

OHRNET

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PARSHA INSIGHTS

by Rabbi Yaakov Asher Sinclair

The World's First Selfie

“With this shall Aharon come into the Sanctuary...” (16:3)

The Artemis II space mission took me right back to 1968.

As they orbited the Moon in December that year, William Anders, the lunar module pilot of the Apollo 8 mission captured the iconic “Earthrise” photo, showing our planet rising over the lunar horizon.

It was the world’s first ‘selfie’.

This time Artemis went further and the photography was better, but the feeling was the same: a small, luminous sphere, suspended in endless darkness. Everything we know — every city, every person, every life we live — spinning around on that little green blue and white marble.

One of the most difficult things in davening is when we say the Shema and pronounce Hashem’s Name, one of the things we are meant to think is: *He is the Creator of everything*. Not just the Earth, but everything.

Beyond.

And beyond the beyond.

This is a difficult idea to imagine.

But I got some help when I saw those pictures from Artemis.

I think of that view of Earth from afar, and then I think about ‘pulling back’, expanding that view more and more and more until the small pin-head of the Earth vanishes; and then even more, extending outward into the vastness of space, until our galaxy, the Milky Way which contains between 100 billion to 400 billion stars, also starts to shrink and shrink until it, too, becomes a pin-head and the vanishes, and on and on...

It becomes just a little easier to conceptualize that Hashem is the Master of All.

At the beginning of Acharei Mot, the Torah describes the *Avodah* of the Kohen Gadol on Yom Kippur, entering the *Kodesh HaKodashim* (Holy of Holies), the holiest point in physical space. And then, in Parashat Kedoshim, we are told: “*Kedoshim tihyu*” — you shall be holy.

You could think that holiness exists only in one place - in the Holy-of-Holies, the domain of the Kohen Gadol - and that it exists only at one time of year - on Yom Kippur.

But the Torah immediately tells us: “*Kedoshim tihyu*” - that same awareness can extend outward, into every aspect of life.

Kedusha is not confined to a point in space, or time.

Hashem is the Creator of *everything*—of all existence, in every direction. He exists everywhere at the same time, and so every moment is full of His holiness.

Parshat Kedoshim is filled not with abstract ideas, but with practical mitzvos: honesty in business, respect for others, sensitivity, restraint. Because once a person internalizes that Hashem fills all reality, holiness is no longer something distant—it becomes something imminent and immediate.

Acharei Mos leads to *Kedoshim*. When we truly see how vast creation is—and how it all comes from Him—then even our small world, our small actions, take on infinite significance.

Kedoshim tihyu—because He fills everything.

PARSHA OVERVIEW

Acharei Mot

Hashem instructs the *kohanim* to exercise extreme care when they enter the Mishkan. On Yom Kippur, the Kohen Gadol (High Priest) is to approach the holiest part of the Mishkan after special preparations and wearing special clothing. He brings offerings unique to Yom Kippur, including two identical goats that are designated by lottery. One is “for Hashem”, and is offered in the Temple, while the other is “for Azazel,” to be sent to the desert. The Torah states the individual's obligations on Yom Kippur: On the 10th day of the seventh month, one must “afflict” oneself. We are to abstain from: eating, drinking, anointing, wearing leather footwear, washing, and marital relations.

Consumption of blood is prohibited. The blood of slaughtered birds and undomesticated beasts must be covered. The people are warned against engaging in the wicked practices that were common in Egypt. Incest is defined and prohibited. Marital relations are forbidden during a woman's monthly cycle. Homosexuality, bestiality and child sacrifice are prohibited.

Kedoshim

The nation is enjoined to be holy. Many prohibitions and positive commandments are taught:

Prohibitions: Idolatry; eating offerings after their time-limit; 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; 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; tattooing.

Positive: Awe for parents and respect for the elderly; leaving part of the harvest for the poor; loving others (especially a convert); eating in Jerusalem the fruits from a tree's fourth year; awe for the Temple; respect for Torah scholars, the blind and the deaf.

