

חמודי שי על התורה והמועדים

Chamudei Shai on the Torah and Holidays

by Dr. Joseph Geliebter

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Parashas Acharei Mos

וַיִּתֵּן אֶהָרֵן עַל שְׁנֵי הַשְּׂעִירִים גּוֹרְלוֹת גּוֹרֵל אֶחָד לַה' וְגּוֹרֵל אֶחָד לְעִזָּאֵזֶל (ח, טז)

In our holy Torah, “*And Aharon shall place lots upon the two goats: one lot ‘for Hashem’ and one lot ‘for Azazel’*” (16:8)

The great intensity of preparation for Yom HaKippurim

Seven days before Yom Kippur, the Kohen Gadol was separated from his home and brought to the *Lishkas Parhedrin*. On the day before Yom Kippur, they would bring before him the various animals to be used in the *korbanos*, so that the Kohen Gadol would recognize them and be fully familiar with them.

The order of the Kohen Gadol’s *avodah* on Yom HaKippurim required extensive preparation and great awe. “בזאת יבא אהרן אל הקדש.” In our parashah, Hashem says to Moshe, “אחרי מות שני בני אהרן,” reminding Aharon of the death of his two sons, so that there should be added caution, that he not enter the *Kodesh HaKodashim* with even the slightest deviation from the required time and conditions for that great encounter, once a year, between the representative of Klal Yisrael and the Creator of the

**upon the mitzvah of
"Love your fellow"**

- ▶ **The mitzvah of rebuke is also rooted in the mitzvah of "Love your fellow"**
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World. This demanded meticulous preparation and perfect execution of the order of the *avodah* service. No changes could be made, and not a single detail of the required conditions could be omitted. Everything had to be performed with tefilla and with exalted *kavanah*.

Allusions of the lots

The Mishnah in Yoma (6:1) explains: "שני שעירי יום הכיפורים, מצוותן שיהיו שניהן שווין במראה ובקומה ובדמים ובלקחתן כאחד." It is a mitzvah that the two goats, the שעיר לה' and the שעיר המשתלה, be identical. Yet although the goats were equal at the outset, after the lot they are no longer equal. The goat for Hashem is offered in the Mikdash, while the goat that is sent away is dispatched to עזאזל.

Perhaps we may learn from this lesson an example for ourselves. We enter Yom Kippur in the state of "בינונים" or "intermediates," whether as individuals or as a nation, balanced between חייב, guilty, and זכאי, innocent, and at any moment we may easily tip the scale one way or the other. But

unlike the goats, whose fate depends upon a lot, whether they go to Hashem or to עזאזל, we are able to determine our own destiny. We can cause our scarlet thread to become white, receive complete atonement for our sins, and merit a good life in the coming year.

The Rambam's call for this type of reckoning

I was then reminded that these ideas are indeed the very words of the Rambam, who writes in *Yad HaChazakah*, Hilchos Teshuvah 3:4:

אע"פ שתקיעת שופר בראש השנה גזירת הכתוב רמז יש בו, כלומר, עורו ישנים משנתכם ונרדמים הקיצו מתרדמתכם וחפשו במעשיכם וחזרו בתשובה וזכרו בוראכם... לפיכך צריך כל אדם שיראה עצמו כל השנה כולה כאילו חציו זכאי וחציו חייב וכן כל העולם חציו זכאי וחציו חייב

"Although the sounding of the shofar on Rosh HaShanah is a decree of the Torah, there is an allusion within it: Awaken sleepers from your sleep, and those who slumber, arise from your slumber. Search your deeds, return in teshuvah, and remember your Creator. One must therefore see himself the

entire year as though he is half meritorious and half liable, and so too the entire world, half meritorious and half liable. One sin can tip himself and the whole world to the side of guilt, while one mitzvah can tip himself and the whole world to the side of merit, bringing salvation and deliverance...."

When we return in teshuvah, our scarlet thread - לשון של זהורית - will turn white, and each one of us is purified from the *yetzer hara* and from the sins we have. This is the meaning of the verse (Yeshayah 1:18), "אם יהיו חטאיכם כשנים, כשלג ילבינו" "though your sins prove to be red as scarlet, they shall become white as snow."

