



The Path To Follow KEDOSHIM

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GUARD YOUR TONGUE!

The Difficulty and Reward of Remaining Silent

When someone finds himself among people who are gossiping about others and slandering them, he is forbidden to participate in their conversation and speak Lashon Harah. This applies even if he cannot leave their presence, and even if he feels extremely uncomfortable to be the only person not speaking. True, this is not an easy thing to do, for nobody wants to seem foolish or boring in the presence of others. However we must remember what one of our Sages said, namely that it is better to be considered a fool for your entire life by man, than to be considered wicked for even a single instant by G-d (Eduyot 5:6). Nevertheless we may be comforted by the thought of our reward, for as the Sages have said: "Commensurate with the effort is the reward" (Perkei Avoth 5:21). Insofar as situations that require silence are concerned, it is also said that for every second a person remains silent, he will merit a hidden light that no angel or created being can even comprehend.

"YOU SHALL BE HOLY" IN JOY AND RIGHTEOUSNESS

(BY RABBI DAVID HANANIA PINTO SHLITA)

Our parsha states, "You shall be holy, for holy am I, the L-RD your G-d" (Leviticus 19:2). Rashi says in the name of the Sages, " 'You shall be holy' – abstain from forbidden sexual relationships and from [other] sin." All the same, we must ask how a person can truly elevate himself and enter the realm of holiness. If he sanctifies himself by abstaining from sexual immorality, and if he also sanctifies himself in what is permitted, as the Sages have said (Yebamot 20a), how will he know, and when will he feel that he has reached the level of a holy man?

We shall attempt to explain. When a person wants to perform a mitzvah, he will encounter obstacles stemming from his instincts, obstacles that will discourage him from performing that mitzvah. As the Sages have said, "Man's evil inclination gathers strength against him daily and seeks to kill him" (Kidushin 30b). However when a person controls his instincts and actually performs a mitzvah despite such obstacles, he will experience joy and gladness in his heart, and at that point a feeling of relief and happiness will erupt in him, as if he has discovered a great treasure.

As a result, it seems to me that the joy that erupts in a person's heart is the very proof that he is holy. In fact because he performs the Creator's will and cleaves to Him by performing His mitzvot, he has merited to sanctify himself and to be called a holy man.

This idea is alluded to in the verse, "You shall be holy, for holy am I, the L-RD your G-d." In other words: When you accomplish Torah mitzvot and tremendous joy springs from your heart, you will then know that you are holy and that you are attached to Me, "for holy am I, the L-RD your G-d." The satisfaction that you feel in performing a mitzvah is what sanctifies your body to the point that joy erupts within you. Now we already know that the goal of serving Hashem must be joy and contentment, for in this way we will attain holiness. All the reprimands directed at the Jewish people are because "you did not serve the L-RD your G-d amid gladness and goodness of heart" (Deuteronomy 28:47).

Some may ask, "How can I truly attain holiness? How can I feel so much satisfaction in serving Hashem that I will know I am actually holy?" The answer is that, insofar as sexual immorality is concerned, there is the deed and there is also the thought and imagination behind the deed. Consequently, when a person erases all thoughts of sexual immorality from his heart, when he uproots them and repents completely, he will feel satisfaction, joy, and happiness in his heart. It is precisely there – in the place where such deeds or harmful thoughts could have dwelled – that holiness will come and dwell.

We must realize, however, that everything relating to a person coming closer to G-d must stem from the person himself. It is the individual who must find a way to approach G-d, at which point the Holy One, blessed be He, will help him to become holy, but only where he has the right to approach. If someone tries to approach in areas that are not destined for him, placed not made for him, he is liable to pay dearly for it.

This idea is found in Parsha Acharei Mot: "After the death of Aaron's two sons, when they approached the L-RD and died" (Leviticus 16:1). Nadav and Avihu, Aaron's two sons,

also wanted to add to the holiness of the Jewish people. They wanted to bring mundane fire to the altar, something they had not been commanded to do, and so they died. From here we learn that every person must understand when he is to come closer and when he is to keep his distance, all so as to teach us the principle: "Seek not things that are above your strength" (Hagigah 13a).

