

Parshas Kedoshim

For the week ending 3 Iyar 5757
9 & 10 May 1997

Overview

The Torah gives details how the Jewish People should observe the commandment to be holy. The following are prohibited: Idolatry; eating offerings after their time-limits; 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 someone; taking 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; and tattooing. Positive commands are: Awe for parents and respect for the elderly; leaving part of the harvest for the poor; loving others (especially a convert); eating in Jerusalem fruits from the fourth year of a tree; awe for the *Beis Hamikdash*; respect for Rabbis, the blind and the deaf. Family life must be holy. We are warned again not to imitate Gentile behavior, lest we lose the Land of Israel. We must observe laws of *kashrus* and thereby maintain our unique and separate status.

Insights

A FRIEND IN NEED

"Love your neighbor as yourself — I am Hashem" (19:18)

Once, there were two friends.

Seldom was there a friendship such as this. Literally, there was nothing that one would not do for the other, so great was their love for each other.

It happened one day that one of them was falsely accused of a capital offense. He was arrested and incarcerated in the dungeons of the king. Following a summary trial, he was sentenced to death.

His friend spared no effort, neither by day nor night, to have him released and pardoned. He sought audiences with those of power and influence in the land. All was to no avail.

The date for the execution was set.

It was a gray, unforgiving morning that saw this innocent man walking sadly to the gallows. A sea of faces, some ghoulish with delight, some crying, thronged the route to the gallows. And there too stood his friend, with a look of unspeakable sadness on his face.

The condemned man was already standing on the scaffold. The hangman, draped in a black hood, placed the noose around the neck and like some fiendish bespoke tailor, adjusted it to size.

Eighteen inches to the right of the condemned man there was a trap-door. The hangman threw the lever to make sure that the trap-door would open efficiently under the feet of this hapless Jew. The accused man gazed into the abyss where the trapdoor had opened. This was to be his portal to the next world.

Suddenly there was a disturbance in the crowd. A man was shouting "*Stop the execution! Stop the execution!*" It was his friend. Unable to bear it any longer, he ran up the steps of the gallows and shouted "*Stop the execution! Stop the execution! You're hanging the wrong man! I am the one who's guilty! Hang me - not him!*"

The crowd murmured excitedly. This was much more than they had bargained for in this real-life medieval soap opera.

When the accused man saw that his friend was trying to save him by sacrificing himself he started to shout "*Don't listen to him! Don't listen to him! I'm the one that's guilty, not him! Hang me!*"

To which the other shouted back "*No! It's not true! I did it! Hang me!*"

Back and forth they shouted at the hangman "*Hang me!*" "*No! Hang me!*" The hangman was standing between them. As each of them shouted, his head turned back and forth. As the shouting escalated in speed and volume, it seemed that if the hangman turned his head any quicker, **he** would be the first one to lose his head!

At any rate, it was clear that there would be no execution that day. A disappointed crowd slowly dispersed. The affair reached the ears of the king and he commanded that the two should be brought in front of him.

"*Now, what is the truth of this matter?*" demanded the king. "*Why are you both so keen to 'take the drop' and hang from the gallows? If you tell me the truth, I will pardon you both.*"

"*The truth is that neither of us are guilty of the crime, your majesty. We are friends. I could not bear to see my friend go to his death. So I decided I would give my life so he would live.*" "*The same is true for me*" said the other.

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The king spent some moments looking from one to the other. He was obviously deeply touched by what he had heard. Then he spoke: "I will keep my word and pardon you both. But on one condition — that you too make me your friend!"

The Torah teaches us: "Love your neighbor as yourself — I am Hashem." When a person loves his friend as much as he loves himself, then "I am Hashem" — Hashem makes Himself a friend to them both.

FIRST THINGS FIRST

"You shall be holy..." (19:2)

In the Ten Commandments, The mitzvah of Shabbos is followed by "Honor your father and your mother..."

In this week's Parsha, however, the order is reversed: First comes the mitzvah of fearing one's parents, and only after that, the mitzvah of Shabbos.