Q & A – ACHAREI MOT

Acharei Mot – Questions

1. Why does the Torah emphasize that *Parshas Acharei Mos* was taught after the death of Aaron's sons?
2. What is the punishment for a *Kohen Gadol* who inappropriately enters the *Kodesh Kodashim*?
3. How long did the first *Beis Hamikdash* stand?
4. What did the *Kohen Gadol* wear when he entered the *Kodesh Kodashim*?
5. How many times did the *Kohen Gadol* change his clothing and immerse in the *mikveh* on Yom Kippur?
6. How many times did he wash his hands and feet from the *Kiyor* (copper laver)?
7. The *Kohen Gadol* offered a bull *Chatat* to atone for himself and his household. Who paid for it?
8. One of the goats that was chosen by lot went to *Azazel*. What is *Azazel*?
9. Who is included in the "household" of the *Kohen Gadol*?
10. For what sin does the goat *Chatat* atone?
11. After the Yom Kippur service, what is done with the four linen garments worn by the *Kohen Gadol*?
12. Where were the fats of the *Chatat* burned?
13. Who is solely responsible for attaining atonement for the Jewish People on Yom Kippur?
14. From one point in history, installation of the *Kohen Gadol* through anointing was no longer used but was conducted by donning the special garments of that office. From when and why?
15. What is the penalty of *karet*?
16. Which categories of animals must have their blood covered when they are slaughtered?
17. When a person eats a kosher bird that was improperly slaughtered (a *neveilah*), at what point does he contract *tumah*?
18. The Torah commands the Jewish People not to follow the "*chukim*" of the Canaanites. What are the forbidden "*chukim*"?
19. What is the difference between "*mishpat*" and "*chok*"?
20. May a man marry his wife's sister?

All references are to the verses and Rashi's commentary, unless otherwise stated.

Acharei Mot – Answers

1. 16:1 - To strengthen the warning not to enter the *Kodesh Kodashim* except on Yom Kippur.
2. 16:2 - Death.
3. 16:3 - 410 years.
4. 16:4 - Only the four linen garments worn by an ordinary *Kohen*.
5. 16:4 - Five times.
6. 16:4 - Ten times.
7. 16:6 - The *Kohen Gadol*.
8. 16:8 - A jagged cliff.
9. 16:11 - All the *Kohanim*.
10. 16:16 - For unknowingly entering the *Beit Hamikdash* in the state of *tumah*.
11. 16:23 - They must be put into *geniza* and not be used again.
12. 16:25 - On the outer *Mizbe'ach*.
13. 16:32 - The *Kohen Gadol*.
14. 16:32 - Anointing ceased during the kingship of Yoshiahu. At that time, the oil of anointing was hidden away.
15. 17:9 - One's offspring die and one's own life is shortened.
16. 17:13 - Non-domesticated kosher animals and all species of kosher birds.
17. 17:15 - When the food enters the esophagus.
18. 18:3 - Their social customs.
19. 18:4 - A "*mishpat*" conforms to the human sense of justice. A "*chok*" is a law whose reason is not given to us and can only be understood as a decree from Hashem.
20. 18:18 - No, unless his wife has passed away, in which case he may then marry her sister.

Q & A – KEDOSHIM

Questions - Kedoshim

1. Why was *Parshat Kedoshim* said in front of all the Jewish People?
2. Why does the Torah mention the duty to honor one's father before it mentions the duty to honor one's mother?
3. Why is the command to fear one's parents followed by the command to keep Shabbat?
4. Why does Shabbat observance supersede honoring parents?
5. What is "*leket*"?
6. In *Shemot* 20:13, the Torah commands "Do not steal." What does the Torah add when it commands in *Vayikra* 19:11 "Do not steal"?
7. "Do not do wrong to your neighbor" (*19:13*). To what "wrong" is the Torah referring?
8. By when must you pay someone who worked for you during the day?
9. How does Rashi explain the prohibition "Don't put a stumbling block before a sightless person"?
10. In a monetary case involving a poor person and a rich person, a judge is likely to wrongly favor the poor person. What rationale does Rashi give for this?
11. When rebuking someone, what sin must one be careful to avoid?
12. It's forbidden to bear a grudge. What example does Rashi give of this?
13. The Torah forbids tattooing. How is a tattoo made?
14. How does one fulfill the mitzvah of "*hadarta p'nei zaken*"?
15. What punishment will never come to the entire Jewish People?
16. What penalty does the Torah state for cursing one's parents?
17. When the Torah states a death penalty but doesn't define it precisely, to which penalty is it referring?
18. What will result if the Jewish People ignore the laws of forbidden relationships?
19. Which of the forbidden relationships listed in this week's Parsha were practiced by the Canaanites?
20. Is it proper for a Jew to say "I would enjoy eating ham"?