However if someone refrains from seeking holiness, this will turn against him "after [his] death." After a person dies, he will see how he distanced himself from holiness, bringing him tremendous shame, for there he will be, standing alone with neither Torah nor holiness. The Sages have said in this regard, "Woe to us on the day of judgment, and woe to us in the day of rebuke" (Bereshith Rabba 93:11). In fact even a person who learned a great deal of Torah in this world – but did not conduct himself with holiness and has nobody to reprimand him in the World to Come – must reprimand himself when he sees the truth revealing itself to him. He will then understand everything that he lost, for he could have acquired more, much more merit, in this world while he was still alive.

A person must learn from all this to strengthen himself in holiness, for holiness leads to joy. As for one who lacks holiness, he goes around looking distraught, depressed, and sad all day long, for he is still far from the King of kings, the Holy One, blessed be He.

This is what our Sages said concerning Nadav and Avihu, Aaron's two sons (Yalkut Shimoni, Shemini 524). According to one opinion, their sin lay in the fact that they did not marry. Hence Hashem punished them and they died.

This needs to be explained. Joseph merited royalty because he controlled his instincts and did not yield to them, to the point that he was called "the righteous one, the everlasting foundation" (Zohar I:186a). That being the case, why were Nadav and Avihu punished because they did not marry? On the contrary, they should have been considered great tzaddikim, since they controlled their instincts and overcame their desires!

The problem is that not getting married is considered a sin. In fact for a man to arrive at perfection and holiness, he is obligated to unite with his wife and become a single body. By marrying a woman he completes G-d's Name within himself, since the letter yud in the word ish ("man") and the letter hei in the word isha ("woman") unite to form the Name Y-H, which helps a person sense the holiness of marriage. Yet Nadav and Avihu did not want to achieve this level of holiness, for they apparently thought that they had already attained perfection. Hence they sought nothing more in this world.

It is of paramount importance for a person to work on himself in order to achieve holiness. The initials of the expression kedoshim tehiyu ki kadosh ("You shall be holy, for holy [am I]") have the same numerical value as the word keter ("crown"). This means that when a person controls himself through holiness, he is considered as a king wearing a crown on his head, and he will merit arriving at perfection and royalty. This is because a king lacking a crown is not really a king. If he is crowned with one, his holiness hovers above him, and such a person is called holy, "the righteous one, the everlasting foundation."

MUSSAR FROM THE PARSHA

You Shall be Holy

There are many ways to spread the light of holiness in the world. Some people do it by the light of Torah, by the blood, sweat, and tears that they devote to its study. Other people spread holiness by performing deeds of kindness. What follows is a marvelous story of a person who would spread holiness by deeds of kindness.

There was a certain Jew who was among the first residents of Bnei Brak. To put food on the table, he set up a printing business in town that earned him an honorable living. During that time the printing industry had not yet fully developed, and there were no competitors in town. Therefore his clients came to him from all across the region and his business flourished.

One day another Jew arrived in town and opened up another printing business just a few yards away. The children of the Jew who owned the first printing shop were very upset with this newcomer, a man who in their opinion had come to unfairly compete with them. However their father conducted himself with exceptional moderation, and not only was he not upset, he even gave a warm greeting to his competitor when he paid him a visit at work. He said to him with a friendly smile, "You're new to the area, and undoubtedly you don't know where to find clients for your business. Come, I'll give you my list of clients."

He immediately began to show him a long list of clients for whom he had done work, kindly giving his new competitor permission to contact them. He then asked, "Do you know how to best use your printing machines? If not, I'll show you how to effectively use them to complete the orders that will soon be coming your way." After this extraordinary reception, he sat down with his new competitor and showed him the ins and outs of the trade.

