe** noted that when one is inside the Kodesh HaKodashim, he is at one with Hashem – so intense is the Deveikus. In that scenario, there is no room  for anything that separates. Outside we are visiting Hashem. There are limits to the boundaries of the experience in those places.

**גּוֹרָ֤ל אֶחָד֙ לַֽה' וְגוֹרָ֥ל אֶחָ֖ד לַֽעֲזָאזֵֽל One lot for Hashem, the other for Azazel (16:8) - Rav Yechiel Perr** noted the symbolism of the Goral. Clearly, all things even, the Kohein Gadol would prefer that the goat on his right go to Hashem. But there is no way to stack the lottery. The lots are exactly the same – even. The same is true for people at the time of birth. While everyone would prefer NOT to make choices, the Avodah of the goats teaches us that we must make choices in life. We tend to think we will be along with others if we go to Azazel but in the end we go off the cliff alone. Recognizing that end, will hopefully give us the means to curb the temptation and bring us to Teshuva and to forgiveness.

**וְשִׁלַּ֛ח בְּיַד־אִ֥ישׁ עִתִּ֖י הַמִּדְבָּֽרָה And it should be sent by the hand of the man of the hour (16:21) - Rav Pinkus** compared this situation to the situation when a person is trying to overcome sin in his midst. He explained that a person needs to know that a mashgiach is not a broom because while both cleanse, a broom often becomes covered in the filth that it is trying to sweep away. In this action, there is a method to the cleansing and some lessons to be learned from it. First, sin needs to be sent by the Ish Iti - the one prepared to handle it. The Ish Iti needs to remove the evil far from the camp – to the Midbar and that there needs to be Milavin – those who accompany him in order to keep him on the straight and narrow.

**וּשְׁמַרְתֶּ֣ם אֶת־מִשְׁמַרְתִּ֗י And you shall observe my charge (18:30)** - The Gemara (Yevamos 21b) uses this possuk to teach us that we have a responsibility to add protective fences around the Torah. This was one of the 3 things that the Anshei Knesses HaGedolah insisted upon. **Rav Schachter** quoted the **Baal Hatanya** who noted that the idea of Gezairos coming when we do not have an independent Jewish government. When we are under another authority, it is more likely that we will become enslaved to the Satan and Gezairos are important then. Rav Schachter added that when one is enslaved to his own challenges s/he too is responsible to introduce a personal Harchaka to protect himself/herself.

**וְלִפְנֵ֣י עִוֵּ֔ר לֹ֥א תִתֵּ֖ן מִכְשֹׁ֑ל Don’t place a stumbling block before a blind man (19:14)** - If this is the case why does Hashem do it? Why give us a Yetzer HaRa that we cannot withstand? **Rav Pam** explained that this is like what happens when a person digs a six foot hole in the middle of the street. Clearly the person is Chayav if someone else gets hurt. However, when the person puts up cones, flashing lights and warning signs and the victim ignores the sign, it is on the victim. Hashem did not simply give us a Yetzer Hara, He gave us a Torah to be the antidote to the Yetzer HaRa’s missives.

**לֹא־תַֽעֲשׂ֥וּ עָ֖וֶל בַּמִּשְׁפָּ֑ט בַּמִּדָּ֕ה בַּמִּשְׁקָ֖ל וּבַמְּשׂוּרָֽה Don’t carry out a miscarriage of justice with weights, and measures and volume (19:35) - Rav Belsky** noted that the prohibition of dishonesty is written twice, once as the individual (in Parshas Ki tze Tze) and here in Parshas Kedoshim as it affects the community. A Jew is not allowed to keep faulty weights and a community has the responsibility to create the environment of honesty and fair play. Rav Belsky added that in his experience the community does not hold financial integrity up to the standard to which we should all aspire. When a person steals, cheats or swindles but may act in a religious manner, many communities look the other way, and at times, even reward the person with honor. It is a communal responsibility not to accept dishonesty in financial matters from its membership.

**וָֽאַבְדִּ֥ל אֶתְכֶ֛ם מִן־הָֽעַמִּ֖ים לִֽהְי֥וֹת לִֽי And I separated you from the nations to be there for me (20:26)- Rashi** explains that if you are separated, you are for me but otherwise, you are like Nevuchadnetzer and his friends. Why Nevuchadnetzer? The Gemara (Sanhedrin 92b)  notes that emotionally, Nevuchadnetzer had the power to captivate spirits like Dovid HaMelech. So strong were his compositions that a Malach needed to come and slap him in the face. **Rav Elyashiv** notes that even with the great expressive emotional spiritual talent, Nevuchanetzer had no ability to capitalize on it. That is the difference between a healthy Jew and Nevuchadnetzer. If you can capitalize on Jewish spirit turning it into practical, achievable actions, great. But if not, you are no better than Nevuchanetzer  is.

**Haftara:**

**בַּיּ֣וֹם הַה֔וּא אָקִ֛ים אֶת־סֻכַּ֥ת דָּוִ֖יד הַנֹּפֶ֑לֶת וְגָֽדַרְתִּ֣י אֶת־פִּרְצֵיהֶ֗ן On that day I will raise the fallen Sukkah of Dovid and will fence in the holes (Amos 9:11) – Rav Yaakov Krantz,** famed Maggid of Dubno noted that there is a difference between a home and a sukkah. The Sukkah falls easily but can be rebuilt easily too. The home is more sturdy and can take a lot to knock it down but it also takes a lot to rebuild. The same is true for the Beis HaMikdash which has been known as a Sukkah in the past because of its temporary status. In the future Hashem will rebuild the Beis Hamikdash with the same ease that he can rebuild the Sukkah but he will fix the holes and sturdy them as this Bayis will stand forever.