Answers - Kedoshim

1. 19:2 - Because the fundamental teachings of the Torah are contained in this Parsha.
2. 19:3 - Since it is more natural to honor one's mother, the Torah stresses the obligation to honor one's father.
3. 19:3 - To teach that one must not violate Torah law even at the command of one's parents.
4. 19:3 - Because the parents are also commanded by Hashem to observe Shabbat. Parents deserve great honor, but not at the "expense" of Hashem's honor.
5. 19:9 - "*Leket*" is one or two stalks of grain accidentally dropped while harvesting. They are left for the poor.
6. 19:11 - The Torah in Vayikra prohibits monetary theft. In *Shemot* it prohibits kidnapping.
7. 19:13 - Withholding wages from a worker.
8. 19:13 - Before the following dawn.
9. 19:13 - Don't give improper advice to a person who is unaware in a matter. For example, don't advise someone to sell his field, when in reality you yourself wish to buy it.
10. 19:15 - The judge might think: "This rich person is obligated to give charity to this poor person regardless of the outcome of this court case. Therefore, I will rule in favor of the poor person. That way, he'll receive the financial support he needs without feeling shame."
11. 19:17 - Causing public embarrassment.
12. 19:18 - Person A asks person B: "Can I borrow your shovel?" Person B says: "No." The next day, B says to A: "Can I borrow your scythe?" A replies: "Sure, I'm not stingy like you are."
13. 19:28 - Ink is injected into the skin with a needle.
14. 19:32 - By not sitting in the seat of elderly people, and by not contradicting their statements.
15. 20:3 - "*Karet*" -- being spiritually "cut off."
16. 20:9 - Death by stoning.
17. 20:10 - *Chenek* (strangulation).
18. 20:22 - The land of Israel will "spit them out."
19. 20:23 - All of them.
20. 20:26 - Yes.

COUNTING OUR BLESSINGS

by Rabbi Reuven Lauffer

Sheva Brachot (Part 9)

A husband and wife are one soul, separated only through their descent to this world. When they are married, they are reunited again.

Zohar HaKadosh

The seventh and final blessing of the *Sheva Brachot* is: **Blessed are You Hashem, our God, King of the universe Who created joy and gladness, *Chattan* and *Kallah*, mirth, glad song, pleasure, delight, love, brotherhood, peace, and companionship. Hashem, our God, let there soon be heard in the cities of Yehudah and the streets of Yerushalayim the sound of joy and the sound of gladness, the voice of the *Chattan* and the voice of the *Kallah*, the sound of the *Chattanim*'s [plural] jubilation from their *chuppot* [plural] and that of the youths from their song-filled feasts. Blessed are You, Who gladdens the *Chattan* with the *Kallah*.**

Our blessing is comprised of ten different expressions of happiness: *sasson* (joy), *simchah* (gladness), *gilah* (mirth), *rinah* (glad song), *ditzah* (pleasure), *chedvah* (delight), *ahavah* (love), *achvah* (brotherhood), *shalom* (peace), and *re'ut* (companionship).

Rabbi Chama bar Chanina teaches (*Bava Batra* 75a) that Hashem made ten *chuppot* (plural of *chuppah*) for Adam in *Gan Eden*. Our blessing alludes to those original ten *chuppot* and to the sense of perfection that existed at the time of Adam and Chavah's marriage.

The Talmud in several places (*Brachot* 61a, *Shabbat* 95a, *Eruvin* 18a-b) and the Midrashic texts (*Bereshit Rabbah* 18, *Otiot d'Rebbi Akiva*) describe the lengths that Hashem went to to ensure that their wedding be a spiritually elevated experience, tending to Chavah before He, Himself, brought her to the *chuppah*; and how Hashem arranged all the details of the *chuppah* for them; and how He blessed their union.

As with the previous *Sheva Brachot*, our blessing portrays the similarities between the world's first wedding and the wedding that is now taking place.

Fascinatingly, Nachmanides is of the opinion that there are actually twelve expressions of happiness not ten, because he includes the *Chattan* and the *Kallah* in the list. The Ramban is introducing us to a deep and thought-provoking concept: happiness is not only an emotion.

Happiness is a state of being. As Ingrid Bergman, a Swedish actress, once said, “Success is getting what you want. Happiness is wanting what you get!”

So central is the concept of happiness that our blessing opens with the words, “Who created joy and gladness.” The final blessing is teaching the *Chattan* and the *Kallah* one of the most fundamental lessons of married life: joy and gladness are not simply positive emotions that enhance our lives, rather, joy and happiness are the most effective means of serving Hashem! As Rabbi Akiva teaches (*Sotah* 17a), “A husband and wife, if they merit it, the *Shechinah* is [present] between them.”

Rashi explains that the Hebrew spelling of the words *Ish* [literally “man”, but in context, “husband”] and *Ishah* [literally “woman”, but in context “wife”] spell out the holy Name of Hashem. The Midrash (*Pirkei d’Rebbi Eliezer* 12) explains that when a couple marry, the *Shechinah* joins together with them and protects them.