The children of this tzaddik, who were completely taken aback by his conduct, said: "That you didn't try to discourage him, this we can understand. But where in the Torah is there a mitzvah to generously help your competitor?" He said to them, "You are aware of the fact that a person's sustenance comes to him from Heaven, and that nobody can change even the slightest amount that is destined for him. Therefore it's obvious that I lost nothing of what was destined to me from Heaven because of what I did for him. Isn't that true?"

Although everyone knows that this is true, we still do not believe it in a concrete way. Intelligence consists not only of knowing something, but also of putting it into action. The man in the above story also said to his children, "To put an effort into earning a living results from the curse given to man, and without the sin of the first man we would have been able to study Torah and serve Hashem all day long for our entire lives. However that's not the case, for the curse obligates us to work hard. Yet now that I have an incredible opportunity to rid myself of some of the curse and study more Torah, how can I not do so with great joy?"

This edifying story teaches us that to achieve holiness, a person in no way needs to fast or live austere. By controlling our instincts and breaking our negative impulses, we can sanctify ourselves and come closer to Hashem. This story is just one of the countless examples of how to achieve this goal. There are many other ways of sanctifying ourselves, as we have been commanded to do.

Father, I Brought You a Cane!

It is written, "Every man shall fear his mother and his father, and My Sabbaths you shall keep" (Leviticus 19:3).

Just to what extent should this fear go? The Rambam rules that even if a person's father and mother come and tear his clothes, strike him on

the head, and spit in his face, he must not shame them. Instead, he must remain silent and fear the King of kings, Who commanded him in this regard.

Rabbi David of Lvov was still a very young man when he first traveled to Lizensk to see Rabbi Elimelech. However Rabbi David's father was very upset because he left without telling him. When the youngster returned, his father wanted to punish him, and he looked all around the house for a cane. David rushed outside to look for one, then returned and gave it to his father, saying: "Don't exhaust yourself looking for a cane, father. I brought you one so you can punish me."

Loving All Jews

It is written, "You shall love your fellow as yourself" (Leviticus 19:18).

The Chazon Ish Zatzal writes in his commentaries on the Rambam's Hilchot De'ot: The mitzvah to love your fellow as yourself also applies to Jews who commit sins, for they too are included in the concept of "your fellow." In fact the Sages teach that because of this mitzvah, even a wicked person who is sentenced to die by the earthly court is administered an easy death (Sanhedrin 52b). The teaching declaring that it is a mitzvah to hate a sinner (Pesachim 113b) only applies to a person who was not properly reprimanded. The Gemara quotes Rabbi Eliezer ben Azaryah as saying, "I wonder if there is anyone in this generation who knows how to [properly] reprimand" (Arachin 16b). As a result, whoever commits a sin enters into the category of a person who has not been reprimanded, hence the mitzvah obligates us to love him. Thus the Rambam ruled, "It is a mitzvah for every Jew to love every other Jew like his own self. ... Therefore a person must praise his fellow Jew and be careful with his property just as he is careful with his own property and desires to be treated respectfully. Whoever seeks honor through his neighbor's shame has no portion in the World to Come" (Hilchot De'ot 6:3).

Double Love

It is written, "You shall love your fellow as yourself. I am the L-RD" (Leviticus 19:18).

What connection is there between loving your fellow and "I am the L-RD"? Rabbi Chaim Vital, a disciple of the Arizal, explained it in the following way: "When two people sincerely love one another, the Holy One, blessed be He, desires to be close to them and will cause His Shechinah to dwell among them. We find an allusion to this in the word ahava [love], which has a numerical value of 13. When there is mutual love between two people, we have double ahava, with a numerical value (26) equal to that of the Tetragrammaton. This is what is meant here: 'You shall love your fellow as yourself,' meaning that when you reach a degree of love for others that is completely devoid of personal interest, you will also awaken a sincere love for yourself in others, and the result of this double love will be 'I am the L-RD' – the Holy One, blessed be He, will cause His Shechinah to dwell among you."

Only a Reminder

It is written, "You shall not take vengeance and you shall not bear a grudge" (Leviticus 19:18).