We wear "בגדים צואים," garments soiled and stained, garments that require cleansing from stains that have penetrated deeply into the cloth, until it requires Hashem Himself, as it were, to cleanse them. Our tefillos to Hashem *Yisbarach* initiate this process of cleansing and purification and set it into motion. We do not rely upon luck or lots; we must take responsibility.

On this special day of Yom Kippur, we are given a special opportunity to return in teshuvah and receive forgiveness, atonement, and purification from Hashem, Who cleanses and whitens the stains of our sins.

"Acharei" or "Acharei Mos"?

The parashah is known by two names, "*Acharei*" or "*Acharei Mos*." One may say that "*Acharei*" is the name of the parashah when it stands by itself, for it is not desirable to conclude on a sad note, "*Mos*," the death of Aharon's sons.

Yet in many years, Parashas "*Acharei*" is joined to *Parashas Kedoshim*. When one says "*Acharei Mos-Kedoshim*" while they are combined, there is benefit in this, for then the phrase "*Acharei Mos Kedoshim*" gives praise and honor and serves as a tikkun for the death of Aharon's sons, for they were holy. It is as though one says, "*Acharei Mos [ha]Kedoshim*," after the death of the holy ones, the sons of Aharon. This hints to the greatness of their holiness, that they were chosen to reveal the awesome intensity of the

sanctity of the Mishkan, just as Moshe comforted Aharon: "הוא אשר דבר ה' לאמר בקרבי אקדש ועל פני כל...through those who are near Me I will be sanctified, and before all the people I will be glorified...."

Rashi explains (Vayikra 10:3): אמר לו משה לאהרן, אהרן אחי, יודע הייתי שיתקדש הבית במיודעיו של מקום, והייתי סבור או בי או בך, עכשיו רואה אני שהם גדולים ממני וממך "Moshe said to Aharon: Aharon my brother, I knew that the Mishkan would be sanctified through those beloved of the Omnipresent, and I thought it would be through me or through you. Now I see that they are greater than me and you."



Parashas Kedoshim

The obligation of a person to remain attached to one's community while separated only in their body

In our holy Torah, in our parashah, it is written: דבר אל כל עדת בני ישראל ואמרת אליהם קדושים תהיו כי קדוש אני ה' אלקיכם (19:2).

"Speak to the entire congregation of the Bnei Yisrael and say to them, You shall be holy, for I, Hashem, your G-d, am holy."

Rashi, on the words *"Speak to the entire congregation of the Bnei Yisrael,"* explains: This parashah was said in assembly because most fundamental principles of the Torah depend upon it.

The *Chasam Sofer* comments on the fact that *"You shall be holy"* was said in assembly, that even according to the author of *Chovos HaLevavos*, who emphasizes the virtue of separation and solitude, it is not the will of Hashem that a person isolate himself from the company of other human beings, such as one who goes out

to the wilderness or forest seeking Hashem and contemplating His greatness. Hashem did not create the world in that way. "לא לתוהו בראה" - "For He did not create it for chaos," but rather, "לשבת יצרה" - "He formed it for settling."

The will of Hashem, blessed be He, is that one should "be אוהב את הבריות," love His creations, love other people, and "join with them, to teach them understanding and wisdom in the Torah of Hashem." Through love of His creatures, one can draw them close to Torah and to *dveikus* in Hashem.

One may separate from eating and drinking yet still be engaged in society

How, then, does a person fulfill "קדושים תהיו" - "You shall be holy?" This is פרישות הגוף, separation of the body, a kind of bodily restraint. A person can do both things at once. He can be separated from worldly indulgences as far as his body is concerned but not be separated from the companionship of other human beings.

Accordingly, from the wording of the verse, "Speak to the entire congregation," Rashi learns that this parashah was said in assembly so that a person should remain involved with other people, because most essential parts of Torah depend upon this, to learn and to teach, and to be a "kingdom of kohanim."

A person must be part a community of people, for in this way he can spread the Torah of Hashem to others. The *Chasam Sofer* lived in a time when the *maskilim* were waging war against those faithful to the Torah tradition, and he understood that the way to fight back was through a strong Torah community in which people support one another.