Thus, the underlying reason for being joyful is that happiness gives honor to Hashem because happiness enables the *Shechinah* to dwell together with us. As the *Kol Bo* (a foundational Halachic compendium of unknown authorship) writes (*siman* 75): “For it is Hashem’s honor when people are happy because then they can receive His glory. This is because distress closes the soul and creates a barrier that separates the person from Hashem. A person should not be angry, but accept Hashem's decree(s) with love... [Our Sages teach us that] the *Shechinah* cannot reside in a place where there is laziness or sadness, only where there is joy, and this is Hashem’s honor.”

What a revolutionary concept to impart to the *Chattan* and *Kallah*! The final words that they hear under the *chuppah*, the words that everyone hopes that they will carry with them throughout their life together are “be happy together so that you can serve Hashem with wholehearted purity!” As Rabbi Avigdor Miller so perfectly and eloquently describes, “Happiness is not something that can be pursued directly; it is the by-product of a life lived with meaning and purpose.”

To be continued...

TAAMEI HAMITZVOS – Reasons behind the Mitzvos

by Rabbi Shmuel Kraines

THE FRUIT OF A SAPLING

Mitzvos 246-247; *Vayikra* 19:23-25.

We may not eat from the fruit of a tree for the first three years, during which the fruits are called *orlah*, meaning “blocked” [from benefit]. During the fourth-year, there is a separate Mitzvah to eat the fruit in Yerushalayim, or else to redeem the fruit and use the money to purchase fruit in Yerushalayim and eat it there. The fruits of that fourth year are called *neta revai*, meaning “saplings of the fourth [year].” These days, we redeem the *neta revai*.

Ramban explains that the purpose of these two Mitzvos is to honor Hashem by refraining from eating from our produce until we “offer” some of it to Him, by enjoying it in His holy city and praising Him there. During the first three years, when a tree is a weak sapling, it is too weak to ripen its fruit. It produces few fruits, which are lacking in both taste and fragrance, and thus not fitting as an offering. Most trees do not even produce any fruit at all until the fourth year. It emerges that these two Mitzvos are really two parts of one Mitzvah, whose purpose is to praise Hashem for His kindness that is evident in fruit.

As to why these Mitzvos apply only to fruit trees, we may suggest that Hashem’s kindness is especially apparent within fruit trees, since they produce fruit regularly, which are colorful, sweet, ready-to-eat, and nutritious. Moreover, mankind could subsist without fruit (*Tosafos, Berachos* 37a.), so their existence reveals an added aspect of Hashem’s loving-kindness.

Ramban adds that the Torah prohibits eating *orlah* also because it is unhealthy. According to *Sefer HaChinuch*, an added benefit of bringing *neta revai* to Yerushalayim is that at least one member of every Jewish family will frequent the holy city of Yerushalayim and study Torah there until he finishes consuming the fruit. Thereby, there will be Torah in every Jewish home. This, he explains, is the reason for the similar Mitzvah to eat *maaser sheini* in Yerushalayim.

Moreh Nevuchim (3:37) records the practice of idolaters to plant a tree for a deity and to eat its first crop in their house of idolatry. He explains that the Torah commands us to do the opposite and bring the first crop to His house. Since most trees do not produce fruit until the fourth year, *neta revai* applies only then. He adds that idolaters would use witchcraft to make trees produce fruit earlier. To prevent such practice, the Torah prohibits us from eating the fruit during the first three years.

On the esoteric level, *orlah* corresponds to the foreskin, the *orlah* of circumcision. Just as the foreskin is associated with impurity, *orlah* fruit are subject to forces of impurity, which is why they are not beneficial and why idolaters would practice witchcraft upon them. In the fourth year, a force of holiness begins to develop, making it possible to eat the fruit sanctity in Yerushalayim. See *Rabbeinu Bachya*, *Recaniti*, and *Metzudas David*.

The Sages compare the first years of a fruit tree's life to that of a person: For the first three years, a person cannot speak properly; in his fourth year, the child is taught to recite *Torah tzivah lanu* and the first verse of *Shema Yisrael* (see *Yoreh Deah* 245:5) - paralleling the fourth year of a tree which is designated for sanctity. After that year, the child begins to learn the Torah properly, which is the "fruit" of a Jewish person.

We may suggest that just as teaching a child to speak words of Torah from the earliest time he can speak dedicates his life to further study, bringing a tree's first fruit to Hashem shows that all of its future fruit come from Him and demonstrate His kindness to mankind.

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