A Christian bishop once said to the gaon Rabbi Yonatan Eibeshutz, "It's been more than 2,000 years that Jews have held a profound hatred for Haman the Agagite, celebrating his downfall each year with joy and cheer. However in your Torah it is written, 'You shall not take vengeance and you shall not bear a grudge.'" Rabbi Yonatan replied, "When we celebrate Purim, it's not because we feel bitter hatred for Haman, who detested Jews. It's because Purim serves as a living reminder of every 'Haman' in each generation. It reminds us that whoever strikes Jews will be struck like the first to have attacked Israel."

Novel Torah Insights on Shabbat

It is written, "Every man shall fear his mother and his father, and My Sabbaths you shall keep" (Leviticus 19:3).

It is written that if someone wants to give satisfaction to his deceased parents, he should relate a novel Torah insight on Shabbat, for it will cause his parents to be crowned in Gan Eden.

Here the Chida said: "This is stated by the verse, 'Every man shall fear his mother and his father, and My Sabbaths you shall keep.' You want to honor your father and mother? Then give a novel Torah insight on Shabbat."

Kiddush and Havdalah

It is written, "You shall be holy for Me, for I the L-RD am holy, and I have separated you from the peoples to be Mine" (Leviticus 20:26).

A chassid came to Rabbi Mordechai Malkowitz and said to him, "The village lord used to like me, but now he has started mistreating me." The Rav said to the chassid, "As long as you hated him, it didn't bother Hashem, Who loves you. However now that you think he is kind and you've taken a liking to him, no choice remains – the village lord must hate you. If a Jew does not know how to do Kiddush [i.e., act with holiness], then the non-Jew will do Havdalah [which will make him feel the difference between them]."

This idea may be used to explain the words of the Haggadah: "It is this that supported our fathers and us. It is not only one who has arisen against us to destroy us... but the Holy One, blessed be He, saves us from their hands." What is it that supported our fathers and us? It is the fact that in every generation, people have arisen to destroy us. That is what supported us, and that is what obligates us to remain Jews.

The son of the Noda B'Yehuda, Rabbi Shmuel Landau, paraphrased G-d as saying: "I neither despised nor rejected them to the point of destruction. However if I had not made the Children of Israel despised or rejected, non-Jews would have already destroyed them."

Overview of the Parsha

After the purification of impurity and sin is described in previous parshiot, Parsha Kedoshim deals with the sanctification of Israel. It is written: "You shall be holy" – we must be sanctified through understanding; "I am the L-RD your G-d" – and through social justice. Furthermore, "I am the L-RD" – we are warned about forbidden relationships among people, as well as forbidden mixtures in nature, the punishment for those who upset the natural order being death or excision.

REASONS FOR THE MITZVOT

In Comparison to Hashem's Holiness

On the verse, "You shall be holy, for holy am I, the L-RD your G-d" (Leviticus 19:2), the Maggid of Dubno said that holiness is not measured with respect to animals, nor is it measured with respect to people who aren't any better than animals. Instead, it is measured with respect to the Holy One, blessed be He, Who is holy. The Maggid illustrates this concept with a parable:

A very wealthy man from a small town went to find an exceptional husband for his only daughter. He traveled throughout the country, until he finally arrived at a distant yeshiva. He then spoke to the Rosh Yeshiva, promising a huge dowry if he could find him the right kind of son-in-law. The Rosh Yeshiva replied, "If you're ready to expend such a huge fortune, I know a young man who is the best and most gifted of all the students here, be it by his abilities, his extraordinary diligence, or his refined manners." The wealthy man was committed to doing his best, and he returned home with the young man and showed him great honor.

After the wedding, the wealthy man soon discovered that his new son-in-law was lazy when it came to learning Torah. He stayed in the Beit Midrash no more than an hour or two per day. Because this bothered the man, he reprimanded his son-in-law for his behavior. The young man replied, "Ask the Shamash in the Beit Midrash if anyone else in this town opens a book even once a month! Although I don't study very hard, no month or week goes by without me studying Torah! In fact I study it every day, and even if I don't remember the things I've learned, I still know more Torah than anyone else in this town has ever known!"