It seems to fit well with his teachings on the verse "קדושים תהיו," teaching that a person must be part of the group of people around him and of his community, and strengthen one another in Torah and in drawing distant Jews near. According to this approach, every Jew bears an obligation to influence and bring other Jews

close, and to learn with them, to be one who loves Hashem's creatures. "You shall be holy" is a personal obligation, but not at the expense of the Klal.

The mitzvah of "Love your fellow" is difficult to fulfill

The *Sfas Emes* (5641/1881) writes on the verse

קדושים תהיו: ואהבת לרעך כמוך" ויראת מאלקיך הם גם כן הבטחות, כי על ידי שמירת אלה המצוות יזכו לאלה המדרגות

"Chazal say, "ואהבת לרעך כמוך, זה כלל גדול בתורה. Therefore, precisely because it is such a great principle of the Torah, it is very difficult to fulfill. But "only by means of the preceding mitzvos" does the Torah give us a path by which to reach this great principle, even though it is exceedingly demanding.

Thus, the Torah says: "לא תלך רכיל בעמך, לא תעמוד על דם רעך, אני ה'. לא תשנא את אחיך בלבבך, הוכח תוכיח את עמיתך, ולא תשא עליו חטא. לא תקום ולא תטור את בני עמך, ואהבת לרעך, עמך כמוך, אני ה'". This is the formula. Through fulfilling these mitzvos

one may ascend to the level of "And you shall love your fellow as yourself."

Thus far are his words.

Even the mitzvah of rebuke flows from "And you shall love your fellow"

It seems to me that one may add that these mitzvos are of great stature because they are mitzvos between man and his fellow. For example, "לא תעמוד על דם רעך" is part of "ואהבת לרעך כמוך." "You shall not stand idly by while your fellow's blood is shed" is part of "And you shall love your fellow as yourself." When a person sees something causing distress, pain, or harm to his fellow, he is obligated to speak and to do everything possible in order to prevent that harm from coming upon his fellow.

Likewise, "לא תשנא את אחיך בלבבך, הוכח תוכיח את עמיתך, ולא תשא עליו חטא." If a person sees that his fellow is struggling with sin, or has already sinned, he should rebuke him gently, out of the virtue of the mitzvah of "And you shall love your fellow." All of these mitzvos are

interconnected. "You shall not be a gossipmonger among your people" means that a person should not speak slander about his fellow. "And you shall love your fellow as yourself" - means that one should love him, just as one would not want others to speak slander about oneself.

Perhaps Rabbi Akiva's students were held to an especially high standard in this matter

Everything is interconnected. Therefore, if one fulfills these mitzvos properly, he can reach and completely achieve "ואהבת לרעך כמוך" and attain all the great things promised by this mitzvah, for it is "This is a great principle in Torah." Even though on its own this is a mitzvah very difficult to fulfill, if one follows the steps along the way, he can reach the pinnacle of this greatest of mitzvos, זה, ואהבת לרעך כמוך, זה, כלל גדול בתורה.

This is what Rebbi Akiva teaches us. Since this is what he taught, and he demanded a high level of this mitzvah from his students, I would like to suggest that perhaps they

were required to meet an especially elevated standard in this area. Therefore, because they "did not conduct themselves with honor toward one another," so many of Rabbi Akiva's students, to our great sorrow, fell ill and died during the days of the Omer. Rabbi Akiva and his students were on such a high level that they were expected to reach a higher standard, but they failed to achieve such a high level.

In my humble opinion, this is what the *Sfas Emes* means when he says that this is such a lofty level that it is almost impossible to attain. He says, אַם כֵּן, קִשָּׁה מְאֹד לְקִיּוּמָה - "If so, it is very difficult to fulfill it." For Rabbi Akiva's students, it was very difficult to fulfill. Even with all their learning, since it was Rabbi Akiva himself who taught them this mitzvah, the expectations placed upon them were extraordinarily high.