Holiness has two realms: The realm of *action*, and the realm of the *mind*.

In the realm of *action*, the most exacting area of holiness is the mitzvah of honoring and fearing one's parents.

Shabbos, on the other hand, is the ultimate fulfillment of the holiness of the *mind*.

On the road to holiness, which is the subject of this week's Parsha, actions must come before thoughts. **For a person must first sanctify his actions, and only afterwards can he rise to the level of sanctity of thought.**

Thus the mitzvah of fearing one's parents — the holiness of *action* — comes here before the mitzvah of Shabbos — the holiness of *thought*.

Haftorah: Yechezkel 22:1-16

STICKS AND STONES

"...therefore have I made you a shame to the nations, and a mockery for all the lands. Those who are near and those who are far will mock you 'Contaminated of name!'...." (22:4-5)

The prophet tells us that because of our sins, the word 'Jew' will become an insult and a slur in the mouths of the nations of the world. When someone wants to curse or disgrace someone he will hurl at him the insult 'Jew!'

In *Midrash Eicha* there is a depiction of two non-Jewish women fighting. One of them sneers at the other: 'Jewess!' The other stops in her tracks

CENTER STAGE

"Love your neighbor as yourself — I am Hashem." (19:18)

Rabbi Akiva states that this is the fundamental principle of all the Torah. But, in truth, how is it possible to love another person as one loves oneself?

A person's view of the world tends to be ego-centric, and even when he behaves altruistically, his actions usually emanate from the desire to feel good about *himself*.

That's not loving your neighbor *as yourself*. That's *loving yourself!*

So, how can a person love someone else as much as himself?

The answer is the end of this verse: "I am Hashem."

When a person puts himself at the center of the universe instead of Hashem, then necessarily every other creation is light-years away from him. Because he feels himself to be the center of all things he necessarily feels removed from his neighbor. There can only be one center. And he has grabbed the center stage for himself.

But when he acknowledges that he is not G-d, but "I am Hashem" — Hashem is G-d — then as a creation of Hashem he sees himself linked to his fellow man. For both he and his fellow are but equidistant points from the Center of all.

In a sense there becomes no difference between 'me' and 'you.' As we are all expressions of the will of the Creator, as much as I can love myself I can love my neighbor.

and hisses: "Call me anything you like. Call me the biggest insult in the world, but don't you ever call me a Jew!"

This is what the prophet means "Therefore have I made you a shame to the nations" — your name will be a watchword for ignominy among the nations until "Those who are near and those who are far will mock you" — they will mock each other with the name "Jew!" because you have become 'Contaminated of name!'

Sources:
A Friend In Need - Mayana shel Torah
First Things First - Shem MiShmuel
Center Stage - Rabbi Mordechai Perlman
Sticks And Stones - Kochav MiYaakov in Mayana shel Torah

INSIGHTS INTO THE ZEMIROS
SUNG AT THE SHABBOS TABLE
THROUGHOUT THE GENERATIONS.



מה ידידות - MAH YEDIDUS
"HOW BELOVED..."

We therefore run towards you;
Come, oh royal bride.

**בבן נרוך לקראתך
בואי כלה נסובה**

*b'chayn na narutz likrosaych
bo'ee chalah n'suchah*

When one man runs in a public thoroughfare and collides with another who is walking, the runner is held accountable for the damage he causes, because it is not the norm to run in a public place. If the running took place just before the advent of the Shabbos, however, the runner is acquitted because he is permitted to run in order to properly welcome the holy day as one would welcome a royal visitor.

It was the custom of Rabbi Chanina to call out before Shabbos: "Let us go out towards the royal Shabbos bride." Rabbi Yannai would dress in his best and proclaim: "Come, oh bride; come oh bride."

This is the vision of going forth to welcome the Shabbos which we express in our about-face during the last stanza of "Lecha Dodi." It is this scene that we sing about with the words "We run towards you; come oh royal bride."

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