His father-in-law replied, "My son, it's not for this reason that I chose you as my son-in-law. I didn't invest so much money in you so you could be the best in a town of uneducated people! I chose you from a famous yeshiva where you studied with great students, all of whom learned diligently each day, and you were the best and most accomplished among them all! Therefore I'm not content with you being just the best in this miserable little town! No, you have to be the best in comparison to the place from which you came!"

The moral of the story is that even when a person has sanctified himself, he must still remember that in comparison to the sanctity of Heaven, he still has a long way to go and much more to do.

On the other hand, this requirement is also a cause for joy. After all, it cannot be such a difficult task because Hashem says: "You shall be holy, for holy am I," and we know that "the soul that You have given me is pure."

EISHET CHAYIL

By Her Merit

The family of the Chazon Ish's wife consisted of simple folk, people who did not understand his way of life. In fact they held a grudge against him, for they could not understand why a young woman like his wife should forgo all the pleasures of life and devote herself exclusively to earning a living for her "lazy" husband, a man who spent all his time in the Beit Midrash. Simply put, they failed to appreciate the value of their wonderful son-in-law. The Chazon Ish's wife paid little attention to what they said, and she continued to watch over her husband as the apple of her eye. In fact she considered the task of enabling him to study in peace as being her life's goal. A great Sage of Israel once said, "Hillel the elder divided the money

he earned. He gave half of it to the custodian of the Beit Midrash to let him study, and the other half he gave to his wife for their home expenses. Although this was extraordinary on Hillel's part, today we might still be able to find a man who does the same. However where today can we find a Rebbetzin like Hillel's wife?"

Rebbetzin Batya, the wife of the Chazon Ish's youth, did wonders from the day they were married, even forsaking the half that Hillel's wife was given. Indeed, Rebbetzin Batya was the one who provided her husband with food and everything else he needed while they lived in the Diaspora.

– Pe'er HaDor

A TRUE STORY

An Oath on the Two Tablets of the Covenant

It is written, "You shall not swear by My Name to a lie" (Leviticus 19:12).

The book Niflayim Ma'asecha states that Rabbi Yosef Haim, the Ben Ish Hai, recounted a story concerning the Saba Rabbi Moshe Haim of Baghdad, the head of the chachamim in his time. Two people came before the chachamim, an accuser and a defendant, and one of them plainly denied what the other was saying. In his wisdom, the Saba understood that the person who was denying the other's claims had the intention of making a false oath. He said to him, "You think that I'm going to make you swear by the Sefer Torah? I'm going to make you swear by the two tablets of the covenant!" He immediately told the court official to immerse himself in a mikveh and bring him the two tablets of the covenant.

When the man heard this, he was very frightened, for he had never heard of a book called Shenei Luchot HaBrit ("Two Tablets of the Covenant," a book that in fact was written by Rabbi Yeshayahu Horowitz about 400 years ago). Instead, the man naively believed that Rabbi Moshe Haim was actually referring to the two tablets of the covenant that Moses brought down from Heaven, tablets that were inscribed by the finger of G-d. He thought that the Children of Israel had carried them to Babylon when they were exiled there. With that thought in mind, he became filled with fear and immediately exclaimed: "I'll pay! I won't take an oath!"

Rabbi Moshe Haim said to the man, "No, you've already committed yourself. Despite what you're now saying, you have to take an oath!" The man instantly got up and admitted that his denials contained no truth at all.

THE DEEDS OF THE GREAT

The Gaon Was Right

A local governor said to Rabbi Jonathan Eibeshutz, "You Jews surprise me, for you adhere to laws that are completely illogical, devoid of all sense. For instance, your Sages have said that when a fruit becomes infested with a worm after it falls from a tree, it becomes forbidden to eat if the worm has emerged from the fruit, but permitted to eat if the worm is still inside. What difference does it make if the worm has emerged from it or not? What's the logic behind this, since in any case it's still a worm?"