Through the Klal, one can more easily fulfill the mitzvos

The *Sfas Emes* further writes (5652/1892) "on the verse וְאֶהְבֶּת לְרֵעֶךָ כַּמוֹךָ, and Chazal say:

Rebbi Akiva says, "זֶה כָּלֵל, גְּדוּל בְּתוֹרָה." Ben Azzai says, "זֶה סֵפֶר תּוֹלְדוֹת אָדָם - "This is the book of the generations of man," is an even greater principle. For the essence of the fulfillment of Torah and mitzvos is within Klal Yisrael. Through the Klal one can merit holiness, as it is said, "You shall be holy." Every mitzvah that a person performs should be done in the name of the Klal. A person should not perform a mitzvah for personal gain, but for the benefit of the public.

"When Rebbi Akiva says, this is a great principle, we may deduce that there is a smaller principle as well. The smaller principle is that every mitzvah should be performed with all of a person's 248 limbs, for man is called a small world. The *Sfas Emes* says that every mitzvah should be fulfilled with the totality of the person's being. The greater principle is the inclusion of all Klal Yisrael.

"Ben Azzai adds that "This is the book of the generations of man is a greater principle than it" is greater still, for not only must one do Torah and mitzvos for the sake of all

Klal Yisrael, as it is written 'You shall love your fellow as yourself,' but one must also include oneself with all the generations. A person must connect themselves with all past generations, all the way back to Adam HaRishon, for all the souls of all the generations are bound up with one another.

"Therefore, one must guard this principle and perform every mitzvah for the sake of Klal Yisrael, and then the Name of Heaven rests upon it, as it is written, 'I am Hashem.' If one fulfills the mitzvah properly, then in every deed there is a will and a love to rectify one's soul. When we do this properly, we draw holiness to our brothers, the Bnei Yisrael, and then Hashem Himself is with us.

"And then the power of the Klal assists in this." By loving every Jew, we bring holiness to all of Klal Yisrael, and in return, *Hakadosh Baruch Hu*, helps unite us. This is the goal. With Hashem's help, may we merit holiness and divine assistance.

וְאֶהְבֶּת לְרֵעֶךָ כַּמוֹךָ, זֶה - כָּלֵל גְּדוּל בְּתוֹרָה - This is

reflected in the well-known episode with Hillel HaZaken, when a gentile came to him and asked that he be converted while standing on one foot. Hillel gave him a version of this verse: "What is hateful to you, do not do to your fellow." We see from here that not only is this a great principle in the Torah, but the principle of "You shall love your fellow as

yourself" is the essence of the Torah.

If one fulfills this mitzva properly and with genuine love toward the other, one can truly fulfill the entire Torah. "ואהבת לרעך כמוך" is a great principle in the Torah. All of Klal Yisrael is like one body, and every mitzvah fulfilled by each individual becomes included in the nation. כל

ישראל ערבים זה בזה - All of Yisrael are responsible for one another" is a direct outgrowth of "You shall love your fellow."

Baseless hatred brought about the destruction. This great principle of the Torah, "ואהבת לרעך," should protect us, and in its merit may the Beis HaMikdash be rebuilt speedily in our days, Amen.

Maharal Tzintz ב-י-ל-א ואמן

PEARLS FROM THE TEACHINGS OF THE GAON FROM PLOTZK

Parashas Acharei Mos

The fast of Yom Kippur, statute or ordinance?

In this week's parashah, immediately following the order of the *korbanos* of Yom HaKippurim, the holy Torah commands us regarding the sanctity of Yom HaKippurim itself, concerning the mitzvah of fasting on that day: והיתה לכם לחקת עולם... תענו את נפשתיכם. "And it shall be to you a statute forever... you shall afflict your souls." This requires explanation. Why does the verse say "והיתה לכם לחקת עולם"? Why is the mitzvah of Yom HaKippurim described as being "for you," when the day is holy unto Hashem? And why is the mitzvah of Yom HaKippurim defined as a "chok," a statute without apparent reason, when it is in fact among the most understandable of mitzvos, the day of atonement for sins?

Our master, the Maharal Tzintz, explains that one may say that *Hakadosh Baruch Hu*, desired that Bnei Yisrael reach a high level before Hashem and purify themselves through the power of their own essential *avodah* to Hashem, to the extent that they would no longer require the atonement of Yom Kippur. If they would merit such an exalted and elevated state of self-purification, then Yom Kippur would indeed be in the category of a *chok*, a statute mitzvah without a discernible reason. Therefore, the verse says that it would be "for you," for your own benefit, that you should reach a state where Yom Kippur is a חוקת עולם, that the mitzvah of fasting should be without reason, because you would not require atonement.

The following verse continues and explains this: **כי ביום הזה יכפר עליכם לטהר אתכם**. The meaning is, on Yom Kippur Hashem atones for you from all transgressions, and therefore there is a reason and a purpose for the mitzvah of Yom HaKippurim, namely, the atonement of sins. But it would be better if this reason for Yom HaKippurim did not exist at all, and rather Klal Yisrael would dwell in the state of "לפני ה' תטהרו," already pure on their own. Then the fast of Yom HaKippurim would be a *chok* without reason.

The Maharal offers a second explanation of the word "לכם." We find with regard to Yom Tov that it must be half "לכם," that there should be a measure of delight and joy. The verse comes to teach us that on Yom Kippur the very affliction itself is in the category of "לכם," a genuine delight. This may be explained as follows. The *Magen Avraham* says that one may fast a *taanis chalom* (fast for a troubling dream) on Shabbos, and this is not a contradiction to the mitzvah of *oneg*, delighting on Shabbos, because "התענית עונג הוא לו," the fast itself is a delight for him, since it relieves him of the distress caused by the troubling dream. So too on Yom Kippur: since on this day "יכפר עליכם מכל," and we gain immense and extraordinary benefit from the fast, therefore it is proper that we feel in our fasting a kind of joy and delight, as though we were eating and drinking and enjoying ourselves, because the reward that comes from the fast is so immense, the atonement for sins.

From the Maharal's two explanations we learn that on Yom Kippur we must be filled with tremendous joy. For either way, if we do not require atonement, we should rejoice in the greatness of our level. And if we do require atonement, we should rejoice greatly that we merit the extraordinary gift of forgiveness for sins.

Parashas Kedoshim

Man's Limitation: Encouraging, Yet Demanding

The parashah of the week begins: "דבר אל כל עדת בני ישראל ואמרת אליהם קדשים תהיו כי" *Hakadosh Baruch Hu* commands us here regarding the holiness of the people of Klal Yisrael. We are a holy nation of a holy G-d.

Our master, the Maharal Tzintz focuses on a nuance in the pasuk. Why is the word "קדשים" written defectively, without a ו, rather than "קדושים"? He offers two explanations. At first glance they seem contradictory, but upon reflection they complement one another, as follows.

First explanation: Chazal say that the *yetzer hara* (evil inclination) overpowers a person every day. For the *yetzer hara* is stronger than us, and were it not for the help of *Hakadosh Baruch Hu*, it would be impossible to conquer the *yetzer hara*. It follows that when a person seeks to sanctify himself, on his own, his holiness is not complete, for the *yetzer hara* overpowers him. This is hinted to by the defective spelling "קדשים," for

our self-generated holiness is incomplete. Yet the pasuk says: Do not be discouraged by this, for *Hakadosh Baruch Hu* assists us in conquering the *yetzer* and in reaching a lofty level of holiness, for "כי קדוש אני ה' אלקיכם" means that if you come to purify yourselves, I will help you complete that holiness.

Second explanation: Even if you attain a level of holiness, you must still know that you are only "קדשים," written defectively, because your holiness is still not complete. Rather, the righteous continue to ascend, constantly rising to yet higher levels. Therefore a person must always regard himself as one whose holiness is not yet complete and who still has another rung of holiness to ascend. For כי קדוש אני ה' אלקיכם means that My holiness is infinite. Even if you rise through a thousand levels, you will never reach My holiness. It follows that for every level of holiness there is always a higher level beyond it.

These two explanations are not contradictory. On the one hand, we must be encouraged and know that although our own efforts are limited, we must still do what is incumbent upon us, and *Hakadosh Baruch Hu*, will bring us to completion. On the other hand, we must know that even if we have fulfilled our entire task today, tomorrow a new task awaits us, loftier and holier still.

Fortunate are you, Yisrael. We know the greatness of our holiness, for *Hakadosh Baruch Hu*, Himself purifies us. But this should not cause us to refrain from seeking ever greater elevation. On the contrary, just as *Hakadosh Baruch Hu* raised us to this level, so too we long to merit ascending and sanctifying ourselves more and more, without end.



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