(Note: This ruling appears in Shulchan Aruch, Yoreh Deah 84:4. However if a fruit becomes infested with a worm while still on a tree, it is forbidden even if the worm has not left the fruit. If there exists a doubt as to when the fruit became infested with a worm, it is forbidden, as explained in paragraph 7.)

The gaon took a clean spoon from the table and said to the governor, "If you would, please spit into the spoon." When he did, the gaon said, "Now please put the saliva back into your mouth." The governor refused, saying that it was revolting to swallow. The gaon replied: "Why is it so revolting? One moment the saliva was in your mouth, and the next it was in a spoon. How does that change things?" The governor replied, "Even if the saliva was in my mouth, once it left it became revolting to swallow." The gaon therefore said, "The same applies to a fruit. As long as a worm is inside the fruit itself, having not emerged from it, it is considered as part of the fruit itself. Hence it is not revolting. However once it has emerged from the fruit, even for an instant, it becomes revolting. This is why it is forbidden." The governor then admitted that the gaon was right.

IN THE LIGHT OF THE HAFTORAH

The Sign of Shabbat

It is written, "I gave them my Sabbaths, to be a sign between Me and them, to know that I am the L-RD Who sanctifies them" (Ezekiel 20:12).

Scripture calls Shabbat a sign in order to relate its importance to us. It is like a craftsman or merchant who sets up a sign outside his shop to inform people of the nature of his business. As long as his sign remains in place, it means that his business is still functioning. Even if he has to leave town for a few days, he still hasn't abandoned it. This is not the case when he removes the sign, for it proves that his business is no longer there. The same thing applies to Shabbat. It is a sign that Hashem created the world in six days and rested on the seventh. It is also a sign that a Jew who displays this sign (i.e., a Jew who observes Shabbat) believes that Hashem created the world and renews it. It indicates that He is the Master of all, and that we must do His will with all our heart and soul, for everything belongs to Him. Through faith in Hashem, a person infuses his heart with Hashem's holiness. Therefore even if he happens to transgress a mitzvah, the sign remains with him and testifies that he is still there, that the holiness of Hashem still dwells in his heart. This is not the case if he desecrates Shabbat, for then the sign disappears and demonstrates that his heart is no longer that of a Jew who believes in Hashem. It means that in his heart, he has already separated himself from the holiness of Hashem. Hence the Sages have said that whoever desecrates Shabbat, it is as if he denied the entire Torah.

– Shem Olam 1

YOUR EYES SHALL BEHOLD YOUR TEACHER

Rabbi Ephraim Navon – The Author of Machaneh Ephraim

The gaon Rabbi Ephraim Navon Zatzal was born in the city of Constantinople, where he and his friend of the same age, the gaon Yaakov Sasson, studied Torah with their teacher Rabbi Alfandri Zatzal. Rabbi Ephraim continuously elevated himself in the rungs of Torah and the fear of Heaven, studying with extraordinary diligence and insight. When he reached the age of marriage, he wed the daughter of the gaon Rabbi Yehudah Irgaz Zatzal, at which time he and his father-in-law left for Eretz Israel and settled in Jerusalem. Rabbi Ephraim remained isolated for 10 years, studying the entire Talmud with tremendous concentration and in great depth. During that time he also studied the works of the Rambam and the Beit Yosef. Thus Rabbi Ephraim's name became famous in the Jewish world.

Sent by Rav Rosenheim, Rabbi Ephraim left Israel and returned to Constantinople, where he became the Rav of the city. At the same time, he wrote his famous book Machaneh Ephraim on various Halachot, a book that the Chida described as being incredibly insightful and valuable. In fact his book was acknowledged by the entire Torah world, and even today both Machaneh Ephraim and its commentaries are studied in yeshivot throughout the world.

In reading Machaneh Ephraim, one can clearly see the author's extensive scholarship and wisdom. It is even said that Rabbi Ephraim could perform wonders, knowing the sacred Names of Hashem and being able to use Kabbalah to save Jews from hardship and illness. Rabbi Ephraim Navon passed away on Nissan 26, 5491, and his soul ascended to the celestial academy. May the memory of the tzaddik be blessed.